

The Reunion

By June Bryan Belfie

It took every snippet of courage I had to drop the acceptance in the mail. Now I was committed. No way out. I could never afford to lose \$65.00 - just like that!

I had seven weeks and four days to turn myself into a glamorous, enticing woman. I was on my way to my high school's 20th reunion. The first one ever for me. And for a shy, overweight, unpopular divorcee, it was a biggie.

Things might have been different if Joe hadn't dumped me after ten years of marriage for that teeny-bopper who worked in his office. In fact, I doubt I would have spent that much on putting myself through the trauma of pasting a smile on my face to impress my ex-classmates, who I'm sure were wittier, richer, and far more successful than this rejected matron with three out-of-control kids.

My life changed completely! No more desserts, butter, or midnight binges. That was the immediate. I stuck a photo from my skinny days on the refrigerator and the kids posted reminders around the house on computer paper with phrases like, "Fats out—Skinny's in," or "Get a Grip—Slim that Hip."

Three days before this momentous occasion, I stepped on the scale. This was it. I weighed myself stark naked, first thing in the morning, after getting every drop of pee out. Ten pounds. I had done it! That afternoon I proudly headed for the size eight rack at the local boutique and tried on fifteen dresses. They fit! I purchased a black sexy-looking strapless gown marked down 50%, placed it in the trunk of my car, and headed to the mall to the hair stylist. A cut, color, and styling later, I made my way to the cosmetic department of Macy's and let the gorgeous gal behind the counter talk me into \$100.00 worth of facial transformers.

Shoes! I'd totally forgotten. I picked out a pair of black-strap heels—way too high, plus panty hose and headed home to feed my starving family.

The final day required a professional manicure—my first ever, and a dress rehearsal with my best friend as judge.

“You’ve done it, kid. You look positively gorgeous.”

“Yeah, right.” I posed in the full-length mirror and admitted that I wasn’t all that bad.

“So, how many are going to be there?”

“Probably a hundred or so.”

“Anyone special you’re trying to impress?”

I shrugged. “Not really. Just everyone who thought I was a loser.”

“Like everyone there.”

“Very funny.”

The dinner dance was held only ten miles from home, so I planned to leave a half hour ahead. Gave me more time to prepare. When I came down the stairs, the sitter and the kids were watching a movie.

“Wow!”

“Is that you, Mommy,” my four-year old asked, wide-eyed.

“Of course it’s Mom! Don’t be such a dope. She’s just beautiful now, that’s all.”

Eight-year-old Scottie smiled shyly at me.

The sitter yawned and asked what time I’d be home.

That first step into the hall was like the first step on the moon. What a shocker – everyone was so much older. And fatter. And balder. Good thing we had name tags. My best friend from school who came all the way from California spotted me first.

“Debbie, is that you? You look wonderful!” We grabbed each other and hugged and air-kissed, careful to avoid smearing.

“So do you,” I lied. Two other girls from our crowd came running over and everyone squealed and giggled like we were seventeen. I moved from one group to another, ‘oohing’ appropriately at kid photos.

I spotted him. David Pondermink. He sat at the bar, sipping a bloody Mary, and talking to a guy I didn't recognize. No wife by his side. Maybe she was away or dead. I made my way to the bar and ordered a coke.

"Well, look at you!" He checked my name tag furtively, and then smiled. The guy next to him took off and we were alone—well, except for about ninety others.

"Did you bring your husband?"

"I'm divorced. How about you?"

"I'm single, too. Any kids?"

Here came the clincher. Watch a guy take off when he hears you have three kids.

"Only three. And you?"

"Four. They live with their mother, for now."

What did that mean?

"Do you live nearby?" I asked, knowing full well that he lived five miles from my home.

"Yeah. Hey, maybe we should get together sometime,"

"Sure. How about next Saturday?" *Was that me talking?*

He laughed and tapped my glass with his drink. "You're on. Why not have a picnic with all the kids?"

That's not what I had in mind, but hey, why not?

My hand reached automatically for the cheese dip, but I pulled back just in time. After all that work and expense, I planned to stay "gorgeous" a little while longer.