

Ten Tequila Shots

by C.D. Reimer

I came of age in a time of no heroes. My father, for example, was no hero. Not after I sprouted boobs and a vagina the night before my sixteenth birthday. No longer being Daddy's little girl—and having more boyfriends than girlfriends on Facebook—drove him into a full-blown midlife crisis on his fiftieth birthday. As fate would have it, a week after mine own. His birthday parties were family affairs, so my friends weren't invited to witness his downfall from parental grace. Everything started normally enough on a warm Saturday afternoon. He fired up the BBQ at twelve sharp, marinated the meats inside the kitchen and brought them outside in aluminum pans to set on the side table next to the BBQ, and tossed each piece on the grill with the great relish of an amateur chef who watched too much Food Network TV. I ushered arriving family members through the back gate into the backyard to prevent my younger cousins—all boys with naughty little pricks—from getting into the house to ransack my bedroom and steal my panties. As for the bottle of tequila and a shot glass that showed up on the side table, no one knew anything about it.

After the first round of meats—hot dogs, hamburgers and chicken—moved off the grill to the bar inside the gazebo for everyone to help themselves, Dad opened the tequila bottle, poured off a shot and recapped the bottle. With a silent toast to himself, he slammed down the shot straight. No lemon slice and salt to chase it down for this birthday boy. He gasped like a drowning man on his final breath, tears squirted from his closed eyes and his face turned beet red. A primal yell from deep within his throat startled everyone. He shrugged it off like it was nothing. This amused the men, the women rolled their eyes, my cousins didn't understand and I stared in shock. This is the first time I ever saw him drink alcohol. We never stocked booze with the sodas and water bottles in the ice tubs. If anyone brought booze to our parties, we turned them away unless they came back empty-handed. After Mom went into the deep

end of the family pool from alcohol abuse and later divorced my father when I was twelve, we became a teetotaler family.

Dad found the remote for the sound system inside the gazebo, turning on the CD player to blast "Go Your Own Way" by Fleetwood Mac from the outdoor speakers. My parents were pot-smoking hippies back in the late 1970's. I cringed whenever they broke out the family photo albums with all that hair, funky clothes and analog technology. He started dancing to the music, clapping his hands together and shaking his booty (which I didn't need to see). I lost my appetite for my half-eaten hot dog, tossing it into the trashcan, and went over to confiscate the tequila and shot glass from him. One shot was one too many. As I reached for the tequila bottle on the side table, he grabbed my wrist and pulled me over to the lawn for a father-and-daughter dance. I went with the flow, basking in the "aww" moment from the married relatives and the catcalls from my cousins (whom got smacked in head by their parents). I actually enjoyed dancing with my father (please don't tell my friends). I saw a pair of unsupervised cousins entering the house, begged off from another dance and went after them, catching the little pricks on the stairs to my bedroom. Despite their loud protests that they needed to go pee-pee and somehow missed the downstairs bathroom, I tossed them out of the house. If they need to go pee-pee that badly, they can water the tomatoes. Meanwhile, Dad went back to the grill to flip his meats, sprinkled the salt and pepper, and slammed down another tequila shot. As the greatest hits kept coming, we kept dancing whenever I tried to confiscate his party booze.

After the meats got cleared off the grill, we watched in growing horror as he started taking his clothes off with each tequila shot. The camouflage bucket hat that covered his balding pate splash landed in the birdbath to piss off the hummingbird that claimed our backyard as its home. The expensive pair of sunglasses flew over the fence to get run over by a passing car in the street. The tank top came off to reveal a shag carpet of salt-and-pepper chest hair above a hanging gut that he could no longer suck in. He tossed the shirt over to our female relatives who hollered like a pack of horny

bachelorettes. (I immediately corralled my younger cousins into the house, told them to watch TV in the living room and knowing damn well that the little pricks will ransack my bedroom as soon as I went back outside.) The gym shorts joined my ten-year-old collection of weather-beaten Frisbees on the neighbor's roof because the grouchy old man who lives there wouldn't let us into his yard to get them back. None of my relatives bothered to stop him after his tenth and final tequila shot. He rolled off his tighty whities, tossed it on the still hot grill and watched it burn to a crisp.

Before anyone could react to seeing my father in his birthday's suit, he ran out the back gate into the neighborhood with his flip-flops flip-flopping on the sidewalk. None of my relatives went after him. They shrugged their shoulders, talked about something else and finished off the food inside the gazebo. After seeing my father's twig-and-berries, I could understand why my mother ran off with a body surfer whose twig-and-berries bulged out from underneath his wet suit for the whole world to see. My father's were small and hidden. Much smaller than some of the middle school boys I shagged a few years ago. Oh, hell. My newly sprouted vagina was bigger. As I said, I'm no longer Daddy's little girl. This has pushed him off into the deep end of the family pool. I covered my face in shame. Although none of my friends lived in my particular neighborhood, I'm sure I'll hear about this when I go back to school.

As fate would have it, I was sitting on the living room sofa with my aunts, who were consoling me that it wasn't my fault that my mother was an alcoholic and my father fell short in the manliness department, when my naked father came into the house, slammed the front door and snapped the lock behind him, ran into the coat closet next to the front door, and slammed that door after him. I exchanged puzzled looks with my aunts. Despite his drunken birthday behavior, I felt relieved that this episode was finally over.

And then someone started pounding on the door.

Dad's muffled voice came from inside the closet: "Cops! Tell them I'm not here!"

I looked dumbfounded at my aunts, who hightailed back into the kitchen to leave me alone to deal with the cops. Like my father, they weren't heroes. Being the designated adult in this family sucks donkey balls. The pounding continued on the front door. I unlocked and opened the door to face three police officers. Although younger and trimmer than my father, the officers were breathing hard. Dad's no spring chicken but he must have given them a good run in his flip-flops through the neighborhood.

"Yes, officers?" I asked, putting on my best smile.

"We're looking for a naked man," said the nearest officer, "who ran into this house."

"That would be my father."

"Where is he?"

My face scrunched up as I considered the moral dilemma: Do I lie to protect my father from his stupidity, or do I tell the truth to protect myself from my father's stupidity?

"Not in the closet!" His muffled voice slurred the words now. "Not in the closet!"

One officer beckoned me to step outside. The other officers entered the house with drawn guns to order my father out of the closet. When he didn't respond to their repeated warnings, one officer opened the door and the other officer pulled him out. His twig-and-berries got rug burns from being shoved down hard to the carpet. After being arrested for public drunkenness, indecent expose and resisting arrest, he spent the weekend in jail. None of my relatives would post bail for him. My aunts intervened to prevent the police from taking me into protective custody, as I was a minor without a parent at home. After everyone left me with a messy backyard to clean up and a ransacked bedroom without a clean pair of panties, I cried from the stress of becoming a woman in this family. With lemon slices and salt, the bottle of tequila and the shot glass became my new friends into the deep end of the family pool.

