

“You have huh?” Cait challenged him. “You know about my sexual exploits. What about yours?”

Brian’s grin faded and he stared down at his feet for a long moment. “I was kind of hoping you wouldn’t ask.”

“That bad?” Cait arched her eyebrows.

“You’ll think it is,” Brian looked back at her. “I’m a virgin.”

Cait’s eyes widened in shock. “What?”

Brian nodded almost sadly.

“But you’re ... you ...,” Cait snapped her mouth shut and looked down at the ground.

“I’m an almost forty year old male, raised in foster care and former military to boot. How could I possibly have kept myself sexually pure with so many strikes against me?”

Cait nodded mutely, a slight blush touching her cheeks. Brian sighed sadly, knowing she was putting up a wall between them. It was considered acceptable for a man with a sexual history to marry a woman who was a virgin, but a woman with a sexual past marrying a man who was a virgin? That wasn’t the way it was supposed to happen. Brian had hoped to wait to have this talk until after everything was over and he’d already won Cait’s love.

“My dad started having sex talks with me before I even started kindergarten. At first they weren’t obviously about sex, more along the line of choosing to live in a God-honoring way. He didn’t explain about men and women making babies until I was in first grade. I was eight when he told me the basic mechanics of sex. The very last conversation I had with him was about sex.”

Cait looked up in surprise. Trask was staring in the distance with the tortured-peace look that people get when they remember a great moment with a loved one who was still greatly missed in their life.

“Dad was taking me to my friend’s house because him and Mom were going out on a date. I was complaining because I was going to have to spend the night. Any other night of the week I would’ve been happy to stay with Eddie, but Saturday morning breakfasts were legendary in our house. All the kids wanted to stay at my house on Friday nights, I didn’t want to go to theirs. So I was whining.

“Dad said, ‘Sorry Son, this is one breakfast you’re gonna miss. I’ve got plans for after the play, and they’re gonna be much more fun if you’re not in the house.’”

Brian smiled slightly, “I said, ‘Ew, Dad! Are you talking about sex again?’ He laughed, ‘I sure am Son. When we do it God’s way, it’s the greatest fun in the whole world.’

“‘Better than baseball?’ I challenged him. ‘Way better,’ he laughed. ‘Better than ice cream?’

“‘Son,’ Dad grinned at me as he pulled into my friend’s driveway, ‘you do it God’s way an’ wait until you’re married an’ it’s gonna be better than baseball, ice cream an’ watermelon on the Fourth of July.’ I rolled my eyes as I got out of the car. ‘Yeah, right,’ I said doubtfully. As I walked up to the door, Dad stuck his head out the car window. ‘Have fun Son,’ he hollered with a goofy grin, ‘an’ don’t be dreamin’ about the girls tonight.’

“‘Ew Dad!’ I made a face at him. ‘That’s gross!’ He laughed, waved and drove off. The next time I saw him, he was in a casket.”

Cait touched Brian’s arm gently, bringing him back to the present. “What a wonderful legacy.”

Brian looked down at her with troubled eyes. “Yes it was. And the timing made it a lot like a warning from the grave. If I even thought about having sex with a girlfriend, I saw that last smile and wave. I heard Dad saying, ‘Wait. I promise you that you won’t regret it.’”

“I’ve got plenty regrets, enough for both of us.” Cait looked away, but not before he saw the tears in her eyes.

Brian stared at Cait’s profile, thinking about how to say what he needed to say. How could he give her hope without making a promise he might not live to keep?

“Cait, when my dad talked to me about virginity, it was always just about me and God. Me doing what God wanted me to do, regardless of what anyone else did. He never talked about my future bride, about making sure she’d followed the same rules.

“Mom did talk about my future bride. She talked about how important it was to make sure that any girl I really liked loved Jesus as much as I did and she talked about how I was supposed to treat my girlfriend, and eventually my wife. She didn’t talk about my wife cooking or cleaning or being a virgin. Just make sure she loves Jesus is all Mom ever said about what I should look for in a wife.”

“Are you saying that you never broke up with a girlfriend because you found out she wasn’t a virgin?”

“I wish I could honestly say, no, I haven’t,” Brian winced. “I did, once. But it was the excuse I finally found. I was looking for a reason because something told me she wasn’t right for me. But Maggie, my ex-fiancée, she wasn’t

a virgin when I met her. I would've married her. She was the one who broke it off, not me."

Cait stared at the ground with a doubtful frown.

"We need to get back to work," she finally said with a troubled sigh.

Brian stood and followed her. He almost laughed at the sad irony that he was in danger of losing the love of his life because he was still a virgin.

CAIT WAS ALMOST morose for the next hour or so. Brian tried to make casual conversation but she replied with grunts or non-answers.

She was devastated by Brian's admission. She had known that he was much too good for her but she hadn't realized just how good he was. And this was an area where she couldn't get better. Virginity was a bell that couldn't be unring. She was a fallen woman and she always would be. Brian couldn't ever truly love her, not for keeps.

Cait glared at the weed she was trying to uproot. It was a lot like her past. The roots had gone down so deep that she would never get rid of it. There would always be a stubborn remnant that broke off and sent another shoot upward to show its ugly head.