

RAMBO YEAR ONE

BY WALLACE LEE



BASED ON THE CHARACTERS CREATED BY DAVID MORRELL
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RAMBO YEAR ONE

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To all of the veterans that contributed to this book;
words aren't enough, guys. Thank you from the heart.

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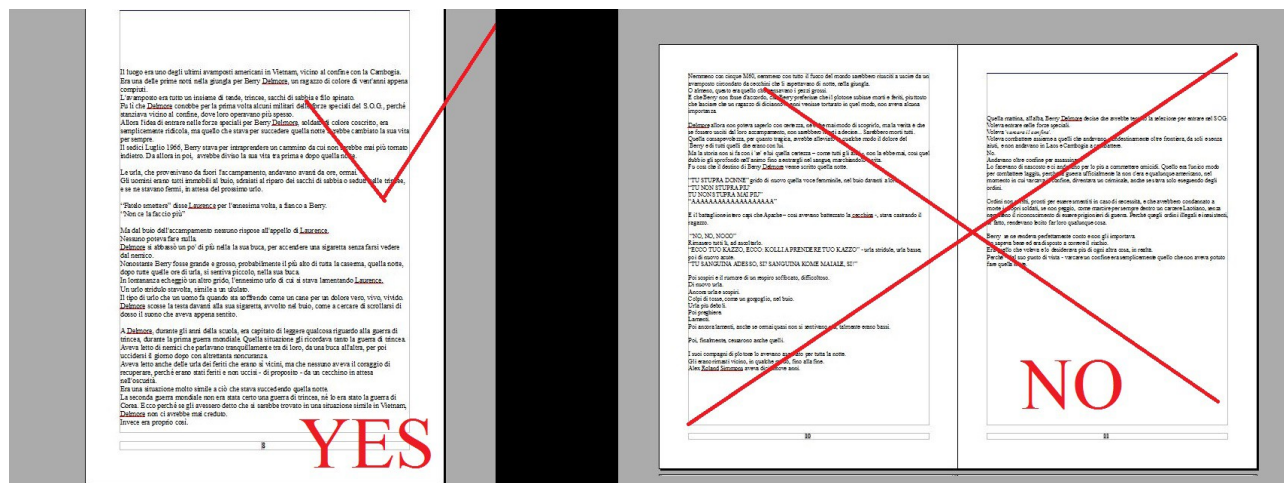
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HOW TO READ

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Double Edged Ghost Writings



The characters in this novel are fictional, but the events described actually occurred. The fictional content and references to true historical facts are distinguished in the notes at the end of this book.

- a ghost writer -

Year One

1966

The camp was one of the remotest camps in Vietnam, close to the Cambodian border. It was one of the very first nights in the jungle for Delmore Barry, who had celebrated his twenty-third birthday just a few days earlier. The camp was a rough-and-ready agglomeration of tents, trenches, sandbags and barbed wire. It was there that Barry met some S.O.G. soldiers for the first time. Barry was a black conscript and back in those days the idea of entering the special forces was simply ridiculous, but what happened that night would change his life forever. On July 16, 1966, Barry was about to embark on a journey from which he would never return. From that time onward, he divided his life into two periods: 'before' and 'after' that night.

The screams beyond the perimeter of the camp had been going on for hours. The men kept perfectly still in the darkness, lying behind sandbags or sitting in the trenches; they made no movements at all and just stayed there, waiting for the next scream.

“Make it stop!” Laurence cried out for the umpteenth time.
Laurence was a black kid, barely nineteen years old.
“I just can’t take any more of this crap. I don’t want to hear it any more!”

Everyone heard Laurence’s appeal but out of the darkness came no reply.
Nobody could do anything.

Barry managed to squeeze down a bit lower in his hole so he could light up a cigarette without being seen by the enemy. Although Barry was fairly heavily-built and probably the tallest man in the entire squad, on that particular night, after hearing all the screaming for hours on end, he didn’t feel so tall. Quite the opposite. He just felt so small, crouching in that dugout. Another cry was heard in the distance but this time it was shrill, almost a howl, the kind of scream that conveys a sense of real physical torture and incredible pain. Barry shook his head in the darkness, in a futile attempt to get rid of the horrible images going through his mind at that moment. He just continued to smoke. A lifetime ago - when he was still at school - he happened to read something about life in the trenches during the First World War in Europe. The situation he was in right now reminded him of those stories.

