

## An Officer and a Gentleman

Jane Carnall

*For Scarlatti, with fondest love.*

They were both very drunk. Even by the standards of the Swamp, which set standards in drunkenness for the 4077th, which set standards for Korea – or at least for the surrounding area – they were very, very drunk.

“Andrea, Sylvie...” Trapper was counting on his fingers. “Lucy, Maria, Terry....”

“No, I had Terry,” Hawkeye slurred. He thought about it. “I had Sylvie, too.”

“Before or after me?” Trapper was drinking a Swamp martini. His eyes looked glazed through the clear liquid.

“Both,” Hawkeye said, and grinned.

“Can’t be both.”

“Can be.”

“Sylvie...” Trapper sounded faintly perturbed. “Hey. Why would she want you after she’d had me?”

“Cause I am the smoothest-talking doctor this side of the Pacific.”

“Can’t be.”

“Can be,” Hawkeye said.

Trapper rolled up on his elbow and jerked a finger in Hawkeye’s general direction. The martini should have spilled out of his glass, but he saved it with a slurp. “I am smoother than you. I am smooth as... as a very smooth... as this martini.”

“Can’t be,” Hawkeye said. “You want to know why?”

Trapper thought about it. “Yeah. I think I do. I want to know why.”

“You’re married.”

“What does that prove?”

“Bachelors are smoother than married men.”

“How do you figure that?”

“We get more practice.”

“Hell if,” Trapper said. “You’ve never been married.”

“Yep,” Hawkeye said.

“Married men get plenty of practice. Trust me.”

“I wouldn’t trust you. You’re drunk.”

“But smooth.”

“I am smoother than you,” Hawkeye said.

“No you’re not,” Trapper said. He poured himself another martini, ultra-dry, straight from the bottle. “You’re not so special. This martini is smoother than you are.”

Hawkeye picked the glass from out Trapper’s hand and slurped it. “No, I am smoother than this. Definitely smoother than this. There isn’t anyone smoother than me. Or any drink smoother than me. I am smoother than, than a very very smooth thing... *and* I had Sylvie. And Terry. And Lee. And Natalie...”

“You never had Natalie!”

“Did too. Once. Anyone. I can have anyone... if I want them.”

“Anyone?”

“Yeah.” Hawkeye finished the martini in one gulp. “Anyone.” He lay down flat. “Anyone at all.”

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“Bet?”

“Yeah. Bet.” Hawkeye stared at the canvas roof above him. It was rippling. “What do you bet?”

“Uh...” Trapper retrieved the glass, tried to suck some more martini out of it, and let it go. “Three bottles real gin. And a bottle of vermouth.”

“Okay...” Hawkeye tried to sit up and lay back down again in a hurry. “Okay. Bet.”

“Bet,” Trapper agreed, and started to laugh. “Three bottles. And vermouth.”

“I’ll win.”

“You’ll lose,” Trapper prophesied, laughing. “Best in Tokyo, okay?”

“I’ll win!” Hawkeye tilted his head to glare at Trapper. “Any nurse – ”

“Who said *nurse*?”

“What?”

“Anyone, you said,” Trapper said. “Father Mulcahy.” He was still laughing. “If you can get *him*, I’ll pay up. If not...”

“Father Mulcahy,” Hawkeye said. He started to laugh, too.

It was a joke: a drunk joke. It didn’t really matter which of them won, and it was going to be Trapper, but hell. A bet was a bet was a bet. And a gin was a gin was a gin. And the wages of gin was...

Early morning Mass.

Father Mulcahy did an ecumenical service later on in the day for anyone to attend, but at dawn on Sundays he served Mass. Assuming that he wasn’t still in the operating theatre. But Hawkeye had seen him go directly from scrubbing up to serve Mass, at a point when any of the other staff would have been ready to drop with fatigue – either into bed, or into a dry martini, depending. Or, if Frank Burns, into a blind funk.

There were two other Catholics at Mass that morning: Klinger, in a neat practical cotton print, white gloves and demure earrings, and a nurse who was good at her job but didn’t do anything else. Trapper and Hawkeye had both established this, in two separate attempts. No chance of slipping in at the back. Mulcahy showed no sign of surprise that his tiny congregation had expanded by 50%, but Klinger raised his eyebrows and said in a stage whisper “Converting, sir?”

The nurse took communion. Klinger didn’t. Hawkeye stayed in his seat, wondering what the rules were. Father Mulcahy said formally “*Ite, missa est*” and the service was over: quick and plain.

Klinger and the nurse left: Hawkeye had been preparing an opening line all through Mass, and leaned back in his seat, keeping a smile off his face, ready to use it. Mulcahy was still standing by the small altar: when the door closed on the heels of the nurse, he cleared his throat. “Are you all right?”

Hawkeye looked up at him, and the opening line melted out of his mind. “No.”

“Oh, dear.” Mulcahy sat down beside him, and sighed. “Is there anything I can do?”

“No,” Hawkeye repeated. He was trying *not* to think what those nicely parted lips would look like round his cock. From the altar, Mulcahy had represented the unattainable. Sitting next to him, Mulcahy seemed far too attainable, and Hawkeye was feeling rather like a cad. The bet had been okay, so long as he’d been absolutely sure he would lose it. He was no longer absolutely sure. Mulcahy was flesh and breath and lips: Hawkeye had a justified confidence in his ability to persuade anyone made

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of flesh and breath into bed, unless they were already committed or started out hating him. And Mulcahy certainly didn't hate him.

