

# THE NIGHT BEFORE A

# PM CHRISTMAS

**T** WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, AND THROUGHOUT CAMP LORE, NOT A SOLDIER WAS STIRRING, THERE WAS BARELY A SNORE.



**T**HE STOCKINGS WERE HUNG ON THE MOTOR POOL WALLS, IN HOPES THEY'D BE FILLED BY OL' SANTA CLAUS.



PS 733

**T**HE OPERATORS AND MECHANICS WERE SNUG IN THEIR RACKS, WHILE DREAMS OF PM HAD THEM COMPLETELY RELAXED.



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**A**ND ME, THE 1ST SERGEANT, HAD JUST CLIMBED INTO BED. I WAS CLOSING MY EYES AS I LAY DOWN MY HEAD.



DEC 13

**THUD  
BOINK  
CLUNK  
BONK  
SWOOSH**

**W**HEN OUT IN THE MOTOR POOL THERE CAME A GREAT NOISE, I HOPPED STRAIGHT OUT OF BED, BARELY KEEPING MY POISE. OVER TO THE WINDOW I RAN REALLY FAST, AND PUSHED IT WIDE OPEN SO I COULD SEE WHAT HAD PASSED.



**T**HE SODIUM LIGHTS SPREAD A DIM YELLOW GLOW, ON THE SNOW-COVERED TRUCKS IN THE LOT DOWN BELOW. MY EYES POPPED WIDE OPEN AS ON THAT WINTER FRONTIER, FLEW A BIG RED SLEIGH PULLED BY EIGHT FEISTY REINDEER.



**A**T THE REINS WAS A DRIVER WITH A BIG SQUARE JAW, I KNEW RIGHT AWAY IT MUST BE HALF-MAST SANTA CLAUS! FASTER THAN LIGHTNING ALL HIS REINDEER DID FLY, AND HE SHOUTED THEIR NAMES AS THEY MOVED 'CROSS THE SKY!



**N**OW, DUDLEY! NOW, SMEPLEY! NOW, PERCY AND JOE! ON, SEYMOUR! ON, CRUSTY! ON DEXTER AND MOE!

**T**O THE TOP OF THE MOTOR POOL, QUICK AS CAN BE! I'VE GOT TMS TO DELIVER FOR THESE SOLDIERS TO SEE!"

**W**ITH A CRACK OF HIS WHIP AND A MIGHTY "HO, HO!" HALF-MAST SANTA UP THE BUILDING DID GO. UP ON THE ROOFTOP THEY ARRIVED WITH A CRASH, HIS OVERSTUFFED SLEIGH FILLED WITH A PM MISHMASH.

**A** FEW SECONDS LATER, I HEARD STEPS UP ON TOP, AND THEN, RIGHT BEHIND ME, I HEARD A LOUD PLOP! I TURNED AROUND QUICKLY, AND WHAT DID I SEE? WHY, HALF-MAST SANTA CLAUS JUST AS REAL AS CAN BE!



**H**E WAS DRESSED IN GREEN CAMO FROM HIS HEAD TO HIS TOES, I WAS SHOCKED WHEN I SAW HIM AND IMMEDIATELY FROZE.



**H**E HAD A HUGE BAG FILLED WITH ALL KINDS OF STUFF,

**L**IKE TMS AND GREASE GUNS—HE'D BROUGHT QUITE ENOUGH.

**H**IS GLASSES, THEY SPARKLED! HIS GRIN RATHER KNOWING, HIS CHEEKS WERE QUITE RED; I GUESS IT'D BEEN SNOWING.

**H**E WAS A PERFECT PICTURE OF CLASSIC AMERICANA,



**E**XCEPT HIS CHIN WAS CLEAN-SHAVEN. NO BEARD FOR THIS SANTA!

**W**ELL-MANNERED AND NEAT, AND POLITE AS YOU PLEASE, THE SMILE ON HIS FACE QUICKLY PUT ME AT EASE.

**T**HEN DROPPING HIS BACK TO THE FLOOR WITH A SIGH, HE STRETCHED OUT HIS BACK AND LOOKED ME IN THE EYE.



**W**ITH FINGER TO LIPS, AND A "SHHH!" AS HIS PLEA, HE DUG THROUGH HIS PACK AS HE DROPPED TO ONE KNEE, LUBE ORDERS, MULTIMETERS, GREASE GUNS AND PLIERS, WHEN I THOUGHT HE WAS DONE, HE PULLED OUT SOME TIRES!



**A**LL THESE GIFTS WENT IN STOCKINGS OR RIGHT ON THE FLOOR, THEN HE WENT BACK TO HIS PACK AND DUG OUT SOME MORE! IT TOOK QUITE A WHILE BEFORE HIS BAG WAS DEFLATED, - BUT THE EMPTIER IT GOT, THE MORE HE SEEMED ELATED!



**F**INISHED AT LAST AND PACK NOW QUITE BARE, HE TURNED FROM HIS WORK AND CLIMBED UP THE STAIR. BEFORE HE COULD VANISH, HE GAVE ME A WINK,



**A**ND THEN HE WAS GONE, BEFORE I COULD BLINK.



**H**E JUMPED IN HIS SLEIGH  
AND I LOOKED BACK OUTSIDE,  
AS THEY TOOK TO THE SKY  
LIKE A SHIP AT HIGH TIDE.

BUT I HEARD HIM CALL OUT  
AS HE SPED THROUGH  
THE NIGHT,

REMEMBER  
THIS  
CHRISTMAS  
TO KEEP PM  
BURNING  
BRIGHT!

**END**