

~ Da Nang ~

by Larisa

Disclaimer: Yeah, yeah I know who they look and act sorta like. These ones are all mine and yes, there is violence, filthy language, sex between woman and everything else I could toss in and get away with. If you're a baby, go away come back when you're out of diapers. If it's illegal, sorry about your luck.

Thanks to Lesia and Ri for being my guinea pigs.

Da Nang

By Larisa

Hecate3366@frontiernet.net

A light drizzle fell from the gloomy skies, water dripped from the jungle vegetation to soak the black cami clothing of the four people hiding in the thick undergrowth 5 miles west of Tuy Hoa. With sniper rifles at the ready, they scanned in front of them for the enemies that were supposed to be in the area. According to reports, they had been in the area no more than four hours past.

Using hand gestures, the one in command sent two of the men off in different directions to flank the area. The other man was to remain where he was while the commander went forth to recon the area in front. Taking point was the most dangerous part of the patrol, very rarely did someone volunteer for the job. If the booby traps didn't get you then the snipers would. Moving much like a panther, the tall figure slowly crept through the ankle deep muck towards the tall reeds. A feeling tugged at the soldier's gut, and that feeling was never wrong when it came to the VC. Piercing blue eyes surrounded by black and olive drab face paint scanned the muddy bank near the reeds, small foot prints could be seen going inward. There were choices to be made, either toss a grenade in or go in and fight hand to hand.

Choices were soon forgotten when rifle fire came from inside the reedy area and then more from a ridge up above where they were. Dropping down, the soldier crawled through the reeds with a K-Bar in each hand. Screams echoed in the tropical heat as the VC took shots from the other soldiers. All time stopped when the name Zach was screamed after a loud explosion, K-bar's re-sheathed Zach pulled a 45 and took off firing towards where the explosion had gone off. VC fell as bullets tore through their bodies from the 45 and M-16's from the other 2 men. With the 45 empty, it was slammed back into its holster and a K-Bar was pulled. Zach tackled the first VC, rolling on the ground, fighting until one body went limp. Throwing the small thin body to the side, the tall soldier crawled to where a sniper rifle lay in the mud, strapping the rifle over one shoulder Zach crawled to what was left of one of the soldiers. He was missing the lower part of his body from the waist down, he had set a trip wire off and the grenades did their job. Feeling a

bullet whiz too close overhead, Zach took cover near a tree, silvery blue scanned the ridge for the sniper. A sudden flash was seen close to the ground above. Bringing the sniper rifle around, Zach wrapped the strap tightly around a thick upper arm and strong wrist. Taking aim with the cross hairs, Zach squeezed off a shot and watched as a body fell from the ridge to tumble to the jungle floor below.

"Fucking bastards!" Was mumbled to no one right before a volley of bullets tore into the vegetation to Zach's right. Pulling a grenade from a grenade belt, the pin was pulled and then lobbed into the reeds. A loud explosion thundered parts of reeds and body parts flew through the air. Screams could be heard coming from the area where Zach had thrown the grenade. Breaking cover, with an M-16 at the ready Zach and one other soldier made their way into the reeds. Looking down into the dark brown eyes of a screaming VC, Zach took aim and blew his head off without even a flicker of any emotion in icy blue eyes.

"Where's Jackson?"

"I left him over on the other side; he's got a gut wound." The man pulled a knife from the dead VC's hand and slipped it into his ALICE pack.

"I'll get Jackson; you strip these fuckers of all weapons and ammo. Any papers you bring to me when you're done."

"Gotcha Zach, what about Peters, where's he at."

"Didn't make it, bag him and mark it on your map. We'll get someone out here to get him."

"But we never leave anybody behind!" He argued until icy blue eyes challenged him.

"Today we do. He's in two many damn pieces to carry back. Now move it!"

Zach moved silently to where Jackson was leaning up against a tree, his cami jacket shredded, showed his ripped flesh from within. Kneeling beside him, Zach pulled the GI's first-aid pouch from his monkey harness and pulled pressure bandages from inside. Tearing the material open wider revealed his intestines outside of the large gaping wound. Pushing them back in as best as could be done in the field, Zach pressed the bandages to the wound then wrapped bandages around the mans waist.

"You dumbass kid, where the hell is your flak jacket?" Was spoken quietly to the unconscious man.

"Zach, lets get out of here." Cpl Greene whispered to his MSgt. "I think some of them got away; I found tracks leading off to the north-west."

"Take his rifle and ALICE pack and stay right behind me." Ice blue eyes drilled into the younger mans brown. "You screw-up and I'll shot you myself."

"Come on Zach, you should know me by now."

"Yeah I do, that's why I just warned you."

Zach lifted the wounded man up and over onto a wide shoulder, taking off at a good pace, they knew they had at least five miles before they would be anywhere near the 91st Eval Hospital. Usually they were out so far in the jungle that they would have to care for their own wounds until they came anywhere near a camp or hospital. Zach was pissed that they would be backtracking to get there, but rather try and save one of the men than lose him. They had time enough to get to Da Nang since no one knew they were out there to begin with.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The Eval Hospital was in the shape of a large X, two wings were for surgery, one for the VD cases and the other was the Psych ward. Jeeps and personnel carriers drove back and forth past the large hospital dropping off and picking up the injured. Nurses could be seen pushing soldiers outside to get fresh air and sun. Bickering came loud and clear from the back of a cargo truck, one voice deep the other an octave higher and louder.

"You're nuts if you think I'm going to trade you a case of Morphine for half a case of surgical gloves!" A small nurse with long blonde hair yelled. "I can get a whole damn truck load of stuff for a case of Morphine!"

An older man shrugged his shoulders and smirked at her. "Hey, I just thought I'd give it a try." Looking over his shoulder at another box, he pulled it towards himself and opened the top. "OK Mickey, take a look at these and tell me what you'll give me."

She looked in at the box full of hemostats, searching through them she pulled out a few that were broken and set them aside. Narrowing green eyes at him, she pulled a large bottle of quinine from her backpack and tossed it to him. "That's for the hemostats, rubber tubing and the gloves, take it or leave it."

Shaking his head at her and sighing loudly he agreed. "Damn Lady you strike a hard deal."

"You're lucky I don't strike you, I know you steal this stuff from the trucks that get blown up along US 1."

"I risk my life searching through all that mangled steel. Besides if I don't take it the VC will."

"Uuhh huh right Warren and the stuff I trade you every week you turn around and sell to those scumbag black market assholes in Da Nang..." She stopped in mid sentence when she saw two darkly dressed figures come from behind one of the trucks. The tall one was carrying an injured soldier across broad shoulders. She waved to Warren and then took off at a jog to the door to the surgical unit and started calling for a gurney to be brought outside. Tossing her bag on an old wooden desk, she pulled a surgical gown over her scrubs and headed back out the door.

Zach laid Jackson down onto the gurney and followed it in as the nurses pushed it inside. Yells went out for a surgeon as they took him to the first operating room. Zach was stopped by a pair of green eyes looking over the top of a surgical mask.

Mickey froze when her eyes looked into the coldest pair of blue eyes she had ever seen. She felt chills run up her spine at the feeling of death coming from the tall soldier that was covered in black clothing from head to toe. She stuttered her words trying to stop the person from entering the operating room.

"Hold it right there! You can't go in there it's a sterile area, you can stand in the hall and watch through the window if you want." She jumped back when the tall filthy person snarled at her.

"I'll wait."

Mickey turned and walked through the double doors, scrubbed and joined the operating team that was working on Jackson. She looked down at the man's torn and bloody body and was surprised that he was still alive with as much damage as he had. The surgeon pulled pieces of shrapnel from the wound and searched the bowel for tears and punctures. She glanced up to see icy blue eyes watching her. It was un-nerving and she dropped a surgical sponge on the floor.

The surgeon looked over at her. "Come on Mickey straighten up or I'll throw you out."

"Sorry sir, lost concentration." The surgeon followed her eyes to the window.

"Jesus what a scary fucking person! Who is that?"

"He brought this guy in."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Two hours later Mickey walked through the door and up to the tall soldier. She lowered her mask then pulled it back up when the stench of blood and body odor hit her square in the face. She was going to grab a hold of the soldier's harness and drag him to the showers but thought better of it when she realized she no longer had gloves on.

"He's going to be all right, can I ask you how far you carried him to get here?"

Tired blue eyes looked down at her and answered her with a deep gravelly voice.

"Six miles."

"Six miles?" Mickey mumbled to herself. She tilted her head to the side and let her eyes follow the tall body from toe to hood covered head. "Come with me." She ordered in a low voice. When she walked away and turned back, she saw that he was still standing there. Walking back towards him, she grabbed his harness and tugged. "Either you come with me or I get some orderlies out here to scrub you down with disinfectant."

She pushed the door open to the staff showers and dragged Zach in with her. Turning the shower on and adjusting the water, she spun on her heel and gave her best glare at the filthy man.

"Get out of those filthy clothes, in the shower and I'll get you some scrubs to wear."

She received a deep growl but grinned when he started taking off his harness. Walking from the room, she went to a supply room and searched for a pair of scrubs and a towel for the solder. She chuckled when she realized that she had just ordered the same person who had rattled her with just one glance.

"I must be tired." She ran a hand down her tired face and sighed when she leaned against a shelf. "I wouldn't want to meet that one in a dark alley. Shit, just one glance and I'd hand him my last dime!" Moving from the wall on tired legs, she went back into the showers. She didn't care if he got embarrassed from her walking in on him, she was a nurse for gods sakes and seen more naked bodies in one day than most people saw in a lifetime.

"Seen one seen them all." She remarked and walked with her eyes following the black scuffmarks on the floor. She rounded the corner just as the water was turned off, reaching a hand towards the shower stall, she dangled the towel until she felt it taken from her hand.

"I found you some scrubs to put on; I'll put them here on the bench." She turned to go back out the door but stopped when she heard a deep voice call out to her. Turning her head, she gasped at the naked body standing next to her. Snapping her head back around she covered her eyes and took deep breathes. "Gods have mercy." She whispered under her breath.

"Problem..." Zach pulled the dog tags from where they rested against Mickey's chest. "Lt. Jardian?"

"I thought you were a man!" She turned and tried her hardest to keep eye contact but found her eyes traveling down to muscular shoulders, firm breasts, trim waist and very muscular thighs. She felt her face get hot and knew she must be ten shades of red for being so ignorant as to practically drool over the gorgeous body.

Zach snorted with amusement at the small blonde. "Do you always stare at peoples bodies?"

"Yeah...I mean no...I don't usually dro...damn." She handed Zach the scrubs and turned to face the wall. "Sorry, it's been a long day." She felt the wet towel tossed over her shoulder and heard the rustle of clothes. Bending over she picked up the filthy gear and cringed from the stench, standing back up she kept turned away from Zach.

"You have a CO club around here Lt. Jardian?" She turned Mickey around to face her to come under the scrutiny of wide sea green eyes.

Mickey couldn't believe how beautiful the woman was; her high cheekbones framed by long hair the color of coal, a aquiline nose and full pink lips. She looked up into the bluest eyes she had ever seen in her life and felt her heart beat a staccato in her chest. She was afraid that any second

she would start to hyperventilate.

"Uuhhhh yeah...why?" She thought to herself what a stupid reply that was for her to make.
"Why else do people go to the CO club?"

"I need a drink and something to eat, care to join me?"

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach tore into her food like a starving animal; she used her fingers to scoop up the beef stew. Mickey groaned with disgust and laid her hands on top of the larger ones.

"We do have utensils here." She handed Zach a spoon and watched as she fumbled with it.
"Please tell me that you've used a spoon before."

"Long time ago, use my hands mostly. It's faster." A small grin crossed her lips when Mickey's eyes darkened when she licked her fingers clean. "Foods scarce, we eat what we steal. Mostly rice."

"Wait a minute here." She held up her hand. "First of all, I've never seen a woman that goes out in the jungle. What Unit are you from and why do you steal food?"

"I can't answer the Unit part because I'm not really here and we steal because we can't carry the food with us..."

"Because you're not really here." She dropped her forehead on the table and groaned. "Is this one of those Philosophy tests?"

"We don't carry a whole lot because we have to move fast."

Mickey looked up from the table at her. "Who are you, I never got your name or aren't you allowed to tell me?"

"Zach, they call me Zach."

"Is that short for something?"

"Can't tell you." She gave her a huge grin.

"You know this is really infuriating! You still haven't told me why you're out fighting in the jungle with a couple of men."

Zach shrugged her shoulders and got up from the table, she looked around the CO Club and back down at Mickey.

"Is there some place I can get a rack and some shut eye?"

"There's the barracks but that's where the men sleep when they come in from the jungle."

Zach rubbed her face and yawned. "Where's it at?"

"It's right out the door and to...oohh noooo! You're not going to sleep in the men's barracks."

A dark brow rose over a blue eye. "Excuse me; I always sleep in the male barracks. So where is it?"

"You're the most maddening person I have ever met in my life!" She took her by her hand and froze in place when she felt a tingling go right up her arm. She looked into tired blue eyes to see if it was only she who felt it or if Zach felt it as well. Her blue eyes showed nothing except exhaustion.

"Come on you can sleep in my room; I have to be on duty until later tonight so I won't be there."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey pulled her into her small room and pointed to the rack across the room. "It's not much but it's home, there's a spare blanket on the shelf if you need it."

"More than what I've got. Couple rocks and my A.L.I.C.E. pack." Stashing her pack and weapons under the rack, she dropped down onto the edge of the thin mattress and took her boots off, a low moan came from her lips when the skin on the bottoms of her feet split open. She swung her legs over the rack and let her feet dangle over the end of it. Mickey walked around to the end of her rack, picked up her foot and grimaced at the blood trickling from the cracks.

"I'll be right back; I'm going to get some stuff for your feet." She looked down into half lidded eyes. "How the hell can you walk on those dogs when they're almost falling off?"

"I ignore them." Was all she said before she fell asleep.

Mickey covered her up with a blanket and then went to get what she needed to tend to her serious case of foot rot.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

After collecting what she needed she went through the surgical wing and checked on the Jackson. She noticed that he had four bags hanging and the drips were all open wide. She checked his stats and noticed that he was running a slight temperature. She marked it down in his charts and stopped one of her friends on the way out to have a doctor check on him. She went back to her room to find Zach still in the same position snoring softly. She cleaned Zach's feet and applied a salve to them that would help get rid of the foot rot and then wrapped them with gauze. When she was done, she tried to give herself a hernia moving the larger woman up in the rack. She couldn't ignore the fact that she was extremely attracted to the stoic mysterious woman.

