

# Nurse Me Back in Time (Man to WWII-era Nurse)

By FoxFaceStories

## A Commission for Morfe

*Samuel has failed his physical exam to join the army for the third time. Wanting to be a war hero like his ancestors, he clears his mind by perusing WWII antiques at a local shop. But when he feels a strange connection to some of the owner's items, he is shocked to find himself transported back to WWII, and in the body of a rather attractive nurse too! Will the new woman be able to get back? And can she still be a war hero in her own way?*

## Nurse Me Back in Time

### Part 1: Memorabilia

Samuel managed to wipe away the few tears he had shed and walk away with the rest of his dignity intact. The young man took heavy breaths as he left the army recruitment office, the burning shame of humiliation and inadequacy coursing through him.

"Third attempt. Third failure. Why can't they just let me try?"

He knew why, of course. Samuel was short, had a weak constitution, little stamina, and struggled with his asthma. Even now he had to pull out his inhaler and take his mandatory four puffs through his spacer just to catch his breath. Stress alone could often trigger an attack. He ran his hands through his brown hair, ruffling it. This was despite the fact that he'd put a lot of effort into trying to make it look professional that morning. Despite the fact that he'd been trying to tone his figure, show confidence, and deal with his lack of energy and rigour by applying himself everyday.

And yet he'd still been rejected. No military force wanted him, not even in the reserves. 'Frail as a piece of soggy cardboard' had been one phrase used to describe him. 'Sick as a dog,' was another.

*Why me?* the twenty two year old man thought to himself. *Why did I have to have a defective body like this? All I ever wanted to do was join the army and prove myself. To serve my country! Sure, it would be great to be a war hero like my father or grandfather, even if they gave they gave their lives in battle, but I'll take just placement and being given the chance to prove myself. Now . . . now I don't even have that.*

It was demoralising. It was humiliating. It was, more than anything else for poor Samuel, utterly *emasculating*. Even after so much personal training, he'd done no better

than he had before on his physical, and it just wasn't up to scratch for military service. He'd be the first man in the family to break with the tradition, though not for lack of trying.

*Sorry, Dad, he thought to himself. I failed you. You made the ultimate sacrifice. I don't have anything worthy to sacrifice.*

The dark cloud of these thoughts hung over him. He decided to walk home rather than take a cab or a bus, preferring to stew in his thoughts and try to calm himself. He avoided the gaze of the crowds, feeling their judgement upon him somehow, and so he took a longer route than usual to clear his mind. To his surprise, it sort of worked, because he came upon an antiques shop called *Wartime Vintage Antiques* that he'd never heard of or seen before. The exterior of the building seemed just as antique as what was being sold, real old-fashioned and sturdy and with lettering that looked like it had come from the 1950's. Perhaps it had, and had just been renewed ever since.

*Huh, looks like they've got some war memorabilia in there. Might as well check it out.*

He stepped inside, keen to view the items. One outlet for dealing with his own continual physical failure was to delve deep into history. He was, in fact, quite the history nerd or buff or both when it came to twentieth century conflict, chief among them WWII, the war in which his grandfather had perished upon the Pacific front. He found the display, and was surprised to see that it dominated more than half the store easily! There were trinkets and tins, pieces of destroyed aircraft, vintage posters, nurse's outfits, soldier's uniforms, helmets, bayonets, even a variety of guns hidden safely behind thick glass displays, including what looked like a real Browning machine gun! Samuel gaped at this, astonished at the preserved newspapers, photographs, women's clothing from the time, naval equipment, and so on. He'd never seen such a vast collection tucked away in a hobby store like this.

"I see you're quite the history buff, young man," came a voice.

Samuel turned to see an old woman behind him. She was quite old, in fact, and he wouldn't be surprised to find out that she had been around during WWII, and not as a child either. Her hair was short and white-grey, and she wore glasses. She leaned on a cane to walk properly, but while age had likely shrunk her a bit, she was still tall and proud in her stature, with piercing green eyes that reminded Samuel of his own - his mother had said they were his best feature. He remembered her saying it before she passed, not long after his father. It was a kind memory for him.

"I, um, have a passing interest in it, yes," he said.

She chuckled a little. "More than a passing interest, I'd say! I'd venture to guess you are quite obsessed with it, young man."

"What would make you think that?"

"An old woman knows these things," she said. She extended a hand. "I'm Rachel."

"A pleasure," Samuel said, taking her hand and shaking it. "I'm Samuel Board."

"I hope you're not!" she said, still holding his hand.

"Oh, it's my last name. I get it all the time."

"We shall have to get you a new name, and soon," Rachel said, winking. He couldn't figure out what the joke was, or why she was still holding his hand. She released it when he looked down.

"Apologies," she said. "I forget my own youth and what it feels like."

"Um, do you mean age?"

She cackled again. "Nope, not at all! But that'll make sense later. Do you like my store, Samuel?"

He gazed around, staring up at the hanging model planes, the preserved propeller from a P-38 Lightning, even part of a net that had apparently caught a mini-sub sent into Australia's Sydney Harbour, if the placard was telling the truth.

"It's astonishing," he said. "I've never seen anything like it. Did you collect it all?"

She nodded, placing both hands on the cane. "Myself and my husband, James. He passed away recently, actually."

Something lodged itself in the pit of Samuel's stomach, making his failure at the recruitment office seem paltry compared to such a loss.

"I'm very sorry," he offered.

She put up her hand. "I thank you, but it's fine. I knew it was coming. For a long time, actually, more than anyone could have guessed. Call it an old woman's intuition, I suppose. He was a World War Two veteran himself, actually."

Samuel found himself interested. "Really? May I ask what he did? Where he fought, if he fought at all?"

"Oh, he fought alright," Rachel said. "He fought for his life. He was there for the liberation of Paris, in fact."

"Wow."

"That's one word for it. We met before that though, in the Ninety-First Field Hospital."

"You were a nurse?"

"Oh yes," she said, smiling. "Fond times, if you can believe it. Well, not really. But there were moments of beauty among the horror of it all."

"That's incredible," Samuel said. He hesitated a moment, then decided to speak anyway. "I've . . . always wanted to serve. I know you speak of horror, but I imagine your husband was proud of what he did. What he fought for."

The woman smiled, looking back into the past. "He very much was. And he did fight for the good cause. You can't serve?"

"I'm . . . too weak. Too sick."

She nodded, looking him up and down. "I remember what that was like. You know, when I was your age I desperately wanted to go to the battlefield because I was never allowed-

"Because you were a woman."

"Hush, don't interrupt an old woman. Anyway, I learned the hard and unexpected way that there's more ways to protect those you love - and the country you love - than just firing a gun. Healing, in many ways, does just as much."

Samuel nodded, though he didn't quite believe her words entirely it wasn't like he could judge them. Rachel left him alone for a while as he perused the collection, but he didn't feel like buying anything just yet. Perhaps another day, when his nerves were calmer. He began to leave, but Rachel was waiting near the entrance with an object in her left hand, which she thrust out to him.

"Here, take this, Samuel."

He held it. It was an old tin lunchbox, looking like it was from the wartime itself.

*It probably is*, he thought.

"Um, I'm not buying anything to-"

"It's free, young man. You can look inside it when you want. It contains most of my memories from the war - photographs and letters and mementos and the like."

*Mementos? Why on earth would she give me these!?*

She must have caught his surprise, because her smile was gentle and amused, one hand held up in protest against his coming comment.

"You can take them, young man, and I insist upon it. There's some wonderful history there, and I can't hold onto it. I'm closing down this store soon anyway. Since my husband passed, I've made plans to go and live with my wonderful daughter. I want someone who cares about history to take good care of my treasures as well."

Samuel didn't know what to say. "I can't, this is too much. I'll come back and purchase something else."

"I'm not sure you have the time," she said, smirking a little.

*Right, she must be closing the store real soon, then. Damn, I wish I could take a line of credit. This day just keeps getting worse.*

"Look, how about I just take it for a little bit, then return it?" he suggested.

She laughed at that, and it was a surprisingly joyful laugh that made him smile for no good reason. "Well, I should just about say you will return it," she said. "For now though, I'm about to close up. You have a good day, Samuel Board. Please enjoy my life for me."

*What a strange, wonderful woman*, he thought to himself before leaving. *Something about her feels so achingly familiar but I just can't place it.*

He left, continuing to walk back home, his humiliation at having been rejected from military service still hanging over him, but soothed a little by the relic clutched carefully in his hands.

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Samuel left the lunchbox alone for a while. He still had other avenues to pursue. He shot forth several emails to contacts his father had made, asking for their help in securing him a possible spot in the military. He also began reworking his training plan, making it longer and more endurance-based to deal with the latest hiccups. He booked an appointment with a specialist - that would be costly - to determine if anything could be done to reduce his asthma symptoms. He'd had to get the puffer and spacer out again after arriving home from a simple uphill walk, after all! Then it was dinner, which he made by himself in his lonely apartment, and finally to bed after a tiring day.

It was there, his legs under the cover but his torso up straight, that he carefully inspected the contents of the box. The hinges whined as he opened it carefully, and to his surprise the first thing he found himself was a beautiful silver necklace with a green stone.

*Wow, he thought to himself. That's beautiful. Absolutely gorgeous. I wonder . . . I wonder what it would feel like to wear it?*

It was the strangest sensation, the weirdest urge, but in that moment Samuel felt a strange compulsion to place the necklace over his head, its green-stone pendant placed over his chest. The reflection from it glittered beneath the lamplight, leaving flecks of green across part of the room.

*It feels beautiful. It feels right. Why am I wearing this?*

The question was there, but he pushed it aside. It just felt like the right thing to do, for reasons he couldn't place. Samuel set about looking through the rest of the box's objects. There were lots of letters - love letters and letters to family and to friends and the like - and various pins and badges, evidently from her nursing days. There was even her folded nursing cap, surprisingly well preserved. Beneath all of that were the photographs, and it was these that made Samuel's eyebrows rise.

*Woah, she was quite the looker. Damn, quite the hottie back in the day!*

There were numerous photos of Rachel from the 1940s, both in a nicely fitting house dress as well as her nurse uniform from the war. She had what appeared to be dark brown hair - it was hard to judge from the black and white images - which framed an incredibly beautiful face. She looked a bit like Lauren Bacall from that era, with sharp, angular eyebrows that framed an intelligent and sultry face. Her nose was long without being

exaggerated, giving her a dignified bearing. It also suited her cheekbones and smart, wavy hairstyle. It was also clear that she used to have quite the killer bod.

“Damn, was she stacked or are these just the cone bras or something?”

Samuel felt that it really was likely the former, a judgement that was confirmed to be true when he found several . . . saucier images. In these she was posing in sexy dark lingerie, complete with garters and stockings and the works, and her svelte, shapely body was something to behold, especially her rather impressive breasts.

*And they would have been all natural back then too, wow! Um, but why leave these with me?*

The sexy photo one had a woman's signature on it that had to be hers, written in black ink and dedicated to someone. It took him a moment to figure out the cursive handwriting: it looked somewhat like his own, only more womanly.

*'To my Jimmy,' it said. 'Let this give you comfort on cold nights, and give you a taste of what to expect when you come back home - Rachel.'*

“Damn Rachel, you were a tease!” Samuel said, smirking. “She definitely must have forgotten these images were in here, or she wouldn't have given them to me.”

There were others in there: pictures of her with a smiling patient - *she probably made them get better just by looking like she did*, he thought, *or made them pretend to be sick just to see her again!* - as well as a couple of photos of her and a few other nurses hanging out with several soldiers, acting like the boys as they drank and smoked.

*I wish I could have been there*, he thought to himself, sliding his fingers over the photographs. *Fighting for freedom and enjoying the moments of relaxation between the battles. Man, I wish I wasn't so jealous of an old woman who was around during WWII, but look at that carefree attitude! Her joy!*

An icy feeling ran through him as he looked at all the friends and fellow nurses that past-Rachel posed with, happy to be part of the great effort to help, but also clearly in close connection to these people. Envy crept into his system. Samuel's constant sickness when he was young, as well as his weak constitution right through to the present day, meant that he had struggled to maintain friendships all his life. It wasn't like he could smoke or drink, going clubbing was out of the question, and doing intensive physical activities - hell, even just kicking a football! - could often end up with him feeling winded. So one by one his social group had slipped away, leaving him lonelier.

*And it looks like they all went through something big together. The biggest thing, really, given it was the invasion and liberation of France! They all had something important, scary, and wonderful to be a part of.*

Samuel creased his brow as he took out one last item out of the lunchbox. It was a folded letter, but unlike every other item in the box it was fresh. New. He slowly unfolded it, and his brow creased even further in confusion as he took in the words Rachel had written. Once again, something about the handwriting was familiar to him, though he couldn't exactly explain why . . .

*To Samuel,*

*I hope this note finds you well. I tried to remember how this went before, but in the end I've trusted that the words I put here will be as they were quite some time ago, at least for me. For you, there is so much yet to come. I know you are in a hard place right now, but I promise you that it will get easier. You will have difficult times, of course, and things will be very, very different (that is most certain!), but there will also be good health, excitement, love, and best of all dancing! So much dancing, and I miss it. How lucky you are to have that all ahead of you.*

Samuel stopped reading for a moment, barely believing the words on the page. "What the hell? How did she know my name when she read this note? How did she have this letter prepared in advance to know I was coming? And what the heck is she talking about?"

It was enough to make him puff on his inhaler, his breath becoming tight for a moment as a weight settled in the pit of his stomach. He continued reading anyway.

*Still, there will be confusion first of all. And, as I recall, quite a bit of anger. It will pass, I promise. I am genuinely sorry for the life change that is about to happen, at least in the short term. But trust me when I say that you will adjust and find out it was all for the best. After all, there's more than one way to serve one's country and protect the ones you love. But you already knew that, didn't you? All the best, Samuel. You've got a whole new life ahead of you.*

*Love,*

*Rachel Allen*

Samuel turned the paper over, trying to determine if this was some kind of prank or something. In doing so, he noticed one final part of the message.

*PS. Have a nice pair of breasts and a bombshell body ain't that bad once you get used to all the attention, trust me! But even more than that, don't underestimate the power a pretty girl's smile can have on men who need healing. Be proud of good looks: they're not just for*

*show, they can help someone going through a dark time when they need an angel nearby to remind them of what's beautiful in the world. Trust me, I know, and you will too.x*

The young man scoffed, now definitely not believing his eyes.

*What the hell is this all about? This has to be some kind of elaborate prank or something, right?*

He was about to inspect the letter again and try to understand the strangely cryptic words within when something else distracted him; namely, that the green rock pendant at the end of Rachel's necklace was beginning to glow upon his chest.

"What the-"

His sentence didn't get very far, because suddenly the pendant's light expanded and grew in power, becoming a blinding green-white light that extinguished the entire surroundings of his bedroom, the letter, even his own body. All visibility had dissipated, and Samuel flailed, trying to figure out what was going on and if he was blinded. His body tensed, muscles aching, and strange pressures came all over him. Soft hairs, perhaps from the edge of the bed lining, fell over his head, and he struggled to get them off.

And then, just as quickly as it had blinded him, the light faded, leaving Samuel blinking as he tried to determine what had just happened. He was sprawled back in some kind of supply closet, somehow, the structure around him akin to a tent. A large one.

"You okay there, Rache?" came a nasally female voice.

Samuel looked up, blinking as a figure slowly took shape in front of him.

*That's impossible . . . she looks like a World War II nurse!*

It was true; she had the white uniform and the folded white cap of one. Her hair was blonde, pinned back but styled somewhat impressively in a much older fashion. She was quite pretty, and she seemed familiar.

*No. No way. She - this woman looks like the one from Rachel's photos!*

## **Part 2: Back in Time**

"Rache? Rache? Rachel, can you hear me, honey? Are ya'll alright there?"

Samuel stirred, feeling odd. He was laying back against a mountain of supplies, many of which looked . . . almost like bags of ration packs.

"I'm sorry, how did I get here?" he asked, only to pause. Something was wrong, something was very wrong. For one, his body felt all weird. Smaller, though not weaker, at least. And something was weird with his hair, almost like it was . . . longer. And his clothing

had changed - he was not wearing pyjamas anymore, that was for sure. And that wasn't even getting into the two flesh-like weights upon his chest. But more than anything, at least to his awareness so far, was the fact that the voice that had just come from his lips was not his, not his at all. It sounded like a woman's voice, young and smoky and attractive to the ear.

The WWII-era nurse just put her hands on her hips and shook her head, confused and amused in equal measure.

"That's exactly what I'm trying to figure out, hun! Don't tell me you've been sleeping in this room before your shift starts! It's a good thing I found you, huh?"

Samuel swallowed. Slowly, he stood up, and the changes to his body became quickly evident. He was wearing a white uniform; a *nurse's* uniform, and his hair spilled down, dark and perfect, upon his shoulders. Right in front of his gaze was a pair of large, heavy, perfect breasts, providing a rather bountiful appearance from above. And they were *his*.

*Holy shit. Holy fuck. I've become a woman. I'm a woman! How the hell did this happen?*

He looked up, wide-eyed at the woman.

"Did - did you just call me Rachel?" he said, voice still possessing that low, sultry tone to it. "Rachel as in a Rachel Allen?"

She raised an eyebrow, stepped forward, and placed a hand on Rachel's forehead.

"Oh my word, you *definitely* have a fever, Rachel. No wonder you're talking flabbergasted nonsense here! I'll inform the chief doctor that we'll need another girl to cover your shift."

"But I am Rachel?" Samuel continued. "Rachel Allen?"

