

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS

Daisy Dexter Dobbs

Forever,  
Blue Eyes

ELLORA'S CAVE

*Quickies*

*Wild Winter*

An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



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Forever, Blue Eyes

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# *FOREVER, BLUE EYES*

Daisy Dexter Dobbs

### *Dedication*

For Bree, for being an editor whose attention to detail keeps me out of hot water, whose intuition is uncanny and whose continued support and encouragement are invaluable.

### *Trademarks Acknowledgement*

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Marshall Field: Marshall Field & Company; The May Department Stores Company

## **Chapter One**

*Chicago, December 1942*

“Hiya, fellas! Welcome to the USO Christmas party. I’m Betsy, and...” At the outbreak of wolf whistles she paused, savoring the appreciative din for a moment. Speaking into the microphone again, Betsy continued, “And this is Nancy and Linda.” She gestured left and right, beaming a smile as she and her two best friends were treated to more whistles, cheers and clapping.

“We may not be pinups like Betty Grable or Lana Turner,” Nancy said into her microphone, smiling at the vigorous disagreement of the servicemen.

“And we may not be the Andrews Sisters,” Linda added.

“But, brother,” Betsy continued, “we sure know how to swing!” She kicked out her leg, slapping her knee and a cheer went up from the enthusiastic audience of uniformed men. “And we do a mean rendition of “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy”. Which one of you boys is gutsy enough to come up on stage with us and do a little pantomime while we sing?”

As she hoisted the bugle in the air, Betsy’s eyes immediately fell on the handsome guy she’d locked gazes with earlier. She’d had been manning the coffee urn when she felt the heat of his gaze on her. Deliciously dashing in his army uniform he stood there watching her for a long moment before ambling up to the table and requesting a cuppa Joe. Tall with a head of wavy black hair, he had a velvet smooth voice, hypnotic brown eyes and a smile that tugged at her heart. When their fingers brushed as she passed him the cup, something electric zigzagged through her body.

Now he was right up front and flaunting that same devilish smile he’d given her before. “How about you, soldier?” She winked at him.

The men around him nudged the soldier, urging him to get on stage. "Sure," he shrugged, "what the heck." He climbed on stage and took the bugle from Betsy. "But I don't have to pantomime," he said, returning Betsy's wink before putting the horn to his lips and blowing out a jazzy version of reveille. Another cheer went up from the audience.

"Hey, this boy can blow," Betsy said to the men. "You're a real killer-diller on that horn, soldier."

"Thanks, blue eyes."

The timbre of his voice and sensuous linger of his gaze were unsettling. For an instant, Betsy could almost believe they were alone—and she found herself wishing they were. She took in a deep breath and cleared her throat. "Tell us your name and where you're from," she said, easing herself back into her playful stage persona.

"Johnny," he answered. "Private John Lakeside of the United States Army, by way of Minneapolis, Minnesota." He saluted. A few of the men whooped a holler and Johnny laughed. "Sounds like my buddies from Camp McCoy." At the mention of the Wisconsin base serving men from the upper Midwest, another round of cheers were heard.

The foursome entertained the audience with a rousing performance of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy", complete with exaggerated gestures and plenty of humor. As Johnny left the stage Betsy and the girls treated the men to Irving Berlin's hit song, "This is the Army, Mr. Jones", followed by several other tunes on the hit parade. Although she tried hard, it was difficult for Betsy not to keep her eyes glued on Private Lakeside as she, Nancy and Linda performed.

As soon as they'd left the stage, and the dance music blared over the speakers, Johnny snagged Betsy's arm. "Hold on there, blue eyes," he said. "You don't think you're getting away from me that fast, do you? How about a dance?"

Betsy felt a rush at the touch of Johnny's hand on her elbow. Before she had a chance to answer, Johnny had whisked her into a jitterbug. He was as impressive with

his feet as he was with his mouth, which suddenly had Betsy wondering what else about him might be just as impressive. Her gaze dropped to his groin as he danced, lingering on the olive-drab material a bit longer than prudent.

The USO events were always chaperoned and dating the soldiers was strictly forbidden. Even so, romance often blossomed. While she and the other volunteers were there to dance with the servicemen and make their visit enjoyable, as a rule Betsy didn't like to get involved with the servicemen. Why chance getting hooked on a guy when she'd probably never see him again? Rules, however, were meant to be broken, Betsy reasoned as she found herself falling under the charming, dark-eyed soldier's spell.

"Another jitterbug," Betsy lamented three dances later, wrinkling her nose as the music started. She loved swing dancing but had been hoping for something slower this time so the handsome soldier could hold her close in his arms.

As if he'd been reading her mind Johnny said, "It's getting warm in here. I could go for a walk outside to cool off, how about you?"

"Sure." After grabbing her wool coat and scarf Betsy suddenly became nervous about spending time alone with the soldier. Not because she was afraid of Johnny, but because she was worried she'd bore the poor guy to tears. It wasn't like she led a very interesting life. Entertaining servicemen at the USO and doing smalltime performances locally, it wasn't as if she and Nancy and Linda were celebrities. The everyday Betsy was nothing more than a salesclerk at Marshall Field and Company's glove counter in downtown Chicago. What could she talk to him about to keep him entertained enough not to think she was a complete dud? A smile took hold when Betsy came up with an idea.

"You mentioned that you liked Abbott and Costello," she said, thinking a movie would be a great way to be close to him without having to carry a conversation. "Their new movie is playing just down the street if you're interested. I think this one has the Andrews Sisters in it too."

“Normally that would be swell.” Johnny hugged Betsy close. “But right now I’m more interested in getting to know you better, blue eyes.” He winked at her.

She tried to act nonchalant but the way he kept calling her *blue eyes* made Betsy want to trill out a dreamy sigh. The most delicious sensation zipped through her when Johnny looked at her like that with those glittery eyes of his. It was like she’d never been fully alive until she met the matinee-idol-handsome soldier.

“Is there some place we could grab a cuppa Joe and something to eat around here?” Johnny asked as they left the dance and stepped into the chilly early evening air. His stomach growled loudly and he and Betsy chuckled.

“There’s plenty to eat back at the USO.” She hiked a thumb over her shoulder. She hoped that wasn’t what he wanted. She’d like nothing more than to keep Johnny all to herself.

He gave her that mesmerizing look again. “I meant someplace more private where we could get to know each other better. Someplace where there’s not a hundred other uniformed dogfaces hanging around making eyes at you.”

“Oh.” A ripple of excitement made her shiver. At that moment Betsy felt so buoyant she expected to look down and find herself walking on air.

“Cold?”

“No.” Betsy shook her head. “In fact the temperature is surprisingly mild for December. Bullard’s is a couple of blocks that way.” She pointed to her left. “It’s a corner drugstore with a great soda fountain. They make the best chocolate malts and vanilla phosphates.”

“Uh-uh. Not private enough.”

With minimal forethought she opened her handbag and plucked out a folded paper. “Look what I have.” She waved it under Johnny’s nose.

Holding her hand to still it, his eyes brightened when he opened the paper and read it. "A sugar rationing coupon. Hey, those are like gold." He licked his lips in exaggerated fashion.

"I traded a beef coupon for this." With the coupon an inch from her lips, Betsy smooched the air. "Ever since some of the markets began selling horsemeat because of the meat shortage I've been a little leery of buying beef." She shrugged. "I mean, what if the butcher accidentally slaps a beef label on a package of ground horse." Now she shuddered.

"Whoa, Nellie!"

Betsy nodded. "Exactly. People who've tried it say it's supposed to be pretty good, but I'd much rather take my chances on the sugar."

"I'd have to agree with you on that. So we're off in search of sugar?"

"Maupon's Market just down the street should still open," Betsy answered with a quick glance at her watch. "We can stop in, pick up my eight ounces of sugar and go back to my apartment. I've got some flour and just enough chocolate to make a quick batch of chocolate chip cookies." She felt like a sinful, wanton woman inviting a virtual stranger up to her apartment just a few hours after they'd met. Neighbors would surely talk and her reputation would most likely suffer but right now it didn't matter. She *had* to be with him. There was something special about Johnny, something almost magical that made her feel whole and complete when she was with him.

"Sounds swell." Johnny linked arms with her. "Got the coffee too?"

"And a percolator and two aprons."

"Two?"

