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**FOREWORD:** *My Name Is Red* is a novel by Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk. In 16th-century Istanbul, an elite group of miniaturist painters secretly toil over a book, ordered by the Sultan himself, to be rendered in the "heretical" Frankish style. Each chapter is told from a different character's perspective, sometimes even from the lips of a drawing displayed in one of the city's notorious coffeehouses. This piece is an attempt to replicate Pamuk's distinctive style, and to humanize one of history's more elusive cultural identities.

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## I AM A BEDOUIN RAIDER

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Spencer J. King

No doubt that in your current state of mind, stimulated as you are by the rich coffee steaming in your cup, you are induced to seek out much merriment and sources of joviality. But look no further, friend, than to the eloquent drawing before you now as it is displayed by that graying miniaturist with such pride. Behold the regality of my turban, the sure step of my disciplined camel, the noble ferocity with which I tote my ornamented spear. Surely to your prying urban eyes I must appear somewhat of a novelty, or even rather buffoonish, especially due to the bizarre manner of my rendering. But rest assured, friend, that in my native desert I am the master of all that I can see. Also know that I wasn't always confined to this simple piece of parchment as you see me now, but that once I felt the wind in my hair as you feel it, and loved women as you love them.

In truth, I was once a brave warrior of the Juhayna tribe and won many battles. Our herds were vast, with sheep stretching as far as the eye can see and the noblest camels in all the deserts; alas, in my day my brothers knew greatness. Our herds provided us with food, shelter, fuel for burning, and all the necessities of life. When we were in want of rich fabrics, weapons, or jewelry for our women, we took them in great number from the caravans who traversed the dunes. Now, understand that as I have traveled to all corners of your Sultan's glorious empire within the confines of this fading piece of parchment, I am quite familiar with much of your esteemed literature. Try to contain your surprise as I quote that fork-tongued Mustafa Ali, who held my brothers in an even lower regard than he did those plundering Tatars:

Ready to commit the most abominable acts [are those] Bedouin horsemen... Other packs, even while evil footed, content themselves with stealing property as their daily bread. [The Bedouin] are indeed of evil character, injurious, and corrupt (Ali 54).

As poisonous as are these words you may be shocked to find that I take no offense, for a Bedouin tribe confined to horses is likened to your Sultan confined to an

outhouse. Only a tribe lacking in strength or pride would forego the camel in favor of a common horse, and what room is there for a galloping horse when your home is a mountain of shifting sand? So I know Ali cannot have been referring to me or my noble brothers. As for the charges of banditry among the Bedouin, let me ask you this: when your woman expresses her desire for a fine cloth or a new piece of jewelry, do you not pursue her object of interest with the utmost fervor for fear of her mighty Temper!

You see, we are not so different, you and I. You are bound to the banalities of urban life, and so come to commit sin in the coffeehouse out of the necessity of your being. I am bound to the hardships of the unforgiving desert, and so come to commit sins on the Pilgrimage Route out of the necessity of mine own being. But I'll stop boring you with my pleas for your sympathy, at least for the time being, and tell you of how I came to reside upon this parchment as you see me now. This, of course, was long before I murdered my brother, that coward, and became the greatest *sheikh* the Juhayna had ever known, before my accumulation of the fine drawings I came to treasure so dearly, before my heinous execution at the behest of your illustrious scholars.

When I was a young man, I had no equal in all the deserts under the gaze of Allah, may He be exalted. Naturally you must think me a braggart for making this declaration so assuredly, but let me explain. I fought many battles with sword and spear, and no man of any size or temperament ever bested me. I drove the herd of my father the *sheikh* and never lost a single sheep to bandit or jackal or for lack of water. The camel I chose as my steed was the most ill-tempered camel that ever strode the desert, but he bowed to me as I was his master. My wife was the most beautiful vision of Allah that ever did grace His earth, and when she would remove her golden mask it was as if the sun were rising for the very first time. So take your scoffs elsewhere, friend, and know that I once was a great man.

Upon a certain glorious day, my elder brother and I had led a party of Bedouin out to a remote reach of the Pilgrimage Route where we intended to procure some trinkets for the women. After a brief period of idleness, we caught sight of a small and poorly-guarded caravan treading across the way. Immediately we descended upon them with great speed and ferocity, easily dispatching the guards with mighty throws from our spear arms, until we had the whole of the caravan under our quarter. This is something you city dwellers often fail to understand, as demonstrated by your disposition to flee on foot from we Bedouin raiders: a properly trained and well-fed camel can easily outrun a man when spurred by a rider that has mastered it. We dismounted our steeds and proceeded to examine the contents of the wagons.

Imagine our surprise, though, when we found one wagon to be populated not by Arabs or Turks, but by white-faced Infidels! An old man and his daughter, a fine specimen by all counts, sitting amidst wagon filled with useless inks, brushes, and parchment. Now, this Frankish beauty was like nothing the men had ever seen, inciting a lustful frenzy, and after my brother nodded his approval they proceeded to have their way with her.

"Stop!" cried the old man, standing up and extending his pale wrinkled arms. His voice was surprising in its depth and confidence, and he spoke in the tongue of my brothers and cousins. "I beg of you to stop! Please spare the girl her honor, as she is all I have left at the end of this long life. I beg of you, allow the girl to pass freely and take me in her place." Now, friend, join with me in a chuckle when I point out that the anus of an old man is a very foul thing indeed and hardly a substitute for the softness of a young woman. We recounted this to him, and here is what he had to say: "In my homeland which is very away, I am praised as the greatest of painters. Let the girl pass, and I shall bind myself to you and paint great works to glorify your people, if it should please you."

