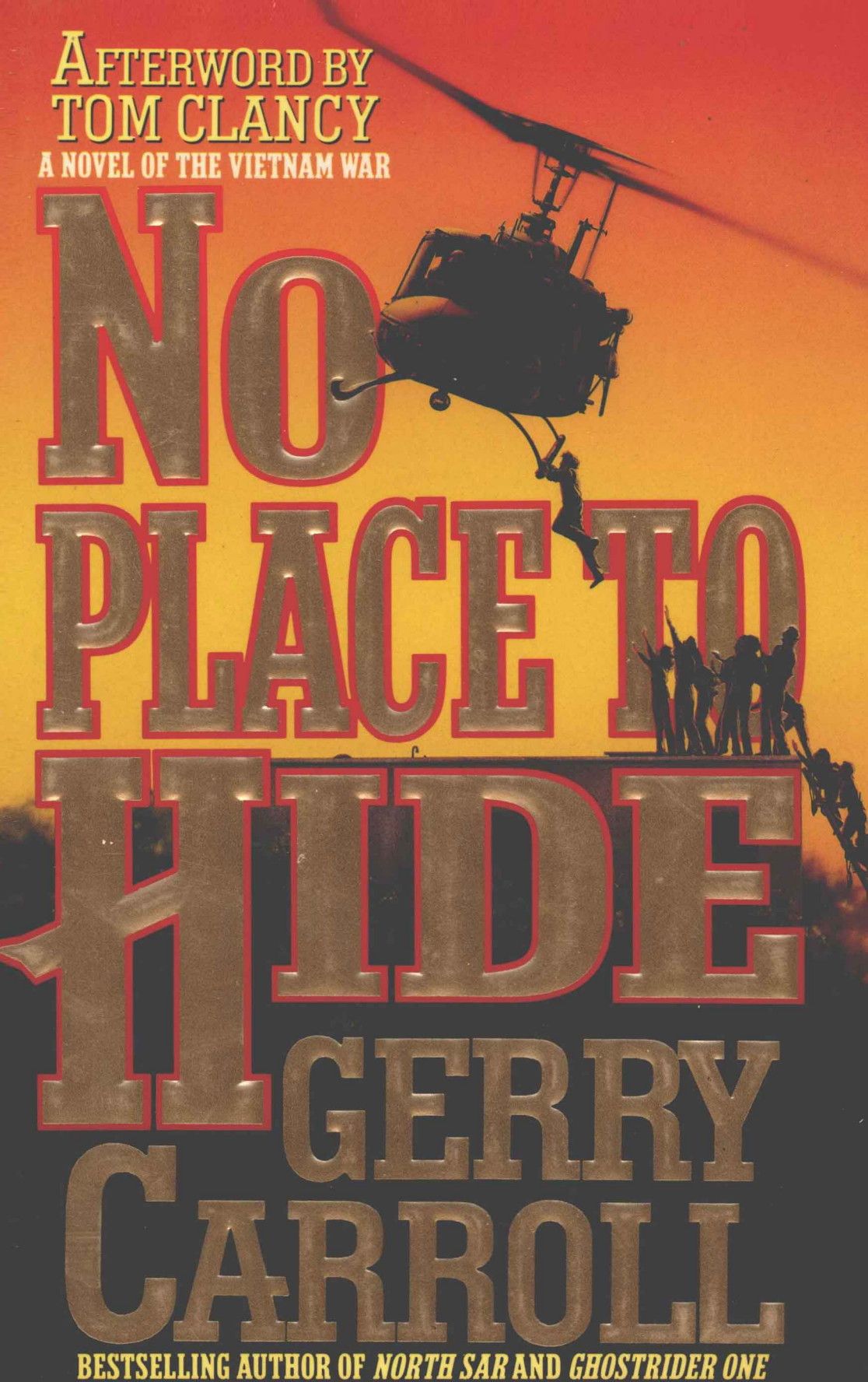


AFTERWORD BY
TOM CLANCY
A NOVEL OF THE VIETNAM WAR

The background of the cover is a dramatic sunset or sunrise scene with a gradient from orange at the bottom to red at the top. A helicopter is shown in silhouette, hoisting a person by a rope. Below the helicopter, a group of soldiers in silhouette stands on a rooftop or ledge, looking up. The title 'NO PLACE TO HIDE' is written in large, bold, metallic letters with a red outline. The author's name 'GERRY CARROLL' is written in large, bold, metallic letters below the title.

