

Always Faithful



Isabella

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For purposes of this novel Battle Dress Uniform, BDU has replaced the Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniform, MCCUU.

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CHAPTER ONE

God, how she hated this part of her job. Major Nichol Caldwell looked at her reflection in the mirror, smoothed a few strands of brown hair into place, and adjusted her uniform for the last time before leaving her office. She hated doing “informs”, the term she’d given to the process of calling on family members to inform them of a loved one killed or lost in Iraq.

The Chaplain was waiting outside her office. “Ready Major?”

“As ready as I ever am in this situation, Father. This is the worst part of my job. No matter how many I do, I’m never prepared for them.”

“You know, of all the officers who’ve accompanied me on these, you have been the most understanding and supportive. Remember, God doesn’t tell us why he is testing our courage. We just have to do what we can for our fellow soldiers and their families during their time of need.” He placed a kindly hand on her shoulder before heading to the car.

Nic didn’t want to tell the priest that she had lost her faith a long time ago. No, now wasn’t the time for a philosophical debate on whether God even existed and if so, how could he let those so brave die so needlessly. They’d debated that many times in the past and she didn’t have the energy to spar with him today.

She knew the dead officer’s family fairly well. Captain Mike Monroe had been two years behind her in ROTC and they’d taken a few engineering classes together, drilled together, and socialized with some of the same people in college. ROTC was a small community, in general, and on a college campus it was even smaller. She and Mike went through flight school at the same time. Even though he was in an attack unit and she was in a medivac unit, they were still in aviation and aviation was a tight group. She wouldn’t say they were close, but she knew him well enough to feel sick to her stomach at his death. Mike left behind a little girl who would never know her father and wouldn’t understand what was happening. Maybe that was a blessing in disguise. Nic had met Claire, Mike’s widow, at a few social events on the base. She was a beautiful woman and Mike was a lucky man, *was* being the operative word. Now she had to go and turn Claire’s world upside down, shattering her dreams for the future.

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Every house on the base at Camp Pendleton looked the same from the outside. Standard military housing with no frills and no big swimming pools in the backyards. The buildings ran together, ugly beige or grey paint blending together like the desert land they sat on, marked as separate by the occasional fence that penned in the obligatory dog. Here the rules were clear. Mow your lawn, watch how fast you drive, and never, ever, let your kids run the streets. These habits made for quiet neighborhoods that were simple and bland without a hint about the sacrifices the families made to be a part of these tight neighborhoods.

When she pulled up to the house, Nic knew the neighbors would be watching. They were always watching. It was part of some implied military family code. For that very reason crime was low in military housing. It was a small bonus to be living with like-minded people. Nic got out of her car and waited for the Chaplain to join her. *Man this sucks*. Why did she have to pull this duty when she got back from Iraq? Why couldn't she just fly a desk like so many of her other counterparts who had been wounded? Oh, right. She *was* flying a desk and her desk flights included death notifications.

She knocked on the door with a cute little sign announcing who lived at this residence. When no one answered she looked over at the carport and noticed the tan sedan parked in the driveway. Perhaps Claire Monroe was taking a nap or she was over at a neighbor's house. Nic knocked harder, rattling the wooden sign on the door.

"Be right there." The door opened slowly and Claire Monroe appeared in the doorway, the sun backlighting her slender figure and obscuring her features. "Good Morning. What can I do for...?" She looked from Nic to the Chaplain as the words died on her lips. "No—no. Oh, God. Please no. Go away. You're at the wrong house. Please, please, tell me you're at the wrong house. Please—" Claire turned towards the house, as though by shutting the door she would shut out the impending news.

"Mrs. Monroe, please—" Nic's voice cracked as she followed the unofficial "script" for these occasions. "May we come inside and tell you why we're here?"

“I know why you’re here. You’re here to tell me that Mike isn’t coming home, aren’t you, Major? You’re here to tell me that the Corps is sorry for my loss and that Mike died a hero. Right?” Claire was practically screaming now. “Answer me, Major.”

