

# MAJOR DADDY

MILITARY DADDIES

BOOK THREE



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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.  
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## CHAPTER 1



"MILA WILDER, THIS IS MAJOR ROYCE HARDING. ROYCE, THIS is Mila Wilder. She and I have known each other since we were in diapers. Our moms were best friends."

Dear God, she hated blind dates—especially when she didn't expect that this was going to be a blind date. She was supposed to be having dinner with her best friend Eve and her gorgeous Army Reserve officer husband, Raul.

Instead, she had seen an unfamiliar vehicle in their driveway. She hadn't thought anything of it, really, since she knew that her best friend knew, too—better than anyone else she was close to—just how much she detested being set up.

At least, she thought Eve knew that. The case in point, though, meant that she was going to have to have a "come to Jesus" meeting with her at some point afterwards.

Still, it wasn't as if she was going to turn tail and run. Even Mila—who had a definite tendency to say exactly what was on her mind and follow her own instincts, which were often at odds with what most people would consider was polite—wouldn't embarrass her friend and simply run out

rather than endure what was sure to be an excruciating evening.

So, she gamely stuck her hand out, finding it immediately engulfed in his big, warm one. He squeezed hers quite gently—as if he were fully aware of his own strength—and pumped up and down once.

"It's very nice to meet you, ma'am."

She immediately forgave him for "ma'aming" her. With a man who was as good-looking as he was, she'd forgive him nearly anything.

Then he let go of her with a warm, broad smile and twinkling blue eyes that had her realizing in horror that she could very likely drown in those intense pools.

Disconcerted, she asked by rote, "And how do you know Eve?"

She watched him go from a more formal stance, during which he was incredibly straight-backed, to a more casual "at ease" stance, wondering to herself if he only had two gears—militaristic and only slightly less militaristic. But she did marvel at how correct his posture was. Her mother had always been after her for slouching when she was younger. She'd love the way this man carried himself—tall, shoulders back, looking alert and ready for anything.

Maybe Eve should have been introducing the major to Eloise Wilder, instead. If she liked him, she wouldn't let a little thing like the fact that he was several decades her junior stop her from going after him.

Just the thought of that possibility made Mila cringe inwardly. She might be lacking a bit of polish in regards to her manners, which was something she was working on, but her usually quite circumspect mother, when presented with a man she was interested in, would jettison every possible courtesy in pursuit of him. As a result, since her father had

died when Mila was barely three years old, she'd had a succession of step-fathers—most of whom never really presented themselves as such—that rivaled the list of British kings in length, if not quality.

"I don't really know Eve all that well, Miss Wilder. I met Raul while we were both in Afghanistan a while ago, and we became good friends. So now, when I'm in the area, or he's in mine, we try to get together. But I've only met Eve a couple of times."

"I would assume you've done a reasonable amount of traveling, being in the military. So I'm curious as to what constitutes 'in the area', since I know there are no Army bases in Vermont."

He smiled, and she immediately forgave him for being a very short-haired redhead, who, if she ranked men's attractiveness according to their hair color—which she didn't—would have put him squarely at the bottom of the list.

"Well, there's a training site in Jericho, but it's primarily ANG—Army National Guard—although it's also a site for the 86<sup>th</sup> IBCT—Infantry Brigade Combat Team—and the AMWF—Army Mountain Warfare School." She marveled at how naturally he translated all of those abbreviations and acronyms for her, which, of course, was better than some military people she'd met, who just assumed that everyone knew all of their ridiculous nonsense words for things. "I'm stationed at Fort Drum, NY, which is towards the border, in the northwest corner of the state, kinda, sorta..." he explained with a somewhat sheepish grin.

Mila had been around Raul enough to have heard a lot of that kind of thing spoken by him, but nothing she'd ever heard from him had rivaled this man's alphabet soup speech pattern.

"You must get tired of having to translate all of those mili-

tary abbreviations into English for civilians," she commented, taking the small glass of neat whiskey Raul offered her before she gave him a peck on the cheek.