Her hands burned from where they had touched the hard muscles of Zach's arms, she brushed back dark hair from Zach's forehead and sighed at what a beautiful woman she was and still wondered what she was doing there.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Choppers came from the west, debris spun in small dust devils, brush bent to the dusty ground while the tops of trees bent from the force of the spinning blades. Medical personnel of every shape and form scurried to the landing area pushing gurneys and carrying stretchers. Being the only full hospital unit in the area, they often got casualties from as far away as Da Nang. That was if it was a bad battle and all the other units were full and in dire need of help. These wounded were from about 20 miles South-West between Nha Trang and Da Lat. Mickey grabbed her medical bag and ran after the others, she could see that a lot of the men had suffered from shrapnel and knew it would be a very long time before she got any sleep that day. Taking the first one that came her way, she pulled the makeshift bandage from the man's chest and saw the torn and burned flesh below. Checking his stats, found them very low, she knew he had to get into OR before they lost him.

Giving the orderly the OR room number she went on to the next soldier. When all the wounded were secured inside the hospital, she donned her surgical gown and picked an OR room to enter. Being head surgical nurse and being able to charm a Cobra, she did pretty much what she wanted. The OR that she had picked turned out to be a soldier that needed to have both legs amputated above the knee. He had stepped on a land mine and had one leg taken off in the jungle and the other they had to remove there, because of the irreparable damage. She always felt extreme emotional pain for the men who lost limbs while fighting a war no one wanted to admit was going on. She did her best when they were in recovery to bring up their spirits before they left for the states and a life that held no promises. She had contact with a Veterans hospital in Seattle Washington and did her best to get the ones who needed the support the hospital gave to have them transferred there. Before they would go back to their family and the angry people that denied the veterans their welcome home as courageous heroes.

After the last of the wounded were cared for, she went to check on Jackson. She noticed that he looked better and had no more problems with fever, Zach would be happy to know that he would survive and be able to return home. The thought of the tall woman now sleeping in her room made her heart patter in her chest. She felt elation in her spirits and wanted nothing more than to go to her room to see if Zach was awake. Even though she was exhausted, she wanted to talk to the tall dark warrior. A grin came to her face with the thought of Zach being a warrior.

On sore feet and legs, she stumbled to her room to find Zach curled in a fetal position. Her one hand under her chin, the other hand was curled around something hanging from a chain around her neck. Pulling the blanket up over her shoulders, she brushed back the long hair that fell across her cheek, letting her fingers linger, she couldn't help but caress the soft skin. *"What are you doing out here and why?"* She thought to herself as she continued to stroke the dark hair. A big yawn almost unhinged her jaw and made her eyes water. Looking around her room, her eyes stopped on the hard wooden chair she had salvaged from a garbage dump months before. Pulling it over to the foot of the bed, she sat down, leaned it back against the wall and propped her feet

up on the foot of the bed. Within minutes she was sound asleep and dreaming of icy blue eyes. She woke eight hours later to see Zach still sleeping; lying on her stomach, she had her arm hanging off the side of the bed, blankets wrapped around her legs and her scrub shirt lying on the floor.

Using every bit of strength she had in her, she dragged her eyes away from the muscled back. "And they say I sleep too much, hell you've been sleeping almost two days straight." She spoke to the sleeping woman. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes, she shrugged her shoulders and went about collecting her shower gear. She felt like the bottom of the E club and knew she would chase away bugs with her body odor.

Turning the water on, she stepped beneath it and groaned when it beat on her sore muscles. She had shampoo in her hair and was about to rinse it when one of her friends stepped under the showerhead next to her. Hearing her voice she peeked one eye open to look at her.

"Who was that tall dark and deadly guy I saw you with the other day?"

With confusion showing on her face, Mickey looked at her short and stocky friend Angie.

"Who?"

"That guy outside of the operating room, who is he?" She turned and winked at Mickey. "If you don't want him, I have space in my room for him."

"Ohhh! You mean Zach." A bright grin came to her face. "Would you believe tall dark and deadly is sleeping in my rack?"

"Shit Mickey, if you get caught they'll send you to some hell hole place for the rest of your tour!" She turned her showerhead and sprayed Mickey in her face. "Get him out of your room before you get caught!"

"Wait a minute, Zach is a woman. I don't think anyone will care that she's in my room."

"Don't try and pull a fast one on me here, I know a man when I seen one and that was one hell of a man!"

"I saw her naked and if she's a man then he has some gorgeous tits." She blushed when she realized what she had said. "Anyway, Zach is not a man I can guarantee it."

Angie gave her a curious look then went back to showering. "Mickey, you need a man if you're looking at women's tits. Wanna join me at the CO Club? Maybe we can find you a man to get rid of all that sexual frustration."

"I'm not frustrated; Anyway, I have too much work around here to think about sleeping with some guy."

Angie turned the shower off and gave Mickey a raised eyebrow look. "You are such a liar; I haven't seen you with anyone in the 14 months you've been here. You have got to be horny by now!"

"If you never had it you don't miss it." Mickey said lowly.

Angie's eyes grew wide at her. "You're a virgin? Come on Mickey, with your looks you can't be a virgin." Angie narrowed her brown eyes at her. "This is the time of free love, you can't tell me you didn't get all wild before you came here."

"I was raised that when you find that special person that you want to spend the rest of your life with, your virginity is a gift to them."

Angie bent over at her waist with laughter, wiping tears from her eyes, she slapped Mickey on her shoulder. "Hell Tiny, I've been giving out gifts for years!" She wrapped a towel around herself and left a blushing Mickey deep in thought. After dressing in a faded tank top and cut off cami shorts, Mickey headed over to the old Vietnamese woman that did her laundry, she paid her twenty dollars a month American money, which everyone thought, was an insane amount to have your clothes washed. But Mickey didn't think so, she knew if she washed her own clothes, she would spend double that to replace what she ruined. She walked into the small building and smiled when the old woman shuffled towards her.

"Ms. Mickey, all done with wash. Fix many holes in big clothes."

"Thank you Mrs. Tuan, I'll tell my friend to be more careful so you don't have so much work next time." She pulled three spools of thread from her pack and handed them to the old woman. "I picked these up for you and Warren says he may have some buttons for me next week."

"Thank you Ms. Mickey, always need thread for mending. You have good day."

Mickey gave her a smile and bowed to the old woman before she took the paper wrapped bundle and left. She wondered what Zach would think when she got her clothes back and found out that they were mended.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach swung her feet to the floor and stretched her back, loud pops came from her spine, she groaned when she rolled her head on stiff shoulders. She knew that if she slept too long she would be sore, but she felt well rested and knew she needed the sleep. Taking a quick glance around the room, she found her boots missing and her feet wrapped in white gauze. A small grin came to her face, she knew that the little blonde had taken care of her feet. She really needed to get more socks and foot powder to keep her feet from falling off at the ankle. It was one of the problems being out in the jungle, the wetness always caused problems if you weren't careful. Too many times, she saw men with complete body rot from not letting their skin dry. It was nothing to come upon a squad of men sitting in the sun naked.

She looked up when the screen door opened and Mickey walked in carrying her large bundle in her arms. A bright smile came to her face and Zach thought she would fall over. She took in the small finely muscled body, how the tank top stretched across her breasts. The sight of her nipples showing through the material was enough set alarms off in her mind. She saw a light blush come to Mickey's face when she realized where her eyes were pinned. Then, realizing that she was sitting there with out a shirt on, grabbing up the scrub top she quickly pulled it over her head. She didn't know why it bothered her; the men in her squad had seen her many times with out a shirt on. With Mickey it was different, she felt like she should respect her.

"You're awake! I thought you had sleeping sickness or something." She put the bundle down on the rack and opened it up, she turned a healthy pink when she saw her panties right on top. Quickly hiding them under the bundle, she searched through the clothes and found Zach's. "I had your clothes washed and Mrs. Tuan fixed all the holes and tears for you."

"You didn't have to do that, I would have taken them down to the sea and washed them."

"EEWW, they would have felt like sandpaper when they dried!" She handed them to her and put the rest of her own clothes inside her footlocker. "Your harness is over at the supply shed, I'm having Cpl. Blackenship fix the buckle and all the other stuff that's been worn or broke."

Zach didn't know what to say, she had never had anyone do stuff like that for her. She did something that she had never done before, she stood up in front of Mickey and pulled her into her arms.

"Thank you." She whispered close to Mickey's ear and then let her go. Mickey was ready to fall over, she didn't expect to be hugged by the tall stoic woman.

"Your welcome, I just...wanted...are you hungry?"

Zach gave her a crooked grin, she had no idea that just a innocent hug would have flustered the little blonde.

"Yeah, I am and this time I'll even use a fork."

"I put your boots out front in the sun, they should be dry by now. You really need some new ones before you end up barefoot."

Zach chuckled. "They reek that bad huh?"

"Let's just say that not even a desperate person would steal them."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The looks they received from the other personnel when they walked to the chow hall was hilarious. Mickey couldn't help but snort at how many men tripped over their own feet or walked into things after seeing Zach. Mickey glared at a couple who threw filthy suggestions towards

Zach, she didn't know why it bothered her and she knew that Zach could wipe out the entire male population if she felt like it. But it still bothered her that she worked around a bunch of chauvinistic pigs.

"Sometimes I would love to perform castrations on some of them!" She rumbled deep in her chest.

"Nah, couple more trips to Bangkok and their dicks will just fall off all by themselves."

"Believe me, with as much penicillin as we go through around here, we could only hope that would happen." She stayed silent until they got through the chow line and found a table to sit down and eat at. "She thought for a second before she did something she thought she would never ask anyone let alone someone who was more or less a total stranger.

"Can I ask you a question?"

"Depends, may answer may not." Zach looked up from her tray of food with a smirk on her lips.

Mickey narrowed her eyes at her. "OK, tell me why all the men and some of the women around here have one track minds?" She filled her mouth with food and spoke that way causing Zach to shake her head at her. "I mean, all they do is run off to Bangkok or Da Nang and come back with STD's. Sex can't be that good that you would take a chance on catching some horrible disease afterward." Green eyes locked with amused blue. "Can it?"

Zach leaned forward towards her and whispered. "How old are you?"

"Twenty six, why?"

"It's not common that someone your age would be a virgin, that's all."

Mickey choked on her food, she started turning a dark red while trying to get a breath. Zach got up from her seat, slapped her in the center of her back and then performed the Heimlich. Mickey took in a deep ragged breath and wheezed. Zach put her down in her chair and stood behind her massaging tight shoulder muscles with her large hands.

"I didn't mean to get you all choked up over it." She leaned over her shoulder and looked into her tear-filled eyes. "You OK now?"

Mickey nodded her head, reaching for her glass of water; she took a small drink. "Thanks, it went down the wrong pipe." Her body was set a fire from where Zach's hands kneaded her shoulders, she wished that those hands would move further down her body and then blushed at the thought.

Whispering into her small ear. "There's nothing wrong with you being a virgin, it means that you have strong morals and these people around here don't." Squeezing her shoulders once, she went back to her chair to finish eating. "These people around here use sex to feel alive and to hide

from what's going on around them. They can't handle the fact that they deal in death every day."

"What about you?"

Cocking a dark eyebrow, she asked. "Are you asking if I need a prescription for little white pills?"

"No, I mean do you...shit I don't know what I'm asking." Defeated she dropped her eyes to her tray and played with her food.

"No Lt. Jardian, I'm not like them. I chose to come here and the death doesn't bother me because it's a job that I came here to do."

Fear ran through Mickey, she knew that Zach killed people but she never thought that she would enjoy it. A slight shiver ran through her body at the thought of Zach going out, killing innocent woman and children and laughing afterwards. She looked frightened green eyes with icy blue, she flinched when Zach reached across the table and took her hand.

"I know what you're thinking, no I don't kill woman and children."

"How did you know I was thinking that?"

"It was in your eyes, you show your soul clear as day."

"Ohh, maybe I should wear sunglasses then." She found her mash potatoes good for making a small replica of the Marble Mountains. "My names Mickey, you don't have to call me Lt Jardian."

They finished eating in an easy silence, each thinking of what the conversation meant to them. Zach admired Mickey for her innocence and somewhat naive outlook on life, she hoped that the war never took that away from her like it had done to countless others. This was the first time that she had ever meet someone that she felt comfortable just sitting with in silence, it had been a long time since she could relax. That would soon end, as soon as she got word, she and Greene would be back out in the jungle.

"How's Jackson doing?"

Mickey looked up at her, she had forgotten all about Jackson and felt bad for it.

"Ohh I checked on him last night and he's doing good. When do you leave?"

Zach was surprised that Mickey asked her that and it showed in her blue eyes. "As soon as my CO gets word to me, I have to find Greene and see if he's heard anything."

"Where are you headed, that's if you can tell me?"

"Da Nang, that's where we were headed when we ran into the VC."

"How will you get there and will you be back this way any time soon?"

Zach smiled at her many questions. "We'll walk and I don't know, it's hard to tell were they'll send us afterward."

"What about Jackson, he's got a ticket home."

"I'll get two more replacements in Da Nang."

"Two? I saw you come in with Greene what happened to your other guy?"

"He got blown into pieces because he didn't pay attention."

Mickey flinched at the coldness that crossed blue eyes. She stood up from the table and took her tray over to the scullery window. A warmth ran up her spine, she knew that Zach was right behind her.

"Mickey, I know I sounded cold about what happened to him. It's bad out there, if they don't pay attention to the smallest details around them then shit happens. I can't dwell on it, all I can do is write a letter home for them."

They walked out of the chow hall in silence, Zach knew that Mickey was feeling a lot of emotional turmoil. "Come for a walk with me." She looked down into misty green eyes and took her small hand in hers. They walked down towards the beach, Zach dropped down into the warm sand and pulled Mickey down with her and wrapped an arm around her shoulders. .

Zach spoke in a low whisper. "It's strange that the sea being so turbulent can make me feel so at peace." Mickey looked at Zach's profile, she could see the calmness on her features. So different from when she first met her.

"Have you ever been out to sea?"

"Couple of times, I like to stand on the bridge and watch the sunset."

Mickey leaned in to her side, comforted by the warmth of her body against hers. "You're a closet romantic aren't you?"

A slight grin came to Zach's lips. "Nah, I just know what I like."

They sat and watched as the sun set over the sea, until Zach felt a presence behind them. Turning her head slightly to the side, she picked up the scent of rose perfume and alcohol.

"So this must be tall dark and dangerous." Angie dropped down into the cooling sand in front of them. Reeking of sex and her speech slurred from too much beer. "Look at Tiny Mickey all nice

and cozy."

Mickey knew her face was red, whether from anger, from what was said or embarrassment for her friend, she didn't know which. She tried to move away from Zach but felt a restraining arm pull her closer.

"Angie, why don't you go to your room and get some sleep."

"But the nights still young, lots of studs to bang." She tried to focus her eyes on the two woman before her. "But from the looks of you two, studs are not what you wanna bang." She tried to wiggle her brows but all they did was twitch.

Mickey stood up and offered her hand to Zach. "Come on Zach, I've got some cookies my Mom sent me."

"Aahh come on Mickey, you're no fun!" Angie yelled at their backs.

"Neither are you when you're drunk." She hated to be around Angie when she had to much to drink, the small woman never cared what she said to people and could become down right mean at times.

"Mickey did it bother you that I had my arm around you?"

"No, it's that Angie is such an ass when she's drunk." She reached down and took Zach's larger hand in hers. "She's one of the base sluts, she keeps trying to get me to go pick up men with her. I told her I wasn't interested."

