

**Call Sign: Wrecking Crew
Storm Warning**

By

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&

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Dedication:

To the members of the Special Operations community and the U.S. Armed Forces around the world who not only consistently put their lives on the line but also preserve our rights to liberty and freedom on a daily basis

To those who came before us, especially those who taught us to read, to write, and to learn more about ourselves and the world we live in

Special Dedication and in Memory of Clint, Rick, Mel, and Dan:

Four men who have earned the right to be called the finest Security Officers one could ever be associated with. Their characters and their dedication to their work inspired others to be their best. They were not Hollywood versions or the bad apples. They were the real deal. They were true friends to many. Their talents and their spirits live on through this book.

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Call Sign: Wrecking Crew

Storm Warning

Prologue

Amidst the milieu of civil unrest during one of the deepest depressions in American history, one man heard his calling. He answered it, not for power, but to be in a position to make a positive change as a world leader. That is why in 2012, Gerald Daniel Moore from Raleigh, North Carolina, a 68-year-old ultraconservative member of the Tea Party ran for President. In an unprecedented move, he was paired with a Democrat, Howard Lee Lyons, as his running mate in part because by all appearances he has conservative ideals. Against all odds, they overwhelmingly won the Presidential election. Some talking heads felt it was due to the voters' distrust in and anger with the prominent parties. Within the first two years of his term, President Moore accomplished not only his goal for financial reconstruction, but that of bringing the Iraqi people into their own Democratic Society.

His plan to stop the insurgency of the Iranian and Syrian nations by keeping US troops in place worked. This proved beneficial because it resulted in the U.S. Armed Forces working side by side with the Iraqi Armed Forces. Even before the arrival of the U.S. troops, the Iraqi Ground Forces were minimal. The U.S. Military facilitated the training of troops in many areas in which the Iraqi Military Command felt they were deficient. The Iraqi Air Force was enhanced, not only with the help of the U.S. but also by the fact that President Moore was farsighted enough to include other countries in aiding the Iraqi nation. In particular, Russian Premier Vladimir Borenski made arrangements to provide two squadrons of MiG 28 aircraft, spare parts and instructor pilots.

After securing like-minded allies, President Moore pulled out of the UN because he had heard and understood the cries of the American public. Without leaving NATO, the newly formed alliance cooperated in establishing three Forward Operating Bases. The first one named, FOB Sword, billets mainly Special Forces. The other two are named FOB Gold and FOB Currahee. FOB Currahee quarters the 2/7 in addition to other Cavalry troops, as well as the 75th Airborne Ranger Regiment Alpha Company. These bases were created to secure the borders between Iraq and Iran. Since they are aided by air support, they can maintain minimal ground troops, potentially preventing high casualty rates.

This newly formed U.S. and Iraqi relationship created a unique and unconventional understanding between Israel and Iraq that Iran is their common enemy. Their secret pact was unbeknownst to the other Arab Nations. Although President Moore was not responsible for this new found relationship, he heartily approved of the outcome.

Within the first month of the Iraqi/Israeli secret alliance, President Moore received an urgent phone call from Israeli Prime Minister, Albert Lloyd Bernard, "... I received intelligence regarding a nuclear facility within the Iranian borders. Contrary to the Iranian claim that it's for plutonium enrichment to be used solely for energy purposes, it's really a weapons base aimed at the Israeli people. I also received separate intelligence revealing that the Iranian Military is poised to attack the Iraqi border despite the current truce."

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President Moore sits down to the emergency session of the National Security Council. This particular meeting includes the Joint Chief of Staff Special Operations; National Security Advisor; Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director of Intelligence; National Security Agency Director; and Defense Intelligence Agency Director.

President Moore begins, "I recognize the challenges this group has overcome regarding the sharing of information. Although it was initially forced on you by the Patriot Act, you're now freely cooperating with each other." He addresses the group, in particular the CIA DDI, "...as you all should know by now, Iran is poised to attack Israel and Iraq. Mr. Winchester, what do we have in the way of intelligence, more to the point, what assets do we have on the ground to monitor the situation?"

William Winchester answers, "Due to budget cuts we don't have any human intelligence on the ground but we do have satellite and electronic intelligence. They are constantly gathering data, demonstrating they're definitely up to something. We're unable to confirm the exact nature at the present. However, it's possible they're days from attacking."

As a straight shooter, President Moore rolls his eyes at this obvious double speak. "Cut the malarkey and get down to brass tacks—in other words, tell me what you really know."

Mr. Winchester shrugs "I guess in truth, we don't know anything more than the Israelis."

"At least you're honest about your lack of knowledge." Looking around the room he says, "Does anyone else have any intelligence regarding how imminent an attack really is?"

General Randall Aaron Burr responds, "I don't have any assets to go into Iran itself. However, I have enough assets at FOB Currahee to do border surveillance and patrol. A covert op will take anywhere from thirty-six to ninety-six hours to put into place."

President Moore looks at the National Security Advisor and asks, "Ms. Thompson, is that going to be enough time?"

Emily Thompson doesn't answer the question but instead looks across the table, "Mr. Winchester, do you have a Special Ops team you can get there any sooner?"

"Yes, I do. I have three teams standing by at the moment. All I have to do is narrow it down to the right team for this task."

The DIA Director, David Immanuel Archer, interjects, "We can give you updated intelligence as we have it."

NSA Director, Nathaniel Samuel Anthony adds, "We can utilize our SAT COM for your communication needs. Not only that, I can provide you with two highly secure satellite-capable cell phones for the Team Leader and his assistant."

Ms. Thompson asks, "Is this strictly reconnaissance or if the event is real, do we want to Blow It?"

President Moore answers, "That'll be Israel's call. So let's keep Israel in the loop because all these relationships are tenuous at best. Not to mention they have the best intelligence plus they're in constant secure contact with their Iraqi counterparts. "With a stern look, he adds, "If anything is leaked to the press let alone to anyone else, including Vice President Lyons, it'll be all of your necks on the chopping block. This needs to stay among those of us in this room, except of course, the chosen Team Leader and his designated second. This'll be useful in the event the Team Leader is taken out. Even at that, it should be on a strictly need-to-know basis."

Ms. Thompson looks at General Burr, "Is it possible to have a LASER Designator which can guide an aircraft and their payload to the target."

President Moore realizes it will take more than the people present in the room to do the task at hand. He adds a disclaimer, "Okay people. Let's work together to make this happen but keep things compartmentalized, so no one person knows the big picture except us. I've decided to call this Operation Sandstorm. Meeting adjourned."

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Mr. Winchester returns to his office and quickly reviews the teams that are currently standing by. In reviewing their files, he comes upon the Wrecking Crew and thinks, '*the name sounds perfect.*' On the screen in front of him, he reads:

Call Sign: Wrecking Crew
Summary Profile
Base of Operations: Texas

Team Leader: J.T. Jones
Call Sign: Cool Razor
(AKA "Boss")

Physical attributes: Caucasian Male, 6 foot 4 inches tall, brown hair and green eyes

Military background: 1978 - 1998 Army Sergeant First Class who served in the Nuclear Explosive Search Team 1978 - 1998

Year of recruitment: 2001

Other pertinent data: Counter Terrorist Unit (CTU) Sniper from 1998 to 2001, Third Degree Black Belt in Aikido

Assistant Team Leader: Jeffrey Daniel McDermott
Call Sign: Warmonger
(AKA "Mac")

Physical attributes: Caucasian Male, 6 foot 5 inches tall, brown hair and hazel eyes

Military background: 1978 - 1998 Navy Gunner's Mate Chief who served on Navy SEAL Team 4. During his service he saw action in Grenada, Lebanon, Panama, Desert Storm and Bosnia. Recon missions include Operation Desert Shield

Year of recruitment: 2001

Other pertinent data: SEAL Sniper and a masterful Gunsmith, CTU Member 1998 - 2001, Third Degree Black Belt Tae Kwon Do

Administrative Organizer: Terrence Knight Adams
Call Sign: Bad Karma
(AKA "T K")

Physical attributes: Caucasian Male, 6 foot 1 inches tall, salt and pepper hair and brown eyes

Military background: 1966 - 1976 *with Medical Discharge WIA* Army SFC attached to 5th Special Forces—MAC-V SOG

Year of recruitment: 1976

Other pertinent data: Spent the last six years of his military life as a driver for military upper echelon including one that became a CIA-DDO then Driver/Body guard to said CIA DDO upon his discharge in 1976 and eventually became a CIA recruiter in the Spec Ops section

Communications Specialist: Debra Ellen Brown
Call Sign: Dancer
(AKA "Deb")

Physical attributes: Caucasian Female, 5 foot 8 inches tall, strawberry blonde hair and blue eyes

Military background: 1998 -2000 *Resigned Commission* Army Lieutenant with OPSEC Delta in Operations Control with superb Computer and Cryptology skills including the most sophisticated Satellite Communication Systems

Year of recruitment: 2001

Other pertinent data: Resigned commission after a classified mission went bad, then from 2000 to 2001 worked in the Mobile Operations Center/FBI SWAT Team, Houston, Texas, Expert Marksman—Small Arms, First Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do

Lead Scout/Co-communications: George Lawrence Parker

**Call Sign: Eagle Feather
(AKA "Crazy Larry")**

Physical attributes: Native American Male, 5 foot 8 inches, black hair and brown eyes

Military background: 1988 - 1998 *with Honorable Discharge* Air Force Technical Sergeant, who served in Special Forces A-team as a Pathfinder Combat Controller during Desert Storm/Parajumper in Bosnia HALO (High Altitude Low Opening) Qualified, Recon missions during Desert Shield.

Year of recruitment: 2001

Other pertinent data: Sited reason for leaving Air Force dislike of the military *Political Correctness*. Became a Smokejumper for an outfit in Colorado shortly thereafter, has penchant for wearing his eagle's feather in all his headgear, First Degree Black Belt in Aikido

**Spiritual Guide: Roger Dean Martin
(AKA "Deano")
Call sign: Rev**

Physical attributes: Black American Male, 5 foot 8 inches tall, black hair and brown eyes

Military background: 1969 - 1975 *with Medical Discharge WIA* USMC SSGT serving in First Marine Division First Force Recon

Year of recruitment: 2001

Other pertinent data: Expert Marksman, Third Degree Black Belt Tae Kwon Do, Methodist pastor who continues to minister to outlying communities upon request

After reading the team's profile, Mr. Winchester knows that their combination of skills make them the best team for the job. Next step is activating them for *Operation Sandstorm*.

