



Love and Loyalty

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Category: Erotic, Romance, New Adult, Lesbian Romance

Description: When the heat of battle meets the heat of passion, who will win?

Expect tension, close-quarters intimacy, plenty of passion and always a Happy Ever After

Izzy Oakley is a brilliant trauma surgeon, used to saving lives on the front lines, but when she meets Major Drew Mitchell, a daring and cocky combat pilot, her heart faces a challenge she never expected. Drew's fearless attitude instantly clashes with Izzy's strategic approach but underneath their professional clashes, there is a burning attraction simmering.

Amid rising tensions at a forward operating base in the Middle East, the two are thrown together during high-risk missions.

Will their undeniable chemistry survive the chaos of war, or will duty tear them apart?

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Chapter One

Izzy

Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley stepped off the transport plane and onto the scorching desert tarmac as exhaustion washed over her. The long flight from the States combined with the stress of preparing for this deployment had taken their toll. Her eyes felt gritty, her muscles ached, and her mind was numb.

But she knew she couldn't afford to rest. Not yet.

Being posted to this special operation unit had been a dream come true, and she intended to do her best.

Taking a deep breath, she squared her shoulders and walked toward the command center of the forward operating base. The blistering sun beat down on her, sucking the moisture from her skin.

As she entered the command center, a flurry of activity greeted her. Personnel bustled about, preparing for the upcoming mission. Izzy's gaze swept across the room before locking onto the intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Patel.

"Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley reporting for duty, sir," she said, her voice crisp despite her fatigue.

Lieutenant Colonel Patel looked up from the maps spread out before him, his eyes narrowing as he took in her disheveled appearance. "Lieutenant Colonel Oakley,

welcome to FOB Eagle. You're right on time."

Izzy nodded, her mind already racing with the tasks ahead. "Sir, I've already reviewed the mission briefing. What's the current situation on the ground?"

Lieutenant Colonel Patel gestured to the maps, and Isabel moved closer, her eyes scanning the terrain. "We've got a high-value target located approximately 10 clicks north of our position. Intel suggests a heavy enemy presence in the area."

She dove into the mission planning, her focus laser sharp and exhaustion forgotten. She knew that in this unforgiving environment, complacency could be deadly, and she was ready to get to work.

Quickly adjusting her uniform, she scanned the bustling special operations unit's base. Although she had been here only an hour, she could already see that there was a lot of work to be done.

The first task was to check on the medical unit, ensuring it was fully equipped and prepared for the upcoming operation.

As she entered the medical tent, she was greeted by the unit's medic, Sergeant Thompson. "Ma'am, what brings you here today?"

"Just doing my due diligence, Sergeant. I want to make sure everything is in order for the mission."

He nodded, leading her through the tent. "We're all set, Lieutenant Colonel. We've got all the necessary medical supplies and equipment."

But as she inspected the shelves and crates, her trained eye noticed something was missing. "Where's the portable defibrillator?" she asked, her voice firm.

Sergeant Thompson hesitated, his expression faltering. "Ah, I think it might have been misplaced, ma'am."

Isabel's gut tightened. The portable defibrillator was a critical component of the mission. Without it, the team would be severely compromised if there were any emergencies.

"I need to see the inventory logs, Sergeant."

As they reviewed the logs, Isabel's suspicions were confirmed. The defibrillator was nowhere to be found.

This was not just a minor setback; it was a potentially fatal omission that could put the entire mission at risk, and she was determined to get to the bottom of it.

She marched toward the medical quarters and found the unit doctor in charge of equipment, Lieutenant Lewis, tending to a patient on a stretcher.

She cleared her throat. "Doctor, I need to speak with you."

But before the doctor could respond, the patient—a very attractive woman of medium height with a lean, muscular build; short, tousled blonde hair; and sharp green eyes that twinkled with mischief—looked up at her with a grin. Izzy couldn't stop looking at her bare arms, beautiful lines of muscle gleaming. "Hey, doc, maybe it's being used for a different procedure. Lots of crazy people here, if you know what I mean." She winked at the doctor.

Isabel's eyes narrowed. "This is no laughing matter, private. The defibrillator is a critical piece of medical equipment, not some toy for your amusement."

"Private?" the young soldier spat out as if the sound of Isabel's words were bitter. She

stood. "Major Drew Mitchell at your service, ma'am."

Major Mitchell's twinkle in her lovely green eyes was still there, though Isabel noticed it had subdued slightly. She was thoroughly unimpressed and rightly so. "Well, that defib is very important, and I don't appreciate those jokes."

The major chuckled, seemingly unfazed by her rebuke. "Hey, I'm just trying to lighten the mood. You surgeon types are always so serious."

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Lieutenant Lewis shot the major a warning glance. " Lieutenant Colonel Oakley, please, let's step outside for a moment, ma'am."

As they exited the medical quarters, Isabel's expression remained stern. "Doctor, I need to know what happened to that defibrillator. We can't afford to have it missing."

Lieutenant Lewis nodded, his expression apologetic. "I understand, ma'am. I'll investigate and get back to you ASAP."

Isabel nodded, her eyes still flashing with annoyance at the major's inappropriate joke. "See that you do, doctor. This is no laughing matter."

As she emerged into the bright sunlight, she was surprised to see that the major had followed her with a smug grin spreading across her face. She had dressed now and her rank was very obvious.

"Hey, Lieutenant Colonel, don't worry about the defib." Her voice dripped with nonchalance. "It's not like it's a crucial piece of equipment or anything."

Isabel's eyes flashed with anger, her temper igniting like a spark to gasoline. "Excuse me, Major?" she said, her voice low and even but laced with venom.

Major Mitchell shrugged. "I mean, come on, we're not going to be dealing with any serious medical emergencies out there. It's just a precaution."

Isabel's anger boiled over. "You think you can dismiss the importance of a defibrillator? I'm a trauma surgeon. I will make the decisions on what medical

equipment is necessary.”

The surrounding soldiers stopped what they were doing, their eyes fixed on the scene unfolding before them. Isabel's face was red with rage, and her fists were clenched at her sides.

"Do you have any idea what could happen if we don't have that defib? Do you have any idea how many lives could be lost because of your negligence?"

Major Mitchell took a step back, her grin faltering, but Isabel wasn't finished.

"I don't think you do, Major. I think you're just a reckless, arrogant..." She caught herself, her training and discipline kicking in. She took a deep breath, her voice dropping to a growl. "We will find that defib, Major Mitchell. And we will have it ready for this mission. Do I make myself clear?"

The major nodded as her green eyes sparkled. She swiveled on her heel and started walking away, but she stopped and turned to face Isabel. "Absolutely, Lieutenant Colonel. I like your fierce commitment."

Major Mitchell looked Izzy up and down appraisingly like she might want to devour her.

And then she turned and walked out, leaving a stunned silence in her wake.

Isabel stood tall, her eyes scanning the horizon as she led her medical team out of the special operations unit's base. The desert sun beat down on them, casting a golden glow over the vast expanse of sand and rock.

It was the third day, and their mission was to investigate a recent attack carried out just a few miles from their base where a group of soldiers had been ambushed,

leaving several critically injured.

As they navigated the treacherous terrain in their armored vehicle, Isabel's mind raced with worst-case scenarios. She had been posted to this unit only a few days ago, but she had already earned a reputation for her exceptional leadership skills and unwavering dedication to her team.

The medical team—consisting of Lieutenant Lewis, a soft-spoken yet highly skilled doctor and Sergeant Thompson, a gruff but lovable medic—worked in tandem with Lieutenant Colonel Oakley, their movements fluid and practiced.

Upon arriving at the scene, Isabel's team sprang into action, their training kicking in as they assessed the situation. The air was thick with the acrid smell of smoke and sweat, and the ground was littered with the remnants of the ambush: shattered glass, twisted metal, and the eerie silence of a battlefield.

Isabel's eyes locked onto a figure lying motionless on the ground: a young soldier, his face deathly pale, his chest rising and falling with shallow breaths. She rushed to his side, her heart racing with a mix of adrenaline and concern.

"Lieutenant Lewis, we need to stabilize him now!" she barked, her voice rising above the din of the scene.

With precision and speed, the medical team worked to save the soldier's life, their hands moving in tandem as they administered treatment. Isabel watched, her eyes never leaving the soldier's face.

As they finally stabilized the soldier and prepared to transport him back to the base, Isabel's gaze swept the area, her mind still reeling from the attack. She knew that this was only the beginning, that their mission was far from over.

As they left the scene of the attack, a sudden, heart-stopping explosion rocked the air from the right hand side of the vehicle. Flames licked at the windows and doors of their armored vehicle. Their shouts of surprise and alarm filled the air as they scrambled to escape the vehicle.

This was not what she had been expecting when they set out that morning. But then that was what their training was about. Always expect the unexpected.

Isabel's instincts kicked in, her training taking over as she swiftly assessed the situation. "Get out now!" She grabbed the wounded soldier, pulling him to safety.

They stumbled back from the vehicle- the opposite side to where the explosion had been, coughing and covering their faces from the acrid smoke and heat. The vehicle, their only means of transportation, was now a blazing wreck, flames engulfing it with terrifying speed.

Stranded and surrounded by the hostile terrain and the remnants of the ambush, Isabel's mind raced. They had to act fast and find shelter and safety before another attack came. She scanned the horizon for any sign of rescue or refuge.

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"Lieutenant Lewis, assess our situation," she barked, her voice firm and commanding. "Sergeant Thompson, check for injuries. We need to move now!"

As they quickly assessed their situation, Isabel knew they had to keep moving. They were sitting ducks, exposed and vulnerable in the open desert. She spotted a cluster of rocks in the distance far away from where she could see the enemy.

"Let's move!" She led her team toward the rocks, their only refuge in the vast, hostile expanse.

As Isabel and her team fled toward the rocks, there was an eerie silence. Suddenly, the air was split by the thunderous roar of a military aircraft, its arrival as unexpected as it was welcome.

The team turned, shielding their eyes from the sun, as a sleek fighter jet screamed across the sky, its cannons blazing. The terrorists, caught off guard, were quickly decimated, their positions targeted with precision.

Isabel's instincts flared, her anger and frustration boiling over. She had been forced to flee, to abandon her vehicle and her mission. But now, with the arrival of air support, the tables had turned.

"Take cover!" she yelled as the aircraft made another pass, its guns tearing into the enemy's positions.

But she didn't take cover. Instead, she stood tall, her eyes blazing with fierce determination. She turned to her team, her voice ringing out across the desert.

"We're not running anymore. We're taking back control. Let's move!"

With a ferocious cry, Isabel led the charge, her team following close behind. They sprinted toward the enemy's positions, their weapons at the ready. The aircraft continued to provide cover, its guns laying down a withering field of fire.

As they closed in, Isabel could see the terrorists faltering, their lines breaking. She raised her weapon, her sight fixed on the enemy.

"It's time to finish this," she growled, her finger squeezing the trigger.

With a battle cry, Isabel led the charge, her team following close behind. They swept across the desert terrain, their weapons blazing as they targeted the enemy combatants. The aircraft continued to provide cover, its guns laying down a withering field of fire that pinned down the enemy.

As they fought, exhilaration washed over her. She was in her element, leading her team into battle and taking control of the situation. She darted between rocks, her weapon firing in short, precise bursts.

The enemy soldiers were quickly overwhelmed, their positions breached, their fighters either killed or captured. Isabel stood tall, her chest heaving with exertion as she surveyed the aftermath of the battle.

She was a doctor first- this wasn't her usual role, although obviously she was trained for it, but in the absence of anyone better placed, she had taken it on and she smiled to herself. She had succeeded.

"Secure the area!"

Her team complied, and as they rounded up the surviving terrorists, Isabel's thoughts

turned to the mission. They had been ambushed and their vehicle was destroyed, but they had fought back and taken control. She felt a sense of pride and satisfaction knowing that her team had performed flawlessly under pressure.

But as she looked around at the carnage, she knew that this was far from over. There would be more battles to fight and more missions to complete, and she was ready.

"Let's get the wounded evacuated. We've got a job to finish."

With that, Isabel led her team to the plane to go back to the base ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead.

As the plane touched down, Isabel's heart swelled with gratitude. They had made it out alive, thanks to the timely intervention of the aircraft. But as the door to the cockpit opened and a figure emerged, her emotions took a drastic turn.

Major Drew Mitchell, the same officer she had lashed out at just hours before, stood before her, a look of concern etched on her face. Isabel felt a wave of shame wash over her, her cheeks burning with embarrassment.

"Major...I..."

Major Mitchell's expression softened, her eyes crinkling at the corners. "Lieutenant Colonel Oakley, I'm just glad I was in the area. We got the distress call and, well, you know the rest."

Isabel nodded, still trying to process her emotions. She had been so quick to judge the major, to assume the worst. And now, here she was, the one who had saved her and her team and there was kindness in her eyes.

"I...I don't know what to say, Major," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper.

Major Mitchell smiled, her eyes glinting with amusement. "No need to say anything, Lieutenant Colonel. Just glad we're allsafe. Although," she added, her voice teasing, "I think we need to work on your communication skills. Lashing out at me like that? Not exactly the best way to get what you want."

Her hungry gaze looked at Izzy once again.

And then just like before, she walked away.

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Isabel felt her face grow even hotter, but she couldn't help but laugh. Maybe, just maybe, she had misjudged Major Mitchell. And maybe, just maybe, she owed her an apology.

The next day, Isabel stood outside Major Mitchell's quarters, her hand raised to knock on the door, hesitating. She had been thinking about apologizing to Major Mitchell, but now she wasn't so sure.

As she reflected on their encounter, she realized her anger had been misplaced. The major's comment about the defibrillator had been thoughtless, but her reaction had been disproportionate. She had let her stress and fatigue get the better of her.

But as she considered apologizing, another reason crept into her mind. She remembered the way Major Mitchell's eyes had crinkled at the corners when she smiled and the way her short blonde hair curled slightly just above her ears. She felt a flutter in her chest, and her resolve wavered.

Maybe, just maybe, she wanted to apologize because she wanted an excuse to see her again, to be close to her, and the thought sent a shiver down her spine.

The memory of Major Mitchell's smile lingered, etched in her mind like a whispered promise. Her eyes, a striking green that seemed to hold a perpetual glint of amusement, had crinkled at the corners as she spoke. And her hair, blonde and curly, had seemed to beckon her closer.

As she pondered her apology, a sly, insidious thought crept into her mind again, weaving a subtle spell of attraction.

Isabel's hand dropped, her fingers brushing against the rough fabric of her uniform. She turned away from the door, the desert landscape stretching out before her like an endless sea of gold. She wouldn't apologize now. She couldn't trust her own motivations, couldn't risk revealing the hidden truth: that she was drawn to the pilot-Major Drew Mitchell in ways she couldn't yet understand.

She had been grappling with the weight of her proposed apology for what felt like an eternity, her thoughts tangled in a web of conflicting emotions. And to go for a spark of electricity that seemed to crackle between them like a live wire would be a huge mistake.

She needed to keep her distance and maintain a professional relationship.

But as she walked away, she couldn't shake the feeling that she was denying herself something more.

She had hardly walked a few feet when a voice whispered into her ear. She felt ripples of electricity flash through her body and the tiny hairs on her neck stand up.

Major Mitchell's voice was deep and gruff and the sexiest thing she had ever heard.

"Did you just come to apologize without bringing something to drink?"

Chapter Two

Drew

The recent encounters with the doctor, Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley kept replaying in Drew's mind. Ever since they crossed paths at the medical center, she hadn't been able to dismiss her face.

She knew their conversations had not been exactly friendly, as Lieutenant Colonel Oakley seemed like a strict disciplinarian while she, on the other hand, was carefree and jovial.

She liked to think, though, that they were progressing in sorting out their differences. She had intervened when the lieutenant colonel least expected it, and Drew knew she was impressed. The apology that came later was icing on the cake, although it was shocking.

Superiors barely apologized to their subordinates, but the lieutenant colonel did. There was something sizzling between them, but Drew couldn't draw conclusions yet.

Sadly, after speaking briefly that night, they didn't have a real conversation again.

There had been a moment that night when Drew thought they were close enough to kiss. And she had wanted to, so very badly. But, she couldn't kiss a higher ranking officer- no way. So, she had held herself back. But as Isabel's beautiful eyes had looked into her own, skeptical and ever thoughtful, Drew thought she had seen something there. Some spark of mutual connection.

Drew hadn't crossed paths with her since until Isabel suddenly appeared in the field during the morning drill.

She watched as Isabel's tall frame approached. Her dark hair glistened in the sunrise, and her brown eyes were focused. Her uniform was well tailored, as always, fitting her beautiful body like a second skin.

Drew was surprised to see her because she thought she'd be making her regular rounds at the medical center, but Drew saluted her regardless. "Good morning, Lieutenant Colonel," to which Isabel nodded in approval.

“Officers”—she turned to the soldiers in their smart uniforms—“is this field training a joke to you?”

“No, ma'am,” they replied in unison.

“Then why do I see the same boring routine from yesterday? No new challenge, no critical task, no rigorous exercise?”

“Excuse me, Lieutenant Colonel,” Drew said, trying to explain, but Isabel interrupted her.

“Surely, you are responsible for this lifeless routine.”

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Drew's eyes bulged. She was confused and lost for words.

“These training sessions are meant to equip them for the tasks ahead, not turn them into sluggards. I expect better from you next time.”

Turning to the rest of the soldiers, she barked, “You're all dismissed.”

“Yes, ma'am,” they chorused as Lieutenant Colonel Oakley walked away, leaving no room for Drew to utter a word or explain herself.

Drew watched as Lieutenant Colonel Oakley paced aggressively away from her.

Drew hated being so worked up. Her passion and years of experience and dedication to work have always enhanced her confidence in her job. She was a good major, and her training routines were never boring.

The officers usually started with stretches, push-ups, and light cardio before getting to the real deal. Lieutenant Colonel Oakley must have known that and decided to spite her regardless after the defibrillator saga, but Drew quickly dismissed those thoughts. Isabel couldn't be that petty.

“Unbelievable!” She punched the air in frustration.

She couldn't believe the lieutenant colonel had outright challenged her in front of her subordinates. “She had better be good at her job.”

From the moment Drew had arrived at the FOB Eagle, she had stayed grounded,

doing her work diligently, researching unnecessarily, and even helping out in other fields. There had been no slugging, no complaints, and no mischief—up until now.

Drew admired Isabel's passion, resilience, and dedication to work. It was something she knew they both shared.

Just as she resigned to the fate of the incident, an officer came with an urgent summons from the lieutenant colonel.

The moment Drew stepped into Isabel's office, she also saw Lieutenant Colonel Patel and Sergeant Lewis. She felt the situation was grave, but which situation wasn't grave in their line of work?

Lieutenant Colonel Oakley spoke first. "We had an emergency call. Our intel is anonymous but reliable. The point is we're going in for an extraction. Gather the team for a situation report right away."

"Yes, ma'am!" Drew saluted and activated the alarm.

A few minutes later, the soldiers gathered in their uniforms and stood with rapt attention in front of Lieutenant Colonel Oakley.

"We have an emergency. In a village not too far from here, humanitarian workers and villagers have been held down by insurgents."

She paused to scan the grim faces of the men and women.

"The plan is simple: We move in and out undetected. I want the medical team to be on standby to treat and rescue people who are ready to leave. Am I clear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Drew was switched on to the task ahead of her, but also entranced by the woman in front of her and her sharp brown eyes.

“Major Mitchell, I trust you to use the best pilots we have. Mitchell, you will fly with me. The rest of you, load as many supplies as you can into the planes. We're leaving at 1100h.” She checked her wristwatch.

“You're all dismissed. Let's get to work!”

Drew organised her pilots and aircraft for an imminent departure. She was in the cockpit ready. Her radio crackled. Lieutenant Colonel Oakley, “Let's move this thing,” she commanded.

Drew had been waiting for this moment. She loved flying, and it was her favorite part of every mission. One of her favorite lines was, “When you're on air, you're always there.”

But this mission was a very dangerous one, and she needed to be extremely careful to not sabotage her team.

Drew easily took the control panel and their take off and flight was smooth.

She was a little pensive as they approached the village. It seemed calm and quiet from afar; no one would think anything was amiss. Everyone's eyes were down, studying the terrace carefully.

The village appeared as a cluster of tiny roofs, a mosaic of golden-brown earth blending seamlessly into the surrounding landscape.

Meandering roads, like tiny ribbons, weaved through the village, lined with tiny trees and bushes. As they drew closer, one could see the boxes taking the form of an actual

house.

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“There are things poking up,” Sophie, a first lieutenant, said naively.

“Yeah, some men set up cameras to welcome us. We're celebrities,” Drew chipped in sarcastically. Lieutenant Colonel Oakley threw her a look.

“There are about three machine guns up front and two missile launchers, ma'am,” Jones called over the intercom.

“I can see that. It's best if we enter from the north. Low and steady. Smith, are you with me?”

“Affirmative, ma'am. I hear you loud and clear.”

Drew circled to the back, flew a few feet, and landed in a small area of bush. Smith followed suit. Lieutenant Colonel Oakley stepped out of the plane and scanned the environment.

“We're clear,” she said, and the rest of the crew gathered behind her.

“Mitchell and Smith, you're to move not more than 10 feet from the craft. Stand by and be ready to take off as soon as possible.”

“Sergeant Thompson and the medical team, you're with me; Jones and half the team will be on the lookout; the rest of you, get as many supplies as you can carry and head into the village.”

“Let's do this quickly and quietly,” she said, and everyone shuffled to their various

positions. Everything seemed to be going according to plan. The villagers were given water, snacks, energy drinks, and antibiotics.

The medical team, led by Lieutenant Colonel Oakley, checked the children and women first before administering first aid to those who needed it urgently.

Each family was given blankets, basic supplies, and words of encouragement. Drew heard Isabel's voice on the radio- passing messages, giving commands.

Then all of a sudden, Drew heard gunshots from the eastern side of the village. Isabel's voice crackled through the radio immediately. "We've been compromised. I repeat, we've been compromised. Fall back and head to the take-off point immediately. Ready the aircraft for take off."

The soldiers jumped into the craft and were about to take off when they heard an explosion from the other side. Drew heard Isabel groan. "I need to ascertain where the missile is coming from. Hold up, Drew and Smith."

"We can't wait, Lieutenant Colonel. We need to leave right away or we may not be able to. Jones and the others can shoot them down."

"We are already low on..." Her voice was lost to the heavy gunfire from the insurgents.

Drew took off slightly from the ground and moved toward some of the enemy combatants.

"What are you doing?" Lieutenant Colonel Oakley screamed at her. "They're coming from the front. I command you to turn back now."

"It's more dangerous back there, ma'am," she shouted over the flight deck and flew

toward the machine guns. The soldiers fired back as much as they could.

Drew skilfully maneuvered through the approaching insurgents and attacked as she went. She knew that was their best chance of making it through. but luckily made it through the village and headed for base.

“Smith, are you there? Do you copy?” Lieutenant Colonel Oakley asked over the intercom, clearly agitated.

“Affirmative, ma’am. We're safe and good. We believe there were some explosives at the back of the village. If we had gone through, we wouldn't have made it,” Smith replied, breathing heavily.

