

The Wounded Warrior And The Colleen

**A Love Story by
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Chapter Six

Monday and Tuesday

Monday morning, Colleen, Michael, and I were at the mall when they opened. David and Carol were waiting for us. I felt confident enough about walking to use only a cane and I hardly needed it. For the next two hours, I let Colleen choose new clothes for me, with the assistance of Michael and David and Carol. The young salesman was a friend of David and Carol and even more of a friend after he heard the k-ching of the register ringing up the items. I didn't bother to worry about the cost. I knew that was a losing battle with Colleen.

I paraded in and out of the changing room and tried on clothes as Colleen dictated. Michael helped me into and out of so many different items I lost count. I turned around and modeled while Colleen and Carol and David discussed how I looked.

I couldn't believe what Colleen wanted me to have, no, insisted that I have. She chose two conservative suits, one a dark blue pinstripe, the other a dark gray plaid. The coats were a good fit in the shoulders but too large in the waist. She said they would fit when I added 20 pounds. The pants were also too large but they could be altered to my present smaller size and altered again to my larger size after I gained weight. At least, the store didn't charge extra for altering.

She also chose two sport coats for me: a classic navy blue blazer with brass buttons and a conservative sport coat, a light gray hounds tooth with elbow patches. With those I got three pairs of worsted-wool dress pants, dark blue, gray and khaki; two pairs of cotton permanent-press casual pants, khaki and black; and two pairs of knee-length shorts, regular and cargo.

She chose dress shirts, casual shirts, dress socks, white socks, t-shirts, regular and v-neck, and undershorts. I refused to wear briefs and insisted on boxers, all I had ever worn and we compromised: some regular boxers and some mid-thigh boxer briefs. At her insistence, I acquiesced to two little stretch briefs, dark blue with red trim. She said I could wear them, just for her, sometime. Who was I to argue? Shoes: black dress, brown casual, and sneakers. Three belts: dress, plaited, and stretch.

The only thing we didn't buy was ties, which I didn't want to wear but she insisted I would. She said she was going to raid her father's horde of ties.

For his assistance and patience, Michael was rewarded with a new pair of sneakers and two pairs of shorts; that's all. David got two pairs of shorts and Colleen insisted putting them on my tab.

Lunch was different stuff from the mall food court. I ate what Colleen ordered for me but I warned her that the two tacos and the big beef and bean burrito might cause a blow-back. Michael sniggered and said "Yeah, he's going to fart up a windstorm."

After lunch, David and Carol had to go to work and Colleen and I dropped Michael off at It's About Time to help his grandparents. Colleen said they would bring him back home when they closed.

I really needed to rest and, when I told Colleen, she wanted to rest with me. Fully clothed, if shorts and shirts and socks count, we crawled in my bed, she turned her back to me, and I didn't need to be told to spoon up to her. I put my right hand on her hip and waited to see if she would move it to her breast. She leaned forward, released her bra in back, and then moved my hand to her naked softness. Somehow it wasn't arousing but more just comforting and caring. We talked and whispered and giggled and laughed for a while and it was so good that I didn't want to sleep, but finally I did for a while.

When I woke, I looked at the Sky Dweller - about five after three - and I was alone. When I went downstairs to the kitchen, Colleen was putting the ingredients for a salad on the table.

"I'm making a Greek salad, Ryan, and I've got two frozen pizzas thawing. Michael and I like the thin-crust ones. Is that OK for dinner?"

"Yes, anything is fine with me. Do we have time to do something else before Michael gets home?"

“What?”

“I’d like very much to go for another walk in the woods with you,” I said. “I’d like to hold your hand and when we’re deep in the woods, I’d like to share a kiss with you, not a sexy kiss, just a simple little kiss.”

She smiled at me. “I think I’d like to do that too.”

I helped her by slicing the cucumber, onion, and bell pepper. She sliced the Romaine and tomatoes, crumbled some feta cheese, and drained some black olives. At her direction, I made the dressing: olive oil, red wine vinegar, lemon juice, and oregano. She put the salad in the fridge and, when I tried to hand her the dressing, she shook her head and told me that the flavor of the dressing comes through better if it’s not refrigerated. Live and learn.

After that, we went for a leisurely stroll in the woods, holding hands, occasionally bumping hips, quietly talking. I felt confident enough to walk without a cane and managed most of the time. On a couple of occasions at uneven places, I held on to her shoulder and she put her arm around my waist. Maybe she knew I didn’t really need assistance but she didn’t say anything.

