

Chapter 3: **WIFES AND LOVERS**

Natalie I hadn't seen her face for months and she was going to be here TONIGHT. *sigh*. As I thought about her, the more I missed her I rummaged through my coat pocket, I found a very dirty Black and White picture of us both happy... before this, before the war, as I looked my mind went back to that day, the picture was taken a week or so after we were married.

There she was standing there, the only thing in my world that mattered to me. Natalie stood little over 5ft 7, although it was black and white the colours seemed to bleed through, I could picture the greens of the trees and blues of water and sky. Her hair is a golden brown with her ginger fur gently changing direction in the cool summer breeze; she is a feline, the woman of my life for ever and always.

"I love you David" she was smiling at me; it's the happiest time of our lives.

Just then a shot rang out, her back arched and blood dripped out of her mouth as she fell to the ground, hunched over blood seeping over the grass, I ran to her but I couldn't no matter how hard I tried she was always so far away, she lifted her head to face me.

"Don't leave me Natalie; you can't die not here, not in my arms."

"I am sorry David you have to go, get back to your life....."

"What's wrong with us Yanks SIR?" came the voice of an American... I was brought very quickly to my seat in the tent MY GOD that dream, not again it felt so real I know it never happened, but with all the times I have dreamt it I think I have lived it... it was my biggest fear.

I looked up and got together my composure; a tall white tailed deer, he was standing in the "door way" of the tent, from my family trips to America before the war, I knew the accent was somewhere in Middle America.

"Hello there Liam, nothing dear boy they are just grand, come in my friend, sit with the rest of your squad members"

Did we hear him right? Was this fur in our group? Before we could speak

the Captain explained;

“Here is 2nd Lieutenant Liam Tustin”

“Sorry sir, but I have been promoted since our last meeting” We all knew that Sgtnjr. Barry was going to hate this out spoken remark, we all gingerly turned our heads, all we saw was his tail leaving the tent, this was not a good sign for us, he was going to be pissed.

Mahen looked stunned, his mouth slightly open, not by what our new friend said but by the Alsatians reaction to him.

“Oh Sorry Lieutenant Liam Tustin, he is an liaison from the American Army, he’s an engineer at heart; setting pontoons, demolitions etc, but he also will double up as antitank/ bunker support, I trust that you have trained with the PIAT Lieutenant?”

“Yes sir I have, May I say it’s a very good weapon to hold and fire, knocked out that “pillbox” as easy as standing up sir.”

“That’s what it’s made for, glad you like it” I could see the Captain liked him and by the way the Deer spoke he seemed a very nice fellow also.

“Can you and Lieutenant Berryman get to know each other for a little while as he will be your primary 2nd man, I do need you both to have a sixth sense about you, know what the other is thinking. But in the heat of it I am sure even this straggle of furs can hand you a round if need be” he laughed and the Deer finally sat down.

“Will do sir umm I m sorry Lieutenant Berryman which one are you? None of you have rank markings apart from the Captain” he said this as if he were embarrassed, we didn’t think anything of it.

“That would be me, if you want when Mahen... umm The Captain is finished why don’t we take a walk around the base and... liase” they both chuckled and agreed to it.

“Well I only have one more piece of information, then you can go to your new home or get to know some people around the base, don’t worry they know who you are just don’t brag or do anything stupid. It seems that one of our members has been hiding something very important from us, it’s his last chance to own up” we were all very struck by this change in tone, he was dark now I can see how he was the Captain and not to cross him

ever.

Then we heard it.

“Ok Ok Ok, please don’t court martial me or shoot me I didn’t know I was doing to wrong, we all did it in Dunkirk” It was Danny the Rabbit, he looked very worried.

“What are you talking about Danny you haven’t done anything wrong” the Captain looked concerned.

“The food, I have been keeping leftover food in my billet, the squad gave it to me when I asked, don’t take it out on them I didn’t know” the Rabbit was very noble he words weren’t cowardly as he spoke them, he would go down on his own, I have the deepest respect for him.

Mahen just belted out the biggest laugh I ever did hear, bigger then general Harvey himself.

“That’s ok Danny that’s not what I was talking about, but I am glad to see your ability to take the crap and try not to get your squad in it also, what I was eluding to was someone’s birthday” still blank faces from all.

