

THE HOUSE OF FLESH AND BONES

by

Mike W. Rogers

mike.rogers67@hotmail.com

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A platoon of Marines creep through Vietcong occupied jungle.
Eight men proceed slowly and in unison.

A SOFT WIND and BIRD SONG covers the Marine's movement.

Leading the group, a black, battle-scarred veteran.

This is SARGE (40). No first names. Won't know ya that long.

Sarge raises his fist to his troops behind him.

The men stop but remain on alert, their head's on a swivel.

SARGE

Hicks, Jelly, with me.

A pint-sized soldier with a flamethrower on his back breaks formation.

This is HICKS (21).

A heavysset soldier, with skin as dark as Sarge's, appears on his right.

This is JELLY (20)

Ahead, chimney smoke floats from a shack on a hill.

HICKS

Sarge, does this look like a
Vietcong outpost to you?

SARGE

Who knows what the night hides.

Jelly removes a map from his flack jacket.

JELLY

These are the coordinates Command
gave us.

HICKS

Wouldn't be the first time they
were wrong.

SARGE

Jelly, get Rock up here.

Jelly whistles and motions for Rock to move forward.

HICK
 Better not be another civilian
 farm. I've had nightmares all week.

A bushy-haired giant arrives next to Jelly.

He carries a bulky metal field radio on his back.

This is ROCK (19).

Sarge removes the foot long phone from the radio and revs a
 crank on the side of the box.

SARGE
 (into radio)
 Black Swan to base.

RADIO (V.O)
We read you, Black Swan.

SARGE
 (into radio)
 Location acquired.

RADIO (V.O)
*Roger that Black Swan. Establish a
 perimeter and report back any
 activity.*

SARGE
 (into radio)
 Roger that Command, Black Swan Out.

Chief hands the radio receiver to Rock.

SARGE
 You heard the man. Bring up the
 rest of the unit.

Jelly motions for the rest of the men to move forward.

The remaining men join the Sarge, Hicks, Jelly, and Rock.

A bookish soldier who wears glasses kneels next to Sarge.

This is WORM (19).

SARGE
 Worm, set the trip wires.

WORM
 Right, Sarge.

Worm removes some wire from his flack jacket and moves into the jungle.

A Puerto Rican soldier wearing a camo bandanna lights a cigarette.

This is JESUS (19).

SARGE
Jesus, set a forward position.

JESUS
Right away, Boss.

Jesus quietly moves off into the jungle.

SARGE
Jelly, Hicks, with me. We're taking a closer look. I can't have any more civilian blood on our hands.

Sarge places a hand on Rock's shoulder.

SARGE
Rock, hold our position.

Rock salutes to Sarge and settles into position.

EXT. FORWARD POSITION - NIGHT

Sarge, Jelly, and Hicks arrive at a clearing where Jesus lays, mounting a scope on his M-16.

SARGE
Any movement?

JESUS
It's ink black out here, Boss. I'm having trouble seeing anything.

Sarge taps Jelly and Hicks on the shoulder.

SARGE
Let's move, Boys.

EXT. BOTTOM OF INCLINE - NIGHT

Sarge leads Jelly and Hicks up an incline to the shack.

Before the house, a gravel path is lined with white stones.

The dark of night hides any of the shacks detail.

Candlelight shines against the jungle from the rear.

Sarge, Hicks, and Jelly move to the back of the building.

EXT. FORWARD POSITION - NIGHT

VIEW FROM JESUS'S SCOPE.

The three soldiers disappear around the building.

JESUS
Pincha pentaho.

EXT. BACK OF BUILDING - NIGHT

Jelly and Hicks crouch watching the jungle. Sarge looks into the window.

VIEW FROM INSIDE THE WIDOW

Three naked Men hang by their wrists from a rafter.

One of the Men's back is covered by a tattoo of a blue wave.

An OLD WOMAN (90) uses a broom to totter into the room.

Sarge lowers from the window.

SARGE
Got three hanging from the rafters.
This is the place. Let's move out.

Hicks and Jelly move into the jungle.

FWAP, SPLASH!

Sarge turns back to the window.