Finally, deep in the woods, I stopped. We put out arms around each other, looked in each other’s eyes, and grinned. I put one hand behind her head and pressed her soft cheek against mine. For a while, that’s all we did, just holding each other, quietly breathing, no hurry for any more. When I felt full, I pulled back from her, slowly lowered my face to hers, and gave her a chaste kiss on her soft lips. That was enough and I was somehow satisfied with our kiss.

After dinner, the three of us swam and played in the pool for an hour or so, naked again. For the first time, I felt free and relaxed in being naked with them and I understood how good it was to be that way.

I had no idea what we’d do, if anything, before we went to bed but Colleen did. She said we should all sleep by ourselves because, as she put it, she didn’t want to get hooked on something. She was certainly addictive to me but was surprised to hear her say I was that way to her.

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Tuesday morning, Colleen and Michael and I went to the shop to help her grandparents. I took my computer, thinking I might have time to make a few diary entries. Colleen wanted me to watch her work the

cash register and do credit cards. After a couple of times, I felt confident enough to ring up a sale on my own.

Business was constant during the morning and I didn't really have time to use my computer until that afternoon. Colleen asked me to show her grandparents some of my additions to the computer, insisting that I forget to say please for one command. I was embarrassed to hear Alexander say "Fuck you, Ryan," with her grandparents standing there but they both got a big laugh out of it.

Tuesday evening, Michael and Colleen and I went to the movies. The multiplex movie at the mall was playing something Michael wanted to see: a movie about the coolest superhero ever. He said it rated three out of four so it must be pretty good.

Colleen saved me. She looked it up on her computer and I knew I wouldn't like it. There were scenes in the movie where a guy was converted into a superhero by being hooked up to all sorts of machines and tubes. Looking over her shoulders, the short excerpt I saw was enough to convince me she was right. I had been hooked up to all sorts of machines too and it had not made a superhero out of me. I didn't want to be reminded of it.

We compromised. Michael went to see the superhero movie and Colleen and I went to see a chick flick. Before, I wouldn't have been caught dead watching a chick flick but I enjoyed this one because of what went on off screen. Colleen held my hand through much of the movie, not me holding her hand but her holding mine. She often leaned toward me and our heads were side by side and I smelled her sweet-smelling hair. Once she turned toward me, I turned toward her, and we kissed, just the most innocent closed-lips kiss imaginable but it was probably as wonderful as any kiss I'd ever had.

After the movie was over, we stood in the lobby waiting for Michael. His movie ended about ten minutes after ours. When he exited in the crush of people, Colleen and I, still hand in hand, went out toward the parking lot and Michael followed.

Just outside the mall, the jostling crowd separated us for a moment and pushed me ahead of her. I stopped and looked back for her and, at that moment, I saw some big guy close behind her. She cursed and turned around facing him. I saw his hands cupped down and I knew he had groped her rear.

Then she surprised me. She put her hands up, probably on her breasts, and asked him. "Would you like to feel these too?"

He smiled and I saw his hands reaching up. That's when she let him have it: her knee in his nuts. He grabbed his cohorts first but then he reached for her. By that time, I had made my way through the throng and I pushed her to one side. With all my strength, I shoved my right fist about six inches into the groper's solar plexus. When he doubled over, I started to do what I had been trained to do, to give him my knee in his face, hopefully hard enough to break his nose. Somehow I held back and, when the guy collapsed, I caught him under the arms and slowly lowered him to the ground. He immediately curled up into a pretzel, silent, struggling, unable to breathe, and I knew he was out of commission for a while.

Something seemed strange to me and I thought for a minute, trying to reason what it was. Then it occurred to me that the guy must have known that Colleen was with me and that I was just a few feet away. Yet he groped her anyway. Why? Could he have been doing it to provoke me into defending her? He was much bigger than I was and probably wasn't afraid of me. Could he have known I was a wounded warrior and that might disadvantage me?

I reached down to my belt and took out my little recorder. It looked like a cell phone but it was capable of so much more. The groper saw me about to take his picture and covered his face with his hands. I told him he'd better cover his nuts because that was where I was going to kick him. He started to move his hands down, realized that was a mistake, and moved them back over his face. Too late! I snapped a couple of pictures of his face.

I looked around for Colleen and Michael. He was standing to one side protectively in front of her. I smiled, grabbed her hand, and we quietly walked away, me holding one of her hands, Michael holding the other. The big groper was curled up on the sidewalk groaning. Most of the crowd walked around him. A few stood looking at him for a moment. Nobody offered to help him and I wondered how many had seen what happened.