**Call Sign: Wrecking Crew
Storm Warning
Part I: Operation Sandstorm**

Chapter 1

It is the beginning of a blistering hot Sunday in Houston, Texas. Mac, J.T., T.K., and Deb completed shooting at their favorite range. Despite the fact that they claim their only objective is to maintain their certification, they are heard squabbling over each other's scores in a manner reminiscent of siblings fighting over a favored toy.

J.T. says, "Mac, I can't believe that she beat my score."

"I know, I think I trained her too well because she's even beaten mine."

Deb retorts, "Listen here, Mister. You didn't train me. I already knew how to shoot long before you ever came into my life. I've just been waiting until the right time to show you."

"Yeah right, Sister! Let's go one more round and I'll show you who trains who around here."

J.T. is about to settle the argument once and for all when all of their pagers go off. They say in unison, "So much for a day off."

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Approximately 15,000 feet above ground, Crazy Larry is doing what he does best, sky diving, when his pager goes off. Looking at the Jump Master, he asks, "If I don't jump, how long will it be before we land?"

The Jump Master replies, "About 30 minutes."

Crazy Larry jumps, giving the impression that he did not wish to be late, but in reality he would have done it anyway.

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In a small East Texas town, Reverend Martin is giving his Sunday morning sermon. While he reads the text from Genesis Chapter 47 verses 13 through 27 in his NRSV Bible, his pager, which is resting under the pulpit next to his carefully placed .45 caliber pistol, vibrates. Surreptitiously, he pushes the button and it stops. He quickly concludes his sermon as if time was running out for the 11 a.m. service. As he shakes hands with members of the congregation exiting the church, he ponders how many actually heard what he said or were they thinking of the secular things they could be doing, just as he was wondering what this mission is all about.

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All members of the Wrecking Crew Team are trained to respond to their pagers by grabbing their gear and meeting at their team house. The team house used to belong to a local "Outlaw Biker" club from whom the team members purchased it. Now it serves as a safe house for them, their weapons, communication devices, ammunition, work clothes and tactical gear. J.T.'s well trained dog, Bear, is on constant guard.

Inside the place looks like the stage manager of the show *Sons of Anarchy* decorated it with a few female touches. While it isn't true, some of the team did like the show. After they throw their gear in a corner, J.T., T.K., Deb, and Mac impatiently await the arrival of Crazy Larry and Deano, who are approaching the two-hour deadline for the team briefing.

As Crazy Larry bursts through the door still dressed in his sky diving suit, Mr. Winchester appears on the satellite communication system. The satellite dish is communicating through the 50-inch plasma screen that Deb recently installed. Mr. Winchester says, "Wrecking Crew is being activated. You're to meet at Ellington no later than 2100 hours tonight. From there, you'll be embarking a C-5, destination to be known only to the commanding pilots. Your orders will be awaiting you there. Are there any questions?"

J.T. says, "Just this, are we going to be wet and salty or dry and sandy?"

"Dry and sandy," Mr. Winchester looks around the room, counting heads, "You seem to be missing a member of your team. I believe you call him Deano."

J.T. answers, "He's en route as we speak."

“Very well, you have to be on that flight at 2100 hours, with or without him.”

The image of Mr. Winchester disappears leaving only static on the screen. Deb turns off the plasma.

While awaiting Deano, the team plans what to pack for a destination dry and sandy. Mac says, “Desert gear it is. God only knows what they have in store for us this time.”

As J.T and T.K. nod their heads in agreement, Mac goes behind the bar and reaches for a Kaliber non-alcoholic beer and unscrews the cap. After that, he reaches for a beer tap that has a specially created mechanism. When he pushes it in, instead of beer pouring out, a door unlocks behind him. Mac and T.K. go inside the hidden armory to gather weapons. Mac stacks them onto his rolling cart as T.K., ever the administrator, ticks them off his pre-made list, even providing the amount taken off the walls.

Mac murmurs, “I sure am glad that we have this place well hidden. No one would ever guess this old motorcycle shop is now our armory. The Banditos sure were smart in their set-up ‘cause you know, these days it is best not to advertise where the skeletons are buried, so to speak.”

Suddenly, the wheels of the cart squeal under the weight of the mounting weaponry. Mac thinks out loud, “A little WD-40 should take care of that” as he continues to push his way back to the door, arriving just in time to see Deano walk through the door. As the door closes behind T.K. and Mac, they hear J.T. holler at Deano, who is still in his Sunday go to preaching clothes, “Next time move your chocolate buns a little faster. The Company despises tardiness. I covered your butt this time. Who knows if they bought it or not? Get my drift?”

Mac reaches for another Kaliber and tosses it over to Deano as he says, “J.T., the man was at church doing his thing. What do you want him to do, blow his freaking cover?”

J.T. grumbles under his breath, knowing full well that Mac is right, but as team leader he has to be tough and not play any favorites at all.

T.K. and Mac start stowing the weapons into two boxes along with the appropriate ammo. Efficiently, they place the small arms in one box while the long rifles go into the other. Before they leave, everyone completes their individual check list. They make sure that all their personal gear as well as the tools of their trade is put together. Also, that the placement in their desert gear war bag is secure, for what they figure will be a long rough flight. They don their elite-looking, dark-colored matching polo shirts, khaki pants and black tactical boots. As Mac secures the team house, the others pick up their gear bags and toss them over their shoulders. After everyone and everything is loaded into the team’s Hummer, T.K. swiftly and expertly drives them to their destination.

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As 2100 hours Sunday night approaches, the team loads the last of their gear onto a C-5A in one of Ellington’s hangars. This military transport plane was previously loaded with two armor-plated desert-camouflage HMMWVs aka Humvees, plus their two specially designed Desert Patrol Vehicles, which they simply call their dune buggies. Anxiously, the team awaits their orders, wondering where in the world this trip will end and if this desert that they are destined for is familiar or unfamiliar territory. As the aircraft is preparing for takeoff, J.T. is handed a sealed envelope which is stamped DO NOT OPEN. J.T. tosses it in the briefcase and straps in with the rest of his team, who are bound for parts unknown.

Call Sign: Wrecking Crew
Storm Warning
Part I: Operation Sandstorm

Chapter 2

After landing at Dulles Air Force Base, a CIA staff officer hands J.T. more orders with a note attached to the sealed envelope. It reads, "Open at your final destination" and is stamped TOP SECRET in thick red ink. He is also handed a medium-sized box which has another note attached similar to the sealed envelope, except it is stamped FRAGILE with bold red lettering in opposite corners of the box. J.T.'s eyes hold an unmistakable look of annoyance as he places these new orders inside his leather-bound briefcase along with the first set he received at Ellington. He hands the box to Deb, since he figures it might be delicate equipment that she would know best how to store. He turns to the team, "Looks like we are only stopping to refuel. Let's take this opportunity to make sure the vehicles and supplies are secure before we take off again."

Mac checks the Humvee holding the team's weapons not only to verify it is secure but that the weapons and ammo are still safely stored inside their boxes. Meanwhile T.K. and Deb check the dune buggies they have picked out to drive when they arrive at their final destination. The other Humvee, containing the team's gear, is checked by Deano, as Crazy Larry makes sure all the communication gear is safe and secure. Deb finds a secluded and secure place to put the new package inside with the rest of the communication devices.

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Another 24 hours pass before the exhausted group of warriors exit the aircraft. While the Load Master is off loading the C-5A, Mac supervises. Out of the corner of his eye, he spies a Humvee pulling up on the dark gray tarmac next to the aircraft. He glances over to J.T. with a knowing look. They watch as a tall man, approximately 6-foot-7, with close cropped gray hair and hardened face sported by yellow-tinted, wire-framed wrap-around sunglasses, disembarks from the vehicle. J.T. notes the black vest, khaki shirt and black tactical pants and boots. The M-1 carbine and Glock 25 fully automatic 9 mm pistol strapped to his leg does not escape the notice of any of the team members. Mac, who is fully aware that a Glock 25 can shoot 300 rounds a minute and has a 30-round magazine, notices four visible magazines.

This man addresses J.T., "I'm Robert Smith, your case officer..." J.T. thinks, *'Of course, why not, all of you 'guys are known as Smith or Jones, and since I'm Jones, you have to be Smith, don't you?'* Just then an Iraqi Officer rounds the vehicle in a stealthy manner "...and this is Major Muhammad Ali Hassan..." He has dark eyes, medium-length hair touching his ears, long side burns

connecting to a thick mustache. "...Major Hassan and I will get you through the check points necessary to get you to your final destination. Have you opened your orders yet?"

J.T.'s annoyance turns to suspicion and agitation at having no time to get acclimated to everything. Instead of showing these feelings, he turns towards the team and barks, "Mac, get these vehicles fueled and our gear on board."

Mac knows that look of distrust in 'spooks.' He throws back a glance that tells J.T., *'All right, Boss Dude, but you know how these spooks are, don't lose it'* while he says "Aye, aye, El Capitan!"

J.T. finds a secluded place in which to open the sealed envelope with Top Secret—Eyes only—Destroy after Reading orders. After J.T. reads the location and verifies on his map where they are being sent, his eyes get as big as saucers, immediately knowing the implication.

Seeing this reaction, Mr. Smith says in an even tone, "Do not let Major Hassan know your destination. Can we trust him? Most assuredly, except where you're going he'll want tag along and I don't want this mission compromised. There's a lot riding on it!"

"That's why they call us in, we're expendable, the break glass for emergency or prior to nuclear exchange." J.T.'s tone is mixed with annoyance and pensiveness.

J.T. turns to his team and uses his best John Wayne imitation to hide his aggravation, "Okay guys let's get this show on the road. We're burning day light." With an unbridled look of disgust he turns towards Mr. Smith, "Since I have no choice in the matter, get in your saddle and let's ride."

Everyone except T.K. and Deb divide up into the two Humvees. T.K. drives the dune buggy which houses the Browning .50 caliber M-2 Machinegun mounted on the rear behind the middle swivel seat as well as the .50 caliber Barrett M82 Sniper Rifle complete with a bipod and case hidden in the back as well as another optics case containing both a day and night scope. Deb drives the dune buggy that has Mac's infamous GE Mini-gun 5.56 mm mounted on the rear behind the middle swivel seat. The team will sort out the rest of the weapons at their next stop.

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The small group halts at FOB Sword, temporary home to some of the Special Forces groups, in order to get fuel, supplies, and something to eat or so they think. J.T. gets out of his vehicle and says, "Smoke 'em if you got 'em!"

This always reminds Mac of the story he was told about how 'the men on the *USS Kitty Hawk* were sent five thousand miles to smoke a camel and President Carter wouldn't give them a light!'