Betsy giggled. "You'll need one if you don't want to get your uniform all full of flour when you help me bake those cookies. So, what do you say, soldier boy?"

"Putting me on KP, huh?" He laughed. "Well I guess that's better than LD. Just point me to the kitchen." He gave a salute.

Betsy thought for a moment. "Okay, I know KP is kitchen patrol, but what's LD?"

Cupping his hand over his mouth Johnny leaned in close. "Latrine duty."

"Oh. No, I wouldn't do that to you." She laughed to herself as the wicked thought of engaging in a little BD, bedroom duty, with Johnny came to mind. Betsy felt herself flush as succulent images of her and the gorgeous soldier, naked, hot and sweaty jitterbugged across her mind.

A short time later they were bustling around Betsy's kitchen, talking up a storm about anything and everything as they tossed cookie ingredients into a big glass bowl. Johnny was so masculine that he still looked every inch the man all dolled up in the ruffled over-the-head apron. By the time the cookies came out of the oven, Betsy felt as if they'd known each other for years. She felt so comfortable with him, so at ease. In fact, she'd barely even given any thought to her usual anxiety about her weight. Not that she was huge, but she certainly wasn't a delicate small-boned creature. The way Johnny sort of ate her up with his eyes made her feel slender and entirely appealing.

Crazy and sudden as it seemed, Betsy could actually imagine spending a lifetime with this man. Not only was Johnny handsome as all get-out, he was charming and bright and witty and...well, he was everything she'd ever dreamed about all rolled into one big sexy package. She sent up a silent prayer of thanks that she'd had the good sense to volunteer at the USO dance instead of staying home to curl up with a good book. Oh, what she would have missed!

"So tell me," Betsy said as she lit a snowman-shaped candle and pair of angel candles the living room. "Where'd you learn to blow a horn like that, soldier? Are you fixing to be the next Harry James?"

"I wouldn't mind." Johnny chuckled. "I've been playing the trumpet ever since I was a kid. Maybe when the war is over I'll form a band and you and your friends can come on board as the singers."

"Nancy and Linda plan to retire to go the apron and baby bottle route soon, but I'm your girl if you need a singer." Excited at the prospect of spending time with Johnny in

the future, she turned her attention to the Christmas tree, fussing with the ornaments. The small tree shone with tinsel and was dotted with an eclectic assortment of mostly homemade trinkets.

“Not the homebody type?” Johnny asked.

“Maybe,” Betsy said with a shrug as she fiddled with the paper chain garland. “Someday. If I find the right guy.” She felt her cheeks warm and scooted back into the kitchen for the refreshments.

Once situated with their coffee and fresh-baked cookies, Betsy turned on the radio and joined Johnny on the sofa. She watched as he took a warm cookie off the plate and bit into it. Closing his eyes, he murmured his appreciation before darting his tongue over his lip to lick the residue. It had her wishing more than anything she were that stray bit of chocolate.

“Join us on Christmas Day,” the announcer said, “as Lionel Barrymore treats listeners to his annual portrayal of Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.”

“Oh, I love that program,” Betsy said. “I listen every year. If...if you don’t have other plans for Christmas, Johnny, you’re welcome to come over and listen to the broadcast with me. I’m not the world’s best cook, so there won’t be a big, fancy Christmas dinner, but I think I can manage not to ruin some meatloaf, peas and potatoes.”

“Aren’t you spending the holiday with your family?”

“No, it’s just me.” Betsy gave a wistful shrug. “I lost Mom, Dad and my older sister in an automobile accident a few years ago. Grandparents are all gone too.”

“I’m sorry. I lost my parents too, about five years back.” Johnny took her hands in his. “Aw, Betsy, I wish I could spend Christmas with you—more than anything I do—but I can’t.”

“Oh.” Betsy sucked in a deep breath as sexy images of the two of them engaged in a passionate Christmas romp fizzled. What did she expect? Of course the man didn’t

want to spend Christmas with her. He hardly knew her. "That's okay. So you've already made other plans then. Is it...are you spending Christmas with your girlfriend back in Minnesota?"

"There's no girlfriend. Blue eyes, since you came into my life I only have eyes for you." He looked at her mouth and his dark eyes glittered.

When he leaned in close, cupped her face in his large hands and brushed his lips across hers Betsy thought she'd melt into a puddle at his feet. Every cell in her body zinged to awareness and she felt a series of insistent flutters between her thighs. She'd been with two other men so it wasn't as if she were a virgin, but she'd never experienced the physical and emotional sensations with them that she felt with Johnny. At the touch of his lips against hers she was tempted to devour him, to taste every inch of him.

"I can't be with you," Johnny continued, "because I'm shipping out on Christmas Eve. I got my orders three days ago."

"No." Betsy bolted upright in her seat.

Johnny nodded. "I came down here to Chicago from Wisconsin on leave because I've never been here before and wanted to see it. And now I'm mighty glad I did." He kissed her again.

"Johnny," she said, her voice almost frantic at the possibility of never seeing him again, "Christmas is just a couple of days away. They wouldn't make you go on the holiday. They can't."

"Unfortunately war isn't put on hold for holidays." Johnny smiled as he caressed her cheek. "They wouldn't have issued those orders if it wasn't necessary, Betsy. Did you hear President Roosevelt's last Fireside Chat on the radio?"

Betsy nodded. "I never miss a single one."

"Remember, FDR said the fate of democracy rests with the Allied Forces. The more troops we have in the field, the sooner the war will be won, and the less casualties we'll

have." Betsy nodded again as he spoke, this time with an audible sigh. "It's my duty to serve my country," Johnny said with resolve.

Gazing into his determined eyes, Betsy felt her eyes well up with tears. As the sound of Bing Crosby singing "White Christmas" came over the airwaves, she grabbed Johnny's hair in both hands, hauling him hard and close and kissing him like she'd kissed no other man before.

Johnny reciprocated with a lusty plunder of her mouth. Good God he tasted so good Betsy wanted the kiss to go on forever. She heard herself whimper with regret as he broke the kiss but loved the way he gazed down at her as he traced her lips with his fingertip.

"Has anyone ever told you what an appealing mouth you have, blue eyes?" He spoke in a hypnotic whisper that made her insides go all warm and liquid. "So soft," he said, "sensuous, and always ready to smile." Johnny captured her mouth in a warm, wet kiss full of hope and promise. As he deepened the kiss she almost felt drugged, becoming happily lost in the deeply erotic feel of his tongue dancing with hers. "It's not just pretty," he whispered as their lips parted again, "it's delicious too. Just the way I imagine every luscious inch of you is."

Dazed in a thick fog of desire, Betsy allowed herself to be led to her bedroom by him like a sleepwalker. Never having slept with a man on a first date before, internal signs of warning and guilt began to surface. Logically, she knew she shouldn't be doing this, but logic be damned. Consciously blocking out impending feelings of self-reproach, Betsy mentally prepared herself for a night she felt certain she'd remember for the rest of her life.

## Chapter Two

Johnny unzipped Betsy's blue wool dress and it pooled at her feet. She cast a look at his face from underneath her lashes as she stepped out of it and reached down to pull her full slip over her head. The way he gaped at her, swallowing hard as his gaze washed over her bra, panties, garter belt and nylons, sent a flurry of quivers through her system, lodging deep in her belly.

"You're more beautiful than any pinup, Betsy, Lana Turner and Betty Grable included. I'm taking a memory photograph of the way you look right now so I can carry it close to my heart no matter where I am."

At the subtle reminder that their time together would be too short, Betsy's heart skipped a beat. She ran trembling fingertips across the manly stubble on his strong jaw, making her own memory snapshot of his sexy mouth, and the glimmer in his gorgeous eyes.

When his gaze fell on her bra her breasts suddenly felt heavy and tight, needy for his mouth. Cupping one of her breasts with his hand Johnny smoothed his thumb over the nipple while the fingers of his other hand threaded through her hair.

"The color of cinnamon," he whispered. "Soft and silky. Just the way I knew it would be." He bent and sniffed her hair. "Gee, that's nice. You smell like spring flowers. That's what I wish we could do, Betsy. Be together sprawled out on the grass in a big bright field of flowers under the warm sunshine."