He remembered reading about soldiers from the two different sides that had even spoken to each other from behind the trenches or they would communicate somehow between one dugout and another across no-man’s land, only to kill each other the next day or a few hours later with absolutely no feelings of remorse. He had also read stories about screaming, wounded soldiers who were so close and yet so far from

safety, because no one had the courage to go out and drag them back to a safe place. Some sniper, hiding somewhere and waiting in the darkness, had preferred to inflict non-lethal wounds on his victims, leaving them there crying out for help so that he could then kill anyone attempting to go out and help them.

Barry was in a situation just like those that had occurred half a century before, but the Second World War and the conflict in Korea had certainly not been 'trench wars'. So if someone told him he would end up in a situation like this in Vietnam, he would never have thought it possible. But that's the way it was.

And then there was this kid.

Alex Roland Simmons was nineteen years old. The Vietcong had captured him and decided to hold him close to the camp so that the others could hear everything as they slowly tortured him.

They had tied him up in the dark just a few yards from the base so that his American friends could listen to his cries.

And we heard him for sure. Oh, God, we could hear him!

"AAAAAAAARGH!"

Laurence wrapped around his head everything he could find: a camouflage jacket, a towel, even a sweaty shirt.

Then he curled up, lying on the ground, as if he were sleeping and not on guard duty.

But Barry didn't complain and neither did any of the others.

All of the others were drinking and smoking or staring into space as if nothing was happening.

Barry felt that he wanted to hear everything they did to the boy; he really wanted to hear it all.

It was his way of living this moment of impotence; his duty at that moment was to obey orders, and the orders were to do nothing.

What Barry would really have wanted to do was to save that boy, or die trying, but he couldn't.

So he didn't.

He just defended the camp.

Besides, it might really have been a trap.

Maybe the Viet Cong really wanted them to come out and Barry, who was no fool, knew that's the way it was.

He clenched his teeth as he lit another cigarette.

The packet was now nearly empty.

"AAAAaaaa"

He lowered his head between his hands.

Had he really finished his pack of cigarettes, he would have cracked for sure.

Then a woman's voice suddenly echoed in the darkness.

"YOU FUCK VIETNAM WOMAN, EH?"

Barry got up and, walking with a stoop, went over close to the commander's tent to eavesdrop and hear what the officers were saying.

It was fairly evident they didn't know what to do.

The lieutenant was still talking with the major, and they still didn't know how to get out of the fix they were in.

They didn't want to venture out beyond the perimeter. Going out at that moment would probably cost dozens of lives. Barry also knew that would probably be the outcome. In particular, the Viet Cong also knew that might happen.

"HEY, YOU, AMERICA ... YOU KILL CHILDREN AND RAPE WOMEN!"

No, there was no way of leaving the camp without being massacred. It was a risk they didn't want to take. They just couldn't, and that was that.

"YOU RAPE WOMEN, I KNOW TRUE!"

Not even with five M-60s or all the firepower in the world would it have been possible to get out of a camp surrounded by snipers in the jungle waiting for them during the night.

At least, that's what the top brass thought.

And the fact that Barry was really in a different frame of mind didn't count. He would have preferred the platoon to suffer casualties rather than let a boy of nineteen be tortured in that way, but it didn't matter at all.

At that point in time Barry could not have known for sure, nor did he ever get a chance to find out, but the truth was that if they had left the camp, they would not have died by the dozen ... they would have *all* died.

However, these are the 'ifs' and 'buts' of history, and Barry - just like the rest of them - could never be certain about the outcome. So the doubt remained with him forever, like a deep scar.

And this is why Barry's fate was decided that night.

"YOU RAPE WOMEN!" The woman shouted again from somewhere in the darkness.

"YOU NO MORE RAPE WOMEN!"

"YOU NEVER RAPE WOMEN AGAIN!"

" AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH"

The whole unit realized that the 'Apache' sniper (the nickname they had given to her) was castrating the boy.

"NO, NO, NOOO!"

Everyone could hear what was happening.

