

NERF HQ:

My name: John Wolf.

My rank: Captain of the 501st squadron.

My preferred gun: Recon CS-6.

My armor type: ghost class CX-32.

My story:

I was born in Ohio, specifically Dayton, home to the air force museum.

When I turned 25, they came for me. Men in strange suits. I had no idea... the training they put me through nearly broke me. Nearly. I managed to get past and excel at all training courses. Then, they blindfolded me and brought me to their headquarters. I became part of an elite group known as N-STRIKE, the immortal upper-echelon group who were unstoppable in the field of battle. I worked my way up to captain of the 501st squadron.

I was known in all of the squadrons, but I thought the best of 501st. I had trusting friends here. No man would ever be left behind in here, no matter what kind of fire they were in. If a man went down, we went down with him. We had an unspoken motto: Never say Never. If anyone said "Help!" then we heeded the request.

We could not be beaten... until we received a top secret mission. Here, I have enclosed a documentation of the battle.

If you tell anyone, you will be hunted down. If you in any way try to betray our trust, we will find you. If you understand, and swear not to betray us, then read on... about mission X.

Mission X

LOCATION: CLASSIFIED.

We headed towards the eastern tower. We were ordered to spring an assault on an enormous fortress, told there was stolen weapons and ID's, as well as other data that could be of great use to the enemy. We had no idea... We were nearly at the first entrance.

I order the 19 other members of my squad to stop, preparing to sweep for traps. There were none. We continued on, despite the cold, damp conditions of the weather. I see a guard, and borrow a Longstrike CS-6 sniper rifle from Kowalski, my long range assault specialist.

Dutch, my hit-man, says to me, "what are you doing? Why use a rifle we cant afford losing ammo to?" And I answer, "Because I can't aim well enough with the recon! Get out of my way Dutch!" He backs off, but not before muttering under his breath, "Fine, but if we fail, you burn with us!" I can't help but think there may be a traitor in our midst, just waiting to happen. Dutch has always been that way though. He could just be cranky because of the weather. Whatever. I've got the shot anyways.

I take it, and we pass the guards' unconscious body unnoticed. He'll live, but he won't wake up

until I remote re-awaken him.

That's the handy thing about needle-tipped darts; they inject stuff into people that is so small, if its metal, a detector won't see it.

We hear footsteps and all find hiding places. I activate the helmet mike and say quietly into it, "Alright men. Our objective is on the top floor. Police your brass, and don't let yourselves get caught. If you are captured, use the pill. I know you all hate having it on you, but at least it's not the Nazi method. Let's get that tech back!" Kowalski gives me the immortal line: "if their lookin' for trouble, they just found it." "I'll handle recon ahead and report back guard placement. Over and out."

As he uses special panels on his suit to turn effectively invisible to the care-free eye, I say to the remaining 18 men, "That sight-cloak won't hide Kowalski forever. let's move!" They all understand perfectly. We encounter at least twenty guards before we find the elevator shaft. No point in using the actual elevator, they probably have cameras in them anyways. We use piton cables to get up the shaft, after alerting Kowalski to our position so he can catch up. One of my men, Leroy, says to me urgently, "we need to hurry, Kowalski isn't reporting back. I think he got caught!" While this sounds reasonable, I don't think much of it, other than to acknowledge it with a stiff nod.

Then my radio crackles and I hear Kowalski's breathless voice, yelling at me to leave him behind. Then I hear it. A sharp gurgle. He used the drug-based knockout pill, ensuring he could never reveal secrets to the men who captured him.

I feel a stab of pain at the loss of my first squad member. I vowed silently to gain revenge for Kowalski's defeat. "Why you, Kowalski? Why you?" is all I can say. Then an unexplainable fury takes over me and I begin to climb with renewed strength. Kowalski wasn't just an ally. He was a friend. Below me I hear the shaft door close and I am dimly aware that I am outpacing the others, something that would usually be lethal in any mission. I can only think of Kowalski, though.

I adjust the piton cable and keep moving, hearing a gentle panting sound starting up from nearby, but it doesn't come from below, like I'd thought. Instead, an elevator box heads past me, a group of guards in it nearly spotting me in my jet-black outfit. And in an elevator shaft with no lights, you begin to appreciate the security, or lack thereof, that these guards installed. An elevator shaft, with no lights. And bullet-proof glass and steel framed elevator boxes, just so guards can see inside the shaft from all directions, in case of the scenario we are putting this places security through. I look back to my men and see nothing.

They must have cloaked themselves from the elevator. I let myself rest for a minute to let the rest of the team catch up. As I wait, I think back to the expression of the guards. Then I realize I couldn't see their faces! They were all talking into their radios! With my heart pounding, I hear another elevator coming down.

Then I see what I missed before. The elevator shaft was not light free. The lights were just turned off! The next elevator was full of guards, and if the lights turned on, I was dead without a doubt. I held my breath, hoping, hoping that luck was with me. I shielded myself from view with the cloaking device and slowly breathe in and out.

