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Chapter One

The desert hid little. Amazing that Patton had succeeded during his campaigns on this godforsaken continent. How in the hell did he blend?

Sergeant Chuck DuClay stared out into the expanse of sand. Steam caressed his face, and the immense heat wriggled distant objects in his vision. Even with his eyes narrowed to slits, he could still make out the base—his home for the next twelve months—blatant in the distance, like a scab exposed. All that was missing was the giant red target painted around the perimeter, indicating to enemy forces exactly where the bomb should be dropped. Beyond that, he swore he could see Europe.

The next twelve months...

Knowing the war raged elsewhere hardly inspired confidence of an eventless tour of duty, guarding the nearby seaports of Djibouti, which he couldn't see from his vantage point. Vigilance was a virtue well learned in his time with the Army since voluntarily enlisting after 9/11. Then, a more idealistic Chuck had yearned to defend his country and wave his flag in the face of oppression, yet one tour through the Middle East quickly cured him of any future inclinations toward combat. Right now, he just wanted a break.

Why anyone would think to send him here as his duty contract was about to expire...Chuck clutched his lurching stomach and tried to discern, as he had since getting assigned here, whom he had pissed off.

An invisible bump along the sandy floor jolted the Jeep, sending Chuck and his driver momentarily airborne. Private Dewayne Anderson, a blond, darkly tanned man with large, sweating hands, appeared unfazed and kept a firm grip on the wheel. Chuck, by contrast, yelped and grasped whatever was available for support, in lieu of the missing seatbelts. Beneath

them, tires continued to spit light dust as they neared their destination.

Dewayne crooked his head closer, his mirrored shades still fixed on the filmy windshield. "First time?" he yelled over the noise of the engine. His accent was distinctly Southern, thickened by a tongue that seemed to extend beyond normal limits. Chuck could only nod and wonder how the solder didn't inhale a bucket of sand as he talked.

"Yeah."

Dewayne grinned a wide block of brightly white teeth, a daring gesture given how the sand pelted them fiercely. To Chuck it felt like a million needle pricks tickling his face and arms. Dewayne, however, seemed impervious, as though his wicked smile shone forth to provide a force field.

Chuck squirmed in his seat, suddenly embarrassed, as Dewayne let out a deep guffaw. It was as though his driver had interpreted his answer as an admission of virginity.

"Who'd you piss off?" Dewayne asked.

"Not a clue."

Another braying chuckle.

Chuck attempted to join in, but didn't have it in his heart. He averted his eyes from Dewayne, his discomfort increasing. He saw something more in his companion's shaded gaze that spoke hidden words of interest. He could swear Private Anderson sized him up from behind those sunglasses, evaluating Chuck's sexual flexibility and prowess. Chuck didn't doubt men experimented with the absence of women in these isolated bases, and to be honest the idea didn't wholly repulse him.

Don't ask, don't tell. Definitely don't ask me.

Not right now, anyway.

Chuck shook his head. The heat was really getting to him, playing on his discomfort and taunting his forced celibacy. He had no right to think ill of his escort. He'd only just met the soldier, and he couldn't be certain Dewayne straddled the fence, much less played for the home team exclusively.

Chuck, for one, was hardly one to hop from bed to cot and back. He wasn't like his faithless ex-girlfriend. Whatever Dewayne did, on base or in town, was not his business.

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“Just to warn you now, you gonna be bored shitless,” Dewayne told him as the Jeep slowed to the guard station. “Djibouti ain’t what you call a tourist trap, so don’t be expecting fuckin’ Branson. Nightlife is one casino that amounts to watered-down rum drinks and somebody’s grandmother running a fixed roulette wheel.”

Chuck nodded, thankful for the portable DVD player packed away in his sack. His body jarred with the vibration of the Jeep and its ensuing abrupt stop before a pair of unsmiling guards. “So, what does everybody do for downtime?”

There was that wall of white teeth again, gleaming in the African sun as Dewayne held his right hand high and waggled his fingers. The formerly stern statues surrounding them broke out in laughter, and Chuck felt his face flush from something other than the dry heat. He tried his best not to make his facial expression a question, lest any of the men volunteer further information. Do the men jack themselves off, or each other?

Unconsciously he squeezed his thighs together, anticipating an ache for want. His cock had been given enough manual workouts since he broke it off with Rita. *Twelve long months...* would he have anything left to work with when he got back to the States? Assuming he would find anybody?

“It’s low fat and don’t cost nothing, and you don’t have to worry about getting tested later on. Ain’t that right?” The question was directed to the nearest guard, who checked them in with snickering salute. One sharp jerk brought the Jeep back to life, and into the base they cruised. Chuck focused on the new scenery—bland tents and sandy sidewalks, soldiers sweating in desert camouflage—and tried not to picture the passersby with their cocks hanging out, waiting to yank or be yanked.

Cocks. Everywhere Chuck looked he saw men. His heart sank. He hadn’t expected to enjoy much carnal activity on this tour, but just the sight of a lovely feminine form on occasion—third-dimensional, preferably hourglass-shaped and brunette—would have boosted his spirits. With his two-year engagement to Rita dissolved, he knew he didn’t even have the clandestine e-mailed nude photo to look forward to while here. He imagined the base Internet system blocked all the fun sites.