"Someplace where there is no war or fear or hatred and we could hold each other in our arms for—" Betsy caught herself before uttering the word *forever*. Johnny would think she was certifiably crazy if he knew how strongly she felt about him already. The last thing she wanted to do was to scare him off before she had the chance to be with him—to spend one glorious night of passion with him.

“Forever,” he said, completing her sentence. “I feel it too, Betsy. Almost from the moment our gazes first met. You’re the one, baby. The one I’ve been searching for my entire life.” He eased her onto the bed, kneeling next to her as he unbuttoned his shirt and unfastened his trousers. “I-I know it sounds crazy, but I think I’m in love with you, blue eyes. And I swear to God almighty that’s not just a line to get into your pants tonight. I mean it. I’ve never, ever said that to any other woman before. Fact is, I never thought I’d hear myself say it to any woman.”

Somewhere deep down, she wanted to believe him. Hell, she *did* believe him. Betsy snaked her hands beneath his khaki-colored undershirt, hiking it up over his chest. Her fingers delighted in exploring his hard belly and the sculpted planes of his pectorals. “I believe you, Johnny. And maybe it is nutty, but I feel the same way. It’s like I’ve been waiting for you my whole life.”

In the matter of moments they were both fully undressed, except for Betsy’s garter belt and stockings. Marveling at the size of his cock, she instinctively moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue. It was much bigger than the two she’d previously encountered. She’d enjoyed the closeness of sex before but there had never really been anything special or out of the ordinary like some of the things the more experienced Nancy and Linda had told her about. No fireworks. Somehow she knew tonight would be different. Fireworks, sparklers, rockets, stars, stripes and the whole brass band – they were all just around the corner. She could feel it.

Johnny kissed the soft valley between her breasts and the hollow at the base of her throat. “*I love you*. I really like the sound of those words. I want to spend every spare moment we can together before I ship out, Betsy.” He kissed her again, licking her everywhere, her throat, her breasts, her belly...between her thighs.

Near giddy with pleasure and expectation, she muffled a ripple of laughter and surprised delight as Johnny’s tongue delved between her pussy lips. Strong hands massaged her hips and wound their way to her breasts, squeezing and kneading. He

pinched her nipples at the same instant his tongue flicked over something that just about sent her through the roof.

“My God, Johnny...what are you doing?”

“Pleasuring your clitoris.”

“My what?”

Popping his head up to answer, she saw that Johnny’s eyes were heavy-lidded with passion and something else. Possession. They soon focused a bit more and his brow furrowed. “Betsy, honey, is this your first time?”

“Well, no, but I...” She felt her cheeks color. “Well, I mean I’ve never...um, no one has ever...”

“No one else has ever tasted your sweetest meat before. Is that what you’re trying to tell me?” Betsy just nodded. “Good, I’m glad. Let me tell you that it’s an honor to be the first.” Johnny grinned. “Have you ever had an orgasm?” His head disappeared between her legs again.

“Me? No. Ooh...” She swallowed hard. “I didn’t think women could have...mmm, oh—” Whatever he was doing with his tongue was making everything inside her go so haywire she couldn’t think straight. Betsy fisted the bedspread, clinging to it for dear life. An overwhelming feeling like none she’d experienced before was on the verge of consuming her. It was wonderful. It was frightening. It was... “Oh, sweet Jesus. Oh, dear God! You’d better stop, Johnny, I think something is wrong. You...you triggered something down there and I think I’m dying.”

Johnny came up long enough to say, “Just hang on and enjoy the ride, blue eyes. You’re not dying but before too long I promise you’ll be getting an up close glimpse of heaven. Just try to relax while I take you there.” And he went back to work, licking and nibbling that curious spot while he pinched and tugged on her aching nipples.

Before she could stop herself, Betsy bucked her hips, grinding her pussy against Johnny’s eager mouth. She should probably be feeling ashamed for being so brazen but the only sensation that mattered right now was that wild electrical charge Johnny had

ignited between her thighs and the way it was stampeding through her entire nervous system. More...she wanted more. Rising in the distance was the sound of that brass band—or was it a fleet of heavenly trumpets? And the fireworks. She could almost see them now.

Heat seared through her when Johnny's tongue plunged inside her pussy. In and out and then back and forth over the tiny, sensitive little bud until she thought she'd scream. Fisting his thick head of hair, Betsy held on as he took her soaring to sizzling new heights. Just when she felt certain she couldn't take it anymore, when she found herself teetering precariously on the edge of reason, she heard herself cry out. It was there, all of it. The horns, the sparkles, the stars, the angels and so much more. And right there in the midst of it all was the wonderful, generous man who'd delivered her to this unparalleled destination.

It was without question the most astounding, breath-stealing occurrence she'd ever experienced.

Somewhere, sometime, somehow when she'd finally regained her senses she murmured, "Thank you, Johnny," surprised at the emotion that choked her.

Johnny scooped her into his arms, kissing her tenderly and then whispering at her ear, "Merry Christmas, blue eyes."

### **Chapter Three**

"I just never had any idea," Betsy said. "I mean, my girlfriends and I have talked, but I've just never heard anything about...well, about anything like this, Johnny. Guess I must have lived a more sheltered life than I'd imagined." Still on her back, Betsy stretched, reaching her arms toward the headboard and wiggling her fingers.

"You look delicious all stretched out like that," Johnny said, licking her from her bellybutton to one nipple, blithely swirling the tip of his tongue there until her flesh responded.

"I feel, oh, I don't know...reborn," Betsy declared, loving the feel of him licking and nibbling at her breast. "Yes, that's it, I feel reborn, brand new. It's like you flipped a switch inside of me and brought me fully to life."

"With my talented tongue." Johnny winked and straddled her. "I never imagined I could find such enjoyment watching a woman climax. Your pale skin got all rosy and you practically glowed, Betsy. And when you looked at me it was with a zeal I've never seen in a woman's eyes before. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. *You're* the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

"And you made it happen," Betsy reminded him.

"I sure did." Johnny licked his lips. "Boy, your sweetmeat tastes good, blue eyes. Like beer, wine, whiskey, honey and salt, all mixed together."

Betsy frowned. "Oh...that really doesn't sound like a very good recipe."

"Taste is subjective. Those are some of my favorite things, so as far as I'm concerned, I just enjoyed a sumptuous feast." He gave a bright smile. "Ready for act two?" He positioned himself between her legs, spreading them with his knees.

"Is this the act where I get to return the favor? Because I sure would like to have the chance to lick every hot, hard, solid inch of you, Johnny." She propped herself on her

elbows to get a better look. "Mmm, starting with that impressive cock down there that's saluting at attention."

"Nope. Act two is where I get to feel myself high and deep inside you." He waved the condom packet he'd retrieved from his wallet.

"No, wait," Betsy said, grasping his knee. "At least let me touch you before you put that on. I want to see what you feel like."

"You're not seriously expecting an argument from me are you?" Johnny winked.

Betsy got up on her knees and moved toward him. Cupping her hand over his cock, she feathered her fingers across its length, watching it bob in response. Looking up at Johnny's eyes, she stroked his shaft hard a few times as he watched. She liked the feel of him, rigid yet supple at the same time. With the fingers of her other hand she traced the thin trail of dark hair leading from his navel to his groin. He had a magnificent form, one she'd be content to explore for hours. Eyeing his response to her touch she felt her body heating, growing agreeably moist in anticipation of feeling him inside her.

"Come closer," Johnny said, a devilish gleam in his eyes. His cock still firmly clenched in her hand, Betsy knee-walked closer. "Open your legs," he demanded, and she did.

He thrust two fingers up into her, bathing his hand with the resulting gush of her juices. Sliding two more fingers inside her pussy and working them hard and fast enough to make Betsy see stars, Johnny added to her pleasurable torment by massaging her clit with his thumb in slow, splendid circles. She pumped his cock hard in response.

Just before she felt as if she'd detonate and glimpse rockets and fireworks discharging again, Johnny's hand slipped away and he stilled hers on his shaft. Uttering a mournful whimper her tensed muscles relaxed.

After expelling a long ragged breath he smiled "The next time you come, blue eyes, it's going to be when I'm inside you."