Raul was one of the few men she'd found she was willing to tolerate—not just because he'd allowed himself to be trained to bring her whiskey whenever she entered their door, either.

Between her own problems with men and the sometimes quite horrific tales some of her friends regaled her with when they were in their cups over the years, Mila had decided, about five or so years ago, not to date. She was perfectly content living alone. She had a good job that allowed her to do what she liked, within reason—luckily, neither her interests nor her desires were all that expensive. She had a close group of good friends, and—if she absolutely had to have a man—she could get together with someone on Tinder, although she'd largely weaned herself from that, too, much to Eve's disgust.

But in Raul, her best friend had found a real gem. Sometimes, she had to look away from the two of them. They still gazed at each other like they had during the years before they were married—as if he were her and she were his be all and end all. They'd been married since the year they both got out of college, going on fifteen years.

No marriage was perfect, and they had gone through their own trials, but they had remained rock solidly committed to each other throughout every challenge—like the separations they'd had to endure when he'd been sent into a war zone.

Raul treated Eve as if she was the most precious thing in his life, and she did the same for him. They were her ultimate relationship goal—although that, too, had largely faded. But she knew that Eve still wanted her to have what she was lucky enough to have found.

But Mila was thirty-seven—like they both were—and she'd forced herself to come to the realization that there wasn't going to be anyone like Raul for her, and she'd made her peace with that.

Her best friend's husband blushed—as he always did—when she kissed him, however platonically, and that was more than half of the reason why she did it.

"Thank you, Raul."

"I don't mind explaining them," Royce answered. "You kind of get used to saying what the acronym is right afterwards when the person in front of you isn't dressed like a tree."

"Maybe the military should give you decoder rings you could hand out to civilians whose eyes begin to glaze over as you speak." Eve's husband cleared his throat sharply at her little dig, but she just smiled. "I know sometimes—especially when he'd come back from his two weeks or a deployment or whatnot—I could barely understand a word he said!" Eva teased.

"Or they could just start, you know, calling things by their actual names..."

It was a bit of a snarky comment, but if he couldn't take her poking a bit of fun at the military—and as much as she respected those who served, there was still a lot to poke at—then she should just go home now.

But he didn't seem offended in the least. "Man, the staff meetings would never end if we did that!" He grinned.

"Thank you for your service, though, Major."

His grin changed to another of those highly disconcerting smiles, a more serious one, and if possible, even more intense than before, as he nodded to her. "You're very welcome, Miss Wilder. And please call me Royce."

"Call me Mila."

"Or you can call her Chunk or Fred or Tootsie..." her friend gleefully helped.

She hadn't blushed in decades, but she could feel her cheeks brightening as Eve went through the list of ancient nicknames she'd been given over the years, which she refused to let die a natural death.

"What was it that that beady-eyed little guy you used to date called you?" She scrunched her face up while trying to think.

"You have a suspiciously accurate memory for things that embarrass me, Eve." She looked at her friend accusatorily, but Eve just gave her a wide-eyed, innocent look back. "That was Lloyd, ten or more years ago. He thought "Mila" was too long a name, and he decided he was going to call me "La". I felt like everyone who heard it was going to start singing the *Do-Re-Mi* song from *The Sound of Music* at me, just like you did."

"I couldn't help it. How could anyone resist the urge?" Eve chuckled. He did it as covertly as possible when they were all hanging around the kitchen, but Mila saw Raul give Eve's butt a pat and heard him say in a quiet, warning tone, "That's enough, Eve."

That was yet another way her best friend had lucked out in the husband department. Eve had always wanted someone to take her in hand, and Raul fit that bill very nicely. Everything she'd heard from Eve about how Raul treated her in that regard was wonderful—like a fairy tale—so much so that Mila had considered asking her not to talk to her about that aspect of their relationship.