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Twelve months. If the war didn't kill him, boredom was certainly a contender.

* * * *

He found it odd Dewayne chose to hang around while he acclimated himself to his new living quarters. Though he would serve his tour as a Military Police officer, keeping order in a place that seemed to have enough of it, he had not been offered special provisions. Eight cots cramped the tent he now called home, leaving barely enough room for each soldier to keep a footlocker. Chuck positioned his just so it didn't collide with the one next to his. The last thing he needed at the beginning of his stay was an accusation of denting somebody's property. He would be the face of authority here, but Chuck knew sometimes passion gave way to violence, regardless of who was on the receiving end.

He would keep his cool, however. Somebody had to in the heat of the desert.

Dewayne appeared nervous now, glancing out the tent flap as though playing the watchman. Chuck suddenly felt like a criminal, prepared to sift through blankets and pillowcases in search of contraband cookies and letters from home.

"What I talked about earlier," Dewayne said, grimacing, "you didn't...that didn't offend you, did it?"

Chuck shrugged and slowly shook his head. "Human nature, is all. If nobody's getting hurt it's none of my business."

He relaxed, then, "What if somebody made it your business?"

Chuck frowned. "I don't follow you."

"Yo, it's like this," Dewayne began, his face all serious now. Chuck watched the young man's face soften as a strong, dark hand raked over a thin layer of buzzed blond hair. "There's a group of us that's gets together here to...watch movies."

"Okay." Chuck drew out the word in more syllables than necessary. Where was this going? Was he expected to make himself scarce while Dewayne partied with his friends? Not tonight, though. He'd just come from a twenty-hour flight and wanted to get some sleep before reporting for duty.

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“Call it a group tension release, whatever. We got a guy who brings in movies to help us...” Dewayne’s mouth twitched and his eyebrows bent upward to his high hairline. Years melted from his face, and Chuck now saw the giddy mirth of a schoolboy looking forward to the last bell, when he could fly home and dig underneath his brother’s bed for *Playboys* and cigarettes.

“These movies,” Chuck said, “wouldn’t happen to be Disney features?” He lay back on his cot, crossing his ankles and resting his head in his hands. More comfortable than the standard Army pillow issued him, plus it allow Chuck to tilt his head upward for a better look at Dewayne.

Out of the Jeep, he was lean and tall. Hardly a model, but Chuck doubted the young man was never wanting for the company of women. Or men.

Don’t ask, don’t tell. Chuck imagined this base held many secrets.

“Whatever the opposite of Disney is, times a million.”

Chuck laughed. Dewayne’s childlike candor was endearing, he had to admit. The private had to be quite green to reveal to an MP that somebody had smuggled in porn. “Your secret is safe with me,” Chuck said. A few dirty movies he could overlook in a place that had little else to entertain the troops.

Dewayne slouched against the main tent pole and offered a casual salute. “Thanks, man. I don’t know what I’d do if I didn’t at least have that to look forward to.”

Masturbate in private? The question was best left unsaid. Dewayne was a mystery—cocksure one second and skittish the next. Small comfort, knowing that they had twelve months to get to know each other better.

“We’re getting together around twenty-one hundred hours, you can join in if you want,” Dewayne said.

Did he have a choice? “I don’t know. It’s been a long day for me and I kinda want to get some shuteye...” Chuck doubted he could sleep in the same space as a group of men pumping their own cocks in full view.

“I couldn’t help but overhear,” Dewayne broke it, his voice now small, “you telling that soldier back at the airport about your DVD player.”

Ah. So that was the game. Entertainment was provided, just no current means of enjoying it. Pick on the new guy with the goods. Make plans concrete so he has to say yes, so he won't look like the base jackass. *Nice.*

Chuck sighed. "You don't have a player?"

"We use Doug's, er, Private Dougherty's laptop, but the screen burned out.

"I can imagine why."

"Not like that," Dewayne laughed. "It was old."

Chuck now noted the desperation lining the young soldier's strained smile. Could it be the release was needed that badly for the soldiers on base? He inhaled the desert air deeply, thinking it best not to make enemies so soon upon arriving.

"Sure, why not?" That would prove to be an interesting orientation. Chuck sighed. He'd be here by default anyway, he realized as his eyes fluttered shut. He was bone tired, apt to tumble into the slumber of dead. The tinny moans of a lesbian orgy squealing through tiny pinhole speakers wouldn't be enough to rouse him.

Bony fingers prodding his ribs, however...

"What the fuck?"

He bolted upright. Time had clearly lapsed, he could by the position of sunlight beating down on the tent and the shadows crossing the desert floor. Dewayne, he presumed, had long since gone. In his place was an ancient African woman with a shock of white scouring pad hair. Dressed in rags and curved by what Chuck guessed was a combination of curiosity and osteoporosis, the wrinkled woman inspected his torso and thighs. He grew uncomfortable with the way her wizened face stretched into a leering grin. Wrinkles flattened but hardly took away the age from her coal black skin.

Lips parted to reveal blackened stumps that had once been teeth. Chuck sensed his skin curdle at the sight of it.

