

The War Reporter Paul Watson Hears the Voice

We ask them, Have you seen the American
soldier? Someone says he saw him tied up
in a wheelbarrow. I take a picture
of children bouncing on a rotor blade
in the smoldering wreckage of a Black Hawk.
Has anyone seen the dead American
soldier? The mob parts around me, I look
down in the street. And I meet the man. When
you take a picture the camera covers
your face, you shut the rest of the world out,
everything goes dim. And I hear a voice
both in my head and out. *If you do this,*
I will own you forever. I'm sorry
but I have to. *If you do this, I will*
own you. I'm sorry, I'm not trying to
desecrate your memory. *If you do this*
I will own you forever. I took his
picture. While they were beating his body
and cheering. Some spitting. Some kid wearing
a chopper crewman's goggles, face screwed up
in rapturous glee while giving the dead man
the finger. An old man's raising his cane
like a club and thudding it down against
the dead flesh. Men holding the ropes that bind
the dead man's wrists are stretching his arms out
over his head, rolling him back and forth
in the hammering morning light. I'm standing
outside myself. I'm watching someone else
take these pictures. Wondering, You poor man.
Who are you?