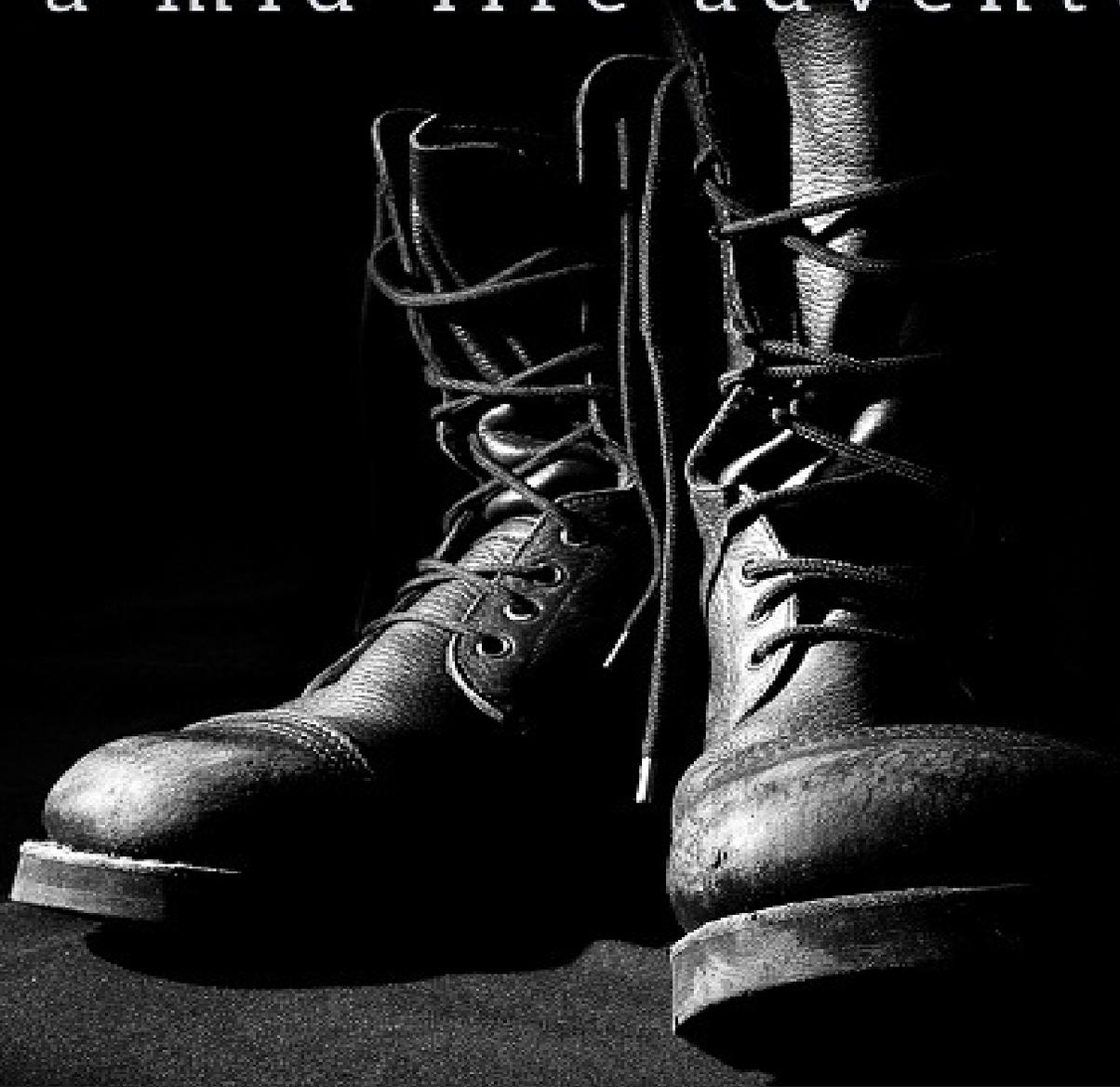


Bad Luck Cadet & Officer

Suzie Ivy

a mid-life adventure



Post One

Accidents Happen

My midlife crisis started with a broken hip that began with a smart horse and a dumb rider. I was forty four years old and forty pounds overweight. My horse was in great shape and enjoyed my pain tremendously. He laughed all the way to his new owners. I cried all the way to the hospital.

I convalesced for two months. During that time, I watched television, read books, surfed the web and ate lots of junk food. My forty pounds soon became fifty and I think depression set in. I never suffered from that condition before so I can't be positive. It may have just been the pain pills.

As soon as I could walk without the walker, I decided I needed to make some changes. But what? What did I want to do with the rest of my life?

An ad on the drugstore bulletin board changed everything:

Small Town looking for a few good men and women!
Must have a crime free background,
Must work well with others,
Must be able to physically undergo the rigors of the police academy,
Must be able to complete what you start.
Must be 21 years old but you're never too old.
Academy begins August 15.

