

After The Facts

An After Coffman mystery

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To my mother, my wife, and to Tracy for their faith before the fact.

To Dave and Ed for their faith after the fact.

one

“Might just have to depend on dumb luck,”

I muttered as the shadows began to lighten in the cramped hallway outside apartment B-23, of the Boulevard Estates apartments. The door, scarred with years of abuse and neglect, stared back at me without comment, shades of tan, white and an unidentifiable color vying for prominence as they were unappealingly peeling away from the pressboard veneer. Dumb luck was all I was having on the case to this point, but a clue to its puzzle might just be behind the door.

Please notice that I wasn't asking for the entire puzzle, as that would be asking for far too much.

I was struggling with my conscience, as I wondered whether or not to pick the lock. I pulled a quarter out of my pocket, surprised that I still had coins of that high a denomination left. I quietly said, “Heads;” as I flipped it into the air. Of course it came down tails.

Figuring one flip was not legitimate odds, I flipped it again. Tails.

Flip.... tails. Flip....tails. Flip....heads; good enough! I took out my picks and went to work on the door. The lock yielded its secrets as easily as a 5-year-old caught with his hands in the cookie jar, ready to rat on any sibling in order to avoid his punishment. Of course the door didn't open easily, so I had to put my shoulder into it. Knowing, however, the clientele of this elite establishment, I was fairly certain that no one had recovered yet from the previous night's wine binges and would not be bothered by any noises I might make.

Cheap wine too, by the looks of the bottles and cardboard boxes in the trash bin outside. How had we stooped so low as to allow wine to be packaged in cardboard? What was that all about? At least there wasn't a lot of rotting garbage in the dumpster, these people weren't into food all that much.

OK, I was in. Placing the quarter back into my pocket, I pulled some gloves on, and took the edge of my shirt to wipe off any fingerprints around the door, not that any half smart detective couldn't make a match from the grime that rubbed off onto my shirt. I was pretty sure that this particular grime would have no match anywhere else in the county. I stepped inside; pulling the door nearly closed as gently as possible. There was evidence of a chain having been forcibly removed from the door jamb at one time, but it appeared to be from a long ago time when married people may have lived here, perhaps a jealous husband breaking in on the spouse during a horizontal exercise session.

I stood inside the door, taking in as much of the room as I could. I believe that first impressions tell me more than an hour of sleuthing. This belief had never yet borne fruit, but it was a chance I was willing to take, and neither the apartment nor I had anything else going at the moment. The room was roughly 12 feet square, a worn, torn and forlorn carpet distancing itself from the walls, making an inevitable march to oblivion toward the middle of the room.

There was one plastic chair sitting under the single window on the wall to my right. There was no trash to speak of on the floor, and very little dust, except for the type of very fine dust you see caught by sunlight while floating in the air. In this case, it was final proof that someone had been here long before me to clean up. Clean up what, is just what I was here to find out. There was a door on the left side of the opposing wall and an archway of sorts on the left wall, leading to the kitchen, no doubt, judging from the cracked tile floor that I could see from my vantage point. I decided to do the kitchen first.

The kitchen floor was as clean as the main room's, supporting the hypothesis that someone had been at work restoring a sense of order to the place. There was no one inhabiting this place at all, and hadn't been for days at least. There was no smell to indicate old food, or even cleaning supplies. No trace of ammonia, dusting spray or perfume. No one had been here for a while now. There was not a lot of dust in the kitchen either, and as it had been a dry summer, this Sherlock deduced it as having been a week since anyone had been here.

Nevertheless, I opened all cabinet doors, peered under the sink and looked in the small pantry built into the far wall. Nothing, not a scrap of paper, not a dollop of spilled food, not even the bones of a starved mouse. I was gratified to see a cockroach scuttle from the pantry as I opened its door, but the little fellow must have been reliving ancestral memories, as the proverbial cupboard was bare.

The next thing I tried to do was look behind the trim near the floor, working my way around, searching for a place that may have been pried off, leaving a small hole to hide whatever it is I was looking for. I would be more than glad to share with you just what the object of my attentions were, if I knew myself, but my employer had not managed to inform me of this before she had met an unscheduled and untimely demise. That is a story that I will relate in a bit, allowing you to get caught up, but seriously, you know just about as much as I do right now.

Finding nothing but old glue behind the trim, I proceeded back through the archway and through the living (I use this term very loosely) room, and into the master suite. This was not a lot better. I discovered an aluminum frame bed with a lumpy mattress against the wall; a nightstand of cheap pressed wood and a lamp with a bare bulb next to the bed. No carpet on the recently cleaned floor and nothing else in the room either. There was a small closet, no rod, and no door. There was no door leading to the small bathroom.

There was nothing to look for in the bedroom, but I did the obligatory lift of the mattress, looking for resown seams, feeling among the lumps for anything out of place. The nightstand had no secrets to yield, no false bottom, no paper; it had been recently polished as well. I knew there were no fingerprints to be found anywhere in this abode.

With a sigh, I approached the bathroom, expecting nothing to change here either. A funny thing, the air seemed to move a bit, the dust motes had a different pattern as I walked towards the doorless entrance. I encountered no surprises as I entered. The stool was cracked and broken under the weight of many years and countless bottoms. I lifted the top to the tank and took a look. It was somewhat dark in the room, so I turned to flip the wall switch, and barely caught a movement as the world suddenly went even blacker with a crack that I heard more than felt.

••• Well now, I had discovered something, what it was, I had no clue, but it was apparently a clue of some sort, and clues are supposed to be important in my line of work. I was trying to put my wits back together, one wit at a time. My first coherent thoughts were that I had a splitting headache and was flat on my back. That took awhile to sink in. I then opened my eyes, found that they were not yet ready to focus on a spinning room, and closed them again.

Too late! I rolled over and vomited all over the floor near the toilet.

So much for a clean apartment. Ah yes, the clean apartment! Bits and pieces began to swim about in the squishy mess that had been my brain moments (or was it hours?) before. I chanced another eye opening, but just with my right eye. Not too bad, I couldn't get any sicker anyway, unless the yellow that someone had assumed was a legitimate color for the ceiling made me sick again. Breathing a bit more regularly, I closed my right eye and opened the left. No real problem there either. Just knowing that both sides of my face were working independently was a relief, but that in itself was yielding no results. OK, I opened both eyes, and the room slowly swam back to normal, or what passed for normalcy in this little slice of hell.

Now, I had to figure out why I was in this predicament. Two options worked their way into my slowly returning consciousness.

One, that I had been clubbed from behind as I was turning around; that would explain the dust moving. Someone could have entered the unlocked front door. The second option was that part of the ceiling had fallen on me. I was voting for the latter, but my vote generally does not count, and this time was no different. I pulled myself up and looked around. No new holes in the ceiling, and the doorway seemed in one piece as well. OK, I got clocked, but why? There was nothing to be found here; the place had been swept clean.

Whoever conked me didn't know that though, or else I would still be looking for clues in the bathroom. Did I mention that clues are important in my line of work? They are, and unless one or two of them fell upon me (perhaps an unfortunate metaphor), I would soon be flipping burgers in the fast food restaurant down the road from my rented room for a living.

I stood up, holding the stool for support, hoping that it knew better than to move suddenly. For once, my luck held, and I made it to my feet in an unsteady fashion. Gathering myself, I slithered to the sink, wondering if the water still ran. Turning the cold water knob yielded nothing. The hot water knob did turn, and of course the water was cold, which suited me just fine. I splashed some of it on my face, and that did help a little. I looked in the mirror, which was cracked, but clean, pretty much summing up my

morning. Yup, it was me, with my eyes somewhat unfocused and my right ear still lower than my left. I don't know why some people are born with perfectly symmetrical faces while others have obvious defects. My biggest flaw was that I had mismatched ears, the right much lower than the left. To make matters worse, the earlobe was bigger on the right ear, and both stood out as if they were windbreaks on a Kansas wheatfield. I remembered the kids calling me Jughead in school, and I suspected even then that there would be no Betty or Veronica in my future.

