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*The Rainy Goodbye:*  
*A Short Story of Brian and Meghan*  
*O'Mara*

This is dedicated to all of my fellow military spouses. You have been my rock, my sisters, my sanity, my partners in crime.

## **Novels by Stacey Reynolds**

Raven of the Sea: An O'Brien Tale

A Lantern in the Dark: An O'Brien Tale

Shadow Guardian: An O'Brien Tale

## **Novellas**

Fio: An O'Brien Novella (A Spin-off Novella of The O'Brien Tales)

## A Note to the Reader

*The Rainy Goodbye* is a complimentary short story for my loyal readers, preceding *Raven of the Sea: An O'Brien Tale*. A story of the young Lieutenant Brian O'Mara, USMC and his wife Meghan O'Mara. Branna's parents.

It takes place in the early nineties, during the time of a little known military conflict and relief effort known as Operation Restore Hope in the Federal Republic of Somalia, a country located in the horn of Africa. After the murder of some allied peacekeepers, the U.S. Military along with other forces in the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) were deployed in an effort to create a protected environment for conducting humanitarian relief to the region. It was a time of chaos, drug lords terrorizing the citizens. Tribal wars, human rights atrocities, mass starvation, and the humanitarian relief being blocked. It was a dangerous time for our U.S. troops, dramatized in the Hollywood blockbuster movie, *Blackhawk Down*.

This short story is small glimpse of a young Marine Corps family, when they were blissfully happy and untouched by tragedy. Lt. Brian O'Mara, an officer in the Marine Corps, has received overseas orders to Somalia.

The sting of goodbye is something you never get used to as a military family. And within the dynamics of a loving couple, the moment of separation, the last night together, is an intimate, beautiful, utterly heartbreaking page in the their history. It never gets easier, no matter how many times they part.

Branna's parents won't get their own book, but they deserved a moment that was for them alone. It can be enjoyed as a short, stand-alone story, but would be enhanced by the reading of Book 1 of *The O'Brien Tales*.

I have included a preview of my first full sized novel, *Raven of the Sea: An O'Brien Tale*. The story of an older, stronger Branna O'Mara as she begins a new life, following a series of personal tragedies.

## Near Yorktown, Virginia

Megan O'Mara buzzed around the kitchen of their small, historic home, dodging duffle bags, shoe polish, and ammo cans. She padded along the oak floors in her bare feet, shaking her head at the mess. The few days before a deployment were always chaotic. It looked like an Army Navy store blew up in her home. Her husband, 1st Lt Brian O'Mara, was usually an organized man. This mission had been a surprise, hence the frantic mess of gear scattered throughout every room in the house.

Somalia... holy God. The country was a mess. It was in the middle of a gang war. Drugs, warlords, starving people. She shut her eyes as the fear rolled through her. She cleared her throat, shaking off the panic. *He'll be fine. He's a good Marine. The best. He'll come home in four months.*

No matter how many times he left, whether it be on assignment or for training, the sense of panic and anxiety never left her. But Brian always talked about how tough she was. That she could handle anything. So she would. She'd take care of their little girl and gut it out...again.

The wind picked up, blowing the curtains around in a flurry. Then the huge drops started, followed quickly by slanted sheets of rain.

"Brian! Shut the upstairs windows! The rain is coming in!" Meghan yelled up the stairway.

"Copy that! Ah, shit balls!" he blurted.

Meghan stopped, "What's wrong?" She could hear her husband laughing. That wasn't good, because jarheads had a particularly sick sense of humor. She looked around the room. Where the heck was Branna? She'd been in the kitchen with her a minute ago.

"Hey momma, we got a runner! Backyahd, headed east!" His Boston accent was pronounced, despite the fact that he hadn't lived there since he was nineteen. Fortunately, she understood him perfectly.

Meghan dropped the roll of paper towels she had in her hand, and shot out the back door. The old wood and screen door slammed behind her as she launched off the back porch. The lightning was crashing in the late evening sky. They were in the throes of a good, old southern gully

washer. Their home was on the Chesapeake at the mouth of the York River, and the storms were fast and furious.

“Branna, get your butt back in here right now, little girl” she screamed as she sloshed through the back yard. Her daughter, usually a sweet and obedient child, absolutely loved the rain. She was currently squealing with delight as she soaked and muddied her pajamas.

Meghan could hear Brian thumping down the stairs, but there was no time to wait. Branna was fast, her long black hair trailing in a wet tangle behind her. Her arms were stretched out like an airplane, her face joyous. Meghan jumped as another crack of thunder followed a flash of lightening.

Lt. Brian O’Mara watched his spritely, petite wife as she sprinted through the wet grass in pursuit of their only child. He shouldn’t laugh...really. It’s just that his little baby girl was giving Meghan a run for her money, and it was a sight to see. It kinda made a man proud.

He let out a whoop as Meghan closed the gap, swooping the little fireball up in her arms. At four years old, his daughter had a mind of her own. She was a good girl, obedient, sugar and spice, and all that. But man, how she loved a good rainstorm. There was no hiding under the covers for this kid. No way. He wouldn’t be shocked if she became one of those nutty storm chasers, like on TV. He opened the front door, ducked into the half bath off the kitchen, and grabbed a clean towel.

