

LOVE IS AN OPEN ROAD



Don't Read in the Closet 2015

LIFEBOAT

Rob Colton

Table of Contents

Love is an Open Road.....	3
Lifeboat – Information.....	6
Lifeboat.....	7
Chapter 1.....	8
Chapter 2.....	12
Chapter 3.....	15
Chapter 4.....	19
Chapter 5.....	23
Author Bio	28

Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

LIFEBOAT

By Rob Colton

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Photo Description

A man, shirtless, his muscular right arm up behind his head. His hair is cut very short. His chest is covered with an ample amount of dark blond hair. He has a thick mustache. His chin whiskers are just as thick, with a patch of gray. He has a slight smirk and expressive eyes.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Do you see this smile? And the little laugh lines around the eyes? What makes him smile like that? Is he smiling about something? At someone? What brought him here, looking at the camera and just capturing my curiosity—and perhaps yours as well?

Please tell the story behind this picture!

Yes, I know, that sounds rather simple. The fact is, I saw the picture of this guy and since then he's in my head and refuses to leave, on the other hand he refuses to give me more details! He's just smiling! Can someone please help him? And me, so that he can leave?

Contemporary, please.

Sincerely,

Anke

Story Info

Genre: science fiction

Tags: military men, reunited, spaceships, stranded, technicians

Word count: 6,950

LIFEBOAT
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Chapter 1

“Chuck...”

My eyes fluttered open at the sound of his voice. I automatically began my ingrained response to Jack’s butchering of my name. “My name’s not Chuck—”

Uncontrollable coughs took my breath. Sharp pangs like white-hot poker stabbed at my left side. I couldn’t stop the ragged moan from escaping my lips. The air was thick, filled with acrid smoke. The smell of burning electronics and plastic permeated the room.

It was dark except for a strobing red light.

Lying facedown on the ship’s deck plating, I lifted my head. I ran my forearm across my nose and mouth. Pain shot straight through my face into my brain. Was my nose broken? Looking down at my uniform sleeve, I saw it was streaked with dark, viscous liquid.

After pushing myself to all fours, I gripped the bulkhead and pulled myself up. My left side throbbed as I stood.

Our ship had been en route to Communications Relay Station 147. The station had gone off-line, and real time comm traffic between Earth, Centauri Colony, and any United Earth starships in the region was no longer possible. As an engineering technician first class, it was my job to fix the station. Before we could get there, we were attacked by an unknown vessel.

The U.E.S. *Hermes* wasn’t equipped to handle engagements with hostile ships. We were a repair crew. There were no soldiers on board, not like my last post. The U.E.S. *Antares* was a full-range tactical scout ship.

“Don’t go, Chuck.”

“I have to, Jack,” I replied to the smoke-filled air.

For a moment, I was back on the Antares. Sergeant Jack Braxton blocked my path. “We’ll work something out.”

“It’s just a temporary assignment. A few months to help refit the communications grid.” I wanted to back away. When Jack was this close, I wasn’t able to think clearly. He smelled so good, I just wanted to throw myself at him, to tell him this was all a mistake. I wasn’t leaving after all.

We both knew temporary would become permanent.

Jack sighed. "You're running away. I won't let you. I'll find you and I'll drag you back here."

It took a second to orient myself. I was outside the bridge. I hit the door control, but the computer refused entry. Slamming my fist against the control did not help. I tried again, and then once more just in case. The computer screen above the door control was fried, so I didn't have access to the security system.

I needed to return to Engineering. I made my way through the debris-filled corridor, wading through the thick smoke, avoiding the bulkhead fragments and sparking wires.

Once I made it to Engineering, any hopes I had of getting out of this alive were shot. The engines were dead. Power levels were less than twenty percent and dropping. Oxygen levels were falling and carbon dioxide levels were increasing. *Okay, so I don't have to worry about dying in a fire if these sparks catch. There won't be enough oxygen to fuel it.*

We were dead in space, but our momentum was still bringing us toward the relay station. If we could dock, then maybe we'd be okay. If the ship was unable to dock with the station, then I was screwed. There was absolutely no way the ship could make it anywhere else with no engines and failing life support.