"Oh, now that was cruel," she teased. "Well, two can play at that game, soldier boy." Not giving Johnny a moment to think, Betsy swooped in and took his cock

between her teeth, scraping it gently. He let out a groan when her lips covered him. He was too big to take fully into her mouth but she swirled her tongue around his shaft, finishing at the tip where she lapped up the salty droplets of pre-cum. As Johnny drew deep tattered breaths, she got into her previous position, flat on the bed, beaming a wicked smile up at him. "Okay. I'm ready now, Johnny. And, by the way, you're delicious."

Fingers fumbling, he rolled on the condom. "Wicked and wonderful," he said, chuckling and kneading the flesh of her thighs before working his way up to her hips and belly. "You have the most gorgeous, womanly body. Soft, pliable, round and curvy. And, God, look at those breasts. Like lush, ripe fruit." He reached up and squeezed them, flicking the tips with his thumbs and causing her nipples to bead and crinkle in response. "Not to be coarse, blue eyes, but you're like my wildest wet dream come to life."

Betsy studied Johnny for a long moment as he played with her body, apparently enjoying the heck out of it. "You're serious, aren't you?"

He looked up at her with surprise. "Of course I am, why?"

"So you don't think I'm too—"

"Please." Johnny held up his hand. "Don't even say it, okay? What is it with women? You're all concerned with getting skinny. Betsy, listen to me, you're not fat by any stretch of the imagination. You're a woman in full bloom. Ripened and round and sexy as hell. You look the way women are supposed to look."

"My God, Johnny, where have you been all my life?" Betsy laughed.

"Searching for you," he said, passion darkening his eyes. "Not some stick-figure excuse for a woman, Betsy. Not some sharp-boned fragile girl or some wispy female who could be carried off in a breeze. I've been searching for an honest-to-goodness goddess, Betsy. For you."

With one quick thrust his cock was inside her, filling her completely. She'd been wrong. She hadn't been reborn after he'd licked her to a screaming climax earlier, she'd

just been primed for the main attraction. The big event. And this was it. Now...*now* she was complete. She squirmed and moaned, fully certain she'd never be the same again.

"Feel that?" Johnny asked, slipping out partially and plunging into her depths even harder. "That's a perfect union. That's the feel of a man's cock sliding into the pussy of a woman whose body was designed just for him."

Her breasts bobbed with each forceful ram. Oh yes, Betsy felt it, all right. She knew exactly what Johnny meant. It was as if they were two lost puzzle pieces who'd finally found each other—and now they were joined, whole, complete. She wished she could respond with more than just a panting nod but her mind was swirling with erotic sensations too intense to speak. Arousal made her nipples peak in painful points, desperate for his touch. As if reading her thoughts, Johnny's hands were on her breasts, pinching, twisting and pulling until she writhed beneath him.

"You're so responsive," he said, his voice descending to a seductive murmur. He rocked his hips as she did the same, in perfect unison. "I can feel every little vibration, every tiny quiver inside your body as I drive into you."

As he spoke, Betsy raked her nails up his strong thighs, his ass cheeks and up his back and arms, relishing the feel of his muscles bunching and cording as he moved. "I've never responded to anyone else like this, Johnny. No one has ever made me feel like this before—not even close. It's like I can feel you clear down to my soul."

"I think you're the other half of my soul," he breathed out. "You complete me, Betsy."

"Yes...soul mates," she agreed, amazed that any of this was really happening and terrified it was all some wonderful, fantastical dream she awoken from any moment.

Johnny's thrusts became more insistent, almost fierce and her body responded accordingly, trickling warm dribbles of cream from her pussy. Aware of a finite mix of pain and pleasure so faultless, so blissful it was almost unbearable, Betsy moaned. As he pumped his cock fast and hard she watched the muscles of his chest flex and tighten and she felt the muscles in his legs contracting. Johnny's concentrated gaze was near

animalistic, primal and her heart began to race. Grand sensations mounted, intensifying with each breath. Her swollen, sensitive clitoris strummed, pulling her insides taut until she felt like a violin string ready to burst free at the next stroke of the bow.

With Johnny's next thrust she did, indeed, shatter and he came right along with her, groaning incoherent mutterings of passion. Amid raw grabs and squeezes they hollered out the unbridled joy of their releases before falling quiet in a limp, sated heap.

The feel of Johnny's hard body slumped over her was almost as good as the feel of him pummeling inside her. Betsy felt safe, protected...loved – infinitely satisfied and complete.

## Chapter Four

The next day brought the couple eminently closer. Verbally, emotionally and sexually they made optimum use of every moment they had together before it was time for Johnny to leave.

Striving not to let her fears encroach on the time they had left, Betsy forced thoughts about Johnny's impending departure to the far recesses of her mind. After all, now that she'd found her true soul mate, God couldn't be so cruel as to take him from her forever. Johnny would be back. He *had* to be back.

The night of December twenty-third, as Johnny cradled Betsy in his arms after making love to her, he whispered in her ear, "The time's gone by so fast. Tomorrow's Christmas Eve. Our last day together, sweetheart."

Betsy gazed up at him, determined not to let the tears begin because she was afraid she'd never be able to stop them. "I just wish I knew where they were sending you, Johnny."

"I know, me too." He stroked her hair, planting a soft kiss on her forehead. "But it's SOP, Betsy, standard operating procedure, not to tell the troops where they're heading during wartime. All I know is that I have to be at the train station at a particular time and what happens from there is anybody's guess."

"We'll go to the train station together tomorrow night, Johnny. I want to see you off."

He sucked in a cautious breath. "Aw, honey, I don't know about that. I don't know if I could take a last-minute goodbye from you like that. It wouldn't do well for me to be bawling like a baby when I stepped on to the train with all the other guys." He chuckled.

“Well, get used to the idea, soldier boy, because I’m coming to that train station with you no matter what.”

“I just wish I’d met you before the war started.” He traced a fingertip down Betsy’s throat to the hollow between her breasts before leaning close to kiss her there. “Just think, we could have been married with a little house of our own and maybe...maybe even a baby by now.”

“Married...” Listening to Johnny describe the idyllic scenario she’d played over and over again in her mind almost since she’d first laid eyes on him, Betsy couldn’t prevent the catch in her throat when she spoke. She smoothed her hands over his shoulders and chest, tenderly kneading his warm flesh while doing her best to commit the feel of his skin to memory.

“John and Betsy Lakeside,” Johnny said with a smile. “Has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it? Look, Betsy, it wouldn’t be fair to ask you to wait for me, but if you’re not married or with someone when the war’s over I’d like nothing more than to make you my wife when I come home.” Raking his fingers through his short hair, Johnny laughed. “Aw, hell, that wasn’t really much of a proposal, was it? I guess romance isn’t one of my strong points.”

Betsy sat up against the pillows, drawing him into a hug. “On the contrary, it’s the most perfect, beautiful thing you could have possibly said to me tonight, Johnny. Except, I don’t want to wait. I want to marry you now.”

Johnny’s features exploded into a grin. “No kidding?”

“No kidding,” Betsy answered with a resolute nod.

“It wouldn’t be fair to you, though, Betsy. I mean, what if...what if I don’t come back? You’re too young to be a widow, baby. God only knows what—”

With a choked gasp, Betsy grasped his arms and shook him. “Don’t say that. Oh please don’t even think it, Johnny. Of course you’re coming back.”

Johnny tugged her close, rubbing her back. "Shh, shh, shh. It's all right, honey. I'll be back. But isn't there a waiting period of, what, three days or something like that? For the blood tests and marriage license?"

"Normally." Betsy nodded. "But I know someone who can help us. Nancy just got married. Her boyfriend got his orders forty-eight hours before he had to ship out. Her uncle is a judge with some clout. He got all the red tape waived and performed a quick civil ceremony. Nancy and I are really close. I know her uncle will help us if she asks him, Johnny."

"I've heard about other cases where they've made exceptions to the seventy-two hour rule during wartime." Clearly lost in thought, Johnny's brow furrowed as he seemed to look far off into the distance. "Are you sure you want to do this, Betsy? I mean, you'd make me the happiest guy on earth if you did, but I want to make certain this is what you—"

"Oh, for heaven's sake! Quit wasting time, soldier boy, and hand me the telephone so I can dial Nancy's number." With a look of mock impatience Betsy gestured to the phone on her nightstand.

