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Hunting in the Zoo: A Detective Pete Nazareth Novel

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R.H. JOHNSON

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First Edition

1.

Drill Sergeant Blanton Greenway hit the ground with all the grace of a 100-pound bale thrown from the hayloft of his grandpa's barn in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. Most witnesses said the punch was an uppercut. A few thought it was a right cross. Either way, the blow was a monster, and Greenway's tour of duty as a drill sergeant was in jeopardy.

His fractured jaw would no doubt be fine once doctors removed the wire in eight weeks, and his four broken teeth were deemed fixable. But the missing tip of his tongue -- he had bitten it off and swallowed it after being hit -- was problematic since the surgeon's report noted the likelihood of "moderate to severe speech articulation impairment."

"In English," the doctor said, "he's going to have a bad lisp."

"Oh, great. That's just what I need: a drill sergeant with a bad lisp," is all company commander Captain Curtis Grimes would say about Greenway's possible reinstatement. "Besides which, how does he even face the rest of us after getting his ass kicked by a raw recruit in front of everyone?"

The lopsided altercation between Drill Sergeant Greenway and Private Stone Jackson took place in late December on the 41st day of the U.S. Army Basic Combat Training course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Greenway was, as usual, in a trainee's face screaming insults and obscenities. A trainee -- in this case Private Jackson -- was, as usual, gamely responding, "Yes, drill sergeant," "No, drill sergeant," or "Thank you, drill sergeant" as loud as he could. Just another day in paradise.

But Greenway touched a raw nerve when he yelled, "How about I put a pretty bow in your hair?" Someone else had asked him the same question 10 years ago, when he was eight, and Jackson snapped. He got all 187 pounds of his chiseled 6-2 frame behind the punch, and the burly drill sergeant went down for the count.

After two weeks of confinement Jackson faced a special court martial, and the prosecution argued for serious prison time along with a dishonorable discharge.

“Sergeant Blanton Greenway is not just a drill instructor,” proclaimed Captain Todd Henry, the attorney handling his first case as prosecutor, “he’s a U.S. Army hero.” Henry pointed out that in the seven years prior to becoming a drill sergeant Greenway had served five combat tours in the Middle East and had twice won a bronze star. “The unprovoked assault on Sergeant Greenway is an assault on the military chain of command and, in fact, on the nation we all proudly serve.” The three officers who served as jury for the case solemnly nodded in agreement. This was, in fact, an appealing argument

But Stone Jackson’s defense attorney, Major Drew Whitmore of the Army’s Trial Defense Service, took immense pleasure in making a mess of the prosecution’s case. Whitmore had recently been passed over for promotion to lieutenant colonel and would soon be booted from the military, so at the moment he had no particular fondness for the chain of command or anything else that might benefit the Army. He didn’t know, nor did he care, what had prompted Jackson to punch his drill instructor. What he did know after nearly 20 years in uniform was how to upstage a rookie prosecutor.

“My client,” Whitmore explained, “suffers from intermittent explosive disorder as described in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is published by the American Psychiatric Association and is accepted as the United States’ official standard for classifying illnesses of this sort.” The major then enlightened the jury by reading aloud relevant sections of the manual as well as half a dozen commentaries on the disorder that had been published by major U.S. hospitals and the National Institute of Mental Health. “On this basis alone we should and in fact *must* dismiss the case. Private Jackson requires treatment, not punishment.”

The jury appeared unconvinced until Whitmore went on the offensive. "I regret that we must also scrutinize Sergeant Greenway's behavior, which by every reasonable measure was outside the clearly defined boundaries of acceptable conduct by a non-commissioned officer. The testimony of 15 eyewitnesses will verify that Sergeant Greenway discriminated against Private Jackson on the basis of his perceived sexual orientation."

Through his wired teeth Greenway tried hard to explain that his comment about putting a pretty bow in Jackson's hair was "a routine sarcastic motivational device" and not a reference to the trainee's sexual preferences, but all he did was dig a bigger hole for himself.

"The sergeant wants to call it *a motivational device*," said the indignant Whitmore, "but the Uniform Code of Military Justice calls it abuse. And there's no room for that in today's Army."

A week later Stone Jackson was a civilian once more, released from active duty under what the Army termed an *entry level separation*. "Basically it means you were never here," Whitmore told him when all the papers had been signed. "Now go get some help, Mr. Jackson."

Stone Jackson knew exactly what sort of help he needed.



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