

## CHAPTER TEN

“Well Sir, it seems as if the first squad is set up and operational at Fire Support Base Mongoose,” Sgt. Sprowl said in his official tone.

“Good, now the missions should start coming in,” Lt. Stockdale said in a low tone wondering who would be next to be hit.

“Where is Wahl?” Sprowl asked.

“He went to pick up Muir,” Lt. Stockdale answered.

“Back from his first mission already?” Sprowl asked surprised.

“Yes it’s been three days, Lt. Stockdale answered, wondering why Sprowl would be surprised. “You know we are going to try to get these teams on a three day rotation.”

“Yes sir,” Sprowl answered sounding a bit disappointed.

“How was your mission?” Jon asked as Tom Muir loaded his gear in the jeep.

“Man it was something else,” Tom replied anxiously. The first night out I was on ambush and saw fire flies all over the place. I thought they were gooks, that was pretty scary and funny too. The next day we went into this area that had defoliant sprayed on it, man it was awesome everything was dead not even any bugs, real spooky. That night we sat up on ambush, and about fifty gooks passed by us.

“Oh yea. What did you do?” Jon asked curiously.

“Nothing,” Tom calmly answered.

“Nothing?” Jon asked in that get back New York tone.

“That’s right. Nothing,” Tom said quietly. “If we would have opened fire we all would have been killed. There was only twelve of us on the Ambush.”

“I guess that was the smart thing to do,” Jon answered. “By the way Sprowl and Stockdale will want to debrief you when we get back. You did get the after action report filled our didn’t you.”

“Got it right here,” Tom said. “Anyone else back in yet?”

“Not yet, but it is time so maybe this afternoon.” Jon replied confidently, hoping all would return safely.

“Did they get our shower built yet,” Tom anxiously asked.

“As a matter of fact they did,” Jon answered eagerly, “But you have to heat the water yourself with immersion heaters.”

“At least it is a shower,” Tom said.

The jeep wheeled rapidly into the 47th area, and Tom headed for Lt. Stockdale’s office.

“Tom Muir reporting in from my first mission sir,” Tom explained then started to fill the Lieutenant in on his mission. He handed him his after action report, and headed toward the kennel area to put Bullet on his chain, he then went to the feeding area and started mixing Bullet a well deserved meal.

“Before you feed him will you bring him in here for his checkup?” John Carter asked in his soft spoken voice.

“Sure,” Tom replied knowing that this was the procedure of a dog handler, dogs first.

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“Well we have one handler return without being wounded,” Jon said, a little relieved at that.

“We still have a few out,” Stockdale said showing slight emotions. “I hope the others make it in.”

By mid afternoon on the fifteenth of July all handlers had returned safely. Things were okay for the moment.

“Looks like we made it this time,” Jon said relieved that all handlers had returned.

“We haven heard from the guys at Mongoose yet. Cross your fingers,” Stockdale

replied taking a deep breath.

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The day was almost over and still no sign of Otis and Frank. Then from a distant the sound of the blades of the chopper could faintly be heard, they were getting louder as the chopper made it's little landing maneuver and sat slowly down on the heli-pad. Two dog handlers jumped off quickly with their dogs tugging at the leash.

"Welcome back to Mongoose," I said grabbing some of Franks equipment, while he was struggling with Rebel's strong tug against his leash.

"Thanks," Frank said, with a sigh of relief.

"How was it?" I asked curiously.

"It sucked," Frank angrily replied. "When we got their the CO put the company on line to search the village. I told him that Rebel couldn't work like that, and he should let me walk out in front. He then told me." "Too bad you are here and will move out with the rest of us."

"What happened? I anxiously asked.

"We had five people wounded, I was lucky I didn't get hit," Frank said angrily. "I asked him to send me in and he refused. There is so many booby-traps out there we will never be able to find them all.

"It was the same here," Otis said. "There must have been ten guys hit with those things. I was scared the whole time out.

"No gooks?" Pearce asked anxiously.

"We got into one fire fight that lasted about five minutes," Otis said. "We killed three gooks. We couldn't tell weather they were VC or NVA.

"Same here," Frank said. "We got two that walked into our ambush."