I stood for a moment before getting in the car, feeling emotions that I hadn't felt in a long time. Laying the big groper out was just so damn sweet and I loved the way it made me feel, that I could be a man and take care of someone and protect her. It was like a breath of fresh air on a spring day. Still, I wondered why he had groped her with me so close.

We were on our way home, me driving, Colleen in the shotgun seat, Michael scrunched up on the rear bench seat, when he asked me a question.

“Ryan, you were so cool. Were you mad when he groped Colleen?”

“Yeah, I was in a rage. I wanted to kill him.”

“But you just hit him once and he collapsed. Damn, that was cool.”

“Michael, my training helped me do no more than what was needed. A hard blow to the solar plexus will immobilize anyone. I started to really hurt him but I held back.”

“Why? I wanted kill him too when he groped Colleen. Could you have killed him?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Something I learned in another life, Michael. When a man is kneed in the nuts, his first reaction is to bend over and grab them. He didn’t bend over far enough and I guessed that maybe Colleen had missed them. I hit him as hard as I could in the solar plexus. When you hit a guy there, the diaphragm spasms and he can’t breathe and is often in a lot of pain. That usually immobilizes him for a while and makes him bend over. I started to grab him behind his head, shove it down, and knee him in the face as hard as I could. That can break his nose and sometimes drive bones back into his brain, if he has one. It’s just another way to kill a man.”

“Where did you learn to do stuff like that, I mean, in your other life?” Michael asked.

“I was in training with the Army Special Forces, the Green Berets, but I washed out just short of finishing.”

“The Green Berets, they’re like Navy Seals; aren’t they?” Michael asked. “Why did you wash out?”

“They are, except we didn’t have water training like they do. Have you ever heard of a disease called mononucleosis, the kissing disease?”

“Yeah, I’ve heard of it but I don’t know much about it.”

“It’s a contagious disease and can be transmitted by kissing. Mine wasn’t because I hadn’t kissed anybody for months before I got it. Among other things, it causes headaches, fatigue, and muscle weakness. I couldn’t do the Green Beret training and I was given easy duty for a few months.”

We drove in silence for a few minutes before Colleen said anything.

“Thank you, Ryan,” she whispered.

“You’re welcome. A man will always try to protect his woman.”

“I’m not your woman yet, Ryan.”

“No, but maybe you will be.”

“Yeah!” Michael whispered in the back seat.

At home, I parked Colleen’s car in her favored spot, went around to her side, and held her door for her. Michael pushed the driver’s seat forward and crawled out. When Colleen stood up, I thought I saw a frown on her face and I wondered why. She let me hold her hand while Michael fumbled with the front door.

Inside, I watched her face carefully and saw signs that suggested something might be causing her discomfort. When she said she was going to bed by herself, no smile, maybe a little bit of a frown, and that Michael and I could entertain ourselves, I thought I knew what it was.

Michael and I went to the bathroom off the family room and put out the fire. Michael really had to go so I let him go first and he pissed right in the center of the bowl long and hard enough to put out any Boy Scout fire. Then he stood and watched me as I released another torrent from my firehose and doused the embers.

“What’s wrong with her, Ryan?” he asked.

“Nothing,” I said. “I think she has her period.”

“Oh,” he said. “How do you know?”

“I don’t know, Michael. I said I think that. Where do you keep mild painkillers?”

He led me to a kitchen cabinet and showed me the collection. I found what I wanted and poured a small glass of milk.

“What are you going to do?” asked.

“I’m going to do something for Colleen and then I’m going to bed. You can do what you want to but don’t stay up late. Tomorrow morning

you and I are going to cook breakfast. I don't think Colleen will want to."

Upstairs, I went to my bedroom, found what I wanted, and then went to the door of Colleen's bedroom and tapped lightly.

"Colleen, may I come in?" I asked.

I heard her moan and then she said "No."

"I've got something for you, a mild pain reliever and a glass of milk," I said.

I was about to give up when I heard her say "OK."

Her bedroom was dark except for a nightlight. She was curled up in the bed on her side wearing a nightgown and socks. The sheet and bedspread were tangled at the foot of the bed. When she saw the glass of milk, she sat up on the side of the bed.

"You've got your period; haven't you?" I asked.

"Yeah, how did you know?"

"I told you I had an older sister, Colleen. She sometimes had bad cramps when her period first started and I helped her occasionally."

I offered the pain reliever to her, the same one my sister used, and she shook two out in her hand. She tossed them in her mouth, took the milk, and drained the glass. Then she looked back at me, saw me reach in my armpit for the plastic container, and frowned.

