



Bobby Michaels

VETERANS

*For the Love  
of the Corps*

Loose Id

# VETERANS: FOR THE LOVE OF THE CORPS

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LooseId®

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## Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my readers who have shared with me their status as members or veterans of the United States Armed Services -- especially current and former members of my beloved Marine Corps. It is also dedicated to the memory of all members of the armed services who have given their lives in America's defense.*

*A special thank you to Dr. Rebecca who not only takes care of me, but cares about me -- even when I frustrate her.*

*Acknowledgement: There are always a lot of people to thank for any book, but I would really be amiss if I didn't mention the incredible technical assistance from somebody who's been there -- Sarah Black, LCDR, USN (ret.). Thanks so much for your help.*

Think where man's glory most begins and ends,

And say my glory was I had such friends.

-- William Butler Yeats

## Prologue

Hey, Mike,

Not much going on here at Benning. Been doing tactical training.

I hear tell you made it out of boot camp. In one piece. Keep it that way in where you're headed to next.

I figure we'll both wind up in the same place, just in different parts, you being marines and all. No more mixing up Collins and Rollins. Didn't think they'd ever get that straight in school.

Parents are disappointed I didn't get hitched before enlisting. Can't say I've met any one person I'd settle down with. Like the field too much. Definitely broadened things out over training more than we ever knew, and we knew a lot. It'd have to be an accepting person to settle down with my grumpy ass. Might need more than one to put up with me.

That's about it. Stay in touch.

Rich

## Chapter One

Anybody ever tells you that Marine Corps boot camp is easy, you tell 'em that they have shit for brains. I had been a high school star athlete in football, wrestling, and track -- a real jock with what I thought was a really tight, killer body, but boot camp kicked my fuckin' ass and just about killed me. But there is a reason for the physical torture the Marines put their recruits through. I found *that* out the hard way.

In boot camp, the Marine Corps does in twelve weeks what nothing or nobody could do in your entire life. They tear you down, physically and mentally, and rebuild you from the ground up. In this process, somewhere, you become something more than you ever were in your life. You become a United States Marine. You are taught how to fire a rifle, how to fight, and how to follow orders -- automatically and without question.

You also learn something else -- that every marine, whether you know him or not, and whether you like him or not, is a brother. He is someone you will defend with your own life if need be, and you learn that he will do the same for you. It is this camaraderie, this brotherhood, that has made the Marines different from all the other American armed services. That, and one other thing...

The Marine Corps carries with it a very special belief. The belief by the American people that no matter what happens, the Marines will be there immediately, and we will take care of whatever needs taking care of. We are taught this in the Corps, and we know it to be true. It creates a special bond between the Corps and the country, between a marine and home.

It was the brotherhood I found in the Corps, which started with boot camp, that really changed my life. In some very good ways and in one way I didn't know how to deal with.

Now I'd been around other guys all my life, but I'd never lived with any. I was an only child of a single mother. I was in high school when Mom finally told me the truth about my father. She'd always told me that he had died. The fact of the matter was, he'd knocked her up and then run off -- leaving her to raise me alone. Her parents, deeply religious people that they were, would have nothing to do with her or me. Maybe you can understand why I have little or no tolerance for people who spout the Bible.

In middle school and high school, I had been a jock, so I was used to slamming into other guy's bodies and showering next to them. Sure I noticed how developed or not they were and how they were hung in comparison to me. I think every guy on earth does that. I was always grateful that, if the bastard I had for a father hadn't hung around, he at least left me with some real *hang* -- if you get my meaning. I had nothing to be ashamed of, and I usually was bigger and longer than any guy in the shower.

I knew what guys looked like soft, but never saw nobody else but me *hard*. I had no idea that all guys woke up with wood most mornings. That first morning in the barracks was a real fuckin' revelation! I learned that I not only had most guys beat soft, but hard as well. That made me feel pretty good. My staring and the fact that my hard-on got even harder looking at other guys didn't make me feel good at all.

Now, let me clue you in here. I had been fuckin' cheerleaders just like every other good-looking jock on the football team since I'd been sixteen or so. I found that it was okay. I mean, getting' off, shooting a load is good anytime. But I also noticed one thing -- when I



was alone, just jacking off, I tended to think about other guys and their bodies. And their scent. Fuck! Their scent! I had the damndest time not getting an erection in the locker room.

Then there was my favorite part of the male body -- a guy's butt. Oh, my God! How I loved the look of some guys' butts. Especially those who worked out and really built their glutes until they were like twin footballs hanging below their broad, muscular back and slim, tight waists.

One thing I definitely kept to myself was my love of the scent of my own butt when it got on my fingers from stroking and playing with my hole while I jacked off. One time I even swiped my mom's hand mirror, put it on the floor, and squatted over it just to see what my asshole looked like. I know I had an overwhelming urge to see what some of these other guys' buttholes looked like and smelled like. More than that, though, was this strong desire to shove my cock into their holes and fuck the hell out of them. With my reaction to my fellow recruits' erections, their scent, and their butts, I figured that I could be in some kind of real shit if I didn't keep myself in check.

And I could have, if it hadn't been for Scott.

I saw him first when we got on the bus to take us to Parris Island. I had thought Marine recruits from east of the Mississippi River were trained in North Carolina but those from west of the Mississippi were trained in San Diego, California, at Camp Pendleton. Scott was pure California surfer -- white-blond hair, blue eyes, tanned skin and all. He even had the cutest little freckles on his nose so I wondered why was he here in North Carolina? Now, understand, I wasn't complaining about him being here -- I was just curious. Me thinking his freckles were *cute*, however, bothered the shit out of me.

He was way shorter than my six feet two inches of height. In fact, I would have sworn he was too short to qualify as a marine, but his five feet five inches was packed with as many hard, developed muscles as my own athletically trained body.

Except for the muscles, we were polar opposites. He was blond; my hair was so dark, it was almost black. His eyes were blue, mine were a dark sable brown. His body was almost completely smooth. I'd started growing hair on my chest when I was fifteen. By now I had a nice dusting of hair across my chest and a treasure trail that went all the way down to my generous pubic bush. And of course, our height differential made us look like Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Twins*.

Like I said, I could have kept myself under control, but our drill instructor -- the DI -- did something that completely destroyed any chance I had. I told you about the brotherhood within the Marine Corps -- well, that starts the first day in boot camp when you're paired with another recruit who becomes your *buddy*. He's the guy you are responsible for, and he's responsible for you. If he can't make it on one of the DI's little forty mile humps, with full hundred-pound pack, one morning after breakfast, well...you get to *help* him hump his butt forty miles carrying his pack and yours if you have to, because if he doesn't make it, you don't make it, and you both get saddled with whatever punishment the DI can devise.

I remember one morning I was trying to get ready for inspection, but I was running late. I was trying to get my boots polished as best I could when, all of a sudden, without saying a word, Scott sat down on my bunk next to me, took my other boot, and started polishing. He just kind of grinned at me -- a grin, by the way, that went straight down to my nuts and made them start to tighten up -- as if to say, "That's what a buddy's for."

Speaking of bunks, Scott's was right next to mine. Seems that's how we got paired up in the first place. We followed each other alphabetically by last name. Scott was *Calder*, I was *Collins*. Just that coincidence brought us together. I've never believed in coincidences, though. To this day, I believe that some power in the Universe meant for us to be together. I have to believe that, because it's the only thing that keeps me sane.

I don't want anybody getting the idea that there was any sex going on in boot camp, or if there was -- trust me on this -- nobody knew about it. Especially not me. There is this thing called *Don't ask, don't tell*. Basically it says that the Marine Corps can't ask if you're a

faggot, and YOU can't do or say anything to let them know that you're a faggot, or they get to throw you out. But just because the Marine Corps can't ask you, don't think for one second that they don't *watch* you to see if you are. So, like I said, sex on base -- especially during boot camp -- is somewhat impossible.

Besides, you may wake up with a hard-on in the morning because you're a young guy with lots of hormones, but by the time the day is over and you've run the obstacle course several times, you may still be able to get it up, but you have no strength left to do anything about it. I had never gone more than two or three days without shooting a load until I went to the Marine Corps. Then I went for twelve weeks. Unbelievable!

I should tell you that other guys didn't go that long. Late at night, I'd hear the bunks creaking rhythmically, or I'd hear the *slap-slap* sound of flesh against flesh as some fellow recruit took matters in hand, so to speak. I was, believe it or not, too fucking shy to do it in front of other guys, so I went the whole damned, fucking twelve weeks without slapping my monkey, and it about drove me nuts.

Day by day, our entire platoon of recruits grew closer and closer to each other and learned to operate as a team. Along the way, buddies became closer, and that was definitely true of Scott and me. It was almost like we really became twins. It was like we could read each other's minds. I would start to ask Scott if he wanted to do something, and before I could even say what, he'd already said, "Yes." We could finish sentences for each other. The only thing we couldn't do was wear each other's uniforms. However, one day, something happened to do with Scott's clothes that sent me reeling.

I was alone in the barracks for the first time. It was only for a few minutes, but it was long enough to do something I had wanted to do for weeks, ever since I'd seen Scott taking it off one night on the way to the head to shower. I got into Scott's locker, between our beds. I'd already noted what his combination was, so I was able open it quickly. I dug down into his laundry bag and pulled out the most incredibly erotic piece of clothing he had -- one of his jocks. It was sweaty and raw with man smells, and I immediately buried my nose in it.

Scott's scent rose into my nose like the smoke from incense and wrapped itself around my brain. My cock went instantly hard, and I knew I would give anything in the world just to be able to smell his scent for the rest of my life. It caused an aching in my chest and guts I had never experienced before. It was a feeling I'd heard described before though, by friends of mine in the locker room, or when we were hanging out, and they were talking about falling in love with the girls they were fucking. Now I knew what they were talking about, and it scared the living shit out of me, because it meant that I was falling in love too. Not with some girl, but with Scott.

I quickly buried his jock back in his laundry bag, locked it in his locker, and got the fuck out of the barracks. I stumbled around for a short while, wondering what the hell I was going to do. How was I going to deal with the fact that I was falling in love with another guy? I mean, being hard and horny over one, wanting to shove my cock down his throat and up his ass was bad enough, but love? That was way too fucking much to deal with. It meant that I was a *faggot*! No fucking hiding it anymore. No kidding myself that it was just something I thought about when I jacked off. It was real. It's what I was, and there was no going back.

I'd always known that the girls I fucked meant nothing to me and that something in the sex was always missing -- an excitement, a hotness...something. I just thought it was supposed to be that way. I know I'd always fantasized that what was missing with girls would be there with another guy, but I didn't really know how that would be. Especially since I'd never had sex with another guy -- only thought about it...maybe more often than I'd ever wanted to admit to myself.

I wasn't even watching where I was going, or what I was doing so lost in thought, when all of a sudden, somebody grabbed my arm. I turned to see it was Scott who had hold of me.

"Mike, what the fuck are you doing? What's wrong, buddy? I called your name three times, and you didn't even notice."

“Uhh...nothing. I...I just have some things on my mind. Sorry.”

“Hey, no prob. Do ya’ want to talk about it?”

“Nah. Talkin’ ain’t gonna help. I just need to drop it and chill out.”

“Hey, how ’bout we go over to the mess hall and get some coffee?”

Now if there is one thing the Corps knows -- it’s how to feed males. We had some form of sustenance available to us almost all our waking hours. If nothing else, there were huge urns of coffee and, quite frequently, freshly baked cookies on a tray beside them. I remember when I left for boot camp, my mom said that she’d be able to save half her salary now because she wouldn’t have to feed me anymore.

Scott and I headed over to the mess hall and grabbed coffee and a handful of really good oatmeal cookies with raisins. We sat down at the end of one of the long tables. We were on one of the rare breaks from training for about an hour, so it was great to just sit down and relax.

“So what you gonna do after graduation?” Scott asked after we’d sat down and drunk some of the coffee and ate a couple cookies.

“I don’t know. We get a weekend off. I’ve really thought about just sleeping through the whole weekend.”

“Yeah, me too. But I don’t want to fucking do it in the damned barracks.”

“Where else would you do it?”

“I got a motel room in Jacksonville. Less than four miles from the front gate of the base, we could fucking walk there in no time flat.”

“We?”

“Well, yeah. We’re buddies, right? I don’t want to spend the weekend without you. I’ve kind of gotten used to having somebody sleeping next to me so I grabbed a room with two queen-sized beds for us. Besides, there’s an Outback Steak House there and a Red Lobster. We can eat high on the hog for the weekend.”

I had to say I was truly moved by his wanting me to be along, but also somewhat panicked by this. After all, it was one thing to sleep next to Scott in the barracks with forty-something other guys around, but in a motel room with just the two of us, that could make things somewhat awkward -- not to mention dangerous. I knew I didn't sleepwalk, but what if I talked in my sleep or something? What if I started having a wet dream about Scott and called out his name while I'm shooting my load? I mean, it could happen, right?

The bottom line was, though, that I had no fucking common sense where it came to Scott or to my dick, either -- just like most guys. There was no way I was going to give up the chance to be alone with him, even if all we did was sleep, eat, and watch TV. Just being near him was enough. Just being able to smell his scent alone was all I wanted the chance for.

Yeah, right.

## Chapter Two

Graduation Day from Marine Corps boot camp is one of the proudest days in a marine's life. It is the day that he finally earns the right to be called a marine. Up until that time, he has been called what he is -- a *recruit*. Someone to be trained and vetted, but not yet a marine.

There is a ceremony for graduation. If there are two things that all branches of the military are into it is ceremony and tradition. The graduation from boot camp combines both. It is a tradition that goes back to when there first was a training camp for marines, and it is a ceremony with all the pomp and pageantry that the Marine Corps can offer.

Many of the newly minted marines' parents came for the ceremony, just like they were graduating from college or something. My mom couldn't afford to fly down and Scott's parents didn't come, either, but it was only the night before graduation that I found out why. I also found out that some of my assumptions about him were very wrong.

"California? How the fuck could you think that?" Scott asked.

"Well...you look like a fuckin' surfer, and you had that tan goin' on. I just figured you were, like, this *surfer dude*."

Scott threw back his head and started laughing so long and so hard, I thought he'd never quit. I was getting embarrassed at my stupidity.

"Mike! I haven't ever seen the ocean, much less been surfing. I'm from Mansfield, Ohio."

"Shit! So why aren't your parents coming down then?"

At this, Scott got real quiet. His face went red, and he turned away in embarrassment.

"They didn't want me to become a marine. They said I was wasting my life in the Corps."

He said this so quietly, I barely heard him, but I heard enough. To a marine, those are fighting words. After all the hard work, sweat -- and yes, at times -- tears we had put in to become marines, being told that it was a waste of our lives would get someone a lesson in how well-trained marines are in hand-to-hand combat.

"That's a bunch of crap, and you know it," I fumed.

I didn't know exactly what I was more angry at -- the slight to the Marine Corps by Scott's parents or the pain they had caused Scott. Somewhere along the line, I'd decided it was my job to keep Scott from ever being hurt. I didn't know where that was coming from, but I had a sneaking suspicion it was another symptom of me loving him.

"I know that. I just wish I could get them to see it."

"If they can't respect the Corps and you being a part of it, then fuck 'em! They don't deserve to have you for a son."

Scott looked at me with shock written all over his face.

"But they're my *family*. What would I do without them?"

"Buddy, look around you. You've got a whole family of marines now, taking your back and caring about you."

What I wanted to say was that he had *me* loving and taking care of him, but there was no way I could get those words to come out of my mouth -- ever.



“Yeah, that’s true. It’s just hard for me. I always wanted my parents to respect me. Like they do my older brother. He’s in medical school. They brag about him all the time. I’ll bet they never mention me at all or the fact that I’m in the Marine Corps.”

“How does your brother feel about all this?”

“He’s completely oblivious. He’s the *good son*, so he gets all the attention. It’s always kind of been that way, and as long as it is, he’s happy.”

“That’s really fucked up, buddy.”

“Yeah, I know,” he said sadly, hanging his head.

I don’t know where the courage came from, or maybe it was just that I wasn’t really thinking about what I was doing. Scott looking so sad just completely fucked with my brain. Before I realized it, I’d reached out and put my hand on his shoulder.

Now, it wasn’t like we hadn’t ever touched each other before. But that had been in the acceptable way for guys to touch -- a light punch in the arm or chest, wrestling on the ground doing hand-to-hand combat training -- that kind of stuff. But this wasn’t that kind of touch. This was full-on *emotional* touching. This was giving my touch and my warmth in an attempt to let Scott know that I was there for him and that I cared about his pain. Of course, the moment I touched him and felt the warmth of his body through his fatigues, my balls drew up and my cock started to bone. It was everything I could do to get it to calm the fuck down.

What Scott did at that moment didn’t help at all. He looked at me, and the warmth in his blue eyes just about totaled me. I couldn’t talk; I couldn’t move. I couldn’t do anything but sit there, my hand on his shoulder, and stare into his eyes. I’d heard about how some animals snare their prey by hypnotizing them with their eyes. I thought for a moment that was what Scott was doing to me, but then I realized that those eyes were not the eyes of a predator, but of a lover.

*But that can't be, I thought to myself. Scott is straight. He couldn't be feeling for me what I feel for him.*

But the more I stared into his eyes, the more convinced I became that something was going on here between us. It was at that moment that some guys at the other end of the barracks playing poker started yelling. Evidently somebody had won a big pot by bluffing, and they were all carrying on about it. I took my hand off Scott's shoulder, and we both sort of smiled at each other in embarrassment.

The next day was graduation. We went through the ceremony and then were gifted with our very first three-day pass. We didn't have to be back to base until eight in the morning on Monday. We didn't have to walk into Jacksonville, North Carolina, however. There were buses that took us into town. Not like city buses, but like old school buses painted dark blue with USMC in yellow-gold letters on the side -- the Corp's colors.

The driver of the bus was nice enough to let Scott and me off at the motel. We each carried a duffle bag with a change of uniform, some civilian clothes, underwear, and our toiletry articles, but not much else. Scott had made the reservation, so he checked us in and gave the woman behind the desk his debit card.

The woman told Scott that he was lucky to have gotten a reservation at all. It seemed the motel was completely full -- either from families who were there for the graduation or newly minted marines wanting to spend the weekend off base. I noticed that there was a sign on the wall behind the woman saying you had to be twenty-one years old to rent a room. Scott and I were both nineteen. In fact there was only one guy in our whole platoon who was over twenty-one. The rest of the recruits had been between seventeen and twenty.

I experienced, for the first time, something that was to become common over the next two years until I turned twenty-one. When you are wearing the uniform of the USMC, nobody questions your age for anything. I guess people just kind of figure if you're old enough to be a marine, you're old enough. Period.

Our room was on the second floor. When Scott opened the door, we were in for a shock. What was supposed to be two queen-sized beds turned out to be one king-sized bed. I stared at it not knowing what to say. Finally Scott spoke.

“I’ll go and try to get us another room.”

“I don’t think you’ll have much luck. You heard what the lady at the desk said. They’re full up for the weekend.”

“You don’t mind?”

“Well, it sure looks big enough for both of us. Shit! It looks way bigger than my rack back at the base -- and a whole lot more comfortable.”

What I was thinking inside, of course, was: *What in the fuck am I gonna do? I was worried about sleeping in another bed in the same room. Now I’m gonna be sleeping in the same fucking bed with him! How the fuck am I gonna keep myself away from him? I sure as fuck ain’t getting any sleep this weekend.*

“Well, if you don’t mind, I don’t. What do you say we change into civvies and explore the town? Supposedly there’s a Marine Corps Museum of North Carolina about a mile from here.”

We spent the next few hours going to the museum, which was all about marines who had been born or raised in North Carolina, and about Parris Island, and the building of Camp Lejeune.

We went to the Red Lobster for dinner. I have to admit, I’d never had lobster before, but I loved it. Dipped in melted butter, it was about the most delicious thing I’d ever had. Scott had to teach me how to use the lobster cracker and to get the meat out of the claws. The first time I cracked into one of the claws and the hot juice shot out onto the bib, I understood why Scott had told me not to object when the waitress tried to put it around my neck.

We got back to the room, having filled our bellies with enough chow to last us for a while. We stripped down to our briefs and lay down on the bed on top of the covers. Scott grabbed the remote and started clicking through the channels. Through the Pay-Per-View they offered some movies, but no porn -- after all, this was the Bible Belt. But we found a perfect movie for two young marines -- *Diehard with a Vengeance*, with Bruce Willis.

Even though it had been a hit movie sequel, neither Scott nor I had seen it. As I sat there on the bed next to Scott watching it, I realized why I hadn't seen it. In my senior year, my friends stopped going to the movies together. They started seeing movies only when they were on dates with their girlfriends, and *this* was not the type of film you took a date to. It was a *guy flick*, and face it, guys took girls to *chick flicks* on dates in order to get them in the mood so the guy could get laid. I hated going to movies by myself, and I wasn't interested in dating much, so I ended up seeing almost no movies that year.

When the movie was over, Scott turned off the TV, and we pulled down the covers and got into the bed. I was wrong, however, about not being able to sleep. The bed was as comfortable as I thought it would be, and after twelve weeks of the stress and physical exertion of boot camp, I'd no more than said good night to Scott, he turned out the light, and I was asleep.

But not for long.

### Chapter Three

I awoke to the feeling of warmth and to a scent that was evidently making my cock so hard it was leaking into my briefs. When I opened my eyes, what I saw had my heart racing a mile a minute. It was Scott, asleep, but pressed up against me, his head resting on my shoulder and against my chest as my arms wrapped themselves around him and held him close to me. I didn't know what the fuck to do. I was afraid to move and wake him up. I sure as fuck didn't want him to see us like this -- me holding him, and him curled up to my body while I had the hard-on from hell.

I lay there for what seemed like forever though it was probably no more than five minutes. I had finally made up my mind to just leave well enough alone and claim that whatever happened had happened while I was asleep, and I couldn't be held responsible for that, could I? I nearly got back to sleep when I heard Scott's muffled voice from under my chin.

"Are you angry about this? I can hear your heart racing, so I figured you finally woke up."

"No. I'm not angry. I just don't know how it happened."

"I'm not exactly sure, either, but I do know I must have moved close to you, because I felt you reach out and pull me toward you, and then you wrapped your arms around me. I thought at first you were awake when you did it, but you weren't."

"Uhh...are *you* angry?"

"No."

"I'm sorry, Scott. I didn't mean for something like this to happen. I should have known if we were in the same bed, it would."

"Hey, Mike! I'm not angry. I'm actually quite happy."

"You are?"

"Mike...I'm afraid to say this, but I've got to." Scott pulled back in my arms so he was looking at me, our eyes looking deeply into each other's. "At first, I just wanted to be friends with you -- buddies, just like the Corps wanted us to be. But I can't help it; my feelings went a lot farther than that. Believe it or not, I came into the Corps to try and make a man of myself and stop wanting to be with other guys. I think that was probably pretty stupid on my part."

"How far did they go?"

"What? How far did what go?"

"Your feelings. You said your feelings went a lot farther."

"I guess all the way. As far as they can go. I fell in love with you, Mike. I'm sorry."

