

“Metamorphous”

by Melinda Canny

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Get over the notions that	Women aren't qualified to perform well
they should not serve in combat.	They can't match men in aggressiveness
Find out what the limitation are.	We can't build a winning army
If it lowers efficiency, exclude them	soldiers haven't confidence in comrades
Russia used women as combatants	American people do not want it
It's direction our culture is going	Women alone can be mothers
It's easier to have a family life now	That's what women should be doing
Retention rate is higher for women	Listening to men.

Yesterday, my only thoughts were
what movie to go see,
if the cute green-eyed
boy would ask me out,
or did I have enough
gas money to make
it to the beach.

Today, I sit in a bus painted Army green
with black shapes interspersed over
it taking the unsuspecting to Fort Jackson,
South Carolina. Cactus bush springs
pushed through shit-brown upholstery
You were the pincushion. Each occupant
trying to ignore the skunk-like smell
That radiated from the walls or
was it the stink of fear? In
petrified silence, we
sat with only the
country music station
playing Kenny Rogers,
“The Gambler.”

We were the first group of
Regular Army females. We were
the first who would do the same
training as the men. We were the

first to...I was the first to break
the silence. We guessed what
would happen when we arrived.
We were wrong. Anyone who says:

war is hell forgot about
boot camp.

Armed guards at the
front gate keep us in or others out.
A female, dressed in green
fatigues and shiny like a
night star combat boots,
joined us. She explained
what would happen and
asked if we had questions.
It was rhetorical. We were to
learn this lesson fast.
Never, say you have a question.

Then, the devil joined us.
He came roaring onto the bus.
“Get off this man’s Army’s bus you lazy
good-for-nothing....” We climbed down
off the bus and looked around.
“Well what are you waiting for
fallin,
fallin.”

Thirty girls looked for a clue, neon sign or
something that would tell us what that
giant wanted. He was kind of a cute
giant, if you didn’t mind having
your brain smashed in with
words on a regular basis.

Drill Sergeant Daniels,
6’5” with blizzard-white teeth,
black skin glistening with moisture from the
humidity. Sweat oozed down from his Smoky the
Bear hat. He stopped smiling. We
were all milling around like lost ewes. He looked
right at me. “Your name.” I gave it to him and added
Sir to the end my sentence – my first mistake, of many.
“Drop and give me ten” is what he responds.

“Ten what?”
He was speaking Army
I didn’t know the code.
Oh, it wasn’t long before

we all did, but right then.
Nope, no *idea*. Not the first
or the last. No idea how to
shoot a gun, no idea how to scale a
wall, no idea how to make a bunk, so a
quarter would bounce. Not sure why that was
even important. Then there was guard duty. Why
if there are guards with guns at the gate did we wander
around at night stopping strangers with, "Halt
Who goes there?" The special treat they
had...the gas chamber. Yeah, we
looked great with snot smearing
with tears at they ran down our
cheeks. Do you know how many
ways they can ruin even spam?
Yes, shit on-a-shingle is a real
food. No matter what they
say MRE's never taste good.

Twenty Things I learned in the Army.
A clean gun is your friend
Watch each other's backs
Calling cadence can get old
No, is not an acceptable answer
Never show them they got to you
Shine your boots until you can see your face
Do enough pushups and you will have great arms
Trees make lousy landing places when parachuting
Always know what the task is -- before volunteering
There is only one right way. Drill Sergeant Daniels Way
Be on time (this one at least is transferable to civilian life)
Never point a gun at a Drill Sergeant they don't think it's funny
Drill Sergeants, like parents, have eyes in the back of their heads
Tooth brushes make a lousy way to clean the grout in the bathroom
Don't get drunk on Sunday night when PT is at 0500 Monday morning
Don't scrub out someone's filthy coffee cup, sometimes they like it that way
Never sit on your bunk before inspection -- the quarter will no longer bounce
Don't dawdle over your meal. You don't know when the time to eat comes to an end
Don't ever hang a foreign nations flag upside down when you are a guest in their country
Never call an enlisted man "Sir"