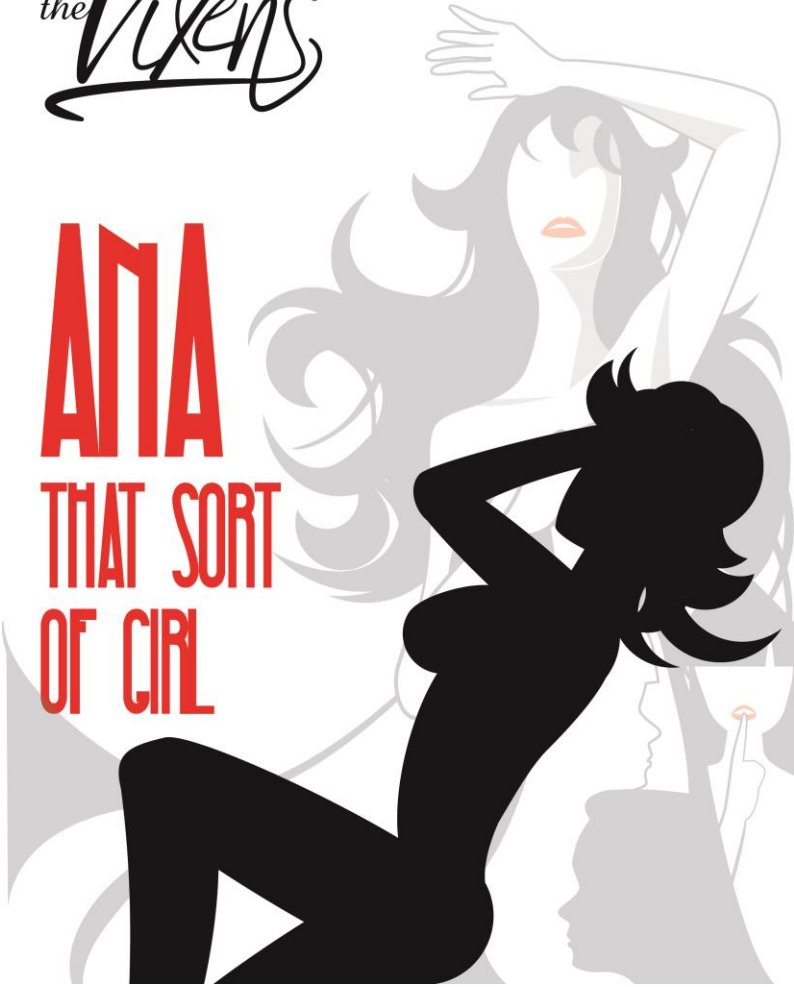


the Vixens

ANA
THAT SORT
OF GIRL



He pulled my straps down, exposing my chest, took off my strapless bra and started to savor my two round breasts.

"How lovely," I heard him say over and over.

I held his head as he sucked my nipple and pulled it with his mouth. Then he would say "lovely" before kissing my lips.

My hand searched for him, unzipped his pants and pulled them down. As a nurse, I'm adept at undressing other people. He was already stiff and neither of us wanted to go through the drudgery of undressing. I pulled my panties to the side and pushed my hips against him, immediately undulating like a cowgirl riding a horse on a rodeo.

He held my hips as I moved and besides our breathing we were quiet. We were panting, fucking the pain out of each other.

I grabbed his hair and told him not to come.

"I like you," he said after everything has subsided. Both of us were still locked in each other's arms. "But that doesn't mean..."

"...that we love each other," I said finishing his statement. "This is just one of those one-night stands."

"I agree. No emotions. No strings attached. I like that," he said and kissed me on the lips. "By the way, happy birthday, Ana."

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That Sort of Girl

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1 - The Reunion

I CHECKED MY WATCH. It was almost seven o'clock in the evening. The invitation stated that registration had already started at six o'clock. I was still in the cab, stuck in an awful traffic. *Why is it that every time it rains, traffic becomes horrible?* I've been asking that question whenever it rains in the streets of Marcelo, La Isla Colonia.

But why should I care? I'm not driving, I don't drive, and I hated it. I also hate being late. The rain and the taxi were making me grumpy, but I was adding to the mess with cruel thoughts and memories of my tumultuous senior year.

"Ana Maria," our principal, Sister Corazon had shrilled at me in her office twenty-five years ago.

Someone must have seen us or Neil's rocking car.