But it was so damned perfect, and she'd never found anyone with whom she had clicked in that very particular way. Mila was in that unenviable place where she absolutely adored hearing about their lovingly dominant relationship, but it made her feel just as bad that she didn't have one.

In the end, she hadn't said anything to her friend about



it, because she'd rather hear about that reality than not—even if she wasn't likely to ever experience it herself. It was great to know that it was out there for some people, anyway.

She took her phone out of her purse, just out of curiosity, using Google Maps to find out where Fort Drum, New York was in relation to Burlington, Vermont.

"Good Lord, you drove all that way to get here?" She gave him an incredulous look.

"I did. I like driving. It's between foliage and ski season, so there weren't many people on the road, and it's a quiet time when I can just think, or listen to music or a podcast. But, if I were going to stay here, my parents' house—which, since my parents are gone, my sisters and I own jointly—is relatively nearby."

"Wow. I think the longest time I've ever driven was to that hotel on Hampton Beach Eve and I stayed at early one summer." Suddenly realizing that she'd forgotten her manners yet again, she stopped hanging around on the outskirts of the kitchen and went to stand near her friend. "What can I do to help?"

And, to her surprise and his credit, the major was right behind her, echoing her question.

She took them both at their word and gave them each tasks, asking Mila to set the table and Royce to take the roast out of the oven, since it was in a porcelain over cast iron pot, and it was both heavy and awkward for her to get.

When everything was on the table, they all took their places around it. Mila was happy that it was a round table and there were four people, so that she didn't have to sit too close to the major. Usually, that was because the man Eve was trying to pair her off with was not right for her. But that was not necessarily the case this time.

It amazed her that Royce stood behind her, holding her

chair out for her, while Raul did the same for Eve, as was his habit, no matter where they were.

Mila wasn't used to that and sat down gingerly, saying an awkward, "Thank you."

"You're welcome."

He took the seat to her left, while Raul was to her right, and Eve across from her.

The dinner table conversation was varied and lively. They talked about everything from books to television, from the military to school systems, from travel to local tourist haunts, and what's more, it flowed effortlessly, she thought, as if they'd all been friends for years, which put her more at ease than she usually was when she met someone for the first time.

And her friend had cooked her favorite meal. That alone should have told her that something was up with the invitation to dinner for that evening. "Oh, my God, Eve," Mila said, as she closed her eyes and groaned in ecstasy at nearly every bite. "You could sell this pot roast—you *should* sell this pot roast."

"You say that every time." Raul smiled.

"That's because it's true. And the veggies, all cooked together with the roast..." She put another forkful in her mouth, moaning as if she were seconds from orgasm, obviously not paying any attention at all to the reaction she was causing in the man to her left.

Royce knew she wasn't trying to be deliberately erotic—Raul had told him a bit about Mila, and he could read people reasonably well on short acquaintance—but she was managing to sound like she was writhing in ecstasy.

He hadn't been able to take his eyes off the woman to his right. She sounded as if she was having an orgasm right then and there, on the spot, and although he was trying not to

stare and not to listen, it was causing a not necessarily unexpected reaction in him.

Royce already liked her, but he could barely believe what he was seeing and hearing at the dinner table. It was as if someone had left a Pornhub tab running with the volume up.

He thought he was the only one to notice, but then her friend obviously kicked her none too gently, and he wished she hadn't, because Mila immediately stopped, but his blatant reaction to her didn't. He expected her to blush when she realized what she'd been doing, but she didn't, for some reason, and that intrigued him even further.

He'd never been very fond of blind dates. He'd been on several—married servicemen, and/or their wives—were always trying to get everyone else they knew married off. In some unhappy cases, that was only because misery loved company. But none of them were quite right, and he didn't intend to settle. That was okay with him, early on, because he'd been concentrating on his career, but now it had gotten to the point where he would like to be married, but he couldn't seem to find anyone he was attracted to, except in the basest of ways.