All Nic could do was look at her spit-shined shoes and wish she were somewhere else. “Yes ma’am. Can we go inside now, Mrs. Monroe? Father O’Rielly and I are here to help in any way we can, to give you support, and to tell you what we know about what happened in Iraq.”

The Chaplain put a hand on Claire’s shoulder. “Please, Mrs. Monroe, can we come in?”

Nic watched tears stream down Claire’s face. She despised what this war was doing to families all over the United States. Here she was to tell another family how their loved one had died a hero, in a war they were never going to win. In the beginning, she had believed in the war, but as it continued, she had witnessed the devastation first hand and it angered her. She wondered how a commander-in-chief, who had only served in the National Guard, could send American troops in to win something that he knew damn well wasn’t winnable. For a brief moment, Nic thought of her own crew and wondered how their families were doing. She made it a point to keep in touch, but it had been weeks since she had talked to any of the families. She didn’t want them to think they were forgotten or that their sacrifice was for nothing. A sob pulled Nic back to reality. *God, I hate this job*, she thought for the third time in as many minutes.

“Mrs. Monroe, I’m so sorry for your loss. I know that sounds trite, but if there is anything I can do right now, please let me know,” Nic said softly.

“Can you bring back my husband, Major? Can you do that for me? Otherwise there is nothing you can do to help me and my daughter.” Nic watched, as a sudden realization seemed to hit Claire. “Oh God. How will I tell Grace that her dad isn’t coming home? Oh God!” Claire crumpled to her knees, burying her face in her hands as she wept uncontrollably. “How will I ever tell her?”

Right at that moment, one of Mrs. Monroe’s neighbors came out of the cookie cutter house next door and walked over. “Claire, I’m so sorry. Come on. Let’s go inside, honey.” Turning, she extended her hand and introduced herself. “Good morning Officers. I’m

Claire's neighbor, Debbie Rouch. Let's get Claire inside and see what we can do to make her comfortable."

Nic felt helpless as she shook the hand of another military wife who knew she could be in Claire's shoes at any time. Nic tried to help Claire up, but she was like a rag doll lacking any internal structure. So Nic gently lifted Claire into her arms and carried the woman inside. When Nic placed her on the couch, she noticed Claire's expression had changed from anger to a hollow mask, utterly devoid of emotion.

She had seen soldiers who had their whole lives ahead of them die. Futures snuffed out like a flame in a hurricane. The stories were usually the same. A soldier is deployed to Iraq, goes out on a routine mission and a bomb takes out half the squad. Those, who survived were sometimes wounded so badly that they wished they were dead. Then they came home to families so happy they'd survived, no one cared what condition they were in, just as long as they'd come home, because the alternative was worse.

Nic watched as Debbie Rouch put her arm around Claire's shoulders and gently rocked Claire like a child needing comforting. Nic knew the pain was so great that nothing would penetrate Claire's emotional fog for days, but when it finally did, her grief would reach into her soul, claiming whatever it could.

Nic had been there often in the past three months. In fact, she was starting to question whether she should stay in the Corps. The loss of her crew was hard on her and it was one of the reasons she was stateside at the base in San Diego doing informs. She wasn't in a hurry to be redeployed as so many of her fellow pilots were after recovery. Nic relived the accident every day she drove by the airfield on her way to work, or every time she had to see a family and inform them of the loss of a loved one. Moreover, she relived it every time she looked at her scars.

Today was just a little different, because this time Nic knew this inform. Today she had to tell the wife of an acquaintance that she must wake up alone tomorrow. Something Claire had done a hundred times since her husband's deployment. However, from this time on it would be a permanent way of life. All the Corps could offer was some counseling, a polite thank you from the President of the United States, a life insurance policy of four hundred thousand dollars, thirty days to vacate family housing, and the offer to move her household goods to a permanent residence, wherever that may be.