The woman smirked. "Honey, I ain't ever heard of someone forgetting their name like that. Yes, if you're asking me seriously, you're *Rachel Allen*, tough you must have come down with something serious to be lost like this. You just come with me now and we'll take care of you. You know me, right?"

Samuel shook his head. His heart was pounding anxiously. *This has to be a dream, right? But it feels so real. These breasts, that . . . absence between my thighs, it all feels real!*

The woman seemed bewildered. "Oh, Rache, I can barely believe it! I'm Tiffany, remember? Tiffany Harding. This is definitely serious. Come, we might find you a space to be a patient instead of a nurse! At least you know you'll get good service, right?"

"R-right. I guess."

Samuel had no idea what to do. Had he actually become Rachel? Was this just some strange nightmare? How could any of this be possibly real? His breathing quickened, leaving him to reach into his pocket to extract his inhaler. Only it wasn't in its usual place. It wasn't anywhere.

"Forget something?" the woman named Tiffany said. She couldn't have been older than twenty three, though the style of the time made her look a bit more mature.

"I'm looking for my inhaler."

"Your what now?"

Samuel paused, and not just because Tiffany was giving him an odd look, or because the now obvious pair of breasts were jostling a little in his top, making their impossible presence known. It was also because, despite his very clear panic and shock at what was happening to him, and despite his breathing becoming rapid and fearful, his throat was still not tightening. His lungs didn't feel like they were burning. There was no sense that his head was getting foggy as his body struggled to take in its oxygen supply.

*I don't have asthma anymore?* he thought to himself. *Does this body . . . but if that means I truly am Rachel, then I wouldn't have it, would I?*

It was too much to take in. "I - never mind."

"We're getting you to a room, missie!" Tiffany said. "Take my arm. You weren't drinking again last night, were you? Oh, I bet that's it. No wonder your brain is like a fresh batch of scrambled eggs, you were sneaking over to that poker table with the injured boys again, right?"

Samuel, now trying his best to pose as Rachel while his brain worked at lightspeed, gave a nod and a smile. His hair flicked about messily, reminding him of how long and feminine it now was.

"Y-yeah, that's right," he said, voice an attractive mezzo-soprano. "I was with . . . Phillip and Archer. And Wendy was with me."

The knowledge hadn't come from nowhere, though the words had slipped off of his new tongue almost unnaturally. Samuel recalled that the three individuals he - or she? - had just named were the ones who had been named in the photograph of Rachel smoking a cigar and drinking some booze around a poker table in mixed company.

*But still, the thought just came to me. I need to figure out just what the hell is going on here and then get back to my damn life. I'm not meant to be a woman!*

"Wh-what year is it, by the way?" he said.

Again, there was that odd look from Tiffany as she led Samuel out of the supply room and through a large tent area. To his shock, there were numerous other nurses, army personnel, doctors, and - of course - as they hit the next room, patients as well. Many of them were quite injured; one had a bandage over both of his eyes, the poor man, while another had clearly lost part of his leg in battle. Another was being wheeled around by a nurse who was muttering sweet things to him, making him chuckle despite the burns across parts of his

body. Others though, were even less fortunate. She could hear the groans of soldier boys who were in pain and being given morphine, and for some even that relief wasn't enough for them to bear the pain. One man screamed as his stitching was seen to, and a nurse had to pull a curtain to mask it a little.

"Nineteen forty four," Tiffany said, quietly, though her words carried the power of an earthquake. "Don't tell me you didn't know that, honey?"

She gave a comforting smile, the kind nurses are trained to give, and led Rachel outside. The air was warm and the sky was pink with the promise of a blue day ahead of this early morning, but the wind was chilly. Samuel hugged his arms beneath his . . . breasts, and noticed for the first time how feminine his arms were now, right down to the carefully maintained fingernails. His actions only had the result of emphasised just how voluptuous and simultaneously petite his new form was though, and others made sure he knew that.

"Looking good, Rachel!" called one of the army personnel assigned to the base.

"If looks could heal, that nurse would do miracles," another said, chuckling with his friends.

"At least I'm in heaven, huh?" a wounded man said to his caretakers as he was wheeled past. He was checking out all the nurses, but his gaze fell on Samuel the longest, and the transformed male could only smile awkwardly. He was very aware now of his changed body. His hips were quite obviously wider, and they sashayed from side to side with each step, his feminine gait coming almost naturally to him.

*Oh God, oh God, what if this is real? I'm a nurse. I'm a female nurse. In WWII. I recognise those uniforms, those guns, those tents. It's all authentic! Rachel's letter . . . why has she turned me into her? Or is she making me experience part of her life? And there is no way I'm going to enjoy having these big tits, I'll tell you!*

They bounced in her top as Tiffany took her to the other side of their camp. Here there were more women, but not all were wearing the same white nurse's outfits. Others were in the female version of fatigues, though obviously not for combat purposes so much as practical considerations for a field hospital. A few signs indicated the name and present location of this hospital: The Ninety-First Field Hospital, at Boutteville, France.

*France. Nineteen forty-four. This is during the liberation, then. D-Day has already occurred, and hundreds of thousands of men are invading across the continent, pushing back the Nazi tide. Many of them will never leave. Good God . . .*

Samuel felt himself getting oddly choked up. History had always been fascination and fact for him, easily able to be removed from the intensity and humanity of it. Now, however, a combination of female hormones surging through his system and the fact that he was

*actually here* hit him like a truck. He blinked away tears, especially at the sight of more injured coming in.

“It’s terrible, ain’t it?” Tiffany asked. “Which is why we need your sweet tush back with us when your shift starts. You rest in here and nurse that headache, and get those darn memories of yours back. Get your hair ready too; you look like a total mess and while it makes me look better by comparison, I’d rather you dealt with all the flirts today.”

She took Rachel to bed and practically *forced* her to lie back in it, then set a glass of water at her side and checked her forehead again.

“I’ll be back soon. Ya’ll just wait here and keep that memory joggin’, okay? Must have been quite the party last night, huh?”

Samuel nodded, a sheepish grin on his face that belied his true fears. He only realised as Tiffany left that this was, functionally, *his* room.

*Her room*, he thought. *Rachel’s. Rachel Allen. I’m her. I’m - I need to see myself!*

It was a simple tent, but large, as such things were in a military camp. There were a few bunks - obviously several women would be grouped together - but no running water.

*Of course, it’ll be rerouted from the nearby town. Any pipes or taps will be at a collective location.*

There was, however, still a mirror one of the girls - maybe even himself/herself - had kindly hung up for them to inspect their own appearances. It wasn’t terribly big, but large enough to at least look at his new face, and shoulders, and when adjusted, everything else too.

*Holy shit, I am her*, he thought. *I’m Rachel. I’m Rachel . . .*

The new woman groaned, clutching her head for a moment. Something was happening, and it was affecting her mind. She could feel neurons firing in different directions than usual, connections being made and terminated that should not have been. Her breaths heaved, causing her impressive bosom to rise and fall dramatically on her chest. Even the nurse uniform did little to hide her impressive bust.

“What’s h-happening to m-me!?”

The sensations passed, the headache dissipating. When it was finished, Rachel checked herself over, trying to determine if any more physical changes had taken place. There were none as far as she could tell, but then again this body was still so new and strange to her that she didn’t feel like she had a solid gauge on what even was normal in this highly abnormal situation. All that Rachel knew was that she was suddenly a woman during WWII, and she was living someone else’s life.

*What’s a gal to do? I can’t just - wait. Oh no. Oh shit. Oh freaking hell! I’m thinking of myself as a woman now! Why am I thinking of myself as a woman? Worse, why am I thinking of my name as Rachel!?*

It was undeniable; the former male's very gender identity had shifted. She was still Samuel to her core, personality and everything, and she could still *think* of herself as Samuel and a man, but it didn't come automatically. It was like she had a new default resting state, that of a woman named Rachel. She could get her mind out of that lane but it continued to drift back without conscious focus.

"Great. Just great!" she exclaimed to herself. "So now I'm not just female in body, but mind too! I suppose that'll be all the estrogen travelling through me having an effect, not that they know about estrogen yet. Do they? I don't know too much about what the nursing profession does or does not know, just another crazy fucked up-"

Another headache, another clutching of the head and groaning as a series of headaches came over Rachel. New connections were forming once more, and this time it was a real doozy. When it passed, Rachel felt the weight of new knowledge upon her. She suddenly had a strong understanding of nursing practices appropriate for the time; how to administer bandages, how to conduct proper bedcare, sanitation practices, cleaning of wounds, even the protocols for working with the doctors and army personnel, and that included their names. It was like a set of false memories implanted into her; she couldn't say that she actually *experienced* any of that training, but like a Wikipedia page from her own time, there was a play-by-play recollection she could draw from in a cold, objective way. The only thing was that Samuel-turned-Rachel felt *anything* but cold and objective at that point!

*This is insane. Am I going to forget who I am soon? Is Samuel just going to up and disappear and my identity will be dead and then Rachel will take over and that will be just it and oh God oh God oh God I'm going to die I won't exist anymore I'll never get back to my own time and my mind will be gone gone gone GONE GONE!*

She lost control of her breathing, hyperventilating in the large tent. She had to sit on one of the bunk beds just to wait it out, and she found herself reaching habitually for her inhaler over and over again.

But then nothing further happened. No memory loss, no identity death, not even a suggestion that she couldn't think of herself as Samuel or a *he*, if only she kept concentrating on it. She just now had a female identity, and a working knowledge of the period and the expectations of a nurse's role.

*Okay, maybe it's not that bad. Maybe it's just . . . adjustment. Maybe Rachel - the real one - is trying to teach me something. Yeah, that's it. I could do without the knowledge of how to put a bra on though, thank you. I'm sure it's useful, but . . .*

She looked down at her rather impressive knockers. Her top buttons had come undone during her repeated incidents of panic and mental changes, and the large mammarys now looming out from the bottom of her view made her realise just how busty she now was.

“Okay,” she said aloud, cupping them. “Maybe I do need to know how to use a bra.”

Carefully, wary of any further disruptions or changes, she moved to the mirror and inspected herself again. This time she slowly peeled off her uniform so that she was just in her bra and panties, and then she removed the former to fully see her top half naked. She had to angle the mirror to catch every part of herself, but what *parts* there were to catch! She was indeed just as beautiful, if not far more so, than the photographs of Rachel Jessman had revealed her to be. Her eyebrows were sharp and defined, her eyes intelligent, the rest of her face betraying intelligence and wit and charm. Her hair was perfect for the era, at least once she got it under control thanks to her new knowledge of haircare. It had a natural wave and curl to it that made it quite bouncy, and this only added to her attractiveness. She made several facial expressions in the mirror - shock, a forced smile, fear, gasping, even a kind of pinup sexy smirk. It was alien to behold the beautiful woman’s face do the same in the reflection. It wasn’t her at all . . . and yet it was.

*I’m her, for now. Rachel somehow knew this would happen. I’ve been zapped into her body for whatever reason, and now her face is my face, for now.*

She adjusted the mirror and her positioning to take in more of her body, and this time she actually gasped, jaw dropping at the sight she beheld.

“Oh, those are large. Those are quite large.”

She was referring, of course, to her breasts. They weren’t absurdly big, but their weight was considerable, as was their fullness upon her form. They hung a little lower without support, a result of their sheer size and the influence of ever-intractable gravitational forces, but despite this they were remarkably pert and rounded, forming a natural teardrop shape that came with their bigger-than-average size. Rachel cupped them, feeling the flesh overflow her palms. The skin was surprisingly sensitive, particularly around her big pink nipples, which stiffened at her touch.

“Ooh!” she cooed for a moment. “Okay, gotta be mindful of that. Dear Lord these things are big! What am I - an E-cup? F-cup? Bigger? I don’t know sizes.”

She checked her bra, but it was no real help determining this. It was sized as extra-large, perhaps tailor made or simply from a manufacturer yet to adopt the modern cup sizing that had only come out a decade ago.

*Either way, they’re big, she thought. Big and beautiful. And this bod! Wow! She wasn’t kidding when she described herself as looking good. This is a total bombshell figure.*

She had the curves, the hourglass, even a nice rear - though flatter than modern tastes preferred. Her legs were long, and her skin was mostly blemish free. She had a tiny bit more of a pooch in her stomach than modern women, but it wasn’t unnatural either. In fact, it only flattered her figure and added to her realness. There was, after all, a whole new organ taking up space in there.

*Wait. That's true. I've got a womb now. A womb. I can technically get pregnant and give birth to babies through my . . .*

Her hand lowered slowly down to her underwear. Carefully, she placed her fingers beneath the soft fabric, over the new configuration of her pubic hair, and then to her vaginal lips. She shuddered a little at the sensitivity there. It was totally foreign. Her penis and testicles were gone, replaced by this - this entrance! This tunnel, with its vulval opening, labia lips and small, sensitive clitoris.

"Nope!" she declared, pulling her hand back out. "Nope, nope, nope! Not dealing with that now. I've got to find a way out of here. Get back to my own time. I refuse to end up stuck as a damn female nurse during the greatest war in history. Goddamn it, why couldn't I have just been sent back as a soldier? *Then* I could do something important!"

She quickly got dressed back up again, buttoning up her shirt and hiding away her breasts. She checked her hair too, placed it under her nurse's cap, and just as she was finished the flap to her tent opened and a woman came in, smaller than Tiffany and black-haired.

*That's - I know who that is! She was also in one of the photos. And these new memories, or facts or whatever, I know some things!*

"Rachel, Tiff tells me you were doing poorly?"

Rachel put on her most convincing smile, trying to hide the sea of confusion and anxiety coursing through her. "I was, *Abigail*, but I'm feeling much better now."

Abigail frowned. "You know I hate being called my full name. I much prefer to go by Abby, Rache."

*Okay, I guess I haven't been given all the tools to survive. Still need to keep alert.*

"S-sorry. I'm just tired after last night."

"Yeah, I turned in as soon as I was done. Not one for . . . fraternising."

*Okay, so Abby is a total judge of character. Noted.*

"Well, I'm better now," Rachel said. "So I'll just be going and-"

"Getting started on your shift, of course. I just came to check in and then get you on over there. We've got some new wounded coming in, so it's best we get to it. Poor souls."

Rachel's eyes widened. She hadn't actually intended to *do* nursing! But it was unavoidable now, particularly after she had admitted she was fine now.

"Um, sure. You, uh, lead the way, Abigail. Abby."

"That's not like you. You're usually the go-getter, Rache. Much have been quite the gathering last night. I hope it wasn't too exciting."

*She means I didn't sleep with someone. A man. God, I am not going there!*

"Come on," Abby said. "The show must go on."

Rachel had no choice. She followed Abby back out across the field camp. Evidently they had just arrived in Boutteville, because they were adjacent to the town and a number of adjutants and army personnel were shifting objects and living equipment to nearby houses and larger buildings for a more settled establishment. The pair ducked and weaved through this bustling business, and once more Rachel was hit with a sad longing. She was in France, during the *liberation!* And yet here she was, stuck in a damn woman's body, unable to contribute to the war effort.

*I'm healthy, more healthy than I've ever been - especially in two large places - and I feel more energetic and full of stamina than ever. But I can't use it to do anything I've always wanted to do. What's the point!?*

It was then that Abby opened the flap of the large hospital tent, and the 'point' revealed itself. She had only paid a little attention to it before, the shock of having become female still so fresh. It still was, but before it was even worse. Now though, she could take in the legions of wounded men, many of them injured or crippled for life, others still battling against death and decay, some in the very twilight of it. Nurses and doctors moved from bed to bed, the more severe cases relegated to segmented inner-tent areas. There was misery in the air, pain too, and the scent of septic sanitation battling against septic infection. It was one of the darker sides of war, the aftermath of heroics, the survivors who had to go on.

Something in Rachel's heart broke to see it. She wiped away a tear, her new feminine emotions bubbling to the surface and threatening to overwhelm her. The only thing that held it back, strangely, was noticing the way in which so many of these wounded American heroes were being tended to carefully by the army of nursing staff who saw to them. It was a form of quiet heroism that Rachel had never really considered before, at least as Samuel. She watched this, eyes wide and gaze sweeping, for some time until Abigail caught her attention again. The smaller woman handed her a clipboard from the tent wall with a list of beds and patients to see to.

"Time to get started," she said.

Rachel swallowed. "Of course. Yes. Of course."

*God, what am I going to do? Please don't let me screw this up, and please send me back to my own body and time as soon as possible!*

The new Rachel didn't know it yet, but it would take a long, long time for her to ever see her original body again.

### Part 3: Nursing Duties

The former male was terrified at first, her hands shaking. It was a good thing she had real, practical experience with first aid to fall upon, but the small dose of experience and knowledge her mental changes had given her was a large part of why she didn't completely fall apart either. It helped that she was apparently one of the less experienced nurses out of the group, being only twenty one years old, apparently. The other ladies, particularly Tiffany who was evidently Rachel's best friend, were all on hand to help her and provide guidance and expertise. Most of the men she was assigned to required little more than checking of the bandages, cleaning of their wounds, and general assessment of their pain levels and how they were coping. She also brought them food and drink, and asked them if they needed anything else. Of course, given how she looked, the wounded men were more than happy to tell her.

"Perhaps a little kiss would do some good, dollface?"

"Well, hello nurse!"

"Did I die and end up in heaven? Because you must be an angel."

"Getting injured is well worth it to see a bosomy broad like you, I tell ya!"

It was weird as hell to have men suddenly salivating over you, particularly since more than once the former man had to crack out that old chestnut: "Hey there, my eyes are up *here*." It only got a laugh from the fellas, which had the effect of making her blush upon, as she was referred to more than once, her "sweet cheeks."

