

## Chapter 5 Made you Look, Made you Look, Made you buy a Penny Book



I kept hustling down the trail, nervous that I would run into another patrol. I kept alternately running and walking, hoping that I would hear any oncoming patrol before they saw me. I kept thinking that I should get off the trail before I ran into someone, but I also liked the idea of putting a lot of distance between me and where I had been seen by the last set of bad guys. I would keep moving on this trail till it intersected with a stream, then move down the stream.

I kept moving for two hours, alternately running and walking fast, and did not hear anyone or anything behind or ahead of me. I was getting pretty confident that I had outrun my pursuers.

The trail was now moving down steeply, and I could hear a stream ahead. I loped down the steep slope towards the rushing stream. As I took the last jump into the stream, I came face to face with two Viet Cong, who had stopped in the stream to fill their canteens!

The one closest to me was only about 3 feet away. I could not really see the other Cong, who was right behind him. I aimed my rifle at them, and said "Freeze". I could not remember the Vietnamese word for "Hands Up" or "Surrender", so the English would have to do. And the VC understood the universal language of my rifle pointed at his chest. I could not see his buddy well, who was directly behind him. Both were carrying pistols but I could see that neither one had drawn them.

"Hands up", I shouted fiercely, motioning up with the barrel of my rifle. Both Cong slowly began to raise his hands.

Then the first guy closest to me looked past me, and pointed, and yelled something loud in high pitched excited Vietnamese. He was talking to someone behind me!

I whirled and crouched, ready to shoot the VC behind me. As I started my turn the nursery rhyme "Made you Look, Made you Look, Made you buy a Penny Book." came into my mind. He had suckered me! I whirled back instantly, and saw that he was drawing his pistol, and it was half way out of his holster!

No time to turn all the way back and bring the rifle around and shoot him. Instead, I drove the butt of the rifle into his face, as we had been taught to do in boot camp in bayonet drill. I delivered a horizontal butt stroke of terrific force with the butt of my rifle into his chin, which then slid off to his throat. My momentum and force knocked him down, with the other VC under him, and with me falling on top of both of them.

The force of the blow had knocked the pistol out of his hand. The other VC underneath the first VC still had his pistol in his hand. I put my knee firmly on his wrist, and knocked the pistol out of his hand, and pushed both pistols out of their reach.

I was on top of the VC I had hit, looking directly into his face, eyeball to eyeball, my face a foot apart from his face. I could see his eyes look at me with hatred, and then go glassy, rolling back into his head, and then he looked dead or dying or unconscious. I stood up with both Cong between my legs, staying astride of both of them, ready to shoot either VC if they made a move. I then rolled the first dead or dying VC off the the top of the other VC, ready to shoot him if he had a weapon.

The second VC was a woman!! She was scared, with a look of fear and dread on her face. She had no weapon, but put her forearm above her face to try to protect her from me. She kept her gaze on me.

I continued to straddle her for a moment, then got up, keeping my rifle muzzle on both her and the first VC. She had no weapon - both her pistol and the other VC's pistol were in the stream five feet away.

I motioned with my rifle to get up and told her verbally, "stand up". I then pushed her back a few feet with the barrel of my rifle. "Hands up", I said and motioned with my rifle. She complied.

I took a closer look at the man. He was not breathing. My blow to his throat must have killed him. Still nervous that he was faking, I watched them both closely for a minute. Carefully watching the woman, I leaned over and felt his pulse. No pulse and no visible sign of breathing.

"We've gotta get out of this place. If it's the last thing, we ever do!" I hummed lightly. I was really psyched and tired and getting more than a little manic. Time to get out of Dodge. These two might have friends close by. But this creek was on the trail, so I better move the body, or the next VC that came through would see what happened, and be on my trail again.

I picked up both pistols and put them in my pocket. I motioned with my rifle to the woman to move downstream. She began moving. Then I picked up

the man, awkwardly, and tucked him under my left arm. Like many Vietnamese, he was small and light, but it was still an effort to hold and drag him along the stream with one hand helped by my other hand which was also holding my rifle, while I kept the woman covered with my rifle. The dead or faking guys feet were dragging in the water as we moved downstream.

I looked back to see if I could see evidence of our fight. The flow of the water was rapidly covering up all signs of our life and death struggle. In another minute no signs of the fight would be apparent. Good

We moved down the stream for about 150 feet. I found a place to swing the man up and out of the creek on to the bank. I told the woman to stop.

I rolled the man on to the bank away from the stream, and laid him on his back. Then I went through his pockets, all the while watching the woman, who was watching me. I felt like a ghoul searching his pockets, but it was part of the intelligence gathering process - try to get information about his unit, their positions, etc. I hoped he was not her husband or a loved one. He was likely to have known her well. She must hate me for killing him and now searching him.

I found a wallet and a small notebook. I also took his pack and his canteen belt. I would need whatever food he carried, and he may have more items of intelligence value in his pack.

