

IN LOVE AND WAR

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT - MOUNTAIN LODGE - CENTRAL EUROPE - NIGHT

An overhead bulb dimly illuminates the bare room. In one corner is a sagging cot. On it sits ALLISON HART, 20s, slim, disheveled. Her evening dress is dirty, torn in places. She flips disconsolately through an old "People" magazine.

LOUD THUDS draw her attention to staircase at opposite end of the room. Door at the top bursts open and a GUARD, spewing blood, flops down the stairs.

A man festooned with the implements of war climbs down the stairs, his suppressed M4 rifle pivoting as he surveys the room for targets. At the bottom, he nudges aside the body, and crosses to Allison, who stands and waits nervously.

SGT. STRYKER is in his 20s, of medium height, and solidly built. He tilts the night vision goggles off his face and gives her a big smile.

STRYKER

Hey, how ya doing? Sergeant Stryker  
at your service.

She sighs, smiles, and opens her mouth to speak, but loses her breath when he shoves a backpack into her stomach.

STRYKER (CONT'D)

You'll find clothes and boots in  
your pack. We gotta vamoose before  
the other rats come back.

(heads back to stairs)

I'm going to check for any vermin I  
might have missed.

Allison is equal parts apprehensive and happy at her sudden reversal of fortune.

ALLISON

Vamoose? Vermin? Vat the hell?

INT. KITCHEN - TEN MINUTES LATER

Allison steps into the kitchen from the basement, backpack in hand. She's outfitted in a woodland camouflage uniform, armored vest, and combat boots. A utility belt on her waist holds a sheathed Ka-Bar knife.

Stryker, whose head is buried inside a refrigerator, looks up, nods approvingly at her transformation.

Sprawled on the kitchen floor is the body of another guard. Allison gives it a glance and shudders, then pulls a dozen red roses out of her backpack and smiles.

ALLISON  
Are these for my birthday?

STRYKER  
What? Hey, I asked for a dozen roses, not a dozen roses!

ALLISON  
What?

STRYKER  
A rose is a napalm grenade. What were those idiots thinking?

He reaches into the refrigerator and pulls out two cans.

STRYKER (CONT'D)  
Want a beer?

Allison shakes her head, watches him pop the can open and down the beer in one gulp. When he's finished, he tosses the empty can away and burps.

STRYKER (CONT'D)  
Skunky beer.

Allison looks around, hoping to find someone else to hang with, but only sees several more bodies in the room beyond.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

Stryker and Allison use their night-vision goggles to navigate through the heavy forest.

ALLISON  
These night-vision things suck.

STRYKER  
Yeah, they're really only good for seeing what you just tripped over.

ALLISON  
So, where are the rest of your men?

STRYKER  
Dead. A SAM hit the plane just as I was jumping.

ALLISON  
Oh my god. I'm sorry.

STRYKER  
Yeah. They were good guys...

ALLISON  
Is anyone coming for us? Did you call someone on your radio?

STRYKER  
I only have an intra-squad radio.  
No good for long-range comms.

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

Stryker is leaning against a tree, puking. Allison sits on the ground, head on knees, too weary to lift her head.

STRYKER  
Definitely a skunky beer.

He straightens up, takes the second can of beer out of his pack, pops the top and downs it in one gulp. He throws can away and burps.

ALLISON  
Idiot.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

Stryker and Allison stare down at a lush green valley. She sinks to the ground.

ALLISON  
I can't go on anymore.

STRYKER  
You saw those planes earlier. They weren't looking for UFOs. Besides, we're short on rats and ammo, and we still have several days to go before we reach the rally point.

ALLISON  
How do you know anyone's going to be at this rally point?

STRYKER  
A drone will be on-station for the next week.

She groans, but stumbles after him down into the valley.

EXT. RIVER - VALLEY - DAY

Stryker leads the way across the shallow water, eyes constantly moving. Allison has a hand on his backpack to steady herself over the uneven river bed.

ALLISON

Did they try to rescue the other people kidnapped at the party?

STRYKER

Yeah. All the missions were launched at the same time.

ALLISON

Hope they had better luck.

They climb up the opposite bank and Allison stops. Stryker pushes her to keep her walking.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

You're not exactly a knight in shining armor, are you?

Stryker stops and faces her.

STRYKER

You know the difference between me and your knight in shining armor?

ALLISON

What?

STRYKER

I'm here, and he's not.

He moves off. Allison rushes to catch up.

ALLISON

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Stryker stops under a group of trees.

STRYKER

Alright, let's take a short break.

ALLISON

Thank you.

She goes down on her knees, then falls flat on her face and is instantly asleep. Stryker takes a drink of water from his hydration pack, but doesn't relax his guard.

EXT. SHALLOW CAVE - VALLEY - NIGHT

Stryker and Allison eat pocket sandwiches from brown packets.

ALLISON

What are these things? MREs?

STRYKER

Meals Rejected by Everyone? No, these are FSRs -- First Strike Rations. In the end, it's all crap.

Allison ignores him, finishes her sandwich. Stryker pulls his pack over and pulls out a poncho and liner. He lays them out in the cave.

ALLISON

You don't happen to have a warm sleeping bag in there, do you?

STRYKER

Sorry, the mission was supposed to be a quick smash and grab, so we packed accordingly.

ALLISON

What about that tube in my pack. It's always warm.

STRYKER

I'm always warm, too.

