

The General

Chapter 31

from *10 Years of Strong Black Coffee and Strong-Willed Patients*

By Derek Hadinger, RN, BSN

The General was a quiet and stoic character, and he had a slight stroke that he was slowly trying to recover from. This gave him some difficulty with speech and eating a decent meal. He could speak, but it took him a little while to be able to formulate his words, and he would speak softly and sometimes repeat himself or simply not speak at all. The General's wife was in the room with him, and she was quite classy and dedicated to her man.

I introduced myself. General was sitting straight up on the edge of the bed and looking forward, as if he were ready for battle first thing in the morning. He looked at me with a little grin. "H-h-h-he-el-l-l-loooo, y-young m-m-m-man."

I stood straight at attention and remembered my dad teaching me the proper salute to a military man of higher rank, so I saluted him and said, "Derek Hadinger, Registered Nurse, reporting for duty! What can I do for you, *SIR!*"

General's wife spoke up. "My husband is somewhat embarrassed to speak about this, as he is not used to having to rely on others for anything. You are a respectable young man, and he is even more embarrassed to have another man hear that he has pooped in his big man diaper this morning, since he is used to doing this kind of thing by himself. Do you have a helper to do this so you do not have to perform this task? You are a nurse, and I am sure that you are very busy.

"My husband was the first four star black general in his division in the military who actually went into battle with his troops to come out alive as the man you see now. He is very distinguished, and to me, he is distinguished in every way as he has been the best husband that this woman could ever ask for! I Love my man!"

I turned to The General, saluted him again, and started joking with him while deeply respecting who he was. I was extremely honored to be this man's nurse. "*Sir*, I am honored to report for immediate rear guard ass wiping duty, *SIR!* I shall commence to assist in lifting you up and proceed to undo your fine uniform pants, and as soon as I can remove your offending excrement receptacle from your person, I will wipe your ass as clean as your military record, *SIR!*"

The General turned to look at me while I was holding him up, and he slowly saluted me with a grin and a proud look. "Y-y-y-y-oo-u are a f-f-f-fi-ine r-r-re-e-e-a-a-r-r g-g-g-g-uard! C-c-c-o-o-m-m-m-enc-c-ce w-w-w-i-p-ping!"

“YES *SIR!* Wiping now, and gently, *SIR!* Hold on, hold, on... Your four star ass is now as clean as a whistle, *SIR!* Rear guard reporting off ass duty to assume (hahahaha!) other duties for The General, *SIR!*”

The General smiled the whole time, and he started to cry a little. I immediately sat next to him and gave him a big bear hug that lasted for at least a whole minute. I cried on his beautifully pressed military shirt that he served in.

I came back every thirty minutes like clockwork to be sure my General was well tended to. His wife and I talked much about faith, hard work, family, medicines, what to expect moving on after strokes and life changes, and we talked and talked.

I closed out my shift with The General when he looked up and said, “T-t-t-h-ank y-y-y-o-o-o-u. I L-o-o-o-ve you!”

His wife was crying and said, “He thinks of you as his own son now, as you have treated him as if he were your own dad that you just loved so much. We both love you, and want to thank you.”

“I am honored to think of you as another dad to me, and your wife as another mom to me, *SIR!* I cannot thank you enough for your service and willingness to let this man who is completely outranked by you to wipe your four star shiny ass! You put your life on the line for many, and you always have me to put my life on the line for you, *SIR!* Or, should I say, thanks dad! I Love you!”

We hugged and cried, and I had a four star general salute me and accept me as if I were his own son. What a colorful family we were that day!

I learned from The General that it is an honor to give back to those who gave more than most would be willing to do in order to live in a safe, free and fun country. I have a black general as an adopted dad, and I got to serve on the front line for The General when he needed it the most in a battle for his own health. Do not ever be above wiping anybody’s rear end, as you may need it done to you someday no matter how much status and respect you have obtained throughout your life.

Real men and women look past egos and status, and when you are willing to help others in a time of need while respecting their (earned) dignity, you can have well-connected and reliable people to look out for you no matter what situation you may be in and in need of their help. You get out of life what you put into it, and if you give freely from the heart, and in love, you get many times over the positive returns on anything that you willingly do for somebody else.