



## What have you done?

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Cami took a deep breath, turned the knob, and nudged the door open. Her mom stood in the center of the living room, foot tapping, eyes blazing.

"Hi, Mom." Cami offered a forced smile.

"Where have you been? I've been worried sick!" She grabbed Cami and pulled her tight. "You said you had an errand and wouldn't be gone long. That was almost twelve hours ago."

"Sorry, Mom. I was..." Cami pulled back and looked at the hardwood floor. She wasn't confident in what she needed to say. The minute she said anything, the anger would return to her mom's face.

*So, why say it? Why not wait a few days? Maybe a week? A month sounds better.*

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Her mom crossed her arms in preparation for battle.

"A few weeks ago, a man came to our school and offered me a way to pay for school." Her stomach flipped. *Just breathe.* She turned away and sat against the blue-ingham sofa. Her mom's insistent stare made Cami sink lower into the cushions. "Please don't be mad at me."

Her mom stepped forward. "What have you done, Camilla?"

She swallowed. "I joined the Army."



## **What people are saying about Kimberlee...**

Author of the psychological thriller *On the Couch*, the novella *The Seraph War*, and the nonfiction book *The Human Video Handbook: Christian Outreach through Mime, Music, and Dance*. Her script and workbook for *The Woman* was purchased by *Youth With A Mission* for worldwide distribution. Her plays *The Mystery of Montley's Manor* and *The Case of the Show Stopping Nun Nabber* were published by Meriwether Publishing, and her script *On the Couch* was showcased at Grossmont College and published in *Literary Magazine The Acorn Review*. Her screenplay *The Seraph War* was made into a short movie and aired at several venues in San Diego. You can also find several of her poems in various magazines and anthologies, including "Silent Amour," which won Creative Arts and Sciences' Editor's Preference Award of Excellence.

Paul Shane with *Good News, Etc.* writes, "Mendoza writes with the mind of a chess champion. She's always at least three moves ahead of her reader."



# Reveille of the Heart

by

Kimberlee R.  
Mendoza

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

Reveille Of The Heart

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## **Dedication**

To Ricky and Ethan—whose “hugs feel like a million bucks!” And to my parents for praying me through my own journey.

To the service men and women who have risked their lives for our country.





## Chapter One

Cami stared through the screen at her mother's corpulent silhouette. Her mother paced with hands on her hips. Maybe this wasn't the time. Cami looked over her shoulder at her car. The yellow '77 Mustang screamed for her to jump in and take off. Anywhere but here.

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Her mom stepped forward. “What have you done, Camilla?”

She swallowed. “I joined the Army.”

Her mom blinked. “I’m sorry, what did you say?”

“I just came from the Department of Defense office. I, um, joined the Army.”

She shook her head. “No, you didn’t.”

“Yes, I did.”

“That’s not possible.” Her mom swatted at the air and turned for the kitchen. “You’re only eighteen years old. You couldn’t have possibly joined anything.”

Cami tracked her mother into the kitchen. “I signed on the dotted line less than an hour ago. I have orders that officially make me Beatle Bailey.” She laughed. “Or Private Benjamin, depending if you count my huge wardrobe and manicured nails.” Cami spanned her fingers in the air and grinned.

Her mom reached into the refrigerator crisper and pulled out several bags of fresh vegetables. “Whatever you think you did, you can fix it in the morning. Right now, I need you to go upstairs and wash up for dinner. Your dad will be home soon.” She placed a head of lettuce under the faucet and busied herself with its final shower.

Cami twisted a strand of her curly, golden hair around her finger and sucked in her lower lip. “Mom, I leave next Tuesday.”

“No, you don’t. Your father won’t have it.” Her mom switched to stuffing a naked chicken with wild rice and oranges from a pot on the stove.

Cami’s eyes watered, she didn’t trust her voice. She took a deep breath. “I’m afraid he won’t have a say in the matter. I’m an adult and have signed my rights away. Nothing Dad or you say will change the fact I’m leaving

San Diego on Tuesday.” Cami turned on her heel and ran down the hall and up the stairs to her room. She was prepared for her mom to be angry. Anger Cami could fight. Denial was like battling a ghost.

She flopped on the bed and snatched the phone from her nightstand. She wanted to call Trevor. *Wait*. The anger Cami hadn’t received from her mom would definitely be furnished by her boyfriend. She stared at the phone a moment before dialing. Maybe she’d be wrong.

“Hello?” Trevor said.

“Hi, honey.” Cami rolled onto her back and stared at the U2 poster on the ceiling.