As Meghan approached the back porch, her husband stood there with a dry towel. He was laughing. The infernal man was laughing.

“Daddy, did I make a funny?” Branna said, soaked to the bone and grinning. A spark in her blue eyes.

“No, no. That was naughty to run from Mommy. You got her all wet,” he said, suppressing a grin. He wrapped them both in the big beach towel, wrapping his big arms around them both and rubbing.

“I like the rain. And I think Mommy looks pretty all wet,” she said innocently, running her hand through her mother’s wet hair. Brian barked out a laugh. Then he looked at Meghan.

“I can’t argue with that, now can I Mommy?” Argue sounded like ah-gue and Meghan’s mouth turned up. He raised his eyebrows as if to say, *this kid is something else*. Then they were both laughing, the stress of the moment draining out of them. He pulled them both closer against him and just held them. “My girls ah pure trouble.”

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“Daddy, I don’t want you to go.” Branna said. She was in clean pajamas now, her hair still damp. Her wisps of black hair spread out on her pillow, the pillow case with the piano key pattern that he’d bought her before her recital. *This way you can practice in your sleep*.

“I know, Branna. I don’t want to go either. I love you and your momma. It’s my duty, though. Remember when we talked about duty?”

She nodded. “Because sometimes little girls and boys need help in other countries? Like getting food and going to school and stuff?”

Brian smiled. She was so smart. “Exactly. Those little girls where I’m going, they need more food and the bad guys aren’t letting them get it. I’ll go help protect the food and medicine and get it to the people. Do you understand, baby? Do you understand why I have to go help?”

She nodded again. Then she pulled a little toy from under the blanket. It was a stuffed fox that he’d bought her for her birthday. One of those beanie things that were so popular. “You can take Rusty with you. He’s brave and he’ll keep you company. I even made him a parachute for the plane.” She had, indeed, made a parachute out of a sandwich bag and dental floss.

Brian’s throat tightened. “He’s your favorite. Are you sure?” His heart was breaking.

She lifted her chin, trying to be brave. Her stormy blue eyes reflecting the effort. “Yes, Daddy. He’s not scared, and I’ll be brave too. I’ll keep Mommy company, I sleep with her and keep her safe.”

He pulled his daughter to him and kissed her head. “You are something else, little monkey. You are my brave, smart girl. I’ll take good care of Rusty. I promise. You just say your prayers every night and keep working on that piano.”

“I will, Daddy. Will you sing to me? Sing with your funny accent!” He laughed. She loved when he sang the old tunes. The ones he’d learned from his Irish grandmother.



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Meghan was toweling off her wet hair in the kitchen when Brian came downstairs. “Is she asleep?” she asked.

He nodded. “Two stories and three songs, but she’s down.”

“She does love the rain. It’s hard to stay mad at her, considering her father is just as guilty.” She was smiling now, a personal smile just for him. He came across the kitchen, a kiss on his mind. She backed toward the door, a challenging brow lifted.

Brian cocked his head. “You know you can’t outrun me, little Meghan. Just come on over here like a good girl.” She squealed and ran out the back door, her big Marine hot on her tail. Her feet splashed into the wet grass as she darted toward the shed at the back of the property. She could hear his edgy laughter as he closed in on her. She squealed again as he caught her around the waist. Her summer night gown was soaked and he could feel her warm curves through the thin cotton, as he pulled her to him.

“Gotcha. But that’s what you wanted, isn’t it?” He purred in her ear. She pressed back against him, breath coming short. He groaned. So soft and perfect.

Just like that, Meghan was undone. His heat and hard body pressed against her. In a flash of motion, she was behind the shed, hidden from the house, from neighbors, and then it was just him. Her Brian.

His mouth was warm. He had strong lips, skillful kisses. Six years together and she still couldn’t get enough of his kisses. “I need you, baby. Ah, God. I need you!” he moaned.

She clawed at his shirt, peeling it back as his muscular chest was exposed. The fine dusting of dark hair trailing down his chest to his tight stomach. His shorn hair was even blacker when it was wet, his chiseled jaw tight with lust, his eyes burning and begging her for one last connection. She pulled at his shorts, desperate. She slid her hands down, feeling his hard length, and that was all it took. He hissed as his hips jerked, then he was under her gown. She had nothing under it. She never did. She was always ready when he wanted her, reached for her. The rain pelted down on their warm skin, her nipples exposed through her wet gown. He dipped his head and teased one with his teeth as he cupped her hips and lifted her up.

She wrapped her legs around him. “Brian!” and they were joined with one slick thrust. He looked at her, barely making out her face in the darkness and rain. She was so fair, she glowed in the night lighting. “It’s only for four months. I’ll come home, baby. Just be here with me, right now. Remember this.” Then he started to move, thick and hard inside her.

“I will. I’ll remember every detail,” she whispered as she started to peak.