I felt that as long as I was here, I might as well finish what I came for, so I slowly and gingerly looked at the rest of the room, recovering my equilibrium as I did so. I have been hit harder, so this blow was not meant to kill or incapacitate, just get me out of the picture for a bit. I remember Gretchen White clubbing me with her purse on our first date, breaking my nose and sending me to the hospital, where my stepfather of the moment came to get me with a bemused look on his face. I don't know if he was bemused because I had actually had a date, or because I had dared to do something that would make a girl hit me like that. Actually, all I had done was suggest that Patty Boyle was a pretty good looking girl, and that had been enough to get me clobbered. Apparently Gretchen felt a bit sorry for me, as a few days later, she apologized and suggested that we give it one more try. Two hamburgers, a couple of sodas and some fries later, she dumped me immediately, and without any appearance of conscious thought or remorse when local stud Mike Worthy came into the burger joint, and asked if she would like to take a spin in his new Thunderbird convertible. She readily agreed, and after explaining to me how things, "Just sorta happen, y'know?"; she flipped her ponytail and popped out of my life forever. I didn't mind too much, as I had barely enough money for that date, and no future funding in line for another hot time. What got to me was the fact that she got into the car, and it already had 3 other girls in it. Had she no pride? After realizing whom she had shared her most recent repast with, I realized that she might not! Anyway, as it appeared that I was going to live a bit longer, I finished checking out the bathroom, finding nothing at all. Working my way back through the apartment, I saw nothing out of place, but as I was still just a bit woozy, I sat on the plastic chair by the living room window, trying to figure it all out. I felt the back of my head, and found the tender lump recently deposited there, and wondered how noticeable it would be. Probably not too bad, as people rarely got beyond my ears before giving up at looking at my face.

As I sat at the chair, trying to figure where I would go next, I noticed a very slight movement. It was a large black ant working its way up the windowsill. A sign of life being rare around here, I watched idly as it crept around, exploring for a way out, no doubt.

It wasn't long before the ant went through a place in the window frame where the wood had split and made his escape into the rarified air of 2nd floor Boulevard Estates. I peeked out the window to see how he was progressing, and noticed that I was directly above a dumpster in the courtyard between building A and building B. I had not ventured to this spot yet, not having discovered a way between the two buildings from the outside. I had noticed a locked wooden gate that probably remained that way, except for trash days.

The gate and lock had been rusty and unused looking when I had first glanced at them, and I figured it had been awhile since that dumpster had been in service. A possibility

came to mind that perhaps there was some trash in the dumpster that had been tossed out of this apartment in some recent time. It might come to nothing, but I decided it would be worth pursuing anyway.

Rising from my prefab throne, I tried to open the window and found it surprisingly compliant. It opened easily, revealing a dusty and dirty exterior surface, with one exception. About halfway up the interior frame, there was a clean area, as if it had been dusted by a rag. I placed my fingers on the wood and sort of played with it a bit, and to my astonishment, the wood pulled away without complaint, revealing a scrap of paper! Eagerly, I pulled it out of its crevice, and opening it with trembling fingers, read, '1:30 A.M., Green Frog....call 845-777.... ahead of time'. This was scrawled in an uneducated hand, much like mine, so I was able to decipher it fairly easily. I had two problems; the lack of a final digit to the phone number, and the fact that this scrap of paper meant absolutely nothing to me. The paper was fairly new though, there was no sign of curling or yellowing yet. Chances were strong that it hadn't been there for very long, but it must have been important enough to hide.

Satisfied that dumb luck is better than no luck at all, I considered it a well spent, if somewhat painful morning, and I slithered out the door, only slightly sorry about the deposit I had made on the bathroom floor. After all, the rest of the apartment was spotless, and would probably rent to the first person desperate enough to look at it, who would doubtless make similar deposits of his own. I locked the door from the inside, and closed it gently, going down the stairs, and out a small side door that led into the courtyard and then onward to the little used dumpster. Removing my gloves as I neared it, I realized that my earlier assumption was correct. There were weeds and trash all around the dumpster, showing that it had not been moved in some time. There were boxes and old pieces of furniture, TVs and other debris on this side of the gate, which swung inward by the look of the hinges. So, I had carte blanche to review the trash of the past few months, at least. Lucky me.

Looking around, and seeing no sign of intelligent life, I pulled myself up and over the edge of the uncovered dumpster and peered inside. As I said earlier, we have had dry weather recently and this was making the prospects of finding unspoiled paper unusually promising. The rubble was not that deep, and hardly smelt at all, so as I was still somewhat conspicuously perched on the edge, I decided to drop in for a more conclusive visit. The trash was mostly composed of paper wrappers, newspapers, bits and pieces of broken furniture, trashy paperbacks and rags, with the occasional bottle and can. I figured the rats had gotten all the old food, thus explaining the lack of odor. Even so, I knew that I was unlikely to find anything worthwhile, unless I was extremely lucky, as there was too much there to simply pack up and take with me.