"Now I understand why she said what she said. She thinks you're a lesbian because of not being a slut like her and sitting on the beach with me."

"Yeah, I guess so. At this point I could care less what people think of me." She stopped their progress and looked up into dark blue eyes. "How long before your tour is up over here?"

"I can quit any time I want, why?"

"Just wondering, I've been here fourteen months and I go stateside in another five."

They continued walking towards where Mickey lived, in pensive silence. At the storm door to Mickey's room, Zach held it open for her then followed her in and took a seat in the wooden chair.

Curious about her small friend and wanting to know more about her she asked. "When you leave where will you go?"

A bright smile crossed Mickey's face, she lowered her head a bit and looked up from below her dark eyebrows. "I have a position waiting for me at Freedom Hospital in Seattle Washington, it's

a VA Hospital. I want to help the GI's feel that they are worth something. They don't get the parades and stuff that others have gotten when they came back from a war. Most of them can't even find jobs because the minute some liberal finds out they fought over here they refuse to hire them.

"I know you'll be good at it, you care more for these men than anyone."

"Why do you say that, you barely know me?"

Zach got up from the chair to stand in front of the blushing little blonde, she cupped her cheek with one hand and gazed down into darkening green eyes. Tracing her bottom lip with her thumb, she gave her a small smile.

"You didn't know me from any other GI, you gave me your bed, took care of my wounds, had my clothes and gear taken care of and you show me more compassion and understanding for what I do than anyone ever has." With the pads of her fingers, she wiped the tears from a smooth cheek. "You're a gentle soul Lt. Jardian." She pulled her into a gentle hug, letting her fingers run through long silky hair calmed her in a way she had never felt before.

Mickey molded her body against her taller friend, she felt so safe and secure being held in Zach's arms. It was like she was made to be held by her, she took a deep calming breath and took in the warm musky scent of the woman. She felt a deep connection to this woman, more than she had felt with any member of her own family. Her fingers kneaded the strong lower back muscles, she felt Zach start to sag against her as a low moan escaped near her ear.

"Keep that up and I'll be on the floor."

"Keep breathing in my ear and I'll be down there with you." Mickey teased before she pulled a small distance away to show a teasing grin. "Want some home made double chocolate chip cookies?"

"I'll go steal some milk, you get the cookies out."

Zach had just stepped out the door when Greene came running up to her and handed her some papers.

"You know how hard it was finding you?"

"What did it take all of two minutes?"

"No three, the nurse was flirting with me. So the male barracks not good enough for ya?" He winked at her.

"I was under orders that I was to stay here."

His dark eyes grew large, he didn't know any one who would have the balls to tell his Top what

to do. "Big brass get a hold of you?"

She lifted her eyes from the papers and glanced at him. "No a little blonde haired nurse, who is going to kick my ass if I don't get to the chow hall and get our milk to go with our cookies." She gave him a rakish grin then jogged towards the chow hall.

"Top drinking milk and eating cookies?" He wandered away still mumbling under his breath about his Top drinking milk. "Next she'll have me carrying a rack around on my back."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Pulling out a small metal box with a pad lock on it, Mickey opened it and pulled out four tins of cookies. Her mother sends care packages every month with things she couldn't get where she was, namely pogy bate. Pulling the lid off one, she popped a piece of peanut butter fudge into her mouth, closed her eyes and moaned when it melted in her mouth.

"Better than sex."

"How would you know?"

One green eye opened to see Zach standing behind her with two bottles of milk.

"I don't, but this has gotta be! Once you taste this you'll say the same thing."

"I will huh?" She handed a bottle over and sat down next to her on the rack. "Can't say that I'm any kind of authority on sex, but junk food now, I'm a professor."

Mickey held out a piece of fudge, waved it in front of Zach's mouth and waited for her to open her mouth.

"Open up." She popped it into her mouth and watched as her blue eyes closed, a low moan rumbled in Zach's chest and made Mickey's blood pressure rise a few points. Just one look from the tall GI sent her into a tailspin. Taking a shuddering breath, she popped another piece in her mouth and held one out to Zach.

"Well, is it better than sex?"

Zach shrugged her shoulders, gave her a sultry grin that reached all the way her eyes.

"Can't tell ya, nothing to compare it to."

Zach thought Mickey was going to fall off the rack with her admission, she pushed up on her chin to close her mouth and waved a hand in front of her unblinking eyes.

"You in there?"

"Uuhhmm...how old...are...?"

"Thirty, I have very strong morals when it comes to my body." Ruffling Mickey's hair, she chuckled when all Mickey could do was open her mouth a few times and then shake her head in astonishment. "You have any writing paper and an envelope, I have to write a letter to Peters's parents."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach stretched out on her stomach and started writing the letter to Peters parents, Mickey lay on her back beside her, between reading a new manual on prevention for STD's she fed Zach a cookie each time she ate one. A full tin later, Mickey was sleeping with the book on her chest and Zach was asleep with her head resting on her folded arm. Sometime during the night, they rolled into each other. Mickey had her head resting on Zach's shoulder with her face up against her neck. They both woke at the same time but were afraid to move. Mickey spoke with a low gravelly voice into Zach's neck.

"You awake?"

"Uhh huh, as comfortable as I am, I have to get up." She rolled over to look into sleepy green eyes. "Natures screaming like a wild banshee." She crawled over Mickey and ran out the door, she could hear Mickey chuckling as she came running out behind her.

When they came out of the latrine, a male orderly was standing there waiting for Mickey, a lecherous look covering his face as he sided up to her.

"How about you and me and the beach tonight." He looked over his shoulder when he felt a hard tap and right into steel blue eyes. "Who are you?"

"The tooth fairy, run away before I take a donation."

"I swear all the women around here have gone nuts!"

Zach took Mickey by her elbow and walked her back to her room.

"Who was that guy?"

"One of Angie's conquests, just wait until I see her today! She's going to wish she had never come down to the beach last night."

"What are you going to do?"

"When I go on duty, I'm going to search her out and remind her to get her weekly prescription by yelling really loud in her ear."

After they had gotten to Mickey's room, Zach turned her so they were facing. She took a deep

breath and looked into concerned green eyes.

"Mickey, I have to leave in a few hours. Greene gave me the papers last night, we have to head to Da Nang." Tears formed in Mickey's eyes, her chin quivered with emotion causing Zach's heart to ache. "I'll be back in a couple of weeks, I promise and I never go back on my word." She pulled a crying Mickey into her arms and held her tightly.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey reported for duty with a morose expression on her face, she stayed away from the other nurses and orderlies so that they wouldn't see the tears that filled her eyes. In just a few short days she had lost her heart to Zach, something that she never thought would happen to her let alone it being a woman that claimed her very soul. She stood in a supply room with her arms wrapped around herself, fighting back the tears that wanted to cascade from her eyes.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach strapped her rifle to her back, checking her gear one last time to make sure everything was in place, she picked up the thick leather map case that she had removed from her ALICE pack. Taken a hand written note from her pocket she placed it on Mickey's pillow. She looked around wanting to remember every little thing about the simple living quarters. With every mission she went on, she never knew if it would be her last, this time it was worse, Mickey had snuck past the walls around her heart. Closing her eyes, she saw smiling green eyes looking up at her, soft pink lips curling up at the corners to become a full out smile.

"Gods Mickey, what have you done to me?" Running a hand down her face, she took a deep breath and left the small room to go search for the little nurse.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The hair on the back of Mickey's neck stood up, she turned around to see Zach standing behind her. The tears she had been fighting all morning broke loose and poured down her cheeks. She stepped forward to be engulfed in strong arms, wrapping her arms tightly around Zach's waist, trying to sink in to her tall friend's body. Sobs tore through her body; she knew this was goodbye and that Zach may never come back.

Zach buried her face against Mickey's neck; she squeezed her eyes tight to keep her tears at bay. With a raspy voice, she whispered into a small ear.

"Walk with me." She wrapped an arm around Mickey's shoulders and led her from the room. Mickey had her arms wrapped around her waist and her face pressed up against chest. As they neared the edge of the jungle, Zach saw Greene and gave a nod of her head to send him off. She pulled Mickey around to face her, cupping her tear stained face between her large hands, she looked misty blue eyes with red-rimmed green.

"I'll be back, I promise you." She whispered as she looked deeply into Mickey's eyes. "I want

you to hold on to something for me." She pulled the leather map case from inside her cami jacket and handed it to her. "This is all my personal things; I'll be back for them when we're done with our mission." Pulling a chain from inside her shirt and over her head, she placed it around Mickey's neck. Mickey picked them up and looked at the black taped dog tags.

"But Zach these are your dog tags, you need these."

"I want you to have them. You're the only one I trust with them."

Leaning forward she placed a tender kiss on her lips then walked off into the jungle with out a backward glance.

Mickey watched; tears streaming down her face as sobs racked her body. When she could no longer see her friend, she clutched the dog tags to her chest and walked back to her room. She knew that she wouldn't be any good to the patients in her condition. Once in the privacy of her room she sat down on her rack and pulled the black tape from around Zach's dog tags. More tears came to her eyes when she read the information.

Zachary
A. N.
276 76 02 56 BPOS
USMC M
PAGAN

"I've fallen in love with a Marine." She lay down on her rack and cried herself to sleep.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach wiped her tears from her cheeks and then caught up with Greene a few yards into the jungle. She kept her face averted so that he couldn't see the pain in her eyes.

"Was that your nurse?" He asked in a low voice.

"Yeah, got a problem with it?"

"No, she looks nice. I'm glad you have a friend Zach."

In all the time they had worked together, he had never said anything like he had just done. She gave him a small smile.

"Thanks, she is nice. To nice for the likes of me."

He nudged her shoulder and grinned at her. "Don't give me that shit Top! Let's get going so you can get back to your little nurse."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

It was late that night when Mickey heard a soft knock on her screen door. She told who ever it was to go away but it didn't work, Angie walked in slowly, her hands in her pockets and head down she asked in a soft voice if she could talk to her.

"What come to see if you can cause me to be even madder at you than I all ready am?"

"No, I came to apologize for my asinine behavior last night. I was wrong in how I treated you."

Mickey moved over on her rack and told Angie to have a seat. She was still angry with her friend but was willing to hear her out.

"Just tell me why you had to act like a total ass."

"I was jealous." She said simply.

"Jealous of me, why?"

"It's kind of stupid, but when I saw how you two were sitting on the beach. I got jealous because no one has ever even taken me down to the beach to watch the sunset. All they want is a roll in the rack and off they go."

"Angie, some of the men here only want one thing. They're not looking for a meaningful relationship. The ones who are looking for that don't want a woman that's going to jump in the rack with them in less than five minutes. Set your sights a little higher and you may just find that one man that will take you to the beach for a sunset."

"Wise words from one so young." She looked into sad green eyes then to the two sets of dog tags hanging around her neck. Picking them up she saw that the other set were Zach's.

"She gave you her dog tags?"

Mickey felt her eyes filling with tears again, she had never cried so much in her life.

"Yeah, she said for me to hold on to them and she would come back to get them after their mission."

"You know when a GI gives a girl his dog tags it's the equivalent of them giving you their class ring."

Mickey's eyes grew wide, she looked down at Zach's dog tags and a grin crossed her face.

"Really? I never even thought of that." She rubbed her finger across Zach's name. Her heart swelled with emotion and more tears came to her eyes. "I hope she's careful out there."

"I hope Greene's careful to."

Wiping the fresh tears from her face, Mickey looked over at her mopping friend.

"You know Greene?" A grin came to her face.

"Yeah, I do. After you two left the beach I went up to the E club and ran into him. We talked most of the night; he speaks very highly of Zach." She looked over at her friend. "He said that she risked her life to save his ass many times and he would do anything for her."

Mickey looked back down at Zach's dog tags and sighed, the woman was puzzling. Cold when it came to the death of one of her comrades but willing to risk her life for them to.

"I hope they take care of each other out there." She softly said.

"Me to, thanks for listening to me. I'm going to get some sleep."

Mickey watched her friend leave, a soft sigh came to her lips when she remembered how Zach had kissed her before she left. "You would do that to me, kiss me then walk off in to the jungle to face Gods only know what." She laid back down on her rack, still clutching the dog tags in her small hand she let sleep claim her once again.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene held back five paces from Zach, she had heard the rustle of vegetation, clothing and the stench of unwashed bodies. Taking point she had her M-16 at the ready, she would rather take them with her knives but it being so dark under the canopy of trees she couldn't make out any movement. Using her other senses she tried to locate the men without alerting them that she was there. The sound of a match striking and the scent of an American cigarette, pinpointed one of the men. She crept closer until she could see him closely. She stepped behind him, grabbed the barrel of his rifle, yanked it out of his hands and slapped the top of his helmet.

"You would be dead right now if I was VC."

Scared eyes looked up at her, the GI's mouth dropped open and his cigarette fell to his feet.

Her voice deep and growling she asked. "Who's in charge of you idiots?"

All he could do was point a few yards away to where she could just make out dark blurs huddled together.

"Come on, your taking me over there so those assholes don't shot me."

Greene held back a chuckle when he watched her take out the so-called guard. He knew if that guy had been on her team she would have shot him for being so stupid. He stopped dead when he saw that some of the guys standing there, he had gone through boot camp with. *"This is going to*

be good."

"Which one of you idiots is in charge here?" She looked from one startled face to the other. "Well?" A thin GI who looked to be twenty if he was lucky stepped forward with a cockiness that almost had her laughing.

"I am, what's the problem?" He asked as he came nose to nose with her. This was a huge mistake on his part. Zach came to her full height and towered over him, her voice more of a growl than anything, tore at his eardrums.

"Aren't you wondering how I got so close to your little party here?"

"Berchell brought you over."

"No, more like I had him bring me over. I came up behind him and took his rifle from his hands. If I was VC you would all be dead right now." She tossed the kids M-16 to his Corporal and then shoved him forward. "What unit are you guys from?"

"We don't have to tell you anything, so just go back out in the jungle where you came from."

Greene stepped forward to keep Zach from killing all of them, he knew that she hated incompetence and arrogance because that's what got men killed.

"Martin you had better tell my Top before she gets mad and turns you into a little pile of mush."

The Corporal squinted his eyes in the dark, his face fell when he recognized Greene.

"Fuck man, what are you doing out here?" He stepped forward with his hand out but Greene refused the camaraderie.

He stood his ground, arms crossed over his chest like he had seen Zach do so often. "MSgt Zachary asked you a question."

"Man there ain't no bitches out her in the jungle, why are you tagging along with her?"

Before he could blink an eye, he was grabbed by his throat and lifted off the ground. The other men in the squad looked on with frightened expressions on their faces. The guard that she had ambushed stepped forward and saluted her.

"Ma'am we're from the 7th Infantry. We were just dropped off today after being in Saigon on R&R."

Zach dropped the Cpl and let him lay at her feet gasping for breath.

"Seems the only smart one is the one that I could have killed, what's your rank?"

"Private Ma'am."

