



The Telling

Eden Winters

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Time in Iraq cost Michael Ritter some of his hearing and a friend whose death he feels responsible for. He'd left Alabama hoping to escape a dull, small-town life, only to return four years later, lugging a duffle full of personal demons.

Cookesville, Alabama isn't the most welcoming place on earth, particularly for a gay, Hispanic student wanting nothing more than to earn his degree and get back home to Texas. An image of a somber young man that he knows only by name and the stories told by an adoring sister comes to life when Michael returns home, just as Jay is already half-way to losing his heart.

Michael's biggest battle lies ahead, and he'll need all the help he can get to find his way in a world where he no longer fits in. Jay's not sure where he fits either, but it could be next to the war-torn soldier who needs his strength.

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The Telling Details

Date : Published June 30th 2013 by Rocky Ridge Books (first published 2009)

ISBN : RCKRDG0000

Author : Eden Winters

Format : ebook 195 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, War, Military Fiction, Contemporary

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From Reader Review The Telling for online ebook

Purplegirl says

This was such a sweet story. I couldn't put it down until I finished. Jay was so patient with Micheal during his time dealing with PTSD. The story was sweet, romantic and had some humor. Since it was free, it was even better:)

Mark says

[

My favourite bits / characters; I loved Angie,

Betryal says

Reading two stories in a row which involved war I think is really starting to mess with my head. Michael is the war veteran in this case and his fears from that experience in Iraq tramples him into the ground, but with Jay's love and support he overcomes the majority of it to deal with, move forward and just Be among his everyday life. He's living again. There's so many parts that I applauded his courage.

Even though this story is not so angsty (Not giving a shite if this is a word or not) I had expected it to be, but was otherwise not and it was a languid story full of heart and feeling.

There's only one problem I had with this book though was, and because I am anal about this, it had type-o errors that I'd easily caught. Shame on her editor for not catching the boo boos cause they are bleeding Hell. I still have another of Eden's to read and I won't let this deter me from it.

A.B. Gayle says

I enjoyed this story, but what really lifted it to 5 stars was the excellent depiction of the sessions with the therapist. There is an element of the hurt/comfort in the rest of the story, but this is nothing like that. It's helping someone really see what's going on in their lives. Helping them see situations from a different angle so they can make sense of them. While the sessions were dealing with PTSD and an abusive step-father, the lessons learned could be applied to all sorts of instances where life feels like it is spiralling out of control or when people or situations have hurt you.

Highly recommended for that section alone.

The only thing I didn't like? The prying, possessive, interfering sister.

Would I be tempted to detract a star? No, because it's the author's right to create characters like that. Lol. No

matter how well meaning she was and how much she loved her brother, she's just lucky she's not MY sister!

Cole Riann says

I've read most of Eden Winters later books now, and after reading *The Telling* I was very pleased to see how much her writing has improved since she started. I can see now that her writing was already at a high level, and I really loved *The Telling*. Despite the heavy subject (Michael's PTSD and post-military career), the focus of the story is on healing, love, and redemption; and despite the POV being from within the muck of depression, it is never pitying, yet full of hope. Michael and Jay are wonderful characters. I only wish I could have gotten to know Ryan better, though that would have been even more heartbreakingly.

This is one of the best free-reads time can buy.

Kassa says

I first heard of *The Telling* as a free book offered by the author to get to know her writing. Not only intrigued but curious, I downloaded a free copy. After having read *The Wish* I wanted to see what else this author could offer. *The Telling* is very similar in writing style and tone to *The Wish* and I hesitate to make bold statements after just two books but Winters' writing seems to be languid, affecting, and poignant. There is a gentle ease to this story that draws readers in to the emotionally battered characters and their struggles. The romance factor is very high and I even whelled up with tears once or twice as the book has an emotional impact for sure. I'm surprised this is a free read because it's really that good. If you're looking for a book to introduce you to a very good author, check it out.

As the summary says, the story is about a small town Alabama boy Michael that is back after four years in the military. He may be physically ok, minus hearing from one ear leading to his discharge, but emotionally he's still coping with the horror and tragedy of his time in Iraq. His very real struggles are helped with a surprising attraction to Jay, a Mexican student from a huge family with a big heart and a lot of compassion. With Jay's help, Michael not only slowly starts to heal but discovers his sexuality.