NO PLACE TO HIDE

GERRY
CARROLL

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *NORTH SAR* AND *GHOSTRIDER ONE*

No Place to Hide



Gerry Carroll



POCKET BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

An *Original* Publication of POCKET BOOKS



POCKET BOOKS, a division of Simon & Schuster Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Copyright © 1995 by Gerry Carroll

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce
this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.
For information address Pocket Books, 1230 Avenue
of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Carroll, Gerry.

No place to hide / Gerry Carroll.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-671-86510-2

1. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961-1975—Naval operations, American—
Fiction. I. Title.

PS3553.A7639N6 1995

813'.54—dc20

94-45923

CIP

First Pocket Books hardcover printing August 1995

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

POCKET and colophon are registered trademarks of
Simon & Schuster Inc.

Printed in the U.S.A.

**No Place
to Hide**

Gerry Carroll's Vietnam War/Naval Aviation Trilogy

**North SAR
Ghostrider One
No Place to Hide**

Published by POCKET BOOKS

For my wife, Debbie

I had the adventures and the fun and
I got the praise and the medals.
But she was always the one who
had the courage.

Acknowledgments

Gerry Carroll passed away shortly after finishing this novel. These are the acknowledgments he would have wanted to make:

To Paul McCarthy, his editor for all his expertise, support, patience, and especially his friendship.

To Tom Clancy for his encouragement and friendship.

Gerry's wife, Debbie Carroll, also wanted to acknowledge the support and friendship she has received:

To all the people who were true friends when I needed them the most I want to say thanks.

To my family and Gerry's family for being there whenever I need them and for all their love and support. To Paul McCarthy for helping me figure out what was going on in this business. To Tom Clancy for being Gerry's best friend and for all the support he and Wanda have given the boys and me. To Kathy, Claudia, and Mary for all their help the first week and every week since. To Vic Thomas for all the rides he provided and for being there especially for Kevin. To John Sorthorn for keeping Gerry around in lacrosse. To the Smiths for always keeping me in mind. And a special thanks to Connie for being there every day.

★ **Contents** ★

★ **1968** ★

Prologue: Staying Behind	3
---------------------------------	----------

★ **April 1975** ★

Part 1: Returning to War	15
Part 2: The Enemy Advances	99
Part 3: No Getting Out	155
Part 4: The Final Days	299

★ **1992** ★

Epilogue: Still Fighting	411
“Ave atque Vale,” by Tom Clancy	415
Afterword, by Tom Clancy	418

1968



☆ PROLOGUE ☆

Staying Behind

★ Prologue ★

Friday, 23 May 1969

LT. KEVIN THOMPSON LET THE LETTER FALL TO HIS LAP AND LEANED BACK in his battered Navy-issue gray desk chair. He didn't know whether to be hurt or angry or relieved as he looked out the window at the city of San Diego, shining in the late-afternoon sun. In the bay between the city and the beach outside his window, he could see several small boats moving quickly north as his fellow Navy SEAL instructors took the newest class of would-be SEALs out for their evening exercises. Their white wakes streamed out behind them as they bounced and jostled over the dim wakes left by the dozens of vessels moving about the bay.

Sailboats were luffing their way painfully slowly from nowhere in particular to somewhere else. Powered boats of all sizes were moving along at whatever pace their drivers chose, always altering course to give the right of way to the sailboaters and always mentally cursing them for being hazards to navigation. The tour boats moved back and forth giving their deckloads of tourists a close-up view of the huge gray Navy ships tied up at the quay at North Island.

