



VICTORIA COALESING

P. Arthur Stuart



Victoria
Coalescing

P. Arthur Stuart

Copyright 2015
By P. Arthur Stuart
Register with US Copyright Office
May 10, 2016 – Claim number 1-3396762681

To *Patricia Lynne* the love of a lifetime.

I'm sorry I'm not the Arthur you deserved.
I did and do love you more than you knew or know.

Prologue

Thursday – September 16, 2010

He wonders, “Decisions! Decisions! Decisions! Why can’t life be simpler?” It seems like he’s always making some kind of banal decision. That’s one thing he likes about the Navy, most of the routine decisions were made for him. He didn’t have to think about what he would have for meals, what to wear, and when to go to sleep, at least while he was on duty; the navy made the decision for him. As far as eating, he would eat if he were hungry. It’s really the mundane decisions that he disliked. So, the Navy made most of them for him.

The complicated decision of running a business, finding a solution to fixing a piece of equipment, planning for the future are exciting. These decisions are for the most part based on reason and the desired outcome, not normally on how one feels.

In a few days he would be discharged. His thoughts were about how prepared he was and had he taken the necessary steps to successfully rejoin the civilian community. He considered reenlisting but wanted to see if he could make it in the non-military world. Further, he wanted to pursue getting a college education. He’d use his GI bill benefits. One thing he has in his favor, was his planning months in advance of his release and his uncles support. Along with his final paycheck, which include two months of unused leave, and his uncle fronting him a significant sum, he estimated that he had close to six months of no financial worries, although, he knew he would worry, it was his way.

His advanced planning included: finding a place to work from, purchasing the required equipment and tools, meeting with prospective clients, a few of which signed with him, finding an evening job to supplement income, and investing in a utility vehicle. He obtained a job at a local building supply company. He explained to his boss, that he might have to leave, if one of his clients needed an emergency repair; he would make up his time on his day off or on weekends. His boss was understanding and encouraged him. Besides his pay, the job also offered parts and materials at employee pricing. Further, he spoke with various businesspeople, members of SCORE, and just about anyone that could offer assistance or guidance. Most of the people he met, were referred to him by friends and associates.

Shortly after turning nineteen, with his mother's help and the GI bill, he was able to purchase a condo, while he was still in the service.

It's the personal decisions that he has the most difficulty with. Should he ask a girl out or to dance, what would he do if she said no? What should he say by way of introduction? He wonders, "Why are relationship decisions so complicated?" Why do the men have to initiate most of the beginning conversations.

He wonders how others felt about their first sexual experience, that is, losing one's virginity. For him it was a disaster. He suppose for some; it is wonderful and a memory that will last a lifetime.

Chapter 1

Sunday – November 9, 2014

My convalescing is moving along nicely. I'm scheduled to go back to work tomorrow, which I'm excitedly looking forward to. I saw Dr. Storyes last Friday and she did a couple of tests, had an MRI performed, and then gave me a clean *Bill of Health*. She gave me strict instructions, should I get a headache, I should stop any activity I am doing and call her. Over the weekend, Victoria and I rediscover each other, numerous times. I'm back in the game. The only injury I suffered was to my ego, that is, being beat up by a Chihuahua.

We're sitting on the couch cuddling, showered and dressed, after finishing our breakfast. I ask, "I would like to start doing something after our Sunday morning exercise."

"More sex?" sounding somewhat hopeful she asks.

"No! You're always ready for sex."

"Well, sex sounds good to me. We could have sex, exercise, then more sex. It's a perfect plan."

"Damn! I wasn't talking about more sex. What the hell was I talking about?"

"You said you wanted to start something new after our Sunday morning breakfast. Sex just seemed a natural progression to me."

"Yes, that's it. I want us to start reading to one another for at least an hour."

"What???"

"I want us to take an hour, on Sunday to read to each other. I have a book I want to read to you. Please think about it."

"What book? Fifty Shades?"

"No! One of my all-time favorites, *If Only It Were True*, by Marc Levy. It's a book I want to share with you."

"What's it about?"

"It's about this crazy rich bitch that beats the shit out of her boyfriend."

Before I can say more, she swats me, "Knock it off. What's it about?"

"It's a love story. The woman has a car accident and ends up in a coma, on life support. The man rents her apartment. One evening he hears someone, if I remember right, singing in his closet. When he opens the door, there she is. You will have to listen to me read the rest to find out what happens."

"It sounds kind of farfetched."