VIEW FROM INSIDE THE WIDOW

Piles of intestines lay under each of the hanging bodies.

The little Old Woman totters from the room.

Sarge covers his mouth but GAGS.

The Old Woman turns back to see Sarge in the window.

EXT. BACK OF BUILDING - NIGHT

Sarge drops fast out of sight, BREATHING HEAVY.

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY

JELLY
(whisper)
Sarge.

Sarge's eyes shoot open in terror. Sweat covers his face.
The sounds of the JUNGLE BREEZE and BIRD SONG calm him.
He rolls from behind low lying leaves and grabs his M-16.
Worm, Rock, Jelly, and Hicks sit in a circle, weapons
trained on the surrounding jungle.

SARGE
Report.

Hicks won't look away from the jungle as he speaks.

HICKS
Radio's gone.

Sarge looks at Rock.
The harness remains but the electronics box radio is gone.

SARGE
When?

JELLY
One second it was there, next not.

WORM
Trip wires are gone, too.

Sarge moves into the center of the circle.

SARGE
Tripped?

WORM
Taken.

Sarge checks the magazine on his rifle.

SARGE
Break camp. We're moving to the
forward position. Any word from,
Jesus?

Silence answers his question.

EXT. FORWARD POSITION - DAY

Jesus chews on a piece of jerky as the men arrive.

SARGE
What do you got?

Jesus shakes his head.

JESUS
Take a look for yourself.

Sarge uses the scope on Jesus's rifle to view the house.

Sarge pulls his eye away from the scope and GAGS.

Jesus takes another bite from the jerky.

JESUS
I know! Almost wrecked my
breakfast.

Sarge collects himself and looks back through the scope.

VIEW FROM RIFLE'S SCOPE

Night had hidden what was bleach white in daylight, an
structure built of bone and skin.

Bones bound together to form a frame.

Piled rib cages, a support beam totems.

Untanned hides layered one atop the other.

Human and animal pelts pulled between the dry white bones.

The eye's and mouth's are sewn closed with Worm's tripwire.

SCOPE'S VIEW MOVES TO THE LEFT

Three new hides have been added. The blue wave tattoo now a
new mural on the outside wall.

The Old Woman totters out of the shack on her broom.

EXT. FORWARD POSITION - DAY

Sarge drops the rifle and rolls over.

SARGE
Rock, radio.

Rock holds out his hands, helpless.

SARGE

Right.

HICKS

Sarge, we need that radio back.

WORM

Better ask nice.

Jesus kisses the crucifix which hangs about his neck.

JESUS

No way I'm going near that shit.

HICKS

Fuck the radio. Burn it.

JESUS

You can't burn that shit, Man! That
there some Far East Hoodoo!

Sarge looks to the ground and thinks for a moment.

HICKS

Sarge?

Sarge slaps the tanks on Hicks's back. PONG

SARGE

We can't afford your superstitions,
Jesus. Nightfall, we burn it.

Jesus rolls back over, his eye on the scope of his rifle.

JESUS

That's a bad plan, Boss. Bad plan.

EXT. BOTTOM OF INCLINE - NIGHT

Six men creep across the incline below the gruesome shack.

SARGE

Hicks, light it up.

Hicks ignites a butane blue flame at the end of his weapon.

It exudes a ROARING stream of dripping napalm.

The soldiers painted faces illuminated in the night.

Jesus steps on a stone that frames the gravel path.

CRACK!, like a terracotta pot.

JESUS

What the--?

Jesus looks down at his boots.

Not stones but small human skulls pushed into the earth.

Rock's rifle muzzle starts to shake as fear takes over.

SARGE

Easy there, Big Fella.

Hicks walks within ten feet of the structure.

Bloody sinew remains on the bones, as if ripped from their host and immediately re-purposed.

HICKS

Abomination.

As the shack ignites, the birds chirp a CHAOTIC CHORUS.

The wire on the victim's eyes and mouths burn away and open.

High pitched SCREAMS become a low, pained WAIL.

A pillar of black smoke rises from the top of the structure.

FROM THE JUNGLE

The Old Woman totters dragging the radio on a burlap tarp.