Nic felt a gentle hand on her shoulder and looked up to see the Chaplain staring down at her. “I’m sorry, Father. What did you say?”

“I asked if it would be possible for you to come by and check on Mrs. Monroe later. Since you two seem to have some history together.” He searched Nic’s face. “In fact, would you mind lending a hand to Mrs. Monroe during this difficult time, perhaps helping her get Mike’s affairs in order? I know it is a little out of the ordinary, but Claire was just telling me she doesn’t have family close by. Only a friend who won’t be able to come immediately and it will be a few days before Mike’s family can get here.” Pausing, he looked back at Claire and added, “I’m sure Mike would appreciate it, too.”

“Father, I don’t know if that’s such a good idea. Wouldn’t it be better to have someone around who won’t remind her of Mike?”

The Chaplain shrugged off her concerns. “Right now, she doesn’t have anyone who knows the system as well as you do. We have personnel who could advise her—but they’re strangers, you were a friend of her husband’s. She might be able to confide and grieve with you, whereas that would likely prove harder with a stranger.”

“Fine,” she said. “I’ll do what I can.”

She received a look of relief from Mrs. Rouch, who had made a cup of coffee for Claire and was standing close enough to listen to their conversation. Claire sat on the couch, her gaze unfocused. She sipped her drink automatically, clearly lost in her own stunned memories.

“I think you can help more than you know,” the Chaplain said. “Remember, as someone much older than me said, ‘What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.’ You’ve been through a lot yourself. I’m sure you can lend some of your strength and support to Mrs. Monroe.”

Nic nodded silently. *Okay, but how do I help her with her pain when I don’t know how to deal with my own?*

CHAPTER TWO

Claire looked around the room and saw a few wives whispering and wiping their eyes. They looked at her with the same look she had given other wives who had lost their husbands; disbelief and relief mixed with a dose of pity. She saw Chaplain O’Rielly and Major Caldwell talking and she wondered if she would ever be able to look at that uniform the same way again. Mike looked so smart in his uniform. It transformed him the minute he put it on. He had a military bearing about him, a pride that she was sure only someone who wore the uniform understood. He had told her many times how proud he was to serve his country and he had died for that very honor.

Once the word got out, every wife in Mike’s unit stopped by to see if she could help in some way.

Claire felt a hand on her shoulder. “Claire, I am so sorry for your loss. Is there anything I can do to help? Maybe I can take Grace for a while?”

Turning into the touch Claire reached up and patted the hand on her shoulder. “Thank you, Gail. There isn’t really anything I need right now.”

“Claire, you know we’re here for you,” said another wife wiping her eyes, “and you know that you can call one of us anytime of the day or night, honey.”

“Thanks, Shirley, I appreciate that. Really I do.”

Claire knew they meant well, but she couldn’t tell them how they could help even if she wanted to. The constant talking around her made her head buzz. She was in a fog that deepened the longer everyone stayed. She couldn’t focus. She couldn’t think. She couldn’t function with everyone around. After what seemed like hours, Claire finally found the strength to ask everyone to leave. She needed to be alone with her daughter. She wanted time to think about what had just happened and how she was going to explain to Grace that her daddy wasn’t coming home, ever.

“Thanks again everyone for the food and everything,” Claire said as she watched the wives leave.

“Let us know when the funeral is Claire,” someone in the group said.

“I will. Thank you again.” Closing the door, Claire leaned against it for support.

She thought about her daughter and started to cry again, not for herself but for Grace. She slid down the door and hugged her knees to her chest. Grace adored her dad and Mike adored her. She cried harder when she realized that Mike would never see Grace grow up to be a beautiful woman, walk her down the aisle for her wedding, or bounce his grandchildren on his knee. Regardless of the type of relationship she and Mike had, he was a devoted father. He doted on Grace and it was clear that she had him wrapped around her little finger. In fact, Claire would often raise her little pinky, wiggling it at Mike when he gave in to Grace during one of her tantrums. Laughing, Mike would always say, “Hey, she is the best thing I have ever done in my life, and I refuse to be the bad guy. Besides, that’s your job, right?” Although it would draw a mock grunt of disgust from his wife, she would always smile at how much he loved being a dad.