"It has come to my attention that someone saw you hanging out with boisterous boys. Is that true? It's un-ladylike of you drinking liquor until wee hours of the morning."

Sister Corazon was an old nun who maintained her antiquity by forcing old practices down our throats. I recoiled just thinking about her.

I still don't know why my parents insisted on sending me to an exclusive Catholic school for girls. It was one of the oldest schools in Marcelo, founded by Spanish Franciscan nuns back in the 15th century. My teachers were either devout Catholic mothers or old maids; and I thought at first that my parents would send me to the nunnery. To me, that was not cool. *Good old Convento de Santa Clara y el Colegio.*

"Sister, I just went out on a date with my boyfriend, that's all," I had said in a matter-of-fact manner as I straightened out my pleated skirt in front of her. *If there was something I hate at that moment, es que usted y su oficina, Sor Corazon.* I was such a brat back then.

"How old are you, Ana Maria?" she asked, her face stern and stolid.

"I am seventeen, going on eighteen, Sister." *And why do I get this feeling that I know what you're going to say next?*

"But still, you're too young to have relationships. You should know that. Do your parents know about this?"

Will I answer the question or not? Either way, Sister Corazon would still call my parents to discuss this matter.

"You're behaving like you're not studying in this convent," Sister Corazon continued.

She wanted to use some stronger words just what kind of a lady she thought I was. I was always getting in trouble with boys and that hadn't changed one bit.

I bounced my knee in the taxi, glancing again at my watch. I thought of Sister Corazon's puckered face shouting at me for being tardy.

The rains had stopped and the gate of Convento de Santa Clara y el Colegio was just a few meters away. I decided to walk instead, so I paid the cab driver and dropped off.

I walked along the wet sidewalk, not minding the splatters my gray shoes received whenever I step. The new pair of shoes needs baptism after all. The cool wind freshened up my face as I walked towards the gate. I wore a gray, soft, woolen dress that flowed with the wind, and carried a gray leather shoulder bag over my shoulders. I entered the gate and walked towards the gymnasium, more excited to see my high school than worried.

People were still pouring in the gymnasium as I fell in line to register for our alumni homecoming dinner. *Good,* I thought, *I'm not the only one who's late.* Women still crowded the registration table. I peeked to check if Sor Corazon was still lurking in the hallways with her wrinkled face and upturned nose. Then a hand landed on my shoulder.

"Good evening," I heard someone saying.

It was a young Chinese lady in her early twenties or much younger. She wore a t-shirt bearing our school logo; her long hair tied in a knot and secured with something that resembled a chopstick. She carried bottled water and a brown bag, looking tired like she had been there since the event started and just took a short break. Her smile washed away the tiredness on her face.

"Let me help me with your registration. What year did you graduate, ma'am?"

"Oh, thanks!" I said. "1987."

It's been a long time. I couldn't even remember when was the last time I've been in Convento de Santa Clara y el Colegio. I could have sent my two daughters to school here but for some reasons, I decided not to. One was the location. I have now moved to Buenvenida, a suburb about an hour ride outside Marcelo; not practical for the three of us.

She turned and looked for a folder among the pile on the table. She pulled a folder marked "1987" and opened it. She handed it to me together with a ball pen.

"Sign beside your name," she instructed.

I took the folder and looked for my name. I saw the maiden surnames arranged in alphabetical order. So I looked for mine under T. T for Torres. There are only two Torreses in our batch, Maria (*Yes, her name is Maria.*) and me. I found her name below mine and saw her married name as Salcedo. She has signed already, meaning she was already there at the venue. I saw my name: Torres as my maiden surname, Ana Maria, then a blank married last name. I signed my name beside it and returned the pen and folder to the young lady.

She smiled as she took it from me and checked my signature. "Aren't you going to update your last name?"

I shook my head, "No. I'm a single mom and never married." *And I'm proud of it.*

"Oh," she said as if she had never heard of it. Or she might have thought that an alumna like me would end up like that. *Was it social discrimination?*

She handed me a set of colored cards and explained, "Here are your tickets. The blue one is for the dinner buffet. The red is for the complimentary drink. The yellow is for the raffle, and the green is for the souvenir items. You may drop your raffle ticket at the box located near the stage. The souvenir booth is on the right. Buffet dinner starts at eight. There are booths around that you can check out for other food and beverages as well as other products and services from our sponsors. Enjoy your evening!"

