



JUNGLE
SAVIOR

BRENT GOLEMBIEWSKI

J U N G L E S A V I O R

The wind howled, green foliage above me shuddering in the onslaught. Morning light illuminated the sky, heat radiating from the small semi-circle peeking over the green canopy. The sounds of metal gears grinding one another, interlocking with little room to spare, rattled overhead. The distinct sound of rescue, a whoomp whoomp, echoed above the other noises. My senses adept at picking up the noise. Noise that spelled salvation for the soldier in my arms.

My eyes locked onto the Huey, an outdated helicopter returned to service for one last go. The craft crested the tops of the tropical canopy and a mighty wind blew through the already scorching heat. Soldiers screamed nearby, rounds cooked off, a fully-automatic machine-gun lay down covering fire into the trees behind me. I knelt, one knee digging into the moist dirt causing an army of ants to scurry about. Was this an apocalypse for them as well? Had my giant appendage destroyed their home, causing panic? Were they fleeing or fighting? Both were suitable reactions to a stressful situation. I was holding my ground, the soldier I clutched needed me. His bandages were soaked with blood, the sanguine fluid dripped onto me from his wounds. I had sewed him up as best I could, but the damage was heavy. A possible casualty from a hidden anti-personnel mine. I hoped he wouldn't be another number. A moan slipped from his lips, his head lolled to one side, a name eking out.

“Audry.”

Was Audry his girlfriend, wife? Maybe his mother? I knew nothing of the soldier, he wasn't part of my platoon, yet we were both sent on the same task. A night raid on an enemy stronghold deep in the tropical forest, a place my body did not function well. The helicopter continued its approach, tracer rounds skipped off the hull. Flashes of light ignited the cabin as rounds of hot metallic projectiles exited the cargo bay door. My eyes stayed focused on the Huey, awaiting the signal to approach, a signal that couldn't arrive soon enough. The metal skid tubes of the 1960s era rescue vehicle crushed into the ground, my mind slipped to the ants, were there more there, too? Was this a war on their country as ours? The pilot raised his hand, the motion I was waiting for, his arm rocked back and forth. I raised my body still holding the soldier tight, his moans now drowned out by the metallic blades spinning above us at over three hundred RPM. The grass rustled around me, swaying like a hurricane. To the ants it must feel like Armageddon. I planted my first foot, propelled myself forward, my strides long, my legs springs stabilizing my patient. His body flowed through the air as if he rode on a cloud. Any extra movement could reopen the wounds, I had to take great care not to bounce. In the cabin, a soldier leaned out and waved me in, his antiquated weapon at the ready in his spare hand. Two steps in, his body rocketed back out of view, his legs kicking straight out. A streak of blood wrote in the air like an open pen spun between tightly

wound rubber bands. The Huey cried, its engine whining as the skids loosened their grip, sloshing in the muck. My pace quickened. Rounds zipped by my ear as I placed the patient onto the deck of the craft, the blood red paneling glistening in the sun. A round hit my back and signals shot to my mind notifying me of the penetration. I raised a hand, my thumb extending up towards the pilot, he nodded in response. Dropping to a knee, my hand slipped away from the helicopter as it rose into the air, its skids popping my arm away, twisting my body. My focus stayed level, the tree line now in clear view, the tall chutes of grass fluttering about and beyond them, advancing fighters. The whine of the chopper eased, its ascent swift, breaking over the treetops and out of view. I heard a loud voice from behind me.

“Mat! Get back here! We’ve been overrun, we gotta get back to cover.”

I turned. The platoon Captain stood aiming over my shoulder, his AR-15 spouting off rounds, eye tight on the iron sights, his red dot out of power. We had been out for weeks. Supplies were running low and all of our electrical equipment was inop. Our forces scraped by with what was leftover from previous wars. I scanned the horizon, saw the other members disappearing into the far tree line. Captain Thompson scooted back, half-crouched, his movement slow, precise. Legs like shocks, upper body poised. His fire continued.

“Mat, get your medical butt to those woods now! You think any of us can fix you if you go down?”

The sounds of war echoed around me, ordinance flew over the trees, explosions flinging dirt and bodies into the air. A mortar attack, one of our last ploys to suppress the enemy. I wondered how the ants fared. Better than us? I scurried to the tree line where the rest of the platoon bunkered down, firing across the open field at any movement. Some firing at nothing at all, their screams of rage bellowing out, the loss of friends, family, from the last excursion fresh in their minds. Another sensation in my back, another penetration. I collapsed onto my knees, my heavy body crushing into the ground. My vision wavered, my auditory senses fading. John, our radio man, grabbed my chest and held me up. He called for help, his waning strength unable to keep me upright. Another joined, tipped me onto my back. John stood over me, his hands frantic on my chest. My senses were shutting down.

“Mat, stay with us. You’re going to be fine, we got you!”

John’s voice was resolute, strong, persuasive. Would I be okay? Would I survive this? My vision full of static, I reached my hand out onto John’s shoulder, he gazed back at me.

“You need to rest, shutdown for awhile. I’ll make sure we get you out of here.”

I stared at his eyes, his eyebrows narrowing with concern, his lips pressed together. My vision flickered and went dark, the last thing I saw was florescent green letters floating in black space.

Medical Automated Technician