My elder brother, the great imbecile, considered this and thought how it might please my father to have the greatest of the Frankish painters as his retainer. Though I objected that there was little room to display such works even in the large tent of our father, my brother ordered that the girl be spared and proceeded to tie some of our beasts to the Frank's wagon. We then let the caravan pass on, as is our custom, the girl with them and the old man with us, and rode back to our encampment.

Upon our return we found that my father was dead. This may seem a very melancholy turn for a simple coffeehouse yarn, but he was an old man and had nobly struggled against the fever for some time, so his death did not come as a surprise. My brother, being the eldest, was the rightful successor but I cringed at the thought of my people falling under the sway of such a weak and short-sighted man. I challenged him, and we rode out to the desert that very day. Only I returned, as *sheikh* of the greatest tribe in the domain of Allah, may He be exalted. As the Bedouin say, "I against my brothers, I and my brothers against my cousins, I and my brothers and my cousins against the world" ([en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedouin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bedouin)).

Naturally, I busied myself with the many duties of my new position but summoned the Frank to my tent each day, as I had inherited him into my charge. On the first day he brought me a bizarre rendering of a camel in the desert, with all manner of minute trees dotting the horizon. Upon receiving this I exclaimed, "This is not the manner of painting to which I am accustomed; I wish for you to try again." And the

old Frank said with a shrug, "I do not know to which manner of painting you are accustomed, my lord," to which I replied: "I wish you to see the camel as Allah would see it."

The Frank and I carried on much like this the second day, and the third day, and again the fourth day and so on for fifty days. At this time he began to bemoan and weep, not knowing whether his daughter were alive and unable to let her know that he was still alive. Seeing him so weak filled me with disgust, and I let out upon his ears fifty days' worth of my frustrations. Who was he to put himself on the plane of Allah by depicting the world from his eyes rather than through His own? How dare he insult the tent of the great *sheikh* with such blasphemy? I spit fire upon him in my wrath.

The old Frank was careful and respectful with his reply, which pleased me. He said, "God gave me this brush so that I might recreate the joys of His children, not for His own joy; for the beauties He has known are too great for me to ever express." I was taken aback, as the words of this wise old man had truly stirred me. Promptly I sent him away and pondered in my tent. Laid out before me were fifty bizarre camels to keep company. After an eternity of bafflement, finally I saw my herd as I knew them, smelled their musk and relived our journeys. I wept for my happiness.

And so, up until his death, the old Frank brought me much delight with drawings of all manner of things. He even drew the becoming portrait you see before you today. When the herd moved I bound them up in skins and kept them with me, and they were my greatest sources of gladness and reminiscence.

When I was an old man, my raiding party was captured by a squad of brash janissaries. Searching my person their captain found my drawings, including the portrait of myself I often gazed at to remember what it felt like to be young and strong. Naturally he found them highly offensive and heretical, and so I died by his sword that very day. He gave the drawings to a miniaturist, who happened to be in accompaniment by request of the Sultan, and ordered that they be destroyed. But the miniaturist served his art more than he served the Sultan, and hid the paintings away for their novelty. When times were tough the drawings had to be sold, and it is after a most long and arduous journey that I arrive here before you today in this dim coffeehouse.

So, friend, I do not implore or expect you to gaze upon me with the same loving glare you show the beardless boy on your knee. I know what I am, a bizarre depiction by Frankish Infidels, and I used to see myself in the same way you must be seeing me now. But know at the least, my friend, that once I was a great man.

## UNDERNEATH THE BERET: THE REALITY OF THE U.S. SPECIAL FORCES IN VIETNAM

Alex DiGregorio

The many branches of the United States military have always challenged individuals to push their own limits. Join up, they say, and be a part of something big, powerful and unique. "Be All You Can Be," the Army asks its prospective soldiers. "Aim High," the Air Force challenges pilots. "Semper Fi," vow the Marines. All claim to be able to push a man beyond his normal abilities, to hone him and make him something more. All have reputations for being able to do just that. But, since the 1960s there has been one military group whose reputation surpasses the rest. This group has been able to hold the interest of all kinds of people, from war buffs and conspiracy theorists, to simple video gamers and moviegoers. A mystique has been built around them and so, to many who would hear of them later, their actions would become exaggerated into legend. This group is the U.S. Army's Special Forces, and Vietnam was the setting for their activities. But, what is the truth about what happened there? Where can we draw the line between actual military operations and exaggerated pop culture nonsense? What were these people *really* capable of? The answers lie in the accounts of the soldiers themselves.

### FACT OR FICTION?

Looking at the reality of the situation, one can easily see why the Special Forces became iconic. For a moment, imagine a group of six men moving silently through a dark jungle. They are predators, despite being far away from home and deep in enemy territory. They are camouflaged to the point of being invisible, and quiet as ghosts. They hunt the enemy, despite being outnumbered and outgunned, and they are known to be lethally dangerous. In 1990, Tim O'Brien novelized this through the eyes of regular infantry in Chu Lai. "Secretive and suspicious, loners by nature, the six Greenies would sometimes vanish for days at a time, or even weeks, then late in the night they would just as magically reappear, moving like shadows through the moonlight..."<sup>1</sup> There was an air of mystery about them, even among the rest of the military who were, for the most part, oblivious to their orders. For some time that knowledge was kept tightly sealed. *Stars and Stripes*, the military newspaper, admit that at the time they would not have published anything regarding the activity of the Special Forces. However, despite the secrecy and general ignorance of the public, the popularity of these units skyrocketed.

For years following the peak of Special Forces activity in Southeast Asia, American culture spawned numerous imitations of their actions. In film, Sylvester Stallone's Rambo character (1982) perpetuated the image of a super soldier who could do anything and may as well have been able to win the Vietnam War alone. Francis Ford Cop-

<sup>1</sup> Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Broadway Books, 1990) 92.