Six months away, never too old! This was for me. I could actually picture myself in a police uniform. I had always looked good in navy.

I stepped back from the police academy ad and my reflection appeared in the glass. Who was this overweight slob looking back at me? I had no excuse. I was forty pounds too heavy before my accident. And I might have under exaggerated the extra ten pounds since the accident.

Things needed to change. I needed to change.

I looked back at the ad. What would my kids say? What would my friends think? My husband would be no help. He would sit in his big easy chair and say, "Yes dear."

I needed Veronica. She's that one friend everyone has, but likes to hate. She's in great shape, she's a vegetarian and she believes volunteer work is good for the soul. Veronica's that kind of friend.

Over the next two months Veronica kicked my butt. She never gave up and felt it was her own personal volunteer goal to see I dropped the weight and got in shape. She agreed not to tell our friends. I agreed to keep her latest nose job to myself. We were both happy but I was in pain. My legs hurt, my arms hurt and my butt hurt.

What I needed was another prescription for pain pills but I knew I would need to pass the urine test and it wouldn't look good to have narcotics in my blood stream even if they were legal. So I suffered through.

As my stomach shrank the small food portions I was consuming became more bearable. My pants became too large and my breasts too small. My husband was the only one who complained. I started to feel like I was in my twenties, well maybe thirties. I had more energy and wanted to exercise all the time. I went to Small Town's police department and picked up an application.

Yes, I lived in the Arizona city of Small Town. It is frequently confused with Nowhere, Arizona. My husband and I moved here ten years ago. He sells widgets to power plants and two of the largest power plants in the country reside here. Norman also had a pilot's license and flew to other large power plants. There was a lot of money to be made in power plant widget sales.

There were two reasons I married Norman. One was because I loved him and the other was for his last name. Ivy just went along with Suzie. My maiden name was actually Suzanna Shultz. Need I say more?

The police application was twenty-two pages long. It required my life history, copies of my birth certificate and high school diploma and it had to

be notarized and turned in by the deadline of June 1. Two weeks away. It was time to tell Norman and my kids.

Technically they were not kids any longer. They were young adults just beginning their lives. My oldest, Letty, thought she had finally found the “right man.” Roger, the middle child and my only son thought he wanted to be a power plant operator. My youngest, Cassie, just graduated high school. She would be leaving for college when I left for the police academy.

Norman accepted my announcement like I knew he would. I’m surprised he didn’t pat me on the head. I didn’t think this was a good time to explain I would be living on campus five hours away and he would be cooking his own dinners.

My kids were a different story. Roger thought I was out of my mind. He actually stormed out of the house. I knew he would be back; he lived with us rent-free. Letty thought I was menopausal, too old and even after losing thirty pounds, too fat. Cassie, bless her heart, sided with me.

“If this is what you want mom, I think it’s great.” She said.

It actually didn’t matter what anyone said. My mind was made up and I’d been working my ass off to reach my goals. I finished the application and turned it in with a week to spare. A few days later, I was called to begin the first round of eliminations.

There were sixteen people in the room not including Sergeant Spears. He told everyone he would begin checking our backgrounds after we passed a written examination. Two people walked out without completing the test. I spent the first hour answering questions and the second hour checking my work. The test wasn’t exactly hard but it made you think about and analyze the questions.

I looked around and I realized the applicants were young. All appeared to be in their twenties. Maybe this was not such a good idea. How could I compete? I turned in my test and went home.

A miserable three days later I got a call.

Sergeant Spears wanted to speak with me in person. He scheduled the appointment for 1300 hours. Thank god I was an army brat and knew what he meant. I arrived two minutes early. I didn't want to show my eagerness but I absolutely didn't want to be late. I waited around the corner for thirty minutes before pulling into the parking lot.

I was shown to Sergeant Spears' office. He looked me up and down as I entered. Not in a male female sort of way but in a "she's completely lacking sort of way." He asked me to have a seat.

"What makes you think you can be a police officer?"

"I'm organized, I'm intelligent and I love mystery novels, not the cozies but the real hard core ones."

He rubbed his forehead and then the back of his neck; I didn't think it was a good sign. He shook his head and then looked at me again.

"From what we have found so far you have a clean record. I believe you received a traffic citation five years ago but went to traffic school. As we dig deeper, are we going to find out anything?"

"I'm a Democrat."

There, it was out. I'd been reading up on police officers and they were overwhelmingly Republicans. Not that it would be anything new, I was an out spoken democrat in a town that was prodigiously republican and took its politics seriously.

Sergeant Spears just stared. I stared back without breaking eye contact.

"You scored the highest on the written test. I've been giving that test for three years and yours is the highest score ever."

Boy there must be some dumb kids nowadays.