The elevator comes parallel with me and I freeze. The seconds pass, and the elevator box carries on its guard-filled way. I release a cloud of pent-up breath, and realize for the first time that it is freezing cold in here! Not only that, but the temperature is steadily dropping. I really don't like this. I

call through the radio to the squad, "Everybody get ready to hop off. They're trying to freeze us out!" They wait for my signal, having just shot secondary piton cables into the shaft walls. "On my mark. Three... two... one... mark!" Immediately 18 jet black shapes separate from the shaft core. I join them without hesitation. We were lucky. The door to the shaft was just above me.

As Hector, our hacker, started to get into the security systems, we waited impatiently, getting colder by the second. Finally, the door opens and Hector jumps inside... and reports back no guards. As I climb in behind him, I have to pass a remark on Hector's choice of weaponry. "Hector, you do realize that maverick REV-6 is an old model, right?" He looks annoyed, so I just grin and pat him on the back. When he realizes it's a joke, I'm already ahead of him.

LOCATION: UNKNOWN

"Is our operative in the squadron?"

"Yes."

"Then tell him to spring the trap."

"Of course, Sir."

"When the 501st realize their mistake, it will already be too late."

"Sir, if I may--"

"No! You will not interfere with my plans! If you want answers then you will be severely disappointed!"

"My apologies, sir. I did not mean to question your judgment, only... why Kowalski? Of all the men in the 501st, why did you pick the sniper?"

"Because he was obvious. Now get out of my sight!"

"Yes, sir."

"Ha ha ha... Captain Wolf was rather silly to believe he could get past my men, into my safes! He will pay dearly..."

LOCATION: 501ST SQUADRON

"I think I'm pretty smart with my team, getting so far in here." I joke to myself. Hearing gunfire, I ready my recon cs-6 and wait for the guards. I turn back and see our logo on the wall on my right. Why would our insignia be *here*? *This is getting stranger by the minute. First lights off in the elevator shaft, now this?* I think. *This is going to be interesting.*

I wait for the rest of my team, but the only one to come back is Carolina, the only girl in my

team. "Sir, the enemy has gotten automatic rifles. It's a trap. We need your help!" She says. "On my way!" Is my only reply. I'm not used to dealing with automatic guns yet. I've never dealt with them. For one of the first times on a mission, I actually am afraid. Carolina is no different. I can see the fear on her face, and she is harder to scare than I am. Either that or she is better than me at hiding it.

I see my unconscious teammates on the ground, but no sign of the guards. That's when I'm really scared. I see Dutch on the ground, and move to check his pulse, but then I hear footsteps.

I grab Carolinas arm and we run. I can't bear to think of the fates of my team, but we have to complete the mission.

We get past door after door, and finally find the mission objectives safe. I try shooting the lock, but the darts just bounce off. Carolina bashes it with her gun stock, but cant get it open either. I have lock picks on me like the rest of the team, but never got to learning how to use them. Carolina can use them, but not overly effectively. She gives it a go, but no luck. She keeps on trying to stubbornly pick this lock, but I can hear footsteps.

There! She finally gets it open, but there is nothing in it. It doesn't add up. "I think they may have moved it out to another safe, another room, another building even," I say to Carolina. We were tricked, and I realize this was a setup all along. We were never meant to get out of here alive. Carolina gets ready for the guards, but I'm still thinking of ways out. I see none.

I join Carolina at the back of the room. We are fortunate for the door. With this, we can bottleneck the troops. I see the first guard and fire a dart straight into his chest. Carolina has more shots than I do, with her Raider CS-35, fighting like she was born for this. I remember her training scores, and realize she may actually have been born for this. She beat us all in target practice, both moving and stationary.

She throws a special flower grenade, which is worse than it sounds. It sends darts flying out in a cone-like sweep (hence the name), ensuring that there are no people escaping the blast. We hide behind the safe, hearing nothing. Hardly daring to breath, we both take a quick look over the edge. Nearly thirty guards, all unconscious.

We trade glances, and get out of that building as soon as we can. Passing by the rest of my team, I see there is no movement in their eyes. Dutch is the only exception. Leroy, Hector, Larsen, James, all of them are past our mediocre help. They have been stunned and their heartbeats are now too weak to handle the journey back. All of them are defeated. It feels as though the world has ended. First Kowalski, then this.

In a kind of stupor, I gather their weapons and Carolina and I haul Dutch into the elevator shaft. I can barely move, I can barely think. We aren't in a shaft; we are in an elevator box. It's likely to be a trap, I know, but I don't care. All I feel is sadness.

I slide to the floor of the box and just try to rest. By the time we hit the ground level, I've been tinkering with the teams guns, and combined a few of them into a strange new gun. As far as I can tell, it's automatic, with over 150 shots in 8 separate clips.

