

RAMBO YEAR ONE
TAKE ME TO THE DEVIL



WRITTEN BY WALLACE LEE

BASED ON THE CHARACTERS CREATED BY DAVID MORRELL
A DOUBLE EDGED GHOST WRITINGS FREESHARE RELEASE

Wallace Lee's
TAKE ME TO THE DEVIL

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All the Veterans who helped put Black on White;
Words are not enough. A heartfelt thanks.

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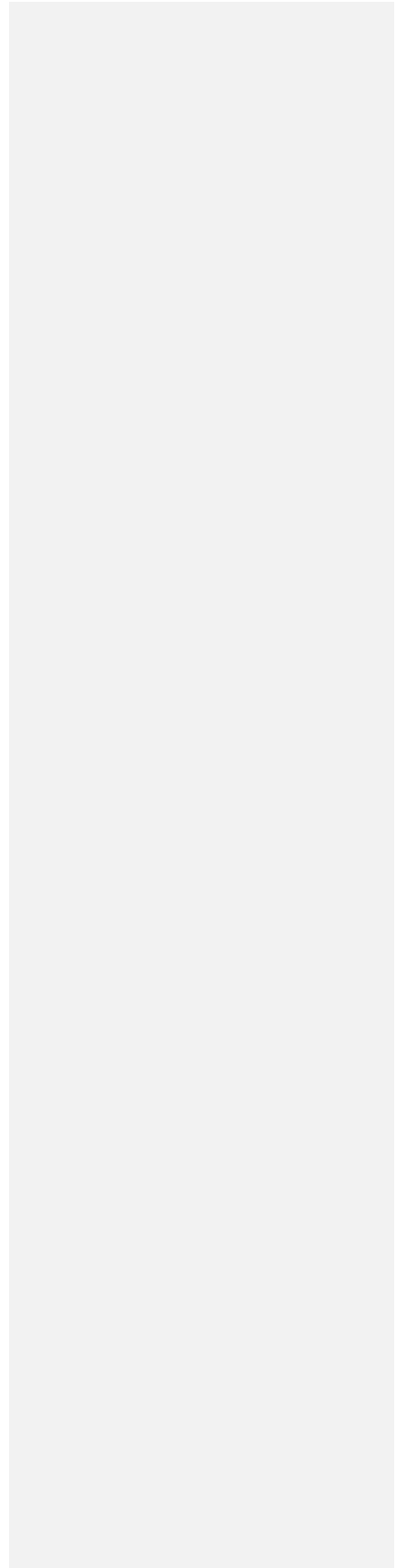
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Il coltello *First Blood* è stato disegnato dal fabbro dell'Arkansas Jimmy Lile (1982).

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IMAGES



Israel Military Industries UZI.



A nine millimetre Uzi sub-machine gun from Israel.

Sub-machine guns are weapons that shoot handgun caliber bullets in full auto. They have a shorter range and are less powerful than assault rifles, but are far easier to control in full auto and handier overall especially for close proximity fighting like the jungle warfare kind.

The SOG used Uzis for the most part on parachute-jumping missions because of its small size.

Despite being so compact, Uzis sport a standard-size barrel and, considering its period, could shoot with extraordinary accuracy.

If needed, it could be aimed with one hand, and with the magazine located inside the handle it could be reloaded very easily even in the dark. It was an extremely reliable weapon even in the worst of conditions, be it in the presence of sand, mud, rain or extreme cold. Not even being submerged in water could stop it and kept working even without clearing the chamber before opening fire.

Although nowadays its open-bolt technology is outdated, there is still no other submachine gun as successful as the Uzi was in so many countries across the world.



Cessna 'bird-dog'

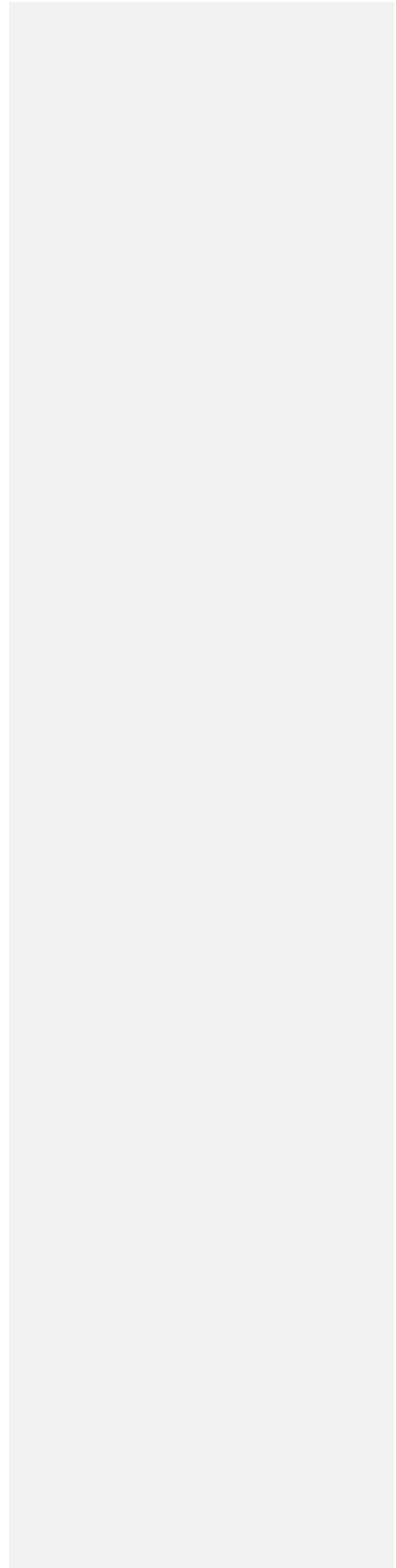
The “bird-dog” was an extremely slow, cheap, lightweight and small and lightweight civilian air plane, and although cheap, it was known for being extremely slow. It was unarmed (or almost unarmed) for the most part and was often used in a support role for SOG ground soldiers.

Given its ability to fly very low and slowly, it was used to locate hidden structures like radio relay sites, give info to ground soldiers and occasionally even for battlefield observation from up above or correct the nearby artillery’s aim throughout the fight.

Some of its pilots showed so much skill and subject to such levels of danger to become real and proper living legends.

In the above photo, an F4 Phantom strikes after receiving the coordinates from a 'bird dog' airplane.

Take me to the Devil



Ortega opened his eyes, and the deathlike darkness gave way to confused images and sounds.

Ortega was on-board the Huey, lying on its metal floorboard.

His chest was warm and sticky with his own blood, but he was alive.

The wind slapped him against the face while the noise of the engine was stunning, but nevertheless, he was alive.

Ortega had a clear view of Messner, Danforth, Krakauer and Eddie Johnson, one of the hostages they'd freed on that mission looking down at him. They were standing all around him, packed up against each other and sporting worried expressions on their faces. He could tell they were worried by the look in their eyes. Their torn clothing told of the time they'd recently spent on the run in the jungle, while he could hear someone talking on the radio behind them. Besides all that, of course, there was also the pain...

Ortega could hardly swallow.

It was excruciating.

Comparable to gigantic hand – made of needles – squeezing his chest diabolically. Jesus. Ortega couldn't be alive... Not if he felt that bad... Not with all that pain he couldn't.

I guess that bullet gutted me– he thought.

It must have... and it must have been a large calibre too.

It probably ripped open my stomach because that's the only plausible explanation for how much pain I'm in.

Ortega shifted his look down to his chest, but his camouflage uniform was so full of blood that he couldn't understand where he'd been hit.

Why the hell doesn't anybody ever just die instantly in this damn war?

Why doesn't everybody die, just like that, bam, it's over, the same way they do in the movies?

Jesus.

Ortega stretched his hand out to Krakauer and Berry... fully aware there was nothing else they could do for him any more.

Be that as it may, he was happy they'd be there in his final moments before he died.

Even just seeing those faces made him happy, yeah...

He was happy about being awake.

He was still alive.

Still alive for the meantime at least. Not that there was much hope though, because he was well aware of the way he felt. He could feel it inside. He could feel *it* deep inside him reaching out to him.

Take me – he thought.

Berry took his hand and held it tight.

“Raven?” whispered Ortega, but Delmore Berry didn’t answer. No one did... This because Rambo and Jorgenson were gone, and Ortega knew it. “You’re gonna’ make it, Manuel,” Delmore said quietly to him. “You’ve got this.”

Ortega was in a state of shock. He had lost too much blood and was looking pale, too pale. The longer he laid on that metal floor the more blood he was going to lose. Ten minutes later, there was so much blood that it began dripping onto the floor.

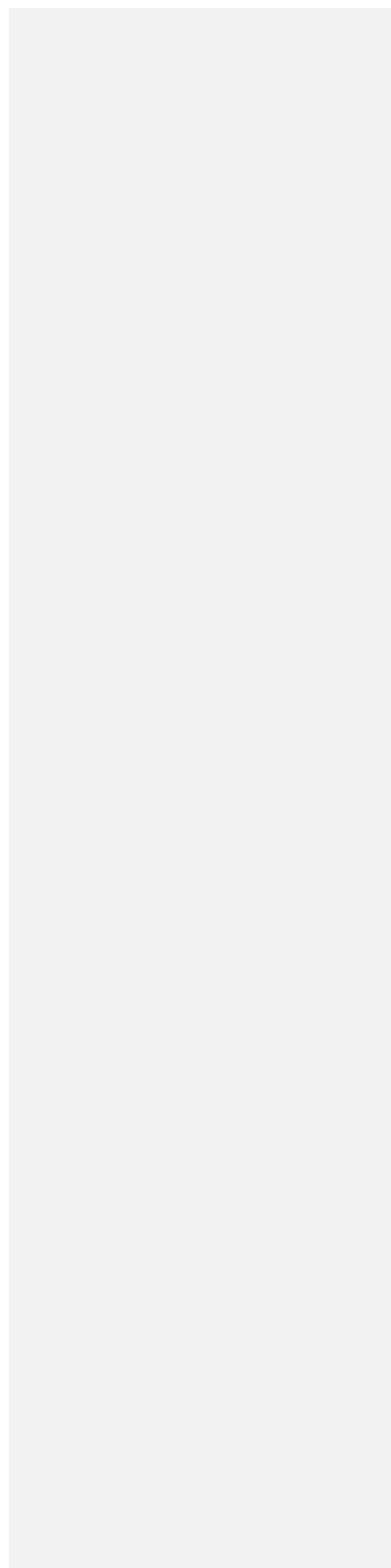
“We are almost there,” said Delmore. “Hold on, brother.”

When the helicopter landed on the hospital roof In Dak To, the rest of the Baker Team was received by a small crowd of paramedics and military personnel. Only once the hospital staff had put Ortega on a stretcher, cut his uniform wide open, checked on his temporary bandages and shot two injections of something or other into him did they finally take him to the OR.

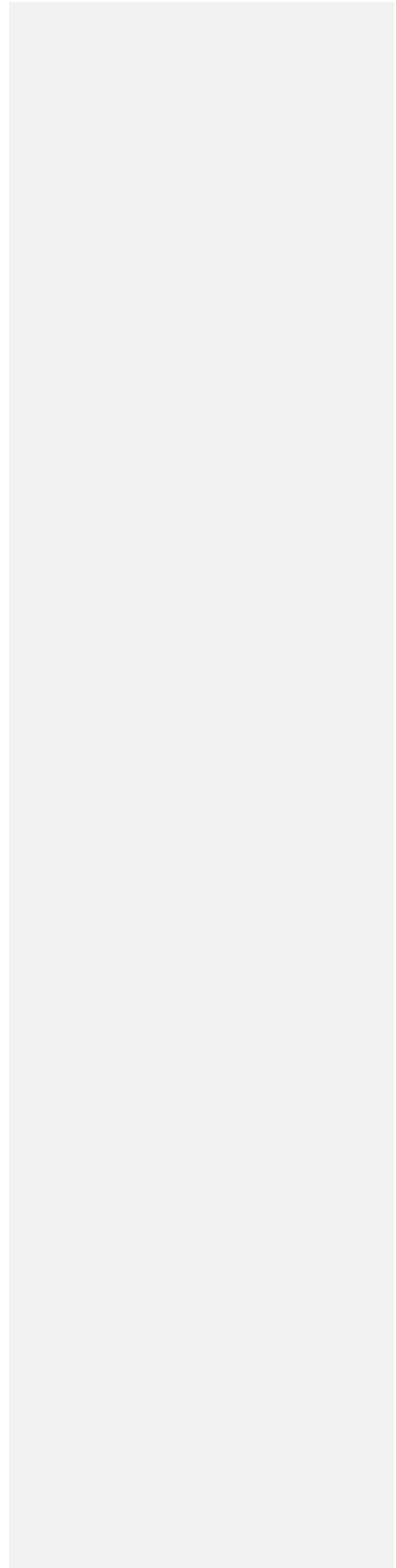
In the meantime, a crowd made up of both medical and military personnel formed around the POWs and the Baker Team itself. Only then did the team realize Trautman was right there in front of them, standing just behind the crowd. He was there waiting for them in person. An insurmountable wall had formed between them of Surgeons, paramedics and stretchers at the ready. Nevertheless, there he was standing right there in front of them, observing carefully and not letting them out sight. Danforth rejected any doctor who offered him care, gesturing to show his annoyance (*‘Prisoners come first, what the fuck!’*) until finally stopping where he was to look the Colonel straight in the eye, despite the crowd separating them. As soon as he caught his eye Trautman gave him a nod. Then in a slow and pensive manner, the Colonel lowered his head and Danforth immediately understood both the gesture and the message.

Without saying a word, he’d told him –*Well done* –. *Well done, he said.*

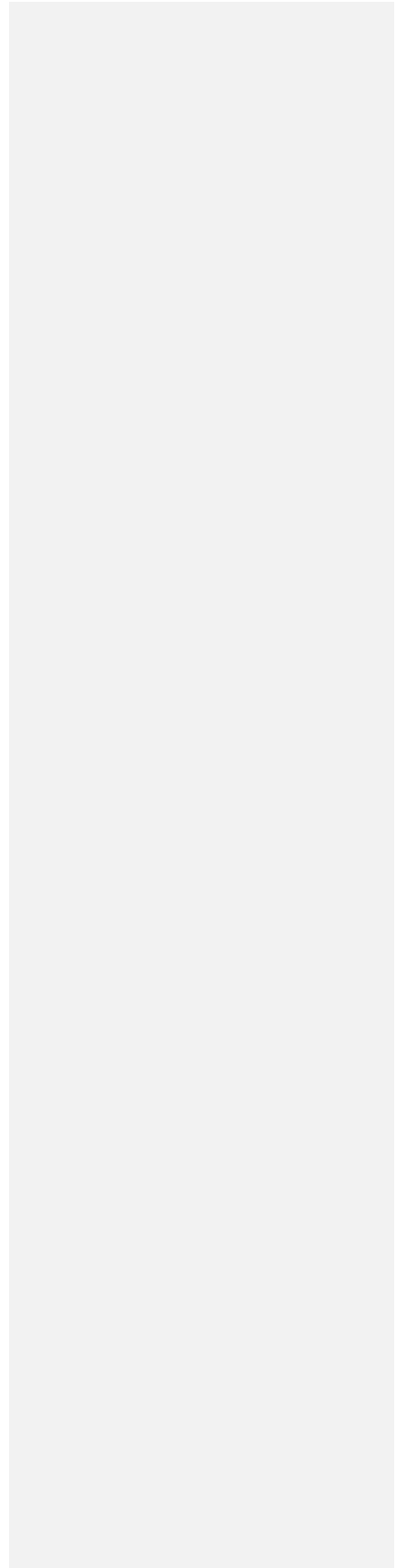
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Part One



Beyond the
Point of No Return



Garner cut through the crowd as he headed towards Trautman.

he was smiling when he set off at first, but by the time he reached the Colonel, he had orders ready for him.

“I want the POWs in Saigon ASAP. As for the rest of the team, send them to San Lu instead. When you’re done, come back here to the hospital for debriefing with Ortega.”

“Why San Lu?”

“Because I want the team to sleep there tonight. They deserve it.”

“Okay, fine.”

“Good. Now, let's get out of here. Let's see if we can have a word with any of them at least.”

Ortega was about to pass right by the two of them as they spoke.

Two paramedics pushed out the stretcher Ortega was laying on, and that gave Trautman the chance to take a closer look at him albeit only in passing.

Now unconscious, the Baker Team leader looked quite pale in the face with beads of sweat on his forehead and dark rings under his eyes.

Black bags under his eyes – thought Trautman.

He's showing signs of internal bleeding already.

His face was unnaturally relaxed, probably due to the morphine, so it looked quite different from how it usually did. It didn't even look like Ortega at all actually. Trautman had seen this kind of effect many a time before, on many a soldier who generally died shortly thereafter.

It's almost as though he's already dead – thought the Colonel.

That wasn't his case however. He was still alive, for now at least. He was alive, in hospital, and just minutes from receiving a blood transfusion before ending up in surgery. As he looked at Ortega's eyes more closely, Trautman thought of the new and improved version of morphine they were now using in the military. It was a lot lighter than the older one, or less dangerous overall.

We didn't have drugs like that in Korea – he thought to himself.

When someone was in pain, he'd just scream like a pig being slaughtered, and that was it.

*

Everyone else on the Baker Team had a check-up as well but it didn't take them long to go through them at all. Aside from being undernourished and dehydrated, they were, for the most part, fine.

In little more than half an hour, their chopper was running and ready for lift-off. Consequently, Trautman hadn't had the chance to talk to any of them, not even to the Baker vice, Danforth. It didn't matter though.

His men had seen him and they knew that the Colonel had been there personally just to greet them, so that was more than enough for him.

Garner got on-board the helicopter with them before they took off to Lan Su.

Trautman stopped on the hospital rooftop for a moment, to watch them leave.

That was it.

The prisoners were safe, Ortega was in surgery and the team was airborne to Lan Su.

It was finally over. What's more, they'd had their greatest success, ever.

For the first time in SOG history, a team, which had been missing in action, had successfully managed to come back.

They'd even brought back some POWs while they were at it.

Trautman took a deep breath then turned to look out at the city.

The sun had begun to set.

Garner questioned the Baker Team their entire flight to Lan Su. He listened and made summary notes in a kind of informal debriefing, just to get a rough idea about what had happened to his men while they were missing in action.

By the time they landed at Lan Su, the base was shrouded in darkness and silent. Garner didn't stay with them but left again soon after, just as Trautman had ordered him to.

When they reached their quarters, the Baker Team dispersed, each to his own bunk quietly, and each still wearing their filthy clothing.

Krakauer and Danforth wasted no time diving straight onto their bunks, dirty clothes and all.

Unlike the others however, Delmore, Messner and Coletta went on to check the state of their equipment instead.

That's when the mission felt, and was, finally over.

Even though that mission had been an unparalleled success, the Baker team B had at any rate, suffered two losses. Once you considered how close the team members were and the kind of team they were, those losses couldn't be thought of as minor at all.

In reality, they were anything but minor.

Berry – *painfully* – laid his weapons down first and then followed heed with the rucksack, placing it in the nearest dark corner. Now that he could finally sit down, any old bunk bed would do, and he hardly gave any of it second thoughts.

Jesus...

He'd never felt that bad his entire life, not ever, not even after he'd finished boot camp with Trautman.

Despite his exhaustion however, he wanted to wait a bit before laying down for the night.

Everything hurt. Even his wrists ached but he had no idea why.

The tent was dark and he could hear the sound of his friends around him in the stillness. It was then in the darkness when Jorgenson and Rambo, his two friends missing in action seemed to appear right in front of him. They appeared before his eyes, out of nowhere.

He must have been hallucinating. He was so tired that his thoughts were turning into real-life. He was daydreaming and it was real enough to watch like on television. In other words, he was seeing things.

Missing – he thought.

Missing in action, for fuck's sake.

There he was, bitching about how tired he was, while Rambo and Jorgenson were still out there missing. They might have been hiding out somewhere in the dark, obscure jungle or maybe worse, running for their lives. What's more, by this time, they were doing it with no food, no water and probably no ammo either.

They're screwed.

They're absolutely screwed.

Berry however, knew that in spite of everything, Rambo and Jorgenson hadn't given up.

They'd never surrender, neither in mind nor in body. He was sure they'd keep fighting to the bitter end.

Let's plan our next move, Sir.

They'd fight to the last drop of sweat.

Let's plan our next move.

They'd fight to the last drop of blood.

Berry closed his eyes in a prayer-like manner, when he realized *it wasn't done*.

It's not over – he thought to himself.

No, it's not over yet.

...Assuming they were still alive that is.

