

## CHAPTER 13

“Get up!!!! Get up!!!! you bunch of assholes.” Sgt Hames yelled as he walked sleepily through the tent.

“Allen, you and Corsello, and Roger Hermann are going to Mongoose today.” Sgt Hames spouted as if he hated to give that order.”

“When?” I asked half asleep.

“In about an hour as soon as the first convoy takes off.” Sgt Hames replied.

Getting up was a chore for me it seemed like I never got any sleep in this Army. Slowly walking to the water trailer I noticed how peaceful and quiet it was this morning it reminded of the mornings back home when Jimmy and I had went camping. I sure miss him I thought. The water in the trailer was luke warm but better than nothing. It was good for shaving and nothing more it was to hot to drink even though we gave it to our dogs and occasionally had to drink it ourselves. It did not take long for the day to start heating up from the cool 80 degrees it had been as soon as the tip of the sun rose above the horizon it started getting hot.

“I hear you are going with me today.” I said to Tom as I walked up to the water trailer to fill my stainless steel feeding pan I used to shave in.

“Yea I don’t know what the fuck they want me to do. This shit sucks.” He replied with that Chicago punk attitude in his voice.

“Lots of booby-traps out there it can get rough.” I assuringly replied.

“Thats all I need to hear. But thats everywhere in this shit hole.” He said not quite as saurcatically as before.

The ride to Mongoose was slow and rough the deuce and a halves were rough on the unpaved Highway 1 which ran from the DMZ all the way down to the Delta area of

Vietnam. We then took a turn to the left and headed down this trail of a road that led to the small fire base. It was jungle and a few bombed out old buildings. It was a dangerous road this was the place Otis found the dead Marines that had been guarding a bridge. It took a while for the mine sweeping team to clear the road.

“Welcome to Mongoose.” I said as the truck turned ever so slowly off the road into the gate at the rundown little fire support base.

“Wait until you see your sleeping quarters.” I slyly commented to the new handlers.

“It’s about time you guys got here.” Joe McMahon said as the truck slowly pulled up to the side of the little bunker we had to share.

“We are having so many missions that we can’t keep up.” Joe said in a very tired voice.

“What the fuck you mean. I have only been gone two days.” I said thinking he was complaining about me taking Sig to the rear.

“They have been calling for dog teams faster than you can count. I just came in this morning. Pearce and Jones are out there now and they want two more teams for tomorrow.” Joe said in a really pissed off tone.

“We need more handlers or we going to be in the field all the time. The dogs need rest or we will get the shit blown out of us.” He said as if preaching to the choir.

Joe walked off shaking his head and headed for the command post to call back to Lt Stockdale and request more handlers.

“Well I had the last mission so I guess you and Roger will have to take these.” I said with that Texas smirk on my face.

“Fuck you.” Was Tom’s wise ass remark.

“How is it out there?” Roger asked in that quiet worried voice soldiers get when they are going out into the unknown.

“Look, it ain’t that bad. All you have to do is watch for booby-traps and the infantry will take care of the rest from what I have seen. But you have to remember I have only been on one mission too.” I answered trying to sound confident that I knew, at least a little something.

Joe walked hurriedly back to the area with a serious look on his face. It wasn’t hard to see he wasn’t happy with this job.

“Okay you guys are going out in the morning at 6, so get ready and be sure you have plenty of dog food and water with you.” Joe ordered not really wanting to make that order.

“All of us?” I asked thinking aw fuck not again.

“Yep all 3 of you so get your shit together. We have been making lots of contact the last few days.” He replied as if he wanted someone else to give the order.

The night was hot and muggy, the little bunker was wet and nasty rats controlled the floor, they would crawl over you all through the night. I spent most of the night on top of the bunker fighting the mosquitoes and other bugs.

Just before daylight choppers began to fly and soldiers were running around getting supplies prepared for the next re-supply to the grunts. By this time we were all up and getting our shit together.

“Allen you catch the next chopper out. Seems that Charlie company liked working with you.” Joe ordered as he was trying to get everything together for his next mission that he knew would be coming up soon.

“Okay Joe I’m on my way.” I barked as I put on my ruck and grabbed Sig’s leash along with my M-16 and headed toward the helo-pad just across the little firebase.

It wasn’t but a few minutes when I could hear the thump-thump-thump of the Huey’s huge rotor blades as it was trying to make the landing zone as easily as he could.

“You going to Charlie Company?” The crew chief/ door gunner yelled over the

noise of the blades breaking the air.

“Yep.” I yelled as Sig almost dragged me down jumping on the chopper. He loved to get on the birds and he liked to get off. Go Figure?

After the huey was loaded, the bird started its ascent into the morning sky. I watched as the firebase disappeared out of sight and all I could see was rice fields and water buffalos and Gooks heading for the fields for a day of work. About ten minutes later I could see the yellow smoke the grunts had popped so the chopper knew where to land.

“You need to get off fast.” The door gunner yelled over the deafening noise. “We have been drawing fire every time we have landed the last few days.”

“No sweat I yelled back,” Knowing that as soon as the chopper got close to the ground that Sig was going to jerk me right out the door.

About 5 feet off the ground Sig lunged and off the chopper we went. I almost fell face first from the jerk of Sig. He was a big dog and I was a little guy, but we made it. I kept hearing these popping sounds as the grunts were unloading the chopper.

“Get down!” A yell came from a grunt running to grab the supplies from the bird.

All of a sudden the M-48 tanks began firing their 90MM cannons and 50cal machine guns. Then the grunts opened up. What the fuck did I get into this time I asked myself.

As soon as the chopper lifted off the firing stopped and everyone started moving around and things seemed quiet.

“CP is over there.” A grunt yelled as he pointed in the direction where all the radio antennae were.

“Morning sir.” I said as I approached the CP element.

“Morning.” Replied the Company Commander in a very tired and worrying voice.

“I want you to go with third platoon today.” He ordered in a tired worn out voice.

I slowly moved over toward where the third platoon was gathering up their re supplies. The guys were scurrying around putting c rations and other supplies in their rucks.

“Hey it’s the dog man again.” Bill yelled. He was one of the grunts that knew me from my last mission. He was a tall slim southern boy with red hair and a freckled face and a strong southern drawl.

“Look Steinbeck it’s the dog man and he brought Sig back with him.” The southerner yelled. I thought it strange how he remembered Sig but he couldn’t remember Rusty.

“Okay, okay I see him.” Steinbeck replied shaking his head as saying why me.

“What do you have for me to do? I asked expecting to have to start out walking point.

“Well first off we are going to load up on these tanks and head for a small ville a couple miles from here.” He said calmly.

“What was all that firing when I came in about? I asked curiously.

“You couldn’t tell? He asked looking at me like I was the cherry I was.

“Not really I thought you guys were having a mad minute. (A mad minute is when the unit just fires everything at nothing mostly to check out their weapons, but it also scares the hell out of anyone down range.)

“The gooks were shooting at the chopper you came in on. The tanks opened up in the area that they thought the gooks were then we followed suit.” He explained making me feel making me feel like a real cherry.