

Chapter 4

Military School Proposition

Paul is let into his grandfather's home by the maid. He makes his way to the room where his father and grandfather are sitting. They both have intense expressions, and Paul instantly knows there is something wrong. He has seen these expressions all during his life. They are the expressions they gave Paul when they tried to force him to play football in high school. He told them more than once that playing football did not appeal to him. They did not listen. Paul's refusal only made his father and grandfather more determined to force him onto the team. They felt Paul was intentionally robbing them of the recognition and accolades that go with having a child on the high school football team.

To avoid their constant complaining, Paul agreed to join the football team. He decided to do it his way. Paul paid a student to take his place on the football team. He didn't see anything wrong with it. The student loved playing football, the team liked him there, the student got money, and Paul didn't have to engage in physical activity that could cause him to experience pain. He thought it was a perfect situation. These are the same expressions his father and grandfather had when they came into the principal's office to discuss his football player business. He knows all about their intense expressions.

Paul's father and grandfather look at him and then look away. There is an uncomfortable silence in the room.

Paul is the first to speak. He says, "If somebody called you about a shipment of edible female underwear, I can explain."

James simply shakes his head and points to a chair and says, "Please sit down. Your father and I would like to discuss a few things with you."

"Things? What things? You know there are some things that should never be discussed between a man, his father, and his grandfather. I'm sure you don't want to cross that line."

Walter sighs and says, "We need to discuss how you have managed to be expelled by three colleges in less than two years."

"Expelled is such a harsh word. Let's just try to keep my academic experiences in proper perspective. I view it as me simply using my own unique method of eliminating institutions of higher learning that don't quite meet my specialized educational requirements?"

"I call it getting kicked out."

"Yeah, and so did Mom."

Paul and Walter exchange angry stares and a quiet moment passes between them.

James clears his throat and gets the attention of Paul and Walter.

He looks directly at Paul and says. "We're worried about you. We feel strongly that something is needed to change your bad attitude."

"What bad attitude?"

Walter yells, "The attitude that you can do whatever you want and not be held responsible for it."

Paul calmly responds, "That's not a bad attitude. That is simply an example of my deep aspirations to one day pursue a career in politics."

James looks at Walter and says, "You know, he does have a point there."

Walter screams, "You're not helping."

James puts up his hand and then says, "Yes, you are right. We must remain focused."

"Thank you," says Walter.

"We've noticed some serious flaws in your character," says James.

Paul is shocked and says, "Flaws, what flaws? What character flaws do you believe that I could possibly have?"

"How about cheating?" yells Walter.

Paul rolls his eyes and says, "Let's call that a strong desire to get around red tape."

"Greed," says James.

"A strong desire to do well in business," says Paul.

"Lying," yells Walter.

"I view it more as simply altering the truth a little in order to cut down on people's stress levels. I'm sure you realize that I'm a giver."

James says, "It appears that you are unable to grow and mature in a conventional academic setting. We feel something a bit different would work best for you."

"Something that will teach you discipline," says Walter.

"A place that will help you mature and develop a sense of responsibility for something other than yourself," says James.

Paul looks at his father, then grandfather, and says, "I refuse to work for public television."

"Your grandfather and I have decided it would be best for all of us if you attended a military academy," says Walter.

Paul starts to laugh. He thinks to himself that if getting kicked out of a regular university was easy, he may only last a few hours at a military academy. Paul can't believe his father and grandfather would even consider such a thing.

"Sorry to disappoint the two of you. Paul here doesn't do the soldier scene. I don't like wearing green and the idea of bullets piercing my flesh is something I don't find appealing. In case you forgot, I just turned twenty and drive a new sports car. The military school is out. What else do you have?"

Walter and James look at one another and smile.

"Paul," says James.

"Yes, Grandpa," says Paul.

"You know your grandmother and I control your trust fund until you reach the age of twenty-five. I've spoken with your grandmother. She agrees that attending this school will be good for you. If you don't attend the military academy as we request, we'll cut you off from your trust fund immediately."

Paul is taking a drink from a bottle of Perrier when James makes his last statement. The shock causes Paul's throat to close. He spits out some of the Perrier. He then coughs for a few minutes until he can speak again.

"Don't you see how this is the best solution to our problems?" says Walter.

Paul simply gives James and Walter a cold stare.

"You can't do this to me," says Paul.

Walter smiles and says, "I think you know we can, and we will. We may even take pleasure in doing it."

Paul's face shows the rage he is feeling. He calmly says, "Okay, maybe you guys got me this time. But don't forget, I'm going to become quite proficient at killing people."