Royce had no problems with sex, and if that was all it was going to be, he was fine with that. But lately, over the past five years or so, he began to find one night stands to be less and less satisfying, overall. He'd come to want what his friends—like the Torreses had. They seemed to be the perfect example, and he knew they even meshed on that very particular interest the three of them seemed to share.

He wasn't sure how Mila felt about the lifestyle her best friend had chosen, but he had to assume that she was at least okay with it, or she likely wouldn't have been as affectionate with her friend's husband as she was.

So when Raul suggested that they should get together at his place, that there was someone he'd like him to meet, he'd

hesitated, but only for a few seconds. If the person he had in mind was anything like Eve, then he was all in.

And in some ways, she was quite like Eve—she was funny and seemed intelligent. He'd noticed a few small things about her that piqued his interest and pointed to the possibility that she, too, might be like-minded about a certain aspect that they all agreed on was a necessary way that a man showed his woman how much he truly loved her. But he knew better than to assume that her rainbow shoelaces, or the occasional higher pitched tone of her voice, was anything more than a coincidence.

If he recalled correctly, she worked in some kind of IT department for an area bank, so she had to be smart—at least about that, if not anything else. It was obvious that she was very comfortable with the both of them, enough so that, when it was time for dessert, she was the one who took everyone's plates into the kitchen, telling Eve to stay put, since she'd done all of the cooking.

Royce automatically—and somewhat expertly—cleared the plates and pots from the table that she hadn't gotten to.

"Thank you. You can just put everything on the counter and I'll dish up the dessert."

Instead, he rinsed all of the plates and stacked them in the dishwasher, found and put all of the leftovers into plastic containers, which he then put in the fridge. Then he finished loading the dishwasher and ran it, and washed what wouldn't fit there, all in little more than the time she had taken to dish up dessert and get everyone whatever they wanted to drink with it.

When they both came back to the table, he held her chair again. She had to admit, she was impressed, and—regardless of how decidedly un-feministic it was—she could definitely get used to being treated that way. "Someone must've had a

job as a waiter and busboy, I would guess," she complimented.

"Bingo, I was both. Started as a busboy in a very popular place called the Mesquite Grill in my hometown when I was fifteen and worked my way up through the ranks."

"Can I hire you to do that for me at my house?" Mila asked, teasing. More points for him at not flinching in the least at doing cleanup after dinner.

"I don't think you could afford me." He smiled back with a wink she wasn't really sure she'd seen him do, taking a taste of his chocolate mousse and sounding much like she had about the pot roast, leaving her to watch him surreptitiously as he closed his eyes and put his head back while moaning obscenely, giving her an unobstructed view of his strong neck and profile.

She had the advantage that Raul did not kick his friend under the table to get him to stop, although it was very noticeable when he did come to realize what he sounded like. He blushed very nicely for a guy.

They sat around talking for a while after dinner, drinking coffee and laughing a lot—more than he had with any other woman he'd just met, he thought. He liked the banter that flew very naturally among the three of them. It reminded him of what dinner with his family had been like while he was growing up. And now, too, whenever they got together, it was always just the same, everyone jockeying to take the mickey out of everyone else and see who could get the biggest laugh.

When she rose to clear the table again, as best she could, while her friend told her to just leave it, Mila announced that she had to be getting home. It was, in fact, much later than she had intended to stay, and that was all down to the major. She was more loathe to leave his company than she'd ever

been any man in her life, and that both terrified and intrigued her to no end.

Royce stood and said roughly the same thing. "I'll walk you to your car, Mila, if you'd like."

And then he actually waited for her to agree, eyebrows raised questioningly at her.

Ignoring the fact that they were in a rural, residential area of Vermont with a crime rate in the negative numbers, and the fact that her car was only about fifty feet from the front door, she nodded. It would be much more likely that they'd be trampled by cows or goats than mugged or carjacked.