Drew glanced round at Isabel in triumph but was surprised by the stern look she received. The Thunderbolt was quiet, as everyone was trying to calm themselves after the near-death experience.

When they arrived back at base, Isabel alighted from the plane and pulled off her helmet. Her medical team shuffled behind her.

“You’re all dismissed. Major Mitchell, to my office, now!”

They had barely made their way into the office before she slammed the door. Drew could see the anger blazing in her brown eyes which now looked almost black.

She looked sexy when she was angry- Drew couldn’t help but notice.

“You had no right whatsoever to defy my orders and put us in danger. I understand you were trying to defend and protect your comrades, but what if we had missed the targets or were shot down?”

Drew kept her head down. Aside from the fact the question was rhetorical, she was angry too. She had just saved the day, but instead of gratitude, she got this.

“I took a risk, sure. But it paid off.” Drew said, standing firm by her belief.

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“If you or anyone had missed the targets, we would be dead, and that includes everyone on our plane and the other comrades too. Everyone you were trying to save. Safety comes first, next time, understood?”

Drew knew she had to bow to Isabel’s rank but she didn’t like it. Isabel was close to her now and imposing. Drew felt electricity crackling in the air between them.

She wanted to kiss her, but she certainly didn’t dare.

“Yes, ma’am!” Drew replied, bowing her head before she did something she might regret.

“You’re dismissed.”

Drew walked away in shame with heavy thoughts. She had never thought her spontaneity could cause harm. She knew she was reckless sometimes, but it wasn’t like she hadn’t contemplated other options.

Isabel had made her feel thoughtless and uncertain, as if she were nonchalant about her troops safety. But she wasn’t. She cared about them deeply, which was the sole reason behind her decision.

Maybe it was because she wasn’t used to being corrected often. Most of her superiors had trusted her wholeheartedly, and she needed to gain Isabel Oakley’s trust too.

Later that night as she lay down on her bed, she wondered if she was thinking too much about the lieutenant colonel. Why did she care how Isabel Oakley perceived

her? Why did it matter so much to her?

Every time Isabel looked at her with those intense brown eyes, she felt too self-conscious and too seen. Like the whole world could disappear, and it wouldn't matter.

She wanted to lose herself in Isabel Oakley's fierce stare.

Something was building up within her, and it wasn't just a spark. It was something deeper, something more, something warm. She shrugged off her thoughts; she'd better catch some sleep before dawn.

A few hours into the night, Drew was jolted awake by a loud crash. The room was pitch black, the air was heavy with the scent of sand and dust, and her nostrils flared. She immediately groped for her flashlight, alerted by the sound that woke her up.

Soon, a cacophony of howls and a deafening roar echoed. Without stepping outside, she knew it was a sandstorm. It was ironic that even though she was adventurous usually, she detested sand storms. They kept her awake and afraid.

"The storm must have caused the blackout," she muttered to herself. She rubbed her eyes, shaking off the grogginess.

As she stepped outside, she realized the storm was even more intense than she'd thought. Although she wasn't particularly keen about being outside, she needed to check what was wrong with the power supply.

And with that, she ran along the path that led to the power plant, covering her nose and mouth as she raced.

The wind whipped through the electric poles, causing them to light up and sway ominously. Sand particles danced and twirled vigorously. She picked up the pace and

soon arrived at the power plant.

There was someone inside, and Drew wondered if they had tampered with the power supply. Slowly but tactically, she tiptoed behind the figure and captured them, trapping them and eliminating any chance of resistance.

The figure elbowed her, and her flashlight tumbled from her grasp.

Drew winced before looking up to see Lieutenant Colonel Oakley . She seemed to be staring through her or probably checking her out. Maybe both. She swallowed before apologizing. “I’m sorry. I thought it was an intruder.” Isabel’s voice was silky and smooth.

Drew winced again, grabbing her ribs in exaggeration. “I’m sorry too. I thought the same thing.”

“It’s alright. The storm woke you up?”

“Yes, it did. When I saw the power outage, I decided to come and check it out.”

“Good job, Major.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel.”

“Tonight, you can call me Izzy.” Isabel narrowed her eyes at Drew. She was in what looked like a light sleep shirt and Drew could see the outline of her nipples through it.

“Okay, Izzy,” Drew said, stifling a smile. “Did you find out the problem?”

“Not exactly. My guess is the wind hit the power lines hard, damaging insulation and disrupting the power flow.”

“Most certainly.” It made sense.

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They worked together to try and resolve it.

While they were in there, the storm worsened. Something had fallen a few feet from the plant, barricading the path, and the wind tugged at them fiercely. Drew's fear heightened; she couldn't imagine going back to the dorms in the chaos, but it was also unsafe to sleep in a power plant.

Isabel noticed Drew's discomfort. "We can't go back out there. It's too harsh and destructive."

"It's not safe to sleep in here either. We could use the veranda instead?" They could create shelter there- it seemed the best option. Drew knew they would have to just wait out the storm and it made sense to sleep.. if they could, that was. "Let's find something to sleep on."

And with that, Drew rummaged through a small storeroom while Isabel checked the main building.

"Anything?" Drew asked from within.

"Just ropes. Nothing much!"

After a few minutes, Drew found a tarp and blanket and rushed toward Isabel. "Look what I found." She grinned.

"I think I can make something out of those." She took the ropes she had seen earlier and divided them into two parts. Isabel tied the first rope from the pillar to the

window and repeated the process with the other rope, stretching it to the other side of the window.

She then threw the tarp over the structure, creating a makeshift shelter.

Drew watched in awe as the shelter took form. She laid a blanket under the structure, and they lay down. The nearness of Isabel was intense. The brush of her hand as they rigged up the tarp was intense. Drew felt a heat building deep inside her. A burning sensation deep in her core. She wanted her. She wanted Isabel Oakley badly.

Their makeshift tent was quiet for a while and safe under cover of darkness until Drew cleared her throat. "I'm a bit afraid of storms," she said, surprising herself and Isabel. She had never told anyone. You didn't admit fear in the military. It never felt safe to be vulnerable and yet here she was admitting her fear to her superior. The superior whose clothes she wanted to rip off, no less.

"Is there a reason why?"

"My uncle died in a rainstorm. We were very close. He wanted to visit the day before my birthday, so he flew down, then took a car. Everything seemed okay." Drew paused to keep her voice steady. She hadn't shared this story with anyone before.

"On his way, a heavy storm caught up with him. The car was wrecked, and he..."

Isabel reached out to hold her and rub her back and Drew felt her heart leap as Isabel caught it. "It's okay."

"You're one of the bravest people I've ever met," Isabel continued. The sacrifices you make for the team, including the one you did today. Reckless? Yeah, but still very brave. It is ok to have fears."

Drew laughed. "I know I can be a little much sometimes."

"Not too much for me, hopefully." Isabel's hand on her body felt electric. Drew felt like she might combust there and then.

"I think I'm just enough." Drew pulled herself together. "And I understand your point concerning safety. I have thought through my actions from earlier. I will try my best not to be reckless. I know you're worried about the troop, and I admire your love and genuine concern."

"Am I not overbearing?"

Drew could see the outline of her face in the darkness. Her elegant eyebrows arched quizzically. Drew wanted to hold her beautiful face and kiss her.

"Trust me, you are." She laughed briefly, and her body vibrated against Isabel's. They were pressed close now, for warmth, or something. The desert was cold and the sound of the storm loud. Thunder rumbled loudly, and they both drew closer to each other for warmth and comfort.

"I like the way you laugh," Isabel said, her voice thick as she grabbed Drew's face and planted a feathery kiss on her lips.

Drew was shocked, but before she could respond, Isabel had already pulled away.

"I'm sorr—" Isabel had barely completed her apology when Drew pulled her in for a deeper kiss. She plunged her tongue into Isabel's mouth, deepening the kiss. It felt like the most intense kiss of Drew's life. She felt desire flooding between her legs.

They kissed for a while until Isabel pulled away to catch her breath. Drew couldn't believe she had just made out with her superior officer and so passionately.

The tent was tense with emotion. Drew wondered what Izzy was thinking and hoped this would not worsen matters between them and ruin her professionalism.

Amidst her concern, Drew savored the taste of her.

“So...” Isabel cleared her throat.

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“So.”

“What just happened between us shouldn't interfere with our job. We are two adults, and we can manage our feelings accordingly. This should never have happened.” Isabel said.

“I totally agree with you. I suggest we keep things strictly professional.” Drew was relieved to have spoken about it.

“That being settled, I wish you a good night, Drew.”

The sound of her name on Isabel's lips sounded different. Drew inched closer to her.

“Goodnight, my able lieutenant colonel,” she joked and Isabel laughed.

As she drifted towards sleep, she felt Isabel's lips pressing against her forehead. She hoped she could tame her feelings for Isabel and concentrate solely on her work without ruining her chances at happiness and their newfound friendship.

She wanted so desperately to take things further, but Isabel was right. It was a really bad idea. They needed to stay professional.

Chapter Three

Izzy

Izzy woke up to darkness still around her. She gawked at her immediate environment

before yesterday's events crawled their way into her memory, and she smiled mischievously.

Kissing Drew. Mmmm. Sleeping next to her. Feeling the warmth of her body and the press of Drew's breasts in her back. Izzy couldn't shake the feeling of how much she had enjoyed it.

As unprofessional as it was.

No, they couldn't pursue anything. It would get messy. And Izzy certainly didn't do messy.

Drew stretched beside her and roused in her sleep. Izzy could see the outline of her short tousled blonde hair and she felt like she wanted to ruffle it.

She wouldn't though. Obviously. That would be entirely unprofessional.

It felt strange seeing the tough soldier so vulnerable.

Look who's a sleeping princess, she thought. She crawled out gingerly, even though she knew she wouldn't wake Drew.

She could hear soldiers approaching on their morning run. They must have cleared the debris from the sandstorm. Their heavy boots hit the ground in unison, creating a synchronized thud. They were led by a figure she didn't recognize, and she hid as they shuffled past her.

She couldn't believe that she, a lieutenant colonel, was hiding from her subordinates. But it was better to hide than face a scandal. She scanned her surroundings, spotting a narrow alleyway between two buildings that would allow her to circumvent the main patrol route.

She darted into the alley, her heart racing as she picked up her pace, determined to reach the safety of her quarters without being noticed.

She felt bad abandoning Drew to whatever came, but it would be worse if they were caught there together.

She hadn't done anything wrong. Well, not much anyway. But she still felt the guilt of the illicit yet delicious kiss weighing around her neck.

A little later, she emerged from her quarters, properly dressed and ready for the day. She was on her way to the medical center when she was intercepted by Lieutenant Colonel Patel.

"Good morning, Lieutenant Colonel," she said cheerfully.

"You seem to be in a good mood. And enough with the honorifics, please."

"Of course, Patel."

"We have an urgent mission this morning. It's nothing too serious, but it concerns you. An army outpost needs medical supplies and other resources. I want you to oversee what we can spare and pack them up," Patel said.

"Okay, I'll head to the medical center right away."

"Thank you, Oakley. You really are the best." He smiled.

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She liked Lieutenant Colonel Patel's playfulness. Although he was older and had joined the army in his later years, he was still good-natured, though strict when required.

As she entered the medical center, the receptionist greeted her. Sergeant Thompson was sitting beside her.

“Good morning, ma'am,” Sergeant Thompson greeted.

“Good morning, Thompson. Where's Lieutenant Lewis?”

Lewis appeared from within. He was a soft-hearted and efficient doctor who she genuinely adored. He met her with a straight face, steadying his lanky frame.

She addressed them both. “We have an urgent mission. You're to go to the storage unit and check the available resources to see what we can spare. Please report back to me immediately.”

After they left, she made her morning rounds, reminiscing on the feelings brewing between her and Drew. It didn't help that she left Drew all alone this morning, and guilt settled in her stomach.

“Lieutenant Colonel Oakley?”

She turned to see a young private who had been shot on his first mission. Not a serious wound. But a bullet wound nonetheless. He seemed to be doing better; the bandage on his right leg was new.

“How are you feeling?” she asked sincerely.

“I'm feeling much better. I should be able to patrol by next week.”

“Now that's good news. Take your medications, and don't hesitate to ask for help. I'll get the nurses to run a general test on you before next week.”

The young private grinned widely, and she walked to another patient. Sergeant Thompson returned with the information she needed, and she sent him back to retrieve the resources and supplies needed for the mission.

A few minutes later, they started sorting everything. Soon, a little crowd led by Smith- one of the pilots- approached them. “Good morning, ma'am. Lieutenant Colonel Patel directed us to you.”

She was surprised that he didn't choose Drew. Major Drew Mitchell was the best pilot they had. Surely any of them could see that? Her heart fell that she wasn't the one.

She yearned for the crinkle at the corners of Drew's sparkling green eyes.

She turned to Smith. “The plan is simple. You're to drop off some resources at an army outpost south and circle back to base. I have entrusted Sergeant Thompson with the necessary information. No slugging or funny business. Understand?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

After completing her rounds at the medical center, she had breakfast, gave a lecture on safety precautions, and then headed back to her quarters to rest.

She hadn't seen Drew all day after she had snuck out of the veranda. Her heart

yearned to know if she was okay, but her brain had always led her. She had always thought her emotions should never contradict her professionalism.

As she pulled off one boot, the camp siren bellowed, signaling an emergency that demanded urgent attention. Had they been attacked? Is someone dead or badly injured? Is Lieutenant Colonel Patel fine? Is Drew?

She quickly pulled her boot back on, tied the laces firmly, and hurried to Lieutenant Colonel Patel's office. He was aggravated and tense.

“The mission has been compromised. Black Hawk has been shot down, and our troops are in danger.”

She understood the situation immediately. “I’ll handle it from here.” She hurried to the assembly where the soldiers were already gathered.

They immediately quieted down when they saw her, and she ordered some soldiers to go grab a few supplies from the medical center.

“Get any emergency med supplies you can get your hands on. And tell the rest of the medical team to prepare to move.”

As she spoke, she felt the intense gaze from familiar eyes following her movements. She turned briefly and met Drew’s sparkly green eyes, staring back at her.

She held eye contact for a few seconds, and something tingled in her stomach. She turned back toward the crowd and stood at the center of the podium.

“Black Hawk has been shot down, which means that Smith and the rest of her team on that aircraft are in grave danger. They need our assistance as soon as possible.” She paused amidst the gasps of the soldiers.

“We’re taking the Thunderbolt, and just some of you are needed. The rest of you know what to do while we're away.”

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She could see the soldiers' eager eyes, but she intentionally avoided Drew's.

"It's a rescue mission, so the medical team is readying, and then we need a team to get them in and out safely."

As she called out the team they would be taking, the relevant soldiers lined up.

"Major Mitchell, you're flying." She settled her eyes on her. Drew's hair was slicked back. She looked smart and capable and ready for anything. She muttered something to her partner before stepping out. She looked excited already.

The relevant soldiers moved to the Thunderbolt while Drew checked the craft to ensure everything was set.

The soldiers stood at attention as Isabel emerged from her quarters toward them. "At ease, soldiers. We just got word from Smith. They're fine, but they know the enemy troops are likely approaching. I need everyone positioned inside the craft. Be on high alert, please."

"Let's go save our friends, yeah?"

"Yeah!"

They hopped inside the Thunderbolt and headed south for the rescue mission.

Drew flew slowly and steadily; they needed to maneuver their way past the missile launchers to get to where the soldiers had crashed and locate them by GPS.

Isabel read the situation report. “Although we've lost contact with them, they crashed at the other side of the outpost. I assume they were attacked while circling the outpost. They tried escaping but were gunned down.

“They're hiding in the mountains, and we must get past any hostiles. Major, you know what to do with that information.”

She decided to lay down her fears and trust Drew's experience and commitment. She was willingly giving her valid information, with no command or suggestion. She saw Drew raise her eyebrows, and Isabel smiled to herself.

“Aye, Lieutenant Colonel,” Drew said, and Thunderbolt roared faster than it ever had. As they had presumed in the briefing, the insurgents started shooting once they approached.

“Hold on, everyone!” Drew screamed as she zig-zagged to avert the gunshots. The sharpshooters tried to engage in combat but couldn't steady themselves.

After a life-threatening ruse through the gunshots, they passed the attackers and landed a few feet from where Black Hawk had crashed. It was dry and rocky, as expected.

This wasn't the approach Isabel would have chosen, but she ignored it anyway. She wasn't a pilot and she had to remember that. If she wanted to give Drew a chance, she should do it wholeheartedly. “Position yourselves, Team Alpha. Protect Thunderbolt and watch out for any movement. Team Beta with me. Let's go!”

She marched on with the medical team and a couple of combat rescue officers toward Black Hawk. She raised her hands as they approached, and upon reaching her, Isabel realized Smith's foot was stuck behind the seat.

“Breathe, Smith, breathe. We'll get you out. I can see four people here. Where's the rest of the team?” Isabel asked.

“I don't know!” Smith replied, breathing heavily. “I couldn't leave to search for them.”

“I did,” Sergeant Thompson said. “There is a little cave nearby. They went to find if there was anything they could get to improve the situation.” Blood gushed from his nose, and he wiped it constantly. “They asked me to stay behind after I fell from walking a few feet. Lewis is with them.”

Isabel sighed. “It's alright,” she said and held Thompson's hand. She soon settled to work as the other two soldiers were bleeding heavily. She stretched them out, ran the necessary tests, administered painkillers, and asked some comrades to accompany them back to Thunderbolt. All the soldiers came back, but they couldn't leave yet.

She knew they were running out of time, and she began to feel panic. Smith's leg was unmovable, and it was highly likely the enemy troops were drawing close. Everyone was safely secured in the rescue aircraft except for them and Lewis.

As she shook the seat in frustration, she saw Drew approaching, and her anger erupted. “Major, you're supposed to be on standby in case of an emergency evacuation.”

“Lieutenant Colonel, we don't want to lose anyone on this mission. People are already heavily wounded. We have a back up pilot on board. Let me help, please.”

“And what happens if you can't help? What happens if we can't get Smith off this seat? We could all be doomed.” She was slowly losing her cool.

“Let me try my best. Let me see if I can help,” she said gently, with a concern that

was unlike what Izzy knew of her.

“Fine.” Isabel sighed.

Drew examined the situation and realized that the linkage rods and cables were wrapped around Smith's foot, holding it in place. She carefully examined the entanglement to assess the extent of the damage and complexity of the situation.

Isabel watched as Drew stabilized the wreckage and sent Lewis to get bolt cutters and pliers. When he returned, she carefully cut the cables that were easily accessible, careful not to put Smith at risk.

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She then released the tension on the linkage rods and untangled them from Smith's legs, working from the easiest point of access. Just as she was done, a gunshot flew past her.

“Take cover!” Drew pushed Izzy down, covering her body with hers.

In that very moment that Drew shielded her, nothing else mattered. Not the gunshots, not the fear of losing her life, and certainly not her safety. She was in a world of two people: herself and Drew.

“Arrhhh!” Lewis’ voice jerked her back to reality. He had been shot and was limping into the backseat of the aircraft.

“Do you copy? We've been attacked,” she said over the intercom, sliding from beneath Drew.

Drew extracted an M9 Beretta and shot back, taking someone down.

Lewis shook from inside the plane. Isabel knew he hated this part of the army.

“Burn in hell!” Drew yelled, shooting a few more times.

“That's a nice handgun, Major,” Isabel said.

“Thank you, Lieutenant Colonel.” Drew grinned, clearly confident in this kind of situation.

Team Alpha soon circled around them, took out the hostiles, extracted Smith, and led them all back to Thunderbolt and they were soon up in the air and heading to safety.

No lives lost.

Izzy couldn't stop thinking about Drew throwing herself at Izzy to protect her. She had liked it. That protective thing Drew had going on and the closeness of her body. Not that Izzy couldn't look after herself, of course.

But it got tiring after a while, always being the one in charge. Always being the one making the decisions.

It felt nice to have someone who wanted to protect her.

Over the next week, Drew and Izzy dissolved the awkwardness between them. They became more friendly than ever, exchanging pleasantries whenever they ran into each other and making crude jokes.

Isabel soon realized that Drew wasn't just proud and arrogant; she was funny, lively, and happy. Not just that, but she was dedicated, committed, and efficient at her job.

It was admirable to be so full of life despite being in a place where death was a real possibility.

One cool evening after dinner, she invited Drew over for a conversation about strategy and improvisation so they could avoid situations like the one that had just happened.

Although everyone was saved, the daunting questions of "what ifs" and "maybes" bothered her, and she just wanted to talk about it with someone who she felt was reliable and professional.

She also wanted to spend time with Drew, and she couldn't try and pretend even to herself that that wasn't part of it. With Drew, she didn't have to be a tough officer; she could express herself a bit more. Most importantly, she could truly be alive.

Were they friends? Something more? Izzy liked her. She knew that. Although she also knew she most certainly shouldn't be taking anything further.

"Lieutenant Colonel?"

"You may come in, Drew." Izzy nodded, "And when are you gonna drop the honorifics?"

"When milady wills," Drew said and bowed mockingly.

The sound of "milady" trailed down to Isabel's core, and she laughed lightly to cover it up. "You never get tired, do you?"

"No, Izzy. Life itself is a war. Moreso, we're soldiers. We can't also be at war with ourselves, being all stern, cautious, and unhappy."

"Are you saying stern people are unhappy? That's judging a book by its cover, isn't it?"

"Most times, the content of the book isn't so far from the cover. You know what I'm talking about."

Izzy didn't want to bite the bait. She knew where the conversation was headed, and it was better to avoid it. She switched to work.

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“I wanted to discuss certain strategies we can take to avoid being forced in vulnerable situations like Smith was. Should we incorporate training focusing on possible measures to take when faced with unforeseen circumstances like that?”

“But we already have Crisis Management and Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape training. I think we need basic tools that can help in those situations.”

“That's a good idea.”

“Yeah, basically a well-equipped med box, flashlights, blankets, maps, pocketknives, ropes, and the like.”

“Come on, most soldiers carry these things anyway, don't they?”

“They do, but its impossible to have everything on you all of the time. And no mission should be considered too small for these things.”

Isabel knew she was smart, but this sounded like Drew understood her keenness on safety. “We'll be particular about these things. I don't want any casualties.”

“Izzy, I know you were scared about Smith and the attackers coming up on us. But I want you to know that nothing that happened there was your fault. You're trying your best, you are excellent at your job and I see you,” Drew said and she reached and took one if Izzy's hands in her own.

Izzy felt herself melting at Drew's touch. She should pull away. She knew she should pull away. But, she didn't.

“You do?”

“I do, milady. I see your beautiful brown eyes dotted with concern for all members of your team. I see you hitting your head in frustration. I see you biting the skin at the edges of your fingernails when you are stressed. And I just want to tell you that I'm here for you.”

Drew leaned in closer and smiled reassuringly. “I'm here for you, anytime and any day.”

Isabel was taken aback with that smile; something warm was fluttering in her stomach, and she couldn't control it.

She was going to kiss Drew. She knew she was.

As she closed the space between them and captured Drew's lips in her own, it felt like the most natural thing in the world. She wanted Drew. She wanted her so very badly.