The other girls just laughed it off, Tiffany especially. She was quite the beauty, though obviously not in Rachel's league - few women in history surely were! - and when she saw that Rachel was struggling she just patted her on the shoulder.

"What's wrong with ya'll, hun? You'd think you'd never caught the eye of a man with blood in his system before - or in this case, some men with someone else's blood kindly donated."

Rachel was flustered. "It's just that - they keep saying all these comments. It's fucking-"

Tiffany's eyes widened. "My word! Rache, I knew you had quite the lashing tongue but even I didn't expect that kinda foulness to come leapin' out of ya! Okay, who went too far? I don't care if his arms and legs were blown clean off and the Medal of Honor three times over, I'll boot him from here all the way back to his home state and leave his balls right here."

*Holy hell. Tiffany doesn't just go to bat for her friends, she brings the whole baseball team. Rachel was lucky to have her, I guess. And I suppose I am too, in my temporary state.*

"No, it's alright, Tiff," she said, getting a hold of herself. "I'm just . . . out of sorts today. Having an out of body experience, you might say. I'm just getting more comments than normal and half of them can't help but talk about my boo - uh, my chest."

Tiffany smirked, grabbing some extra bandages and waving to an impatient doctor to indicate yes, *I'll be right over, it's not an emergency yet!*

"Honey, I can't help but talk about your chest, and that comes from a place of pure jealousy. Just let the boys have their silly little comments after all they've been through, and bite back at the ones that go too far. Never forget that we control the pain medication!"

Rachel was briefly stunned, until Tiffany burst out laughing.

"For God's sake, Rache, you really are out of sorts today! I'm just joking around, you know that. If it helps some, I'll make sure to keep a close eye on some of these horndogs."

Rachel was more than appreciative of that fact, especially since it meant she could double check her work continually with Tiffany. The woman was a natural flirt, but apparently Rachel was a bit by reputation too, since several of the men who had been here longer treated her with familiarity as she dealt with their injuries, brought them food, got them to take their medicine.

"Consider me the luckiest man alive," one rather handsome black-haired young man said, about her age, if not younger.

Rachel was working on checking the bandaging around a leg that was thankfully healing. She was struggling not to feel sick from dealing with all these wounds, but her first aid training as Samuel and her mental experience as Rachel was at least keeping it at bay. She put on her brave face.

"Why is that?" she asked as she dressed the wound again. "No more pressure to run the ten mile marathon?"

He laughed, then caught himself due to the pain.

"Oh Lordy, and she has a sense of humour too! You sure I can't get just skip the healing and get the leg taken off later on so I can stay a while longer in your company?"

Rachel found herself actually smiling - hell, *beaming*. She couldn't remember the last time *anyone* had complimented or flirted with her, or genuinely desired to stay in her company. She leaned over him a little more closely as she checked the scrap on his neck, only to realise that her impressive chest was closer to his face than was strictly professional. She drew back slowly and played it off like it was her giving him a little bit of joy for the day.

"You've done more than enough," she said, putting a delicate hand on his shoulder. "You're a real hero."

"Please, I barely got a shot off before Fritz hit me with an artillery shell. You girls patching us up, you're the real heroes."

She smiled warmly at his words, and saw that he truly meant them; it wasn't just flirting this time.

"You really mean that?"

"I surely do. Plus, you look even better than us grunts in uniform. I like the name, by the way. Rachel. It suits you."

"I really don't think it does," she said.

"Well, I never thought that of mine either. It's why friends call me Jimmy."

"Jimmy it is," she said, smiling.

He thanked her back. "Hey, that means we're friends."

She laughed, thanked him, and got to the next patient. But his words stayed with her.

*Me? A real hero? I highly doubt that. I was too weak as Samuel, and right now I'm stuck well behind the front. Still . . . he really did mean what he said, didn't he? He thought I was a hero. A hero in war. It's not true, but . . . it feels pretty good.*

It was enough to put a skip in her step, her hips swaying from side to side a little more as she stopped fighting her graceful feminine gait. The compliments, comments, flirting and general gazes continued throughout the long shift, but she didn't mind it so much after that point. Sure, it was still wrong as all hell for a bunch of men to be lusting after her in their sickbeds, but she couldn't blame them too much after all they'd been through, and the killer body she'd been cursed with.

*What am I thinking? I refuse to accept this! I don't care if I've got the body of the best pinup gal who ever lived, I'm meant to be Samuel, not Rachel! And I will not humour a bunch of guys slobbering over me. Jesus, it's like the monkey's paw. I wanted good health, to be in a great war, and for others to like me. And now I'm stuck as a hot nurse in WWII.*

Still, much as she wanted to remain angry, it was hard to be when she was so damn busy, learning as much as she could and trying to stay in character to get through the day. It also didn't hurt that Tiffany was keeping her spirits high, and there was a genuine kind of . . . sisterhood among the nurses. And 'the boys', as the nurses called them, wounded in their beds or awaiting treatment, were fairly harmless for the most part. The ones that were bad news or rude as hell already had a reputation, and so a member of army personnel was always present, thank God. If not them, then the nurses could certainly bring the battleaxe demeanour if necessary.

It was only after the shift was over that Rachel felt her adrenaline finally decrease. She'd been running on a mix of confusion, shock, fear, and a smidgen of genuine curiosity all

day, having to furiously learn and adapt and do her best at a profession that she never was meant to have. Still, she managed to pass well enough, and despite the craziness of her whole transgendered and time-warped situation, she was at least able to get through it all in one piece. That was more than she could say for the men she was tending, many of whom would be forever transformed by the war. It seemed far less glorious to her after just several hours of seeing those dreadful wounds and the pain of those young men up close, and giving them comfort for a time at least soothed herself as much as them.

*Hell, even them really appreciating my looks wasn't so bad, I guess, she thought to herself. God knows they deserve a little break, not that I plan to show off this stolen body too much.*

Which begged the question, when would she turn back? The real Rachel obviously intended this to be a lesson or something of the sort. Samuel didn't believe in magic before, but now as Rachel, she was thinking the real deal in the future was a witch. She resigned herself to likely experiencing a twenty four hour period in this young, curvaceous nurse body. That meant she would have to go to bed as a woman.

"Hey Rache," Tiffany said as she was getting ready to slip into her bunk. She still wasn't used to wearing women's clothing, but the sensation of taking a bra off at the end of the day felt damn nice - like she was setting the 'girls' free and letting them wobble as much as they liked.

"Yeah, Tiff?" Rachel said.

"Take your eyes off those magnificent hooters of yours for a second."

*Shit. I must look pretty odd, being fascinated with my own body.*

"S-sorry," she said, going red in the cheeks.

"Well, if I had a bust like yours I'd play with them everyday. But maybe you've got a chance for someone else to play with them. A few of the handsome recovered boys are having a little send off tonight in the rec room, and it seems a few nurses are invited, and I'm not talking about our stick in the mud Abby. There'll be booze, cigars, games, and . . . dancing." She grinned cheekily at that last part. "You in?"

*Nope. No way. I am not recreating that photograph. The one where Rachel is sitting on a soldier's lap.*

"No thanks," she said. "Not tonight, Tiff."

"You sure? I know the boys would love to hear your lovely singing voice?"

*I've got a singing voice? God, this just doesn't stop!*

"I'm sure that I'm sure, Tiff."

She shrugged. "Your loss. I'll see if I can't snag a handsome soldier for some fooling around tonight. See you in the morning, honey."

Rachel bid her farewell, trying to ignore the history enthusiast in her that would love to hear soldiers swapping stories. But she had already been seen as a piece of meat for much of the day, and just wanted to change back to her body in her own time. So she slipped into her pyjamas and rested in her bunk, trying to get her long hair out of the way. It was a constant annoyance she wasn't used to.

*Just go to sleep, Rachel. I mean, Samuel. Just nod off.*

Only she couldn't. For reasons she couldn't quite explain, her mind kept turning to think about that handsome black-haired soldier Jimmy with the leg injury. His kind words, his rugged good looks, the way his eyes had lit up when he'd seen her. His arms had been quite hairy, and certainly well muscled.

*Why . . . why am I thinking about this?*

Her nipples stiffened, and without even thinking she began to feel her heavy tits. She normally slept on her stomach but found that painfully impossible now, but it left them open to grope and squeeze, rubbing her fingers over her nipples. She unbuttoned her front to feel them properly, and it left her moaning.

"Ohhhh, that's - that's good. Mhmm . . . got to s-stop. I'm not . . . ahh . . . into m-men."

But she evidently was, because she was now imagining that same man fully healed, both legs normal, clothed in a soldier's garb, looming over her with lust in his eyes.

*Mhmmm, why is that so goddamn sexy? What the f-fuck is wrong with m-me?*

The sensitivity in her breasts was incredible, beyond anything she had ever felt. But it was also making her new tunnel become wet with arousal. Once again she lowered her hand down to that impossible place between her thighs, and this time her fingers stuck around.

"Ohhhhhh, mhmmmm," she groaned, the pleasure growing as she found her clitoris. It throbbed with desire, and she found herself rubbing it even as she slipped two fingers inside herself. The sensation was all wrong and yet so, so damn right. It left the voluptuous former male writhing on her bed, and thankful that the other nurses were either on night shift or out at the rec room.

"Ahhh, oohhh, yes. F-fuck me. F-feel m-meeee."

She continued to play with her breasts, marvelling at how large and full and *fuckable* they were. She imagined a man on them, feeling them, even sucking on them. More than that, she imagined a man ploughing into her, penetrating her feminine folds with his erect cock. Taking her, making her a woman in full.

*Why is this t-turning me on s-sooooo much!?*

The pleasure became all too much, and she finally came as she rubbed her left nipple and stroked her vulva. A thunderous shock of ecstasy hit her, and she had to quickly slap her hand over her mouth to silence her own cries.

"MMHPPHH!!

*Oh fuck oh fuck oh fuuuuuuuuck! Oh G-God that f-feels divine! Holy - ohhhh, another one! AAIIIIIEEEE!!*

She was lost in a sea of deliriousness as multiple orgasms cascaded through her perfect body. It left her quaking, her last thought being the attractive sight of Jimmy, naked and manly, lying on top of her, gripping her body as he thrust into her.

*I - I - I can't believe I just did that, she thought she came down from the pure pleasure of it all. I have to turn back. It should happen tomorrow, right? This was just a bit of fun. That's all! This body is clearly attracted to men. Just need to get out of Dodge soon.*

She went to sleep shortly afterwards, still cupping her naked breasts and smiling at her fantasy, however wrong it should have been to her.

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Rachel did not turn back to Samuel or forward in time the next day. Nor did her reality change back the following day, or the day after. In fact, two weeks passed with Rachel having little choice but to continually adapt to her life at the Ninety-First field hospital, even as it began to appropriate nearby buildings for administration and expansion. Men were flooding in from all across the Western Front, and the nurses and personnel and wounded alike continually listened to the radios, anxiously awaiting news of success or failure. Rachel already knew how it would go, of course, but what she didn't know was how long she'd have to experience it for. She was trapped as a woman in a strange time, forced to tend to wounds and help injured men recover, often only for them to be sent back to the front . . . which most of them were itching to return to anyway!

*Am I just stuck like this? Surely I can't just take her life!?*

But that's exactly what it seemed like she was doing. Every day she worked to tend to injured men, serving as their guardian angel, which many of them were quite appreciative of, given her very good looks. A few of them occasionally patted her on the backside or tried to get in a sneaky kiss, both of which galled her at first, but became more of a regular nuisance the longer she spent in this body. It was a different time after all, and many of these men had not seen an American woman in quite some time. Hell, few on the planet had ever seen a beauty like her, and she was starting to know it. As the two weeks passed she stopped trying

to fight her more sensual gait, or to keep her voice lower than her gorgeous mezzo-soprano, or even to keep hunching over to hide her prominent chest. Embarrassing as it was to admit to herself, there was even a point of pride in being known as the most attractive nurse on the Western Front, at least to hear a few men tell it. Certainly, she was the most popular nurse in the Ninety-First, and not one but two men tried not just to woo her, but to actually *propose* to her. Tiffany practically came at them with a shoe.

And that last point was one of the things that made her new existence bearable. Not just being desirable (and God knows she was that), but also suddenly finding herself with a wonderful best friend, one of several friends in fact. She and Tiffany watched each others' backs, gossiped about things back home (which required a lot of improvisation and historical knowledge on Rachel's part), and even talked about the cute boys. The last was reluctant for Rachel, and often had her blushing, but part of her couldn't help but mention that the recovering man named James Cartwright was very attractive, and more than a little charismatic too. She and he had talked more than a few times as she tended to him, and while he was clearly appreciative of her form, he was much more respectful than other men, and seemed genuinely interested in her.

"I'm not going to be here more than a week or two, I'd say," he said one afternoon as she redressed his wounds again. "And I'm able to move around on crutches. Why don't you join us tonight at the rec room for some poker and drinks? It could be . . . well, it could be a date, if you're interested? Or if not, then some mighty fine company."

Rachel bit her lip, trying to force down her body's attraction to this man, a continuing problem after two weeks.

*I'm still here and he's still here. Maybe just one night . . . no. I can't.*

"I'm not sure that's a good idea."

He looked disappointed. "Well, if you ever want to, I'd be happy to have you there. I promise to kick - or punch, I guess - any lout that treats you inappropriately, and also to let you win at poker. How about that?"

*Don't give in, don't give in. Unless . . . unless I'm meant to go along with it. Yes, that makes sense, right?*

She sighed, letting her chest rise and fall delectably. Then, Rachel extended a hand. "Fine, I'll come along. But you're on your best behaviour, alright?"

"Always am," James said. "Or my name isn't James 'Jimmy' Cartwright."

*James . . . something about this man . . .*

But the thought flew from her head, and she consented to go to the rec room that night. She'd been forcing herself not to have fun and mire herself in misery far too long while

stuck as Rachel Allen, and she was over it. Sure, she was also self-pleasuring a lot while the others were away, but that was only raising her libido, seemingly. And besides, this was WWII. The time of the Greatest Generation. If she couldn't go back in time as a self-sacrificing soldier hero, perhaps she could at least meet a few, and spend some time with one James Cartwright.

#### **Part 4: Dancing and Singing**

Ironically, it was only now as a woman in a distant time that Rachel was able to do things she'd never be able to do as Samuel; namely, drink and smoke and party it up. She was dressed in her more proper fatigues, something all the nurses were slowly changing to as the work of treating wounded men became more frequent and command talked more and more of the need to eventually move the 91st when the front advanced sufficiently.

*But I can't deny I look damn nice in it, that's for sure. Weird to feel proud, but I really look like quite 'the catch' as they would say in these times.*

Indeed, the smart mustard green uniform fit her figure smartly, and even with its thicker material, there was no denying that her chest was quite fulsome. With the buttons all done up, it perhaps emphasised it even more than the white scrubs. Her hair had been done to perfect as well - thankfully courtesy of the skills Rachel had picked up in this new life - which left it with delightful curls arranged in a victory bob, though not quite so pronounced as the curls Tiffany gave herself, which seemed like they could carry the entire D-Day force to victory if the hairstyle's name was indeed correct.

"Looking smart, Rache! Finally, you'll be joining us. Bringing that singing tune voice out as well?"

"Oh no, definitely not that!"

"A shame. Maybe they'll be dancing. These uniforms are a bit more restrictive though . . . perhaps some sweet soldiers will carry us."

Again, Rachel just laughed off the comment. She had been in this new body for time enough that she was learning to adapt, not just in her medical practice but also in how she interacted with the other girls. They could be serious when the job was on, but outside of it, there was a genuine buzz and desire to flaunt the societal restrictions placed upon them, to flirt with the men, to smoke cigars and drink with them, and to even swear like sailors and go to bed with soldiers if they were really up to it. And now Rachel was in the middle of it all.

*Still wish I could be one of the soldiers, flirting with the beautiful women, and having a chance to fight with the Greatest Generation. God, I could be just like my grandfather, fighting against the Nazis. Fighting for freedom.*

She sighed as she examined her figure and face in the mirror, noting the lovely red lipstick that Tiff had artfully applied to her features.

"I suppose this'll just have to do," she said.

Tiff hugged her from behind. "It'll more than do! If you can't get a room full of soldiers to look your way when you enter, Rache, then the rest of us have no hope! Now let's go already!"

They left together, a whole gaggle of them, and Rachel's heart beat nervously in her chest as they did so. She was once more aware of how her hips swayed - particularly since she was wearing heels in that moment - and how her large breasts bounced slightly in her bra, hidden away from view by her entirely buttoned coat.

*At least I'm not showing them off,* she considered.

They entered the lion's den, and a cheer from the men rose up to greet them.

"Here come the gals!" one enlisted guard, whose name Rachel remembered to be Robert, said as they came in. Each of the five girls ahead of Rachel - especially Tiff - gave an exaggerated curtsy or extravagant display with their hands. Tiffany stretched one arm out and down and the other out, bending her knees a little so that she looked like she was a dancing act on Broadway.

*If not a burlesque,* Rachel thought to herself. The former male entered somewhat shyly, smiling sheepishly and waving just a little. A couple more hoots and hollers followed.

*Evidently, my reputation as a beautiful gal precedes me entering this body.*

It begged an important question for the new Rachel: was she *possessing* the body? Surely that had to be the case, right? The real Rachel would be sequestered away, perhaps sleeping, perhaps erased entirely, perhaps fully conscious.

*So why don't I feel anything of her? It feels like it's just me in this body!*

"What beautiful dames we've got here this evening," a soldier said, one who had a wrap around his left eye, where he'd clearly been wounded in battle. He had a crutch under one arm as well, but it didn't stop him from nursing a bottle in one hand.

