

## BROTHERS

"No more pencils, no more books, no ...? Damn, what was the rest of it? Peter shook his head, why in the hell had I thought about that saying just now and why in this stinkin' place?"

Paul sank down on one knee, trying to dodge the other students as they rushed past.

Peter pushed the helmet up away from his eyes, bringing what seemed a gallon of sweat cascading down over his face. He cursed and spit the chew out onto the hot ground, "damn, sand sure kills the taste of good tobacco. He made a move toward the canteen, no, that had better wait."

The boy reached for the book bag with one hand, while the other tried to catch the assignment paper skimming across the marble floor.

The rest of the squad better not be far behind. God, how he hated this being 'point man'. It gave you the weird feeling of being the only person alive, besides you were always so friggin' exposed to any 'sob'. that might just happen to look in your direction.

As he slid the book, a dog eared copy of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and the assignment sheet back into the bag, he just knew, she was gonna' be there! He could feel her, even before his eye caught sight of the 'habit'. "

He was in trouble now, for sure.

Peter dove head first down behind a small mound of sand, his stomach digging a trench in the soft ground. Damn, he could already feel the heat starting to come up through his jacket.

where in the hell were they?

S.O.P. (Standard Operating Procedure) said the squad was never supposed to be more than a few hundred yards behind your point man.

For some reason, Sister Clotilda, always happened to show up at the wrong time. She seemed to have some sort of a sex-sense when it came to finding the perpetual screw-ups. "Like me."

"If they don't show soon, I could be in real trouble."

Those bastards could be out there anywhere! A hundred years spent in this sort of terrain had given them the know how, to remain hidden in places where there was no where to hide! Something else bothered him too; this wouldn't be the first time that some klutz back at GHQ had underestimated enemy strength.

Paul's head moved slowly up her habit. He blushed as his eyes hesitated on her huge chest. The thing that frightened him most about her was the hair growing out of her chin. "Just like his uncle Clem's."

Peter'd heard rumors about other times they'd fouled up. Saying an area was 'clean', when it wasn't! In one case an entire squad had been wiped out. He shook his head in disgust, "great, that gives me a real feeling of confidence!"

*The hell with them, all that counts right now are the guys coming up on his rear*

Paul had just started to pick up the bag, when a kick from her shiny black shoe, sent it spinning across the floor; its contents going in nine different directions.

What followed was a guttural, "trouble maker."

He heard voices a couple of hundred yards to his right. Then a familiar, "shit, stinkin' sand." Peter knew he was no longer alone!

As Paul tried to bring books, bag and papers back together, he felt someone touch his shoulder. Startled; he fell back against the wall. But somehow, he knew this time, it was a friend.

Peter signaled for them to hold their position, then turning slowly, crawled back to where they were spread out across a small gully. Just spotting all that fire-power; the M16's, the grenade launchers and the rest of the weaponry made him feel a hell of a lot better.

He laughed to himself, "Mom, sorta' like Paul's security blanket, huh?"

He'd been right! It was Sister Agnes. Gee, if only there were more Nuns like her; this wouldn't be a half bad place.

After a break, they moved out again. Peter, still 'point man', but this time with a new wrinkle! The revised orders, "move slow, stop every couple of minutes, we'll be right on your heels" Gave new meaning to the word, "okay!"

Paul was embarrassed when she helped him to his feet, smiled, shoved the book bag up under his arm and pointed down the hall to his home room.

Then Peter started to get that queasy feeling in his gut. Like a thousand GI's before him, it was as if someone was sending up a message. Dropping down, he started to crawl, rifle stretched across his arms; his elbows digging into the soft sand giving him just enough momentum to move forward.

As Paul leaned back against the locker, he watched her disappear into her own classroom, the laughter coming out the door gave him a good feeling.

With fingers cupped, he made a deep channel through the sandy mound in front of him, holding his breath; he looked out. He could hear voices! It was them, no American spoke jibberish like that!

The bell rang just as Paul walked into the room. Sister Clotilda gave him a dirty look, but

didn't say anything. As he sat down, he remembered something he'd heard just the other day. Supposedly some young Sisters were going to come into his school that fall. "Good, maybe this wasn't gonna' be such a bad semester after all."

Peter turned his head to one side to make sure the squad had him in sight, but he must have raised up a little too high. The bullet caught him on the right side of his neck, just above the collar, tearing open his wind pipe, but not before he had one final thought;

"Got it, no more teacher's dirty looks...."

THE END