

# **SONNET COUPLED**

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Free Preview Chapter



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*For Mark M. Miller, who took advantage of teaching moments.*

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## **SONNET COUPLED**

## Chapter One

The push tacks on the staffroom bulletin board wouldn't stay in. Sonnet Mendoza wrestled with one then secured the "ROOMMATE NEEDED" ad she'd written. Insurance had paid off the house after her dad had died, but living alone had taken its toll. If she got hurt or fell while alone, no one would know. The neighborhood was okay, but the nearby Chicago areas crawled with gangs and were infested with crime. She roused at the slightest sounds at night and doublechecked the locks. It was time for a change.

She straightened the notice and walked back to triage. First stop after returning from her break was Mr. Gonzales. The monitor showed his heart rate had climbed to a scary number. She hadn't thought his vitals could have skyrocketed any higher, but he proved her wrong. She jotted the information on her clipboard and prepared to take him straight back to the ER.

All in all, it had been a decent shift. She had good rapport with most patients who came through, and she had managed to be on the ball and quick on her feet. Not bad for a first week.

A shadow loomed in the doorway, and the second she looked up, a long-since secured door inside her busted wide open as she feasted her eyes on the finest male specimen she'd ever seen.

To say this guy won the genetic lottery would be putting it mildly. His security uniform molded around prominent, hard-earned muscles. She noted the holstered sidearm, and caught the whiff of fresh, polished leather. She swallowed. Why did the butch smell always make her think of sex?

He was tall. His head stopped just a few inches below the doorway; he stood with his back erect, his jawline set while his gaze scanned the area around him before it settled on her. Damn. Dark, clean-cut hair framed an almost boyish, sensitive face, were it not for the high cheekbones and intense blue eyes, which assessed her in return. A concentrated expression schooled his features as he focused on her, and she could tell he was one of those guys who hit the gym at zero dark thirty each morning, drank protein shakes, and prided himself on his perfect body.

She smiled professionally even though her body was suggesting otherwise. "Can I help you, officer?"

"Yes, ma'am." His voice was deep and sexy, and her insides grew hot. "Are you Nurse Mendoza?"

"Yes." Uh-oh. Why was he looking for her? It was one thing to admire the man, quite another to think he'd tracked her down.

"Dr. MacIntyre wants to speak with you in his office when you're done."

"Okay." Whew, a legit inquiry. "I'm sorry, I don't think we've met. You *are*?" She'd gotten used to Max, the older, seasoned officer who'd greeted her throughout her first week. If she had to deal with Robocop from now on, however hot he might be, it might make for a whole different experience at work. She wasn't sure she wanted the awkwardness of having to avoid ogling over the man.

He cleared his throat. "Officer Parker. Griffith. I'm the new security on graves. For a month, anyway, to fill in for the regular guard who's on extended leave. I'm here for the day to train with Max." He extended a large hand and she tilted her head to the blood pressure cuff still around Mr. Gonzales's arm, who grumbled about it being too tight.

"My hands are a bit busy, but it's nice to meet you." She offered a polite nod to Mr. Gonzales with the sky-high blood pressure as she removed his arm cuff. "Let's get you back to get examined,

sir.” She glanced at Officer Parker. “Tell Dr. MacIntyre I’ll be there after I take Mr. Gonzales to his room.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

She laughed. “Sonnet, not ma’am. This isn’t the military. Thanks for letting me know.” He nodded and left.

She helped Mr. Gonzales stand, and watched Officer Parker walk away. Well, at least he’d work a different shift. That *take me now*, body-of-a-stallion physique was a distraction and a half she didn’t need, no matter how professional she might be.

Ten minutes later, she sat in Dr. MacIntyre’s office. The name plaque on his desk proclaimed him Chief of Medicine at Medrow Medical Center. This was the first time she’d spoken to him, though she always passed his massive portrait in the lobby when she got off her shift.

“Know why I pulled you from triage?”