I began by quickly sorting the food and bottle trash to one side, and the newspapers, books and other readable junk on the other, using the broken furniture to separate the two piles. I began sorting through the readable trash. I opened each book, shaking the pages, looking for scraps of paper. I read the headlines of the papers, trying to see if there was any theme to them. The most recent paper was dated August 4th, 10 days ago, and the other newspapers weren't anywhere near that date. Perhaps a clue, perhaps not. Someone had dumped something here 10 days ago though, and it was not food.

Papers and books eliminated, I looked at the loose paper, finally spying a fairly fresh green flyer. Turning it over, I saw that the header was proclaiming the opening of a new nightclub, "The Green Frog"

for the night of the 4th. It announced that the opening act was "Bill Kirby and His Sound Makers" for a night of jazz. Doors open at 9:00, one drink minimum, shoes and shirt required. I felt that this was a clue for sure, and still seemingly without a case, I felt I had made progress nevertheless. A quick look at the rest of the papers yielded nothing and I rose out of the dumpster, only to find myself face to face with a very large, very upset, and very unwashed specimen of mankind. The only thing he had going for himself was the fact that in his hairy, beefy hand was a very large, and efficient looking gun.

I looked at my captor, wondering how I was going to get out of this. Trying to look him in the eye was difficult, seeing as there was about 200 pounds of metal about to be shoved into my face. The best I could do was, "Hello, how ya doing?"

He seemed startled by this, either because I had managed to sound as if I always talked while a gun was in my face, or because no one ever bothered to ask him how he was doing. Perhaps he didn't really know a response to either possibility. I decided to try an easier one, "Mind if I get myself out of the trash bin?"

Not much better, he just looked at me, gun never wavering. I chanced looking into his eyes, small and mean and black. I couldn't tell if there were pupils or not. I sensed a movement, and noticed he was moving the gun up closer to my face. I refocused on the 250 pounds of metal about to swish my life away. Beefy just kept staring at me. I stayed as still as I could, sweat dripping from my armpits down my shirt. I felt the back of my shirt clinging to me, an instant sauna. My legs were only half-straight and my knees were beginning to give out. Have I mentioned that I am not the biggest, toughest guy around? That's why my nose was broken the first time by a girl, as well as two other times I may talk about sometime in the future. Anyway, I will tell you some about my personal life after I tell you how I finally got out of this situation.

Beefy just kept glaring at me, trying to figure out what he was going to kill me with, no doubt. The gun was unnecessary; either hand would do the job easily. My legs were giving out, and I thought it was time to try something again. "I was trying to find Felix Jeffries."

I got a response, "He ain't down here."

"Oh? I thought I'd look around some."

"Lives in 23."

"I knew that, but he wasn't there, so I thought I'd come down here and wait, saw a newspaper, started reading it, and figured the sports section was here in the dumpster."

"No one uses this."

"If I would have known that, I would have just waited outside his door."

"Not here anyway."

"He's not?"

“Been gone for awhile, maybe come home soon.” The gun moved back a bit, 200 pounds again.

“Do you mind if I stand up, my legs are killing me.”

No response, so I slowly began to stand, and finally had regained a semblance of balance. “Listen,” I said, “I guess maybe I’ll just go now or something and maybe leave a phone number, then perhaps we could meet up somewhere else, not bother you again.”

“Maybe,” he seemed to consider this, then, “Nope.”

“Why not?” I whined, at least it sounded like a whine, I cleared my throat, and tried again, “I wasn’t doing anything wrong, just waiting for Felix”; definitely a whine.

“He’s not here.”

This was going nowhere, and really fast too, but I had run out of small talk. I tried to think of something else, but was still feeling the 200 pounds of pressure. “Ummm, can I leave a card with you to give Felix?”

He seemed to consider this, and finally lowered the gun, “Yeah, but you’ll have to write yer number on it, cause I can’t read or write.”

Of course! I tried to appear shocked, but it was a weak attempt, at best. Then, I just nodded my head and reached for my wallet.

Sonofabitch! It was gone, G-O-N-E, gone. The person who had clobbered me had taken my only form of identification, and what little money I had left. I looked at him in what I hoped was a sincere and forthright manner, shrugged my shoulders and smiled weakly.

“I seem to have lost my wallet.”