"George, what on earth are you doing out of bed right now?" Gayle asked, one of the other girls. She had lovely brunette hair and quite the trim figure herself, though Rachel had already learned that Gayle had been a bit of an athlete herself, and even fought one boy off who tried to pat her on the backside.

"I'm enjoying the fruits of war, ma'am," George replied, hefting the bottle. "You gals have chosen the right time to show up. Come take a seat, because this was liberated from a French vineyard I was shot at. I figure the owners, wherever they are, probably owe me. I hear the best stuff is in the south, but I'll drink Vichy wine if it means Hitler and his boys can't drink it."

"I'll drink to that!" another soldier declared, himself much more fully recovered.

"Hear hear!" said another, and this one Rachel recognised. It was James Cartright, still handsome, still nursing a bit of injury, but all smiles. She could have sworn there was an actual *gleam* in his eye as he looked at her. He gave a wink, and it made the former male feel a bit funny.

*This body has Rachel's wants and needs - the real her, I mean, if she even exists. I guess that means these warm, fuzzy feelings are . . . attraction. God, just my luck!*

But it was too late, because the nurses were already circling across the rounded table and taking seats. Naturally - and probably by male design for the night - there wasn't enough seats. When Rachel pointed this out, the men just laughed.

"Of course there are!" a man named Jack replied. He gestured to his lap. "First in, best served. I've got all the best cigars - Americana, and French varieties. Invitation goes to the quickest, ladies!"

Tiff squeaked in excitement, and pranced over to him, practically leaping onto his lap with her legs off the side. She reached over, clinging to his neck with one arm, and grabbed a cigar, letting him light it.

"Someone's eager," Janice whispered in Rachel's ear. "I'll take the blonde one. I like a blonde."

"And so do I," George replied, getting himself down into a chair. "But a redhead is truly transcendent."

Janice beamed, clearly enjoying the flattery. She let him pour a drink, then took a cigar handed to her from Tiffany, who was apparently electing herself the Dispensary Officer for the night. Soon the other women were finding their places - two on the remaining available seats, and Gayle upon the lap of another recovering soldier. It left just Rachel, standing there, looking beautiful, she knew, but also the odd one out.

*I am not sitting on a man's lap. I am absolutely adamant on this.*

She noticed that James had slid his seat back, but only at the last second. He smirked at her, as if to say 'I've been waiting for you and you alone, Rachel.' Something about his smirk made her feel a bit playful too, so she strode towards him, letting her hips cock

from one side to the other, and leaned close to him. It was enough to make the heft of her bosom more obvious.

*Easy, girl. I mean, guy.*

One of the men gave a wolf whistle. Another a cat purr. The women laughed, as did the men, as James looked up at Rachel.

"Care for a seat?" he asked.

"Of course," she replied. And then she placed her hand on the back of his chair and gestured with her head. "Would you mind being a gentleman and giving me this?"

The room erupted in laughter, and James, to his credit, immediately leapt off the seat, sitting on the table's edge instead. He nursed his injury carefully, which made Rachel feel a bit bad, but he just gestured that it was no big deal.

"I still have a great view!" he declared to the group. More laughter followed, and Rachel blushed as she realised it meant that he was now staring down at her, including getting a potential peek at her cleavage. She checked her buttons.

"Perhaps later, when the cards come out and the betting starts!" Tiffany said.

Rachel shot her 'the look' - the one she was rapidly learning was a masterful form of silent communication between women - but Tiffany was too preoccupied with her fun.

"Well, now that we're all enjoying ourselves," George said, moving to a gramophone on a nearby table. "How about we enjoy some wonderful tunes from back home?"

He activated the old music device, and soon a lovely pop band song began to play.

"What is that?" Rachel asked.

"You don't know it?" James asked. "It's *You Always Hurt the One You Love*. The Mills Brothers. Great stuff."

The others eyed her curiously, which only increased her blush.

"I'm . . . not a big music person," Rachel said.

"Nonsense! She's a classy singer and everything!" Tiff declared, even as the wonderfully slow, romantic tune continued to play.

"Really?" James said. "I'd sure like to hear that."

She grinned awkwardly. "Can someone pass me a drink?"

"You won't sing."

"Maybe another time."

James shrugged and passed her a drink. She took it and made sure to pour more than was likely necessary. As she did, the song suddenly sped up, hitting its loungey, finger-clicking main beat. The other soldiers and nurses found moments to join in with the lyrics as they continued.

*"If I broke your heart last note, it's because . . . it's because I loved you most of all!"*

Tiffany was already singing along with her soldier man, and several others were joining in. Several were already gathering cards together, while a few more were passing around and sharing cigars. There were only fourteen or so of them in the room, with not enough nurses to go around, so it didn't take long for several smaller groups to form, sharing anecdotes, flirting, talking about how the war was going. The last, however, was quickly clamped upon.

"Uh-uh, not war tonight fellas!" Gayle declared with her authoritative voice. "The war's cancelled tonight, didn't ya hear? Talk about movies, music, sport and even us lovely ladies if you want, but the war is off limits, got it?"

"Yes, ma'am!" two soldiers announced, raising their glasses for another filling.

Soon the hidden crate of spirits was out. Turns out that not only did the commissary have some spirits, but the soldiers themselves had private stashes that were 'liberated.' Rachel relaxed back into her chair with James, a calmness settling over her, partly thanks to the alcohol and partly due to . . . all of it. Soldiers and nurses in the middle of the biggest and greatest war in history, co-existing and laughing and partying and drinking and smoking.

*It's all real. I'm actually here, experiencing a slice of history. As a woman, sure. As a woman with big hooters and a damn fine figure, sure as well. But I'm actually experiencing it. Hot damn!*

"What are you smiling about?" James asked her.

She snapped back into reality. "Oh, just thinking about how wonderful all this is. You know, a real respite from the war."

"Careful, or Gayle will spank you for going off limits."

Rachel giggled. She'd already spanked another soldier for doing so, and now they were all saying "the war, don't forget the war!" to get their own spanking. Tiffany was joining in, and Janice was cackling, already two drinks in.

"Well, I won't tell if you don't," Rachel said, smiling. She took the cigar he offered her, the one straight for her lips, and for reasons she couldn't quite fathom - perhaps just that charming twinkle in his eye, she actually placed it against her own ruby lips. She took a puff of the cigar, the sweet scent filling her lungs before she exhaled it out. "Mhmm, this is really good!"

"Isn't it just?" James replied. "May I?"

She passed it back, and he took a puff, and soon they were passing it back and forth and filling one another's drinks as the two surprisingly opened up to one another.

"You're kidding? You want to go into business when this is all done? What kinda business?"

James shrugged. "You know, I have no idea. I just like the idea of owning my own store. Nothing big, nothing company-sized. Just me and a store in the city, able to meet new and interesting people. Maybe talk about baseball with them."

"You like baseball?"

"I surely do."

Rachel beamed. She *adored* baseball or at least Samuel had. And better yet, she had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the sport's history ingrained into her head, all courtesy of her sport-obsessed father.

"I love baseball," she said. "In fact, I bet I know even more than you do!"

Someone gave a loud 'Ooooooh!' as the challenge was issued, and James sat up a bit straighter, nursing his wound just a little. He slapped his hands together. "Okay, that's a silk white glove slapped across my face right there. I accept. Who wants to give us the questions?"

"Oh, I didn't mean-"

But it was too late. Card games were abandoned as the group turned on the pair, and all the baseball fanatics (almost entirely men) began rapid-fire questioning them.

"How did the Louis Cardinals score in the second game of the season?"

"What's the biggest weak link in the Yankees, Rachel?"

"You're a damn good looking nurse, lady, but there's no way you can name both most valuable players for the season!"

"Where did the Washington Senators rank? Who's their heavy hitter?"

She didn't get all of the questions right, but by God she got most of them. She drank more of the bourbon that was being passed around, had another smoke, and as the questions continued to come she became more confident, sticking her rather ample chest out proudly. At some point, without even thinking about it, she shifted to sitting in James' lap as he tried to keep up with her. She was a little bit inebriated by that point, but the purpose was clear; she was having a devil of a time using her new and splendidly good-looking body to distract him and keep him off balance. She minded his bad thigh, so she was only sitting on his right leg, but it gave a strange little thrill at the same time.

*I can't believe I'm doing this, but I'm actually winning, so who the damn cares?*

"Alright, I give up!" James finally exclaimed. "Someone give me a cigar already! And a drink. I've been outfoxed."

"And by one foxy lady too," another soldier said, a figure by the name of Thomas.

"She's that indeed!" James declared. "And if I may say so - and please blame the drink for me being such a lout - but altogether far too covered up as well."

A warm flush rushed through Rachel. In a fit of spontaneity without thought, she undid the top two buttons of her uniform top, allowing her chest to 'breathe' a lot easier. The result was that her cleavage could be seen through the gap, as she also did her white shirt buttons undone a little. Then she relaxed into James' lap.

"That better?" she said, aware that he now had a prime view down her top.

"Wow. Uh, yes ma'am, I'd say so."

The entire male section of the room were gazing her way and trying not to be obvious. Even a few others like Janice were looking. Tiffany was just joyous, mouthing 'nicely done!' to her.

*What is wrong with me?* Rachel thought. But the truth was that the freedom and flirtatiousness in the air was infectious.

"You love baseball, you've got an angel's kind heart, and you look like a million bucks. Is there anything you can't do?"

"I can't travel to the future just yet," she said, giggling.

"Well, I'd rather you stay right here anyway."

He placed a hand on her thigh as she grabbed her glass, and the sensation of his hand there made her feel excited. Warm. Aroused.

"Hey everyone, give us a cheers!" came a voice.

Rachel looked up to see an old-timey camera in the hands of one of the soldiers.

"CHEERS!" the group declared, her own tipsy self included.

And thus the photo was taken.

*Holy shit, it's that photo. I just made history. The history in the lunchbox that I've seen.*

The music started up again, and with it further excitement. Tiffany squeaked, grabbing the nearest soldier and pushing him to an empty space, practically forcing his arms around her waist. Gayle dragged a man up there.

"No funny business," she declared, though her mischievous smirk was evident.

Thomas approached Rachel. He smiled as he extended a hand as the next upbeat tune played on the other side of the gramophone.

"Care to dance, ma'am?" he asked.

She swallowed. The urge to dance was there - it felt like another of Rachel's skills being downloaded into her brain. But she managed to shake her head.

"N-no thanks. I think I'll stay here until this poor wounded soldier can get off his crutches and show his two left feet."

James guffawed. "Another challenge? Well, I must get better in the hopes of achieving it. You know, you're absolutely one of a kind, Rachel. I mean it. I've never met anyone like you."

"Am I one of your interesting people? The kind you like to meet?"

As she said this, she laid further back against him, raising her head so that she was looking up at his eyes from below, her hair falling over his chest, her breasts straining against her top rather visibly. It was, without even meaning to be, a deeply seductive pose, one that could have made her a pinup model. A man even whispered as such across the room.

*'I have to tell Bennett. He won't believe his luck with her!'*

"I'd say you've captured my interest," he said rather suavely. Something about the way he said it, the easy confidence but lack of chauvinistic swagger, made her smile.

"Especially with that gorgeous smile of yours," he added, raising an eyebrow.

They clinked their glasses together and had another drink. Rachel's confidence was surging. Despite all that had happened to her - the sex change, the time travel change, the new skills and position in life - this was actually quite fun!

"So, Rachel Allen," he said, "what about your interests?"

"Mine?"

"Well, I've talked your ear off about baseball, only for you to pull the rug from under me on that one, and about what I want to do when I get home. I like dogs too, if I can throw that in."

"I like dogs too," she said, smiling up at him.

*I know it's just this female body and its attractions, but he really does have lovely eyes. And his light brown hair is so . . . nice. Yeah, nice. It suits him.*

"Oh no, I'm not talking dogs then. You'll prove to be a master breeder who knows every cocker spaniel's last name on this side of the planet."

"Just this side?" she teased, making him chuckle. "Well, okay. I guess you could say I'm interested in war."

His eyebrows raised. "Well, you're in the right place."

"I mean that when I was a - a girl, I always wanted to fight. To be a hero. To serve my country."

"Not exactly a dame's job, is it?"

*No, it isn't. Not a job for a puny man with chronic health issues though, either.*

"No, I suppose not."

“So you volunteered to be a nurse near the front instead?”

“It’s the most I could do, I suppose. I didn’t exactly *intend* to be here,” - that much was true, certainly - “but now I am, and I want to do the most I can to help the war effort. I really believe in it, just like I believe in the men who fight it.”

James smiled. “Well, if a woman like you can believe in a man like me, I’d say there’s no chance of us losing.”

*I want to tell him there isn't, but it's like I can't say it. I can't act on future knowledge. Ugh! This is frustrating.*

But the frustration melted away as he placed a hand around her waist, adjusting her on his lap. His other hand fell softly to her stocking’d thigh, and for a moment she just luxuriated in the feeling. He was warm against her, and for once she felt almost kind of *right* in this body. She didn’t even mind that he was sneaking glances down at her very impressive cleavage, or that he was clearly flirting. She was getting a little into the role and flirting back.

The gramophone record was flipped, and once more *You Always Hurt the One You Love* played. This time, however, Rachel was inebriated enough that she couldn’t help herself. She raised her voice and began to sing, Tiff cheering in the background and even joining in.

*“You always hurt the one you love  
The one you shouldn't hurt at all  
You always take the sweetest rose  
And crush it till the petals fall.”*

The room was soon aloft with more singing, but it was her own voice that led the chorus, a sweet and melodic sound that was almost professional in its quality.

*I sound so hypnotic. Since when can I sing like this?*

The knowledge and skill set of her new self guided her, and she leaned into it, standing up and waltzing around the table, raising her voice higher as the tune continued, making it her own. The others fell silent, listening to her, some even grabbing a partner and engaging in a fun little tipsy waltz. But the entire time Rachel kept her gaze upon James, performing for him, leaning a little over the round table so that he on the other side had a delectable view of her deep line of cleavage, then raising herself up and strutting around. She was acting more feminine than ever, and something about it was wild and freeing, just like the letter had promised it would be. But she didn’t care about the real Rachel’s comments by that point; her entire focus was on her and James, and as the song reached its end she sauntered back to him, uttering the final lines.

*“You always break the kindest heart  
With a hasty word you can't recall, so*

*If I broke your heart last night*

*It's because I love you most of all!"*

The others cheered as she finished. She slid back into James' lap with the last line, singing it straight to him as if she were Marilyn Monroe singing to John F Kennedy. He looked at her with such a captivated gaze that it gave her an inner glow.

"That was something else, doll," he said, clearly amazed. "You can sing too?"

"I suppose I can," she declared with a slight giggle, sliding back against him. The next tune played, but she was comfortable where she was against this intriguing man.

*It's just good fun. Besides, he's pretty hot. And maybe it's just the drink but I'm feeling so darn comfortable up against him. And the music is lovely. And the drink is good. And - and - what is THAT!?*

Her eyes widened as she realised *exactly* what the feeling pressing against her backside was. It was the only natural consequence of a woman as beautiful as her pressing herself against the lap of a man as red-blooded as him. He was hard against her, and clearly trying and failing to hide it from her.

"Woah!" she exclaimed, standing up. James had gone a bit red-cheeked, and was hunched over to hide his sudden erection.

"Hey, can you blame a guy?" he whispered.

"Sorry, I just . . . I didn't mean to stir such a reaction."

The awkwardness made her laugh, and with their shared alcoholic state they both began to laugh together, and soon they were giggling and chuckling and guffawing to the point that others were looking at them.

"Mind letting us in on the joke?" Tiffany asked.

"Did James tell a tall one?" George asked.

"A tall something!" Rachel exclaimed, and then she and James burst out laughing all over again, much to the bemusement of everyone else.

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Rachel was starting to feel tired and sleepy, and as much as the alcohol was making her giggle, she knew she had to be partly responsible. James volunteered to escort her back to her tent, and Tiffany being Tiffany, she checked if Rachel was okay with it.

"I am," she said. "He's a nice guy. He won't do anything."

*I know he won't. I'm not really a woman. It'd just be . . . weird.*

"Okay, well, you two have *fun* then."

"It's not like that."

"Sure, hon. Best of luck with that tall drink of water."

James took her arm and led her back. She swayed a little, and the pair laughed.

"You really are a singular woman, you know that?"

"I don't feel like a woman at all, somedays."

"Still hankering for the fight?"

"I suppose, but I guess I'm seeing that I can help a little here."

He paused. "I think you help a lot, actually. You help make people better. You get soldiers back on their feet. You give us reasons to keep going, and you keep our spirits high. And, if I might say before you get in that tent, you look absolutely angelic while doing it too."

"I don't think angels are meant to unbutton their tops quite so low as I have tonight."

He smirked, drawing closer to her and placing his hands upon her upper arms.

"Well, I like my angels with a bit of fire inside them, from time to time. But you are an angel, that's for sure. I never heard a song so sweet as what you did before."

She looked up at him, and her thoughts flew. *Oh fuck, he's so handsome. He's looking at me and he's so fucking handsome and I'm feeling so warm and good and my nipples are stiff and I'm getting wet down there and -*

They kissed. It was, in a way, almost fated. At least it felt that way to the new nurse, hurled back in time and placed before this dashing, caring, and funny and sweet man. They kissed for a long time, their lips locking together, their tongues even slipping into one another's mouths, and soon she was moaning a little, experiencing the bliss of being a woman held by a strong man, even if that strong man had a crutch under one arm.