She drops the tarp and stares at the fire.

She picks up a large rock and drops it on the radio.

.

Rock drops his rifle and backs away.

With both hands, she hits him in the chest.

He stumbles back into Jelly, then falls to the ground.

Worm aims his rifle at the Old Woman.

OLD WOMAN

bạn xây đng nhà!
(you build house!)

Worm looks to the burning construction.

WORM
Oh, hell, no!

SARGE
What did she say?

WORM
She wants us to rebuild her house!

JELLY
With what?

HICKS
What do you think?

JESUS
Sarge, let me put this lady down
before she causes us any trouble.

SARGE
At ease soldier!

Sarge places his rifle on the ground.

HICKS
Sarge, what are you thinking?!

He holds up his hands.

SARGE
Lady, we don't want any trouble
with you. We'll find a way --

The Old Woman picks up Rock's M-16 and points it at Sarge.

OLD WOMAN
bạn xây dựng nhà
(you build house)

HICKS
Take it easy, Lady!

JELLY
Sarge?!

The Old Woman swings the rifle between the men.

OLD WOMAN
bạn xây dựng nhà
(you build house)

Worm hikes his M-16 to his shoulder.

WORM

She's being insistent!

The Old Woman tosses the M-16 away and drops to her knees.
She draws a circle in the dirt and mummurs in Vietnamese.
The pillar of smoke twists toward the men.

WORM

What the fuck, Sarge?

JELLY

Burn it!

Hicks shoots a line of fire at the black mass, no effect.
Jesus walks to the cloud and raises his crucifix.

JESUS

I command you! Back to hell with
you demon!

The swirling black dervish shoots down Jesus's throat.
The mass pours past Jesus and encompasses the platoon.
The soldiers drop to the ground and COUGH the black smoke.
The men BREATH HEAVY on the ground.

OLD WOMAN

bạn có cho đ'n khi bui sáng!
(You have till morning!)

Rock continues to cough.

SARGE

Worm, check Rock.

Worm places his hand on Rock's back, pulls it away quick.

WORM

Damn it! What the hell!

His palm shows bright red as if just placed on a stove.

ROCK

Whoa, I couldn't breathe!

Rock's skin keeps becoming a deeper shade of red.

ROCK
Anyone else feel that heat?

Worm aims his rifle at Rock and backs away.

WORM
Sarge?

SARGE
Keep moving back, Worm.

Rock rubs his eyes.

ROCK
My eyes are burning.

I white liquid pours from his eye sockets.

Rock pulls his fists away from his eyes.

Only black holes remain. His liquefied eyes stain his face.

Sarge looks for the Old Woman but she has disappeared.

Rock falls to the ground.

ROCK
Guys, I don't feel so well.

Rock vomit blood.

JELLY
Sarge!

Rock falls over on his side. His body already in rigamortis.

His body begins to smolder and smoke and turn a burnt black.

JESUS
Freakin' voodoo witchcraft!

JELLY
Sarge?!

SARGE
Retreat to forward position! Move,
move, move!

HICKS
What about the radio?

SARGE
Screw the radio,

Sarge takes one look back at Rock's now charred body.

SARGE (CONT.)
It's toast.

EXT. FORWARD POSITION - DAY

The soldiers arrive at the clearing.

Jelly helps Hicks remove the flame thrower from his back.

HICKS
What the hell was that?

Jesus COUGHS and spits on the ground.

JESUS
This is no good, Man.

Sarge drinks from his canteen, then spits it out.

He hands the canteen to Worm.

SARGE
Worm, what was the last thing she
said?

Worm washes out his mouth with the water.

WORM
She said we have till sunrise.

Worm hands the canteen to Jelly.

Jelly lifts the canteen to his mouth, then pauses.

JELLY
What happens at sunrise?

JESUS
Were either all dead from that
black shit we inhaled or we go back
and rebuild her house.

Jelly screws the top back on without taking a sip.

Hicks grabs the canteen from Jelly.

HICKS

I say we get as far away from here
as possible!

JESUS

Don't you get it? It won't make no
difference. She's inside us.