"Are you sure?" Mulcahy looked concerned. His hand shifted up across his chest, to touch the silver cross he wore. "If there's anything I can do...?"

Hawkeye stood up. Of course, in theory Mulcahy *was* already committed to someone else. Or rather, Someone Else.

"Want to walk over to the mess tent with me, get some coffee?"

"I was going to have breakfast, actually," Mulcahy admitted, getting to his feet.

"Ah yes. Breakfast. The army's way of making you sorry you got up in the morning." They were walking towards the mess tent: Hawkeye knew without looking that Mulcahy had casually matched his stride to Hawkeye's own. Mulcahy was effortlessly good at that.

Mulcahy smiled at him, his blue eyes kind and still a little worried. "I could have a word with Colonel Blake about getting you a four-day leave in Seoul. Perhaps you'd feel better if you got away from here for a little."

"I'd feel better if I got you away from here for a little," Hawkeye said, and added smoothly, "I'd feel better if we *all* got away from here for a while. Like, the entire war."

Mulcahy hesitated mid-stride, glancing up at him, and in the middle of that hesitation, Frank Burns shoved past them into the mess tent, growling something that might have been "Good morning, Father," but might just as easily have been "Goddamn you, Pierce": only the syllables were clear.

"On the other hand, we could leave Frank here," Hawkeye said, catching the door as it swung back on Burns's heels, before it could hit Mulcahy in the face. He held it open for Mulcahy, and went through after him. "As a deterrent to North Korean invasion. More humane than landmines."

Hawkeye was good at lying. He had the various methods down to a fine art. It wasn't until he actually walked Mulcahy to the door of his tent, one night eight days later, after the last batch of patients had been freighted off to Seoul and Tokyo, that he admitted to himself that he had been manoeuvring himself into this position all along.

He and Mulcahy, together, alone, in Mulcahy's private tent: Mulcahy slightly drunk, but not to incapacity. If it could be done at all, it could be done now.

"Mind if I come in?" Hawkeye asked.

"Oh... certainly," Mulcahy said. He looked up at Hawkeye again with that kind and worried glance, but ushered Hawkeye in without a word beyond "Sit down," until he had closed the door, and sat down in the chair opposite the one Hawkeye had chosen.

"I know you're not a Catholic," he said, sounding uncertain for the first time.

"Agnostic," Hawkeye said, grinning. He had been unable to avoid getting more than a little sozzled himself. It was rude to make someone drink alone, as well as tactically inadvisable. "I don't believe in anything. Well, one thing. Okay, two."

Mulcahy smiled a little. "I was going to say, even if you're not a Catholic, if there's anything you need to talk about, I – well, I would regard it as secret as the confessional."

"What makes you think there's something I want to talk about?"

"You've been spending quite a lot of time with me. You've even come to Mass. Twice. And I know you're not a very religious man." Mulcahy smiled again, though his voice was diffident. "And I know my sermons aren't that interesting. So I thought – you might want to talk about something. If you do, well, I'm available."

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Hawkeye leaned forward. He could never resist a straight line. “Are you?” he said, and without thought, his voice sank to a caressing purr.

Mulcahy nearly jumped out of his skin. “What? I – ” he gulped, and said more steadily, “I’m sorry, Hawkeye – I know you didn’t mean – ”

But he hadn’t said no, Hawkeye noted with the sober part of his brain. He hadn’t said no. “Ask me what I believe in,” he said, keeping his voice level and uncaressing. His eyes held Mulcahy’s, and he was pleased with what he saw.

Mulcahy’s voice was still slightly uncertain. “All right...” He steadied himself with a visible effort, and went on, “What do you believe in?”

“Two things,” Hawkeye said. “The second one’s drink.”

“And what’s the first?” Mulcahy’s voice was almost back to normal. There was an undertone of gentle but relentless inquiry.

“I’ll show you,” Hawkeye said. He stood up, and Mulcahy stood up too, and Hawkeye moved in and took hold of him and kissed him, all so swiftly that he had let go and stepped back before Mulcahy could complete a movement of resistance.

“If you hit me, Francis, you’ll knock me out.”

Mulcahy lowered his hands, uncurling from fists, with a look of shame so abject that Hawkeye felt guilt for the first time. “I’m sorry,” Mulcahy said, nearly stuttering. “Sorry. But you mustn’t – I’m sorry if I let you think – ”

“Mustn’t what?” Hawkeye asked. Guilt was easily suppressed when he was drunk. It was the best reason for drinking. He moved in again. There had been no instinctive resistance: Mulcahy wasn’t finding the idea intrinsically unappealing. When he had time to think about it, he knew he must not: but if he wasn’t given time to think?

“Mustn’t do this?” He kissed Mulcahy’s mouth, teasing his lips apart and tasting Mulcahy with a brief tormenting flicker of his tongue. “Or this?” He moved, running his hands down Mulcahy’s back, sliding his mouth over Mulcahy’s cheek, feeling the fine stubble under his lips. “Or this?” He kissed the sensitive spot under the ear, nuzzling down into Mulcahy’s neck. “What mustn’t I do, Francis? Just tell me and I’ll stop.” He could feel Mulcahy’s cock, rising and hardening against him, and without even being touched.

