

# **The Wounded Warrior And The Colleen**

**A Love Story by  
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## **Chapter Eight**

### **A Second Friday Evening**

**I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up. It was the Senator.**

**“Could we have a talk, Ryan?” he asked.**

**“I can’t. I can’t move,” I said.**

**“Did you enjoy your dinner?”**

**“Yeah, it was great. Could we go in your office? I need to talk to you too, in private.”**

**He handed me my cane and held out his hand to me. I took it and stood up.**

**“Ryan and I are going in the office and talk for a while,” he said to the five others in the kitchen. “Anybody need anything from us before we go?”**

**Grandpa, Grandma, Margaret, and Colleen shooed us out. Michael just sat there smiling and probably as stuffed as I was.**

**The Senator put his arm around my waist, I put mine on his shoulder, and we walked slowly to his office. He held the door for me, watched me carefully, and I walked in. He indicated a chair for me to sit and then pulled another one directly in front of me and sat. He groaned. I groaned back. I was stuffed with damn good food and really didn’t feel like moving.**

**“That was quite a meal,” I said. “Your mother is one great cook.”**

**“Yes, she is. You and Michael ate like you were in competition,” he said, smiling. “It’s good to see two young men enjoy a meal like that.”**

**“Colleen’s trying to fatten me up,” I said. “If I keep eating like this, I’ll be twice as big in a few months.”**

**“Grandma knows it’s one of my favorite meals,” he said. “She thinks I don’t eat right in Washington and she likes to welcome me home like this.”**

**“What was it Michael called that meat, that roast beef, that stuff that melted in my mouth?” I asked.**

**“Sauerbraten. It’s a German dish. I like it with garlic mashed potatoes and spicy red cabbage. Did you like the German bock beer with it?”**

**“Yeah, I don’t drink much but I do like a good cold beer.”**

**I took the recorder out of my shirt pocket and put it on the desk beside us.**

**“You want to record what we discuss?” he asked.**

**“Yes, you may want someone else to hear it later. Don’t worry. It will be absolutely secure. Unless you tell me to, no one else will ever hear it.”**

**“OK, then,” he said and looked at me intently. “I trust you.”**

**I pressed my right thumb on the recorder screen. “Alexander, please record the conversation between me and Senator Kelly?”**

**Alexander’s male voice replied. “Yes, Ryan, I will record your conversation.”**

**The Senator looked at me with a puzzled expression on his face.**

**“You’ve changed it. Why did you do that? And how did you do it?”**

**“Yeah, I made a few changes. I changed the required password to a four-syllable one instead of three. When you sell the system, every other device will require a three-syllable password. I also changed the voice recognition software so that the system will respond to only my voice. Then there’s the thumbprint system as well. I can require all three security features in any order I wish. You should put facial recognition on it too.”**

**“We’re working on it. I know it’s recognizing only key words. Is please one of those?”**

**“Alexander, do not record our conversation,” I said.**

**“Fuck you, Ryan,” Alexander said.**

**The Senator looked at me and grinned.**

**“Alexander has a weird sense of humor sometimes, Senator. Please is a required word.”**

**“Well, I like it but how did you get into the software? My development team is supposed to make it impenetrable.”**

**“I found the backdoor. There’s usually one.”**

**“Yes, but if you tried to go in that way without a damned long passcode, it was supposed to lock up.”**

**“I just went under the backdoor, Senator. I didn’t go in it.”**

**“Damn, you can program that well?”**

**“Senator, programming computers is just another language skill. You either have it or you don’t. It comes easily to me, just like my writing skills.”**

**“Well, I think I’d better have a long talk with the development team. Would you meet with them and show them what you’ve done?”**

**“No, I don’t think so.”**

**“I could put you on salary to do it. You think about it, OK?”**

**“OK, but I’m really a very simple man, Senator. Money doesn’t mean that much to me. You’re giving me an allowance, feeding me and giving me a roof over my head and that’s enough for now.”**