With that realization, Berry's thoughts were abruptly brought back to the now. The truth of the matter was, he'd probably never find out what had really happened to them. He could spend the rest of his life not knowing, as had been the case for

thousands of other missing in action soldiers, from the Second World War, the Korean War and now in Vietnam.

Missing in action – he thought dreadfully.

So many others had ensued and this time it was going to be two of ours.

A feeling of anguish came over him as the details from the mission and its final stages crossed through his mind again. He had concluded that with their given circumstances, at the time, there weren't any alternative actions or decisions to consider. Ortega hadn't made any mistakes and the mission, well, Ortega had accomplished his mission by bringing back as many hostages as he could. Furthermore, the number of casualties hadn't been kept at two, and that was something to be pleased about as well. Despite the mission's miraculous outcome and success on all fronts, Rambo and Jorgenson had been sacrificed for the higher end and nothing more than that.

After all, isn't that what war is really about? Dying for a greater cause?

So, if you actually think it could never happen to you or to any of your friends because you're all "better" than everybody else is, well then...

You're just fucking idiot.

They'd put up a good fight, a fucking good one, actually. Maybe even too good.

They'd fought exceptionally well considering they're only human.

They'd fought like machines.

Christ, we haven't been human for a long time – Berry thought.

Joining the Special Forces had changed everything.

I can't even eat a fucking hamburger in peace anymore, for fuck's sake.

Feeling guilty when I do, worried I'll get used to NOT eating absolute shit after that.

Christ.

Berry reached for one of the buttons on his shirt but was quickly distracted by his thoughts.

How the fuck am I supposed to live with Lucy after everything I've been through?

Death didn't really bother Berry much any more the same way killing didn't upset him much either. He was rather indifferent to it, which was not unlike the way the rest of the Baker Team felt about it as well. They didn't really feel it any more.

Lucy – thought Berry.

My love... When all of this is over, I'll go back to being normal again.

I swear I will.

Yes...

He'd do it for her, so they could live together and maybe one day, even have kids.

Kids...

Then and there however, so soon after completing a mission deemed impossible, nothing could seem further from the truth.

I swear Lucy: when all of this is over, and we start a new life together, the only mission I'll be worried about is "getting back" to normal.

With that thought in mind, Berry started to undress again.

After spending all that time in the jungle, his clothes stank more than a backed-up

sewage system in a third world country would.

He was *in pain* as he took off his gear, and then in even *more pain* as he followed suit with his equipment belt, until all he had on was a uniform, pants and boots.

Not having any gear on was like being weightless. He could hardly even keep his balance.

Despite the sense of liberation, the thought of Jorgenson and Rambo still hurt.

It felt the way a cut feels when it's fresh and won't stop burning.

It would take some time to forget.

He gave his head a shake trying to get that idea right out of his head. There was no fucking way he was going to forget them.

Rambo was two years younger than he was so for Berry, he was the "kid" on the team.

Rambo meant a lot to Berry and he'd always be a kid to him too.

Unlike the others, Jorgenson already had a little one to look after.

He'd a little girl made of his very own flesh and blood. She was probably destined to grow up without her father thanks to that fucking war.

No, they couldn't be dead.

They just couldn't.

Not yet anyway.

Not just yet.

Berry looked around in the dark towards the other bunks.

Everyone on the Baker team was both physically and spiritually exhausted, and if he cared about his team as much as he said he did, then he'd need to get over the losses.

He had to move on.

He needed to get over that sense of confusion he's been feeling since the adrenaline had died down and he'd started to relax.

They had to put it all behind them, even the loss of Rambo and Jorgenson, if necessary.

In no time at all, the team would have to move on and make as though they'd never existed, and that time was coming soon.

Yeah right, sure they would.

Trautman certainly wasn't going to give them a month off because they'd finished the mission. Not only was that unlikely, it was highly impossible.

That's why the sooner Berry moved on the better it would be for him and everybody else too.

Unless Ortega was about to die too, of course.

Now, that would have been serious blow for the team, an insurmountable one in fact.

If that ever actually happened, they'd probably ask Trautman not to call them 'Baker Team' anymore. That wasn't something he could get his head around though. Not there and then at least.

That meant Danforth would become team leader, they'd get three replacements and within weeks they'd be up and running again. No way. He couldn't handle something like that.

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