

## MC 061: Beginnings... and Endings

Sunday, 23 November 2008

G.I. JOE #61

Beginnings... and Endings

Cover Date: July, 1987

Writer: Larry Hama

Penciler: Marshall Rogers

Inker: Danny Bulanadi

Coloring: Bob Sharen

Lettering: Joe Rosen

Editor: Bob Harras

Editor-in-chief: Jim Shooter

Summary: In the basement of an army office building somewhere in the United States, Hawk is briefing Stalker, Snow Job, Outback and Quick Kick on a reporter named Devlin Winchell, who has been arrested on espionage charges in the People's Democratic Republic of Borovia. The Department of Defense is sending the four Joes in to rescue Winchell, posing as trade emissaries, however, they are being discharged from the service for the duration of the mission as a basis for denial.

The next day in Denver, at Fred's garage, Billy has regained his memories from before his accident. He explains to Fred VII, Raptor and Cobra Commander, that he can remember everything except how to hate as much as he did. As he tries to leave, Fred attempts to stop him at gunpoint, but Billy just brushes Fred aside, as well as Raptor. Cobra Commander also has Billy at gunpoint, but lets him go after Billy's promise not to betray him, over Fred's strong objections.

Later, in Krogdanz, Borovia, Stalker is the last of the rescue team to arrive at the Hotel Grod, and meet with Spigou, their local contact. The five go over plans to the State Security Building where Devlin Winchell is being held, which Spigou likens to the FBI. Spigou has arranged for them to be on the garbage truck which goes to the building every night, and also has a trunk full of weapons.

Meanwhile in Denver, Billy returns to the blind Master's dojo, finding, not the Blind Master, but Jinx. Billy takes her up on her offer to walk down the path of the ninja, and confirms that she reports to the Joe team. He also reiterates to her that he won't betray his father. Across the alley in Fred's garage, Cobra Commander has just informed Fred VII and Raptor that he is quitting Cobra. Taking off the suit of Battle Armor Fred constructed for him, he says he's going to start over, honestly this time, and try to win back at least some of Billy's respect. As he tries to walk out, Fred tells him that he owes him more than this for giving up his past, and shoots Cobra Commander through the back. With the smoking gun still in his hand, Fred VII picks up the Battle Armor helmet, and muses "Great thing about this armor...Could be anybody inside."

In Borovia, the rescue team begins their assault of the State Security Building, capturing one guard and knocking two others unconscious. They check the cells, only to find that all are empty. The guard confirms that Devlin Winchell was released that morning, in a spy exchange arranged by the State Department. The deal was apparently so ultra hush-hush that the State Department didn't even tell the Department of defense, leaving the Joes with no one to rescue. Just as the realization dawns on the team, two State Security officers find the guard missing from his post, and sound the alarm. The team fights their way out to where Spigou waits in the get-away truck, but Quick-Kick and Snow Job are both seriously wounded. Spigou drives through the city, attempting to elude the State Security units, but the team is eventually trapped in a dead-end alley. The Joes get out of the truck, and Spigou advises he'll try to buy them some time. He throws the truck into full speed reverse and heads toward the tank which is blocking the alley, but with an order from the commanding officer the tank fires. Spigou muses "Better this than the Gulag..." as the truck is consumed in the explosion. Meanwhile, Stalker tells Outback that as mission leader, Stalker has to stay with Snow Job and Quick Kick. He orders Outback to escape and evade, and report back to Hawk on what happened. After the explosion the State Security guards capture Stalker, Quick-Kick, and Snow Job, and as Colonel Ratnikov kicks Stalker into unconsciousness, we see that Outback is hiding beneath the manhole cover, and Stalker's blood drips through onto his face.

Later, somewhere in the United States, several members of the Joe team watch the news report of their teammates' capture. The State Department of course denies any connection to the team's mission. As Hawk comes in, Rock 'N Roll asks when the rescue mission is scheduled. An obviously agitated Hawk informs the team that there is to be no rescue mission, and that anyone who attempts to defy the orders will also be written off.

To Be Continued... (in Special Missions #6)

Review: The Commander is Dead, Long Live the Commander! (Or should that be imposter?) This issue contains the

start of a fairly major story arc, and the start of the first crossover with the Special Missions series, which is only just getting started (Special Missions #6 picks up immediately from this issue.) Fred VII is about to assume leadership of Cobra (leading in part to the Cobra Civil War) and Billy is starting on the next step of his road, which will eventually result in his being reunited with his mentor Storm Shadow. The primary thread of this issue though, is the failed attempt to rescue Devlin Winchell, which results in Stalker, Snow Job, and Quick-Kick being captured by the Borovians, and written off by the Department of Defense.

In retrospect, this issue doesn't seem as tense as I remember it, but part of that is certainly knowing that it all does work out in the end. That said, there's still plenty of action in this issue. Cobra's motto is "Greed, Ambition, and Ruthlessness," so it's not too surprising when one of the Commander's Crimson Guards shoots him in the back, rather than letting him abandon the organization to the wind. Also, for those of us who like the ninja sub-plot, it's nice to see Billy back in the series.

#### First Appearances:

- Geography: Borovia; Krognz (Borovia's capitol)

#### Reprinted in:

- The Transformers (UK) #236-240 (September 23rd - October 21st, 1989). A Marvel UK series that began reprinting Action Force stories after the end of that series. These issues reprint this story in five parts, alongside original stories. All references to "G.I. Joe" were changed to "Action Force".
- Classic G.I. JOE: Volume 7 (February 2010). A trade paperback collection from IDW Publishing. Includes issues #61-70.