He took this in slowly, then very easily took my shirt in his nongun hand, lifted me out of the dumpster as if I were a bag of potato chips and walked me over to the unused wooden gate. Looking at me with those dead eyes, he seemed about to say something, got very close to my broken nose and sort of snorted at me as if I was nothing but extra trash from the dumpster. In other circumstances, I might have been offended, but right now, he had the upper hand, and it was around my throat. I was having trouble breathing, and couldn’t tell if it was from the fetid air coming from his lips to my battered nose, or if it was from the squeezing of my neck from a size 15 to a size 13. I opted to just hang there in the air, until he decided what to do with me.

He decided a lot sooner than I thought he would, which was just as well, as oxygen was becoming very, very scarce at the moment.

With what appeared to be a flick of his wrist, he tossed me over the gate, where I was airborne for several seconds before landing on my walletless butt several feet from the gate.

“Don’t come back.”

“Maybe I should have called first?”

He turned around and left. Considering how things could have turned out, this was a reasonable outcome, and I was just beginning to catch my breath and straighten my collar out when I had another visitor.

“What’s the matter, wife toss you out with the dog?”

I looked up to see one of Hustle’s finest (Did I mention that I live in a berg called Hustle? Maybe later, during my life story). Now, Hustle’s cops are a pretty decent bunch for the most part. You don’t cause them trouble, and they won’t cause you trouble. They even have a small fleet of patrolmen who actually still walk the neighborhood beat. They generally pick those who can speak in more than one syllable, are usually friendly and outgoing, and who have strong arches. This, it is believed, will foster good rapport between the men and women in blue, and the average sidewalk sitter, as I was currently occupied. Being, in general, in favor of good rapport, I laughed easily and said, “No, the landlord tossed me out.”

He smiled, looking me over, and unfortunately taking me for a tenant of said Boulevard Estates, said, “You know, if you can’t pay the rent here, you may not find a better deal elsewhere.”

“Oh, I don’t live here,” I was glad to announce, “I live in a boarding house on 7th and Elm.”

“Mother Teresa’s?” he asked.

“Why yes,” I exclaimed, “do you know her?”

“Lived there myself while going to college. Can I give you a lift home?”

Now, that was a fine offer, and I felt my heart soften in favor of our wonderful city fathers who had decided on good rapport. “I’d appreciate it immensely.”

We strolled over to a blue sedan parked a few yards away and got into the car. “I thought you walked the beat,” I said. I couldn’t help but wonder why he was in this particular neighborhood, if he was truly off duty.

“I am, but I just got off duty and was on my way home,” he replied. “I work the graveyard shift. I was looking for a friend of mine who lives here, but he appears to be out and about this morning.”

“I’ll bet you see some strange things during that shift.” I chuckled.

“Sometimes even after the shift is over,” he rejoindered.

I felt that the remark was probably aimed at me, so smiling offhandedly, I just sat back and enjoyed feeling my rump on something softer than concrete. I took the opportunity to study my new acquaintance. He was a pleasant looking young guy. Light red hair with one of those razor cuts. He had short sideburns and freckles.

He wasn’t much taller than I, maybe 5’ 10”. His uniform was still clean and starched, even after a night on the beat. He was such a straight arrow it made me quiver.

Hustle is a small town, and in no time at all, we were at Mother Teresa’s boarding house, where I had a small room and a closet on the 3rd floor, sharing a bathroom with a myopic cub reporter and a demented 12 year old cat named Soot.

As I got out of the car, I turned to thank him, but I noticed that he was getting out as well, doubtless to insure I was really welcome here. We strode up the sidewalk together, actually strode is a bit strong, as I was in some pain yet from my recent fall and lumpy

head, but nevertheless, we arrived at the front door at approximately the same time. Mother came to the door and seeing my companion, immediately let out a cry of glee and rushed out to sweep him up in her massive, motherly arms. “Jocko, we haven’t seen you in months, where have you been?”

“Hi Mother, well, you know how it is, just married, the baby and the two jobs, hard to get away.”

I was touched, this Boy Scout was too good to be true. I shuffled my feet, looking for a way past these two, and for a way back to my own safe haven on the third floor.

“That’s no excuse Jocko, you know you are like my own family, so you just bring that little family of yours here to see me, I’ll bake you a pie, and we’ll have ice cream and sit on the porch, just like old times.”