He parted from her, smiling.

"I rather liked that," he said. "I rather like you, Rachel."

She couldn't help herself. No one had ever looked at Samuel this way. She *beamed*, flashing her brilliant smile. She placed her arms around him, or perhaps she already had? Time seemed to slow.

"I rather like you too, James. Or is it Jimmy?"

"My friends call me Jimmy. But I like it when you call me James."

"James it is then," she said, kissing him.

*God, he feels warm. God, he feels - oh no. I'm about to do something stupid.*

"Would you like to see my tent?" she asked. "It's got a comfortable bed."

"I wouldn't take advantage of a woman like that."

She smirked, the rush of liquid alcoholic courage and tipsy delight coursing through her body. It was very attracted to this man, and it had been so, so long since she had gotten laid, that even getting laid as a woman seemed . . . delightful.

“Then let me take advantage of you,” she replied.

But he stopped her. “Not tonight,” he said. “Besides, I think I might rip some stitches open. We’ll make this a perfect goodnight, and see where the future takes us. How about that?”

He kissed her again, and she returned it, and then he made his way back. Rachel got back into her tent and curled up in her bed. She was alone, of course; the others were all still out. It gave her a moment to calm herself. When her body was no longer so utterly horny, and her mind a bit more clear, she uttered the only thing she could.

“What the fuck was I thinking?”

## **Part 5: Into the Swing of Things**

Rachel still couldn’t believe that she’d almost had sex with a man, though at least that man had been James Cartwright. It didn’t hurt that he was damn good looking, or that she’d started imagining him when she had time to ‘deal with the plumbing,’ so to speak. As embarrassing as it was to admit to herself, it was very, very clear that her new nurse self was very attracted to men, just as men were naturally very attracted to her. She distracted herself from this clear awareness by throwing herself into her duties and getting into the swing of things. In the following days she became a more and more competent nurse, not just in how she dealt with physical wounds, bandages, the use of needles (God, they were big in this time, bit and threatening!), and so on, but also the less savoury aspects such as dealing with belligerent or depressed patients, helping them change or deal with traumatic imagery.

It was during those times that James’ words kept coming to her; that she was almost like an angel in the ward, even if it did seem a bit self-important to think so. Men brightened up at her presence, they flirted and commented on her, and while she got some ugly words and some unwanted groping, most of it was genuinely appreciative. Besides, Tiffany and Janice and Gayle and the others were always there, a coalition of nurses looking out for one another, particularly since the actual doctors were useless. She made it a point to avoid Doctor Grey in particular; he was an ass who felt the nurses deserved to give him attention, and he more than once commented on ‘what a great wife’ Rachel would make one day.

"I imagine you'll make a good wife too, Dr Grey," she simply retorted, leaving him humiliated as several nurses and even some wounded nearby cackled at him being emasculated so publicly and deservedly.

She quickly got a reputation for her quick wit and clever wordplay, something she'd prided herself on privately as Samuel, but had never been able to show off due to her lack of social connections. Now, her social circle was constantly expanding. She had new friends among the nurses, the incorrigible and excitable Tiffany closest of all, and a good number of the soldiers were very pleased to know her, though a few she knew were only keen to get into her pants. Still, she did her job every day, still wondering when she would change back, but also finding herself no longer anxious about it every waking second. She was doing good work, just as the older Rachel's letter had said, and she truly was being a light in dark times for many of the more severely wounded, seeing them purely as people. All the nurses were, of course, not just her, but it started to be a point of smug pride to her that she was the prettiest of them all. It wasn't important to the work of course, but it certainly helped the soldiers' morale.

And, of course, there was also Jimmy. James. Rachel saw him every day, and despite her shame at just how far she'd gone that one night, she just couldn't keep away from him. And that wasn't just because she helped check on his wounds and make sure there was no infection as part of her duties - no, she actually waved off Clara from seeing him just so she could.

"My own personal angel," he said, always smiling as she approached. She even put a little more wiggle in her hips as she walked, and got closer to him. Almost too close.

"That's me," she declared. "Though I doubt I'll be getting so tipsy next time. I made a fool of myself."

"Well, I don't agree with that. But I hope you don't regret everything, especially the kissing."

His gaze was confident, but she could see the nervousness in his eyes.

*He really is worried I'm not into him. That I was just a bit drunk. Well, that should be the case! But then why do I feel so guilty . . . and why would it be a lie to tell him otherwise.*

"I enjoyed it plenty," she said, realising she was telling the truth. "I haven't been kissed in a long time, and never quite like that."

"In a good way?"

"In a marvellous way," she said, again realising her own honesty.

"Remind me to get wounded more often then, just so I can see you some more."

Her heart nearly stopped. "You're not - you're not back at the front soon, are you?"

"Not for another couple of weeks, I'd say, but it'll be happening alright. Thanks to you I'm mending quicker - I told you you were helping the war effort. What's wrong?"

"I . . . I don't want you to go."

The man shrugged. "And I'd rather stay here in your presence than anything else, if I'm not being too forward, especially if I can hear you sing again. But this is a war worth fighting for. It truly is. And I have to do my part just as you do yours."

Something cracked inside of Rachel, slipping through her ribcage and slicing through her heart like a small, ethereal dagger.

*He can't go. What if he gets hurt?*

It was a wave of feminine emotion, the stronger compassion and empathy she now possessed. She cupped his cheek with her hand.

"Is there anything I can do?"

He gave a very characterful smirk. "Well, there is one thing. You see, I'm healing up pretty good that I don't need the crutches, and I'd like to see more of the local town before I go, especially if I could have a pretty lady like yourself on my arm. What do you say, Rachel, would you like to have a wartime date with me? I promise I'll even let you win baseball trivia against me again."

"Let you?" she said, grinning.

"Fine, I'll be trounced six ways to Sunday, but the local frogs won't know it. And we can eat some of their cheese and try some of their wine. If nothing else, we can have some fun and you can decide if you want to kiss me again."

*This is stupid, she thought. I can't say yes to this. I've already fallen too far into being Rachel Allen. Whatever lesson she's trying to teach me is something I've already learned, right? I could be zapped back any second, and be Samuel again. Sad Samuel. All alone, and ill, and weak, and without people looking at him like James does at me, and oh God I'm doing this, aren't I?*

"It's a date," she said.

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It took another week to organise, when he was recovered enough and she had the free day off from her constant duties. It didn't stop them talking and flirting, and James was even drawing her into ideas about businesses for when the war ended; he was currently stuck on baseball card memorabilia, but she managed to talk him away from it - too specific. But even

those chats were lively, with both of them a little anxious to get on their date, and Rachel anxious about it in other obvious ways too.

Tiffany was ecstatic, of course.

"Finally! Looks like that bonk on the head is now finally healing for ya. I swear, I was getting a bit concerned there with how shy you were acting, until you finally broke out the pipes that night. Even then, you've been so shy on this guy: are you getting really sweet on him? Lord knows he's sweet on you."

*God, if she thinks that, what does everyone else think?*

Rachel coughed a little. "It's just a little outing, nothing more."

"And what will you be wearing?"

Rachel paused, and gestured at her outfit. "I thought . . . in this. Oh, that's not a good idea, is it?"

Tiffany felt her head. "No fever, that's for sure, just rank stupidity. I swear, those looks and those fine tits are wasted on you. If I had them - and I'm a fine looking dame if I may say so myself - I'd be flaunting them like they were going out of style. No, we have an emergency here, and your best friend is here to solve it. It's time to glam you up something serious. That handsome soldier won't even know other women exist when you're in front of him, just you wait."

Rachel was practically helpless to what followed. Tiffany rummaged through all of her things, and all of Rachel's, in search of the perfect dress. It turned out Rachel already had one, and finely pressed to. It was an admittedly gorgeous dress, emerald green to match her magnetic eyes of the same colour. Rachel somehow knew to be a 40's style peplum, and when she put it on, after a few moments' awkwardness realising she was wearing an actual dress, she found herself examining her reflection and swirling the hem about, getting a feel for it.

*It would look great with a hat, she thought to herself, but I think I rather like my hair out, and Lord knows James likes it too.*

The thought of James made her feel somewhat excited, and her cheeks blushed. She checked herself out again, seeing how the dress conformed nicely to her figure. Certainly, there was little mistaking what a prominent bust she had, though it was also modest enough not to make seem . . . unseemly, she supposed. Tiffany was quick to shower her with compliments, as well as to touch up her hair and makeup.

"Now, you show that gentleman a good time, okay? He's off to war again soon, and that means every moment counts."

"Thanks, Tiff."

"Every moment."

"I get it!"

Her friend just hugged her joyously, clearly happy for her.

"Consider me officially jealous. Now get on out of here and make that man's jaw drop to the floor!"

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James' jaw did not, pointedly, hit the floor, but that was only because he was very, very obviously trying to keep his cool, and failing badly. It made Rachel burst out laughing in her singsong voice.

"What? What's so funny?"

"It's just that you are trying very badly not to smile from ear to ear, cool guy."

He snorted. "Very well, I shall abandon my fierce soldier's face and say the obvious: you are astoundingly beautiful."

"You're not so bad yourself," she admitted, grinning in turn.

It was certainly true there as well: he was dressed in a sharp grey suit, the kind one would be expected to wear in public in this day and age, albeit far from the frontlines, of course. With his smart burgundy shirt beneath, not to mention his clearly muscled figure and tall stature, it was doing things for her.

*Damn, this body is very attracted to him. To men in general, but definitely to him. I better be more careful than I was the other night.*

"Shall we head on out?" he asked.

She extended her arm gingerly, but before he could take it, a voice cried out.

"Wait! Don't go! Not just yet!"

James looked up and sighed. "Oh, it's Bennett. Everyone's favourite wartime photographer."

A shorter man with a black moustache ran forward. He looked Italian, but spoke with a thick Southern accent.

"That's photographer, illustrator, and publisher, I'll have you know. My dear lady, I am told you are the esteemed Rachel Allen, are you not?"

"I . . . am," she said.

The man bowed in a profusely over the top manner. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Alexander Bennet. I publish wartime photos for the public, but I also dabble in side photography. I would love to take your pictures."

"Um, what for?" she asked, even as James coughed.

"To stick you on the side of airplanes wearing loose dresses and obvious garters," the man said somewhat brusquely. "Shall we go, Rachel?"

But Rachel hesitated. "You're in charge of some of the pinups?"

"I . . . to allow that more distasteful word to be allowed, then yes."

*A real pinup art. Just like from the photos in Rachel's box of memories. But to have a chance to have my image on the side of a real bomber craft. Wow . . . that would be something else. I mean, sure, it would be a little embarrassing, but I'm already a hot looking gal, so why not take advantage of it and make history? Besides, it's a bit of a boost to wartime morale, right?*

"What would I be on?" she asked, stepping away from James for a moment. "A B-17 Flying Fortress? The B-25 Mitchell? I hear there's a new B-29 Super Fortress they're making, it would be a real thing to be considered for that. Do the Brits do an exchange? I only ask because, no offence to our own American side, but that Lancaster has to be the most beautiful four-engine bomber in the entire war, I tell you. Not that the Germans ever got around to making a four-engined Heinkel, the morons. Just another thing that cost them the Blitz."

Both James and Bennett were briefly stunned, and it took the small, portly man a moment to recover himself.

"Well, uh, I see you really know your stuff, Miss Allen! If you would consider allowing me to do a model shoot, you would receive some small royalties of course."

"Don't tell me you're actually considering this?" a bewildered James asked.

"Why not?" she shrugged.

"Because - because -"

She placed her hands on her hips and cocked her head to one side. As Samuel, women's rights had been something she'd been supportive of but never really *felt*, but she was experiencing a sudden surge of feminism right now.

"Because I can't make my own choices? Because I can't be a little risqué? You liked that more than enough the other night when I was smoking and drinking."

"But this is public!"

"And lucrative!" Bennett added.

She shrugged again. "I don't see how it'll hurt. It's a bit of fun, it'll be part of history, and who knows? A bit of fun for the boys. Now, are you going to make this an issue or are we going to have a fun time out?"

James sighed, collecting himself. "Of course. She doesn't have to take photos now, does she?"

"Of course not!" Bennett declared. "I need to get some things set up first. Tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow it is," she said, that dawning female confidence rising further. "For now, my man here is taking me on a date."

*Okay, this is more than a little fun, twisting him about like this, she thought to herself. I've never been able to be so while. The irony that it took being a woman in a sexist past to actually achieve that!*

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It was a lovely date indeed, and rather aimless in the good sort of way. The region of Boutteville provided some lovely views, though the scars from war were also evident. Several children flocked to greet them as they visited the nearby village, along with other soldiers out and about, while some French were clearly not happy to feel occupied a second time. But the day was beautiful, and the village quaint, and it gave itself over to lovely talks. Rachel found herself chatting about all kinds of subjects: her hopes, her desires for after the war, what she wanted to achieve. They were all filtered through the compulsions of her new role, but she could also be surprisingly candid, talking about her sickness as a child, how she was once frail and weak, and how she wished to help play a part in making the world better, even if it meant sacrificing what she had.

"That's very noble of you," James remarked. "I'm embarrassed to admit I got more into the war for excitement. Combat wrenched that right out of me. Now I know the duty of it, and what has to be sacrificed. And I would sacrifice, if it meant someone like you could walk free of it all, Rachel. I mean that."

His words warmed her, and as the day continued on she was surprised to find that as she talked of her childhood - she was able to make tales of her father and mother that were very close to her own past, just altered to the present - that they seemed to almost manifest in reality. A compulsion came over her as she talked of her 'war hero' father to reach her hand into her purse, and when she pulled it back, there was a photograph in her hand, blurred and poor quality but all too real, showing a man who must have been her father.

"That's him," she said. "Harold Allen. My father. He died in 1917 on the Western Front."

*Okay, I definitely did not intend to say that. But whoa, this photo . . . it's like I just . . . conjured it.*

James took the photo. "He looks like a good man. Certainly a brave one."

"He was," she said. She had to wipe away tears. Her father's death - her real father, that was - had stuck with her a long time. Only now as a woman could she find it acceptable to cry about it. "And my mother too. She was . . . also a nurse. She inspired me too. She passed away when the Spanish Flu came around again."

Another photo was suddenly in her purse, and she could pass that to James as well. He took it carefully.

"I can see the likeness. I'm sorry, I had no idea. I feel so lucky, both my parents are still alive and well."

"You should send them a message when you can, make them know they're loved. You never know when it's your last chance to do so."

It was a sentiment from the heart, and he took it on. The pair moved on to other discussions, but Rachel's mind kept going back to the photos.

*I checked my purse numerous times before heading out. They were not in there. They weren't. Did I invent them into existence? Am I mapping out Rachel's backstory? Wait, then that would mean . . .*

The revelation hit her like a truck.

*Rachel doesn't exist. Or at least, not as I thought she did. She's something else. I don't know who the old lady I encountered was, but she sent me back into this life not to possess someone, but as an entirely fabricated woman.*

It explained so much, right down to how easily Tiffany and others were able to excuse her confusion at first, to how Rachel had a set of skills that made no sense for her to obtain, to even the convenience of her coming here, in this form, to this time and place. Reality had warped around her, allowing for Samuel to become Rachel Allen.

*But to what end? Why would that woman - if she even is human at all - do that?*

There was no point in trying to guess at the impossible. But it stayed in her mind a while, even as they had afternoon lunch together, and then went to the local bar as well. It was more like a tavern, it was so old, and that lent an extra charm to it. James paid for some further food and some drinks, and she found her anxiousness falling away again as she spent time in the company of this sweet, handsome man. Naturally, the conversation turned to dogs and baseball, the former because she loved dogs too, the latter because she really wanted to toy with him again. As they laughed and talked and drank, she found herself playing with the emerald stone pendant on her necklace. James regarded it with interest.

"That's a lovely stone you've got there. Can I ask what it is?"

Rachel held it up carefully. It was strange, she hadn't really thought much about the pendant since her time travel and transformation.

*But hadn't I felt compelled to put it on? Wasn't it the glow that changed me? It's like this green gem doesn't want to be thought about.*

"It's . . . a bit of a mystery," she admitted. "It was given to me by an . . . acquaintance. I was sort of taken with it, and she let me have it. I suppose she thought it would bring change. That's what it's supposed to do."

"And has it? Brought change, I mean."

She looked into his handsome face and found herself drawn into it.

"I suppose it really has," she said, putting the green gem necklace back.

"And has the change been good?" he asked, extending his hand to take hers. She let his fingers intertwine with her own, enjoying the feel of his coarser skin, of the masculine feel of him.

"Jury's still out, I suppose, but things are looking good, I'd say."

"Well, that warrants another drink of celebration, I'd say!"

They continued to enjoy their date. Rachel talked about her love of music, and while some of it flowed from her new singing expertise, she found herself increasingly and genuinely entranced by the tunes of this time. She and James swapped favourites, recommending jazz bands and even the sad songs of the blues. As they did so, she continued to idly play with the green gem pendant, considering it.

*Maybe now that I'm aware of it again, this is the way to change me back. Maybe it's my path to becoming Samuel again.*

Strangely, the thought didn't fill her with the same hope that it did before. In fact, warmed by the company of James, it actually brought a kind of sadness, perhaps even regret.

*Surely I don't want to stay? I'm a woman, for God's sake! I've got boobs! A vagina! I'm dating a man currently. I can't keep this up, can I?*

But as the drinks flowed and the two continued to flirt, her hesitation only continued to grow. She found every excuse to hold James' hand, to lean in close, and to emphasise her own impressive chest. They were certainly heavy enough on her back that she didn't feel too bad for at least taking advantage of them! Soon, in fact, she was giggling as they exchanged silly stories, lost in his eyes and his gorgeous smile.