"So what? Have a little imagination. I know it's in you from the way you reacted to Queen Califia's Magical Circle. I'll tell you what, if after I finish the first reading, you don't like doing it, we'll just drop it. Agreed."

"Agreed."

"Oh, the reader gets to determine how we'll be arranged."

"What? Arranged how, what are you talking about?"

"What I'm saying is the reader will select where in the apartment we'll be. The way we'll be dressed, if we're dressed at all. The relative positions. I'm going to start with me reading with my head in your lap. I can see us in bed. Maybe you are sitting on me while you read. Even in the bathtub, soaking instead of showering. There are many ways we can enhance the experience." I consider for a moment adding, "It would be good practice in preparation when we read to our

children,” but I didn’t want to give her a heart attack and spoil the mood. I ask, “Just consider it please.”

“I just did. It’s something that seems to be important to you. Okay, I’m willing to give it a try. Next week we’ll start. You read me the book and then we’ll both make a final decision. Agreed?”

“Agreed! Thanks.”

“Are you ready?”

“Ready? Ready for what?”

“Option 2.”

“What’s option 2?”

“More sex,” she says and bursts out laughing while she attacks me. Option 2 turns out to be everything it always is.

Chapter 2

Monday – November 10, 2014

It's my first day back on the job since the Chihuahua and tree accosted me. I've reviewed several of our proposals, a few maintenance schedules, and plans for growth. We are growing at a steady rate and my biggest fear is I won't be able to find the right people. I wouldn't trade any of our current staff. They're all hard workers and support the company's goals. Around eleven, I call Helen. She's in our Poway office.

She answers, "Hi boss. Everything is going well here. Is everything okay up there? How are you doing?"

"Couldn't be better. I'm feeling fine. You kept everything under control. It's like I never left. I called to ask you if you could come up before we close here. You can work from here tomorrow."

"Sure. Is there something wrong?" she asks hesitantly.

"Yes and no. That should keep you wondering. However, it's good, so, don't stress over it. Please drive carefully. Bye for now."

"You don't want to give me a clue." She sounds apprehensive.

I state and inform her, "Other than, don't worry. No, I don't. See you when you get here. I'll call Harold and ask him to join us."

Sounding concerned, "What does he have to do with this? What are you up to now?"

Mildly tormenting her, "So impatient are we. What part of it's all good and don't worry, don't you understand. If nothing else, you'll get to spend the night with your lover."

My last comment elicits a big sigh and a whimsical, dreamy response, "Oh, yes that will make the trip worthwhile, big time. One question though. Will I want to smack or kiss you?"

To grate her a bit more, "Hmm, that depends."

I'm sure she knows me well enough by now to know, I won't answer her, yet she asks, "Depends on what?"

I want it to be a surprise, so I end the conversation, calmly with, "I'm going to disconnect now. Bye." I disconnect before she can say more. I think, *Yes, I'm an asshole, sometimes. Not a mean, stupid, or offensive one—just a little annoying.*

I get back to work. Time moves by quickly when you're very busy catching up and enjoying your work. Unexpectedly, around three-thirty Victoria walks in. I'm a bit stunned and wonder what could be wrong. She usually calls to make sure I'm here.

I ask, "What's wrong? Are you Okay?"

"Nothing is wrong with me. I just started worrying about you. You didn't join or come get me for lunch, like you usually do when you're working here. Why? Are you upset?"

Whimsically, I reply, "I'm not upset. Why in the world would I be upset?" It's just a rhetorical question. "Just forgetful. It had nothing to do with the bump on the head. I didn't even realize I missed lunch. I was so busy working, and it was refreshing. You know how you get sometimes when you're working on something you enjoy. I lost track of time. I'm sorry, really very sorry. I always enjoy lunching with you. I guess that's why I feel hungry right now. The fact is I always enjoy spending time with you, regardless of what we do."

Responding like I committed a major crime, "I forgive you. Let's go home or into your private room and make love. We have a lot of catching up to do. You know your debt increased due to your lack of performance." She smiles and giggles.

I laugh and say, “I’d love to love you right now, on my desk, then the floor, and the couch. However, Helen and Harold are going to be here any minute now. Please join us. We can take up where we leave off, in my private room, when they depart.”

“If we must, we must.” Then she comes and sits in my lap. While we make out like teenagers, in the backseat of a car, I wonder if I can holdout till Helen shows up. We engage ourselves this way for not very long. My intercom buzzes. “Ms. Troy and Mr. Walters are here.” Judith informs me.

I reply, “Please send them in.” Victoria starts to get up, but I hold her in place.