The story itself is very sweet with a languid pace to the writing. There are a few moments that get your heart racing or eyes tearing but these few scenes are dramatic rather than action filled. The characters drive the story with their relationship and emotional struggles. Jay is not quite perfect as an engineering student that falls in love with the image and stories about Michael long before he meets the man in person. Jay's help and support is crucial to Michael as he starts to make small inroads into his PTSD. Michael is wonderful as a slightly broken young man dealing with a slew of emotions over his past actions and the death of a very close friend. He also knows he's gay but hasn't really acted on the knowledge until his attraction to Jay motivates him.

The two men move around each other in a slow, lovely dance that culminates in a bit of instant love but their depth of emotion and commitment is understandable given the background. They have a very strong connection and the story offers a lot of hope and romance between them. Their interactions are the core of the story while each has a strong family that supports them. Here the story stays with Michael's emotional problems as the biggest conflict and neither man experiences much outside condemnation though it's hinted at. Most of the negative reaction is centered around one man who becomes the sole figure of opposition to

Jay and Michael's newfound love. This is a bit one sided but given how much Michael struggles, I didn't want him to deal with additional town issues so this choice is fine.

The story tends to lean slightly on sappy sweet in a few places and Jay comes across a little too good to be true for the most part while both families are strong support. The dialogue can be stilted in a few places and some actions are obviously contrived – the scene with Michael and Angie with Jay in the bedroom for example – but these are all minor issues that won't affect reader enjoyment. For the most part, *The Telling* offers an absorbing gentle journey filled with emotional hurdles and a strong happy ending. It's free so there's no excuse not to familiarize yourself with the good writing of Eden Winters.

Cindi says

4.5 stars

Anyone who has read any of my reviews knows that I am hesitant to read anything based in the south, especially Alabama as it is the state I live in (born and raised). Very rarely does an author get the dialogue right. One of my biggest pet peeves is southern speak. As I have said many MANY times, it's fine to hear it but not to see it in a book because it comes across as making the characters look stupid. Thankfully that is not the case in this book. The author may have based the story in a small Alabama town but in no way did she make us seem slow or backwards.

With that being said, I will say that I seriously enjoyed this book. Michael is back in his small Alabama hometown after recently being discharged from the military after experiencing a tragic experience in Iraq. The experience left him with PTSD that leaves him terrified of open spaces and with some hearing loss. His sister picks him up from the airport and takes her back to her place where he meets Jay as well as a host of other characters. There is instant attraction between Michael and Jay though no one knows that Michael is gay. He has only recently admitted it to himself. It was a pleasure watching Michael and Jay find their way together. Jay is the ultimate character. Michael suffers panic attacks as a result of his PTSD and Jay is calm and supportive and helps him through them. It doesn't take long for the two of them to get together and the relationship happens rather quickly but it did not seem rushed to me at all.

The secondary characters were also good though the sister got rather annoying at times because she treated Michael more like a child than the adult that he is. I loved their mother. I was expecting some homophobia especially considering the setting of the book. There was some (mainly by one individual) but the book wasn't completely saturated with it. There are a few scenes that got me a little teary as was expected considering the subject.

Overall a really good story. Thanks to the author for offering this free. I look forward to reading the second one.

Deeze says

While I enjoyed this story I never quite felt myself as drawn to the characters as I expected.

I think I went into this one expecting much more angst or emotional issues, and while there were certainly times I needed my tissues handy, overall it was a much more slow and gentle read.

Barb ~rede-2-read~ says

I enjoyed this story. It was a very heartwarming story of the healing that happened for Michael, an Iraq war veteran, disabled and discharged after a roadside attack which left one of his best friends dead and his gay partner devastated.

Michael meets Jay when he returns to his hometown and together they work toward healing his past. That's a very simplified version of the story, it's much more complex and really touched me deeply for personal reasons.

It always amazes me that some of the free stories like this one are much better than some others I've paid for. I recommend this to anyone looking for a nice love story with lots of hurt/comfort healing.

Jenre says

Michael returns from Iraq a broken man. On one hand he's full of embarrassment for his medical discharge due to loss of hearing in one ear, and on the other he's full of sorrow and guilt over the death of a close friend in a convoy raid. He returns to the small Alabama town where his mother and sister are living, determined to stay for a short while and then move on. On his first day back he meets Jay, a gay Hispanic man, who is studying at the local college. Michael is attracted to Jay, but thinks he has too many issues to deal with, as well as only recently realising that he is gay, to start a relationship with Jay. However, Jay is a kind and compassionate man who, for his own reasons, is willing to wait for Michael to resolve those issues, as well as support him during his recovery from PTSD.