Maybe I could cannibalize the escape pods on Deck 4. Realistically, that wouldn't buy me much time though. The pods on a ship this old were meant to put us in stasis, where we wouldn't need extended life support. If I could somehow rig the pod *not* to put me into cryosleep, I still wouldn't be able to maneuver it to the station and dock. They didn't have standard airlocks, let alone engines.

Activating the ship-wide comm system, I broadcast a message. "Crewman Prescott to the bridge. Please respond." After a moment of silence, I tried again. "Crewman Prescott to anyone who can hear me. Please respond."

I used the computer to access the master system control, switching the display to show me the ship's damage report on a 3-D model of the ship. Nearly every inch of the vessel was pulsing red. I accessed the bridge security feed.

When the video image came on screen, my knees buckled. I gripped the console to keep myself from falling. The front half of the bridge was *gone*. The ship's atmosphere was venting into space. No one could have survived that.

No one *had* survived that.

We had all been on the bridge, curious about the unknown vessel approaching at high speed. When the ship didn't respond to our comm requests, the captain put the *Hermes* on alert. But it was too late.

After the first torpedo hit, I left to return to Engineering. As far as I knew, the rest of the crew was still on the bridge. A quick internal scan for life signs confirmed my fears.

Eight men gone.

But I didn't have time to dwell on the loss. I swallowed the lump in my throat and activated the long-range comm system. "This is Crewman Charles Prescott of the United Earth vessel *Hermes*. Our ship has taken heavy weapons damage from an unknown vessel. Power levels are minimal. Life support failing. Request immediate assistance. Repeat."

I then set the message to repeat on all frequencies. Fat lot of good the message would do me. The damn relay station was broken. That's why we were here in the first place. By the time anyone received the message, the ship would be dead in space—me along with it.

Suddenly, the ship was rocked with an explosion. As red strobe lights disoriented me, the klaxon came to life, its alarm slamming over and over into my ears. The computer display flashed red, text scrolling so fast across the screen I barely had time read it: *Hull Breach Containment Failure. Deck 3 Explosive Decompression. Deck 3 Emergency Bulkhead Failure. Oxygen Levels Critical. Hull Breach Containment Failure...*

I didn't think, I just acted. I activated the transverse bulkheads and completely sealed off Deck 3. The audio alarms abated, but the computer still scrolled through its messages.

The main airlock was on Deck 3. I would now have to go through the emergency airlock located on top of the ship, which meant climbing up a ladder two decks tall. By cutting off Deck 3, I also lost access to Deck 4. Which meant the escape pods.

Using the ship's thrusters, I corrected course, making sure we were perfectly lined up with CRS-147. I enabled the auto-docking beacon. If the ship could make it to the relay station, hopefully the autodock would kick in and it would successfully connect with the one airlock we had active.

Sliding down to the floor, I pulled my holopad from my pocket. Though the screen was cracked, it still powered up. I flipped through until I found the picture. Other than my memories, it was the only connection I had to Jack.

My holopad had automatically taken the screencap during a video chat a few months ago, when I was still serving on the *Antares*.

“Are you naked, Jack?” I asked as I gazed at the curls of hair on his bare chest.

Jack smirked, the corner of his mustached lip turning up and emphasizing the tiny laugh lines around his green eyes. He tucked his right arm back underneath his head, making his bicep flex. “I might have underwear on. Maybe those tight trunks you like. Why don’t you come down to my quarters and find out?”

I tried to ignore the flood of saliva in my mouth, but I had to swallow. “Someone might see us.”

“I don’t care, Chuck.”

“My name’s not Chuck. It’s Charles.”

I really didn’t want to have that same argument with Jack. He’d told me several times that the United Earth defense forces didn’t have any official policies preventing relationships between non-commissioned ranks, but it still seemed wrong to me.

My head hurt too much to think about it.

“I’m just going to sleep for a minute, Jack. I’m sorry.”