ALLISON

So you're saying there are some warm things you shouldn't sleep next to.

Stryker laughs, puts a fist in the middle of his back.

STRYKER

I'm putting in for a purple heart.

ALLISON

Were you hurt landing with your parachute?

STRYKER

Leaving.

ALLISON  
Leaving? The plane?

STRYKER  
The jumpmaster pushed too hard.

ALLISON  
You were thrown off the plane?

STRYKER  
I wouldn't put it that way,  
exactly.

She stares at him for a beat, then laughs.

ALLISON  
You're such a liar.

Allison crawls into the cave and watches him position their packs against the cave entrance.

He stretches out next to her and wraps the liner around them. She leans across him, and pulls the roses out of her pack.

She settles back, inhales the scent, then places the roses next to her head.

ALLISON (CONT'D)  
Are you going to stay in the  
military all your life?

STRYKER  
Why not? I like camping and hiking.  
Plus I get to shoot at things. And  
burn things down. And blow things  
up. It's an interesting life.

ALLISON  
You're insane.

STRYKER  
That's what the shrinks say. But  
what do they know? They think I'm  
crazy.

She laughs.

ALLISON  
You would so scare the hell out of  
my family and friends.  
(pause)  
It's getting cold.

STRYKER  
Stop thinking about it.

ALLISON  
How do I do that?

STRYKER  
Empty your mind of all thoughts. I  
find it easy to think of nothing.

ALLISON  
That's a shock.

She nudges up against him and he drapes an arm over her.

STRYKER  
Or we could do it this way.

ALLISON  
Hey, let go of that.

STRYKER  
I have a chocolate bar.

She stares into his eyes for a few beats, then moves her  
mouth to his and they kiss.

EXT. VALLEY RIDGE - DAY

Stryker peers over the top of the ridge, while Allison,  
several feet below him, clutches nervously at the fastenings  
on her armored vest.

STRYER'S POV

Spread out on the slope below, a DOZEN SOLDIERS are moving up  
the hill, weapons at the ready.

BACK TO SCENE

Stryker slides down next to Allison.

STRYKER  
Oh man, I wouldn't want to be in  
your shoes right about now.

ALLISON  
You are in my shoes, you moron!

He considers this for a beat, then frowns.



STRYKER

Hey, that's right. I wish you'd quit making jokes like that.

She sputters, tries to think of a riposte, but settles for punching him hard in the arm.

He smiles and reaches into her pack. He pulls out the dying roses and hands them to her, then reaches back in and pulls out a red tube ten inches long and three inches in diameter.

ALLISON

What is that thing? And why is it always warm?

STRYKER

This is what kept your roses alive on the way down from the plane -- it's damn cold up there, you know.

(beat)

This is a Bangalore rose.

ALLISON

Is that the same as a napalm rose?

STRYKER

There's no such thing as a napalm rose. I made that up.

ALLISON

So the flowers weren't a mistake?

Stryker shrugs, holds the tube with both hands and twists them in opposite directions. Each half rotates 180 degrees then locks into place.

STRYKER

This is an MTD. Miniaturized thermobaric device.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

STRYKER (CONT'D)

Hey, this is a combat zone!

He crawls back to the top of the ridge, jumps up and hurls the tube. RIFLE FIRE sends him plunging back down. He covers Allison's body with his own.

A tremendous EXPLOSION shakes the ground and a BLINDING WHITE LIGHT obliterates the sky. A wave of dirt and debris crashes around and on top of them.

After a few beats, Stryker and Allison surface. They spit out dirt and dust themselves off.

STRYKER (CONT'D)  
Where's John?

ALLISON  
Who's John?

STRYKER  
John Wayne. My rifle.

He finds his rifle, and Allison finds their packs.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE - DAY

Stryker and Allison stare down at the blackened slope. All that remains are burning tree stumps.

ALLISON  
John Wayne, the cowboy actor?

STRYKER  
John Wayne, Sergeant Stryker in  
"Sands of Iwo Jima."

ALLISON  
But Stryker's your name.

STRYKER  
Yeah, well, we're not allowed to  
use our real names.

She glares at him.

ALLISON  
I bet it also comes in handy in  
paternity suits.

STRYKER  
That too.

They start down the hill.

STRYKER (CONT'D)  
Ground's still hot.

ALLISON  
Hot. Just like last night when you  
wasted no time sharing your warmth.

STRYKER

Hey, you thrust that thing into my innocent hand.

ALLISON

Thrust? Thing? Innocent?

She kicks dirt at him, then regains her composure.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Aren't you bothered by the fact that I only let you have your way with me because you bribed me with a chocolate bar?

STRYKER

Hey, I'm a guy; the reason doesn't matter.

Allison pulls the knife out of its sheath and moves it to within an inch of his neck. After an internal struggle, she reluctantly slides it back into its sheath.

ALLISON

No, I won't kill...

STRYKER

We still have a lot of indian country ahead of us, so you might want to reconsider your attitude.

ALLISON

Oh, I definitely plan to do that.

(pause)

I can't believe I traded my virtue for a chocolate bar. To you!

STRYKER

I have another chocolate bar.

ALLISON

You monster.

She shakes her head in disgust, puts her arm through his.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Whatever your name is, I think this is the beginning of a horrible friendship.

They walk into the smoke and dust drifting across the devastated hill.

FADE OUT.