“Any of it,” Mulcahy said. He sounded choked and uncertain. “Hawkeye, don’t – ”

Hawkeye could unbutton army fatigues one-handed. He’d done it before. One arm still round Mulcahy’s back, his lips now testing the line of Mulcahy’s jaw, he felt him quiver and press close to Hawkeye. “Beautiful,” he whispered. “Francis, you’re beautiful like this.”

“Hawkeye, don’t,” Mulcahy said. It was almost a whimper: the good kind of whimper. How long had it been for him that a simple touch could reduce him to this state so fast?

A long time. Hawkeye swallowed. Of course. Years. Maybe since forever.

He let go, with extraordinary difficulty, and stepped back. He had loosened both their trousers, but hadn’t ventured inside; and even so Mulcahy was shivering and red in the face, drunk and aroused and shaking his head. “I can’t – ”

Seduction was a messy business when you had to stop it halfway. Hawkeye didn’t want to think what he must look like.

“I know,” he said. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have tried – ”

“I shouldn’t have let it get this far,” Mulcahy said. “I wasn’t expecting – ”

“Oh for God’s sake, you must know about me,” Hawkeye interrupted with exasperation. “You of all people.”

“What do you mean – me of all people?” For the first time, Mulcahy sounded genuinely indignant.

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“You take confession,” Hawkeye said. “People talk to you.”

“Well, there are rumours about you and Captain McIntyre,” Mulcahy admitted. “People say things – ”

“What things?”

“I couldn’t possibly repeat them,” Mulcahy said, apparently quite surprised that Hawkeye could think anything else,

“Pity, they might give us ideas. Anyway, Trapper and I are just good friends, whatever it looks like.” Hawkeye drew himself up. The effect was spoiled when his trousers fell down. Seconds later, Mulcahy’s trousers also fell.

They looked at each other a moment, and Mulcahy chuckled. It was a unpracticed kind of laugh, but nothing uncertain in it. Hawkeye felt himself go hot with embarrassment. Mulcahy said “Hawkeye, what do you *think* it looks like, right now?”

“Okay, we’re good friends who have orgasms together on a semi-regular basis,” Hawkeye acknowledged. “You know, like whenever there’s an R in the month or we run out of nurses.”

“And you’ve run out of nurses and Trapper hasn’t?” Mulcahy bent down and pulled his trousers up: Hawkeye followed suit. There was a faintly resigned note in Mulcahy’s voice. “Since it’s March?”

“It wasn’t like that,” Hawkeye protested. He had vague thoughts of confessing the bet: he had lost it anyway. “I just – ”

Mulcahy was watching him: he looked calmer now. He had his professional face on. If Hawkeye confessed to the bet, he would forgive it. But it would hurt him.

“I wanted you,” Hawkeye said. “Is that so strange? You’re gorgeous.”

“Hawkeye!” Mulcahy’s voice rose, unprofessionally.

“No, you are. You are, Francis. Beautiful. Okay? I just – oh, hell. I’m sorry.” That came out completely genuinely. “I didn’t mean to upset you this much. But I did it because I wanted you. You’re not second-best to anybody.”

“Well.” Mulcahy was eyeing him cautiously. “I’ll take that as a compliment. But I think you should leave, Hawkeye.”

“Yeah, I guess.” Disappointed, Hawkeye made himself grin. It had always been a point of honour to take dismissals cheerfully. “Of course, you’re missing the chance of a lifetime. I don’t offer myself to just anybody, you know.” He backed away. “A person’s got to be at least breathing.”

Mulcahy swallowed. “Of course.”

“You know what? I could really use a drink,” Hawkeye said, with heartfelt sincerity. “Uh – want one?”

“I think we’ve both already had too much to drink.”

“Says the man who once got sozzled on communion wine.” Hawkeye produced his hip-flask, with a flourish. “One drink. Just one. Nothing more.” He paused. “I really do want to talk to you. Please.”

“I suppose so,” Mulcahy said reluctantly, visibly facing up to his responsibilities.

Hawkeye sat down on Mulcahy’s bed with studied casualness, every movement saying *It just happens to be the nearest thing to sit on*. Mulcahy sat down on his chair. He still looked nervous. He leaned forward, evidently trying to put on a priestly face.

“Look,” Hawkeye started. “I mean – listen. You and I, we’re friends, right?”

“Well, I’ve always – ” Mulcahy swallowed. “Yes, Hawkeye.”

“I wouldn’t want anything to disturb that friendship. What I just did was really stupid. I’m really angry with myself.”

“Don’t,” Mulcahy said. “It’s all right. I don’t – ” He accepted the flask with fingers that fumbled, and took a participatory swallow. Hawkeye took the flask back from

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him and put it to his mouth. He swallowed without drinking. He didn't intend to get any drunker. Mulcahy was almost drunk enough for both of them. "Hawkeye, if I was upset, that was my own fault. You must understand, I'm not – I'm not offended, but I don't –"

"But we're still friends?" Hawkeye passed the flask to Mulcahy, leaning forward to do it and forgetting to lean back.