Within the next hour after making a few calls, an ecstatic Betsy had set up all the arrangements for her and Johnny to exchange vows in front of Nancy's uncle at City Hall the next morning.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Mrs. John Lakeside!" Johnny belted out as soon as they'd exited City Hall. Scooping Betsy into his arms and swinging her around so fast it made her dizzy, he asked, "You know what that means, don't you, honey?"

"What, Private Lakeside?" Near giddy with joy, she braced her hands on his shoulders while he held her aloft. "That we're a couple of crazy kids in love?"

"Well, that too." Johnny winked at her. "But I was thinking more about destiny. It means we were destined for this very moment together. Think about it. Just a few days

ago we didn't even know each other. And now we're married. *Married, Betsy!*" He swung her around again.

Once Betsy's toes touched the cement steps she beamed a smile up at Johnny. "I agree. It was meant to be." Wrapping her arms around his waist and snuggling against the brass buttons on his chest, she held him close. The ceremony had been so speedy and antiseptic it was hard to believe they were actually married—but they were, and she had the documentation to prove it. While Nancy had been able to attend just long enough to serve as a witness before heading off to her job, Linda couldn't get away from work on such short notice.

Later, after the war, she and Johnny could do their vows over again in a little flower-lined chapel or church with their friends in attendance. But for right now, Betsy couldn't be happier. After all, she was in the arms of the man she loved. Her Johnny...her *husband!* "All I have to say, Johnny, is that whoever is in charge up there," she hiked a thumb toward heaven, "of coordinating perfect love matches for people, has done pretty well for us."

"I'll say," Johnny agreed. "They won't be getting any complaints from me." And then his expression changed. He leaned in close, a somber look in his eyes—his gaze so intense it was as if he was trying to see into her very soul. "This is for always...forever, blue eyes," he whispered against Betsy's ear before kissing her with such passion it brought tears to her eyes.

A hushed chorus of murmurs and giggles assaulted Betsy's ears. As she and Johnny ended their kiss they glanced around them to see they'd attracted a small crowd of onlookers on the steps of City Hall. Betsy felt herself turn three shades of red before she broke into nervous laughter.

Flashing a satisfied smile and pointing proudly at Betsy, Johnny announced, "Hey, everybody. This is my bride. We just got married!"

A cheer went up and well-wishers crowded around them, clapping and offering their congratulations and best wishes. One woman drew a pouch from her purse and dipped into it. A moment later she was sprinkling the bride and groom with rice.

“My sister’s getting married in half an hour,” she explained, tossing another small handful of grains. “And I brought more than enough to go around. Congratulations!”

Johnny caught sight of a man with a camera. “Hey, mister, would you mind taking a picture of me and my beautiful bride and sending the photo to her? I’ll be glad to pay for the postage and film developing.”

“My pleasure, son,” the older man answered. “But the cost is on me. It’s the least this old vet can do for a fellow soldier.” After Johnny and Betsy posed, she scribbled her address on a scrap of paper and gave it to the man, hoping he’d be kind enough to follow through and send her the picture.

As soon as the gathering dispersed, Johnny grabbed Betsy’s hand and all but flew down the rest of the steps.

With one hand holding her hat in place so it wouldn’t blow off, Betsy scrambled after him, yelling, “Johnny! Where are we going?”

“Your place,” he said without slowing down. “We’ve got food, drink, music and a squeaky double bed. All we need to keep us happy for the next several hours. Come on, blue eyes, step on it. We don’t want to waste a single minute of our time together.”

## Chapter Five

“Has anyone ever told you, my dear Mrs. Lakeside,” Johnny said, lifting the waistband of Betsy’s underpants and peeking at her pussy as if it were a tempting cherry pie cooling on a windowsill, “that you have the prettiest, most lip-licking little pussy imaginable.”

“No, but I’d love to hear all about it from you.” Johnny’s words and the way he looked at her, like she was delectable, made Betsy feel beautiful, desirable. Stretching on the bed as he traced her curly triangle of hair she added, “Just what is it about my pussy that intrigues you so?” As he slipped her panties down, she lifted her bottom from the mattress. Once she was bare, Johnny spread her legs apart.

“Well, let’s take the moisture factor, for starters.” He swooped one extended finger along the inside of her upper thigh and then held the digit aloft, examining it. “See how hot and wet you are for me? I really like that—a lot. And then, of course, there’s the taste factor.” He dipped three fingers into the alcove between her thighs and then sucked her juices from them, one by one. “Now that’s just too damned delicious to be legal.”

Each action, each word from her new husband’s mouth, every touch of his flesh against hers, elevated Betsy’s libido until she found herself panting in anticipation of feeling him inside her once again. Now, she needed to feel him inside her *now!*

“Okay, soldier boy,” she said with a devilish smile as she dragged Johnny into place. “It’s time to roll out the heavy artillery and start the invasion. Don’t stop shooting that big cannon until you see the whites of their eyes, soldier. Batten down the hatches. Man the torpedoes, full speed ahead!”

A husky chuckle rumbled up from Johnny’s chest. “You’re mixing your branches of the service, General, but I think I get the idea.”

Before Betsy even had time to take another breath, Johnny plunged into her with one swift mighty thrust. Her thighs trembled and her breathing grew shallower at the welcome military invasion. She had her soldier's hot, hard flesh inside her, his hands and mouth working to please her, the velvet steel of his muscled body pressing into her soft flesh. She could touch him, smell him, experience him... He was hers. Forever.

Betsy did her best to explore with her fingers as he kept up a rhythmic pace. With a bit of stretching she'd cupped his balls, stroking and squeezing cautiously.

"That feels good," he said, thrusting even deeper until his cock was hitting high and hard, connecting with someplace extraordinary. "Feel that, baby?"

Lost in a whirl of mysterious pleasure, all Betsy could do was nod. She could feel him clear up to her womb and the blissful sensation was indescribable.

"It's tickling the tip of my cock just right," Johnny said, his breath ragged. "Especially when I do this." With a slow gyration of his hips, he twitched deep inside her. "Oh, fuck, yeah, that feels good." Dipping his head, he captured one of her nipples between his teeth and tugged. She shuddered with pure delight. The more exuberant his tugging, the more exquisite her enjoyment.

"Oh, how I love being with you, Johnny." Betsy's words came on labored breaths. "It's like someone came along and dipped me in a great big vat of ecstasy." They were quiet for a while, luxuriating in the rapture of their personal honeymoon heaven.

Her body building toward a climax that promised to be beyond profound, Betsy stared into Johnny's eyes as he gazed hard into hers. She could feel his love permeating every cell of her being and wondered if he could feel her love in return. Without speaking, Johnny nodded. It was almost as if they'd somehow been gifted with the ability to speak to each other of love with only the power of their minds.

Just as it seemed she'd either detonate or perhaps melt from an overdose of sheer, raw pleasure, Betsy felt herself stiffen. Seconds later her body trembled, quaked and orgasmed. Adding to her immense joy, she felt Johnny climaxing at the same time, calling out her name as he gripped her tight and close.

As if caught in a whirling tornado of devotion and passion, the crescendo of their joint orgasm—their first as husband and wife—remained long enough to deliver the most amazing pure essence of erotic love to each nerve ending.

When the satisfying tremors finally drifted to a close, Betsy sighed. “Oh, God, this is heaven. Honeymoon heaven.”

Johnny sprawled on top of her, looking more pleased and content than she’d ever seen him. When he was able to speak he rolled over lazily, wrenching Betsy close until her head rested just over his heart. “It was unbelievable. You’ve turned my world on end, Mrs. Lakeside, and I couldn’t be happier.” They stayed that way enjoying a silent embrace until Johnny shifted to his side a few moments later. Propped on an elbow, his head rested on the palm of his hand. “I know this isn’t the kind of honeymoon a woman dreams about, Betsy, but I’ll make it up to you one day. I promise. After I come home we’ll go anywhere you want, just name it.”

“You know, I think that big field of flowers you talked about before would be just perfect.” Betsy smoothed her hand across his cheek. “I really don’t care where it is as long as we’re together.”

“When I’m in the trenches, just before I close my eyes to go to sleep I’m going to think about how I long to hold your sweet naked body in my arms, bury my nose in your silky hair, thrust my cock into your warm, creamy depths.” He smoothed his hands over her curves as he spoke. “Oh, sweetheart, how I’ll miss those soft, luscious curves of yours.” His hand traveled over her. “Full breasts, belly, thighs...” He reached beneath her, clutching her backside. “And that enticing ass of yours. Perfect. Everything about you is perfect, blue eyes.”