Her senses were heightened in delight. She instinctively plunged her tongue deeply into Drew's awaiting mouth, where it was enveloped in warmth. This sent shivers of pleasure coursing through her, prompting a soft gasp to escape her lips.

She felt Drew's hands beginning to roam her body.

Izzy pulled away for a second. She saw where this was going and she needed absolute consent. Even though she knew from the hunger in Drew's kiss that Drew wanted this as much as she did.

“Are you sure? Are you sure this is what you want?” Izzy said and Drew fixed her gaze and took her right hand running her fingers over Izzy's lips.

“More than anything. I’ve wanted you like this since the first time I saw you.” Drew ran her fingers down over Izzy’s collarbone and Izzy felt a shudder run through her. They were both dressed casually as it was evening and down time. Drew’s fingers reached the hem of Izzy’s shirt and pulled it up and over her head and Izzy raised her arms to allow it.

She felt vulnerable suddenly, sitting next to Drew on the sofa in just her bra. The open fire was burning out. It could do with another log, but it wasn’t going to get one, not right now. She noticed Drew’s eyes drop to her breasts and she felt an insistent throb between her legs. She liked Drew’s eyes on her body.

“We must keep this secret though. If we do this, I mean,” Izzy said, firmly.

“Baby, we are doing it.” Drew’s hands reached behind her back and unhooked her bra and Izzy felt her breasts spill free as Drew pulled the bra off each arm and threw it to the floor with her shirt.

Drew looked over her body and smiled appraisingly. “You are so fucking gorgeous, you know Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley.”

Izzy smiled. “Promise me,” she said quietly, aware that she was in no position to be making commands with her breasts on display.

“I promise we will keep it secret.” Drew ran her hands lightly over Izzy’s body, and Izzy felt her nipples harden under Drew’s soft touch.

Oh my god.

Izzy felt herself squirming with how turned on she was.

She needed this. It had been so long since she had had sex. Such a very long time and

she wanted this so badly. There was no going back now.

“Lift your hips.” Drew was now on her knees, unfastening Izzy’s pants and pulling them off of her. Closely followed by her panties.

Oh my god.

Drew stripped off her own clothes as Izzy watched. She was fast and efficient and she wasn't wearing a bra. Her small breasts were beautiful and her nipples were erect. Her body was muscular and compact, much as Izzy had imagined, but nude, all her true beauty was exposed and Izzy was blown away by it.

"Drew.. I..." Izzy took a deep breath. "It has been a long while since I have done this."

"Shh, baby." Drew whispered. "Don't worry. I've got you. Anyway, it is just like riding a bike. It will come back to you. I know it will."

Drew took her hand and guided her to the rug on the floor in front of the fading embers of the log fire.

As Izzy lay down, she felt the beautiful weight of Drew's body as she lay on top of her and kissed her. The kiss was deep, passionate and filled with the longing both of them had been feeling.

Izzy could hear the crackles of the fire as she felt Drew's kisses moving to her neck, to her ear and running a tongue around her ear.

"I can't wait to taste you," Drew whispered and Izzy felt a bolt of desire run through her like a gunshot.

She could feel how wet she was. She needed to feel Drew inside of her.

Drew's kisses began to move down and run over her neck, her collarbone and down to her breasts. She felt Drew take one of her nipples into her mouth and she heard herself moan loudly.

She felt Drew pulling at her nipple with her teeth and it send shivers running all through her body.

"Oh, Drew. Oh... oh my god..."

"That feel good, baby?" Drew asked with a smirk.

"Oh yes. So very good." Izzy thought she might explode with how much she wanted this. She had never felt so turned on in her whole life and as she felt Drew's mouth release her nipple and her kisses move down over Izzy's belly, she wondered how long she might last.

Her breathing was quickening and her heart rate was through the roof.

Drew's tongue trailed down over her pubic area, tangling in the dark hair that was there as she went. It ran down the crease of her groin and Izzy thought she might go crazy with the anticipation.

"Please..." she gasped in desperation.

Drew's tongue, unhurried, ran down the crease of her groin on the other side. Then up her labia, one at a time.

Drew was drawing this out. In some kind of twisted exquisite torture. And Izzy knew there was nothing she could do except enjoy it.

And she was certainly enjoying it.

And then, Izzy felt it. Drew's tongue drawing long and slow starting at her anus and trailing up through the very center of her being until it reached her clitoris and then she took it in her mouth and sucked gently on it.

Izzy felt herself swelling in response. Any second, she might come.

Drew's tongue running the same path. Long slow strokes of her tongue from anus to clitoris. Again. Again. Again. Torturously slow.

Izzy felt her climax building deep inside and she knew it wouldn't be long.

"Drew.. I'm going to come.." Even Izzy's voice was shaking as she spoke.

Drew continued exactly what she was doing with the long slow controlled strokes and suddenly Izzy felt her orgasm exploding within her and flooding through her body like a tidal wave.

"Oh my god," she cried out as her body tensed and released. Releasing everything that Izzy had carried for so long. It felt so good just to let go completely. And let go she did.

She felt tears forming in the corners of her eyes as Drew emerged from between her legs and climbed gently back up her body capturing her lips in a tender kiss.

Izzy could taste her own sex on Drew's tongue and she kissed her back. The taste of her orgasm mingling with the lovely taste of Drew.

This was more than she had imagined it might be.

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Izzy felt Drew's wetness as she straddled Izzy's left thigh and began to grind herself against it while kissing Izzy.

Their kiss was intimate and tender and Izzy heard Drew begin to moan into her mouth.

It took barely any time at all before Drew's own orgasm tore through her and she cried out into Izzy's mouth. Izzy lay still, holding her while she rode her orgasm out and they both lay tangled in each other's bodies.

"I think I like you," Drew whispered.

"Do you say everything that comes into your mind the way it is?"

"We have just one life. You either say it now or regret it later. About me liking you, you don't have to say it back, not until you genuinely feel that way."

Isabel drew her closer, kissing the top of her head.

I like you, too. Izzy thought to herself. But it just felt way too scary to say it out loud.

Chapter Four

Drew

Drew had always been driven by a sense of duty and honor. Her posting to the special operations unit was the ultimate test of her skills, and in the last few days, she had

done her best to prove herself as a professional pilot and well-organized operator in high-risk operations.

However, she was never prepared for the wave of emotions that usually hit her whenever she was with Izzy.

Lieutenant Colonel Oakley was a force to be reckoned with—tough, no-nonsense, and always in control. Her sharp jawline and piercing brown eyes seemed to bore into her soul as if she were being dared to make a mistake.

Drew found herself drawn to her confidence and expertise, but she was determined to keep her feelings in check.

After that night's confession, she knew it was better to take things slow and steady. After all, she was a professional, and she couldn't let her emotions compromise the mission.

They had spoken the next morning and agreed to leave things as they were. Just that incredible night together and they would remain friends with fond memories of that night in front of the open fire.

It wasn't really what Drew wanted, but once Izzy's clothes were back on, she had been determined that that was what would happen, so Drew agreed to it. What else could she do?

Obviously she still wanted Izzy. Obviously she still felt that familiar yearning in her groin every time she saw her, but it wasn't to be and she needed to accept that.

As they worked together on a series of high-stakes operations, she found herself relying more and more on Isabel's expertise. Isabel's calm and steady presence was a balm to her frazzled nerves, and she usually looked forward to their briefings

together.

As such, the events of one fateful night had her doubting her ability to remain professional.

They were on a stealth mission deep behind enemy lines when she made a critical mistake. She had misread the coordinates to the location, and they found themselves flying straight into an ambush.

Lieutenant Colonel Oakley's voice was low and urgent in her earpiece. "Major, what's going on? We need to get out of here now!"

Her heart raced as she frantically tried to correct her mistake, but it was too late. They were surrounded, and the enemy was closing in.

So, she did the first thing that came into her mind. She landed the helicopter impromptu, and almost immediately, they started firing.

In a flash, Lieutenant Colonel Oakley took charge, her medical training kicking in as she dragged Drew to safety.

They huddled together behind a nearby rock, bullets whizzing overhead, as Izzy tended to a wound on the arm of one of the privates who had come along with them for the mission.

"Private Johns, I need you to stay calm," she growled at the ruddy looking boy, her eyes locked on him. "We'll get out of this, but you need to stay calm here."

Drew felt a surge of gratitude mixed with a healthy dose of fear toward Isabel. She knew she had almost gotten them killed, and all because she had allowed thoughts of the delectable Izzy to fill her head.

As they huddled behind the rock, Isabel's hands moved swiftly and precisely, assessing the private's wound and applying a tourniquet to stem the bleeding. But Drew's gaze was drawn to the other soldier lying nearby, his eyes pleading for help.

Isabel followed her gaze and nodded grimly. "Right, Private Johns will be ok. Nothing serious."

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"I've got to try and save the other soldier," she said, already moving toward him.

Drew's eyes widened in horror as Izzy crawled into the open, bullets whizzing past her head, to reach the soldier's side.

The thought of losing her was terrifying.

Drew dashed out into the open to follow her helping her quickly drag the injured soldier back to their position of relative safety behind the rock.

Drew watched as Izzy worked swiftly, her hands moving with precision as she applied pressure to his wounds, her face set in a fierce determination.

"We are in danger here, the enemy are moving around. Our location will soon be compromised." Drew screamed, trying to grab her arm, but she shook off her grip.

"I have to try!" Her voice carried above the din of gunfire.

For what felt like an eternity, Isabel worked on the soldier, the risk to all their lives was great. Drew watched in awe as she refused to give up, even when it seemed hopeless.

As Lieutenant Colonel Oakley worked to save the soldier's life, Drew provided cover, firing her weapon at the enemy's positions, trying to keep them pinned back. She moved swiftly as she darted between rocks, returning fire.

But in the chaos of the battle, she didn't notice the enemy soldier flanking to her left,

nor did she see the rifle barrel trained on her until it was too late.

The gunshot cracked through the air, and she felt a searing pain in her arm. She spun around, her vision blurring, as she saw the enemy soldier fall to the ground, taken out by Isabel's swift shot.

She dropped her gaze to her arm, where a crimson stain was spreading rapidly. She felt a wave of dizziness wash over her, but she refused to give in.

"Lieutenant!" She tried to keep her voice steady. "I've been hit!"

Isabel's gentle face appeared beside her, her eyes scanning her wound. "I think it's just a graze," Izzy said, her voice calm. "You'll be okay."

But Drew knew she wasn't okay. She could feel her strength fading and her vision tunneling. She looked up at Isabel, her eyes locking onto hers.

"Protect yourself," Drew whispered, her voice barely audible. "Get out of here."

Isabel's face was set in fierce determination. "Not without you," she growled, dragging her back behind the rock as the enemy closed in.

As she put a makeshift bandage on Drew's wound, their eyes met, and for a moment, the chaos of the battlefield faded away. She felt a deep sense of connection and understanding, as if they were the only two in the world.

"Why?" Drew asked, her voice barely above a whisper. "Why did you risk your life like that?"

Izzy's gaze locked onto hers, her beautiful brown eyes burning with intensity. "Because it's what we do," she said, her voice firm. "We save lives, no matter the

cost."

Drew knew that. Of course she did. But, somehow now she cared about Izzy and whatever there was or wasn't between them, she knew she couldn't bear to lose her.

At that moment, Drew knew she was in big trouble. She had feelings for Izzy and they were growing. Even though they had decided not to act on it. She liked her. Not just on a personal and physical level, although certainly on a personal and physical level. But also, Izzy was an incredible soldier- not just for her bravery, but also for her compassion, humanity, and unwavering commitment to saving others, including her, even in the face of danger

Isabel's hands moved gently, her touch sending shivers down Drew's spine. "You're going to be okay," she whispered, her voice soft and reassuring.

Drew's gaze drifted to Izzy's face, her eyes tracing the lines of her jaw and the curve of her lips. She felt a surge of emotion, gratitude, and something more.

"Thank you."

Isabel's expression softened "You don't have to thank me. I'm just glad I was here."

As they gazed into each other's eyes, the tension between them was palpable. She could feel herself drowning in the depths of Izzy's eyes like she were home. Then, Izzy broke the connection.

"I have to check on the private."

Drew took one look at the private lying a few feet away and shook her head. "I think he's gone, Izzy."

Isabel shook her head. "I have to make sure. I owe it to him."

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Finally, after what felt like an eternity, Isabel crawled back to their position, the soldier's lifeless body left behind. Drew saw the toll it had taken on her: her sweat-drenched hair, the exhaustion etched on her face, her eyes that seemed to hold a thousand emotions.

For a moment, they just looked at each other. The only sound, distant gunfire; the only movement, a gentle rustle of the wind. The gunfire was more distant now. They seemed safe. For now, anyway. Drew took Izzy in her arms for just a moment.

The battlefield was an ever changing beast and Drew knew they needed to get out of there soon.

Then, Isabel's face drew closer, her lips inches from Drew's. Drew's heart skipped a beat as she realized what was happening.

But just as their lips were about to touch, they heard a helicopter. A rescue helicopter coming for them. They both pulled away from each other quickly, remembering where they were. They had to get out of here.

Just as they were about to board the extraction helicopter, a hail of gunfire erupted from the surrounding hills. Another group of insurgents had launched a surprise attack.

Without hesitation, Izzy sprang into action. She sprinted toward the enemy, her weapon at the ready. Drew watched in awe as Isabel took down the insurgents one by one, her movements swift and deadly.

Isabel's training seemed to have kicked in overdrive, and she went full commando, taking cover behind a nearby rock and returning fire with precision. She darted between boulders, using her agility and quick reflexes to evade the enemy's bullets.

Drew joined the fight, but Isabel was a force to be reckoned with. She took point, clearing a path through the insurgents with ease. Her superior shooting skills were on full display, and Drew couldn't help but feel a mix of pride and admiration.

As the insurgents fell, Izzy turned to Drew and yelled, "Let's go, Drew! We need to get out of here now!"

Drew nodded, and together, they made a break for the helicopter the last soldiers still alive on their team joining them. Isabel covered their backs, laying down a withering field of fire to keep the enemy at bay.

As Isabel's fearless assault inspired the others, a fierce battle cry erupted from the team waiting at the helicopter. With renewed ferocity, they charged into the fray, unleashing a maelstrom of firepower and fury upon the insurgents.

Drew turned around and led the charge, her weapon blazing as she cut down enemy fighters with precision and skill. The rest of the team followed close behind, their movements fluid and deadly.

The insurgents, caught off guard by the sudden ferocity of the counterattack, stumbled backward in disarray. Their cries of panic and fear filled the air as the team closed in for the kill.

In a whirlwind of chaos and destruction, the team tore through the enemy ranks, leaving a trail of devastation in their wake. The insurgents' weapons fell silent, their bodies strewn across the ground like broken dolls.

As the dust settled, the team stood victorious, their chests heaving with exhaustion. Isabel, her eyes still blazing with fury, turned to Drew and nodded. "That was for you, Drew."

Drew's face softened, a hint of a smile playing on her lips. "Thanks, Izzy. I owe you one."

The team's roar of triumph echoed through the hills, a testament to their unbreakable bond and unwavering loyalty. Together, they had faced danger and emerged victorious; their trust and respect for each other forged in the fire of battle.

The team turned to Izzy. They surrounded her, patting her on the back and congratulating her on her bravery.

"Rambo! Rambo!" Sergeant Rodriguez chanted, his deep voice echoing through the hills.

The others joined in, hailing Isabel as a hero. Corporal Patel grinned, shaking his head in amazement. "Lieutenant Colonel, you're a freakin' legend!"

Isabel's face flushed with embarrassment, but she couldn't help smiling.

They made it onto the extraction helicopter and Drew sat next to Izzy, a quiet smile on her face. She raised her hand, giving Isabel a thumbs-up. "Well done, Lieutenant Colonel," she said, her voice low and sincere.

Izzy smiled in response and her gaze remained locked on Drew.

As they lifted off, Isabel turned to Drew with a fierce grin. "It's an exhilaration, isn't it, Major. I hate war for everything it stands for, but coming through these battles, winning mostly, it's a thrill. But, I ache for the soldier we lost." Her eyes looked into

the distance.

Drew raised an eyebrow, impressed. "You're a regular action hero, Lieutenant Colonel. And, the soldier we lost, Private Brown, we will always remember him."

Isabel chuckled, her adrenaline still pumping. "Just doing my job, Major."

But Drew knew better. Izzy had saved her life, and she would never forget that.

As they made their way back to base, it was difficult to shake off the feeling of shame and embarrassment that enveloped her earlier.

She had let her emotions cloud her judgment, and it had almost cost them their lives.

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But as she glanced over at Isabel, she saw something in her eyes that gave Drew hope. Maybe, just maybe, Isabel felt the same way. And maybe, just maybe, they could overcome their mistakes and their fears and find a way to be together.

Later that night, Drew made her way to Izzy's quarters, clutching a bottle of wine. She had been thinking about her all day, replaying their moments together in the field.

Isabel opened the door, a hint of surprise on her face. "Drew, I didn't expect... "

She held up the wine with a smile. "Want to hang out a bit?"

Izzy's expression softened, and she stepped aside, letting her in.

As Drew entered her quarters, she was greeted by the warm glow of soft lighting and the gentle hum of jazz music. Isabel's lovely brown eyes sparkled with surprise, followed by a hint of delight, as she took in the bottle of wine.

"I really didn't expect company," Isabel said, her voice husky. "It has been a bit of a day of it."

Drew smiled, feeling a flutter in her chest. "I thought we could unwind. Talk about something other than work, war, or death."

Izzy nodded, leading her to a cozy sitting area. As they sipped the wine, their conversations started light with stories about their families and childhoods.

She laughed at Isabel's tales of her mischievous siblings while Isabel chuckled at the stories of Drew's adventurous youth.

But as the night wore on, their words delved deeper, touching on their fears and doubts. Drew spoke of her anxiety and her fear of losing control, and Isabel shared her own fears of failing and not being able to save everyone.

Drew's voice trembled as she spoke of an encounter she had in the past and how she didn't want to relive the scenarios that led to that haunting experience. Isabel's eyes filled with empathy, her face reflecting her emotions.

"It makes me feel like I'm constantly walking on eggshells in life, and I try every day not to let such situations come up ever again," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. "Like if I make one wrong move, everything will fall apart."

Isabel reached out her hand, her fingers brushing against Drew's. "You're not alone," she said, her voice filled with conviction. "We all feel that way. But we can't let fear paralyze us."

Their words hung in the air, raw and vulnerable. But instead of pulling away, they drew closer, their eyes locking in a deep understanding. The wine bottle was empty, but they didn't notice.

They were lost in each other's eyes, their hearts beating as one.

Izzy's words were like a balm to her soul, soothing her fears and calming her doubts.

As they talked, their faces inches apart, Drew felt her emotions raw and exposed. But instead of pulling away, she leaned in, drawn to the warmth of Izzy's presence.

Then, without a word, Izzy's lips met hers, their kiss gentle yet passionate. The world

around them melted away, leaving them lost in their emotions.

Drew moved closer, their tongues tussling in a passionate kiss. Her hands began to seek beneath Izzy's shirt instantly, her hunger for her stronger than ever before.

Izzy responded to her, letting out a little moan as Drew's hands began to roam her body. The lightest of brushes over her nipples had them erect and excited and Drew couldn't wait any longer.

She began stripping Izzy's clothes off to feed the desperate need inside of her and as she did, she felt Izzy's hands beginning to strip her own shirt from her. Her Calvin Klein bra was suddenly being pulled over her head. Their movements were needy and desperate in amongst kisses.

In barely any time at all they were both naked and Drew dropped to her knees on the floor, desperate to taste Izzy.

She pushed Izzy's thighs roughly apart with her hands and there was no teasing tonight. Her hungry mouth took an eager mouthful of Izzy's hot wet pussy. The taste of her and how wet she was drove Drew crazy.

Izzy moaned.

"I need you," Drew took a breath and spoke before going straight back to what she was doing. Then another breath. "You taste so good, you are so fucking wet for me," she said.

Izzy's moans got louder and Drew noticed her thighs part further and her hands tangle in Drew's hair as she pulled Drew's face tighter into her.

Drew devoured Izzy, her mouth working hard both to please and to satisfy her own

desperate hunger.

She wanted this woman so badly and she had nearly lost her today. Their passion was driven by the fear of loss, the bullet graze on Drew's arm long forgotten as Drew's tongue took everything from Izzy.

The hot wet heat of her pulsing in need on Drew's tongue.

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“Oh, Drew... oh, fuck,” Izzy’s voice was just a whimper.

Drew brought her right hand up pushing fingers inside Izzy with no warning. She wanted to fuck her, she needed so desperately to fuck her now.

“Ohhhhh” Izzy cried out loudly. “That feels so good.”

Drew began to thrust in and out, her mouth still on Izzy’s clitoris, her tongue lapping eagerly. She was finally fucking Lieutenant Colonel Oakley in the way she had fantasised about since the first time she saw her and it felt like the biggest thrill Drew could imagine.

Oh, and there was something else she wanted before Izzy came.

She pulled away from Izzy suddenly. “Turn over,” she growled.

Izzy’s eyes opened as she sat forward, her big brown eyes widening at Drew. “Trust me, you’ll like it,” Drew said, her mind whirring with filthy possibilities.

Before Izzy could argue, Drew stood, pulling Izzy up off of the sofa and repositioning her bent over the arm of the sofa. Drew pushed her face down into the cushions knowing that would raise her ass deliciously.

This was what she wanted to see, Izzy’s ass in the air, pulling her open and on display for her and it didn’t disappoint.

Oh fuck, yes.

“Oh, baby, you look so good,” Drew said as she ran her hands up Izzy’s back, tangling them for a second in her dark hair and giving a gentle tug.

“I’m going to take you and your beautiful body somewhere now, baby. You just relax and come with me.”

Drew’s hands ran eagerly over the globes of Izzy’s round ass. Drew had always recognised how good it looked in pants, but now, it looked absolutely edible.

She knelt on the floor again. This hadn’t been her original plan, but right now she couldn’t resist. She parted Izzy’s cheeks with her hands and licked with her tongue eating Izzy with purpose again, Izzy’s clit swelling in her mouth as Drew sucked on it. Then Drew’s tongue parting her labia and pushing as deep as it could reach.

Then Drew’s tongue running over her anus and up the beautiful cleft of her ass.

Fuck, I could do this all day.

By the sounds of Izzy’s moans, she could also do this all day.

Drew’s hands parted Izzy’s cheeks again as she began properly tonguing her asshole and enjoyed the delicious shivers she felt running through Izzy’s body in response. She felt them transferring to her own body like electricity pulsing through her veins.

There was one hell of a sexual connection between them Drew felt her own clit throbbing and her own wetness becoming almost uncomfortable as she pressed her tongue into Izzy’s tight anus, feeling it begin to open for her and she pushed inside more.

That’s right, baby. Open up for me.

She moved her right hand plunging 3 fingers into Izzy's soaking wet pussy while she continued her tongues efforts on Izzy's asshole.

She heard Izzy's cries muffled by the sofa cushions.

She added a 4th finger curling her fingers downwards to press Izzy's G spot as she began to fuck her roughly. Izzy was so wet and open for her and moaning loudly at every thrust.