"Of course," Mulcahy said. He stared earnestly into Hawkeye's face. "I understand... I mean... I wasn't... I didn't want to hurt your feelings."

"I didn't mean to upset you," Hawkeye said, just as earnestly. "You know, I really – I really like you, Francis." He hoped he sounded drunk enough to get the right note of maudlin sincerity: and then, remembering how much he'd had to drink, decided he only needed to worry about whatever vestige of sobriety Mulcahy had left.

As if telepathically inspired, Mulcahy put the flask to his mouth again. Hawkeye kept his face solemn.

Mulcahy gasped a little, and said, not even slurring the words a little bit, "I like you, Hawkeye."

"And me kissing you didn't change that?"

"No," Mulcahy said, definitely. "Oh no." He leaned in a bit nearer. "I really like you," he confided.

"I'm sorry –"

"Don't be sorry," Mulcahy said. "Why shouldn't I like you? You're a good man, Hawkeye."

"Oh, come on –" Hawkeye was genuinely disconcerted.

"You stopped," Mulcahy said. "I really – couldn't have –"

"You stopped me," Hawkeye said. He cast his eyes down in shame. "I'm ashamed of myself," he lied. "You know, grabbing at a friend like that – but sometimes you want a friend, you know? Someone who wants more – someone who wants more than just – just flesh."

The breathy touch on the side of his face was Mulcahy's lips. Hawkeye did not smile. "Thanks," he said softly.

"Hawkeye?"

"No," Hawkeye said, not moving. "You know if you – if you start touching me –"

"No," Mulcahy said in agreement. He didn't move. "You're right. We mustn't."

Hawkeye turned his head. Just enough. Lips to lips. "Even if –" He was so close to Mulcahy's mouth that the plosive closure of *if* puffed air into the other man's parted lips. "No," Hawkeye breathed.

Mulcahy kissed him.

Hawkeye wrapped his arms round him and kissed him back. "No," he whispered. Then he put a lot of attention into kissing Mulcahy again.

After that, it was easy. And very pleasant. At one point – they were both naked by then – Mulcahy did try to push Hawkeye away, but it was only with the palm of one hand against Hawkeye's shoulder, the other hand trapped between their thighs, and Hawkeye easily distracted him with a long teasing nibble down Mulcahy's forearm, tonguing at his elbow. Mulcahy was easily distracted, but oddly passive: he followed Hawkeye's lead, but didn't initiate. Hawkeye hesitated only once: when he went down on Mulcahy and heard him sob, a small broken sound. But Mulcahy's whole body felt strung tight and ready to come: all Hawkeye's experience told him that stopping now would get him... well, cursed out if he were having sex with anyone but Mulcahy.

Excommunicated, probably, under the circumstances.

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Mulcahy came. All his body went slack and melting like butter: for an instant. Then he was trembling again, the tremors different from the tense shivers pre-orgasm. Hawkeye figured he was about to get his face slapped. Or something. He shifted himself so that he could see Mulcahy's face.

No. No face-slapping. Mulcahy's mouth was trembling. He looked, of all things, as if he were about to cry. But before Hawkeye could be certain, Mulcahy turned over and wriggled down the bed – a hasty manoeuvre that got his face out of Hawkeye's sight and his knees off the edge of the bunk. Hawkeye thought for a instant that Mulcahy was trying to get away, and moved to sit up, meaning to reassure the other man that he didn't have to go – hell, it was Mulcahy's tent –

– but then Mulcahy leaned forward, his hands grabbing at Hawkeye's thighs, and pushed his mouth onto Hawkeye's cock.

It wasn't the best blowjob Hawkeye had ever had. It wasn't the worst, either: the worst one ever, in Hawkeye's estimation, was always going to be the one Sue Ellen Norton tried to give him when they were both fourteen and neither of them had any idea what they were doing, and when they heard Mrs Norton come in downstairs Sue Ellen had nearly vasectomised him. But any blowjob – apart from one involving amateur surgery – is a good blowjob: though Mulcahy was clumsily tentative, retreating when he should have advanced, using his lips instead of his tongue, no idea how to use his gag reflex – still it was good, almost enough to drive away the war outside the tent walls. Hawkeye knew he should come soon, not wear out this unpracticed mouth, but for a minute or two he wondered if he could – and then Mulcahy's tongue, by good luck or by guess, touched Hawkeye's cock in a way that if he went on doing it Hawkeye knew he could not help but come. His muscles were clenching, he was afraid his legs would cramp up, he tried to think of things that made him come when he jerked off, Trapper blowing that guy in Tokyo with the biggest dick either of them had ever seen, Trapper grunting underneath him the way he did before he came, but his mind's eye kept drifting back to Mulcahy's face, lips slightly parted, sitting next to him after Mass.

He came. It wasn't the best orgasm he'd ever had, either: but it was good. Hawkeye's muscles relaxed. It was good.

Mulcahy jerked his head back, getting half a faceful and half a mouthful of come. He had a look of startled accomplishment on his face.

It was good. Hawkeye wanted to lie down somewhere soft and warm with an armful of man for about twelve hours: an army cot with Mulcahy for the next six hours was the best he could hope for. Good. Good enough. He wrapped his hands round Mulcahy's wrists and tugged him upwards, pulling him into the bed with Hawkeye. "We'll fit, don't worry --" he mumbled.

