

RICE WILL GROW AGAIN

Frank A. Cross, Jr.

We were walking
On the dikes
Like damn fools--
Steppin over dud rounds.

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Mitch was steppin light
When he saw the farmer.
The farmer:
With black shirt
And shorts.
Up to his knees
In the muck
Rice shoots in one hand,
The other darting
Under the water
And into the muck
To plant new life.

Mitch saw the farmer's hand
Going down again
With another
Shoot
But the hand
Never came up
Again--

After Mitch
Ripped the farmer up the middle
With a burst of sixteen.
We passed the farmer,
As we walked
Along the dike, and
I saw rice shoots
Still clutched in one hand.
He bubbled strange words
Through the blood
In his mouth.
Bong, the scout,
Told us the farmer
Said:
"Damn you
The rice will
Grow again!"

* * *

Sometimes,
On dark nights
In Kansas,
The farmer comes to
Mitch's bed:
And plants rice shoots
all around.