I name it the HAILSTRIKE, and give it a try on the waves of guards that are waiting for us outside the elevator door. I don't even feel surprise, or fear. I only feel anger at these people, they who imprisoned the rest of my team. I feel darts rushing past me, but the enemy is no match for me. I slip past darts like they are moving in slow motion. Waves of guards fall before the HAILSTRIKE. As per the name, it leaves no one undefeated.

Carolina is still in the elevator shaft. I search her face, and can only discern fear in it. *She is afraid of me*, I think. *She believes I will attack her as well*. “We need to go,” I say to her, but she doesn’t respond. She is rooted with fear. I can’t really blame her. She raises her gun, and I think she is going to shoot me. But she isn’t staring at me. She’s looking past me.

I turn around, and see... something. It looks like a jet, but I can’t tell. It’s equipped with weapons, as well as missiles, but I can’t tell if it is friend or foe. *Oh no. That is foe alright*, I think as I see into the cockpit; more guards.

I don’t see a way to defeat it. It looks impenetrable. I start to open fire, and I pour all of my hatred into the darts, all the while moving back for Carolina and Dutch. Dutch appears to be waking up, so I hand him the new guns from the team and tell him to get Carolina and get out of there. He nods, and Carolina doesn’t need persuading. I hold off the jet, playing chicken with it, because heck, if I’m going down, I may as well go with a show.

I hear a crackling on the radio. It’s the jet. “attention idiot. If you continue to fire, we will destroy you. We can see through your silly little old fashion cloaking device. Surrender and you will be spared. Drop your weapons and get down on the ground. I repeat, drop your weapons and get down on the ground, now!”

I respond sarcastically, “sure I surrender. Make that a negative, seeing as you killed my team. Eat lead!” Firing even faster, I grab the Recon CS-6 and actually take out a missile, blowing it up and blowing part of a wing out.

Satisfied I’m keeping it occupied, I see Carolina and Dutch have made it into the woods and are firing at it from behind. I wish them luck, because I can’t see a way into that jet besides the cockpit. I start running towards it, screaming my fury at the enemy. They try to hit me, but I easily dodge the stream of bullets. They fire a missile, and I dodge that as well. I fire at the remaining missiles and missile pods, taking out multiple guns in the progress.

The jet starts losing altitude, and fire at me with the remaining guns. I get hit on the shoulder, and lose feeling in that arm. I still shoot at them.

One of the engines is taken out by Carolina, and it drops even faster. I run out of darts and grab my Recon. I fire again, and again, and again! Adrenaline courses through me. It’s not a really large jet, but it has thick plating on it.

The recon runs out, and I switch clips. Six shots is not a lot, but I manage to get the laser sight working. This increases my accuracy, and I take out the last engine.

The jet plummets like a rock. I ready a flower grenade, and toss it into the jets path. The jet hits the ground and surprisingly, does not explode. Instead, it bends and twists a lot, but still does not explode. I don’t want to take any chances.

I run to Carolina and Dutch, and see that Dutch is hit in the wrist. He won’t be firing any guns for a while. We begin to head back to base, turning on our reflection plates to turn invisible, and encounter no more guards.

When we do get back to our base, I ask for a personal talk with the director. It doesn’t go well. I get put on rehabilitation. I suppose I do need it, what with my squad being decimated.

I attend their rescue missions, and feel more melancholic by the day. I just want it to end. I fulfilled my vow to Kowalski, and I feel good about that, but that’s it.

Carolina pays me regular visits, and I realize the mission formed an unbreakable bond between

us. I think she knows it too, but it's hard to tell.

I get new squad members. Jacob is a pretty good hacker, like Hector. O'Connor is a good lock picker (thank God) and I have a guy with an amazing knowledge of guns, grenades, and melee weapons.

The team members each get a specialty sword, something we never had before. Some of us get shields but almost nobody needs them. As the days pass by, I never forget my old squad, but I begin to accept it. My new friends haven't met me yet though.

I'll go introduce myself. As I clear rehab, I realize how good it feels to breathe unfiltered air. In rehab, your environment is strictly controlled. Filtered air, water, and everything else. Plain white box of a room. Windows, sure, but no latches to open them.

It feels like a prison cell, just with better food. I see my squad for real (before I only had names and mug shots) and they all recognize me. I see Carolina and feel happier for it, because I don't know what I'd do without her in a battle.

Then the red-alert blares out. There is only one reason we would go on red-alert. Our base has been targeted. "No... its not possible. How could they find us?" I breathe. "How did they find us?"

My teammates are running towards the armory. I decide to follow them, even though I am straight out of rehab. I need a gun if I am going to save myself here. I see the HAILSTRIKE that I invented, and I wonder if I can handle it. But I decide not to. It's not time for that yet. I see hundreds of guns.