Although he couldn't see them from his window, Thompson knew two carriers were there that were guaranteed to make even the most obnoxious of tourists fall silent and simply stare. One of the carriers, the one with sailors desultorily painting her sides, had just returned from a seven-month deployment to Vietnam. The other, the one with cranes steadily swinging crates and boxes of supplies aboard, was only a week away from departing for the Gulf of Tonkin and the war.

Thompson looked back at the small boats full of SEALs and

Gerry Carroll

trainees, bouncing along toward the training area out in the Pacific. He had always loved driving those boats around, the wind and the spray in his face. But he hated the long, grueling, conditioning swim that the passengers were in for when they got to the drop-off point. He sighed. That was part of the price you had to pay, he thought, if you were going to get the job done and stay alive when it hit the fan.

Thompson picked up the letter and looked at it again. The battered, water-stained paper and the labored, almost childlike penmanship bothered him nearly as much as the message that the letter contained. He remembered the pain he'd felt when he and the others of his SEAL "action team" had been unable to find Tony Butler or any trace of him after the firefight during the last patrol a year ago. He recalled with a little pride and with some shame the screaming match he'd gotten into with the detachment commander about continuing the pullout with one of his men still missing. He remembered his commander's eyes hardening and his lips pressing into a grim line. And he remembered the feeling of a vast emptiness within as he obeyed his commander's curt order to shut up and get on the damn helicopter.

Glancing at the clock on the wall, Thompson saw that it was finally time to secure for the day. He dropped his feet to the floor and stood, stretching the kinks out of his back. After carefully folding the letter, he placed it gently in his left shirt pocket. Down the hall, he could hear the other members of the staff closing their offices and walking past his door to the exit. He waited for the distinctive sound of Senior Chief Dalton's leg cast to come thumping down the green linoleum decking. When Dalton had passed by, Thompson picked up his car keys from the desk and walked out of his office, checking as he went the locked drawers of the file cabinets standing side by side under the wall clock.

Thompson walked quickly to the exit door and looked through the wavy glass, watching Dalton as he limped across the parking lot toward his Pontiac GTO convertible. Thompson slipped his cloth garrison cap from his belt and put it on, unconsciously adjusting it until it sat rakishly low on his forehead with the little aviator's peak at the back. Pushing the door open, he trotted down the steps and across the parking lot toward Dalton's GTO.

"Hey, Senior Chief. Got a minute?"

★ No Place to Hide ★

Dalton looked up and smiled at his lieutenant. "Yes, sir. What's up?"

Thompson was suddenly unsure of himself. Dragging Dalton into this was unfair at best and illegal at worst. He decided to take it slowly. "Senior, you got time for a beer?"

Dalton grinned. "I always have time for a beer. How 'bout the MexPac in ten minutes? Last one in the door buys."

"Fair enough." Thompson turned toward his Austin-Healey as Dalton abruptly let the clutch out and left a small rooster tail of gravel as he headed for the gate. The lieutenant shook his head. It should be impossible for Dalton to drive that car with his leg in a cast, but from long experience Thompson knew that *impossible* was a word that had never entered Dalton's lexicon—that was why Thompson needed to talk to him.

As Thompson's right hand inserted the key into the ignition, his left patted his shirt pocket, checking one more time that the letter was still there.

The Mexican Village Restaurant, or "MexPac" to a generation of Navy men, sat on a beautifully manicured main street in Coronado—Orange Avenue—just south of the Naval Air Station at North Island and just north of the Naval Amphibious Base where Thompson and the West Coast SEAL teams were headquartered. With its facade a sort of dark flamingo pink, the Mexican Village looked a little odd, even standing as it did among other small businesses all decorated in what passes for normal in Southern California.

As Thompson entered the front door, he stood for a second, letting his eyes adjust from the brightness outside to the relative darkness of the restaurant's interior. He returned the bartender's wave and spotted Dalton sitting at a table along the wall, his white cast stuck out into the aisle a little way. Dalton waved an Olympia beer bottle at Thompson, who nodded and stepped up to the bar to order a couple more.

Thompson idly ran a fingernail over the edges of the mosaic tiles along the edges of the bar while he waited for the bartender to bring the two "Olys." On the ride over, he had debated further what he was going to say to Dalton, and even after he walked back to the table, he was still unsure.

