The Party's Over

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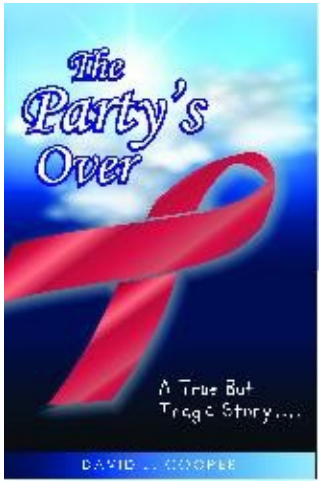
Two friends discover that they have AIDS. One of them takes his doctor's advice and survives. The other one, Cisco, won't accept that he is infected. Not responding to his doctor's advice he retreats into his own world of drugs, male prostitution and partying so, tragically, suffers the consequences. Cisco's best friend is frantic with worry, so much so that as a result his own health suffers. A true, and moving story.



Published on
Booksie

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Chapter One

â Que cachondo!â

Those were the first words I heard from the male stripper as he gyrated close to me just wearing tiny, red briefs. This was the beginning of a five year friendship that was to fill my life with joy, and sadness, and was to end tragically.

He was very good looking, young, with a very good physique. A handsome Mexican guy, and was the only stripper in the club, which I used to go to, that could dance! The other strippers would just make the usual aerobic movements. His fifteen minute routine consisted of music by Wilfred Vargas, Jennifer Lopez, and Bon Jovi.

Appearing in a casual shirt, and pants, and wearing sunglasses, he would dance to the rhythm of the music and finally, to the slow beat of the last but one song, heâ d remove his clothes in a seductive way until he was down to his briefs. Then heâ d mingle with members of the audience, who would strategically place peso notes into his briefs, while having the opportunity to touch his muscular body.

The club, *Palomitas*, where I used to go, wasnâ t far away from where I lived and I used to go there to enjoy a night out and have a few beers. It was located in the *Zona Rosa*, Guadalajara, Mexico. It has since closed down.

I used to go there to see the drag show. The artists were very professional and looked exactly like the real artists whom they were portraying.

Apart from the female impersonators, there were males too, who impersonated Mexican male singers and were identical to the real McCoy!

They didnâ t just perform their songs in Spanish, but also mimicked international singers, especially famous singers from the United States.

Guadalajara has some good night spots, but also has some dives! This club didnâ t fall into the â diveâ category though.

Because there was a cover charge of seventy pesos, and which I thought was a bit on the high side compared to other clubs, the local *â mayates,â* as they are called, which means male prostitutes, wouldnâ t come to the place. Clients were usually middle-aged professionals.

The cover included the first drink of your choice. It had two floors - an upper bar and a downstairs bar with the dance floor - and could hold up to four hundred people. The show started at 11.00pm and went on until 3.00am. It was open from Wednesday to Sunday.

Once a month, it would have a â Hot Night,â where the strippers would expose everything!! Women werenâ t allowed in on those nights.

The regular show would start with female impersonators in a dance routine, followed by the host, who was also a drag queen, portraying either a famous female Mexican singer or a female international singer.

In between the drag show were the male strippers. It was an entertaining night out.

Almost all of the nightclubs in Guadalajara, especially the gay ones have this type of show.

I was never really interested in the male strippers, because I thought that it was more of an art for a male to convert into a female, but this male stripper was about to change my life in more ways than one!

I always felt relaxed in this particular club because I never used to get bothered by anybody who was just looking for a one night stand. It was a local pick up place, and it was obvious, but I wasnâ t into that.

It was well-known, and frequented by gay people of both genders, but had lately become a haunt for mixed couples and swingers.

I was friendly with the bar staff and also with all of the drag queens. The conductor of the show, Alex, would always say

â Ah, hereâ s David the Englishman who is more Mexican than English!â

The other drag artists were always very friendly and welcoming to me, thatâ s why I felt safe and relaxed there. When male members of the public, who were looking for a pick-up, could see I was a friend of the artists and bar staff, they wouldnâ t bother me.

