

Long Story Short

by Tim Young

Long story short, I lived in Nigeria and France for a while. I translated English short stories into French. I didn't like the language, French, at all, but my mother had insisted I become fluent. I still don't know why. I hated Paris, only lived there for a few weeks, I just couldn't warm up to it, so I moved to the coast, near Cannes, actually, and fell in love with the seaside. Then an American I met, Larry, who had made a fortune in rare baseball cards, convinced me to move to Nigeria with him. Well he didn't convince me so much as I just thought it would be so daring and romantic of me to live in Africa. And so I did but only for six months, in Lagos, also on the coast. It was pretty there, but instead of romantic I realized I was a hopeless stranger. I couldn't read and couldn't write. Larry left after a few weeks. He was a mistake. That's when the short stories dried up, I mean I grew sick of ever reading another one in my life. I moved back to the states.

I grew up in Cleveland and when I returned I became friends with the manager of the Cleveland Indians. I think he loved me but stuff like that was never ever mentioned back then. We did kiss once. Anyway I always had more than one girlfriend. I had three kids from a previous wife. I sent them tons of money. The baseball guy set me up in a huge retail shop to sell baseball merchandise. I was good at it. Soon we had to move to a larger store. I made both of us tons of money.

Long story short, I lost most of it because I had so much. I began taking side trips to Vegas. Everyone in the hotel I usually stayed at knew my name, what I would like to drink, eat and everything. Even the women I'd want. Turns out though I decided after a while I had

fallen in love with the west, a real love. Nevada, Utah, and especially Arizona. I met Christine there and she helped me buy some land where I eventually built a big house with a kidney shaped pool. I was in that pool everyday, morning and night. It was always warm enough to do it. I mean we used to make it in the pool. She would scream so loud at first I thought I had hurt her but she explained to me right away about how she just had to let it loose. And did we ever make waves in that pool.

Soon we opened a big book store. Christine was the most avid reader I had ever met. She even wrote some short stories too that I never translated. They were good though. Long story short, she made me crave for literature, poetry and a return to the writing life. I began to burn up inside. My hunger for her and words on the page began to take its toll. Long story short, I came down with skin cancer and could no longer go outside. I felt terrible and so did Christine. I went to New York for the most expensive treatments. She would read to me over the phone. Long story short, they worked. After six months of the most intense treatments everything cleared up except I had to have a skin graft on my nose. It was horrible. I thought I would never be able to breathe like a normal person again. I had to have the oxygen tank for a while. Christine learned all about how to refill it and keep me from going mad. She was more than amazing. She gave me the room I needed to breathe. My bedroom had been looking more and more like a hospital supply room with all the oxygen tanks, IV cables, and stands, we even had a heart monitor machine with its incessant beeping. Christine said I would never fully recover in such a mechanical wasteland. Her plan was to create an environment for me that would boost my spirits, influence me to my creative side and allow me the freedom to write if I wanted. Long story short, it worked. The absence of the hospital like atmosphere increased my strengths in all areas. She moved in books I hadn't read, a writing desk and, the most brilliant touch, cartloads of live colorful flowers so that now my room was reimagined into a true living, breathing, almost rain forest like

ambience. I loved it and more important for me, she loved it too. She told me she had even learned to love my quite unfamiliar nose and proved this astounding fact often by planting her lips and a beautiful kiss right on the tip of my new nostrils. I was recovering.

Long story short, no sooner did I begin to get back on my feet and back to work at the store did Christine have a heart attack and die. But not at first. She languished in the hospital and still always gave a smile when she saw me. I often had to turn away just then to hide my tears. The doctors never made explanation to me. I couldn't read or write another word. Christine began to lose her voice. I had lost mine. Our bookstore went to hell. I couldn't work it without Christine and the people I had no longer had heart for it either. Long story short, I ended up in the hospital with a nervous breakdown. I think that's what really pushed Christine over the edge, she was taking on the blame, it was a vicious circle her heart couldn't cope with. All the attempts I made to help her assuage her guilt fell into the abyss. I felt like the end of the earth. After I recovered I wanted to move back to Europe, to France, but I just could not move. I mean I could barely get out of my chair. I'm saddled with the regret of my choices. Why did I ever come home? How long will I suffer? Long story short, it's a mystery I don't dare attempt to explain.