Sonnet met his glare across the desk. He was a grizzled man with salt-and-pepper hair. His sharp green eyes scrutinized her with a direct curiosity.

“No, Dr. MacIntyre.”

He leaned forward in his chair. “You must have an inkling. Come on, sharp kid like you? Give me your best guesstimate. Hypothesize with that big brain.”

Sonnet scratched behind her ear, careful not to mess with her French braid. Her long, thick hair could be a nightmare to plait, but she’d done a decent job. Just one week in triage, and he’d pulled her into his office. God, had she screwed up already? Her nerves rabbited in every direction. *Calm down. Maybe he just wants to introduce himself.*

“D-did I put the wristband on the wrong way on the patient or—”

He shook his head. A smile tugged at the corners of his lips. The familiar way he regarded her roused her memory.

“You didn’t mess up, Sonnet.” He laced his fingers together. “I know you. Well, I knew your father. He served under me in the eighty-ninth airborne in Okinawa.” He opened a drawer, and slapped a thin file on the desk. She could see her name printed on an index label at the top. “I would’ve said hello before now, but I’m a busy man, and it didn’t dawn on me who you were until I saw your paperwork and put two and two together.” He gave her a paternal smile. “Now, you were about five the last time we met, and this was more than sixteen years ago, so I’m sure you don’t remember me. But I remember you said when you grew up you wanted to be—”

“A doctor.” She smiled. She did remember him, vaguely. He’d been at the battalion barbecues, and ranked high up, a colonel if she recalled right. “I wanted to be one for as long as I can remember.”

He nodded. “Is that still the case?”

She sat a little straighter, alert with the whiff of opportunity in the air. “Yes, sir. I want a career in medicine.”

“Good.” He flipped open her file, and her NCLEX-RN results and final exam scores from her nursing program were displayed. “Because I want to give you a real chance to obtain one. I

normally don’t bother, but I perused the transcripts from your BSN. Your scores are immaculate, and you’ve had continuous top-notch praise from mentors and evaluators. From what I’ve

observed these last few days, you seem to be quite bright and cool under pressure.” “Yes, sir, I am.” She blinked. *Stay calm, Sonnet.*

He considered her. “And what field are you interested in—internal medicine, surgery, obgyn?”

“Neurosurgery.”

“A neurosurgeon, hmm? You want to crack open a cranium and see what’s in people’s noggins, eh?” He paused, and his lips twisted in amusement. Dr. MacIntyre struck her as illtempered but someone who meant well, like a cranky cat who longed for attention but didn’t know quite how to seek it. He leaned forward and interlaced his fingers on the desk. “I heard about what happened to Julio. I’m sorry, he was a good man.”

She pressed her lips together and bottled the still-fresh pain. It had been almost a year since she’d lost her dad, and some wounds took a long time to heal. “Thank you.”

Dr. MacIntyre grunted. “Now, listen, there are some things you need to know about me and this facility. The first, I’m one crusty old bastard, and just because I know you, it doesn’t mean I’ll go easy on you in the ER. Between you and me, half the staff hates my guts because I’m brutal with them, but I’m *damn* good at what I do and I’m committed to providing the best possible care for our patients. When it’s crunch time I won’t be lenient or soft. That’s not how I do things. I expect efficiency and dedication. Still, I’d like to give you the opportunity to prove yourself here. If you can show us what you’re made of and do well, in six months I’ll do an evaluation, one-on-one. Based on the evaluation”—he looked her square in the eye—“I’ll contact colleagues at Johns Hopkins in Maryland. I’ll talk to them about a placement for you in their medical program and a possible scholarship.”

Sonnet’s insides leaped for joy, but she kept her features schooled. “It’s a wonderful opportunity, Dr. MacIntyre.” She kept her excitement banked and struggled to keep calm. This was *exactly* what she’d hoped for—a chance. It was hard to get into medical school, and most medical students racked up about a hundred thousand dollars at the least in student loans. “Thank you. I’ll work very hard, and I won’t disappoint you.”