“Mmmm, and you, handsome...” Betsy pulled herself up, getting on her knees and cupped his groin, enjoying the feel of his limp shaft gradually mushrooming beneath her fingers. “You’re the big, beefy embodiment of my fantasies.” She stroked his hip and thigh with the other hand. “Big, thick cock, strong, muscular thighs and...” She grabbed one of his ass cheeks and squeezed. “And that firm, sexy ass. Until you come

home I'll be counting the days until I can hold you in my arms again, naked and without a stitch of that dull khaki or rough olive-drab anywhere to be seen." She played with Johnny's cock, rolling it between her hands as if it were kindling and she was trying to start a fire – which she indeed was.

She licked her lips and let out a low, throaty chuckle. "Do you know what I'm thinking about?" Now she engaged in a longer more exaggerated swipe of her tongue across her lips.

"Chocolate chip cookies?" he teased.

"Nope. But if I had any more chocolate in the house I'll give you three guesses what I'd be using it for right about now." After pumping his shaft with her hand a few times she released it, thoroughly delighted to see that it was nearly erect again. She leaned over and caught his firm, bobbing flesh in her mouth, licking, sucking, nibbling. In no time at all it had swelled to its previous proportions.

"Oh, Jesus," Johnny groaned, fisting her hair and drawing her head closer to him. "Christ that feels good."

Making use of her hands and mouth, Betsy focused on giving her husband a sensory memory to carry with him he'd never forget. Guided by his moans and groans of pleasure, she experimented with her tongue, swirling around the broad base of his cock and flicking it across the tender head. "Believe it or not," she said coming up for air, "I don't even miss the chocolate a single bit." And then her mouth was on him again, sucking with more insistence, biting with more determination until Johnny's hips pumped hard and he growled out his climax, spurting warm salty ribbons of cum down the back of Betsy's throat.

The precious hours they spent together were like a carnal treasure chest of riches as the newlyweds explored, experimented and enjoyed a wealth of sexual delights. Now, with Betsy on her knees, her backside facing Johnny, she knew the last of the uncharted territory left on her flesh map was about to be traveled.

When she felt Johnny spreading salad oil in the crack of her ass with his finger, Betsy teased, "I hope you're not going to add vinegar to the oil."

"Well, our only choices were this, or the lard I found in the back of your kitchen cabinet or that jar of messy cold cream on your dresser," Johnny said, chuckling. "I figured salad oil was probably the best choice." He ringed the rosebud of her anus with the tip of his finger a few times before slipping inside just a ways. "You should probably know I haven't done this before," he said.

"That makes two of us."

"But I've read about it, so I know the basics. I promise to be gentle."

The sensation was strange at first and Betsy didn't quite know how she felt about the anal invasion. As Johnny's finger probed a little deeper she started to get more used to it, finding it somewhat pleasurable, but still odd. She still couldn't begin to imagine what it would feel like to have his cock up her ass.

"I trust you," she said. "The idea of doing this would be unsavory if it were anyone else, but nothing feels wrong or off limits when it involves you, Johnny." She glanced back over her shoulder to see Johnny sheathing his cock and then coating it with the oil. When she first felt his cock seeking entrance she instinctively tightened her ass cheeks.

"Well, that felt damn good," Johnny said with a husky chuckle. "But I think you better try to relax, baby, so I can get inside."

After two more tries, Johnny was able to slip the tip of his cock within the interior of her anus. Betsy's eyes widened at the unusual sensation and she gasped.

"Doing okay?"

"Yes. Try going in a little further."

Johnny's cock probed deeper and Betsy felt a curious mix of pain and pleasure. It was when Johnny reached beneath her and jammed his fingers up her pussy that Betsy cried out. Johnny's cock and his hand stilled.

"Did I hurt you?"

She panted, unable to answer at first. "No. Feels good. More," was all she could manage under the circumstances.

The finely orchestrated movements of Johnny's fabulous cock twitching halfway up her ass while his magic fingers fucked her juicy pussy were so intensely gratifying Betsy thought she would simply explode on the spot.

"Jesus, Betsy, Jesus." Johnny sounded nearly as breathless as she was. "You feel so damn good. So damned tight."

"More," she demanded.

"Want to...can't," Johnny said, sounding as if he was speaking through clenched teeth. "Not...not supposed to go all the way in the first time." He stopped to suck in a deep breath. "You could get hurt, sweetheart."

"I...don't...care," Betsy just about growled, "if it kills me."

Clearly restraining himself, Johnny's cock remained where it had been but he added his thumb to her rapturous torture as it flicked over her clit. The triple delight had Betsy heaving deep, ragged breaths and her mind spinning somewhere it had never been before. The raw commotion building at her clit was so extreme it felt as if every fiber in her being had ignited. As the first surge of her orgasm rocked her, Betsy's body jerked. Johnny gasped her ass cheeks firmly, keeping her in place as she succumbed to the violent roll and crash of each sensuous wave.

She was minimally aware of Johnny roaring out his climax while the last vestiges of hers still vibrated deep within. Ecstasy. Bliss. Sheer and utter elation such as she'd never known before.

Not more than ten minutes later they were wrapped in each other's arms and they stayed that way, sleeping until the clatter of the alarm clock rudely intruded on their happiness.

## **Chapter Six**

Betsy held onto to Johnny for dear life at the train station, digging her fingers into the scratchy olive-drab wool of his uniform and praying for a miracle that would somehow keep him from getting on that train. The station was filled with GIs and their girls, hugging, kissing and weeping together as they expressed their farewells.

“I’ll write you as soon as we get wherever they’re sending us,” Johnny said. Stroking her hair, her face and her neck, he studied her as if he were trying to commit her features to memory.

“I promise I’ll write to you everyday,” Betsy said, choking back a sob as she sprinkled his face with kisses. “Every single day, Johnny.” The night air was frigid and she could see her breath as she spoke. Try as she might, she couldn’t shake off the winter coldness that chilled her to the bone. Logically she knew it was because the chill had nothing whatsoever to with the temperature, and had everything to do with icy, gut-wrenching fear.

She wanted—needed—to be naked with him again. To feel the comforting warmth of Johnny’s skin against hers. To feel his muscles flexing as he crushed her to his chest. To taste the sweet nectar of his kisses whenever she damn well pleased. If only she could somehow wrap herself around him, intertwining limbs until they became all but inseparable. She’d capture his beautiful cock with her pussy and keep him there inside her, safe and warm and secure. That’s where Johnny was meant to be, with her, not in some godforsaken corner of nowhere ducking bombs and bayonets and gunfire. She shuddered at the thought.

How in God’s name could she let her beloved soldier boy go after he’d opened a whole new world to her? How could she survive without experiencing more of the blissful, heartfelt passion and intimacy they’d shared? The sexy sound of his voice, the

merriment of his ready laughter, had become a part of her. It wasn't fair to ask her to give that all up—to give Johnny up. She wanted, she *deserved*, more than memories to keep her warm. She wanted her Johnny, her husband, holding her close each night as they drifted off to sleep.

Betsy didn't want to cry. She didn't want to make it any harder for Johnny, but at the harsh, shrill pitch of the train whistle demanding Johnny's departure, her breath caught and she openly wept.

She and Johnny kissed. Oh, God, how they kissed. So much more was said with that single goodbye kiss than some couples convey to each other in a year's time. As their tongues tangled he yanked her so hard against him she went breathless.

"I have to go now, baby," Johnny whispered. He broke their embrace, tearing himself from her arms and leaving them cold and vacant.

"Promise me," Betsy called out as Johnny walked backwards toward the train. "Promise me you'll come back to me, Johnny."

"I'll be back." Winking, Johnny was clearly doing his best to give her a reassuring smile, but Betsy could still see the concern in his eyes. "I promise," he said, climbing the stairs of the train as it started to move. "I love you, Betsy. Always." He blew her a kiss. "Forever, blue eyes."

"I love you too, Johnny. I love you too!" The train picked up speed and Betsy ran alongside it as Johnny disappeared into the train car. "Always and forever, my darling Johnny," she sobbed.

And then he was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

While the Chicago summer had been typically hot and muggy, Betsy was chilled to her very soul that sweltering day in August when she answered the door to find a delivery boy, telegram in hand.