"Hawkeye, I want –" Mulcahy sounded too much awake.

"Not now," Hawkeye protested. He could feel sleep coming over him, better than sex right now, better than a Martini right now, better than anything right now. Mulcahy smelt great. Hawkeye nuzzled his nose into Mulcahy's neck. "Later, okay? Later..."

"Hawkeye –"

"Not now," Hawkeye mumbled. He couldn't keep his eyes open. He didn't have to. It felt great.

The siren blared, outside in the compound, from the wrong direction. Hawkeye jerked upwards – the wrong direction, because he wasn't in the Swamp, he was in Mulcahy's tent.

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*“Incoming wounded. All staff to the compound. Triage in the compound. Incoming wounded.”*

“Not now,” Hawkeye mumbled: but he was standing up. If he was vertical and could walk a straight line he could do triage, that was the rule of thumb he and Trap both worked by. But not naked. He was struggling into his uniform, blanking out with tiredness. Even an hour’s sleep would have helped. It hadn’t even been ten minutes.

Mulcahy was fully dressed now. just sitting down to pull on his shoes. No, he was grubbing under the bunk for his dog tags and his cross.

“Father, can you get me about half a pint of coffee?” Hawkeye could hear the trucks coming into the compound now: there was literally no time for anything else. Triage, then surgery. God.

Mulcahy looked up. His face held an odd expression: vulnerable, startled. “Yes,” he said. He stood up. “Can we talk – about this – ”

“Not now,” Hawkeye snapped, and then, with exasperation at himself as much as at Mulcahy, “Let’s just tell the wounded out there to quit bleeding until we’ve got time for them, okay?”

He was already crossing the compound before it occurred to him that it had been a cruel thing to say to Mulcahy, of all people. He meant to apologise when Mulcahy got him his coffee, but he was checking out a stomach wound at the time and it was minutes after he’d downed the bitter blackness before he realised that Mulcahy had passed him the cup.

They were in surgery for twelve hours. Frank Burns stepped out after four hours for a four hour nap, and came back grumbling that Hot Lips Houlihan had woken him up. He didn’t say how, and this provided Trapper and Hawkeye with fuel for four hours worth of jokes: Burns and Houlihan complained to Blake at regular intervals, and Blake protested that they should stop, all as routine as twelve hours of surgery on wounded kids could ever be. Eighty-nine casualties, of which they lost one. Three amputations: foot, leg to the knee, leg to the thigh. One kid with his face full of shrapnel who would live, but who would never see again. Too many stomach wounds.

“We’ve got to get them to stop telling the kids they’ve got guts,” Hawkeye told Trapper.

“I know they’ve got guts. I’ve seen most of them.”

“Seen them? I’ve given them a hands-on, in-depth appraisal!” Hawkeye looked up. He had a teenager on the table with a belly full of metal and a right leg that ended around the knee: Father Mulcahy had come back with the x-rays and Hawkeye squinted, trying to work out what was wrong with the femur –

“That’s a scapula,” he snapped. “You’re showing me his shoulder, not his leg!”

“Sorry,” Mulcahy mumbled. He was fumbling with the x-rays.

Blake glanced up. “Go and get some rest, Father.”

“No, I’m fine.” Mulcahy dropped the sheaf of photographs on the floor, and dropped to his knees beside them, scrambling to pick them up. He held up the right one, and Hawkeye looked at it: he had nearly finished stitching up the stomach, and the leg had to come off next.

“This boy’s going to lose his knee,” he said out loud. “Damn, I hate it when that happens.”

“You sure?” Trap said from the other table.

“Move it round, Father, let the nice doctor have a good look.”

“Let me have a look at it too,” Blake added.

“What about me?” Burns demanded.



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“Sure, Frank, whatever turns you on.” Trap’s voice was nasal with tiredness. “Hawkeye, I don’t see there’s any of the joint left to save. He must have stepped right on the mine.”

It was the kind of medical conference they were all used to having, and it wrapped up fast: the x-ray was clear enough. Even Burns said only, after one look, “He should be grateful to lose his leg for his country!”

“You should get some rest, Father,” Houlihan said.

“No, I’ll be okay –” Mulcahy showed Trap the x-ray of the scapula: Trapper nodded after a minute’s study, and Mulcahy moved away again.

It was past noon when they staggered out of the operating theatre: Hawkeye leaning on Trapper’s shoulder, Trapper keeping his balance with an arm round Hawkeye’s shoulders. Burns was sent off to post-op, grumbling about it. Blake got into the showers ahead of them, rubbed himself down briskly, wrapped himself up in a bathrobe, and went off to his tent to ignore his paperwork. Radar was trailing after him.

“I want a shower,” Trap said.

“I want to sleep.”

“I’m not sleeping with you until you’ve had a shower.”

“Who says I want to sleep with you?”

“Who else would want to sleep with you the way you smell right now?”

The first answer that crossed Hawkeye’s mind was *Father Mulcahy – he’s very forgiving* but he managed not to say it. He couldn’t stop himself from laughing: Trapper steered him, giggling weakly, into the shower box that Blake had just vacated.

“I’ll get the bathrobes,” Trapper promised. “If you feel yourself going to sleep, switch the water on.”

