

CHAPTER SIX

All too quickly I was awakened by the sounds of the war, and the rustling of sleepy GI's all around me. It seemed as though I was awakened from one dream into another, this just couldn't be real, I thought to myself as I sleepily laid in bed thinking of another day and what it might bring.

"Rusty you have to get up and get going," Bert said in that easy tone he often spoke in.

"I know," I replied in that sleepy slur that I often had in the morning.

"You know Rusty," Bert said. "I think that fighting may be getting closer."

"Yea it kind of sounds like it," I replied in a worried voice. "I had a dream last night that we were attacked and had no weapons to defend ourselves."

"What happened?" Bert asked.

"I dunno you woke me up before they got to us." I answered sounding concerned about not having weapons.

After breakfast we headed toward the air base where the dogs were. Saigon was already bustling with the hordes of Vietnamese civilians trying to make a living in one way or another. The fact that these people were just trying to live as normal a life as they could with the war going on didn't make me feel any better about them. I still hated them with a passion. I didn't want them to come close to me much less touch me, but that is the way they did business, always touching or nudging you speaking that gook shit language. "Why am I here?" I asked myself over and over.

As we passed the bar that had the rotting meat hanging out front the ARVN's were already gathered drinking and laughing. I noticed one walked out to the big hunk of rotted meat and slice a large portion and began to eat it.

"Fuck," I said in a gagging tone. "Did you guys see that."

"Yes," Jimmy replied. "That makes me want to throw up."

By the look on the others faces I knew it was making them sick too. What the fuck am I doing here, I kept asking myself.

"I hear that the Air Force has one hell of an EM (enlisted man) club here." Jimmy said, trying to change the subject.

"Where the fuck did you hear that." I asked.

"One of the guys in the barracks told me," He said. "He also told me that they have a big PX (post exchange), and a movie theater with real pop corn."

"These Air Force REMF'S sure got it rough," I said, in that old Rusty sarcastic tone.

We walked on past the gate and caught a ride to the perimeter road about two miles from the 936th. Walking down the road I noticed four APC's, off in the distance, heading our way. The closer they got, I thought I could see long blonde hair from a woman.

"You guys see that third APC?" I asked.

"Looks like a woman to me," Pearce said.

We looked in awe as the APC's passed and on the third one was a blow up sex doll held tightly by a grunt. What next, I thought to myself.

The next ten days went by rapidly. We finally found the giant PX and the movie theater. When we found the EM club, it was just as the GI had told Jimmy. I had never seen an EM club that looked like this. The Army's officers clubs weren't this nice. All in all we were getting used to Vietnam, although Tan Son Nhut was much like a military base in the US.

Finally the day came to move to Bien Hoa. We had made it to the kennels at the 936th and were waiting for the trucks to arrive. It was about 10 AM when the deuce and a halves drove up with the handlers to retrieve their friends who were in the kennels such a long time.

"All right men," Sergeant Sprowl yelled. "Get your dogs and load up on the trucks."

The dogs were loaded in a matter of minutes. I could see the handlers as they were hugging and petting their dogs. It was easy to see that the handlers missed the dogs as much as the dogs had missed them.

The trip to Bien Hoa was an experience in itself. The streets of Saigon were crowded and the trucks moved at a snail's pace all the way through. We were all keeping a keen watch for the little gook with the hand grenade, however we never saw him. Apparently the Vietnamese were afraid of the dogs and would clear the way when they saw the big Shepherds on the trucks.

"Look at the way these people are staring at us." Dick Leonard said, in a questioning tone. "They look as if they want to kill us all right now."

"If it was up to me." I said in an angry voice. "I would pull all US troops out today and put the mushroom (atomic bomb) on this place tomorrow."

"You shouldn't feel that way," Larry Proper said. "These people have been involved in this war a long time. You can imagine how bad the GI's treat them."

“These people are the reason I’m here against my will,” I said getting a little more upset. “They have already cost me a cousin and several good friends. I wish they would all die right now.”

The rest of the way was through the country side, and the tension built to a new high. For all we knew the gooks could jump up from any where and kill us all. We finally arrived at the 101st rear in Bien Hoa. Right across this large field of elephant grass was the Bien Hoa Air Base. This was the busiest air port in the world. Fighters would take off four at a time, one batch after another for what seemed like hours.

We took the dogs and placed them out away from the population of the base. Then we were taken and assigned an area in the cheap made hootches they called barracks.

“Starting tomorrow the detail left at the 936th will start P training (six days in country training the 101st required before you were assigned a combat role).” Sergeant Sprowl said as we were standing around the hooch counting the days that we had left in this shit hole country, and feeling a bit relieved that we were going to spend more time in a rear area. However I was beginning to get a little worried about the increased rocket attacks, and rumors of NVA regiments moving closer. Still from what I heard, it was still safer here than it was up north.

Toward the middle of June, we were informed that it was up north and to work.

“You guys heard the latest?” Fred Severni asked in his usual loud bitching tone, entering the hooch with Craig Haverfield his bitching buddy.

“No,” Larry Proper said in his easy going voice. “What is it.”

“We just came from the EM Club,” Craig said. “And the AFVN TV (Armed Forces Vietnam TV) news said that Camp Eagle and LZ Sally both were over run last night.”

“At least some gooks penetrated the perimeter and blew up some shit,” Fred said, more than a little worried.

“Well I guess we will find out in the next day or so,” Larry answered in a concerned tone knowing there wasn’t much any of us could do about it anyway.

“There is still a lot of shit going on in some place called the ASHAU Valley,” Fred said, knowing that was in the area of where we were headed.

“I think it is going to be tough up there guys,” Pearce said, in a not so gung ho tone.

“All we can do is wait and see,” I said knowing that they had every right to be afraid. The 101st is noted for its gung-ho attitude and wanting to get right in the middle of the bad stuff.