“Cami? I’m glad you called. I just got a weird call from your mom. She said something about talking sense into you.”

“She told you?”

“Told me what? She just called and said, ‘Trevor, call Cami and talk sense into her.’ And then hung up. What’s she talking about?”

Cami sighed. Maybe she shouldn’t have called him so soon. She wasn’t in the mood for his wrath. Perhaps she could prolong the news. “How about we meet for coffee? I’d rather tell you in person.”

A long pause greeted her.

“Trevor?”

“Okay, tonight at nine. Should I pick you up?”

Cami twirled the phone cord around her index finger. She didn’t know how it would go and she didn’t want to end up walking home. “No, I’ll just meet you.”

“Okay, see you at the Corner Coffee at nine. Love you.” Trevor hung up before she could respond, “Me, too.”

She placed the receiver down and grabbed her favorite stuffed frog from under her head. The Pepto-Bismol pink walls seemed to close in on her. Her best friend had told her it was a bad idea to paint them such a bright color. Right now, Cami agreed.

“Oh, Lord. Help me.” *He’s going to be mad.*

\*\*\*\*

Cami sat at the table nursing a sugar-free vanilla latte and a sour stomach. Trevor stared at her with his hazel eyes, obviously waiting for the missile to be launched. She pasted a smile on her face and babbled on about useless information. She told him about her final grades, a dress she'd just bought, and about the way the clutch on her "new" Mustang stuck-anything to avoid the real reason for their meeting.

"Cami, please. Enough!"

"What?"

"Tell me why your mom was so worried. Why'd she call me?" He leaned in. "And I don't want you to tell me it's the way you cut your hair or the nail polish you used on your toes. I want the truth."

Cami took a deep breath. *Here goes everything.* She didn't want to look him in the eye and risk seeing the disappointment that would follow her announcement. Focused on her lap, she started, "I don't want you to be mad, but remember when you told me to get a job. Well, I got one."

"That's what this is all about? A job?" Trevor laughed and took a sip of his coffee. "How bad can it be? You're not doing anything illegal, right?"

She scowled. "Of course not!"

"Then let's hear it. I doubt I'll be mad." He raised his cup and drained the contents into his mouth.

"I enlisted in the Army."

Luke warm mocha sprayed through his lips all over Cami and the table.

She sputtered and ran for napkins, grateful to get away for a moment. She looked back at him. His eyes were locked on her position. With hesitation, she returned to the table. "So, you're mad?" She wiped her face and shirt.

Trevor snatched one of the napkins from her hand and dabbed his mouth. His defined jaw was tense, his tan skin red. "Mad?" he said with a forced calmness. "I don't

know if mad is the right word.” He glowered at her. “Sit down, Cami!”

*Here it came.*

“What would possess you do something so stupid?”

*Yeah, he was angry.*

“Mom, Dad, my guidance counselor, even you...” She pointed at him. “You were all on my case to get a job to pay for school. I needed money for college and they offered me the G.I. Bill. Now, I have the money issue under control.”

Trevor ran a hand through his short brown hair and sighed. “That isn’t what I meant.”

“I know.”

“Why now, Cami? We were supposed to get married next year. That’s going to be kind of hard with you living in the Middle East.”

She coughed. “I’m not going to the Middle East.” A thought she wouldn’t allow herself to consider. She wasn’t joining the military to fight, but to go to college.

“You don’t know that,” he said. He looked around the room for a moment. “You’re now *their* property. Not mine.”

She sighed and reached for his hand. “Look, we can still get married. Maybe it won’t happen next year, but why not? You can always join me where ever I’m stationed.” She tried to smile, but probably just looked in pain. “And it won’t be Iraq or Afghanistan. Or anywhere dangerous. I asked for stateside.”

“That’s not how it works,” Trevor said. “I’m supposed to get a job, and you’re supposed to come with *me*.”

She pulled her hand away and glared at him. “What a piggy thing to say.”

“Look, I’m sorry. But you were wrong to go off and make such a big decision without consulting me. We’re supposed to be engaged.”

Cami held her bare left ring finger in the air.

“You know what I mean.” He glanced around the room again; this time she followed his gaze. People were staring.

Cami leaned forward. “Look, I’m sorry I didn’t consult you. But I knew you’d just talk me out of it.”

“You bet I would have.”

Annoyance churned within her, but she tried to stay calm. “Well, I didn’t want you to. I’m happy with my decision.” His heated stare pitched her composure in the trash. She stood. “You can either deal with it or move on.”