Trapper disappeared. Hawkeye leaned against the side of the shower. After a minute, he closed his eyes. Sex was good. Even bad sex was good. It was like coffee in that respect. But more fun. He’d feel better if he’d had even four hours more sleep. Sex wasn’t a substitute for sleep. Nor was coffee.

“Hawkeye?”

Hawkeye blinked his eyes open. Trapper was back. “That was quick.”

“You were asleep on your feet,” Trapper said.

“Neat trick,” Hawkeye said, self-approvingly. “Now if only I could manage that on someone else’s feet.”

He stripped off and got under the shower, briefly grateful that both he and Father Mulcahy – *Francis* – had swallowed. *No muss, no fuss*.

Not quite no muss: Francis, looking vulnerable without his glasses, with come splattered over half his face. It was a lovely picture. He was too tired to get hard over it, but he felt a stir: what had Francis done with his come? No image would come: he’d barely had his eyes open.

“You want breakfast?” Trapper asked.

“I don’t even want lunch,” Hawkeye said. He wrapped the bathrobe round himself. With any luck he’d have half an hour in his tent alone with Frank and Trapper elsewhere: time to jerk off and fall asleep before either of them came back. He was looking forward to that. Sleep.

“Sure?”

“Yeah. I just want sleep.”

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“She must have been good last night.” Wrapped in his own bathrobe, Trapper looked clean and shining. They were walking through the compound towards the Swamp: any public reference to sex, by unspoken mutual agreement, would always be heterosexual. Even – especially – when it wasn’t. Trapper grinned, with the kind of lascivious flippancy that only he could manage, and glanced at Mulcahy’s tent. The chair outside was empty. “Was she?”

“I don’t think she even knew what I was on about,” Hawkeye said.

Trapper laughed, and choked it off almost immediately, looking at Hawkeye with a mixture of surprise, amusement – and even an element of shock. “God – you actually *tried* – ”

They had reached the door of the Swamp. Frank wasn’t there. Hawkeye made for his cot and collapsed on it. Trapper sat down on his own bed and stared at Hawkeye with rising eyebrows and rising amusement. Despite himself, Hawkeye noted the difference between *really* sitting down on the bed because it just happened to be the nearest thing to sit on, and his own much-practiced imitation.

“I want to get some sleep,” Hawkeye said.

“You’ll do *anything* to win a bet, won’t you?”

“Yeah, but I lost this one,” Hawkeye said. “Three bottles of gin, Tokyo’s best, okay?”

“*And* a bottle of vermouth,” Trapper said automatically. He was grinning. “So what happened?”

“Nothing happened.” Hawkeye said. “I got him drunk, I got him alone, and he – ” *Francis’s face, half-splattered with come* “ – just had *no* idea what I was on about. He thought I had a personal problem I wanted to talk about – ”

Trapper laughed. This time he didn’t choke it off. He stood up, still laughing.

“It’s not funny – ” Hawkeye protested, with the right note of indignation.

“Remind me never to bet you you can’t seduce Henry,” Trapper said. He turned round just as he got to the door. “Radar would be *very* upset.”

He got the last word. Hawkeye lay back on the cot just as he was and pulled the blanket over himself. He was even too tired to jerk off, though coming would have made sleep easier. Dragged down by tiredness, he went under like a drowning man.

When Hawkeye woke again, it was late afternoon. Squinting at his watch, he figured he’d slept five hours: it was unlikely that he’d managed to get twenty-nine hours rest without someone wanting him for something. What had woken him was the garbage truck: it arrived infrequently enough that he’d not yet learned how to sleep through it.

He was still tired enough that it actually took a couple of minutes mental debate before he could make up his mind that it would be better to get up and eat whatever kind of food was available than to lie here too hungry to get back to sleep again. The last thing he’d eaten had been a sandwich fed to him at half past something in the morning by someone – Natalie? Gillian?

Father Mulcahy.

Hawkeye was already on his feet and halfway into his army fatigues before he remembered. Mulcahy. Father. *Francis*.

*Can we talk about this?*

*No. Not now. How does ‘never’ sound?*

Hawkeye glanced cautiously out of the Swamp door. The chair outside Mulcahy’s tent was empty. Good. He had made it all the way into the mess tent and was standing in line for whatever the army called food today when he saw Mulcahy watching him.

## Sins and Virtues

The priest was sitting at a table from which he could see the whole of the mess tent: he was nursing a mug of coffee, and he looked as if he had been there for some time. Hawkeye switched on his widest smile, picked up an empty tray, and marched up to the serving table to collect himself a stomachful of warmed-over protein and fatty carbohydrates. The army called it liver and mashed potato.

When he turned back from the serving table, having put everyone within earshot (including Hawkeye himself) off their food, Mulcahy was still sitting, still watching. With ineffable precision, as Hawkeye's gaze slid over him, the priest caught his eye, nodded, and waved a hand at the seat opposite him. It was neatly and casually done: to ignore it would have been a public snub.

Hawkeye formed an opening line in his mind, walking across the mess tent carrying the unappetising tray, and this time, didn't let the expression on Mulcahy's face put him off using it. "If we keep meeting like this, Father, people will start to talk."

"I hope not." Having snared Hawkeye, Mulcahy was staring down into his coffee. He spoke quietly and without much expression.