I slept.

Chapter 2

“Chuck. Wake up.”

I tried to open my eyes, but it hurt too damn much. “Go away, Jack.”

“If you get up, I’ll suck your dick.”

Even though my body felt like it had been crushed by a two-foot thick titanium bulkhead, part of it still responded to Jack’s request. I couldn’t help but remember what it was like when Jack sucked me off. That first time had been in the auxiliary access closet in Engineering. He’d caught me staring at him again, but I couldn’t help myself. He looked so good in his uniform. It bulged in all the right places, and it was distracting. His lips, that touch of gray in the hairs covering his chin, and those eyes... They did me in every time they met mine.

When he finally confronted me, I didn’t have the will to say no—not to a man like Jack. It didn’t matter that we could have been caught anytime. The damn closet didn’t even have a door. Anyone walking in could have seen us. And they would have gotten an eyeful: Jack Braxton squatting in front of me, his head bobbing up and down, his hand between my legs, his finger inside my ass, tapping my prostate.

That was one of the reasons I had to leave. I had no self-control when it came to Jack Braxton. I was in way over my head. There was also the problem of him being my boss...

Wait a minute.

What was Jack doing here?

I opened my eyes and took in the battered engineering compartment. Smoke still filled the room. The sound of a repeating *ping* caught my attention.

The computer announced over ship-wide comm, “*Proximity Alert.*”

Bracing myself against the bulkhead, I pushed to my feet. The room spun, and I nearly tripped over my own feet. Turning, I leaned against the wall and slammed my eyes shut, waiting for the dizziness to pass. I was starting to feel the effects of the dwindling oxygen as well. I could feel my heart beating faster, and I struggled to catch my breath.

I drew in a deep breath. That was a mistake. The fumes from the melted electronics caught in my throat, and I began to cough uncontrollably.

“Fuck,” I spat, wiping my eyes with my sleeve.

My head throbbed, but I did my best to ignore it as I shuffled my way to the working computer panel.

Proximity Alert flashed on the screen, followed by *Automatic Docking Initiated*.

The ship shuddered, and the sound of metal scraping that followed was not a good sign. In the distance, I heard several loud crashes. The *Hermes* was falling apart.

I grabbed my repair kit and located the container of spare parts. The attached-lid container would be awkward to carry by myself given its size. But what choice did I have?

My tool kit had a shoulder strap, so I pulled it over my head and let it drape across my body. Picking up the plastic container using both handles, I then headed straight for the dorsal airlock.

When I reached the airlock, I let out a stream of curses. How the hell was I supposed to climb the ladder carrying this damned box? Even though the distance was just over fifteen feet, it might as well have been a mile.

Letting out a sigh, I dropped the crate on the floor and leaned against the ladder for a moment to relax.

Suddenly the ship’s klaxon came to life. The sound reverberated in the airlock room, and I clamped my hands over my ears. The ship shuddered once again. Overhead, the sound of metal shearing got my ass in gear.

Searching around the storage compartments, I found a length of rope. After tying one end around one of the crate handles, I tied the other around my waist.

I psyched myself up, then grabbed the ladder and began the climb.

Between the weight of the crate pulling down on my waist and my splitting headache, I immediately wanted to crawl back down and just say “fuck it.”

But I didn’t.

By the time I reached the overhead door, my arms were burning from exertion. I pressed my authorization code into the airlock control panel. The panel indicated the station’s life support system and gravity control had gone online. I just had to wait for the air pressure to synchronize with the *Hermes*.

Closing my eyes, I rested my forehead against the metal. This was going to take a few minutes. I wheezed as I struggled to draw in oxygen. That made me

have another coughing fit, and I nearly lost my grip. Spots danced in front of my eyes, and my body began to tremble under the strain.

When the panel beeped and the screen turned green, signaling the door was unlocked, I almost cried with relief. Balancing my weight, I opened the hatch. Hefting myself up, I pulled up the box, crying out in agony as my arms nearly gave out trying to lift and maneuver it through the opening.