Our blasters have upgraded since I last saw them. I am not surprised. I see my old recon, and head towards it, but a hand stops me. I expect to see a guard standing there, but the hand belongs to Carolina. She hands me a different gun, one I don't recognize. It is similar to my old recon, but missing the top sight and the light. I look at her questioningly, but take it anyways. I also take a recon, and add the parts I want. Then I grab a DEPLOY CS-6, and head into the mess hall.

The enemy already breached the walls there, and as I waited for the leader of their squad, I wait for my squad too. I see them coming up the hall to me, and I motion at them to take cover. I want the enemy to think that I am alone, then to reveal my squad. It has worked in the past. It should work now. As the first squad member comes out, I see automatically that something is wrong with him. He is already looking for me. It is almost as though he knows what is coming. As I lung out to begin the battle, he turns and looks me in the eye. Then I realize it. The squadron leader is Kowalski.

As I wait for my brain to process the information, he pulls back his arm and punches me in the shoulder. My whole arm goes dead, then burns like wildfire. He must have had something in his fist that he stabbed me with. He must have poisoned me.

As my vision flickers, I use an old trick. I play defeated. When Kowalski turns his back I get up so fast that I must be a blur, reaching for his blaster. I realize it is the same one we dispatched to him when he was recruited.

A wave of fury races through me, and with it a surge of adrenaline. The dead arm forgotten, I start taking out the squad. Signaling to the rest of my friends, the battle breaks out.

I am locked in a melee with Kowalski, and I can't help but wonder if I can beat him. The poison is taking its toll. Soon my strength will fail. I will fall unconscious and then be taken hostage. Once it gets to that point, my squad will be helpless.

I see Carolina in the background and see she is taking on two men twice her weight, and beating the living daylight out of them. When she gets mad... yeesh.

I shift my attention to Kowalski, and see he has taken out a dagger and is slashing at me wildly. He looks nervous. I look him in the eye, and see the desperation there. He must be trying to prove himself.

I see a sword thrown to me. I snatch it from the air and resume combat. I find out that this sword is easy to manipulate, slashing an opponent's gun in half with a simple flick of my wrist. I begin to see fear in Kowalski's eyes.

He slashes even more wildly, overbalancing so much its amazing he is even still on his feet. He stabs. I step to the side. He swipes at me and I dodge again. Stabs again and I bring the hilt down on his wrist. He drops the dagger and I smack him on the side of the temple with the flat of my blade. He falls down, presumably unconscious for the moment.

I start to fight the rest of them, and we drive them out of the mess hall and into the night. I hear Kowalski screaming to retreat, and see him charge past me, actually jumping off the cliff that is to one side of the building. The rest of his squad follow, except for the two Carolina is beating up. I help her out by shooting them both in the back with my new DEPLOY.

As they fall to the floor, Carolina stands straighter and gets this look in her eyes that clearly says, "You just couldn't let me have the fun could you?" I ignore her and head out, motioning for my squad to follow.

We quickly subjugate the fighting in the other areas. I let Carolina have her fun with a few other soldiers. She seems to forgive me for the mess hall guys, and when the battle is over, we head back to get them. They are still there.

"Let's get these two over to interrogation. They have questions to answer." After interrogation, we all retreat to our quarters. I decide to call Carolina and Dutch over to my quarters, to discuss Kowalski.

They both come in with their unique 'teed-off' looks on. I know how they feel. This has gone too far for Kowalski. Carolina immediately throws a dagger into the poster I have of the old squad. I notice it has sunk straight into Kowalski's eye. I don't question it. In fact I actually remove the knife, step over to her, and ask her to hit him in the other eye. She does. I am not surprised.

We start to discuss why Kowalski has betrayed us, and Dutch comes up with a good idea. "Maybe if we look at his past records we might find something out about him. I suggest looking for files on his life before he joined us." I agree, and we head down to the library. We all grab some files but find that they were wiped clean. Nothing in them but blank paper.

"Nobody but an admiral could have done this with clearance. I think that there is a mole in the base!" Dutch and Carolina both agree that it makes sense.

We decide to send it in to the commander. He decides to take action on it, and after several boring meetings and 2 letters to the council, they decide to do whatever they need to worm out those moles. For several months nothing happens.

LOCATION: The Infinity Complex

We headed silently into the complex. We had pinpointed Kowalski's location and his boss.

"You guys take out the guards. He and his boss are mine!" They all understood, knowing how

personal my fight with Kowalski was. I had a RETALIATOR (the new RECON CS-6), melee sword, and a STRONGARM. It was a new, ELITE version of the older, less manageable MAVERICK REV-6. It was also more powerful.

I hoped it would be effective against Kowalski. He wasn't likely to be taken out with the same trick twice. However... it was worth a shot. If I was going to take Kowalski down, I had to be a bit unorthodox. He knew all the rules, so it was time to break a few.

As we moved through the complex with our shields up, we met more guards than empty spaces.

Kowalski had been busy. He had upgraded all the security, including installing elevator lights that actually worked.