Hawkeye sniffed his first forkful of liver, made a sound of disgust, and ate it. It tasted no worse than he'd expected, but he made another loud sound of even more appalled disgust. "How can they expect us to eat this? I've thrown better stuff than this away after surgery!"

Mulcahy drank another mouthful of coffee. "I've got a jeep for the afternoon," he said. "There's no wounded expected. Come out to the orphanage with me."

"What?"

"I – we need to talk. In private." Mulcahy looked up. "We really do, Hawkeye."

He looked very appealing: worried and wide-eyed. Hawkeye wanted to lean across the table and kiss him. He would have liked to drag him off to his tent and ravish him. He would have settled for being able to sit across the table from him and tease him.

"Couldn't we just pretend it never happened?" Hawkeye inquired. He went on eating the liver and potato. There was the ghost of an old onion in there somewhere.

"You may be able to," Mulcahy said. His voice grated a little. "I can't. We need to talk."

"Okay," Hawkeye agreed. "We'll talk. Does it have to be right now? I mean, I've got patients..."

"Captain McIntyre's in post-op," Mulcahy said. He was now patently saving his last mouthful of coffee for the moment when Hawkeye should have finished the last of his food, and the problem was that Hawkeye had no wish to spin out the eating of it. The prospect of a 'talk' with Father Mulcahy was excruciating – the more so as Hawkeye was uncomfortably conscious of not having behaved well at all the previous night – but at least it would come to an end.

"Okay," Hawkeye said, chasing the unpalatable agreement with a still more unpalatable mouthful of mashed potato. "Why am I coming out to the orphanage with you?"

To his surprise, Mulcahy picked up his meaning immediately. "Because there are two new children and I want you to give them a physical. They're brother and sister, and they seem to have been wandering for quite some time. I don't think there's much wrong with them beyond simple starvation, but I'd like you to check."

"How old are they?"

"They don't seem to know," Mulcahy said. "My guess would be that the girl is eight and her brother is five."

## Sins and Virtues

"I'll come," Hawkeye agreed. He stirred what was left of the food on his tray with his fork, looking at the patterns he could make in the slurry. "I'd have come for that anyway, you know."

When he glanced up, Mulcahy had finished his coffee and was on his feet. "I know. You're a good man, Hawkeye."

There was a bad taste in Hawkeye's mouth, and it was not altogether the food. He finished it anyway – fuel was fuel – and went to put together a medical kit. Radar had already scavenged enough spare food to fill two cartons – cans and packets, bits and pieces. He did it every time Mulcahy went to the orphanage.

The road to the orphanage was about as safe as driving anywhere: nevertheless, no one usually stopped by the side of the road and sat as if admiring the view. Mulcahy sat staring straight ahead at the dullest group of trees that Hawkeye had seen in a long time. On the other hand, better dull than snipers. Or bazookas.

"Can't we talk and drive," Hawkeye suggested after a minute.

Mulcahy sighed. "Hawkeye... did you seduce me last night just because you were drunk, or did you have some other reason?"

Hawkeye jumped. "Well – " He glanced at Mulcahy, and managed a wide grin. "You know – "

"Please, Hawkeye," Mulcahy said sharply. "Don't start the nonsense again."

"What nonsense?"

"Calling me a very – " Mulcahy swallowed. "Just don't."

"You are a very attractive man."

"Hawkeye – " There was genuine pain in that one word, and it stopped Hawkeye cold. "You see, if you... seduced me because you were drunk, I suppose I can just stay away from you when you're drunk. If you had some other reason..." he glanced at Hawkeye. "You see, there's usually a priest at the orphanage."

"Yeah," Hawkeye said, and then it sank in. "You're going to confession."

"Well, I did commit a mortal sin last night," Mulcahy said. "And before I can receive absolution, I must be repentant and have the firm intention to avoid a future occasion of sin."

That hurt. "Listen, it wasn't just me," Hawkeye snapped. "You went down on me like you were starving and I was your last meal!"

Mulcahy's hands clenched on the wheel. "I know," he said. "I remember thinking that as I had already committed a mortal sin I might at least...eat a full helping, as it were. But it *is* a sin, Hawkeye. Whether or not you repent it is between you and your conscience. For me, it's different – I – I broke a promise last night. I didn't mean to, and God knows I don't intend to do it again, but I never intended to do it last night. I need to know why you did it. I need to know that... whatever motivated you to seduce me... you're not going to do it again."

"You don't have the willpower to resist me?" It started out as a joke. It trailed off as Hawkeye realised it wasn't very funny.

Mulcahy shook his head.

Hawkeye sat still, dry-mouthed. After a long moment, he muttered, "You sure know how to take the fun out of things, Father."

"So you see," Mulcahy said with perfect gravity, "I need to know whether I will have to apply for a transfer away from the 4077th, or if I can just arrange to keep you at arm's length when you're drunk."

"Apply for a *transfer*?" Hawkeye nearly choked.

## Sins and Virtues

Mulcahy started the jeep. “To avoid the occasion of sin,” he said, and said nothing more, all the way to the orphanage.

The two kids were suffering from nothing worse than starvation, exhaustion, and extreme emotional trauma: Hawkeye examined them, found nothing to advise on (the sisters at the orphanage were far more experienced than Hawkeye in dealing with refugee children suffering all three, and often worse) and made himself feel useful by advising on the best treatment for persistent diarrhoea.

