

DISCHARGED

Written by

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INT. LOCKER ROOM

An empty locker room, a shower runs in the background. COLE stands next to an open locker, a decorated military jacket hangs on the back. He folds some green slacks. He turns and starts to pluck the jewelry off the jacket and places it in a small tin. Last, he unpins the name tag, HARRIS from the jacket and places it in the tin.

EXT. ARMY BASE

The base is empty early in the morning, COLE walks across in street clothes, carrying a duffel. He walks through the last gate. He turns, walks up to a car, JOHN, stands next to it. He smiles big, laughs happily. COLE smiles back, close, then hug. Cole's smile fades as they embrace.

EXT. HOUSE

The car pulls up in front of a suburban home. Sprinkler's running.

INT. CAR

COLE and JOHN are in the car. Cole takes off his seat belt, John turns and puts his arm on the back of Cole's chair.

JOHN  
See you later?

Cole nods. He opens the car door.

INT. HOUSE

An empty modern home, pictures on the walls, furniture. COLE looks around, no one's home.

INT. KITCHEN

COLE steps into the empty kitchen, looks out into the backyard. On the fridge are to-do lists, grocery lists, he opens it, full. He closes the door.

INT. BEDROOM

COLE steps into a bedroom. Cole looks around, ordinary, still the same. He drops his bag on the bed, sits next to it. A white envelope sticks out of a side pocket.

COLE grabs the envelope, opens it. Unfolds it. THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY is stamped as the letterhead, addressed as MEMORANDUM: FIRST LIEUTENANT COLE HARRIS, SUBJECT: Withdrawal of Federal Recognition.

Cole stares at the letter.

MORE TEXT:

1. THIS IS TO INFORM YOU THAT SUFFICIENT CAUSE EXISTS TO INITIATE ACTION FOR WITHDRAWAL OF FEDERAL RECOGNITION IN THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD FOR MORAL OR PROFESSIONAL DERELICTION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH NGR 635-101, PARAGRAPH 9E. SPECIFICALLY, YOU ADMITTED PUBLICLY THAT YOU ARE A HOMOSEXUAL WHICH CONSTITUTES HOMOSEXUAL CONDUCT IN VIOLATION OF AR 600-20, PARAGRAPH 4-19A(3).

(O.S.)

Cole!?

COLE quickly folds the letter and puts it back in his bag.

(O.S.) (CONT'D)

COLE?

COLE'S MOM comes into the bedroom just as he gets the letter in the bag and the pocket closed. He smiles and stands.

MOM

Cole!

She hugs him tight.

MOM (CONT'D)

I'm so glad you're home, honey.

DAD comes into the doorway. He smiles.

DAD

Hey Cole.

(beat)

You want a beer?

MOM

(to DAD)

Oh honey stop.

Cole smiles.

EXT. BACK PORCH

COLE and DAD sit next to each other and stare out into the backyard.

DAD  
Your mom's been real worried about  
you.

Beat.

DAD (CONT'D)  
It's great they let you out early.  
(beat)  
What now?

Cole shrugs.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Start thinking about college? Job?  
Economy's taking a dump, least you  
got a bonus all the time you put  
in. How's that work, they give you  
a check right away, something like  
that?

Cole shrugs again.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Ah, you'll figure it out.

Dad pats Cole on the leg.

DAD (CONT'D)  
Beer?

Cole lifts his bottle, almost empty, smiles. Dad smiles back.  
Dad gets up, heads inside. Cole stares at his bottle, then  
out into the yard.

EXT. APARTMENT/DUPLEX

Cole knocks on a duplex door.

(O.S.)  
Coming!

Cole smiles, waits. The door opens. MEG, older, opens the  
door, surprised and happy.

MEG  
COLE! Oh my god!

They hug.

MEG (CONT'D)  
Come in, come in.

INT. APARTMENT/DUPLEX

COLE and MEG step into the apartment, decorated nicely. Pictures on the walls, chandelier hangs in the middle, kitchen way in the back, DOUG, in workout gear, sweaty, is back there, downs water from a bottle.

MEG  
You remember Doug?

She points to Doug. Cole nods.

MEG (CONT'D)  
(to Doug)  
Hey Doug, you remember my brother  
Cole.

Doug comes over.

DOUG  
Sure, hey Cole.

Cole smiles.

Silence. Awkward. They all glance at each other.

DOUG (CONT'D)  
Uh, well, I'll give you guys a  
minute.

Meg smiles. Doug heads to the back of the house. A door CLOSES and a TV blares, ARE YOU READY TO SWEAT!?! (One of those workout videos.)

Cole and Meg look at each other, laugh.

MEG  
Doug's really into one of those at  
home workout videos, Insanity, you  
probably heard of it.

Cole nods. Meg sits down on the couch, Cole follows.

MEG (CONT'D)  
Mom and Dad said you've been back  
for a couple of weeks, why the hell  
are you just now coming over here?

He shrugs.