Since the way we had gotten in on the mission that this whole thing had started with wouldn't work, we decided to climb a building and creep along that rooftop, then move to the next one, and the next, until we were on the target buildings roof. A good part of the building was underground, so we would need to take the elevator down. Unless we could do something else... "Is that air duct wide enough for us?" I asked Dutch. "It should be, unless you mean to also let enough air through to not be counted as an obstruction by the monitoring computer. Then they try to purge us, and wherever we end up is surrounded by guards. It is going to be risky, captain." This is not encouraging. But there is no other choice, so we proceed.

Carolina goes first, although not as I had hoped. We attach our piton cables to the roof of the duct and slide down silently and efficiently. From there we have a clean shot through the doors, after Jacob has hacked them. We see a solitary guard, relieve him of duty, (and his weapon) and move on.

We watch a guard head into the facilities, knock him out and lock the door. Proceed on, find a mess hall, and shut the doors and once again lock them. They should be missed by the other guards. It was rather stuffed with guards, that mess hall. All Dutch can do is say "Man, they have pizza. Why can't we get pizza at our base?" I silently agree. But the mission comes first.

We move out, hoping no guards have filters to see through the shields like the jet could. But we move on without incident. Then when we enter one corridor, the door swings shut behind us! "It appears we were expected. This looks like a gauntlet. Lets see..." there were small irregularities with the walls, ceiling and floor on the corridor. We avoided them, and go through without triggering anything. We head out through the door, and move on.

The next corridor is empty. I stop, suspicious by instinct, but David heads in there without a second thought. We hear a click and before we know it, a wall of darts speeds towards us. Luckily for David, he brought along a shield, and avoided being hit. We all got lucky too. Although I was mad at David for stepping in without care, I said nothing to him, and moved on. Getting to Kowalski was too important.

According to a special mapping device that I have, which uses sound waves, sent into a building in front of us, bounces them off any surface and then sends them back, this should be the last door before it is home free to Kowalski and co. I ready my sword and step through. For a second all I see is a sea of black that stops at head height, but then I realize that these are guards. Judging by the whine of machinery, these guards are robots. Darts don't work on things without blood. I look over my shoulder

and say to the squad, "Swords at the ready. LETS CRANK STEEL!" We throw explosives in, then charge in, cutting through metal like a hot knife through butter.

I see Carolina facing off with two droids and denting their shells, but not doing much with hands and knees. I throw a blade to her, since she was the only one who didn't bring one, and in seconds the robots are reduced to scrap metal. Instantly three more set upon her, and I join in the fun.

Beating back the droids, wave after wave, I see she is tired. I have never seen her tired. She always seems to be the most energetic of us. But then I remember that she hasn't been sleeping well, for the past 2 months. Kowalski's betrayal was hard on her. It's been hard on all of us from the old squad, but I have been strengthened by it.

I cut through the remaining droids and take her away from the battle. "you can't keep going like this. Stay here until you are ready to fight some more. Here," I say, handing her my RUFFCUT.

I see the squad are cutting down the rest of the robots, and help them finish them off. I scan the rooftops, and, seeing nothing, turn to my squad. Then I notice something. A slight irregularity on one roof. It almost looks like... "GET DOWN!! IT'S KOWALSKI!" I scream to my squad.

I am already aiming my gun at him, when he fires. One shot, and he hits me in the arm. My trigger finger goes dead. Another shot and he hits my leg. It is now impossible to stand, and my team is now firing everything they have. The darts simply bounce off of him. He has a new armor, one made of metal. Or maybe something else that is dart-proof.

Then I see Carolina. She has a strange gun in her hand, which she is aiming carefully. It looks like it's one of the guards guns. She fires one shot, and it amazingly doesn't bounce off of Kowalski. Instead it sticks to him, and then I see it. It has hooks on it, almost like a magnified type of Velcro. The sniper falls off the roof, and I see his face. It is not Kowalski.

All the same, I pick up his gun and it is one of ours. The same sniper rifle that Kowalski always carried around.

I decide to keep it, leaving the RUFFCUT 2X4 for Carolina. I get onto the rooftops and my team stays on the ground. We proceed like that until I come to the door that will lead to Kowalski.

I put a hand on the doorknob and suddenly feel uncertain of myself. If the time comes to shoot Kowalski, I don't know if I can do it. We were once the best of friends. A bond like that is hard to forget. All the same, I open the door and say to the team, "Stay out of this. He's mine." And I walk through the door.

I am standing in a room with large crates stacked in it. There is also a single catwalk that goes all the way around the room. On it, is standing Kowalski. He is holding two nasty looking guns, each with ten shots and two handles. One he clips to his back, and trades it for a RECON CS-6. Seeing that gun, in his hands, just makes me mad.