Betsy drew in a long, hesitant breath as she took the paper from the messenger, fearing the contents held the most heinous news possible. Her fingers trembled as she read the stark words aloud.

“John Lakeside has been cited for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty...” As she continued to read, her head rocked from left to right in disbelief while a deep shuddering breath gripped her being.

It had to be a mistake. Yes, mistakes like that happened all the time, didn't they? Betsy's thoughts raced as she fought to concentrate on their wedding day. With all her might she struggled to remember every last detail in the hopes that the power of her love could somehow bring Johnny back again. She remembered his hands on her, *in* her. His lips, teeth and tongue doing the most magical, marvelous things to her. And she remembered the unwavering expression of love in his eyes as he drove that sweet cock of his deep into her depths...

A cry tore from her heart, shattering her thoughts. “No...no, Johnny, you can't be dead! I can't go through life without you, without ever feeling your touch again. Without ever hearing your voice... I kept my promise. I wrote and I wrote and I waited and I waited.” A wailing sob rose from the depths of her soul, flooding the room with heartache. “But you never came back, Johnny...you never came back...”

## **Chapter Seven**

### *Christmas Eve, Present Day*

The sound of Christmas carolers outside Betsy Lakeside's apartment at the assisted living center wafted on the cold night air. Betsy sang along with their merry warbling of "Good King Wenceslas" as she lit the last of the pillar candles lining the mantel. She fussed with the evergreen garland a while before drawing a small framed photograph from her pocket and placing it at the center. Gazing at it for a long moment, she smiled. "Merry Christmas, soldier boy." She rimmed the silver scrollwork frame with the tip of her finger. "How handsome you were in your military uniform. I believe the term they'd use today would be *hunk*." She chuckled a bit. "Oh yes, you were most definitely a hunk, Johnny."

The glint from the sparkling Christmas tree lights caught her attention. She loved the look of her heavily adorned tree because each ornament afforded a special memory. Most of the dangling trinkets were music-related, having come from her music students over the years. Her favorite though was the small photo of a smiling soldier and his happy young bride on the steps of City Hall. Encased behind glass in a small lightweight frame, it hung from the branch on a loop of red velvet ribbon.

"I remember the exact moment that picture was taken, Johnny. It's the only photo I have of us together." As memories of their quick City Hall wedding came flooding back, Betsy sighed. That Christmas Eve more so many years ago had been the happiest day of her life, leading to the most memorable, passionate night she would ever share with a man.

"We'd known each for just a couple of days," she whispered, fingering the ornament and gazing at the faded image. "And I was your wife for less than twenty-four hours before you shipped out." She hadn't realized she'd been crying until a fat tear plopped onto her hand.

“Oh no, that won’t do at all,” Betsy said, swiping away the tears with her fingers and sucking in a deep breath. “Our Christmas Eve’s together are a time for happy memories and celebration, Johnny, not for grieving.” She paused, listening to the carolers again. This time they sang “Deck the Halls”. Determined to keep her mood light, Betsy joined in, belting out the words with gusto. “I have so many splendid memories to keep me company,” she said, giving the old, worn photo of Johnny on the mantle another glimpse as the carol ended. “There’s absolutely no reason for me to be bawling like a baby.”

Rubbing her hands together in an anticipatory gesture, Betsy continued, “I’m planning to throw all my dietary restrictions out the window, Johnny. The hell with what all those damn know-it-all doctors say.” Laughing, she tottered over to sofa, plumping the pillows. “I’m going to treat myself to a decadent cup of rum-spiked eggnog and gobble up the entire plateful of home-baked Christmas cookies those nice volunteers brought by while I listen to Bing and Frankie.” She stilled, looking far off into the distance. “Remember the fun we had making those chocolate chip cookies together, Johnny?” She waited a moment, as if expecting for him to respond. “After that,” she went on with her jabbering, “maybe I’ll watch some old holiday movies and nod off in front of the TV. That’s about all the excitement I can manage for one holiday.” She laughed again.

Betsy turned on the CD player, slipping in a disc and setting the machine to play and repeat “White Christmas”, the new Bing Crosby hit single she and Johnny had listened to on the radio that Christmas Eve. She closed her eyes and breathed in slowly, swaying softly to the crooner’s song.

“When I close my eyes like this,” Betsy said, sashaying left and right, “I can almost believe I’m young again, Johnny. With peachy-soft skin, clear blue eyes, long brown, shoulder-length hair and plenty of pep to my step.” She opened her eyes, catching sight of her wrinkled hand gently waving through the air and sighed.

“Reality can be such a bitch,” she grouched, picturing herself the way she looked now. “I’m still a looker though,” she added with conviction. “I’ve seen the way some of those old codgers here give me the eye. And why not? I look a hell of a lot better than some of those crotchety old broads with their surly etched expressions. You know what, Johnny? If you look hard you can still see the youthful sparkle behind these aged eyes of mine.” She smiled at that. “You always liked my eyes, remember? I loved the way you always called me *blue eyes*.”

She swayed to the music again, jerking to a sudden stop. “Damn!” She winced in discomfort. “I moved the wrong way again.” Arthritis and other ailments had taken a toll on Betsy’s frail, slender body, but she got around fairly well without the use of a cane or walker. The thought of meandering around with a cane made her shudder. “I may be eighty-something but I’m still a vain woman,” she said, rubbing her hip joint.

She’d scoffed at her doctor’s recommendation to use a cane, although she realized she wouldn’t be able to hold out much longer. She noticed she’d been having more trouble maintaining her balance lately. All things considered, Betsy had to admit, begrudgingly, that she was glad she’d finally listened to reason and moved into an assisted living facility with medical technicians on the premises.

As her fingers smoothed over the bony protrusions of her hip she chuckled at the thought of being slender now. It’s a state she’d strived to attain for decades. Now it had come naturally, without any struggle on her part, simply because she rarely had an appetite, most likely due to all the medication she had to take.

“So here I am, finally skinny at last and...well, who the hell really cares?” Betsy snickered. She thought of her former excess poundage more like a lost old friend now rather than an adversary. “Strangest of all, Johnny, is that I actually miss that soft, womanly layer of extra padding on my body. That’s something else you said you liked about me, remember?”

She danced around for another moment, gingerly so she wouldn’t lose her balance and fall, breaking another hip. “See what’s become of me, Johnny? Somewhere along

the line God decided to play a dirty, rotten trick and turn me into an old bag. But at least I can finally wear small-sized clothes.” She chuckled a bit at the irony.

Funny, sometimes Betsy had problems recalling what she’d been doing an hour earlier and yet right now she could so clearly remember what had happened decades ago—the night she met Johnny at the USO. Tonight for some reason it was all flooding back with crystal clarity, the wartime slang, the sights, smells, sounds, what she’d been wearing and, most of all, the first time her eyes connected with Johnny’s. She trilled a dreamy sigh.

“Remember the night we met, Johnny? Remember?”

*I remember, blue eyes.*

With a sharp intake of breath at the sound of Johnny’s voice, Betsy stilled. She’d been talking aloud to him for years and lately, over the last few weeks, there were times when she could almost swear he was talking to her too. Oh, sure, she’d always heard his voice inside her head, but this was different. Almost as if...

*It was the USO holiday dance a week before Christmas. You came with your two girlfriends. You were all decked out in a blue dress that almost matched your beautiful eyes. Our eyes met and our fingers touched as you passed me that cuppa Joe.*

“Yes...yes, that’s right,” Betsy said, envisioning the way she’d dressed that night. “Oh, and you looked so handsome and dashing in your army uniform.”

*A truer case of love at first sight I’ve never come across.*

Delighting in the seeming exchange with the long-lost man of her dreams, Betsy wondered if she’d become so senile her mind was playing tricks on her. It wasn’t exactly clear who was talking. Was it just the voices in her mind getting louder, or was it...could it possibly be...

*Yes...it’s me, blue eyes. I’m here. I’ve been with you always, tucked deep inside your heart, and now I’m here standing right beside you, Betsy. If you concentrate you can feel my arms around you.*

She filled her lungs, breathing in a deep whiff of Johnny's aftershave, a scent she'd never forgotten even after all these years. As she felt his arms encircle her a sob spilled forth from Betsy's throat. "No...no, not now. It's not fair. Not when I'm old. Don't look at me, Johnny. I'm not the same. I'm like a dried up old prune now." Betsy hid her face in her hands.

