

CHAPTER TWELVE

The medivac landed quickly across the street from the 47th's area at LZ Sally. I quickly picked up Sig and headed toward the Vet Tech tent where John Carter was waiting for me.

"What's up?" John asked running to help me with the massive dog.

"He got to hot Doc," I said excitedly. "I had to bring him in. I think he is better after the cool chopper ride."

"He looks exhausted," John said examining him closely. " Lets put some water on him to cool him some more."

"Check his paws," I said nervously. "It was so hot that it was burning my feet inside my boots, and he acted like he might have blisters from the heat."

After another douching with water and a through examination Sig was looking better.

"I think he is all right," John stated in a professional tone. "It looks like his feet are okay too."

"Thanks Doc," I said relieved. "I'll go stake him out for a while before I go back to Mongoose."

After putting Sig in a stakeout area I immediately headed for the orderly room, where Jon Wahl had my mail.

"What happened?" Jon asked curiously.

"Sig got hot, that's all," I said calmly. "Where the fuck is my mail?"

"Right here," Jon said coolly. "To bad about Otis huh?"

"Yea, has anybody heard anything about him?" I asked concerned for my squad leader.

“Yea, he is in Cam Rahn Bay hospital,” Jon said in a concerned tone. “He got his legs messed up pretty bad, but he didn’t lose anything, and he is going to Japan soon.”

“I guess he’ll be going home from there?” I asked concerned.

“Most likely.” Jon said kinda knowing what he was talking about. “They usually send the wounded there before sending them to the States.”

“What the fuck over,” Tommy Corsello said, entering the orderly room. “What was the fucking medivac for?”

“Sig overheated in that fucking white sand along the eight click ville,” I said.

“How was your mission?” Tommy asked curiously.

“Oh yea. Here Jon is my after action report,” I said handing Jon the dirty wet paper I had returned with.

“Thanks,” Jon replied and handed me my mail.

“Lots of booby-traps and gooks,” I said looking at Tommy. “Otis was hit just a short way from me, and a couple of guys were wounded. I got in my first fire fight, and didn’t even fire a shot.”

“Sounds like fun,” Tommy said. “My first mission was in the fucking Ashau Valley, with recon from 2/502. It was a harry fucking trip. I left My steel pot with a grunt at the heli-pad and now Wahl is trying to make me pay for it.”

“Corsello it is government property and you lost it, now you gotta pay for it,” Jon said winking at me.

“Fuck you Wahl. I ain’t paying for no fucking helmet,” Tommy angrily said.

“Did you give him another one?” I asked Jon winking back.

“I just loaned him one. He will never get out of this country until he pays the Army for that steel pot,” Jon said trying to hold back the laugh, that was about to break loose.

“Anyway, I went to Fire Base T-Bone, that’s the one you can see from here,”

Tommy continued. “They already had a dead gook that recon had sent into T-Bone. From there I went to the Ashau, and they dropped me off in an area that had been sprayed with that defoliant that is supposed to be so good. Well it was everything was dead, no trees, no bushes, no plants of any kind, and no animal life not even bugs. It’s the only place I’ve been to that I didn’t even get bitten by a mosquito. It was real spooky.”

“Once I got off that chopper,” Tommy continued. “I saw this dead gook nude with his dick sticking straight up in the air. Not much good to him now I thought. It wasn’t long before we made a combat assault to a spot on the Song Bo river. We started moving along the river and Jeff (Tommy’s Dog) alerted. The grunts checked it out and found a place where the gooks were building sampans. Jeff found lots of punji-pits, just big enough to fuck up your feet. That night we set up an ambush and Jeff alerted on a gook walking into our ambush. I threw a grenade and killed the little bastard, I guess it was me, we all threw them. Later Jeff alerted across the river. It must have been a couple hundred NVA moving along the bank. We called in Arty. I was scared to death, but those crazy recon grunts were eating that shit up. The next two days Jeff found several booby-traps, an arms cache, and a cache of rice. Hell of a mission I was scared the whole time out.”

“I guess mine wasn’t quite that bad,” I said explaining my mission to him.

“What’s the date?” I asked.

“July twentieth,” Jon answered. “Why?”

“Hell it’s my birthday,” I said, “What a fucking place to turn twenty-one.”

“Happy birthday,” Jon and Tommy said at the same time.

“I’m going over to the tent and read my mail,” I said reeling around and headed out the CP tent.

