

Tommy

By G. R. Driver

The young recruit is 'aughty -- 'e draf's from Gawd knows where;

- R. Kipling

Chapter One

Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina:

“Sir, First Sergeant Estes sent these files.”

“Thank you, Corporal.” Lieutenant Commander James Hyschak reached out and took the short stack of personnel files. The corporal returned to attention, the very picture of a proper junior Marine NCO. The LtCmdr. said, “As you were, Son, tell the first sergeant I said thank you.” The corporal barked out. “Aye-aye, sir.” He then executed a near perfect about face and marched back to S1.

As the Second Battalion’s Chaplain, LtCdr. Hyschak reviewed the personnel files of every recruit who specified a non-standard religion. Today, he had three folders to review, the first two recruits’ non-standard religions were Coptic and Sikh. Nothing he hadn’t seen before. The third surprised him, he had never seen a Marine recruit whose religion was Mennonite. LtCmdr. Hyschak stood and called out to his secretary, “PFC Jones, call down to Fox Company, tell them I’m coming to speak with recruit Schmidt.”

“Private Schmidt reporting as ordered to the...” Private Schmidt faltered a moment. He didn’t know how he should address the officer sitting behind the senior drill instructor’s desk.

His senior drill Instructor interrupted. "To Lieutenant Commander Hyschak."

"Private Schmidt reporting as ordered to Lieutenant Commander Hyschak, sir."

LtCdr Hyschak took a moment to study the young recruit. Private Schmidt looks willing enough. Hyschak smiled and said, "At ease, son."

Tom Schmidt knew how to do "At ease."

"Private Schmidt, I am the Battalion Chaplain. Your personnel file shows you've claimed a religious affiliation of Mennonite. Are you a Mennonite?"

"Sir..." Tom looked to his senior drill instructor.

Staff Sergeant Allen spoke to the senior officer. "Excuse me, sir." After Hyschak nodded, the drill instructor addressed the recruit. "Private, what's the problem?"

"The private doesn't know how to speak with a lieutenant commander."

"Speak plainly, but with respect."

Tom Schmidt turned back to the officer "Sir, I was born and raised a Mennonite. But I'm not a Mennonite anymore. When I filled out the form, I didn't know what else to write down."

"Do you know that Mennonites are conscientious objectors?"

"Yes, sir. Kevin and I talked about it. I'm not a conscientious objector, sir."

Hyschak glanced at the senior drill instructor. Sometimes, in the interests of expediency, the drill instructors "helped" the recruits. "Is Kevin one of your drill instructors?"

"No, sir. Kevin Butcher is my brother in law, sir."

The senior drill instructor opened his mouth as if to speak. Hyschak said, "Sergeant Allen, do you have something to add?"

"A question for the recruit, if I may, sir?" The chaplain nodded.

The drill instructor turned to the recruit. "Private, you said Kevin Butcher. Was he in the Marine Corps?"

"Yes sir. He's out now, but Kevin likes to say, 'Once a Marine, always a Marine, sir.'"

Staff Sergeant Allen nodded. "We'll speak about this later."

Hyschak made a mental note to ask the drill instructor about this Kevin Butcher. He asked Private Schmidt about his religious beliefs and they decided his affiliation would change to Protestant. Private Schmidt agreed to attend those services on Sundays. With the issue resolved, Staff Sergeant Allen dismissed the recruit back to the platoon.

After Private Schmidt left the office, Hyschak turned to Sergeant Allen. He said, "Do you know this Kevin Butcher?"

"I was stationed with a Corporal Kevin Butcher, and if he trained Private Schmidt, the recruit might require special handling, sir."

"Why is that, Sergeant."

"Sir, have you heard of The Butcher of Helmand Province?"

LtCdr. Hyschak's eyes opened wide. "I thought The Butcher was just another legend."

"No sir, Kevin Butcher is the real deal. I was there. In one cold night, Corporal Butcher killed fifteen Taliban with his bayonet, improvised weapons, and his bare hands. In the morning, the local tribeswomen came out and disposed of the bodies. We didn't have any more problems for the rest of our deployment."

"Well, I have to get back to my office," LtCdr. Hyschak stood. "Let me know if Private Schmidt has any problems."

Chapter Two

Private Tom Schmidt came to a halt and snapped to attention in front of the senior drill instructor's desk. He said, "Private Schmidt reporting as ordered to the Senior Drill Instructor, Sir."