"What are you doing?" He flinched when her forefinger came to hover over his fly, air-tracing the bulge. "Watch that." How did a civilian just walk into camp? Granted, there might be local townspeople in the base's employ, but certainly none with the authority to access to private quarters without an escort.

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The old woman's age betrayed her abilities. With the dexterity of somebody much younger, she had Chuck's duffel on his outstretched legs and was quickly rooting through its contents. She was one elbow deep when Chuck managed to wrest it away. "No!" he shouted, deep and slowly, hoping *No* was universal. "You do not touch this."

High-pitched nonsense spilled from her toothless smile. Beady black eyes shone and haunted him. Chuck felt his heart throb to his stomach and his ears ring with her foreign chiding. Everything sounded like *nacknacknack*, a worn tongue clicking against her upper plate. She was a human alarm.

Thankfully, Dewayne was the first to respond. The young soldier bolted through the flaps, waving his hat like slapping away a fly. "Hey, git!" He shooed the old woman out of the tent.

Slowly she turned, acquiescent. With one endearing smile aimed at Chuck, she tottered away as though voluntarily taking leave.

"Shit, sorry about that. She knows she's not supposed to come in here when the tent's empty." Dewayne looked at Chuck and realized his error. "Er...I meant to say, when somebody *awake...*"

Chuck held up his hand and lay back down. "I get it. I take it she works here?"

"She does laundry, and some alterations. I heard too she sells home remedies to some of the guys looking for hangover relief after liberty, but I ain't into that voodoo. There's a daughter who brings her here. *She* speaks English, but the old lady, forget it. She makes those weird clicking noises and shit."

Chuck smiled, his eyelids suddenly heavy again. He felt confident the old witch wouldn't return unbidden. There wasn't anything in the small duffel worth stealing, and she had to have seen that.

"I won't worry about her," Chuck said. "It's probably best, though, that she has a soldier squire her around when she makes her rounds?"

"Good idea." Dewayne's voice sounded uncertain, as though confused by the word *squire*.

"It is." Chuck began to drift.

"We still on for later."

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Later? And Chuck remembered his movie date with the guys. “Sure. She isn’t gonna be there, is she?”

Chapter Two

Eager hands curled around the flagpole situated in the center of the base thoroughfare. The vantage point was an open target for curious stares, yes, but few people seemed to care of others' business around here. Soldiers and civilian personnel walked past without a second glance. Even the one anomaly in the otherwise staid military camp was ignored as she waddled slowly, almost painfully, to their designated meeting place.

A glimpse at the teasing open flap offered no great reward. Chuck was probably sleeping still, he had dropped like a stone. No matter for now. Neither one of them was going anywhere.

Not yet.

The old woman was nattering her lyrical, clicking song as she reached the pole, a scowl marring her already wizened features. Her head shook from side to side vigorously, denouncing her mission, but her complaints quickly ceased when the bills came visible. American, as the natives preferred. Worth much more than their own currency. No doubt the old woman expected to live like a queen for this simple task.

Luckily there were no language barriers to contend with, and the woman produced the bounty. A light palm unfolded to reveal the strands of brown—clipped and clumped together, a keepsake.

Most assuredly not Chuck's, a plus.

"You got this from *his* bag, correct?" There were to be no surprises tonight, or the old woman would discover one for herself when her entire family was wiped out as punishment for her ineptitude.

A toothless smile widened, and the old woman's free hand dipped into a pocket to extract the gold lavalier where the hair had presumably been kept. A stupid move; Chuck would most

assuredly miss that. At the very least, however, the soldier would have a suspect in mind.

“Give me that. That was a stupid thing to do.”

She protested at first, clicking and frowning, her voice turning into a steady sheep’s bray. “I don’t care, you old nitwit. You have grandchildren to feed? Here.” More bills quelled the volume of the old woman’s belligerence.

The prize was finally returned with much reluctance. The old witch grudgingly collected her finder’s fee without another word and hobbled away. A quick check of the tent flap revealed no disturbance. Chuck slept, unaware.

Oh. To just steal a moment or two and watch him sleep. How those strong hands might curl around the edge of a blanket, how those smooth eyelids might flutter, protecting those marvelous eyes.

Blue eyes. Like looking into the clear ocean, it was. Chuck’s babies would be gorgeous with those same eyes. A new generation, watching the worlds with blue eyes unknown to alien races.

It would happen, and introduce a new era of dignity and beauty to a dying race.

Soldiers and staff continued past the flagpole, oblivious and uninterested. Another, more determined fist closed around the strands of hair and the locket that had encased it. It had to belong to a lover, a girlfriend...not a wife, as Chuck wore no such ring to indicate that.

Whoever she was, Chuck would soon see her again if everything worked to plan.

And it would work. It *had* to work.

Chapter Three

Getting to knooooow yooooou, something something something about yoooouuu...

Curse his poor memory. Trying to recall the song seemed to be the only cure to aid the pounding pornographic rhythm making his head ache. His suggestion to mute the film had been met with an enthusiastically negative reaction. Apparently the moaning and groaning and wah-wah pedals enhanced the experience.