I shut the door and engaged the lock. Pushing away from the door in the floor, I collapsed back against the wall of the station's ventral airlock room. I made a conscious effort to breathe slow and even, making sure I drew in a steady supply of oxygen. When I let my head fall back against the wall, it felt like someone jabbed a hot poker into my brain.

“Fuck!”

That was when I felt the vibrations in the walls surrounding me. As they grew in intensity, I knew I was out of time. There would be no going back. I entered my authorization code into the relay station computer and undocked the *Hermes*.

The computer emitted a series of beeps, and I heard the sound of the docking clamps disengage.

The vibrations instantly ceased.

The *Hermes* was adrift.

I was now trapped alone aboard Relay Station 147.

Chapter 3

“Chuck. Wake up.”

I jerked awake at the sound of Jack’s voice. “My name’s not Chuck; it’s Charles. Whoa...”

When the spinning stopped, I opened my eyes to find Jack Braxton squatting in front of me.

“Jack?” I sat up, and my head pounded in disapproval. “How long was I asleep? Wait. What are you doing here?” I watched the condensation from my breath dissipate in the air, and I realized just how cold it was. “Shit.”

I looked around, remembering I was in the relay station’s ventral airlock room. Though dimly lit, the room was clean. The station appeared to be in good order.

Jack stood. “Come on, Chuck. We got work to do.”

“How did you know I was here?” I asked. When I got to my feet, I untied the container from around my waist. It felt like pins and needles were stabbing me where the rope used to be. “Shit, that hurts,” I moaned. I hit the door control, and the airlock opened. Warmer air whooshed into the airlock room. *Oh, that was nice.* The air smelled crisp, almost sterile. But there was plenty of it, so I wasn’t about to complain.

I picked up the container and followed Jack out of the airlock. “We should go to the control room first. It’s in the middle of this floor.”

“Lead the way, Chuck.”

This time I didn’t correct him. I was so happy to see him and hear his voice, he could call me *Chuck* all day and all night.

“I didn’t think anyone would get my distress call,” I said as I clumsily made my way down the corridor. “Damn this box is getting heavy. I’m glad you’re here.”

“I’m just back here enjoying the view,” Jack said. “Did I ever tell you that you have one fine ass?”

“Yeah,” I admitted. “Just about every time you...”

“Every time I fucked you?”

I cleared my throat. So I guess Jack was just going to go there. “Yeah.”

Jack snickered behind me, and I ignored him. Even though he thought it was cute when I got embarrassed, I hated it. A grown man blushing just wasn't cute.

Once we made it to the control room, I dropped the crate. I rubbed my biceps, trying to get rid of the knots. Cupping my hands, I blew warm air into my palms. The first thing I did was to make sure the environmental controls were activated for human comfort.

As I worked the touch controls, I stared at the computer, and spoke softly. “I'm sorry, Jack.”

“What for, Chuck?”

Straightening, I turned around. “For running away. You were right. Me working for you... that was just an excuse.”

“I know,” he said softly as he closed the distance between us. “I tried to tell you. I didn't want you to go. I just about begged you to stay.” Jack reached up and rubbed his finger along my jaw.

“After the *Hermes* was attacked, I was afraid I wouldn't get to say it, Jack. To tell you how I felt about you, but you're here now. I don't want to die alone, Jack. I don't want to die a coward.” Tears dripped down my cheeks, but I couldn't help myself. I swallowed down the lump that had lodged itself in my throat. “I love you, Jack.”

“I know, Chuck.”

In spite of everything, I laughed. “Asshole,” I muttered.

I wiped my eyes and my nose with my hand. *Ouch*. My nose was tender. When I pulled my hand away, I found a smear of dried blood. I rubbed my hand on my uniform.

“Let's get this bitch patched up, Chuck. And then we can find ourselves a nice flat surface.” A lecherous leer spread across Jack's face as he waggled his eyebrows.

“Right.” I chuckled nervously.