Staff Sergeant Allen had hoped a problem like this wouldn't happen, but it had, and two recruits were now in sick bay. He said, "Private Schmidt, what am I going to do with you?"

"Sir? The private doesn't know, sir."

There was no doubt that the two recruits attacked Private Schmidt. Just as there was no doubt that Private Schmidt beat the living shit out of them. Other recruits had been present and confirmed the details. Still, fighting was against the rules. "Very well, Schmidt, in the future, could you defend yourself without hospitalizing the rest of the platoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will stand the last fire watch every night for the next week. You are dismissed...A moment, Private, do you have Kevin Butcher's cell phone number?"

Kevin Butcher's head rested on his wife's lap while they lounged on their antique metal porch glider. His cell phone began to chirp, but he didn't budge.

"Kevin, your phone's ringing." Rebecca lifted the text book so she could peer down at her husband.

As he sat up and reached into his pocket for his phone, he said, "Keep your lap warm for me?"

"Yes, dear." Rebecca smiled and went back to her studies.

Kevin didn't recognize the number; he hoped it wasn't another security system scammer. He tapped the answer button and said, "Hello."

"Corporal Butcher," an all too familiar voice came from the phone, "what have you sent me?"

Kevin hadn't spoken with his former squad leader, Sergeant Robert Allen, since he checked out from Camp Lejeune. "Ah, Robbie?"

"So, you remember me?"

"Well, hell yes." Kevin sat up straight. "What's going on, Robbie? I didn't expect to hear from you." Rebecca glanced up at her husband's sudden change in demeanor.

"For my sins, Corporal, the Marine Corps decided to make me a drill instructor. In fact, I am the senior drill instructor of platoon 2224."

"Platoon 2224? Um, one second." Kevin glanced at his wife and said, "Tom's platoon number is 2224, isn't it?"

"You read his letter yesterday," said Rebecca.

"Robbie, is my brother-in-law, Tom Schmidt, one of your recruits?"

"Yes, and that's why I'm calling. This morning, he put two other recruits into sick bay. Just what have you taught him?"

"Is Tom in trouble?"

"Two Baltimore gang-bangers thought they could push around the Pennsylvania pacifist. They are now in sickbay and may recover. Recruit Schmidt will be on fire watch for a week, but he isn't in trouble. Now, what have you sent me?"

Laughing, Kevin replied. "I've been training Tom, off and on, for the last two years. He's going to be one hell of a Marine."

"Shit! Kevin, this job is difficult enough. Where is he with MCMAP?" Pronounced, mic-map, MCMAP is the abbreviation for Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.

"He'll probably test out at black belt."

"What about the rifle range?"

“Expert. I’ve taught him with my M4 and my match grade M1 Garand. The sniper school might want him.”

“Shit.”

“Robbie, Tom isn’t going to be a problem. He won’t develop an attitude. Treat him the same as the other recruits. Or, if you can, push him even harder. Teach him what *you’ve* learned.”

“Huh, all right. Hey, will you be down for the graduation?”

“Oh, hell yeah. Me *and* my wife.”

“Wife? What kind of woman would marry the likes of you?”

Kevin glanced at his wife as she read her nursing text book. Rebecca’s French braided hair glowed in the late afternoon sun. He said, “Only the very best, Robbie.”

The End

Author’s Note:

While writing TFD, I also wrote several background stories. Jonathan and Rachel, Kevin and Kristen, Kristen and Andrew, and Tommy. These mostly unfinished stories served to keep me straight.

The Jonathan and Rachel story consists of four semi-unfinished chapters. Some of it made its way into TFD chapter six. The parts detailing Deborah and her teacher’s “romance” are some of the porniest bits I’ve generated.

I’ve sent copies of Kevin and Kristen out to interested readers and no one likes it. Mostly because Kristen is so selfish and screwed up. This early Kristen was based on the symptoms of female sociopaths. They exist, look it up. The version of Kristen who found her way into TFD is nicer.

Kristen and Andrew’s story is unfinished. I kind of like it and can see finishing it up some day.

Last, is Tommy. I stole the name from the Kipling poem. Tommy is number three or four on my “stories to write” list. One major hurdle to overcome is learning to write modern combat scenes. My time in the USMC was spent repairing helicopter flight controls and ended long ago.