The bar tenders were male and straight, and I used to get on well with Pedro, the ownerâ s brother, a man of about thirty eight, chubby, and short. His famous catchphrase was always â *puta!â* Manuel was the other barman who was tall, and thin, and had a moustache. These barmen worked in the downstairs bar. The other barmen, who worked in the upstairs bar, were Jacob and Jesus. There were two waiters, Armando and Felipe. Five regular drag queens appeared in the show: Carlos, Damien, Alberto - who regularly impersonated Yuri and looked exactly like her - Federico, who impersonated Cher, and Aldo. There were also guest male impersonators, usually portraying Alejandro Fernandez, and Juan Gabriel. I also got to know Jose, the bouncer, a forty year old bald guy.

Iâ d usually walk there, as it was near to where I lived, but I always took a taxi home, so I got to know the taxi driver, a man of around fifty, whose name was Chino, pretty well too.

Well, Iâ d go there on weekends, usually on a Saturday night.

Eventually, I met Cisco â his real name was Francisco - a male stripper, in February 2007. He found out that I worked at a language school and asked me about English classes, so I gave him my business card and told him to ask for me if he was interested in classes, because I could get him a free scholarship and he wouldnâ t have to pay for them, and left it at that.

About three weeks later, he phoned my home number and asked if he could come and see me personally to talk about the possibility of studying English.

This was on a Sunday afternoon. I wasnâ t doing anything, so I gave him my address and he arrived half an hour later by taxi.

We spoke for about an hour and I said it would be best if he came to the school the next day, so that he could register and start his course. I was very surprised because I thought he wasnâ t really serious about taking English classes. He also said that he was interested in getting to know me, because the bar staff and other artists he worked with had spoken highly of me and had told him that I wasnâ t like the other clients, who only went there to pick someone up for a one night stand.

He came to the school the next day and registered and started his classes at 5.00pm. Unfortunately, he only came for two weeks and never showed up again, which came as no surprise.

I personally didnâ t think that this type of person would be serious or committed enough to study English as he was in showbiz.

I went to the club the following Saturday night, but he didnâ t appear in the show. I didnâ t see him again for about three months.

I had a friend, Burt, an American, who was also a teacher, and we would often have a coffee together, so one day I suggested that we go to the club one Friday night for a couple of beers.

Heâ d never been there and was interested in seeing the drag show, so we made arrangements to meet outside the club at 10.30pm the following Friday night.

Well, it was a very good show and, lo and behold, Cisco was in the show that very night. Burt was very surprised to see how friendly the artists were with me. Anyway, I introduced Cisco to him. After his spot had finished he came and sat with us. Burt didnâ t want to stay to the end and left after the first show, so I stayed with Cisco for company.

â Why donâ t we go on to another club?â he suggested, â I prefer to go somewhere else because I work here and want to get away from my work.â I agreed, paid for the drinks, and we left in a taxi to take us to another club, which was very near to my house.

We had a really good time and this is when I started to get to know him. We had a photo taken together and met some other acquaintances of mine, Miriam and Javier. I had known this couple for some time because they used the same club too. They were in their late thirties. Miriam was an accountant, and Javier was a taxi driver. She was of medium build and he was slightly taller, with a very short moustache. They were swingers, but Iâ d been told by one of the barmen at the club that Javier was into young men and Miriam was aware of this.

â Is it okay if I stay at your place tonight?â Cisco asked, to which I agreed.

So at 6.00am when the club closed we came back to my place. He stayed the night.

During Sunday we talked a lot about his family and also about my family and what had brought me to Mexico.

â My mother lives in Los Cabos,â he said, â So do my brother and sister. Sorry, I couldnâ t continue with my English. My work takes me out of Guadalajara at times and I havenâ t been able to continue with my English classes, because Iâ ve been working in Puerto Vallarta.â

â So, where do you live?â I asked.

â Near the ring road,â he replied, â I share a house with some other strippers, but was wondering if I could come and live with you, because itâ s nearer to *Palomitas*.â

I said I would think about it and let him know the following week.