**“Yeah, but what you’ve done sounds very valuable to me. You deserve to be paid for your contribution.”**

**“Senator, stop and think for a minute. I’m a poor wounded warrior who may steal your daughter’s heart. I’m going to college to make something out of myself. Do you want the world to know anything more than that about me?”**

**He thought for a moment. “You’re probably right.”**

**“Senator, I know you’ve got tentative plans for me to do something else for you, something you don’t want anyone to know about. You want to keep me under cover; don’t you?”**

**He grinned. “Damn, Ryan, you amaze me sometimes.”**

**“Don’t tell anybody else that, Senator. I’m just a nice-looking twenty-year old kid, a wounded warrior, who’s struggling to recover from hell and get on with his life. That’s all that you should reveal.”**

**“Yeah, you’re right,” he said. “Now, first things first, any problems since you came here?”**

**“Yes but it’s not because of anything Colleen and Michael have done. I couldn’t want a warmer welcome than the one they’ve given me. Your parents have treated me like a grandson. I’m the problem. The transition is harder than I expected.”**

**“How?”**

**“Well, I’m just not as strong mentally as I used to be,” I said. “The doctors said I would likely have difficulty in adjusting and I have. My emotions overwhelm me occasionally. I’ve cried like a baby a few times and I’ve almost slid back into depression on one occasion. My leg decided to hide again. It did that the day I was discharged from the hospital and went to the shop for my watch.”**

**“Are Colleen and Michael causing any problems?”**

**“No, Senator. You should be very proud of your children. They’ve done their best to help me. I just need some care and affection and loving and they both give it to me. Colleen’s hugged me out of my black hole a few times. Michael rubs my shoulders and jokes with me. They both help.”**

**“OK, now give me a report on Colleen.”**

**“Are you sure you want me as a son-in-law?”**

**“I’ve never said I did, Ryan,” he said. “Colleen’s a beautiful woman and I just warned you not to be too quick to fall in love with her.”**

**“I’m just reading between the lines, Senator. She thought you saw her as a wild little filly and you had picked me to break her. I like her just as she is, sort of wild, and I’d never want her to be broken.”**

**“Well, you’re more of a man than any of those shitheads that usually hang around her and I’d rather have you as a son-in-law than one of them.”**

**“Senator, I don’t believe men and women *helplessly fall* in love. I believe we grow in love with care and respect and things we share. Love sneaks in with time and you realize it has arrived at some moment, like seeing her smiling at you over pizza. Maybe that will happen to me some day...and to Colleen. I’d like to be in love with her but I’m not yet, not completely anyway.”**

**“Ryan, that’s up to you and Colleen. I can’t be seen as encouraging or discouraging. You know that. I’ll just tell you I wouldn’t mind if you became my son-in-law.”**

**“Thanks.”**

**“Any problems with Michael.”**

**“No, Senator. He’s a wonderful young boy and you should be proud of him. He’ll be a man you can love and respect someday.”**

**“I already do. He talked to me about what you said, that you’d help him get a porn stash. I’ve got no problems with that if it’s just normal stuff like you said. You’ve got my permission to help him.”**

**“I don’t want just to lead him, Senator. I want to teach him at the same time. Everybody is interested in porn but there’s a lot of really sick shit on the internet. I’ll try to steer him to sites portraying normal heterosexual love and sex but he’ll do what he wants to on his computer.”**

**“Yes, I know.”**

**“I never had a brother,” I said. “If I’d had one, I would have liked him to be exactly like Michael. I think he already regards me as a big brother.”**

**“Ryan, that’s one role I sort of hoped you would play,” he said. “I’m not home as much as I’d like to be and I saw in you a good role model for him.”**

**“Well, thanks again. I hope he does let me play that role.”**

**“I want to thank you for that speech,” he said. “It was perfect. Colleen told me how you wrote it, that you took her outline, asked her some questions, sat there and composed it in your head, and then closed**

**your eyes and typed it out flawlessly. You've really got unusual skills to be able to do that. Maybe you might help with all my speeches. I wish you would."**

**"Senator, I don't know where my writing ability comes from but I know few people can do what I can do with words. I'd be glad to help with your speeches."**