He didn’t notice when Mulcahy slipped away: he only remembered when Mulcahy came back. Hawkeye didn’t know exactly what a confessed and repentant priest would look like: it hadn’t occurred to him that Mulcahy would need to go to confession. The church the Pierces hadn’t gone to on Sundays had been Presbyterian, and in Crabapple Cove not going to the Methodist church was the only other conceivable option. There wasn’t any other church not to go to.

*What does he have to say? What kind of detail – ?*

They were almost gone when the priest at the orphanage came out and shook hands with Mulcahy: Hawkeye, sitting in the driver’s seat, desperate to get out, eyed the strange priest with a nervous embarrassment that was foreign to him. *Does he know it was me?*

The strange priest said something not in English, and Mulcahy said something back in the same language. They were smiling and nodding at each other. Hawkeye jerked the jeep into gear and drove off. He wasn’t planning to stop for any views.

“Father – ?”

“Hawkeye, are you sure we should be driving this fast?”

“Yes,” Hawkeye said, but he slowed down. “Father, would it make any difference if I promised – if I swore – that I won’t *ever* do – I won’t touch you or say anything to you even when we’re alone? You won’t need to avoid me.”

Mulcahy glanced at him, startled. “Actually, I’d just been telling Father Casalino that I probably wouldn’t need to apply for a transfer because the – the man I’d sinned with had only fallen because he was so drunk.”

*You didn’t tell him my name?* Buoyed on a wave of embarrassed relief, Hawkeye heard himself say giddily, “No, it wasn’t. I meant it. Every deed and every word. I don’t have to be drunk to appreciate you.”

“Oh,” Mulcahy said. His voice fell a little, sounding worried.

“But I swear –” Hawkeye fumbled for something convincing “– on my father’s grave, drunk or sober, never again.”

“Your father’s still alive, isn’t he?”

“In Crabapple Cove, we plan ahead.” Hawkeye jerked a glance sideways. “I’d hate it if you left because you were afraid of me.”

Neither of them said anything most of the rest of the way back to the base. They passed the stand of trees when Mulcahy had stopped on the way out, and, as if reminded by them, Mulcahy said abruptly, “I’m not afraid of you, Hawkeye. Of myself, I suppose. But I trust you. I won’t talk to Colonel Blake about a transfer.”

Hawkeye was familiar with the awkwardness of being around someone with whom he had had sex, but who was not about to admit to it or to repeat the experience: though the reason in the past had, mostly, been *Christ was I drunk last night, I don’t remember a thing!*

*Not Christ, I was drunk last night: please forgive me my sin.*

## Sins and Virtues

But the technique he employed for dealing with men who didn't remember worked just as well for a man he couldn't forget: behave normally, avoiding neither teasing nor familiarity, and don't talk about it. Mulcahy couldn't – Hawkeye assumed – have the same kind of experience, but he followed Hawkeye's lead with trusting ease, for the years they spent together in Korea.

*7260 words*

May 2004

## Afterword

All Catholic theology and belief described in this novel is based on my own research: I am grateful to Daegaer for her advice, but any errors are mine and not hers.

Shoshanna, editrix supreme, provided incalculable help with the first and following drafts of "An Officer and a Gentleman". Thank you.

### **Susan Elizabeth Leinbach**

Born: 28th November 1966

Died: 15th June 2006

Susan wrote as Iolanthe: you'll find her *M\*A\*S\*H* slash stories on her website, [iolanthe.netfirms.com/Slashfic.htm](http://iolanthe.netfirms.com/Slashfic.htm). She wrote the first Hawkeye/Mulcahy stories I read: "Spin the Bottle", "Compassion", the unfinished story "Playing the Game", and a trilogy: "Caught", "Possibilities", "Escape". (She also wrote as Scarlatti on livejournal, where we first met.)

Thank you, Susan. I wish we could have met in person: I'm glad we touched via fandom.

Doug Spencer, Susan's partner, wrote in response to a query about donations in Susan's memory:

"I might suggest that any charity local to you which is involved in cancer research, cancer treatment or palliative care would be pleased to receive donations in her memory. Cancer Research UK (formerly The Imperial Cancer Research Campaign and The Cancer Research Campaign), Marie Curie Cancer Care and the Macmillan Nurses are all organisation worth googling for in the UK. Similar organisations exist in the USA and Canada. Any one of a number of local hospices, and a couple of hospice umbrella organisations, would be pleased to have your money.

"If you're a taxpayer, there may be techniques provided by your government to ensure that your donation reaches its target accompanied by any tax which you might otherwise have had to pay: in the UK, google for "gift aid", or fill out the appropriate sections of the screen if you're donating online. Similar techniques will exist in other jurisdictions.

"If these issues don't enthuse you, there will be others which do. Contribute time, energy and money to causes which you feel are going to help you to honour Susan's memory. Wherever you choose to give it, whatever you choose to give will be gratefully received and faithfully applied."

"Sins and Virtues" is distributed free of charge. You can copy it and pass on copies to anyone you think might like it. Please include this page whenever you copy "Sins and Virtues", in whole or in part. Remember Susan. I will.

Love,

Jane Carnall

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