If only it could make everybody come faster, they could save the rest of the movie for another lonely, horny night. He could go back to sleep and forget he had ever participated in a circle jerk. Or rather, an elliptical jerk. Bodies were everywhere, draped haphazardly around the tent.

Chuck reclined on the floor, against the side bar of his cot as best he could. The thick metal rod was situated just under his shoulder blades and made for an uncomfortable brace. It was hardly the optimal position for stroking his half-flaccid erection to orgasm. Looking around the tent at fellow bunkmates and other soldiers, though, he noticed adaptation where masturbation was concerned was a quickly learned art. Hands moved at different speeds and levels of roughness. It seemed like a race.

There were eight of them tonight. Dewayne had mentioned earlier the number might be as high as twenty, and Chuck surmised the absent must have found a better deal elsewhere. Eight bodies crowded around the portable DVD player, which was situated high on a stack of crates. Pretzel positions and splayed bare limbs decorated the tent as eight soldiers silently stroked to *The King and I...and Her and Him*.

Chuck rolled his eyes at the current harem scene, highlighted by an acrobatic group of lipstick lesbians engaged in some heavy clit-licking. So this was what the King's wives did

for fun when he was off winning wars and waltzing with Deborah Kerr. He had half a mind to just quit and take a walk. His heart, and apparently his cock, just wasn't into this.

He tried to recall the last time he had been able to sustain an erection. It had to have been the last time he made love with Rita, weeks before his deployment. Looking into her eyes as he gently eased his cock in and out of her, he sensed and embraced her sadness, and dried her tears on his chest. He did his best to kiss away her fears and help her temporarily forget his pending departure by focusing on their love.

He hadn't realized then her melancholy had nothing to do with missing him while he was overseas. To Rita, this act represented their last time...period, rather than their last time until his return from Africa. Two days later, she broke down and admitted she did not want to marry a man who might come home in a body bag. She could not wear the badge of military wife and accept the risks connected to it.

So he was here in Djibouti, nowhere near the war. Last he heard, Rita had taken up with a luxury car salesman with a bad knee. Good for them. As their wedding neared, Chuck decided not to point out to Rita that danger did not discriminate, and her current love might just get run over while directing a Cadillac onto the showroom.

Dream on.

Dewayne interrupted his mentally tragic stroll down memory lane. "Man, this is some shit, yo," he groaned, and stroked his cock the way one might pet a kitten. Flat-handed, one direction down the shaft and curling around the tip. Chuck watched a drop of precum disappear in Dewayne's hand and quickly searched for another point of focus. Somewhere in the course of the clit-licking one of the King's wives had unearthed a strap-on dildo from a mountain of silk pillows, and now the wives were taking turns on the giving and receiving end. This scene held even less appeal for Chuck.

"Yo," he muttered and let go of his cock. He moved to stand but stilled, hands gripping the cot behind him, when two soldiers abruptly darted out of the tent.

Neither one had bothered to zip up on leaving.

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Dewayne didn't wait to be asked. "They just want a bit of privacy, I guess."

"I guess." Chuck wasn't about to ask for specifics. Were the two sucking each other off, or did they prefer to come away from prying eyes? Whatever the reason, it was none of his business, just as his lack of interest in the King and his less-than-fair maids was none of Dewayne's.

"Where you goin'?" The best part's coming up," Dewayne moaned, his first orgasm of the evening apparently imminent. "There's a hot DP scene on top of an elephant's back. You gotta see it."

"I'll live," Chuck said. Animal cruelty wasn't his thing. Heaven forbid it turn into bestiality when he least suspected it. He zipped his pants and stood, then stepped his way over bodies that shifted to avoid breaking contact with the screen. "Just need some air."

He was at the flap when he noticed something glinting in a beam of moonlight. Looking down, Chuck recognized the miniature heart shape of his locket. It was still snapped shut.

Shit. How did it get this far from his cot? He darted back to the crowd. All eyes were on the screen. No guilty expressions offered clues.

He jammed the bauble into his front pocket, and out into the night he went. Tomorrow he'd interrogate. This was not the time to take fingerprints.

* * * *

Oh, but he had such a nice ass.

Despite the dim lamplights casting yellowed rays on the sand, despite the baggy quality of his pants, there could be no denying Chuck had a firmly sculpted, perfectly rounded backside. How delicious it would be to lift up slightly and gaze down his sweating back, watching those lovely buns bobbing up and down, up and down, during an intense lovemaking session. Feeling that cock...

Focus, you twit. This is not wholly for play. Indeed, this night served a greater purpose, a matter of life or death for not one person, but an entire race. To be able to pull off such a feat

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in a restricted area, surrounded by some of the finest fighting men in the world, would be a story to tell for years.

A tale of victory, no doubt.

Hands curled around the hair sample filched from Chuck's locket. The soldier remained in the distance, hunched forward and walking around a large tent, out of immediate view.

Perfect.

Chapter Four

Oh, thank you, Jesus.

He turned a corner and discovered the two absentee filmgoers, each jerking himself to completion. Chuck did not want to think what his reaction would have been had he saw at least one with his bent over the other's lap, sucking a throbbing cock.

As it was, both men appeared embarrassed to have been caught. Odd, considering neither had a problem whipping it out in front of six other men only minutes earlier. It wasn't as though these men had less to brag about, too.