She eyed him and knew that he had to be a higher rank than Pvt. He knew by the look in her eyes that he had better come clean.

"Ma'am, I was a Cpl until I punched out our former squad leader." He gave her a small grin when the guys behind him chuckled.

"Well, you're a Cpl again and your squad leader. Put this sack of shit on guard duty." She shoved the former squad leader over with the toe of her boot. "I'm not doing this because you answered my question, I'm doing it because now you'll be more attentive to your surroundings while asshole here will only be worried about his cocky ass self. And no more smoking out here, that's one of the reasons I knew where you were." She signaled to Greene and they went back in to the jungle.

Martin got up off the ground, his temper flaring, he used every cuss word that he knew.

"Who the fuck was that bitch?" He spun around with his hands beating the air. "And you are not the squad leader!" He yelled. Then out of nowhere a rock came flying and hit him between his eyes, he dropped to the ground in a heap.

Zach stepped to where they could see her. "Son, tie that asshole up and gag him. Next unit you come to have him removed from your squad." She disappeared into the night.

"Who is she?" One of the men asked.

"That is the Warrior of Da Nang, she can kill you before you even blink an eye."

A chorus of "Ohh shit!" Was heard from the men.

One of them went on further, adding to the notorious Warrior. "I heard she has the most confirmed kills so far. And that she's the best sniper over here." The men turned so that they were back to back, shivers ran up all their spines when it clicked in their heads that she could take them all out.

Zach and Greene walked through the night until they came to a small village outside of Quy Nhon. The villagers were going about their business except for a few that looked up and then made a hasty retreat to their huts. This did not get past Zach, she knew that VC had to be in the area and those who left at the very sight of them were sympathizers and went to warn them. It didn't bother her one bit. *"Let them come."* She thought. *"And they will join the ranks of many."*

Passing through the village, they kept to the well-beaten path made by feet and oxen. Zach felt her guts twist, and that was not a good sign. It was a well-known fact that the VC had tunnels with many trap doors that left them open to many exits. They could pop up just about anywhere and blow your legs off with a grenade. Rice paddies were off limits also, the villagers knew where the trip wires and clay mores were but it was deadly for a GI to go traipsing through the

paddies. Zach scanned the area with narrowed eyes, she was looking for a place to hold up. Looking up into the trees, she saw that they would have cover and be able to see the VC coming. She wished that they could get to Da Nang with out all the bullshit of having to shot the assholes.

"Hey Greene, drop your pack behind the tree there and get your ass up on one of those branches."

Greene's mouth fell open, he couldn't believe what she told him to do.

"Are you serious? I don't know how to climb trees!"

"What? Where are you from Greene?"

"New York, now if you wanted me to steal a car or break into a building then I could do it. But me and trees have never had a thing."

A low chuckle rumbled in her chest, shaking her head at him she had amusement written all over her face.

"OK, I throw you up to that branch and then you just pull yourself up and hug the hell out of the tree."

She laced her hands together, Greene put on foot in her hand and steadied himself with a hand on her head. She straightened swiftly, raised her arms upward and threw him up towards the branch. She watched as he pulled himself up and sat close to the tree with one arm around it. Moving over to the tree next to his, she dropped her back behind it and then with a running start she hit the tree with one foot, pushed off and grabbed the lowest branch, Swinging upward she grabbed the next branch and did something that almost made Greene fall out of his tree. She swung a few times to gain momentum, released, threw her body higher and landed on the next highest branch on her feet. Turning she gave him a lopsided grin.

"Are you from the circus or something?"

"Or something." She winked at him then sat down on the branch, pulling her rifle over her shoulder she readied it for what she called target practice.

Fifteen minutes later, she heard them coming through the brush at the side of the road. She counted six of them all armed with either Russian or M-14 rifles. She looked to make sure that Greene had seen them. Pulling a grenade from her web belt, she pulled the pin and threw it in the middle of them. When it went off, she and Greene picked off the remaining VC.

"That was easy." Greene said as he dropped down from the tree. "Now what Top?"

"We go find their little rat hole and make sure that we got all of them."

He groaned, "I hate doing that." They took all the rifles and piled them up. Zach pulled an

incineration grenade from her web belt stepped back and tossed the grenade on top of them. With in seconds the weapons were a huge melt mess of steel.

"OK, lets get this over with." They picked up their packs and followed the trail left from the others. Fifteen feet into the brush, they found the wooden lid to the VC's tunnel. Zach lifted the lid and looked down into the dimly lit tunnel, listening she heard nothing. Dropping down she stepped to the side and let Greene drop down beside her. Slowly, they followed the tunnel until they came to a place in the wall where numerous wooden crates were piled. She motioned for Greene to stand as look out while she checked the crates. Finding numerous grenades, she replaced the ones she had used and stuffed more in the cargo pockets on her ALICE pack. Once they cleared the tunnels, they would come back and destroy all the supplies that were stashed. Zach reached down and pulled a throwing knife from her boot and her 45 from it's holster. Motioning her head to Greene the moved further down the tunnel, they rounded a corner and surprised two VC. Two shots rang out and the VC dropped with out ever firing their rifles. Zach took their clips and cleared the barrels. They could see a bamboo ladder around the next turn and heard voices. Zach crouched low and made her way to the next bend, before Greene could catch up, she took out the remaining four VC.

"That's all of them. You stay here, I'm going to go set off all that shit they have down near the other trap door. Anyone opens that lid you blow the fuckers away. Got it?"

"Got it, hurry up Top. I hate being in these damn tunnels." He looked around him nervously wishing he was on the beaches in the Bahamas.

Zach took off at a run down the tunnel, when she reached the stash, she pulled a small piece of explosives from her butt pack, a detonator and charge. After she had everything ready, she took off at a sprint and yelled for Greene to move it. A low rumbling came from the direction she was running from, dirt and rocks started to fall all around her as she ran, a cloud of dust enveloped her as she rounded the last corner. Greene was climbing up the ladder, he looked down to see her charging towards him. Then all hell broke loose when part of the ceiling gave way and crashed down around her. The shake of the ground threw him from the ladder, he fell to his back and covered his face to keep the debris from hitting him. Minutes past with dirt and rocks falling all over the place, he rolled to his side and tried to see where Zach was.

"Zach?" He crawled towards the pile of dirt and rocks, coughing and wiping his eyes he dug in the dirt. "Don't do this to me Zach!" He felt movement under his knee. Starting his dig there, he found her boot.

"Damn it Zach!"

"Damn you to! Get off my foot!" She lifted herself up and shook her head to get the dirt off of herself. Rolling over on to her back, she took a deep breath and coughed when dirt fell in her face. "Let's get the hell outta here."

"Are you all right? A lot of shit fell on top of you."

"Yeah, just pissed at my self for using too much bang." Getting to her feet, she felt a burning sensation in her left knee, ignoring it she climbed what was left of the ladder. Outside of the hole, she fell onto her back and took huge gulps of fresh air. "They don't pay me enough to do this shit."

"Me neither, can we take some R&R when were done with this mission?"

"Yeah, we definitely need it." Looking down at her knee, she saw blood trickling from a gash and soaking her pant leg. Checking it, she saw that it wasn't that bad and decided to leave it until they could get clear of the place.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey sat on her bunk pulling her boots on, she looked down to see the leather map case that Zach had given her. Picking it up she pulled it open and lay it across her legs. What she found almost made her have a heart attack. Inside was thick wads of American money in all dominations.

"My Gods Zach! What are you doing with all this money?" Looking further through the case, she came across family pictures. They were all old, showing a very young Zach in her late teens. One was her with a young man a few years older than her, Mickey knew that it had to be her brother. They could have been twins, both tall and dark with ice blue eyes. Others were of her and her parents.

"Why did you give these for me to keep?"

She found letters that were at the earliest six years ago, she didn't feel right to read them but she read the name on the outside of the envelope.

Tears welled in her eyes, her Marine's first name was Alexandra. Running her finger across the picture of Zach and her brother, she thought of the last time she had seen her.

"You better come back Alex." She closed the case, pulled her footlocker out, opened it and retrieved a metal box with a lock on it. Taking her key from it's hiding place, she unlocked the box and put the map case inside.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The OR was busier than Mickey had seen in a long time, choppers kept coming in one after another. Trucks and jeeps carrying wounded stopped outside the doors. They had to turn the triage area into an operating room and move some of the patients into other areas to use their rooms also. She went into the area where Jackson was and found him trying to get out of his bed.

"Hold on there Jackson, you can't get up with out help." Giving him a stern look, she pushed him back down on his bed. "Where are you going anyway?"

"Ma'am, some one else needs this bed more than I do. I can bunk in the male quarters." He looked up into her tired green eyes. "Do you know how I got here?"

"Zach brought you in. Let me get you a wheelchair and I'll take you outside for some sun."

A small smile came to her face, if she couldn't be with Alex, then she would talk with someone who had spent a lot of time with her. She came back with a wheelchair and helped him move from his bed. Taking the easiest way out she pushed him away from the building until he was far enough away to be out of the flow of human traffic. Taking a seat on the ground next to him, she cleared her throat before speaking.

"How long were you with Alex?"

His green eyes looked down at her with confusion. "Alex?"

"Sorry, I mean Zach. Please don't tell her I told you her first name, she'll kill me."

"I won't say a word, honest! I was with her and the others for seven or eight months. Did they leave already?"

"Yeah her and Greene left a few days ago."

"What about Peters?"

"I'm sorry, he didn't make it. Zach said that he set off a trip line or something." They sat in silence for a few minutes until Jackson spoke.

"You know she's the best out there, she's the only female that has ever been out in the combat zone. None of us has ever been able to get any information on how she got out there. She won't say and neither will anyone else."

"She doesn't say much about anything." She chuckled. "She told me she's not really here."

"We aren't, but I will tell you this because I have this weird feeling that I can trust you not to say anything. We're with Special Ops and she hand picks us to go with her."

"She couldn't trust me to say that?" She felt hurt that the woman she loved wouldn't tell her that she was with SO. *"Then again, I never told her that I love her."*

"Don't feel bad Lieutenant, she didn't even tell us that we were going SO. She's so damn mysterious at times that it drives us all nuts."

Mickey smiled, her memories of the short time they had spent with each other and how frustrated she became during some of their conversations. Her heart swelled with love for the stoic GI, she could swear that she could feel her with her at that moment.

"Listen Jackson, I have to get back in there, if you need anything just yell and some one will come help you."

"Thanks Lieutenant."

"It's Mickey, not Lieutenant."

"Gotcha Mickey."

A slight blush colored his cheeks when she squeezed his shoulder and offered him a smile. She took off at a slow jog when another chopper landed on the pad. She could see orderlies running with stretchers.

"Gods, what the Hell is going on today?"

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Twelve hours later, she was finally done her body ached from fatigue. She wanted nothing better than to take a hot shower and go to sleep. Going to her room, she dropped down onto her rack and groaned when she tried to bend over to take her boots off. A piece of white showing from under her rack caught her eye, stretching she picked up the folded paper. Lying back on her bed, she opened the paper.

Mickey

I'm not very good with spoken or written words. So I'll make this simple. I will do every thing possible to return to you.

Love
Zach

Tears flowed from Mickey's eyes; she lay down on her rack and held the note to her chest. Picking up Alex's dog tag, she placed a soft kiss on it and held it tightly in her hand. "I miss you Alex."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The next morning she woke up feeling like she had slept on a concrete slab, her eyes were gritty and her mouth felt like she had been lying in the desert. She felt her forehead and felt a slight fever to her skin, when she swung her legs over the rack she felt light headed.

"I don't wanna be sick." She whined to herself. Using the edge of the rack, she pushed herself up and felt a dull thumping pain in her legs. Stumbling to the door she made it outside just in time, her stomach heaved and rid its self of all contents. Cold shivers ran through her body, sweat popped out across her forehead before she passed out and fell to the ground.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene walked to where Zach leaned up against a tree sleeping, he noticed that she looked awful pale and was sweaty even though the morning was rather cool. He knew better than to touch her if he wanted to live, so he kicked her left boot and flinched when a low moan escaped her lips. Feverish blue eyes opened, her tongue slipped out to lick dry lips.

Her voice no more than a croak. "Greene shot me."

"Shit Zach, you're sick."

"Am not. Help me up."

He reached down and took her hand, as soon as he had her up on her feet, her knees buckled and she went down with a howl of pain.

"Damn it Zach, we're going back to the hospital!"

Her eyes narrowed, baring her teeth she snarled. "We are not going back! We're going to Da Nang now help me up! Or I'll shot you!"

Against his better judgment, he helped her up and held on to her until she had her legs under her enough to walk. He could see how much pain she was in and made a decision on the spot. She may kill him afterward but better her than a little blonde nurse. He led them to one of the highways that was used for military traffic, unknowing to the feverish woman, he headed them back the way they had come from. He just hoped that a jeep or truck would come their way before she realized what he had done.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey woke up lying on a gurney in the hallway of the hospital. She looked down at her arm to see an IV running into her. She was confused to see it there and more so that she was on a gurney. She sat up and watched the room spin.

"Son of a bitch." She lay back down and turned her head when she heard her name called.

"Angie, what's wrong with me?"

"Don't know Tiny, I found you lying outside your room. Might be the flu, so one of the doc's gave you a shot and I started an IV. You were dehydrated really bad."

"Can I go back to my room? You guys don't need me here with my germs."

"Sure, give me a minute and I'll help you over there."

Mickey felt horrible, she hadn't been sick the entire time she had been in country. All she wanted to do know was go to her room and sleep for the rest of the day.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene turned at the sound of a vehicle coming behind them, with one hand he waved to them and prayed that they stopped. Since they had been walking, Zach had gotten worse. At one point when they rested, he saw the nasty gash in her leg and saw how red and swollen it was. He was now supporting most of her weight, he knew that he would never make it on foot. When the truck stopped, he grabbed a hold of the doorframe to help ease the strain he was under.

"Can you give us a ride to the 91st Eval?" He asked the driver.

"I'm not going that far, I'm turning off just up the road."

"Come on buddy, my Top is really sick. She's got a bad gash in her leg and it's infected." He hefted her sagging weight against his side. "I'll give you a phone number to call if you get in trouble for taking us."

The driver thought for a few minutes then nodded his head. "OK, get in back."

"Can you help me, we've been walking for about five hours and I'm about dead."

When he got her to the back of the truck, she looked around in confusion. As soon as the driver came on her other side, she started to fight them. Neither one of the men knew what she was saying in her delusional state, it didn't matter, even sick, she was as strong as three huge men.

"I hope you don't kill me later Top!" Greene pulled back and slugged her in her jaw. She fell back on the tailgate of the truck out cold.

"Oohh I am soo glad I'm not you buddy!" The driver said as they pushed her up into the truck. "I didn't know who you were with, but now that I see with my own eyes, I'll help you anyway I can. I'm just glad that I wasn't the one to hit the Warrior woman."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Angie came charging into Mickey's room, she shook Mickey trying to get her to wake up.

