



LOVE IN THE HOUSE OF WAR

SCOTT MEEHAN

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WAR
Generations of Valor
Book One

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PROLOGUE

December 24, 1979

The engines of the transport planes roared through the thin air as four regiments of the Soviet 103rd Airborne Division descended upon Kabul airfield like an iron storm. Among the soldiers, Captain Viktor Tamarov, a member of the elite Soviet Blue Beret Commandos, stood out as he arrived with the third regiment. His features were distinct—a wide forehead tapering to a firm chin, giving his face a sharp, triangular shape. His natural blonde hair framed steely blue eyes that seemed to pierce through the haze of the war-torn landscape, eyes that had seen too much and revealed too little.

Viktor's demeanor was as cold and unyielding as the Siberian winters he had endured in training. He led his commando unit with the precision of a seasoned warrior, each movement deliberate, each command executed with unwavering discipline. They set up their base near the imposing Bala-Hisar fortress, a centuries-old stronghold perched just outside of Kabul. The fortress, with its ancient walls and commanding view, now bristled with modern weaponry and the steely determination of Soviet soldiers.

The orders handed down to Viktor were unequivocal: Be ready to drop anywhere at a moment's notice, and execute operations as dictated by high command. There was no room for hesitation, no margin for error. As Viktor surveyed his surroundings, the weight of the mission pressed upon him. His mind sharpened to a fine edge, ready to cut through the fog of war with the same precision he demanded from his men.

In the shadows of the fortress, under the gaze of the distant, snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush, Viktor and his unit prepared for the unknown battles that lay ahead. The scent of conflict lingered in the air, a mix of dust, diesel, and the faint, metallic tang of impending violence. Viktor's heartbeat in time with the rhythmic clatter of boots and the distant hum of military machinery—a relentless, unyielding cadence that drove them forward.

As night fell over Kabul, the stars flickered coldly overhead, mirroring the resolve in Viktor's eyes. The mission was clear, the path set. With his men by his side and the weight of the Motherland upon his shoulders,

Captain Viktor Tamarov stood ready to carve his mark into the annals of war, one drop, one operation at a time.

Despite the official narrative—that they were in Afghanistan at the behest of its government to combat rebels and restore order—Viktor harbored no illusions. The war was a chessboard of geopolitics, and he was but a knight on its checkered plains, trained to either kill or be killed.

By the light of a flickering lantern, Viktor pored over maps, imprinting the jagged peaks and valleys into his mind. The unforgiving terrain dictated his strategy: always command the high ground, always outmaneuver the enemy. His mission was clear and relentless—eliminate the Mujahedeen fighters who operated like shadows in the rugged mountains and hidden valleys.

Their operations were meticulously planned, each movement a calculated step in a deadly dance. Viktor's unit swept through villages with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, searching for hidden weapons caches or clandestine Mujahedeen hospitals. The villagers watched with a mix of fear and resentment, their lives caught in the crossfire of a war they neither started nor wanted.

MI-8 helicopters, their rotors slicing through the Afghan air, transported Viktor and his men to and from these perilous missions. The throaty roar of the engines became a familiar sound, a harbinger of both hope and dread. Clutched tightly in their hands were the AKS-74 rifles, the 5.45 mm caliber assault weapons. Unlike the bulky AK-47, the AKS-74's metal folding rifle butt made it ideal for the rapid, unpredictable deployments that defined their airborne assaults.

The operations were grueling, each one a testament to the harsh realities of guerrilla warfare. Viktor and his men moved like phantoms through the mountains, their every step measured, every sound scrutinized. The Mujahedeen were elusive, melting into the landscape like ghosts, but Viktor's resolve was ironclad. He knew that in this war of shadows, only the resolute and the relentless would survive.

The nights in the Afghan mountains were cold and silent, the darkness punctuated by the distant echoes of gunfire and the soft murmurs of the men in their makeshift camps. Viktor sat by the dying embers of a fire, the maps spread out before him, his mind a fortress of strategy and survival. He was far from home, surrounded by the vast, indifferent expanse of Afghanistan, but his purpose was clear.

In the heart of this ancient land, amidst the echoes of war and whispers of history, Captain Viktor Tamarov steeled himself for the battles yet to come. Each day was a new chapter in a story of endurance and sacrifice, a tale written in the blood and sweat of men who dared to hold the high

ground. And Viktor, with his steely blue eyes and unyielding spirit, was ready to carve his name into the very stones of the Hindu Kush.