Mac's thoughts fade when he sees a man. At first he appears to be a mirage coming out of nowhere. Mac reads his badge, FOB Sword Operations, Sergeant Stanley, as he is saying to J.T., "...The current war has been over for a couple of years. The mullahs have finally given up fighting the US, especially since they have a better life now. It took a while. Iran is heating up. I know why we needed to win in Iraq but right now we are basically border patrol."

J.T. shows SGT Stanley his procurement list at the same time Mr. Smith hands him a letter. The letter essentially reads, "Give this guy what he wants and don't ask any questions as it is above your pay grade."

SGT Stanley looks at the orders, gives J.T. a sad look which brings out J.T.'s smiling yet evil grin. SGT Stanley says, "No problem."

SGT Stanley thinks, *'I know who these people are, especially given the U.S. elections around the corner. A Republican president would do this. Democrats don't have the balls to pull this off.'*

SGT Stanley is met by FOB Sword's Commander, CAPT Pullman 5th SFG. When SGT Stanley shows him the orders, he surmises where this team is heading. He thinks, *'Who do these people think they are kidding? Don't they know the modern military is smarter than those men from yesteryear who came up with the whole spook shit, spy shit, not to mention general cloak and dagger bull shit?'* Out loud CAPT Pullman says, "You guys look like you could use some rest."

Mr. Smith nods in the affirmative, "It has been a long trip and everyone could use the rest."

Mac pipes up, "Deb can sleep with us. We're used to her and she is used to us. If we touch her in an unwarranted manner, we'll be wearing our balls around our necks. So men, if you value your family jewels, don't fuck with her!" He winks at Deb who is smoking her black and mild-tipped cigars.

CAPT Pullman takes Mr. Smith and J.T. aside, "Hope those are the Humvees we've been waiting for."

Mr. Smith says, "Yes they are. Hope you don't mind. They stored their gear in there for the trip over. No one told them they weren't theirs."

J.T. bellows out of sheer exasperation with Mr. Smith, "Mac, check out the weapons and supplies. Get what you can into the dune buggies. Deb and Larry, check out the comms. T.K. and Deano, go through the Humvees and remove our gear so we can have it for the night. Those Humvees aren't ours. They belong to FOB Sword. We were just transporting them. Deano, you might start saying a prayer for us. We're going to need it."

Mac asks SGT Stanley, "Do ya'll have a range, so I can do a weapons check?"