"Come on Mickey wake up!" She shook her almost out of her rack and yelled once more before bloodshot eyes opened. "We gotta go to the showers! NOW!"

"Angie why the hell do I need to go to the showers?" She sat up and cringed from her aching body.

"Greene brought Zach in a few minutes ago, she's in the showers and she's really sick!"

Adrenaline rushed through Mickey's body, she jumped from her rack and half stumbled out the door ahead of Angie. She was at a full out sprint before she got to the showers, slamming the door open she rushed to where Greene was sitting on the floor with cold water spraying down on him and Zach. Panicky eyes looked up into green.

"It's not my fault, she didn't say she was hurt."

"It's OK Greene." Mickey said as she dropped down to her knees, she saw the gash through the tear in Zach's pant leg. Ripping the material, she paled when she saw the red puffy skin. "Angie, get me some stuff to take care of this and bring it to my room. Please." She turned pleading green eyes to her friend.

"I'll get right on it." Angie ran from the showers for her mission.

"Greene can you carry her to my room?"

"No problem. Is she going to be OK?"

"She had better or I'll kick her ass." She talked braver than she felt, but she didn't want Greene to worry any more than he already was.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey had Greene step outside the room while she stripped Zach of her wet clothes. She could feel the feverish heat coming from her skin, after she got her trousers off she noticed all the bruises on her body and the dark bruise on her jaw along with some slight swelling. She covered her up with three blankets then went out to talk to Greene.

"What happened out there?"

He told her about them going down in the rat tunnels, how the ceiling fell in on top of Zach, and the condition she was in when he went to wake her.

He looked down at his boots and spoke in a low voice. "She's going to kill me when she wakes up."

"For bringing her back here?"

"That and for knocking her out. She started fighting me and the driver, so I punched her in the jaw."

Mickey started laughing, she surprised Greene by giving him a hug.

"I don't know who scares me more, Zach or you if anything would have happened to her."

"Don't worry about her being mad at you, I'll take care of her for you. Go get something to eat

and get some rest."

With Angie's help, she was able to clean and irrigate the wound on Zach's leg. She found dirt between the epidermal layer and the muscle tissue. Zach should have never left the wound go untreated. It was bad enough that it took 25 sutures to close it.

"Ever think of becoming a doctor, Mickey?"

"Yeah, but the responsibility is to much. This way I can just take care of the patients and not have to worry about more schooling and all the insurance bullshit." She bandaged Zach's leg and propped it up with a rolled blanket. "I know she knows better than to let a serious wound go untreated, I wonder what the hell she was thinking?"

"Who knows, I'm just glad Greene was with her and their both safe for the time being." Angie got up from where she was sitting and placed a hand on her friends shoulder. "I'll swing by the chow hall later and bring you some food, I'll have one of the cooks make up some broth for Zach."

"Thanks Angie, I owe you one."

Mickey used a cold wet towel to bath Zach's heated body, she hoped that all the stuff they had put into the IV's they had run earlier helped with the fever and infection. Pulling the wooden chair beside the bed, she covered Zach's forehead with the towel then sat down. Taking a larger hand in hers, she caressed the rough calloused palms and fingers. With all the activity that she had endured since she had been awoke by Angie, she now had time to think. The first thing she noticed was that she wasn't sick anymore and her fever had gone away. It seemed very strange that with Zach being brought in so sick, and her having similar symptoms that were now gone. She didn't dwell on it too long, instead, she gazed with loving eyes at the woman before her. "Sleep Alex, it'll be better when you wake up." Leaning over she kissed Zach's cheek before placing her head on her strong shoulder and falling asleep minutes later.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Zach could see the light ahead of her, she tried to run but her feet were stuck to the ground. Using all her strength, she tried to lift her feet but a sharp pain radiated through her legs. She cried out from frustration and pain, covering her head, she tried to protect her head from the falling debris. She felt her body slammed to the ground and a heavy weight on her chest making it hard to breathe. She was confused as to where she was until she heard a familiar voice whispering near her ear. Opening her eyes, she looked around to see a dim glow come from the screen door. She relaxed her body and wrapped her arms around the small body that was lying on top of her.

"Mickey." Was all she said before she fell back to sleep.

"Mickey was jerked from her sleep by Zach's thrashing and her wail, she tried to hold her down from along side the bed but found that her light weight was noting compared to Zach's delusional

strength. She crawled on to the bed, straddled the stronger woman's waist, and placed both hands on her shoulders to keep her from moving.

"Alex it's me." She whispered close to her ear. "Easy baby or you're going to hurt yourself." She felt the larger body relax beneath her, feverish blue eyes opened, looked around and then closed. Deep even breaths followed as Alex drifted back to sleep. Exhausted from her battling Alex, Mickey laid down beside her, moved one leg in between hers, wrapped a comforting arm around her waist and rested her head on her shoulder. Breathing in Zach's soft musky scent lulled her back to the arms of Morpheus.

A low groan came from parted dry lips, Zach brought up a hand and rubbed her eyes. She tried to sit up but found her body being held down by a warm weight. "Mickey?" She brought her free hand up to caress a soft cheek. "Mickey you awake?" A low mumbled voice came from the sleeping blonde. Zach tried to move her legs and let out a gasp as pain shot through the left one.

"Alex you OK?"

Pain filled blue eyes looked down into sleepy green; Mickey used a small fist and rubbed one eye. Getting up onto her elbow, she looked into a pale face. "Let me get you some water." She slipped to the end of the rack so that she wouldn't hit her leg. Zach pulled herself up on the rack, sweat broke out on her forehead from the pain. She felt like such an ass, she knew why she felt so bad and knew it was all her fault. Looking down at her swollen leg, she winced with the movement.

"Here, just sip this. It's chicken broth, a lot better than water." Mickey held the cup up to Zach's mouth and let her take small sips. Angie must have come back with food when she was asleep. She watched as Zach swallowed with some difficulty. Feeling her forehead and neck, she could feel the feverish skin. "Are you allergic to anything?"

"Besides being buried alive, no." She looked at the ceiling and gritted her teeth. "Where's Greene?"

"Probably in the barracks sleeping." She put the broth down and picked up a wet towel to wipe Zach's face. "He was exhausted the last time I saw him."

"When I see him he's going to need your help after I kick the shit out of him."

Mickey sat on the edge of the bed, pulling Zach's head down to that their eyes were level.

"Why in the hell would you do that?"

Her voice started out low until she was yelling. "Because I told him that we had to get to Da Nang and he went against my orders. That's why!"

Mickey's eyes narrowed, her temper flared to equal Zach's. Going nose to nose with her tall friend, she yelled back at her.

"Alexandra! If it wasn't for Greene going against your orders, you both might be dead! So stop trying to be the hard ass bitch and accept that he saved your ass!" They stayed nose to nose for long moments, looking into each others eyes until a lopsided grin came over Zach's face.

"What?" Mickey asked.

"I like how you say my name." She wrapped her arms around Mickey and pulled her to her chest. "How did you find out something that no one else has been able to?"

"Your map case." Was mumbled from where her face was buried in Zach's chest.

"Forgot about that." She placed a kiss on the tousled blonde crown. "Uuhhhh Mickey...I have to...use the latrine, like right now."

"Well, you have two chooses, a bed pan..." She smiled at the horrified look on Alex's face. "Or we try to get you there on one leg."

"One leg sounds a hell of a lot better than a cold impersonal bed pan."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

After dressing Alex in a pair of scrubs, with one crutch and an arm over Mickey's shoulder, they were able to get to the latrine and then the chow hall. Alex dropped down into a chair, winded and with sweat dripping from her chin onto her chest. She eased her left leg up onto a spare chair and groaned with the effort. She wanted to be mad as hell for her ignorant pride and Greene going against her orders but she couldn't hold onto her anger. She chuckled when she thought of Mickey going nose to nose with her and yelling back. She would never have thought the gentle little blonde had a temper. And the way she said her name sent shivers down her spine.

"Here ya go, enough to feed a horse." Mickey put two trays down on the table and laughed when Alex's eyes grew huge at the sight of all the food. "And this is just for you." She handed her a fork and spoon with a flourish.

"You stubborn god damn woman." Greene said from over her shoulder. "I'll have you know that I feel like I was thrown out of a chopper with out a repelling rope." He squeezed her shoulder and gave her a huge toothy grin that made his tired face look years younger. "How are you felling Top?"

Her blue eyes narrowed, voice deepened to a low growl. "I'd be felling great if it wasn't for my sore jaw." She pulled the man into a hug and shocked the hell out of him. "Thanks Joe, I owe you one. Now go get some rest." He stumbled away with a stupid grin on his face and thinking that his Top had lost some marbles down in the tunnel. He knew that Mickey was the reason for his Top acting human and it looked good on her, for once, she showed facial expressions besides anger.

A week went by with Mickey taking care of a stubborn Alex in between the patients in the hospital and assisting in the surgery. They continued to share Mickey's small rack, with Mickey using Alex as her own personal pillow. With each day, her love for the tall woman grew. With each touch, she felt the flames of arousal lick at her center; she wanted their relationship to reach a higher plateau, the problem was, she didn't know if Alex felt the same as she did, even though she had signed her letter with the words love Zach, didn't mean anything. They were sitting on a part of the beach that was hidden from prying eyes. They had been coming to this spot every night since Zach's return, to watch the sunset and then the stars. Mickey looked at Alex's strong profile; she loved to sneak quick peeks at her when Alex was unaware. Occasionally she got caught and a very expressive dark brow would rise above a twinkling blue eye. All she could do was try and hide her blushing face by looking in another direction. Moving closer to her left leg, she removed the bandage to let the wound get some air. Letting her fingers lightly touch the smooth skin of Alex's leg, a grin came to her face when Alex took in a shuddering breath.

"Does that tickle?"

Alex was ready to jump in the sea to cool her rapidly rising libido, just Mickey being close to her made her body react in ways it had never done before. Now with her fingers grazing the sensitive flesh behind her knee had her center throbbing. With lidded dark blue eyes, she watched the small delicate fingers terrorize and burn her flesh. Her breath caught when passion filled green eyes looked up at her; she could swear the air crackled with energy. She was frozen to her spot after those small fingers whispered up the inside of her thigh and back down. Licking dry lips, she placed a hand behind Mickey's neck and pulled her closer. Their eyes locked and searched for any hesitance within. Moving closer to each other, Alex brushed soft lips with her own, a low moan came from her with the tingling racing across her lips.

Mickey's voice was low and sultry when she said Alex's name, she laced her hands behind her neck and pulled her back for an exploring kiss. She asked for permission by flicking her tongue against Alex's top lip. She groaned when her lips parted and their tongues met. Easing them down into the cooling sand, Mickey slipped one thigh between Alex's and moaned when her center encountered a muscular thigh. Their kiss deepened, tongues searched every tiny area until they broke apart needing air. Alex cupped Mickey's cheek with one hand, her thumb caressing a swollen bottom lip. She pulled a breath between closed teeth when her thumb was taken into a warm mouth and sucked.

"Mickey, you're going to kill me." She growled and then moaned when her thumb was released and a warm wet tongue ran down the center of her palm. Wet lips pressed against the inside of her wrist and moved up her forearm with open mouth kisses. When she reached the tender skin at the inside of her elbow, she traced the creases with the tip of her tongue and felt Alex thrust her hips against her. Covering Alex's body with her own, Mickey pressed her sensitive breasts into the warm body below her, licking the sensitive skin below Alex's ear; she flicked her ear lobe and then took it between her lips to suck gently. Warm calloused hands worked up under her shirt to run up her ribcage and brush the sides of her breasts. Mickey gasped when her nipples tightened, a breath burst from her nose into Alex's ear. From some primal instinct, they moved their hips against each other in a slow tempo. Mickey searched out the button on her soon to be lover's cut off shorts she needed to touch her. Pulling back, she gazed down in to darkened blue

eyes.

"I want you Alex; I need to feel you against me."

Alex nodded her head; lifting her hips upward, she let Mickey slip her shorts down her long legs. The little blonde was pushing her closer to something she had only heard about. Their combined arousal was thick and hung in the air around them, she ran her fingers down Mickey's back to cup her rear for a few seconds before moving down to the backs of her thighs. Her fingers found a slickness coating her skin where her very short shorts ended just below her tight rear. A deep guttural groan escaped her lips; she moved her hands to the front and fumbled with the fastening of the shorts.

"Off Mickey, take 'em off."

In seconds, they lay pressed up against each other in only their T-shirts, moving their hips in sync, while tongues dueled with each other. They were pushing each other higher towards a place neither had been before when all hell broke loose. Explosions rocked the area around them, rifle fire split the air in a nonstop assault, screams and yells were heard coming from the hospital a short distance away. Alex rolled on top of Mickey and looked around them, searching for where the area that all the shooting was coming from. Rolling off her, she picked up her shorts and pulled them on.

"Get dressed Mickey; we have to get out of here before they find us." She threw her body over Mickey when a mortar round exploded close to them. "Mother fuckers! Rolling off of Mickey, she pulled her to her feet and took off running towards the hospital. She stopped to pull her close, speaking into her ear she told her to stay right there and not move for nothing or no one. She would be safe in the small area nudged in the side of the bank. Pulling her white T-shirt off and handing it to Mickey, she kissed her tenderly before taking off in the opposite direction and into the darkness.

"Ohh Gods Alex what are you doing?" She asked the emptiness around her. Dropping down to her haunches, she hugged her knees close to her chest and let her tears flow down her face. "Be careful Alex, I can't loose you."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex dug into the soft ground, bringing up two handfuls of the black dirt she scrubbed her face, chest and arms until she blended in with the darkness. She moved silently through the night looking for any sign of who was shooting at the hospital. She dropped to the ground when she saw a muzzle flashes off to her right. Searching the ground around her, she came up with a two inch in circumference stick. The end wasn't sharp but jagged enough to hurt someone. When the rifles started firing again and under the guise of that and the explosions, she moved quickly through the jungle until she was close enough to take out one of the attackers. Coming up behind him, she grabbed his head and gave a quick twist, snapping his neck, and then grabbing his rifle before he hit the ground. Pulling the small blade from his belt, she disappeared back into the thick vegetation to find her next victim. Another one was off to her left; taking the small blade,

she flipped it in her hand and threw it with all her strength. It hit home in the mans throat, he grabbed at the handle in panic, his rifle firing in to the air before he fell in a heap.

She could hear footfalls rushing towards her and caught the shine of brass reflecting off a worn buckle of a webbed belt. Whispers reached her ears; she cocked her head to listen to what was being said. *"Dumbasses!"* She thought to her self when the whispering turned out to be other GI's looking for the attackers. *"A deaf person could hear you coming!"* Waiting for them to get closer, she threw out her foot at the last minute and tripped the last man coming past her. Clapping a hand over his mouth, she whispered into his ear.

"You're too damn noisy; you want to get killed out here?" She removed her hand to look down into the eyes of a terrified young GI. "Now go get your buddies, spread out and work your way west of here. I'm taking the east, now go!"

"Who are you?"

