



*The porcupine,  
whom we must  
handle gloved,  
may be respected,  
but is never loved.*

While walking down an old country “road” (Road? It was more like a pig trail through the woods) Saturday morning, I came face to thorn with this “flower”. I call it a flower because apparently, when the plant matures, it opens up and a beautiful flower emerges. If you look close enough at the top, you can see some of its true colors starting to push out.

Why are some plants covered with thorns? Some are poisonous; others have such a hard exterior, almost nothing can penetrate their thick skins. Why? I am told that thorns are nature’s way of protecting the fragile plant. The thorn is a defense mechanism, designed to shield the plant from those who would hurt it. The frail flower is hiding behind the thorns because it does not want to be hurt.

Does that sound familiar? Somebody hurts us, so what do we do? We build our walls, we display our thorns and we discourage others from getting too close. Why? We don’t want to be hurt again. We all have our own defense mechanisms, don’t we? I love me so much, I’ll isolate myself from those who might hurt me; Because, if I let you get too close, I might get hurt, or taken advantage of. If I let you see the “Real” me, I might get rejected. So, we go on hiding behind thick skins and thorns.

**We could learn some valuable lessons from this flower:**

1. We should allow our true colors to be seen. Let's permit the people we care about to see the "Real" us. We go through life feeling lonely, because we have isolated ourselves from the people who love us. Let's get real!
2. That difficult person in your life, (you know the one) may be suffering and really needs a friend. You may feel their thorns from time to time, but who knows, you might discover a new companion hiding behind their rough exterior.

**Something to think about:**

- The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night. He said, "The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth's winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness."
- Porcupine People—they have many good points, but you cannot get close to them.
- A friend is someone with whom you dare to be yourself.
- He who seeks a faultless friend is friendless.

Your friend with the thick, prickly exterior

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