I replace the sniper rifle and my retaliator, and pull out my sword. It worked once, it should work again. With my spare hand, I hold the STRONGARM. "I thought you might come, John. You always were very predictable. Is Carolina with you?" He asks. "You know she is. Still have the scar I gave you in the mess hall?" I parry his remark with no emotion. But inside, the fury is like a pot that's about to boil over. And when it does, it is going to be pointed at Kowalski. "Why betray us, Kowalski? What did we do to you?" I ask him. "Why not? It wasn't worth it there anyways. You guys thought of me as a number. Now you pay." And with that, he opened fire.

Ducking behind a crate, I search for a way to get up there. I will be better in combat at eye level

with him. But the catwalk is sealed off. No ladders anywhere. *STUPID! STUPID STUPID STUPID!!!* I berate myself silently, only now remembering my grappling gun.

I fire a dart both left and right, hoping to the dear and fluffy lord that my plan works. With a final dart, I fire straight up. Suddenly I am suspended in a triangle, able to maneuver at any point, and it pays off. I see again the light of fear, once again in Kowalski's eyes as he realizes my plan.

I see Carolina toss a grapple gun, and catch it. I know why she threw it to me. I fire another three pitons, this time in the horizontal angles. One down, one to the upper right, one to the upper left. Now I can move in any direction, and with ease.

Now Kowalski is terrified. I open fire, and he fumbles. As I fight, I move through the air like I was born there, sliding to one direction, and spinning off in another. All the while I fire at Kowalski, and my first hit connects with his arm.

I swap the STRONGARM for the LONGSTRIKE, and take careful aim. I aim for the chest, and my first shot misses. If he can use my old gun, then I can use his. He gets mad now, and I fire again. I am missing on purpose now, trying to drive him towards a cable, hoping he will use it to jump at me. He does, and it seems in slow motion.

As I draw my sword, I throw the LONGSTRIKE at him. His armor will stop the sword from going too far in. He will only be scratched, but he will still be knocked out. Then he can be imprisoned. I don't care. Either way, I beat him.

However, as I throw the sniper rifle, he grabs it, and fires in the hopes of hitting me. Instead, it misses, and as I watch the path of the bullet, I realize who it will hit instead. "CAROLINA! LOOK OUT!" I scream at her, but she does not hear. The bullet hits her in the stomach, and she doubles over. Both I and Kowalski look on in shock as she falls to the floor. She will be more than knocked out. This was Kowalski's dart. She will be comatose for weeks, if not months.

Kowalski is in shock, and I take advantage of it to stab him in the exact same place that he shot Carolina. Vindictive perhaps, but like I said I did not care. My squad was tending to Carolina, and Kowalski would now be able to be put in custody.

Now for the Bossman. I notice a door at the end of the room, and I walk through it. The only man in there is finely dressed, and I barely glance at his face before I shoot him in the chest. I head out to Kowalski and search his pockets.

I find a small manila envelope with the words ANTIDOTE FOR BULLETS. This must be the wake-up serum that Kowalski made to revive the people he shot. If he did not poison them.

I hurry over to Carolina and open the envelope. There are three vials and a syringe. One vial is still full, so I load the syringe and swab Carolinas neck with an alcohol swab.

As I put the antidote into her, her skin, formerly pale, starts to regain its color. Since this seems to be a good sign, I finish injecting the antidote and wait. It takes a few minutes, in which I begin to feel rather paranoid, but eventually she wakes up.

I help her up, and support her so she can walk. I call a drop ship and we ready the prisoners. When the drop ship arrives, we load up the prisoners and take off.

As I leave the complex with my squad, I realize that something in me is changed. We head back to HQ and sign off the mission as complete. I have just finished writing it off when I hear Carolina walking up behind me. She nods at the "mission man" the guy who gives us the mission parameters in the same boring manila envelopes.

"It's nice to see that's finally over" she says. I agree with her, knowing how she and Kowalski were once good friends, like me. It must have been harder for her than any of us to take shots at him.

Kowalski was interrogated, to make sure all his friends were beaten. As it turns out, they weren't. There was still one more fight.

Kowalski's boss had been a small part of a big gang, one we had to take out. Some of those gang members were bribing the government officials, so we really needed to take them out. As I read the mission file, I grew more and more nervous. This was going to be a tough mission. These people were powerful in the gang network. A man with that much power would be nearly invincible. They weren't specifically a gang, but they controlled them all.

"If we take their leader out," I whisper "we would take out the main chain of command in every single major enemy on the face of the planet." However, the task could be easy. We had developed a new technology. It was a kind of troop carrier plane. With active stealth capabilities, it could drop pods with a single trooper in them into whatever combat zone was necessary. We weren't big fans of vehicles, but when needed, we make 'em big.

The pride and joy of our scientists, a modified jeep, could fire flower grenades in a dazzling 15 rounds per second. It relied on belt-and-barrel tech to quickly load a grenade, fire it and then load another one.