The anger and rage Paul begins to feel is something profound. He does want freedom from his family, but only when he can do it on his terms. These feelings go deep and trigger a strong desire to get even with his father and grandfather. Paul decides to continue hiding the intense anger he feels toward them. He is now focused on devising one of his special lessons for these bullies. Paul is determined to make it a learning experience they will never forget.

Paul is sitting on a bench in a beautiful park with his arm around a very pretty twenty-year-old girl named Monica. She has long silky dark hair and bright blue eyes. Her figure is the envy of other girls her age. Monica has known Paul since they were young. She has always had strong feelings for him. Monica hates not being able to let go of her desire to be with Paul. She remembers how he was so nice and fun when they were in high school. Monica and Paul dated during this time and it was special to her.

They broke up when Paul began to change. This happened when his father remarried more than once after his parents got a divorce. Monica has no other boys in her life at the moment. She is happy to be here in the park with Paul. Monica likes him having his arm around her. She misses the Paul she knew from high school and all the good times they had together.

Monica doesn't realize Paul never liked how she constantly tried to control him with her tears and drama. He considers her an emotional bully. Paul finds it easy to ignore these things since she is absolutely beautiful.

Monica looks at Paul and says, "Are you sure you got drafted by the French Foreign Legion? I thought people just went to France and volunteered to be part of them."

Paul takes a deep breath and appears to be in a state of shock.

"I don't understand it myself. Obviously, there is an important covert war happening somewhere in the world that requires people with my special abilities to participate. It's the least I can do for my country," says Paul.

"But the French Foreign Legion fights for France. Besides that, you have no special abilities."

Paul leans forward and looks directly at Monica.

"Then you need to think of me as a trailblazer. The first American with many unknown special abilities to be drafted into the French Foreign Legion. Hey, I want you to know how much I appreciate you providing some physical comfort for a man about to face war and death. I don't know if I'll come back from this alive, but I'm going in there. I know I will always cherish these special moments with you during the remaining days of my life and through eternity when I'm gone."

Paul runs his hand up Monica's leg. He holds her closer and slowly goes to kiss her. Monica suddenly pulls away, looks at him, and laughs.

Paul is confused and says, "What's wrong?"

"You are so full of it. Why do you always try to bullshit me just like everybody else? I know you."

Paul shrugs his shoulders.

"Because it has always worked so well in the past."

Monica's face shows she is now angry. She stands up to leave, Paul grabs her arm and gets her to slowly sit back down beside him.

Monica says, "You don't have to lie to me. I'm the girl you grew up with who saw you at your best and worst. I hope you don't forget that about me."

"How could I forget? You constantly ask me if I remember things about our high school years. It's like always answering test questions on a never-ending personal history exam."

"You are still really lacking in many boyfriend skills. That's why we're not together right now. It seems like the only time I see you is when your hormones are raging or you're in some kind of trouble."

"Then don't complain that we never spend time together."

Monica gets up again like she's going to leave. Paul grabs her arm and again gently pulls her back down to the bench.

"Okay, I'm sorry. Please sit down. I admit that I've not treated you too good in the recent past."

"No, you haven't. You come around and we have a great time. We go on trips and do things together for days. Then you're gone, and I don't hear from you. Do you understand how that hurts?"

"I hope you realize that hurting you is not where I intend to go, it just seems that's where I always end up."

You're just a pathetic self-absorbed asshole."

"I suppose that is a view of me held by you and others."

Monica slowly moves over and hugs Paul.

Paul smiles and says, "Now that we have that settled; there will be nobody at my father's house for hours since he left on a date. We'll have the entire place to ourselves. You could do your naughty nurse routine. You know how I love it when you perform your special examination."

Monica yells, "Paul."

Paul is confused and says, "What? I just thought it would be easier than using my sports car. We both know that is a bit of a logistics challenge. I think using my father's house would make things much easier. I'm just thinking of you."

Monica moves away from Paul. She is still not looking at him, trying not to cry, and says, "I talked with your mother the other day."

Paul yells, "My mother?"

Monica looks at Paul and remembers the strong emotional response he always has when the topic of his mother is discussed. She knows this is the one thing that always weakens Paul. Monica has seen how Paul's mother has power over him like nobody else in the world. Few people know this about him.

"Yeah, what's wrong with that? I was at a store near the art gallery where she works. I saw her and we talked. She just got a promotion at her job and is going to move into her own apartment this month. She'll be glad to move out of her sister's house. You know how she's lived there for the past few years. I assumed she told you."

Paul runs his hands through his hair, stands up, and starts walking around sighing. He's struggling to control his emotions.