**"She also told me how easily you got the password for our home router and then she gave you my private e-mail address and you sent the speech to me. How did you get in so easily?"**

**"I have a little program which works specifically with routers. The password, if there is one, is usually very simple. Breaker can usually find it for me in a couple of minutes."**

**"Breaker, huh? Where did you get it?"**

**"I wrote it. Be careful with your question."**

**He looked at me appraisingly. I knew the question and I knew the answer.**

**"OK, just give me the answer."**

**"2024."**

**"Damn, you did it. My IT guy swore nobody would be able to but you did it. How?"**

**"Be careful, Senator. What you don't know, can't hurt you. What you know, can."**

**"Why?"**

**"Senator, you've got me by the cajones. Hacking into a governmental account can put me in prison. I know nothing about you which could do the same to you. Are you sure you want this advantage over me. Why? As Colleen said, since I wasn't your emissary, I wasn't her enemy."**

**"Yeah, she and Michael like to play that little game."**

**"Why are we playing this one?"**

**"OK, Ryan, I'll be honest with you. I knew you were hacking into the VA hospital medical records because you knew things which were**

supposedly confidential even from you. I didn't say anything because I felt you should have total knowledge of your own medical record given to you and, since it wasn't, you got it for yourself with that little computer I gave you. Am I right, so far?"

"Yes. It was easy. I also said something about hacking into e-mail accounts in the last election and bragged that they should have had me set up everything. I wouldn't have done it for them but I could have. You picked up on that; didn't you?"

"Yes, I wondered if you could hack into my governmental accounts and, if you could, what else might you learn about me."

"I've learned you're a good man, Senator. When I register, I'll vote for you. I didn't really look at all your files. I knew what I was looking for and I found it."

"Thanks. How did you find it? How did you get to it without me knowing when I had a tripwire on it?"

"I reasoned that you wanted to test me, to see what I could do. Since it was a test, I expected a tripwire. I just went under it."

"How did you know what to look for?"

"I reasoned that you would have set up something to test me, to see what I could do and you wouldn't make it impossible to find. The most central thing about me is my name. I went looking for that and found it. Ryan MacEwen, Wounded Warrior, 2024. It took me a while to realize the significance of that. That's when you're thinking about running."

"My IT guys say that hackers usually leave a footprint. Do you?"

"Yes but it's not my footprint. It's an NSA footprint. They're into every damn thing that anyone says on the internet."

"Damn, Ryan, you're too much."

"No, Senator, just enough. What do you want from me? What can I do for you?"

He laughed.

"Ryan, it's time to cut out the bullshit. You probably already know what I want from you. Do you?"

**“I think so but I’m not sure. Tell me.”**

**“Ryan, I want somebody like you to be my protector, my silent warrior, somebody that believes that I am completely honest when I say I want to help veterans, particularly wounded warriors like you. It’s not politics, Ryan. I’m not lying to you. I want you to watch out for me. You’re young and you can’t know what kind of political crap goes on in our government. I think I can trust your character and your instincts and you can protect me from that shit when they start throwing it at me like they did at each other in the last election. If I run, of course.”**

**“Of course.”**

**“I’m sincere, Ryan, I want you to be like a son to me, maybe to be my son-in-law but that’s up to you and Colleen. I won’t interfere in your relationship with her in any way. You’re both adults. Marriage is what the two of you make of it.”**

**“Did Michael tell you something else I did with him? And something the two of us did with Colleen?”**

**“Yes, he told me. It’s no big deal. Don’t worry about it. What was it you were trying to teach him: always be willing to give as good as you get? I like that. When it comes to sex, that’s important.”**

**“Yes but Michael is still a child and I shouldn’t have let him play with me and Colleen. During the night, after we did it, I realized what I had done. It scared the hell out of me, not so much what it might do to me, but what it might do to you and you helping wounded warriors if it got out. I’m sorry. I was wrong to do it.”**

**“Michael’s good about talking to me, Ryan. It wasn’t easy this time but he told me. He was worried about you and how you felt you’d done something really wrong and not worrying about yourself and instead worrying about me.”**

