

ABBY

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Chapter 16 - Thanksgiving

A Thanksgiving was the first one since those big loans the Mansion House had any discretionary money. Most of the residents wanted a Turkey, and we had sugar cured ham too. We had so many people working on this big dinner we had multiple turkeys and hams, and skads of vegetables, trimmings, and holiday deserts.

Mack the Head Chef now calling herself Marsha and her crew surveyed the kitchen. They discovered they could only cook one turkey and one ham at the same time. The ovens would have to be used in relays. We found restaurants that would deliver a day or two before Thanksgiving, and we could reheat those. We could reheat our own cooking, too. The kitchen overflowed with additional volunteers.

My sense, and others too, was that the place felt joyful and happy for the first time. We were laughing. There were let downs, outbursts, and tears, from the original abuse and our institutional style circumstances. The general feeling was there such an improvement in our lives, and everyone was affected. There was even laughter about our diaper changes and breast pumping.

A few weeks before Thanksgiving a volunteer woman in the kitchen hummed a tune. Then another. Then a man. Someone sang a popular song. Another sang the spiritual *We Shall Overcome* with more volume. Others joined in. Most of us did. We sang it all together at a Wednesday evening meeting. We had all felt we had been abandoned by God, but there was a growing sense of we were succeeding despite our misfortune. Joyce sang *Rose Garden* a little off-key as we had never promised each other a rose garden. More joined in, and then a guy with a good singing voice tried it all on his own. Tara played *Amazing Grace* on her computer, and more and more residents joined in singing that. *Different Drum* came on sung by a popular country singer. Singing that song caught on like wildfire as we flocked to that and joined in. One morning the kitchen was crowded a few days before Thanksgiving when Kim asked Tara to play *Stand By Your Man*. Except Kim in a witty mood came to me singing *Stand By Your Trans*. One of the guys laughed, and that rippled across the big room and into the kitchen. She sang it again, and more joined in for yet another time.

Thanksgiving Day was mass chaos keeping people changed and pumped as more and more volunteers were running back and forth through the kitchen. Someone

would sing one of those favorite songs and so many joined in the work virtually stopped on several occasions.

One last woman remained curled up in a fetal ball and kept in a crib in another room. A small team of the women caring for her found an old wheelchair for bringing that unfortunate woman out into the big room. We bought a wheelchair after that old one broke down. They would change her, rag wash her, put her in a new diaper, and sit her in the wheelchair. They would strap her in for keeping her from falling out onto the floor. They would wrap her in a blanket instead of trying to unfold her for putting her in any regular clothes.

The Dining Hall aromas were making me hungry when a Police Officer played *Coal Miner's Daughter* on Tara's computer. Those hardships sung in an upbeat way brought tears to my eyes. People sniffled. "Play it again" bellowed across the room with a new found sense of enjoyment. It was ragged singing with people breaking down with tears and crying before joining back in.

My Mommies and I were in a line holding hands as we dropped out of the singing for tears before joining back in.

Into all that wonderful wet eyed emotional flood the team with that woman in the fetal ball rolled her in.

A wail burst out from one corner expressing all of our agony. It swept across the room as others felt it and wailed too.

That poor woman in a fetal ball shrieked from her wheelchair. That was a soul piercing and back shivering shriek. Somehow our feelings right then reached into her with empathy for her painful plight. The women with her rushed in around her, held her hands, and had hands on her arms. They were the people she knew had been taking care of her. She was safe with them to be who she was. She shrieked again.

The kitchen crew could not interrupt their work. People strapped into cups for pumping their breasts could not move. Everyone else rushed into a crowd around that woman now mostly wailing.

Whatever she needed to do we were all with her. Our experience with the other four who had been in fetal balls told us this would be a difficult and lengthy recovery. This was her first step. She visibly uncurled just a little.

We all applauded in a standing ovation as they rolled her into the Dining Hall.

She wasn't up to feeding herself, but as the saying goes, she was sitting up and taking solid food.

The Chef and kitchen volunteers felt so appreciated and loved it all so much they

browsed on the run without stopping to sit down.

I loved the dressing. My Mommies felt the mood another way. They told me to behave as they handcuffed me and tied the 'cuffs to my waist. They sat me down, strapped me to the chair, and fed me. Tara, Pat, and Barbie-Doll came by us. Tara reached down and pinched my cheek. "Abby could feel we are laughing at her. Not so. This is perfect for everyone feeling Abby is one of us instead of the boss, which she is, and for us that is funny. Smile like a girl, damn it."

Only the guy inside Tara's cross-dressing appearance could pull that off with me.

I did force a smile before I caught the matching mood.

