

Michael Williams

FEAR SFOD-D

Night fell over the Armacham building, the only light coming from spot lights and security lights that swept up the building, slowly fading as night swallowed them at the tip of the building. Alan saw the building from the open side of his helicopter as it thundered across the night sky, vibrating throughout his body and giving him a jittery feeling he knew would disperse once he landed. Once he landed, it would be all business.

“This is Holiday. Can you hear me Delta Team?” A voice crackled from the helicopters radio. The co-pilot gave a small start and then quickly tossed a radio back to Alan. Alan removed his helmet for a moment, revealing thinly shaved brown hair and deep gray green eyes.

“Loud and Clear, Sir!” Alan shouted over the roar of the engine.

“There’s been a change of plans. Two of the three operatives on the first assault helicopter are down. The point man managed to clear the LZ and then went in alone. We’re sending you and Delta Two to back him up! Your objectives are to catch up with the point man and assist him in anyway he deems appropriate.”

“Yes, Sir!” Alan yelled into the radio.

“Holiday out.” Holiday said over the thundering of the chopper, and then the radio went dead. Alan quickly picked up his helmet and locked it into place.

“You hear that, Rookie?” He asked the other man who sat on the other end of the chopper. The man had his helmet on, but Alan could tell by certain tiny spasms in his legs that the man was nervous as hell. And why not? Alan thought. For the Rookie, it was going to be baptism by fire. Maybe literally.

“Yes, Sir!” John, the Rookie replied, his voice staying as steady as the man was able to make it. He turned to give a crisp salute. Alan couldn’t see the shakiness in his arm. Good Alan thought. Shaky arms carrying a rifle never boded well for a mission. Alan took up two of the RPL sub machine guns secured to a rack on the side of the helicopter and tossed one to John. John caught it easily and they both checked their ammunition and safetys.

“Thirty seconds till we hit the LZ!” The pilot yelled back over the roar of the engine. Alan gave him the thumbs up.

“Roger that.” Alan turned and reached over to slap Johnny on the back. “Don’t sweat this one. We’ll crack open a cold one at my place after this and debriefing, got it?” Alan’s eyes hid the silent gnawing nervousness that resided in his stomach. John turned and some of the nervousness lifted from his eyes as he gave Alan the thumbs up.

Alan turned to watch the side of the Armacham building blow by to be replaced by the starry night sky. The helicopter turned slowly again and the building slid back into view, revealing the LZ.

“Go! Go! Go!” The pilot yelled as he maneuvered the copter into a hovering position. Alan and John jumped out, dropping four feet to the solid concrete of the

LZ. As soon as they were steady, they both lifted their SMG's to scan the menacing looking entrance ahead of them. Wind assailed them both and threatened to disrupt their balance as the helicopter took off again and flew for home.

Alan took point and moved steadily towards the entryway while John kept pace behind. When they were only 20 feet from the entrance, Alan stopped to check for anything unusual. Seeing only broken glass, Alan signaled John. They both charged through the doors, sweeping the room with the barrels of their SMG's. The lights flickered, revealing a bloody mess of dead ATC guards at their feet, mingled with the bloody bodies of dead replica soldiers. It was very apparent the point man had stopped by this entrance, though security had locked the entrance tight with a steel gate.

The steel gate seemed to read his mind as it slowly pulled up, causing a loud rattling that made both Alan and John lift their rifles up cautiously. Alan felt a shiver go down his spine as he heard faint footsteps. He told John to stay put with hand signals. He unlatched a fragmentation grenade and waited one second, then threw it down the hallway.

"A second team is... shit!" A voice echoed down the hallway, followed by an explosion. Alan and John immediately turned into the hallway and scanned for any remaining soldiers. One of the replicas started standing up, apparently only having been rattled by the explosion. He immediately fell back down as John let loose a stream of bullets from his SMG. John fired the rest of his clip into the only other corpse, making sure the replica was dead.

Alan again took point, scanning both sides of the corridor. It was seconds before he noticed John wasn't following. "Get a move on Rookie, this point man is one tough fucker and we need to catch up." Alan said as he turned to check on John. He froze and walked over to John. John was on the floor, cradling his head as his body seemed to convulse of its own will. "Rookie...? John! John can you hear me? What's going on? Are you hit!?" Alan said alarmed, kneeling down and trying to keep John from tearing off his own head. Alan could hear him grunting from pain. Suddenly, John went limp. He lay still a moment before getting on his feet and standing up slowly, rubbing the side of his head. Alan frowned.

"I'm ok... I think. I don't know what happened, I just suddenly felt like my head was going to explode... it's gone now I think... let's go." He said. His face was pale but his voice was steady and his eyes (Though Alan could see them only through the goggles over his helmet) seemed steady enough as well. Alan nodded. It must be some weird psychological bullshit going through his head. It IS his first combat mission, Alan thought to himself.