**“I’m not back to being myself yet, Senator. The struggle to decide the right thing to do is harder than it was before. I may make more mistakes and I don’t want to hurt you or your family.”**

**“Did you really give Colleen her first orgasm with a man, with your tongue?”**

**“Well, yes, but Michael helped me.”**

**“But you haven’t had your dick in her yet?”**



**“No, I’m old fashioned, Senator, especially when it comes to her. She’s everything I could want in a woman. I think she’s like something precious that should be protected and cherished. If I grow to love her and she loves me back, I’ll make her smile a little but not ‘til then.”**

**“That’s up to you and her, Ryan. I’m going to trust you and Colleen to sort out all this sex stuff. Michael too, I suppose. Just do the best you can and don’t worry about it. We all think with our little heads too much.”**

**“It’s what we are, Senator, just men, acting like men have acted for thousands of years, pretending to be civilized.”**

**“Margaret may tease you about what you did with Colleen. Just give her back as good as she gives you. She and I have always been open and honest about sex with Colleen and Michael, that is, in talking and teasing about it. When it comes to doing it, she and I are old fashioned and we do it in private in our own bed.”**

**“You know I was worried about being impotent or close to it when I was in the hospital; don’t you?”**

**“Yes.”**

**“Well, I’m not. Think of a railroad spike. That’s what Colleen raises. She’s enough to make a eunuch get a hard-on.”**

**“Yeah, she is. She’s just like her mother was when I married her. Damn, she was really something at twenty-one. Still is.”**

**“Have you tried to break Margaret?”**

**“No. I’m like you. I’d rather have her just like she is. Now, I’ve got to piss so let’s take a break.”**

**“Me too,” I said. “Senator, did you know you never can buy beer; you just rent it.”**

**The Senator was just like the Colleen and Michael, not hesitant about doing something like pissing while standing there with his dick in his hand and talking to someone. Then he watched me as I returned my beer to the primeval sea.**

**“She’s going to love you when you give her that thing,” he joked. “Maybe I’d better keep Margaret away from you.”**

**I returned that thing to its hanging out place and zipped my shorts.**

**“Senator, seriously, I believe strongly in being faithful to a woman who has yielded her body to me. I won’t play around on Colleen.”**

**“You’d better not,” he said. “She’ll rip your balls off.”**

**Back in the office, we resumed our seats and got back to the serious stuff.**

**“Are you going to give me clearance to your Washington accounts?” I asked. “If you want me to have it, I’ll need to be cleared for all types of security classifications, eventually even top secret. I’ve told you everything about my life I can think of which might affect that. You should think long and hard about what we’re doing and make sure it’s what you want. I’ll be looking over your shoulder at everything you think or do.”**

**“That’s what I want, Ryan,” he said. “I want somebody like you to keep an eye out for me. I don’t want our relationship ever to become public knowledge. That’s why I hope you and Colleen might hit it off and you would be my son-in-law and part of my family. That would be perfect cover for you. Someday I want you to call me Dad, just like Colleen and Michael.”**

**“I don’t want it to be public either, Senator. I’ve been your shadow for months now. All my info about you is either in my head or on a hard drive, a little remote hard drive that’s encrypted tighter than Maude’s ass.”**

**“I’m going to give you access to all my personal financial information too, Ryan. I want you to review that and see if you think there’s any way I can be attacked there too. Whether you believe it or not, I’m proud of my integrity and I want to maintain it. I want you to cover my ass, I suppose, and I’m going to trust you to do that and let me know if you see problems or even potential problems. You’ll have your work cut out for you for quite a few years. You should think about that and make sure you want to do it. No one else must ever know about our relationship, not Colleen, not Michael, not even Margaret, no one except me and you.”**

**“Being your son-in-law would be perfect cover for me, Senator.”**

**“I know but that’s got to be up to you and Colleen. I can’t be seen as encouraging or discouraging that. You don’t have to break that little filly but you might have to ride her a little.”**