"Yes, if you're ready, follow me."

~~~~~

The range, which is out back, is make-shift at best. FOB Sword is designed in a triangular pattern, 100 meters by 200 meters by 100 meters and quarters Army Airborne Rangers and Green Berets, Navy SEALs along with a squad of Force Recon Marines and Air Force Special Ops personnel just to keep things fair. The bunkers surround all the peaks of the triangle with the main gate to one side and the range on the other. As you enter FOB Sword you find the chow hall. After that is the operations area which is followed by the showers and sleeping quarters and are the support of the triangular structure.

Mac starts out by shooting a total of 200 rounds of ball ammo through the weapons they had stored in the Humvee. As he cleans each weapon, he pauses long enough to admire his work and imagines T.K. ticking off his list:

1 Stoner 63A

4 M-4 carbines with M203 Grenade Launchers

1 USAS-12 with 20 round drums

1 M248 Grenade launcher 30 rounds

1 Barrett .50 caliber Sniper Rifle, Infrared & thermal w/range finder scope (plus four 10 round magazines of .50 caliber Plutonium)

6 Glock 25 fully automatic 9 mm pistols

2 Pistols, .45 calibers (carried by J.T. and Mac)

1 Submachine gun Ingram MAC-10

Mac finishes readying the weapons when J.T. calls everyone except Mr. Smith and Major Hassan inside the briefing room. Deano says a short prayer before J.T. starts the briefing. J.T. calls on Mac for a report on weapons and supplies. Mac gives his best imitation of T.K. as he ticks off his list:

56000 rounds of 5.56mm link belted ammo for mini-gun

6000 rounds of .50 caliber link belted ammo for Browning M-2

1600 rounds of 5.56 Tracer (four 450 round drums) for Stoner 63A

1200 rounds of 9 mm-147 grain Hollow Points (30 round magazines)

450 rounds of 5.56 mm (fifteen 30 round magazines) for the M-4

400 rounds of 00 buck-shot (twenty 20 round drums) for the USAS-12

100 rounds of H.E. and Willy Pete for the M-203

100 rounds of H.E. and Willy Pete for M-248 grenade launcher

100 rounds of .45 caliber 230 grain Hollow Point (10 round magazines)

50 hand grenades

40 rounds of .50 caliber ammo, loose Plutonium for Barrett Sniper rifle

"Anything else, Boss Dude?" says Mac.

"No," says J.T.

Mac goes on to the supplies:

50 gallons of fuel (5 - 5 gal. cans per dune buggy)

Water and food to last for 3 weeks

Mac sits down to indicate that he is through. J.T. points out, "Sounds as if it is going to be a tight fit, er...I mean, we are going to be very cramped."

J.T. points to Deb, for an update on communications, "Sat uplinks coordinates are looking good. We'll be passing out the personal radios after we check them and given the 'Intel' if it is good. We should be in communication range throughout the 'op', unless it's out of country, then it could be dicey."

J.T. didn't want to hear that, "I asked for long-range satellite uplinks and they gave you this? Well lady, and the rest of you, this is not going to be a cake walk. Deb and Larry, I need up-to-the-minute 'Intel' on troop movements." J.T.'s unhappiness tinges his voice. "For this mission we'll be using the following Call Signs:

**Unit:** Wrecking Crew

**CH-47:** Tiger one eight

**Comanche:** Cobra one two for fire support

**FOB:** Home Plate

**CIA Operations:** Husky Whiskey

**Squad radios:** frequency channel 1.42 and 4.54 alternate

“Oh, we’re going in to Iran to see if their nuclear plant is up and running hot. If it is, we’re to let Husky Whiskey know and wait for further orders. We’ll be taking the dune buggies. The spook and the Iraqi will be following.” He makes a gesture indicating quote marks, “to ‘help us get across the border.’ We have CH47 Chinooks, and the new Comanche to replace the AH-1S Super Cobra that has never been tested in a combat environment, until now. Deano, check out the NVG and optics before we head out. Now we have two choices, drive through or fly out. I want to drive because I don’t want to compromise the mission.”

T.K. says, “If speed is the key, why can’t we fly around and enter the back side?”

J.T. says, “Fuel and potential for mechanical breakdowns.” He and Mac know too well that Mr. Murphy likes to tag along and he likes to fly. *Desert One* in 1980, failure due to mechanical break down and weather are good examples of Mr. Murphy’s work. “We’ll drive but since the Comanche has stealth technology we’ll call if we get in too much shit. Deano, have we got the cameras?”

“Yep, but I don’t know how to use it.”

“Don’t worry ‘Old Man’, Crazy Larry and I have been checked out with it,” Deb says playfully.

“I’ll show you old...”

J.T. interjects, “All right, knock it off! I don’t like this and I don’t like it when you guys think this shit is a walk in the park.”

Mac says, “I also don’t like the look, the smell, or the taste of this. Generally speaking, I don’t trust spooks.”

J.T. continues the briefing, “We’re to recon, take pictures, and wait for further orders. That’s the part that bothers me. We’ll leave at o’ dark early—head lights blackened out. Welcome to Operation Sandstorm. Are there any questions?” No questions are voiced. J.T. concludes, “Good, finish getting things squared away. When you’re done with that, get some rest and I’ll see you in the morning. T.K., I need you to stay behind for a moment.”

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T.K. assists Deano and Mac with getting the dune buggies squared away. On top of their complement, J.T.’s dune buggy has the .50 caliber as their main gun and Mac uses the mini-gun. Both dune buggies have self-sealing fuel cells and radiator plus Run Flat on their tires. In the event that they break down, the CH-47 could bring in spare parts at night but basically, this team is on its own.

While the team is busy preparing for their mission, Mr. Smith and Major Hassan are garnering assets to get this team across the border. Mr. Smith broods over the mission. *‘It’s sensitive with a prospectively high failure rate. I don’t like the politically correct environment placed by the current administration on both the military and intelligence communities. I’m not willing to take any chances.*

After all, my career could be on the line here. I've spent almost 25 years of service with the Company. I'm only CIA case officer and special operations officer, but I'm bound and determined, that if this particular operation goes south...this team will disappear for good.'

His mind continues to race as he sees the writing on the wall, *'Well, I'm not new to these types of conflicts. I do like what I've seen of this team, so far...yet this operation is beyond important because failure means global war! The economies as well as the securities of the United States and Europe are at stake. I'm currently in a country that has enemies hidden in high places of the government. Some of whom want to obliterate the freedom the U.S. represents.'* Mr. Smith hopes his thoughts are invisible to Major Hassan, who is getting up from his chair, Mr. Smith follows the Major.

After going over his briefing notes, J.T. lights a cigarette as Major Hassan and Mr. Smith walk in. J.T. looks up with a half grin "What's up?" Mr. Smith and Major Hassan each pull up a chair and lean in towards J.T. signifying a sense of privacy.

"You look worried," said Mr. Smith possibly projecting his own fears on this man whom he barely knows.

"I've been in this business for too long and I don't like it. I don't trust the government or the clowns in power. Oh and to give us this set up, I feel that whether we succeed or fail we won't make it out or worse, we'll be hung out to dry."

Mr. Smith thinks *'Has he been reading my mind.'*

Major Hassan tries to ease the tension, "As long as I am here, I want to say I owe the U. S. everything. My family was virtually exterminated at the hands of Saddam and his sons. Freedom or some semblance of it is prospering and Iraq is now becoming a major player in the world's market. For what feels like the first time, my country is reacting to the effects of a free market society, personal freedom and all the responsibilities they carry with them."

Mr. Smith shares with J.T., "If we fail, Israel is ready to take the complex out completely, but if we succeed we could prove that Iran has nukes. Exposing them could lead to a blockade and possibly prevent global thermal nuclear war. Iraq will be the staging point for any aggression from Iran—Syria—Jordan—Egypt —Libya—Afghanistan—Pakistan and even the Palestinian State. That is why Iraq was so important."

J.T. yawns, mostly in an effort to prevent an international conflict in the FOB Sword briefing room. After he wishes these men a good night, he walks toward the sleeping quarters. J.T. thinks, *'I know what's at stake even before that Mr. Smith gave his little pep talk. Isn't he aware that I worked with the IDF as an observer while serving with the CTU prior to joining the Company? Does this man think it was an accident that my experiences with detection of nuclear weapons, not to mention terror counter-terror tactics, paved the road for my responsibilities as team leader?'*

This team is more than a team—it is a family. J.T. thinks back, *'I remember the days on end I sat with Mac after his divorce. I was able to get him to quit drinking. When T.K. was on the skids, I let him stay at my house and now we're inseparable. Deb hooked up with the wrong guy who turned her world upside down after she left Delta. Who was it that kicked ass and took names later? It was T.K., Mac, and I that were in that bar the night that dirt bag wanna be, badass outlaw biker started beating the shit out of her. Deb surprised us when she broke a bottle and stabbed the asshole with its sharp edges. The idiot pulled out a gun in retaliation. Mac got behind the dumb dude and disarmed him. T.K. and I got the dude on the floor. Mac, the crazy SOB, emptied the weapon without being noticed and placed the barrel on the bastard's forehead before pulling the trigger six times. Deb shoved her knee into the most sensitive part of*

his balls, not just once but several times. We took turns placing our boots to the rest of the man's body. Some might call it beating the shit out of him but for us, that was just a love tap. The local club found out about it, and after hearing what happened let us in with their group until law enforcement got too hot for even them. They sold the club house to Crazy Larry. He couldn't afford it on his own, so T.K., Mac, and I put our money into it. We used it for everything...bar/ recreation room / storage room for guns, ammo, knives, communications—computers. When Deano came along, we brought him in not only for his spiritual guidance but because he had long-range recon under his belt, not to mention being a handy mechanic. We may be a dysfunctional family, but we're family and families stick together.'

J.T.'s contemplations make him turn around for another talk with Mr. Smith and Major Hassan. After finding them still in the briefing room, J.T. says to Mr. Smith, "We will not fail but if you set us up, we will find you sooner or later. This isn't a threat, it's a promise. Major Hassan, I commend you in helping us out and if you need anything..." J.T. is scribbling his private number, "...call me. However, I will tell you the same thing. You fuck me or anyone on my team you will not be safe."

At first Major Hassan is taken aback but realizes trust with J.T. has to be earned. He is honored and humbled by the compliment. What Major Hassan doesn't know is that J.T. doesn't give out his private number. Not to girlfriends, acquaintances—not anyone. Since he gave it to him that meant he was among the few—the few being the team, the CIA DIO, and NSA Operations Director. This is definitely an elite group.

Major Hassan is again humbled when J.T. asks, "Would you like to join my team on the mission?" Major Hassan accompanies J.T. as he checks on the vehicles, making sure the new package has been removed.

Major Hassan sees the size of the dune buggy and how tight a fit it is for three people. "Thank you for your kind offer, but I have another form of transportation."

J.T. and Major Hassan talk for what seems like hours before total drowsiness takes over. As he leaves, Major Hassan promises, "I will do everything in my power to see this mission succeed, even after we leave you at the border."

As J.T. approaches his cot, he sees a package has been placed on his olive drab blanket. A note with Deb's handwriting captures his attention.

Boss, there was an envelope just inside this package that read for Team Leader eyes only so I stopped and left it for you.

J.T. opens the envelope the note inside reads:

These are courtesy of NSA Director Anthony. There are two highly secure satellite capable cell phones for you and your assistant. They have been programmed in such a way that it looks as though you are using your personal cell phone number, so use with due diligence.

Signed,

William Anthony Winchester

CIA DDI

J.T. notices the paper is melting in his hands. He goes to the latrine and flushes it down the drain, hoping all the while this is not going to be an omen of things to come.

Call Sign: Wrecking Crew
Storm Warning
Part I: Operation Sandstorm

Chapter 3

Before even the sun is awake, the team hears the voice of SGT Stanley as he calls time to rise and shine. The team is up and ready to pull out by 0430 hours or as J.T. calls it o' dark early. J.T. takes a second to hand Mac the other present out of the package sent especially for them, no explanation except repeating the message he received before destroying it.

Mr. Smith and Major Hassan are in their armored Humvee, taking the lead. Following them is the Wrecking Crew. T.K. and Crazy Larry are with J.T., who is manning the .50 cal in his swivel seat, in the first dune buggy. This leaves Deb and Deano in with Mac, who is maneuvering the mini-gun into position as he adjusts his swivel seat in the second dune buggy. Following the Wrecking Crew is another armored Humvee occupied by four Special Operators from FOB Sword covering the rear. The Comanche helicopter 'Cobra 18' is on the pad on alert status.

The cat calls and usual insults thrown out amongst them slowly settle down as they pull out. The morning is clear, moonless, and they notice a slight chill. While their comic veneer is melting away, their true professionalism starts to shine. The seriousness of the mission occupies their minds. As usual when they enter mission mode, they initiate their Call Signs.