SARGE

Bull shit. Whatever just killed
Rock has to be localized.

Worm rubs his arms and blows into his hands.

WORM

Let's get moving, feels like I'm
cramping up.

SARGE

Hicks, give the man some damn
water!

Hicks shakes the canteen, then hands it off.

Worm's hands shake as he tips back the canteen to drink.

CHUNK. Not even a drip comes from the spout.

Hicks grabs the canteen back.

HICKS

Give me that!

Hicks only holds the canteen for a second, then drops it.

HICKS

Damn it! Thing's freezing!

Sarge picks up the canteen. The water now a block of ice.

JELLY

Sarge? Something's wrong with Worm?

Worm's face is white. He hugs himself and shakes.

JESUS

I told you. She's in all of us!

Worms fingernails go black, as his eyes become opaque.

Jelly reaches out to touch him.

JELLY

What's wrong with him?

Jesus jumps to stop Jelly but is seconds too late.

Jelly's fingers make contact and turn blue with frostbite.

JELLY

Ah! It burns!

Jelly falls to his knees with his fingers in his armpit.

Worm falls to the ground, THUD!

Frozen solid.

HICKS

We gotta get out of here!

Sarge drops down next to Worm.

His stiff body smokes from the jungle heat.

Sarge grabs Worm's rifle and jerks it.

Worm's hands SNAP off at the wrists, exposing white bone.

Sarge pries Worm's black fingers from the rifle.

He tosses the severed, frozen hands next to Worm's body.

He pushes the ice cold M-16 into Hick's chest

SARGE

Get your shit together, soldier.

Jesus kneels next to Worm and starts to pray. Last Rights.

Jelly rocks back and forth.

JELLY

I can't feel my fingers.

Hicks helps Jelly's wrap his hand in an ace bandage.

SARGE

It took us a full day to hike here.
We have to keep moving if we want
out by sunrise.

Jesus looks up to Sarge.

JESUS

Sarge! In the heat of the sun, this man just died of cold!

SARGE

We're not going back, Jesus!

Jesus looks back down to Worm's frozen corpse.

JESUS

One way or another, Boss, this darkness has got to give.

EXT. JUNGLE (CONTINUOUS) - DAY

The four men move quickly through the jungle.

Hick's stops and rests his hands on his knees.

BREATHS HEAVY.

From behind him, the tree RUSTLE.

Sweat stings his eyes as he looks back at the jungle.

He stumbles forward and falls to the earth.

INDISTINGUISHABLE WHISPERS are heard around him.

Hicks raises a hand to the group ahead and attempts to yell.

Black soil tumbles from his mouth in a pile in front of him.

His hands sink into the earth up to his elbows.

The black moist soil forces his eyes from his skull.

His body collapses and loses its form. Large, brown bugs rush out from the flat cloths on the jungle floor.

EXT. JUNGLE - CONTINUOUS -DAY

The men push large branches that cover the path ahead.

Jelly stops and notices Hicks no longer with them.

JELLY

Sarge, we lost Hicks.

Sarge looks back at the jungle, then ahead up the path.

SARGE
We should go back.

The men turn and push there way back through the brush.

In a clearing lay a uniform and boots.

Sarge slowly approaches the uniform.

CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, large bugs cover the jungle floor.

JESUS
This is not good, Man. None of this
is any good!

Sarge notices something on the ground.

JELLY
It's just a uniform on the ground!
He took it off and wandered into
the jungle. Only explanation.

Sarge drops to one knee to get a closer look.

JESUS
And Rock and Worm? They just freak
out too?!

He figures it out . Hick's ear being eaten by the bugs.

The trees begin to rustle.

The PANTING of an enormous beast is heard beyond the trees.

Sarge raise his fist.

Jesus and Jelly raise their rifles to their chins.

Sarge opens his fist and begins to move backward.

SARGE
Slow, Boys.

The men creep backward.

Their legs SNAP and CRUNCH as they try to remain silent.

The PANTING becomes faster and more pronounced.

SARGE
On my mark, run.

Sarge stops and aims his rifle at the jungle.

He fires three short bursts from his M-16 into the jungle.
The Beast HOLLERS in pain.