Only two months after arriving in-country, Viktor and six of his troops loaded into a MI-8 helicopter and flew north to the Panjshir Valley, otherwise known as the “Valley of the Five Lions.” His special mission was to set up a small forward defense with his team, which included two minesweepers, and secure a wide landing zone (LZ) for further transport.

The valley lay ninety-three miles north of Kabul, divided by the winding Panjshir River. Though often described as one of the most beautiful areas, it was also one of the most dangerous places in the world, home to more than 140,000 people, including the largest concentration of ethnic Tajiks. The terrain was both majestic and menacing, a place where beauty and peril intertwined seamlessly.

As the chopper set down, Viktor and his men emptied the bird in a swift, practiced motion, completing the task within six seconds. Once cleared, the helicopter lifted off, turning south and departing with haste, leaving the seven men in the silence of the valley.

Viktor's team assumed positions along the mountain base, away from the clearing. The moon hung high in the sky, its bright, silver light casting long shadows and forcing the Soviet soldiers to blend into the mountain-cast darkness. Viktor's lieutenant and executive officer, Alexsei, was by his side.

“I never knew the moon could be as bright as the sun,” Alexsei murmured, his voice barely more than a breath.

Viktor responded in a hushed whisper, his eyes scanning the ridges above. “Keep quiet. We are being watched.”

Alexsei nodded, trusting Viktor's instincts without question. The mountains had eyes, and the enemy was as much a part of the landscape as the rocks and trees. The Soviet soldiers moved with the precision of shadows, every step calculated, every sound suppressed. They knew that the Panjshir Valley was not just a battleground, but a proving ground—a place where only the most vigilant survived.

Hours passed in tense silence. The valley, with its beauty and danger, wrapped around them like a shroud. Viktor's mind was sharp, his senses attuned to every whisper of the wind, every rustle in the underbrush. His men followed his lead, their trust in him absolute.

As the night wore on, the silence was broken only by the distant call of a night bird and the soft murmurs of the river. Viktor remained vigilant, his thoughts a constant calculation of risk and strategy. The mission was clear: secure the LZ, ensure safe passage for incoming forces, and hold the line against any threat.

In the heart of the Panjshir Valley, amidst the shadows and moonlight, Viktor Tamarov and his men stood as silent sentinels. They were far from home, surrounded by the beauty and danger of a land at war, but their resolve was unwavering. With the mountains as their witness, they prepared for the battles yet to come, each moment a test of their courage and determination. And in the stillness of the valley, beneath the watchful eye of the moon, Viktor knew that they would endure.

Suddenly, an explosion rang in Viktor's ears, causing him and all his men to hug the ground beneath the cliff. Dust and debris showered over them as the noise echoed off the mountain walls.

"Anybody hurt?" Viktor yelled between gasping breaths.

"We're all fine, sir!" Alexsei stammered. "What about you?"

"The Dushmans are dropping mines onto our location! We'll need to make a run for it across the LZ to the other side."

Eyes big as saucers, Alexsei looked across the wide-open area, shining like an American football field on a Friday night. "Sir, we'll be sitting ducks!"

Just then, another explosion rang out near their position. "We have no choice. They are trying to fish us out, and we will die if we stay here!"

Alexsei did not like his options but gave his nod of approval.

Raising his voice, Viktor yelled, "When you see the red smoke, send the men across the LZ, immediately!"

Viktor hastily grabbed two canisters, popped them, and threw one of them in front and one behind him. The overpowering red smoke spread across the base like a cloud.

"Now!" Viktor yelled. He and Alexsei stayed and fired their AKS-74s in a flurry up the mountain range while the other five members jumped, tumbled, and gaining their foothold, streaked across the LZ. There was return fire coming from the hills above them, but Viktor could not tell if the Mujahedeen were accurate with their aim.

Looking to Alexsei, Viktor said through gritted teeth, "Let's go! Now!"

The two officers leaped to the abyss below them, stumbled, fell, jumped to their feet, and sprinted across the LZ. Not only could Viktor hear the crackling of bullets, but he could also hear some of them whistle past his ears.

Then, he heard the sickening sound of a thud, followed by clattering metal and a human body hitting the ground and rolling to a stop. Viktor immediately stopped, turned to face the base of the mountain where they had just left, and unloaded his weapon up and down and across the mountainside while running back to Alexsei.

Viktor did not take time to evaluate his executive officer; instead, he hefted him over his back and continued the break across the LZ. He felt warm liquid soak through parts of his arms and back as the bullets continued to fly past him from the mountain. Just when he thought the end was coming, his men fired back with a volley of firepower, including RPGs as they emerged from the brush on the other side.