Hugs and goodbyes were exchanged in their tiny foyer—made that much tinier by the size of the men in it—enthusiastic promises that they would get together again soon were extracted from everyone, and then, suddenly, the door closed behind them, and they were standing there in the cool, sharp almost-winter air.

Feeling horribly awkward, she began to walk towards her car, and he fell into step beside her, hands at his sides, not in his pockets. The military trained that out of their soldiers, too.

"I had a great time tonight." Royce rolled his eyes at his own banality.

"So did I. I always love to come over here. They have such a great home. I always feel welcome here." Christ, did she not know how to shut up, babbling at him like an insipid idiot?

"I agree. They love each other very much, and it's very... palpable."

Mila smiled up at him. "An excellent word for it. But they're not exclusionary about it—they've never made me feel like a third wheel." Good God, would she never stop talking? Next thing, she'd be regaling him about the joys of soup for one and telling him the name of her cats, for fuck's sake!

"Exactly."

They'd reached her car, and he leaned against it, facing her. "So. I believe this is where I'm supposed to ask you out." It was a practical, efficient car, which kind of surprised him, although he wasn't sure why. But there was a sparkly unicorn hanging off the rearview mirror, and the steering wheel cover was white, fluffy, and had ears.

He became more hopeful than he usually allowed himself to be so early on.

His arms were crossed over his impressive chest, and that put her off a bit—although it was hard not to be distracted by all of those muscles, and his stance could be interpreted as dommy, she supposed.

She opened the car, pausing before getting in, her eyes somewhere on the ground in front of him. Mila's voice was soft as she said what she said to almost all of the men she'd been set up with like this, who inevitably took her up on her offer, "You don't have to do that. I know I'm not most people's cup of tea. I'll tell Eve that you asked me and I turned you down, so they'll direct their inevitable inquiries to me, not you."

Eyebrows rose, and he looked positively stern for a few seconds, before his expression softened, although his tone of voice was gentle and calm. "You're going to lie to your friend?"

Yet another blush suffused her face as she sank down into the driver's seat. "Well, I..." One look at his face made her stop talking, although he didn't look in any way angry or threatening.

Instead, Royce looked vaguely disappointed as he closed the door for her, and that was somehow worse. She rolled the window down, less because she wanted to, but more because she thought she should.

He didn't crowd her, didn't lean on the edge of the window, didn't take another step closer to her. Instead, he

crouched down where he was—a good three feet away—and he was still taller than she was, she realized, her mouth going dry.

Continuing in that impossibly soft, steady manner, "I don't want you to lie to Eve on my account, Mila. And I would very much like to take you out." *And spank your butt till you cry for offering to lie for me*, he thought to himself.

The urge to bite her lip was high, but she fought it down, repeating, "You don't have to do that, Royce."

"I know you don't know me very well, but I can assure you that very few people could make me do something that I don't want to do."

She could definitely believe that! It would be like trying to coerce a brick wall!

"So. What do you say to dinner and a movie tomorrow night?"

"My word, you sound like a used car salesman!" She meant it teasingly, but then she listened to what she'd said, and it could easily be interpreted that she thought he was some clunker of a used car. "Jesus Christ, I didn't mean to say it like that!" she groaned, putting her hand over her face in mortification.

He looked perplexed. "Like what? I didn't take it as an insult, Mila." He smiled. "I took it as a compliment that I'm persistent."

He said it so blatantly and eagerly, that she had to chuckle, but then she added, "But you can't really think that I'm your type. You're six-foot-whatever and fucking damned gorgeous." That got him laughing, but then she looked down at herself. "And I'm, well, like I said, I know I'm not to very many people's taste, especially men."

Royce was out and out frowning at that, and although he didn't make her feel unsafe in any way—quite the opposite,



in fact—but, looking up at him, she still wished she could retract it.

"I like to make my own decisions about whom I might want to have in my life, and the fact that you're not some cookie-cutter woman who looks and acts like every other average woman is a plus to some of us."

She drew a long breath, barely believing what she was about to say. "All right."