I could hear the guilt and the sorrow in his voice, and I couldn't speak. All I could do was pull him closer to me in my arms and feel what it felt like for the first time in my life to hold somebody I *wanted* to hold. To feel the muscular body of another male in my arms.

At first, Scott tried to struggle out of my embrace, but when I tightened my arms around him, he stopped struggling and just lay there, his head still resting against my chest. Oh, fuck! It was the most wonderful feeling I'd ever had in my life! Scott resting against me

while I held him in my arms. I was sure that life just couldn't get any better than this. It felt so good, I was finally able to find my voice.

"I have been in love with you almost since the day we met. I know that now. I didn't realize it until a few weeks ago, though."

"What happened? What made you know?"

Oh, fuck! What the fuck was I going to tell him? *I fell in love with you with my nose shoved in your sweaty jock.* Oh, yeah. Right.

"Mike, what was it?" he asked again.

"Uhh...you gotta promise me that you won't hate me. I know this is gonna sound like I'm a perv, and maybe I am, but...well..."

I just couldn't go on. I was too embarrassed.

"It's okay. I won't hate you or think you're a *perv*. Now tell me what it was."

"I got into your locker...uhh...and I took your jock out of your laundry, and...uhh...I was huffing it when I got this aching in my chest and in my gut. The same fuckin' ache that my friends in high school said they got when they realized that they were in love with their girlfriends."

The last of this I said all in a rush, trying to get it out before I lost my nerve completely. When I stopped, I expected Scott to say something, but there was only silence. Then I felt him shaking in my arms. I wondered for a second what was happening, and then I realized that he was laughing. He was fucking laughing! Here I was, dying of embarrassment, and he was fucking laughing! I started to say something, but all that came out of my mouth was like a growl that you would hear from an animal.

"I'm sorry, Mike! I truly am," Scott hurriedly said. "I'm not laughing at you. I'm laughing at the fact that I went into your locker and was huffing your jock a month after we got here."

I was speechless for a moment. I had no idea that anybody else had my little *perv* for scents. Especially the ones from a guy's crotch.

"Uhh...you like to huff my jock, just like I like to huff yours?"

"Yeah. I do. I love the scent of you. I think that's why I moved close to you in my sleep. I never expected you to reach out and take me in your arms, though."

"I didn't, either. It had to be because I was asleep. I'd never have had the guts to do it if I was awake."

"So now what?"

"What do you mean?"

"Now that we know that we love each other, don't you want to do something about it?"

"Uhh...like what?"

There was silence again for a few moments before Scott finally asked, "Mike, have you ever been with another guy?"

"No. Only in my fantasies and in my dreams."

"What did you fantasize about?"

"Well...uhh...I fantasized about guys suckin' my cock and me fuckin' them in the ass."

"Anything else?"

"I did think about smelling and tasting them all over."

"Does that mean you might consider sucking cock yourself?"

"Only if it's yours."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I always fantasized about guys I saw in the locker room, but ever since I met you, I haven't dreamed about anyone else. I dreamed about you practically every fuckin' night and woke up with a hard-on every morning. Scott, I don't know how to say this. I



know most guys are horn-dogs and will fuck anything with a hole, but I'm not like that. I love you, and I only want to be with you."

Again there was silence for a few moments, and then I heard Scott sniffing. I leaned down and rubbed my cheek against his, and it was wet. He was fuckin' *crying*. What the fuck had I done?

"I'm sorry! If you don't want that we don't have to --"

I didn't get any more out, because Scott cut me off in the most incredible way possible. He pressed his mouth against mine and kissed me. I could feel his tongue moving into my mouth, and I could feel mine rubbing against it, and I almost fainted from the pleasure of it. Now, I'd kissed girls before. If you want to fuck 'em, you have to. But I never really wanted to. Kissing Scott was a totally different experience. His kiss was strong and eager, but soft in a very masculine way. I can't explain it completely; I just knew that I loved it from the get-go.

Scott pulled his mouth from mine finally and looked deep into my eyes.

"I want to suck your cock. I want you to fuck my ass. And I don't want anyone else -- ever."

At that point, I was grinning so hard, I didn't even notice the fuckin' water coming out of my own eyes.

## Chapter Four

Having Scott in my arms was wonderful, but I finally figured out that I needed to do something with him. I rolled him over and got on top of him. I didn't know how he'd deal with that, but it seemed to be the right thing to do because he wrapped his arms around my neck and sighed deeply.

"Oh, yeah. Make love to me."

"Uhh...I'm going to, but I want to take my time. I've never done this before."

"Never?"

"Well...I've fucked girls, but that was not making love. For the first time I get to do the things I've always wanted to do with a guy. And a guy I really want to do them with."

"You go ahead and take all the time you want. I've wanted you to touch me for so long that anything you do will be sure to get me off."

I don't know why, but Scott's words caused me to have a complete change of plan about what I was going to do. They suddenly made me realize that what this was all about was not just me getting me getting off, but me getting him off too. That was certainly different than all those times with girls. If they got off, I sure didn't know it, nor did I care. It was all about me. About me getting off. About me shooting a load. But with Scott, I was

concerned about whether he got off or not. And not just because he was a guy and getting off is very important to guys (in fact, most of us feel like, what's the use of putting out all that energy fucking if you're not going to get off?), but it was important to me, because for once in my life, it wasn't just all about my pleasure but his too.

I moved my face down to his neck, and the scent of his skin set me off. I loved his scent, but now I got to not only know what he smelled like, but what he tasted like as well. I locked my lips to his skin, and as my mouth sucked gently on it, my tongue bathed it, tasting his saltiness and the taste that is his alone. I was careful, however. I didn't want to leave any *evidence* of what we'd been up to. There would be hell to pay back at the barracks if Scott came back with hickeys on his neck. Oh, the guys would think he'd been out with some girl, but then Scott would have to make up a story to cover that, and I would as well, since it was known that we went on leave together. Instead, I contented myself with sucking gently and doing far more tasting than biting.

I licked my way down Scott's neck until I encountered his smooth chest. I loved the smoothness of his skin as my tongue glided over it. Unlike my hairy chest, Scott had nothing but a broad expanse of hairless skin. As I licked across it, I discovered one of his tiny nipples. Now, I knew that girls' nipples were sensitive, but I had no idea guys' were. Having never played with my own or had somebody touch them, I had no way of knowing. But the reaction I got from Scott when my tongue brushed across his nipples told me that his were quite sensitive -- perhaps even more sensitive than the few girls' tits I had licked.

I locked my mouth around his small nipple and began to once again gently suck. Scott moaned in delight, and I could feel his nipple erect in my mouth like a small, hard rubber eraser from the end of a pencil. The more I sucked and licked at it, the more Scott groaned. He began to move under me, trembling as if what I was doing to him was more than he could stand. But when I took my teeth and gently began to bite and nibble on his tits, Scott made as if to rise vertically, bending in the middle. All he managed to do, however, was to shove his chest harder against my face and his tit harder into my mouth.

I finally let up on my torture of his nipples and moved down further on his body, dragging my tongue across his abdomen and into his trimmed blond bush. At least I thought it was trimmed at the time. The hairs were sparse and short, but soft -- almost like the hair on a baby's head. Not dark, thick, and wiry like mine. Later I was to learn that he didn't trim them -- they were like that naturally. I buried my nose in them and deeply inhaled the scent of male crotch -- Scott's crotch. The sweaty, musky odor was totally enthralling to me. I could have stayed like that forever, just breathing in the scent of him, but there was something getting in the way. Something hard and substantial. That fleshy tube that I had seen for twelve weeks and wanted so badly to touch, to lick, to suck.

Scott's cock wasn't as long as mine, but I thought it fit him perfectly proportionally. More importantly, I thought it would fit my mouth perfectly -- something my own size probably wouldn't. I rose up to engulf the head with my mouth, and it was then that I tasted the sweet/salty essence of his precum. I loved it immediately. I lay there, my head resting on his stomach, sucking gently on the head of his cock and licking across the head, gathering all of the sticky sweetness his cock produced.

Scott, however, quickly told me he couldn't take any more of what I was doing as it would make him get off much too quickly. I forsook his cock and decided to continue in the same direction I had been going. I licked down his cock until I reached his balls. His balls were as hairless as mine were furred. But they gave off a wonderful odor and taste nonetheless. I moved around until I was lying on the bed between Scott's legs and licking at his sac and sucking it into my mouth to cleanse the sweat and musk from it. I kept following the line that bisected his sac until I reached that part of a male's body called the *'tain't*, because it *'tain't balls and 'tain't ass*, but that patch of skin between them.

Scott groaned as I licked there and raised his legs, pulling them back almost to his chest so I had a clear shot at what I was licking. However, in doing so, he also gave me a clear view of the furrow of his ass and his pulsing hole. Of course, it also gave me complete access to the scent as well. One whiff of his butt and I realized that no matter how much I'd gotten off on

my own scent while I jacked off, it was nothing in comparison to how turned on I was to Scott's. I ran my nose up his hairless furrow, breathing in as deeply as I could the scent of his butt. But I didn't stop there.

I guess I got carried away, because before I knew it, I had closed my eyes, my tongue came out, and I was tasting his ass as I continued to move up and down inside his trench. I was afraid that Scott would think I was some kind of pervert and would stop me, but he didn't do anything but call out to me to keep going.

"Yeah! That's it. Eat my butt -- eat my fuckin' ass! Shove your tongue all the way up it!"

Now that's something I hadn't thought of doing, but if that's what Scott wanted, I was more than happy to comply. I wasn't exactly sure how to do it, however. Finally I decided to lock my mouth around his little puckered hole and began to suck on it at the same time that my tongue poked at it, trying to gain entry. Gradually, the hole loosened and opened to my probing tongue, and before I knew it, I was licking up inside of Scott. It wasn't nasty like I'd have expected it to be. Instead there was a dark muskiness which excited me to no end. I licked and sucked until I thought I was going to eat the asshole right out of him. Instead I was stopped by hearing something I longed to hear from Scott.

"Fuck me! God! Shove your cock in me! I need it *sooo* bad."

This last was moaned out in such desperate need, there was no way I could refuse him -- not that I wanted to. I wanted to fuck this hole more than anything I'd ever wanted in my whole life. However, I didn't know there was any difference between fucking pussy and fucking ass -- other than one I'd done to girls, and this was a guy's ass. I just figured that his hole was wet from my eating his butt, and I spit on my cock and moved up until my cock was pressed against his hole and tried to shove it in.

Scott screamed out in pain, and his eyes flew open.

"WAIT! That ain't pussy, Mike. You need lube on your cock, and I need it on my hole, otherwise you'll tear me apart with that big dick."

I looked at him sheepishly. I didn't want to cause him pain. In fact, I was so distressed by what I'd done that my cock went immediately soft.

"Go over and get my duffle and bring it here," Scott said, and I hurried off the bed and grabbed his duffle as quickly as I could.

I handed it to him, and he dug around down in it until he pulled out this tube, which at first I thought was toothpaste, but it turned out to be lubricant. He squeezed some out on his hand and grabbed my cock and began lubing me up. My cock had gone soft, but with the touch of his hand, I was instantly steel-hard once more. I looked at his hand stroking my cock and then into his face, where I was met with two bright eyes and a smile. I smiled back and took the tube out of his hand. I squeezed some onto my fingers, reached down, and began spreading it on his ass. I slipped one, and then two fingers into his hole, lubing him up and feeling the tightness of him. It certainly *wasn't* pussy. I'd never been in a hole that tight.

Scott must have decided that I was lubed enough, because he lay back and pulled his legs back to his chest again. This time, I approached his hole with a lot less *bravura* and a lot more sensitivity. I put the head of my cock against his asshole and slowly pushed. The head of my cock slowly began to slide into his hole. He groaned once, and I went to stop, but he grabbed my hips and pulled me forward so I was soon buried deep in his hole. His hands stopped my hips and held me like that.

His hole surrounded my cock. I'd never felt anything so tight and wet and hot in my life. The muscles inside his ass held my cock like it was in a wet, velvet vise. As I rested there, however, I gradually felt his muscles relaxing, and the grip around my dick became less and less. Finally, Scott began to pull me forward slightly and then push me back, making clear it was time for me to start fucking.

At first I was afraid to hurt him, but he knew what he could take and what he couldn't. Then I was afraid that I would come all too quickly. After all, it had been weeks since I'd gotten off, and fucking Scott's tight hole was the single most exciting thing I'd ever done

sexually -- not to mention still having the taste of his ass on my tongue and lips, which was driving me into a sexual frenzy.

Luckily, Scott was as horny as I was, and before I knew it, I was slamming my cock in and out of his ass, and his ass was tightening around my cock again as his dick shot stream after stream of cum onto his chest and abs. That's all it took to throw me over the edge, and I was shoving my cock deep in his hole and shooting volley after volley of my cum as far up his ass as I could. I shot so hard I wouldn't have been surprised to see my load come gushing out of Scott's mouth.

Having shot my load, I moved Scott's legs so they were around my waist and then collapsed on top of him. He wrapped his arms around me and began licking and kissing at my neck and shoulder while I lay there, a sweating, panting heap on top of him. I wanted to just pass out from the effort, but at the same time, I didn't want to miss a second of being like this with Scott. Now I knew what fucking a guy was like, and I knew what being in love could do to you. I was totally and completely happy for the first time I could ever remember in my life. This was even better than my tenth birthday, when I got that red ten-speed bike I had prayed for most of a year for.

Gradually, I got my strength back and rose off Scott and moved over to where I was laying beside him. He moved over so his back was pressed against me, and I was spooned to the back of him. I held him to me and buried my face in the bristle of hair on his head and licked at his neck and ears. He wiggled his butt back into my crotch, and damned if my cock didn't go hard as a rock in seconds. Scott rubbed against it and then moved back so his ass perched right on top of the head of my cock, and it began to sink back into his tight, hot, wet hole. I groaned, but my hips thrust forward, and we were off to the races once again.

I shoved my randy pecker in Scott's butt at least four times that night and actually passed out asleep with it still buried in him. I know that, because I came awake with his butt still impaled on my cock and me fucking him in my sleep. I can tell you there is no better way in this world to wake up than with your cock buried in the ass of the guy you love.

Not that I got to wake up that way too often.



## Chapter Five

It was the most glorious weekend I can ever remember. Except for food, Scott and I never left the motel room. In fact, except for necessary body functions, we hardly left the bed. Speaking of which, while most people probably wouldn't think of taking a piss as a loving and intimate act, I discovered the next morning it could be. After fucking Scott's butt first thing in the morning, like almost all guys, I had to take a wicked piss. I pulled my cock out of Scott's ass, leaned down and gave him a kiss, got off the bed, and headed to the bathroom.

I was standing there, my cock in my left hand, and I'd just started, getting that terrific feeling (second only to orgasm in intensity) of relief as my piss flowed into the toilet, when I felt an arm slip around my waist, and there was Scott, his cock in his right hand, and his flow of piss streaming out, joining mine. While it was weird, standing there pissing with another guy -- something I'd not only never done, but never even thought of doing -- I put my right arm around Scott's shoulders, and he leaned his head over against me.

As I finished pissing and shook the final drops off my cock, I leaned over and kissed the top of his head. There were times, when with his shortness, I could almost think of Scott as a little brother and not just a guy I was totally and completely in love with. I guess there was

some kind of *brotherly* love involved in what I felt for him. After all, he was my *brother* according to the Corps. To the Corps, all marines were brothers. Of course, I knew that the Corps didn't approve of the way I loved Scott, or the fact that I'd just got done fucking the hell out of my *brother* marine, either.

When we finished pissing, we went back to bed, and Scott eagerly curled up into my arms, but my mind was still on something else.

"Scott, what are we gonna do?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. What are we gonna do about *us*? What happens when we get back to base? How are we gonna hide how we feel about each other?"

"I guess the same way we've been doing. If nobody's noticed how we felt about each other up to now, I don't think they're going to."

"I don't know. I was more careful before, because I didn't want you findin' out how I felt, but now that you know, I'm afraid I'll let my guard down, and the rest of the guys will know. Then they'd throw us both the fuck out."

"That's not going to happen. The thing I'm worried about is what the fuck is going to happen now that we're marines. We won't necessarily get posted together. We don't know where the fuck we'll be assigned."

"I know that, but it's more than likely we will. After all, they have to plug holes of guys who are getting out. I think we'll have the chance to serve together."

"I sure hope so."

Little did I know how prescient that observation of mine was. We were both assigned to the Third Platoon, Company C of the Sixth Marine Regiment, of the Twenty-sixth Marine Expeditionary Unit based at Camp Pendleton on Onslow Beach.

Scott and I settled into the daily routine familiar to any jarhead. PT, drills, rifle training and practice, military training classes, personal combat training classes -- all the things that

go into keeping a group of warriors ready for combat. We were told always in our training that combat readiness was critical because situations requiring it could happen at any time. I don't think any of us truly believed that then.

We had our regular three-day passes which allowed us to spend time together, making love and just being together. Those weekends were what I lived for. We were so much in love with each other, but we couldn't show that on base. We did find places on base -- out in the woods and behind the rifle range -- where we could kiss and hold each other and have sex, usually standing up. It wasn't the most comfortable way, but it made a really good cocksucker out of me.

Finally after about six months, we went on our first *float*. That's what we called deployments. We went traveling on Navy ships with our so-called *sister* service -- the United States Navy. Now there is no sibling rivalry in any family on earth that equals the sibling rivalry between these two so-called sister services. For an example of the rivalry that the members of the Corps feels with the Navy (and the Army) you need to look no further than *The Marines' Hymn* whose last stanza ends with:

*If the ARMY and the NAVY ever gaze on Heaven's scenes,*

*They will find the streets are guarded by UNITED STATES MARINES.*

The float was an opportunity we all looked forward to, getting to travel beyond the borders of the United States and visit foreign countries. Because we were on the east coast, our float was going to be visiting South America and Europe. First, however, we were going to stop for "Fleet Week" at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale. As was explained to us, Fleet Week has a large number of Navy ships in the port with the chance for civilians to take tours of them. It also meant the city welcomed the members of the ships' crews, including the marines onboard.

I'd like to say Scott and I did some sightseeing on our shore leave of forty-eight hours, but I'd be lying. The only sight we saw was each other naked inside a motel room. Well, we

did take a walk along the beach one night, but that only lasted about an hour, and then we were back in the motel room and back at it.

Fort Lauderdale does hold one distinction, however. It's where I lost my virginity. I was curious about what Scott loved about me fucking him. I also started to think it was unfair for me to be fucking Scott's ass all the time, but never offering him mine. But what really got me interested was the last three-day pass we'd had back at Camp Lejeune.

It was Sunday afternoon, and I was worn out. Between Saturday night and Sunday morning, I'd fucked Scott at least six times. We'd fallen asleep, and I had evidently rolled over on my stomach. I awoke to the strangest sensation I'd ever had. It took me a couple of minutes to figure out what it was. Something was sliding up and down my butt and rubbing against my hole. I have to admit, it was a thoroughly great feeling. I reached back with my hand to see what was going at my butt like that and encountered the bristly stubble of a marine high-and-tight haircut. It was Scott's head, and I realized what was going on. He was eating my butt, and I was loving every minute of it.

He kept it up for quite a while, and I found myself relaxing my hole. Then Scott started slowly shoving his index finger up me. At first, I was scared and tightened down with my muscles, so of course, it hurt.

"Relax, babe. Let me make you feel good. It won't hurt if you just open up," Scott crooned at me.

I did as he said, and again let my hole relax. I felt him put something cool on it and realized he was using lube. He slowly tried again, and this time his finger just glided inside me on a coating of lube. He was right. It did feel good. Scott slowly moved his finger in and out of me as I lay there, gently moaning at the feelings he was causing. My dick was harder than steel and leaking precum onto the sheets, I was so turned on by what he was doing.

"Roll over onto your side."

I languidly did as he ordered. I looked into his eyes, and he winked at me.

“Now, I’m gonna show you something new.”

I couldn’t imagine what more new he could come up with, but I was eager to find out. Scott maneuvered himself to where he was facing my cock and took it into his mouth. He then slid his other hand behind me and began to slowly tease my hole with his finger again. The more he sucked and the closer I got to blowing my load, the further his finger explored, until I felt it hit something deep inside me, and I almost immediately began emptying my load of cum down Scott’s eagerly sucking throat.

When I’d finally stopped moaning from the intense orgasm, I looked down at Scott who was grinning up at me.

“Fuck! What the fuck was that you were playin’ with?” I asked.

“That was your prostate. The same thing your cock rubs against when you fuck me and make me come.”

“Wow! You’ve got one really talented finger there.”

“Uhh...fingers. Plural.”

“How many fuckin’ fingers did you have up me?” I asked hesitantly.

“Just two, but your hole opened up so easily, I thought I was going to have to go for three.”

From that moment on, the thought of taking Scott’s cock up my butt was with me all the time. It was a scary thought, but an exciting one as well. If his cock felt as good as his fingers, I knew I was in for an incredible ride. The only problem was that Scott may have been way shorter than me, but he wasn’t short in the cock department. In fact, I only had about an inch or two on him, and he was just as thick as me.

That first night of shore leave, we just grabbed some burgers and went back to our motel room. I was more than eager to get this show on the road. I could see, however, that Scott was more quiet than usual, and I wondered what was wrong. As we lay there after

eating, his head on my chest and my arm around him, I thought maybe it had something to do with him fucking me.

“We don’t have to do this if you don’t want to,” I said.

He looked up at me startled.

“No, it’s not that. It’s just that I’ve never done this before.”

“You’ve never fucked somebody?”

“No, I’ve never fucked somebody who’s never been fucked. That’s way different.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right, but does it make a difference that I really want you to?”

“Well, yeah, it does. But that also puts a lot of pressure on me to make this good for you.”

“You made the finger thing really good for me. I think if we take things slow, you can make your cock even better.”

At this, he smiled at me and nodded. If there is one thing that will make a marine rise to any occasion it’s a challenge. Of course, a challenge issued by another marine -- especially one you’re in love with -- holds special significance.

## Chapter Six

There was something I didn't stop to think about when I decided I wanted Scott to fuck me. It meant submitting to him, letting him take the lead, letting him be *top*. It was an experience I'd never had. Always when we made love, it was me making love to him. It was me giving him pleasure as I took my own. When Scott climbed on top of me, I almost said, *No, that's the wrong way*. But it wasn't. Scott had me on my back and was making all the moves that I did with him, and before I knew it, I was making all those wonderful noises he always made.

As Scott moved his mouth from my lips to my ears, from my neck to my shoulder, from my chest to my tits, and then back again, I just lay there and experienced what it was like to be made love to. At first I had this stupid thought that Scott might think of me as a woman. Some woman! Over six feet tall and hairy. But just as I never thought of him as anything but a man -- and a very masculine one at that -- I knew Scott was not thinking of me in any way feminine. Even when he told me to pull my legs back until my knees were almost touching my chest, and I was lying there in the most vulnerable position I can ever remember being in outside of a wrestling meet.

Scott told me quite clearly that he was not going to so much as touch my cock, and I wasn't to, either. He explained the hornier I was, the more intense my desire to be fucked would be, and the easier it would go. I already wanted it. Little did I know how much I would *crave* it by the time Scott was done.