SARGE

Run!

Jelly and Jesus run off into the jungle.

Sarge waits for the beast to show itself.

The Beast HOLLERS once more and stands its ground. Waiting.

Sarge shakes in fear as he raises his rifle to this face.

The Beast starts its charge.

The trees twenty yards in front of Sarge fall to the side.

Sweat forms on Sarge's brow as the Beast grows closer.

The earth RUMBLES as the beast STAMPEDES toward him.

Sarge can no longer hold his rifle on target.

SARGE

Ahh!

The Horns of the legendary Torus emerge from the jungle,

Sarge runs.

EXT. JUNGLE (CONTINUOUS) - DAY

Sarge charges ahead, his forearm to his eyes. Thin bamboo branches cut across his thighs as he runs.

The path he once followed is gone.

JELLY (O.S.)

Sarge!

Sarge adjusts his route to Jelly's scream.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Sarge charges into a clearing, his rifle aimed behind him.

Jelly and Jesus kneel back to back in the clearing.

Sarge drops down next to Jelly and Jesus,

SARGE
Weapons hot!

JELLY
Sarge.

SARGE
No time, Jelly! That thing is right
behind me!

JELLY
Sarge!

Sarge reluctantly looks to Jelly who's face shows no alarm.
He looks past Jelly to the surrounding clearing.
Around the clearing lay the frozen, handless corpse of Worm.

JELLY
We found the others.

Rock's burnt, black form on all fours.

JESUS
She's watching us. Waiting.

Hick's white bones stacked in a pile with his skull on top.

SARGE
This can't be just her!

JESUS
Can and is, Boss.

JELLY
I didn't want to believe it either.
But we ain't seen anyone else?

JESUS
Can't you smell it? Like a circuit
just blew.

Jesus's face goes sour.

SARGE
Look, if this is just her, then
they must be putting somethin' in
the water.

JESUS
Uh, crap, I can taste it!

SARGE

Far as I am concerned, she done us
a favor and moved these bodies
almost one click closer to base.

Sarge looks up at the sun.

Jelly what time we got?

Jelly checks his watch.

JELLY

We got about two hours to sun up.

SARGE

Then we have to pull up our panties
and grow a pair. This shits all in
our minds. We just have to fight
it!

Jesus drops his weapon and sits on the ground.

JESUS

She won't let us get back to base,
Boss. She'll keep chasing us in
circles till the sun comes up. Only
when we are all dead can she
rebuild.

Jesus props the rifle's butt on the ground.

SARGE

I don't have time for your shit,
soldier! We move out now!

He looks around the clearing at the bodies.

SARGE

I got one man who burned to death
from the inside, another froze to
death. I can't say what happened to
Hicks but from the looks of it--

BAM!

Black blood sprays the right half of Sarge's face.

Blood drips from the back of Jelly's head.

Jesus lay on the ground with his rifle muzzle in his teeth.

JELLY

No!

Sarge stares at Jesus.

SARGE

Damn it.

From the jungle, the Little Old Woman totters on her broom. She drags the burlap tarp behind her.

Jelly shoots up and aims his rifle at the Little Old Woman.

JELLY

You old bitch! I'll kill you!

Sarge pushes his rifle muzzle to the ground.

SARGE

Enough, Jelly.

JELLY

But Sarge!

JELLY

Enough killing.

Jelly drops to his knees and SOBS.

The Old Woman spreads her burlap blanket on the ground.

She totters to Rock's body and WHACKS it with her broom.

The body crumbles into a pile of ash and white bones.

She picks out his bones and tosses them on the tarp, CLAP.

Jelly's SOBS grow louder.

The HOLLOW CLAP as bones play off one another on the tarp.

Sarge lays down his rifle on the ground.

The Old Woman stands straight and stretches her back.

OLD WOMAN

bạn xây đng nhà.
(you build house.)

Sarge tosses Hick's bones onto the tarp, CLAP.

Jelly pulls his Bowie knife from its sheath, SHEEN.

He straddles Jesus's dead body. He raises the shiny blade above his head, then sinks it deep into his gut, THUNK.