

Rose

Part 1

It had been more than ten years since I'd been back to the old neighborhood so, for some odd reason on a Saturday, I decided to get up early the next morning and take a drive through the old stomping grounds.

Early Sunday morning the old neighborhood was nearly deserted. I drove through several streets before coming to a red light. And there she was, or was it.

I circled the block several times trying to get a better look. She was beautiful, and statuesque. But could it be her? The last time I had seen her was twenty years ago; she was an 18 year old senior in high school, and I was 25. That encounter had left me in awe of her. She was 5' 10", and built like a brick-shit- house; she was stunningly gorgeous; she definitely had an air of pride, confidence, and superiority.

Yes, it was definitely her. I reached to the glove-box for pen and paper. I pulled the car over to the side of the road and printed a note : if you want to wash my mouth out with soap then wave this note in the air the next time I drive by.

As I drove by her again I tossed the folded note out the window, towards her. I could see through the rear view window that she picked up the note. I would go around the block one more time.

When she saw me coming down the street she started waving the note in the air. She had the biggest and most beautiful smile on her face; she crooked her index finger at me, indicating for me to come to her. I was really nervous; she looked way-too-willing, and way-too-anxious. Still in awe of her, I stopped the car.

When she got in the car her perfume tickled my nose. Her first words were, "so, you've been a naughty boy and you deserve to have your mouth washed out with soap. Correct?".

I choked on the words "kind of". I cleared my throat and said, "do you remember me?".

She said, "should I?".

I pulled over down the street and turned off the motor. We looked at one another. Then I said to her, "it was 20 years ago, on that very corner back there. I was standing on that corner talking to a friend. Then I saw you dragging a kid up the street. You were a senior in high school; you were wearing your school uniform. The kid was about 16 years old, and you were man-handling him, slapping him about his head and face.

He was crying; you were laughing. I heard him say 'what are you going to do' and I heard you say 'I'm going to wash your mouth out for what you said to me'.

I felt sorry for the kid so I said to you 'hey, why don't you let the kid go, pick on someone your own size'.

You looked right at me and said 'okay, I'll let him go. But only if you're ready to take his place'. I could only stand there in stunned silence. You busted out laughing and said, 'what's the matter, afraid to get your mouth washed out'. You roared with laughter as you continued dragging that kid down the street. Anyway, do you remember that day?"

She told me that she did remember that day, that she remembered that my face had turned bright red, that she should have punished me for not minding my own business, that the kid got punished because I wasn't man enough to take his place.

She said, "okay, let's go over to the park and I'll wash your mouth out".

I said to her, "I don't have any soap".

She said, "What! You wrote this note, and gave it to me, and now you're telling me that You don't have any soap!".

I said, "this is the first time in years that I've been back to the neighborhood. I never in a million years would have expected to see you here".

She looked at me and said, "that's no excuse. And all the stores are still closed. And I'm on my way to meet a girlfriend. I'll tell you what."

She gave me directions up and down a few streets and then she said "see that house right there. That's where I live. Can you remember that? I want you to come here tonight at 7 sharp. That will give you about 12 hours to think about the mouth-washing that I'm going to give you. That is, if you don't chicken out again like a little sissy. And don't worry about bringing any soap. I have plenty in there. Now, how 'bout being an angel and dropping me off at my girlfriend's house."

Twelve hours to decide whether, or not, to show up.