Looking at me, while the door opens, she asks, “Just what the hell are you doing? Let me up!”

I look her in the eyes, “I would if it were anyone other than Helen and Harold. And I will, if it’s really what you want me to do.”

She giggles, then leans back into me and relaxes. Helen always quick on the comments, modifies the good old cliché and says, “*Why don’t you two get a room* and send us home to ours.”

I look at her, “Look sis, I will in a minute, but first I want you to look these papers over and when you understand them, you’re free to go. You can meet us at *The Exchange* at seven. I’ve arranged for a small get-together.” I toss her an envelope with the papers inside.

She catches the envelope, opens it, and extracts the papers. Documents I had John prepare for me last week. Victoria is equally puzzled. She leans in and whispers in my ear, “What’s going on?”

I just sit there watching Helen. All of a sudden, her eyes light up. She looks at me and says, “This isn’t one of your stupid, moronic jokes, is it Art? Are you serious?” Neither Victoria nor Harold have a clue.

“Helen, besides loving you like a sister, you run this company and you’ve made it better. It’s not a joke, ‘Partner.’ I probably should have done this months ago. With all the time, I spend away from work, you’ve carried me. Making you a partner is a no brainer and no less than you deserve.”

She just sits there in shock. Harold takes the papers from her and looks them over. He says, “I knew there was a reason I fell for this woman. Now she can take care of me.” This brings Helen back to earth.

Still not sure that I’ve regained my senses, she asks, “Art, are you sure you want to do this?”

“I’ve been thinking about it for a while. Long before the chihuahua and tree attacked me. Yes, I do. With my current salary and the profit sharing we do; I have a substantial income. We’re growing and so is our personal income. You really do deserve it. It’s not a gift, much of our success can be traced back to you, you’ve earned it.”

Barely able to speak, she mutters, “Wow, Thank you.”

I inform all present, “We’ll celebrate at *The Exchange* tonight. Invite whomever you want. Tell them to tell the guy at the front door, they’re part of the private Starfield party. I called and asked for one of the private rooms. Is everyone onboard?” I look around and everyone is nodding. Then I say, “Harold, Helen, if you’ll excuse me, I have a debt I have to pay. We’ll see you tonight. On your way out, please tell Judith to go home.”

They get up and leave. I turn to my girl, “My room.” I don’t have to ask twice.

Chapter 3

Tuesday – November 11, 2014

We elected to take Monday off for Veteran's day, instead of today. We also gave our staff the same option and most elected to take Monday off; it made for an extended weekend. Many of our clients are open, so we have work we can do. I've decided to spend the day at our Poway office. It's been a couple of weeks now since I had visited here. I meet with the staff, while they get ready to go out and perform their assignments. It is nice to know that they were concerned. On my way out, I stop and ask Louise, "Please inform Perry, when he finishes what he's doing, that I'm heading out to do some field service work. I'm also planning to visit some of our clients to find out how we're performing, to let them know we want to provide the best service, and most important to let them know we value their business. If he needs to discuss anything, I should be back in a couple of hours.

When I return Perry stops by and asks, "How are you? Is there anything you need?"

"No. I just wanted to see how things are going with my own eyes, as they say. I also want our people to know I'm fine and that I care about them. After all, these guys are *Planck Owners*. Since Helen is staying in LA today, I figured it would be a good time to visit. I reconnected with a few of our customers. They're happy with our performance and we can use them as references. Good work. Thanks."

"Art, I'm heading out to give a couple of techs assistance. Call me if you need anything. Are you sure you'll be okay?"

I laugh, "Sure Dad, I've got a clean bill of health from my doctor. I'll be working on the *Quickspin Machine Company* proposal and contract. If I get it done before you get back, I'll give it to Louise."

An hour later, I'm working on the proposal and contract. Around two-thirty, I finish. I'm just about to print them when the power goes out. I scream inwardly. Shouting internally, *Shit! Shit! It's gone, it's all gone. Three hours of work shot to hell. Why does this always happen to me?* It's a rhetorical question. My mood is less than positive. I'm angry and despondent. So, I decide I'll just go to get something to eat, before something else bad happens and my rising blood pressure causes a brain aneurysm.

As I'm about to leave, Victoria calls, I answer, gruffly, "Hello."

Concerned, she asks, "Are you all right?"

Curtly, "Yes, why wouldn't I be?"

In an apprehensive tone, "Are you upset?"

Brusque, I respond, "No. I'm on my way out to go to get some sustenance."