“How were the guys you worked with,” I asked wondering if we were going to be alone in the field.

“They were great,” Frank said. “They were just following orders, but it seemed as if they wanted to take care of me.”

“Yea, they treaded me real good,” Otis added.

“Where we staying at?” Otis asked walking toward our little hole in the ground.

“Right there,” Joe said laughing at the sight as Otis eyes popped out.

“No way,” Otis said angrily. “Where is the CP I’ll get this changed right away.”

“Right over there,” Joe said knowing that it was lost cause.

“Fuck this shit, I’m not putting up with this shit,” Otis mumbled as he tromped off toward the CP.

“Frank, we live with rats, bigguns,” I said laughing at the incident that happened the first night.

“We can’t all sleep in that little hole. Can we?” Frank asked turning his head back and forth.

“It will be a little crowded, but maybe we can,” I answered shaking my head.

“Yea, we may need to evict a few rats, but we can do it.” Joe said knowing we had no other choice.

Less than five minutes went by and Otis came stomping back mumbling.

“This is wrong, this is fucked up, I can’t sleep in that shit hole.”

“What happened Otis?” Joe asked with that Irish shit eating grin on his face.

“That mother fuckin Captain ran me out,” Otis angrily said gritting his teeth.

“I knew that was going to happen, that’s what they did to me,” Joe said jokingly.

The night came in Otis had reported the situation report to the 47th’s head quarters at LZ Sally. He also complained about the living accommodations to no avail. After all this is Vietnam, and not a social gathering.

The night was hot, miserable and long, with the bugs and rats sleep was very difficult. We were lucky to get a couple of hours of real sleep.

So much for the first round of missions of the 47th Scout Dog Platoon. Things were not looking good for us, I thought as I drifted off into a semi sleep.

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The next morning we were up before daylight fighting rats and mosquitoes. I went to Sig. and tried to keep as many mosquitoes off him as I could.

“This ain’t good for Sig.,” I complained. “I know he will wind up with heart worms.”

“What about us?” Joe asked.

A Sergeant approached us slowly.

“Who’s in charge here?” He boldly asked.

“I am,” Otis sharply replied, remembering how he was treated by the CP.

“The OIC (Officer In Charge) wants two dog teams to walk with the engineers on a road clearing operation,” The Sgt. stated.

“I’ll go,” I said.

“No I’m going,” Otis grumbled. “Joe you come too.”

“We have not had contact with four marines sharing guard duty with some ARVN’s securing a bridge south of here, be ready in ten minutes,” the sergeant ordered.

Two hours a convoy of trucks entered the gate of the small fire base. Joe jumped off the first one and began to walk toward us.

“How’d it go,” Pearce asked curious because he and I had not been on a mission yet.

“It was nothing, Joe said. “We walked behind the engineers for about five miles,

didn't see a thing."

Another two hours had passed when a convoy of trucks entered bringing the other handler and his dog home. Otis immediately jumped off the lead truck, and began to slowly walk toward us. Every few steps he would stop and bend over and spit something out. Finally reaching us.

"What happened," I asked, Otis was a black man, but he sure looked pale now.

"We headed down the road working with the mine sweeping team until we came upon the bridge the marines were guarding with them ARVN's. It was bad, real bad, made me sick," Otis said feeling a little sick to his stomach. "Just a minute, just a minute. Let me get my shit together."

"Well was it that bad?" I asked nervous, and scared.

"Hell yes," Otis continued. "When I approached the bunkers I found the four marines with their throats cut. It was awful, one had his head almost cut off, and there was flies all over them. It must have been early last night because they were starting to swell and the smell was awful. Blood smells real bad when it is beginning to rot."

"Fuck I'm glad I didn't go," I said shaking while those butterflies in my stomach started swarming. Just hearing about it made me feel sick.

"What happened," Willie asked.

"It looked like the ARVN's had cut their throats and ran off. We couldn't find them," Otis explained trying to keep his stomach down.

"By the way we have another mission they need two handlers," Joe said.

"Joe, you and Willie got this one," Otis said still trying to regain his composure.

The two handlers began to get their gear together for the next mission.

This incident would be burned in his mind for the rest of his life I thought, poor Otis. But this was just the beginning.

What next???