He motioned and they both began moving slowly down the hallway again, keeping their eyes peeled for more replica soldiers. Neither of them noticed the bloody footprints on the ceiling above where they were standing.

They wound their way through the Armacham building, going down several floors looking for the point man. They found signs of his passage, marked by the bloody remains of scores of replica soldiers. Neither of them said much to each other, other than occasional small talk or short discussions about which way to go next. John seemed to be over his rookie behavior after his headache, and Alan felt more confident because of it. He didn't like being the only tough guy around... too much freaky shit was going on around them. John kept stopping and saying he'd seen a little girl, just out of sight. Alan continued to say it was probably an Armacham employee getting out, but every time they investigated, they found no trace of

anyone. John also had started to touch the side of his head habitually, as if his head hurt. Neither said anything about it, but both could feel unnatural nervousness slowly creeping through their bodies and souls. Alan was used to feeling uneasy on a mission he wasn't sure about, but this one especially seemed to shake him up.

When Holiday's voice broke into their COM links they both gave a start that might have been a jump were they not weighed down by their armor and weapons.

"Any sign of the point man?" Holiday asked through the radio, his voice almost drowned out by the roar of a helicopter engine.

"Negative, Sir. We're following a trail of neutralized enemy soldiers but we haven't made contact with him yet." Alan replied, scanning the room. He suddenly noticed that John had gone very still, and seemed to be staring at the ceiling.

"God dammit. Betters just told me that he lost radio contact with the point man about five minutes ago. He was on the 28th floor... We're getting some weird ass interference... don't know what they're developing in that building, but it must be some weird shit. Your objective is the same as before. Try to avoid the replicas as much as possible."

"Roger that, Sir. We'll do our best to locate the point man." Alan replied, now staring uneasily at John, who still hadn't moved.

"Good man. Get your ass moving. Holiday Out." Their COM links once again clear, Alan walked slowly over to John.

"Rookie, you cool?" He asked, keeping a bit of distance and his weapon low but steady. John started.

"I... heard something. It's coming from the ceiling." John replied, lifting his rifle to point at the ceiling. Alan frowned.

"Probably pipes or something. Nothing to worry about..." Alan said, but none the less he trained his gun on the spot that John seemed to be staring at. Slowly, he approached it. The nearer he got, the more uneasy he felt. It was irrational. He was a trained SF operative, and a science building full of nerds was frightening him? Maybe I should start considering early retirement, he thought to himself as he approached the spot. The ceiling was made of chrome tiles, and the one John was staring at seemed no different from the others.

Alan stood right under it and sighed. "I don't hear anything. I think it's your nerves, rookie. Let's get a move on." But just as he finished saying it, the ceiling board fell on him and a black wave issued forth, nearly washing him to the ground. John opened fire as the wave approached him, and squeaks filled the hallway as blood and fur plastered the floor. Both John and Alan screamed at near the top of their lungs as the rats surged around them, flowing off in all different directions for holes to crawl into. When it was all over, all that remained was two very shaky soldiers and a blood smeared floor covered in mutilated furry bodies.

Neither Alan or John had time to say anything because both heard soft footsteps coming from several directions. Quickly, Alan pointed John to an office that branched off into a laboratory. They ducked down around the corner and quietly shut the door. They could hear the footsteps walk passed, and voices radioing each other. Luckily, none of the replicas seemed to take interest in the laboratory delta had taken refuge in. Alan let loose a long sigh of relief, which caught in his chest as he noticed John once again on the floor cradling his head and grunting. Alan, fearful the replicas would hear them, grabbed him by the back of his suit and hauled him up. He awkwardly dragged him towards the door at the other side of the large laboratory only to have the door slam shut in his face. He tried to open it but found it locked tight. John's grunts became yells. He checked the other entrance, only to find

it locked tight. He looked around and suddenly felt a cube of ice drop into his stomach as he noticed bloody foot prints on the ceiling. The lights in the laboratory slowly dimmed down to nothing. He lifted his rifle and tried to flip on his night vision, but found it was shorted out.

“Delta one, this is Holiday, what’s going on? We’re starting to get the same weird interfere...” Static cut him off, and Alan could feel himself shaking. He suddenly felt very alone in the darkness. The only sounds were Johns whimpering somewhere next to him.

“She’s... here...” John breathed raggedly. Suddenly, Alan became aware of a much more horrifying sound. The sound of bare feet walking across a tiled floor... and the sound... was coming towards him.

A woman far away, watched intently on a TV monitor. “He seems to have a reaction to Alma’s presence... interesting.” Genevieve said standing, and exited the office.

To be continued?