**“I can do that,” I said, smiling. “Like I said, she’s enough to give a eunuch a hard-on. Now that I know I’m not one, maybe I can keep her happy. It’ll be hard but I’ll try to ride her often enough to keep her smiling.”**

**“Are we in agreement so far?” he asked.**

**“No, I think you should reflect on whether Margaret and Colleen and Michael should know about my role. I think they should. They want to protect you and help you too. They will be hurt if they find out you didn’t trust them to know about our relationship.”**

**“You may be right. What do you suggest?”**

**“Tomorrow, the five of us should listen to the conversation we’re having tonight. I know you’ve got a good relationship with Margaret and you should keep it that way. Don’t hide anything from her, not even what I’m doing. I want Colleen to know too. I see the possibility of us loving each other and having a good marriage. I want to be totally honest with her. I think a man must if he wants to have a good marriage.”**

**He sat there and looked at me for a moment and I could tell he was pondering what I had said.**

**“This is important, Senator,” I said. “If you run, you’re going to need a place to rest, a refuge with people to love you and believe in you, a warm home to relax in. I think I can be part of a support team with your family. I’d like to be.”**

**“OK, I think you’re right. Except for my family, are you OK with being completely hidden, with being a stealth warrior for me? It won’t be easy.”**

**“Senator, I like the idea but I want to be hidden so well that no one ever knows about me. You must never acknowledge that I’m anything but your son-in-law. I know you don’t like to lie but you may have to. Don’t ever give me up, Senator.”**

**“I don’t like to lie either, Ryan, but I’ll never give you up. Trust me.”**

**“I’ll set up a communication system for us and, of course, it will have to be encrypted e-mail. I’ll hide my identity and I’ll put something in each e-mail that will erase it after a certain time. And I mean really erase it, not just wipe it clean with a cloth. I’ll tell you verbally how the system works. Nothing must ever be in writing about our system.”**

**“You’re getting over my head, Ryan, but I trust you to know what you’re doing.”**

**“I do.”**

**“You’re going to need a car. Get Colleen and Michael to help you shop for one. Colleen will pay for it out of one of my accounts. Just don’t get a little toy like that thing she’s got.”**

**“I won’t. It will be a four-door sedan, probably used, silver color, like millions of others on the road.”**

**“It doesn’t have to be cheap, Ryan.”**

**“But it shouldn’t be expensive either, Senator. Remember, I’m going to be your stealth weapon, a wounded warrior who’s really your secret agent or something like that. I want to fit in, not stand out.”**

**“Ryan, you know I’m quite wealthy, me and Margaret. We’ve patented almost a hundred devices and I’ve sold the patents to some for millions. Right now I also have, I think, eighteen patents leased for use and there’s a damn good cash flow from them. Most of the others have potential value.”**

**“What’s your point?”**

**“My point is I want you to have a monthly allowance just like my children but don’t take that as your limit. Money won’t be a worry for you. As time passes, you’ll share in everything just like Colleen and Michael. Colleen tells me you want to finish college but you’re worried about paying for it and you don’t want to rely on student debt. Margaret and I will take care of your educational expenses. I want you to finish your degree, live with us, go to college, be my stealth warrior, and sleep with Colleen. What more can a man ask for?”**

**“Well, that’s a good start. Senator, I don’t want only to sleep with Colleen. I want her and I mean in every sense of the word. I want her for sex and love and marriage and children and living together and sleeping together spooned up with her hair tickling my nose. I’m going to have her like that too. She just doesn’t know it yet. You showed me pictures of her and I thought she was a beautiful woman. Then I went to the shop for a watch and she came out on the portico and stretched and I saw that face and that wild red hair blowing in the wind and I knew what I had struggled through hell for – her.”**

**“Speaking of watches, I want you to keep the Sky Dweller. You won’t need the money and I’ve got an idea I want to look into for the watch.**

**We might be able to get lots more money for it than you think. Do me a favor and write up an account of the mission you were on when you found it. Include the incident in which you were shot and how it was a Taliban ambush. Make it good descriptive writing, like that thing I read about the firefight.”**