As I lay there, Scott got down below my ass on the bed, lying on his stomach, his face buried in the cleft of my butt. I had eaten his butt so many times like this, but this was the first time he had ever done it to me in this position. I couldn't believe how much easier my hole opened for him, nor could I express how it felt to have his wet, rough tongue going in and out of me like a small cock, tongue-fucking my hole. I could feel the tingles from the outside of my hole all the way up inside me.

Scott slid off the bed and grabbed the bottle of lube. I noticed he'd brought a big bottle, and I was grateful. I knew that if this was going to happen, it was going to take a shitload of the stuff to get me ready. When he got back on the bed, Scott sat cross-legged in front of my butt. He grinned at me and began lubing up my trench and my hole. Slowly, gently, he worked his fingers over and around, up and down. It was like he was putting me into a trance as I relaxed to the rhythm with which he was massaging the muscles around my hole, every so often dipping just the tip of a finger inside at first.

Gradually he began working his finger deeper and deeper, the whole time keeping me well lubed. After a while, I could feel him introducing a second finger, and I concentrated on trying to relax.

"If you push out with your muscles, it will make them relax," Scott murmured to me.

Well, he certainly was the expert -- given that he took my cock so easily. I could just slowly slide it right up inside him now, without any stopping or adjusting. It was like his ass was a glove made for my cock. I wanted my ass to be the same for him. I wanted to love this, because I wanted him to be able to do this as often as I fucked him. That was part of what I had been thinking about -- the equality between us. Both of us guys, both of us marines,



both of us in love with the other. This is what was needed, in my mind, to finally seal the bond between us.

Doing as he told me, I found the muscles of my hole slowly relaxing, and what had been somewhat big -- having two of Scott's fingers in me -- now felt rather small with how loose my butt had become. Scott told me to push out again, and this time, he slowly slid three fingers inside of me. Now, besides working them in and out of me, he began to also spread them apart, making my muscles loosen even further.

I don't know how long Scott worked on me. I know that by the time he was ready to fuck me, I was ready to scream how badly I wanted to be fucked. I also had four of his fingers inside of me. I joked with him that if he could get the thumb in as well, he could probably shove his whole fist up my ass. He totally shocked me by telling me there were guys who liked someone to do exactly that -- have the guy shove his fist, and sometimes even part of his arm, up their ass. I knew Scott would never lie to me, but this really just about blew my mind.

Scott pulled his fingers from my butt, added more lube to my hole, and then did something totally unexpected. He moved around to where he was lying next to me and started lubing up his cock. I looked at him in confusion.

"What the fuck are you doing? I thought you were going to fuck me?"

"Actually, you're going to fuck yourself."

"What?"

"You're going to fuck yourself. It's the easiest way the first time. What you do is you get up and squat down over my cock. That way, you control the speed it goes in you and the depth. Now you'll see what doing all those squat-thrusts in PT are good for."

He was grinning as he said this.

I quickly got the idea and realized he was exactly right. Allowing me to control the speed and depth of penetration would take away any fear I might have and minimize the chance of any pain.

As Scott held his cock straight up, I squatted over it and put the head of it to my hole. Scott reminded me to push down with my muscles as I took his cockhead inside me. I pushed down and then moved down and felt his cock pushing at my opening. I let gravity help and relaxed my leg muscles so that my ass sat down harder on his cock. There was a moment of strong pressure, and then all of a sudden, I felt the head of his cock pop into my ass. There was no pain, just a momentary surprise as I felt the fullness of his cock inside me for the first time.

“Oh, fuck! You’re still so tight. Is it hurting?”

“No. It just feels full.”

“If you play with your cock while you move down it, it will help make it feel good.”

I took his advice and began stroking my cock as I slowly began sliding down his pole. I had to stop a couple of times and allow myself to relax my muscles further, but I finally reached a point where it was like my ass just opened completely up. The muscles relaxed, the hole loosened, and the next thing I knew, I was sitting on Scott’s pubes with his whole cock buried inside me.

At this point, Scott reached out and grabbed my hips. He held me down against him and began to move his own hips under me, like his cock was a spoon and my asshole was a bowl, and he was stirring something. This really loosened me up, and when Scott stopped and let go of my hips, I began riding up and down on his dick like I’d been doing it every fucking day of my life.

I began to ride his dick faster and faster, dropping down harder each time. I was starting to pant, and my precum was splattering out over Scott’s abs and I knew that I was going to come soon. Scott, however, had other ideas. He grabbed my hips again and stopped

me. I'm sure the look I gave him at that point was like a kid who just had his all-day sucker stolen.

"That's enough. I want to fuck you now. Really fuck you. How do you want it?"

"Really hard!"

"No, I mean what position? On your back? On your stomach? What?"

There was only one answer to this question. I wanted to watch him fuck me. I wanted to see him come in my ass.

"On my back."

Scott chuckled at this.

"I figured. That's the way I like it best. I love to watch you while you fuck me."

I lay back on the bed and pulled my legs back again, but Scott took them and put them over his muscular shoulders, and then, bending forward and pushing my knees closer to my chest, he began to do exactly what I'd said I wanted. He began to pound my hole, really hard. It was the most incredible feeling I'd ever had in my life. If I'd known that getting fucked felt this good, I would have been getting fucked a long time before. I looked up and could see Scott's face over me. The determination I could read on it told me he was trying his damndest to make this the fuck of my life -- and he was succeeding admirably. Marines are very physical, can-do kinds of guys and fucking was a way to truly show that off.

The harder Scott pounded me, the harder I pulled on my dick, until I knew I couldn't hold back any longer. I was going to come and come *big time!*

"Scott! Fuck me! God! Fuck my ass! I'm gonna come! Slam me, baby!"

I screamed his name as my load shot out of my cock. The first blasts went into my own face and then all over my chest and abs. My chest hair was matted with semen as I heard Scott cry out my name and could feel his cock slam into my butt and then tremble as he fed my hungry ass load after load of his cum deep inside me. The thought went through my head

that now I had part of him inside me just as he had part of me inside him. We were now truly a part of each other.

Scott sort of collapsed over me, and I wrapped my arms around him as he continued to tremble in the aftershocks of orgasm. I felt something I'd never felt before. I couldn't exactly put words to the feeling, however. It was like, finally, this was how it was supposed to be. I had allowed myself to be vulnerable to Scott, and he had taken me to a place you can only reach through that vulnerability.

Finally, Scott's cock softened and was pushed out of my ass. I have to admit, I was somewhat disappointed by that. I had grown used to the feeling of having him inside me, and I liked it. He moved over, and we curled up together, breathing in each other's sweaty, after-sex scent.

"So how was it? Was it what you thought it would be?"

"It was way better than I imagined. I fuckin' loved it. I hope you'll do it again."

"Well, sure, but not for a few days. You don't realize it, but you're going to be sore. I pounded you pretty hard for the first time. I know you liked it, but afterward, you're going to really feel it. I've got you some ointment to take away any pain and soreness, though."

"Do I make you sore?" I had never even thought about that.

"No. But I'm used to it. The more we do this, the more you'll get used to it too. I just hope you don't love it so much that you want to stop fucking me."

"No way, babe! I love your butt way too much. I love fucking you, but now it's like we're truly equal. You can have my butt any time you want it."

"Just like you know you can have mine."

We kissed deeply and then slowly drifted off to sleep.

And, yes, I was sore the next day, and the ointment Scott brought really helped.

## Chapter Seven

After the float, Scott and I were eligible for one month's leave. I knew what I needed to do was to go home and see my mom, but I didn't want to do anything without Scott.

"I need to go home and see my mother. I know she wants me to come home, but I don't want to go anywhere without you."

"Would your mom be okay with me coming home with you?"

"Sure she would."

"Uhh...Mike, does she know?"

I hesitated.

"She doesn't, does she?"

"No. I never told her, but I didn't know for sure then. And I wasn't going to tell her about us over the phone or in a letter."

"Are you going to tell her?"

"Yes, of course, I am. I'm not ashamed of you -- of us. I want her to know. Not that I think I'll have to tell her. Knowing her, she'll take one look at us and figure it out on her own."

Scott looked at me curiously.

“What do you mean?”

“She’s always been able to just look at me and almost know what I’m thinking and feeling. What about your family?”

“I’m still considered a loser for being in the Corps. I don’t want to go home. And I sure don’t want to take you with me. I don’t think my family would be at all understanding about us.”

“So I guess I call my mom, and we’ll spend our leave there. You sure you don’t mind? We can go someplace else.”

“Your mom wants to see you, and I can tell you want to see her. If she doesn’t mind me being there, then it’s perfect. I don’t give a damn where we go, as long as it’s together.”

“That’s exactly how I feel.”

That night, I called home to Mom and asked her if it was okay if Scott and I came for the month long leave. She immediately said yes but I could tell she was curious about why I was bringing Scott. I guess she figured she’d ask when we were there.

We flew home, and Mom met us at the airport. I wondered how she got the time off from work, but didn’t ask. When we came out of the security area, Mom was waiting for us. I saw the look she gave me, which showed a level of surprise. I don’t think she realized how much of a man her little boy had become since joining the Marine Corps. She also glanced curiously at Scott. But quickly, the glance became settled as if she’d made her decision about my lover.

I hugged Mom and then introduced her to Scott. Scott tried to shake hands with her, but she grabbed him and hugged him instead. He looked at me over her shoulder as she hugged him with a look on his face like *What’s going on? Maybe she DOES know?*

We went down to the lower level to get our duffle bags from the baggage carousel and then headed out of the airport. As Mom drove, I pointed out places to Scott that were

important to me growing up. We went past my high school, and I saw kids hanging out on the front steps just like I used to do. I realized that, though it seemed like forever since I'd been one of them, it had only been a little over a year. It was a time, however, of incredible growth and discovery. I had truly become a man, a man of honor and respect as a member of the United States Marine Corps., but more than that, I had found something I never expected to find in the Corps -- true love.

When we got home, Mom had dinner already waiting. She knew that, just like when I lived at home, food was always a priority for me. She made my favorite too -- chili with rice and cornbread. Not that the chow in the Marine Corps isn't good, because it is, but there is nothing like a home-cooked meal. Especially a home-cooked meal made by your mom. It was after eating, however, when we were sitting around talking, the subject of sleeping arrangements came up.

"The couch is a sleeper so, Scott, you should be comfortable on it," Mom said.

Scott looked at me with a stricken look on his face.

"Uhh...that's okay, Mom. Scott can share my bed."

"But, honey, your bed is only a full-size. I don't think you both would be very comfortable in it..."

Mom's voice trailed off as she looked from me to Scott and then back to me again.

"But...then again...maybe you both would be just fine in your bed."

I looked at Scott, and he looked like he wanted to crawl under the table. I was feeling somewhat the same myself. There was a very heavy silence, until Mom finally spoke up.

"Is there something you want to tell me, honey?"

No, there was nothing I *wanted* to tell her, but I knew I had to. After all, I'd promised Scott I would. I didn't want him thinking I was ashamed of him or of our love for each other. It was just that Mom and I had never really discussed sex before. I guess she didn't feel like

she could talk to me the way a father would, so the whole discussion about sex just never happened.

“Look, Mom, I don’t know anyway to say this but straight out. Scott and I are in love with each other. We’ve been together since the day we graduated boot camp. I just hope that doesn’t make me a disappointment to you.”

Mom reached over and put her hand on my arm.

“Michael, I could never be disappointed in you for loving someone.”

She then looked over at Scott and stage-whispered to me.

“Besides, from what I can see, he’s really quite lovely.”

I don’t know which one of us, Scott or me, blushed a brighter shade of red at Mom’s remark. Mom chuckled at our reaction, but then she became serious again.

“Michael, did you know this before you went to the Corps?”

“No. Not really. I’d never been with another guy until Scott. I’d had fantasies, but I didn’t think I’d end up falling in love with another guy. That was the strange thing, at first I thought I was just sexually attracted to him, but I was too scared to do anything about it -- plus there was no way we could during boot camp. By the time we were able to be alone together, I was already in love with him. It wasn’t just about sex anymore -- if it ever really had been.”

I was talking to Mom, but I was mostly looking at Scott. None of these things had I really explained to him before. When I finished he was smiling so beautifully at me it took my breath away.

“I think I knew from the first day that I was falling in love with you. I was just so scared because I didn’t think you could deal with that. I was shocked when you kept getting closer and closer to me and didn’t seem to be bothered at all by how intense things were getting between us.”



"I think that was more the fact that I didn't really realize how intense they were getting until almost the end. What freaked me out was going on leave together that first time. I didn't think I could be alone with you without something happening."

At this, both Scott and I started laughing.

"I take it that something did happen?" Mom asked.

"Uhh...yeah, I guess you could say that."

I knew I was blushing again, because I could feel my face heating up.

"Don't worry, darling. I'm not asking for details. I just am so fascinated to hear the two of you talk about how you feel about each other. Men don't usually do that. I do, however, get the feeling that you two are telling each other things you haven't ever discussed before."

"No, not really, Mrs. Collins. We've never been in the situation where we could talk to somebody else about us. We wouldn't dare tell anyone in the Corps. They'd throw us out."

"Yes, I was wondering about that. How are you two going to keep anyone from knowing about you?"

"Actually, it hasn't been that difficult up 'til now," I said.

"That's right, Mrs. Collins. The Corps promotes brotherhood among all marines and close friendships between buddies in the Corps are the rule rather than the exception."

"Well, that makes sense then," Mom answered. "Scott, I want you to do me a favor, however."

"What's that?"

"Do you think you could find something else to call me than Mrs. Collins? If you were Michael's wife, I'd ask you to call me 'Mom.' I know you're not his wife, but do you think you could call me 'Mom' anyway?"

"I don't have any problem with that at all...uhh...Mom."

I suddenly had this pang hit my guts like a fucking grenade going off, and my eyes were swimming in tears. Just something about my mom asking Scott to call her *Mom* made me realize more than ever how lucky I was to have her for a mom and how much she loved me. I know it must have been quite a shock, having me show up with another guy and tell her I'm in love with him, but she just opened up her heart and made room for him too. There was no way I could ever in my life do anything to completely show my gratitude to her for that.

Little did I know how much more she was going to do for me in my life.

## Chapter Eight

Scott and I continued to serve together for five more years, until our first enlistment was up. We didn't even think twice about reenlisting for another tour of duty. We wanted to spend our life in the Corps, and the signing bonuses included allowing us to continue to serve together through the next enlistment period. That guarantee was the most important to us, of course. The only thing that probably would get us to leave the Corps was the possibility of not being together.

What kept blowing me away, almost on a daily basis, was how much deeper I was falling in love with Scott. Just his scent when he stood near me sent a bolt of feeling straight to my heart and guts. I didn't think it was possible to love someone more than I had when we first got together. I had to learn that love deepens with time, it takes up more and more of your heart and mind, until I felt like if I was disintegrated, every atom of my being would have the word *Scott* engraved on it.

We both had achieved noncommissioned officer rank, me as a sergeant and Scott as a corporal. Together we were responsible for a platoon of men, some of whom were newly made marines out of boot camp. It was weird to realize they looked at Scott and me the way we had looked at our noncoms when we first were fresh out of boot camp. Now we were the

*older* marines they looked up to. Scott and I talked about it sometimes, and we agreed it made us truly want to be the best examples of a marine we could be for these guys.

There is a saying about the marines that we are always the “First To Fight.” While we stress in our training that marines need to be ready at a moment’s notice to defend America’s freedom, I guess each generation of marines figures they won’t get a chance to put all of our training into action. For us, that belief changed on the morning of 11 September, 2001.

The outrage of a sneak attack on our own soil had an effect on all marines and all members of the military that I don’t think civilians could truly understand. There was a rage beyond all proportion. It came from not only what had been done to this country, but also from the shame and guilt a lot of the military felt for somehow allowing it to happen. Now that isn’t really rational, but when you’re hit with something like the destruction of the World Trade Center and the damaging of the Pentagon, rational isn’t the first reaction.

By sheer coincidence, we were due to go out on another float later that same month. The plan of this float was to go to Spain and then on to participate in the Operation Bright Star exercises in Egypt. The thing was, we didn’t want to go play war *games* -- we wanted to go to war! We just didn’t know, at that point, against whom. Or where.

When the Twenty-sixth Marine Expeditionary Unit deployed aboard the USS Bataan, the USS Shreveport, and the USS Whidbey Island on 20 September, 2001, we were one group of truly pissed-off sailors and marines. Even the excitement of going to sea did little to curb a lot of the anger. It was exciting to be out on the sea, especially for newly minted marines who had been raised all their lives inland and had never seen the sea or had a chance to be on it before, but there was also the feeling that we were going off at a time when our country needed us.

The three ships containing the entire Twenty-sixth MEU docked in Barcelona, Spain. I’d like to tell you about all the fascinating and wonderful sightseeing that we did in Barcelona, but we were only given forty-eight hours of shore leave, and about forty-six of

those hours Scott and I spent in a room on the fifteenth floor of the Hilton Diagonal Mar Barcelona, fucking each other's brains out.

Then it was back to the ship and on to Egypt and Operation Bright Star. There we joined troops from Egypt, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Jordan, and Kuwait for what we were told was the largest war game ever held in history. I could believe it. It was really strange being out in the desert, even though we had trained under those conditions. The desert we had trained in was in the States and was nothing like the desert in Egypt. But we quickly came up to speed.

We spent most of our time riding around the desert in an Amphibious Assault Vehicle -- called an AAV -- which carries a crew of three and twenty-five marines. We had no idea what we were training for or what lay ahead. There were rumors going through the marines in our unit that we were either going to go home or would be fighting in Iraq again.

Actually, that's almost what happened. Instead of Iraq, however, we were sent to Afghanistan where we ended up part of the longest amphibious landing in the history of warfare. We were landed in AAVs on the coast of Pakistan and rode overland to Kandahar, Afghanistan, where the marines took control of the airport and began minesweeping operations on 14 December, 2001.

Four days later, Scott and I and our platoon of men helped to reopen the American Embassy in Kabul and raised the Stars and Stripes over it for the first time since 1989. I remember we spent that night in the reopened embassy. Scott and I found something incredibly precious -- a room with a lock on the door. The room also had couches in it, so we were able to pull the cushions onto the floor and make a bed for ourselves.

We couldn't get out of our packs, weapons, and uniforms fast enough. We'd found a shower that still operated but with cold water. We didn't mind. It was the first chance we'd had to shower in over four days, since we'd taken over Kandahar airport. We shared the shower stall, washing each other and delighting in each other's hard, combat-trained bodies.

We didn't have towels, so we just ran back to the room we'd found and rolled up in curtains from the windows together on the couch cushions.

We immediately were lost in each other, kissing any part of each other's body we could reach until we'd turned ourselves around to where we were engaged in an eager sixty-nine. Over our years together, I had lost any concerns I'd had about what a *man* did or didn't do. I figured out that as a man, I was free to suck cock, get my ass fucked, or do any damned fucking thing I wanted with Scott.

I had, with Scott's excellent training, become, in his words, "one damned fine cocksucker." I had truly learned to love the taste of his cum and relished anytime I got to taste it. I'd also gotten Scott to repeat his masterful performance of fucking my tail many times since that first time on our first float in Fort Lauderdale. I still, however, enjoyed fucking him the best. To feel him in my arms with his hard body under mine, to look into his eyes as he lost it and came all over both of us, made me happier than anything in my life. He told me once that he also loved watching me as I lost it and came up inside him.

In the midst of our mutual pleasuring of each other, Scott suddenly pulled away, and I wondered what was wrong. He looked at me grinning.

"I've got a surprise," was all he said as he got up and went over to his pack.

He dug down inside and brought out a very small tube. Damned if he hadn't brought lube with him on patrol! I couldn't believe it.

"I just figured we might have some need of this."

"You're damned fuckin' right we do! Get your butt over here, and let me fill it up, marine."

Scott laughed again as he slid back under the heavy curtains with me again. I rolled him over onto his stomach and very carefully and lovingly began to lube his ass. God! How I loved his hole. I never grew tired of caressing it, stroking it, playing with it. I loved to lube it

for him, before I shoved my cock deep up inside it. I knew my ministrations felt good to him because he was moaning and purring like a cat in heat by the time I was ready to fuck him.

I greased up my cock and then slid over him, letting my hardness glide between his cheeks until it ran up against his hole. He groaned and pushed back, slowly opening up and taking my cock inside him. It was so hot and tight in his hole that I was afraid that I would come far too soon. When he had pushed himself all the way back on my cock, I held onto his shoulders and stopped him from moving any more. I lay down on top of him and just rested, my cock buried in his butt, feeling the muscles of his ass clenching and unclenching around me as he became used to my cock once again.

There were always days or weeks in between our being somewhere where we were alone long enough to fuck, so it was always like the first time when I was able to shove my cock in him once again. His butt was always tight, and it was almost like hosing a virgin, until the fourth or fifth time I slid my cock into him in an afternoon or night that he loosened up.

As his butt gradually opened up, I began to slowly thrust in and out of his hole. I loved the wet, hot feeling and the hard muscularity of his body under mine. This position of him flat on his stomach and me fucking him from behind was not a position we did very often. I have to admit, while I loved looking into his eyes while I made love to him, this position had its appeal as well. It felt almost *animalistic* in its intensity -- like I was a large predator impregnating my mate in a mating ritual as old as time. And from the growls and groans that were coming out of both of us, it was a fantasy that sounded and felt quite real, until we both came grunting and moaning out each other's names.

I screwed his ass for him three more times that night, each time in a different position until the final time when I did it while gazing deep into his eyes through the entire fuck. That time, when we came, our groans were into each other mouths as we kissed passionately. I tried with my body to tell him how much I loved him, because I just didn't have the words to do it.

We spent three days in Kabul, guarding the embassy. Those three days, Scott and I fucked every chance we got -- meaning any time we could slip away from our squad. Not that we didn't spend a lot of time with the guys, but there just wasn't a whole hell of a lot to do. The grunts were lost in their almost continual spades game, and there was really nothing to guard and nobody to guard it from. Finally some guys from the state department showed up to put the embassy back in business. Some of the marines stayed with them to guard them, but the rest of us were pulled out.

We thought we'd go back to the airport. Instead we were being sent into the mountains of Afghanistan to search out Mullah Mohammed Omar, the second in command of Al-Qaeda, who was hiding out there. We were going off to kill or capture him, whichever came first.



## Chapter Nine

"I think he might finally be conscious. Go and get Major Kent."

"Yes, sir."

They were male voices, and -- thank God! -- they were speaking American English, but I didn't recognize them. I couldn't see anything, because I couldn't seem to open my eyes. Something was covering them. I couldn't smell anything, because there was something over my nose and mouth. I knew I was somewhere civilized, because I could feel air conditioned coolness surrounding me. I tried to move my arms, but I couldn't. My legs, either. I became scared. *Where was I; where was Scott? What's happened to me? Am I paralyzed? Oh, fuck! Was my dick blown off?*

The fear rose up in me, and I tried to speak, but instead, I could feel the blackness overcoming me again.

