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## A Letter from the Front

Dearest Elizabeth,

I have been writing this letter in my head for the past thirty-eight days and now that I am back in an American firebase, I am finding it hard to put to paper the thoughts I had in my head. Guess the best thing to do is write what I am thinking just as if I were back out in the field.

The team was given an assignment to gather intelligence about our enemy and it should have taken no more than ten to fourteen days to complete. Brad, John, and I left thinking we would cross the valley, get what the intelligence officers wanted, and boogie back to base camp. Little did we know that the area they wanted us to scout was actually two valleys over from where we were. Needless to say, we were pissed. I know what my job is. I volunteered to be trained as a long range patrol commando and accept everything that I am ordered to do, but fucking hump over two mountains and through two valleys to gather intelligence is patently ridiculous. Thirty-eight fucking days to get what? I wish I could tell you but then I would have to kill you (just kidding, sweetie, you know I could and would never do anything to hurt you) and they would kill me.

As I explained to you before I left for this God forsaken country, when I go into the field I have no documents, pictures, or letters on me so in the event I get killed or captured the only information the enemy will have is my dog tags. In my mind's eye, I keep my favorite picture of you sweetheart. I can see you just like you were standing opposite me and we are looking into each other's eyes. It helps me to do my job, because you are the reason I live, the reason I take care of my buddies, and the reason I do what I do for a living. Every night before I try to get some shut-eye, I bring the picture out of the picture album in my head and look at you while I try to rest. Sleep is impossible when you are living in the field. The constant fear that something or someone is going to creep up on you and slit your throat keeps you from falling into a deep sleep. The picture I keep of you in my head lets me relax, relieves my anxiety, calms my nerves, and allows me to reinvigorate my body to keep my teammates and myself alive.

The team has worked in the valley and the mountain opposite our base camp since we were ordered into the area. The villages and the people living in them have come to know us because we treat them with kindness and sympathy. Brad has on occasions used his limited medical knowledge to help sick men, women, and children. We are not supposed to use our limited medical and food resources on helping the indigenous people, but we cannot just walk away from them. Our enemy would kill them in a heartbeat to make the point that they were the masters of these simple people's fate. Our goal is to show them that kindness tempered with the proper force wins and the hearts and minds of the villagers are collectively unified to keep our position quiet. I know you are reading this letter wondering why the officers do not want us to get involved with the villagers considering we are supposed to be helping them, converting them to a democratic political model. Seems that if we become too close to certain individuals and they are found to be agents of our enemy it would be harder for us to kill them. Believe me; if I had a choice of dying or shooting an individual to save me or the lives of my teammates, I think you know what my choice would be. Nothing is going to keep me from coming home.

As we continued across the first valley and up the mountain, we encountered a small force of enemy troops. Our goal was to get across the valley, over the mountain, down, and through the next valley. We decided to leave them be and noted their position for future reference. The three of us could have wrecked a bit of havoc on the enemy troops, but their number made it a bad decision. We moved ever so quietly past them and relaxed as we neared the top of the mountain. We had been to the top before, but never crossed it to the next valley. When we came to the designated crossing position and looked upon the valley stretched below each of us had to stand still and stare.

Meandering the length of this unnamed valley was a river that at its narrowest point had to be at least a quarter of a mile wide and at its widest at least a half a mile wide. On each shore, we could see small villages that were apparently built to use the river as an economic resource. Boats piled the river and we knew that we had to get across without letting them know we were there. We decided to spend the night where we were to gain some perspective on the amount of commerce that took place during the darkness. We figured that the denizens of the night would begin their movement around midnight. So we set up a perimeter, drew straws to see who would stand the first, second, and third watch. Naturally, I picked the third, but inside I knew that staying up from 0200 hours until 0600 hours would be easier than trying to sleep. I cannot wait until I can take a hot shower, rest, and think of you by looking at the pictures I have in my footlocker.

The night proved to be uneventful in terms of having to defend ourselves from the bad guys. In terms of how we would cross the river, John figured the best way would be to commandeer one of the boats, use it to cross, and stash it for our return trip. He had noticed that the smugglers, bad guys, and general assholes worked from 2300 hours until 0330 hours. They docked their boats in areas that provided good cover from the prying eyes of the local police, bad guys, and the enemy. We figured we could take one during the day, lay-low, and cross at night when the bad boys plied their trade. Needless to say, we had to eliminate the boss and his workers, but we had a means to cross the river and not be caught.

Damn, I wish I were next to you now. I really miss how you smell. Yeah, I know sounds corny, but the perfume you wear coupled with your natural smell just turns me on. I hope and pray you have not cut your hair. I long to run my fingers through it and feel the ends gently sweep across my chest. Just to sit next to you, my arm around your shoulders, and your head leaning against mine would be the perfect end to a perfect day. I miss you so much and want to tell you how much I love you. I do love you. I will always love you. I want you to bear our children, raise them, and in our old age take care of our grandchildren. I just want to be sure our children will not have to bear the horror of war the way I am.

We crossed the river and made it to the second mountain. We checked our position and made tracks for the area the intelligence officers wanted us to scout. As we got closer, we could see defensive positions, booby traps, and dead people hung from trees. These troops were not fooling around and the locals were nowhere to be found. What pissed me off more than anything else were the children; these mother fuckers (excuse my language, but that is the only way to express it) had no sense of what children meant to the future. They raped and murdered children. It did not matter if they were girls or boys, teenagers, or infants. Or maybe they did and that is why they made such a public view of their handiwork. The worst were the ones they disemboweled and left to die where they lay. Each of us made a promise to teach these fuckers a lesson they would not forget. The 'Rules of Engagement' – fuck the rules...

For the next twenty days, Brad, John, and I picked off two companies of men one by one. We started with the privates and worked up to the officers. We laughed at how incompetent these so called military men were. Three of us killed over two hundred men in twenty days. The officers got the treatment they deserved. When all was said and done, we had collected more than enough intelligence to prove the enemy was planning a major offensive. By getting it back to the proper authorities, we gave our side enough time to attack the enemy and thwart their offensive.

Now I sit in this firebase wondering when I will get back to my base camp. I have some privacy and would like to tell you how much I miss you. If you are wondering, I have released myself from my pants and in between writing have been gently stroking it. It has grown and become very hard. I wish you could see it now. I wish you were here to see how much I love you. All that I have is the picture I carry with you in my head and that is enough for me to rise and salute my love for you. I wanted so much to make love to you before I left, but held to my and your conviction that we should not do anything sexual until we are married. I cannot tell you how much that means to me, but I have to find some relief. I know you will understand. I love you so much.

Forever,

Nathan