Jack watched while I set about running the diagnostic programs on the station's computer. Every so often, I had to stop when the throbbing in my head became too much to bear, or if the room began to spin again. But I pressed on, knowing it was my only chance to save Jack and myself.

“The station is receiving comm signals, but not repeating them. The buffer is full, though, so it’s stopped accepting new signals. Once I get it online, it should send everything in the buffer.”

Jack nodded. “Good work, Chuck.”

“Repeater control is in Junction Seven. Let’s go.”

I grabbed the box of spare parts and made my way through the corridors until I reached Junction 7. After dropping the box, I opened my toolkit and retrieved my autoscrewdriver. When I removed the section’s wall plate, I cursed. The components inside were fried. The acrid stench of burned electronics filled the air, and I choked back a cough.

Hopefully the parts I had were the right ones.

It took me nearly two hours to replace the hardware. Once I finished, all I wanted to do was to sleep. I reran the station diagnostics. My shout of triumph quickly turned to defeat. The repeater was still down. This time the computer said the repeater antenna system wasn’t receiving adequate power.

“You know, it would be nice if it told me all this the first time,” I grumbled. “Whoever wrote this diagnostic needs their ass kicked.”

Jack just shrugged.

I returned to Junction 7 and used my toolkit’s ammeter to measure the electric output. Power was flowing through the components I replaced.

The problem must be further upstream. I moved to the next junction and removed the wall plate.

Jack huffed. “I’d say that’s your problem.”

“You think?”

This junction contained no electronics, but did house the power and data conduits that led to the repeater. It was... fucked up. Both conduits were completely severed.

I used a data bypass module to repair the data conduit. I’d done hundreds of those; it was a quick task to replace it. Returning to the parts box, I dug through the boxes looking for a power bypass.

“No...”

Starting to panic, I began tossing the parts from the box onto the floor.

“You don’t have any power bypass modules?” Jack asked as he squatted down next to the now empty box.

“Actually, I have a ton of them,” I answered with a sigh as I stared at the now empty container. “They’re on the *Hermes*. Which I set adrift.”

Chapter 4

“Chuck. You fixed worse than this.”

“Yeah, but I had a full supply of parts.” I motioned to the boxes strewn about the floor. “This is all I have.”

“Maybe they have some spare parts here on the station. If not, rig something up. It doesn’t have to be pretty. It just has to be functional until help arrives.”

I pulled up the station schematics on the computer, looking for any secondary systems I could use to salvage parts from. The only system that wouldn’t interrupt main power was life support.

“If you don’t care about oxygen and heat, then we’re good to go.”

“Let’s call that Plan B.”

“Right. Let’s see if we can find some bypass modules.” There was a storage closet in the control room.

I opened the door and rolled my eyes. A plain cardboard box sat alone on the shelf. Stenciled on the side was POWER BYPASS MODULE PBP-988A. Letting out a triumphant “Yes,” I picked up the box, almost throwing it over my head due to the unexpected weight. Or lack thereof. I opened the box to find it empty, save for a few loose wires.

“Oh, come on!” I threw the damned box across the room. “Who does that?”

“I guess it’s time for Plan B,” Jack said somberly.

“Yeah.” I went to run my fingers through my hair, but was stopped by a matted, tangled mess. When I pulled my hand away, smears of blood covered my palm. “Gross.” I wiped my hand on my uniform pants and tried to ignore the incessant pounding in my head.

“How’s your head?” Jack asked.

“You certainly never complained,” I answered.

Jack groped his crotch. “I wouldn’t mind a little of that right now.”

I rolled my eyes. “Yeah, I’ll get right on that, right after I save our asses. Wait. I got an idea.”

“You’re so fucking sexy when you get ideas.”

Ignoring Jack, I retrieved my toolkit and then made my way to secondary systems in Junction 6. Having already done this twice, it was quick work pulling the wall panel free. Once I identified the power conduits, I knew my plan would work.

“I can bypass grav control,” I told Jack.

Jack frowned. “I’m not really into the whole freely floating around space thing, Chuck.”

“Do you want to get saved or not?”