He grabbed her arm and pulled her back into her chair. “Knock it off, Cami. I may be angry, but I’m not trying to break up with you.”

Her head swam. She didn’t know what to think. She wanted this chance to get out of Alpine. To try something new. To have a chance at a real education. No one wanted that for her. They just wanted her to do things *their* way.

“Why can’t anyone be happy for me?” she asked.

Trevor pressed his lips together and waited a moment to speak. “I love you, Cami. Your mom loves you. This isn’t about us being unhappy for you. This is about us missing you.” He laced her fingers through his. “It’s about our future.”

“I love you too. I just want to try something different. I have a great opportunity and God has opened the door. Please try and support me.” She squeezed his hand. “I beg you.”

Trevor rested his head on her fingers. His eyes moist. “Okay,” he whispered. “I’ll try.”

\*\*\*\*

It was Monday and Cami would leave in less than twenty-four hours. Elaine ran around the house like a kid with a sugar high. It was only eight in the morning and she’d already washed three loads of laundry, dusted, fixed breakfast and packed Cami’s luggage.

The family and all of their friends were coming around noon for a farewell barbecue. Elaine wanted everything to be perfect.

Okay, that wasn't it. She loved her daughter and would miss her an enormous amount. She couldn't help it. Even more than that, she worried for her safety. She didn't want her only child to die on some barren hillside in the Middle East.

Her husband hadn't been much help. Floyd seemed to embrace the idea of Cami serving her country. He'd even helped her buy everything he thought a young soldier should have. Good running shoes, a duffel bag, and a phone card. He wanted to get her a haircut too, but Cami balked.

While Elaine cried, Floyd beamed. *A lot of help he is.*

"Cami," Elaine heard her husband say from upstairs, "I put your duffel bag in the car." They'd all agreed to pack the car the night before so they wouldn't have to worry about it in the morning.

Elaine heard her daughter bound down the steps in the other room. Her eyes glazed over. She pictured her five-year-old with blonde pigtails, sliding down the banister. Tears filled her eyes. Cami entered the kitchen doorway and Elaine turned away.

"Hey, Mom," she said.

Elaine wiped her eyes with the back of her sleeve and looked back at her daughter.

Cami's sandy-blond hair was pulled back in a hair clip and her green eyes danced with excitement.

*She's beautiful.*

"Need any help?"

Elaine shook her head and returned to removing the husks from the corn. "No, honey. This is your day. You just relax."

Cami stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Elaine's neck, resting her chin against Elaine's hair. "Mom, I hope you know how much I love you."

She choked. "I know."

"And I'll miss you so much."

Now the tears flowed. "I'll miss you too."



## Chapter Two

Cami heard a siren cut through the darkness. She looked around, but couldn't see a thing. Tramping through mud, she sought the source of the sound. Where was it coming from?

She pushed her eyes open. Her alarm. She was in her bedroom. Her alarm rang, announcing 3:45 a.m. Her stomach did a cartwheel. It was time.

She hit the clock, jumped up from her bed, and flipped on the desk light. Nervous excitement shot nausea through her belly and her body shook with adrenaline. She rubbed her eyes, trying to clear her vision.

The smell of coffee wafted through her room. *Mom must be up making breakfast.* She stepped into the shower, staying just long enough to lather and rinse. Drying off in record time, she threw on her jeans, a mauve t-shirt, and a black sweater. Her last civilian attire for a long time. She clipped her blonde locks and applied her makeup. One final look at her reflection revealed tired eyes. Tired but energized. *I'm ready.* Her stomach turned again.

She stepped out into the hallway. With the exception of the light filtering from the kitchen downstairs, the house was dark. She smiled. The old wooden banister never looked so inviting. She looked left then right. Sitting on the edge, she pulled her legs up and pushed. *Whoosh!* She hit the bottom landing and giggled.

“Morning, Mom,” she said, walking into the kitchen. She grabbed a donut, but the pain in her stomach made her put it back.

Her mom faced her. “Hungry?”

“I can’t eat. I’m too nervous.” Cami glanced around the living room. “Where’s Dad?”

“He’ll be down in a minute.” Her mom faced her with a pot of coffee in one hand and a plate of eggs in the other. “You should eat.”

She looked at her mom and grinned. Sympathy for her mother flooded Cami’s heart. She knew this was hard on her mom. Without a word, she ran into her arms and cried. Her mom couldn’t hug her back, but Cami didn’t care.

“Did I miss something?” her father said.

She wiped at her eyes and smiled. “I love you, guys. I’m going to miss you so much.”