Drew kept her fingers inside Izzy and stood up, smiling at Izzy's beautiful body writhing in pleasure beneath her.

She leant forward over Izzy's body her own breasts grazing Izzy's back as she whispered in her ear,

"I'm going to fuck your ass now baby. And you are going to come with my fingers inside your ass."

She felt Izzy shudder beneath her, "Drew, I've never..." she gasped.

"Got to try everything once," Drew growled as she took Izzy's earlobe between her teeth and pulled on it.

"Unless you say the word STOP, I'm going to continue," Drew whispered giving Izzy an out she hoped she wouldn't take. She liked the idea of taking Izzy sexually in a way she had never been taken before.

Drew took both of her hands and ran them over Izzy's body. Izzy hadn't said anything so Drew took it as a sign to continue.

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She had a small tub of vaseline in her pocket that she had been using for her lips which had been dry in the desert air.

That will be perfect.

She pulled out the vaseline, taking a big smear of it with her right index finger, she pulled Izzy's asscheek aside with her left hand exposing her anus and smeared the lube on it with her right finger.

Another loud moan from Izzy.

She wants this. She daren't say it out loud but she's certainly not stopping me.

Drew began to play with her right index finger circling Izzy's anus before pushing very slowly deep inside and the feeling of Izzy's anus opening for her finger was right up there with the most beautiful pleasure Drew had experienced. She felt literal sparks on her finger, their connection was that powerful.

"That's it, Baby. Open up for me," Drew growled. Izzy's breathing was coming in quick pants and Drew could sense her organ beginning to build. Sometimes anal was like that. The feelings could be so very intense and overpowering.

She pulled her finger slowly all the way out, before beginning to plunge it all the way back in as far as it would go.

Izzy's ensuing moan was deep and guttural.

“You are going to come while I fuck your ass, baby. It will be the most powerful orgasm you’ve ever had.”

Izzy moaned in response and shivers ran through her whole body as Drew began to move her finger in and out faster. Izzy’s ass felt suddenly totally relaxed and open to her. As she pulled her finger out, she coated another finger in vaseline and added a second finger pressing both inside of Izzy deeply. Izzy was lost to it now, her body was responding of its own accord, shuddering and moaning in pleasure as Drew’s fingers fucked her ass.

She smiled to herself. It was the most beautiful sight she had ever seen.

She reached her left hand underneath and cupped it so her fingers pressed Izzy’s clitoris as the fingers of her right hand continued to fuck her ass.

Seconds later, Izzy exploded in orgasm gushing into the palm of Drew’s left hand her anus pushing around Drew’s fingers. Her orgasm seemed to go on and on as though it would never stop and it was minutes later when her body was limp and Drew finally slid her fingers out of her.

That climax was incredible and Drew felt privileged to have been able to give it.

Her own sexual need however was throbbing insistently between her legs. She felt her own wetness trickling down her inner thigh.

Izzy was breathing heavily and still lying in the exact same position.

Drew rolled her over until she was on her back along the sofa, her lovely long legs draping over the arm of it.

Her body was flushed and wet with sweat, her breasts rising and falling with her

laboured breathing.

Her eyes looked up at Drew glazed with lust. “That was the most incredible thing I’ve ever felt,” she whispered. “I can still feel you inside of me, as though you’ll always be there. So deep. So very deep,” she whispered.

Drew put her hand on Izzy’s chest between her breasts. “I know, baby. It was the most incredible thing I’ve ever felt. I’m so turned on now though. I need something from you. Can I come in your mouth?” Drew asked, not wanting to do anything without Izzy’s consent but she needed to come so badly she might scream.

Izzy nodded and didn’t move as though she no longer had the energy to do or say anything.

However, that didn’t matter. Drew got up on the sofa, straddling Izzy’s face, lowering her needy pussy onto Izzy’s mouth. Izzy’s tongue pressed into her.

“No need, baby. You just lie there. This won’t take long.”

Drew ground her pussy down tightly onto Izzy’s mouth, and as soon as she felt the sweet pleasure of the pressure of Izzy’s face against her clit she released her orgasm loudly and wetly into Izzy’s mouth. Moaning, grinding, coming once, twice, thrice.

Fuck that feels good.

They lay wrapped in each other's arms, their hearts raw and exposed, until they both drifted off to sleep.

When Drew awoke, she was alone and cold on the sofa, the scent of their sex still heavy.

She dressed quickly and headed back to her own room.

The next day, showered and fresh, Drew sought out Izzy to go over a few details for the new mission. She had been thinking about their passionate night together, replaying the memories in her mind. She wanted to see her again, reconnect, and feel that spark again.

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She wanted her. She couldn't stop thinking about it.

As she approached Isabel's quarters, she felt a mix of excitement, nervousness, and anticipation. She knocked on the door, her heart beating even faster.

Isabel opened the door, her expression neutral, her eyes avoiding Drew's. "Major," she said, her voice polite but distant.

Drew's heart sank and sensed something was off. "Lieutenant Colonel Oakley," she replied, trying to sound casual. "Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Isabel hesitated, her eyes flicking to the side. "I'm busy, Major. We have a mission to prepare for."

She felt a sting of rejection. "Actually, it's about the mission," Drew pressed, trying to keep her tone light to hide her surprise at Isabel's new behavior.

But her expression remained firm. "I'm afraid not, Major. We'll see each other in the briefing room. You can leave. I'll meet you there."

Drew's face fell, and her heart grew heavy with disappointment. She felt snubbed and rejected like she was nothing more than a casual encounter.

"Understood," she said, trying to hide her emotions.

As she turned to leave, she caught a glimpse of Isabel's face, her eyes flashing with a hint of regret. But it was too late. The moment had passed.

She walked away feeling lost, confused, and more than a little hurt. What had happened to the connection they had shared just hours before?

How had she gone from hot to cold so quickly?

Drew turned around and looked back to see that Isabel was coming from behind. She was determined to find out what was wrong.

"Lieutenant Colonel?"

Isabel turned the opposite direction and quickened her pace. She had gone a few feet when she turned and stopped, her eyes fixed ahead. "I'm busy, Major," she said curtly, her voice devoid of warmth.

Drew's frustration grew, her emotions simmering just below the surface. "What's going on?" she demanded, her voice rising. "You're acting like a stranger, like nothing happened between us."

Isabel stopped abruptly, her eyes flashing with a warning. "Nothing did happen, Major," she said, her voice icy. "We've had our moments, yeah. But it was just a time of weakness. Let's just forget it, shall we?"

Drew felt like she had been slapped, her face stinging from the rejection. "Forget it? You can't just dismiss everything we shared like that."

Isabel's expression turned glacial. "I can, Major, and I am. Now, if you'll excuse me, we have work to do."

"Stop," she ordered. "Stop or I'll ask for a direct transfer out of the unit."

Drew knew she was being dramatic, but she couldn't help herself. She needed to talk

to Izzy alone,

This must have taken Isabel by surprise, and she shook for a moment before slowly turning around.

"Alright, let's talk," she said, resigned.

They went to the makeshift cafeteria in the base and had barely sat down when she started to press Isabel for answers. Their conversation grew more heated, and anyone who passed them could see that there was more tension between them. Even the other soldiers in the cafeteria noticed.

One of them, a burly sergeant, snickered and made a crude joke. "Hey, why don't you two lezzas just get a room already?" To which everyone laughed.

Isabel's face turned beet red with anger, her eyes blazing.

"Sergeant. My office 2pm. You'll face a disciplinary."

She spun to Drew, her voice low and venomous. "I can't do this anymore, Major. This is exactly what I was trying to avoid."

Drew felt her face flush with embarrassment, her eyes darting to the surrounding soldiers. "I'm just trying to talk to you."

But Isabel was having none of it. "No, you're not," she snapped. "You're making a spectacle of yourself. And me." She paused and looked around as if checking to make sure that no one was listening in. "Let's keep it professional from now on. I'll take my leave now."

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With that, she got up and walked away, leaving Drew feeling foolish and humiliated. The other soldiers snickered and whispered to each other, their eyes fixed on her.

Her face burned with unshed tears. She felt like she had been wounded. She didn't know what to do, so she just sat there, frozen in discomfort.

The sergeant who'd made the joke patted her on the back, his voice sympathetic. "Don't worry, Major. She's just stressed out. It's not you."

But Drew knew better. She knew she had crossed a line, their connection had been too intense it was terrifying for Izzy to have let go with her on such a level and Izzy was done with her.

As she sat there, a realization dawned on her. The joke, Izzy's anger, the whispers and snickers from the men, it all clicked. Talk had been spreading about them, about their relationship, and Isabel was trying to distance herself to avoid any repercussions.

Her mind raced as she thought about the potential consequences. They were both high-ranking officers, and their relationship would be a problem, they both knew that.

It could ruin their careers, undermine their authority, and create tension within the unit.

Suddenly, Izzy's behavior made sense. She was trying to protect herself, her reputation, and her career. And she couldn't blame her for that.

But that didn't make it any easier. She felt a pang of sadness and loss. She had thought they had something real, something special. But now it seemed like it was all being torn apart by gossip and speculation.

Drew took a deep breath, trying to process her emotions. She knew she had to be professional and maintain her composure. But it was hard, especially as all she wanted to do was talk to Isabel, clear the air and figure out what was going on.

Instead, she got up and strolled to the briefing room, trying to focus on the mission ahead. But her heart was heavy, and her mind raced with thoughts of what could have been, even as she saw no way out of the present ordeal.

She had barely walked a few steps when the general's deep baritone stopped her.

"Major Drew Mitchell, kindly come to my office now."

Chapter Five

Izzy

Izzy was terrified. Terrified of being found out. The rumors about her and Drew were swirling around the base. Her reputation was in jeopardy.

Izzy was terrified of how much she had enjoyed the sex with Drew. It was life changing sex. Drew had made her body sing in ways she hadn't even known were possible. And what Izzy was mostly terrified of was her own feelings that were bubbling up inside and she had to keep shutting them down.

Her feelings for Drew were more than just sex and that was totally not the plan.

Izzy was a woman for plans. And when things happened that messed with her plan...

well, she couldn't handle that.

She couldn't handle the feelings she was having whenever she saw Drew. A complex mix of crazy lust and desire combined with.... well, she liked her. She liked the easy intimacy they shared.

And she desperately wanted Drew to take her and fuck her. Every day. Every night. Forever.

It had to just be a sex thing, right? Great sex complicating things and making her believe she had feelings?

Isabel couldn't shake the feeling of regret weighing her down since the previous week. She had pushed Drew away, trying to maintain a professional boundary, but now she couldn't stop thinking about the hurt she might have caused.

As she lay in bed, Izzy's mind wandered to the moment she had rejected Drew's advances. She remembered the disappointment and confusion on Drew's face, and it pierced her heart like a dagger. Izzy had tried to convince herself she was doing the right thing, but now she wasn't so sure.

She couldn't stop thinking about how Drew probably hated her now. Had she ruined their working relationship forever? Had she lost the trust and respect of her most valued team member? The thoughts swirled in her head like a vortex, making it hard to sleep.

Izzy tossed and turned, her sheets tangled around her legs. She felt like she was losing control, like she was drowning in her own emotions. She had never felt this way about anyone before, and it scared her.

She thought about reaching out to Drew to apologize and explain herself, but she

hesitated. What if Drew didn't want to hear from her? What if she had already written off Izzy as a lost cause?

As the night wore on, Izzy's regret only deepened. She realized that she had been so focused on maintaining her authority and control that she had forgotten how to be human. She had forgotten how to connect with others, how to be vulnerable.

The storm outside seemed to mirror her inner turmoil, the thunder booming and the lightning flashing like a strobe light. Izzy felt like she was trapped in her own personal storm, with no escape in sight.

As the first light of dawn crept into her room, Izzy made a decision. She would reach out to Drew, despite the potential risk. She would apologize and try to make things right. She couldn't bear the thought of losing Drew's trust and respect forever.

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A few hours later, Izzy took a deep breath and made her way to Drew's quarters, determined to make amends for her previous mistake. As she walked down the corridor, she rehearsed her apology speech, hoping to find the right words to repair their relationship.

Just as she was about to reach Drew's door, General Jackson, her commanding officer, stepped out of the shadows, his expression stern. "Oakley, I need to see you for a minute."

Izzy's heart sank, but she followed the general to a nearby briefing room. He explained that they had received intel about a high-value target who had been terribly injured, and he needed her to lead a team to extract the target immediately.

Izzy nodded, her mind racing with the mission details. She knew she had to put her personal feelings aside and focus on the task at hand.

After the briefing, Izzy made her way to Drew's quarters once again, her heart heavy with anticipation. When she entered the room, Drew looked up from her desk, her eyes narrowing slightly as she took in Izzy's presence.

Izzy didn't miss the look Drew shot her, the tension between them as high as it has been, if not higher. Drew's expression was guarded, her jaw set in a firm line. Izzy knew she had hurt Drew deeply, and repairing the damage would take more than just an apology.

"Major," Izzy said, her voice firm but respectful, "I need to speak with you about the mission briefing. General Jackson has assigned us to extract a high-value target."

Drew nodded curtly, her eyes never leaving Izzy's face. "I'm listening, Lieutenant Colonel."

Izzy felt a pang of regret, knowing she had to put their personal issues aside for now. She began to brief Drew on the mission, trying to maintain a professional tone despite the underlying tension between them.

As they discussed the details, Izzy couldn't help but notice how Drew's eyes seemed to bore into her soul, as if searching for any sign of weakness or insincerity. She knew she had to prove herself, not just as a commander, but as someone worthy of Drew's trust and respect. Oh, and stop looking about Drew's hands and remembering how good they felt on her body... and inside her.

The conversation about the mission continued, but a few minutes later, it was not lost on Izzy how Drew went from almost murdering her with her eyes to avoiding her gaze entirely, not making eye contact once. Drew's gaze darted around the room, focusing on the maps, the intel reports, and even the floor, but never meeting Izzy's eyes.

Izzy felt a pang of discomfort, knowing that Drew had probably gone from being hurt and angry from their previous encounter to not caring at all. She tried to maintain a professional tone, but it was hard to ignore the elephant in the room, especially as that elephant had obviously figured out a way to cut her off her life for good.

"Major, we need to coordinate our team's movements carefully," Izzy said, pointing to the map. "We can't afford to have any miscommunication during the extraction."

Drew nodded, her eyes fixed on the map. "Agreed, Lieutenant Colonel. I'll make sure to brief the team on the comms protocol."

She noticed Drew's voice was crisp and detached, lacking the warmth and

camaraderie that usually characterized their interactions. It was as if Drew had built a wall around herself, and Izzy wasn't sure how to breach it.

As they continued discussing the mission details, Izzy tried again to catch Drew's eye, but Drew avoided her gaze at all costs. It was like they were two strangers discussing a business deal, not two colleagues who had shared a moment of intimacy barely a week before.

Izzy felt a pang of regret and longing, knowing she had caused this rift between them. She wanted to reach out and touch Drew's arm, to reassure her that everything would be okay, but she knew that would be a mistake.

Instead, she focused on the mission, trying to keep the conversation on track. But she couldn't shake the feeling that Drew was slipping away from her, and she didn't know how to stop it.

They set out for the mission. As they got ready and donned their uniforms, Izzy noticed that Drew's was slightly askew, the hem of her pants torn and her jacket zipper stuck. Izzy instinctively reached out to help, but Drew brushed her off brashly.

"I can handle it, Lieutenant Colonel," Drew said curtly, her eyes flashing with annoyance.

Izzy felt a sting from the rebuff, but she tried to brush it off as mere pre-mission jitters. However, the exchange didn't go unnoticed by the rest of the team. The male soldiers nearby exchanged hushed talks and jeers, their snickers and whispers carrying on the wind.

She saw the whispering and the snickering and knew what it was about.

Izzy's face burned with embarrassment and frustration. She knew that Drew's

rejection was not just due to pre-mission jitters. She tried to focus on the mission ahead, but the whispers and snickers continued, making her skin crawl.

“Has anyone got something they want to say?” Izzy said, her voice booming and brokering no argument.

Silence washed across the soldiers immediately and every hint of a smirk disappeared from their faces.

Izzy let out the breath she had been holding. That was better. A little respect.

As they moved out, Drew walked ahead, her back stiff and unyielding. Izzy followed, her eyes fixed on Drew's back, wondering how they had reached this point. The distance between them seemed to grow with every step, and Izzy knew she had to find a way to bridge it before it was too late.

The mission was already fraught with danger, and they couldn't afford to have their personal issues compromise their focus. But as they navigated the treacherous terrain, Izzy couldn't shake the feeling that they were walking into a minefield, both literally and emotionally.

When they landed on the outskirts of the territory, Izzy quickly assessed the situation. The civilians were scattered, some wounded, others frightened. She sprang into action, her training kicking in as she began to give each doctor a wounded soldier to tend to while looking out for the high-value target.

Drew and the rest of the team fanned out, securing the perimeter and setting up a defensive position. Izzy focused on the civilians, her hands moving swiftly and surely as she bandaged wounds and administered first aid.

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Everything was going to plan. The mission was proceeding smoothly, and they had encountered minimal resistance. But then, without warning, one of the wounded civilians pulled out a grenade and held it up, his eyes wild with fear and desperation.

"Get back!" he shouted, his voice trembling. "I won't let you take me alive!"

Izzy froze, her heart racing. She knew that if the grenade detonated, it would kill everyone in the vicinity. She slowly began to back away, trying not to make sudden movements that would trigger the man's panic.

Drew appeared at her side, her weapon drawn but held low. "Let's talk about this," Drew said calmly, her voice soothing. "We're here to help. We won't hurt you."

The man's eyes darted between Izzy and Drew, his grip on the grenade tightening. Izzy knew they had to act fast or risk losing everything. She took a deep breath and tried to think of a solution, but her mind was blank.

Just as the wounded man's finger closed around the grenade's pin to pull it, a single shot rang out. The man's body jerked, and he crumpled to the ground, the grenade slipping from his grasp.

Drew reacted in a flash, dashing toward the grenade as it rolled away from the man's lifeless body. She scooped it up and threw it with all her strength, her arm extended in a perfect arc.

Time seemed to slow as the grenade soared through the air, spinning end over end. Izzy watched in horror, her heart racing with fear. But Drew's aim was true, and the

grenade landed with a thud in a nearby ditch, detonating harmlessly.

The blast sent a shockwave through the air, but it was muffled by the distance.

As the grenade detonated, Drew scrunched to the ground, folding her body against the dirt and taking Izzy down with her. She breathed a sigh of relief as Drew turned to her, her face grimy with sweat and dirt.

"Drew, oh God, are you okay?" Izzy reached out to help her up.

To her surprise, Drew brushed her off again, her expression darkening. "I'm fine, Lieutenant Colonel. Just get back to the mission." And she got up.

"Thanks for taking him down," Drew said as she turned, nodding toward the sniper who had shot the man.

Izzy didn't back down. She grasped Drew's arm, her grip firm. "No, Drew, I won't leave you like this. You could have been hurt."

Drew's eyes flashed with anger, and she shook off Izzy's grip. "I said I'm fine, Lieutenant Colonel. Don't make a fuss."

But Izzy stood her ground, her voice rising. "Why are you doing this, Drew? Why are you putting yourself in danger for me? You're constantly risking your life, and I don't understand why."

Drew's face twisted in a snarl. "You really don't get it, do you, Lieutenant Colonel? I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for the mission, for the team. And even if I were doing it for you, which I'm not, you wouldn't deserve it after the way you've treated me."

The argument escalated, their voices growing louder and more heated. The rest of the team stared, uncomfortable, as the tension between them boiled over.

"You're so caught up in your own guilt and regret that you can't even see what's right in front of you," Drew spat. "I'm not some damsel in distress, Lieutenant Colonel. I can take care of myself."

Izzy's face burned with anger and hurt. "How can you say that, Drew? After everything we've been through?"

"What have we been through?" Drew lashed out. "I just saved your life as I would any other member of this team. Why do you have to make it seem like you're something special? Just say thank you and move on."

Izzy nodded, still trying to process what had just happened, but she didn't want to be a topic for the men two times in one day. "Thanks for saving us," she replied, her voice shaking slightly.

The team erupted into a flurry of activity, securing the area and tending to the wounded civilians. Izzy and Drew exchanged a look, their eyes locking in a moment of understanding. They knew that their differences would have to wait. For now, they had a mission to complete.

But as Drew turned and walked away, leaving Izzy standing alone, her heart banged heavy with emotions, and she wondered if they would ever make up again.

Later that night, Izzy had just finished dinner and was already preparing her bed when she heard a knock on the door of her quarters. Peeping through the keyhole, she recognized Drew and memories of their earlier argument rushed back.

Isabel let her in and could tell that the tension still simmered beneath the surface,

even as they engaged in polite conversation discussing the mission and the team's progress.

As they talked, Izzy couldn't help but notice how Drew's eyes sparkled like emeralds in the dim light or how her hair curled in short messy golden waves. It was usually slicked back when working or under a helmet. But here, like this, freshly washed, Izzy could smell the shampoo and desperately wanted to run her fingers through it. She felt a flutter in her chest, and a heat between her legs before suddenly, the conversation turned heated again.

"You're still not listening to me, Lieutenant Colonel," Drew said, her voice rising. "You're still not taking me seriously."

Izzy stood, her heart racing. "That's not true, Drew. I am listening. And I do take you seriously."

Drew's eyes flashed with anger, and she took a step closer to Izzy. "Really? Because it feels like you're just humoring me, like I'm some kind of pet that needs to be placated."

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Izzy's face burned with frustration, and she reached out, grasping Drew's arms. "That's not fair, Drew. I'm trying to understand you."

Drew's eyes locked onto Izzy's, and for a moment, they just stared at each other, the air thick with emotion. Then, without thinking, Izzy leaned in, her lips brushing against Drew's in a soft, gentle kiss.

Drew's eyes widened in surprise, but she melted into the kiss, her lips parting to deepen the connection. Izzy felt a rush of excitement, her heart soaring as she realized that both her feelings and her hunger for Drew came flooding right back.

As they broke apart for air, Drew's eyes sparkled with shock and confusion. "Lieutenant Colonel, what...?"

Izzy's face burned with embarrassment, but she didn't back down. "I don't know, Drew. I just couldn't help myself."

As she tried to kiss Drew again, Drew's eyes flashed with uncertainty, and she almost pulled away. But something in Izzy's gaze held her back, and she hesitated, her lips parting slightly.

Izzy took advantage of the opening, her lips brushing against Drew's in a soft, gentle needy caress. Drew's resistance melted away, and she leaned into the kiss, her arms wrapping around Izzy's waist.

They broke apart for air, and Drew's eyes searched Izzy's face. "What are we doing, Izzy?"

Izzy's voice was barely above a whisper. "I don't know, Drew. But I can't deny this anymore."

Their lips met again, Izzy's kisses were needy as all her unspoken want poured into Drew's mouth.

Suddenly Drew came alive as though the animal within her was unleashed. She pushed Izzy back against the wall and roughly unfastened Izzy's pants pushing her right hand inside Izzy's pants and her underwear.

Izzy felt her legs part instinctively as she relied on the wall to hold her up.