**“You can have the watch,” I said. “It’s not me.”**

**“Well, it’s not me either.”**

**“You’re not going to tell me about the idea.”**

**“Not yet. I’m making some contacts. I want you to let me negotiate a deal for you.”**

**“And that’s all you’ll tell me.”**

**“Damn, Ryan, you may be able to keep the watch and get paid quite a nice sum for the story of how and where you found it. Let me play with something. I’ll tell you when I learn if a certain party is interested. Trust me.”**

**“I do. I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t trust you. OK, you take that and run with it. You have my permission to sell the watch to whomever as part of the deal, Senator. Just make sure you get a good price for it.”**

**“Anything else?”**

**“Yes, being a college student with Colleen would be great but it would also be good cover for your stealth warrior. Maybe in a couple of years, I’ll be through with my BA and I’ll continue for a MA. Maybe I’ll even pursue a PhD. Who knows? Maybe I’ll be a perpetual student for a few years, sponging off my in-laws. Would you want me to do that?”**

**“Damn, that would be great cover for you; wouldn’t it? I have to keep this house because I must have a legal residence in this state to represent it. Margaret can come live with me in Washington. You and Colleen can live here. She likes the college here. Michael wants to stay here too, I mean, in this city. He’s got lots of friends here. So has Colleen. Anything else?”**

**“Yes, one more. When he turns sixteen, you might loosen Michael’s restriction on how much and what kind of alcoholic drinks he can have. Give him guidance but set him free. Tell him you’re doing it because you trust him. The alcohol is not important; your trust in him is.”**

**“You think he’s ready?”**

**“I think so. I’ll watch out for him.”**

**Someone knocked on the door and then Michael said, “Dad, Grandma and Grandpa are about to go home. Do you want to say goodbye?”**

**I stood up and held out my hand to the Senator. He looked at me quizzically.**

**“If you shake my hand, Senator, we’re agreeing on something. I’m giving you my word to live with what we’ve discussed and you’re saying the same thing.”**

**He grinned, shook my hand, looked at me for a moment, and then pulled me close in a big hug. I hugged him back.**

**Back in the kitchen, I gave Grandma another hug and a kiss on the cheek and almost shook Grandpa’s hand off.**

**“Grandma, that was the best meal I’ve ever had. Would you do me a favor and teach Colleen to cook like you do? I’ll forever be her obedient slave if you do.”**

**“Do all Irish micks kiss the blarney stone?” she asked.**

**“I can cook, Ryan,” Colleen said. “Grandma and Mom have both taught me. I like to do it, just not all the time.”**

**The Senator walked them to the front door and then came back to the kitchen. I was standing behind the one kitchen chair with arms with my hands on it, the one that I assumed belonged to the man of the house and the one, at the Senator’s insistence, where I’d sat for dinner. He walked up beside me, put his arm over my shoulders, and waited until everyone was looking at us.**

**“I want Ryan to become part of this family,” he said. “In the hospital, more than anyone else, I felt like a father for him. I was wounded too but I didn’t have to cope with the hell he’s endured. We’ve just had a long talk and I found out just how much potential he has. He’s going to be a fine man, no, he already is, and, who knows, he might even be in Washington someday with me. Tomorrow, he’s going to play back a recording he made of our conversation. When you hear it, I think you’ll all be proud to have him in our family.”**

**I knew I had to reassure Colleen that nothing was yet settled about the two of us.**

**“Colleen, I already know I’m beginning to love you,” I said. “I hope you’ll learn to love me too. I’ll admit I’m going to pursue you but I won’t rush you into anything. You’re the one who must decide if you want to spend your life with me. I know it’s too early to make that decision and I’ll give you all the time you want.”**