I don't know how long I was out, but when I came to again, I could open my eyes -- for all the good it did me -- I was seeing double. I could barely see that I was in a hospital room. I also saw why I couldn't move my arms when I tried -- they were strapped down with restraints. I could see tubes running into me, and I could hear the sound of beeping from some kind of electronic monitor that was above and behind me, outside my line of vision.

There was a window, and I looked out at fir trees and blue sky. I was no longer in Afghanistan, I knew that. But I had no idea where I was or how I got there. The last thing I could remember was being part of a patrol going up into the mountains, searching for...for something...but I couldn't remember what.

I heard movement near me, and I turned to see a Navy corpsman coming toward me.

"So, marine, you're finally awake. We were hoping you'd come back to us. Are you in any pain?"

I tried to speak, but only a croak came out of my mouth. My head hurt, but I was more thirsty than anything. The corpsman seemed to realize this and poured some water from a pitcher into a glass with a straw. He then held the straw to my lips so I could drink.

"Just drink it slow, marine. Don't try to take too much at once."

The water was cool and soothing to my throat. I did as he said and drank it slowly, even though I wanted to gulp it down. Once the glass was empty, he pulled it away, and I looked up into his gray eyes. They were calm, but I could tell he was watching me for any signs of distress. I tried once again to speak.

"Wha...where...am...I?"

I finally got this out with great difficulty.

"You're in Landstuhl, Germany. You're at the best medical facility the military has outside the States. You've been here for a month. We thought you'd come out of your coma about a week ago, but then you went right back under. I think you're going to stay with us this time. Let me go and get your doctor."

I didn't want him to go, but I had no chance to stop him. Before he'd even finished the sentence, he'd turned and moved out of the room. He was back quickly, though, with a young officer in a white coat, but with bronze oak leaf clusters on his shirt collar -- a major in either the Army or Marine Corps or a lieutenant-commander in the Navy.

"I'm Major Kent, marine. Do you remember your name?"

“Mmm...Mike...Collins...sir.”

“That’s okay, Mike, you don’t have to call me ‘sir.’ We don’t stand on much in the way of military ceremony around here. How are you feeling? Do you have any pain?”

“My...head...and...my...side...hurts...and I see...two of you...sir.”

Major Kent chuckled.

“Hard to get marines to drop the ‘sir.’ Had it drummed into you in boot camp, right? Well, we’ll get you something for the pain, but I should tell you, you had a head trauma. That’s where your brain is bounced around inside your skull and gets pretty bruised and scrambled for a while. Your memory will come back eventually, but slowly. Don’t sweat it if you can’t remember something. Okay?”

“Yes...sir.”

“Besides that, you took some shrapnel from what appears to have been an RPG in the side, and it collapsed your lung. We were able to remove it and reinflate your lung, and you seem to have been doing fine since. That wound is healing quite nicely. I’ll have Cpl. Padgett here bring you something for pain”

“Sir...what...about...my...eyes?”

I was afraid that I would stay this way the rest of my life.

“I’ll have the ophthalmologist have a look at you, but I would say, from past experience with other guys with wounds like yours, it should be only a few days.”

“Thank...you...sir.”

With that, the major went out chuckling, I guess over my insistence on calling him “sir.” But he was right. It had been drilled into our heads in boot camp and ever since. You called an officer “sir,” even if you didn’t think he deserved the honor -- the rank did deserve it.

The Navy corpsman went out with the major, but was soon back with a syringe in his hand which he slid into the junctions of one of the tubes going into me. Almost immediately,

I felt a warmth and a lethargy moving through my body. I later found out it was two milligrams of Dilaudid, a powerful morphine-based narcotic. It certainly did get rid of the pain.

I looked at Padgett and raised my arms as far as I could in the restraints. He got the idea immediately and began to remove them. He pulled back the covers, and that's when I found out there were restraints on my legs as well. At least I knew I hadn't lost them or the ability to move them. There was still one thing I was worried most about, but that could wait until I was alone.

"Sorry about that. We had to put you in them while you were out, because you'd become restless at times and try to pull the IVs out. Now that you're awake again, you won't be doing that, now will you?"

I tried to shake my head no, but the pain hit again when I did.

"Try not to move your head very much. It's going to hurt for a while, and there's only so much pain killer I can give you in a day."

I looked up at him in gratitude. I noticed he was about the same age as Scott and me. That's when I remembered -- Scott!

"Whe-where's...Scott?"

"I don't know who that is, marine, one of your buddies? Someone from your unit?"

"Yeah...Scott...Calder."

"I'll try to find out for you."

He left me alone then. I kept thinking about Scott. How much I wished he was with me, not in the hospital, but on base. I needed to see him, needed to talk to him. Most of all needed to touch him and to smell his scent again. I needed to reconnect to the person I loved most in the world.

As soon as Padgett left my room, I reached down below the hospital gown and felt for my cock and balls. My first thought had been that they'd been blown off by the RPG. I

hoped nobody heard the sigh of relief I let go of when I found my fucking cock and balls in one piece.

Grunts will joke about being wounded or dying in combat. Warriors have very black humor when it comes to dying. We realize that the best way to deal with death is to figure you're already dead and get on with the mission. Do what marines do. But there is one thing that every grunt fears more than anything -- more than dying, more than losing their legs or arms. That is the fear of losing your dick. Grunts, at times, may joke about it, but it's always about somebody else losing their cock -- never them. I did notice, however, a tube running out of it. It was my first experience with a catheter, and depending how far that thing went up -- I was glad I was in a coma when they put it in, and I wondered how it was going to feel when they took it out.

The next couple of days were intense ones. They had me out of bed and trying to walk and were constantly having me down in the Radiology Department for X-rays, CT scans, MRI scans, and basically, every kind of scan they could do of my head and body. In the beginning they had me on a liquid diet which consisted mainly of broth (either chicken or beef) and Jell-O. Basically, nothing fit for a man to eat. The second night, they finally brought me real food -- or, at least, what passed for real food in a hospital. Anyway, it was warm, and it was something to chew, finally.

During those days, all I could think about was Scott. I asked over and over again where he was, how he was. Was he still in Afghanistan? Had he been rotated back to Camp Lejeune? But nobody knew anything about him. I sank deeper and deeper into loneliness and what must have been depression. They told me there was mail for me, but since I still couldn't see except everything double, I couldn't read it, and fearing that one or more of the letters might be from Scott, I didn't dare have someone read them to me because of what Scott might say in them.

The third morning, Padgett came in and said I had a special visitor. I thought it was Scott! I got so excited, and then the door opened, and there was -- my mom. I know she must

have seen the disappointment in my eyes at first. It's not that I wasn't glad to see her, it's just that I wanted to see Scott. But I figured he was back with the rest of our platoon in Afghanistan.

Mom came over to the bed and hugged me. She pulled back, and I could see the troubled look in her eyes when she looked at me, but I just figured it was because I was injured. She pulled up a chair beside the bed and took one of my hands in both of hers.

"How are you, Mike? I came as soon as they told me you'd finally woken up. They didn't want me to come before, because they said it wouldn't do any good."

"No. It wouldn't have, Mom. I don't remember anything before a couple of days ago."

"Nothing?"

"No. The last thing I remember is going up in the mountains in Afghanistan. We were looking for something, but I can't remember what."

"So you don't know what happened to you?"

"The doctor said we got hit with an RPG. I don't remember it, but that's what he said happened. I've asked about Scott, but nobody seems to know anything about him. I gotta get a message to him and tell him I'm all right."

I could tell immediately from the look on Mom's face I'd said something disturbing, but I didn't know what. She started to speak, her voice very soft and low. Just the way she talked to me when I was a little boy and something bad was about to happen -- like I was gonna get a shot at the doctor's office or something.

"Mike, I thought they would have told you, but maybe they don't know. Your commander e-mailed me about the attack. Mike, I don't know how to tell you this, but Scott was killed in the attack, honey."

I just stared at her for a few moments. I couldn't quite get my mind around what she was telling me, and then it hit -- just like another RPG hitting me, only this one right in my guts. I cried out, so loudly that Padgett came running, but by that time, Mom had me in her

arms, while I was sobbing loudly. I don't think I'd ever cried like that, not since I'd been a little boy. I heard Mom's voice and Padgett's, but I couldn't understand what they said. Padgett went away and came back with another syringe, which he stuck in my IV, and I went out like a light.

When I came to, I was still groggy. Mom was sitting across the room in a comfortable chair, reading. Somehow, she seemed to feel that I was awake, because she looked up, put down her book, and came over to the bed. She took my hand in hers again. She seemed to be waiting for me to say something. I couldn't think of anything to say, however. Scott was dead. As far as I was concerned there was nothing left for me to live for. I would love to go back to Afghanistan and find the bastard who'd killed him and slice him up into little pieces with my K-Bar, but that wouldn't change anything. If I could find a way to kill myself, that was, I figured, the only way that the pain was going to go away.

"Are you okay, honey?"

Mom's voice pulled me out of my dark thoughts. No, I wasn't okay. I would never be okay again, but I wasn't about to say that. I wasn't about to worry her or let her know what I was thinking of doing.

"Yeah, Mom. I'm okay."

"I'm so sorry, honey. I didn't want to be the one to have to tell you."

"That's okay. I guess it's better to hear it from you."

I was amazed at what a good actor I was. I never knew that about myself. Not that I'd ever really had need for it before.

"I'm really tired, and I've got some pain. Could you ask somebody to bring me my shot?"

"Sure, darling. I'll go, and then I'll see you tomorrow."

"Yeah, that's fine."

Another of the nurses, a woman, came in a few minutes later and gave me a shot of Dilaudid, and I just sank back into oblivion.



## Chapter Ten

I had some very rough days at Landstuhl. I raged at Scott's death and nearly tore up the room I was in one day. I was completely uncooperative with almost everything to the point where they had to give me shots to keep me tractable. Finally I started to think about what I could do about Scott's death.

I'm not exactly sure where the idea came from or when it lodged in my head, but I decided that the best way I could kill myself was to go back into combat. That would certainly be the easiest way. More importantly, I could do it so I looked like I was trying to do something heroic and failed. That way no one would ever know I was actually committing suicide.

On the other hand, the Marine Corps decided they wanted me shipped back stateside to continue my recuperation. I was determined to get back into a unit and get myself back to the fighting. However, by this time, the Marine Corps had pulled out of Afghanistan and returned home, and the Army and Air Force were flushing out the last of the Taliban. There were plenty of rumors that we were going to go to war with Iraq against Saddam Hussein and his army, but it was still rumor.

I was transferred back to the hospital on base at Camp Lejeune for continued treatment until I was certified as medically sound and returned to my regiment and my battalion. An enlisted marine's experience and identity in the Corps is defined by his infantry battalion. It is like his *clan* or *tribe*. When you go to war, you go as a battalion within a regiment, and you come home that way -- just as a clan or tribe would. I was part of the Three/Six, that's the Third Battalion of the Sixth Marine Regiment.

Every day was agony for me. I missed Scott so much. I even got to the point that I started talking to him when I was alone, somehow sure that wherever he was, he could hear me. I told him over and over how much I loved him and how I was going to join him as soon as I could get back to combat. Then we'd be together again forever. It's the only thing that kept me going, knowing that I was going to be joining him. Just not soon enough to keep the pain away.

When I arrived at the headquarters for the Three/Six, however, I wasn't assigned back to Bravo Company where I had served with Scott, but to Alpha Company as the new platoon sergeant. It seems that, along with a Purple Heart I'd received for my injuries, I'd also been made a staff sergeant, which made me eligible to move up from commanding a squad -- about twelve to fourteen marines -- to a platoon which is comprised of about forty marines and under the direct command of either a first or second lieutenant.

I knew that the success or failure of a platoon had everything to do with the relationship between the platoon sergeant and the lieutenant, so I was concerned to meet First Lieutenant Paul Richards, who I had been assigned to and would have to work with. I reported to his office in the barracks, and when told to enter, walked to the front of his desk, stood at attention, saluted, and stated:

"Sir! Staff Sergeant Michael Collins reporting as ordered, sir!"

The lieutenant rose and looked at me.

"At ease, Sergeant."

“Thank you, sir.”

“So you’re the legendary Mike Collins, huh?”

I looked at the lieutenant in shock.

“Sir, I’m not sure what you mean.”

“I’ve heard nothing but amazing stories from the guys over in Bravo Company since it became known that you were coming here. I take it you still don’t have your memory back from Afghanistan?”

“Sir. No, sir.”

“Well, Sgt. Collins, then you don’t remember dragging one of your men to safety while killing the muj who dropped the RPG on your platoon?” (“muj” was slang among marines for mujahideen or any insurgent or terrorist.)

“Uhh...no...no, sir. I killed the fucker?”

“Yes, Sergeant, you did. Too bad you lost your squad corporal. What was his name?”

“Scott...sir...Scott Calder...sir.”

I could still barely get his name out without going to pieces, but I sucked it up. This was my new lieutenant I was standing in front of. I couldn’t let him see how fucking torn up I was inside. He’d never let me command his troops, and I’d never make it back to combat to complete what had become my only *mission*. To join Scott in the heroic and noble death of a marine combat infantryman.

“I take it you were close friends, Mike?”

Lt. Richards’s voice was softer now. Not the *command voice* you learn in Marine Corps training, but the deep, rich, male baritone that wrapped itself around me and calmed me with a surprising warmth that I felt as much as heard. I should mention that he was a *big* male. He was even taller and bigger than me. There weren’t a lot of men that I felt small around, but Lt. Paul Richards was one of them. It was also obvious that he believed in keeping his body at peak operational efficiency -- meaning he was buffed as hell. I had lost a

lot of my size in the hospital, but I knew it was my first priority to gain it back. When dealing with marines in any kind of command position, physical strength and obvious physical development is always an asset. It bothered me, though, that I'd noticed how big he was and how buffed his body was. I had not looked at another male in any way approaching physical interest since I woke up in Landstuhl.

"Since boot camp, sir."

"I'm sorry, Mike. I haven't lost anyone I'm close to -- especially not in combat. What do you say we talk about how we're going to train this platoon so we don't lose any more?"

"Sir. Yes, sir."

We sat down, and for the rest of the morning, did just that. Then we went and had chow and continued our discussion through the meal and on into the afternoon. The time sped by for me. I didn't remember ever spending this much time with an officer, but it wasn't like he was *over* me. We established a working rapport that day which was so much like working with Scott in the days when we were leading a squad, that it was unreal. Being with Lt. Richards was the first time I could remember since Scott died that I wasn't focused on the pain I felt. In fact, I felt guilty because I completely forgot about Scott's death while we were together.

It was only at Retreat, that time in the day on a base when the flags are taken down to a special bugle call, with all of the company in formation, that I got to see my platoon for the first time, and they got a look at me. I already knew some of them, because having been a part of the Three/Six ever since I came from Infantry School after boot camp, it was common to meet the other members of the *clan* somewhere along the line. But I wasn't close to them like I had been to the guys in Bravo Company where I'd been for most of my time in the Corps.

One of the greatest things about being back among my Marine brothers was I no longer had time to think about the loss of Scott. Oh, it still burned inside me when I was alone in

my bunk at night, but through all my waking hours, there was just too much going on, too many guys I had to deal with, too many problems that happen in any *human* organization which somehow always ended up in front of the platoon sergeant.

One of my main duties was to keep things from ending up in front of the lieutenant unless they were really serious. Normal fuckups were handled by the squad leaders. Serious fuckups and they would bring the miscreant grunt to me. I would chew his ass out good and devise some type of punishment duty -- usually something having to do with strenuous physical labor or something nasty and disgusting that nobody wanted to do like cleaning the fire latrines. Eventually, no matter how ordinary the infraction, I told Lt. Richards about it and the punishment I meted out. This was so he would always know what was going on and what I was doing basically in his name. I was a force to be reckoned with by the men, but I also represented all of the command structure -- the most visible part of which was Lt. Richards.

If there was something really serious, some infraction of the rules of Order, then that would have to go to Lt. Richards. Paul had such an incredible relationship with the men that most of them would rather die than go in front of him for some infraction -- not because of the punishment, but because they so hated disappointing him. He was like a well-loved father or older brother to them, and they wanted nothing more than to please him. What shocked me, however, was when I heard from a couple of my squad leaders that the grunts felt the same way about me!

Lt. Richards and I settled into an easy relationship almost of equals. He relied on me; I relied on him. I'd not dealt that closely with an officer before, having spent most of my time with the grunts who were part of the squad I was a part of or leading. Lt. Richards was Annapolis-trained, which meant he had chosen the Corps as his service. Each cadet at Annapolis is given that choice, but most opt for the Navy. I believe it is the true warriors and the best of the best who opt for the Marine Corps. Getting to know Lt. Richards made me believe that.

Things went on, day after day, week after week, month after month. I missed Scott, and I still felt the only place my life was going was to join him in death. I knew there would never be another guy like him, and I didn't want to spend my life alone -- especially without him. That, to me, was no life at all.

The only time I seemed to be able to forget my pain, if only for a little while, was when I was with Lt. Richards. There was something about him -- I couldn't say exactly what -- maybe his quiet strength and masculinity or the fact that he always seemed to know the right thing to do or say when dealing with the hundreds of nit-picking, shitty things he had to deal with on a daily basis. There is a reason that marines prefer combat -- less bullshit. Besides, according to a very popular bumper sticker among marines, "*To err is human. To forgive is divine. Neither is Marine Corps policy.*"

I don't know when they started, but somewhere along the line I started having sex dreams. I guess I should have expected it, considering I hadn't had sex since the embassy in Kabul with Scott. It was hard to believe that it had been *last year!* At any rate, the dreams started out being about me making love to Scott, but then they would change. I was all of a sudden being made love to by this dark-haired guy who was way bigger than me. I would look up into his face, and it would be Lt. Richards.

The first time this happened, I woke up practically screaming out his name, my cock harder than I could remember it being, and then breaking down sobbing. I was grateful that as a platoon sergeant, I had my own room in the barracks, so nobody knew I woke up crying. I hoped the dreams would go away, but they kept on -- at least a few nights a week. I couldn't understand what the fuck Lt. Richards was doing in them. After all, I'd never been attracted to anyone bigger than me.

When November came, Lt. Richards went off to be with his family. I told Mom that, because of him being gone, I had to stay with the men. It wasn't the truth, but I just couldn't explain to her why I didn't want to leave. I knew it was only because I had my men around me that I made it through each day. Lt. Richards being gone, however, made it more difficult

to get through than I would have imagined. I finally had to admit to myself that I missed him. Missed his deep voice that filled me with warmth, just the way Scott's used to do. Missed the feeling of being with him -- the only time I was free of the pain of missing Scott. None of it made sense to me, but I couldn't figure it out.

Thanksgiving that year was a simple affair. I stayed on base and spent it with my men who didn't go home. I was even able to joke around with them and put on a totally false front of being okay. I don't know how I did it. I could barely choke down any of the turkey and shit because I couldn't eat with the pain eating me up inside. But I sat there, grinning like an idiot so they wouldn't know, couldn't tell, that their platoon sergeant was a total fake, because that's what I felt like.

I then went to my room as soon as I could get away from them, pleading I was tired and just wanted to sleep after that good meal. I closed and locked my door, took off my clothes and looked longingly at my sidearm. I could end the pain. I could just stick the barrel in my mouth, pull the trigger, and it would all go away, and I'd be with Scott. Then I thought about my mom and what that would do to her. Strangely enough, I thought about Lt. Richards more. My committing suicide could really put a kink in his career. He would be held accountable for not knowing I was in trouble and doing something about it.

I had another more temporary solution stuck in my footlocker. A bottle of Jack Daniels. I pulled it out and got quietly drunk until I passed out. Every time I started to sober up, and the pain would come back, I'd start drinking again. I did a lot of crying and talking to Scott.

*Please forgive me, I still love you. There just isn't a good way for me to die right now. No matter how much I want to be with you, I don't want to hurt my mom. I know you loved her, and you wouldn't want to hurt her, either. I don't want to hurt Lt. Richards, either. He's such a good guy. God! You would love him.*

I stopped there in shock.

*Love Lt. Richards? Is that how I feel about him? No! I can't love him. I love Scott. I swore I'd only love him, forever.*

Luckily I was downing more booze while I had this conversation in my head, because I soon wasn't able to think about anything and passed out again. I stayed drunk most of that weekend, rarely coming out of my room, and avoiding everyone and everything.

Of course, my squad leaders and grunts knew something was wrong, but they kept their distance and didn't seem to judge me. I guess they figured something really bad was eating at me, and I wasn't taking it out on them, so better to let sleeping dogs -- or drunk platoon sergeants -- sleep it off.

When the Christmas season came around, however, I was having a lot of trouble. It was almost a year since Scott had been killed. I didn't know what the fuck I was going to do, but I didn't want to spend the holiday drunk in my room again. It hadn't helped anything at all. I only ended up having a horrible hangover, while the pain I was feeling over Scott was still there. I didn't want to go home to Mom, either. I knew if I did, she'd figure out how much pain I was still in and try to help. There was no help. Death was the only help, and I still couldn't bring myself to do that except in combat where no one would know.

That's when something so surprising happened, something I didn't see coming.

Lt. Richards called me into his office in early December.

"Yes, sir?"

"Sit down, Mike," he said, indicating a chair in front of his desk. "What are you doing for Christmas?"

The question took me aback.

"Uhh...I don't know, sir. Why?"

"Mike, I heard about Thanksgiving. I think I know why you did what you did, but I don't want you holed up alone for Christmas. I know it's going to be harder, because that's when your *friend* died."



All of a sudden, my ears perked up. There was something about the way he said *friend* that made me think he had some idea of what Scott and I were to each other -- and he didn't seem bothered by it at all.

"Mike, I've got a cabin up in Telluride. I'm going up there for the holidays. Why don't you come with me?"

I looked at him evenly. I was afraid to react. What he was suggesting was, for the most part, illegal, or at least, completely frowned upon by the Corps. It was fraternization among the ranks. He was an officer, I was enlisted. We weren't supposed to spend time together. We weren't supposed to become friends. He should be spending time with one of his brother officers.

It didn't matter that we were about the same age and that I respected the hell out of him and really wanted to spend time with him. It was wrong. He was risking his career for this. It just didn't make any sense to me. I knew that what I should have done is turn him down, and I meant to, I truly did, but when I opened my mouth, what came out was...

"I'd really like that."

"Well, great! I'll book flights for both of us. I'd suggest you pack winter gear, because it gets cold in the mountains."

"Just one thing, sir."

"What's that, Mike?"

"Where the fuck is Telluride, sir?"

"Colorado, Mike. Colorado."

## Chapter Eleven

Throughout those next two weeks, I must have cursed myself up and down at least a couple hundred times. I kept telling myself there was no possible way I could spend time alone with Lt. Richards. How fucking long did I think it would take being around him in a small mountain cabin twenty-four/seven before he figured out I was queer? And worse -- queer for *him*.

That was the worst part, admitting to myself that I desired him. I felt like such *scum*. I had loved Scott more than anyone on earth, more than myself. If I could have given my life for his, I would have done it in a heartbeat. Now here I was, Scott not even dead a year, and I was attracted to another man. But I couldn't help myself. It was the way that I felt when I was around Lt. Richards -- like no matter what happened, he'd take care of it. That I didn't have to be *in charge* all the time. That I could lay some of the burden of command at his feet, and he would handle it for me.