“Racky... that’s you dear boy”

“What? No sorry sir my birthdays on the 19th I still have two days to go”

“No that’s today! Dear me, forgot your own Birthday” he smiled with all that’s gone on I am sure he knows why.

“Yes it seems I did” wow 27 years old that’s nearly 30, I hope to see it one day, but there was a very big possibility that I wont.

“Yes I was born on 19th August 1916, my mother called me the Somme Baby”

It went silent, in deep thought, that wasn’t that long ago, why were we doing the same bloody thing now fighting a another stupid war, it should have ended when we won the first time around, I turned to Scotty he looked very uncomfortable we all did.

The next person to take was Lieutenant Tustin.

“So your name’s Racky, bit of a no brainier that, you being a Raccoon and all... well part Raccoon anyway?” this made the smiles return to the

Squad.

This fur knew how to turn your moral around I was glad he had this ability, he may have seemed arrogant in braking the silence but it wasn't helping anybody.

“No my names David” after another explanation about my family and the “Kind name that Mark gave me on our first encounter, he nodded and decided he also would use the ‘fitting’ nickname.

“Well I have nothing more to say, apart from Happy Birthday, the Ladies will arrive about 7 o'clock, class dismissed” Mahen chuckled. “Oh one more thing, who actually has a wife or fiancée”

I looked, everyone of the Squad had their hand up “Oh my” he said, we all looked, we all clicked, we all had someone that loved us, there could be a few females, receiving “that telegram”.

“You too Liam?” said Berryman

“Yes her names Samantha, she's also a white deer, although she wont be here tonight... her living in Ohio and all” he gave a weak laugh.

“You married” he asked tensely

“Yes 17 years”

“Me too, NOT 17 years though, only 7” Berryman said, “My lovely Red Fox named Rebecca” we all sat down took out our respective girls picture, we all kept them in the same top left hand pocket.

The Captain spoke next. “Well it seems we all have someone, you want to talk about them? It would break the ice a little” we all nodded and sat still as pillars.

“My wife's name is Chloe, she is also a tiger we married just before I signed up I see her in my dreams and every time I close my eyes, she's the reason I joined, I am fighting for her to live free”

We all could see what she was but it was all part of the bonding that we were doing I don't think no officer would be so open, but what happened next astonished even Captain Barkley.

AHEM it was Joe.

“I am sorry about before” he also reached to his breast pocket he also put the picture of his wife on the table.

“Her names Laura she is a Golden Alsatian, she’s the only person that can calm me, when I get angry, I think of her smiling face and it all the anger and hate fades away.” we all thought that seeing his wife tonight made him feel better and that for us was a good thing.

Next it was Daniel Jepson the red squirrels turn. “Her names Rachael she is a Golden yellow Hare”

My goodness, she was so beautiful, we all agreed.

“We have known each other since childhood I have never been apart from her for so long, we are set to be married next time I get leave, you are all coming... alive or not, which come to think is in two weeks... yippee”

He jumped up and fell poorly onto the seat; this made us all cheer up. Good this guy a real joker but he’s message was clear.

“Congratulations my friend” this was Alex and made it his turn for his story.

“Thank you Alex, if you don’t mind Captain could I ask him to be my best man, we have fought along side each other and owe him my life. He was the guy that pulled me to the safety of the foxhole, he was in a bad way to start with, but he managed it”

The Captain nodded. Alex was beaming from ear to ear.

“This is the picture of my wife Amy” he started his part; the female bear was a bit taller than I was but very slim for a bear. Alex continued “But this picture is of my two fantastic children Fred 12 and Sibyl 8”

Oh my lord his got children, I don’t think any one of us knew, I looked the faces of the squad they had darkened again. I then had a thought.

“I never asked Alex, what do you do in the group?” Jepson groaned, then he answered, I nearly bit my tongue off.

“I am the flame thrower assault guy, I was the gunner in a Churchill

Flame Tank but it went up... hit my one of them blasted mines, that's when I pulled Jepson to the foxhole he had been shot, we got picked up by a bunch of Canadians, then I... sorry WE were shipped here"

I sat there sick to the stomach; I hoped my colour hadn't drained to far from my fur. Silence, we all realised just how close these Furs could have been to very nearly not being here.

"Don't worry; I made it out of a tank, that's the hardest one. Danny, I saw your hand up, tell us about your lady."