The turret on the back of the jeep had 8 barrels, and a gear at the back of them turned superfast and auto-loaded more grenades. The jeep itself could drive 120 miles per hour, and had the maneuverability of a stunt plane. Only the elite members of the force got to drive them, because they were the only ones who could handle them. The scientists would never live it down. And we wouldn't let them.

These "speed tanks" as they were called, could be dropped from a carrier plane and could carry up to 4 people at any one time. And as the carrier planes could carry 4 pods and a vehicle, or 5 pods, this was a sensible vehicle to choose.

I signed up for the mission and got cleared for a pod-vehicle drop into the streets of a desert city, where the target was located. The city had been supposedly deserted for years, but that was really just a disguise for what really went on in there. A rather clever disguise, as it was. For while the regular task forces had no idea they existed, thanks to Kowalski and a dose of truth serum, we do.

As we fly out there, I check over my squad. I'm only taking 3 of them, Dutch, Carolina, and Jacob. Hopefully, it will be enough.

As we reach the drop zone, warning lights start flashing in the hold, warning us to get in the drop pods. The pods are designed for heights, incredible air friction, and hard landings. NOT for comfort.

Once we and our weapons are stored in the pods, we get in, and prepare to drop. As we send the OK to the pilot, the copilot begins the drop sequence. The jeep has an automatic parachute system, so when it reaches a certain height above the ground, the parachutes open. The pods rely on us.

As we fall, fins slide out on either side of us, to stabilize the pods. When we hit 1,000 feet, we pull the 'chutes. We all hit the ground simultaneously, and the jeep with us. We grab the guns, swords, and (in Jacobs case) shields, and get in the jeep.

As Dutch and Jacob get in the passenger seats, Carolina gets in the gunner seat, and I drive. The dashboard GPS points us in the direction of the target, and then shuts down. Its mission is done. Now

its our turn.

As we head toward the city, we start to hear warning noises, and see flashing missile icons on the screens. Then we see them. As I frantically read the missile description, I see a “guided missile” icon, and instantly relax. Once the missiles reach us, we’ll be in trouble, but until then we were safe. We were in an near-invisible jeep, for crying sakes! And who uses camera guided missiles anymore.

The jeep, like our suits, has built in shielding panels, to protect us from view. It also works on missiles, apparently. The missiles streak overhead and detonate harmlessly nearly a mile behind us.

We are almost to the city when we here the guns firing. As Carolina, Dutch and Jacob fire back, I swerve to avoid the bullets. It isn’t easy.

As I hit the streets, we hear a helicopter above us, and I head into a tunnel. We are heading straight to the center of the city. Because THAT’S where the target is. And once we get the target, the whole organization will fall. Then, it will finally be over.

But until then, we get to drive through miles of street and barricades, Carolina firing, never missing, and steadily using up the grenades. Fortunately, there are *hundreds* of grenades. When we finally reach the center, we see a mammoth building, and we know the boss is in there. We force our way in there with the jeep, and see our worst nightmare made real. A giant robot, the size of a tree, towering over us and pointing lasers. With one shot, it disables the jeep, except for the turret. Carolina keeps firing, and the ‘bot shoots at her, forcing her to abandon the turret. Then a screen comes on at the head of the ‘bot. On the screen is a face, one that booms, “YOU THINK YOU WOULD FIND ME UNARMED, DEPENDING SOLELY ON GUARDS TO PROTECT ME LIKE THE LAST GUY? I’M INSULTED. I HOPE YOU GUYS FIGHT WELL, BECAUSE THIS ISN’T GOING TO BE VERY ENTERTAINING OTHERWISE. BRING IT ON!!!” so we grab our swords and start to fight.

As we shoot it, I notice hydraulics lines coursing down the robots legs and arms. I grab a grapple gun and aim for the head, hoping the cord is long enough. It is, and I climb to the first set of hydraulics lines. This is on the arm with the bigger gun, and I try to hack through them, but it’s not as easy as I’d hoped. But finally I cut them enough to make the arm go limp.

I start to hack at the other arm, but he swats me away, leaving me swinging wildly on a loosened grapple cable. Carolina starts hacking at the feet, dancing away from his crashing footsteps. For the first time, I notice that when she fights, she has a certain calmness about her, something unusual for anyone fighting a robot the size of a tree. A really big tree, with guns bigger than me. But this is Carolina, and she’s deadlier than a king cobra.

I signal her to distract the robot, and I head to the jeep. The turret has an automatic release clip, with a seven digit pass code. The pass code is to insure the turret does not come off by accident, and the clip is for when the jeep is compromised.

I hurriedly enter the pass code, grip the turrets handles, and yank. The gun comes off with ease, and I suddenly feel like I’m a Spartan, straight out of Halo.

Suddenly, the robot runs out of ammo. It drops it’s guns and reverts to stomping at us. *Big* mistake. The suit may be big but it is not a precision object.