There was much to like about this gentle story of loss and recovery. First and foremost were the strong lead characters of Michael and Jay. Michael's condition manifests itself as strong agoraphobia, especially when he is in a place surrounded by lots of people and noise as this leads to intense flashbacks and panic attacks. I thought the way that this was portrayed in the book both heartbreakingly and realistic. I felt for Michael, felt all his anger and frustration at what he sees as weakness, felt for his low self esteem as he battles with every day tasks and finds even walking down the streets of his home town impossible, felt for his embarrassment when his friends and family see him having an attack. Yet underpinning this is his great guilt over the death of his friend who died sitting in a position in a convey where Michael would usually have sat. This guilt casts a pall over his memories of the war, and fills him with such sadness that it's hard for him to move on. As well as coping with his guilt and PTSD, Michael is also struggling slightly with the realisation that he is gay, and that he needs to come out to his family. All of this may sound like Michael's character, and thus the story, is rather heavy going. Actually, I didn't find this the case at all. Yes, when you list Michael's problems, there does seem like there's a lot for him to overcome, but the story had a lightness of touch which, whilst

never dismissing or belittling Michael's problems, prevented the story from wallowing in a mire of misery.

Partly, this was due to the relationship Michael has with Jay, firstly as friends and then more. Jay, too, has his problems, first and foremost being a Hispanic man in a town of nearly all white people, and living as an 'out and proud' gay man in the bible belt of the USA. However, he sees the wounded Michael and his heart breaks for him. All through the book, Jay is there for Michael, helping him cope with life through little thoughtful gestures such as closing the blinds on a balcony to keep it enclosed, or rescuing Michael from more predatory gay men, or holding Michael through his panic attacks. It was this beautiful, tender and caring relationship which won over my heart in the story as I was absorbed in watching them meet, overcome a few difficulties, get together, cement their feelings and fall in love. Marvellous.

The other characters in the book are well drawn too. I especially liked Michael's free-thinking, flighty mother and his PTSD councillor whose wise words which rang with experience helps Michael immensely.

Although this book doesn't shy away from the harsh realities of war, and of the tragedy for both the survivors of war and the friends and families of causalities, this is essentially a book about hope and moving away from tragedy into a brighter future. I enjoyed it a great deal and would recommend this book to anyone looking for a sweet, gentle romance with the theme of the redeeming power of love.

Monique says

This is an emotional and traumatic story of a young man broken by war and so desperately alone, who finds the love he needs to help put the pieces back together in the place he was only too eager to escape from four years earlier...3.5 stars

This is an emotional read and the author has done a great job of endearing the reader to the mental and emotional trauma this young man Michael experiences after being rejected by the Army... with four years in Afghanistan, he had fulfilled his patriotic duty.

He had survived an attack which left him deaf in one ear, he is debilitated by nightmares caused by PTSD which also leaves him scared of his own shadow... and now no longer a fighting machine but a liability, Michael is now surplus to requirements... But he was alive, which is more than could be said of so many others including his best friend.

Not only is Michael dealing with the baggage of four years service, he is also confused about his sexuality... The Army's DADT policy pretty much put those inclinations on the back burner, but one night of mutual compassion and consolatory grief, turns the whole thing on its head and it's just another battle he is fighting internally.

Four years ago, Michael had left the small town of Cookesville, Alabama a young boy, running away and wanting to see the World. He wanted to escape from the life that was expected of him... the teenage marriage, that was sooo not going to happen, the small minded bigotry of the town folk and the abusive stepfather that did his best to make Michael's life a misery. It was also the only way he was ever going to have enough money to see himself through college.

Now returning home, he is wrapped up in the exuberant love of his family, with his Mother and sister Angie both a force to be reckoned with, they go about taking care of him, just so happy to have him back home and

alive. It is through Angie he meets the tall dark and handsome Jay, with his southern drawl, he was drawn to Jay as though he were under a spell he couldn't quite fathom... but his body was definitely getting the gist!

We get to see their romance develop from both points of view, which was a little frustrating at times as we are aware of both their insecurities and I just wanted to shout at them and say "get on with it!" but where is the story in that?