Danny cleared his throat, than sat there... nothing.

A tear rolled down Danny's cheek as he looked down at his photo, "Emma... my fiancée, my little Bunny"

He was talking half to himself more than us.

"I proposed before we all left for France in 1939... and so far have never got around to actually marrying her. I thought I'd never see her again... Standing there on the beach... looking at the boat as it left, each time I saw it leave without me, I thought... I thought..."

The rabbit started fiddled with his ears, twisting them
"I thought 'this is it'... this is the last time it comes back, we all did. Jerry was never far behind."

I have never heard such a long statement from him, especially one in which he remembered so much. He had seen hell, he had stood at the edge of the abyss, but the tough git survived, what a guy.

"Will she be here? I have an idea" I whispered to Lieutenant Berryman.

"Yes, yes she will, she was hard to find but we got her, oh, Natalie's also going to be there."

"Thank you Sir it's so nice to be able to see my Kitten again"

Richard raised his voice a little "This is Cynthia my Wife; we also got married as war was declared. Before I came here, on my last 3 day leave, she told me that she was going to have our child, any names would be great, never was one for things like that."

Oh my, another one, we all nodded and started to think of names, if what some half heartedly. This was making my job very hard indeed, but saying that would only make the furs feel worse.

“So what about you Racky, I see your wife is also a Cat” I blinked yes he was talking to me.

“Her names Natalie she is a ginger feline, we got married before the war, and as yet have no plans for children, let’s just see if we can get the war finished before all that, I just hope the kid gets my tail”

Oh my, why was it everything I said gets a laugh, it was time to open up I didn’t mean to joke, even if it did help them, I took the chain and my wedding ring out of my right pocket, I just kept thinking “tonight”, the other guys who were married took theirs out too.

Captain Barkley spoke “If you want you can wear them, your not children, and I think with all that’s going on you deserve to be reminded of your wife’s, trust me when the worst thing happens to you, what ever it maybe, look at that ring and all the pain will go”.

We all put our respective wedding rings on, I smiled a contempt smile knowing that she was with me were ever I may go in the coming years.

Then my friend Mark took the stage. “This is my dear, Adah, she’s a Terrier to, you say anything bad ‘bout her I’ll get HER to sort you out!” we looked closer at the picture and YES she probably could. “We have just got engaged and want a wedding ASAP, I didn’t at the time but know I am so annoyed at my self in not, I will do it as soon as the war lets me have time off”

“That leaves me than does it?” Jason said with his trademark grin. “This is Katherine Kat for short, she’s a Vixen, and huh I can’t believe I said that, I love her dearly I was only joking about the girls bit in the dance, I don’t think I could have knowing she may think I was being... well unlawful, we are married I just hope I can have a honeymoon”

We had all said our piece, it was at an end. We had done in one hour of meeting what many squads need months or a heavy fire fight to accomplish.

“Well it seems that my rear has gone to sleep” the tiger said as he got up and stretched his legs.

We all got up and nodded in acceptance of each other and went our separate ways. I needed to talk to an officer in get my plan in motion the first one that crossed my path was Lieutenant Berryman.

“Sir Can I have a word in private?”

“Of course you can Racky, what it is dear boy? ... I will be with you in one minute Liam”.

“Is there a Chaplin on the base? There were a few furs that said they wanted to marry their ladies, could HE do it for them today?”

“That’s a brilliant idea Sergeant, I am sure they would love to do that... but I don’t know about the Chaplin, though I do know a person that WOULD... CAPTAIN!” he shouted to get his attention... just as he was leaving the tent, with a furrowed brow he skulked back to were we where huddled.

“What is it Lieutenant, could it wait?” he looked like he needed the little Cubs room.

“Sorry sir this won’t take long sir, its Racky he has a plan for the “to be wed furs”... Is there a Chaplin posted on base?”

As he registered with his sharp brain he realised what I had in mind, he had a VERY subversive look on his face.

“Yes there is, he’s name is Reverend Hillary and if what I am thinking is correct, yes he can perform military weddings *if* and only *if* both persons agree, if you want to find him he’s normally stationed with the Red Berets, you find him and tell him the situation and what you would like, and I will get a list of the ones that would like to have the ceremony... after I attended to my bladder” he gave us a nod and he was off like a rabbit, or maybe a rabbit being CHASED by a tiger.