

“Run for your Life!”

(Based on a joke circulating around the Internet...you've probably read or "heard" it... The previous version didn't have the OFFER on it...sorry!!)

The first time I saw Terry, it was in 2004. I was introducing Eliza to some of my friends at a party he was hosting over in Bloomington, an upscale suburb of Minneapolis. I wanted her to meet Terry, for he has a large heart in spite of his "over the top" way to make and keep friends. I introduced Eliza to Terry, and I could feel her embarrassment for the guy. Eliza and I are not small, thin people -- but compared to the largeness she was meeting, she was a midget, and I was next to the midget. She was polite as we caught up on life for a few minutes.

Terry has always been a large guy -- larger than most young men his age.

Eliza left that evening thinking that "all of my friends" must be the same size and shape as the large man she was introduced to that evening. Terry and I stayed in touch and when he got engaged a few months later, he wanted to take the two of us out to dinner. Eliza declined.

"He's just not healthy, Mike. I guess you can accept large folk like that but I really can't." While disappointing, I did share her point of view: for a man not even 30, Terry surely was packing more than my 200 or so pounds. He was more like pushing 350.

While I was overseas, I would get notes from other friends of mine sharing what all has been going on -- you know, the regular gossip: who's living with whom, who's seeing whom -- that kind of thing. Several of my friends kept asking me "have you seen pictures of Terry?"

"No" I would say, adding to myself, "nor do I really want to see any...."

So it was a shock to my mind as well as body when I saw Terry back in the fall. I was in town for one of my "pre-work" visits and Terry calls my cell phone and leaves a message. I did tell myself and everyone else that I had planned on "at least saying "Hi!" to everyone who knew me before I left..."

The man who stood up at the Culver's had Terry's jovial head with cropped black hair. But that was where the similarity ended. This man was slim, almost the same size as me. I took his hand and shook it and then I embraced him -- mainly so that I can see if he's wearing a corset or some other trick to "look thinner".

"I can't believe this is YOU, Terry!!" I said, ending the embrace and finding a seat at the booth. In the past, Terry's belly would not permit him to sit anywhere except at a regular table.

"Yeah," he answered, "After Kristen left me I decided to make some changes."

"Wow. That's a big change! Sorry about Kristen, however..." We waited until the waitress finished with our drink and food order and continued.

"You know, everyone was telling me that you've really slimmed down. But you know, I slimmed down too before I left, and most of what I've got is coming back!" I tapped my belly as to give witness.

"I found a really great program, Mike. It really worked for me...and I bet it would work for you."

"What, are you selling weight-loss stuff now too?" Terry was always in the "sales mode". Instead of a high-priced software engineer, he lost his calling as a salesman.

"Nah..." he said, taking a drink of the water and placing the glass back down onto the table. "I really found something that works for guys like us....you know, horny old men!"

"Speak for yourself with regard to the "old" part!" I grinned. "Alright, let me hear the pitch!"

Terry started. "Okay, the company is called "Run for your Life!" and it's run by a bunch of former military guys. They have a website and everything, the regular drill with diet and portion control and all of that crap. But they also have a special "quick loss" program that doesn't involve pills, no injections, and you can eat just about anything you want."

"Wow." I was already drawn in.

"So I called their 888 number and I ordered their 5-day, 10 lb. weight loss program -- just to test it out. Cost me \$500!!"

"Expensive! I think I'll pass..."

"No... It REALLY WORKED. The day after I ordered," Terry said, "there's a knock on my door. So I go to answer it. There's an absolutely beautiful blonde looking at me. She had to be no more than 18 or 19 years old. She asked if I'm Terry Steward, and then tells me to sign a form. It's one of those disclaimers that says I feel that I'm healthy and that if I died from the program, that my mom can't sue their company. I'm telling you Mike, I signed the form but I can't remember even if I signed in the right place!"

I grinned large as Terry told me what happened next.

"So she tucks the form into those skimpy bright red running shorts and then says "Are you ready?" Then she turns this sign she's wearing around her neck -- and it says simply "If you can catch me, you can HAVE me!" "

"No...." I said. "It had to be a gag, right?" I was laughing politely. "Did you get her?"

"Nah man...my ass was so out of shape, I stopped right after the first corner and puffed my way back to the apartment!"

"That's it?" I asked.

"Nah... the SAME girl shows up the next day and the next day...the rest of the week. By Friday, Mike, I was running a good mile and a half with all of that weight trying to catch that gal!" But on Saturday morning, I woke up and weighed myself and DAMN!! I lost 12 pounds -- more than the ten pounds they promised!"

I drank my coffee as I listened to Terry.