*You'll never be old to me, my sweet. Beneath that cloak of years I still see the same, breathtakingly beautiful young woman I fell in love with. My soul mate...my heart...my darling Betsy...*

As Bing Crosby warbled on, Betsy took a seat on the sofa, resting her head back against the high-backed cushion. "We only had those few days together, Johnny. Just a few perfect days of bliss." The first time they'd made love was the first time Betsy had ever had an orgasm. Times were different then. She hadn't even known such marvelous things as orgasms for women existed until Johnny had enlightened her by sending her clear over the rainbow.

"Love, romance, passion..." she sighed on a whisper. "It doesn't matter how old people get. It's all still there, Johnny. Young people don't understand that. They don't realize that we're still the same inside, with the same yearnings and desires. Maybe it's a little slower to get things started, but the feelings and sensations are the same. I've never forgotten the way it was with us, Johnny...never..." Her eyelids fluttered shut.

The most dreadful of all memories pricked at her consciousness as Betsy recalled the bold lettering of the telegram. She rubbed the goose bumps that suddenly rose on her arms.

"The last words you ever said to me, Johnny, were—"

"Forever, blue eyes."

Johnny's voice was so clear Betsy could have sworn he was standing a mere few inches from her. "Yes...yes, that's what you said..." Her eyelids cracked open and she did her best to focus. The first thing she saw was her hand resting on the sofa. It was old and wrinkly. And then she looked up, her mouth falling open in a silent gasp.

“Come on, blue eyes,” Johnny said, holding his hand out to her. “We’ve got an appointment with eternity.”

“What? Oh dear, I-I must be losing my mind,” she said under her breath. “Yes, yes, I remember the doctor said something about dementia the last time I saw him.” Betsy blinked a few times. The more she blinked the more solid Johnny became. “Johnny? Johnny is it really you?” If she *was* going crazy, then this was the best damn hallucination she could possibly hope to have.

“You betcha.” He winked and gave her that gorgeous smile of his. “In the flesh. Well,” he clapped his chest, “not exactly.”

“I’m not dreaming?” She put both hands in front of her face, wincing. “No, I can’t be dreaming because I’m old. In my dreams I’m always young.” Betsy looked up into Johnny’s eyes, a flood of emotions churning within her. Had he really come back to her at last—after all these years? She didn’t understand. It didn’t make any sense. How could he possibly still be alive—and still so young when she’d grown old?

“It’s not the age or the outward appearance that matters,” he said in answer to her thoughts. “It’s what’s in here.” Johnny tapped his fingers against his heart a few times. “True love is ageless, just like inner beauty.” He took her hand in his, smiling warmly at Betsy. “Your worn, tired body has served you well, Betsy, but now it’s time to leave it behind. Just let go of those weary old bones, all the aches and the pain and discomfort. Don’t be afraid, Betsy. I’m here. I’m not going anywhere without you.”

“Oh, my God. Johnny! My Johnny!” Betsy held his hand against her cheek, savoring the feel of his skin against hers. “My dear, sweet, handsome soldier. It *is* you! You’ve really come back to me.” Excited beyond all reason, Betsy struggled to rise from her seat. A sudden overwhelming heaviness prevented her from getting up. Her eyes widened and she clutched her chest. As “White Christmas” began to play again, Betsy fell back against the sofa cushion, wiping tears of frustration from her eyes as her breath became labored. “I can’t do it. I’m tired, Johnny. I’m old and feeble and so very tired. And, oh dear God, how I miss you. How I long to be with you again.”

“Come, sweetheart.” Johnny easily drew Betsy up into his arms, holding her close as he rocked her back and forth. “There, there, blue eyes. Everything is all right now.”

Betsy looked into his eyes. She reached up to caress his face, stopping short when she spied her hand. With a sharp intake of breath she turned her hand front and back and then lifted her other hand, studying it too. Then she touched her face, smoothing her fingers across silky, unlined cheeks.

“I’m young again. Oh, Johnny, I’m young again!” She beamed a bright smile up at him, relishing how suddenly light, buoyant and carefree she felt—as if decades of worry, illness, stress and the rigors of daily life had been lifted from her being.

“Indeed you are.” Johnny captured her lips in a kiss so adoring it made her knees buckle.

Betsy held onto him as if she were afraid he’d disappear into thin air unless she had him in her grasp. The last time they’d kissed that’s almost exactly what happened.

“I’ve waited more than sixty years to give you a welcome home kiss,” she whispered. “And you’re even more delicious than I remembered. But...but how...what...”

Johnny nodded toward the sofa. “Look,” was all he said.

Betsy’s fingers flew to her lips as she turned her attention to the sofa. The oddly familiar form of an old woman rested against the cushions, the hint of a smile affixed on her features. “It’s...it’s me.” A sudden rush of sympathy for her old worn body flushed through Betsy as she looked at her eighty-something self. “Oh, that’s it. Of course,” she said, a knowing smile taking hold. It was odd how the realization didn’t alarm or frighten her in the least—it simply felt matter-of-fact, natural. “I’m dead, right?”

“Just your body.” Johnny nodded. “But your soul, your vital essence stands here before me now, and that never dies.”

“I always believed this day would come, Johnny. The day we’d be reunited.”

Somewhere in the distance Betsy heard knocking and then a familiar voice.

“Mom? Mom, are you okay? Answer the door.”

The knocking became more insistent and then she heard the distinct clink of a key turning in her door’s lock.

John Lakeside, Jr. rushed through the door and stopped short when he saw the vision before him. One glance at the transparent image of a young man and woman embracing had his jaw dropping, while seeing past the couple, to the still form of his mother on the sofa had him gasping out, “Mom!” He ran to her side, checking for a pulse.

It’s okay, John,” Betsy’s ghost assured him calmly. “Don’t be sad. I’m with your dad. He’s come back for me, just like he promised.” She smiled warmly at her son.

John turned toward the ghostly specters, cocking his head at the father he’d never had an opportunity to meet. “Dad?” he said in an incredulous tone. As he stared, Betsy could see the realization set in when her son finally recognized her youthful form. “Mom, you’re...you’re young...”

“I’ll take good care of her,” Johnny said. “I love you, son, and I’m so proud of you.”

“I...I love you too, both of you,” John said, ignoring the stream of tears coursing down his cheeks. With a long look at his mother’s blissful, satisfied smile as she stood in her husband’s arms, John’s face relaxed. Slowly his lips curved into a broad smile. “Merry Christmas,” he whispered.

“Merry Christmas, John,” Betsy said, blowing a kiss to her son. “We’ll see each other again one day. Be happy.”

She looked up at her husband then, filled with such happiness she could barely speak. Before Betsy even had a chance to open her mouth to try, something otherworldly commenced and she found herself being transported. In what seemed like an instant, Betsy was standing with Johnny in the middle of a field of flowers. The depth and brilliance of the floral colors, the beguiling fragrance, the velvety grass, the way the sun shone soft and golden about them, everything about the magnificent place was beyond mortal description.

“Remember when we said we wished we could be together like this one day?” Johnny asked.

Nodding slowly as she took everything in, Betsy answered, “A place without war or fear or hatred. Someplace where we could—”

“Hold each other in our arms forever,” Johnny finished, drawing Betsy close and brushing his lips across hers. “Making love to each other.”

“We...we will be able to stay together, won't we, Johnny?”

“Forever, blue eyes.”

With a loving kiss, Johnny led his beloved Betsy to their appointment with eternity.

## **About the Author**

Daisy Dexter Dobbs has a valid reason for lying when she's asked where she gets the ideas for her books. She knows most people wouldn't believe the truth about the madcap mayhem that goes on in her daily life. Case in point: Imagine frantically trying to file your way out of a locked bathroom door with a teeny nail file, dressed in nothing but a too-small towel while you're waiting for a real estate agent and a family with three small kids to arrive for a showing of your house. Okay, now picture the contents of a box of just-delivered sex toys (purely for research purposes, you understand) strewn on the bed just outside that locked bathroom door. Mmm-hmm, it really happened.

Happily married to her soulmate, the award winning artist and writer believes in love, happily-ever-afters and the wondrous, magical escapism of reading and writing.

Daisy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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