

## West Falkland's Finest

Brigadier Haywood knew he couldn't put it off any longer. He sorted the numerous papers on his desk into a neat pile and pressed the button marked *Talk* on his intercom. 'Send in Sergeant Stibbings, please.'

Rhythmic footsteps sounded in the corridor. The door opened and in marched an imposing soldier in full regulation battledress. The soldier snapped to attention and gave a salute. 'Sir, Brigadier, sir!'

'At ease, Sergeant.' There was silence while the Brigadier appraised his subordinate. Eventually he said, 'As commander of the British forces here on the Falkland Islands, I'm only too aware of the dangers we face following the recent defence cuts. Which is why I issued a memo asking personnel for suggestions on ways to make our shores safer given the limited resources at our disposal.' He tapped the pile of papers. 'My request received 144 responses. Impressive...were it not for the fact 142 of them were from the same soldier. That soldier is you, Sergeant.'

'Sir, yes, sir!'

'Much as I admire your zeal. There appears to be a somewhat recurrent theme to your suggestions. Does the word *ovine* mean anything to you, Sergeant?'

'Ovine, sir?'

'Sheep, Stibbings. They all involve sheep.' The Brigadier picked up one of the papers, 'Take this suggestion. In it you appear to be recommending we defend our beaches using...a battalion of combat-trained sheep.'

'Not just any sheep, sir. Royal Merinos.'

'And here...' said the Brigadier, picking up another, '...you're suggesting we use male sheep as some form of *shock* troops.'

'That's right, sir. If the Argies do gain a foothold, our Ram Raiders would soon sort them out.'

Brigadier Haywood looked carefully at Stibbings but the sergeant's gaze remained fixed on the wall behind his commanding officer. Picking more examples, the Brigadier said, 'This one is for a company of ovine *infantry*...'

'1<sup>st</sup> Foot & Mouth, sir. Trench warfare specialists.'

'...and here you propose a four-legged SAS regiment...'

'Special Attack Sheep, sir. Drop 'em behind enemy fences and it'd be like lambs to the slaughter, sir. Argies wouldn't know what hit 'em.'

'...this one has sheep as military police...'

'Fleece force, sir'

'...and what about this one involving *black* sheep?'

'Good for solo missions and night ops, sir.'

The Brigadier shook his head. 'You even talk in this one about painting sheep pink to make them look like *pigs*?'

'Camouflage, sir. Mutton dressed as ham.'

The Brigadier let the papers fall on his desk. 'Sergeant Stibbings, am I right in understanding your role here in the Falklands involves manning one of our more...*remote* observation posts.'

'Yes, sir. Pebble Island, sir.'

'A solo position you have occupied for some time now?'

'Six years, sir.'

'Does Pebble Island perchance...have any sheep on it?'

'Yes, sir. A whole brigade, sir.'

'Quite.' Brigadier Haywood sighed. 'Has it never occurred to you Stibbings that if we tried to defend our shores using a flock of sheep, horns and woolly jumpers would be little match for bullets and artillery. Your *Special Attack Sheep* would in all likelihood be butchered earlier than expected.'

Sergeant Stibbings visibly drooped. 'At least they'd die with dignity, sir.'

'Quite.' Brigadier Haywood leaned back in his chair. 'I've made up my mind, Stibbings. As of tomorrow, you're on rotation back to England.'

'Yes, Brigadier, sir!'

'That will be all.'

Outside command headquarters, Sergeant Stibbings shivered in the ever-present South Atlantic gales. A huge black sheep sporting horns that had been sharpened to form curved, yet deadly daggers appeared by his side.

Stibbings looked down. 'I'm sorry, Corporal, I tried my best,' he said.

The sheep remained deathly still for a second. Then, as its wool rippled in the wind, it opened its mouth and bleated, 'The troops will be *baa...dly* disappointed, sir.'

x---x