

Altered Course

by Phillip W. Weiss

This story is about a guy named Charlie. He was a regular guy, born in Queens, New York, had loving parents, wonderful siblings, followed sports and liked girls. After he graduated high school, the army drafted him. This was during the Korean War. He reported for duty as ordered. But he did not complete his military service. Instead, the Army issued him an administrative discharge, the reasons for which Charlie never fully discussed. Sometimes he would mention something about having been injured in Korea but when asked to provide details, his answers became fuzzy. That did not stop him from getting a job for the government and having friends. At first, he liked working for the government, but after ten years working in a drab government office he quit. He hated his supervisor and the rigid and indifferent bureaucracy that reduced him to a nameless cog in an impersonal bureaucratic machine. In need of income, he applied to the VA for service-connected disability benefits. He claimed that he lost his mind during basic training, leaving him too mentally disturbed to work. Well, the VA rating board reviewed his case and awarded him 100 percent service-connected disability benefits for life. At age of forty-one Charlie became a retiree. His friends considered Charlie as something of an oddity, but that did not stop them from accepting him as one of the guys. Together they would go to

singles functions to try to pick up girls. They went to dozens of these functions. Some of Charlie's friends succeeded in scoring with the ladies. However, Charlie was neither so fortunate nor lucky. Charlie struck out all the time. He couldn't get their telephone numbers. His self-esteem rattled, Charlie's frustration and anger grew and soon he developed a hatred for women. Now, this was not a demonstrative hatred. Rather, it was a simmering hatred which came through as bitter cynicism regarding the character of the female of the species, which as far as he was concerned, were all a bunch of money grubbing manipulative, nasty, and vicious whores. Yet, Charlie still wanted to meet and succeed with girls. One day he saw on television a report on the sex industry in southeast Asia. That report caught Charlie's interest and soon he booked a flight to Manila. In spent a week in Manila going from bar to bar, trying to pick up girls. Everywhere he went he struck out. He was at the point of despair when an American serviceman told him about a section of the Philippines called Happy Land located near Clark Air Base where there were hundreds of bars where he could meet all the girls he wanted and at a cheap price. So, thanking the service man and following this advice, he packed his bags, checked out of his hotel, and took a bus to Happy Land. When he arrived at Happy Land, he immediately knew he had arrived at the right place for him. The streets were lined with bars. Outside of each bars girls stood offering their services to passing pedestrians. Charlie found a room in a hotel that was little more than a flophouse. But Charlie did not care. He didn't go to Happy Land for fine living accommodation. He went to Happy Land to meet

girls and get laid and if it meant staying in a dump, so be it. As for the girls being whores, he was okay with that too. After all, he rationalized, “the girls in New York are also whores, just a lot more expensive.” After he settled in the hotel, he freshened up, drank a can of soda he had gotten from a vending machine in the hotel lobby, went onto the street, and joined the throng. Within five minutes Charlie was in a bar. The place was packed with girls and customers. Charlie didn’t know what to do or say. Soon, a young girl approached him. She flashed him a big smile and he smiled back. She said, “Hi, sugar. Looking for a good time?” Charlie did not know what say. He never had a girl come on to him. The girl, being a pro, sensed that she was dealing with a novice. She said, “Honey, I like you. Why don’t you buy me a drink, and we can grab a table and chat..” Charlie, mesmerized, said, “Okay.” “Thank you, sweetie. By the way, my name is Suzie. What’s yours?” Suzie asked. “My name is Charlie,” Charlie said, beginning to relax. Suzie called to the bar, “Two drinks here.” The bartender who doubled as the bar’s bouncer and pimp, nodded, and soon brought over two drinks. He handed the drinks to Suzie and Charlie. Suzie then led Charlie to the back of the bar where there were booths. Each booth contained a table with chairs. Suzie took Charlie to one of the empty booths and both sat down, facing each other. Both sipped their drinks. Charlie said, “Hey this is good. What’s in it?” “Rum and coke,” Suzie said. Suzie then put aside her drink, again smiled at Charlie, and said, “I like you, Charlie. You want to have some fun tonight?” Charlie was flabbergasted. He never had a girl come on to him. His excitement

was building. He could feel his loins coming to life. He liked this girl and wanted her badly. "Yeah, I want some fun tonight," Charlie said. He then asked, "What did you have in mind?" "How about if we go to your place," Suzie suggested. "Where are you staying?" Charlie told Suzie the name of the hotel. "I know that place. It's just a short walk away from here," Suzie exclaimed. What she didn't tell Charlie was that she knew all the hotels in Happy Land all of which were bordellos operated by gangsters who fancied themselves legitimate businessmen providing a valuable and popular entertainment service. Suzie had been in Charlie's hotel dozens of times with dozens of customers, none of whom ever left dissatisfied. "So, how about if we now leave and go to your place where we can get to know each other better," Suzie suggested. Charlie could hardly believe what he was hearing. Get to know each other better? That was a line that guys used on girls. Now, Suzie was using the exact same line on him. "Yes, let's do that," Charlie said. Suzie called for the check which Charlie paid, leaving a tip for the bartender who smiled, and they left. They walked to the hotel, holding hands, as if they had known each other for years. Then they arrived at the hotel. At the reception desk Charlie asked for the key to his room. The guy behind the counter gave him the key and greeted Suzie who nodded and smiled. The guy was Suzie's cousin and her favorite pimp. Suzie and Charlie walked up a flight of stairs to the second floor and soon entered Charlie's room. Suzie said, "Nice room," She had been in this same room at least ten previous times. "I'm glad you like it," Charlie said. Then Charlie embraced Suzie and kissed her full on the lips. Suzie laughed and