Cool Razor and Warmonger scrutinize the flanks while Eagle Feather and Bad Karma scan the front. It is a long drive to the border which is made easier by the fact the Mullahs quit fighting and have come to accept the American Forces as protectors rather than destroyers. They have come to coexist. At the border, a small contingent of Iranian border guards addresses the convoy. Mr. Smith gets out of the Humvee and hands over a large envelope to the ranking border guard who in turn waves the two-vehicle patrol on through.

As per SOP, Eagle Feather communicates through the SAT COM to CIA Ops Control, "Wrecking Crew to Husky Whiskey, feet dry, I repeat feet dry (meaning they are now in Iran)." Afterwards he calls FOB Sword's TOC, "Wrecking Crew to Home Plate, feet dry, I repeat feet dry."

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After reaching a safe distance from the border, Rev and Eagle Feather pull out their GPS and map out a route which will take the team through the remote areas of Iran. The plan is to travel at night only with resting to begin around 1000 hours. After miles of unforgiving terrain, they stop by a ridge which affords good cover and concealment.

No one speaks as they proceed to top off fuel and put their cammo netting over their vehicles. Radio checks to home plate reveal 'Cobra 18' is still standing by with a 1-hour ETA should they get into trouble. Cool Razor winces at this, saying under his breath, 'No shit, Sherlock.'

The rest period runs until 1700 hours with each team member taking half hour watches. As the sun is setting, 1730 hours, the cammo netting is removed. While the light descends over the mountain, the comm check to Home Plate is made notifying Ops Control that they are once again on the move. This scenario repeats itself over the next several days until they finally reach their destination.

Finding a suitable observation position, Cool Razor takes out his specially designed military grade long-range binoculars complete with LASER range finder, compass, et al. He observes that this particular Iranian nuclear facility is surrounded by a mountain range. Strung out along both ridge lines are what appear to be mobile SAM (Surface to Air Missile) launchers. Cool Razor has never seen these before but knows they aren't Russian.

In a soft voice, Warmonger, who is now next to Cool Razor, asks, "What's wrong, Boss Dude?"

"I've never seen these before—and I've seen all the Russian/Chinese versions. These are new. I need to get photos of these bastards and get them to the Ops Center fast."

Cool Razor scans the plant with his new Top Secret device that indicates radioactive materials even from miles away. The supposed SAMs are nuclear tipped. They along with the plant register a reading of hot. Cool Razor notes to himself, or was it out loud, "These guys ain't fucking around and they're all aimed at Israel."

Dancer, who used her personal stealth technology to come up beside the two men while they were talking, quietly says, "I was afraid of this. From what you just said, these are long-range tactical nukes, not SAMs."

Cool Razor says, "Too small for tac nukes."

"No, we have been aware of their existence for a couple of years, but no one has ever seen one until now. I know because I still have contacts at Delta who keep me informed about such things."

"Shit! There has got to be at least a hundred of them!" Cool Razor quickly snaps back into team leader mode and says, "Get Husky Whiskey on the horn. Give them the coordinates and tell them to inform the powers that be what we just found."

Dancer tries the SAT COMs, "Satellite is down Boss, no comms."

Cool Razor takes his cameras out. While snapping pictures, his new secure cell phone rings. Two Iranian MiG 28 aircraft zoom overhead. He didn't hear them until they were 200 meters out and too late to do anything about. The planes flew on by and did not circle. An air-raid siren blows. Soldiers barrel out of the plant as if they are in an ant bed that has been stirred-up.

Cool Razor thinks, '*Shit, we've been compromised!*' Out loud he says, "Let's get the hell out of here." As he picks up the mini camcorder and tosses it to Bad Karma, he says, "Document the scene." Meanwhile more troops come out of the woodwork.

Normally both Cool Razor and Warmonger use their swivel seats so they can fire and protect their collective rears, but with Cool Razor and Bad Karma documenting the action, that leaves

Warmonger covering by himself. He shouts, "Cool Razor, Bad Karma get a move on, damnit! Dancer, get me in closer so I can protect those two assholes. Eagle Feather, are comms up yet?"

Eagle Feather is transmitting when the first explosion occurs. Cool Razor and Bad Karma come hauling butt down the dune and Cool Razor shouts, "Warmonger, unleash on top of that dune!"

Iranian soldiers come over the dune. There is a short five-second burst from the mini-gun taking a lot of them down. Meanwhile, the team continues to pull back, Cool Razor lets loose with his .50 caliber M-2, main gun on his ride.

Dancer screams, "Warmonger, God damnit, you're spraying us with hot brass, you asshole!"

Warmonger shouts back, "I told you two before we left to wear hats with flaps but you looked at me like I was crazy. Next time you'll listen to me." Then without missing a beat shouts over the team intercom, "Eagle Feather, you got comms up yet?"

Eagle Feather adjusts knobs and tries the Sat Comms again, "Husky Whiskey, this is Wrecking Crew, transmitting photos in addition to mini-cam. Have been compromised, pursued by Iranian military—over."

A welcome response comes over the communication systems: "We'll contact Home Plate to scramble Cobra one-eight, hang tight and evade, help is on the way. Good luck Wrecking Crew, Husky Whiskey—out."

The gun fire settles down. The dune buggies are quick in the hard desert floor. While the team is approximately 50 clicks out, they notice they have left the Iranians in their dust. Suddenly there is a bright flash which almost blinds them, followed by an explosion. As their eyes adjust, they notice the shock wave coming towards them. As the team attempts to outrun the shockwave, Cool Razor and the crew know what must have happened. Someone had blown up the plant.

Warmonger speculates out loud, "This team is going to bear the blame. I just feel it in my bones!"

Cool Razor shouts, "Eagle Feather, get on the comms and let Husky Whiskey know what just happened."

"Cool Razor, the comms are down, possibly due to the explosion."

As soon as the words come out, the shock wave catches up with the Wrecking Crew. It knocks Cool Razor and Warmonger out of their respective dune buggies. Just as the drivers are stopping the dune buggies to collect their scattered warriors and check for damages, the dune buggy that Dancer and Rev are still in, suddenly and without warning, totally tips over, shaking up people and equipment.

Dancer swears like a sailor. This makes Warmonger smile. Not only does he know that she is all right but he picks up a few new words in the process. Meanwhile, Cool Razor is sitting upright and notices that Rev's eyes are becoming as big as saucers and his skin turns from a dark chocolate to French vanilla. Some may even say he was as white as a ghost. Everyone begins to recover their composure. Cool Razor realizes they are without any MOPP suits. He snatches up his Geiger counter—the radiation level is a little high but not lethal. Afterwards, he notices the winds are blowing northwesterly. He thinks, *'With any luck this all will be heading towards Tehran.'*

The team begins shaking off the dust and grit. Without signals and almost in unison they shake their heads.

Eagle Feather calls Home Plate again, to send 'Cobra 18' back given that no one will be pursuing the team. Meanwhile, together J.T., T.K. and Deano upright the temporarily tipped dune buggy back onto its four wheels. They take the opportunity to refuel the vehicles, adjust the supplies, and check the ammo. They are preparing to move out side by side. The vehicles never move, because Fighter Jets appear just above the horizon. Simultaneously, J.T.'s cell phone rings.

## Call Sign: Wrecking Crew

### Storm Warning

### Part I: Operation Sandstorm

## Chapter 4

**Mac stares suspiciously** at J.T. as a deep slow growl seeps out. Mac says, "J.T., are you going to tell us what the hell is going on?" These guys have been as close as brothers. Mac has never known him to put anyone at risk until now.

J.T. smiles noncommittally, "What?"

"You know God damn well what! Let's see, first and foremost this was supposed to be a sneak-and-peek only mission. Then you and T.K. are putting a LASER range finder on the plant. A plant that blows up just as we approach 50 klicks, not to mention all the while we have the Iranians on our collective asses. Or how about when you told us to get in our vehicles? I saw you pick up your phone as those two MiG 27s show up. What exactly do you think that fucking fireworks display did to our buggies? It knocked Deb's satellite gear all to hell. Fortunately, there aren't any damages."

Crazy Larry asks, "Mac, what the hell is wrong with you?"

"Shut up, Crazy Larry! I mean it, I'm pissed off and I want some answers." Mac's face gets redder by the second.

Deb gets out, lights a Backwoods' cigar, and stretches. "Mac is right. What the fuck is going on, J.T.?"

T.K. and Crazy Larry both roll their eyes. Deano says, "I'm too old for this shit, J.T. We weren't told to blow up the plant. Now what's up?"

J.T. explains, "That was Major Hassan on the phone. Earlier he said those were Israelis flying those two jets. They used something but I'm not sure exactly what, and neither is he. Then Major Ali, as I have begun to call Major Hassan, called to warn me that the Iranians have been massing along the border."

Unexpectedly, the comms crackle and a voice says, "Wrecking Crew this is Husky Whiskey, come in. Cool Razor come in, this is Husky Whiskey. Wrecking Crew, Cool Razor, your team is not— repeat—not to cross the border. It is too hot, repeat too hot."

Cool Razor asks, "Husky Whiskey, is Cobra one-eight en route to help."

Husky Whiskey responds, "Negative, Wrecking Crew, all assets have been pulled."

Mac, up in arms, says, "Well J.T., what the fuck do we do now? We're in the Bad Lands and now all our assets have been pulled."

J.T.'s phone rings and the team hears, "Thank you, Major. If you pull this off, you're coming home with us."

J.T. looks at the team. He knows Mac is right. T.K. sees the look in J.T.'s eyes and says, "J.T., go ahead. They wouldn't have come if they knew what was up, not to mention the stakes."

"How the fuck do you know that, T.K.?" Mac is really pissed off. Everyone could tell he is about to transition from his easy-going nature into his mad-man mode. They have witnessed it before. They feel like they are about to be unwilling participants in the mother of all goat fucks.

J.T. begins, "Mr. Smith has been given a burn notice and is finding his way back to the States as we speak. Major Ali is at FOB Sword trying to get us help."

"Burned?! The CIA case officer has been burned?" Mac's disbelief shows as his voice rises. He turns to Deb, "Get on your laptop, go to SNC and find out what the fuck is going on."

After the laptop switches out of sleep mode, Deb's fingers fly across the keyboard. She gains access to the appropriate site. The team hears, "Breaking news from the Satellite News Channel Desk. Iran has cut off all oil shipments to the U.S. and Europe. What's more, Iran has declared war against Israel and Iraq. Iranian troops are gathering along the border of Iraq as we speak, with all the signs that they are about to invade. Israel is experiencing rocket attacks from Syria. All of this is as a result of the Iranian nuclear power plant explosion earlier today. Our sources say that it was 'taken out by Israeli and Iraqi commandos.' The U.S. denies any involvement and swears that no U.S. troops were used in this 'raid.' In other news, President Gerald Moore is in the Intensive Care Unit at Bethesda. He was taken there initially after having a heart attack shortly after hearing about the explosion. While in the hospital, he suffered a stroke. We have no further details at this time. Vice President Lyons, who is currently in charge of the nation, has cut off aid to Israel and refused to send more troops to Iraq. We will provide further updates as they become available."

Mac says, "Hey J.T., did you hear? SNC is reporting that the Iranian Army is massing along the border of Iraq and the V.P. is not committing any additional troops to help." All the while, he is thinking, *'Now our conservative President is in the ICU and this terrorist-loving Commiecrat is in office because President Moore wanted to give the Democrats an olive branch.'* J.T. gestures to huddle-up, snapping Mac out his contemplations.

The team huddles around J.T. Mac lights a Marlboro. J.T. and T.K. fire up their Camel non-filters and Deb continues smoking her cigar. Deano and Crazy Larry don't smoke at all. J.T. begins, "Okay, listen up. I know I got you guys into this but I didn't know how quickly the Government was going to respond and certainly had no idea that we would switch Commanders-in-Chief in midstream."

Mac gives J.T. a disgusted look and shakes his head, "J.T." Mac finally says, "I would've come anyway but the least you and T.K. could've done is let the rest of us in on this, so we could've had a plan B ready.

"Before I briefed you all on this mission, I received separate orders not to let anyone except T.K. know the exact nature of the mission. Instead we were to make you believe it was just a simple reconnaissance or like you call it 'sneak and peek.' I knew you guys would do this even if I did tell you, but in this business you can only push things so far without getting your balls busted."

Mac and the rest of the team are still put out but they understand J.T.'s sticky situation. The look in their eyes tells J.T. all he needs to know. He had made the cardinal sin of any SPEC OPS mission—not telling the team everything. Yet they are family, he knows they will forgive him. More importantly, they will follow him anywhere, if he treats them with respect. He makes a vow to himself that he will do just that from now on...no matter what."

"J.T., do you trust Major Hassan?" asks Mac