All she said was Zach before she disappeared into the dark. The young GI got quickly to his feet and went after the others; he was in shock that the notorious Warrior of Da Nang was out there with them. But felt stupid that she had taken him down by tripping him. Alex ran through the jungle towards the hospital, she wanted to keep the VC from getting to close to where they could start shooting the personnel. She just hoped that Mickey had stayed where she had left her.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey couldn't stand it any more, she knew that the injured would need her help. Easing around the outcropping, she looked towards the end of the Psych ward and saw that no one was around. Shedding her white T-shirt, she tossed it to the ground along with Alex's. After taking a deep breath, she sprinted to the safety of the building. And the door at the rear. Pulling it open, she ran down the center aisle pushing men out of her way. She never thought about what she was doing and was shocked when some of the crazier men started trying to grab her.

"God damn it! We're under attack, get out of my way!" She punched one man in his face and another received a kick to his groin. Slamming her shoulder into the door, it gave way and dumped her into the main area of the frantic hospital. Scrambling to her feet, she ran towards the front door and all the commotion. Angie grabbed her by her arm and pulled her into one of the examination rooms.

"Mickey what the hell are you doing running around shirtless?" Grabbing a scrub top from a pile on a table she handed it to her.

"I don't have time! Alex is out there!" She broke free of her friend and ran from the room and out the front door. She searched through the wounded and the other's running around but couldn't find Alex. Her heart was beating out of her chest with worry. Tears flowed down her cheeks when she thought of Alex never coming back to her but lying out there in the jungle wounded or dead. Out of the corner of her eye she saw a dark figure run from the brush, he drew his arm back and was about to throw a grenade towards them when Alex stepped out of the brush mere

feet from the VC. She leveled her rifle and emptied the clip into the mans back. He fell to his knees and dropped the grenade. Mickey screamed, "NO!" as the grenade exploded sending the area up in debris and body parts. She continued to scream as she ran full out, to where she had last seen Alex. She could hardly see for the tears filling her eyes, her breath burning in her chest as she ran. Dropping to her knees near the indentation in the soft soil where the grenade had gone off, she let out a wail that raised the hair on the backs of many necks. Collapsing to the ground in body racking sobs, she beat her hands on the ground until the pain in her hands turned to numbness.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @

The ringing in her ears blocked out everything around her, clasping her hands over them she shook her head to try and clear the bright flashes behind her eyes. Lifting herself up from where she had thrown herself before the explosion, she checked herself over and groaned when she saw the blood running down her side from where a piece of wood was still sticking out of her. Leaving it where it stuck from just above her right hip she stumbled from the edge of the jungle. The first thing her eyes picked up was Mickey beating the ground with her hands, with long strides she reached her from behind and wrapped her arms around her and picked her up to hold her close to her chest.

"Mickey stop." She fought the small woman as she kicked out and tried to get free. "Baby it's me." When Mickey calmed she put her on the ground and turned her so that they faced each other. "Look at me." She cupped her face between her palms and looked into tear-filled eyes. She wasn't expecting for small fists to pound on her chest, but that's exactly what Mickey did, she beat on Alex until she collapsed against her and sobbed. Alex ran her fingers through long tangled blonde hair and murmured into her small ear. She could hear a little of what Mickey was chanting.

"Thought you...were dead." Was repeated against her sweat-dampened chest.

"I'm right here, I'll never leave you." She lifted the tear stained face up to hers, capturing her lips with her own she kissed her deeply until she felt an arm wrap around her neck and a warm body press into hers. She gasped when a small hand hit the piece of wood sticking from her side. Mickey pulled back and looked down at her blood-covered hand.

"You're hurt." She mumbled and then looked up into pain filled blue eyes.

"Just a scratch, got a band-aide?"

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

They sat by side on a gurney while Angie and another nurse attended their wounds. Angie kept pushing Mickey's one hand down while she sutured the gash on the side of her other hand.

"If you don't stop, I'll tie you down!"

"But...but..."

Angie covered her mouth with her hand, giving her a glare she then went back to her job. Mickey went to raise her hand but felt a larger one intercept it and then warm lips kissed the bruised flesh.

"Baby, if I can sit here in the hallway half naked and let some strange woman put her hands all over my body, then you can let Angie stitch you up."

The nurse who was suturing Alex's side chuckled, she looked up with amused green eyes and winked at Alex.

"Been called many things but strange ain't one of them." She said with a thick southern accent. "You're all done honey, no more grenades for about a week and take care of that crazy little nurse next to you." She walked away still chuckling under her breath.

Angie squeezed Mickey's thigh and gave her a wicked grin.

"How is it that neither one of you has a shirt on anyway?"

"Uuhhmm...well...we..."

Alex put her hand over Mickey's stuttering mouth. "We were on the beach when everything started blowing up, we took them off because they were white and I didn't feel like us being the little ducks in a shooting gallery." She took a deep painful breath before continuing. "I told someone to stay put but did she listen?"

Mickey pulled her hand from her lips, she blushed three shades of red before she could get her words out. "I knew they needed help here, so I made it to the Psych ward and then to the main area."

"Oohh you're the one who got all the crazies going! You know they keep yelling about a naked woman attacking them." She gave her friend a wicked smile. "You evil little thing."

Alex snorted at the thought of Mickey running through the crazy ward half-naked, then her face became somber when she remembered where she had found her.

"What were you doing outside during the fire fight?"

Mickey looked down at her bandaged hand. "I was looking for you and then I saw that VC, then you come up behind him..." She broke down into sobs; Alex knowing what she had seen pulled her into a comforting hug. A confused Angie looked to Alex, her mouth opened a few times then closed.

"What did she see?"

"He had a grenade and when it went off I was standing behind him."

"Ohh shit! Then how the hell did you..."

"Survive? There's a safe zone inside the perimeter of a grenade blast, I was in that but Mickey couldn't have known. I found her near the crater."

"That explains a lot. You two get back to her room and put some damn clothes on will ya." She squeezed Alex's shoulder before she headed to help other injured GI's.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

After showering, Alex and Mickey went to the chow hall, stole some food and went back to her room. They both fell down onto the small rack, Mickey rolled onto her side to face Alex. Her eyes showed remnants of fear and emotional exhaustion. Alex brushed her damp hair off her forehead then placed a tender kiss on her lips.

"Go to sleep little one." Mickey opened her mouth, she was silenced by soft lips before she could speak. "I would give anything for you not to have seen what you did tonight, but I can't."

"Is that what you do out there?"

Blue eyes took on a haunted look that scared the hell out of Mickey, she was about to tell Alex to forget it when Alex became another person and sent Mickey scrambling off the rack to fall on her rear. She gasped when Alex came to her full height and glared down at her.

Do you know how long I've been hunting in that fucking jungle! Searching for an answer to all my nightmares that haunt me in the light of day? Ripping at my very soul and eating me up from the inside out? Do you know how many of our men have died out there? They sent our loved ones, children, brothers, husbands and daughters over here to fight for something that they won't even acknowledge to the free world! Do you know that when they ship a body home they put it in some god forsaken building and have the family come to get it! My brother was only nineteen years old, he lasted exactly one week over here before they shipped what was left of him home in a baggy! My father was the only family I had left when Jimmy was killed and now he's gone to!" Tears flowed down her face to drip off her jaw, her hands clenched so tightly that her knuckles were white. The anger and hatred rolled off her body in waves sending shivers and chills up a terrified Mickey's spine. She inched her way back against the wall and shuddered when Alex came close to her. Bringing her knees up to her chest, she tried to hide from the silvery eyes glaring down at her. She jumped when Alex dropped down in front of her to lean forward on her toes, she slammed both fists on either side of Mickey's head making the wall shake from their force.

"Before he left I was too busy to see him off! I never got to say goodbye." She leaned in close to Mickey and growled deep in her chest. "I will kill every single VC I find and the people who pay me will know that I took from these fucking little assholes family's the same thing they lost when their sons were killed."

Mickey looked deeply into the haunted, rage filled eyes before her, she could barely take a breath to speak. She was confused and scared, Alex was not the same person she had been with down on the beach with, she was not even close to anything Mickey had ever witnessed before.

She took a chance with her own life by speaking. "Alex, you're not alone." She whispered and took another chance and cupped a feral looking face between her hands. "I'm here and I love you." She whispered before she pulled the enraged Warrior into her arms and held her tightly against her now sobbing body. She cried for all the pain and anguish that filled Alex's body that she herself couldn't release. She cried for the loss of loved ones who would never return home to their families and most of all for knowing that Alex was here on a suicide mission. She felt Alex start to shudder against her, sobs tore through the tall body when all the pain she had bottled up behind the erected walls of her heart were torn down by three simple words from Mickey. Wrapping her long arms around Mickey's shoulders, she sunk to the floor to bury her face against her breast.

Hours later, Alex had fallen asleep holding on to Mickey, She tried to run back over what Alex had said but still couldn't make heads or tails of it. Was Alex for the war or against it, why did she come over here and who were the people paying her to kill VC. She was afraid to ask her after what had happened a few hours ago. She knew if Alex was like that out in the jungle, then the VC definitely had something to worry about. She was running her fingers through long dark silky hair when Alex tipped her face up; she blinked her eyes a few times before they focused.

"I'm sorry Mickey. Do you want me to leave?"

Mickey cupped her cheek with one hand; she gave her a small smile and brushed her bangs back from her eyes.

"No, I never want you to leave, ever." She moved out from under Alex and offered her a hand. "Let's go to bed, I'm worn out."

Mickey lay down and pulled Alex into the small rack with her, Alex went to lay facing away from her, but a strong hand held her in place.

"Come here." Mickey wrapped an arm around her shoulders and brought her closer to her. "I love you Alex." She brought their lips together in a kiss filled with all the love she had in her heart. When the kiss broke, they both had tears in their eyes.

"Mickey...I..."

"I know Alex, I know." She ran her fingers at her temples and eased her head down to rest on her breast; she continued to let her fingers caress her temple until she heard the long deep breaths of sleep come from Alex.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

It was late the next morning when Mickey woke to an empty bed; she looked around the room and found she was all by herself. A feeling of dread coursed through her body, her heartbeat erratically in her chest at the thought that Alex had left her. She scrambled from the bed and ran to the door to collide with a hard body.

"Easy little one; can't have Angie over here to fix you up again." Alex dipped down and placed a soft kiss on her lips. "I brought us breakfast."

"I thought you..." Mickey stuttered over her words.

"No, I will never leave without you knowing it." She pulled her against her side. "I promise. Now let's eat, I'm starving."

Mickey kept glancing up at Alex; she noticed the dark circles under her eyes and the way she slumped against the wall. Her eyes held so many different emotions; it was hard to tell what she was thinking at any given moment.

"You want to know everything don't you?" Alex asked in a low voice.

"Only if you want to tell me."

"Alex lay down on the rack and put her head in Mickey's lap, she took a deep breath and was silent for a while before she started to talk.

"My Dad was so proud of my brother, he had seen me graduate from boot camp years before and now his youngest and only son had graduated from Army training. I know what you're thinking, he was an only son how could he enlist? There are ways around things; you just have to know how to do it." She paused for a few minutes getting her thoughts in order.

"When Jimmy came over here, he had just gotten out of training. He was so green that he didn't know if he had his boots on the right feet let alone know what to look for. Nothing can prepare you for Vietnam; you learn by yours and others mistakes and hope that you're not killed in the process. His squad were out in a place that had been reported to have VC activity; the numbers of VC were in the 50's or 60's. Jimmy's squad was only eight men; they should have never been there. So, when all hell broke loose, his squad retreated in to rice paddy fields. Half of the squad was blown to pieces within 30 feet of the edge of the fields. When my Dad called me I flew to the holding area to pick up Jimmy's remains." Her voice started to crack with emotion; she felt warm fingers brush through her hair at her temples, instantly calming her. "All they gave me was a small bag with his personal items in them. I found out that he had fallen on two land mines and that they couldn't find enough of him to send home." She broke down sobbing, Mickey pulled her up and held her in her arms, rocking her and whispering into her ear. Long minutes past before she was calm enough to continue.

"When I got to my Dad's house, I went into the kitchen and found him with his head on the kitchen table and the pistol he used in the Korean War laying on the floor."

Mickey murmured lowly. "Ohhh Gods, I'm so sorry Alex." Tears fell from her eyes to drip onto Alex, she buried her face against her neck and cried for the pain she felt for her friend.

"He left a note that said he shouldn't have pushed Jimmy into enlisting and he was sorry. After I buried my father and brother, I flew back to base and told them I was retiring. They fought me since we are at war, but they knew if they didn't let me go it would be the biggest mistake they ever made. Within a week I was over here with a large amount of money and the backing of numerous families and a very powerful Governor."

"If you're not enlisted then what are you?" Mickey was confused, she had never heard of someone coming to Vietnam who was not in the Military.

"I'm a hired mercenary; it makes me feel like I'm doing something to help. If I can kill the VC, then maybe more of our men will go home."

"How do you get others to join you and I thought you were Special Operations."

"I have contacts that give me a list of guys that are interested in being spooks, I trained Marines in Special Ops and I was the only female in the Intelligence branch of the Corps. That's how we get our reports on where the VC are at."

"Will you go back out there?" She hoped that Alex would say no, but she knew better.

"I have one more mission and then I'm going back to the states. I don't know where I'll go yet."

"Alex, come to Seattle with me." Green eyes looked down into red-rimmed blue; a slight flicker passed through them then disappeared.

"What about your family, won't they want you to come home?"

Tears filled her eyes, her breath caught in her chest when she thought of what she had back in the states. "I'm an orphan; I don't have anyone waiting for me. My parents were killed in a car accident when I was in junior high. I was a ward of the state of Illinois and had foster parents; my foster Mom sends me care packages every month. They're in their 70's and in a nursing home."

"I'm so sorry Mickey, I didn't know and here I am running my mouth about my problems." Alex felt her heart break at the thought of such a gentle woman not having anyone to comfort her when she left Vietnam. She didn't know what to do; she couldn't promise that she would survive the next mission. It would be very dangerous and she knew she had a 50/50 chance of survival. She would hate to give Mickey hope she knew it would destroy her if she were killed. She stayed silent not knowing what to say.

"Alex, I know what you're thinking. What if I don't make it back what will happen to her?" She cupped Alex's cheek in her warm hand. "Neither one of us knows what will happen tomorrow

nor the next day, all we can do is live for today. I leave here in one month to go to Hawaii before being completely released from the Navy. After that, I'm going to Seattle to work at the hospital. If your mission is completed before, the month is up, I will meet you here, and if it's longer, I will see you in Seattle.

Worry showing clearly on her face, she started to say something but two fingers covered her lips.

"No buts. I know you will make it and I will pray for your return every day and night."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Because you're the Warrior of Da Nang." She brought Alex up for a kiss to rival all their others, when it was broke Mickey ran her finger across a bottom lip. "I have faith in you."

They cuddled together, lost in their own thoughts of the future and what it would bring them.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex sat in the sun outside of Mickey's quarters reading a book on Greek mythology that she had found in Mickey's room. She was particularly fond of the Goddess Artemis for apparent reasons. But the thought of having one of her breasts cut off for the Goddess sent shivers down her spine.