They stood, and in unison stuffed themselves back into some semblance of order, and offered casual salutes. "Dismissed," Chuck sighed, and they split around him without another word.

"Yes, Army life certainly isn't boring," he muttered, and kicked up a few dust clouds to cover what drops of cum had splattered on the ground. If he was going to rest for a bit in the quiet, he didn't want to dirty himself in other ways.

Satisfied that the sand was as pristine as it was going to get, Chuck lay back and crossed his hands behind his head, then his ankles as he stretched to his full length. The inky black above glittered with a thousand tiny jewels, the constellations easily visible without the bother of strong light to cloud the sky. The low-pitched ticking of a desert insect provided a calming soundtrack to the evening, and Chuck twisted his face muscles in the dry heat, trying his best not to be lulled to sleep from the sheer serenity of it all.

Tilting his head to the right offered an expansive view of desert, sand and dark to the end of the earth. He wondered if he looked long enough, would he be able to see a thin sheen of ocean separating him from home. Was that blinking light far, far

away the very tip of the Empire State Building, and beyond that would he see Virginia with her gentle waves of white cotton and green-leafed peanut plants.

He closed his eyes and willed Rita closer. She was nestled in a Norfolk love nest with an oily car salesman who used veterans' holidays to sell late model sedans. In his mind he chanted her name, calling her to her window, to the stars that connected them. The handle of the Big Dipper, held high to pour his love down on the city, and shower Rita with silent kisses.

She wasn't married yet, not that he knew. There was still time. Peace in the desert was a good sign. He would come home in one piece, ready to give it all to her.

Hot tears stung the corners of his eyes and rolled down either side of his face. Yes, he would come home in peace and Rita would be Mrs. Cadillac. Better he rolled over into the come-soaked sand and hope for a land mine.

He did, and met only more sand. Tiny granules crunched under his body, mingled with his skin, messed up his clothes. On his back, the alignment of the stars remained unchanged, but a deeper sense of dark crept into his vision.

Shadows blocked the distant light from camp. Soft footfalls announced an approached. Chuck sighed and prayed no other soldiers had arrived to seek private relief, whether solo or with help.

A barely audible gasp followed, and Chuck was quick to rejoin with, "I'm okay, just resting. I wanted to be alone." It didn't register with him until seconds later that the noise sounded quite feminine, unsure. Surely a soldier on patrol would have cocked a weapon with cool appraisal, and not let the enemy think he was caught off guard.

How could this be with no female personnel? Surely the natives went home for the day.

He lifted his head and let his eyes adjust to the light in the backdrop of the willowy figure standing before him. The yellowed brightness lent her an ethereal, angelic glow, shining though the pale shift that hugged her bosom and narrow hips. Bare feet tipped in toenail polish padded quietly toward him. Darn, cornsilk hair clung to creamy shoulders, smooth despite a heat that could frizz even the closest buzz cut.

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Chuck propped himself on elbows. There was the kickstart his cock had needed earlier. Deborah Kerr couldn't do it. All the king's horses and all the king's lesbians had failed, too. Now...Chuck shifted his hips to better accommodate the ache in his pants as his cock throbbed to full hardness.

"This is a dream," he whispered.

"No, it isn't," said Rita.

* * * *

He was the dream, lying languid in the shadowed sand. A perfect specimen of man, the hope of a future generation.

Her hope.

She sucked in her abdomen to further accentuate her pert, small breasts under the sheer, silken fabric. Looking down, she noted her own arousal as her aureoles appeared shaded and visible, her nipples threatening to breach. The desert heat fit her like a glove, with even the slightest of movements feeling as though she had to cut a swath through the air to be closer to him.

"I was hoping," she said, "you didn't want to remain alone."

Chuck offered her a loping, almost drunken grin. He was going to play along, it seemed, still convinced this was a hallucination. He would soon learn differently.

She pluck away one spaghetti strap, then the other, moving in a graceful shimmy as the fabric slid effortlessly down her body. The heat sought to penetrate her bare skin, covering her dusky nipples and taut stomach, and the clipped brown hair forming a triangle over her pussy. She loved the feel of the desert at night but yearned for much more, and she could tell by the tenting of Chuck's pants that the feeling was mutual.

She was ready for some mutual feeling.

"You don't seem worried about us getting caught," she noted, stepping over Chuck's prone body to straddle him.

"I doubt any passersby will come 'round these parts," he said, his voice a low drawl. "Even so, what are they going to find except a heatsick soldier gone out of his head."

"That's the idea." She tried not to laugh, but the incredulous expression on her lover's face took on a more amusing quality as she neared. Surely he could sense her now, smell her arousal,

and want to rise to a sitting position. By her estimation, his face would align with her pussy, the perfect level at which he could lap at her folds and take in her juices. Her moistening slit twitched with anticipation at the hope of being licked.

“I miss you,” Chuck said on a sigh.

“How can you miss me, I’m standing right here.”

“Are you?”

She tilted her head. At this angle, he looked all the more appealing.

“For somebody looking at a ghost, you certainly are excited.” She nodded to his erection, appearing ready to burst from his pants.

“It’s a nice view. I like to show my appreciation.”