J.T. nods as he looks at Mac. They have been through a lot and he knows Mac isn't prone to belly aching. He also knows that Mac dislikes being left out of the loop and rightfully so. J.T. begins to wonder if the orders were part of a set up to get this team to dissolve or was it a test of some kind by the big guys in suits and ties. As J.T. focuses on his current surroundings, he hears his people talking about how they are almost out of reserve fuel, water, and food but they have plenty of ammo for their weapons. His cell phone rings yet again, bringing him completely back into reality. It is Major Ali who reports, "I have authorized a squadron of MiG 27s as well as MiG 28s to blow a gap between the borders."

J.T. relays the news and adds, "Currently, the Iraqi and American troops have what equates to about one-eighth of the troop level that was in Iraqi Freedom. The Vice President is not committing any more troops."

Even knowing the odds, Mac says, "Who's up for a little fire fight? Deb, Deano, and I will take point and use the mini-gun to take out the flanks. Crazy Larry, you get the grenade launcher. J.T., please follow my lead, because unfortunately we only have one 30-rounder. That's why I'm taking point, this time." Mac climbs up in his vehicle. "Deano, now is the time to say a prayer because we're going to need it."

Deano eloquently begins, "Oh Heavenly and Merciful Father, we your humble servants are up to our rear ends in snapping alligators. We beseech Thee for guidance and a way out of this predicament. Heavenly Father, this team has saved Israel, your beloved tribe, from annihilation. So I'm asking You to save a little Grace for us. I ask this in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior's name, Amen!" He climbs up, "Let's go kick some Iranian Asses!"

Mac's dune buggy heads out as Crazy Larry plays AC/DC's Hell's Bells over the team's intercom.

**Call Sign: Wrecking Crew**  
**Storm Warning**  
**Part I: Operation Sandstorm**

**Chapter 5**

**As Mac nears** the border, the team sees Major Ali's jets blowing a path a kilometer wide. As the Iranians are about to cross the border, artillery shells and jets are already attacking their collection of front line troops. The Iranians have T-72 tanks and MiG 25 fighters. No match for the Iraqis. While the team remains hidden between two sand dunes watching the show, they spot two divisions of Iranians trying to cross the border by outflanking the allies. They are too far away for any of the team's weapons, even the Barrett .50 cal. Sniper Rifle.

J.T. gets on the horn to FOB Sword, "Home Plate, this is Wrecking Crew. You're being outflanked on both sides of the borders by two divisions—over."

"Roger that, Wrecking Crew, and thanks—over and out."

At one fell swoop, artillery shells start air bursting. The Iranians slow their assault, and the two divisions are stopped cold. They pull back and regroup. More fighters and Apache helicopters attack. As the remnants of two divisions and three battalions are being decimated, a regiment of Iranian Republic Guards are on the go about five clicks from the team.

J.T. grabs the Barrett and after a quick calculation, estimates he can slow these guys down. He picks out the lead vehicle, a command car, and fires, leaving the driver drooping and driving off to the left in front of a T-72 tank which takes out everyone in the lead car.

"Home Plate, this is Wrecking Crew. Cool Razor engaged a regiment reinforcing the border. We're engaged and are requesting immediate air support—over."

"Roger, Wrecking Crew, stand by."

With their vehicles side by side, J.T. gestures to Mac to break out the weapons. Mac quickly passes out the necessary weapons. After everyone is appropriately armed, Mac glances over to J.T. and whispers, "You know this reminds me of an episode of *The Rat Patrol*"

"Yeah, I know."

Just as they are driving away, the T-72 opens up, missing both dune buggies but delivers a shower of rocks and sand. Meanwhile, the battle is still raging on the border. Six Israeli F-14 Tomcats with nuclear tipped Phoenix missiles track towards Tehran.

J.T. and Mac hit the Iranian's flanks, while four UH1N Iraqi gunships race across the sky. Deano and Larry lay down heavy fire with the Stoner 63A and grenade launcher. J.T. snaps up the .50 caliber Barrett and starts hitting the T-72 with plutonium-tipped shells causing a cascade that systematically takes out the tanks.

Larry grabs the comms, "Wrecking Crew to Home Plate—have gunships overhead. What's their call sign and frequency? Over."

Before Home Plate can respond, Major Ali speaks, "This is Hornet 6 and I have four angry beasts. I see the dune buggies are taking the left flank. Tell them to keep the fire up on the right. Our Jewish friends are thumping Tehran and having a glowing success."

"Roger that Hornet 6—Eagle Feather—out."

All the while, J.T. and Mac are giving the right flank hellish fire. Mac's mini gun chews up Iranians like hot butter through a knife, while J.T.'s .50 caliber hammers them. Deb is chewing on her cigar while both arms bleed from shrapnel and rocks from grenades, artillery, T-72 shells, and small arms that have been ricocheting all over the buggies.

Meanwhile, Hornet 6 is doing a terrific job of stopping the advance cold. The Iranians circle their wagons. It appears as if no one is coming to relieve them. Even though things look pretty bad for the enemy, an unexpected explosion occurs in front of Deb, causing Mac to be thrown out.

"Warmonger, are you all right," Deano calls out seeing Mac lying on his back, half-conscious. Deano, who is halfway up in the air, shoots at any Iranian attempting to get to Mac. Deb comes down hard after she swings the dune buggy on two wheels and has turned around just as J.T. pulls up next to Mac.

J.T. jumps out screaming, "Mac...Mac wake up. Don't you fucking die on me!"

Mac looks up, grins his evil grin and mutters, "Boss dude, this don't mean we're going to swap spit and take hot showers together, you hear me."

"Yeah, I hear you, you SOB. Now get your ass back in your buggy!"

Deb yells at both of them, "If you two are finished with your little love fest, can we continue kicking Iranian ass?"

Mac is helped up by J.T. and Deano. Mac inspects his mini gun. It fires a three-second burst, then quits. "J.T. my weapon is fucked up. We gotta get out of here!"

Crazy Larry overhearing J.T. and Mac, quickly gets on the comms, "Hornet 6, this is Wrecking Crew, we need cover—over."

"Wrecking Crew, this is Hornet 6, message received and understood—out."

There are two flights of two, covering the flanks and the team. By the looks of things, the Iranians have had enough for one day. Three regiments and one battalion have been almost annihilated. Hornet 6 covers the team as the dune buggies race the five clicks together. Despite previous appearances, more artillery shells are exploding. The team thinks, *'Someone doesn't want us to cross the border.'*

Cool Razor calls out, "Hornet 6, too hot for you. Get out of here."

"Sorry, Cool Razor broken transmission. We're going to cover you —over."

J.T. thinks, *'Damn he has big balls.'*

As more shells explode, Mac says to Deano, "Give me the Stoner 63A." He mounts the Stoner 63A and stores the mini-gun. "We're set," Mac says to J.T.

Just then Deb gives a distinctive look towards Mac. Despite the current situation, Deano takes a long look at Deb and Mac. He shakes his head and laughs.

Deb asks, "What the fuck is wrong with you, Deano?"

"If I didn't know any better, I'd say you and Mac are an item."

"And if we are?"

Deano's eyes might have gotten as big as platters if he didn't shake his head so hard with disbelief.

Deb says, "Fucking Jar Heads!"

As the team crosses the border, they are met by a Special Operation Force. An Army Captain says, "I'm Captain Billings in charge of the Green Berets A-team. This is Lieutenant Adams, platoon leader of SEAL Team Ten 8. Where the hell did you and your team come from?"

In a perfect Bugs Bunny imitation, J.T. quips, "I knew I should've taken that left turn at Albuquerque."

The Special Forces leaders are unimpressed. CAPT Billings asks, "What's your Call Sign?"

Everyone is apprehensive. Major Ali flies back around announcing over the loud Haler of his gunship. "This team is with me. I am Hornet One-Six."

CAPT Billing repeats with authority, "What is your Call Sign?"

J.T., who is still unsure what this is all about, proudly says, "Our Call Sign is Wrecking Crew!"

## **Call Sign: Wrecking Crew**

### **Storm Warning**

#### **Part I: Operation Sandstorm**

### **Chapter 6**

**As the team** is escorted back to FOB Sword, Hornet 6 lands and performs his post-flight inspection. Upon return to the base, the injured warriors of the Wrecking Crew are taken to FOB Sword's medical team while J.T. and T.K. are taken to debriefing by their escort command. Crazy Larry and Deano are left in charge of contacting Husky Whiskey via the communication systems in their buggies.

Eagle Feather begins, "Husky Whiskey—were met and escorted back to FOB Sword—over."

“Come back with call sign—over.”

“This is Wrecking Crew—over.”

“Do not recognize call sign—over.”

“Husky Whiskey, this is Wrecking Crew—over”

“Again do not recognize call sign. Suggest you take your orders from FOB Sword—over.”

“Roger that, Husky Whiskey—over and out.”

Deano looks at Crazy Larry and says, “What’s going on?”

Larry shakes his head as he says, “I don’t know but J.T. and T.K. are going to be really pissed off when they hear about this. Deano, go check on Deb and if her wounds have been tended to, have her come back and help me find a back channel. Listen, it might be best if you don’t tell anyone, especially her, what just happened. I’ll tell her when she gets here.” Deano nods as he leaves.

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Entering FOB Sword’s medical section, Deano sees they are just finishing with Deb’s wounds. He also notices Mac’s wounds are being stitched. Mac observes Deano’s face and immediately knows something isn’t right.

Deano speaks to Deb, “Are you all done here?” She nods in the affirmative. Deano continues, “Could you please go help Larry?”

Deb asks, “What exactly does he need? Tell me he didn’t mess up my equipment.”

Deano responds with his special look that Deb knows means business, “Please just go help him. He’ll explain when you get there.”

As she leaves, Deb shoots Mac a look and shrugs, “Okay, Deano, I’ll go see Larry now.”

Mac’s face turns a deeper shade of red, “Deano, what is the fucking problem?”

Deano only shakes his head and walks out following Deb.

Mac knows without a doubt that something isn’t right. The feeling in his gut is telling him that the team is FUBAR. Knowing he has to get his mini-gun repaired and find out exactly what is going on adds to his concern. Even though he feels that the medic working on him is taking forever, it hasn’t been a minute since Deano left the room.

The medic looks at Mac, “If you don’t stop swinging your legs back and forth, I’m going to have to give you something stronger than a local to sedate you.”

Mac realizes he needs to calm down and focus. The medic finishes stitching Mac up and releases him with the usual warnings regarding wound care. Mac nods at the medic, who is thinking, *‘He isn’t really listening. Some people are just bound and determined to go back out in the field despite their injuries.’*

Mac leaves the medical section, making a bee-line to his mini-gun. Despite the pain he is feeling, he fixes the malfunction in record time.

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J.T. and T.K. enter the debriefing room with CAPT Billings and LT Adams. J.T. asks, "What is your major malfunction? Why are you acting this way towards us? Don't you realize we just helped save some of your military brothers' butts out there? Where are Captain Pullman and Sergeant Stanley? They know what's going on."

CAPT Billings says, "We've been informed that your Call Sign is not recognized. As for the Captain, he has been relieved of duty and the Sergeant has been reassigned. So what were you doing in Iran and why did we find you crossing the Iraqi border?"

"I won't say anything until Major Hassan is present."

"Who is Major Hassan?"

J.T. is about to answer but, then he sees Major Hassan enter the doorway, still in his flight suit. "Ask him yourself. He's right behind you."

CAPT Billings turns around to see who J.T. is talking about. Major Hassan looks at all the men in the room. He begins, "I am Major Muhammad Ali Hassan, the co-commander of this joint operation."

CAPT Billings asks, "Where is the commander?"

"He was given his burn notice and as far as I know he is making his way back to the United States."

"What was your mission?"

"That is classified and is what you Americans say is, 'Above your pay grade.' Beyond that I will not say because I will be taking over this debriefing."

"No, you're to remain here until your people let us know what we're to do with you!"

Even though Major Ali is frustrated, he does not show it. In an even tone, he says, "I do not take my orders from you. Until I hear differently from my people, I will debrief my men. Would you please leave the room?"

J.T. and T.K. look at each other. Neither likes the sound of that. Unexpectedly, an Operations Sergeant comes from the TOC into the debriefing room. He announces, "The Iranian Republic Guard has one Regiment and one Battalion of Iranian Regular Army including tanks and artillery. Troops from FOB Currahee are at the border taking fire and requesting assistance."

J.T. looks at CAPT Billings, "Now what do you plan on doing? Are we all going to play in the sandbox or should my team of specialists set this one out?" Realizing he may have overstepped his bounds, J.T. looks at Major Ali apologetically.

CAPT Billings looks at LT Adams, "Guess we have no choice."

J.T. looks at T.K. and T.K. knows what he is thinking without a word being uttered, *'Damn straight you don't have a choice unless you just want your collective asses kicked.'* T.K. smirks and nods toward J.T.

Major Ali addresses J.T. and T.K., "We will postpone our debriefing. Get your team together. I will fly cover."

CAPT Billings bellows orders to the TOC Sergeant, "We need immediate assistance of all kinds before we are invaded by these Iranian troops. While you're on the horn, be sure to explain

exactly what we're up against. Meantime, FOB Sword will hold our own, leaving behind only a platoon of Army Rangers guarding the base."