She snorted. "And I'm called insane?"

"Who says that?" Mickey asked from where she stood behind her tall dark warrior.

Leaning back in to the warm body, she tilted her head back and winked at her. "Every body that has ever come in contact with me."

"I don't think that of you, I think you're maddening and a horrible tease but not insane." Leaning forward, she placed a wet kiss on a warm neck. "And you look so damn sexy wearing my too small T-shirt and green skivvy boxers." She looked down to where the slit in the boxers was gaping open and felt the heat rise in her body. "Not to mention a bit of an exhibitionist." Alex looked down to see where green eyes were burning her flesh and grinned. "Builds up my little ego."

"And brings out the naughty little voyeur in me!" Mickey's little voice said to her, licking dry lips with an equally dry tongue, a soft moan rumbled in her chest when Alex moved and the slit opened further to show soft dark curls. It was killing her slowly, every night they slept in each other's arms, she wanted so badly to run her hands over every inch of her tall friend but never did because she didn't want Alex to think her brazen. She couldn't handle it anymore, she leaned over Alex's shoulder and placed her hand over the opening of her boxers, a small whimper escaped her when curls brushed her palm. Alex gripped her wrist and added downward pressure. A soft groan came to her parted lips when the heat of Mickey's hand encountered her flesh.

"Alex...we have to...stop this." She stammered.

"You're right...now's not the time." She released Mickey's hand, only to have hers captured. She was pulled from her chair and dragged into the small room; Mickey slammed the inner wooden door with her foot and stalked her tall friend.

"Now's the time!" She stepped closer, a feral look in her green eyes, she growled before she launched herself at Alex and took them down onto the rack. "Fuck romance and all the other foreplay, I want you now and nothing is going to stop me!" She nipped at Alex's neck with her teeth and grinned evilly when she heard an intake of air pulled between clenched teeth. "Not mortars, VC, the airborne not even the fucking Marines!" She ripped the T-shirt from Alex's body and tossed the rags to the floor. "The Calvary can come charging through and I could care less!" Boxers hit the floor, a Warrior was pushed back against the pillows, and her breast was held captive between warm sucking lips. Long fingers tangled in long blonde hair as her back arched offering more to her growling nurse. Everything outside ended at that moment. All that mattered to either one of them was the pleasure they would bring to each other.

Alex rolled them over and pulled the T-shirt over Mickey's head, her shorts and then her boots were tossed to the floor. Kneeling with her legs on either side of Mickey's hips, Alex ran her hands slowly from hip to shoulder, reveling in the soft warm flesh that she had waited so long to touch. Goose bumps rose across pinked flesh with each caress, nipples tightened into hard buds when Alex's calloused fingertips circled them. Mickey's eyes watched the strong hands as they covered her breasts, her head fell back and she let out a gasp when rough palms brushed over her sensitive nipples. Arching her back and moaning, she offered more to her soon to be lover.

"You are so beautiful, so soft and warm." A husky voice whispered. "I've wanted to do this from the first time I saw you." Kissing her way across a soft breast until she came to a hardened nipple, taking it between her lips, she looked up into dark half lidded eyes as she sucked gently and then used her teeth to lightly nip. Mickey's head fell back to the pillow; a deep moan came from deep in her chest, lifting her hips upward she searched for contact. Alex moved so that one strong thigh was between her lovers, she moaned against a soft breast when she encountered the hot wetness of Mickey's arousal. With just that sensation, she felt her own fluids flow from her center and her nether lips throb. Using a feather like touch, she explored Mickey's ribcage; hip and over to brush fingertips across her lower stomach. A sharp gasp came from her lover when her fingers played in blonde curls, with one finger; she touched a nether lip and felt a small jump of Mickey's hips.

She panted with each touch she felt. "Please Alex, I need...something?" She reached forward and pushed down on strong shoulders, until Alex knew what she wanted. Blue eyes dark with arousal watched green as she moved downward, leaving wet kisses in her wake. She came to soft curls and breathed in the soft musk of her lover's arousal. Hesitantly she reached out her tongue and took her first taste, a deep moan rumbled in her chest.

"Alex! What did...you do?" Mickey groaned and thrust her hips upward looking for more. She felt as if a blowtorch had just ignited between her legs, a deep throbbing began in her stomach and got worse every time Alex touched her.

Alex didn't know what was happening to her but she felt like she was about to explode. With a long deep kiss on her lover's center, she crawled back up her body to give her a kiss that stole their breaths. When need of air caused them to come apart, she lifted Mickey up to straddle her kneeling thighs. Spreading her legs to give her more balance, she pulled a sweat-covered nurse against her chest and suckled her neck. She murmured against the warm wet flesh.

"Touch me baby, I need to feel you." Her head fell back when small hands ran down her breasts to linger and pinch her nipples. Her breath came faster each time Mickey pinched them. "I'm gonna...baby...not yet...stop." She begged her lover before she pushed her over the edge. Pulling small hands away from her breasts, she sighed with somewhat relief.

"You're evil, Mickey." She panted.

"Well...I don't know what to do." Her face turned a deep red from embarrassment; she had started this and now had no idea what to do.

"Give me your hand." When the small hand fit in to hers, she pressed it up against her apex and shuddered. "Copy what I do." She ran her fingers between Mickey's lips and felt how wet she was, she buried her face against her neck and moaned loudly from both what her hand and body was feeling. Slipping her fingers to the first knuckle, her lover whimpered and pushed her hips forward. Moving slowly she pumped into her hot, wet center.

"More Alex." She begged and pushed harder against her hand while slipping two fingers into her lover part way.

She lifted her head to look into clouded green eyes. "Baby, this is going to really hurt."

"I know, kiss me." They came together in a searching kiss, tongues slid against each other. Breasts pressed together sending flames to settle and flicker in southern regions. Alex could feel her lover's juices flowing over her fingers, she pushed in further and felt Mickey do the same to her. With a non-communicated signal between them, they pushed their fingers in all the way and gave their gifts to each other in painful gasps. Seconds went by before they slowly moved against each other, Alex captured soft lips, and tenderly kissed her lover, and moans came from their throats as their bodies rose to the pinnacle. Nerve endings sang, breathing stopped, muscles tightened and strained as the heavens welcomed them. Bright flashes of color enveloped them as they cried out their earth tilting releases and then silence. Alex slumped to the rack taking Mickey with her, long minutes passed with out a sound except even breathing. Two sets of eyes fluttered open, filled with so much love for one another plainly showing in the depths.

"I love you Mickey."

"I love you to Alexandra."

Alex looked down at her lovers chest and then up with a bashful smile. "I think I passed out, how about you?"

She snickered and moved closer to her lover. "Uuhhmm well..." Her left eyebrow rose upward towards her sweat drenched bangs. "I won't tell if you don't."

Alex moved to where she could reach her canteen, grabbing a torn T-shirt off the floor, she poured the warm water on it. Placing a loving kiss on Mickey's lips, she then gently spread her legs and washed the blood from inside her thighs. Mickey's heart filled with so much emotion that she thought for sure she would die.

"Alex, you don't have to do that."

"I know, but I want to take care of you." She placed a soft kiss above blonde curls before lying down beside her lover and kissing her gently. "I want to take care of you forever."

After Mickey had returned the favor of washing Alex, she crawled into her arms and lay with her head on her shoulder. Tracing delicate patterns on her shoulder with her fingertips, she joined her sleeping lover in the lands of Morpheus.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

A huge smile split Mickey's face when she felt the warm body of her lover pressed up against her, her arm possessively holding her around her waist and the other cupping a breast in her large hand. Running her fingers up her arm from wrist to elbow, she felt the soft hair covering her arm and couldn't resist giving it a yank.

"Oww, baby why'd you do that?"

"I felt like it." She rolled over to face a blurry-eyed Alex, placing a soft kiss on her lips; she continued to kiss the rest of her face. "I love you Alex, make love to me."

Their touches were gentle and loving, they explored each other's bodies with long caresses that they hadn't done the night before. Mickey traced each scar on her lover's body and then kissed them gently. Alex's naturally dark skin was peppered with white scars from her battles. She hated the fact that Alex was here to participate in this ugly war, then thought, if not for the war she would have never met her. Alex rolled her over and looked down into eyes that showed a deep sadness.

"What's wrong Baby?"

"It's nothing." Tears filled her eyes and trickled down her cheeks; as she ran a finger across a scar over her right breast. Alex kissed them away and gave her a small smile.

"They're only scars; they'll fade in time along with some of the stuff I've seen over here." Kissing her gently, she moved slowly down her lover's body until she came to lie between her thighs. Nuzzling her blonde curls with her chin, a wicked grin crossed her lips when Mickey's hips thrust upward. Hungrily she licked and sucked at her nether lips, taking in every bit of her arousal. Mickey was thrashing on the small rack, her blunt fingernails digging into Alex's

shoulders. Her back arched when she felt a warm tongue push into her center and a thumb rub her engorged clit. Her mind started to spiral as her climax drew near, with a deep growl against her center from Alex. She went over the edge with a cry of her lover's name, seconds later she heard her own name echoed through out the small room.

Alex lay between her lover's thighs taking in gulps of air while the last of the tremors cascaded through her body. She felt small warm hands run across her face, wiping the sweat from her brow.

"Come up here my Warrior." She wrapped her arms around her tall lover and nuzzled her neck. "You OK?" She asked after she felt Alex's body stiffen against her.

"Yeah, just after shocks." Wiping the sweat from Mickey's upper lip with her thumb, she brushed her wet hair back from her cheek. "That was..."

"Yeah it was, tell me how you know so much if you were a..."

"Men brag and give out a lot of info." Grinning wickedly, she licked a path from Mickey's ear to her lips. "I've always been a quick learner and I have many skills."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex was dressed and walking out the door when she heard Mickey mumble. Going back to the rack, she bent down and placed a kiss on her forehead. "I'll be back I'm going to steal some chow for us." Mickey grabbed the thick gold chain that hung from her lover's neck and pulled her back down for a longer kiss. When they came apart, she looked closely at the medallion that was on the chain. It was round with Gaelic designs around the outside, with a cross in the center.

"What's this mean?" Mickey asked with a curious glance into smiling blue eyes and then back to the medallion. She flipped it over to see strange foreign letters on the back.

"It's a Gaelic Briac Cross, it means strong. The letters on the back are Greek; it means never to be apart. It's been handed down for centuries from mother to daughter."

Mickey wondered if Alex would be the last one to wear the Briac Cross, placing a kiss upon it she pressed it against her lover's chest. And then pulled her lover down to wrap her arms around her.

"No, I won't be the last."

Questioning eye's looked at her. "How do you always know what I'm thinking?"

"No idea, just do."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene came charging up to them as they made their way towards the chow hall, his breathing came out in pants and sweat rolled down his clean shaved cheeks.

"Zach...radio call came in...guys held prisoner..."

"Hold on now, calm down and take it easy." She placed a hand on his shoulder and let him catch his breath.

"OK, the guys that we ran into a while back have been captured, they want us to go get them."

Alex ran her hands threw her hair and sighed, she hated the idea of going after the assholes but knew she had to. She pulled a worried nurse against her side and placed a kiss on her forehead.

"Mickey I have to go, but I'll be back." She turned her so that she was looking down into her misty green eyes. "I promise you."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex checked her gear one last time before she stepped from the small room, Mickey was sitting outside the door waiting for her to finish. It was too much for her to watch her lover get ready to head back out into the jungle. Every time she left, Mickey's soul and heart ache with the thought that this may be the last time they saw each other. Tears flowed from her red-rimmed eyes down her cheeks to drip onto her hands that were held as if she were in prayer. She leaned back into the warm body of her lover when Alex stepped behind her.

"It's time baby, the sooner I leave the sooner I get back to you."

Her pain evident in her speech, she jumped up and stared Alex down. "I hate this! No more after this Alex!"

Alex grinned at her, she pulled her little fiery nurse against her chest and hugged her tight.

"This is it, no more after this. Hope Seattle can handle the two of us."

They walked to the edge of the jungle and saw Greene with Angie in his arms. He kissed her tenderly and then walked in to the dense growth leaving a sobbing Angie to watch. Mickey turned tear-filled eyes to her lover, she pressed her hand over the gold medallion.

"I love you Alex, I'll be waiting for you."

"I love you to and I'll be back before you know I'm missing." She captured her soft lips in a deep lingering kiss that had their hearts beating a staccato in their chests. When they came apart, Alex wiped the tears from Mickey's face, kissed her once more then walked into the jungle to join Greene. Mickey walked up to her friend and pulled Angie into a tight hug, both women broke into sobs and held each other for long moments before heading back to the hospital. Alex found Greene wiping tears from his eyes, she gave him a gentle hug and smiled.

"Come on stud, lets go get them so we can get back here to our women."

"I'm no stud after hearing you two screaming the other morning." He blushed at what he had just said and was ready to run for his life but was surprised when Alex just laughed at him and slapped him on his shoulder. His Top was very different and he liked it, he just hoped and prayed that they survived this and made it back in one piece.

They cut through the jungle at a diagonal angle to where they would pick up transport and then be taken by chopper to where the seventh Infantry squad was being held by the VC. Alex had a worried look on her face for the first time, she had a bad feeling about this from the very beginning but put it up to leaving Mickey. Now she wasn't so sure as the chopper got closer to where they would repel down to the dense jungle. She looked over the different shades of green and a set of eyes came to her as she closed her own stormy blue. She could see Mickey's smiling face and her heart ached for her lover.

"Come on Zach, time to go kick some Charlie ass." Greene said as he hooked up the rope to his harness. He jumped backwards and disappeared into the wind from the chopper blades. Alex took a deep breath and followed behind him.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey and Angie sat side by side on her small rack, it seemed that they both had been crying for the past couple of days. Their eyes were permanently bloodshot and every time they heard a vehicle pull into the hospital, they ran outside to have their hopes dashed.

"How much longer are we going to have to sit around here and not know a damn thing?" Angie asked as she got up to pace the floor for the hundredth time.

"I don't know but I may be completely insane by the time they get back. And it'll be because of your damn pacing!"

"I can't help it, if I don't pace I cry and I don't want to cry anymore." Tears flowed from worried brown eyes. Mickey got off the rack and hugged her friend tightly and let her cry. She knew all to well what her friend was feeling, she knew that the tears wouldn't help Alex so she did her best to hold them back and pray to the Pagan Gods of her lover to keep her safe.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex and Greene crept forward to the small VC camp where they had been led to believe the seventh was being held. They saw tiger cages set up in rows with filthy men held in them. The over powering stench of decaying vegetation was laced with the scent of fear and body odor. She knew that the men had been tortured and worse.

"We go in tonight, take out all the fucking Charlie's and get the men out." Alex said in a low whisper into Greene's ear.

"I counted twelve VC and nine GI's."