Brian felt a rush of warmth and wetness that had nothing to do with the summer rain. “That’s it, that’s what I want. Ah, God Meghan. You’re so beautiful.” He was wild as she met his strokes with her own, feeling the old wooden shed creak with their efforts. The moan ripped from her throat. She pulled him along with her, until they both cried out to the stormy sky.

Brian ran his lips all over her face, tasting the rain, her skin, her tears. Somalia in two days. For four months he would be away from his family. Away from her. It wasn’t the first time, and wouldn’t be the last, but it was hell every single time. “Don’t cry baby. I’ll come back. I swear it. I’ll always come back to you.”

## **About the Author**

Stacey Reynolds started writing when she was inspired by the small coastal villages, following a trip to Ireland. She spent the first fifteen years of her married life as a Marine Corps spouse and mother of five. Before that, she was a police officer. She now lives in Colorado with her husband and three youngest children. She has written three full size novels and one novella. She is currently working on her fourth novel, *River Angels: An O'Brien Tale* which is due to be released this winter.

## **A sneak peek at *Raven of the Sea: An O'Brien Tale (Book 1 of The O'Brien Tales)***

### **Chapter 1**

#### **May 2012, somewhere over the Atlantic**

“Attention passengers aboard Aer Lingus Flight 1350. We are due to arrive on schedule to Dublin Airport in 2 hours and 43 minutes. We will now dim the cabin lights. If you require anything, please use your call button located on the arm of your seat. Thank you for flying Aer Lingus.”

Branna O'Mara was used to traveling alone. She was used to being alone, period. Orphan status aside, her particular brand of employment didn't require hordes of people other than the occasional phone call to a plumber, roofer, or HVAC tradesman. She was done with school for now, and she found herself in that particularly awkward phase in life where her peers were either studying for finals or picking out china patterns. She was almost twenty-four and had a foot in neither camp.

Solitude was the new normal. Dating had always been sporadic for her, and in the last year non-existent. Without the social network of college, she had to make an effort to meet people, and it seemed barely worth the effort given her genuine lack of interest. Besides, her life was busy, full. Dating someone, who would eventually cease to be around, just seemed like wasted energy.

So, she worked. Her parents left her with a comfortable livelihood. Her education was in business and real estate even though she hadn't finished her degree. She'd quit school a year before she was finished, when her mother had gotten really sick.

That was fine, though. She was her own boss, and she was good at her job. She owned property in coastal North Carolina, Boston, San Diego, San Clemente, Yorktown, and most recently in Tampa, Florida. Some were paid off and others carried low mortgages, she was in the black on all fronts, which was not bad for her early twenties.

The Tampa residence had been her first independent property purchase 14 months ago. She'd made the move on a fixer upper, lived on Cuban take-out and energy bars, and done a lot of the work herself. The rest of the properties were given to her. Her mother had transferred it all to her

on her eighteenth birthday. She'd thought that her mother had wanted to teach her the business, but the real motive would reveal itself five years later.

She'd been an orphan for exactly nine months, and she paid no inheritance tax on the properties since she owned them all outright. It seemed convenient that her mother had been given this foresight, considering she wasn't diagnosed until Branna was 22, but it ended up saving her from having to liquidate the estate in order to pay half to the government in inheritance taxes. In this instance, Caesar had not received his pound of flesh. God, on the other hand, had taken everything worth taking.

Now she owned a thriving real estate business. She had them all full of steady, dependable renters. She did very well with it. Well enough to support herself and do some philanthropic work. She was the head cheese at the Major Brian O'Mara Memorial Foundation. The only cheese, actually. Employees cost money, and she could run it herself with good volunteers.

She helped wounded veterans with the extra costs of outfitting their homes to fit their disabilities. She knew a lot of tradesman who were ex-military or supported the troops. Everything from wheel chair ramps to special bathrooms alterations, she did what she could with the funds left over from her living expenses coupled with a knack for fundraising.

Now, she'd made the tricky decision to take this adventure to the next level. She was going international. The red tape was insane, but she was doing it.

Her father, Brian, had inherited that first Boston property and one other home on the passing of his mother. Branna's mother, Meghan, had inherited one in historic Alexandria, Virginia, which was also where her parents had met. The others were acquired at almost every duty station they had ever lived.

Branna's father had been a Major in the Marine Corps, an infantry officer. He was first generation American, Boston Irish to the core. He moved around from age 19 until the day he died, but he never abandoned the Red Sox or the accent. A unique combination of Boston salt and Irish cream.

God, she missed him. He was bigger than everything. But that was the nature of war. Only the strongest and bravest and noblest of men were offered up as sacrifice. She'd lost her dad in the

second Battle of Fallujah, and it had killed her mother right along side him. Not right away. It was a slow, suffering, suffocating death. She bore the decline in lonely silence, a lady until the end. Having a daughter was not enough to make her live. Like an amputee, her mother had lost a huge piece of herself on a dusty street in Iraq, and had never gotten over it. As if Branna needed another reason for the current anti-dating trend, this is what she'd learned. She was better off on her own. True love gutted you in the end...