**“OK, I’ll let you know in about ten years,” she said, smiling.**

**“Can I have him while you’re making up your mind?” Margaret asked.**

**“Sure you can, Margaret,” the Senator said. “He can have seconds tonight.”**

**Michael finally gave in, burst out laughing and that infected the rest of us.**

**“Well, now that’s settled, I’m going to swim laps for a few minutes,” the Senator said. “Anybody want to join me.”**

**I knew they all liked to swim together occasionally, naked. I knew that I’d be invited to join them. I was more than a little apprehensive about getting naked with the Senator’s wife. I had no idea how I’d react to seeing her naked, and also how she’d react to seeing me. I decided to grin and bare it.**

**There in the kitchen, in front of each other, we stripped. I was conscious that my penis was heavy and distended a little but I wasn’t sure whether it was going to look around for something to get into. It did. Colleen was any man’s dream and Margaret was almost as much of a fantasy to look at, just a little older. My eyes played ping pong with the two of them. I felt my buddy start to lift his head and told it not to but it wouldn’t listen. Before it stood straight up, I ran out the door to the pool and took a flying leap in.**

**The five of us swam laps together and that and the cool water took care of the problem. When Margaret and the Senator stopped swimming and got out of the pool, the rest of us followed. Colleen took my hand and we started back in the house. Margaret had the last word.**

**“Ryan, don’t you ever do that again,” she said. “Never dive in the pool with a hard-on. You might break it off.”**

**<><><>**

I was sitting on the side of my bed, naked, and ready to turn in for the night, my forearms on my thighs, and my head hanging down. My mind was in a swirl, not the maelstrom swirl that pulled me inexorably down, more a confused spinning. I was trying to sort out my feelings for the last eight days. Eight days with so much thrown at me and, now, after my talk with the Senator, so many possibilities. Was I capable of doing what he wanted and getting what I wanted and needed?

My room was almost totally dark with only the dim light from my partially-opened door. Was she going to come to my room again tonight? The opened door was like an invitation. She hadn't slept with me since Wednesday night but for the last two nights she had come tip-toeing into my room for a few minutes, dressed or maybe undressed in only a shorty nightgown and white panties. For the last two nights, we had held each other for a few minutes and whispered back and forth. I was comforted and content and perhaps she was too.

When she came in this time, I didn't stand up but I did hold out my arms in welcome. Perhaps she knew what I wanted. She moved between my spread knees, put her hands behind my head, and pulled my face into her softness. I put my hands on her back, pulled her against me, and breathed in her essence a few times. I was content.

“What did you and Dad talk about?” she whispered.

I turned my head so my cheek was against her breasts. “I recorded our conversation. He says I can play it back for you and Margaret and Michael sometime tomorrow. I was right that he had something in mind for me, something that's important to his plans, and I'd like to do it. Can you wait until tomorrow?”

“Yes, he usually works on something in the morning but you two talked for about an hour so maybe you can squeeze in the recording. When he comes home, he likes to take it easy and maybe just swim and lay in the sun and relax for a while. That's what we'll probably do tomorrow afternoon. Sunday morning he will probably want us all to go to church with him and he'll want you to be dressed like he is, in a suit, looking nice and senatorial. Monday he'll go to his local office and he'll want you to go with him.”

“Colleen, I'm not religious. After the last few years of my life, I can't believe in some old grandfather in the sky who cares about me. If he does, he's a sadistic shit and he really sucks at being a god.”

“Dad's not religious either, Ryan. None of us are. Don't you understand why he goes and wants us to go with him?”



**“No.”**

**“Ryan, you can be a flaming queer and still get elected to congress. You can’t be an agnostic or atheist, not unless you stay in the closet about your lack of belief. That’s just the way it is. The four of us usually go at least once in a while and he takes us out for lunch at some nice place afterward. I’ll help you get dressed if you’ll go with us.”**

**“OK, I’ll go just as long as I don’t have to sing.”**

**“You can fake it. Michael usually does.”**

**“OK.”**

**“Ryan, would you do something for me?”**

**“Yes. What?”**

**“Unbutton my nightgown and put your mouth and hands on my breasts. Just for a minute or so?”**

**“I’ll do more than that, if you’ll let me. I’ll rub your...tummy.”**

**“That would be nice. Would you let me rub yours?”**

**“Yes.”**

**TO BE CONTINUED:**