~~~~~

J.T. and T.K. leave the debriefing room to find the team. As luck would have it they are all working on the vehicles making the appropriate repairs and gathering information. J.T. gives the team a current sit rep, adding, "... Look I want us to be ready so we can leave out with the rest of the Special Forces teams. Mac, get all the unused ammo and weapons and load them into our vehicles. Deano will help you with that. Larry and Deb, make sure our comms are working and while you're at it see if there is any news that I need to know."

Mac and the rest of the team relish the suggestion of this challenge. Not only will they show this new FOB Commander what they are made of, but the joy of being in combat again is like catnip to Mac more than any of the others.

Call Sign: Wrecking Crew

Storm Warning

Part I: Operation Sandstorm

Chapter 7

While all the teams scramble to get ready, Major Hassan notices his aircraft is not ready for pre-flight. He asks the person who appears to be in charge, "Is there a reason why my Huey is being locked down?"

"Sir, that's beyond my pay grade. You'll need to talk to your people about that."

Major Ali recognizes that he is caught up in the web of a CIA SNAFU. The non-recognition of Wrecking Crew's Call Sign should have come to mind when they were being questioned. However, the overall urgency and rapid fire sequence of events pushed it from his immediate thoughts. Now he will have to find some kind of back channel for help. An idea comes to mind but in order to make it work, he needs J.T.'s assistance.

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J.T. sees Major Ali coming towards him, the look on his face is new yet somehow familiar. Major Ali approaches, "J.T., my aircraft is being locked down. I need to get hold of someone who can help us out. Would it be all right if I borrow your cell phone? I know it will not be a secure call but it is better than it being monitored on a phone inside, if you know what I mean." J.T. nods his head, hands over the phone, and listens as Major Ali makes his call.

Major Ali dials, hears it ring and then his cousin, Sheik Ahmed Hassan answers, "Hassan and Sons, how may we help you?"

"Shloonak Ahmed?" It is Ali.

Sheik Hassan responds, "Hello Ali, Alhumdu lillah wa shukar, wa inta?" telling Ali he is good, thank God and asks how he is doing while flipping on the radio in the background

"Alhumdu lillah wa shukar. I am on an assignment that has gone very bad. Now I am grounded and unable to access my resources. Can you help get me some support?"

"Yes and you should know the government is searching for you. They say they want to court-martial you but I am sure they really mean, execute without a trial. If Saddam was still in power that would mean your whole family would already be in prison and/or dead. I will see what I can do, but it may take an hour or two. Take care until then."

"I understand, but an hour may be too late as troops are already on their way. Try to hurry if you can."

"I understand and will do my best inshallah, God willing. Expect assistance ASAP, ma salama Ali."

"Ma salama, Ahmed."

As he hangs up and returns the phone to J.T., Ali shudders slightly, "my head is already being positioned... as you might say, 'on a platter' for the Iraqi President."

J.T. nods and accompanies Major Ali to speak to CAPT Billings and LT Adams. J.T. says, "Major Ali has a UH1N gunship, Call Sign Hornet One-Six. However, unless someone gets it out of lock down, it'll be of no use to us. It can accommodate six SEALS or six Green Berets. Which one is flying with him?"

LT Adams says, "One of my squads will fly with Major Hassan." Then he motions to his assistant platoon leader. He orders, "Get Second Squad on Major Hassan's bird as soon as it's ready for takeoff." LT Adams turns to CAPT Billings and adds, "The rest of us will fall in behind Wrecking Crew."

CAPT Billings says, "For now, the Major is part of my defense team. I'll get his aircraft out of lock down. My team will take the Humvees as well as the deuce and halves into this, shall we say, responsive action."

J.T. says, "While you're doing that I'll make sure that my team has everything under control. We'll meet you at the staging area for departure."

J.T. updates the team and then he and T.K. leave. Because everything is happening so fast, J.T. is not briefed. Deb figures that maybe waiting a little longer to tell him will be a good thing.

Elsewhere, as they check out their gear, J.T. tells T.K. what happened with Major Ali. T.K. says, "On a platter? The man certainly can use our help, that's for sure. He deserves it after all he's already done for us."

Moments later, everyone is assembled in the staging area. CAPT Billings picks up the pace, hollering out Call Signs as each team gets into position. The Bradley Fighting Vehicles, Call Sign: Hammer takes point, not just because of their maneuverability but because of their familiarity with the terrain on the way to the border. Next up, Call Sign: Wrecking Crew, their

Desert Patrol Vehicles are paired with LT Adams along with the rest of his SEAL Team in their armored Humvees utilizing Call Sign: Anvil. Behind them the Green Berets in their own specialized Humvees, are given Call Sign: Green Giant. Bringing up the rear is the Army Rangers, in the deuce and halves and they are assigned Call Sign: Rough Neck. After CAPT Billings gets in place, the teams venture out. The normal verbal banter of these warriors is somewhat subdued and swiftly transforms into a professional mind set as they egress from FOB Sword. They know this mission is no dry run and that anything could and would happen if they did not focus in on doing their jobs. They are after all, well trained, top-notch warriors.

On Wrecking Crew's 'team only' intercom, Cool Razor asks, "Dancer, what did you find out?"

Dancer begins, "As you know, our team Call Sign isn't being recognized by our people..." She looks at Warmonger and Rev quickly for moral support. "...We are now 'persona non grata.' Not only that, there are special orders for you to await the nearest CIA Station Chief for a full briefing. As I understand it, after this current situation is contained, we are to stay put at FOB Sword."

Sarcastically, Cool Razor says, "Glad you told me now."

"Exactly, Boss, exactly."

Warmonger asks, "Dancer, so are we going to be disbanded?"

Everyone says, "Let 'em try!"

Dancer says, "Boss, guess you won't be alone at that briefing."

As darkness settles in, the sky lights up with exploding shells and tracer rounds reminiscent of the ones seen during Operation Desert Storm. The memory of a bygone era is not lost on this team who has seen more than their share of conflict and life lessons, all in the name of God and Country.

## Call Sign: Wrecking Crew

### Storm Warning

### Part I: Operation Sandstorm

## Chapter 8

**As soon as** FOB Sword's mass mobilization groups approach the action, they hear sounds of soldiers calling for medics, help, and ammo. The merged mass converts into fighting formations when Call Sign: Hammer breaks off taking the left flank. The Wrecking Crew takes the right

flank. The SEALs, Green Berets and Rangers go hey-diddle-diddle-right-up-the-middle to fill any remaining gaps, thus creating their version of a giant fishing net. This unity and spirit of cooperation was totally spontaneous, yet unfolded as if it had been choreographed.

Out of nowhere, Wrecking Crew spies a soldier. They stop long enough to gather what intelligence they can, regarding the current battle. The soldier introduces himself, "I am SSG Warren J. Bell, US Army, First Cavalry 2/7. Currently, I'm the ranking NCO, that is, of those not critically injured or already killed in action. I've been ordered by Captain John Miller, US Army, 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment (Airborne), 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Alpha Company to stay behind to brief anyone coming in to help us. He went out with a SEAL Squad that some crazy Iraqi pilot in a Huey dropped off. Then all of a sudden this crazy Iraqi pilot takes off and starts 'tear-assing' around stopping the advance dead cold, approximately twenty minutes ago. It appears he went back to refuel and hopefully bring more desperately needed air support. I suspect the Iranians are regrouping and will hit again soon."

As SSG Bell is talking, Deano notices his voice sounds as if he may be from Harlem, New York. Looking at him it seems possible that he is a fellow 'Black American' except between the darkness and the camouflage make-up, it is really hard to tell.

J.T. thanks him for the information. Immediately they hear the sounds of jets. Looking up, they see six Iraqi MiG 28s flying low followed by USMC FA18 Hornets and Super Hornets and USAF F16 Falcons. The aircraft detect the Iranian fighting force are just beyond small arms range. However, Call Sign: Hammer is fragmenting them. As the MiG 28s demolish the Iranian artillery, the FA18s take out the tanks and the enemy troops that are in the middle. J.T. thinks, *'The remaining forces should be able to be stopped by the incoming Special Forces group as well as the regular army troopers from First Cavalry 2/7.'*

Abruptly, Major Ali's gunship is heard over head, followed by eight more Huey gunships, all presents left by Uncle Sam back in the day. Four of them begin assisting the fighter planes. All the while, Major Ali acts as translator for both sides. He is coordinating efforts so they don't run up each other's sixes, or even worse into their flack.

An Iranian group that breaks through is met by fire power from the combined U.S./Iraqi Forces resulting in ever increasing casualties to the Iranian troops. The combined forces begin picking off the last of the lingering Iranian troops.

As the fires from the battle rage on and the sickening smell of death emanates all around them, the assembled teams hear a voice over the secure military comms. The voice identifies himself as CAPT John Miller, current Battlefield Commander. He gives a time and position for all the team leaders including SSG Bell to convene and brief him.

J.T. gets on the Wrecking Crew's intercom, "Mac, I don't know these people well enough to play by their rules. I need to have you there as my second in command. I don't care what they think of it. Too many hinky things have been going on today for my taste."

"You got it, Boss Dude."

~~~~~

J.T. and Mac approach the command vehicle just as CAPT Billings, LT Adams, and SSG Bell arrive. With all the parties assembled, CAPT Miller begins, "First of all gentlemen, I want to applaud your efforts out there. I've never seen a group come in and sweep across a battlefield with such eloquence and daring. I was especially impressed by the mini-gun action that helped

stop the enemy right in their tracks as well as defending our right flanks when they were taking on heavy fire.”

Mac nods his head which barely contains his classic, shit-eating grin. The yellow wraparound sunglasses, still on his face, hide the look in his eyes which tell another story.

CAPT Miller continues, “Sergeant Bell, I need a TOE assessment. In particular, what will you need to hold the line?”

“Information is being gathered as we speak, sir.”

A tall lanky male whose uniform indicates that he is SGT Mays, walks in as if on cue. With a twinge of Alabama in his voice he says, “Sir, sorry to interrupt but I knew you’d want this information right away. We’ve got ten KIA including our First Sergeant. We’re down one main gun. We have 4 operational SAWs. Even at that we’re down to one hundred rounds, per man, of which we have one hundred-thirty that are able to fight. Twenty were WIA and are currently being evacuated to FOB Gold via chopper. Thanks to the Iraqi pilots who stayed behind. We’ve got enough food for two days and water for one day.”

CAPT Miller says, “Sergeant Mays, thank you for that timely report.” As SGT Mays leaves, CAPT Miller turns to CAPT Billings, LT Adams, and J.T., “What do you have in the way of people and equipment that we can utilize in order to hold the line?”

Mac whispers to J.T., “We should have enough to repel one more attack but after that we’ll be screwed.”

J.T. reports, “We should be all right for one more attack, if it comes before we can get re-supplied.”

“Get me a list of what you need as far as supplies within the hour. I’ll relay it to Baghdad so they can get things to us by first light. After re-supply I’m going to need a damage assessment. I’ll need two teams of Airborne Rangers and their Humvees. With them, I want one Bradley Fighting Vehicle, for support if needed, taking the left flank. I want them to go out fifty to hundred clicks, do reconnaissance and see if the Iranians are regrouping or on their way. Upon return, if possible, assess the battlefield damage.” Then CAPT Miller looks directly at that team leader and continues, “If they are regrouping, do not engage, unless fired upon first, then fall back to this location, unless otherwise directed.”

CAPT Miller turns again, “Lieutenant Adams, I need you and your team to take the right flank and do the same thing.”

J.T. interjects, “If you want, one of our dune buggies can accompany Lieutenant Adams and the other can go with Captain Billings. We can follow those same orders.”

CAPT Miller nods affirmatively and continues, “Captain Billings, I need you and your team to take center position and do the same as the other teams. So in conclusion, when supplies arrive, make sure that refueling and restocking of supplies is sufficient for this mission and beyond. I don’t intend on losing any more good men, especially on a recon mission. Remember gentlemen, I need those supply lists to me within the hour. After that, get some rest, assuming we aren’t attacked overnight, and I’ll see you at first light.”

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J.T. speaks privately to Mac as they start towards their vehicles to give the rest of the team a sit rep. "Get with T.K. on what ammo we'll need for re-supply, including the Stoner 63A and M-248. He can complete the lists for all the other supplies and get it to me for Captain Miller."

"Roger that. You take the M-248 grenade launcher in your buggy. My gut says you are going to need it."

J.T. looks at Mac like a brother, "What're you going to take?"

Mac, looking like a kid in a candy store, says, "I'm taking the Stoner 63A, M-4 carbine with M-203 grenade launcher, plus I have the Barrett." Approaching his dune buggy, Mac hands over the USAS-12 shotgun along with four 20-round drums of 00 buckshot.

"I really need this?"

"Yes, you really need this." Mac smiles. As he begins to say something, he hears J.T. join in, so in unison, they say, "There's no such thing as too much firepower or too much ammo."