He finally made it to where they were hiding and firing. His men took Alexsei and moved to a spot one hundred yards within the brush. There, they set up a defense perimeter surrounding an area to lay Alexsei down. Breathing heavily, he looked into Alexsei's distant eyes. Drops of salty sweat rolled down his face, catching the corners of his lips.

"Hurry," Alexsei said quietly, staring attentively at the moonlit sky. Viktor applied bandages on his back and beneath his ribs. The red blood seeped through.

"Stay with me, Alexsei!" Viktor and another medic worked feverishly to stop the bleeding.

Intent on his work, he did not notice when one of the team members approached him with a man and woman at his side. They were unarmed.

He instinctively reached for his weapon but stopped suddenly when the trooper quickly yelled, "Here is a doctor and a nurse from town."

Viktor looked alarmed, but the doctor quickly added, "I studied in London, and I can help your comrade."

He saw that both the doctor and nurse stared at him pleadingly while his team member held his weapon on them. "They're unarmed," he added.

"Okay, doctor, go to him."

The doctor was a small man, standing at five feet, seven inches. He wore glasses, and although his skin color was the typical olive tone, it was not weatherworn like the others he had met.

The girl wore the traditional shapeless garment that covered her whole body except for her face. Despite the urgency of the situation, Viktor could not help but notice how pretty she was, how her eyes sparkled green, even in the dark night.

"I am Doctor Rajiv, and this is my sister, Sumayah. We are from Tajikistan by birth but operate a clinic nearby in Golbahar. I will help your comrade, but he needs to come to the clinic right away."

The guard looked at Viktor. "Could be a trap, sir."

Viktor thought for a moment. "It is a chance we must take."

Viktor and his men developed a relationship over a period of time and a strong allegiance grew between the people of Golbahar and the Soviet officers, especially after Dr. Rajiv was able to save Alexsei's life. Many

troops deployed there to protect the locals for the next seventeen months. Often, it was Viktor and his team who returned to bolster the government forces there, sometimes staying six weeks at a time.

Viktor delighted in this mission because each time he arrived, he made it a point to see Sumayah, and in time, the two developed a secret relationship.

Although Sumayah appeared to be slightly gaining weight, it was not until he told her about his involvement ending in Afghanistan that she broke the news about her pregnancy.

“I have your baby here,” she said, pointing at her stomach as Viktor looked as if he had just seen a ghost. “She can come soon.”

“WHAT! She? You should have told me! How do you know it’s a girl? I could have arranged for you to come with me. Us! All three of us, and your brother too!”

Sumayah started to cry. “I was afraid of what you would say. I didn’t want to get you into any trouble!” she said, crying.

Viktor was beside himself, angry at his own actions. *How could I have let this happen?* he thought. A baby girl...my baby girl!

“Okay, okay. Let me think. I will come back to get you, but I must first plan. You cannot travel until after the baby is born. I think we can do this. You will come with me?”

Wiping away the tears, she managed a smile and shook her head with enthusiasm. “Of course!”

Viktor lifted his hand towards her cheek and wiped away a tear. “Wait for me until I come back. Tell your brother to be ready too.”

Six weeks later, Viktor stood outside the traditional house made with mud. The rooms inside had good insulation material, and the windows faced south to gain the maximum amount of sunlight during the winters. A small boy stood peering down at him from the flat rooftop. Other buildings clustered around, some sharing walls to reduce exposure to cold winds.

Viktor’s men spread across the perimeter, forming a circle around him, anticipating the special moment. A muffled scream, followed by a baby crying, startled the whole team, and Viktor began running through the opened door. Just then, Dr. Rajiv appeared, smiling from ear to ear.

“Comrade Tamarov, you are the father of a beautiful baby girl!”

Before Viktor could react, his troops came up, slapped him on the back, and congratulated him, one of them thrusting a bottle of vodka in front of his face. “A gift, from the commandant.”

Dazed and confused, yet elated, Viktor blurted, “When can I see them,

doctor?”

“Come, now.”

The two walked inside, and Viktor rushed to one of the back rooms. Surrounded by three other women, all covered from head to foot, Sumayah held the baby at her breast. “Come, see your beautiful daughter.”

Viktor moved swiftly and stopped at her side. “You are well?”

“Yes, of course. Here, hold her.”

Viktor nervously took the baby from Sumayah and immediately noticed her sparkling green eyes. “I thought newborns had faded colored eyes.”

“They usually do, but this one is special,” Sumayah answered.

“What is her name?” Viktor asked.

“With your agreement, I want to name her Sarah. It means Princess.”

Viktor smiled. “Sarah it is!”