Claire walked to her daughter’s room and sat in the rocker Mike had bought her when she had Grace. She watched Grace sleep, and wondered how much a three-year-old little girl would understand what happened to her father. She thought about how different their life would be now that Mike was gone. Did he suffer? Did he know what was happening or did it happen so fast that he didn’t know what hit him?

She thought about Mike’s family. They were a tight-knit group, the kind of family Claire wished she had growing up. They were close and happy, always looking out for each other. Mike’s mom irritated Claire sometimes, but Claire understood that she only wanted the best for Mike. It was something she could relate to now as she looked at Grace, but as close as Mike and his family were, he had kept a secret from them. One, Claire would now have to keep no matter what happened. It was something she was glad she could do for Mike, especially now. The past didn’t matter as much as it had two days ago, and she had to look towards the future-one without Mike.

She thought about Mike, and guilt started to eat at Claire. Had she been a good wife? Had she made him happy, at least in the ways that mattered to Mike? She did all the “wifely” duties she thought she was supposed to. From the outside they were the ideal military family.

Grace started to stir and Claire was at her side immediately, picking her up and hugging her. Grace laid her head on her mother's shoulder and Claire stroked her short, wispy hair. There was no denying Grace was Mike's, she had his big blue eyes and his full lips.

"She'll be a heart-breaker," Mike often said when he looked at his daughter. He joked he would be the type of parent that would welcome his daughter's boyfriends while he was cleaning his shotgun. "Just to start the relationship off right," he would joke.

"Oh honey," whispered Claire as she rocked her little girl. Claire looked into her daughter's eyes and choked back a sob.

"It's okay Mommy. I take care of you," Grace said as she wiped a tear from her mom's face. Claire cried harder as she realized she had to tell her daughter something even she couldn't believe yet. *Damnit. How could Mike do this to us? Damn him, damn him, damn it all to hell. She sat back down in the rocker with her daughter held tightly against her.*

###

Nic sat at her desk, her head in her hands, running her fingers through her hair as she wondered what she had gotten herself into. She was still struggling with her own scars from Iraq and now she had to deal with helping a family start the process of getting through their own ordeal. Claire Monroe had to process out of military housing in thirty days and then she would be with her own family and working through her issues with them. Thirty days wasn't that long. Nic had been back almost three months, although sometimes it seemed like forever. Other times, it felt like only yesterday.

Months had passed since her medivac helicopter went down in Iraq. Her first few weeks were spent in the hospital as they repaired her destroyed body, then the next few weeks were spent in rehab as she learned to walk again. She had been told the burns and grafts would take time to heal, and the hospital staff had been adamant about maintaining a daily regiment of workouts. The workouts helped her body to heal, but not her mind. The sound of the crash then bodies and burning wreckage everywhere still haunted her. Everyday she thought about her friends who had died, and every day she wondered. 'Why me? Why did I survive and not Jack, who had a wife and three kids? Or the navigator Craig who had

just married his high school sweetheart?’ She thought about them, about their families and how they were coping with their loss. She thought about it all, everyday.

Nic was still seeing a doctor weekly for her injuries, and to top it all off they were still making her see a shrink. “Just to make sure everything is fine upstairs.” Bullshit. They wanted to make sure she wasn’t some loose cannon who would freak out at any minute and go shooting up the place. She had heard about the combat stress many of the soldiers were coming home with, and how some of the soldiers were killing their spouses and themselves because they couldn’t deal with life stateside. Well, that wasn’t her. She knew she had better coping skills than that. After the crap she’d dealt with in her childhood, she could handle anything. She had chosen the Marine Corps to prove to everyone she’d ever known that she could take anything that came her way.