Drew's fingers weren't waiting, they were seeking and probing and pushing inside of her all at once. Izzy felt wet all of a sudden. Very wet.

She cried out as Drew's fingers opened her up and bit Drew's shoulder through her shirt. Drew's fingers thrust hard and deep- straight into her with no warm up and as shocking as that was to Izzy, she realized she wanted it. She wanted Drew inside her so very badly.

SheneededDrew inside of her. She needed to feel Drew fucking her in the same way as she needed air to breathe.

"Fuck me," she whispered in Drew's ear, her voice throaty and hoarse. "I need to feel you fuck me."

Drew immediately responded, her fingers thrusting into her and out of her. Izzy could hear the squelch of her own wetness and the deep earthy sound of her own moans. She had never been loud during sex. Until Drew. With Drew, she was very loud during sex.

She had also never imagined that rough sex was something she was into.

Until Drew.

She was pinned against the wall by Drew's body. She was still fully dressed but Drew's fingers were fucking her in a way she had never been fucked before. She felt Drew pull out and add another finger before thrusting into her once again and Izzy felt her body opening up for Drew as though her body knew it wanted to take everything Drew had for her.

"Harder, please... fuck me harder," Izzy heard herself saying things she never had before and Drew responded. She felt Drew's fingers moving harder and faster into her and out of her.

She felt Drew's thumb sliding against her clitoris and she knew her orgasm was close.

She felt Drew's lips against her ear and a shiver ran right through her.

"Come for me, baby," Drew growled and right at that second Izzy felt her orgasm tear right through her body in strong waves. She felt herself gush down the inside of her thighs, soaking her underwear and her pants.

"Oh, fuck.." she moaned.

Her legs felt weak and Drew released her and she fell instinctively to her knees. She knew what Drew would want now and although she was still riding high on her own orgasm she looked up at Drew in absolute submission to her.

"Fuck my face, if you like," Izzy gave her permission and their eyes met. Drew's eyes were dark green now and filled with lust. She looked down at Izzy with so much

hunger Izzy felt like it would never ever be satisfied.

She unbuckled her pants and pushed them to the floor along with her underwear.

She stepped forwards until she was above Izzy, their gaze still fixed on each others. She took hold of Izzy's head in her hands and pulled it tight into her pussy.

Izzy opened her mouth to receive the hot wetness of Drew's desire. Just like last time, fucking Izzy had clearly turned Drew on so much. She began to grind herself onto Izzy's face, holding Izzy tightly in.

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Izzy could barely breathe, but she didn't care. Her mouth and tongue moved instinctively to please Drew.

The way Drew chose to take her own orgasms from Izzy was the single most erotic thing Izzy thought she had ever experienced. She hadn't stopped thinking about the last time Drew had fucked her face and come in her mouth and this time was no different.

Izzy felt dizzy at how good it felt feeling Drew taking pleasure on her tongue, tasting the hot earthy scent of her sex, hearing her deep moans of enjoyment.

"That's right, baby. You are so fucking good to me baby." Drew growled and Izzy continued to work hard for her with her tongue and her mouth. She wanted to lap up every bit of wetness Drew had for her, but the more she licked, the more wetness came.

"This is my favorite way to come, baby," Drew groaned and pulled her head in tighter. Drew's fingers were tangled tightly in her hair. "On your beautiful face.... In your hungry needy mouth..."

With that, Drew's whole body tightened and she came hard, crying out and bucking her hips against Izzy's mouth. Izzy swallowed and licked, swallowed and licked, desperate to take every drop of Drew's orgasm.

Izzy looked up at Drew and met her glittering green gaze.

"Good girl, baby. Good girl."

As Drew prepared to leave, Izzy felt a pang of uncertainty. They had crossed a line, but what did it mean for their future?

Drew's eyes seemed to hold the same questions as she dressed and turned to face Izzy. "What does this mean, Izzy?"

Izzy shook her head, feeling helpless. "I don't know, Drew. I only know that I needed you, and suddenly, you were there."

Drew's expression was guarded, her eyes searching Izzy's face. "And now?"

Izzy took a deep breath. "I don't know. But I do know that I want to explore this, to see where it takes us."

Drew nodded, her face still uncertain. "I want that too. But what about the mission, the team, our duties?"

Izzy's heart sank, knowing that their love was forbidden and could compromise their careers and relationships with their comrades.

As Drew turned to leave, Izzy felt a sense of desperation. "Drew, wait."

Drew turned back, her eyes questioning.

Izzy's voice was barely above a whisper. "What if this is all we have? What if this is the only chance we get?"

Drew's expression softened, and she took a step closer. "Then let's make the most of it," she said, her voice filled with emotion.

She took Izzy's face in her hands and kissed her deeply and passionately, her tongue

exploring Izzy's mouth and Izzy felt that familiar heat rising again between her legs.

"Oh, Drew," she moaned.

Chapter Six

Drew

The army base was very tense, the air thick with anticipation and fatigue. This was partly due to the recent missions that had taken a toll on the soldiers, leaving them frazzled and on edge. Everyone was on high alert, ready to respond to the slightest signal and move.

The other reason was the next mission, which kept everyone on their toes. It was an EOD support mission, extremely dangerous and requiring skillful planning and execution.

Drew was back in her quarters just before lunch, examining a map for the mission. She needed to study the area carefully to decide where to land and areas to avoid.

During the briefing yesterday, they had been told by Lieutenant Colonel Patel and Lieutenant Colonel Oakley that the EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) mission was one that could cost a lot of lives if anything went sideways. Their missions were often dangerous, but this one was extreme.

Drew listened as Izzy announced that the insurgents had planted explosives to terrorize the local population. Their role there was to invade the area undetected, diffuse the bombs, and save the lives of the villagers. It was truly critical, but nothing was too critical for them.

Yesterday was the first briefing, and they were to have another one just before they

embarked on the mission. Drew sighed as she checked the time. She had just skipped lunch again, and it was soon becoming a habit.

She folded the map hurriedly, changed her uniform and headed straight to the command center. Yesterday, it was agreed that they should assemble there immediately after lunch to run through their plans, draw conclusions, gather supplies, and move in.

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She heard a voice call out to her, “Good morning, Major.”

She turned to meet Jack, Smith’s co-pilot. He seemed a bit down. “Good morning, Jack. Is everything alright?”

“Yeah. It's just that Smith isn't feeling too well.”

“Smith isn't well? But she was at the briefing yesterday, right?”

“Yes, she was. She had a high fever this morning and was taken to the medical center. I wish I could stay there with her.”

“I'll excuse what you just said, considering this isn't a good time for you. But you should know no matter your ties or friendships with anyone here, it shouldn't affect your job as a soldier. You cannot let your emotions cloud your judgment, okay?”

“Yes, ma'am,” he said, trying to lighten up.

Drew thought about her own words. Here she was, dishing out advice to a lieutenant, advice that she couldn't seem to take herself. She gave a wry smile as she watched Jones walk away, his head bent.

“Jack?” Drew called out, smiling as she hurried over to the young man. Jones stopped, his forehead wrinkling.

“Yes, Major?”

Drew stopped beside him. “She's going to be fine. She's a tough nut to crack. Not even this can hold her down.”

She watched Jack's face lighten as her words chased the storm clouds from his face. “I know she will.” Drew nodded, and Jones walked off.

When she arrived at the command center, all the soldiers were already gathered and the supplies had been loaded in the Thunderbolt.

Isabel was at the podium talking all tall lean lines and beautiful dark eyes and dark hair. Drew felt her heart jump at the sight of her, but she pushed her feelings and desire for her back down. This was not the time to be thinking about fucking Izzy. Or about coming in her lovely mouth.

Both of those were sweet sweet thoughts she needed to save for late at night in her own quarters.

Izzy reemphasized the purpose of the mission, their different positions and roles, and lastly, their evacuation. She ended by saying, “We have to do our very best, officers. About five thousand lives depend on us. Let's do this!”

Drew watched her scanning the crowd until Izzy's eyes settled on her. She tried to stay professional, but it was near enough impossible. Their eyes met for just a second, filled with emotion before Drew looked away.

She had to stay focussed. Everyone's lives depended on it.

Soon the team was on their way. They flew fast and landed away from the village. This allowed them to go into the village quietly and stealthily. Izzy stepped down and beckoned to the EOD specialist and the rest of the team to come with her, leaving about four people in the craft for cover.

Just before she left, she called out to Drew, “Be very careful, Major.” Drew noticed her voice had a subtle tremor of worry.

“Yes, ma'am, I will,” she reassured. She watched as they moved quickly. The farther they went, the smaller they became.

Drew was supposed to wait for the signal announcing they were inside the village before moving. Jones was beside her, and he seemed scared.

“Major, we're positioned inside the village.” Izzy’s voice ranged over the intercom.

“I’m on the move, Lieutenant Colonel.”

Drew lifted the helicopter off the ground with ease, the rotors whirring smoothly as she guided the aircraft into the clear blue sky. The mission was simple, and Drew had flown on this route countless times before. She felt a sense of comfort and familiarity as she banked the helicopter to the left, following the winding river.

The flight was uneventful, with only a few scattered clouds dotting the horizon. Drew's co-pilot, Captain Samantha Lee, chatted idly with her, discussing everything from their favorite foods to their plans for leave. Drew smiled and laughed, feeling a sense of camaraderie with her fellow pilot.

But as they approached the extraction point, Drew's instincts began to twitch. Something didn't feel right. She scanned the horizon, her eyes narrowing as she searched for any sign of trouble.

Without warning, the helicopter shuddered and lurched to the side. Drew's heart skipped a beat as she saw the flash of gunfire from the ground below.

"Incoming fire!" Captain Lee shouted, her voice tight with urgency.

Drew reacted instinctively, banking the helicopter hard to the right as bullets whizzed past the cockpit. But what caught her off guard was the direction of the fire. It was coming from unexpected angles, as if the enemy had set up a perimeter around the extraction point.

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"Where's it coming from?" Drew demanded, her eyes darting between the instruments and the ground below.

"It's everywhere!" Captain Lee replied, her voice strained. "We've got multiple hostiles, Major!"

Drew gritted her teeth, her mind racing with tactics. She knew she had to get Lieutenant Colonel Oakley and her team out, but the enemy was closing in fast. She flew the helicopter with precision, dodging and weaving between the bullets, but she knew she couldn't keep this up for much longer.

As Drew continued to expertly maneuver the helicopter through the hail of bullets, she could hear Izzy's frantic voice crackling over the radio.

"Mitchell, this is Oakley. What's happening over there? Is everything okay?"

Drew's grip on the controls tightened as she heard the desperation in Izzy's voice. She knew she had to act fast.

She had no time to answer as the enemy fire intensified, and she could feel the helicopter shudder as bullets hit the armor plating.

She gritted her teeth, her focus narrowing to a single point. She could hear the Izzy's voice again, her words tumbling out in a panicked rush.

"Major, what's going on over there? Is there a problem?"

Drew's heart raced with adrenaline as she sped up, the helicopter surging forward in a burst of power. She could feel the engines roaring beneath her, the rotors whipping the air into a frenzy.

With a fierce cry, Drew unleashed a barrage of return fire, the helicopter's guns blazing as she tore through the enemy lines. The insurgents scattered, momentarily stunned by the ferocity of her counterattack.

As she flew closer to Izzy's position, Drew could see the enemy regrouping.

With fierce determination, Drew flew straight into the heart of the battle, her guns blazing.

A few moments later, Drew banked the helicopter hard to the left, her eyes scanning the terrain below for any sign of Izzy's medical team.

As she flew, Drew's mind kept drifting back to Izzy herself. She had seen her composure during previous mission, and her intelligence, courage, and beauty had left her breathless. And that was aside from the exquisite pleasure of seeing Izzy come undone for her sexually and the easy intimacy they had shared in the safety of the night together. She had tried to brush it off as a distraction, but she couldn't shake the feeling that she was falling in love with Izzy.

"Mitchell, this is Apache-1. We have visual on the Lieutenant Colonel's team. They're going in from the north," Captain Lee called out.

Drew's heart raced as she pushed the helicopter to its limits, ready to swoop in to extract the team.

Her heart swelled with emotion as she saw Isabel's team huddled together, ready for the next phase of their mission.

With the helicopter safe from enemy fire, Drew and Captain Lee held their ground, ready to fire at will to keep the enemy at bay, their eyes scanning the horizon for any sign of additional threats.

She took a deep breath before turning on the ignition. “Steady yourselves, guys.”

The next phase was the most dangerous part of their plan. She was to circle above the village, use imagery intelligence to locate the specific places where the explosives were positioned, and notify the team, which would, in turn, diffuse the bombs from below.

Beads of sweat trickled down Drew's forehead as she thought about the plan. Her breathing became shallow and rapid, but she composed herself.

She knew she was strong and brave, and the entire team depended on her to pull this off. She was going to make it work at all costs.

She reached the location and began to circle it. Visually inspecting the area, she noticed a change in the landscape in the eastern region of the village; it seemed the place had been dug up.

“Hell yeah!” she said, all riled up, then cleared her voice. “Lieutenant Colonel, there are improvised explosive devices in the eastern region of the village behind a white bungalow.”

“We are heading there now. Hold on!” Then, to the other soldiers, she said, “To the eastern region now!”

Drew watched as they moved fast toward the specified location.

“It looks freshly dug up,” a specialist said over the intercom before they began

working on it.

With Jack's help, they conducted a thorough sweep of the area, uncovering a cache of cleverly concealed explosives, including some buried just 12 inches underground.

Drew implored for the protection of Izzy and the entire team as they worked with precision and haste to defuse the deadly explosives. Just as it seemed like the operation was proceeding smoothly, a sudden jolt of tension shot through the air as Izzy's voice crackled over the intercom, her usual calm demeanor shattered by a frustrated yell. "Goddammit!"

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The outburst sent a shiver down Drew's spine, and she wondered what could have gone wrong.

She suddenly became apprehensive. "Hello, Lieutenant Colonel. Do you copy? Is everything good down there?"

"Major Mitchell, there's a timer attached to a bomb here. The specialist just realized we have less than fifteen minutes to diffuse it or else it explodes."

"Holy shit! What do we do now?" she said, concern etching in her voice.

"Stay put and do your part. We'll handle it!"

Drew let out a deep, exasperated sigh, her frustration palpable as she felt helpless watching from a distance. She longed to be alongside Izzy and the team, and her heart raced with every passing moment.

All she could think about was Izzy's safety, and her mind was consumed by worst-case scenarios. She felt like a bystander, forced to rely on the intercom for updates, her expertise idle and unused. The wait was agonizing, and Drew couldn't shake the feeling that she should be doing more to ensure Izzy's protection.

Before she could conjure a plan, her thoughts were shattered by the sudden, sharp crackle of gunfire, making Drew's heart skip a beat. Then, Izzy's voice burst through the intercom, her words laced with urgency and authority. "We're under attack! Fire at will!"

Adrenaline surged through Drew's veins. Her mind raced with the implications. She could hear the bursts of gunfire growing louder, the team's return fire echoing through the comms system.

Drew's grip on the console tightened, her knuckles white with tension, as she strained to stay focused, her thoughts consumed by Izzy safety and the dire situation unfolding below.

Drew's mind reeled in confusion and dismay. The sudden attack had added a catastrophic layer of complexity to the already desperate situation. This can't be happening, she thought, her grip on the controls tightening as if she could will the chaos into submission.

With a deep breath, she shook off the paralysis, her training and instincts taking over. "We can't just sit here," she growled. "We're going in to assist them. Position yourselves for descent. We'll provide cover from above!" The words tumbled out, a battle plan forming in her mind.

Drew lowered the armored craft down, circling directly above the insurgents, and screamed, "Attack!"

As the insurgents realized they were no longer alone, they swarmed out of their hiding spots, a seemingly endless horde of armed fighters converging on the plane with a singular focus to bring it down.

Bullets ricocheted off the fuselage, echoing through the air as Drew struggled to maintain control. This gave Izzy and the EOD specialist an unforeseen opportunity. The insurgents' distraction provided a narrow window of chance, allowing them to make a break for the bomb.

With the enemy momentarily distracted, they seized the chance, fingers moving with

precision as they carefully disarmed the deadly device.

Inside the helicopter, Drew gritted her teeth, fighting to maintain control of the aircraft as the relentless onslaught raged on. The insurgents' bullets continued to pound the chopper's armor, threatening to breach its defenses at any moment.

The armored glass, once a secure barrier, now lay shattered, its fragments littering the cockpit floor. Drew's eyes darted anxiously between the instrument panels and windows, bracing for the next impact.

She knew the insurgents were targeting specific weak points, trying to exploit the plane's vulnerabilities. The question was which critical system would they hit next? The engines, fuel tanks, or perhaps flight controls? Each passing second felt like an eternity as Drew struggled to hold the fort, her skills and training stretched to the limit.

"Major Mitchell, I told you to stay put!" Izzy yelled over the intercom. It seemed like a combination of anxiety and anger.

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant Colonel, but now isn't the time to push blame around! Have the explosives been diffused?" She knew the obvious answer to the question.

"I think we would have all been dead now if the case was otherwise."

Drew finally found a window of opportunity to escape the hail of bullets. She let out a deep sigh of relief, her tense shoulders sagging slightly. "Hang on, Lieutenant Colonel! I'm going to put down a few feet from your position in an open field. It's your best chance for extraction."

She continued, "Please make sure you and the soldiers get there quickly and safely. I'll do my best to cover you from above, but I need you to move now!" The words

tumbled out, laced with a sense of urgency.

Despite the suggestion from Izzy that she should land a bit farther from the location, as mentioned earlier, Drew didn't budge.

With a final burst of engines, she set the plane down in the open field and swiftly turned to Jack, her voice low and urgent. "Take the controls, Jack. Keep her running, and be ready to lift off at a moment's notice."

As Jones nodded and slid into the pilot's seat, Drew gathered a few soldiers. They positioned themselves strategically, forming a defensive perimeter around the insurgents.

Just as they got into position, a burst of gunfire echoed across the field, and the EOD specialist, flanked by a handful of soldiers, sprinted toward the plane, the insurgents hot on their heels.

Drew scanned the crowd for Izzy but couldn't find her. Her heart plunged to the floor, punching through her stomach as it tightened. Drew felt she couldn't breathe as her eyes roved, her legs already moving forward without conscious thought.

She couldn't be missing; she just couldn't be. Drew approached the outlet mindlessly. Some soldiers tried to pull her along, but she resisted fiercely.

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As she sprinted across the chaotic battlefield, her heart palpitating with every step, she suddenly collided with a figure and tumbled to the ground. Apologetic, she looked up to see Izzy's familiar face etched with concern and exhaustion.

But it was what Izzy was holding that made her heart skip a beat: a young lieutenant, his eyes glazed with pain, a bloodstain spreading across his uniform from a bullet wound to his ribs.

She felt sorry for him. Yet, amidst the ear-splitting gunfire, Drew felt an unexpected calm wash over her as she gazed at Izzy. It was as if in this moment of utter chaos, she had found a beacon of hope, a reminder that they were in this together and that they would get through it as a team.

Izzy's eyes widened in astonishment, her face pale with shock. For a moment, she seemed frozen, unable to speak or move.

Drew didn't hesitate, swiftly scrambling to her feet. With a gentle yet firm grip, she grasped the injured lieutenant's shoulder, supporting him. Together, they sprinted toward the waiting aircraft, protected by a defensive perimeter of soldiers who held off the insurgents.

The air was thick with the smell of smoke and sweat hanging heavy as Drew and Izzy rushed to escape the chaos, their footsteps pounding out a desperate rhythm.

With a gradual yet deliberate pace, the defense team fell back into the aircraft, their weary faces etched with relief. Though battered and bruised, with a few injuries sustained during the intense firefight, they had held their ground, protecting their

comrades and securing their escape.

As the last of the team members boarded, Drew swiftly switched places with Jack, her hands moving with practiced ease over the controls. With a deep breath, she lifted the aircraft off the ground, soaring into the sky as the insurgents' frustrated shouts faded into the distance.

The team's exhausted silence filled the cabin, punctuated only by the soft beeps of the instruments and the steady hum of the engines as Drew flew them back to the safety of their base. Drew let out a breath she hadn't realized she had been holding.

That was a close one. Too close.

When they arrive on base, Drew accompanied the injured lieutenant to the medical center to get a chance to talk with Izzy, but she was busy instructing her medical team to prep for surgery.

"I'll be leading the surgery," Izzy barked. "Prep my equipment, I'm scrubbing in."

A few hours later, Lieutenant Colonel Patel summoned both of them to work on the mission report and corroborate their contributions and roles. Drew saw this as the perfect opportunity to talk to Izzy concerning their personal issues.

As they walked, she trailed closely behind Izzy, her footsteps echoing Izzy's steady pace. Upon arriving at the office, they entered in silence, the door closing softly behind them.

The familiar surroundings seemed to fade into the background as they settled in, their attention drawn to each other. The air was charged with a newfound awareness, and the intensity of their shared experiences had created a connection between them, making them overly conscious of each other.

Drew sat opposite her desk, watching her closely, but she seemed more engrossed in turning her laptop on, her expression stern and focused.

The air between them thickened with emotions and unspoken words, and Drew knew she was intentionally avoiding eye contact. “Izzy, say something, please,” she said, hating the tension that was engulfing the room.

“You will address me as Lieutenant Colonel, and I suggest we focus solely on why we're here. This report is a bit complicated, and we need to get our facts right.” Her tone was firm.

The words flew from Izzy's mouth and stung Drew as sharply as a whip, leaving her feeling raw and exposed, the venom in her words lingering in the air.

She swiftly gathered her emotions like a stormy sea retreating from the shores. “I'm sorry, Lieutenant Colonel. I overstepped my boundaries.” Izzy looked at her, uneasiness stretching over her face like a thin layer of frost.

She knew her words had hurt her. Heaving a sigh, she said, “Professionalism is an important aspect of our job. This job requires unwavering dedication, relentless attention to details, and a commitment to excellence in every task, no matter the challenges, circumstances, or personal feelings.”

She paused, presumably to let her words sink in. “Never put a mission at risk because of your personal feelings. Do you understand?”

“Yes, ma'am,” Drew answered, but her head was buried in her own thoughts.

Drew knew Izzy was avoiding a conversation about their personal lives and using professional advice as a smokescreen to mask the underlying tension between them, a clever tactic that allowed her to maintain a sense of control and distance while also

keeping her at arm's length.

She decided to let it go this time.

As they worked on the report together, she thought of the other things Izzy had said about feelings interfering with her job. Perhaps she wasn't the only one who was guilty of this.

The clear difference between her and Izzy, though, was that she was bold enough to admit her mistakes while Izzy shied away from it. This left her perplexed and struggling to reconcile Izzy's tough exterior with the fragility that her refusal to face her fears revealed.

"Just face it!" She gasped. She didn't mean to say it out loud.

"Excuse me?"

"Nothing, ma'am."

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But Izzy's demeanor changed. Perhaps she heard her after all, and those three words had struck a chord.

Chapter Seven

Izzy

“Just face it!”

It had been three days, and Drew's words still gnawed at Izzy. The echoing tone of her voice was still sad, and those three words were still sharp and accusatory. Drew had called her a coward to her face, and she didn't do anything about it.