“Heard Sig got hot on you,” Jimmy Powrzasas said curiously. “Is he all right?”

“Yea he’s cooled down now he just needs a little rest.” I replied sifting through my mail.

“Pal (Jimmy’s dog) had a slight heat stroke and we came in on a medi-vac too. How was your mission?” Jimmy asked.

“It went okay I guess.” I replied. “How did yours go?”

“Scared the hell out of me.” Jimmy said in a more serious tone.

“Tell me about it?” I asked wondering if it was worse than mine or Tommy’s.

“Well, I went out to C/2/501, I arrived about one thirty that afternoon and immediately started walking point, Pal (Jimmy’s Dog) started alerting right away, the grunts check out the alerts out and didn’t find anything. That night we set up in our NDP and about eight that evening we got into one hell of a fire fight. I was scared shitless. We had three KIA and about ten WIA. I’ll never forget that fire fight even though it only lasted about ten minutes, to me it lasted forever.”

“The next day,” He continued. “We went to this place called the ten click ville. This place was so hot with booby-traps and NVA the Marines were afraid of it and refused to go in it. We moved into it in single file. Pal found several booby-traps including at least two with 250 pound bombs attached. Pal also found a tunnel that had a hospital with seventy five beds recently used. We lost two WIA from booby-traps. These guys strayed off the path we were on. We moved out into the open to set up our NDP. The next day We walked back into the ten click village. Pal found two caches of rice and one with several weapons of various types. I am really afraid of this place.”

“Me too,” I said sadly. “Sig found booby-traps I’m not sure all of our dogs can find. All plastic. Sig was fantastic, but all he has to do is make one mistake, and its all over for both of us.”

“Rusty! I have some bad news for you.” Jon Wahl said entering the tent.

“Oh no,” I said wondering if it was about my grandmother who was ill from time to time.

“Frank just got hit, and was medi-vaced to Phu Bai,” Jon continued sadly.

“How bad, and how is Rebel (Frank’s dog)?” I asked almost in tears, not knowing just how to react since Frank was my best friend.

“Word we have is he will go back to the world,” Jon replied. “Rebel is on his way in they put him on the chopper with Frank and he is coming here. I don’t think he is hurt at all.”

“We ain’t going to make it are we Tommy?” I asked Tommy who had entered the tent with Jon.

“Don’t talk like that,” Jon said knowing things were looking real gloomy for dog handlers.

“Why not?” Corsello said it that loud Chicago punk tone. “It looks like we are all going to get it sooner or later.”

“You know that’s what it looks like,” Jimmy added.

“I think it’s time to be scared,” I said sadly wondering if I would ever see Frank again.

“You guys shouldn’t think like that,” Jon Harraden said in that east coast Yankee accent.

“Look this month has eleven more days in it. We started missions on the eighth, and Youtz was hit that first day. If you can count we have lost two more since. It don’t look good, Harraden.” I stated firmly.

“I just think we should start looking at what happened and try not to let it happen to us,” Jon Harraden said, “And any way I go out on a mission in tomorrow.”

“Good luck,” I said and commenced to turn my attention back to the mail from home, but I still couldn’t get my mind off Frank.

After finishing my mail I headed to the stake out area where Sig was to see how he was doing. I now realized that I had to depend on him far more than I had anticipated.

I was going to have to take exceptional care of him, and never push him as far as I did in this fucking heat. From now on he was going to be my top priority. I will have to risk court martial if anyone tries to put him in harms way.

“Allen,” Sgt Sprowl said. “I want you on that convoy back to Mongoose first thing in the morning.”

“Okay top,” I replied, I sure didn’t want to stay around with all the shit details going on.

Dark was sitting in, and I stood at the perimeter staring out toward the ARVN base camp that was several hundred meters from us. I turned my head around looking at the small village, then on around to the mountains where the dreaded Ashau valley was only a few miles away. I wondered about my parents, my brothers, and friends. I couldn’t help but think of what they might be doing right at this instant. They were so far away, it almost seemed like in another galaxy. My emotions were running wild now. I didn’t know whether to shit or go blind. I had made up my mind that I was a lost sole all alone in a twilight zone world. Perhaps Rod Serling wasn’t as far out as people thought.

I wheeled around smiled at Sig and said good night to him and headed for the tent that was like a furnace even at night.

Well I at least lived for one more day in this shit hole. Now I know it is going to be a day by day effort to stay alive or whole.