He unlocked his computer screen and studied a spreadsheet for a moment. “Now, schedulingwise, I want you to work under Avani Singh, our head nurse. She’s the best of the best. But she works nights, so I’ll need to switch you from the shift you’re on now to graves, which is our busiest time here. The shift is from Monday nights to Friday mornings, four tens. Everyone always works overtime when needed. Can you work graves?”

“Absolutely.” She didn’t hesitate. She’d never worked all night, but she was young and her body could adjust.

“Good. I’ll send Avani an email and copy your charge nurse on it. This will happen fast, so I suggest you ready yourself.”

“I will, sir. Thank you.” She stood as he did, and shook his hand. “Good luck, Sonnet.”

\* \* \* \*

Medrow Medical Center had been built with one purpose in mind: the comfort and well-being of the patients. The state of the art equipment and furniture were all carefully chosen and placed. The ER where Sonnet worked was clean and clinical, but the main entrance seemed more like a comfortable, warm hotel with two large, ornate fireplaces and the live baby grand piano, which staff volunteers played on their time off.

Sonnet strode past the warm decor, and opted to take the long way out to her car so she could let everything that happened earlier today sink in. The chips were all falling into place at last.

*I could be a surgeon here someday.*

“This is it, *Papi*,” she whispered as she headed out. He’d always spoken about the one chance that would come when she least expected it, and he was right. *You have to seize it, Sonnet. The second it comes. You’ll know when it does. Some people get one shot in their whole life to make their mark. I want to see you make yours.*

She fingered the little amethyst ring on her right hand, the birthstone he’d given her the year before he died. He’d raised her to be dedicated to her family and school, and she’d always aimed to make him proud. She had an obsessive, bone-deep desire to make her mark in the world, to contribute, and not be just another sheep in the flock, and she’d do it. Not just for *Papi*, but for herself.

Out in the parking lot, she unlocked her car. The dark green sedan was beat up and long past its prime, but it ran. It had clocked over 100,000 miles, and she needed to get it serviced and have the oil changed soon. Her dad had always handled it, but in the last year she’d learned how to keep its care up-to-date. Sometimes she had to work to get the car started, but so far so good. She turned on the radio as she pulled into the five o’clock traffic. She sang along, and smiled at the prospect of Dr. MacIntyre’s offer.

It’d been a bumpy path after her father passed away, but Sonnet had come to a few realizations about the world around her, and about adulthood: One, being on your own sucks. She used to complain her dad hovered way too much, but she missed the bliss and comfort, the freedom that total ignorance had given her in her youth. He had handled everything, and even tended *Abuela Graciela*’s vegetable garden after she’d passed on. Two, no one wants to listen to you whine. It was a harsh lesson to learn. Her overprotective father had allowed her to be open with her emotions, and they came as easy as breathing. But all that gushing had no place in the adult world. Three, she’d been forced to grow up, and now she felt like a woman. She was proud of what she had accomplished and was rewarded for her efforts by the open and positive attitude people conveyed when they saw her in her scrubs.

She stopped in the neighborhood grocery store to get a few essentials and food, and then made her way home. The house was modest, clean, and compact in a family-centric neighborhood, as long as you didn’t travel too far outside it. She stepped inside and locked the dead bolt, then set the groceries on the kitchen table.

“I’m home,” she announced to no one.

She’d given some thought to adopting a shelter dog. She was allergic to cats, and the logical choice would be to have a pet that could alert her if there was an intruder, a possibility she’d become more paranoid about at night. But when the RN job at Medrow Medical had come through, she felt it wouldn’t be fair to a dog to be alone all day, never get walked or have someone to play with.

No, she needed a roommate. The house was paid for; her dad’s life insurance had been enough to settle the mortgage, so the bills were thankfully low. She’d even begun to pay back her student loans. What she needed was someone there to quell the loneliness that seeped its way into her heart. It didn’t matter who became her roomie, as long as they were decent and good. She went out dancing with her girlfriends on the weekends, but for the most part, she was straight-laced and devoted to her studies.

