

Hell and back...

by Daniel Rubenstein

Sarge sat at the forward end of the Troop Delivery Vehicle and mouthed at the cigar stub between his lips. He appeared calm, but you could sense his stress through the tightness in his muscles. You could see them tense even further with every announcement made by the AutoPilot.

"2 minutes until egress" The AP droned.

Sarge had done this before. Not with this many rookies and not on a one-way trip. This was a suicide mission. The boys didn't know it, but he did. They weren't coming back. Hell, they couldn't come back. The delivery vehicle they were in was just that - a delivery vehicle. Not a transport, not a troop delivery/recovery vehicle. This was an arrow, not a boomerang. The T.D.V would glide silently through the water until it beached itself at a depth of 3 feet. The front would open for 10 minutes allowing the troops to evacuate. Then the T.D.V. would reverse its course going back past the continental shelf and scuttle. This was hard coded into the artificial intelligence. The soldiers couldn't change it if they wanted to - they were all grunts. Sent here to raise hell and hopefully kill something.

"1 minute until egress"

"Damn that thing is annoying" Sarge mumbled to himself.

Most of the men were scared. To tell the truth Sarge was a little worried himself. Intel on this place was scarce. He hated not knowing the enemy. He knew he was going to die. He wasn't afraid of that. He just wanted a bunch of those bastards to die with him.

"30 seconds"

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Standing up, Sarge thought about saying something - maybe something like "them German sons-a-bitches" like Patton or, Sarge smiled to himself, maybe tell them to "Win one for the Gipper". But these punks were too young for that and besides, they would never get a chance to find out what that quote meant.

The boys saw Sarge's smile, some chalked it to an old man preparing himself for war. Others thought it was an old man showing his craziness.

"Lock 'em boys" Sarge shouted over the drone of the T.D.V. brushing against the beachfront.

"10 seconds"

The door started to slowly open. This was planned. It would open slowly until about 1/3 of the way to allow the soldiers to prepare to exit, then it would rocket down - it did this so that the soldiers could time when to come rushing out.

"5 seconds"

All the soldiers stood at the ready, guns in hand, tensed, about to run out into hell. Sarge turned, opened his mouth to yell...

"Chharrrr... "

THWACK... THWACK... THWACK...

Blood splattered off the entire front line of grunts. That's when the soldiers knew that they didn't need to charge out into the shit. The shit had come in after them.