Hands now on hips, she backed away. When she thought herself at a safe proximity, shifted her stance so that her breasts wobbled slightly. Crossing her legs high at the juncture between her thighs, she tried to hide her pussy from view but failed. She snickered at Chuck’s now pouting lip.

“Would you like to do more than see?”

“You already know the answer to that.”

“Well.” She braced a forceful stance in the sand again and bent at the waist. Bringing her arms closer to her chest, she squeezed her breasts together in a brazen pose and relished the gasping reaction that ensued. “Thank you. Now, can *I* see?”

Chuck relaxed deeper in the sand, bringing down his elbows down so he could undo his pants. In one fluid motion they were over his hips, but it took several seconds of awkward shimmying to discard them completely. The wait was well worth it, she noted as Chuck’s rod stood to attention, thick and hard and heavy. A good eight inches wavered close to the last button on his shirt, which was in the process of removing as well.

“And if the guards come?” she prodded, stepping closer.

“I’ll make sure you come first.”

“That’s what I like to hear.”

When she approached again she began a descent that landed her knees in the sand on either side of him. Perched on his lower thighs, she inched forward slightly so that her pussy just brushed against his cock. Underneath her, Chuck’s body tensed and he sucked the desert air through his teeth.

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“Shit!” he hissed. “I’ve missed you so damn much.”

Quickly shushing him, she dipped two fingers between her moistened folds and pried them apart. She wasn’t sure if, in the dark, he could see her glistening pink clit, but she made sure he felt it.

Arching forward, she rubbed her clit against the soft flesh encasing the hard muscle. Up and down, slicked by her juices, the sensation dragged over her loins and ignited the sensations pooled in her belly. So amazing such a small body part could elicit an incredible feeling, and devour one whole with passion. The bud throbbed and tingled within her, unleashing an orgasmic firestorm that swept up her body and tightened her pussy. She felt the muscles involuntary clutch, as though trying to keep the goodness inside.

But, one last stroke against Chuck sent her over the edge and she wailed low, ignoring the sudden look of fear on Chuck’s face. She came loud and rough, bouncing against his swollen flesh, aching to be seared and filled with the seed that bubbled on the reddening tip.

“I need you know,” she grit through her teeth, and smoothed her hands down her breasts. Her nipples, pinched tight and swollen with need, jostled with every movement closer to his cock. Chuck offered no reaction, just a gaped mouth and that same look of worry.

“Something wrong?” she chided.

“You were awfully loud a minute ago.”

“Really?” She leaned back. Chuck’s shaft seemed to pop forward. “I thought I was a dream nobody would see or hear. I thought if the MPs come all they’re going to see is some crazy naked soldier on his back trying to divine for water in the desert.”

“I’d rather see a hot brunette’s titties bouncing while she fucks me.”

“I think I can help you there.” Without further pretense, she crawled forward, minding his cock as she assumed position. Still soaking, impaling herself on Chuck’s length was a simple task, and she groaned her approval as he filled her.

“Sa-lute.”

* * * *

Truly, this was not a dream. Dreams didn't feel so tight and warm and smell of lilacs growing in the dust.

He reached forward to grasp her hips as she settled on his cock. Real flesh, soft to the touch. This was Rita, come to Djibouti to surprise him, to take away the loneliness and keep him away from unnecessary Internet peep shows. Maybe this turned out to be a bad year for Caddies, given the gas hikes. Who cared, though, she was here, with him.

She belonged with him, wherever they happened to be.

He bucked his hips upward to meet her every downward thrust. The sensation of her pussy lips tightening around his cock teased his body closer to orgasm. His balls prickled, an explosion imminent. Excited as he was, he thought he might send Rita to the moon, his love surged with such power.

She laughed as he voiced that thought. "Why not? It's on the way home."

"Huh?" The momentary jolt knocked off his concentration. An odd thing to say during sex, but then he and Rita had had their moments. Thankfully it was not enough to threaten his erection, and he quickly recovered.

He motioned for Rita to lean closer and she obeyed. Between short gasps of breath he managed a kiss. "I love you, babe."

"I love you, too."

He lowered his gaze to enjoy the sight of his cock disappearing into her. "I thought I'd never see this again."

"You thought wrong, darling," Rita said. "I'd never leave you."

Uh-huh. Did she have amnesia? Where was the resolve that coldly saw him out of her apartment before his deployment? Was this really a hallucination brought on by the night heat?

Hallucinations couldn't feel like this, though. Having made love to Rita many times, this was exactly the same. Dreams of sex didn't have this heightened perception—no smells or sounds this vivid. Had loneliness and desire to be near Rita enhanced his senses to the point that he could will her doppelganger to Africa?

MANEUVERS

Stop rationalizing, just come, he scolded himself. Analyzing the moment brought him no closer to Rita, and as it was she looked at him curiously, like he had suddenly fallen ill.

One look at those beautiful breasts, swaying as she rode him, and all misgivings and doubts faded. Resuming his rhythm, his orgasm quickly followed and he soon shot himself into her, crying her name as he came.

From Rita bellowed another noise, this one foreign and bordering on feral. She curled back, stretching her lean torso as he emptied into her. She seemed affected by the onslaught of heat—the night air coupled with his seed made for an invisible inferno that engulfed her.