Now annoyed with my attitude, she replies, "Just what the hell is wrong with you? When are you coming home?"

Sarcastically, I reply, "I am home, this is where I live. Oh, you mean your place. I was planning on leaving shortly after I finish eating. When will you be home? And why'd you call anyway?" Mystified, I wonder, why am I behaving like this?

Angrily, "Look asshole, I was worried. I'll be home after seven. I have an important golf game with some key CEOs. It's been on the calendar for weeks now."

Petulantly, "Fine. I'll just stay here tonight. Enjoy your golf game, I'll see you tomorrow. We need to talk."

I can sense she's getting very mad, "What the hell is going on? Talk to me."

I take a deep breath, tactlessly, I spout, “Besides losing three hours of work, I got a lot on my mind. Specifically, our future. I just don’t know what I’m going to do. We’ll discuss it tomorrow if that meets with your highness’s approval.”

I wait for a reply, maybe a minute, then she says, calmly, reigning in her temper and shifting to her CEO persona, “Why not come home tonight?”

Tersely, “I’m staying here. Please don’t call or text. And definitely don’t come down.” I almost add, *I might be with another woman*. “I just need some time alone to think and figure things out. When I’m with you I can’t think straight.” Then sarcastically, add, “Enjoy your golf. Bye.” I end the call before she can respond.

When I get back from dining out, I remember my program automatically backs up every five minutes. I wonder why I keep forgetting this and go hyper. I find the backup and it’s all there. I make a few corrections, then print it, and take the copy to Louise. When she looks up, I hand her the documents and say, “These are the papers for *Quickspin*, pass them on to Perry for his review and please check them out for spelling and grammar.” The file name and location are in their standard place on the document.

Louise acknowledges, “Will do. Art, do you want me to make changes?”

Nodding, “Yes, make yours and Perry’s changes in red, so, when I review it, I can quickly see them. I’m heading home. I’ll probably be here for a short time tomorrow, before heading back. I’m tempted to turn off my phone, but I won’t. If I’m needed, call. Good night.”

Concerned, “Art, if you need anything call. You know we were all worried?”

I smile, probably for the first time today, “Thank you. It’s nice to know. Have a good evening.” I turn to leave, stop, turn back toward Louise, and say, “There is one more thing you can do for me.”

Smiling, “Okay, shoot.”

“Please call Judith and tell her to prepare a memo for my signature announcing that Helen has been made a partner in the company; effective November tenth. Also, I’d like to have a celebratory gathering. See if we can find a place between here and LA to hold it. You and Judith can work out the details.”

Excitement in her voice, “You made Helen a partner?”

In a cheerful and jocular manner, “Yes Louise. That’s what I said. Can you handle my request? Or are you going to expire from excitement?”

Louise laughs. “Sorry boss. I’m so happy for Helen. And yes, Judith and I will take care of it. Any specific day?”

“No. You have our calendars. Also, tell Judith to make sure Victoria and Harold are available. Again, have a good evening.”

“Good night Art. I’ll take care of everything.”

Thirty-five minutes later, I’m at home, with a glass of wine. I’ve turned on some music. My thoughts revolve around, *What the hell is wrong with me? Where is my future heading? Do I want to continue doing this? Can I continue to live this way?* I’m not sure.

Chapter 4

Thursday – November 13, 2014

I've been worrying about this day, from the day, we established our relationship. My life will be changed forever. A day I've worried about since I've been with her. Our announcement is so important that we've agreed earlier to take the day off, to plan on how to tell our family and friends. There is no way I could work with it on my mind. When I call Helen to invite her to the announcement, I inform her about my taking off. I tell her that I'll likely take Friday off to wallow. I think Victoria tells her PA something similar.

It's approaching two-thirty and the decision to get our friends together for the announcement we'll make at eight tonight, has been agreed upon. Elizabeth arrives at two and is informed of our life changing agreement. Victoria wants to make the announcement this evening, she doesn't want them to wait or find out through the media or rumors. They need to know now. I acquiesce. We agree, the only thing we will say about the announcement is, "It will make a lot of people unhappy." We're hoping the clue will somewhat help prepare our family and friends for our decision.

An hour after we've decided to make the announcement here tonight, everyone has accepted. I briefly wonder, as I have before, if any of them have a life. However, I know that they will probably cancel somethings to be with us, as we would do for them, when we have something important to announce. It feels good to know that family and friends care enough about you to do that. I call my mom, and she agrees to the Skype call, which she'll take through the planes avionic system, likely just before they land.