That was, until after returning from the bathroom to rejoin their table, whereupon another soldier currently off-duty slapped her across the backside. By instinct, Rachel span

around in shock and slapped the man across the face. It connected with an impressive force, making the man stagger back.

"How *dare* you!" she cried. "You - you pig!"

The man recovered, smirking in a rather lecherous manner. "Just enjoying some of the fellow pork, honey. But you're more like a cow with a pair of 'udders' like that! Ha!"

Fury and shame ignited within her, and she covered her chest up with her arms as if they weren't already clothed in a brassiere and dress.

"Sir, you're drunk. Walk away now."

He stepped closer instead. His breath reeked of alcohol. "And what if I don't, baby doll? What if I say I want a piece of action from a hot miss like yourself? What if I just want a bit of grab and squeeze for all the hard work I've been doing on the front?"

She readied a slap again, but he caught her hand. Grinning, he made a motion to kiss it. It was at that moment, however, that someone tapped on his shoulder. The lecherous pervert turned his head.

"Hey, I'm busy he-"

"The lady's taken," James said, before delivering a punch to the man. It knocked him flat over.

*God, my hero. I've turned into a freaking damsel in distress!*

She hugged James. "Oh, thank you. That man was being such a total jackass!"

"Don't worry, Rache, I've got your back. I won't let anyone-"

"James, watch out!"

The man was back up on his feet and racing towards Jack. He slammed into him, and soon the entire attention of the tavern was on the two men as they crashed over a table, fists swinging. What followed was an absolute calamity of a bar fight, as they tustled and fought in an increasingly erratic and uncoordinated manner. There was a point where Rachel stopped being dazzled by the man who had come to her aid and just started rooting for him from the sidelines like a cheerleader.

"Right hook! Now get him with the left! Watch out, your left ribs are exposed!"

"I think I've got a handle on it, thanks!" he said, and she quieted with embarrassment, until the next hit came in and he toppled. A fist slammed into his wound, sucking the air from him. Rachel watched as the crude man began to choke James. She didn't even think at that point; she simply grabbed a bottle of bourbon and *slammed* it over the man's head. He toppled to one side, his expression telling them that he was seeing stars.

"Th-thanks," James muttered, taking her hand to help him up as he clutched his side.

"No problem honey, but I think we better get out of here. This is about to become a real mess!"

She indicated to the bar patrons moving towards them, and then to the American soldiers in the bar stepping up to stop them. In mere moments the outraged French citizenry and American liberators were up in fisticuffs, a proud bar tradition. Rachel ran to James and grabbed his hand.

"Woah, Nellie!" James declared.

"C'mon, you midwestern boy, I think it's best we leave!" Rachel declared, pulling him away from the crime scene and out towards the exit.

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The two giggled and laughed and cackled as they managed to find a little alley to hide in. Not that anyone was actually pursuing them, but it felt taboo in an exciting way.'

"I can't believe you punched him!" Rachel said.

"I can't believe you slapped him first!" James replied, chuckling. "You really are one of a kind, Rachel. Really, you are. I've never met anyone like you."

The former male found herself biting her lip to hide her expressive grin. "I've never quite met anyone like you either, James. That sure was something to see. I never thought I'd see a handsome shining knight come to my rescue."

"Well, I only do it for the most beautiful princesses."

"Are you sure you're not from the Mid-West? Because that was some diet corn right there."

They shared another laugh, her clinging to him and wiping tears from her eyes. And then, the laughter faded, and an awareness seemed to emerge in both of them.

*This is a moment, isn't it?* she thought to herself, as she raised her chin to look at him, and he placed an arm around her. *I could stop it. I really could.*

The epiphany was like being hit with a freight train.

*But I don't want to.*

They kissed. Passionately. Their hands ran over each other's bodies in this little alleyway between houses, nestled and out of sight. It was dark, but there was enough light from across the street that they could make out the other, and drink in the sight of their attraction. They were drunk, they were keen, and Rachel gave herself over to the feelings that had been bubbling and boiling and rising for several weeks now.

"I want you," she moaned, kissing him again even as he began to unbutton her top.

"I've wanted you since I first laid eyes on you," James said. He grunted as she lowered her hands, daring to rub his clear erection in his trousers.

"No, I really want you."

"Right here?"

"Mm-hmm. Please, before I regret it. I want you now."

"God, you are perfect."

They came together once more, even more passionately. He kissed her neck tenderly, making her gasp with arousal. Her nipples stiffened, and her breasts yearned to be touched. She managed to free them from the front of her dress, thankful that this style had its buttons at the front, and for a moment James just marvelled at their size in her brassiere.

"Not too shabby, are they?" she said, shaking her shoulders so that they wobbled, a devilish smile on her features.

"Those are the most perfect breasts I've ever seen."

"Seen many, have you?"

"Enough to know yours won't be beaten. But I'll need to inspect closer . . . just in case."

She giggled, but only for a moment, because as they worked to release her impressive bust from her cups, he lowered his mouth to suck on her nipples one at a time, and it gave her such pleasure that they moaned ecstatically.

"Shhhh," he reminded her, but it was too late; the bliss of it was too much. She writhed against him, working her dainty hands to free his member from his trousers.

*I'm Rachel right now, and I want this. I want his cock so fucking bad. I want him in me. I want him inside me.*

She told him as much, and it only made him more eager. He pressed his face into her chest, causing her to once more bite her lip to contain her moan, and then he did something that was unbelievably sexy; he hoisted her up against the brick wall, pressing her against it, keeping her aloft with ease. She in turn wrapped her legs around him. They fumbled for a few moments, working the hem of her dress so that it was hiked up, then she pulled down her underwear to allow him access. Her pussy was soaking wet by this point, hungry for his manhood, but when it finally entered her, she went rigid.

*Oh my God oh my God oh my God oh my God that's something else!*

"Ohhhhhhhh!" she moaned, grinning despite the alien feel of it.

"Does it hurt?"

She struggled to breathe. "Only a - ahh! - little. Keep going. I want the p-pleasure more. I want *you* more."

James asked no more questions. He began thrusting into her, slowly at first, and then gaining speed as their shared arousal grew. Rachel found herself in the throes of ecstasy, unbelieving how completely joyous she was to be fucked by a man. But James was more than just a man, and all sorts of warm feelings floated into her feminised mind as his cock slid in and out of her new tunnel. Her vaginal muscles clung to his dick, gripping it, milking it, consuming it, at least that's what it felt like. Her breasts bounced heavily with each thrust, and she delighted in the way he pressed his face against her chest at times, or loosed a hand for a moment to squeeze one of her tits. It was ecstasy. It was near-orgasm.

*It's right*, she thought.

And in that moment, she came. She raised her head and, with her sweet song of a voice, cried out in pure pleasure. It was only the first orgasm, but it radiated throughout her entire being, including her big, sensitive boobs, and was far more powerful than any male orgasm she'd had. This only increased with the second, and the third, and when James' cock throbbed inside her, ejaculating his hot seed deep into her womb, she moaned with even greater ecstasy. She pressed her head against his, savouring every moment of what had just happened.

Slowly, he lowered her, and the two worked to get their clothing adjusted back, even if they were both a bit ruffled-looking now. Still, she pressed herself against him, kissing him, that post-coital arousal still clinging on much like the way his semen mixed and mingled with her feminine juices still.

"That sure was something," she said, getting her breath back under control.

"Rachel," he said. "I'm sorry if this is too soon, but I think I rather love you."

There was no thought process. No hesitation.

"I think I rather love you too, James," she said.

They kissed again, and she pressed her chest against him with affection.

## **Part 6: Regrets**

Rachel's mind was aflame with thought as she walked back with James. She barely said a word, clinging to him out of instinct and comfort and warmth, and yet feeling utterly out of place at the same time.

*Did I just have sex with him? she thought to herself. I did. Oh my God, I actually did. I let a man stick his . . . stick his penis inside of me. And I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it a lot. What is happening to me?*

"So," James said, as they got close to the camp. "Can I expect another date soon?"

"I . . . I don't know," she said. "I didn't expect us to . . ."

She trailed off, but what she was going to say was obvious. James put on a comforting grin, placed a hand on her shoulder. "Hey, I know I enjoyed it, but if you think we were being a bit forward, we can take it slower, huh?"

She nodded, pushing her hair behind her left ear out of her new feminine habit. "I think I'd like that, James. Very much."

"You know, you did say the big L-O-V-E word back there."

Her cheeks became fully flushed at that. "Um, I suppose I rather did. We might have to work our way back to that . . . there was a lot in the moment."

His shoulders sagged a little. It was obvious that he was a little disappointed to hear that, but he rallied quickly, cupping her chin and kissing her gently.

"Then I'll just have to prove my love for you, until you feel comfortable saying it again. Good night, Rachel. This has been the best night . . . well, probably of my whole life."

He bid her farewell, kissed her again, and she couldn't help but raise her leg a little. And then he was gone, and she was back in her tent, the other girls - Tiff especially - trying to draw as much gossip from her as possible. But when it became clear that she didn't want to talk about it, Tiff silenced them, best friend that she was.

"He wasn't . . . you know . . . ?"

"What? No!" Rachel declared. "He was a perfect gentleman. I just . . . don't know myself, these days." She placed her hand on the gemstone pendant, that emerald green rock that had started it all and yet was oddly hard to focus upon until just this very night. "I just don't feel entirely myself at the moment. I don't know who I am, really."

Tiff hugged her friend. "Get some rest, honey. I know who you are. You're Rachel Allen, my very best friend and a damn fine nurse. That's who you are, and until you remember that again, I'll remember it for you."

Her words warmed Rachel, and she thought of them as she drifted off to sleep.

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The dream Rachel experienced was a strange one, and yet seemed to be telling her something. In it, she could see her old self. Samuel was weak and ill as ever, but his green eyes were so alike Rachel's. He was walking, or floating, through a great tunnel, one that was translucent green like the rock itself. He was travelling in a circle, round and round and round, and Rachel was there too, always on the opposite side to him. They moved as one, she

beautiful and curvaceous and happy, him vulnerable and desperate and small, but they possessed the same energy nonetheless, that same inner essence. Round and round and round they went, part of the same cycle.

Taking the same journey.

*Being the same person, just in different times.*

Rachel felt that epiphany wash over her, and as it hit her like a tidal wave, she saw her mirror reflection head on. It was Samuel again, *and* it was Rachel. Their motions were as one, their faces and bodies superimposed upon the other. Finally, the Samuel aspect faded, drawing into the Rachel aspect, and then the dream was ended.

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Rachel woke with a startle, her large breasts jostling in her light top. It was early, and the other nurses were still sleeping. But she was now wide awake, the realisation now fully upon her, the suspicions of the previous night confirmed.

*I am Rachel. I was . . . always her. Or she was always me. I'm not possessing her, or even becoming her. She is me, somehow, like this was meant to be.*

It was a strangely cathartic understanding she possessed, but it didn't alleviate that part of her that wanted to be in her own time, in a male body. And yet . . . as she looked down in the dim light upon her female form, her full breasts and curvaceous figure, her healthy state in general too, she couldn't avoid the deep sensation that this was where she was meant to be.

*I really do feel nice like this, even if I am a woman. I . . . I actually like these breasts. I like my figure. I like the way James looks at me. And I like being in this time, doing good work.*

But it was because she liked it that she felt trapped. It was *because* the temptation was there that she needed to fight it. She recalled the experience of James fucking her, his hard member thrusting into her, driving her to fits of ecstasy. It had been heaven, and yet utterly emasculating.

*If I don't stop myself soon, I might actually experience her whole life. I'll be trapped. I'll be a woman pining after a soldier instead of being one.*

Her fist tightened around the emerald pendant.

*No. No. I can't let that happen, no matter how much this new me wants it!*

And with that, she threw it to the ground with as much force as she could muster. It shattered, waking up a number of the girls. Tiff sat bolt upright.

"Rachel, what one earth are you doing?"

Rachel gaped. *What am I doing? What if that was my one way of getting back?*

"I - I don't know. My pendant! Oh God, I've ruined it!"

Tears formed in her eyes as she tried to bring it back together, but the various shards were all impossible to work with.

*Oh God, oh God. Did I break the loop? Did I break time? What the hell was I thinking?*

It took several of the girls to calm her. The only explanation she could give was that she was emotionally confused, and was still coming to terms with the previous night. None of them quite knew what that meant, but it would have to be enough. Only Rachel knew the truth, and she literally couldn't explain it. She took the shards, eyes trembling as she saw her future and past crumbling apart between her fingers, and tossed them out of the tent, much to the surprise of the other girls.

*Whatever I've done, it's done. I can't go back, and I can't go forward. Maybe . . . maybe if I just see James.*

She rushed to get ready, despite the fact that she didn't have to be up straight away. She washed herself at the nearby shower block, ignoring how much she had become used to this body and even enjoyed cleaning it. She got dressed in her military nurse garb and practically *leapt* from the block, moving with haste to find James in the hospital barracks.

Instead, she literally *bumped* into him as he turned a corner.

"Rachel!"

"James!"

He gripped her into a powerful hug, kissing her passionately before she could do anything. She swooned anyway, raising a foot automatically like a total stereotype.

"I'm still coming down from all that excitement last night," he said.

She giggled a little, but then the laughter turned to tears immediately.

*Fuck, I'm so emotional right now. It's not just being a woman either, I just feel so . . . unable to decide!*

"Hey, hey there, what's wrong? Oh no, did you get word already? I'm sorry, I was rushing to be the one to tell you."

She cocked her head in that owl-like fashion. "Tell me what? James, what's going on?"

His expression became grave and determined. "I'm going back to the front. The orders came in. A number of us are returning for the march on Paris. The plan is to liberate it within the next three weeks."

A dagger fell down Rachel's throat, sliced through her heart, and passed through her body. For a moment, it was like being unable to breathe.

"You're - you're going back to the front?"

He brushed Rachel's hair. The sensation of it felt completely *right* in a way she couldn't quantify.

"I'm sorry, doll. I have to. It's my job and my duty, and as much as I'd like to stay with you here forever, I have a responsibility to my brothers-in-arms as well."

The tears slipped further down Rachel's cheeks. She gripped him, hugging him tightly and pressing her face into his chest.

"I don't want you to go," she breathed.

An arm encircled her. "I know. And frankly, I don't think the cigars will be as good where I'm going, even if it is Paris. And I know the company won't be as good."

"Don't joke. You could get hurt. You could die."

"I know that too, Rache. I also know that this thing is bigger than the two of us. We're just two little people who don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world."

Rachel paused, and even in her grief, she couldn't help but laugh.

"That's *Casablanca*."

"And you're my Ilsa. My Ingrid Bergman. And now I have to leave you. But I promise, unlike that movie, I'll come back. I'll do everything I can to come back, Rache. You've given me a whole lot of reasons to, not least of them being the magic of last night. Don't go falling in love with any other wounded soldier boys, now."

She nodded, smiling through the tears. "Of course not, James. J-just you. Oh God, I never thought I'd feel this way."

"Me either," he said. He kissed her again, and this time she responded passionately.

*Please don't let him die. God, please don't let him die. I love him. I do. I don't want to, I shouldn't, but I do!*

"I'll be leaving at midday," he said. "I've got to get everything ready. But I'll see you, won't I?"

"Of course!" she declared. "I . . . I like you a great deal, James."

"And I love you. You don't have to say it again till you're ready, but I do. For now though, maybe take Bennett up on those pinups you were so keen on. I'd certainly like to see my own sweet bird flying in the air, watching over me, keeping my morale up . . . among other things."

She slapped him lightly on the shoulder. *God, how does he cheer me up even when he breaks my heart?*

"I'll do it," she said. "I was having second thoughts, but I'll do it. I want to. Just do what you can to stay alive, James. I'll never forgive you if you die."

"Hell, I won't forgive myself. Can you imagine a man dying rather than coming back to a body like yours?"

She didn't even know what to say to that.

*I think I've got a pretty good idea, actually.*

\*\*\*

Rachel found James with his convoy, ready to leave. For whatever reason, Tiff was with him, speaking conspiratorially and passing him a package. He put it away as they approached, and Tiff ran off.

"Goodbye James! Come back to my best friend or don't come back at all. I'll shoot you myself if you take up with a French floozy!"

"I rather believe she'll do it," James said, watching her as she ran away laughing.

"She's a good friend," Rachel said, and she meant it.

"More than you know."

"What do you mean by that? What was she giving you?"

"Something I can't tell you about. I'm sworn to secrecy. Trust me."

*I trust him. I actually do. I've never felt that kind of trust before.*

The horn sounded, and the first few vehicles began to leave, packed with soldiers. Someone called for James to jump up into his own truck with the others, though a few other soldiers were clearly enjoying the sight of Rachel too much to put him to haste.

*Yeah, yeah, keep on looking. God knows I would have, once.*

She had to blink a few more tears from her eyes as she embraced James yet one more time. His hands wandered south - perhaps too south - but despite the hooting of the men watching, she let it happen. There was a comfort in his arms, a warmth in his daring and humour.

"Just come back," she said.

"Hitler and all his High Command couldn't stop me," he said, kissing her one last time. "I've got an even greater prize worth fighting for; a beautiful woman's love, and the promise of hearing another gorgeous song from her beautiful voice."

He got into the track, and even as it left she kept pace a little while, as if by walking, jogging, and then finally running futile behind it would allow her some modicum of hope in preventing his leaving. Instead, she simply had to watch him wave to her, shouting words of praise and - no doubt - love that was lost to her ears over the thrum of the accelerating vehicles.