If you haven't been in the position of command, you may not understand what that means to someone. I had the responsibility for forty marines twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I lived with them, I ate with them, I slept in the same barracks with them. Their problems became mine. If they fucked up, it was up to me to straighten them out. If

their girlfriend dumped them, it was me that they usually came to talk to, sometimes to cry to, rather than their buddies.

Having someone for me to go to, to talk to -- maybe not to cry to -- was the only real good that the *chain of command* did for me. I could talk about what was happening and share with somebody else who cared. That is worth more than anything, because it made sure I didn't keep all that shit bottled up inside. I'd seen guys who did, and I saw it destroy them. I had enough bottled up inside me with my grief over Scott's death without keeping anything else.

I kept telling myself that I had to go to him and get out of it somehow. Tell him that my mom was sick or something and that I had to go home. Tell him anything, but avoid at all costs getting on a plane and flying off to some mountain cabin with him for almost two fucking weeks.

I called home one evening after chow and talked to Mom. I wasn't going to tell her about what was going on and about me going off to Colorado with Lt. Richards, but somehow she knew something was up. I guess no matter how old you get, your mother knows you better than almost anybody.

"Mike, what's happening there? I know something's bothering you. I can hear it in your voice."

"I've got myself into something that I don't know if I can handle or not. You know I've told you about Lt. Richards."

"You've told me a great deal about Lt. Richards. You talk about him all the time."

"Uhh...yeah...well...he wants me to spend Christmas with him at a cabin he's got in Colorado."

"I'll miss you, but that sounds wonderful. What's the problem? Are you worried about me?"

“No, Mom. I’m worried about the fact that shit like that isn’t supposed to happen between enlisted personnel and officers. I told him I’d go, but I’ve been thinking about ways to get out of it.”

“If there was trouble, who would be more affected? You or him?”

“Well...he would. He’s an officer. It always goes harder on them.”

“Then I would say that Lt. Richards has already made his decision about what he’s willing to risk. I don’t think you have to be worried about that.”

“It’s more than that. I’m afraid that he’ll...well...that he’ll find out about me.”

“Oh! I see. I don’t think that’s the real problem, is it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve thought for a while now, the way you talk about him, that you were feeling something for this lieutenant, and knowing you, you’re feeling guilty about it. Like you aren’t allowed to ever love someone again because Scott got killed. Do you really think he would want you to spend your life alone?”

I didn’t say anything for a moment. As soon as the words were out of her mouth, I knew Mom was telling me the truth, but it was a truth I didn’t want to hear. A truth I didn’t want to admit to.

“This has nothing to do with Scott. I don’t feel anything for Lt. Richards beyond respect as an excellent leader.”

“Mike, you can lie to me all you want, but you can’t lie to yourself. I can hear it in your voice when you talk about him. There’s more there than simply respect. I can hear the same sound in your voice like you had when you’d call me from boot camp and talk about Scott.”

That was a shocking revelation! So Mom had known that something was happening between Scott and me even in boot camp -- she just didn’t know what.

“Mom, I don’t care what you think you’re hearing. I’m not in love with Lt. Richards. Scott is the *only* man I’ve ever been in love with and the *only* one I’m ever going to be in love with!”

I couldn’t remember *ever* screaming at Mom the way I was doing. That should have told me right there that I was full of shit. But, no! I had to compound it!

“There’s nothing else I’m going to say about this. I’ll talk to you later.”

And with this, I hung up the phone.

I got into my truck and headed over to the NCO club. My intention was to get drunk, but when I got there, I just sat in my truck in the parking lot. Getting drunk was not an answer to anything. It didn’t take the pain and grief of losing Scott away, and it wouldn’t solve this problem I had with Lt. Richards.

I sat there for a long time, just thinking. And hurting. I was a one-man demolition team when it came to my own life, it seemed. Now, I had yelled at my mom, something I’d never done -- not even as a snot-nosed teenager. I knew I was going to have to apologize for that.

I was also going to have to either decide to go with Lt. Richards or to tell him I couldn’t. I just didn’t know what the fuck to tell him the reason I couldn’t go was...

*I’m sorry, sir. I’m still getting over the death of my last marine lover.*

Oh, yeah. That would be good...or how about...

*I’m sorry, sir. I’d rather stay on base, all alone with my miserable self.*

Well...that would at least be accurate...or I could just be honest...

*I’m sorry, sir. I want to crawl into your arms and have you tell me that you love me because I’m too fucking guilty and scared to let myself fall in love with you.*

Luckily, I had parked in the back of the lot behind the building where it was dark, because with that, I leaned my head onto the steering wheel and cried. No, make that sobbed. In my mind I was begging Scott to forgive me for being unfaithful to him. I was

begging God to just kill me as I sat there so the pain inside would stop. And I was so fucking lonely and needing someone so badly that I just couldn't stand it.

I spent way more time sitting there in that parking lot than I realized. When I finally was able to pull myself together, I looked at my watch, and it was past midnight. I slowly drove back to the barracks and went to the guard station to sign in. The grunt on guard duty had a message for me.

"Cpl. Hudson needs to speak to the platoon sergeant, sir!"

"Thank you, Bender," I said, noting the name stenciled on his fatigues. "But I guess it will have to wait until morning."

"Sir, the corporal requested that you send for him no matter what time you got in, sir!"

"Okay, Bender, send somebody to get Cpl. Hudson for me. Tell him to come to my room."

"Sir! Yes, sir!"

Whatever this was, it couldn't be good. No marine ever liked their sleep disturbed. God knows, out in the field we so often have little or none for days on end. So if Cpl. Hudson, one of the best of my squad leaders, wanted to be woken up when I got back to see me, that was not a good sign.

I was sitting at the small table where my laptop was, when I heard a soft knock on my door.

"Enter."

"Mike, we've got a bad problem," Ted Hudson said, coming into my room.

In the Marine Corps, corporals are noncommissioned officers just like sergeants. Because Ted Hudson and I were both NCOs, when not in front of the platoon, we called each other by our first names.

"What's up, Ted?"

"It's Keenan. He tried to commit suicide tonight."

“Fuck! Is he okay?”

“He’s at the base hospital having his arms stitched and getting blood transfusions. Took his bayonet and sliced his wrists open with it.”

“Thank God, he doesn’t have a sidearm. Why the fuck did he do it?”

“From what I could piece together from what the other grunts told me, his girlfriend was killed in an automobile accident. Her parents called him direct to tell him. Fuckin’ stupid civilians! If they’d gone through the base command, there would have been a chaplain to tell him, and we could have put a watch on him.”

“How long ago did it happen?”

“Couple of hours ago.”

“I’m heading over to the hospital, see if I can do anything. I’ll call the lieutenant and let him know.”

“Thanks, Mike.”

When I reached Lt. Richards, he told me he’d meet me at the hospital. The BOQ (Bachelor Officer Quarters) are farther away from the base hospital than our barracks was, and I drove over in a hurry, so I was there before Lt. Richards. They had Keenan in a cubicle in the ER, but a nurse let me back there.

Keenan was out of it, with tubes running into him and his arms all bandaged. He must have looked somewhat like I did when I was in Landstuhl, but I hadn’t put myself there. I realized, however, that this was what I had considered doing at Thanksgiving. I also suddenly understood what the shock of this would do in anyone close to me. I didn’t think of myself as stupid for wanting to kill myself over Scott, so what gave me the right to think of Pvt. Keenan lying there as stupid for wanting to kill himself because his girl died?

“Is he going to be okay?”

It was that deep, soft voice I knew so well and thrilled at, every time I heard it. His voice did for me what the Dilaudid had done for me back in Landstuhl, warmth and calm

filled me at the sound. I knew immediately that, no matter what, everything was going to be all right. Lt. Richards was there. Just his presence and the scent of him made everything okay.

It was then I decided there was no way I could *not* go to Colorado with him. That I would go to the ends of the earth to be near him.



## Chapter Twelve

I had been to Afghanistan, but never west of the Mississippi River in my own country. The only thing I knew about Colorado was that it was where they made Coors beer. It seems that Lt. Richards and his family were from Colorado. In fact, his great-great-great-grandfather was one of the first settlers in Colorado.

Lt. Richards had two brothers, both of them younger. James, the middle son, was also a Marine Corps officer, but was on the staff of Maj. General Hejlik, commander of the Marines' Special Operations Command. His younger brother, Tim, had gone a completely different direction and had become an Episcopal priest, serving a parish in Buena Vista, Colorado. Mike explained that we would be joining his parents and brothers for Christmas Day at his parents' house in Montrose, but that we would be staying at his cabin in Telluride, which was about seventy miles from his parents' house.

We flew out of Raleigh-Durham International to Chicago and then to Denver. It was when we got to Denver that I first got the idea that Lt. Richards might not be as poor as most of the grunts I'd known in the Corps. Even Scott, who'd grown up in circumstances better than most, was only middle-class. It was about the time that Lt. Richards led me to a private

helicopter that would take us from Denver to Telluride that I got the idea that he was very wealthy. The sign on the side of the helicopter said RICHARDS INDUSTRIES.

I guess he saw the look I gave the helicopter and its sign, because he quickly explained to me that Richards Industries was his father and his five uncles. While the entire family benefited from the company, his other cousins were in line to run it, leaving Lt. Richards and his brothers free to choose lives that didn't involve the company.

I'd ridden in plenty of Marine Corps helicopters, but none of them were outfitted as luxuriously as this one was. The trip took only about three-quarters of an hour, and we were landing outside what looked to be a rather large log house. This was way more than I'd pictured in my mind when Lt. Richards said a *cabin*. It was two stories, and at one corner of the house, it was two stories of windows. This turned out to be the *great room*, which had a fireplace as well as the two-story glass view of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, which were behind the house.

Lt. Richards showed me to a bedroom upstairs where I could change out of my uniform. I put my stuff away, changed into sweat pants and a T-shirt, and then came back downstairs. Back in the great room, we sat on the couch looking out those windows at the mountains. I was surprised when Lt. Richards showed up in a western shirt, tight-fitting jeans, and a pair of very beat-up cowboy boots.

Lt. Richards got us both a beer out of the refrigerator. Coors, of course. He told me that he has somebody who comes in and cleans and stocks the place with food when he's coming home. To say I was in awe of the luxury of the house was an understatement. I guess Lt. Richards noticed the look on my face.

"This was left to me by my grandfather. I spent a lot of my childhood in this house with Grandpa and Grandma. More so than James and Tim. Grandpa left them trust funds when he died, but he only left me the house. I was grateful, because I'd have spent every bit of a trust fund trying to buy the house anyway. I think he knew that. Of course, I don't get to

spend a lot of time here because of being in the Corps, but it's always here when I can come home. For me, this is home, more than the house my parents have in Montrose."

"It's really beautiful, sir."

"Mike, we're on leave. We're nowhere near a Marine base. Can't you call me Paul rather than sir?"

Yeah, I could, but I didn't know if I wanted to. That *sir* was like a wall that kept me from acknowledging what I felt about him. It was something I still didn't want to admit to myself or to anyone -- especially not him. I guess I'd known from the moment we met that there was something about Lt. Paul Richards that called to something deep down inside me. It was a feeling, an attraction that I didn't want to have. I didn't want to fall in love with another marine for a whole number of reasons -- not the least of which was that I didn't feel like I had the right to fall in love with anybody. I was still in love with Scott. We'd pledged our love to each other for all time, and I felt like I was being unfaithful to him feeling anything for Paul.

More, I didn't want to fall in love with someone else who could get killed and leave me alone again. And falling in love with a fucking officer was completely out of the question! Fuck! That went way beyond even *Don't ask, don't tell*. Even if we weren't both males, the Marine Corps rules and regulations completely outlawed any kind of personal relationships between officers and enlisted personnel. I wasn't an officer and wasn't about to become one. Paul was one. To put it bluntly -- *No fuckin' way, José!*

"Yeah. I could. But do you really think that's a good idea?"

"Yes, Mike. I do. Can't you think of us here and now as Mike and Paul, not Lt. Richards and Sgt. Collins? I may be way out of line, but I think you really need a friend. There are times I look at you, and I can see in your eyes so much pain that it hits me like a fist in the guts. You're too good a guy to be hurting like that. I want to take some of that pain away.

Please, Mike, don't tell me I'm making a fool of myself here. Please tell me you understand what I'm trying to say."

"I understand what you're trying to say, but do you really understand what you're asking for? I loved somebody once with all my body and soul. He was killed, and all I've wanted since then was to go back into combat so I could join him, so I could die too. Do you understand that? I'm fucking damaged goods. I don't know if I can ever love someone again. And I sure don't want it to be another fucking marine who could get killed just like...just like..."

I tried to get Scott's name to come out of my mouth, but instead, I broke down crying. I was so embarrassed to be doing it in front of Paul. Worse, he reached over and took me in his arms, and I didn't even try to pull away, but sank gratefully into his strong, warm arms. I loved Scott. There was no doubting that, but I always felt like I was the one who had to be strong for him. With Paul it was different. I felt like I could finally let go, and he would be strong for me. I'd never thought I needed or wanted that, but I began to think that maybe that was because it had never been there. I'd had no father, no older brothers, no stronger males other than some of my friends in high school, who I could ever feel that way about. I'd never felt like that with Scott. It was like such a simple thing that when we slept together, Scott always curled up in my arms. With Paul, I'd already figured out who would be curled up in whose arms.

And that was something else that scared me. I'd never been in the position of being vulnerable to a larger, stronger male than me. I didn't know how that would feel or how that would work. Would I feel less of a man? I never did with Scott, but I felt in control there. I didn't feel that way where Paul was concerned. He was taller than me. He was bigger than me in almost every way. Well, except there was one way I didn't know about, but from the bulge I'd seen when he was in his fatigues, I figured that was substantial as well.

That was part of what was fucking with my head as I stayed wrapped in his arms -- fucking. I hadn't had sex of any kind, not even jacking off, since Scott died. Some of the time

was in the hospital, but ever since I came back to the Three/Six, I'd done absolutely nothing. Being this close to Paul, feeling the strength and the warmth of his arms and body, smelling the scent of raw male again, I wanted him so bad. At the same time, I felt so fucking guilty because he wasn't Scott, and I was feeling like I was cheating.

I swear that Paul is psychic, because the next words out of his mouth completely blew me away.

"I want you, Mike. I need you. I think you want and need me too, but I also know that you're feeling really torn because you're still in love with Scott. You take your time. I'll wait. When you're ready, you know I'm here for you. Until then, I won't push. I just want to be your friend and be there for you."

Then his mouth came down, and he gently kissed the top of my head.

I lay in his arms for a very long time. I didn't want to move, and evidently, neither did he. I didn't know at that point just what I wanted other than not leaving Paul's arms, because I knew I would then have to make some kind of decision about what I did want. I know Paul said he would wait, but he was male, and so was I. Males usually aren't very good at waiting for someone they want -- especially if it's as a mate. Except I wasn't exactly sure that's what Paul was wanting. Going back over what he said in my mind, I never heard anything about permanence -- about a relationship other than friendship.

Finally, I went to pull away. Paul immediately let go of me. I have to admit, I liked that. I was still somewhat skittish about being vulnerable to him. After all, I knew him as a commander, as an officer I was under. I didn't know him as a lover.

"Uhh...can I ask something here?"

"Sure. Ask anything you want. I'll answer as best I can."

"Where do you see this going? What are you looking for?"

"There's only one thing I've wanted since I first met you -- I want you to be mine. I want you as my partner, my mate, my lover, whatever you want to call it."

“But you’re an officer. We can’t be lovers.”

“You asked me what I wanted; please don’t go throwing regulations at me. You and Scott weren’t supposed to be lovers, either.”

“No, but we were both enlisted. It was easier for us to get away with it.”

“And you’re my platoon sergeant. We’re supposed to work closely together.”

“But what if somebody notices that we go on leave together? What about that? Scott and I did that, and nobody thought anything about it.”

“Want to bet?”

I stared at him dumbly.

“What do you mean?”

“Do you really think that grunts are *that* dumb? You two go off for *every* leave together, neither of you ever talk about women, you share the same room in a motel and are never seen out of it, and you really think guys didn’t know what the fuck was up with you two?”

“But...but...how did you find out?”

“Guys from Bravo Company told me. They were feeling me out. They didn’t want you thrown out of the Corps. They wanted to make sure that I wouldn’t care that you liked guys.”

“Oh, fuck!”

I put my head in my hands. Everything I thought about how smart Scott and I’d been about hiding our relationship was all crap! Everybody had known all along. What I couldn’t understand was why nobody ever ratted us out? That’s when Paul did his *psychic* thing again.

“Wondering why nobody ever reported you? Maybe you have some idea of how the grunts felt about the two of you. Yeah, they knew you were *queer*, but you were both great

fucking marines, and you were both leaders who could be trusted. It's how the guys still feel about you."

"And about you."

I said this quietly. It was Paul's turn to look shocked.

"They do?"

"Not the queer part. They have no idea about that. The other part about being a leader who can be trusted -- they believe that. Fuck. I didn't even know about the queer part until we got here. I was afraid you'd figure out about me."

"So why did you agree to come then?"

I didn't think it was still possible, but at this, I could feel my face heating up as I blushed furiously.

"I-I...wanted to be with you -- any way I could."

That was probably one of the hardest admissions I'd ever made in my life, except for when I'd admitted to Scott that I loved him.

"Then be with me. All the way."

And with this, Paul opened his arms to me. I took a moment, apologizing in my head to Scott for what I was about to do. I went back into Paul's arms, and this time, his mouth came down on mine, and I tasted him for the first time.

## Chapter Thirteen

Let me say, first of all, that Paul kissed nothing like Scott. The kiss he gave me told me, in no uncertain terms, he was in charge. I guess, thinking about it, it was no more than I would expect from a Marine Corps officer. They are trained to be in charge. At first, I didn't know how to respond. I did the only thing I knew how to do -- I met his strength with my own. The kiss was wild, passionate, and very virile. I'd never experienced anything like it. It was like we were trying to devour each other. Indeed, the grunts and groans I could hear coming from Paul -- and surprisingly myself -- sounded like we were trying to do just that.

I could feel his hands, running up and down my back. Strong. Demanding. I was wearing a T-shirt and an old pair of sweat pants. His strong hands tore at my T-shirt until it pulled from my waistband, and his hands could finally touch my skin. I wanted to do the same, but his shirt was much more difficult to pull out because it was hugging the muscles of his body so tightly.

I was frustrated that I couldn't get to his skin. So frustrated, I could hear myself *whine* -- a sound I don't ever remember coming out of me. But Paul heard it and understood. He pulled away from me so there was just a bit of distance between our chests and took his two hands and just ripped open his shirt. I expected to hear the sound of fabric tearing, but



instead, what I heard were snaps popping open. I didn't know that western shirts often did not have buttons, but metal snaps. I had a stray thought go through my head, *I gotta get me some of those. They're great for getting naked in a hurry.*

But my thoughts stopped entirely when Paul's chest was revealed. It was covered with hair. He was even hairier than me! Dark curls of hair all over his chest, so much so that I could barely see his nipples which were sticking up like two pencil erasers. The hair continued down his abs and disappeared into those jeans which I had to somehow get off him, eventually. But right then, I had this bizarre urge to just rub my face in the pelt of hair on his chest. I don't know why, but I just had to.

Not even allowing Paul to get his arms out of his long-sleeved shirt, I ducked my head down and buried my face in his furry chest. As the thick, bristly hairs rubbed against my face, and I felt them scratching lightly at my skin, I reveled in the most surprising thing of all -- the scent. Having never had sex with a man who was hairy like I was, I had no idea that the hair seemed to hold the scent of man more completely than the skin alone. I stopped moving my face so that my nose was buried in the hairy cleft between his two huge pectoral muscles and just inhaled as deeply as I could.

The scent was raw and as virile as Paul was. I surmised he'd showered before we left the base that morning, just as I had, but that had been many hours and many miles ago. What I was smelling was the pure scent of Paul -- a scent I knew from being close to him a few times before when we were working together -- but never this strongly by being this close. It went from my nose into my heart and guts, and that so familiar ache began. I could no longer deny, not to myself, not to him, that I was in love with him.

"You like my scent?"

The rich, deep baritone rumbled through the chest I had my nose pressed against, and while I heard the sound, I felt it too, through the vibrations. I pulled back slightly and looked up at him.

“Yeah, I guess you do from that look on your face.”

There was a slight chuckle in his voice, and amazingly, I blushed again. I didn’t think I would ever do that in my life again, and here I’d done it twice in the space of minutes. But his green eyes were sparkling, and I knew he liked the fact I loved his scent. The look on his face almost seemed to be one of masculine pride that something so intimately a part of him, something so *Paul*, could so obviously turn me on.

“I love your scent. I love you.”

*Oh, my fucking God! I said it!* My mind was screaming out at me. The guilt of saying it, of reneging on my word to Scott to love him forever, tore at me like a knife. All of a sudden I wanted to get as far away from Paul as I could get. I went to pull away, but I think he knew what was going through my mind -- it must have shown on my face -- because he grabbed hold of me, wrapping his arms around me again and hung on.

*Damn! Fuck! He’s even stronger than I thought.*

“Oh, no, you’re not! You’re not going to run away after telling me you love me. Not without hearing my answer, you’re not. After that, you can run all the fucking way back to Lejeune, if you want to.”

I stopped struggling against him. I figured I might as well, I sure wasn’t getting anywhere against the strength in his arms.

“I love you. I love you more than anybody I’ve ever known in my life. Maybe even more than I love my parents and my brothers. Nobody else has ever kept me awake at night jacking off over and over because I can’t get the feelings I have out of my head. Nobody has ever made me ache to touch them. Nobody has ever made me want to quit the Corps because I didn’t want to lose them.”

*Quit the Corps? Over me? Oh, fuck! No!*

“I know the kind of man you are, so I figure you must have sworn to Scott you’d love him for all your lives. And God forgive me, I’m so fucking jealous of that, because I want to

hear you say the same thing to me -- because it's what I'm saying to you. I will love you forever. You can run away, but I won't stop loving you -- ever. Now, if that's what you want, go ahead."

And with this, he loosened his arms. I didn't know what the fuck to do. I loved him. I truly did. But I loved Scott too. Scott was gone, though, and Paul was here. Oh, God! Was he here. Here with the scent that drove me crazy, here with the masculine body I craved. Here with the love I needed so fucking badly that I couldn't leave. And he fucking knew it!

I didn't move. I just stayed in his arms, panting like I'd run a marathon, my eyes filling up with more fucking tears.

"I can't leave. You know that. How could I run away from you? When I said that I loved you, it did mean forever. You don't have to be jealous. Please don't be. I don't know how it's possible, but I love you as much as I love Scott, just in...well...in a very different way. You're not him. But that doesn't stop me from wanting you."

I think this was the longest declaration of love I'd ever said in my life. I'm not one to talk about my feelings. It's too scary. It makes you vulnerable, because if someone knows that you love them, they can hurt you. I couldn't take any more hurt. I just couldn't.

"Oh, God, Mike! I understand. I couldn't respect you as much as I do if I thought you were capable of not loving Scott anymore. All I want is for you to love me too."

