

Coming Home



Author: Onkur

Contact: onkur5@yahoo.com

"How are you Jav?"

"Fine and you?"

"Just peachy", replied Nancy with a smile, the smile that killed Jav a few weeks ago. It happened so suddenly that there was no way even he could have ever prepared for it.

This is the same Jav who'd shy away from girls while at Dhaka University. Friends gave-up trying to open him up for some fun. But there was no girl on his horizon while in Bangladesh. Ever busy with his cricket-buddies, debate club, and of course studies, Mommy's boy did not leave any time for girls. Could have made someone very happy. Especially, that girl with the flowing-white ribbon, a few houses down the road from theirs in Dhanmondi. Still her slightly leaning silhouette with sad-serene eyes showering her gentle desire to get his attention bubbles his senses. The attraction was there, but it was just not the right time for him to be wrapped up.

After graduation, things happened rather quickly. As the only child of successful parents, there was no hurry to get into the work-force. Before long, there was this opportunity from ASU. He was not sure. But his parents saw this as something valuable for someone who is going to be at the

helm of their business. So, not even a few months passed, when he found himself buried in the daily drudgery of tasks, assignments, presentations and grades. There were no sports or debates. Only thing in his mind was - "How soon is it going to be over? I wanna be a homeboy back in my homeland with my home-buddies doing my home-stuff".



Then it happened.

He was in a bit of hurry with his report that needed to be on the Professor's desk by noon. If it were not for the accident on the 5th and Mill, he'd have been done with it by now. In the rush, he did not see the girl as he was cutting a corner. And there he was, suddenly tripping over an otherwise

unsuspecting Nancy's foot, all over the pavement, looking like a dork. That's how it all got started.

"Why did you have to trip me like that?"

"How else could I have found you?"

"I was hoping for a nice romantic encounter."

"I think that was the nicest. One day I'll laugh over this with my grand-son."

"How do you know it'll be a boy?"

"Girls know", says Nancy shaking her head, reflecting a mixture of profound silliness on her demeanor so universal that Jav wonders, didn't he see the same in women he knew on a distant land?



"Is it possible that I know this girl, from a different culture, only for a few weeks? Then how come it feels like an eternity?" wonders Jav.

It has only been a few months since Nancy came to the ASU campus from a dusty old town in the neighboring county. Her family owns a ranch nearby. Although there is a modest home on the ranch, usually they lived in town, partly because it was so close by. She is the 4th among seven siblings. Yes, it is a big family. Her parents always wanted a big family. They all came from closely-knit families of ranchers.

Like her brothers and sisters, Nancy was home-schooled till the 12th grade. A typical day for her is the typical day at the ranch. Wake-up early, tend to the animals, wash-up, study, help Mom around the house, study, food-prep, clean-up, study and back to ranch again. By the time dinner is over, usually everyone is dead tired.

Sundays were different. Her Dad made a point of gathering the herd around the bonfire for a hoedown. The herd included her family and, quite frequently, two of her uncles' from nearby. They'd retire after a round of marshmallow stick-ups and talent-shows among the gatherers. She knew that her Dad was a retired Marine, but not much more. After getting back from a service in Vietnam, he pretty much kept his mouth shut and was so passionate about living with the family that he never left the ranch. There was no shortage of information flow from around the globe, as her Dad made sure the children appreciated the things they were enjoying. Hard work gives you hard pleasure - a simple motto from Dad.



So, when she won a scholarship from ASU to study Social Sciences, her Dad was ecstatic. He came with her to this beautiful campus dorm to make sure things were in order. At the end of the day, when he left for the ranch, she broke down crying. Dad put his firm hand around her and said with his usual deep resonating voice,

"It's only two hours from here, just drive down there or give us a buzz and we'll be right over".

But did she feel a little crackle in his voice? Was there a lump in his throat while saying good-bye? A few minutes' later passersby were surprised at finding a middle aged hunk overcome with emotions in his truck in the parking lot.

She spent most of the weekends with family at the ranch. Parties at the dorm were not her style. Knowing that she did not have a sweet-heart back at the ranch, even some of her close friends wondered if she's normal. Then one spring-morning with the sun at its full desert-glory, a strange young man from a distant land came out of nowhere to catch the tip of her cowboy boot. The rest is, what they say, history.

She was surprised at how quickly her family accepted Jav. Dad even made her a bit jealous with the way he treated Jav. Last weekend Jav sweet-talked a horse out of its rowdiness. Now, that was a shocker. She did not say it, but she thinks Jav is a natural.

Some of her cousins are leaving the ranch now-a-days. She noticed a sense of embarrassment in them, whenever they had to mention their ranch background. But not Jav. In fact, it's just the opposite. There is a sense of fulfillment in him. He mentioned that his Dad is the son of a proud farmer who never forgot his roots. Him and her, two from vastly different cultures, yet, made for each other.

"We're gonna have a big family", says Jav.

"Oh no. One is fine."

"No, it isn't and stop rolling your eyes. Your kids will be cross-eyed", quips Jav.

"Not kids... say kid.. and cross-eyed or not, he'll be my guiding light", she says again with the disarming smile that started it all.

He remembered THAT SMILE as he was trying to get himself oriented on the pavement on the day his defenses came down crashing along with him - a young girl with an extra-ordinary smile giving him her hand. Why did she have to have such a smile?

The sun has set as they were feeling-in the dry warm air by the Tempe Town Lake. This is an unusually warm day for a late spring Friday, even for Phoenix Metropolis, The Valley of The Sun. Holding her hand, ever so gently, he notices the soft dying light of the day brushing off of her hair. With a faint gleam in her eyes, she smiles.

Looking at the returning pedal boats and kayaks, he thinks, it's time to tell Mom back home - he won't be coming home alone.