"Thank you!" I said. *Wow! She sounded like a winding toy.*

I left the table and entered the gym. It didn't look like a gymnasium the way I used to remember where we played volleyball and held cheering competitions. A creative hand must have transformed the gym into a grand ballroom. The soft lights and the background music from string quartet made the gym look classy. The flowers, balloons, and candle arrangement on each table transformed the gym into something elegant. A big stage stood at the far end of the gym with a set of big, brown, shiny tiles that comprised the dance floor in front. The tables and chairs around the dance floor wore white and blue linen. The buffet table stood on the left and I saw waiters bustling to and fro bringing cocktails to guests.

I heard someone called my name.

"Ana, over here!"

I turned to where it came from. I saw Maria, my seatmate back in high school. Her long, wavy, blonde-tinted hair flowed over her shoulders. It covered the straps of her velvet black cocktail dress that followed the contour of her slim body. *Oh my God! She looks much more glamorous in person than in magazines.* But then again, she's Maria Torres-Salcedo, the supermodel.

"Maria!" I said as I approached her with open arms. We kissed on each others' cheeks as I continued, "How are you?"

"I'm fine, been busy lately. I just returned from the U.S.," she said. She stepped back to look at me, "My God! You haven't changed a bit."

At the side of my vision, I saw other women staring at us. I turned my head and saw them. I recognized them all. So I approached each one of them, greeted them just like how I greeted Maria.

There was Chloe, the obstetrician-gynecologist, still chubby since the last time I saw her three years ago. She wore a long silk dress full of floral prints; she's still wearing her trademark --- minus the floral headband.

Then Camille, the widow, no longer wearing black as she used to during her mourning years and now sporting a short hairdo. *That's good. At last, she has finally moved on.*

Eva, the housewife, and I've heard became a widow recently. *Oh my God! What happened to her?* She used to be beautiful back in high school but her weight gain (and probably widowhood) masked her real beauty.

The last one was Irene, the executive, tall and slim in her brown blouse and skirt that matches her serious face. *Ugh! She still looks too corporate, and intimidating. No wonder...*

I promised myself to be more civil to Irene than to anyone else this evening. *This is not the time to lose friends, my dear.*

Back in high school we were best of friends, all six of us. We call ourselves The Vixens. Female foxes, sly bitches. But when we reached college, we drifted apart. During the past 25 years, two or more of us (we rarely meet all six) have met on a handful of occasions. So now, everyone was catching up at our reunion.

Maria motioned her hand for us to sit. She seemed excited to have all six of us in one table. I took a vacant seat and I didn't notice that I sat beside Irene. *Why did I sit beside her? (Sigh) I would remind myself to behave this evening.* Next to Irene were Eva, then Camille, Maria and Chloe. There were four vacant chairs in all between some of us. But these women had put their bags and other things on them that prevented other people to take it. I think they decided to have this table with the ten chairs only for us six. *Just like the old times, huh, bitches?*

"How are you now, Ana?" they asked. "Are you married?" "How old are your kids?" "Where do you work?"

Wow! They bombarded me with questions. Was it because I was the last one to arrive?

"I'm doing fine as a manager of a clinic in Buenvenida. My kids now are ages 24 and 18. Single mom," I answered.

"I remember, you're the first one who got pregnant," said Eva.

"Will I be ever late for that?" I replied. "Back in high school, I already knew all about sex when all you guys were still curious about masturbation!"

They laughed.

There are words for women like me but few of them are complimentary. When I think about high school all my memories are about sex. Yes, I was that kind of girl back then. Okay, to be fair I still am that sort of girl. I had my first boyfriend when I just turned sixteen. I'd given up my virginity, but it wasn't until the end of 1986 that I ever made love and brought up lost memories of Neil Gallardo.

NEIL'S FRATERNITY GROUP sponsored a dance party at Zona Residencial. The Zona was an exclusive residential area in Marcelo. My outfit was so '80's. I didn't dance much but I enjoyed the new wave music.

By midnight, the party shifted to a drag race along the deserted road just outside the Zona. Neil and I watched a few races when he whispered that we have to go back into the car.

"Are we going home now?" I asked as I followed him through the crowd holding his hand.

He didn't answer. We reached his car parked on the other side of the street, a few meters away from the crowd. He opened the door to the backseat and let me in. He went inside after me and locked the door. He put his arms around my shoulders and faced me.

"Are you having fun?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered and smiled.

I stared at his brown eyes. His thin lips parted into a smile, exposing his set of white teeth and deep dimples. *Oh, so*

cute, my handsome prince! I felt nervous but at the back of my mind, I was also excited.