"HERE YOUR COCK! HERE! RUN AND GET YOUR COCK! "

There were more shrill cries, then a low groaning and then more high-pitched, heart-rendering screams.

"YOU BLEED NOW? YOU BLEEDING LIKE A PIG! "

Then came a series of low-pitched sighs and the sound of stifled, difficult breathing.

More screams.

More screaming and a long, sighing sound.

Then some coughing and gurgling.

Then, weaker cries.

A long, drawn-out lament.

And then, prayers and pleading.

And then a longer lament, but the sounds became weaker and weaker as the hours passed by.

It was almost dawn when the long, low, drawn-out noises finally stopped completely.

The rest of his platoon had heard him all night.

They had somehow remained close to him to the very end.

Alex Roland Simmons was nineteen years old.

That morning, at daybreak, Delmore Barry decided he wanted to apply to join the Green Berets.

He wanted to be a Special Forces soldier.

He wanted to 'cross the border'.

He wanted to fight with those who were smuggled across or 'dropped' somewhere on the other side of the border, alone and with no assistance, and they weren't going into Laos and Cambodia just to fight.

No.

They went across the border to *murder the enemy*.

It was the only way to do it. The war was not going on there 'officially', and any American was automatically considered a criminal after crossing the border, even though he was only following orders.

Of course, the orders were never written and if necessary it would have been possible to state they had never been issued; these 'non-existent' orders would have meant a death sentence in any case for the soldiers involved. If not worse. They might have been left to rot forever in a prison in Laos, without being recognized as prisoners of war.

They made it legal to do *anything* they wanted.

Barry was fully aware of the fact, but he didn't give a damn.

He knew what the score was and he was willing to take the risk.

It was what he wanted to do, and he wanted to do it more than anything else.

Because as he saw it, crossing a border was simply the thing that he had not been able to do that night.

*“What doesn't kill you,
makes you stronger.*

No, not in Vietnam.
In 'Nam we got to the point where...

*what didn't kill you,
made you someone else”*

Delmore Barry, 1980

RAMBO YEAR ONE

Part one

The selection process

Fort Bragg, a year and an half later.

A couple of weeks before the Green Berets selection process began, Manuel Ortega met Delmore Barry for the first time.

Ortega was thin, with brown hair and a little shorter than Barry. He had an Hispanic surname, but his family had been living in the U.S. for generations. His face had no Hispanic features. On the contrary, he had 'northern', Caucasian features.

Delmore Barry was twenty-three years old: the same age as Ortega. He was tall, big and looked fairly mean. Most of all, Barry looked smart, really smart.

Barry had already fought for real - just as Ortega had - and in order to join the Special Forces he was prepared to do anything he had to.

Where so much dedication came from, Ortega had no idea, but he didn't care.

He too had no idea as to why he needed to join the Special Forces so badly.

The same day, Ortega also met John Rambo for the first time, and he talked with him much more than he did with Barry.

He and Rambo met just after the medical examination, at the office where the application forms had to be submitted.

After signing his papers, Ortega rather shyly invited Rambo to go and drink a beer with him. They might as well take the opportunity to relax, as they would both soon be up to their necks in trouble.

Johnny Rambo – as Ortega heard people call him - was a silent guy.

There was a thing that Ortega picked up on immediately: Johnny had already had combat experience, just like he did.

You could tell from the extreme seriousness of the guy, and his 'seriousness' appeared to be a constant trait despite the fact he was three years younger than Ortega.

As they talked, the fact that they were both veterans made them feel as if they already had something in common.

Rambo was reserved and did not say much about himself, his past or his family.

Ortega was still getting to know him, but perceiving he was so reserved, he just let it go.

The two young men only spoke about the training procedure and their fears about the selection process.

They exchanged ideas on how they should go about getting ready for the tests and did so without hesitation, knowing they were not really competing against each other; if you deserved to be chosen, you would be and that was it. So it was better to give each other a hand, just as you would on a battlefield.

At some point the talk inevitably turned to the Vietnam subject, and shortly afterwards they both fell silent for a while.

They continued drinking their beer without saying anything, until they broke the silence, asking each other about their experiences in the war.

Ortega summed up his own experience in a single sentence:

"I saw a lot of our soldiers die, a hell of a lot, and that was it. That was my war. And what was your

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