"So, I called the company again and asked for that same program. They told me that I had a limit on a 50 pound loss within five weeks -- something about their nutritionists saying that a rapid weight loss can bring on more problems than the present weight. I didn't understand that, but for the next FIVE WEEKS I was running after that SAME gal. I never caught her -- man, the things I would have done with HER!! -- but I did lose 64 pounds by the time I was done..."

"Dude!! That's EXPENSIVE!! Why didn't you just walk or run on your own -- that's like \$2500 you spent on that plan!!"

"It was WORTH IT, Mike. When was the last time you REALLY exercised?"

Terry had a point there. I was slacking off from my own personal exercise routines and the fast-food in the car all day long was not helping things either.

"Okay. So that only accounts for the first what, 60 or 70 pounds. What happened next?"

"So I jack up the weight loss. For \$750, I could get their 5-day, 20 pound program. So I gave them the credit card info, and the following Monday, there stands the most stunning, gorgeous, sexy redheaded woman I have ever seen in my LIFE!! She was wearing those same red small running shorts and a short tank top -- both color coordinated with the red Nike shoes and white socks she was wearing."

"You noticed those things?" I said, taking a sip of my coffee.

"I was noticing that she wasn't wearing NOTHING under those things, yeah...." Terry said.

"So I know the deal...I sign the paperwork, go and find my new pair of Reeboks -- I wore down the old pair I had on the first gal -- and before I got back to the door, this redhead was already down the street a quarter mile....I ran after that gal, Mike...I tried to catch up with her. I almost HAD HER on Wednesday but some stupid bicyclist got in the way and was trying to talk with her while he was riding....he ended

up hitting a tree and I stopped to help."

"Was he badly hurt?" I asked.

"Not as badly as my heart was hurting!!"

"Wow, some cardio...did you have to go to the hospital?"

"Nah man, not from the exercise...from the lack of CATCHING her!!" We shared a laugh before our food came.

"So, this really worked for you -- this running after women thing?"

"Yeah...I can say that the second woman -- she called herself "Red" like "Little Red Riding Hood" -- she helped me lose almost 60 pounds. So after seven weeks I was down from 374 to 270 or so...."

"Wow. You're about what now, 225 -- 230?"

Terry grinned. "Yeah."

I can see that he was extremely proud of his weight loss. I know that I could NEVER afford that cost. But this was a man I knew who previously had to enter into a room SIDEWAYS and had to make sure that he didn't sit down in the center of anyone's couch. I felt sorry for the old Terry -- I guess that was why I took up a friendship with the man. Smart as a whip -- the guy worked for the big hard drive company. He made three times what I make with less sweat and stress.

And now, he looks like a man making that much money.

"So how did you lose the rest -- was it the change in diet or just no snacking?" I was interested... I could lose the first 30 pounds or so but I always had the problem with those last few dozen. Dieticians called them the "lazy dozen" or the "hidden dozen" because they are the most difficult to lose -- those last few pounds, typically ten to 12 toward your goal weight.

"So I called them up and said "I've got to lose 50 more pounds and keep this weight off!"

The company explained that they have a maintenance program which goes for two weeks with another two week retention program and that it was the most rigorous program that the company had. I told them "I'll take it!" Mike, they've been GREAT and I can't tell you how beautiful those women were...." Terry asked for another glass of water and I poured myself another cup of coffee.

"The company overnighted me some more documents to read and sign before they would approve it and I had to fax them back to them with 48 hours along with my credit card information. I gotta tell you...I didn't really read any of it. Just signed and sent it back!"

"How much was it?" I asked.

"\$1000 for both; \$500 for just the maintenance program."

"Did you get both?"

Terry just grinned.

"Absolutely," he replied. "I haven't felt this good since high school! My self-esteem has really kicked in and I'm not just looking for "someone to settle" -- I am looking for QUALITY, just like those gals who's been kicking my butt when I'm chasing them!"

"You think that someone has really caught those gals -- you know...?" I asked.

"I don't think so, but I guess it's a possibility. You work out on your own and get in better shape than they... They know what they were doing though. That first gal -- I never did get her name -- she would slow up and let me catch up to within like, like...." Terry looked around for a comparison. "Like from the front door over to the kitchen area... and then she take off again!"

"Tease." I took a longer sip of coffee. "So what happens with the maintenance thing? Blonde? Redhaired? No... an Asian gal shows up, right?"

"So I open the door that following Monday morning and there's a big, muscular white guy standing there with nothing on but a pair of pink running shorts and a pair of matching pink running shoes and that same sign around his neck -- except that his sign says "If I catch YOU, your ass is MINE!"

I laughed and so did the guy sitting in the table behind us. He must have been listening in on our conversation as well...

"Well...." I said, in between laughing at the man who lost an entire body in a little more than two months.

"I lost 47 pounds over the two weeks and as you can see, I've maintained it...."