Neil put his trembling hand on my cheek when he moved closer to me. He pressed his lips on mine and I pried his mouth open with my tongue. He responded to my deeper kisses, unable to utter a word. "Shy Neil" started to unbutton his shirt with one hand while his other arm tightened around me. He leaned forward so that he made me lie down on the backseat.

He kissed me all over like someone who was ending his long fasting and abstinence. His aggressiveness made me fall into his rhythm, hungry and passionate. His hands crawled under my blouse, unhooked, unbuttoned everything and peeled clothes open. He stared at my chest, as many foolish boys had done before. But this memory stayed clear because Neil was not clumsy or awkward like the others. He bent down to kiss my skin, as though he were enjoying a good serving of dessert, licking and sucking my breasts. I wriggled free of my leggings, which made me naked inside his car. Then I unzipped his pants and pulled down everything, revealing an erection that embarrassed him but turned me on more.

"May I?" I asked.

He nodded, allowing my experience to take over. I stroked my middle finger along the shaft up until the tip, and then held it with my hand. I heard his heavy breathing. His hands tightened its hold on me as I continued my hand job and I heard him moan as he became harder. Neil's hand touched my pubic area and his fingers searched for something. I became distracted --- none of the boys had done this before. I widened my thighs apart to give way for his hand. I continued jerking him harder but he couldn't take it anymore and he pushed me back to lie down. He put my legs up and apart and went down on me. By the time Neil came around I hadn't been a virgin for years, but that night I felt new.

His tongue searched and sucked something secret and small. The feeling felt good that my hands didn't know what to hold. My body tensed, my back arched, and my mouth uttered a moan of pleasure. He must have enjoyed what he was doing

because he didn't stop. He made love to me. After a few moments, my body gave in to an uncontrollable motion and felt a sudden wetness. I muffled an ecstatic shout and held him tight. We were both panting afterwards. He got up and his eyes locked on mine, wild and bright. I grabbed his hard cock and guided it inside me, teaching him and taking his virginity. Neil shivered and I pulled him against me, more connected and aware of my lover than I'd ever been before. My breasts were shaking; my voice was shaking, too. He moved faster, shaking the car, unable to control his own climax.

"SO HOW OLD ARE YOUR KIDS?" I heard someone asked. I think it was Chloe.

I snapped out of my daydream.

"My first born turned 24 and my second turned 18 last month," I answered. *Were they not listening? I remembered saying that awhile ago.*

By that time, a waiter had been serving us cocktails. I gave him my red ticket and asked for a glass of iced tea.

"You don't look like you had kids," said Camille as she took her glass of vodka mixed with soda and cherry. "You're still slim and sexy."

I smiled and pointed out my abdominal area as I sipped with a straw the iced tea I ordered. "Had a tummy tuck," I said with seriousness. I wanted to see their reaction.

"Really?!" Eva exclaimed. "How much did you spend on that?"

Oh, the ever gullible Eva!

"Hey, I'm just joking!" I laughed.

We reminisced about high school life. I had so much fun, I felt young again, carefree and full of life. I've never felt so happy like this before because of what happened to me the past few years that led me to what I was that night.

"The last time I saw you," started Chloe as she put down her glass of white wine, "you were in a relationship with Matteo. How is he?"

I was about to answer the question when Irene interrupted. She pointed to me her hand holding a glass of red wine, "Oh, he was the one before Herbert, right?"

"Whoa!" said Maria, who was about to take a sip of her red wine. "Did I hear it right? You have two men?"

I knew Irene and Maria would react that way. I wouldn't blame them.

"Guys, let me explain," I started. "It has been almost three years ago when Matteo and I broke up. Matteo was the CALM before the STORM. Or should I say, calm AND the storm."

"What storm?" asked Maria as she put down her glass. "Tell us all about it. That would be something juicy."

I smiled and winked at Maria. Among the other five, she was closest to me. We shared secrets back then. But for the past 25 years, we had lost touch due to her modeling career.

"Well, at that time, I thought Matteo was Mr. Right. I almost gave up everything for him only to find out..."

I paused for a while as something entered my mind. *This may be painful for me to tell, but it's over now. Think of it as a catharsis, Ana. No more brooding. I already went on with my life.*

"Find out what?" Chloe asked.

I sighed, "My eldest daughter had a boyfriend twice her age."

"Come on, don't change the subject!" said Camille after taking a sip of her drink.