Looking down at her watch and noting the time she got up, put her hair back in a bun, and hefted her workout bag onto her shoulder. A good hour on the weights, more than a few laps in the pool, and then the sauna. Her gym workouts not only kept her sane, but also the exertion helped relax her and gave her the time and space she needed to think things through. She would work out her emotions in private, without a shrink staring at her waiting for her to make some revelation she didn’t feel. When she was in Bethesda after the crash, she practically came unglued at first, because she wasn’t able to get up off the bed, let alone walk. It hadn’t taken her long after her surgeries to get to the point of being able to not only sit up, but also to get up and walk without help. She made it through, pushing the emotional pain out of her mind once again as she had done so many other times before. *You’re here, you survived and you have a future ahead of you, whether you like it or not.*

“Hey handsome! Back so soon?”

“Hey Trevor. Talk like that might get ya a date. Just not with me,” she said, winking at the gym attendant.

“Yeah, you officers are all alike. No guts no glory,” Trevor said as he swiped her ID card.

“Yeah, well I don’t want to go to the brig for fraternizing, and trust me, I’m not your type. Now that blonde over there,” Nic said pointing to a woman running on the treadmill, “she looks like your type. Why don’t you give her a try?”

“Already did. She shot me down, too.” Trevor rested his head on his hands as he watched the woman running on the treadmill.

“Well don’t give up hope. I’m sure you’ll find someone in this shit hole. Chicks dig a guy in uniform.”

An hour later she was sweating so much that her T-shirt was sticking to her body like a second skin. She often lost track of time when she worked out, getting into a zone where she felt intensely alive, her heart pounding as she pushed herself. At times she worked to excess, to the point where she almost couldn’t get up because her muscles were so fatigued. She knew she could keep up with the best of the best on their P.T. tests, often lapping some of the younger males. At almost six feet, she was an imposing figure with broad shoulders, narrow hips, and well-defined arms and legs, but when she looked in the mirror, all she saw was that weak, wounded soldier at Bethesda. Maybe *that* was why she was still seeing the shrink.

Nic reached for the tingling scar on her back as she made her way to the locker room to finish her workout. It was itching from the sweat, and her soaked T-shirt rubbing against it was a constant reminder of everything she had lost in Iraq. She changed into her swimsuit and continued on to the pool to do her normal thirty laps. Nic rinsed out her swim goggles and couldn’t help but check out a woman sitting on the edge of the pool. She was talking to a slim, pale guy in a Speedo who was leaning over laughing.

Yuk dude, ditch the Speedo, thought Nic as she watched the woman throw her head back as she laughed. *You could do so much better than Mr. Pasty.*

Nic watched for a second too long and was caught looking. Smiling and arching an eyebrow, the woman stared back at Nic. Her eyes roamed up and down Nic’s body and then back to Nic’s eyes.

Did she just wink at me? Nic watched the woman slide the tip of her index finger into her parted lips and bite it.

“Hey, earth to Theresa,” Mr. Pasty said, snapping his fingers in front of the woman’s face. “Hey, we need to get back to the office.”

Nic took the opportunity to don her goggles and plunge into the water. She started to stroke the warm water when she caught Theresa watching her as she walked along the side of the pool to the locker room, her ass firm under her black swimsuit. Pulling up Nic saw

Theresa take one last look at her and wave. Nic politely waved back and smiled before returning to her laps. She grinned at the simple and unexpected flirtation before putting it out of her mind and ducking beneath the heavily chlorinated water. Each long stroke strained her already tired shoulders. Her arms shook with fatigue when she finally stopped. Pulling herself up on the side of the pool, she took a long deep breath. This was exactly what she had needed to get her mind off her last inform.

After showering, Nic walked to the mirror and wiped off the steam that had collected during her shower. She assessed her reflection before she brushed her hair. At least the accident hadn't left any facial injuries, thanks to her flight helmet. Nevertheless, when she looked at her green eyes they looked different, almost as if someone else was looking back at her.

