

BAR BOY-GIRL



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by Eleanor Darby Wright

I. BUSTED

“Hey! Why is she going in there?” one of the cowboys yelled at the woman cop who had her hand firmly on mine.

“Shut him up,” said the older woman grimly as Candy and Steph looked up from the desks at which they sat to be interrogated.

The woman pushed me a little ahead of her, the scent, if you could call it that, of ammonia and pine air freshener in the air between the cells.

“Well, look at her,” said one of the women in the cells. “I don’t think she was out on the streets, was she?”

The female cop opened a holding cell in which there was just a frightened girl, her face streaked with her mascara where she was crying. “This is Nicole,” said the cop to the teenager. “I figure to keep both of you out of the tough girl cell for a while.”

“Thanks,” I said dryly and the woman smiled at me.

I had felt her support from the moment that the black and whites had arrived to put down the melee in the bar. She had looked at me and I must admit that I looked pretty classy in my dark stockings, dark, blue, flared cocktail dress and fluffed out blonde-streaked hair. Of course, I wore a lot of makeup and a fair amount of perfume. You’d expect that of all the girls in the bar where I worked.

Candy was still pounding on one of the little punks who had come into our specialized bar looking for a fight. It had taken several of the riders in the black and whites to subdue her and her partner, Steph, whose dress completely obscured the face of the idiot she was sitting on. He, or course, was getting a face full of Steph’s panties. He must have been awake, though, because occasionally he jerked as if he was trying to get his head out from between Steph’s legs. Then Steph went up and down, holding onto his hair, I think, as she pounded his head on the ground, grinding the poor slob’s face into her panties and garter belt.

Yes, it was the kind of bar where we girls wore the frilliest and most feminine of clothes. After all, that was what the guys came to see and feel. Steph’s playmate was getting quite a freebie if he did but know.

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If Bert the bartender had been any kind of man, he would have pushed Stephanie and Candy aside and thrown the would-be thugs out on the street. But he might have broken a nail or got his wig knocked askew as Steph had. We'd never have heard the end of it if he had got a run in his pantyhose.

My hand was hurting me where I had slugged the one who had come after me. My nails weren't broken, though. I had painted and polished them that night before I had come to work an extra shift for Marty, the owner of Polly Divine's club bar.

I didn't think that I had remembered how to do that, make a fist and clunk someone. The kid coming after me must have been super confident he could take me. I had let him put his arm about my shoulder when we first met and I had purred and told him what a big, strong guy he was and he had eagerly ordered the champagne we had got the boys to order. I had even danced with the boy. I was smaller than him even in my black high heels as he must have noticed.

It was a typical rowdy night as the cowboy tourists were loud, a little drunk and thinking themselves really manly to come into a bar like Polly Divine's and dance with the bar girls. One of them got too adventurous, however, and started feeling up Candy, who objected at giving away anything for free. That led to the usual hassle. The boys were plying us with drinks and knew we were getting a cut on what they bought for themselves and for us. Tourists were hip like that. They also thought they should get a few freebies as well.

Well, I didn't mind a little smooching. I didn't mind a little close dancing and letting a guy grab my derriere. Some guys were a lot manlier than others and held me properly, nuzzling my ear and my neck, playing with my hair and my earrings. I often gave away a kiss for free in such circumstances and they went away happy with a good little story to tell about dancing and kissing one of the pretty bar girls, and I was pretty, at Polly Divine's.

The cops had just broken up a gang fight at Maroney's, down the block. That's why so many of them came bursting in on us within seconds, or so it seemed to me, of the fight starting. One of the guys had started calling Candy names and then had grabbed her and tried to kiss her. She pushed him off and he had pulled on her wig, and it went flying onto the bar, scattering other patrons who were laughing and retreating to the sides of the room to watch the fight.

It didn't happen often but the sight of guys fighting girls always seemed to turn on the audience in the bars where I worked. I never got involved in fights the way that Candy did. I was always there with a Kleenex to tidy up the heavily breathing girl, usually crying and swearing as some big stud left with his friend, flexing his muscles and doing his Schwarzenegger impression. I hoped he'd never be back.

Candy was screaming hysterically as she tried to retrieve her wig, the guy laughing at her. She threw the iced tea we drank into his face and the guy took a

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swing at her. His pal jumped in and started throwing punches as well, laughing away. Steph's massive arm around his neck cut that off and he was unceremoniously dumped across a table as glasses scattered.

My dancing partner shoved me and went to jump on Steph and I didn't think, really. I tripped him, stepping on his instep with my high heel at the same time. That made him howl and he turned on me, his fist raised. He was wide open and my left hook caught him right on the point of his jaw and he went down like a sack of potatoes.

I retreated to the bar and a stool. I hoisted myself up, crossed my legs and waited for the losers to be shown the door.

"Way to go, girl," said a voice in my ear, and long nails scraped my arm as Tiffany congratulated me on the one punch knockout.

I had barely sat down and put my heels on the bottom rung of the stool when the cops poured in. That started the customers scattering along with a lot of the girls. I sat and watched and eventually, the woman cop, who later put me in the cells, saw me sitting there, with more composure than anyone else and asked me, "What the heck is going on?"

I gave her the short version but then the guy who I had punched got up and started screaming at me. "She broke my effing nose!" he screamed, pointing at me, as another woman cop and a detective tried to restrain him.