And then he was gone, and so was a piece of her heart.

*What on earth do I do now?*

\*\*\*

The battle for Paris would take place soon, that Rachel knew well. It would be successful, and Nazi forces would be in full retreat by the 25th of August. Charles de Gaulle would reclaim administration of one of the cultural capitals of the world and shortly face a food crisis, even as the Allies continued to sweep forward, liberating more and more of France. Rachel knew all this well from her studies as Samuel, but they had always been interesting facts, tales of heroism and military brilliance.

Instead, as the days and weeks passed, the knowledge of it only filled her new female life with dread. She had smashed her amulet, thinking in a foolish moment that it might reclaim her old existence. Now, perhaps, she was instead stuck forever. The magic of the pendant had placed her here, and in doing so had allowed her to experience not just life as a beautiful (and quite impressively busty) nurse, but also to find a best friend in Tiffany, and a first love in James, and a meaningful job in taking care of others. For a time she had even come to be tempted to accept this new role, finding it fulfilling. She had indeed protected and defended and aided, just in the field of nursing rather than the battlefield. And it had proved just as crucial, just as noble.

But now James was back on the frontline, the bloody liberation of Paris getting closer and closer. The realities of war had never been closer, and she finally, truly understood what it was like for a woman to fear for her soldier man's life when he went away, and what she could suffer also.

There was only one thing she could really do to cope, and that was to throw herself into her work and make James proud. If he could be brave enough to face war and death, she could be brave enough to help deal with its aftereffects. Rachel devoted herself to being the nurse that could brighten the life of any soldier under her care, and ease the pain of any sufferer she dealt with. She made sure to employ her quick wit and good humour no matter how much her heart ached and worried for herself and James, and when the men made a comment here and there about her beauty - or even more daringly about her figure - she often let it slide. They needed it in this time and place, and she always had Tiff and the other women to put a man in place if they went too far.

Tiff was often there to comfort her, of course. Occasionally, out of nowhere, she'd just put her hand on Rachel's shoulder and smile comfortingly. For a woman who talked as often

and brazenly as she did, this wordless exchange seemed to communicate so much. She also made sure to always save an extra dessert for Rachel to help cheer her up.

"Don't thank me," she said one evening during dinner in the rec room. "I'm just trying to ruin your figure so that I've got a fighting chance with these boys. Mind, with my luck it'll probably all just go to that big bust of yours."

"I hope not!" Rachel laughed. "I'm big enough there already. I swear, not even these padded uniforms can hide these things."

"I bet James sure liked that."

Rachel blushed. "Yeah, he very much did. I always thought, you know, that it would be a bit embarrassing to be so . . . forward. He made me quite proud of my chest, you know."

"Well, I'll be. Rachel Allen - *the* beauty of the 91st, admitting she got red-cheeked over her figure. Hell, I'll take it from you!"

They laughed and continued talking, reminiscing about times that Rachel only had a sort of sense-memory for, and talking about work and the future. Tiff wanted to move to New York, and part of Rachel hoped she did.

*I want you to be close, if I do end up like this for longer than expected.*

But then the music started up, and various soldiers, guards, nurses, and doctors all cheered at the latest wartime single that had been shipped over. With a nudge from Tiffany, Rachel stood, all to more applause, and began to sing. James had made her proud of her sweet voice, after all, and she wanted to keep using it. Anything to make this hospital a more pleasant place.

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"That's it! That's the one. Just pose right there, with your legs spread just a little wider. Nothing too suggestive, but just enough to tantalise our male audience."

Rachel posed once more for the large, unwieldy camera that Bennett possessed.

*If only this man had any idea about the future of such technology! But then, he'd probably still fill the storage space of an entire iPhone with me looking like this.*

She was in a hastily mocked-up studio for the purposes of his propaganda work, and Rachel had been given a number of items to sit on, pose with, hold in her hands, and so on, ranging from a simple stand to a wrench to an American flag to a fake machine gun. But the real deal was, of course, the outfits. She was wearing a *heavily* modified army uniform that was short and split enough to expose her lovely thighs almost completely, and tight around her hips and figure. The top buttons were undone, allowing her breasts to spill forth quite

generously, her line of cleavage deep and fulfilling. A small team had done her hair up in a gorgeous period (though presently *modern*) style, and she had a series of little army caps and hats atop her head. She even got to lay back and pose on top of a ground pounder bomb, the kind being dropped from the B-17 Flying Fortresses during this very campaign.

It was a strange experience, to be certain. Rachel had little doubt that the figure she presented was one of the most alluring, captivating, and downright sexy that most men would ever be gifted to see. Bennett was lucky in that regard, though she was getting the sneaking suspicion from his eccentric personality and style that he was potentially gay; a fact he would obviously have to hide. Still, despite being asked to show off more of her legs, or to undo another button, or to smile with her lipsticked lips as if she were dreaming of a nice soldier man, Rachel was surprised to find that she actually *liked* what she was doing.

*I'm actually really good at this, holy hell. Who would have thought that about my former life? That I'd end up a big-boobed, long-legged dame in the 40's making every soldier on the front happy with my image?*

And indeed, Bennett confirmed that her image would go out; on the sides of bomber planes, certainly, but there were also limited run papers and posters as well. It embarrassed her, there was no doubt about that, and yet the former male couldn't deny that her ego had received quite the boost from the experience at the same time, especially when Bennett proclaimed that she was "an absolute natural."

"That'll do us, I think."

"You don't want to do any more?" Rachel asked.

Bennett laughed. "We've been taking photos for nearly two hours now, and while I consider myself blessed to have discovered you, my dear, I'm afraid my roll is full. Rolls plural, actually. Besides, I don't want to take you from your important work. I'll need to develop what I have, take the best shots, and run them past my department. From there, don't be surprised to see your face among other lovelies, out there on posters, planes, and even playing cards perhaps."

Rachel giggled. *This is just crazy, she thought. Me? On a sexy playing card? Well, to look at me I certainly couldn't blame them for trying.*

"Do you think James will see me?" she asked, becoming more serious.

Bennett smiled. "If I know that man, he's somehow already got a copy. Don't worry your pretty head, dear. He can take care of himself. You just take care of everyone else. I thank you greatly, and while I won't be paying you greatly, alas, you will be receiving some extra boost to your salary as thanks from the propaganda department."

It was enough, she supposed. She hadn't done it for money, she'd done it for him, and for the other soldiers who might need a little boost from a pretty dame.

*And, she thought to herself privately as she adjusted her impressive jugs back into her regular bra and outfit, I did it for me too. Why not indulge and have a little fun?*

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Indulgence was indeed the key. A little drink here, a little smoke there. Not overindulgence, of course, but enough to take her mind off of her anxieties. It had been a few weeks by this point, and Rachel was even starting to dream about James. Some of the dreams were scary, some were full of longing, others simply romantic. Others still - a good amount of them in fact - were downright *naughty*. She decided that she liked those dreams best, especially the one where he was wearing an unbuttoned army uniform and she in one of her army pinup outfits, and he took her out in the open, upon the lush grass of France. She had woken up very horny after that, and had to deal with her own needs privately.

So yes, she needed to get her mind off of him at times, and off of the suffering she dealt with. She was a pro-nurse now, her instincts and 'prior' knowledge aiding her, but she herself striving to get better and better in her care. But more wounded were flowing in, and not all injuries were recoverable, not all wounds capable of being healed. There were deaths, and Rachel found herself weeping over them, especially the men under her care. Tiff was a good comfort in those times, as were other women such as Janice and Gayle, the latter two of which were very much enjoying smoking and drinking and partying in the rec room when they could. For a time, even Rachel was able to get away from the heavy burden of healing, of dealing with death and injury, and fear of what might happen to James.

But then everything changed one evening. She was at the rec room, sitting apart from the group and being more snappish than usual when men looked her way. Tiffany wasn't present, but was apparently on her way. At this point, Rachel just wanted a good stiff drink and a nice smoke to calm her nerves. There was something indefinable in the air that she simply couldn't shake. An instinct that something might happen. That it would all go wrong. The fact that the mobile hospital was set to move soon was likely adding to that; the front was shifting, and so would they.

*It's just nerves. It's been a long day and one of my patients didn't make it, the poor man. I'm just feeling like shit and trying to keep the tears down and -*

And Tiffany was suddenly before her, her friend's eyes brimming with tears. Rachel stood immediately, feeling herself on a strange precipice. She had no idea how she knew what Tiffany was about to say.

"It's James, isn't it?"

Tiff nodded, wordless.

"Oh my God. Is he hurt?"

Tiff nodded again. "He's not dead, Rache. But - but he's with us. And he's not looking good."

Rachel practically pushed past her best friend, fleeing the tent and heading straight to the hospital proper.

## **Part 7: The Gift**

Rachel wept, holding her man's hand in her own. He was sedated, at least as much as the morphine could safely offer, but he occasionally made slurry sounds or half-mumbled speech. The doctors had already operated upon him; there had been some confusion over his identity at first, apparently. Some kind of ambush by German forces on the outskirts of Paris, or in the suburbs from a sniper - the stories differed. Regardless, the result had been that James had been peppered across the stomach with rifle fire; four shots in total. A gut wound was a terribly painful thing, Rachel remembered reading quite a lot about that when she was Samuel. It was a horrible way to go, and often fatal. And yet, somehow, James had crawled to safety during the ambush, and even returned fire to hear the rumours tell it.

*My hero, she thought, holding his hand. You never stopped fighting. And you can't stop fighting now.*

Several fragments had been pulled from his belly. Dr Price had shown her some of them, but it hadn't made her feel any better to know the operation had been successful. There had been a *lot* of bleeding, and the plasma transfusions could only go so far if his injuries were too severe, or his wounds became infected. They were battling that very possibility at that very moment.

"You need to pull through, James," she whispered to him. "Please, for me. I'm alone out here. I barely know what I'm doing half the time. I'm stuck between two places and I don't know how to return to where I came from. You were the first person who made me want to soldier on. To accept that this could be a life I wanted, that I even *needed*. God, I always

wanted to fight, but now I just want to heal. I want *you* to heal. Please, you have to do this for me, James. You have to come back to me.”

Perhaps it was just her imagination, but he seemed to calm just a little. Occasionally he mumbled something that might have been an attempt at saying her name, but it was impossible to tell.

Rachel jolted as a hand came down on her shoulder.

“You need to rest, Rache.”

It was Gayle, tall and commanding in her presence. “I can’t. Not until he’s better.”

“I understand, but we have a job to do. *You* have a job to do. I’ll take the best care of him, I promise, but you have to understand why you can’t be his nurse, at least not until he recovers.”

“He might not recover at all.”

Gayle spun her about, placed both her hands on Rachel’s shoulders. “He can and he will. And then you can be his nurse. Until then, get your rest. Do it for him if not for me.”

*Of course. She’s right. I need to do what’s right. Besides, it’s what James would want for me to do.*

“Thank you Gayle,” she said. “Please tell me—”

“If anything changes, you’ll be the first to know. He said your name earlier, you know. He’s fighting, Rache.”

Rachel nodded, wiped away a few tears. As she made to leave, Gayle spoke one more time.

“There was no need to check his bandages, by the way. I do good work, Rache. Still . . . I’m sure he appreciated it.”

Rachel smiled and left.

*I am so lucky to have such good friends. How could I leave them? How could I even imagine leaving James?*

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The next three days were the worst of Rachel’s life. Not only were the wounds and injuries she dealt with during that time quite severe as the fighting intensified on the front, but she also had the headache of helping pack the base for movement. The only good thing was that it made for some distraction from James’ situation, but then she got word that his condition had worsened, and it was like a knife in her heart. It lodged there for literal days as James fought against a fever, his body trembling, sweating, his words even more gnarled and

mangled than before. He shuddered, almost going into shock, and the surgeons had to deal with him once more, the possibility of infected flesh hanging over him like a death sentence. Sleep was almost impossible. Work was on autopilot. Soldiers cheered her on, recognising her as the 'attractive dame' from the pinup shoots, but she barely acknowledged them. The only healing to her pain was in healing *other people's* pain. Rachel's nursing prowess did not fail her, even as she felt strangely removed from it all. She simply did what she could, checking on James continually, and holding his shaking hand and whispering encouragements in his ear.

"I promise that if you get better, I'll find a lovely red dress. A real knockout, just for you, James. Just for you. I'll even make it low cut. I know you'd like that."

Sometimes it was little flirting comments like that, some of which made her smile. Other times she talked baseball, bragging about her knowledge. Other times still she talked about the future, and how she had been collecting bits of memorabilia for his store, if he decided to go ahead on such an enterprise. She suggested they could even run it together.

"I don't know much about my own future," she told him on the third day, when fever's grip had yet to release its hold, "but I want it to be with you. I don't know if it can be. There's so much I can't tell you - literally. You'd never believe me anyway. But if I *can* stay here. If I can . . . figure it out, or if that's just my life now, then I want to share it with you, James. I want to hear your calm wit, and feel safe with you, and have you beat up every patron in a bar that dares to make a move on me. I'm kidding! But I know you would. I know you would keep me safe. Let me keep you safe. You keep fighting, and I'll do what I can from my side."

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The miraculous occurred, and James pulled through. Even the doctors were surprised. Hell, even Gayle was surprised, and she had done everything for the man. He had to be sedated often for the pain, but after pulling a few strings and with Gayle and the other nurses' help, Rachel was able to be assigned to him. She spent a great deal of time there, looking forward to the moment he would properly wake and see her. When he finally did, another two days after his health began to improve, it was to the sight of her watching over him.

"Hey," he said, eyes barely open. "I don't want to be . . . rude. But shouldn't it be Saint Peter here, and not a beautiful angel?"

She giggled. "Now that is midwestern corn right there, mister. And no, no pearly gates for you. I'm not done having you around yet, James."

He smiled, still clearly a bit dazed and sleepy. "Good. Good. Gotta follow the nurse's orders. I dreamed about you, Rachel. You were . . . you were saving me."

She placed a hand on his. "Just returning the favour, my love."

He smiled again, more deeply this time. She had called him 'love' quite deliberately; it was no accidental slip this time. His lips moved to give an equally loving reply, but then he fell asleep again. She kissed him on the forehead.

"Sleep well, James. I'll be here when you wake up."

She was indeed, in a pattern that repeated over following days. The hardest part was bullying the administration into letting her ride with him on the truck as the camp moved. It was a slow going journey, but thankfully his state could allow it; other patients had to stay behind with the smaller camp until they too could come over.

"Good to know I've got an angel to watch over me," he managed to mumble at one point, raising his hand to caress her cheek. She held it against her own, tears tracing their way down her cheeks as she savoured every moment with him.

"I'll keep watching over you, so long as you keep getting better," she said. "I haven't even taken you to a baseball game yet."

"I practically fear it," he said, smirking. "Which means I can hardly wait. Did . . . did I hear something about a red dress at some point, or was I just dreaming?"

She kissed him on the lips. "No dream, James. I meant it."

"Mhmm, I might go back to sleep now. But you've given me something to dream about until it comes true."

She held his hand until he drifted off again. This was a repeated pattern as his recovery continued. Mobility was difficult for him due to the pain, and morphine could only do so much. The main thing was to ensure that his wounds healed well and that he had no major intestinal damage; the latter could be chalked up entirely to luck and the excellent work of the camp surgeons, whom Rachel thanked every day. Tiffany visited often to relieve her, as did Gayle, and never before had the former male felt such a brotherhood - well, a *sisterhood*, really. She thanked them as well, but they just shushed her.

"It's what we do, honey," Gayle said. "Besides, you're not the first to have a wounded soldier as your crush. Trust me, it's a heartbreak when it goes wrong. We'll do everything we can for your James."

'Everything,' it seemed, had a bit of cheeky flavour to it, because when James was more able to sit up and stay awake for long periods of time, he was clearly hiding something from her.

"Someone's happy," Rachel remarked. *God, he has such a wonderful smile.*

“Who wouldn’t be, with pictures like these to keep me company?”

He had a magazine of some kind in his hands, and it was only when she drew nearer that she realised it was a series of posters, photographs - including original prints by Bennett - and even a wartime magazine, all of which featured *her* on them.

*Holy shit, I look like a goddamn knockout! I mean, I know I have curves, I deal with these big, bouncing boobs each day, but holy moly. That gal in the photo is something else!*

She blushed red. “I was hoping you would see them out there. Maybe get a morale boost.”

“I may have seen a thing or two. Suffice to say, you gave quite a few men the ‘morale’ boost, Rachel.”

She slapped him on the shoulder, laughing with embarrassment.

“Well, in this body, I don’t think I can cough or sneeze without a few men getting a ‘morale boost.’ If there’s one thing I’ve learned recently, it’s that men are dogs.”

“Is that so? You know, I am a man, in fact. You might recall a certain night where I proved that.”

*Mhmm. I still think about it. Was it right to have sex that night? I don’t know. But God if it didn’t feel fucking amazing. Yes it did. That sensation of him inside me, of him sucking on my big tits.*

The thoughts alone were starting to make her a little aroused. She lowered herself so that her prominent chest was right over him, giving him a no-doubt lovely view.

“Well, I do like some dogs,” she quipped. “Especially strong, protective ones called James.”

“Well, woof woof for me, then.”

They cracked up laughing at the ridiculous exchange until James had to stop due to the pain, fearing he’d pull his stitches.

“Sorry,” Rachel said. “I’ll endeavour to be less funny in the future.”

“Don’t you dare. Beautiful, smart, *and* witty? Where else will I find such a lady?”

“Heaven, apparently.”