She finished drying off, applied the bandages to her scars and pulled the tight T-shirt over her broad shoulders. It hugged her body, accentuating her full breasts and hard abs. If there was one thing Nic liked, it was her body in tight clothes. She worked out hard and she wasn't about to hide the results with baggy sweats or clothes. She pulled her low-slung jeans over her narrow hips, tucked her T-shirt in and slipped into her favorite boots. She packed her bag and slung it over her shoulder, feeling a sting when it hit her back. It was getting better. It wasn't as painful as it had been in the beginning when she would sling her bag, slapping it against her back without thinking and causing excruciating pain. These were small victories on her way to a full recovery and a normal life.

She strode out of the gym and over to her Yamaha, her other stress reliever. She had ridden a motorcycle since she was a kid, but after her crash, she had to wait until the doctors okayed her to ride. If they found out she was riding without being cleared she could be court-martialed since she was *still* government property, as she was often reminded.

Nic had never resented that equation until Iraq. She had never questioned the debt she owed her country, she knew what she was signing on for when she joined the Marine Corps. She wanted a college education, discipline, respect and a chance to serve her country. She knew her family would never pay for her to go to college so she hit up her Uncle Sam, who was more than willing to help her out as long as she knew the rules.

Until now, her life seemed to make sense. But somewhere between the sickening sound of her helicopter exploding and those long days in her bed at Bethesda, she'd lost that

certainty. Her bike rumbled just loud enough to make her heart vibrate and tickle her center as she eased the chrome horse out of the parking space to the exit. She loved the freedom the bike gave her. It was like nothing she ever felt in anything else she did, not flying a helicopter, driving a sports car or the high she got from pumping weights. The only thing that came close was the pre-orgasmic shudder she had when she made love to a woman.

Luckily, traffic was light and she wasn't in a hurry to get home to an empty apartment or worse, another inform. Nic weaved in and out of the afternoon traffic letting her mind wander as she became one with the bike. She had often wished she had her bike in Iraq but realized that a woman on a motorcycle would have been unacceptable in a country that didn't even let women drive. Besides, all that sand would have fouled up the injection system. She glided to a stop at the light, touching down one foot to the pavement. Looking to her left, she saw a convertible roll to a stop beside her. The driver was the petite blonde, Theresa, from the gym, who was waving and looking at Nic. The stereo was playing a loud rap beat that practically drowned out the rumble of the motorcycle. Glancing at the light and then back to the car, she grinned as Theresa blew her a kiss. Blushing, she turned back toward the light. *What the*—from the corner of her eye she saw the driver give Nic a wink and pucker her lips, simulating a kiss. Shaking her head, Nic chuckled but didn't look over. The last thing she wanted now was an open flirtation on base that could get her a court-martial. The woman honked her horn and motioned for her to pull over. Shaking her head in the negative, Nic just smiled and waited for the light to turn green. Just as it did the blonde hit the gas and sped ahead of her, cut into her lane, and slowed down, forcing Nic to slam on her brakes.

There were a lot of things Nic could tolerate but screwing with her while she was on her bike was not one of them. She drew alongside the convertible and pointed toward an empty parking lot. The young woman pulled over. Her smile was full of eager invitation as Nic approached. "What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Nic growled as she tore off her helmet. "You could have gotten me killed back there."

"Oh, come on. Aren't you being just a little overdramatic?" Hard nipples caught Nic's attention first. The woman's blouse was so sheer Nic could see she wasn't wearing a bra. *Her silver nipple rings contrast nicely against her dark areolas*, Nic thought as she stared at the woman's chest. Nic found herself more than a little excited by the sight.

Doing her best to ignore the distracting sight, Nic said, "Look this isn't a game. Someone could have gotten hurt and that someone could have been me. Then what?"