Jack sighed dramatically. “I guess. You know, I’ve never fucked in zero-G.”

Once I pulled the bypass for gravity control, the system went off-line. To say it was disorienting would be an understatement. I was already experiencing headaches and dizziness, and this did not help.

“I’m going to throw up, Jack.”

“Put your head down, Chuck. Just like in training. You got this.”

I did as Jack said, and after a few moments, the nausea passed. I put the wall panel back into place and made my way back to Junction 8.

Working in zero-G was tough. I’d done a zero-G EVA repair simulation at the academy, but the real thing was altogether different. It took me nearly twice as long to do the repair. In normal circumstances, I didn’t have to worry about my tools floating away.

I’d done all I could. Hopefully, the station would become our lifeboat, keeping us alive until help arrived. I didn’t want to think about the alternative.

“I’m tired, Jack.” I leaned my head against his shoulder and closed my eyes.

As I fell asleep, I heard the station come to life with a low-pitched hum.

Wet heat surrounded my dick. I opened my eyes and found Jack staring at me as he sucked me off. I reached down and pushed my fingers into his hair. Applying pressure, I pressed down, urging Jack to take me deeper.

“You’re so good at that, Jack.”

One of Jack’s spit-slicked fingers slid into my ass. I moaned, pushing up my hips as Jack found my prostate. Jack liked to get me ready with his mouth and

fingers. He'd get me close, then back off. Once I couldn't take any more, he knew I was ready for his cock.

Jack moved me toward the bed. With a gentle shove, he pushed me backward. But I didn't hit the bed.

I kept going, falling past the mattress.

Falling.

I was falling!

Screaming, I reached out, my arms flailing as I tried to grab whatever I could to stop my descent.

Then I realized I was weightless, floating in zero-G. Everything came back to me. Jack and I had used the grav control's power module to fix the comm repeater. Once I oriented myself, I began to relax.

I was alone.

Where had Jack gone?

"Jack?"

Ouch. Damn, my lips were dry. I cleared my throat and licked my lips, but it didn't really do anything to help. Had Jack left me?

Before the panic could return, a noise caught my attention. In the distance, a series of computer beeps was followed by the sound of someone's voice. *No.* Not someone's voice, it was communications traffic. Someone was trying to contact the station.

Pushing off the bulkhead with my legs, I propelled myself toward the control room using my arms to guide my body through the corridor.

Clang.

Something metal scraped the hull. A ship was docking. Instead of going to the control room, I floated toward the airlock room. By the time I got there, the inside door was already opening.

An Earth Defense soldier pushed himself through the airlock door.

"Crewman Prescott?"

I steadied myself by grabbing onto a nearby rail. Responding to the soldier, I nodded. "That's me. Chuck Prescott."

The soldier looked back over his shoulder. “It’s him. We need a medic.” He turned back to me. “Are you alone?”

“No. Jack Braxton is here, too.”

“Excuse me?”

I turned around, searching for him. “I’m not sure where he is, though.”

“Chuck?” Jack pushed around the soldier, his brow deeply furrowed, as he looked me up and down. His eyes widened. “Jesus. Medic!”

He sailed through the air and wrapped me in his arms. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah.” I was confused. Wasn’t Jack on the station with me? He’d helped me with the repairs. Well, not so much helped, but watched...

“We’re gonna get you patched up, then we’ll finish up the repairs here. How’s that sound?”

“Okay...”

“Then I’m never gonna let you out of my sight.”

Jack pulled me close. The bruises on my body protested, but I didn’t care. I wrapped my arms around Jack and held on tight. This time, I wouldn’t let him get away.

Chapter 5

The doctor made a final note on his e-chart. “You’re cleared for duty and free to go, Crewman.”

“Thanks, Doc. You’re awesome and all, but I am ready to get out of here.”

I hopped off the medical bed and zipped the front of my uniform up. I’d spent far too much time cooped up in the *Antares* med bay. I needed to get back to work.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa.” Jack stopped me as soon as I stepped into the corridor. “Hold your horses, Crewman.”