"Well, you've got that. But you can't quit the Corps. You can't do that. Not for me."

"We may have no choice. I won't take the chance of losing you in combat, and it's coming. But I don't want to talk about that now. All I want is to have you in my bed, making love. Come on. Let's go upstairs."

He then kissed me on top of my head. It was so warm and touching the way he did it, that it almost had me crying again. Instead, I grinned up at him, and we got up off the couch. Then he did something that completely blew me away. Something I had never done with

anybody but my mom. Never with Scott. He reached down and took my hand and led me up the stairs -- holding hands.

When we got upstairs, he led me to the door at the end of the hallway, down from the room he'd showed me to earlier. I guessed I wouldn't be sleeping in there that night. When he opened the door, I stood there in awe. It was like a shrine to the Marine Corps. Above the king-sized bed was a huge Corps flag. On the walls were framed recruiting posters, and there were even lamps next to the bed that had the Marine Corps emblem on the bases.

I walked toward the bed, intending to strip, and stopped dead. There on bedside table was a silver frame. In it was a picture of *me*! It had to have been taken at Lejeune, because you could see the platoon formed up behind me. I had no idea when it was taken or by who.

"I took that the second day you were platoon sergeant. I have a small, digital camera that is easily hidden. I've got another copy of it in my wallet."

I turned to him in a daze. How much I loved this man and how much he loved me. I just couldn't believe that I deserved it.

"You've got to let me take one of you. I want to carry it with me always."

"No problem."

Then he came closer and started to undress me. I almost stopped him, but I could see the hunger and the desire in his face, and I knew, somehow, that he had thought about doing this for a long time. I knew that because I had dreamed of undressing him for a long time now.

Since all I was wearing was a T-shirt, sweats, a jock, and running shoes over bare feet, getting me down to nothing but my jock took no time at all. But when he did, he stopped there.

"Take it off and give it to me."

His voice was even deeper, husky with sexual desire. I quickly divested myself of the jock and handed it to him. He looked me in the eye, and I could see the hunger in his. He

then wadded up my jock in his hand and brought it to his face. I could hear him snorting deeply of the raunchy strap. At this, my cock , which wasn't soft, boned hard, and started dripping precum.

“Just in case you wonder if I love your scent.”

He had a wolfish grin on his face as he said this, and I felt like I was about to become dinner. He reached over and yanked back the bed covers.

“Get in.”

It was no request. I'd never heard the Marine Corps *command voice* all but dripping of sex, but it was an order I gladly complied with.

“Sir! Yes, sir!”

## Chapter Fourteen

I didn't get the chance to undress Paul after all. I crawled into his bed, and he was already mostly undressed by the time I scooted over to the middle of the bed and turned back toward him. I saw just how hairy he was. The pelt continued down into his pubic triangle and then started up again on his legs. I loved all that hair, and it dawned on me it was all mine to play with, to snort, to lick.

What was most stunning, though, was his cock. I was used to always having one of the biggest cocks in school, and I had been bigger than Scott, but Paul's cock had at least an inch or two on mine and was just a bit thicker. There was a certain amount of fear looking at it. I knew he was going to want to fuck me, but I didn't know if I could take it. That thing looked *painful!*

There was something else very different. Paul was uncut. I'd only ever seen uncut cocks on guys in the showers in high school and in the barracks. I had never touched one. I noticed that even hard, the skin was still up around the head of his cock with just the very tip exposed and leaking precum. While his cock frightened me, it fascinated me as well.

He slid into bed next to me, but didn't touch me. He just lay there, on his side his head resting on his hand, looking at me.

“I’ve got the feeling that you don’t get fucked.”

“That’s not exactly true. Scott fucked me every once in a while. I didn’t feel it was fair to fuck his ass and not give him mine. I gotta admit, I loved it when he did it, but his cock wasn’t near as big as yours.”

Admitting to him how big his cock was, was something I never thought I’d be doing with another guy. After all, I was used to being the one who was being told how big I was. It had always been a sense of pride for me, just as I bet it was for Paul. I know that’s stupid. You get your cock size by genetics, no effort on your part, but guys aren’t logical where their dicks are concerned. The fact is, guys love their dicks more than anything else. It defines you as a male and gives you the most pleasure you’ll ever have in your life. What’s not to love?

“I’m glad to hear you say that, because I believe the same thing. I love it when a guy rides my tail, and I don’t want to be the only one doing all the fucking. Look, Mike, I would never do anything to hurt you. You’ve got to believe that. I’m going to tell you something that you’re probably not going to believe, but the longer and fatter a cock is, the better it feels when you get fucked by it.”

“Uhh...have there been a lot of guys...uhh...fucking you?”

Paul laughed.

“No, there haven’t. Not since high school. I was on the wrestling team and the football team. There were a few of us guys who got into having sex with each other when we were horny freshmen. Kept it up all through high school. We never talked about it, but even though we dated girls, I think we preferred the sex we had with each other. At least I did. That’s when I realized I was gay.”

“God! Were you lucky. All I had were fantasies. I was too scared to try anything with another guy in high school. The first time I had sex with another guy was with Scott. So you haven’t had that many?”

I don't know what had gotten into me. All of a sudden I was feeling jealous and maybe just a little intimidated. I'd only had sex with one guy in my whole life. I knew I made Scott happy, but could I make Paul happy? I didn't know. I suppose if I let him fuck me that would be good for him. I thought that my cock was big enough to make him feel it when I fucked him. I'd only ever sucked Scott's cock, and it was much smaller. I hoped I could do justice to it. Maybe I wasn't as good a cocksucker as Scott told me.

"It's not easy to have gay sex in the Corps -- not when you're an officer. Besides, sex just hasn't seemed all that important, because what I wanted wasn't sex. It was somebody I could love who would love me. Now you know why I took the risk I did with you. I love your body, and you are one of the most good-looking guys I've seen in a long time. But it was because I fell in love with you that I had to get you alone and see if all those messages you were sending were for real. To see if you knew what you were doing."

"What messages? What are you talking about?"

"Oh, fuck. You don't know, do you? Mike, it was the way you looked at me, like you really liked what you were seeing. The way you smiled at me, like you were telling me there was something about me that pleased you to no end. And then there was the way you'd always breathe so deeply when I'd get close to you, and I knew it was my scent you were after. Most of all, I'd walk into a room, and you'd be all hyper, and all you had to do was see me or hear my voice, and I could watch all the tension flow out of your body. I guess maybe it's best you didn't know. You might have transferred to Okinawa to get away from me."

"Nah. Okinawa wouldn't have been far enough away. I'd have had to go out for astronaut training so I could run to the space station." I then seriously asked him, "Could you really tell?"

"I hate to tell you this, but you could give glass lessons in transparency. I bet you lose all the time at poker."

"And at spades too. So you knew."



“Well, I knew that there was a very strong attraction -- at least on my side, and it seemed to be answered from your side. But there was a block, and I understood that. I told you I was willing to wait, and I meant that. I still am if you can’t deal with this.”

“My body would explode if we don’t go any further. More, I would be crushed, and I can’t take any more pain. I just can’t. There’s too much inside me now. The only thing holding it back is being here like this with you. Yes, all you have to do is walk into a room or come close to me, and it’s like this healing energy fills me from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.”

“So do you want to fuck me?”

“No. I may regret this, but I want you to make love to me. I want to make you happy.”

“That’s what I want, babe. I want to make you happy.”

*Oh, fuck! When did I become “babe”?*

I looked at him, and I could tell that he could see I was none too pleased. He had the good grace to look embarrassed.

“I’m sorry. It just slipped out. I’m not putting you down or anything. I just kind of feel like I want to say something that tells you how much I love you. I guess I’ll have to find something else.”

I thought for a moment, *Yeah, and he could come up with something worse!*

“No, it just threw me for a moment. Scott and I never had pet names for each other. I guess it sounds like we’re straight.”

“Okay. I understand. No pet names. Is it okay that I think of you that way?”

“I wouldn’t if I were you. What happens if you slip and say it on base? Not good.”

“Okay, I won’t even think *babe*. I promise.”

He was chuckling as he said this. But I knew I was right, and I was sure he knew it too.

“So since I don’t get to call you *babe*, what do I get?”

His grin was a leer.

“You get my slightly used ass.”

“That’s better than any name I could call you. Since you and Scott stayed faithful to each other, I guess I don’t need a condom?”

“Well, I’m clean. How about you?”

“I haven’t had sex without a condom since high school. But you know officers get checked just like grunts -- every six months. I just had mine. I’m clean.”

“Then bring it on.”

“That’s all I wanted to hear.”

And with that he moved aggressively forward, pushing me over on my back and getting on top of me. The weight of him was surprising. But his larger body over mine, rather than frightening me as I’d supposed, made me feel safe and protected.

“You okay?”

I could feel the rumble of his voice through his chest against mine. I loved it. I loved him. I wanted whatever he wanted. Never before had I felt so vulnerable to another man, but I liked it. I really did. That was the most surprising thing of all.

“Yeah. I’m just fine.”

“I don’t want you to feel any less of a man with me. I see you as an Alpha male, and I know you’re allowing me to make love to you -- I’ve not overpowered you. I am taking what you freely offered. That makes you a real man in my eyes. One who knows how to lead and how to follow.”

Tears welled up in my eyes. How could he know all this about me? How did he figure out what I was feeling? He sees *me* as a leader? Coming from him, that’s like the Congressional Medal of Honor.

I couldn't think anymore. Paul was using his tongue, his lips, and his teeth to do such incredible things to me as he moved down my body. He took a couple of tentative licks of my cock, licking up the precum that was pouring from it.

"Sweet," I heard him mumble to himself as he tasted.

He quickly bypassed my cock, but not before taking a huge breath of my pubic hair and growled at the scent.

He got down between my legs, and as he was licking at my balls, he slid his hands under my thighs and began to lift them. From all the times that Scott had done this to me, I knew what he wanted. I grabbed my knees and pulled them back, exposing to him the most vulnerable place on a male's body. If there was any question of whether or not I trusted him, I'd just answered it.

I looked down between my legs, and I could see him staring at my ass. His look was feral and hungry. He just kept staring, and I wondered after a few moments what was wrong. I knew I was clean except for the sweat that would have gathered through the day. So I couldn't figure out what was stopping him. Then he looked up at me, and our eyes locked.

"Beautiful. You are so fucking beautiful."

Scott never told me that! I guess beauty really is in the eye of the beholder.

Paul didn't stare for much longer before he moved forward, and I felt his lips and tongue move gently against my hole. I groaned. His mouth and tongue became more aggressive, and I could feel him sucking on my hole and slowly working his tongue inside me. I pushed down on my muscles, as Scott had taught me, and his tongue slowly slid inside me. What he was doing with his mouth was intense, and I let myself relax.

Paul ate my butt until I was starting to think he was going to eat his way right into it. But he did stop and then got up on his knees on the bed. He looked down at me, his face shiny with spit.

"Time to get you lubed up and opened."

He went over to the bedside table and opened the drawer, taking out a purple-labeled bottle of what looked like clear liquid. It was not the lube Scott and I always used.

“This stuff is really slick; you’re going to like it.”

He got back on the bed, sitting cross-legged close to my still-exposed butt. I could feel him pouring the very liquid lube onto my hole and then working it around with his fingers. He gradually started to work his finger inside me. His finger, like the rest of him, was big -- like two of Scott’s. I pushed down hard to take it and found that it felt really good as he slid in and out on the slick lube.

It took a while, but he worked three of his fingers inside me and then declared me ready for his cock. He pulled his fingers out of me. Involuntarily, I let out a whine at the empty feeling I had in my butt. Paul chuckled.

“Yeah, there’s nothing I love more than a hungry butt.”

As he said this, he was lubing his cock well. He got up on his knees, and his cock’s blunt head was resting right at my hole. He grabbed my legs and put them on his shoulders. He pushed, and I pushed down, and his cock slowly slid into my ass. He kept pushing until there was nowhere to go. He was all the way inside me. I had taken that huge cock! And better yet, there was no pain. Just a feeling of fullness and pleasure.

“Just rest. Your hole needs to relax. It’s so tight, I can’t really move. Just let yourself go, and everything will be good.”

I lay there, and my muscles gradually relaxed. Paul waited until he was sure I was sufficiently relaxed before he began to fuck me. When he did, he started very gently, sliding slowly just inches in and out. But it wasn’t enough. I wanted him to really fuck me. I had taken his cock, now I wanted to take his fuck. I wanted him to pound me with that huge cock driven by that muscular body.

“Come on. Fuck me. Fuck me *hard! I need it!*”

“You want it? You got it!” he groaned through gritted teeth.

And fuck he did. I could only have guessed at the power of his body. He pounded me so hard, had it not been for his putting a pillow behind my head, I probably would have been knocked out by the headboard. All the time, he was leaning over me, staring down into my eyes. I could see the grimaces that guys make when they're fucking that almost look like they're in pain. And they are. The pleasure is so intense, it's almost painful. But I saw something else. I could see a look that told me it was all about me. He wanted me and only me in that moment, and the feeling he gave me made my orgasm, which I'd been desperately trying to hold back, overcome me, and I was screaming out my pleasure as the cum burst from my cock all over me.

"Paul! I'm coming! I can't stop! PAAAUUULLL!"

But Paul hadn't come. He kept fucking me almost like an animal -- a rutting male animal, and I just lay there and thrilled at each thrust inside me. Finally his thrusts lost their rhythm, and he started yelling as well.

"Fuckin' you! Fuckin' your hole! Gotta come! Gotta come in you! MMIKKEE!"

I could feel his cock as it began to unload inside of me. The feeling of knowing that his seed was shooting inside me gave me the most incredible feeling. A part of him was now a part of me. His sperm would be inside me forever. My body would always be a part of his.

Then it hit me. Scott's body was a part of mine too. I held both Paul and Scott in me. I would never lose either one.

Paul collapsed on top of me, sweaty and reeking of the scent of man -- fucking man. I loved it so much. I reached up and put my arms around his neck.

"I love you. You're now a part of me."

"And when you can get it up again, you're going to be a part of me."

We finally rolled over so that we were on our sides, cuddling and talking about little or nothing, just really basking in the afterglow of our loving each other.

"You were right, as usual. Bigger is better."

## Chapter Fifteen

We lay there, just talking and being together for a long time. At one point, since I had no brothers or sisters, I asked Paul what it was like growing up with two brothers. He started telling some stories of the trouble the three of them would get into, and I found myself actually laughing -- something I couldn't remember doing since Scott was killed. I couldn't believe how wonderful it felt to laugh again. It was almost better than making love with someone again.

We finally got up, and Paul showed me the door in his room that led to the bathroom. I couldn't believe how big the room was. There was a huge tub which had jets in it to make it a whirlpool. But what really impressed me was the shower. It was big enough for at least four guys Paul's size. I wondered why it was built so big.

"Damn! You wash King Kong in here?"

"I had the bathroom redone. I took over another bedroom that used to be up here. I didn't need two bedrooms, but I wanted a really big bathroom. I always believed that I would eventually find a mate, and I wanted everything big enough that we could be comfortable together."

"Where the fuck is the toilet?"

I had looked around the room and didn't see one.

"Try those two doors over there," Paul said pointing to two doors side by side.

I opened one, and there was the shitter. Then I opened the other door expecting another one, but instead, I found a large urinal.

"I built this for two guys."

"I can see that."

"Come on. Let's try out the shower. I've never had someone to share it with."

"Never?"

"Never. I've never brought anyone here who wasn't family. This is my sanctuary. It was only meant for me and my mate."

"Thank you for bringing me. And to think I didn't want to come."

"You wanted to come, you were just afraid."

I followed Mike into the shower. The walls were all tile except for a glass brick wall with an opening at one end that kept the water from spraying out so it didn't need a shower curtain. There wasn't just one showerhead -- there were four of them. Two each on opposing walls. When Paul turned them on, it was like we were in a rain forest. Water was everywhere. I loved the feeling, but not as much as the feeling when Paul grabbed me and started washing me with shower gel on his hands.

Paul's hands went everywhere on my body, cleansing and exploring at the same time. He stood up, took my face in his hands, and kissed me passionately. I leaned into the kiss and his body as his hands slipped down and went around my waist, holding me close.

He pulled away and handed me a bottle of shower gel, and I returned the favor. My hands glided over his body, touching, caressing, and lovingly running my fingers through the wet hair. I got to touch every part of his body. I even washed his huge feet. Yeah, I guess what they say about that is true -- at least for Paul.

We played in the shower, splashing each other and acting like a couple of kids. I had forgotten what it was like to be a kid. I was too busy being a squared away marine leader. With Paul, it felt like the most normal thing in the world.

We got out, and Paul grabbed a towel and started drying me. No one had done this since I was a little boy when my mom did it. I loved the feeling, because the drying was just more caresses through a towel.

I didn't let him have all the fun. When he was done, I grabbed another towel and dried him, giving him the same loving attention.

There is a saying that males only think about two things -- sex and eating. If he hasn't got a hard-on, make him a sandwich. That came true for us with a vengeance. After the shower, we were both suddenly starved. Fucking really takes it out of you, and we headed downstairs to raid Paul's refrigerator. We quickly found the preferred male food -- meat. Two huge Porterhouse steaks that we broiled in the oven and baked potatoes we made in the microwave. It was truly a feast.

The most amazing thing to me is that we did it all naked. I found out Paul has the same hatred of clothes I do. We have to wear uniforms all the time, and it was so freeing to walk around without a stitch on, just as freeing as I found being in love again. Besides, I loved getting to look at Paul nude. To watch the movement of his muscles as he walked or bent or sat was a porn film all in itself. He was beautiful in the way that males are beautiful. More than that, I noticed that he was watching me as well. The fact that I obviously pleased him physically made me feel more worthy of him. After all, males are very visually oriented.

We washed down the steaks with a couple more Coors. We were sitting there finishing them when all conversation stopped. We just sat there looking at each other, and it was immediately obvious that we both wanted the same thing -- each other.

"First one in bed gets fucked!"



That's all Paul had to say, and we were both out of our chairs and running for the stairs, bumping each other, and laughing all the way to the bedroom. He pushed me at the last minute, and I had to stumble for balance, so he hopped into the bed before me.

"I win! You have to fuck me now."

"Oh, like that's such a hardship? I've been eying that beautiful butt of yours for months now. I want to fuck you -- really bad. But first, fucker, I'm going to eat it, until you scream for me to fuck you."

Paul laid back and pulled his knees almost to his chest, revealing the deep hairy furrow of his butt.

"Come and get it -- it's all yours!"

I hopped onto the bed, lying on my stomach with my face at his ass. I ran my nose down the furrow and smelled my lover's butt for the first time. The fragrance wasn't strong, but it was definitely the scent of male butt -- a scent I loved. But instead of burying my tongue in his ass, I moved up, scenting his balls. His hairy scrotum was as full of male scent as his ass. I started licking his balls, and I discovered they tasted as good as they smelled. The saltiness of sweat and the tang of hormones and whatever else the skin makes and the hair retains.

I licked further up, and I was at the base of his cock. I could see, once again the fold of foreskin which covered the head of his cock. I was fascinated with that fold of skin and decided to explore it more.

"Uhh...could you put your legs down?"

Paul looked at me questioningly.

"I thought you were going to eat my butt?"

"I am, but I want to play with your cock. I've never had a chance to play with one that was uncut."

“No problem. You play to your heart’s content, but be careful. You get me off, and I’m not going to feel like getting fucked.”

“I know that. I just want to meet the cock that gave me such a hot fuck.”

“Okay. Have at it.”

He put his legs back down on the bed, and I moved around so I was lying beside him, but with my head at the level of his cock. I leaned over and took it in my hand. How substantial it was -- heavy and thick in my hand. I slowly slid the skin back and uncovered the cockhead. I noticed the helmet was smaller than mine, and it looked like it was moist. What I didn’t know then was that most uncut cocks are like that from being covered most of the time by the protective fold of skin.

I pulled the skin all the way down, until the area under the flange of his cockhead was exposed. It was then I smelled a pungent scent wafting toward me. It was a very raw body scent, but one I’d never smelled before. I leaned closer to his cock, and the smell became stronger. I guess Paul could hear my deep intakes of breath.

“What you’re smelling is called *smegma* or head cheese. It’s those little white specks under the head of my cock. If you’re uncut, you have to wash that out every day or it gets really gunky and smells really bad. Some guys hate the smell of it, some love it. It tastes somewhat like strong, stinky cheese, which I suppose is how it got its name. When you washed me, I didn’t show you how to properly clean my weapon, marine. We’ll have to work on that.”

I turned back to look at him, and he was grinning at me, making a joke about properly cleaning his weapon. Of course, one of the first things recruits are trained to do in boot camp was to clean a weapon -- their rifle.

I turned back and tentatively licked at the area under his cockhead and got some of the small white specks on my tongue. There was the instant tang of something like very ripe

cheese, and the scent went up my nose. I liked the scent. It was *very* male. And I even liked the taste. If this had to be removed every day then I was going to volunteer for that duty.

“Sir. I think that the grunt has figured out how to clean the lieutenant’s weapon, sir.”

Paul literally roared with laughter, and I laughed along with him. I don’t remember cracking up in bed, during sex, like that ever before. Paul leaned forward and wrapped his arms around me, bringing his mouth to my ear.

“The job is yours, grunt. Now you can’t object to me calling you that, especially since you started it.”

Then he slowly and wetly licked inside my ear. I groaned. He had me. He’d found his term of endearment to call me -- grunt. I had to admit, if he was going to call me anything, that was one name that was just fine with me, because that’s what I was -- a grunt. A grunt in the Marine Corps is a combat infantryman. And that’s what I had been since the day I became a marine at my graduation from boot camp. It was a title I held with pride. It is not colonels, generals, and the like, who fight the wars and win the battles. It’s the grunts, slogging through mud, sand, jungle, or urban environment. Grunts are the heart and soul of the Marine Corps.

I went back to licking his cock and then slowly and gently sucking it. Paul was writhing on the bed and moaning out his pleasure at what I was doing. I couldn’t do one of those sword-swallowing acts I’ve heard some gay guys can do. I couldn’t begin to take Paul’s huge fucking cock down my throat, but from the sounds and movements he was making, I didn’t have to. It seems I was still a damned good cocksucker after all.

## Chapter Sixteen

I did finally get around to fucking Paul that afternoon, and it is a very strange feeling fucking a man who was your superior officer and bigger than you are to boot. But his ass was fine! It was tight, and he did some tricks with his muscles that just about had me losing my load long before I wanted to. I was going to have to figure out how he did them.

We'd gotten to the cabin on Saturday, and Christmas was on the following Wednesday. This gave us lots of time to fuck, talk, sleep, and eat -- all the time getting to know each other in a way that was very different than we knew each other at Camp Lejeune.

I didn't want to think about it, but I was really worried about going to his parents' house for Christmas. Besides his parents, both his brothers were going to be there, and I don't know who I was more afraid of: his parents, his brother who was a marine, or his brother who was a priest! What did I do if they hated me? I didn't even know if they knew their oldest son was gay. I hope that Paul wasn't going to just spring it on them with me there, like I'd had to do with my mom.

