

Chapter 4

Living on the streets, after running away from her last foster home, isn't a step up for Elizabeth Jacobs. She survives scrounging garbage at night and hiding in dark corners during the days. She steals everything she can get her hands on and sells the bounty to pimps and drug dealers.

In 'sixty-eight she meets a group of hippies staying in Budd Park and a young man they call Moonrock. Liz moves into his old VW microbus with him. The couple tries to survive making and selling paper flowers on street corners.

Eventually, they leave the group and moved south to Bentonville, Arkansas. Neither could find work and they can't afford food or gas. The pair spent their days panhandling and their evenings arguing. They are there only a couple of weeks before they started physically fighting.

Liz gets up early on the morning after a fisticuff. She is bruised and sore from his beating. Elizabeth walks to the highway and sticks out her thumb. The first car to come along, a late-model Pontiac, picks her up.

"Good morning, Beautiful. Where you headed?"

"Not sure. I just know I can't find work here and need to try somewhere else."

"You're in luck. I own a little business in Fayetteville and always looking for help."

"What can I do?"

"Don't worry your pretty little head about it. I'll teach you everything you need to know. First, we'll stop and get you some food. My name's Denny. What's yours?"

"Elizabeth."

He pulls into a local diner in Rogers. Denny has a soda and Liz scarfs down a burger, fries, chocolate shake and two pieces of strawberry pie. Her wide periwinkle-blue eyes sparkling with delight.

Denny explains that as soon as they get to Fayetteville they will stop by his business and she can take a shower and clean up. He assures her sure she'll love the other girls and be able to borrow pants and a clean top. After which they will go shopping and he'll buy her new outfits both for work and play.

Liz tells the stranger that she doesn't have a place to stay. Denny again assures her she has nothing to worry about. He owns a small apartment complex where most of his employees live and she can bunk up with another girl until a unit becomes available. He also offers insurance and other benefits that she can choose from and he deducts from weekly pay. He goes on telling her that the first week he'll get her to a dentist to fix her teeth and a doctor for a complete checkup, all at his expense. The second week she can start work.

Liz was so excited at her first job she overlooks asking what's entailed.

A half hour after leaving the café they pulled into the parking lot of Kats. Liz exclaims, "Oh you own a bar?"

"Well yes. It specializes in men's delight. Your pay is minimum but all the girls live off their tips which are where all the real money is made. You could easily pull down five hundred or more a week. It all depends on what services you offer. It's like you'll be self-employed. The sky is the limit!"

“Services?”

“Let me show you around and introduce you to the other girls. Then we can sit down and talk. You never have to do anything you don’t want to do! It’s fun and easy work.”

Kats is closed this early. As soon as Denny and Liz slip into the bar, she sees the stage and glistening chrome pole. Behind the bar is young woman washing glasses. An older gentleman is stocking bottles of liquor on a shelf in front a mirrored wall. All of sudden a large reflective-tiled ball on the ceiling starts to spin spewing colored light beams around the dim room, and a voice from beyond shatters the quiet scene, “Good morning. Boss. What have you got there?”

Turning around she notices the DJ booth elevated in the back corner where a young man is testing sound and broadcasting equipment. He waves at the new girl, “I’m Ethan.”

Liz’s waves back. She turns to Denny, “What kind of bar is this?”

“Let me introduce you,” ignoring her question.

They approach the bar, “This is Grace, one of our bartenders.”

Grace looks over the filthy ragged young girl. She nods without speaking and turns her back on Liz starting to wipe down the back counter with a dirty dishrag.

Denny makes an excuse for her rudeness, “She hectic before opening. You’ll like her when you get to know her,” wrinkling his nose.

“Milt, come over here.”

The older man walks over, “Hi, I’m Milton but everyone calls me Milt.”

“Hi, Milt.”

“All right then, let’s go to the office. I’ll introduce you to my wife and the three of us can chat.”

Liz follows Denny through the clothes strewn ladies’ dressing room into a large walnut paneled office. There is a giant floor-safe standing in the corner, with a couple of rifles leaning against it, and two desks with a well-dressed beached-blonde sitting behind one. The glass wall looks into the barroom through a one-way mirror. Liz has never seen a one-way mirror and surprised that Denny and his wife spy on everything that takes place on the floor. She also notes a closed-circuit system screen on the corner of his desk picturing the dressing room.

“Meet my wife Charlotte,” Denny’s opened hand outstretched toward the sitting lady.

The three sit down for their talk. They discuss the dancing and money and benefits. Liz is hesitant with taking her clothes off in front of strange jeering men. Charlotte tries to calm Liz down saying she’s in charge of the girls and watches out for them. Charlotte also reinforces the fact that nobody ever has to have sex with a patron and only dance untouched. But she also states most girls make the majority of their income servicing the clientele. She tells Liz her stage name is Lulu Love.

After an hour of convincing Liz and Denny’s wife go the dressing room where Liz meets Madison, the first dancer to arrive. She’s twenty-one, a few years older than Liz, and extremely friendly. Madison lends Liz clean clothes and shows her where to shower and clean up.

After shopping with Charlotte they return to Kats. Her new boss asks Madison if Liz can stay with her for a while until an apartment comes open.

Elizabeth spends the rest of the day and evening watching. After Madison’s shift ends the two girls go home to her apartment together.