He had a ring and a wristwatch. No intelligence value there. Should I leave them on the body, or take them? I felt like a ghoul thinking it over. Decide quickly, I thought. Then I did an odd thing - I asked her if she wanted them, pointing to the ring and watch. She shook her head no. So my guess was she was not his wife or loved one.

So we left Mr. VC there with his ring and watch. Unlikely anyone ever found

him - within a few days animals would have left nothing of him. Sorry about that, buddy, no time to give you a proper burial. It won't matter to you in any event.

In the movies they always bury them and say a few words. "Adios, buddy. Sorry about that. Better you than me. Better luck next time. God Bless you." I said.

Then I motioned Miss VC to continue downstream. I kept her about 15 feet in front of me, keeping her far in enough in front of me that I could make sure she could not hit me with any weapon. I could not see any weapon, but she could have something concealed.

I needed a prisoner like I needed a hole in the head. She would slow me up and increase the chances that the VC would find and capture or kill me.

But what choice did I have? I could brain her with my rifle, and resolve the problem. A tempting choice. But that would be murder, against the Geneva Conventions and against all moral training. You are not permitted to murder prisoners. Of course, no one would ever know, and it would increase my chances of getting out alive. But I am not a murderer; it is against my religion, what is left of it. I decided that I did not want to leave that on my conscience.

A friend of mine had murdered a prisoner. He was leading a small reconnaissance team. He wrote about it in a great book, "Reluctant Warrior". The patrol was in deep dodo, surrounded by an NVA Battalion. They were looking for the extraction helicopter when they blundered into two officers. They shot them up, and then administered first aid. They took one of the officers with them.

But the other officer was too badly wounded to move. As the enlisted men moved out, one of them said to my friend, "Lieutenant, you can't just leave

him. He will tell them which way we went." My friend replied that he knew that.

My friend gave the wounded VC a cigarette. He smiled at the VC, and the VC officer smiled at my friend. Then my friend took his .45 pistol, and blew out the prisoners brains. He told this in a very matter of fact manner. I was a bit startled that he did that, and that he wrote about it in his book. But it was a tough choice. If he had left the guy, he and his men might very well have been caught and killed. I suppose he could have slugged the guy, and hoped that he would stay knocked out until my friend and his men had made their escape. But that kind of thing only happens in the movies,

So I guess he did the smart thing. But it certainly was not condoned or permitted by the Geneva Convention. And I don't know what I would have done in his situation. As it was, he and his men barely made it out alive. They were pulled up by a cable, and brought back to Danang dangling from a helicopter. I am afraid of heights, and that probably would have scared me to death.

My father had also talked of soldiers in WW II killing prisoners. He told of a time when his commanding general had addressed the men in the Division, telling them to treat prisoners fairly and properly. If you begin to mistreat and kill them, the word will get out, and other soldiers will not surrender, but fight to the death. Best practice is to treat them well.

So I certainly was not going to kill her. I could instead just let her go - kind of a VC "catch and release" program. But she would quickly find her unit, and then they would quickly come after me. No, what I have to do is keep her prisoner, despite the aggravation and increased danger. And I will have to keep her until it is time to extract, and then take her back to a prisoner of war prison. She will provide some good intel.

We continued to walk down the stream, stepping on boulders, and slipping

into pockets of water. The stream grew larger and more turbulent as it moved down the mountain side. I needed to find a secure hiding place, and near the stream but not immediately adjacent to the water would be ideal. This way we would have good water, but a VC search party would be less likely to find us if we were some distance from the stream.

We moved down the stream, and it continued to grow larger. Then the larger stream was joined by a smaller stream. I decided to go up that stream, to throw off any possible pursuit from the friends of my woman VC. We moved back up that stream for about 1,000 meters. It grew smaller as we followed it back upstream.

I searched until I found a good place to leave the creek bed, and then directed my VC prisoner to move away from the creek. I moved away from the creek carefully, trying to leave no sign that we had passed by. We moved only about 20 meters, and then came up to a steep limestone rock cliff over one hundred feet high. We moved west along the rock face of the cliff for about 200 feet, finally coming to an area where we could look out over the valley which must be nearly 1,500 feet below. It provided a "fine prospect", fit for the Jane Austin novel my high school English teacher had forced us to read.

As we walked along the cliff I saw a small opening into the cliff with a little water flowing out. The opening was only 2 feet wide, but it looked like it might open into a cave or valley. I called to Miss VC to move along the little stream through the opening.

She and I made our way through the opening for about twenty feet. Then it suddenly widened out into a charming little canyon, about 30 feet across and 70 feet long. In the middle was a small pond about 15 feet wide and 40 feet long. Beautiful vegetation surrounded the pond, framed by sheer stone limestone walls that went up 150 feet or more. A small sandy beach against an overhang of the rock cliff looked like an excellent camp site. Limestone

cliffs on all sides completed the picture.

Home, Sweet Home. For the next few days.