"Well, that's just wonderful. I'm glad to hear it. How great that her only child has no idea what's going on in her life, but my mother takes the time to tell you, a former girlfriend, what's going on with her."

Monica yells, "What's wrong?"

“What could be wrong? I have a mother who can’t pick up a stupid phone, dial seven digits, and say 'Hey, my only child, I just got a promotion at my job. and I’m moving into a new apartment.' No, I’ve got to hear by chance from someone like you.”

Monica sits back, folds her arms, and smirks.

“Don’t you just hate it when someone you care about unintentionally hurts your feelings all the time?”

Paul’s face becomes red and his jaw becomes tight.

“What I really hate is my parent’s bullshit, and your non-stop whining about everything I do.”

Monica stands up and yells, “Fine, I’ve had enough. Get out of my life and this time stay out.”

Paul composes himself and says very calmly, “I want to clarify one thing. Does this mean we’re not going to engage in some type of fornication tonight? I’m sure we can make it something impressive. I’m willing to put forth the effort if you are and besides that, I’d hate to have the free time at my father’s house go unused.”

“Go screw yourself asshole.”

Monica turns and walks away. Paul starts walking in the opposite direction toward his car. He suddenly stops, turns around, looks in Monica’s direction, and yells, “If that made me happy, do you think I’d need you? As we say in the French Foreign Legion, baby, arrivederci.”

Monica turns around and yells, “That’s Italian you idiot.”

Paul screams, “Hey, guess what? I’ve never been a language major.”

Paul gets in his sports car and revs the engine before driving down the road at a fast rate of speed. He thinks to himself how Monica is now a strong contender for inclusion into his inner circle.

Chapter 5

First Impressions

Paul is sitting in the passenger seat of his father's new BMW. They are driving down a rural road toward Saint Michael's Military Academy. He is drinking a bottle of Perrier and humming the tune to the song "The Ballad of the Green Berets." His father is very annoyed with Paul and continuously rolls his eyes and sighs. He decides it would be better to try to start a conversation than listen to Paul's annoying humming.

Walter says, "You know, we were lucky to get you into this military academy at such a late date. Your grandfather had to pull some serious strings for you to go here. You need to change your attitude. I'm sure you'll benefit from attending this school."

Paul chuckles and says, "You know and I know I'm not going to make it there. You saw how easily I got kicked out of those other schools. With all the rules and regulations at a place like this, I give it two weeks before I'm expelled."

"Then you'll be very poor. We're serious about cutting you off from your trust fund. I was cut off from mine for a while when I was your age, and believe me it's not fun. Your grandfather straightened me out rather quickly by doing such a thing."

"So, I'm selling myself out for money just like my father. We have such wonderful family traditions."

Walter yells, "Stop complaining, lots of people would love to have your opportunities."

"You mean like being kept on an emotional leash? Constantly being bullied as well as threatened to be financially neutered by my family members?"

"You just don't understand."

"I understand you hold all the financial cards in my life right now. I wonder what will happen when that changes. What will our relationship be like when you and grandfather no longer have power over me? The two of you may have to spend time at a rehab center for bullies."

"You don't know what you're talking about. I bet one day you'll probably thank me for this."

"What if someday I don't? What if I'm thinking that a future lawsuit against my father based on intentional infliction of emotional distress could be in order? The company always likes to get rid of nuisance lawsuits rather quickly."

"I guess we'll just deal with that if it happens. I'm done talking. Let's just be quiet. We're almost there."

As Paul and his father travel down the road there is stunning scenery and tense silence between the car's occupants. Suddenly, they see the entrance to the military academy. There is a large iron trestle fence. A sign at the top of the trestle reads, "Saint Michael's Military Academy. Where Boys Come To Be Made Men."

As Walter's BMW goes up the road, it stops at a small building on the driver's side at the gate of the military academy. A young man about Paul's age and wearing a very impressive uniform steps out of the small building to greet them. Walter rolls down his driver's side

window. He tells the young man his name and says that he is here to drop off his son. The young man takes out a clipboard from the small building. He looks at it and tells Walter he needs to go to the main building and explains how to get there.

When they start driving away, Walter says, "That was certainly a well-mannered and impressive-looking young man."

Paul looks back at the boy in uniform still directing other cars coming through the gate. He shrugs his shoulders, and says, "Yeah, I wonder if he does windows."

Walter looks at his son with an expression of disgust and says, "You're impossible."

Paul is feeling very nervous. The only thing making him provide an appearance of calm is the intense anger he feels for his father and grandfather. Dreams of revenge keep him relaxed and focused.