Dalton watched Thompson carefully as he placed the bottles on the table and sat down. Dalton picked his up and took a sip.

The young officer nodded at Dalton's cast. "How's the leg?"

Gerry Carroll

"Fine. I think I've finally learned my lesson when it comes to motorcycles." He sipped his beer and put it down. "So what's on your mind, Mr. Thompson?"

Thompson pulled the letter from his pocket and slid it across the table, carefully avoiding the wet rings left by the beer bottles. He watched Dalton's brow furrow as he picked up the letter and inspected it as if it might burn his fingers. "What's this?"

"Well, to be perfectly honest, Chief, it's a problem I have no idea how to deal with."

Thompson sat back and watched as Dalton gently unfolded the letter and began reading. Having read the letter so many times himself, Thompson watched the chief's eyes for reaction when he got to several parts that had surprised Thompson, but there was nothing other than an odd expression of growing sadness as he went on. Dalton finished the second page, glanced at Thompson, and began reading it again, this time more carefully. But there should have been some reaction.

The letter was signed by Tony Butler and was dated only a month before. Thompson had at first thought that it was a fake, but the handwriting, which he'd checked against several records he still kept in his desk, and the words and terms the writer used, suggested it was probably genuine. Although officially listed as missing in action, Butler, as far as Thompson and the rest of the action team had been concerned, was dead. Not only was Thompson totally baffled as to how to proceed, but he was also trying to deal emotionally with the grief he'd been carrying around for over a year. Up until four years ago, he'd been a leader who had inexplicably lost one of his best and most dependable men. That had been a heavy load to carry for a man so young.

Thompson had chosen Dalton to be the first with whom he'd share this because Dalton had not only been the assistant team leader but also Butler's best friend. The chief seemed to deflate as he folded the letter slowly and handed it back to Thompson. He didn't meet the lieutenant's eyes until he'd taken a long pull from his beer. He cleared his throat.

"I, um, kinda feel like switching to tequila. Olys don't seem to be cutting it all of a sudden."

Thompson bit off a sharp retort. He had been carrying this around all day and all Dalton could say was that his beer wasn't

★ No Place to Hide ★

strong enough. He was about to speak when Dalton let out a long sigh and looked up.

"Mr. Thompson, I got one of these, too. About a week ago. Tony told me pretty much the same things and explained how hard it had been to write at all, to make contact with the world he'd left behind. He asked that I keep the letter quiet while he tried to decide if he should write to you."

"Chief, he's not dead, for Christ's sake! He's not even *missing* anymore. We can't just keep this to ourselves."

"Yeah. I know what we're *supposed* to do, but I just couldn't bring myself to do it."

"Why?"

"Look, Lieutenant. It was his decision to stay behind with those people. He believed that they needed him or us or somebody. We armed and trained those tribesmen, and then, because some lard ass in Saigon decided that the priorities had changed, we abandoned them. We were supposed to just walk away and hope, just hope, that they could survive with half the Viet Cong in the whole damn place trying to track them down. You remember how hard we all fought to stay, and I know you remember that Agency prick telling you it was pack up and leave in three days or you'd get a court-martial." Dalton chuckled. "I also remember me and Tony pulling you off him. Good thing the commander showed up right then or your ass would still be in Portsmouth making little rocks out of big ones."

"That's beside the point, Chief. We've got a guy who's supposed to be dead or at least missing who turns out to be still living with and leading a bunch of natives and tearing up the countryside. What if somebody finds out about this and goes after him? Then it's his ass. They'll get him."

"They haven't got him yet and neither have the VC."

Thompson sat back and stared at the table. He realized abruptly that he agreed with Dalton's earlier assessment. He signaled the waitress and ordered two double tequilas.

"Okay. You tell me why we should just pretend that we never got those letters."

Dalton took a large pull from his drink and shuddered a little. He leaned forward and fixed Thompson's gaze in dead earnest. "Because he wants to stay and because it's all he's got in the whole damn world."