said, "You're quite a kisser, Charlie. I think we're gonna have a real good time."

Suzie broke away from Charlie's embrace and said, "But before I can show you a good time, you have to take care of me." Charlie, baffled, asked, "Take care of you?" "You know what I mean. Money. It will be ten dollars for an hour, fifteen for two hours and one hundred for the entire night." Instead of feeling put off, Suzie's frankness excited him. He said, "I want you for the entire night." Suzie said, "Great. Now pay me the money and I will show you the best time you ever had in your life!" Charlie gave Suzie five twenty-dollar bills. Suzie put the money in her purse. Suzie said, "I'm gonna take a shower. You want to join me?" Charlie felt that he was in the middle of a dream, living a fantasy that was now a reality.

"Absolutely," Charlie said, his excitement at the bursting point. What he read about in the porno magazines and watched in porno movies was now happening for real. At this moment, Charlie saw in Suzie the most beautiful and ravishing woman in the world. They undressed, showered together, and enjoyed each other through the night. For the first time in his life, a woman was treating him with respect. Every time they had sex, he thought about all the women who had rejected him back home. "Who needs them? Everything I need is here," he thought to himself with conviction as Suzie gave herself to him. In the morning, Suzie woke up, kissed Charlie, called him a tiger, asked him to look her up again, and left, leaving Charlie alone with his thoughts. Charlie felt like he was an explorer who had discovered a new land, "Here, women know how to treat a man, not like the snobby selfish bitches back home," he thought. "I have found the

right place for me.” Years went by. Each year Charlie traveled to the Philippines and other countries in Southeast Asia for sex. During that period, he had sex with hundreds of girls, some of whom even wrote letters to Charlie exhorting him to contact them whenever he returned. Charlie showed these letters to his friends in New York, offering these letters as proof of how well Asian women treat their men. His friends snickered, wondering if Charlie had totally lost his mind. They told him, “Charlie, all you’re doing is paying for sex. Anybody can do that. It’s no big deal.” They also asked, “Do you understand that you are banging whores?” Unphased, Charlie said, “I know they’re whores. So what? Unlike the girls here, they treat me well and that’s what counts. The girls here are too expensive, too nasty, and too ugly.” In response, his friends laughed, mostly at Charlie. Charlie thought, “These guys are so stupid” and soon had nothing more to do with them. Then one day, something happened that changed Charlie’s life. It happened during his fifteenth annual sojourn to Southeast Asia. By this time, Charlie was known throughout the region. Well, one day, while walking along the street past the bars packed with girls, he stopped in front of a bar where he noticed a young girl. She was thin and emaciated. She looked as if she could not be more than twelve years old. He felt a chill go through his body and asked himself, “Is this what I have been banging for the past fifteen years?” Then a feeling of revulsion welled up inside him, his body became racked with nausea, and soon he was bent over vomiting in the street. He continued to vomit for five minutes and then, gasping for breath, collapsed onto the street. An ambulance took him to a local

hospital where the doctors found him dehydrated and placed him on intravenous fluids. Three days later Charlie was discharged from the hospital. He immediately returned to his hotel, quickly packed his bags, went to the airport, and took the first flight back to the United States. He never had sex with a prostitute again. Back in the United States, this time for good, he was back to square one, alone and still craving women. But after having banged hundreds of girls, albeit prostitutes, his self-esteem restored, he no longer felt the urgent need to prove to himself that he was desirable to women and that he was not a loser. He felt he finally knew how to meet women. Charlie thought, "If I want a woman, all I have to do is pay them money and they will gladly put out, but what the women here have to offer isn't worth paying for." This belief afforded Charlie a certain degree of satisfaction. Then one day, Charlie was sitting on a bench in a park in New York City. A woman showed up, a total stranger, sat at the same bench, took out a book from her shoulder bag, and started reading. She seemed utterly oblivious to Charlie's presence. Nevertheless, Charlie glanced at her. "She looks okay," he thought. "Maybe she's not so bad," he thought. Then Charlie turned, faced the woman, and said, "Excuse me, miss." The woman put down her book, turned to face Charlie, and asked, "Yes?" Charlie said, "I'm sorry to interrupt your reading, but I want to let you know that I think you're a beautiful woman." The woman thanked him for the complement and smiled.