The next day Kim had assembled six women who practiced those songs. They gave a good performance during a lunch of delicious leftovers.

One of the women who had been in a fetal ball asked someone who asked someone who finally asked if Tara would ask me. Tara picked up on the passivity by asking me if she could ask me without saying what.

My annoyance got the better of me. I tensed up which caused an involuntary dribble into my diaper, and the tension came through in my voice. "What?"

"Could we buy decks of cards?"

"Sure. What game?"

"Canasta. I looked it up on Wikipedia. It was the card game craze of the mid-fifties. Betcha many of our grandparents played that game."

"Any downside? Gambling addictions? Anything?"

Quite the opposite. No gambling is reported although that is possible because it is a point based game. Very mild. Might be just perfect for drawing the scared little people out just a smidgin."

The cost was somewhere between not much and almost that low. Tara had one of her students buy a dozen and a half card sets, score pads, and other stuff for tables of four. The popularity raced around so fast the comment was a question why didn't we do this before?

Several days later Megan brought my four women together and held a little hushed conference out of my sight and hearing. An idea had originated with one of Tara's psychology students who had talked with Barbie-Doll. Pat had taken to calling Barbie her Barbie-Doll and somehow the name stuck. Pat enjoyed playing with the dresses, makeup, and accents as if she was playing with a girl's doll. Tara had too

many other more important issues going with other residents to interfere with that one. This new idea had corkscrewed its way through the crowd. They wanted a Communion Service.

I had no idea how to do one of those, but Barbie-Doll found a few of the simpler ones on the Internet. I watched those, and one in particular I reviewed several times.

The seamstress shop made me a new skirt-suit of royal blue which I dearly loved. I could never have worn this color as a guy.

After a Wednesday evening dinner Marsha had the dining hall crew set up a small long table in the big room. It was maybe three feet wide and a foot deep. They had a freshly washed single bed sized cotton sheet folded in two and laid on the table. It was not linen. A few who had ever been at a Communion whispered around it seemed more authentic to them for being so simple and plain. Jesus is believed to have worn the simplest attire. Gandhi certainly did.

We didn't have any religious utensils. The cups were our institutional white coffee cups, the chalice was an abused aluminum water pitcher, and the plates were our regular stock. Barbie-Doll had found out that grape juice was acceptable for wine, and the kitchen crew had made the bread out of whole wheat.

The folding chairs were our same old ones that were the worse for wear. Vicki was watching a CraigsList at the nearest big city for a large enough batch we could buy. Those old chairs we had were arranged in slightly circular rows oriented on the table. The rows were far enough apart for people to walk in front of other people sitting down. There were two breaks in the rows of chairs making aisles.

My Mommies went with me to be changed and pumped right before they dressed me in that gorgeous new blue suit. The seamstresses had made a blazing white pastoral like shawl without any decorations. It was hung over my shoulders. It even had a slight "V" shape in the center for appearing just so across my shoulders. At the last moment they added turquoise dangling ear rings. My long blond hair was brushed and pinned over my right shoulder. They joined the crowd. Vicki came to me in a pleated blue skirt of the same color and a fancy white blouse with ruffles.

A computer played an organ making a trumpet call.

Vicki and I walked into the big room side by side as my eyes watered. I felt lucky my weeping wasn't strong enough to prevent my seeing and making me trip.

The room went silent. Faces and eyes were up and alert.

I came to the center and faced them. "Fellow residents and even our police guardians. Welcome to a Mansion House experiment." A police officer was in the back running a video camera on a tripod. "You are welcome whether this is your first ever

religious meeting or you had been attending all of your life BC.” Which meant among us ‘before captivity’.

As we stood there in front side by side Vicki led a reading and a response. A computer played a hymn *Joyful, Joyfull* one line at a time with everybody singing after each line. Then we did *We Shall Overcome* led by our singing group with everybody standing.

“Please be seated.” I held my arms wide over the table. “This may seem like a small table, but this is the largest table in the world. It is spiritually attached to all communion tables world wide and all religious services held in peace and harmony.

“I know many of us have felt abandoned by God in our plight. But God loves us no matter how much we reject God. We just have a different challenge put on us by very evil people. They live in fear of being attacked and killed by other inmates in prison who were abused. God asks me for my forgiveness of them. I’m not there yet, but I withdraw from dwelling and wishing on their plight, and hope you can to.

“This bread was baked in love.” I was avoiding as many standard religious references and cliches. Later they could ask for those to be included too. I lifted a small loaf baked just for this purpose. The kitchen had scored a line with a knife all the way around the center. “I break it to release the love He has for each of us.” It easily broke in two pieces which I set back in the plate.