As Christmas day got closer and closer, I became more and more nervous about it. Finally Paul noticed something was wrong.

"Mike, what's the matter? Are you going through guilt pangs again?" He said this as he slipped his arms about my stomach and held me back against his warm body.

"No. This isn't about Scott. I worried about tomorrow."

"Trust me, you've got nothing to worry about."

I turned in his arms so I could look in his eyes.

"Paul, tell me the truth -- do they know about you?"

"Yes, since I was seventeen."

"Really? How did they take it?"

"They were very supportive. My dad had a little trouble with it at first, but he got over it, and by the time I went to the Marine Corps, I think I was closer to him than I'd ever been before. I know he goes out of his way to tell me how much he loves me and how proud of me he is."

"God! You are so lucky. I never even had a dad. My mom raised me all alone. I found out from her finally that they were supposed to get married, and then when she found out she was pregnant, he skipped town, and she never heard from him again."

"Did she know about you and Scott?"

"Yeah. We told her when we got our first long leave after our first float. She loved Scott. She was the one who had to tell me he was killed. She's the only family I've got. Her parents dumped her when they found out she was pregnant. Some religious bullshit. That's why I'm kind of afraid of meeting your youngest brother. I don't have much to do with religion because of them."

"If my brother's church was like that, I wouldn't, either. But then again, he wouldn't be a part of it. You've got nothing to worry about. They already know about you, and they really want to meet you. They'll love you -- if for no other reason than seeing how much you love me."

With this he pulled me closer and kissed me passionately. That led, of course, to another trip upstairs.

I just couldn't let go of my fear, however. I stayed awake half the night, lying there with Paul curled up to me, his head in the crook of my shoulder and my arms around him. I had been completely wrong about the sleeping arrangements. It was pretty equal as to who slept curled up to whom between us. I really loved that. I loved the feeling I got when Paul showed his vulnerability and dependence on me by letting me hold him while we slept. I felt so protective toward him, and I knew he felt the same way about me when I curled up to him. I knew because he actually opened up and told me. That was something Paul was teaching me, how to open up and talk about my feelings, especially my feelings about us. He taught me the same way he did the platoon as their leader -- by example.

My love for him, however, didn't take the fear away of having to deal with his family. When you've spent your whole life hiding from everybody, you can't just let go of that. Before I met Paul, Scott and my mom were the only people who knew, for sure, that I was gay. As Paul had told me, the guys in Bravo Company may have had their suspicions about Scott and me, but none of them ever knew for sure. I knew all too well from high school and the nasty comments that flew around the barracks at times what straight guys felt about guys like Scott and me.

Luckily, because of their rejection of him, I never had to meet Scott's parents. From the time he entered the Corps, he never saw or spoke to them again, so I never had the experience of facing any parent but my own. As far as Paul's brothers were concerned, I wondered, even if he accepted his brother being gay, how his brother who was another Marine Corps officer would deal with the fact that his brother was in love with a grunt. I knew that both the enlisted and officers in the Corps had the idea of nonfraternization drummed into our heads almost from the moment we entered the Marine Corps.

The rules in the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the UCMJ, for some reason referred only to officers. Under the UCMJ, *only* Paul could be brought up on charges of

fraternization, but not any enlisted personnel he would be accused of fraternizing with (me), while under Marine Corps rules, *both* of us could be charged with fraternization. Such is the frequent confusion of so-called Military Justice which I have seen, over my years in the Corps, be as capricious and arbitrary as civilian courts are accused of being except for the fact that military courts are far harsher in their judgments than civilian courts tend to be.

As I lay there, unable to sleep, but still somewhat calmed by the warmth and scent of my lover, I could only hope and pray that tomorrow would go by quickly, and it could go back to just being Paul and me, alone in this beautiful house, making love to each other.

The next morning, I got the nicest wake-up I'd ever had. There was Paul, gently sucking my cock. What a way to wake up! It was sure better than fucking reveille. As soon as he could see that I was awake, he moved up, covering me with his body.

"Merry Christmas, grunt."

"It would be merrier if you'd finish what you started," I said grinning.

"Oh, that's just the appetizer. There's going to be a salad course, a main course, and a dessert, as well."

"Have you joined the Cannibal Battalion now?"

"No. I'm first going to *toss your salad*. I take it you've never heard that phrase before."

"Well, yeah. I know what a tossed salad is. I may be a grunt, but I'm not stupid."

"No. *Tossing salad* is a very old slang term for *rimming*."

"What's that?"

"What's *rimming*? You mean to tell me you love to do it, and you don't even know what it's called?"

"I have no idea in the world what you're talking about."

"Rimming is eating ass."

"You're kidding!"

“No, I’m not. Rimming is the slang term for the clinical term “anilingus,” which means *physical contact between the mouth and anus.*”

“Damn! Do you look this stuff up?”

“I did when I was a teenager and started to learn about sex.”

“Shit! I don’t think I ever looked up anything about sex. I just never thought to.”

For a moment, I was really bothered by something. I felt really inferior to Paul. I knew officers were...well...academically smarter than grunts, but that never mattered before. I was feeling like maybe I would become boring to Paul because I was not, evidently, near as smart as he was. I forgot for the moment how Paul told me he wasn’t psychic, but could see everything I’m feeling just by looking at my facial expression.

“What’s the matter, grunt? You’ve got that look on your face again.”

“What look?”

“That look like you’re thinking that something is going to turn into a *goat fuck*,” he said using a typical Corps expression for something that fucked up totally.

I immediately felt embarrassed and looked sheepishly at him.

“It’s just that...uhh...you’re so fucking smart, and I’m...”

“Stop right there. I’ve had some advantages you never had, like someone to pay for me to go to college. That doesn’t make me smarter. I think what you’re worried about here is that I’d outgrow you. Forget it. I am *always* going to love you, no matter what. *You got that, marine?*”

This last was said with a combination of his Marine *command voice* and a growl, and I figured I’d better give up before he did turn cannibal on me.

“Uhh...okay. So what’s the main course?”

“One of your favorites, a nice butt-reaming with my cock.”

“And dessert?”



“Dessert’s a surprise. Maybe afterward I’ll tell you what it’s called, if you like it.”

“A surprise. You mean there’s something we haven’t done?”

“Actually, there’s lots of stuff we’ve never done.” He gave me a wolfish grin as he said this.

And all I could think was, *Fuck! My lover’s a sex fiend! HOT DAMN!*

## Chapter Seventeen

Paul moved down, and I knew to pull my legs back. Almost immediately, I was experiencing the incredible pleasure of having him eat my ass. He did it differently than Scott had, but it was just as good, if not better. He was far more aggressive at it. His tongue reached further up me than I thought was possible. As I relaxed more, he was actually able to tickle the edge of my prostate, which was a feeling I'd never had before.

Of course, it was easy for me to relax now. I'd never been fucked this many times in such a few days. Paul loved to fuck -- as much as I did -- and he loved to be fucked, so I got my chances to ride his tail as much as he rode mine. Everything seemed so equal between us that I was able to completely forget the extreme differences in our stations in the world outside his cabin.

I lay there groaning as he rimmed me. I guess that was the word, at least from what he said. Whatever it was called, I loved it. As much as I loved to do it. And it was especially good when a master like Paul was doing it. He pushed me up and back with his muscular arms so I was almost bent double and was watching him as he ate me. He could look down right into my eyes as my back rested on his thighs. I could tell from the twinkle in his eyes that he was smiling as he ate my ass, very pleased with the reaction he was getting from me.

“You ready for the main course?”

“Oh, fuck yeah! Please! Fuck me! Fuck me hard!”

He had me literally begging to get fucked, something I’d never done in my life, but I wanted him so bad...I needed him. I needed to feel his strength and his love. I needed to have that reassurance before I had to deal with whatever this Christmas was going to bring.

Paul slowly lowered me as he grabbed the lube off the bedside table. We didn’t bother putting it in the drawer anymore. We used it much too often. I wondered when Paul was going to run out of sheets. We were changing them at least once a day.

He quickly lubed me and opened me up with his fingers and then gently slid his cock all the way inside me. I had no trouble taking it, and it felt so good going in. Felt like it was coming home to where it belonged.

Paul fucked me gently and slowly for a few minutes, and then he pulled out completely while leaving my legs over his shoulders. I looked at him questioningly.

“Something new,” was all he said.

He grabbed a pillow.

“Lift your hips.”

I did so, and he shoved the pillow beneath me so my ass was raised up. He took my legs and moved them from his shoulders to around his hips, leaned over, resting on his elbows, and slowly shoved his cock back into my hole while kissing me passionately. He pulled back and grinned down at me.

“Like this better?”

“Oh, yes!” I enthused.

“Good. Me too.”

And with this, he kissed me again, all the while his cock glided in and out of me. It was a much more romantic and sensuous way to fuck than we had previously used. Now Paul

was no longer so far above me, and we could kiss throughout the entire fuck which we proceeded to do. In fact, we came groaning into each other's mouths almost at the same time.

Paul pulled his mouth from mine and unhooked my legs from around his waist, rose up, and pushed my legs back to where my knees were back to my chest. Not exactly knowing what he was up to, I held onto my legs. He smiled at me and then got down on his stomach again and began to lick and suck at my just-fucked hole.

The feeling was absolutely amazing! Since I had just been fucked, my hole was *way* more sensitive than it ever normally was. The feeling of his tongue soothed the abused tissues and had me moaning in pleasure.

"Is this dessert?" I managed to ask.

"The first part of it."

I had no idea what he meant by that, but his rimming got more intense at that point. He was sucking on my hole and shoving his tongue as far up it as he could get. He did this for a few more minutes; then he rose up and moved over me. His mouth came down to kiss me, and I opened to him, but what I got instead of his tongue was something tangy flowing into my mouth. It took a moment to realize what I was tasting was his cum which he'd shot into me. I don't know why, but this thrilled me to no end, and I began to moan into his mouth as we shared his cum.

Finally there was no more, and he rolled off me, and I turned so I was once more in his arms.

"Well, did you like dessert?"

"I fucking loved dessert. Okay, what was that called?"

"Well, actually it was two things. Eating my load out of your butt is called *felching*. Then sharing the cum in a kiss is called *snowballing*."

"Damn! Everything has got a name."

"In sex it does. I figure sex is the most important thing to guys, and so we come up with names for all the parts of it. Shit! Some guys even name their dicks."

"You're kidding me, right?"

"Nope. I knew this guy named James who called his dick *Little Jamie*."

"Fuck! I don't think I'd want to give my dick a name."

"No, I didn't get why somebody would do that, either, but I guess it just goes to show you how much guys love their dicks. Don't you love yours?"

"Well, yeah. But I love yours too."

"Thank you. I love yours too. But I think we need to take our dicks into the shower and get ready. We need to leave soon for my parents'."

"Do we *have* to?" I whined like a little kid.

Paul laughed at this.

"Yes, we *have* to. Besides, your other Christmas present is waiting there."

"Another one? But I didn't buy you anything."

"Grunt, you said you'd be mine. That's the best Christmas present I've ever had in my whole life."

That, of course, led to another kiss...and another...and another...until it was probably another half an hour before we got into the shower. We washed each other and played like kids -- something we did every shower we took together. Not that there were any that we didn't take together.

We got into Paul's Suburban and took off for his parents' house. There had been a light dusting of snow overnight, and the area surrounding the cabin was so incredibly beautiful with the glinting of sunlight off the snow and the snow-peaked mountains behind the cabin. The drive was about an hour and a half, but since I was with Paul, I didn't even notice the time. Just being with him, talking with him, made the time fly by. Soon we were pulling up to a house as different from his as it could be.

First of all, it was huge. To be honest it was a mansion. It was V-shaped with a balcony over the main entrance. It was wood and stone, like Paul's house, but that was the only similarity. I'd thought that Paul's cabin was big, but now I can see why he calls it a cabin. If he grew up in this house, then his would seem small by comparison. Actually I preferred the cabin. Of course, that could be because of how I first saw it and what had happened there since, and it could be because it was Paul's.

We walked under the balcony and up to the entrance. I don't know why, but I thought Paul would walk right in, but instead, he rang the doorbell. When the door opened I understood. A woman stood there in the uniform of a maid. She was probably very little over four feet tall, and her skin was the color of mahogany. Her hair, jet black to almost being blue, was pulled back in a tight bun.

At the sight of Paul, she threw out her arms to him.

*"¡Pablito! ¡Bienvenido a casa!"*

*"Gracias, Consuela,"* Paul said, leaning down to hug the woman who obviously had known Paul a long time.

After they had hugged, she looked over at me.

*"And who is this, ¿Pablito? Él es muy hermoso."*

Paul laughed.

"This is my lover, Mike. He doesn't speak Spanish," Paul informed her and then turned to me. "Say thank you, Mike, Consuela just told me how handsome she thinks you are."

"Thank you, Consuela. That's the nicest thing somebody's said to me all day. I'm really happy to meet you."

I knew I was blushing because I could feel it. Consuela just beamed at me.

*"Ahh! Pablito, this is a good one. I feel that this one is right for you."*

*"I do too."*

I couldn't believe they were talking this openly about Paul and I being lovers, but evidently she must know about Paul. Better still, I pretty quickly figured out that if somebody who worked for the family knew and was okay with Paul being gay, then there was a damned good chance that the family was okay with it, too, just like Paul said they were. Of course, that didn't mean they'd feel the same about me.

"Well, both of you, come in. The family is all waiting to see you."

We stepped into the house, and the first thing I saw was a huge staircase going up to the second floor. The entryway had a flagstone floor. As we took off our coats, Consuela took them and put them in a closet to the left of us. Paul put his arm across my shoulders in a warm but possessive way and began walking us toward a room to the right. This turned out to be a massive living room with a huge fireplace. The room was sunken a couple of feet below the entryway, and Paul and I walked down three steps to reach the carpeted floor.

There were four people in the room, and it was easy to tell who was who. Paul's father was an older version of Paul, wearing a plaid shirt and tan pants. His mother, on the other hand, was slender and tall with steel grey hair cut short into an almost masculine cut. She was wearing an outfit of a black turtleneck sweater, black slacks, and a choker of pearls around her neck. Then there were the two young men in the room. I immediately knew who Paul's middle brother, James, was because he was in a Marine Corps uniform with the rank of second lieutenant. His younger brother, Tim, was wearing all black except for the white collar around his neck, indicating he was a priest.

I almost saluted Paul's brother, until I remembered that since I was out of uniform and had the arm of a superior officer to James around my shoulders, there was no reason for me to do so.

"Mom, Dad, James, Tim, I want you to meet Mike."

His mother moved first, coming close and letting Paul bend slightly so that she could kiss him.

“Welcome home, darling. You’re looking very well. I guess the Marine Corps agrees with you.”

“No, Mom. This marine agrees with me.”

She then turned to me and took my hand in hers, covering it with both of her hands.

“Mike, I can’t tell you how happy I am to meet you. Paul has written and talked of no one else for months now. Merry Christmas, and welcome to our home.”

She leaned forward, and I had the good sense to lean down so she could kiss me on the cheek as well.

Behind her came Paul’s father. He shook hands with Paul first.

“Welcome home, son.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

He then turned to me and shook my hand. His grip was firm without being overpowering. This was a man who had no issues with his masculinity.

“So you’re the fabulous Mike. The way Paul talked about you, I almost expected for you to arrive in a chariot with angels.”

The three of us laughed at this.

“No, sir. I’m a marine. I don’t think there is such a thing as an angel in the Corps.”

“Certainly not. They took two of my sons, so I know they weren’t looking for angels. Well, come on, sit down. Can I get you a drink, Mike?”

“No, sir. I’m fine.”

“How about you, son?”

“No, Dad. Nothing for me.”

We were standing in front of a long, white couch. Mike’s two brothers were sitting on it. They both stood up to say hello to us.



“Hello, Mike, I’m James. And that’s what you’re to call me. Despite the uniform, I’m home, and the only *sir* in this house is our dad.”

James stuck out his hand and gave me a grin which was a great deal like Paul’s and his father’s. There was no mistaking who had sired these boys.

“Thanks, James. It’s not often a grunt is on first-name basis with an officer.”

“From what I’ve heard, it looks like you’re going to be joining the family so I’ll tell you right now that there are no grunts or officers in this family, only marines.”

I looked at Paul in surprise. He must have told them before we even left base. My lover had self-confidence far beyond what even I knew about. He evidently told them before he told me, because even though I’d been there through a couple of phone calls to his mom, he’d never said anything to her about me “joining the family.”

“I didn’t say that. Mom came to that conclusion, and I couldn’t convince her you had something to say in the matter.”

“No, she just remembered how you always found a way to get what you wanted, no matter what it was. Hi, I’m Tim, the civilian brother.”

“Uhh...with that collar on, I don’t know if I’d exactly classify you as a civilian,” I said.

“Ignore it. I had to do a Christmas service this morning, and I didn’t have time to change yet.”

“Why don’t you boys sit down and take a load off?” Paul’s father said, coming over.

“No, Dad. I need to give Mike his Christmas present. It is here, right?”

“Oh, damn! I forgot. Of course. Yes, it’s in the study.”

“Okay, we’ll go get it now.”

With his arm still across my shoulders, Paul maneuvered me back toward the foyer and then to another door on the other side of the staircase.

“My Christmas present to you is right in here,” Paul said, opening the door.

I walked into a beautiful room of mostly bookcases filled with books, a small fireplace with two loveseats in front of the fire, and sitting on one of the loveseats and just now getting up was...

“MOM!”

## Chapter Eighteen

I ran over and grabbed Mom up in my arms, literally lifting her off her feet. I hugged her to me as I murmured, "I'm so sorry. You were right, I just couldn't admit it."

"That's all right, sweetie. I just want to know if you're happy."

I put her back down and could sense Paul standing close behind me. I turned my head to grin at him, and looking at him, I answered Mom.

"So happy I can't believe it. This man reached down into the hell I was in and brought me to heaven."

"Well, I guess that's about the best answer I could ever hope for. By the way, I'm Madeline Collins."

"I'm sorry, Mom. This is Paul. My lover."

"I'm really happy to finally meet you, Mrs. Collins."

Mom tugged on the sleeve of Paul's dark green long-sleeved T-shirt. He leaned down, and Mom kissed his cheek.

"Thank you, Paul, for inviting me and for what you've done for my son. But it's *Miss* Collins. I was never married to Mike's father."

“Mike told me the story. His punishment was not spending these years with such a beautiful lady nor getting to know his wonderful son.”

My lover did, indeed, have a way with words, as well as being one of the most polite men I’d ever known. Mom smiled shyly at Paul at this.

“Why, thank you. Mike told me that Marine Corps officers were true gentlemen. I see he was quite right.”

“Do you want to spend some time alone or join the rest of the family?” Paul asked.

“Oh, I think there will be time later for us to talk. Let’s join your family. They’ve been so wonderful to me,” Mom answered.

“Believe me, they are thrilled I found Mike, and they want to get to know both of you.”

We went back to the living room and spent a couple of hours talking and getting to know each other. We had a wonderful Christmas dinner, and then people sort of drifted to other rooms to spend time together.

Somehow, Paul and I ended up back in the study talking with his youngest brother, Tim. During this conversation the subject of gay marriage came up. This had been in the news ever since Vermont had permitted civil unions for gays two years before. I was surprised to hear his brother talking about the movement in the Episcopal Church to start performing some kind of ceremony to bless gay relationships.

“I think we’re just being too careful. We know what we’re talking about is *marriage*, and we ought to just say so. I had a gay couple in my parish ask me to do a wedding for them privately. These two guys have been together for more than twenty years! How many heterosexual couples make it that long these days? Better still, if that length of time together doesn’t constitute a marriage, I don’t know what does.”

“So, did you do it?” Paul asked.

“You bet I did. Of course, I’m not going to tell my bishop about it, but it had to be the most moving wedding I’ve ever performed. The look of love in their eyes when they exchanged the vows was incredibly moving. I found myself tearing up during it.”

“I have to tell you, I was terribly afraid of meeting you. I thought, because of what happened to my mom, that all religions hated gay people,” I said.

“Regardless of what any of the stupid people who claim to be Christian say, Jesus never condemned gay people. He never said one word about them. Out of curiosity, have you two thought about getting married?” Tim asked.

I looked at Paul in shock. He just grinned at me.

“Sure, I’ve thought about it -- thought about how much I’d love to marry Mike -- but we can’t.”

“Why not?” Tim asked.

“Well, up until this moment, I didn’t know it was ever done,” Paul replied.

“Big brother, I would give anything to be the one to join you and Mike in marriage.”

“Uhh...there’s just one problem, little brother.”

“What’s that?”

“I haven’t had the chance to ask him what he wants. Well, grunt, would you marry me?”

I sat there so disconcerted at first, I didn’t know what to say. Finally I found my voice again.

“I’ve already sworn to love you forever. To me, that’s the same thing as getting married, but if that’s what you want, I want you to be happy.”

“No, it can’t be like that,” Paul said. “You’ve got to want it too. Not just for me. Let me tell you what I want. I want us to stand there in front of God, my parents, my brothers, and your mom and say publicly how much we love each other. I want their blessings on our love. I want them to understand that, for us, it means the same thing as any other marriage.”

I thought for a moment about one thing -- my mom. She'd never have the chance to see me get married any other way, and I knew she would be over the moon, she'd be so happy. I knew I loved Paul. I knew that marriage wouldn't change that, but I did want him to be happy, and I could do this for him and Mom. That's why I wanted it.

"Okay. I'd love to marry you -- but when?"

"Why not now?" Tim asked.

"Now?" Paul said in shock.

"Sure, why not? You don't need a license or anything. I've got my Book of Common Prayer in the car. No problem."

"Uhh...what about rings?" Paul asked.

"Rings are not required. Don't tell jewelers that, but there is no requirement within the service to have rings."

"We can't wear matching rings anyway. That would get us thrown out of the Corps for sure," I said to Paul.

"Wait a minute -- dog tags!" Paul exclaimed.

"Dog tags?" I asked in confusion.

"We each wear two dog tags. We'll exchange one of them with each other."

And so, about an hour later, there we all were -- Paul's parents, brothers, and my mom -- standing in front of that huge fireplace in Paul's parents' living room, while Paul and I were exchanging vows to love, honor, and stay faithful to each other forever. Tim's brother changed the *'til death do you part* thing to *forever* for us. Then Tim blessed our dog tags, and Paul handed his to me.

"With this symbol of my love for you and of my love for the Corps, I honor you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

I may have thought a ceremony didn't mean all that much to me, but why then, while Paul was attaching his dog tag to my neck chain, were tears streaming down my face?

## Chapter Nineteen

Paul and I spent the next day alone together at the insistence of Paul's parents and my mom. We spent the day making love or just lying in each other's arms, talking. We talked about how we were going to handle being back on base together. Paul was of the opinion that we just had to keep on acting like we always had, and that would keep things undercover. I reminded him about what he'd told me about the guys knowing about Scott and me.

"But that was different. You both lived in the barracks with them. You spent twenty-four/seven with them. That's not true for us. You're in the barracks in your own room, and I'm in the BOQ."

"So what about leave? That's what you told me was the thing that gave us away."