Since we've scheduled the announcement for eight, everybody should have had their dinner. Therefore, cold cuts, condiments, snacks, and drinks are all that is needed. Grace is going to make the necessary arrangements for temporary staff and the items we'll need. We expect the guests to start arriving shortly after seven.

After a long hard discussion, we agreed that, Starfield's public relations director, should handle the formal public announcement. Otherwise, who knows how the scandal magazines like, *We Got the Dirt*, will portray us, based on rumors. She's called Gale and instructed her to arrive early. She also arranged for her PA, Barbara, to come and told her to join the PR crew when they are briefed.

At six-thirty, Gale with her photographer and cameraman arrive. As they exit the elevator, they notice the several suitcases, with my name tags on them, in the entryway; we expect the other guests will also see them and hope it will prepare them somewhat.

I meet them at the elevator, and signal Gale and her staff to follow me. I see Barbara speaking to Victoria and signal her to come along as well. When we're all assembled in Victoria's study, I give my speech. I tell Gale and staff, "Since you have all signed a *Non-Disclosure Agreement* and essentially this is official work, what happens here today will not be made public without Ms. Starfield's permission. Don't get me wrong. You will have plenty of stuff. Mingle, talk to the guests, and build the story for a press release. A release that Ms. Starfield will approve. You have carte blanche on what you ask and film. Please do a thorough job. Personally, I like what you do for her and the firm. You're all very good at what you do. That's not a platitude, it's true. Any questions?"

There are no questions. I add, "We're going to make an announcement that will make a lot of people unhappy. I would hope you would not portray us badly. Or rather me, because it is

always the male's fault. Just truthfully. Again, feel free to roam about and ask questions. Please leave guests alone that are uncomfortable with the media questioning them. After the announcement and you've gotten what you need, feel free to join in with the others. I'm sure you can work out the release details with Ms. Starfield. Personally, I couldn't care less."

"Any clues about the big announcement you might care to share with me," Gale asks.

Solemnly I say, "Yes. It's going to make a lot of people unhappy. That's all I'm going to say." I leave, thinking, I need to mingle and while I do, I'll stay as far away from Victoria as I can. I know, there's people out there that are planning ways to kill me. Mostly, from her family and friends that are gathering around her now to offer her support. When I get a chance, I need to, as they say in westerns, "Head them off at the pass."

We all leave together. Barbara, Gale, the photographer, and cameraman begin to move about talking to the guest in a friendly, non-microphone in the face manner. We invited her because she always appears to release material that makes Victoria and the firm look good; I'm not at all concerned how they will make me look, I couldn't care-less. And Victoria thought it was worth rewarding her loyalty. Besides, it's better that the announcement to the public be made by her PR department, then by the rumor mill. Personally, I wouldn't want to cast aspersions on Victoria.

At six-forty the large contingent of guests start to arrive. Grandma Townsmith is first. She drags me to the side. Angrily, staring me in the eyes and in venomous tone, "You had better not hurt my granddaughter. I'm not about to let things go back to the way they were. You're not so big. I'll kick the crap out of you if you've done something stupid." Even in a situation like this, I don't know how I contain my laughter.

Not wanting to upset her, I inform her, "Grandma, I can assure you, Victoria wants this as much as I do. Really, we are in total agreement. We're happy with it." I wonder if happy is the appropriate word. "We believe it's the best thing for our future. Your relationship with her won't change. It might even get better. Neither of us will be unhappy afterwards. We just want to tell everyone at once. We didn't want those closest to us to find out by rumors or through the media."

"I suppose, if Victoria wants it this way, then it's fine. You're not as smart as I thought you were," she says in a huff, turns away, and then walks off.

As I enter the big room Rita and Helen march up to me. Rita, speaking for both, "If you hurt Victoria, you'll not leave here tonight in one piece. I will kick you where I promised you I would. Do you understand shithead?"

Helen jumps in, "Art, how can you be so stupid? You two were made for each other. And I'm with Rita. I have some stomping lined up, as well."

To avoid bloodshed, I placate them as best I can, "Look! Calm down. Victoria and I have come to a mutual, one-hundred-percent agreement. We think this is the best thing for both of us and our future. We're sorry it's going to make a lot of people unhappy. But we've got to do what's best for us. What's best for both of us. Surely you guys can understand that." I can see Gale taking notes and making sure the camera is rolling. Huffing and puffing the two of them march off, I suppose, to plan my demise and their attack on me later.

I make my way around the room, while avoiding John, because I'm not sure how to deal with his rubbing it in. I know he's probably getting attached to the idea.