I lifted the pitcher and poured grape juice into a cup. “This represents God’s love poured out for you.” The residents included a few who would not have claimed to be Christians before their captivity. “If you wish, there is a cup in the center of the plate of bread with gluten free crackers. Come forward as you feel so called.”

Tara was first.

Vicki had practiced, but she now had tears in her eyes and her voice cracked. “The bread of life, Tara.”

Tara took a piece of bread from the plate and came to me.

“The cup of salvation.” But my voice cracked too stopping me from finishing with her name.

But this was Tara who was all for this ceremony of love and healing. She spoke with a clear voice all could hear. “Make it so” was meant in lieu of ‘Amen’ for any who couldn’t bring themselves to say that religious word.

About a third of the residents came by for the ceremony of the bread and the cup. There had been trembling lips and wet eyes. This was working.

There was a disturbance in the crowd. Four of the former fetal balls had stood up, but that wasn't the disturbance. The last one who was still in a wheelchair had quietly asked to stand. The two women on wheelchair duty had her by the arms as she and they struggled with her attempts. She stood erect for the first time we could remember. As two people held her up by her elbows she took a step. That had been a feeble step. It was followed by another.

No one said a word. Everything and everyone stopped.

She shuffled forward with a woman on each side and the other four special victims following at her slow pace.

Vicki took a step in her direction.

I whispered. "No. Let her have the pride of making it all the way on her own. Or at least let her try."

That distraught woman made it all the way. I'm not that tall, but I'm taller than her, and she was stooped slightly forward. She looked up at me with such hurt puppy eyes that I almost lost it with my own break down of crying. She smelled awful, which meant her diaper was soiled, or more likely diarrhea.

She moved her right arm with her helper on that side staying with her movement. She reached for a piece of bread.

"The bread of life, my friend." Vicki didn't know her name.

I held out the cup of juice and lowered it for her convenience although I didn't know it either. "The cup of salvation, my friend."

She dipped in her piece of bread and brought it up to her mouth. "Amen."

She turned in her shuffling way. Some kind soul was rolling her wheelchair. Her quiet soft voice was clear. "No." The wheelchair stopped. Three people in the front row leapt up and slid one of their chairs forward. That was acceptable. They had it about a third of the way when she spoke a simple word. "Stop." She made it all the way to that chair on her own.

When she was safely seated in that chair she looked up at the residents near her and smiled.

I wept.

The room erupted in applause.

After her example the number of people saying "amen" increased until most were

using the religious response.

When all had come by, Vicki and I gave each other Communion using those same sayings of offering. Both of us responded. "Amen."

I returned my attention to everyone else. "Our big breakthrough stole the show. In the larger context of our struggles. There is nothing I can say that equals or comes close to that one big strong statement. She has consecrated this moment far above my or our poor power to add or detract. It is for us who remain here to dedicate ourselves to our improvement individually and collectively. Let's sing *We Shall Overcome* before we close this meeting."

We did.

Barbie-doll was at the computer. She played *When The Saints Come Marching In* done in a joyful raucous style.

Nearly all of us joined in.

A few days later as I bent over the crib edge as my diaper was checked by Megan was when Peggy had a comment. She was the least likely person to make a disruption. "We can't be Abby's 'Mommies' anymore. That last person to break out of a fetal ball was asked what name she wanted. She wanted the name of 'Little Abby' and referred to our Abby as 'Saint Abby'." Peggy held a finger to her lips. "Hesh, Abby. Hear me out first. I've heard others use that title. What they chose to say is their business. But Abby is our business, and she is no longer our little baby girl. We have to stop that. Should we be Abby's girl friends? Her wives? Or something else?"

I stood up.

Kim was the most likely to take charge and did hooking her arm in mine. "What is not always appreciated by the other residents is the intense friendship the four of us real women have for each other. Sex yes; with Abby, with each other, and on our own. But something else much deeper. For me, Abby is my husband. The flawed and wonderful masculine companion that she is. We are all equally flawed, and I hope we all stay together. So, for every one else within the strange language we all must use, we are five wives, and that's just the way it is. But inside only the four us, I want Abby to know she is my husband. I hope all of you can say she is each of your husband too."

I turned and kissed Kim on the cheek, and each of the other four too. They each did another kiss with their tongues in my mouth. They pulled up my skirt, reached down into my diaper, and brought me erect. "We love you Abby. You diaper is wet enough. It's not like we don't know you and each other. Have a nice orgasm in all that wet warmth while we all get pumped."

I blushed. They went away. I was thankful I had a nice orgasm.