While the enemy is busy overloading the hydraulics on his suit, I start firing the turret at any and all view ports I can see. The suit uses small cameras to feed images straight to the cockpit, but cameras break easily, and the more I hit the sooner he falls. However, there are a lot of cameras on him, and I run out of ammo sooner than I thought. I switch to my retaliator and proceed to wreak havoc on his

view screens. Soon I realize I must have succeeded because he starts flailing drunkenly at us, almost as though blind.

I get onto his back and look for some way into the suit. I see a small hatch on the back, and hope that this is his entrance/exit point. I open it, pointing my RETALIATOR inside, and dispatch the lone robotic guard inside. The robot is far more hollow than I expected. I stumble through it, trying to get to the cockpit, when I hear shots. I look up, dodge the bullet coming at me, and fire back. I miss, and the driver fires a couple more shots. One hits the wall behind me, and the other hit's me in the knee. I fall, my leg buckling under extreme pain, and feel one last dart hit me. Just to the right of the heart. As the world disintegrates into black and white stars, I hear Carolina screaming in my earpiece, the driver laughing, and three more shots. The driver suddenly stops laughing. Carolina starts shaking me, telling me something, but I cannot hear. As the world turns black, my last thought is, *Don't let me die.*

Nerf HQ.

06:00 hours.

Hospital Wing.

The first time I wake up, it's momentary. The second, I'm awake just long enough to wonder where I am. The third time I wake up, I stay awake. I remain awake solely because I forcibly whack myself in the gut, then in the head. After that, I don't have to worry about falling asleep. Just the pain.

My chest burns. As my memory unfogs, I remember getting shot there. I appear to be in the hospital wing of some building, though what building is unclear. I could be held prisoner, or I could be in HQ.

I take priority, thinking *1. Observe you're surroundings.* Near empty room, lots of gurneys, curtains, and machinery not being used. A table beside me with a get well card on it. Not much else. I look at the card. It's from my squad. I'm not handcuffed to the gurney so that and the card lead me to believe I'm in HQ. I'm in a hospital gown, meaning no privacy. My uniform is folded in the drawer of the table next to me. I hurriedly get dressed, so nobody sees a second moon.

A nurse enters, bringing lunch. She seems delighted to see me dressed, and requests that I follow her. She takes me to a doctor, who runs a series of tests, (I pass them all) and proclaims me fit to leave.

I go to my quarters, and then head to my separate squad members. They're all happy to see me out of the hospital wing, Carolina the most. "you save my life, I save yours," She remarks, only half joking, and I agree.

After that, I stay in my quarters mostly, reviewing footage of the mission. I see myself going down from Carolina's perspective, see three shots fired at the boss, (they each hit him in the heart, tightly grouped) and see my eyes close for what I thought would be the last time.

I hear my pager (standard issue for all personnel) bleeping at me, and I see it's from the admiral. It's another mission. Better get going.

As you can see here, I had my worst ever moments in that mission. The death of most of my original squad took a huge chunk out of my life. Even so, that hole is slowly being filled again, by my new squad.

Only a few of the squad members are listed here, but should give you enough information on what you need to know.

Original squad members:

CAROLINA

Rank: second in command for 501st squadron: active

Preferred gun: Raider cs-32.

Armor type: ghost class CX-32.

HECTOR

Rank: hacker in 501st squadron: MIA

Preferred gun: maverick rev-6

Armor type: tech class 67-X

KOWALSKI

Rank: long-range unit in 501st squadron: inactive-traitor

Preferred gun: Longstrike cs-6

Armor type: sniper class 88-C

LEROY

Rank: heavy weapons specialist in 501st squadron: MIA

Preferred gun: Vulcan BFF-22

Armor type: tank class heavy

DUTCH

Rank: hit-man specialist in 501st squadron: active

Preferred gun: specter CS-6

Armor type: recon class light

LARSEN

Rank: safe-cracker for 501st squadron: MIA

Preferred gun: two ss-as 1's

Armor type: lock picker class

NEW SQUADRON

JACOB

Rank: hacker in 501st squadron: active

Preferred gun: destructor REV-10

Armor type: tech class 67-X

O'CONNOR

Rank: safe-cracker and melee weapons specialist: active

Preferred weapon: melee sword and nite finder ex-3

Armor type: close combat class ex-77

DAVID

Rank: heavy weapons specialist in 501st squadron: active

Preferred weapon: RUFFCUT 2X4

Armor type: tank class light

JOHN WOLF

Captain of the 501st squadron: active

Preferred gun: RETALIATOR

Armor type: ghost class cx-32

CAROLINA

See 501st squadron original: CAROLINA

DUTCH

See 501st squadron original: DUTCH

Now you know everything you have to. Get used to you new squad, and leave no man behind. You will be equipped with a sword and a specially made bullet proof class pilot armor. You will also have a Longstrike sniper rifle.

Good luck soldier, and remember. It's NERF, or nothing. Wolf, out.