If he ever needed someone to take him down a peg or two, it would be her. Although she'd enjoy it entirely too much. He didn't think he'd ever had a woman be quite so reluctant to go on a date with him. He probably should have just taken the out she'd given him, but he knew he couldn't have. There was something about her that really caught his attention, and he wanted to get to know her better.

He wanted much more than that from her—he wanted to be her Dom, and perhaps even her Daddy, if she were into that, and he thought that there was a distinct possibility that she would. And he wanted to blister her ample behind and bring her to that exquisite razor's edge of pleasure and pain before hurling her over the edge with his mouth or his fingers or his cock—all body parts that would have loved for him to be more of an asshole and less of a gentleman at this moment, but he wouldn't.

He couldn't.

For the moment, he'd ignore the acute aches he felt for her and settle for her agreeing to see him again—however unenthusiastically.

That smile was as potent as any weapon he could have—likely expertly—used on her. "Good. When would you like me to pick you up tomorrow?"

It was extremely depressing to her to realize that she had so little life that she absolutely knew that she was free tomorrow night, and it probably wasn't the "right" thing to

do to admit that to him, but although she did care, she didn't want to care what he thought about that. So she answered, "Well, that depends on what movie you want to see. Why don't you text me later and we'll hash that out then?"

Royce nodded. "Sounds good."

He stood smoothly, effortlessly while she tried—and failed—not to stare, saying, "Drive carefully."

"I will. Thank you." She began to back down the driveway, then stopped and said with surprising seriousness, "I enjoyed meeting you, Royce."

He gave her a small smile, as if he were faintly amused that she had stopped just to tell him that. "I enjoyed meeting you, too, Mila."



SHE HAD such a whirlwind social life that she was asleep when her phone buzzed at about eleven that night.

"I hope this doesn't wake you. I meant to text earlier, but I was helping my sister with a bit of a crisis. Feel free to answer whenever you get up in the morning."

"Oh dear. I hope everything is okay."

"Yes, it was more of an emotional upheaval. I adore her, but she's a bit of a drama queen."

"Ah, well good on you for being there for her."

Mila was quickly scrolling through a list of "in theatres" movies to see what was playing. "Lemme guess. You want to go see Maverick."

He sent her a big, toothily grinning emoji.

"Guilty as charged, but you know, it's almost mandatory."

"I get it. I'll go see it."

"Really?"

"Sure. It's supposed to be really good."

"Great. I picked the movie, so you pick where we go for dinner."

She opened her mouth, then said, "Are you a vegetarian?"

"Do you remember how much of Eve's roast I ate? No, I'm not."

"Good, then Barbie-Q's, in Winooski."

"You've been there before?"

"Yes, and it's good."

"Good for Vermont?"

"That's a very apt way to put it, but I'd say it's great for Vermont, frankly, and I'm—sorry to say—a picky person."

"I like people who know what they want and what they like and aren't afraid to say it."

That was a very different—and altogether reassuring—response from what she usually heard from men when she admitted that she could be fussy. Most men automatically translated that into "high maintenance", when the truth was that—as a lover and/or a girlfriend, she was barely any maintenance at all.

Mila had always maintained that that was their loss, but the older she got, the harder it was to just shrug off the idea that it might well be hers, instead.

"How about the showing at three? We'll be out by a little after five, then we can head to dinner."

"Sounds good."

"Excellent. Does two-thirty sound okay to you for me to pick you up?"

"Yes."

"Great! See you then!"

"Okay!"

Okay? She thought after she'd sent it, wondering if it sounded as lackadaisical and unenthusiastic to him as it did in her head.

Mila put the phone down and turned over, hoping to drift back into slumber.

She was annoyed to realize that she couldn't sleep for the excitement of thinking she was going to see him again tomorrow, which kept her awake for a while as she planned what she was going to wear, like a teenager going on her first date.

It was embarrassing to be her age and yet acting like that over a man.