"If everything checks out you will need to pass a physical, psychological and polygraph tests. You will also be required to meet Cooper Standards for running, pushups and sit-ups. Can you?"

"Yes I can." I said emphatically.

He studied me another minute.

“Okay we’ll be calling one way or another by early next week. Be ready.”

I held my elation in check as I went out the door. It wasn't hard.

What the heck was a Cooper Test?

Post Two

Jumping Hurdles

The week dragged by as I waited for the next stage in my police academy entrance tests. My husband could do nothing right. My kids were driving me nuts, my son most of all. He actually told me I was an embarrassment to our family. My palm itched, but I knew if I slapped him he would call the police just to ruin my near perfect background record.

I looked up Cooper Standards on the Internet. It is divided by sex - male and female, factors in age, then gives levels for superior, excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor standards. If I used the good category for my age and sex, I needed to be able to perform one 17.7 inch vertical jump, 28 sit ups and 15 pushups in one minute; run 300 meters in 72 seconds, and 1.5 miles in 13 minutes and 58 seconds.

Were they out of their cotton picking minds?

I was averaging a 14-minute mile and thought that was good. The sit-ups and pushups wouldn't be a problem. But I had no clue as to my abilities on the 300 meters or the vertical jump.

Well, now was the time to find out. I decided to head over to the high school's track and start timing myself. Maybe I could push everything up a notch or two in the time I had. I called Veronica for moral support. It took me five minutes to get there. She was already waiting.

It was probably my hardest workout. I was beginning to think I might not have it in me. Veronica was a drill sergeant and wouldn't let up.

The entire week continued this way.

In the end, I managed to shave a whole minute off my mile. But I was sure that extra half-mile was going to kill me.

My phone rang at precisely 0800 hours on Monday morning. I was

asked to meet at the track at 0800 the following day. I decided to give my body a rest and take it easy. I jumped on the scale and was down another five pounds. I had fifteen more to go.

The following day was overcast, cold and gloomy. I again arrived early but this time got out of my car and went to do my stretches. Veronica had taught me the value of stretching my old tired body. She just looked so much better doing them than I did.

Everyone began arriving. There were only five of us, three men and two women. The other female was a spunky little thing. She didn't say much to me, mostly just flirted with the guys. I'll call one Mr. Muscle, and the other two, Curly and Mo. Miss Pony Tail rounded out our crew. Sergeant Spears told us we would be doing the pushups and sit-ups first.

The other four recruits (see I was learning the terminology) chose each other as partners. I was left with Sgt. Spears. I actually finished in the excellent category according to Cooper. Next was the vertical jump. I managed 18 inches and raised Sgt. Spear's eyebrows. It was the only test I beat Miss Pony Tail on. Next, we had the 300-meter run. I finished in 70 seconds, having two seconds. We then had the mile and a half run. I gave it everything I had. It didn't matter that I finished last I just wanted to finish under my time.

Mr. Muscle stopped running about halfway through and walked a lap. He still beat me. Curly also walked part of the way and finished before I did. I missed my time by 35 seconds. It put me in the fair category. I didn't know if it was enough, but I knew I had given it everything I had.

Sgt. Spears said he would call us all the next day. I went home and ate a bowl of ice cream. I then ate another bowlful, but added chocolate syrup on top. I hid my crime by washing and drying the bowl and spoon. I didn't try to disguise the empty ice cream carton. Everyone would assume it was my son's handy work.

Torn between dread and anticipation, I tossed and turned for most of

the night.

Before my husband left in the morning, he told me not to feel bad that I hadn't accomplished my goal. He said I needed to pick something a little more attainable the next time. I'm sure somehow he thought that would make me feel better.

The call came early and I was asked to come into the station at 0900.

I was the only recruit there. Sgt. Spears did not look happy. He asked me to sit. I sat.

“Look, I don't think you have what it takes. I don't think you'll survive a week at the academy,” he said. “You don't seem tough enough and this is a tough business. I think you showed guts though by going this far. I had two young strong men stop running yesterday and take it easy when they could have done better. I don't think you could have done better but you never stopped. Those two men are out of the program. That leaves three of you. I'm going to include you in the poly and psych tests. I also want you to have the physical exam. I'll give you a chance. You showed 'heart,' and sometimes as police professionals, that's all we have.”

That was it. I thanked him and told him I was available for the tests.

I called Veronica as soon as I got to my car. I invited her to meet me for a thank you lunch and then gave her the news. I was not 'in' yet, but I was a step closer. Veronica began crying and told me that she was so proud.

And in that moment, I was happy Veronica's mother hadn't drowned her at birth for being so perfect. She was just what I needed.

Post Three

I Think I'm Crazy and a Liar

I was scheduled for my psychological examination in Phoenix on Thursday morning and the polygraph test on Friday. It's a bit of a drive so I decided to stay Wednesday night in the city. I loved visiting the city and the biggest reason was Starbucks coffee. Venti hot mocha, non-fat, with whip, it's the only thing I order.