"Real simple. I have access to a car, and you have your truck. We can go places that most of the grunts won't. They'll have no idea we're going there together."

"Yeah, that would work. Where would we go?"

"Nice places -- expensive places. Places the grunts aren't able to afford."

"But I can't afford that."

"Of course we can."

“No. I don’t have that kind of money.”

Paul chuckled.

“You do now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Grunt, we’re married. Everything that is mine is yours, and everything that’s yours is mine. I’m calling the family lawyer in the morning and having him add your name to the deed for this place.”

I just stared at him. I couldn’t say a word. That was a ramification of getting married I’d never even thought about. Everything had always been equal financially between Scott and me, but that just meant we shared the poverty of most grunts, who don’t get paid all that much. I just didn’t know what to say.

“Grunt, you’re just going to have to get used to the fact that you’ve got money.”

He then kissed me, and all thoughts, except for him, flew out of my head.

The next day we brought Mom to Paul’s house so she could see it. We spent the day together -- Mom really getting to know Paul better. She told me later, when we were alone for a few moments, that she absolutely adored him.

We took her to the airport in Denver the next day, because she had to get home for work. We took her by way of the company helicopter. It was the first time she’d ever been up in one, and to my surprise, she loved it. We both hugged her good-bye, and she made us promise to visit her on our next leave.

A couple of weeks after we got back to base, however, all hell broke out between Paul and me. I never thought we’d ever fight about anything, but this was just too important. Paul’s enlistment was up the end of February. Mine was the end of March. I was simply going to reenlist as usual, but when I told Paul, he informed me he wasn’t.

“What do you mean? You’re going to give up your career?” I practically shouted.



I had a clenching feeling in my gut -- like Paul had become a different person all of a sudden. I never thought he would leave the Corps.

"I have to, grunt. There's something brewing I cannot agree with. My family for years has done business all around the world. I know too much about things to buy into what's going on in Washington. They're going to invade Iraq, and thanks to a buddy of mine in the Pentagon, I know some of the plans, and they just won't work. I've been to Iraq. I know that country. I've never told you, but I speak Farsi and Arabic. That's one of the reasons I got to know the country so well. This is going to turn out to be a disaster, and I just won't be a part of it. Not to mention, I'm not going to risk my life -- and I don't want you risking yours -- on this political stupidity, because that's all it is."

"Well, you can get out, sir! But I'm staying in. I swore to defend my country, and that's what I'm going to do!"

I then turned and started to storm out of his office, but he made me pause.

"I'd defend this country with my last drop of blood. When did Iraq invade us?"

My full head of steam was up. I stomped out of his office and started walking the base.

I didn't know what the fuck I was going to do. Paul was my lover, my mate. Fuck! We were fucking married! I guess I was naïve to just think we were going to stay in the Corps all our lives and then retire on military pensions and live in his cabin in Colorado. Well, that was a nice dream, except Paul just blew it all to hell. How could he think about getting out when this country was going to war?

I don't have the faintest idea why I did it. I guess I was so distraught I didn't realize what I was doing, but I found myself going into the base chapel and actually kneeling down and praying, looking for any kind of answer to this. I hadn't even done this after Scott died, but then, I'd already decided to kill myself. I didn't need any answers.

I stayed there quite a while when, all of a sudden it was like I could feel Scott close to me again, comforting me. I started talking to him, just like I used to.

*What the fuck am I going to do? You know I love Paul. I don't want to lose him, but how can I leave the Corps? Not that I haven't given the Corps a fuck of a lot. I lost you because of the war in Afghanistan. Now I could die in Iraq and leave Paul in the same hellhole you left me -- not that you meant to. But I've got a choice here. The Corps versus Paul.*

That woke me up! That was no fucking choice at all. Between Paul and the Corps, Paul won hands down. I didn't know how this was going to work, but everybody has to sacrifice something for love, I guess. I would sacrifice the Corps for Paul, and God forgive me, let the chips fall where they may.

*Thanks, buddy. I still love you. That will never change, but I've got to live my life for Paul now. Be talking to you.*

I got up off my knees and left the chapel. I walked back to the office and knocked at Paul's door.

"Come!"

I marched to his desk.

"Staff Sergeant Collins, reporting, sir!"

"Please, Mike, I don't want to fight."

"No fight, sir. The sergeant wishes to tell the lieutenant that he is not going to re-up for another tour of duty, sir!"

Paul leaned back in his chair and looked at me.

"What changed your mind, grunt?"

"I talked to Scott."

"You *what?*"

"I talked to Scott. I used to do that a lot. Whenever I was feeling lonely before you came along, whenever I was hurting, whenever I was confused, I'd talk to him. It always seemed to help. It did this time."

“Okay...so what did Scott say that changed your mind?”

“Scott doesn’t talk. I just kind of feel his presence. I can’t exactly explain it.”

“You don’t need to. That’s called prayer. And you’re feeling Scott because wherever he is, I’m sure he still loves you.”

“That’s what I think. Anyway, it dawned on me while I was talking to him that the choice was between the Corps and you, and while if it wasn’t for the Corps I’d have never found you, there’s no choice. You’re my lover, my mate, and I don’t know if this is right, but since we’re married, you’re my husband?”

“Yeah, grunt. Just like you’re my husband.”

At this Paul grinned because I don’t think he’d thought of that, either. Words are always a fuckup to me, and I guess, most guys.

“So if you’re leaving, my place is with you -- not here.”

Paul just sat there, and I didn’t know what was wrong. All of a sudden, I saw tears rolling down his cheeks. He got up, and right there in his office, he took me in his arms and kissed me passionately.

“Oh, fuck, grunt! I thought I’d lost you. I didn’t know what I was going to do.”

“You can’t lose me, remember? We belong together forever. That’s what your brother said when he married us.”

“Yes, grunt. Together forever. *Semper Fi!*”

*“Semper Fi!”*

## Chapter Twenty

As one of his last acts as a first lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps, Paul approved terminal leave for me so that we could go back to Colorado together. That is leave which basically comes at the end of a marine's career in the Marine Corps. You don't muster out, you just leave, and your discharge is mailed to you.

Paul had me sell my truck because I could get a new one in Colorado, and he didn't want me to drive it across country. Actually, Paul didn't want to drive across country with me. He wanted to go home as quickly as possible. I think, though he never admitted it to me, deciding to leave the Corps was one of the most difficult decisions he'd ever had to make in his life.

Over the next five years, Paul and I watched the disaster that Iraq became. Both of us sorrowed over the tremendous loss of life of our forces. I realized Paul, somehow, had foreseen it all.

In the meantime, Paul and I lived quietly in the cabin. Because of Paul's investments and the money that was shared by the family in the company, neither of us had to work. But very quickly that became too boring for us. We'd always been very active men, and we couldn't stand the inactivity after a couple of months.

Paul came up with an idea that really got my juices flowing. He decided that we would start a nonprofit agency to provide care packages to marines fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as money to help marines injured in the wars. I was so ashamed of myself, though. I broke down crying when he told me we would call it The Scott Calder Memorial Fund, and we would start with an initial donation of one hundred thousand dollars from the two of us.

We used the only picture I had of Scott to make the logo for the fund. Paul had never seen what Scott looked like before because I couldn't bring myself to look at the picture, so I never brought it out. It was the formal photograph that almost all marines have made in their dress blues with the flag behind them. I gave the one I had made of me to my mom and one to Scott. Scott only gave his to me. Paul said Scott was indeed a very beautiful male, and he could see how I was so attracted to him.

The fund grew very quickly, especially when Paul's brother Tim got us in touch with the Episcopal Bishop of Colorado. His support of what we were doing and the contacts and resources he could provide for us were invaluable. Not to mention the work that Paul's father did on behalf of the fund. Every month, there was a check from the company in donation to the fund. We soon had to open an office in town because our living room was full of donations. The money also poured in to help the wounded veterans and their families.

Because of our work, we were invited to be on *Good Morning, America* and were interviewed by Diane Sawyer -- who is just as nice in person as she is on TV. I was a nervous wreck at the idea of being on television, but she made it just like we were sitting in a living room somewhere, talking about the fund -- something Paul and I could talk about for hours.

Evidently though, Scott's parents must watch *GMA* or someone who knew them watched the show, because I got a call from Scott's mother. I'd never spoken to the woman in my life, and it was obvious she had no idea what my relationship with her son had been. She thanked me for what I was doing in Scott's name and told me that while they'd hated the idea of Scott becoming a marine, they never thought they would lose all contact with their son over it. I did get the chance to ask her where Scott was buried, which I had never

known. She told me that they'd been so distraught over his death that they'd had him buried in Arlington, because they didn't have a plot in their hometown and hadn't known what to do. She said she was sorry, because now they only got to visit his grave about once a year.

I thanked her for the information. She gave me her address and phone number and asked me to let her know any way she could help the fund. I told her I would be sure to do that.

She then did something that surprised me. She asked if I had any pictures of Scott in his uniform, as she didn't have one. I only had the one we used for the logo, but I said I would have it copied and sent to her. I asked her if she could copy a couple of Scott as he was growing up, and she said she would.

When I got off the phone with her, I guess I had a strange look on my face that Paul noticed.

"What's the matter?"

"That was Scott's mother."

"You're kidding. What did she say?"

"She thanked me for starting the fund in Scott's name. She also told me where he was buried."

"Didn't you know?"

"No, I'd never had any contact with his family until today. She wants to do something to help the fund, by the way. Uhh...could we fly to Washington? In the next few days?"

"He's buried in Arlington?"

"Yeah. Please?"

"Grunt, you don't have to beg. If I'd known you'd never been to his grave or didn't know where it was, I would have moved heaven and earth to find out for you. Let me call the airlines."

Paul was always a man of action. Twenty-four hours later we were in Arlington National Cemetery standing in front of the small, white headstone that said *Scott Vincent Calder, Sergeant -- United States Marine Corps*.

"I never knew his middle name was Vincent. Hey! I don't know yours."

"I don't know yours, either. Mine's David."

"Holy shit! So is mine!" I exclaimed forgetting for a moment I was in a graveyard.

"Nice to meet you, David." Paul laughed.

"Yeah, nice to meet you, David. Oh, that reminds me."

I turned back to the grave and crouched down.

"Scott, this is Paul. Ain't he something? I really do love him. Just like I still really love you. I wanted to bring him here to you, but I never knew where you were. I'm sorry it took so long. Your mom called me, and we're exchanging pictures of you. She said they visit you about once a year. I promise, I'll come back on Veterans Day -- every year. Is that okay, Paul?" I asked looking up at my lover.

"Yes, Scott, we'll be back every Veterans Day. We both promise."

A few days after we got home, a package was delivered to me at the fund office. I opened it up, and there were more than twenty pictures of Scott, from the time he was a very little boy -- no more than two or three -- until he graduated high school. I just sat there, and all the grief over his death hit me like a category five hurricane. I literally started bawling. Paul heard me and came running. He saw the pictures spread out on the desk in front of me. He crouched down beside my chair and took me in his arms. He just held me while I cried harder than I can ever remember crying. Scott had been a beautiful little boy and a stunningly beautiful teenager. The idea that someone so good was lying in the ground just tore me up. He loved me so much, and I missed him terribly. I also felt such guilt, having

Paul there to see me break down this way over Scott. What was that saying about how much I loved him. And I did. I truly did.

“He was an incredibly beautiful boy, wasn’t he? I know you loved him so very much. First loves are hard enough, without losing your love in battle.”

“But I love you. I honestly do,” I sobbed.

“Grunt, I know that. Don’t go getting all guilty because you’re crying over Scott. Shit! Looking at those pictures I could almost break down crying for the waste of such a young life.”

“Thank you for understanding. I thought I was over this grief shit!”

“You never get over loving someone or mourning their loss. It’s just that it hurts a little less each day, but you never get over it. My grandfather’s been dead almost ten years now, and I still miss him -- and I wasn’t in love with him the way you were with Scott.”

“I hope not.”

“Well, they do say that incest is only relative.”

“Oh! That was terrible!” I exclaimed, but I’d stopped crying so I knew what Paul was trying to do worked.

“Yeah, but you would have laughed any other time.”

“I probably would have. I guess I need to go get that picture I have of Scott copied and send it to his mother.”

“I think that’s a really good idea. Why don’t you go do that? I’ll stay here and work for a while. Come back when you’re finished.”

Not long after that day, Paul and his father had a terrible fight. I only found out about it because Paul came home from the office so angry.

All marines, even when they leave the Corps, have some kind of continuing obligation to serve -- either in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) or in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). SCMR marines train one weekend a month and two weeks a year. IRR



marines have completed their active duty or SCMR service, but remain on a list for recall in case of war or national emergency. They are only required to call their local reserve station once a year to check in.

Evidently, Paul had done that and found out that neither one of us was a part of the IRR anymore. We had been removed from the lists. Paul very quickly found out how when he called his father to ask him about it. It seems that not only were the Richardses wealthy, they were politically connected as well. Paul's father had made some phone calls and made sure that neither of us would be called up -- no matter what.

I'd never seen Paul as furious as he was that afternoon. I let him vent for a while, until he seemed to calm down some.

"I can understand why you're angry. He took the decision out of your hands. I can understand that, but I'm sorry, I'm *not* sorry he did. With all the languages you speak, you would be one of the first who got recalled to duty. I'd be stuck here without you because I'm just a fucking grunt -- or they'd call me up, and we'd be in different brigades or even different theaters of war. You could be in Iraq, and I could be in Afghanistan. Your father wasn't going to take the chance of losing either one of us. Don't forget, it was you who convinced me what a waste of life and money this war is."

"Okay, but this isn't right. It isn't fair."

"No, it's not, but tell me what part of life *is* fair? Was it fair for Scott to die in Afghanistan and leave me wanting to kill myself? I don't want to go through that again, and now, thanks to your father I won't have to."

"So you're siding with him?"

"I'm not siding with anybody. I'm telling you I don't want you going off to war and getting killed, and if a phone call from your father can stop that, then I'm all for it. I'm all for it -- no matter how it happens."

"But I'm a marine. Marines don't look for the easy way out."

“Bullshit! I never met a grunt who didn’t look for a way to get out of something they didn’t like. That’s just human nature. Besides, I think we’re doing more to help the marines, the marines who really need help, by staying here and running the fund than going to goddamned Iraq.”

That took the wind out of his sails. I hardly ever argue with him, because it’s not often that he’s wrong, but I usually win when I do because it’s not often he’s wrong. But deep in my heart, I knew this time he was.

“Now, are you going to call your father and apologize, or am I going to call him and thank him?”

He looked at me in shock at first, but when he saw I was absolutely serious, he gave me a sheepish grin.

“Goddamn grunts. Always were a pain in the ass.”

He then got up and went in the den to call his father. The phone call lasted a long time, but when he came out I noticed that his eyes were red from crying. That I took as a good sign.

“I told Dad you were grateful to him. He said you were the only one of the two of us with any sense.”

“Well, I don’t agree with that, but I’m just glad this is over. I’d miss your mother’s pot roast if you two were fighting.”

“Come on, let’s go upstairs. I need to get rid of some energy and pounding your butt seems like the best way I can think of.”

“Yeah, well, maybe I should pound your ass for getting all uppity with your father.”

“I’ve got a better idea. Let’s pound each other’s asses and let the rest of the world go screw itself for a night.”

“Sir! Yes, Sir!”

## Epilogue

Paul and I had celebrated our fifth anniversary with a great dinner at his parents' house and Paul finally bought us matching rings. Just simple bands but they were platinum. The work at the fund was keeping us busy with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continuing despite all the promises of Congress to start bringing troops home. Marines were still serving in both theaters of war, and they were coming home with serious injuries. Luckily, the generosity of the American people is boundless, and we were having no difficulty in getting donations -- whether it was gifts for the care packages or money to help those injured.

I guess our biggest request from grunts in the field were Game Boys and games to play on them. The other thing that got a lot of requests for was help with remodeling homes for wounded marines who were in wheelchairs. We did as much as we could, but there was always more to do. Paul and I had decided that I would do the screening of the requests, because as he put it, I had the more tender heart of the two of us. I don't know if that was true, but since Paul ran the money side of the fund, I felt it was more than fair that I take over the request side of the fund.

I did have some help. There was a retired social worker who lived in Telluride. His name was Robert Gray. He was gay and had at one time been in love with a marine who had

come back from the jungles of Vietnam. But the marine had terrible troubles, as so many of them did, because he couldn't get over what he'd seen and what he'd done, and like so many vets from the Vietnam War, had no place to go for help he could trust. He and Robert had been lovers for two years when Robert came home to find him sitting on the floor in his dress blues and his sidearm in his white-gloved hand which he had used blow his brains out. From that day Robert has dedicated his life to whatever way he can help marines in trouble. They slept on his couch or in his bed. He paid for countless bus or airline tickets so stranded grunts had a way to get back to base.

He was a little freaked out when we first met because the marine he'd been in love with had been named Mike. He got over it in a way that bothered me at first. He took to calling me Mikey. Then he explained that he and his Michael had actually talked about adopting a child. I would well be within the age range for that child if Mike had lived long enough for them to adopt. They would have called him Michael Robert -- Mikey for short. And Robert hoped that he would have been a marine just like Mike had been.

I came to realize that, in his own way, Robert considered me the son he and his Mike never had. He worked very long hours, opened and closed the fund office every day. Mike and I would have him over for dinner once a week because he had few friends in Telluride, having retired there only three years before. If there was a gay community or even a gay bar in Telluride, we didn't know of it. Robert became, in so many ways, the first Marine Corps *widow* that the fund helped by giving him something worthwhile to do in support of marines, and a small family -- Paul and me.

Speaking of family and friends, I got a letter from one of the four guys I went to high school with -- Rich. All four of us had gone into the military. Rich had gone into the Army, while Baldwin and Adam ended up going into the Air Force together. I still think I got the best service, being in the Marines. I'm just glad that none of them went into the Navy. I would have hated to have a good friend who was a fucking swabbie.

They were getting together in Chicago for a kind of reunion. They wanted me to join them, but I didn't want to. I was too different now. We wouldn't have anything in common.

I laid the letter on my desk and forgot about it. A few days later, Paul was in my office and we were discussing something when I got a phone call from a distraught wife whose marine husband was not getting something that he needed from the VA. While it wasn't strictly our function to handle situations that required case management, we occasionally got calls for help. I told the woman we would look into the situation.

After saying good-bye, I got up and took the information to Robert to handle since he was the social worker with all the contacts. I knew that he knew someone at VA who could help the woman and her marine. Going back into the office I saw Paul reading the letter from Rich.

"Hey! You reading my mail now?"

"I thought it was something for the fund. So, a high school reunion. Are you going to go?"

I looked at him like he was crazy.

"Of course not."

"What do you mean 'of course not'? Why not?"

"You know damned well why."

"Oh, they don't know, and you're afraid to tell them."

I didn't like the word afraid. After what I'd gone through in the Marines, I wasn't afraid of anything. Well...maybe some things.

"I'm not afraid. It's just none of their business."

"Oh, I see. They're your friends, but who you are is none of their business. Or maybe they just aren't your friends. After all, real friends accept each other as they are."

I stood there, not saying a word. Paul certainly had a point, but I wasn't about to give into it. I didn't want to go and meet with the guys and have to answer all those questions

about who I'm dating and why wasn't I married yet. How could I tell them that I was already married -- to another guy?

"I just don't want to go, that's all."

"Okay, grunt. Have it your way."

And saying this, he got up, kissed me on the cheek, and left, leaving me with the whole problem to wrestle with. I knew Paul wanted me to go to this thing. I knew he wanted me to *come out* to my friends -- something I'd never even considered doing. I *was* afraid. I'd idolized these guys when I was in high school. I was a year younger than they, and they had accepted me into their group. How was I now going to tell them something like this?

*"Hey, guys, guess what? I'm a fag! I even married another marine who fucks me up the ass just like I fuck him -- every chance we get."*

Oh, yeah. I can see that!

I realized, however, I didn't have any choice. Paul was right. If they were really my friends they'd find a way to accept it. If they didn't...well...fuck 'em and the horses they rode in on.

That night after we ate dinner, I told Paul I'd decided to go to the reunion, but that I wanted him to come along.

"So you are going to tell them."

"Yeah, but I want you there when I do."

"What for? Backup in case they try and beat you up? A marine ought to be able to take on one Army cheese-dick and two Air Force pukes," Paul said using the marine terms for members of those services.

"No, it ain't for backup. Well, it kind of is. If they can't accept me as I am, it's going to be a very lonely weekend. I want you there for that, and if they can accept it, I want to show you off."

The last part I said very quietly. It was somewhat embarrassing to admit to Paul how very proud I was of him.

“To show me off, huh, grunt? Well, I guess I’ll just have to say ‘yes’ to that.”

Paul laughed and reached over and grabbed me in his arms. He pulled me across the couch until I was lying halfway across him, nestled in his warmth and strength.

“I’ve showed you off to my family, my friends, and everybody who would listen. So far, you’ve only gotten to show me off to your mom. It’s only fair I go.”

And with that he kissed me. That led, of course, to another trip upstairs.

The reunion was being held at the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago. We had agreed to meet in their bar -- The Trianon. Paul and I flew in the day before. He had booked us into the Premier Four Seasons Executive Suite. I took one look at this very elegant hotel room and decided *not* to ask how much it was a night. I just didn’t want to know. I think the damned one-bedroom suite was bigger than the two-bedroom apartment I grew up in.

Paul wanted to show me around the city. I wanted to spend time fucking our brains out because I needed the feeling of being close to him. I needed to feel like I was still a man despite being *married* to one -- a feeling I always got from fucking Paul. On the other hand, I wanted to feel his strength and know that it was there for me to rely on if it turned out I needed it.

Paul understood without saying a word. Chicago was forgotten, and we ended up ordering room service because we didn’t want to get dressed again.

The next evening, we came down the elevator from the thirtieth floor where we were staying to the twelfth floor where The Trianon is in the hotel. We started to walk in, and I spied the table where everyone was. I had purposely stalled getting dressed so that Paul and I would arrive half an hour later than the invitation said, because I wanted everyone there when I introduced Paul as my lover and husband. I realized that from where we were

standing, I could see them, but they couldn't see me. I stopped, and Paul, who was behind me, did also.

"That's them," I said, indicating the group at the table across the room.

"I thought there were three of them? There's another guy there. Maybe you're not the only one you all didn't know about."

"Maybe...well, I guess we should go face them."

"Just remember, no matter what happens, I still love you and always will, grunt.

*Semper Fi!"*

"And I'll always love you. *Semper Fi!"*



## A WARRIOR'S PRAYER

Give me, God, what you still have. Give me what no one else asks for. I do not ask for wealth, success, or even health. People ask you so often, God, for all these things, that you cannot have any left.

Give me what people refuse to accept from you. I want insecurity and disquietude. I want turmoil and brawl. And if you should give them to me, my God, once and for all, let me be sure to have them always.

For I will not always have the courage to ask for them.

Amen.

 THE END 

## **Bobby Michaels**

Bobby Michaels has been writing since he was 14 years old. A Gay male with a lot of romantic and erotic experience from his own life to draw on, he is a well known writer of Gay male erotica under another pen-name with a fan group of more than 3,000 members from around the world.

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