Why? Is it because she just couldn't confront her in the moment? Or maybe it was the fact that she knew Drew was right, but she was too proud to admit it.

They had seen each other several times, even after promising to be professional, yet she was playing the blame game, exempting herself, even though she was equally wrong.

Of course, her emotions undeniably influenced her professional demeanor, manifesting in subtle yet telling ways. She overcompensated by adopting an unnecessarily icy persona around her subordinates when Drew was present, attempting to conceal her true feelings.

Her gaze would instinctively sweep through crowds, searching for a glimpse of her, betraying her longing. Whenever their mission was jeopardized and Drew took risks

to ensure its success, her concern for her safety was obvious, etched on her face.

And when Drew's genuine smile illuminated the room, her own world momentarily lost its vibrancy, as if nothing else mattered. These tiny, telling moments revealed the depth of her emotions, and she knew Drew was aware of them, too.

Then why did she lie to her face? Why did she pretend she wasn't in this with her? Why did she let her wallow alone in a pool of agony? These questions haunted Izzy as she went about her daily routine.

But what options did she have? Even if she acknowledged her feelings for Drew, how would it change their situation? They couldn't keep hiding their affection forever, constantly looking over their shoulders, fearful of being discovered by their peers.

With some already harboring suspicions, surrendering to Drew's requests would only put them in greater danger of being discovered, potentially jeopardizing their careers.

It was obvious she felt a deep sense of calm when she was with Drew, but was it worth blowing her life over and risking it all? Was their relationship worth forfeiting her career, her reputation, and her future?

Surely it should be left as what it was, those few incredible nights of life changing sex that Izzy would never forget a single second of.

She envisioned the chief commander's face, furrowed with disappointment, as he revoked her honors and badges, his voice tinged with sorrow and a hint of anger at her downfall. And her fellow soldiers who had trusted and respected her, how would they react to the news?

Izzy shook her head vigorously at the thought of it. No. She couldn't let it happen. Confusion wracked through her as she considered her options, she was literally

between the devil and the deep blue sea.

“Lieutenant Colonel?” The voice jerked her into reality. She opened the door to see the lieutenant, who had been hospitalized a few weeks ago. He seemed to be back on his feet, happy and delighted.

Isabel had been so engrossed in her head these few days that she forgot he had been dismissed. “Good afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel,” he said gleefully.

“Good afternoon, Lieutenant; I'm glad you're doing better.”

“I am, ma'am. The commander in chief sent me here. He wants to see you immediately.”

The news shook Isabel slightly. Had her fears already come into existence? She turned to the lieutenant. “Thank you. I'll be with him shortly,” she said with a smile.

As she composed herself, she also gathered her thoughts, steeling herself for whatever lay ahead. She was prepared and resolute, ready to brace whatever the chief had in store for her.

She came out of her quarters and headed for the chief's office. A few people greeted her, and she answered them briefly before hurrying inside the office.

“Good afternoon, sir.” She saluted.

“Good afternoon, Isabel. At ease.”

That was a relief. She wouldn't be asked to stand at ease if the matter was delicate. She was too engrossed in her thoughts to notice that the chief had started talking.

“Lieutenant Colonel, are you okay?”

“Yes, sir, I'm all good,” she replied, now paying attention.

“There’s an urgent operation I need you to carry out. I need your best soldiers on this mission. It's a raid, and it's highly dangerous. There's a camp north of here about a few miles that's harboring terrorists. They are preparing for an attack on the neighboring towns tomorrow, so we need to act tonight.” He paused to let his words sink in.

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“I need you to gather your best soldiers, infiltrate the camp, and take prisoners if you can. Do not leave any stone unturned. I trust you to do the right thing.”

“Yes, sir.” She saluted and walked out to gather the team together. She sent a lieutenant to get Drew, Smith, and a few people she could trust—people she'd seen make sacrifices, people who were brave and untamed.

The team gathered in the command center, and the soldiers seemed quite riled up about the mission as she went into details. She mentioned the dangers involved, considering it was a night mission.

“Remember, we're not there to engage in an endless firefight. Our goal is to get in, get the job done, and get out. Stay together and watch each other's backs. This mission requires skill, discipline, and teamwork. I have every confidence in every one of you. Let's move out, and let's make it happen!”

“Yes, ma'am!” they roared.

“We're to assemble back here by 21:30. For now, you're all dismissed. Get some rest.” As the soldiers walked away, Izzy searched for Drew but noticed she was one of the first people to leave.

Drew was clearly avoiding her. As Izzy gathered a few maps for some research, Sergeant Thompson walked in. “Good afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel.”

“What brings you here, Sergeant?”

“I want to be part of the mission.”

Isabel was slightly taken aback. The sergeant wasn't a typical person she'd have considered.

“Why?”

“Well, I'm a soldier who's volunteering for starters. Secondly, the medical team isn't coming with you, and I can help in case of any casualties. Besides, you have great combat skills and survival instincts.”

“It's okay, sergeant. You're in. I'll brief you myself,” she said. Thompson was a friend and capable soldier, and he had a good point. She needed someone else with enough medical knowledge to assist in case of an emergency. She sincerely hoped there would be no casualties.

About seven hours later, the team arrived all dressed in black for camouflage. Izzy scrutinized the explosives thoroughly before ordering them to be loaded into the helicopter.

All the soldiers had their headlights on before marching into the armored aircraft. They seemed delighted to go on the mission.

Izzy sat beside Sergeant Thompson. As they deliberated on the mission in whispers, she threw a few glances to the flight deck. It was nice to see Drew at a close range without the awkwardness.

They soon arrived at the area, dropped off a few miles away, and walked in to catch the terrorists off guard.

First, they blew up the enemy camp with a precisely detonated explosive charge,

leveling the central hub and sending shockwaves through the surrounding structures.

The team then swiftly moved in. The terrorists hadn't been expecting them, so they exploited the chaos and confusion, clearing the perimeter. While Drew and Smith marched on one side, Isabel and Sergeant Thompson went in the opposite direction.

They pushed deeper into the camp and encountered fierce resistance, but their coordination helped them to overcome the terrorists. Room by room, building by building, they methodically cleared the area, gathering vital intel and taking down targets.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly until Isabel and Sergeant Thompson stumbled on the camp's stronghold.

It seemed they were on the verge of defeat. Izzy hoped the same hadn't happened on the other side, so she immediately reached out to Drew.

Drew confirmed the absence of a stronghold but, on hearing their dilemma, offered a suggestion. "Can I head back to the chopper for a precision strike?" She sounded agitated.

"As soon as possible, Major. But you must wait for our coordinates before you strike. Understood?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Izzy hoped that she'd be in position soon. In the meantime, the snipers tried to do justice to the dreadful terrorists, while she, the sergeant, and other soldiers tried their best to retain them inside.

The low hum that soon transcended into a loud thrum bloomed hope for Izzy. Drew

had arrived.

She yelled over the intercom, “Are you positioned, Major?”

“Affirmative, Lieutenant Colonel!”

Izzy scanned the area for relevant information about the precise location. She described the stronghold, and Drew notified her that the targeted building was in her sights.

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“Hold on,” Izzy said. She turned to the soldiers and screamed, “Retreat! Snipers, cover the area!” As the soldiers retreated, Izzy tried to ward off the attacks while slowly adjusting backward.

Suddenly, a loud earth-shaking boom rocked the ground as a precision-guided munition dropped from the aircraft above and struck the stronghold with unerring accuracy, sending a massive fireball and debris plume high into the air.

The concussion wave knocked Izzy off balance and shattered the windows and structures in the surrounding area, the sudden, intense blast a stark reminder of the raw power of explosives.

It took Izzy a few minutes to come to. She coughed up dust and debris, her head spinning as she struggled to sit up amidst the ruins of her surroundings. The air was thick with the acrid smell of smoke and explosives.

She assessed the environment, taking in the devastation wrought by the precision strike. A few soldiers around her, dazed and battered, slowly regained consciousness. Izzy ears rang from the blast, but she knew she had to act quickly. She called out, her voice hoarse from the dust, "Report! What's our status?"

There was no reply, and it took her a moment to realize that her intercom had been damaged. In frustration, she yelled, “Retreat! Retreat! Retreat!” As she yelled, she scrambled around, searching frantically for more of her teammates.

She found most of them battered and bruised but alive. All the soldiers on the other side were safe, and they assisted the wounded ones outside.

A young lieutenant was stumbling toward her, his face blackened with soot, his arm hanging limply at his side.

"Can you hear me? Are you okay?" she shouted above the din as she rushed to his side.

He nodded, wincing in pain. She was about to lead him out when she saw Sergeant Thompson on the floor.

His body was limp and motionless, a crimson stain spreading from beneath his head, his eyes frozen in a permanent stare. Izzy's heart skipped a beat as she rushed to his side, her mind filled with dread. "Sarge! No, no, no!" she said, her voice cracking. She dropped to her knees, feeling for a pulse, but there was none.

Sergeant Thompson, her trusted friend and confidant, was gone. Izzy's vision blurred as she gazed at his lifeless body, memories of their countless battles and shared moments flashing through her mind. She took a deep breath, steeling herself for what lay ahead. "We need to keep moving!" she yelled to her team, her voice firm but laced with anguish.

A few soldiers came and carried the sergeant's body. With their objective accomplished, the team gathered at the exit. Drew appeared a few minutes later, and the soldiers scurried in. The armored chopper was thick with a scent of anxiety, somberness, and the stench of death.

Izzy was full of rage at Drew, but they needed to get to safety first. She held onto the dead sergeant's hand for a little while before tending to the injured soldiers. Smith assisted her quietly.

As soon as the aircraft touched down on the tarmac, its engines dying down with a final whine, the team let out a collective sigh of relief, their bodies sagging in

exhaustion.

Izzy was the first to rise, her movements stiff from the adrenaline crash, and her eyes red and wild from smoke, anger, and death. She jumped off and rushed over to the side of the flight deck.

Drew stepped down, and her face seemed distorted with perplexion. "Why the hell did you attack before I gave the order?" Izzy demanded, her words dripping in rage.

She continued, "We had a fucking plan, Major. A strategy to minimize casualties. I asked you to hold on! Damn right, I did.

"But you couldn't wait, could you? You had to go rogue, had to play hero, and now... now we've lost a good comrade, a friend, a committed soldier because of your impulsive decisions and recklessness."

The few soldiers who hung around were quiet, the air thick with unease. Izzy's anger was understandable; the mission had been a disaster, and Sergeant Thompson's death weighed heavily on her mind.

Izzy's voice dripped with sarcasm as she faced Drew, her eyes flashing with anger. "Oh, now the great hero Drew Mitchell is speechless? Where's your quick wit, Major? Your sharp tongue that's always so ready to deflect and charm? Where is it now when we need answers?" She took a step closer, her voice rising.

"You've got nothing to say? No excuses, no justifications, no clever quips to deflect the blame?"

Although they were standing outside, the space seemed to have shrunk, the tension between them crackling like a live wire.

The team watched, frozen, as Izzy's words hung in the air, waiting for Drew's response. Drew's eyes narrowed, her jaw clenched in defiance, as she met Izzy's glare.

"With all due respect, Lieutenant Colonel," she said, her voice low and even, "I don't think now is the time for recriminations. We have all had a bad day. We need to rest, the injured need to be attended to, and the dead?—"

"The dead?" Izzy interrupted. "The dead? You despise his name already? You can't pronounce it? That was Sergeant Thompson, goddammit. He was our friend, Major. And you killed him. Why? Because you wanted to play hero and save the day? Joke's on you now. You've ruined everything!"

Major Mitchell's eyes welled up with tears, but she took a deep breath and composed herself, her expression engraved with sorrow and regret. "Lieutenant Colonel, I...I'm deeply sorry," she began, her words barely above a whisper.

"I take full responsibility for the death of Sergeant Thompson. When you ordered me to hold position, I waited, but there was no confirmation signal. I soon realized that our intercom was malfunctioning, and I made a split-second decision to proceed without clearance." Her voice broke, but she continued, her words laced with anguish.

"I thought I was doing what was best for the team, but I was wrong. My recklessness cost us the life of a great soldier, Sergeant Thompson. I can't forgive myself for that." She paused, struggling to maintain her composure.

"I know I let you down, Lieutenant Colonel. I let the team down, and I'll carry this guilt with me forever. And as for my 'quick wit' and 'sharp tongue,' they are obviously irrelevant. I'm sorry once again." Drew's words hung heavy in the air as the team absorbed the magnitude of her regret and sorrow.

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Izzy's expression softened, her eyes filled with a mix of sadness and understanding. She nodded slowly, acknowledging Drew's apology.

Eventually, her mind began to replay the harsh words she had hurled at Drew, and she felt a growing sense of regret. She realized that her accusations had not only been heavy with condemnation but also thoughtless in their delivery.

She had let her emotions get the better of her, lashing out at Drew when she knew she was already grappling with guilt and grief. She wished she could take back her words, soften their edge, and find a way to address the situation without attacking Drew directly.

She turned to Drew to apologize, but she was already gone, having slipped out unnoticed. All she could do now was hope that she would understand her words had been spoken in pain, frustration, and anger.

The rest of the crowd dispersed slowly. Izzy's thoughts turned to the strain building between her and Drew, the unspoken tension simmering for what felt like an eternity.

The emotional rift between them had become vast, with her harsh words and accusations further eroding the trust and understanding that once existed. Now, she felt utterly lost and bereft.

The weight of her responsibilities, the burden of command, and the strain of their fractured relationship...everything took a toll on her. She felt like she was drowning in a sea of self-doubt, and she didn't know who she had become.

She had always preached safety and diligence, but she crushed the heart of her best friend and lover. Her mind swirled with memories of their past conversations, the trust they had once shared, the intimacy, and the unspoken understanding that had once made their partnership so strong.

Now, all she could see was the endless stretch of what they had lost and the daunting task of trying to rebuild it, if it had any hope of being rebuilt. She had lost it all: her confidence, her sanity, and her focus.

The person who was her source of joy, her anchor in life, and who brought significance into her soul was now distant and furious, and Drew may potentially shut her out forever, leaving her feeling empty and lost.

Her eyes dropped, her gaze falling upon the cold floor as if searching for a lifeline to cling to, a way to salvage what was left of their relationship and find her way back to solid ground, but she knew there was none.

“Lieutenant Colonel?” Lieutenant Lewis called out. “I’m so sorry for your loss. But I think you should get some rest. You have had a really long night. It’s almost dawn.”

“Thank you.” She nodded and walked toward her quarters, knowing fully well that a good night’s sleep was impossible.

Chapter Eight

Drew

Drew had always prided herself on her exceptional skills and unwavering confidence. She had faced countless high-pressure situations, never once doubting her abilities. That was until she met Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley.

She knew she was in trouble right from their initial interactions, even though they kept it strictly professional. However, she realized that she couldn't deny the spark she felt whenever Izzy was nearby. As they worked together, Drew found herself drawn to Izzy's intelligence, leadership, and compassion.

Lately, though, she had begun to experience unfamiliar emotions. She felt vulnerable, uncertain, and questioning. For the first time in her career, she doubted her capabilities, especially in the field.

The loss of Sergeant Thompson had hit her hard. Drew knew she hadn't really done anything wrong on that mission, she had made a split second life or death decision that had likely saved a lot of other lives, but still she felt deep pangs of guilt over his loss.

During missions, Drew's mind wandered to Izzy, wondering what she would think and say. She hesitated, second-guessing herself, which had affected her performance.

They had been at the base for almost three months now, and talk was already going around about both of them, so it was no surprise that after returning from a flight, fatigue setting in as she made her way to her quarters to grab some rest, she overheard a conversation that made her heart skip a beat.

A group of young privates fresh out of training huddled in the corner, speaking in hushed tones. Drew's ears perked up as she caught snippets of their conversation.

"...can't believe Major Mitchell is still leading ops," one of them said. "She's always second-guessing herself now."

"Yeah, and it's all because of the Lieutenant Colonel," another private chimed in. "She's clearly got a thing for her, and it's affecting her judgment."

Drew felt a stinging sensation as if she'd been punched in the gut. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. These young soldiers, barely out of training, were questioning her abilities and attributing her supposed decline to her relationship with Izzy.

She wanted to confront them and set the record straight, but something held her back. Maybe it was the exhaustion, or maybe it was the nagging doubt that had been creeping into her mind lately.

Drew slipped away unnoticed, her mind reeling with the conversation she'd overheard. Was it true? Was her relationship with Izzy affecting her performance? And what did the rest of the team think?

As she trudged back to her room, she couldn't shake off the feeling of self-doubt that had been creeping in since she met Izzy.

Once inside, she paced back and forth, her eyes fixed on the floor. "What's happening to me?" she muttered to herself. "I've always been a top-notch operative. I've never let personal feelings get in the way of my job."

She stopped pacing and stood in front of the mirror, staring at her reflection. "But that's not true, is it? Since I met Izzy, everything has changed. I've been hesitating in the field. It's like I've lost my edge."

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Drew's voice rose in frustration. "I need to get my head back in the game. I need to prove to myself and everyone else that I'm still a top operative, no matter what's going on in my personal life."

She took a deep breath and mentally retraced her steps to every mission since she met Izzy. "Where did I go wrong? What could I have done differently?"

As she analyzed her actions, Drew realized that her doubts and fears had been simmering beneath the surface, waiting to boil over. "I need to confront this head-on. I need to prove to myself that I'm still capable, still professional."

With newfound determination, Drew stood up straight, her eyes locked on her reflection. "I will do better. I will not let my feelings compromise my job. I am a professional, and I will act like it."

Even as she slept that night, Drew knew this was just the beginning. She had a long road ahead of her, one that required her to confront her doubts and fears to emerge stronger and more resilient than ever before.

The next day, Drew sat at her desk, staring blankly at the transfer request form in front of her. She had been agonizing over this decision for weeks, but she knew it was the only way to maintain her professionalism and protect her relationship with Izzy.

She couldn't bear the thought of breaking up with Izzy, not after everything they had been through together. But she also knew she couldn't continue to serve alongside her, not when her feelings were so strong.

With a heavy heart, Drew filled out the form, requesting a transfer to a different unit. She knew it wouldn't be easy, but she hoped it would be the best solution for both her career and the possibility of a relationship with Izzy.

As she signed the form, Drew couldn't help but wonder how Izzy would react. Would she be fine with the transfer, or would she feel abandoned? Drew pushed the thoughts aside, knowing she had to prioritize her own needs.

She took a deep breath and stood up, trembling, the form shaking slightly in her hand. She would submit it tomorrow, and then...well, then she would wait and see what happened next.

Drew's mind raced with possibilities as she lay in bed that night, her thoughts consumed by Izzy and the uncertain future ahead. Would they make it work despite the distance? Or would the transfer be the end of their relationship?

Only time would tell, but Drew knew she had made the right decision for her. She loved Izzy too much to risk losing herself, and she needed to find a way to balance her heart and duty.

She was so lost in thought that she didn't even see or hear her comms device beep. Just as she was about to submit the transfer request form, her comms device beeped for the third time, and that was when she saw it. She hesitated, her eyes hovering over the screen as she answered the call.

"Major Mitchell, we have an impromptu mission briefing in five minutes. Report to the operations room immediately," the voice on the other end said without preamble.

Drew's heart sank. She had been so close to going through what she had written as her reasons for requesting a transfer before submitting the request, and now she had to put everything on hold.

She dropped the form on her computer and closed the file, trying to push aside the frustration and disappointment.

Duty called, and she had to answer.

Racing against time, Drew grabbed her gear and rushed to the operations room. Out of breath, she burst through the doors and took her place alongside the other team members.

Izzy, already seated at the front, gave her a concerned glance before turning back to the mission briefing.

"Intel suggests a high-value target has been spotted in the vicinity of the old warehouse district," the briefing officer said, pointing to a holographic display projecting a 3D map of the area. "We need to extract the target and bring them in for questioning."

Drew listened intently, her mind racing with the mission parameters and potential risks. She knew this was an opportunity to prove herself, to show that she still had what it took to be a top operative.

As the briefing concluded, Drew felt a surge of adrenaline. She was ready to put her doubts and fears aside and focus on the mission.

"Let's gear up, team," Izzy said, her voice firm and commanding. "You guys move out in ten."

Drew nodded, already mentally preparing herself for the challenges ahead. She would put the transfer request on hold for now and focus on the mission. But she knew that this was only a temporary reprieve, and soon, she would have to face the uncertainty of her future once again.

Determined to prove herself, she took charge of the mission, her mind focused on the objective. She led the team through the warehouse district, her senses on high alert, scanning for any signs of the target.

As they approached the designated location, Drew's instincts kicked in. She signaled for the team to fan out, covering all angles, and then she moved forward toward the warehouse where the target was said to be at, her weapon at the ready.

The team, led by Drew and Smith, approached the warehouse with caution. Intel suggested that the high-value target, a notorious terrorist leader, was hiding inside.

As they entered the warehouse, Drew's team fanned out, securing the perimeter. Smith took point, moving stealthily through the shadows. Drew covered her, her eyes scanning the area for any signs of danger.

Drew's voice was low and steady. "Clear left. Clear right. Smith, check that corner."

Smith nodded, moving to the corner. "Clear."

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Drew's gaze swept the room, her eyes locking onto a figure in the shadows. "I've got something. Smith, cover me."

Smith moved to Drew's side, her weapon trained on the figure. Drew crept forward, her movements fluid and deadly.

"Target acquired," Drew whispered, her voice barely audible. "It's our guy."

Smith's heart raced as Drew took charge, discharging orders with precision. "Patel, get the package ready. Rodriguez, cover our exit. Smith, let's get him out of here."

But as they reached the center of the warehouse, something went terribly wrong. A loud creak echoed through the space, followed by the sound of footsteps. The target's guards had been alerted.

Smith froze, her hand raised in a warning. Drew's heart raced as she realized they had been compromised. The guards emerged from the shadows, their weapons drawn.

In the chaos that followed, Drew's training kicked in. She took down several guards, but Smith was nowhere to be seen. Drew's heart skipped a beat as she frantically scanned the area.

Suddenly, a loud crash echoed through the warehouse, followed by the sound of Smith's voice. "Drew, I've got the target. But we need to get out now!"

Drew sprinted toward the sound, her weapon at the ready. She found Smith pinned down by enemy fire, the target struggling in her grasp.

Without hesitation, Drew laid down a withering field of fire, clearing a path for their escape. But as they made their way out of the warehouse, Drew realized that Smith's arm was bleeding profusely.

Their mission had gone sideways, and they needed to get out fast before things got any worse.

Drew scanned the perimeter. "Alright, team, let's move out. Drew, take point with Drew. Patel, cover our backs. I'll take the center with Smith."

She knew the team's tactics, and she trusted her instincts.

She led the way, her weapon at the ready. She moved swiftly and silently, her senses on high alert. She kept her eyes fixed on Smith's back.

Drew couldn't shake off the feeling that something was off. She had executed countless missions, but this one felt different. The target, a man with a gaunt face and sunken eyes, seemed...altered.

At first, she thought it was just the stress of captivity, but as they made their way back to the extraction point, she noticed the target's behavior. He was docile, almost catatonic, and his eyes looked glazed over.

Drew's gut told her something was wrong, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. She glanced at Smith, who seemed equally perplexed.

"What's going on with him?" Smith whispered, nodding toward the target.

Drew frowned. "I don't know, but I don't like it. He's not reacting like a typical HVT."

As they loaded the target into the helicopter, Drew's uneasiness grew. She noticed his pupils were dilated, and his skin had a faint sheen to it.

"Patel, did you notice anything unusual about the target's behavior?" Drew asked, her voice low.

Patel hesitated. "Now that you mention it, ma'am, he did seem sedated."

Drew's instincts screamed at her to investigate further, but they were already en route to the debriefing site. She made a mental note to look into the target's medical records to see if anything could explain his strange behavior.

Her uneasiness lingered, and she realized she felt as if she were being watched.

"Smith, I've got a bad feeling about this," Drew said, her voice low and urgent.

Smith glanced at her, concern etched on her face. "What is it, Drew?"

Before Drew could respond, a hail of bullets assaulted them, ripping through the air with deadly precision. The team dove for cover, returning fire as they scrambled to regroup.

As they fought their way to the extraction point, Drew's mind raced. What was causing this feeling? Did they miss something in the warehouse?

The bullets kept coming, forcing them to move with precision and speed. Drew's team was well-trained, but they were outnumbered, and the enemy was closing in.

Just as they reached the extraction point, a rocket-propelled grenade screamed toward them, forcing them to scatter. Drew grabbed Smith's arm, pulling her to safety just as the grenade detonated, sending shrapnel flying everywhere.

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As they caught their breath, Drew's gaze locked onto Smith's. "We need to get out of here."

Smith nodded, her eyes scanning their surroundings. "I've got the package. Let's move!"

That was when it happened.

A round of bullets had rained down on her, searing a deep pain as multiple rounds hit her, sending her crashing to the ground.

"Major's down! We need to extract now!" one of the team members yelled as they returned fire.

Smith rushed to Drew's side. "Drew, can you hear me? We need to get you out of here!"

Drew tried to respond, but her voice was barely a whisper. She felt her vision blurring, her body numb.

The team quickly regrouped, forming a protective perimeter around Drew as they called in an emergency airlift.

As they waited for the medevac to arrive, Smith held Drew's hand, her eyes locked onto hers. "Hang in there, Drew. You're going to be okay."

But Drew knew she wasn't okay. She felt her life slipping away, her thoughts fading

to black.

The last thing she remembered was the sound of the helicopter's rotors, and Izzy appearing and calling out to her, "Drew, don't leave me!"

Then, everything went dark.

Drew lay in the hospital bed, her body wracked with pain and her mind foggy from the medication. But as she drifted in and out of consciousness, she became aware of Izzy's constant presence by her side.

At first, Drew thought it was just Izzy's duty as her superior officer, but as the hours passed, she saw her genuine concern. Izzy's professionalism was unwavering, but Drew caught glimpses of something more—a deep care and worry for her well-being.

When the medical staff came to check on Drew, Izzy was always there, asking questions, advocating for her needs, and ensuring she received the best care possible.

But when the room was empty and Izzy thought Drew was asleep or sedated, she broke down in tears. Drew, despite her haze, saw the raw emotion, fear, and love in Izzy's eyes.

Drew's heart swelled, realizing that Izzy's tough exterior hid a deep vulnerability. She wanted to reach out, to comfort Izzy, but her body wouldn't respond.

As the tears streamed down Izzy's face, Drew felt a sense of peace wash over her. She knew, in that moment, that Izzy's feelings went far beyond mere professionalism.

And though Drew couldn't speak, she smiled inwardly, knowing that she was loved, truly loved, by the woman she loved in return.

Her condition took a critical turn as a massive internal injury ruptured, threatening to claim her life. Izzy sprang into action, calling for emergency surgery.

The operation was long and grueling, with Izzy working tirelessly to save Drew's life. Her hands moved with precision, her focus solely on repairing the damage.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, the surgery was over. Izzy was exhausted, but her eyes shone with relief as she gazed at Drew's still form.

Thinking Drew was unconscious, Izzy leaned in, her voice barely above a whisper. "Drew, my love, you're going to make it. You're going to be okay. I love you so much."

Drew, however, was not unconscious. She had been listening, and her heart swelled with emotion.

Tears streamed down Drew's face as she felt the depth of Izzy's love. She wanted to respond, to tell Izzy she loved her, too, but her voice was trapped, unable to escape.

Izzy, believing Drew was unaware, continued to whisper words of love and encouragement.

Drew's heart overflowed with joy, knowing that Izzy truly loved her. And as she lay there, she knew she would fight to recover, to be with Izzy, to tell her how much she loved her in return.

A few days later, Drew's eyes fluttered open, her mind groggy from the medication and sleep. She was met with the familiar sight of the hospital room, but what surprised her was who sat by her bed: General Jackson, her commanding general.

General Jackson's face was stern, but his eyes showed a hint of warmth. "Major

Mitchell, glad to see you're awake."

Drew's mind raced, trying to remember how General Jackson ended up here in her hospital room. She recalled the surgery, the internal bleeding, and Izzy's words of love.

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"Sir?" Drew's voice was weak, barely above a whisper.

General Jackson nodded. "I came to check on your progress, Major. You've been through a lot."

Drew's gaze drifted around the room, searching for Izzy. But she was nowhere to be found.

"Where's Izzy?" Drew asked.

General Jackson's expression turned serious. "Oakley is being debriefed, Major. She'll be back to see you soon."

Drew's eyes locked onto General Jackson's, searching for answers. What did he know about her relationship with Izzy? And why was he here in her hospital room?

But before Drew could ask any questions, General Jackson stood up. "Rest, Major. You have a long recovery ahead of you."

As General Jackson turned to leave, Drew called out, her voice weak but urgent. "Sir, wait!"

General Jackson turned back, his expression stern. "Yes, Major?"

Drew took a deep breath, her heart racing. "My transfer request, sir. I know it's been submitted."

General Jackson nodded, his eyes narrowing. "I'm aware of the request, Major. But I'm afraid it's been denied."

Drew's eyes widened, surprise and fear mixing in her chest. "Denied, sir? But why?"

General Jackson's expression softened slightly, but his voice remained firm. "Because, Major, I know about your relationship with the Lieutenant Colonel. And I won't be accepting your transfer request."

Drew's heart skipped a beat. How did he know? And what did he plan to do with this information?

"Sir, please?—"

"Major, I've known about your relationship for some time now. And I've decided to take no action as long as it doesn't compromise your duties or the mission."

Drew's mind reeled, trying to process this new information. What did General Jackson want from her?

"But, sir," Drew tried again.

Denied, Major. You're too valuable to this unit to let you go. And besides, I think Oakley would be lost without you."

Drew's eyes dropped, her heart racing with emotion. What did the general mean? And what did he plan to do with this knowledge?

However, she couldn't get any answer as the general instantly left the room, leaving Drew with the feeling that something was off. Why was he here? And what did he want?

As he left, Drew felt a mix of different emotions all at once. Relief, fear, and uncertainty were the topmost. But as she lay there, she began to process his words.

She realized that her secret was out, but instead of being punished, she was being given a chance to continue serving. Not only that, but she was allowed to maintain her relationship with Izzy.

A sense of calm washed over Drew as she understood that General Jackson's decision meant she didn't have to choose between her career and her love for Izzy. She could have both, as long as she kept her professional and personal life separate.

Drew's mind began to race with the implications. She would have to be more careful and discreet, but she was willing to do that to ensure her relationship with Izzy didn't compromise her professionalism.

A small smile crept onto her face as she felt a sense of hope. She could make this work. She could balance her love for Izzy with her duty as a soldier.

As she drifted off to sleep, Drew felt a sense of peace settle over her. She knew that as long as she kept her priorities straight, everything would be okay. She could have her love, her career, and her happiness.

When Izzy walked into the room, she had a warm smile. Drew knew she was ready to face whatever came next, as long as they faced it together.

"What did I miss?"

Chapter Nine

Izzy

Izzy's world had been turned upside down with Drew's injuries. She had done the surgeries herself saving Drew's life twice. But the stress of it had almost killed her. Drew's life had literally been in her hands, but she couldn't have trusted anyone else with that.

Now Drew lay bedridden, and everything else seemed trivial in comparison. The weight of her fear of losing the love of her life, her soulmate, was crushing her.

As she sat by Drew's bedside, she couldn't shake off the feeling of mortality that had been haunting her. She had seen her life flash before her eyes multiple times, memories of their time together racing through her mind like a movie on fast-forward.

The thought of a future without Drew was unbearable, and Izzy felt like she was drowning in her despair. As she sat vigilantly beside Drew's hospital bed, she witnessed her health teeter on the brink of collapse.

She saw Drew's fierce determination to survive, her refusal to give up, and ultimately, her triumphant victory. But during those long, sleepless nights, Izzy couldn't help but confront the darkest corners of her own fears. She wondered if she could continue serving in the unit without Drew by her side.

Would she find the strength to carry on, or would she abandon her duties and escape to a quiet village, seeking solace in a simpler life? The thought of a life without Drew's bright smile and her infectious laughter was a bleak one, leaving her

questioning whether anything would ever make sense again.

Izzy was aware of the subtle glances and whispered conversations that followed her wherever she went. Her colleagues' curiosity was evident, their eyes filled with a mix of concern and fascination as they struggled to understand the depth of her devotion to Drew.

But she remained unfazed, her focus solely on the woman lying in the hospital bed. Drew's fragile health and uncertain future consumed her every waking moment, leaving no room for gossip or speculation. Nothing else mattered, not the rumors, stares, or judgments. Drew was her life, her utmost priority.

Aside from Drew's health, Izzy was also tormented by the weight of guilt that lingered from their last encounters before the injury. She couldn't shake off the haunting memories of their final moments together—the harsh words exchanged, unresolved tension, and unspoken regrets.

Izzy's mind raced with the unbearable thought that those might be the last words Drew ever heard from her.

She replayed their conversations, rehashing every detail, wondering if she had been too harsh, too distant, or too unforgiving. The possibility that Drew might not have the chance to see the depth of her love and devotion, that their last interactions might be forever frozen in time, was a burden she couldn't bear.

She felt consumed by the fear that she might never have the chance to make amends, to show Drew the true extent of her feelings, and to erase the pain of their last encounters.

The crushing weight of guilt and regret wrecked Izzy, leaving her with a deep sense of emotional turmoil. The only solace she found was in the fervent hope that Drew

would recover and that she could find redemption by laying bare her heart.

Every time she sat beside Drew's hospital bed, Izzy poured out her soul, confessing her love with every breath, every whisper, and every tear. She needed her to know and truly understand the depth of her devotion, to erase the shadows of their past encounters.

With each declaration, Izzy sought to undo the hurt, to heal the wounds, and to rewrite their story. She longed for Drew to awaken, to meet her gaze, and to see the genuine love in her eyes.

In the stillness of the night, when the medical center's corridors were empty and the only sound was the soft beeping of machines, Izzy found solace in her whispered confessions. She'd sit beside Drew's bed, her voice barely audible, pouring out her heart and telling her everything she longed to say.

These secret declarations of love brought Izzy comfort, a sense of hope that Drew would one day awaken and know the truth. She yearned for the moment when she could gaze into Drew's eyes, her own shining with tears, and tell her face-to-face how much she loved her.

Izzy promised herself that she would cherish that moment, hold it close, and never let it slip away. She vowed to reveal her true feelings, speak the words she'd held back for so long, and assure Drew that her unwavering, unshakable love would never be traded for anything in the world.

General Jackson had summoned her to handle a high-stakes meeting. It was a complex supply operation, and the crew was gathered together.

With a deep breath, she outlined the plan, her voice clear and authoritative as she marshaled the crew's attention.

As the meeting progressed, she saw Lieutenant Lewis standing outside the operation center, pacing back and forth. She knew something was up; he wasn't the kind to leave the medical center without reason.

She called out to him, "Lewis? Come over here."

As he approached, she couldn't help but notice the warm smile spreading across his face, a sight that filled her with relief.

Lately, the days had blended into a blur of worry and fear as she navigated the darkest moments of her life alongside Drew's health struggles. As he came closer, Izzy's curiosity was piqued, and she wondered what news could be behind his smile.

"Good afternoon, Lieutenant Colonel."

"Is there something I should know about?" Her eyes scanned his.

"Yes, ma'am. Major Mitchell is awake. I just thought I should tell you myself."

Izzy's eyes widened in disbelief; Drew had not given up on her just yet.

"Hell yeah!" she cheered, then tried to calm herself down.

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The room erupted in cheers, applause, and tearful hugs as the soldiers celebrated Drew's miraculous recovery. It was no wonder they were overjoyed; Major Mitchell was more than just a major; she was a beloved leader and a shining example of compassion, empathy, and kindness.

Her unique sense of humor, unmatched in its wit and charm, had a way of disarming even the tensest situations, leaving a trail of laughter and smiles.

Who could forget her infamous impressions, her uncanny ability to find humor in the darkest of times, or her quick-witted one-liners that always seemed to catch you off guard? She was easily loved.

Izzy tried to tone down the jubilation, but the soldiers were too far gone, their euphoria infectious and uncontrollable. With a warm smile, she conceded to their enthusiasm, asking Smith to assume command temporarily while she stepped outside. "I'll be right back."

As she exited the room, the cheers and whistles only grew louder, a testament to the depth of affection and respect the soldiers held for their beloved Major Mitchell. She took a deep breath, savoring the joy and gratitude that filled her chest, before breaking into a run.

As she raced to the medical center, her thoughts swirled with emotions. She wasn't worried about finding the right words to say to Drew; rather, she was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of feelings and sentiments she wanted to express.

The weight of their shared experiences, the depth of her love, and the relief of Drew's

recovery all threatened to spill out in a torrent of words. She wanted to tell Drew how much she meant to her. But as she approached the medical center, she got scared and wondered if she'd ever find the right words to say the right things.

At the veranda, she met General Jackson and saluted him. Surprisingly, he didn't ask any questions; he just gave her a knowing smile and passed.

She was grinning from ear to ear when she entered Drew's ward, and Drew sat up and gave her a smile, her beautiful green eyes sparkling in mischief.

Izzy's heart skipped. Drew's smile was ever so beautiful. "What did I miss?"

"Good afternoon, ma'am." It sounded polite but very formal.

"How do you feel?" Izzy asked

"Very well, ma'am. Thank you, but I would like to talk to the doctor."

Izzy stared at Drew. What was going on? Why was Drew acting official and asking her about the doctor? She was the doctor. "Are you okay? Come on, it's me, Drew."

"You are a Lieutenant Colonel," she replied.

Isabel's heart raced wildly. Could Drew possibly have amnesia? But there was no trauma to her head. She walked closer to her and held her head, examining it closely.

She needed to run several tests and examinations. Perhaps Drew had possibly hit her head. As she started to walk away, she felt a pair of hands hold her back. She turned to Drew. Fear, sadness, and desperation clouded her eyes.

"Izzy, you have missed a lot. All through the nights I spent here, I heard a certain

beautiful woman comforting me. She said beautiful things, soothing words, and genuine confessions. I know I was sad and in pain, but those words were the best melody I've ever heard. That's what you missed.”

As Drew's words sank deep into Izzy's mind, her eyes welled up with a mix of emotions—tears of relief and joy, tinged with a hint of sorrow.

The overwhelming sense of gratitude that her beloved was alive and thriving was tempered by a pang of sadness, a deep ache in her heart that Drew had to endure such a traumatic ordeal.

But as she gazed into Drew's eyes, shining bright with love and strength, Izzy's sorrow gave way to a sense of awe and admiration for the strength and courage of the woman she loved.

“Don't you ever play with me like that again. I thought you had amnesia and couldn't remember me!”

“I'm sorry. I could never forget you, even if I tried. And believe me, I have tried; it's agonizing.” She laughed.

Izzy loved the sound of her laughter; it was therapeutic. It was as if the warmth of her laughter wrapped itself around her heart, chasing away the shadows of worry and fear that had lingered for so long. At that moment, Izzy knew that Drew was truly back.

No one else could pull off a joke like that, especially not when they were still recovering from a life-threatening ordeal. But Drew was no ordinary person; she was a force of nature, a whirlwind of love, laughter, and light that illuminated the world around her. And Izzy felt grateful to be the recipient of that love, to bask in the warmth of Drew's presence, and to revel in the sound of her laughter.

“Oh, my Sparkle. I have so many things to say, but I don't know where to start.”

“Although I have a very busy schedule, you can go right ahead, ma'am.”

“Oh, please don't ma'am me. It's a bit weird now.”

“Come here,” Drew said, tapping the side of her bed. “Sit here and tell me everything.”

She sat obediently. "I want to start by offering my sincerest apologies. I'm deeply regretful for the hurtful and thoughtless words I spoke to you when Sergeant Thompson passed away. It was thoughtless and I'm sorry. You didn't do anything wrong.”

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“My words were not only insensitive but also selfish as if your own sorrow didn't matter. I was so consumed by my own emotions that I neglected to consider the depth of your hurt. I realize now that my actions were inconsiderate and self-centered, and for that, I am truly sorry. I can only imagine how my words must have felt like a betrayal, and I want you to know that I understand the weight of my mistakes.”

“Come on, Izzy. You know you don't have to?—”

“No, let me finish, please.” She swallowed hard.

“I'm deeply ashamed to admit that my behavior has been completely unacceptable, both professionally and personally. I'm truly sorry for my actions, and I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me.”

“The truth is, I've been living in a state of denial, afraid to confront the uncomfortable realities about myself and my emotions. I've been a coward, dodging the tough issues and the challenges they pose to my work rather than facing them head-on. I've been running from my fears and insecurities instead of acknowledging and addressing them.”

Izzy paused, taking a deep breath as if the weight of her words had left her momentarily breathless.

“I did everything wrong, and I hurt you while struggling with my choices. I sincerely apologize.”

Then came the hardest part of everything.

She cleared her throat. "Major Drew Mitchell, from the instant your sharp wit and sarcasm pierced through my complacency, I knew you were someone special. Through our countless debates, passionate arguments, and emotional turmoil, my love for you has only grown stronger. But it wasn't until I saw you lying there, fragile and vulnerable, that I realized the true depth of my feelings.

"My heart shattered into a million pieces, and I knew I couldn't imagine a future without you by my side. You are the radiant light that illuminates my world, my guiding star, my sparkle. You make me feel seen, heard, and understood in ways I never thought possible. I love you, Drew, with every fiber of my being, and I promise to cherish and support you."

As Izzy's heartfelt words poured out, she witnessed a breathtaking transformation on Drew's face. It was as if the warmth of her declaration had awakened a new dawn.

Drew's features radiated a soft, golden light, like the first gentle rays of sunrise creeping over the horizon. It was delightful. Izzy's heart swelled with emotion as she beheld the woman she loved, reborn in the warmth of their love.

"I can't believe I waited so long to say this. If I had known you'd bloom so beautifully, I would have confessed my feelings much sooner.

"I guess I was too afraid of everything, of myself and the outcome of this, of what will become of the both of us, our passion and our job. But guess what? It doesn't matter at all."

She watched as a tear slipped from Drew's left eye, and she hurriedly brushed it away. Choked with emotions, Drew tried to say something but couldn't. This was a new phase for both of them, and it was better to take it slow and easy.

"One more thing, you don't have to say you love me back," Izzy added.

“Shhhhhhhhhh!” Drew’s fingers grazed her lips, sending electric shocks down her body. She reached out to caress her face; her touch was soft and delicate, evidence of her lingering weakness. Yet, despite her frailty, her voice was laced with a passion that made Izzy's heart melt. “Izzy, my one true love,” she whispered, her words dripping with emotion, her eyes burning with a love that seemed to grow stronger with each passing moment.

"You never need to persuade me to speak my truth because my love for you is undeniable. I've always adored you, every aspect of you. The way your brows furrow in concern when discussing something serious; your warm, kind brown eyes that see right through to my soul; your beautiful body that is always in my dreams. But it's not just your physical beauty that captivates me; it's the passion, commitment, and unrelenting dedication you bring to your work and everything you do. You're a true force of nature, a whirlwind of goodness that sweeps me off my feet. Damn, girl, you're a truckload of sweetness, and I feel so lucky to call you mine."

Izzy blushed at her words.

“My good girl.”

Izzy felt a bolt of desire in her very core when Drew called her a good girl. She felt delicious shivers run through her.

Drew continued, “And about everything that happened, I know I did a lot of things that could be considered wild. I was reckless, but I want you to know that it wasn't for the fun of it. I took that risk for the soldiers, for the success of our mission, for the love of my job, and lastly, for you, Izzy.”

Her heart fluttered gently as Drew's words warmed her soul. “I love my job, and I’ve always wanted the success of our missions. I would not do anything to hurt you or jeopardize our work and our lives. I'm also genuinely sorry about Sergeant

Thompson. His death gnawed my soul for days. I wish I could take back my actions, but it's done, and he's gone.”

Izzy felt her heart punctured again. They had not healed completely from the death of Sergeant Thompson. It was still a sensitive topic, considering the issues surrounding his death and how it hurt both of them. But she knew it wasn't Drew's fault.

They hugged each other for a few minutes.

“One more thing,” Drew said.

“What's that?” She raised her eyebrows.

“General Jackson knows.”

“He knows about what exactly?”

“He knows about us, our relationship, and our involvement with each other. I don't know how, but I guess the rumors got to him, and he investigated himself.”

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Izzy gasped. His smug smile must have been about that. “What are we going to do, and why are you so calm about it?”

“Well, he didn't oppose it. He seemed to encourage us, but indirectly. Like he gave me the impression he might turn a blind eye.” Drew was smiling.

Izzy couldn't believe her ears. General Jackson knew about a relationship in a unit he was responsible for, and he didn't oppose it. He didn't even sanction or warn them severely. It seemed the odds were truly in their favor.

Drew cleared her throat. “I sorta have a confession, and I'm just going to say it. I had considered a transfer. In fact, I had already turned in my application, but it wasn't accepted.”

“I was asked to retain my stay here. I'm sorry, and I really shouldn't have told you, but I want us to start on a clean state.” She coughed while Izzy grabbed a bottle from the small chair beside her.

She patted Drew's back as she drank slowly from the bottle. She then waited for her to be calm before replying.

“I understand; I'm not upset. You must have been seriously frustrated to take such a decision at that time. It's fine, and I love this new slate—clean, fresh, genuine, devoid of lies, pretense, and cowardice.”

“I need you, Drew. In this life and the next, I'll always need you. You are the only peace that makes sense in this chaos of ours; you are my sparkle. You are my major,

my teammate, my best friend, and the love of my life. I need you now, always, and forever. I'll cherish you forever."

"Izzy, my love for you knows no bounds. The thought of doing life without you by my side is unbearable. In my darkest moments, wracked with pain, your words were the balm that soothed my body and soul. I'm grateful for your leadership and guidance as my Lieutenant Colonel, but more than that, I cherish our unbreakable bond as best friends. Above all, I thank you for being my constant guardian, always looking out for me at all times. You are irreplaceable, and I would never trade our love and connection for anything in the world."

As the two lovers held each other, Izzy felt how real their connection, promises, and relationship was.

"Don't you think a sick lady should have some food, doctor?" Drew said teasingly.

"Oh yeah. I totally forgot. I was too wrapped up."

"In what exactly?"

"In this," Izzy said and kissed her passionately.

"I would be wrapped up, too, if I were you," Drew whispered against her lips before plunging her tongue into her mouth.

They kissed each other lovingly, sharing unspoken affection and emotions. The whole world was slowly evaporating around them as the gentle touch of their lips spoke volumes. Time stood still, and the universe melted into the background, leaving only the warmth of their embrace.

And Izzy knew at that moment that even if the whole world was burning, nothing

would matter more than being with Drew, right here and now.

Chapter Ten

Drew

Drew's recovery was a long and arduous journey, filled with twists and turns that tested her physical and emotional limits. After the initial surgery, she faced two additional complications that required further surgical interventions.

Throughout the ordeal, Izzy remained by Drew's side, a constant presence that provided comfort, strength, and reassurance. Izzy's unwavering dedication and love helped Drew navigate the darkest moments of her recovery.

As Drew lay in the hospital bed, she couldn't help but think about the fragility of life. One moment, she was on top of the world, leading her team with confidence and precision. The next, she was fighting for her life, her body broken and battered.

Izzy's gentle touch, soft whispers, and reassuring smiles became Drew's lifeline. She drew strength from Izzy's unwavering optimism, her unshakeable belief that Drew would overcome this.

When the first complication arose, Drew felt a wave of despair wash over her. She thought she was making progress, but now she was faced with another surgery, another uncertainty.

Izzy sensed Drew's distress and took her hand, her eyes locking onto Drew's. "We'll get through this, together," she said, her voice firm and resolute. "You're not alone, Drew."

Drew felt a lump form in her throat as she looked at Izzy. She knew she wasn't alone,

not with Izzy by her side. Together, they faced the second surgery and the third, each one evidence of the unbreakable feelings they had for each other.

As Drew slowly began to heal, she realized that her love for Izzy had grown exponentially. She saw the sacrifices Izzy had made for her: the sleepless nights, the endless worrying, the unwavering support.

Drew knew she owed her life to Izzy, not just for saving her after the accident that had happened during her last mission, but for being her rock, her shelter, her safe haven. And she knew she would spend the rest of her life making it up to her, loving her, cherishing her.

In no time, it became a ritual that Drew had grown accustomed to—Izzy's daily visits, her bright smile illuminating the drab hospital room, and her gentle touch igniting a warmth that spread throughout Drew's body. Even as Drew lay in bed, recovering from the multiple surgeries, Izzy's presence remained a constant, a beacon of hope and love.

At first, Izzy's visits had been filled with concern and worry, her eyes scanning Drew's face, searching for any sign of pain or discomfort. But as the days turned into weeks and Drew's strength began to return, their conversations grew more relaxed, more intimate.

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Izzy would sit beside Drew's bed, holding her hand and talking about everything and nothing—their dreams, fears, and aspirations. Drew felt like she was getting to know Izzy on a deeper level, and she reveled in their connection.

As Drew's recovery neared its end, Izzy's behavior began to change. She would arrive at the hospital, her usual smile faltering, her eyes clouded with a mixture of emotions. She would sit beside Drew, her hand grasping hers tightly, but her gaze would wander as she was lost in thought.

At times, Izzy would pause mid-conversation, her words hanging in the air as if she was struggling to find the right words. Drew sensed a turmoil brewing inside Izzy, and she prayed that this storm would not dare to upend the intimacy they had built with each other over the last few weeks.

One day, as Izzy sat beside Drew's bed, her eyes welled up with tears. Drew's heart skipped a beat as she reached out, her hand brushing against Izzy's cheek.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Drew whispered.

Izzy's gaze locked onto Drew's, her eyes searching for something—reassurance, comfort, love. "I don't know what's going to happen next, Drew." Her voice cracked. "I don't know why I'm still so scared for you, even though you're safe now."

Drew's mind raced, trying to understand the underlying currents of Izzy's words. What did she mean? Safe from what? But before Drew could ask any questions, Izzy leaned in, her lips brushing against Drew's, a soft, gentle kiss that spoke volumes.

That night, many questions went unanswered, but most importantly, for the first time in weeks, Drew wondered where she actually stood with Izzy.

All that was forgotten the next day, which happened to be the final day of Drew's recovery and the beginning of her reintegration into the unit, and she was eager to get back to her normal routine. As she walked into the barracks, she was greeted by an eerie silence. The usual bustle of activity was absent, replaced by an unsettling stillness.

Drew's curiosity was piqued, and she quickened her pace, her heart beating with anticipation. As she turned a corner, she was met with a sight that took her breath away.

A huge, bold banner was right in her face, and just as she tried to clear it away, she was shocked to see that the entire special operations unit was gathered in the mess hall, their faces beaming with smiles.

"Surprise!" they all chorused.

Balloons and streamers adorned the room, and another giant banner reading "Welcome Back, Major!" hung from the ceiling.

She couldn't believe what had prompted her team to do this, and she truly believed it was her team, til a further look revealed that it was like the entire military personnel on the base had come to welcome her.

But what caught Drew's attention was Izzy, standing at the center of it all, her eyes shining with love and adoration. Drew's heart skipped a beat as she realized that Izzy had planned this entire surprise party for her.

As Drew made her way through the crowd, her unit members congratulated her on

her recovery, their words and hugs filling her with warmth. But Drew's gaze kept drifting back to Izzy, who was watching her with an intensity that made Drew's soul flutter.

When they finally reached each other, Izzy took Drew's hand, her touch sending shivers down Drew's spine. "I wanted to make this moment special for you," Izzy whispered.

Drew's feelings for Izzy surged as she gazed into her eyes. She saw the love, care, and devotion that Izzy had poured into this surprise party. Drew knew at that moment that she was deeply, irrevocably in love with Izzy.

As they shared a tender look and the room erupted in cheers and applause, Drew knew that she would never let go of this feeling, this love that had blossomed in the most unexpected way. Izzy had shown her that love could conquer, even the darkest of times, and Drew was forever grateful.

As the night wore on, Drew and Izzy found themselves lost in conversation, their words flowing effortlessly as they shared their deepest feelings. The surprise party was just a distant memory now, replaced by the quiet intimacy of the moment.

As they sat together on the couch, hands entwined, their talk turned to the future. Deployment would be over soon, and the prospect of returning to their normal lives was both exciting and daunting.

"I don't know what I'll do without you by my side," Drew said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Izzy's gaze locked onto hers, her eyes burning with intensity. "You'll never have to find out," she replied, her voice firm. "We'll face whatever comes next together."

But as they delved deeper into the conversation, differences in opinion began to emerge. Drew wanted to take things slow and figure out their relationship in a civilian setting. Izzy, on the other hand, was eager to leave the unit and start a new life together, free from the constraints of military protocol.

Their discussion turned into a light argument, with both women passionately expressing their views. But as the night wore on, they began to see each other's perspectives, their love and understanding bridging the gaps.

In the end, they came to a mutual decision. They would leave the unit together, forging a new path, one step at a time. No more secrets, no more hiding. Just them, together, facing whatever the future held.

As they embraced, their hearts beating as one, Drew knew that she had found her soulmate in Izzy. And Izzy knew that she had found her forever love in Drew.

Their love had conquered all, even the uncertainty of their future. And as they drifted off to sleep, wrapped in each other's arms, they knew that nothing could ever tear them apart again.

As the days went by, Drew and Izzy continued to spend every spare moment together, their bond growing stronger with each passing hour. Despite the demands of their deployment, they found ways to steal away and be together, whether it was a quiet walk around the base, a shared meal, or a simple moment of connection.

Their unit's activities became a blur as they went through the motions, their minds always drifting back to each other. They would exchange secret glances during briefings, their eyes locking in a way that spoke volumes.

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During downtime, they would sit together, hands touching, and talk about their dreams, fears, and aspirations. Drew had never felt this level of connection with anyone before, and she knew that Izzy felt the same.

Their love became a beacon of hope in the midst of chaos, a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there was always something to hold onto.

One day, while on patrol, Drew found herself in a precarious situation, pinned down by enemy fire. Izzy, who was leading the team, sprang into action, her training and instincts taking over. She fought her way to Drew's side, shielding her from harm, and together, they made their way to safety.

At that moment, Drew knew that she owed her life to Izzy, and she felt a depth of love and gratitude that she had never experienced before.

As they returned to base, battered but alive, Drew turned to Izzy and whispered, "I love you." Izzy gave her a gentle kiss on the forehead.

The day of leave had finally arrived, and the unit was buzzing with excitement and nerves. Drew and Izzy stood together, hands clasped, as they waited for their assignments.

As the commander read out the deployment orders, Drew's heart raced with anticipation. She had no idea where she would be sent or if she would be separated from Izzy.

But as the commander called out their names, Drew's heart soared. "Major Drew

Mitchell and Lieutenant Colonel Isabel Oakley, you will be deploying together to Forward Operating Base Delta."

Drew and Izzy exchanged a glance, their eyes shining with joy. They had done it. They would be together.

The room erupted in cheers and applause as the other unit members congratulated them. Drew and Izzy hugged each other tightly, tears of happiness streaming down their faces.

They had faced so much uncertainty, but now they knew they would face it together. They would support each other, protect each other, and love each other, no matter what lay ahead.

As they made their way out of the briefing room, Drew turned to Izzy and whispered, "We did it. We're in this together."

Izzy smiled, her eyes sparkling. "Forever and always," she replied.

And with that, they sealed their fate, ready to face whatever challenges came their way, side by side.

Later that night, as they lay in bed, Izzy suddenly felt a sense of uneasiness wash over her. She couldn't shake the feeling that something was off, that military life was no longer for her.

"Drew, can we talk?" Izzy asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Drew stirred beside her. "What's wrong, love?"

"It's just...I don't know if I can do this anymore," Izzy said, her voice laced with

uncertainty.

"Do what?" Drew asked, her brow furrowed in concern.

"This military life. The deployments, the constant uncertainty. I just feel like we're losing ourselves in it."

Drew nodded thoughtfully. "I know what you mean. I've been feeling it, too."

As they talked, their conversation flowed effortlessly.

"We're always putting our country first, our unit first, but what about us?" Izzy asked, her eyes searching for answers.

Drew's gaze locked onto hers. "We need to take care of ourselves and our relationship. We can't keep putting it on the back burner."

Izzy nodded vigorously. "Exactly! We need to figure out what we want, what we need. Together."

As the night wore on, their conversation deepened and they came to a realization.

"We need to take a leave of absence," Drew said, her voice firm.

Izzy's eyes lit up. "Yes! We need to step back, recharge, and figure things out."

"Let's do it," Izzy whispered, her voice filled with determination.

Drew smiled, her eyes shining with love. "Together, always."

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With their minds made up, the next day dawned bright and clear, a new beginning unfolding before them. Drew and Izzy stood outside the Forward Operating Base, their bags packed, their hearts full.

As they gazed out at the vast expanse of unknown terrain, they knew they were leaving behind more than just a place; they were leaving behind a life.

But they were not alone. They had each other, and that was all that mattered.

Hand in hand, they walked toward the gate, ready to face whatever challenges the future held. The uncertainty was daunting, but they were no longer afraid.

They had found their strength in each other, their love a beacon guiding them through the darkness.

As they passed through the gate, Drew turned to Izzy, her eyes shining with tears. "We did it," she whispered.

Izzy smiled, her eyes radiant with joy. "We sure did."

Together, they took their first steps into the unknown, their hands entwined, their hearts beating as one.

The future stretched out before them, a blank canvas waiting to be filled with the vibrant colors of their love.

And as they walked, the wind whispering secrets in their ears, they knew that no

matter what lay ahead, they would face it together, hand in hand, heart to heart.

Their love had conquered all, and now, they were ready to conquer the world.

Epilogue

Drew and Izzy's wedding was a beautiful celebration of their love as they were surrounded by friends, family, and a few unexpected guests. The ceremony took place on a picturesque beach, with the ocean waves gently lapping at the shore.

As they exchanged their vows, a familiar figure emerged from the crowd: their former commanding general who had tried to persuade them to re-enlist. But today, he came in peace, a warm smile on his face.

The wedding ceremony was officiated by their dear friend and fellow veteran, Captain Rachel Jenkins, who had been a source of support and guidance throughout their relationship. Captain Jenkins, a seasoned military chaplain, brought a sense of warmth and authenticity to the ceremony, weaving together stories of Drew and Izzy's journey, their love, and their commitment to each other.

As the sun shone down on the beach, Captain Jenkins began the ceremony, her voice clear and strong. "Today, we gather to celebrate the love and union of Drew and Izzy. Their journey has not been an easy one, but their love has only grown stronger through every challenge."

Drew and Izzy exchanged vows, promising to love and cherish each other through all of life's joys and struggles. They exchanged rings, symbolizing their commitment to one another.

Captain Jenkins continued, "Drew and Izzy's, your love is a beacon of hope and inspiration to us all. May your bond continue to grow stronger with each passing day,

and may you always find joy, laughter, and adventure together."

As Captain Jenkins pronounced them wife and wife, Drew and Izzy shared a tender kiss, sealing their love forever. The crowd erupted in cheers and applause, and their friends and family rushed to congratulate them.

"I've seen many soldiers come and go," she said, her voice filled with emotion, "but I've never seen two people love each other like you two do. You're an inspiration to us all."

Their friends from the unit took turns delivering heartfelt speeches, sharing stories of Drew and Izzy's bravery, loyalty, and devotion to each other.

"Izzy and Drew are more than just partners," said one friend. "They're each other's rock, each other's safe haven. They're the embodiment of what we all strive for: true love."

The reception that followed was a lively celebration of their love, with music, dancing, and heartfelt speeches from their closest friends and family. Drew and Izzy danced their first dance as wives, surrounded by the people they loved, feeling grateful and blessed for this new chapter in their lives.

As the reception got underway, the general approached Drew and Izzy, a mischievous glint in his eye. "You know, I still think you two would make great generals," he said, chuckling.

Drew and Izzy laughed, knowing they'd made the right decision to leave the military. "We're exactly where we're meant to be," Drew said, her arm around Izzy.

The night was filled with laughter, tears, and music as Drew and Izzy danced under the stars, surrounded by the people they loved. It was a wedding that would be

remembered for years to come, a celebration of true love and commitment.

As the night wore on, Drew and Izzy's wedding reception only grew more joyful. Friends and family mingled, sharing stories and well wishes for the happy couple.

As they cut their wedding cake, Drew and Izzy exchanged a loving glance. Then, Izzy's eyes sparkled.

"Drew, can I talk to you for a minute?" Izzy asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Drew's curiosity was piqued. "What's up, babe?"

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Izzy took Drew's hand, leading her to the edge of the dance floor. "I have a little secret to share," she said, her voice trembling with excitement.

Drew's eyes searched Izzy's face. "What is it?"

Izzy's smile grew wider. "I'm pregnant," she whispered.

Drew's eyes widened in shock, then filled with tears of joy. "Oh, Iz! We're having a baby!"

As they hugged, the room around them melted away. They were lost in their own little world, filled with hope and excitement for their future.

Their friends and family looked at them when they returned, and as the ceremony continued, a few even came to ask what happened.

After fending off questions, they decided to announce Izzy's pregnancy. The room erupted in cheers and applause. The general, who had been watching with a warm smile, shook his head in amazement.

"I guess I won't be getting you two back in the military anytime soon," he said, chuckling.

Drew and Izzy laughed, basking in the love and support of those around them. They knew that their journey together was only just beginning, and they couldn't wait to see what the future held.

It was a sunny morning, and Izzy was bustling around the kitchen, getting ready for another busy day at Phoenix Ridge hospital. Drew, meanwhile, sprang into action, determined to make breakfast for her love before she left.

"Hey, babe, I've got this," Drew said, expertly cracking eggs into a bowl.

Izzy smiled, appreciative of the gesture. "You don't have to, Drew. I can grab something on the way."

But Drew was insistent. "Nonsense, I want to make sure you're fueled for the day. Besides, I need the practice for when our little one arrives."

Izzy chuckled, her eyes shining with love. "You're going to be an amazing mom."

Drew's face lit up with a warm smile. "Thanks to you. I'm learning from the best."

As Drew slid a fluffy omelet onto Izzy's plate, they shared a tender moment, their hands touching.

"Thank you, love," Izzy said, her voice filled with gratitude.

"Anytime, babe. Now go save lives. I'll see you tonight."

With a quick kiss and a squeeze of hands, Izzy headed out the door, feeling loved and supported. Drew watched her go, her heart full, before turning to get ready for her own day of teaching flight students.

"Today's going to be a great day," Drew said to herself, smiling.

Immediately, Drew stood at the kitchen window, gazing out at the serene ocean view. Their cozy cottage, nestled in the heart of Phoenix Ridge, was a haven of peace and

tranquility. The gentle lapping of the waves against the shore, the cries of seagulls overhead, and the warm sunlight dancing across the water all blended to create a sense of perfect contentment.

As she sipped her morning coffee, Drew's thoughts turned to Izzy and their life together. She wondered if she had ever been this happy before. The love they shared, the laughter, the adventures—it all felt like a dream come true.

Their little cottage, with its whitewashed walls and driftwood decor, was the perfect reflection of their love. It was a place where they could escape the world and just be together.

Drew's heart swelled with gratitude as she thought about their baby daughter, Hope, who would be in their arms soon, and the new life they had built for themselves in Phoenix Ridge.

"Have I ever been this happy?" Drew mused, a soft smile playing on her lips. "I don't think so. This is the life I never knew I needed."

As she turned back to the kitchen, Drew's eyes landed on a photo of her and Izzy, taken on a sunset walk along the beach. They were standing hand in hand, beaming with joy.

"That's the answer," Drew whispered, her heart full. "I've never been happier than I am right now in this life with the love of my life."

As she gazed out at the serene ocean view, her mind began to wander back to the journey that had brought them to this peaceful life. She remembered the countless shared nights spent talking.

Flashback to after they had rejected their deployment. She had opted for a leave of

absence instead, especially after they had faced the harsh realities of war together, with her almost losing her life. It was then that they had realized that they wanted more from life. A life free from the constraints of military protocol where they could build a future together.

Izzy, with her sharp mind and compassionate heart, had always dreamed of pursuing a career in medicine, free from the military's rigid structure. Drew, with her fearless spirit and quick wit, had longed to share her passion for flying with others as a civilian flight instructor.

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Together, they had made the bold decision to leave the military and chase their independent careers. It wasn't an easy choice, but they knew it was the right one.

As they navigated this new chapter, they grew closer, supporting each other through every triumph and setback. Drew remembered the late-night conversations, laughter, and tears.

But most of all, she remembered the fateful evening when Izzy took her hand, her eyes shining with love and adoration and said, "Drew, from the moment I met you, I knew you were the one. Will you marry me?"

Drew's heart skipped a beat as she recalled the moment. She had said yes without hesitation, knowing that their love was the foundation on which they would build their life together.

Now, as she stood in their cozy cottage, Drew smiled, her heart full of gratitude. Their journey had not been easy, but it had led them to this moment. A moment of perfect happiness, surrounded by love, peace, and the promise of a bright future.

The sound of a baby crying pierced the air, shattering Drew's reverie. She quickly snapped back to reality, her heart racing with a mix of love and concern. She rushed to the nursery where she found their three-month-old baby daughter, Hope, wailing in her crib.

Drew's maternal instincts kicked in, and she swiftly scooped up Hope, cradling her in her arms. "Hey, little one, what's wrong?" she cooed, trying to soothe her.

As she began to feed Hope, Drew's mind shifted to Izzy, who had hurried out to work, as there had been a huge accident in town. She wanted to make something special for her wife, something that would make her smile.

"Let's make mommy's favorite dinner, shall we, Hope?" Drew whispered, a plan forming in her mind. "We'll make her famous chicken parmesan with a side of garlic bread and a green salad."

Hope, now content and full, gazed up at Drew with big, round eyes as if approving of the plan.

With renewed energy, Drew set to work in the kitchen, the aroma of sizzling chicken and freshly baked bread filling the air. She hummed a happy tune, her heart full of love for her little family.

As she worked, Drew couldn't help but think about how much her life had changed since meeting Izzy. She had never imagined she'd find love, build a life, and start a family. But here she was, living her dream.

As Drew expertly breaded the chicken cutlets, she heard a faint sound coming from the living room. She froze, her ears perked up, wondering who it could be. She tiptoed toward the noise, a sly grin spreading across her face.

As she turned the corner, she was met with a surprise. Izzy stood in the doorway, a mischievous glint in her eye, holding a bouquet of flowers.

"Hey, babe!" Izzy exclaimed, feigning innocence. "I took a leave from work today. I wanted to spend the day with my favorite girls."

Drew's eyes widened, her hands flying to her mouth. "Oh, Iz, you sneaky thing! I had no idea!"

Izzy chuckled, her eyes sparkling with amusement. "I wanted to surprise you. I knew you'd be busy with Hope, and I couldn't resist spending the day with you both."

Drew's heart swelled with love and appreciation. She knew Izzy had been working hard lately, and this gesture meant the world to her.

As they hugged, Hope, sensing the excitement, cooed and giggled in her highchair, happy to be surrounded by her moms.

The three of them spent the rest of the day together, enjoying a delicious meal, playing with Hope, and basking in each other's love. It was a day Drew would treasure forever, a reminder of the joy and happiness that filled their little family.

As the months went by, Izzy and Drew's mornings became a cherished ritual, a time to connect and appreciate the beauty of their life together. They'd wake up early before Hope stirred and steal away to their cozy kitchen.

The aroma of freshly brewed coffee filled the air as they sat at the table, hands clasped and hearts full. They'd share a warm smile, and Izzy would often reach out to gently brush a strand of hair behind Drew's ear.

Their conversations flowed effortlessly, like a gentle stream meandering through the countryside. They reflected on how much their lives had changed since meeting in the military and how their love had grown stronger with each passing day.

Drew would often gaze out the window, watching the sun rise over the ocean, and feel grateful for this life they'd built together. Izzy would squeeze her hand, knowing exactly what she was thinking.

As they sipped their coffee, they reminisced about their adventures, from their deployment days to their travels around the world. They laughed about Hope's antics and their subsequent children's escapades and marveled at how fast they were

growing up.

Their mornings were a time for connection, intimacy, and gratitude. As the months turned into years, their love continued to flourish. They'd grow old together, but their mornings would remain a constant, a testament to the power of their love.

One day, as they sat on their porch, holding hands and watching the sunset, Izzy turned to Drew and said, "You know, I never thought I'd find happiness like this."

Drew smiled, her eyes shining with tears. "Me neither, my love. Me neither."

Suddenly, Izzy's mood changed, and she turned away, making Drew look at her worriedly.

"Something wrong, my love?" Drew asked.

Izzy stayed quiet for a second, then suddenly turned around with a huge smile.

"I'm pregnant. Hope is getting a baby brother or sister."

Drew took her in her arms delighted that their treatment had worked. "Oh, baby. I can't wait for the rest of our lives as a family."