That was just about enough...JOCKO? PIE? ICE CREAM?, she never hugged me, never offered pie and ice cream to me, and never sat on the porch with me. Meanwhile the hugfest continued, with Mother alternately berating him for his faithlessness and hugging him out of sheer joy.

“Ummm, Hi Mother,” I finally interjected.

“After!” she said, “And just where have you been this morning?”

“After?” Jocko looked at me quizzically.

“That’s my name,” I admitted. “I was born in Brooklyn,” I added, as if this might explain all. Apparently it did, as Jocko shrugged and opened the door for all of us to enter.

Immediately upon entering, I made an end-run around the reunited friends, hoping to make the staircase and thus, the first step in recusing myself to my room. I thought I had made it when Jocko called me back, “After, we need to talk a bit more.”

“I thought you were off duty,” I got pretty close to whining again.

“I am, but there are a few questions that need answering.”

Mother was thrilled, “Let me fix a lunch for the two of you, then you can talk!”

“That sounds great, Mother!” Jocko was clearly happy.

“I need to freshen up first.” I grumbled.

“Go ahead, I’ll just sit down here and wait,” Jocko said. So much for rapport.

I trudged up the stairs, realizing what a roller coaster I had been on today, and it was only lunchtime! The stairs seemed higher and steeper than normal, and I was pretty well spent by the time I got to my room. My myopic upstairs companion, Paul, had apparently left my door open, after mistaking my room for his for the thousandth time, and Soot had done his bloody work again. This time, my coverlet was on the floor, all of the items on my dresser top had been thrown to the floor, and the trash can had been overturned with assorted bits of shredded paper all over the place. Luckily, as this had happened many times, I had nothing that was breakable on the dresser. I went to the bathroom, shaved again, combed my hair, put on some after shave, then went back to my room changing into a shirt that had some semblance of a normal collar.

I was ready to meet the world again, I supposed. Well, Jocko, at least. The rest of the world would have to wait until after lunch.

two

You may be wondering a few things right about now. I am prepared to clear some of them up for you. I will go over the few facts of my life that are salient, then you will be as caught up in this case as I am. You may already be way ahead of me. Anyway, the name.... I admit that After is not the usual name, but the circumstances surrounding the dropping of this appellation on yours truly are a bit out of the ordinary. Without going into details, let's just establish the fact that my mother was not always discriminatory when it came to the men in her life. Mom is a wonderful person, would give a friend the shirt off her back, and in fact has done just that on many occasions. Unfortunately, there were times when she should have kept it on. Apparently I was conceived during one of those times, so I guess there is one instance I cannot complain about. At the time of my birth, mom was living in Brooklyn. There are stories about Brooklyn, and there are stories about Brooklyn.

Most of them are true. There are stories about bartenders, cops, crooks, politicians, hot dog vendors, and all sorts of people. Those already from Brooklyn know these to be entirely true. There are so many wild, improbable true stories from there, that there is absolutely no reason to make any others up.

Anyway, nine months later, mom was in labor, and she had to go to the hospital in Brooklyn. Mom made the mistake of reliving some of her exploits to the charge nurse. The nurse was not impressed and when the time came to name mom's creation, the same nurse was there, paper and pen in hand. She asked mom what to name me, mom thought about it awhile then said, "I think I'll name him after his father. I believe his father was Bob, I'll name him after Bob." The nurse wrote 'After Bob Coffman' on the report, using Mom's last name for mine. Mom signed it without paying attention to it and that's how I got the name. Of course, over the years, I tried to talk mom into getting it changed, but she thought it was clever and funny. She told me it would add to my character. Maybe it did.

At any rate, I never got around to changing the name, and now I have gotten used to it and the effect it has on people.

I managed to get through high school with the usual mental trauma associated with that age group, plus the broken nose and several bruised egos. All in all, it was a worthwhile experience. I spent some of my graduation money losing my virginity in a sleazy motel room with a lady of the night. She was missing several front teeth, had too much deodorant and perfume on, charged me twenty dollars, and had me out of there in 5 minutes or so. It was a relief, both to have the virginity thing dealt with, and to get out of the room. One other girl finally legitimized my masculinity after a drunken party on a pontoon boat during my first semester in college.

She was drunk and so was I. I remember that we went out on a raft together, but that's about it. My fellow drunks told me about it the next morning, so let me first admit that neither of us was discreet, and somewhere there are Polaroid pictures to prove it. The girl

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