My Starbucks and I arrived early for the exam. I finished my caffeine chocolate combination and hid the evidence. I didn't know what the psychological exam entailed but I didn't want them to know I needed caffeine to feel human every morning.

I was shown to a small room with four tables and two chairs at each table. I took a seat. Miss Ponytail and Mo came in a few minutes later. Miss Ponytail took a seat with a good looking military type guy and Mo was forced to sit by me. He at least said hi. Miss Ponytail and I were the only females.

A woman came in and told us we would start with basic timed tests. We were each given a bubble page and then our exam. We were told not to begin or look at the test until told and then the ten minutes began.

This was easy.

Question 1: 1,3,5 – what number comes next?

And on it went. The questions were basic sequencing problems. They weren't all as easy as number one, but I actually enjoyed doing them. Before the ten minutes were over I had finished but Mo was having problems. He turned to me and whispered, "What happens if we don't finish? Will they make us leave?" His voice held absolute panic.

I told him to take his time and finish what he could. I was beginning to

understand what the tests were about. When you're forty you've taken so many tests in your life it doesn't throw you to be under pressure or not know an answer. You just go to the next question. Being young, you return to those dreaded achievement tests in high school. Just how smart are you?

For once it was nice to be older. I might not be in the best physical shape compared to others in the room but I had it made when it came to these questions. Five more timed tests were given. I didn't answer every question but overall I knew I had done well. Poor Mo was dripping sweat and feeling the pressure. Miss Ponytail was flirting with her table partner and didn't appear any worse for wear.

After the sequencing and math tests we started the hard part. I've always felt I had a strong head on my shoulders and was pretty self-assured. At the end of four hours I was feeling quite disturbed. We were given three main tests, each with 200 questions. The questions on all three were only slightly different. I could see if you lied in any of the first test questions you would be in trouble. I don't know if my answers were correct but I answered honestly.

I was asked over ten times if I loved my mother or if my mother is deceased, did I love my mother. I answered yes every time. Next, do I love my father and if my father is deceased, did I love my father. Every time I answered no.

Now I was starting to sweat. Was I a horrible person because I didn't love my father? My father was a no good jerk. He left my mom and his three children when we were young. He needed some space and wanted a different life. He died when I was in my twenties. I never really knew him. I didn't hate him any longer but I don't remember ever loving him. I was such a terrible person! I knew they wouldn't want me as an officer. What a stupid test.

We were called one by one into the room with the psychologist. No one ever came back into the testing room after being called. I was last. This was an omen; I knew it. When I was finally called I went into another small but quaint room with a couch and chairs. I sat on the couch and the Doctor sat in a

chair. He went through my evaluation and asked me questions. He never questioned the dislike of my father he just asked about general life questions. I left feeling crazy.

I slept poorly but had to be up early for the polygraph. After hitting Starbucks, I checked in and was given a questionnaire. It covered everything from juvenile shoplifting to drug use. I don't remember ever shoplifting. My mom would have killed me but I remember my best friend stealing a purse and the guilt I felt because I was with her.

Drug use was another no brainer because I didn't know what most of the drugs were. Marijuana, cocaine, yes, but mescaline, crank, and methamphetamine, I had no idea. I guess it didn't matter because the bottom line was I hadn't ever used any. I figured I was just boring.

I finished and was shown into the testing room. Rob Thomas introduced himself as my polygrapher. He began by hooking me up to electrodes. My chest, finger and arms were wired and he explained I was sitting on butt plates so they could measure how my butt clinched. I was mortified. My butt cheeks were getting firmer but they still had wobble. I knew they would give a false impression. This was not going to be good.

Rob asked what police department I was testing for and what academy I was going to. I told him Small Town and PAFRA (Police Academy For Rural America). He told me he was also attending PAFRA in September. I explained I would be starting in August. Rob was not aware there was a class starting in August and I knew he felt I had told my first lie. I think the ad said August. I had looked up PAFRA online but it didn't give very much information.

The test began. I was asked the same questions from the questionnaire I was given earlier. Rob stared at his computer screen while the test continued. I answered every question honestly and began relaxing. It was finally over. I was waiting for Rob to re-question me because on the testing information it stated any questionable answers would be re-asked. It never happened. I told Rob I would see him at the academy. His answer, "We'll see."

What if every question showed I was lying?

I drove home feeling sad. I knew it was my Jello cheeks. Whoever thought they'd measure butt clenching on a polygraph test?

I was exhausted when I arrived. My husband was out of town until Sunday, my son was spending the weekend camping and my daughter went to bed early. I made a Tom Collins and listened to music until I was tired and then tried to sleep. I wondered when I'd receive the news good or bad.