“I’m still not convinced you aren’t an angel,” James said. But then his expression became a bit more serious. “Hey, I wanted to wait until, well, I had enough breath to tell the full story, but I was thinking of you when I came under attack.”

Her heart skipped a beat. “You were?”

James nodded, running a hand through his handsome hair. “I don’t remember all of it. I just recall feeling like I was going to die. That I’d never get to say goodbye to my Mom or Pop, or see my home again. And then I thought of you, and I don’t know, I guess I just found

this strength to get myself to safety. I crawled through what felt like a river of pain. My buddies told me later that it was a river of blood. I didn't much feel it, though. I just wanted to see you again, before I died. And to give you something."

He reached down into the bag by his side, the one that held his things. From within it, he withdrew a small wrapped package and passed it to her.

"What's this?" Rachel asked, sitting back beside him.

"Open it up and have a look," he said.

She did so, and gasped. Within a small box was her emerald pendant, good as new."

*It's the same. It's identical. Maybe a little shinier, but it's the very same emerald. How is that possible?*

Before she could answer the question, James spoke. "It's not the same thing. I just want to say that before you get your hopes up. Tiff gave me the remnants to take with me after I asked her to; she told me how you shattered it apart."

She blushed. "I was . . . unsure of where I wanted to be. Not anymore."

"I'm glad to hear it, doll. Anyway, I couldn't get it fixed, but at a town we liberated there was a woman who worked as a jeweller. I asked if I paid her and gave her the pieces if she could try and figure it out. I was saddened to hear she couldn't; you really broke this thing apart. But the strangest thing happened: after she looked at the pieces and the pendant, she ran out back and came back with - get this! - an identical necklace, emerald and all. She told me that it had been in her family for generations, and it could apparently grant 'true wishes of the heart.' Well, call me crazy, but I damn well believed her then, and still do. I wished to see you again when I was dying, scrambling for safety, and the broken jewel was with me then!"

"You're not crazy," Rachel said, eyes going wide at this story.

*Maybe . . . maybe this is what the emerald is. It grants true wishes. But then how did I end up as -?*

But the answer was obvious, she realised. She hadn't exactly wished to be Rachel, but her jealousy as her experiences, looking at that old lunchbox and the photographs, at the fun and beauty of them, had made her wish to be there. And perhaps, on some deeper level, the emerald had known where her happiness would truly lie.

"Look, I don't know if magic is real," James said. "But this lady thought that your smashed gem and this one were the same thing, and who was I to argue when it had carried me through so much? When I thought I was dying, I put my hand on the little back that held the remains of this little green rock and wished it would keep me with the love of my life. And hey, I think it's true, because here you are, and here I am, loving you."

*He means it, she thought. He means every word, doesn't he?*

He wiped a tear from her eye, and she did one of those little giggles of joy that somehow managed to be accompanied by a sob at the same time. He held out his hand, and she passed him her necklace. Carefully, he affixed the gem pendant to it, then placed it gingerly over her head, helping adjust the emerald between her breasts, perhaps a little teasingly.

"There you are," he said. "Perfect as ever."

"It looks amazing."

"I wasn't talking about the gem."

Again, she laughed, wiping tears once more. She couldn't help herself: she kissed him. It was a slow, loving kiss, not one born of passion but instead a deep and powerful connection.

"I love you too," she said.

They kissed again, he holding her, and she minding his injury as best as she could. She didn't want to let him go.

*I never will, she decided, feeling the weight of that emerald pendant. I understand now. I know who I am. Samuel was just a cocoon. Rachel is who I am. And I'm here to stay and live my life as I was meant to.*

## **Part 8: Paris and Beyond**

The war was still going. It would rage until Hitler finally did the world a favour and removed himself from the equation, and then a few more days until finally they could find someone to give the unconditional surrender. Even then, it would continue until a terrifying new weapon was dropped first upon Hiroshima, then upon Nagasaki. Mid-August there would finally be peace. Rachel awaited it eagerly, but she no longer looked at events as she once did. After seeing just a portion of suffering and trying to do her part, there was no celebration in death, even if it meant peace. She would celebrate the latter, but could only mourn that the passing of so many lives took place to gain it, especially those that were innocent.

*Thankfully, James will not be counted among them,* she thought to herself as she settled into the temporary quarters. It was a small apartment, but it wasn't for luxury anyway. She had some time off from nursing, and like many men and women of the Allies, she had found passage to Paris to celebrate its liberation. She was a little late to the party, but then that was because she had stayed with James and waited for his health to slowly repair. He wouldn't likely see combat for quite some time, and thanks to her own knowledge of how the

war would play out, she was relatively confident that he would not be on the frontlines ever again. Many were talking about how many would be needed to invade Japan after Germany folded, but she knew better.

*And now he can relax a little, enjoy a nice little guard posting.*

It was needed, after all. The French were gleeful to have their capital back under their control, but there had also been many collaborators just as gleeful, along with a civil service that needed careful purging of its fascists, and a military service that needed rebuilding. As it was, American and British troops were on rotation to help guard and oversee this light 'occupation' of sorts. At least, that was how Charles de Gaulle no doubt saw it. Rachel didn't give a hoot what that blowbag thought; it meant that her love could help break up bar fights - a fun irony - oversee relations between locals and new arrivals, and generally keep the peace.

*Anything to stop him from coming into the line of fire. He's done more than enough for the cause and for country. I see that now. There's a lot worth dying for, and plenty have, but there's a lot that's worth living for.*

She caught her appearance in the mirror, and saw again just how true that was. She was wearing a gorgeous Parisian dress, a deep crimson red in colour. It hugged her figure almost scandalously, clearly intended for a figure not quite as busty or curvaceous as her own. She didn't mind that; she wanted it to leave a very deliberate impression, especially with her big boobs on display, her curve of cleavage delectably shown off. Her hair was styled, her lipstick ruby in colour, and her green eyes flashed with mischief. It was strange to think how close she had come to doing something stupid in her past life. Samuel had wanted to throw his life away for a cause, to lie and misrepresent himself so long as he could fight - and die - in battle. The idea of becoming a woman, one who could never fight, would have been utterly anathema to him.

It had been, in fact.

She swished her dress in the mirror, admiring her form just a little smugly.

*And now I'm Rachel. Gorgeous, fun, partying Rachel, quick-witted and caring. And I wouldn't have it any other way. Funny, it took me becoming a woman - quite a bosomy one at that - to have all the manly qualities of courage and determination and heroism I once coveted. And I did it all without needing to fight. My real fight was elsewhere, in the wards, on the hospital floor, in those lonely nights in my tent, praying that a soldier could come home to me.*

She smiled, feeling utterly at peace with herself.

*My soldier did come home, and I found one with him.*

There was the sound of a doorknob turning, and she quickly moved to face it, posing suggestively and grinning from ear to ear.

*Speaking of . . .*

James Cartright entered, looking quite dashing in his new uniform. But he quickly lost any sense of debonair as he stared gobsmacked at Rachel, standing in his flat in Paris wearing a red dress that emphasised all her best features.

“Rachel? Rachel!”

He *launched* forward, embracing her first in a warm hug and then kissing her passionately. He lifted her up, and she giggling as he spun her around, continuing to repeat her name excitedly. He only had to put her back down when he started wheezing and laughing.

“Oh God, I shouldn’t be doing that just yet! Ahh, these damn scars just keep on hurting.”

She put her hands on her mouth. “I’m sorry! I thought it would be a fun surprise! I got word from some of your soldier friends where you were staying, and I let myself in.”

“It’s an amazing surprise. How on earth did you get the key?”

She grinned. “Let’s just say I have my ways.”

*Including bending low and looking very sultry when talking to the owner who has the spare key. Turns out I’m rather good at this seduction thing, though this body does most of the work for me.*

He cupped her chin and caressed her cheek, staring into her eyes - and a little down at her bosom, which was totally her intention.

“Well, it’s the best damn surprise I could have gotten.”

“Oh, that’s not the surprise, mister.”

He raised an eyebrow. “It’s not?”

“Oh no. The real surprise is that you get to see me in this fabulous dress.”

“A sight I’m certainly appreciating and committing to memory.”

“*And . . . you get to take me out of it. Right now, if you like.*”

Painful scarring or not, James was quick to pick her up again, slumping her over his shoulder, the two of them laughing as he took her to the bedroom.

They had a lot of reacquainting to get up to, and she wanted to learn more about being a woman.

He taught her a lot. And then again. And then again.

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The next day, James gave her a tour of the city. Naturally, he was excited to show her the romance of the Eiffel Tower, and she was eager to experience it. As Samuel, she never would have imagined even being able to travel to another country like this, not that she viewed it as a tourist experience. She still had many days of nursing ahead of her, just as James would have many days of duties as well. But for the both of them, for now, the war could be set aside in their minds. They stepped through the main concourse of that great and cultured city, liberated from its fascist overlords at last, and held hands as they did. She was not wearing her red dress this time - that was for *private* enjoyment - but neither was she dressed down, either. She was adorned in the same beautiful green dress as she had from her first date with him, and she was finding that she had come to enjoy the way it swished around her ankles.

*Who would have thought that I would have loved wearing dresses? There's just a wonderful freedom to them.*

A man passing by whistled suggestively at her, and another fellow further along called out something in French that she was *certain* was a very chauvinistic compliment.

"It seems I get attention everywhere I go," she mused.

"Who can blame them?" James replied, "except, of course, for the way they go about it. But I myself was struck in awe when I first saw you."

"And again, when I beat you at baseball trivia."

"And again, when you sang."

She beamed. "And perhaps again, with that red dress?"

"Again and again," he pronounced, walking them before the great height of the Eiffel Tower, looming above its parkland space. "And again and again. You brought me back to life, Rachel."

She bit her lip awkwardly. "That was Gayle, and Dr Prince, among many others. I was just there."

He stopped, then held her hands. "No, it was you. At least, it was your voice that I heard, and your voice that I fought for. I could feel myself slipping away, and you gave me a reason to keep on fighting. *You* saved me, as much as anyone else."

She swallowed, trying not to get teary eyed. *I certainly get a lot more emotional these days*, she thought. *Not that I mind, when they're good emotions.*

She placed her arms over his shoulders, enjoying the muscular feel of them. "Well, I told you to come back to me. I don't like it when men break their promises."

They kissed, and once more the sensations of his lips upon hers made her feel warm and utterly wanted. When they pulled apart though, James looked rather nervous.

“What’s wrong, James?”

He looked around, as if trying to make sure no one was looking. Then he reached a hand into his back pocket.

“Speaking of promises, I’d like to make a big one to you, Rachel. You really are the most special dame, and I don’t just mean how beautiful you are. I mean all of you, inside and out. I love you, more than I ever thought I could love someone, and I find myself lost without you. When you turned up yesterday, I felt whole again. So, well - sorry, I’m not very good at this-”

“Go on,” she said, smiling ear to ear with anticipation, and yet not knowing where this was going.

“Well, I suppose I just don’t like the idea of being apart from you ever again. So with that in mind . . .”

He went down on one knee before her, and Rachel’s eyes widened.

*He isn’t. Is he? He can’t be? He is! Oh my God, please let him be-*

He produced a ring box and opened it, revealing a simple yet beautiful engagement ring.

“ . . . will you be my Mrs Cartwright?”

The tears flowed freely now. *Oh God, he actually did!*

“I love you,” she said, sniffing. She lowered herself to kiss his face. “I love you so damn much, James.”

“I love you too,” he said, kissing her back. “Um, still waiting on an answer here, though.”

She laughed. “Then yes! Yes, I’ll marry you, James! I want to be your wife!”

He scooped her up in his arms, lifting her with much greater ease now that he was much more recovered. He spun her around, pressing her close to him, and when he finally stopped spinning he kissed her passionately once more. She pressed her full chest against him, savouring the sensation of it. Savouring the sensation of *him*.

*I’m going to be a wife. I’m going to be Rachel Cartwright.*

It was going to be a new life. Not without its hardship, she knew, but thanks to the magic of the emerald, she had enough of an idea of how it would go that everything would be okay.

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There were times of separation that followed, and times of longing for both of them. But come the signing of the surrender of Japan on September the 2nd, 1945, the war was over. People across the Western world and beyond celebrated, and Rachel and James were finally able to reunite once more. The lovers made their way back to America, settling in New York and becoming married as soon as possible. It was a strange thing for Rachel, to walk down an aisle in a beautiful wedding dress, towards a man expectantly awaiting her, and yet it felt so right on the whole. She was tearful as they exchanged their vows, and when it was time to kiss and seal the marriage, she practically launched herself at him, much to the amusement of the crowd. The two had a lot of 'catching up' to get to, and Rachel made sure to give her loving new husband a glorious wedding night. The honeymoon was just as special, thanks to a certain red dress.

What followed was indeed a happy marriage. It wasn't perfect; Rachel often chafed at the expectations of what was expected of women in society. Occasionally there was the grumbling with James, who was still ultimately a man of his time and expected his wife to see to the house and cooking and cleaning while he worked. She did her best to correct him, and he was a good and reasonable man who helped out when required, but the truth was that she could only work part-time as a nurse, and even then it was a field she would be pushed out of once she gave birth to her own child.

Which, of course, happened not long after. It seemed that the wedding night and honeymoon were quite effective indeed. Being pregnant was utterly astounding to the former male. She had actual life growing inside her. For someone who had fantasised about going to war, even taking enemy life, it felt like she had come full circle in creating some, rather than taking it. Still, it was very awkward at times, especially as she got bigger. Not that it took away James' desire for her, especially since her boobs became even bigger. Birth was incredibly painful, lacking much of modern convenience, but she was proud to manage it, viewing it as her own personal battlefield. And that was how Samantha, the first of her children, was born. Naturally, she had argued for the name, though only she knew quite why.

What followed was four more children for five in total; three girls and two boys, all of whom she was proud to raise. She was sad to leave the nursing profession, but thanks to her knowledge of the future, she knew she would be able to rejoin when she was older and the children more raised, and the time of Sixties change upon the world. Until then, she supported her husband as he worked various construction jobs, the pair of them saving up to eventually open up their own store.

It took time, but they finally managed it. Their memorabilia store collected numerous bits and bobs from the wartime and before, things that Rachel had a good sense would

become quite valuable quite quickly. Sometimes James wanted to throw in the towel, but she convinced him to continue with it, and eventually the post-war collector rush began, and business was booming. Not that they just specialised in memorabilia from the war, but it was certainly something Rachel turned out to be quite the whiz with, on account of her future knowledge. And of course, she also developed her *private collection* for her and James's enjoyment; there were many stills, posters, magazines, and other mementos and photographs featuring her pinups. She kept a few clippings and photos aside to keep in a lunchbox as well, storing it away for the time it became necessary.

It was a wonderful life, full of love and hope, and the occasional struggle that kept them united. Rachel was gleeful when they got their first proper oven, and when she was still a beautiful woman in her mid-forties, she was practically sobbing when the dishwasher finally became a popular sight in the 1970s. Bras were just as much a relief as they became better developed and tailored for women. When modern sizing came in not long after the war, she couldn't help but chuckle at the knowledge that she was officially an F-cup.

*That'll explain it, alright*, she thought at the time. God knew that the newer bras were so much more wonderfully supportive, taking the burden off of her back and shoulders a great deal, while also looking pretty damn good on her. James certainly thought so; he loved to watch her sweep the floors just to peek down her top as she bent over a little.

It wasn't all housework though: they still found plenty of time for romance and attraction, especially when their beloved children moved out, finding their own love and lives. Rachel returned to nursing for a time, working hard to get her practice up to date. It was a profession she held a deep attachment to, ever since it had taught her so much about the truth of war, life, and love. But she always came home to James, and he to her. She was a beautiful woman still, but time continued to leave its changes. James never stopped looking at her like she was still that woman he had met all those decades ago, though. When she was him, she felt like her beauty and passion had never faded.

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Rachel wiped a few tears away as she checked over the lunchbox and its many photos within. It felt so wrong to be parting with these photos, even though she had others of James from that time.

*Dear God, do I miss him. My wonderful husband. I knew it was coming, I had the knowledge, and yet it was all the more piercing.*

She traced her fingers over the shared photo of them together, her in his lap back in that military hospital rec room.

"We made every day count, didn't we?" she said.

Slowly, she closed the lunchbox. It was nearly time. Soon a certain young man would arrive, curiously inspecting a wartime memorabilia store, and she would gift it to him. She slowly took the necklace off, the one with the green emerald pendant that she had worn for the last seventy years of life. She had no idea how many years she had left, but in many ways, it did not matter to her. She had long learned that each day was a gift, and she knew in her heart that James was waiting for her on the other side, young and dashing again, waiting to hear her sing, and - knowing him - ready to comment on her full bosom all over again.

*I'll see you when I see you, my love, she thought. I know I will. For now, I have to put things in order and complete the loop.*

The sound of the door ringer echoed through the store. She placed the necklace carefully into the lunchbox and closed it. It would be good to see her old self; she could barely remember what she looked like!

Rachel shuffled her way through the aisles, feeling almost like a spy in how she observed the scrawny, sickly-looking man peruse the shelves with intense interest. It was like stepping back into her own past.

*It practically is, she thought. God, the journey I have yet to take. The love I have yet to live. The wonders of womanhood, marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, all of it that I have yet to know.*

She smiled to herself, feeling complete in that moment. She was about to give a blessing to herself. And in some way, it made her feel young again. Almost immortal. The loop would continue, eternal and perfect.

"Young man," she muttered to herself. "You have no idea of the life you're going to have. But trust me when I say it's going to be *wonderful*."

She stepped forward.

"I see you're quite the history buff, young man," she said.

**The End**