“Rita, baby,” he moaned.

And Rita lurched forward again. Her face was different now—elongated and sharp-edged, almost cat-like. And her eyes...

They weren't human.

Chapter Five

“What the—?”

He clawed at the sand and pulled himself away with such force that he disengaged from Rita and sent her reeling backward. She rolled to one side and, after gaining her bearings, stood. Grains of sand clung to places where their lovemaking had been evident.

“Chuck,” she said, her voice low and vibrating. Gone was the sweet lilt he had known. This couldn’t be Rita.

Now he wished this was a dream that would quickly end.

“Who are you? Some kind of African voodoo queen? Why do you look like her?”

“There’s a very good reason for that.”

At least this...person didn’t try to insult his intelligence by trying to convince him she was Rita. Chuck cautiously shifted to his knees and, still crouched low, reached forward to grab his pants. When the woman didn’t move to thwart him, he quickly brushed the wet sand from his cock and slipped them back on, standing as he did so.

“A good reason, huh, for making me look like an idiot. For sexual assault...”

“You can’t rape the willing, Chuck.”

“You probably did a lot worse.” They hadn’t used protection. She may well have just sentenced him to death. He knew AIDS was a big problem on the continent, and the disease wouldn’t stop at the borders of the base. If not that...

“Entrapment,” he charged. *Ah-ha!* There was that shameful bow, those downcast eyes. Somehow she got a hold of his picture of Rita, disguised herself, and seduced him into pregnancy. How could he have been so stupid.

Moreover, why him? “Who are you? You can’t be military. And why me? How did you pull this off?”

MANEUVERS

The woman's sad countenance appeared genuine, remorseful. Chuck continued the interrogation. "Are you trying to hook a soldier, any soldier? Get yourself pregnant so your baby can claim American citizenship?" This he wasn't sure he could handle. Having kids with Rita might have been an eventuality, but with a stranger? A deceptive one, at that. Some soldiers got a bad rap as it was, weathering various scandals...he'd done his best to keep clean. Until now.

But, he was tricked. And, he realized with a heavy sigh, no witnesses would stand for him. He could only hope Dwayne had driven over some long-ago buried radiation on the way to base, rendering them both sterile.

The Rita clone raked her long fingers through her hair and came up with a short, thick clump—a curl similar to the one he kept with his locket. "It's because of this, which belongs to you," she said. "I applied the DNA found in this sample to my own body chemistry to assume this form. I knew if I came to you as someone familiar, somebody you still love, it would be easier."

"Easier to what? Extract DNA?" The conversation took a left turn into bizarre. Surely not even the military had the technology to do something so *Star Trek*. "What the hell are you talking about? Who are you?"

He wanted to run, but this woman's freakish resemblance to Rita kept him rooted to the sand. He truly hoped this was some kind of dream, or hallucination. He tried to recall whether he had eaten or drunk anything unusual, that might have been drugged. He looked past Rita to see if anybody hid behind a tent, watching the scene and snickering.

They were alone. Maybe he was alone, too, struck with a grief so overwhelming that it caused him to see and hear things. Fuck things.

"I don't expect you to believe me," the woman was saying her palm flattened and tilted downward. The lock of hair separated into tiny, near invisible strands and floated lazily to the sand.

"Hey!" Chuck cried.

"You were too good for her," the Rita clone said, her eyes shimmering with tears, then light, then something indescribable.

Her face seemed to fade. It wasn't a trick of the night, or his mind. No way could be imagining an actual human being melting! That's just what was happening, too. He could only sit, helpless, as the woman who had just ridden his cock to orgasm morphed and shifted flesh and hair...taking a man's shape.

Dewayne's shape.

"Fucking no way," Chuck gasped.

Dewayne offered an impish grin and a shrug. His thin, nude body glowed in the night. His features were smooth and practically non-existent, as though his skin were made of rice paper. If the distant light were to hit at a certain angle, Chuck wondered if he could see through the young man. He looked ghastly, lacking his earlier zest.

Inhuman.

Was this really Dewayne? Was the soldier still in the tent, whacking off to bad porn?

The Dewayne clone seemed to regard Chuck with a knowing silence. When he spoke the voice perfectly matched. "It really is me, Chuck," he said. "What happened between us was definitely real."

Chuck's gaze panned down to Dewayne's limp cock—no pussy to be found. What had he just fucked? "What are you, some kind of hermaphrodite?"

Dewayne nodded slightly. "Where I come from, a being's sex is more ambiguous among the population. Many of us tend to exhibit certain gender specific characteristics over others, and unfortunately that is becoming our downfall."

"Where are you from?" Chuck's eyes narrowed. "Where *I* come from, you're male or you're female."

"You could say I'm a bit of both, and nothing at all." And Dewayne rippled and began to glow, his skin illuminating like a night stick. His features became smoother, and his hair receded until nothing was left but a pale yellow humanoid standing before Chuck. Wide brown doe eyes flickered different shades—umber to gold and back—and its belly swirled a ruby red. The creature looked translucent, like a see-through doll bearing a pocket of red liquid.

An alien. He fucked an alien. Or the desert heat fried his brain.