He also told me that he had been living in Guadalajara for nine years because he had had the chance to leave Los Cabos and study to become an actor and dancer with *Televisa* in Mexico City. He preferred Guadalajara and said that he had worked at *Televisa* as a choreographer and that he was a member of ANDA (the association for actors). He also said that he had worked as a model, which was easy to believe because he had the looks.

On the Wednesday of that week, he made a surprise visit to the school to tell me it was his birthday and he was 27 years old. We went to a seafood restaurant in Zapopanâ s *Mercado del Mar* to celebrate.

Now, our friendship was growing and I was getting to know more about him. He had a very nice personality, very bubbly and very outgoing. He was slightly smaller than me, about five feet seven, with very dark, coffee coloured eyes, and jet black hair, which was cut short. He weighed around 170 pounds, and always wore sunglasses - on and off stage!!

But unfortunately, he had a split personality, took cocaine, and was a blatant liar, which I was going to discover much later on in our friendship.

â Letâ s go to the zoo on Sunday!â he said, like an excited teenager, â Then to the movies because Iâ d like to see *Transformers.*â

â Ok,â I replied, â Come to my house at 1.00pm on Sunday.â

The following Sunday, he came to my house and we took a taxi to the zoo, which was only half an hour away. We stayed there all afternoon and had a really great time. We must have walked for miles, because the zoo is very big, and we saw all the animals.

He was mainly interested in the white tigers and the newly born lion cubs, which were on show, and we went inside a place where we could feed the monkeys. He bought a packet of peanuts and a monkey came close to him so that he could give it some.

To remember the day we asked a member of the public to take a photo of us together with my cell phone. It was a nice photo with the *Barranca* as a backdrop.

After our visit to the zoo we took another cab and went to the movies in the *Centro Magno* shopping mall, to see the movie that he had so much wanted to see: *Transformers.*

I would find out later that he loved going to the movies and was interested in watching the boxing on television. He also liked to go out for a meal. His favourite food was seafood, especially oysters and mussels. A breakfast for him consisted of a tin of tuna fish, orange juice, honey and a raw egg all mixed together!

It had been a wonderful day, one I will always remember. After the movies we went to *Palomitas* for a couple of beers. Sunday nights were quiet there, but he met up with another stripper and the day that had been so perfect, was shattered by an unpleasant surprise for me.

The stripper friend had spoken to him about an event in Puerto Vallarta and wanted Cisco to go along as part of a show there in one of the hotels, which was to last three months.

I couldnâ t bear the thought of not seeing him again and going out, because we always enjoyed going out together and he was great fun to be with.

He made me feel younger than my fifty odd years. It was good to go out with a younger person and enjoy the clubs and the other attractions that Guadalajara has to offer. It was much better than going out alone. Company is much more fun.

He told me what his plans were, but promised to keep in touch by phone.

That night, I returned home alone feeling very depressed. It had been such an unforgettable day and this news had ruined everything.

On the way home in the taxi, Chino asked, â Whatâ s wrong David? Why do you look so miserable?â

â Nothing,â I said, â Ciscoâ s just told me that heâ ll be working away for a couple of months, thatâ s all.â

â Just be careful of him,â he said, â I know him. Ciscoâ s just a business and only out to get money from you. I should know. Heâ s used my taxi services enough times.â

I thought, â Why should Chino be telling me this?â

Jose, the bouncer, had also warned me about him by telling me he was a trouble maker.

I went to school the next day still feeling miserable and didnâ t have the heart to do any work, but I said to myself, â David, you must pull yourself together. Itâ s not the end of the world and you have only just got to know him. After all he is a free agent.â

All day long, I couldnâ t concentrate on my job and I kept thinking about the marvellous day weâ d spent at the zoo and the movies, recalling every minute of it.

He had my phone numbers, both at home, and my cell phone number, but I didnâ t have a number where I could contact him. He said heâ d phone as soon as he arrived in Puerto Vallarta and I waited all day for the call, which never materialised.