The car pulls up in front of the main building. Walter and Paul get out of the BMW. Walter opens the trunk and starts taking out his son's luggage. Paul looks around and sees boys ranging in age from twelve to twenty-one years old. Some are being yelled at while doing push-ups, others are marching, and some are standing in line wearing camouflage uniforms. Others are standing at attention while a sergeant yells and pours water from a hose on them.

Paul says, "I think we may have made a wrong turn somewhere."

"Why do you say that?"

"This place looks more like some kind of sadomasochist academy. I can't stay here. I drive a sports car."

"Quit complaining. There is nothing you can do about it."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing."

"How about if I told you I always felt deep down inside that I was really a female from the planet Zernda? A place that doesn't have a military."

Walter yells, "Just stop it."

Walter places three pieces of expensive luggage on the sidewalk. He takes out golf clubs, a suit bag, a briefcase, a six-pack of Perrier and places them next to the expensive luggage.

Paul gets in front of his father and says, "How about if deep down inside I always felt you were a woman from the planet Zernda? You've got to admit that one year when you dressed in drag for a Halloween party, you were way more comfortable than anyone expected."

Walter sighs and puts down the last of Paul's luggage and closes his car's trunk. Paul looks around as he takes another drink from his bottle of Perrier. Suddenly, he tries to grab the car keys from Walter, and the two are struggling and start swearing at one another.

They hear a young female say, "Excuse me, but can I be of assistance with the new cadet?"

When they stop struggling, Walter and Paul are looking at a rather attractive female wearing a cadet uniform. She has deep blue eyes and blonde hair that is pinned up under the cap she is wearing. The strict uniform she wears can't hide her thin and shapely body. Walter and Paul let one another go. Walter straightens his shirt. He and Paul are looking at the beautiful female cadet with stunned expressions.

Paul says, "Are you the military academy's concierge?"

"The what?" says the female cadet.

Walter steps in front of Paul and says, "Ignore him. I'm sure he's a little nervous about this being his first day at the academy. I bet it's like that with all new military academy cadets."

"I'm Cadet Jane Westin here to take the new inductee, Paul Wildman, to the school Commandant's office."

Walter turns to Paul and says, "Well, I guess this is it. Good luck son."

Walter holds out his hand to shake and Paul just looks at it.

When he tries to hug his son, it is awkward and Paul says, "Please don't try and put on a show for the lady cadet. It's embarrassing."

Paul makes one last attempt to get Walter's car keys but fails.

Walter yells, "Oh, no you don't. Like the sign says at the entrance, it's time for you to become a man."

"Oh yeah? Maybe you should be a cadet here. Don't you think it's time for you to become one?"

Walter gets in his car and starts the engine. He then looks out of the window, smiles, and waves. Paul realizes his father is struggling not to laugh. Paul raises his middle digit in the direction of his father's car as it drives away. When he turns back, cadet Jane Westin is looking at him with a somber expression.

Paul says, "I guess every family has their traditions. Flipping off one another is ours."

Jane says, "Follow me, cadet."

She turns and begins to walk away. Paul looks at all his luggage and then at Jane.

Paul yells, "I don't think I can be a cadet, I'm a Presbyterian. Hey, muscle girl, aren't you going to help me out here with my stuff?"

Jane walks over to Paul in precise military fashion. She puts her hands on her hips and starts speaking in a loud monotone voice.

"Let me explain something to you. I am a senior cadet. As a senior cadet, I am not required to help a first-year do anything. Furthermore, from now on you will address me as senior Cadet Westin. The shortened term is senior cadet. If you don't, you will learn all about the academy's discipline programs for cadets with bad attitudes. Do you understand?"

As Jane Westin continues to deride Paul, he can't stop looking at her and thinking about her beauty. He no longer hears any word she is saying. Paul is lost in a world of imagination involving senior Cadet Westin and him engaging in physical pleasure. Suddenly, she says his name several times. Paul is then forced back into reality and says, "What's up with you? Why are you so upset? You belong to a union or something?"

Jane looks Paul up and down and lets out a disgusted groan. She turns around and starts walking away.

"Just follow me and be quiet."

Paul puts his golf clubs over his shoulder and picks up his briefcase. On his other shoulder, he puts a travel bag and picks up the six-pack of Perrier. He walks away and leaves some of his luggage.

Walking behind Jane, Paul yells, "If you're the hospitality greater around here, this place is gonna really suck."

Paul stops another cadet who walks near him. He tells the cadet he'll give him some money to bring his other luggage to his room. Cadet Jane Westin tells the cadet to ignore Paul. She then grabs Paul's shoulder and starts pulling him into the main building.