My shoulders slumped. “Jack, please. I can’t spend one more day in that bed. Doc says I’m clear.”

“You’re on alpha shift, starting *tomorrow*. I have other plans for you tonight.” Jack’s eyes sparkled as the corner of his mouth turned up in a nasty little smirk.

Out of instinct, I looked around, checking to see if anyone was watching. When I saw the look on Jack’s face, I cringed. “Sorry. It’s just... I’m not used to people knowing.”

“It was pretty obvious when I spent all my free time in med bay.”

“Yeah. And I appreciate that.”

“Come on. We’ve got some things to talk about.”

Jack tipped his head toward the hall. I followed him to his quarters. Once inside, he locked the door behind us.

I wiped my hands on the front of my pants. I’d been practicing what I wanted to say to Jack for a couple of days, but now that I had him alone, I couldn’t spit out the words. “Um...”

“The attack on the *Hermes*, on the relay station... It wasn’t just random. The Mirans have taken out a number of stations along the border. Centauri Colony has gone dark. Earth is at war, and we need you.” Stepping forward, Jack placed his hands on my biceps. “You’ve been transferred back to the *Antares*.”

“So, *Earth* needs me... What about you, Jack?”

“I haven’t hidden how I feel about you, Chuck. Not ever. I haven’t said the words, only because you weren’t ready to hear them. I’m sorry that these are the circumstances that brought us back together, but... You know what? No, I’m not sorry. I want you back *here*, where you belong, damn it.”

Drawing in a deep breath, I held it for a second before letting it out in a puff. “I told ‘Head Jack’ how I felt... Of course, I thought we were going to die—”

He raised an eyebrow. “*Head Jack*? What exactly were we doing in your concussion-fueled fantasies?”

“Stop joking around and let me get this out. What I’m trying to say is, when I thought I was going to die, I thought I would never get the chance to tell you that you were right. I was a coward, and I was running away. I’ve never felt this way with anyone, and it scared me. Jack... I love you.”

“God, I love you, too.”

Jack surged forward, his lips pushing against mine. I kissed him back, loving the way his mustache and goatee prickled at my lips and chin. When his tongue demanded entrance, I opened to him, letting him plunder me.

“Didn’t you say you had plans for me tonight?” I asked when he finally ended the kiss to take a breath.

“I’m ordering you to bed for the night. *My bed.*”

I snapped to attention and saluted. “Crewman Chuck Prescott, reporting for duty.”

“Oh, so it’s Chuck now?”

“For you it’s Chuck,” I said with a smile as I relaxed my stance.

Jack’s face went all intense. “Fuck yeah. *My Chuck.*”

“That’s not exactly what I said, Sergeant Caveman.”

He pounded his chest with his fist. “*My Chuck,*” he repeated before picking me up and carrying me over to his bed. He tossed me down hard enough to make me bounce on his mattress.

Damn, that was hot.

Jack yanked at my boots, pulling them free and tossing them onto the floor. While he was doing that, I was unzipping my uniform and trying to get free. Jack tugged at my underwear and my hard-on smacked against my stomach.

As he run his tongue along the length, he snickered. “Head Jack,” he muttered with amusement.

I grabbed his head and gave a push. “Less talking and more of that.”

Jack was predictable. He sucked me while using his fingers to stretch and ready me for his cock. There was an urgency that wasn’t there before. Or maybe it was because I was finally opening myself up to him emotionally. Either way, my orgasm caught me off guard.

I writhed on the bed, moaning his name, moving my hips, trying to get more of his fingers and mouth at the same time. My dick pumped my load into his sucking mouth.

Even after I’d come, he kept sucking, concentrating his tongue action on the head. “Jack!”

It was too intense. I jerked and squirmed, trying to free myself from Jack’s relentless oral manipulations. “Jack...”

Finally, Jack let me go and he sat up on his knees. He undressed faster than I’d ever seen him. His nicely muscled body was so damn sexy, covered in blond hair in all the right places. Like the rest of him, Jack’s erection was perfect.