Sonnet poured hot water from an electric kettle into her favorite *Star Wars* mug filled with cocoa powder. She smiled at a framed picture of *Abuela Graciela*, a beautiful, silver-haired old beauty from Argentina who passed away three years ago. Sonnet’s mother had hemorrhaged



delivering Sonnet in childbirth, and after her grandfather died, Graciela immigrated to the States to live with her dad to help raise Sonnet.

“I got some good news today, *Abuela*,” she told the picture in Spanish. “You’d be proud. I’m going to be a surgeon, just like you said I would.”

After she perused the Johns Hopkins website on her laptop for a good hour, she took a long shower and washed the day away. Then she changed into soft pajamas, nuked a Lean Cuisine with frozen veggies, and grabbed a Malbec from the fridge.

The oven and stove weren’t working, the clothes dryer was broken, and the garbage disposal died a week ago. Since her new position in triage started, she hadn’t been able to schedule anyone to come out to fix her appliances, so she hung her clothes out to dry and avoided the stove and oven as much as possible.

She slipped *Avatar* into the Blu-ray player and sat on the couch. Shifts after the hospital brought about the strange need to watch movies with vibrant color, and *Avatar* had it in spades. It would be hard to explain why to anyone who didn’t work in the medical field, but the vivid color warmed her senses, and reawakened her emotions after being in a sterile environment for so long. It relaxed her.

She ate, and imagined what it would be like to go to Johns Hopkins one day. She’d need to order some more anatomy books and read up on neurological chemistry so she could be ahead of the game.

As the movie went further along and the main hero tested out the new powerful muscles in his Avatar body, her thoughts drifted to Officer Parker and his chiseled arms. The way they flexed beneath his uniform, which hugged his body like a jealous lover. She found herself squirming on the sofa. She hadn’t been this sexually charged in years, and she’d just met him.

Sonnet had never told her dad, but the first time she had sex was right after she turned eighteen. The guy had been another army brat in her senior class, the sergeant major’s jock son who looked like a young Denzel Washington. In the high school she went to on base, all the girls wanted to sleep with him and the guys wanted to *be* him.

When he prowled toward her at a party one night, her brain and common sense flew out the window. Deep in the fog of lust and flattery, coupled with spiked punch from the party, she’d made a mistake. An *enjoyable* mistake, but a mistake nonetheless. He’d worn a condom, but she regretted not giving her virginity to someone who cared about her. He’d all but tossed her aside the second they were done, and she’d gone home and cried herself to sleep.

Since that night, she’d focused on her studies and put men on the back burner. She swore not to get involved with anyone until she got squared away, as *Papi* would say, with school.

No matter how much she wanted to lie to herself and believe she had no attraction to Officer Parker, she couldn’t. He oozed primal sensuality; a blatant, sexual intelligence in the way he moved, the way his eyes raked over her. Sure, she had him tabbed as a guy who loved himself way too much, but what could a fantasy hurt to get him out of her system?

She reached beneath the sofa and pulled out a plain metal box she kept hidden away. She unlatched the clasp, and with fluttering nerves, she looked at the natural-colored vibrator inside. She’d bought it six months ago through a discreet mail order service on a night when she was desperate and lonely.

Sonnet knew she could have a boyfriend or a lover if she wanted one, but relationships required work. *Men* were work, and she needed to stay focused on her career, especially now with medical school as a viable prospect.

But it didn't mean she lacked sexual desire. She extracted the vibrator and gulped. She shouldn't feel guilty—she *was* an adult, after all. There was no shame in accommodating her body's needs in the absence of a man who could. Yet, the few times she used it always brought about mixed emotions, as if giving herself pleasure was in some odd way...cheating.