The others agreed.

"Listen," I said. "I'm not changing the topic."

"Then what?" asked Eva. "You're keeping us in suspense!"

I took another sip of iced tea. Took a deep breath again and said, "How would you feel if you discovered that you and your daughter share the same man?"

2 - Matteo

I SAW DROPPED JAWS, wide-opened eyes and frozen stares. They were speechless for a moment.

"What?" asked Irene.

"You're kidding," said Camille.

"No, I'm not," I said.

"I thought they only happen in soap operas," said Chloe and took another sip.

"I was clueless," I continued as I started playing with the straw in my glass. "His name is Matteo Benjamin, a real estate broker. I called him Matteo. Susan, my eldest, called him Benjie. Susan never introduced him or showed any pictures of him. She kept the relationship from me because she knew I would disapprove of their May-December affair if I learn about it. But I haven't introduced Matteo to my daughters yet because we were both busy with our careers that time. Also, we don't have any photos to show my kids. You know me, I don't take pictures. Matteo always calls me either at the clinic or to my cell phone. And I haven't picked up a call from him for Susan. So how would I know?"

"Did this Matteo know that you and Susan are both related?" asked Chloe.

As usual, she seemed interested in strange happenings. I immediately remembered her set of *Ripley's Believe It or Not* books I used to borrow.

"No," I said. "He had no idea. He was just damn too good at juggling two or three women at the same time, one of his best traits ever!"

I saw Maria's eyes widened.

"Wow!" she said. "I'd better ask him how he does THAT."

I PLACED THE BEEF LASAGNA inside the oven when I heard the phone rang. So I went out of the kitchen to answer it. I saw my eldest daughter, Susan, running down the stairs.

"Don't answer it, Mom. That's mine," she said as she ran towards the ringing phone.

Her long limbs took her a few seconds to reach the telephone. She had changed to a sleeveless shirt and shorts after arriving from her on-job training in an accounting firm nearby. She was about to graduate from college and luckily, that firm promised her a job after graduation.

She lifted the receiver, "Hello? Oh, hi! I'm fine, how about you?"

I turned around and went back to my cooking. The smile on Susan's face made me assume that she was in a deep relationship after breaking up with her last college boyfriend. I trusted that she would not follow my footsteps --- being a single mother twice. So far, she was keeping her promise.

I've never met this new boyfriend yet. She still kept the relationship all to herself (*Promise, Mom, I'll tell you about it soon.*) and I didn't want to look too nosy. Anyway, she's grown up now. She knew what's right and wrong.

While having our dinner, I announced, "I'll not be coming home on Friday after work. Matteo invited me to his rest house by the beach in Puerto Montoya and he will just pick me up at the clinic. Can I trust you, ladies, to take care of the house until I get home Sunday evening?"

"Sure, Mom," said Susan as she finished her lasagna. "I'll be home the whole weekend anyway."

"You don't have a date with Benjie, huh?" said my youngest, Elaine, as she poured another round of iced tea to our glasses.

Elaine is much taller than Susan, and athletic. She's in her junior high school year and plays volleyball.

"Oh, so Benjie is his name," I said, smiling at Susan. "Sorry, I keep on forgetting."

"Yeah," answered Susan. "He said he'll be out of town with his relatives from abroad. They'll be on a road trip the whole weekend."

"He didn't invite you?" I asked.

"He did, Mom. But I declined. I hate hanging out with his relatives. I will just feel O.P."

"O.P.?" I asked.

"Out of place, Mom," Elaine explained. "You need to brush up your youth vocabulary," then she winked at me.

"Oh, that's it," I said. I turned to Susan and asked, "Why? Just be yourself and try to communicate with them. Look for something in common to talk about."

"Nah," Susan said as she waved her hand. "They're not the type of people who enjoy long intellectual conversations. In fact, Benjie would get bored listening to them, I'm sure. He just agreed to drive them to those places because no one would be available to drive the car that weekend."

"So he's acting as the chauffeur," said Elaine laughing.

"Yup," answered Susan. "And I don't want to sit there as a wallflower or a maid-in-waiting, either."

"Okay," I laughed. "If that's the case, you'd better clean your own rooms and do your laundry this weekend. You'll be the maids in your own house."

"WOW!" I EXCLAIMED as I saw the place.

It was already seven o'clock in the evening when we arrived at Puerto Montoya, a beach front west of Marcelo. The bright moonlight shone over the beauty around me.

"It's beautiful!"

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