I worked as the coordinator in the English department at a language school. I had worked there as an English teacher for two years before being given the position, so I was always busy at work, which was good in some way because it kept my mind off wondering about Cisco.

The days turned into weeks and I continued to be busy at work, so Cisco went to the back of my mind. I still kept going to the club at the weekends and life went on as normal.

During one of my visits alone, Aldo, one of the drag queens, took me to one side and questioned me about Cisco.

â Are you and Cisco an issue?â he asked, â You have to be careful of him. Heâ s a drug addict and he sells his body. He introduced me to cocaine.â

â No,â I said, â Weâ re friends, and with all due respect, itâ s none of your business anyway.â

â Well,â he said, â Just be careful!â

Later the same night, another acquaintance, Hector, approached me.

â Hi, David,â he said, â How are you doing?â

â Fine,â I replied, â And you?â

â Good,â he replied, â Is it true that you and Cisco are seeing each other?â

â Weâ re just friends,â I said, â Why do you ask?â

â I just want to tell you to be careful,â he said, â Thatâ s all.â

Then he went on to tell me about someone he had known when he was living and working in San Francisco.

â I had a friend in San Francisco,â he said, â He was involved with a male stripper. Every time they went out together, he had to pay for everything. The stripper expected this because he said that my friend was privileged to be in his company. Finally, the police found him murdered, but couldnâ t prove that the stripper had killed him. I saw him laid out in his coffin. It wasnâ t a pretty sight! Theyâ re all the same these strippers. Nothing more than drug addicts, and prostitutes. I donâ t want to find out that the same thing has happened to you.â

Twice in the same night I had been warned about Cisco.

I couldnâ t get off my mind what I had been told the night before, so I decided to go and visit a lady, who lived in the next block from my house, who read tarot cards.

â Can you speak Spanish?â she asked.

â Yes,â I replied.

She asked me to shuffle the cards and place them into three piles from left to right. After I had done that, she put them back into one pile and started to place them on the table, in the form of a cross, turning them over one after the other.

â Thereâ s a young man who has recently come into your life,â she said, â Heâ s out of the city at the moment, but heâ ll be back soon looking for you.â

She continued to describe him, even telling me his exact age. I was surprised because this was the first time I had been to see her. I continued having further consultations with her during my friendship with Cisco.

â Be aware!â she warned, â Heâ s only interested in you for money.â

This was something I had to seriously think about. People who knew him were warning me about him, and now, a total stranger was giving me the same warning, just by reading the tarot cards!!

I had another very close friend, Juan. He lives in, a small town about forty miles away from Guadalajara. Iâ ve known him now for twelve years and we are very good friends. He is the complete opposite of Cisco. He is very reliable and trustworthy and lives with his mother. She never married, but he knows who is father is. However, he doesnâ t have any contact with him.

Juan has a brother and sister who are married. His family are very humble and with very little money, but they have always been like a family to me. He is the same height as myself, five feet ten and is thirty nine years old. He has very dark brown hair, brown eyes, and is now quite chubby, around 190 pounds, although he was much slimmer when I first got to know him.

The difference between Juan and Cisco is that Cisco was the party type, whereas Juan takes life more seriously. Having said that, Juan had also liked to party a lot when I first knew him, and would stay out all hours, but when he was diagnosed HIV+ some nine years ago, his lifestyle changed dramatically. He became closer to God and went to mass regularly. He cut right down on his drinking habits. He occasionally has a beer, or a glass of wine now, but nothing compared to the years before he found out he was infected.

I met Juan in December 2000 and we became very close friends. I know everything about him and he knows everything about me. I donâ t have many real friends in Guadalajara. In fact, I can count them on one hand. Apart from Juan and Cisco, I have another good friend, Mario.

I also had a very dear friend Jorge, who also died from an

AIDS related illness at the age of thirty four some ten years ago.

When I first came to live in Mexico, almost fifteen years ago, I came looking for a life of adventure not realizing that the adventure would be filled with tragedy!

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