She put the movie on mute. She closed her eyes as she turned on the vibrator. She slid off her pajama bottoms and panties, spread her legs, and touched her soaked sex. Her pussy had already started to throb when she pictured Officer Parker. What did he say his name was? Grant? Graham? Before now, there had been no imaginary lover for her mind to focus on during occasions like these, just the ghost of a man with a great body and hard cock, sculpted to fit her and take her. But all she could see now was Parker. *His face, his body.*

"Griffith," she whispered, and slid the tip against her clit. She slouched back against the couch, and let her body relax as a pleasant tingle shot through her. She lay out and stretched on her back like a cat bathed in sunshine. She moved the vibrator between her pussy lips as her imagination took over. A sigh escaped her and she palmed her breast beneath her pajama top. She kneaded it and rolled her nipple between her thumb and forefinger. His ghost mouth closed around it, laved it, sucked it.

Desire took over. She pushed inside her tight, slick walls, clenched her thighs around the whirring vibrator, and imagined him there. She moaned, and moved it deeper. "Yes, Griffith. Ay, *qué rico.*"

She closed her eyes as she concocted a fantasy in her mind...

*She lay on a soft blanket in the sand, beneath the shade of a palm tree on a sunny beach. He was there with her, over her as he kissed her. He took their entwined hands and raised them above her head on the blanket. He held her wrist as he pulled down her bikini top with his teeth and latched onto her right nipple. Sonnet placed her free hand on his hair and looked at him as he moved aside her black bikini bottom and filled her with his fingers. He sucked her nipple with tender care, and met her eyes as he glided in and out.*

*He took her left breast in his palm, and licked around the areola.*

*"That feels good." She bucked her hips as his fingers drove into her. "I want you, Griffith."*

*He sat back on his knees, his fingers still inside her. He was naked, and his hard, muscular body glistened and flushed with arousal. He cupped his balls and watched her with bedroom eyes. A strand of dark hair fell into his face. "Soon. Let me look at you." He started to pump himself with his free hand. His long cock jutted out, hard for her. He thrust deep, and curled his fingers inside her just right. She cried out as her release came. Her juices flowed over his hand.*

*"Take me," she pleaded.*

*Griffith sucked her essence off his fingers as he watched her. He licked every last drop and moaned. "You taste amazing."*

*"I want you inside," she begged.*

*He nodded, moved over her body, and supported himself on his hands to either side of her head. "Guide me."*

*His low, sexy tone was enough to make her come again from the mere sound. She closed her fingers over his hard cock, and lined the head at her entrance.*

*"Sonnet." Her name spilled from his lips with reverence. When he surged forward and filled her with his cock, there was more to it than just the pleasure, a hidden depth beneath it she longed*

*to explore. But then he moved within her, and the ridges of his cock hit every nerve ending. He pulled back and surged forward, and built a rhythm between them to both punish and please.*

*He kissed her open mouth, and twined his tongue with hers. She held onto his back and dug in for purchase as he took her. He thrust hard and deep, only to pull back and plunge into her again, and again. Her body soared.*

*“Yes!”*

*His hands clutched beneath her thighs, lifted them up, and he hit her back wall. She came for the second time. He collapsed against her, and nuzzled his nose into the crook of her neck. Sonnet wrapped her arms and legs around him, and sighed happily.*

*The splash of nearby waves carried on the gentle breeze, and she turned her head as a light turquoise blue tide came in. It caressed the white sand beneath it like a sated lover. Dappled sunlight cast mosaic patterns on the shallow ocean floor, and she stroked his hair.*

Sonnet opened her eyes, amazed at how real the fantasy had felt. Yeah, it was great to have had the sexual release, but now Griffith Parker was in her head.

She sat up, and adjusted her pajamas. She felt sated but jumpy. The movie had ended, and the intro montage looped until she turned it off. Gooseflesh rose on her arms. She rubbed them for warmth, walked over to the thermostat, and turned on the heater. The furnace made a crackling sound from the basement as it switched to life, and she looked around the room, worried. The house tended to creak and settle in the evening, and it freaked her out, especially when she awoke in the middle of the night.

She checked the front door to make sure it was locked and went to bed alone.

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