Her mom sat the coffee and food on the counter and embraced her daughter again. “I’ll miss you too,” her mom said, holding her tight. “You write often, okay?”

“Yes, Mommy.”

Her mom pushed her back and wiped her eyes on a dishtowel. “You be careful. Those men in the Army can be no good.”

“I understand.” Cami smiled.

“Ready, Hon?” Her dad tapped his watch. “We need to get on the road if I’m to have you there at 5:30.”

She kissed her mom’s damp cheek and walked to the door. Her mom’s hunched shoulders and hollow eyes made her pause. *She looks devastated.* “Mom, I’ll be back for Christmas. I promise.”

She nodded and returned to her eggs.

Cami and her father climbed into his Explorer. He turned on the engine and cranked up the heat. It was still dark, and the air felt damp and cool. The green clock glowed in the dark car. 4:30 a.m. The Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS) wasn’t far down the freeway,

but Cami assumed her father was about as nervous as she was.

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Twenty minutes later, Floyd pulled over to the curb in front of the white brick building.

“So, this is where enlistees signed their life away to the U.S. Government?”

She nodded and yanked on the door handle.

Her father stepped out and popped the trunk.

She reached in to grab her red duffel bag, but her father beat her to it. He stretched out the strap and placed it on her shoulder.

“I’m sorry Trevor couldn’t be here to see you off.”

“I’m glad you are,” she said.

Though his heart ached, he was comforted by the pride that swelled in his heart. He looked up towards the sky in hopes to hold back the tears that threatened to fall.

“You be good, Cami.” He grabbed her and hugged her tight. “And don’t forget to write your mom. You know she’ll be crushed if you don’t.”

She kissed his cheek and pulled back. A small tear lined her makeup. “I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, sugar.” He hugged her one last time. “Now you better get, before they declare you AWOL.”

She stepped back, repositioned the strap of her bag on her shoulder and turned for the door.

“Cami...”

She looked back at him. Her face damp with tears. “Yes, Daddy?”

“Keep your head down.”

Cami pressed her lips together and nodded.

Before the tears could take over, Floyd jumped in his vehicle and pulled out onto the road. His little girl lost in his review mirror.

## Chapter Three

Like a herd of cattle, a dozen women were escorted into a bare room with Cami among them. They were ordered to undress down to their bra and underwear and stand single file.

Two women dressed in fatigues observed them from the side. "Open your mouth...stick out your tongue...lift up your foot...raise your arms...jump up and down...touch your toes..."

For over two agonizing hours, Cami was scrutinized from the top of her head to the arch in her foot. After the enlistees were finally allowed to dress, the two women signed their charts and shipped them off to what resembled a small chapel.

A high-ranking officer stepped in the room, his dark blue, award-decorated uniform revealed his military history.

The enlistees stood in reverent awe.

"Good morning. I'm Colonel Jensen. It's good to see such a great crop of young people here today and I'm honored to swear you in." The Colonel raised his hand. "Raise your right hand and repeat after me."

Cami raised her hand, a smile saturating her face.

"I, and your name," the Colonel said.

"I, Camilla Harrison," she said among the many other names.

"Do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States," he said and the crowd repeated. "Against all enemies, foreign and

domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” They repeated. “And that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me...” Again they parroted him. “According to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.”

Cami repeated the final line with pride. “So, help me God.”

“Welcome to the U.S. Armed Forces,” Colonel Jensen said.

Cami’s recruiter motioned her over.

“Here’s your ticket.” Sergeant Mills handed her a long white envelope. “The shuttle will be here to pick you up in twenty minutes. Grab your things and head out to the bottom gate.”

“Thanks for everything, Sergeant.”

“Good luck to you, Private Harrison.” She winked.

Cami wasn’t sure if it was protocol or not, but she hugged Mills anyway.

“Now go,” Mills said, wiping at her eyes.

A few girls grabbed their bags and Cami followed them. When she reached the lower level, a white van already waited to whisk them away to the airport.

“Hello,” Cami said to the heavy-set driver waiting with a clipboard in hand.

“Good morning,” he said. “What’s your name?”

“Camilla Harrison.”

“Welcome, Ms. Harrison. I’m Juan. I’m to take you to the airport.”

She handed him her duffel bag and climbed in the back seat. A few more girls and one guy also checked out on Juan’s list.

The driver pulled out on the road, and the familiar wave of excitement rushed into Cami’s belly again. She glanced around at the other passengers who conversed quietly. Out the window the amber streetlights still glowed in the early morning fog.