MANEUVERS

“Holy shit,” Chuck muttered. “You’re definitely not from here.”

The alien—he, she, it, whatever—shook its head. “No. By my point of view, we’re practically neighbors, and as your world gets smaller through its technological advances, your people will see it that way. Not yet, though,” it said. “Judging by your reaction, it’s probably best we don’t reveal ourselves at this time.”

“Tell me about it.” Chuck pinched the bridge of his nose. Why couldn’t he just stand and leave? Suddenly he clutched a hand to his chest, and it slid slowly down to his softening cock. “What...why?”

“Our planet is dying, Chuck,” the alien said, reaching out a hand. Chuck was reluctant to take it, but quickly shook away any suspicions and obliged. He’d just had sex with the thing, and nothing happened.

“What, you’re too close to the sun?” he asked.

“Our numbers are dwindling. For reasons we cannot determine, we are producing less offspring. Our population is becoming more sterile,” the alien said. “The prospect of extinction has forced us our reconnaissance of other worlds to test genetic compatibility.” A thin hand, pointed with spindly fingers, caressed the dark red bubble. “I can safely say with humans, there is success.”

“That...” Chuck pointed at the glow. “That’s a baby?”

“It is the hope of my people, yes.”

A baby. He was supposed to have babies with Rita, and chase his little son around the front yard with a football. He was supposed to sit his daughter on his lap and teach her colors and shapes. How many heads would this...thing...have? Would any look like him?

“Why me?” he asked. “Base full of men, and you pick me.”

“Your eyes.” The answer was instantaneous, stepping over Chuck’s comments. “Our people don’t have eyes like yours, as our characteristics are so limited. I want a child with beautiful blue eyes.”

“Well, thanks, I guess,” Chuck murmured. “So, what happens now? Am I going to be hit with child support?” It was

meant to be a joke, and though the alien's smile was slight, it did little to supply more levity to this bizarre situation.

The alien instead bowed its head. "First we'll have to see if the birth is successful, and if the child lives." Chuck felt sullen at this. Of course, cross-breeding a human and alien would certainly have risks. What, he couldn't say. It sounded so much like a science-fiction movie.

"If the child thrives, I wouldn't be opposed to your having a relationship," the alien continued.

"I think I'd like that," Chuck said. "Alien or not, it's a part of me, isn't it? I should know, and I hope that...*he*...would know about me."

"You're a very masculine-oriented race. I gathered as much staying here, living among you as one of you." The smile widened and curled one side of its face.

"I can assure you we all don't watch porn and engage in circle jerks," Chuck snorted.

"I know. I have seen the best of humanity here as well. I look forward to forging a deeper relationship with your people, when it's time."

Chuck slowly dusted himself off and righted his clothing. "Sounds great." What more could he say? This entire experience, passionate as the sex had been, seemed so antiseptic now. The alien hadn't invited him back to the planet to be a daddy, leaving Chuck to assume he was only wanted for his sperm, and eye pigment. In a way, it was almost insulting, but he knew he didn't love the creature, just what it had briefly represented.

"I still don't believe this." He shook his head. "I must be having heat stroke."

The alien dared a step closer. "Believe it in three of your weeks. That's how long it takes for our gestation. Until then..."

That glowing face neared, and Chuck instinctively closed his eyes to receive this kiss. His mind flashed briefly to Rita, how she had looked before he left, and how she was when he thought he was making love to her earlier. All at once, though, as soft lips met his own did Rita's visage fade and brighten into something more beautiful. Light warmed his soul and slowly dissolved into the night heat.

MANEUVERS

He opened his eyes to the dim camp, the distant lamps his only beacon now, and those were obstructed by the thick shadows approaching him.

“Sergeant?” one of them called. As the being came into focus Chuck recognized him as one of the men whacking off in his tent to the porn. “Sergeant, you alright? What are you doing out here?”

Chuck noted the private’s concern, and figured the boy was thinking he’d gone insane. “I-I just wanted some air.” *Got a lot more than I anticipated.* “Must have gotten disoriented or something.”

“Have you had anything to drink, sir? Newcomers tend to get dehydrated when they’re not used to the heat. Then delirium sets in, then you’re lost in the desert.” Chuck felt two pairs of hands guide him back to camp. “Come on,” the private said, “let’s head back to camp.”

“Sure.”

Neither soldier had mentioned Chuck’s disheveled look, or the cum staining his pants. Either they were being polite or figure it was residue from movie night. He walked in between them and tried to get his bearings. Tried to convince himself it was all a dream.

There had been no Rita, no alien. *It was a dream, just a dream.*

And they walked past the flagpole, brightened by a nearby lamppost, and Chuck did a double-take.

He could have sworn he saw a few locks of brown hair curling at the base.

About the Author

Leigh Ellwood writes spicy romances and sassy mysteries. She is the creator of the award-winning Dareville series for Phaze Books, as well as numerous shorts for Phaze and other small publishers. Readers are invited to visit LeighEllwood.com for more information on Leigh's books, and to follow Leigh's writing adventures via her blog at leighwantsfood.blogspot.com or through her Twitter at [Twitter.com/LeighEllwood](https://twitter.com/LeighEllwood).