The Team

Captain Dan Carter

First Sergeant Mark Talbot

Chief Warrant Officer Dan Hall

SFC John Banks

SFC Bill Huber

SFC Chris Short

SSG Mike Phillips

SSG Ron Hawkins

SSG Hal Redman

SSG Rich Bradley

SSG Jack Davidson

SSG Jeff Reimer

ONE

An eighteen-year-old Afghan girl was doing her usual chores of cleaning the eating area behind the traditional mud-brick home in Gulbahar. It was a brisk night in September. Whenever she was alone with her thoughts, Sarah's almond-shaped eyes stared in the distance as she daydreamed about a prince who would someday rescue her from the hellish war-torn land where she had resided all her life. All she knew was war.

Ironically, her mother, who was from Tajikistan, was shot and killed by the Mujahideen, the guerilla group fighting the Soviets who had occupied their land. It was an ambush, her stepfather, Dr. Abdul Rajiv, told her. Sarah never knew her mother—she was only three months old. Sarah survived the hail of bullets that struck her mother's body, which functioned as the shield that saved her life.

Her thoughts were shattered by her stepfather, who yelled in despair, "They killed him! He's dead!"

Sarah ran through the large visiting room toward the front. "Who? Who is dead, papa?"

"Ahmad Shah Masood! He is dead! They killed him! The Taliban killed him!" the thin, gray-haired man answered with tears streaming down his cheeks.

Sarah stood motionless, unsure how she could console her stepdad. At five feet nine inches, she stood at least two inches above all of her friends in the area, including her dad.

Dr. Rajiv continued, "He was our best hope to reunite Afghanistan—The Lion of Panjshir! Now he is dead!"

"Oh, papa, everything will be okay, yes?"

He looked at her, suddenly aware that the young girl was watching him cry. "Yes—yes, of course it will. Go on back now to finish your work."

Sarah went to the back and continued with her chores, and her internal ambitions. *After all*, she thought, *I did pray to Allah for a prince.*

Two nights had passed. Once again, the scene replayed as it had previously, only this time, she would not run to the front. That decision changed when Dr. Rajiv beckoned her. "Sarah! Come quick! You must

see this!”

Sarah ran to the front in a panic. On the television set in front of her stepfather was thick black smoke billowing from a tall modern structure. The view was met with a look of amazement. She let out a gasp. Her mouth opened wide, suppressing a scream while she watched in horror the images of America's tallest buildings burning uncontrollably. “Tha—that looks like the big city in America!”

“Yes! Indeed, it is! New York City!” he answered in shock.

“Wha—what happened?”

Before he could answer, they watched in further terror as a commercial jetliner appeared across the sky on the television and slammed straight into the second building, immediately erupting into a terrific fireball.

Sarah's green eyes glistened with fright.

“Papa!”

Dr. Rajiv held out his shaking hand for her to grasp. “Come, my dear,” as he turned off the set. “Let us have some tea.”



The morning was stimulating for Staff Sergeant Ron Hawkins, who was conducting first aid classes for team members. At twenty-one, he was the youngest operator on the team. Hawkins was personally selected by his First Sergeant, Mark Talbot, a friend of his father, Sergeant First Class Jason Hawkins. Like his father, Ron was now a true Green Beret soldier.

Ron stood tall and confident at six feet, two inches. He boldly shared his medical knowledge with the onlookers, each of whom needed to update their CPR certification. With sandy-colored hair and hazel eyes, good-natured Ron grinned often and had just delivered one of his jokes, which the other members chuckled at, just to make him feel good. “That one was actually funny, junior,” Huber blurted between laughter.

Just then, First Sergeant Talbot popped his head from the screen door of the wooden head shack. “Hawk, you're done! Y'all get in here now!” His voice was urgent.

Ron, looking bewildered at the others, added, “I didn't think it was that bad...and it was clean.”

“C'mon Hawk, something's up,” Short laughed. Accompanied by the usual murmurings, they filed hastily inside their orderly room.

Sergeant First Class Chris Short led the way toward Talbot, who was standing in front of the television set.

“What's up, Top?”

“See for yourself,” he answered somberly.

As the team gathered around the set, they watched with wonder and

shock as one of the twin towers emitted thick, black smoke like a factory chimney. Talbot repeated the media reports about a commercial aircraft slamming into one of the buildings in New York. “Nobody is sure...” he was cut off by the spontaneous gasps and loud curses of the men.

“WHAT THE LIVING...!” Short blurted amongst the chatter.

A new emotion filled the room—anger. Talbot looked at Short and then the rest of them. “Y'all know what this means, don't you?”

His statement was met with anxious and determined looks. “Training missions have just been switched to real-life missions. Start getting your affairs in order.”

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