

## **TURKEY-LOAF** **(A Thanksgiving Story)**

He sits up just as the sun hits his face. As he pulls his poncho and liner off, he picks up his M-16 and first looks at his fire-team laying in the mud around him...they too are just waking up. As he stretches, he looks out and down into the valley covered with triple canopy jungle. It's quite and amazingly beautiful.

He inspects his M-16 and wipes it down with an old piece of towel pulled from his pack. He then pulls a magazine from underneath his helmet laying by his pack, wipes it down and inserts it into his weapon. The safety is on and no round in the chamber...it's chow time.

It's been a few days since resupply so the C-Rations are almost gone. He reaches into his pack and finds the "turkey-loaf" he held back and smiles. By now the platoon is bustling with movement as watches are relieved and new watches take over security details. In the background, he can hear the crackle and pop of the squad radio. CH 46 helicopters are on their way in with a resupply of ammo, frags, chow and mail.

As he gets ready to eat, he hears his name called and knows he and his team are needed at the recently cleared LZ (landing zone). The "turkey-loaf" is placed back in his pack and he runs to the LZ. His M-16 hangs over his right shoulder and neck with the jungle sling holding the weapon at his waist and at the ready. The first "46" hovers and lowers until the cargo net attached to it's bottom touches the ground. Debris is flying every where as one of the hooks to the net is released. Speed is of the essence so his team and another start unloading the wooden boxes of M-16, M-60, 60mm mortar rounds, claymores, C-4, and grenades from the netting. As quickly as they are stacked, team leaders and squad leaders are grabbing them for their Marines.

As soon as the first "46" pulls up and away another drops in with more supplies. As it lowers its self, one of the hooks breaks that secures the net and the supplies are strewed about on the jungle floor. Without hesitation the "46" pulls up and away, leaving some of the supplies still caught in the net. Somewhere in this net is the newly ordered boots, socks, and mail. Marines scramble from all over to gather up what supplies fell out. Most of the ordered new boots, socks and most importantly the mail bag are retrieved. Within minutes everything is turned over to the Platoon Sergeant for distribution to the squads including any mail received.

After receiving his two new pair of socks and two letters from home he returns to his gear. He quickly pulls off his muddy, wet, jungle boots and puts his new dry socks over

his wrinkled feet. The second pair he carefully wraps up in a small plastic bag that he received a few weeks earlier filled with homemade chocolate chip cookies. He places them down in his pack where they will be safe and dry. The sun is rising higher and so is the heat. After he places his boots toward the sun rise to let them dry out, he finally sits down on his poncho and liner.

After reading his letters from home, one from his Grandma and another from a girl he knew in high school, he digs out the small green can from his pack that contains the “turkey-loaf”. The “turkey-loaf” is chopped turkey with it's own juices and it's his favorite. As he opens the can, his squad leader comes by to tell them that all day patrols and night ambushes are canceled for today and “Happy Thanksgiving jarheads” as he moves over to the next set of foxholes.

As he sits back down, he looks around at his fire-team. This is his family for the here and now. Somewhere in a different place and time he remembers another family that seems from a dream. For a few moments a great loneliness overwhelms him. As quickly as it comes it leaves. Tomorrow his team and another will go down into the valley for a day patrol and probably a night ambush. He'd deal with whatever tomorrow brings tomorrow for now though...he had his new socks, mail and “turkey loaf”.

For all of those on lonely posts throughout the world. Happy Thanksgiving and God's speed home.

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