Michael is broken, damaged both mentally and physically. He is afraid of leaving the sanctuary of his apartment needing someone with him at all times in case of anxiety attacks. Jay's easy going personality, and great compassion make him recognise his feelings for what they are and deep down he knows what he wants... never mind how fucked up his life is, he wants Jay. But wanting Jay means he will have to deal with coming out of the "closet" and admitting not only to himself but to his family and those in the town that are narrow minded enough to voice their views, non more so than his Stepfather Crawford Shiller who had traumatised him to the point of fear for most of his childhood.

It was lovely seeing the experienced Jay taking the very inexperienced Michael under his wing and just love him, it truly is a beautiful love story filled with passion and understanding with Jay taking him through the intimacy slowly wanting the experience to be unforgettable whilst still embracing Michael with the care and compassion he still needs. Michael for the first time in his life feels complete, really knowing that his feelings are true and the great void of loneliness that had been suffocating him was now filled with the love of this honest, fun loving man...

There are some great characters in this book, and I liked how they all took an active role in Michaels recovery, there is a theme of the importance of family and friends... the love and support both given and received and how they too are emotionally affected by the traumas of war.

My only issue with the book was with the pacing, slow in parts where we are given some of the background and at times where it returns to the ravages of Afghanistan... I found myself skipping in parts, which is something I hate doing... I wanted more on the relationship! But other than that it was a very believable and enjoyable read.

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Alex says

Overall:

A well-paced, unfolding story of a war veteran trying to overcome his demons and discover who he is, and the young man who helps guide him on his journey. Everything felt realistic and tasteful while dealing with difficult topics. The bedroom scenes were well written and appropriate for Michael's state of mind, a matter Winters always kept in mind.

What I liked

Emotions. If Jay hadn't had a long-standing crush on Michael's picture, then the relationship between the two men would never have worked. Because he did, his feelings and actions were more believable, cementing a support system for Michael.

Struggles. I enjoyed their small miscommunications/misunderstandings in the beginning that caused a little strife but didn't linger. As the story developed, so did the problems, most of them resulting from Michael's innerself, but also realistic things like coming out and Jay's looming graduation.

Moments. Michael isn't completely broken, but he's not completely stable either. Winters did an excellent job of keeping the balance by using little moments (like when he wakes in the morning) to show the random terror he feels in life. He also experiences larger fears (being outside in the open), which are continued as bigger issues that become hurdles for him to overcome.

What didn't work

Pathos. While I liked the characters, there was no real depth of plot to make me extremely attached to them. When something happened to one, I felt a twinge of sadness, but not much else. I don't think this is necessarily a terrible thing, but it is the weakest point of the novel.

Heller says

A sweet story about a just returned 22yo veteran and his sister's best friend. Very likeable characters with a bit of angst that adds a bit of bite to the romance.

Fani *loves angst* says

3 stars

The first half was very promising indeed, seducing me with themes like PTSD, tortured heroes, deep infatuation and a lovely blond hero who's in the closet and afraid to come out. I couldn't wait to read more and find out how they solve all their issues, when it became apparent that no conflicts would be bothering any of them :(Every problem that appeared was solved easily and promptly, as was the next and the next... until the HFN in the end. Completely anticlimactic -even sugary- considering the opening, which unfortunately is not my style.

But man, were those two right for each other :)

All in all, a nice read, but it needed a bit more drama/tension IMHO to keep the reader's interest engaged.

M'rella says

I really feel bad giving it 2 stars. BUT:

- I could not connect with the MCs. The narrations was dry, the interaction between the MCs was too easy: A student with a hero worship + a soldier with a PTSD in need of love and care = Uber Quick Instalove
- I am not usually the one to condemn love at first sight, but this one wasn't convincing even to me.
- Angie was annoying as hell; she set my teeth on edge every. single. time.
- The evil stepfather was extremely sketchy (literally)
- ...And so was the local playboy - Trevor? Terry?

- Ryan... plenty of him in the past, but he was brushed off many a time at the time of the narrative. Why was he even there? Nothing but a prop, like most (all) of the secondary characters here. I hoped and waited for him to show up in book two, but - nothing.

- Rainbow flags were everywhere (in 'spirit' at least). Everyone was sooooo tolerant and accepting and not in the least surprised about everybody else being gay. Except for the evil stepfather, of course, he was one ugly bastard with a foul mouth.

So, a number of things didn't work for me here. Once again - book's too short? I don't know :(I suspect it might be me, since everybody else loves it.