"What's that for?"

"It's the Tummy Butter you and Michael rubbed on my stomach," I said. "May I return the favor?"

"Why was it in your armpit?"

"I have only two hands, Colleen. With pills in one, milk in the other, I had to carry it somewhere. Besides, I wanted to warm it."

She looked at me inquisitively and then a frown crept over her face.

"Sometimes, I rubbed my sister's tummy when she had bad cramps, Colleen," I said. "Would you let me do that for you?"

“Are you crazy?”

“Listen, Colleen, I’ll bet you have a tampon in your vagina and a pad in your panties. My sister would do that when her flow was heaviest. I learned a lot about women’s bodies from her. I’d like to comfort you, if you’ll let me, the same way I comforted her.”

She looked at me for a moment and then gave me a weak smile. “OK.”

At my direction, she lay down flat on her back. I stuck a pillow behind her knees and parted her robe from the waist down. I saw the outline of a pad in her panties. Maybe she was like my sister.

“Push your panties down a little, please, just to your mons pubis.”

When she did, I stuck my fingers in the Tummy Butter and gently rubbed her tummy from her navel down to her mons. Then I did it again, and again, and again.

I glanced at her panties. They looked fresh, like she’d just put them on.

“Did you mess your panties?” I asked. “I mean, bleed on them. They should be washed in cold water to keep from permanently staining them. I’ll do it if you wish.”

“You’re crazy,” she whispered.

“No, I’m not, Colleen,” I insisted. “I sometimes did it with my sister’s panties. If you had a nose bleed and got blood all over your shirt, it should be immediately washed out in cold water. Menstrual blood just comes from a different part of your body. There’s no difference. It’s not unclean just because it comes from your uterus.”

“Yeah, but you guys never have to put up with it.”

“No, we don’t but we should always treasure you for what you do to have children with us. Your womb gets ready for a little fertilized egg to embed in it and, when it doesn’t, it weeps tears of blood. It’s part of a sacred ritual to carry on our lives together in children.”

“I still think you’re crazy. Do you get a thrill from doing it?”

“No, I don’t, Colleen. I’ve told you, to me, women are men’s other half and without them we’re never complete. I respect women and their roles in our lives. I love them for what they do to nurture us and our

children. If we join our lives together, that's the way I will always be with you."

"Where did you get that idea?"

"A Greek philosopher, Plato, wrote something called The Symposium. In it he said that humans originally had four arms, four legs, and a single head with two faces. These creatures had great strength and threatened to conquer the gods. Zeus split them in two and each half forever longs for his or her other half. When they find each other, there is a great joy in being unified again. I believe that's the way we are, Colleen."

"You're weird, too."

I kept rubbing her tummy from navel to mons, just gently rubbing with a little pressure. I was very careful to stop when my fingers touched her pubic hair. I didn't think she would be ready yet for the best of all remedies for menstrual cramps.

"Colleen, does your tummy feel better now?" I asked.

"Yes, it's better."

"I hope you can sleep now," I said. "If you don't, tomorrow night we can try a better remedy for cramps. I think you'll agree when I've done it with you."

"What is it?"

"Just a little something someone taught me."

"Who?"

I didn't answer. I stood up and pulled the pillow from under legs.

"Turn on your left side," I whispered. "Hug the pillow against your tummy and go to sleep."

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When she turned, I pulled the sheet over her up to her shoulders and, since the room was a little cool, I pulled the bedspread up too. Then I leaned over, kissed her on the cheek, and left her.

"Good night, Colleen," I whispered.

"Good night, Ryan, and thank you," she whispered back.

I stopped just inside the door to her room. There was something I wanted from her. It was something I needed and she seemed to understand and to be willing to give it to me. I walked back to the side of her bed.

“Colleen, would you do something for me?” I whispered. “Would you let me hold you for just a minute? Then I’ll go to my own bed. I promise.”

She hesitated for a moment and then answered. “OK.”

I lifted the covers and crawled in behind her. I wiggled forward and she moved back and we came to rest spooned up together. I wanted my hand on her breast, not on her hip, but I hesitated to ask her. We lay there close together, quietly breathing and relaxing. Then she did what I wanted her to do. She took my hand in hers and guided it inside her robe to her breast.

I wanted so much to hold her and to sleep with her but I thought that would be too much to ask tonight. After a minute or so, I kissed her on the back of her neck and crawled out of her bed.

“Thank you, Colleen,” I whispered. “You’ve helped me too.”

“I still think you’re weird but you’re sweet, Ryan,” she whispered.

TO BE CONTINUED: