

barracks to get his things.

They returned a few minutes later with two suitcases. The driver got out and put the suitcases in the trunk. Patty got into the front passenger seat and Tim got into the back. They were heading down the village street at a brisk pace when Patty turned around to talk to Tim. He got the shock of his life.

Sitting beside Tim was Miss Im! She was nestled into Tim and holding his hand. Patty must have looked surprised, and Tim just smiled and shrugged his shoulders. “I saved the best for last,” Tim told Patty.

“I’m jealous. Jealous and glad at the same time,” Patty said.

Their destination arrived all too soon. Miss Im and Patty escorted Tim to the terminal. Miss Im kissed Tim and cried. Patty felt a lump in his throat. He tried to say goodbye, but Tim stopped him. “Friends don’t say goodbye,” Tim told Patty.

“Then what the fuck do they say?” Patty asked.

“ ‘I’ll see you later,’ ” he said.

“Yeah, ‘see you later,’ ” said Patty.

Tim turned and walked toward the boarding area. Patty watched him as his figure got smaller. Tim suddenly turned around and yelled to him, but Patty couldn’t make out what he said. He turned to Miss Im and asked her if she’d heard what he’d said. She nodded her head Yes.

“Well, what did he say?”

“He say don’t fuck everything up for him.”

“What the hell does that mean?” he said.

“That mean he come back,” she said simply.

— Chapter 24 —

Fred came back from the village early. He was hungry for something other than fermented cabbage. If he was lucky, they would serve mystery meat on the hill and there would be lots of leftovers. He crawled under the fence and made his way to the ready room. He had arrived right on time. Mystery meat it was, and everyone was glad to give him their portions.

There were more people on the hill than usual tonight. The new battery commander and the fat first sergeant were up there. Fred didn’t like either. The first sergeant smelled bad to Fred. He wanted to bite him, but the fat bastard always kept his distance. The new BC was mean-looking, and Fred figured that he kicked.

It was best to know what he was like, so Fred went over to where he was eating, and sat down and just looked at him. He was ignored. Fred didn’t like to be ignored. In fact, this asshole was lucky to be on this hill. After all, it was Fred’s hill. He had been here longer than any of them. He growled at the intruder.

The battery commander jumped. He looked at Fred. Fred

looked back at the battery commander. Stalemate.

“Don’t be alarmed, sir; Fred just wants some of your meat,” SSG Brown said to diffuse the situation.

“I don’t give a shit what he wants, Sergeant. That mutt growls at me again and I’ll have him thrown off the hill,” the BC said testily.

Rope came over and grabbed Fred by his collar and dragged him out of the ready room. Fred looked at the BC all the way out.

“You really should try to make friends with him, sir,” Phillips said. “He’s really a good dog. He keeps us company on guard duty and he doesn’t let any slickie boys in.”

“Real fine, son. That’s real fine. Just understand something, soldier: when I want your opinion, I’ll ask for it. Meanwhile, that fuckin’ dog is up here on probation. One more fuck-up like he just pulled, and he’s out of here.” The captain went back to eating his food.

Rope whispered to Patty, “That bastard don’t want to share his mystery meat with Fred. I guess he don’t know it’ll get you sick.”

Patty laughed.

“What’s so funny, Fallica?” asked the first sergeant. “Want to share it with us? Are you telling New Yawk jokes or something?”

“No, First Sergeant; heard this one in Texas. It was so stupid we laughed.”

The first sergeant turned beet red. He was from Texas. “You’re a wise-ass, son. Do you know what happens to wise-asses?” he asked.

“Yes, First Sergeant,” Patty answered. “They put them on a godforsaken hill in the middle of Korea.”

“It could be worse,” the first sergeant said between gritted teeth.

“Yeah, Patty, you could be sleeping with Mrs. Marshal in El Paso,” Rope whispered in Patty’s ear.

Patty choked. He ran out of the ready room and spit his food out on the sidewalk. Fred came over and ate it. After regaining his composure, he returned to the ready room, cleaned his tray and walked out to the guard shack.

Murphy was out there. He was stoned again. Patty wondered if Murph really gave a shit about anything. He asked him if he did. Murph said he didn’t. Patty rolled a joint and smoked it with Murphy. He waited awhile until the smell went away, and went into the corridor for six-hour checks.

It was cold out. Cold and windy. Fred couldn’t go into the ready room, and he didn’t want to go into the corridor because of the four-hundred-cycle noise the vans put out. It hurt his ears. Fred just decided to lie down on the sidewalk.

The battery commander walked out of the ready room and headed toward Fred. Fred was lying on the sidewalk directly in front of the steps leading to the corridor. The BC would have to step over him if he wanted to get into the corridor. He did just that.

Fred bit him. On the ankle, just above the boot. Hard. Hard enough to make the BC scream. By the time the crew came out to see what the commotion was all about, the commander was lying on the ground with his foot in the air, and Fred was gone.

“What happened?” asked SSG Brown.

“That fucking Fred bit me!” the BC cried.

“Are you sure it was Fred?” Phillips asked.

“Shut up, you imbecile!” said the battery commander as he

got up and limped towards his jeep. “Drive me to the aid station!”

The first sergeant hopped in the jeep, gunned the engine, and headed down the hill. “Fred’s in trouble,” SSG Brown said.

Later that evening, the medic called the hill to report that the BC had to have three stitches. It would have been worse, but the largest part of the bite got the top of his boot. They needed Fred down at the aid station so they could test him for rabies. If they couldn’t find him, Captain Williston would have to have a painful series of rabies shots.

Fred was nowhere to be found. It was almost as if he knew he was a fugitive. He just disappeared. The captain disappeared for awhile, too. He went to the hospital in ASCOM to get a painful series of rabies shots. The guys on the hill just assumed that Fred got off on the wrong foot with the captain.

— Chapter 25 —

It wasn’t long after Fred bit the captain when Murph had his problem. It was well known that Murphy liked the ladies. Any ladies. Fat, skinny, pretty or ugly, old or young: Murphy liked them all. They seemed to like Murphy, too. Patty had seen from going out with Murphy that he knew every whorehouse or blowjob palace in the area. The girls knew him, too. They would actually fight over whose bed he would sleep in. Patty asked Murph what the secret of his success was, and Murph would invariably grab his crotch.

Murphy was grabbing his crotch again in the shower. Patty and he were the only guys showering, and Murphy walked over to Patty with his dick in his hand.

“Murph, I don’t want to see your dick,” Patty said with annoyance.

“What a minute, I want you to check something out,” he said.

Patty was ready to come down on Murphy, but he caught the concern in Murphy’s voice. That was really odd, because