"Come on, no one got hurt." Extending her hand, she said, "By the way, my name is Theresa. And yours is?"

"Trust me, you don't want to know my name," Nic said, towering over the petite blonde. "Now if you will excuse me, I have business to attend to."

"Wait." Theresa grabbed Nic's arm. "I just wanted to get to know you. Is there anything wrong with that? Besides, maybe we could have coffee or something."

"I don't drink coffee, and I'm not your type."

"I know how to handle women like you gorgeous. Trust *me*," Theresa said, her voice husky as she eyed Nic's chest. She ran her hand brazenly over one of Nic's breasts, smiling when she felt Nic's nipple harden.

The simple touch, combined with the adrenalin that whipped through her when the woman cut her off, sent Nic over the edge. She groaned and grabbed Theresa's hand, pinning it to her breast. Somewhere in the recesses of her mind she knew she should stop, but it had been far too long since a beautiful woman had touched her.

"Careful what you wish for," Nic said. She grabbed the presumptuous woman by the wrists, pulling their bodies together. Theresa moaned as Nic tilted her head to the left and pulled her hair, forcing her head back and exposing Theresa's neck to Nic's lips. Nic attacked her neck, kissing it roughly. Nic could feel her pulse speed up. She made her way up Theresa's neck to her jaw, nipping at the perfect little line. Nic continued on to her lips, which were open and begging to be kissed. Crushing the waiting lips underneath hers, Nic slid her tongue inside and heard the woman moan. She caressed the breast beneath the thin blouse, squeezing and pinching the pierced nipple until she could feel the woman grinding against her.

God, what am I doing? She suddenly released the woman, who stumbled back against her car. Nic mumbled an apology, as she turned and got back on her bike. She started her bike, slapped on her helmet and drove out of the parking lot cursing her rash judgment. She could hear the woman shouting something, but ignored it as she sped up.

God, what had she just done? Anyone driving past could have seen them, could have seen her. Nic was on fire, every nerve in her body was exploding and she thought she would

come right there on her bike, the vibration adding more stimulation to an already sensitive clit. *Fuck, Fuck, Fuck*, she had to get home and quick. If she was going to have a melt down she didn't want it to be out in public.

It had been months since Nic had even thought about sex. No, that wasn't quite true. Every time she thought about it, she either went to the gym and worked herself to exhaustion or worked late to keep herself occupied. Nic continued to navigate her way back to her place, edgy, frustrated, and definitely explosive. She pivoted her hips on the rolling vibrator, finding a place that not only kept her stimulated, but damn near brought her to climax. Her entire focus was centered on the throbbing between her legs. She turned the bike around at the next light and headed out to a deserted stretch of road. Opening up the throttle, she leaned into the bike allowing her body to feel the vibration of the huge machine as she shifted through the gears. She rocked forward, the seam of her jeans making perfect contact with her clit. Her nipples hardened as she felt the wind rub her shirt roughly against them. Every muscle tensed in anticipation of the impending release, and she could feel sweat breaking out everywhere on her body. She felt herself start to spasm as she rode both the motorcycle and the climax. Nic's hips bucked once, twice, and then a third and final time as she climaxed. It took every ounce of control she had to stay upright on the motorcycle as she pulled to the side of the road.

Nic leaned over, gasping for breath and holding on to the gas tank for stability. Dropping the kickstand, she swung her leg over and flopped to the ground on her hands and knees. *God, what have I just done?* This person was foreign to Nic. She was always in control of her emotions and she never, ever lost control. Sitting back on her heels, taking a deep breath, she could still feel her throbbing clit rubbing against now soaked jeans. She stood, grabbing her jeans at the knees and forcing them down just enough to prevent further contact with her clit. Still hunched over, she worked to control her breathing and her emotions. It had been so long since she had been with anyone that she had forgotten what that felt like. Enough. *No good can come from thinking like this.* No one would want an emotionally bankrupt, broken down soldier. It wasn't worth thinking about.

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