"OK, no problem." She gave him a lopsided grin. They sat until the night grew dark and waited for the lights to go out in the small hut where the VC had all retired to. Stepping quietly from their hiding place, they walked on silent feet towards the hut. Alex took the front while Greene went around the back. She gave him fifteen seconds before she pulled the pin from a grenade and tossed it through a window and then dove to the ground before the explosion. Screams pierced the air and VC ran and stumbled from the destroyed hut. Alex came up onto one knee and started shooting the men as they came towards her. She felt a fiery pain in her upper arm and fell back to shoot the VC behind her. Greene was doing the same as he came running from the back, dropping VC on his way to guard his Tops back.

When it was all over, Alex checked the wound in her shoulder and arm and shrugged off the pain. They had a job to do and the sooner they released the prisoners the sooner they could get back to the hospital and their lovers.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey looked up from where she was checking on a patient, a strange feeling overcame her, then left fleetingly. It had been a two weeks since Alex had left, she only two days before she was sent to Hawaii. She prayed every night that Alex would make it back before she left. She had left a letter with Angie who would leave a week later to join her in Hawaii before they would both go to Seattle. They had been looking forward to traveling to Hawaii with their lover's been it looked as if that was not to be. Deep in her heart she knew that Alex would be back, she just didn't know when.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

All the prisoners had been released, one of which was none to happy to see whom his rescuers were. Martin scowled at Alex and stomped off to join the others. He hated the woman and would see that she paid if it was the last thing he ever did. He picked up a rifle and a sidearm from one of the dead VC, Giving Alex a glare he turned and walked into the jungle.

"All right, lets get the hell outta here." Alex walked in front of the prisoners while Greene took up the rear. They had four clicks east to go before they came to the place where the chopper would lift them out of there and fly them back to the 91st Eval. Alex couldn't wait to get back, she missed Mickey more than she had ever missed anything and she knew that she only had two days before they would leave for good. They couldn't move to fast because of some of the men being injured and having to be half carried through the jungle. She kept feeling eyes drilling into her back and knew right away, whom it was, she would be happy to part ways with the arrogant Martin and hoped she would never see him again. Pulling the small radio from her pack, she whispered into it their location and time of arrival to the pick-up area. She turned it off after she received conformation from the other end. Tucking it back in her pack, she turned and headed half a click south, another 20 minutes and they'd be free of the wet muggy area and back at the hospital. Her acute hearing picked up the sound of a chopper overhead, she looked up and could

just make out the outline of the bottom part of the body. She motioned to the others and they started running to the cleared area in front of them. Dropping down to one knee kept an eye on the surrounding area for VC. When the chopper landed she moved closer as the men boarded, as the last man got on she came sprinting forward, she could see Greene kneeling behind Martin, his rifle laying next to him as he reached out a hand for her. Martin raised the butt of his rifle and smacked it against Greene's jaw, knocking him out cold and to fall to the floor of the chopper.

Alex knew right then that she was in trouble, before she could raise her rifle a burning pierced her chest and she sunk to her knees. Her wide blue eyes looking into the crazed face of Martin as he came towards her.

"You're not going back." He growled. "We don't need bitches saving our asses!" He kicked out, hitting her in her chest so hard that she was thrown backwards. Her medallion sliding from the collar of her shirt to twinkle in the darkness. Martin reached down and ripped it from around her neck and looked at her with an insane expression on his face. He turned and ran to the chopper, pushed past the other shocked GI's and gave the pilot an order to lift off.

Alex took in short pants of air as she watched her freedom take off into the night. *"I'll kill you when I get back."* Where her last thoughts before darkness claimed her.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey barreled from the hospital, planes were flying over and dropping bombs in the surrounding jungle and close to the hospital. Rifle fire was heard off in the distance and then choppers flew over with their gunners hanging from the doors firing into the jungle. She was just about to run to her quarters when a mortar took out the whole section. She fell to the ground and covered her head to keep from being hit by debris. She felt someone grab her arm and pull her to her feet and drag her towards where a chopper was landing in the clearing.

"Get the men off the chopper, we need their help at the hospital!" Her Co yelled into her ear then took off running to where the hospital was on fire. She took off running to help the surgeons that had been flown in. If they were here that means all hell had broke loose and they were going to be seeing a lot of casualty's come their way.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene shook the mist from his head, he groaned at the pounding in his jaw and knew that it had to be broke. Sitting up, the inside of the chopper spun before his pain filled eyes. When every thing cleared he looked around for Alex, panic hit him when he didn't see her.

"Where's Zach?" He asked the man next to him and only received a pained look. The man looked sideways to where Martin was sitting near the bay doors rubbing something gold between his fingers. Rage filled Greene's body, he crawled over to Martin and grabbed him by his throat.

"Where's Zach!" He screamed in the mans face, spraying him with blood and spittle. "You fucking asshole! Where's my TOP!"

Martin let out a crazed laugh and shrugged his shoulders

"I shot that dyke bitch! VC's got her ass now, probably raping her at this very moment!" He laughed hysterically into Greene's hate filled eyes.

Greene pried his fingers from Zach's medallion and ripped it from around his neck. He pulled back and pummeled Martin's face, screaming the entire time as bones crunched under his hands. The other men tried to pull him off but were useless under his savage attack. With a howl of pain, he picked Martin's struggling body up and threw him from the chopper. He watched as he flailed at the air and disappeared into the dark. Falling back on the floor, he clutched the gold medallion to his chest and sobbed.

"God no Zach!" He wailed, the others backed up and stayed clear of the sobbing GI. They knew that none of them would ever tell what had happened that day to Martin but would let everyone know that the Warrior of Da Nang had died saving their lives.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

The bombing had stopped, the fires put out and all the wounded had been care for. Mickey and Angie sat outside the hospital with their backs against the wall. Exhausted, filthy and wanting nothing more than to take a shower, which was impossible since the showers had been burned to the ground. They both looked up when a chopper flew overhead and landed in the cleared area, Mickey's heartbeat picked up when she saw Greene helping men from the bay doors. She and Angie got up and ran to help, she stopped to look around for Alex, and tears came to her eyes when Greene's tear streaked face came into her direct vision. His face swollen and deformed from his broken jaw, he tried to talk but couldn't all he could do was hold out Alex's medallion to Mickey.

Mickey started to sob and repeat the word no, she fell to the ground holding the medallion in trembling fingers. Her wails were heard through out the area along with the sobbing of Angie and Greene. Three bodies clung to each other as the chopper lifted off.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey stood on the balcony to the small room she had near the beach, she looked out at the rolling waves crashing on the white sands of the beach. She remembered the times she had sat on the beach with Alex and tears came to her eyes.

"I will all ways love you Alex." She placed a kiss on the Briac Cross Medallion and then slipped in inside her white button down shirt. She would be flying to Seattle that afternoon to start her new life at the hospital. She had a large-furnished apartment waiting for her a few blocks away from the hospital and would be able to walk to work. When Angie got there, they would share it along with Greene when he was discharged from the hospital and be able to join his fiancée. Mickey was happy for her friends, she would have never thought that Angie would give up her wicked ways and settle down. She just wished that she would be doing the same thing with Alex,

but the fates didn't grant her the one wish she wanted. She made a promise to herself after Greene had told her what had happened to Alex that she would never love again, she would live out her life alone and always feel the love that they had shared in such a short time.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex groaned deep in her chest that ached something fierce, she knew she was in bad shape but had to get out of the open area before the VC found her. She wiped the blood from her neck and wondered why it hurt so bad, then she remembered. Anger shot through her veins, vengeance beat in her chest; she would get back and kill Martin. With a new energy pulsing through her veins, she jogged to the cover of trees and pulled the radio from her pack. Turning it on she heard a slight hiss of static and then nothing, shaking it didn't do anything.

"Mother fucking bitch!" She mumbled before taking the water proof back off and wiping the battery off on her damp clothes. Replacing the battery, she tried again and was able to get a signal and call for a pick-up. The sound of the shocked pilot made her grin. "I'm coming to get you Mickey, won't be long now." She had no idea how long she had been lying out there in the jungle but she would find out soon enough. Twenty minutes later she watched as a chopper came into view, standing on weak legs she stumbled to the chopper and was helped in. Dropping to the floor, she just lay there taking in deep breathes and praying that the pain in her body would go away.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex stumbled from the chopper and jogged towards Mickey's quarters, she fell to her knees upon seeing the burnt out haul of the place she had called home for a short while. Tears came to her eyes as she climbed to her feet and searched for someone to answer her many questions. She saw a nurse coming towards her and grabbed her roughly by her arm.

"What happened here and where's Lt. Jardian?"

"We got hit by the VC and our own guys, lost a couple of nurses and surgeons who were in their quarters at the time. As for Jardian, if she was in there." She pointed to the rubble. "Then she's dead, they pulled a body from there that was burnt to a crisp."

Alex let out a howl that sent shivers up the nurses spine, she took off at a dead run to get away from the crazy tall woman. She burst through the doors of the hospital and knocked Angie into the wall.

"What the hell is your problem?" She rubbed her shoulder where it had hit the door jam.

"Some crazy woman is out there looking for someone by the name of Jordan...Jardan...something like that."

"Lt. Jardian?" Angie asked her.

"Yeah that's it, I told her she was dead." She shrugged her shoulders and walked away.

"Ohh my Gods! Alex." She ran out the door and searched the area, she saw Alex kicking burnt boards with her feet and beating the ground with her rifle. Running over to the woman, she jumped on her back and took her to the ground. Holding her down was becoming harder as the woman's anger built.

"God damn it Alex STOP! She's not dead!" She screamed into Alex's ear. "She's in Hawaii!" She felt the large body beneath her relax and then shudder as sobs racked her body. "Come with me so you can get cleaned up." She rolled off Alex's heaving back and helped her to her feet, taking one look at her bloody clothes, she knew that this woman had been through hell to get back.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex sat on the gurney totally naked except for the sheet wrapped around her hips. Angie was just finishing up with the sutures in the large gash on her chest and shoulder. She placed a sterile bandage over it and taped it down.

"You know she thinks your dead." Angie said as a matter of fact. "You show up in Seattle and she may have a heart attack on the spot." She went on to tell her everything that Greene had told them and noticed a slight grin cover her lips when she found out that Martin had been thrown from the chopper.

Alex jumped down from the gurney and tried to walk from the room.

"Hold up there Warrior, you're not going anywhere dressed like that!" She handed Alex a pair of scrubs. "I don't want Mickey kicking the shit out of me for letting you run around all these horny ass men naked."

"I have to get to Seattle, like right now!" Her eyes blazed with urgency.

"Is tomorrow soon enough for you? I leave on the transport for Hawaii and I just happen to have an open seat next to me."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Mickey pulled the fire damaged metal box from under her bed, she lifted the top and pulled out the leather map case that had belonged to her lover. She wiped the tears from her eyes and from where they had dropped onto the worn leather. Clutching it to her chest, she sobbed for the lost part of her soul. Her heart ached, she wished that she knew how long the pain would last. It was getting harder to control her emotions when she seen the GI's at work. Especially Greene who was there before being released back to the civilian world. She knew that he was not the blame for what happened to Alex, but he reminded her so much of her lover. With getting to know him better, she saw that he had many of her lover's mannerisms. After so long of fighting beside her it was normal for him to emulate her. She saw the pain in his eyes and knew that he blamed

himself for her death. So a few hours a day, they sat and comforted each other's pain. In another few hours, she knew that Angie would be showing up, she couldn't wait to see her friend and was happy that they would be spending time together at home and work. Wiping the tears from her face, she put the map case back in the box and lay down on her queen size bed. She had sent Angie a key to the apartment and arranged for Greene to pick her up at the airport. She gave him a message for Angie, telling her that she was exhausted and would see her at home. "Home." She thought to herself, not really, not without Alex. She fell asleep dreaming of her gentle lover and cried in her sleep for lost love.

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Greene fell to his knees, his jaw dropped open at the sight coming towards him. Angie's smile beamed down at him and a pair of smiling ice blue eyes drilled into his wide shocked unbelieving eyes.

"Alex?"

"What did you think a bullet would stop me?"

Tears filled his eyes, he got to his feet and hugged his Top and all most broke her ribs.

"Ohh come on Greene, what about your fiancée?"

"Sorry, it's just that I thought you were..."

"Dead? Well, I'm not but you may get there soon if you don't get me to Mickey."

@ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @ @

Alex walked down the hallway that led to the bedrooms, Angie had told her that Mickey's was the last one on the right. When she stopped outside the door, she took a deep breath and opened it slowly. Looking into the dark room, she could just make out her lover's small form curled in a fetal position. Her heart warmed and beat faster as she moved to the foot of the bed and crawled up to lay down behind Mickey. Spooning against her, she breathed in her soft scent, a sigh escaped her lips. She was home and it never felt better.

Mickey was having the most wonderful dream, she could feel a warm body pressing against her back and strong arms wrapping around her. But her subconscious knew that when she woke, she would be alone. Reaching out in her dreamscape, she ran her hands across warm arms. It felt so real that she could feel the soft hair tickle her palms. A low moan came to her throat when soft wet lips placed a kiss on her neck. She whispered under her breath. "I love you Alex."

Nuzzling closer to her lovers ear, she whispered back. "I love you to baby."

Green eyes shot open, Mickey felt the arms around her and turned over to look into pale silvery blue eyes.

"Alex?"

"It's none other." She brought their lips together gently then pulled back to see what Mickey would do.

"But you're..."

"Very much alive, I've missed you."

Mickey rolled on top of her and captured her lips in a bruising kiss, their moans swallowed by the other as the kiss became gentler. Alex stiffened under small hands that ran down her shoulders. Running her hands up her lover's ribcage, she pushed her back gently.

"Baby, I'm kinda sore. I got shot a few times."

Tears filled green eyes, Mickey unbuttoned her lover's shirt and pulled it to the sides to see the white bandages on both shoulders and above Alex's left breast.

"One from a VC and the other from Martin. The bullet ricocheted off my harness and went in my chest and out burrowed upward through my shoulder."

Mickey placed kisses over each breast and then rested her head on her lover's chest. Soft sobs started at first and turned it to body racking shudders.

"I'm here and I'm never going to leave you again." Alex whispered to her lover. She ran her hands up under Mickey's shirt and moaned at the feel of warm silky skin. "Baby make love to me." She whispered with so much need and love in her voice.

For hours they loved each other, screams from their passion echoed in the night until exhaustion took them to a deep sleep.

The next morning green eyes blinked open to see the calm face of her lover beside her on the pillow.

"I thought it was a dream."

"If it is, I hope I never wake up." Blue eyes opened and took in her lover's sleepy face. "Marry me Mickey."

"Yes." That one simple word shot through Alex's heart. Mickey kissed Alex with everything she was feeling, when the need for air brought them apart tears filled both their eyes. "I'll marry you Alexandra N. Zachary."

"Nichole, my middle names Nichole."

"OK, last of our secrets to be revealed. Michelle Gabriella Jardian." Mickey said before she rolled on top of her lover, she planed on celebrating their engagement for long hours or maybe days.

The End

Da Nang

By Larisa

Hecate3366@frontiernet.net

[The Athenaeum's Scroll Archive](#)