I took it in my hand and worked the foreskin back and forth over the head. It was slick with precum, which dribbled onto my thumb. I brought my hand to my mouth and licked it clean. “*Mmm.*”

Jack reached under my knees and spread my legs apart, pushing them back toward me until my ass left the bed. “Hold ’em,” he commanded.

I looped my arms under my knees as Jack’s head dived between my legs. The feel of his wet tongue sliding across my hole almost made me lose my grip on my legs. The slickness of his tongue contrasted with the bite of his goatee whiskers.

“Damn, you have a fine ass.”

“Please, Jack.”

Jack pushed forward on his knees until the head of his cock was poking beneath my balls. He held his weight on his arms as he leaned over me. He stared down at me. The urgency seemed to have gone from him, but the intensity blazed just as strongly in his eyes. “I’ve been waiting for this for so long.”

“We’ve done this before... lots of times,” I answered meekly.

“You’ve let me fuck you... but you’ve never given yourself to me. Not until now.”

I nodded. He was right. “Yeah. I’m yours now.”

“Damn right.”

Jack grabbed a bottle of lube he had stashed somewhere close. I was so focused on his face that I didn’t see where it came from. He used his fingers to spread some around and into my ass before slicking up his cock.

Despite having taken Jack dozens of times, it had been a while. There was a momentary bite of pain as the thickness of his cockhead penetrated me. I breathed in and let it out as I bore down on the intruder. With a loud, drawn-out groan, Jack slid inside me, not stopping until he was balls deep.

“God, I missed this,” he grunted as he began to move.

His trunk-like thighs were powerful; the muscles propelled his hips forward, hard and fast.

When he bottomed out, it forced grunts from my chest. The skin of his thighs slapped my ass. The sound of skin hitting skin was loud. If the bed wasn’t bolted to the floor, it would have banged against the wall.

Jack hit my prostate, and I arched my back off the bed. “Right there.”

I let go of my legs, draping them on Jack’s thighs. I brought my hands to Jack’s waist, wanting the physical contact. Jack did all the work; I just lay back and let him take what he wanted... what I needed.

My body trembled as the pressure inside me grew.

“Give me your hand.” I lifted my right hand, and he spat into the palm. “Touch yourself for me,” he ordered.

I grabbed my dick, sliding my slick hand up and down, trying to match the rhythm of Jack’s thrusts. Jack’s body glistened with sweat. With the pained look on his face and the way his muscles were tensed, I would have thought he was hurt—if I didn’t know better.

Jack dipped his head down and kissed me. His tongue thrust into my mouth. Mimicking the rhythm of his hips, his head moved, and his tongue chased mine. I tried to play keep-away, but it was no use. Abruptly pulling away, he growled, “I’m gonna fucking come.”

“Yes,” I cried as I looked into his green eyes. I was right there with him. I sucked in a deep breath and let go as my body exploded. I tasted my own semen as the first volley splattered across my mouth and chin. My back arched, and I shot again.

“Chuck.”

I held onto Jack’s arms as his rhythm slowed. “Oh... fuck,” he mumbled between grunts.

Jack’s body jerked as he came. One final thrust, and then he froze. With a shudder, Jack pulled free and flopped onto the bed next to me.

I stared up at the ceiling as I caught my breath. My body was sore, but it was nothing compared to what I’d been through lately. I felt the wetness of Jack’s orgasm slowly dripping down into the sheets. My own juices were splattered across my chest and stomach. I was a hot and sticky mess, but I was way too tired to get up and do anything about it. I wiped the back of my hand across my wet chin.

Jack’s sweaty body lay next to mine. He was staring upward, same as me.

“No regrets, Chuck?” he said between pants.

“None, Jack.”

The End

Author Bio

ROB COLTON is a software developer by day and avid reader of romance novels at night. A romantic at heart, he loves to read and write stories that feature big, burly men who find true love and happy endings.

Rob grew up in northern Michigan and currently lives in the Atlanta area with his very supportive husband and their very spoiled miniature schnauzer.

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