

The Reunion -- *a case of revocable trust*

ONE

I looked at my cell phone/watch--It was only 5:48 p.m. *I could use a drink.*

Class of 1999 was, on the whole, a noisy flock. As I meandered away from the crowded cacophony of almost-forty-year-olds undulating, writhing flesh in their sundry attempts for purchase of a square foot of parquet flooring--or perhaps a pound of flesh--I felt several pairs of eyes on my backside. The open bar was crowded as well . . . Perhaps outside . . .

I reached my hand between suit jackets, slacks and dresses, trying not to be arrested for groping, and came away with an open bottle of *Chivas Regal*, not my favorite, but any port in a storm as they say . . . I used to know who *they* were . . . I pulled it away from the bar, midst "Heys!" and "Where you going with that?" from my fellow graduates and headed for the nearest exit.

Outside was hardly better. Small groups and couples had scrounged chairs and benches from the ballroom and were now lounging in the balmy July evening, catching up on the past twenty years--their successes, failures, children, divorces, travels, on and on . . .

As I searched for familiar faces, I made my way to the observation deck, two decks above the ballroom, found the hatchway door to a cylindrical shaft . . . more of a tube . . . complete with a short ladder. I had no reason to stop and chat; hell, I didn't remember any of these people. Twenty busy years, indeed!

A quick few steps upward found me on the flying bridge, then another few steps to the ship's railing; and there I sat

watching the last few remnants of a Saturday sun in July 2019. I felt the breeze from the Malibu, the rise and fall of the Pacific swells against the giant vessel, wondering why the hell I had come to this reunion.

Strange, isn't it, I thought. Most of the fellows I recognized enough to shake their hands here this evening--among them the jocks--and I actually only recognized them from name labels . . . Matt Wallis, Barry Franks, Allen Bergstrum (and maybe a few more)--were bullies, and I was a favorite target; most of the gals--Patti Brown, Gerri Kitchens, Roberta Cordero among them--shunned me twenty years ago as a bookworm or some even as a nerdy know-it-all.

Thinking back, I could never see myself as a know-it-all. I can't remember ever trying to show up any of my classmates. I probably weighed 135 pounds soaking wet, with my nose always in a book. My grades were always near the top of the class, but I made no big deal about it. I kept to myself back then. That's one trait I still prefer.

A bit different this evening. I had to inwardly smile to myself . . . no wonder I had a few pairs of eyes on my "six". I had changed quite a bit.

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Memories of my early school years took over and flooded through my mind as I prepared to take a swig of Chivas--it was worth a giggle or two. Let me take you back in time a score or more years. I was brought up as an only child in a happy, Christian home.

I was a bookworm, and not only that, but a little bit of a twerp as well. I had no spurt in height as most of my fellow classmates enjoyed. As I grew into puberty, I was, I suppose, like any typical bright-eyed kid, hormones beginning to suggest I was no longer a child, eyes as big as saucers when I caught glimpses of female anatomy that should have been covered with at least a strip of cloth.

I stayed at 5'1" from twelve years until almost fourteen years. Then in my fourteenth summer I spurted up to 5'6", and

by sixteen I reached 5'7" and weighed one hundred thirty-two pounds . . . and the jocks and their counterparts--the female clique--were murderous with their taunting and teasing. Today of course, it would be called bullying, then it was just good, clean fun. *Yeah, Right!*

My grades were at the top, I kept to myself, was slated to deliver the Valedictory Address but for circumstances I will describe a bit later. I suppose Sherri Foote took that spot. She would have done an exemplary job.

Dating? Seldom. My free time was spent on the water: surfing, fishing, or perhaps, sailing with the folks. Sure, I dated--several times in fact with Sherri Foote--fewer times with other young ladies, but as memory serves, always with proper decorum and respect.

I remember taking Sherri to the senior prom. I remember walking her to her door; when I hesitated, she asked me if I wanted to kiss her goodnight. I kissed her cheek and walked away . . . so, yes, I suppose the jocks were right . . . I was a nerd, spending most of my time studying, reading, fishing, sailing or surfing.

There was one incident . . . I'll unpack it here as it relates to much leading to our twenty year reunion . . .

In our junior year, I was just walking out of the cafeteria during lunch hour when I was surrounded by five or six girls--the popular crowd. One of them, Patti Brown, challenged me with, "Alan, you should take Roxy out. She'll be good to you." She pushed a laughing Roxanne DeVry toward me, "Won't you, Roxy?" Now, Roxanne was a very pretty girl in our class, but she was known to be extremely loose; had probably screwed every boy on campus--except me. Roxanne looked at me and said, "I don't know if I would or not . . . how big is your dick, Alan?"

Of course, the circle around me, including Roxy, broke into fits of laughter. Sherri was walking by at the time and stopped to watch. My face turned purple with embarrassment, I retorted with the only thing I could think of "You'll never know," and walked away.

Roxy's question became the most repeated snicker on campus. For the remainder of that year and all through my senior year it was voiced within my hearing scores of times, usually not to my face, but as an aside.

If Sherri was around, she would take my arm, and reprimand the offender . . . she was, in short, my guardian angel. But most of the time I dealt with the crude language myself. In fact, toward the end of the year, I told Sherri to please butt out; I would handle Roxanne myself. That seemed to upset her. She turned on her heel. We never spoke again.

Which brings us up to the present . . . the reunion.

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And again I ask myself, *Why are you here, Alan?* Preparing to take a first swig from my liberated bottle, I heard a metallic click, followed by a rustling sound. I set the bottle down and listened. Nothing. I started once again to raise the bottle, but I heard another metallic click, like perhaps, the latch on the hatchway door. Finally, a definite footstep on the ladder rung. I set the bottle down yet again. Someone was preparing to join me on the bridge? *Crap! No peace for the . . .*

"Alan! Alan, are you up there? Alan?"

. . . female voice, I think. Couldn't recognize it . . . but after twenty years?

"It's Roxanne. Remember me? Roxy DeVry."

A scrambled, vague series of bits and bytes began to gel in my brain. *Oh, sure, I remember you, Roxanne DeVry . . . The "how big is your dick?" Roxanne!* I thought. Strange voice though . . .

I shook my head, rose to my feet--expecting to walk across the bridge to the tubular shaft, reach down, assist my old, slut of a classmate up the ladder rungs. Instead, I was just in time to hear a muffled, gurgling sound, then a heavy *thump!*

No more words. Just a *thump*. Then, one last click as the latch closed.