~~~~~

After the re-supply list is given to CAPT Miller, the Team alternates taking watches and resting. Each person, in their own way, is thankful that the Iranians did not attack.

Call Sign: Wrecking Crew

Storm Warning

Part I: Operation Sandstorm

Chapter 9

As dawn breaks, the sky is full of CH47 Chinooks heaving with supplies as well as additional troops per CAPT Miller's request. After one of them lands, a Colonel exits. Quickly surveying the area, he asks a nearby soldier, "Where is Captain Miller?" The courteous soldier escorts the Colonel to CAPT Miller. As the Colonel approaches, CAPT Miller comes to attention without saluting.

The Colonel says, "How long have you been in this man's Army, Captain? Don't you know by now that I outrank you?"

"Yes sir, don't you know we're in a battlefield? Saluting under such conditions can result in an enemy sniper attack on high-ranking officials."

"I don't give a damn. Salute me anyway and if you don't you'll go on report."

Giving up, CAPT Miller salutes the Colonel, noticing the name tag reads Campbell. He thinks, *'Like the soup, oh what a mess this is going to be.'*

COL Campbell, unimpressed by what he considers a half-hearted salute, says, "Get on with the briefing, Captain Miller."

COL Campbell actively listens to CAPT Miller until he starts talking about the plans for the day. He says, "I don't see the necessity of a Recon Mission."

CAPT Miller thinks, *'This jerk has been sitting in his air-conditioned, white-walled office way too long to have any brains left.'* However he says, "I don't know what exactly we're up against, especially after that encounter yesterday evening. We could've withstood one more attack last night. Since it didn't happen and we're not sure what capabilities they possess, I thought it best to Recon as well as assess damages."

"You thought, did you? Who issued you brains?"

CAPT Miller hides his smirk, *'Thank God not the same one that issued yours or we'd already be fucked.'* Out loud he says, "I've been an Army Airborne Ranger for ten years. I've seen action as far back as Somalia until now, which gives me a working perspective."

"That's why you're still a Captain and not a Major."

CAPT Miller thinks, *'Really the reason is major assholes like you.'* He says, "I ordered those troopers into Iran owing to the fact that I just don't know what's going on and we haven't gotten any intelligence on troops or troop movements despite our best efforts. We stopped them at the border before damage could be done to the country we're supposed to be protecting."

COL Campbell face turns colors, "On what authority did you go into Iran?"

"On my orders as well as based on my training and experience."

"You're on report. I'm relieving you of command. So get on that aircraft and go back to whence you came."

~~~~~

CAPT Miller salutes, gathers his stuff and walks off towards the waiting aircraft. He thinks, *'I'm sure glad those teams quickly re-supplied and got out of here while the Colonel was having his tirade. I'm also glad he didn't ask for the appropriate Call Signs, so I didn't have to give them to him. The teams won't respond without them. So he's up the proverbial creek and I'm glad.'*

As CAPT Miller boards the aircraft, he tells the pilot, "If anyone attempts to contact us for Colonel Campbell, just play possum."

The pilot nods and smiles because he'd had enough of the pious Colonel on the trip over, so he says, "My radio just became 'Out of Range.'" CAPT Miller nods with approval.

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COL Campbell asks someone nearby, "Who was Captain Miller's executive officer?"

The soldier responds, "First Lieutenant Jenkins, sir. I'll escort you to him, if you like." The soldier escorts COL Campbell to 1LT Jenkins.

Upon reaching 1LT Jenkins, COL Campbell says, "I need you to recall the teams who are currently doing Recon."

1LT Jenkins responds, "Sir, I wasn't given the Call Signs by Captain Miller as yet. I was on my way to do that. If you speak with Captain Miller he can give them to you."

"Exactly what were you doing, Lieutenant?"

"I was checking the line and the men to make sure we're ready in the event of another attack by the Iranians. Is there a problem, sir?"

"Yes, there's a big one. Take me to the Communication Center, now."

1LT Jenkins starts toward the Comms Center. COL Campbell storms ahead of him. 1LT Jenkins quickens his pace and proceeds with directing COL Campbell to their destination. Upon reaching it, COL Campbell snaps at the radio operator, "I want to speak to the aircraft that Captain Miller just boarded."

Radio Operator, SSGT Roberto Orlando follows orders. Afterwards he reports, "Sir, I'm unable to get any response from the aircraft."

COL Campbell says, "Okay thank you, Sergeant Orlando." Then he turns to 1LT Jenkins and starts barking out all kinds of orders.

"Yes sir," 1LT Jenkins answers, but before he leaves, he asks, "Sir, what happened to Captain Miller?"

COL Campbell says, "I relieved him of duty and sent him back to where he came from."

1LT Jenkins has a dumbfounded look on his face. He thinks, *'Why would any intelligent person want to not get all the information they need before sending someone away is beyond me.'*

He starts to get about the business. Then he hears COL Campbell say, "Lieutenant, didn't you forget to salute a superior officer before leaving?" Since 1LT Jenkins is not sure what led to CAPT Miller being sent back so fast, he salutes, then swiftly leaves the vicinity, as he thinks, *'Better safe than sorry.'*

COL Campbell mutters to himself, "Doesn't anybody know how to salute anymore? I don't care what that insubordinate Captain says about the battlefield."

~~~~~

At FOB Currahee, CAPT Miller is approached by a short and stocky male, Platoon Leader, 2LT Anderson. Seeing him approach CAPT Miller thinks, *'I'm glad the baby-face soldiers were kept behind at FOB Currahee. I'd hoped these young bucks wouldn't see battle unless my seasoned troops were overrun, given that I've seen battle up close and personal. How quickly things can change, particularly since becoming Battlefield Commander. I can't believe how fast it happened. All due to losing the 2/7 Command Vehicle, containing the CO, XO, and the First Sergeant. They were just strategizing on defenses when the enemy's artillery round came.'*

His thoughts are interrupted when 2LT Anderson asks, "John, what brings you back?"

"Just a Command Cluster Fuck of a Colonel proportion. Excuse me, while I go to the TOC and attempt to communicate some info about the teams I assigned before being relieved."

2LT Anderson has a puzzled but intrigued look as he carries out his duties.

CAPT Miller continues toward the TOC. Upon entering it, he obtains a secured channel to USSOC Central and begins, "This is Captain John Miller, Alpha Company Seventy-fifth Ranger Regiment (Airborne), FOB Currahee. I need to contact the OIC immediately. I've been relieved

of Battlefield Command by Colonel Campbell. I need to brief on the Recon Teams out in the field. They left prior to Colonel Campbell's takeover."

Swiftly a voice responds, "This is General McKenzie. I'm the OIC, begin your briefing Captain."

After CAPT Miller concludes his briefing, General McKenzie says, "Don't worry Captain, I'll take care of that Colonel so and so by sending one of my best 'Command Generals.' He'll be out there to pick you up and together you can deal with that Colonel. "Then without realizing it General McKenzie goes on a tangent, "I'd explicitly recommended to my superiors to send a 'Seasoned Officer' and not one who has never seen battle other than through his office window." Just as spontaneously he comes back on point then continues, "Stand by. In the meantime I'm activating the 1/5 Marine Division to the border. They're the last remaining troops available for combat. Iraqis are being mobilized but it might be anywhere from seventy-two to ninety-six hours before they'll be able to relieve any troops. That reminds me does this crazy Colonel have the Call Signs or Recall Sign?"

"Negative, sir."

"Good, be ready to move out when the General's bird lands at FOB Currahee. He doesn't like to be kept waiting."

"Who should I be expecting, sir?"

"Brigadier General Bull Simons."

~~~~~

The Recon Teams sent by CAPT Miller are doing their job totally unaware of what is going on in the rear. The left flank is clear at fifty clicks out and continuing forward. However, the right flank along with Mac's dune buggy come across a lot of destruction including APCs, Troop Transport Trucks, and T-72 tanks. These remind the Wrecking Crew of the ones they took out during their first engagement with the Iranians. The destruction slows down their trek immensely. So do the pockets of resistance which appear to be attempting to regroup, as they initiate a fierce firefight. They are quickly annihilated by the dual team effort. The Recon Team in the center which includes J.T.'s dune buggy is encountering similar problems when rounds appear in front of their temporarily parked vehicles. The Humvee is taking the brunt of the incoming rounds. J.T. speaks through the military comms, "This is Cool Razor to Green Giant 6—did you see where those rounds came from—over?"

CAPT Billings responds, "Negative—over"

Without any consultation, J.T. decides to recon by fire. This only leads to the Humvee taking more rounds. CAPT Billings says, "Green Giant 6 to Cool Razor—recon by fire is only resulting in our Humvee being pelted. Cease fire now. Wait until we see a muzzle flash before firing—over."

"Roger—out"

When neither team can see a muzzle flash, they become increasingly irritated. J.T. says to T.K., "Back up a bit, I think I saw a hunk of twisted metal. It might be a tank or something we can get behind to use as a different means of Recon by fire." Then to Crazy Larry he says, "Get on the horn to Captain Billings. Have them find other cover in this maze. Maybe we can flush this guy out."