MEG (CONT'D)  
Oh my god, I bet it's just awful  
living there.

Beat. Silence.

MEG (CONT'D)

Do they know what happened? Ha, who I'm kidding, they're clueless to everything. I mean, if they would just wake up and live-

Cole stares off as she rambles.

MEG (CONT'D)

-in the modern world. I mean, how long do you peop-, do you have to deal with this crap huh? I mean, you're out there every day fighting for our country just the same, there's no difference between you and me-

DOUG is groaning and yelling in the other room, barely audible.

MEG (CONT'D)

-I just wish they could realize what their actions and policies-you know what- I'm ranting. I'm gonna stop now. I'm sorry.

Cole reaches into his pocket and hands her a letter. She takes it.

MEG (CONT'D)

What's this?

She looks at it. It's a bill, from the Army. DEBT REASON(S) OR REMARK(S). BALANCE DUE: \$3455.67. RUSH RECOUPMENT IS REQUIRED FOR THE UNEARNED PORTION OF YOUR ENLISTMENT OR REENLISTMENT BONUS.

Her head jerks up at COLE.

MEG (CONT'D)

Are you kidding!?

Beat.

MEG (CONT'D)

You have to fight this, this is bullshit. They can't do this...can they?

COLE

I don't know.

MEG

Cole, you need to get a lawyer-what does John think?

COLE

I haven't shown him.

MEG

He's gonna fucking flip. Oh my god.

A CRASH IS HEARD IN THE OTHER ROOM! DOUG SCREAMS.

Cole and Meg look at each other, she's in shock.

MEG (CONT'D)

DOUG?!

INT. JOHN'S PLACE

John is RANTING. He has Cole's papers in his hand. Cole stands there, taking it.

JOHN

I can't believe they're doing this to you. How many times does shit like this have to happen before people will wake up!

(beat)

You're fighting this, goddammit you're gonna take down the government. Don't ask, don't tell my ass, this has to stop.

COLE

John.

JOHN

This is such bullshit. That's it, I'm calling the LCR.

He grabs his cell, starts googling.

COLE

John.

JOHN

They'll know what to do, they're this organization called the Log Cabin Republicans or something like that, they fight shit like this.

COLE  
(finally)  
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT IT!

JOHN is stunned. He stops searching.

JOHN  
What?

COLE  
I said I don't want to fight it.

JOHN  
I know what you said. Why not?

COLE  
I...I...I just can't.

JOHN gets closer.

JOHN  
Cole, you have to.

COLE  
No.

John stares at him.

JOHN  
You have-

COLE  
I haven't told my parents.

JOHN  
So, I'm sure they'll support you  
100 perce-

COLE  
(upset)  
I haven't told my parents I'm gay!

John is shocked. Speechless.

JOHN  
What...

COLE  
It just never came up ya know, I  
joined up when I was 18. To get  
away.

(MORE)

COLE (CONT'D)

I didn't KNOW until, I mean of course I knew, but I just didn't, I don't know, I was confused, and being in the Army, it was fine, no one knew, I didn't have to tell anyone, but after a while it starts to eat at you, get to you, drive you crazy-

(losing it)

-you don't know what it's like, to stay hidden, keep it hidden, like some, disease-a plague, but there's no cure, no medicine, just-

JOHN

Cole, I DO know what it's like, I've been there, not in the Army, but in life, things happen, you can't help what you are, there's nothing wrong with it-I'm sorry, I know this hard, but you have to fight this, maybe you don't have to tell your parents but, you have to tell someone-

COLE

I did tell someone and look where I am!

JOHN

What do you mean?

Cole shakes his head, wants to take it back.

COLE

Nothing...

JOHN

Cole, tell me what you mean.

Beat.

COLE

My C.O.

JOHN

What?

COLE

My C.O., my commanding officer, I told her.

JOHN

You TOLD the Army?

COLE  
Yes.

JOHN  
Why?

COLE  
Because I wanted it, I wanted out.  
I wanted out of the Army!

JOHN  
Oh Cole.

JOHN gets real close to COLE, grabs him, holds him. Cole rests his head on John's shoulder, calms down.

Beat.

Finally,

COLE  
OK.

Cole lifts off of John's shoulder as he pulls slightly out of the embrace. They look into each other's eyes.

COLE (CONT'D)  
I'll fight it.

John smiles. Cole smiles.

JOHN  
What about your parents?

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE

Cole opens the door, John follows. Dad is watching football on the couch.

MOM comes in from the kitchen with a beer and some wings. She's startled by Cole.

MOM  
Hey Cole...who's this?

Dad turns around on the couch.

CUT TO BLACK.

TEXT ON SCREEN

FADE IN:

Since the policy was introduced in 1993, the military has discharged more than 13,000 troops from the military under Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT).

FADE IN:

On July 22, 2011, the United States government set the end of DADT for September 20, 2011.

FADE IN:

On September 30, 2011, the Department of Defense issued a a policy change deleting "homosexual conduct" as a ground for administrative separation from any United States military force.