"You did?" asked the woman cop. It said 'Grundy' on her ID tag.

"Self-defense," I said. "He swung at me and left himself open to a sucker punch." On a Saturday night, he would have just been tossed out with his friends. They'd yell and scream a lot as they went down the middle of the street, and that would be it. There were enough serious fights for the cops to clean up that they wouldn't bother to come into an off-beat place like Polly's, not unless someone was shot at or seriously wounded. That didn't usually happen in a place like ours.

I didn't think anything would happen this time when the hubbub died down and even some of the other tourists were saying, "They started it," pointing to the cowboys. There was an older man there, though, in plain clothes and he told them to take the boys downtown. "And those two," he added, pointing to Steph and Candy who looked the worse for wear, despite Candy having retrieved her wig.

"What about her?" the one I had hit wanted to know, pointing at me. "She broke my effing nose."

"Her too," said the lieutenant and so I had to turn and let myself be cuffed by the woman officer.

"Can I get my purse?" I asked her. Beginning to shake a little at the thought of being arrested in drag. "It's just behind the bar."

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Bertie's blue-shadowed, heavily mascaraed eyes were sorrowful as he held out my slim, dark purse and the officer took it. "I called Marty," Bertie said in his gravelly voice. "He'll meet you downtown with a lawyer."

Of course, there was no sign of Marty at the precinct. There was lots of hooting and hollering in the charge room as we were all brought in. I got lots of stares as I sat quietly opposite the woman cop, gave my name and roughly the same account of what had happened as before.

Grundy typed it all onto the charge sheet. No, I had not been arrested before. My name was Philip Moore. I didn't tell her that most people if they knew the real me, called me Flip. They had since childhood. I was married to Claudia Moore and I was the father of two children. The officer's eyes kept on blinking faster and faster as she took it all down. I was the owner of a house in the older part of town. Well, the bank still owned much of it. Claudia, my wife, worked downtown. As for my work, I was Nicole, a B-Girl, at places like Polly Divine's and Madame Bruce's.

The woman cop processed me, the cowboys ranting and swearing about us to the whole room, until the lieutenant came in and told the cops with them to get them to cool down or throw them in the drunk tank with the druggies and rapists for a day before they were prepped again.

I got put into a women's cell with the frightened girl then.

"What, what are you in for?" asked the tearful girl, her back to the wall. Actually, inside, I felt just like her. I had been arrested. I had feared it so much when I was younger and now it had actually happened.

"I was involved in a fight. I punched someone," I told her, sitting on the bench, let down on a chain from the wall, across the cell from the girl.

"A man or a woman?" the girl asked me.

I smiled at her. I wished that I had my purse but the woman officer had given it off to some sergeant when I had been brought in. "A man," I said. "And you?"

"I think we killed somebody," said the girl, bursting into tears. I quickly learned that she had drunk too much, taken pills that she didn't know anything about, not even what they were, had gone joyriding with her friends, with her at the wheel, and it had been fun to drive on the sidewalk. One of her friends said that she had hit someone and she had laughed and they'd driven on. The cops had chased her all over town, cars crashing all over behind, in front and around them till they got down to the river and then they'd all run for it. She'd been picked up in a diner. The cops didn't know anything she'd just told me and I wouldn't tell, would I?

The woman cop came for me then and I was taken into an interrogation room this time. I expected to see Marty and his lawyer but there was no-one but a thirtyish cop, his face tired and a little unshaven. He had dark hair and when he looked up, dark, penetrating, brown eyes. He was poker-faced and didn't seem

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to recognize me though we had met before. "You spent a lot of time talking to Andrea Walker in your cell," he told me. "What did you talk about?"

"The usual," I told him cautiously, wishing that there was a mirror about so that I could repair my makeup. I was sure my hair could do with a combing as well.

He raised his eyes to me. "Hair, makeup, clothes, men, you know," I said with a shrug.

He looked at me for a while. "You are going to be charged with taking part in an affray," he said. "Assault, battery, fraud, conspiracy, soliciting for prostitution, prostitution, deviancy." He smiled grimly at me. "That's just for starters. What did Andrea Walker say to you?"

I looked steadily at him while inside my stomach lurched as I thought of myself being presented in court in drag and all those charges being read out against myself.

"I can get them all reduced to one charge of assault," said the detective opposite me.

Sorry, Andrea, I thought. "No charges of any kind," I said, shifting, re-crossing my legs, the feel of my stockings and my panties actually strengthening me. "It was self-defense. He's bigger than me and he attacked me. I can't help it if he has a glass jaw."

The detective's eyes gleamed at me. "You have to testify in court," he glanced at his notes. "Nicole," he said

"And you are?" I asked him, pretending that I didn't know.

"Brewer," he said and thought about something before adding, "Simon Brewer."

"Which squad?" I asked him, crossing my legs then and he did a slow glance at me.

"Vice," he told me. "Look, Nicole. You're going to be charged. You hit Martin Halliday, son of some visiting politician. Daddy's pretty angry right now. You'll only have to stand up in court and plead to the charge. We'll make it go away after that."

"If I rat out Andrea Walker," I told him with a shiver.

Simon shrugged. "We finally got an officer free for undercover," he said. "I think Andrea is weeping her little heart out all over again right about now. You know how it is. It's a lot easier the second time around."

How could I know that for true? It struck me that this Detective Simon Brewer must be very good at his job.