

# She Closed Her Eyes

by Nicholas Rombes

So we pushed on.

Beyond all reason.

Avery still with the gun strapped over her shoulder, her close-cropped bangs, her small feet in army boots clodding through the open brown field we were now in.

Above us, a wavering circle of vultures, following us, keeping their high distance. The sun far away, more like a star than a sun. Ahead of us, a small grove of trees that promised shade, we hoped.

"Who are you, really?" I finally said. I had nothing to lose. She was the one with the weapon.

"What do you mean?"

"Who are you?"

She kept walking, me beside her. The only sound our boots through the muck of the dead field.

"I'm Avery."

"Avery."

"That's right. And I'm walking through this field with you right now. We are headed towards those trees up there. We need water. My rifle is loaded. What else do you need to know?"

"Well, for instance, who's side are you on?"

"What are the sides?"

"You tell me," I said. "I don't know anymore."

She kept moving, the trees looming larger.

"How can you not know?"

"I've forgotten."

"How can you forget something like that? God. What side do you *think* you're on?"

I stopped. So did she.

"Yours," I said.

Before she could answer, a single shot rang out from the stand of trees not 100 yards in front of us. And then another. We fell to the ground. Another shot, and then another. This one exploded a clod of

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dirt in front of our faces. We laid flat on the field, on our stomachs, staring at each other. The bullets kept coming.

She closed her eyes.

