

Chapter 10

Stripping

I ran away from the trade school before graduating, I was there for seven months, and in that time I was trained on how to cook. I managed to save \$1,000 from the allowance they gave me. It was more than enough to get me to Denver. I was 17 years old and truly on my own. I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't even know how to obtain an apartment. I saw a older black man hanging out in front of an apartment complex. I must have looked bewildered, because he asked if I was lost. I told him of my situation. he then instructed me to go across the street and inquire about an apartment straight across from his that had a for rent sign on the front door. Quickly I obtained the apartment \$500 down \$300 a month. I got a job shortly after settling in as a dishwasher.

It was the only job I could get. I wasn't qualified to do anything else. I received my first check from the hotel, but I couldn't work there long enough to get my next check. I had close to \$500 in the bank, but I had the unfortunate luck of running into a thief. I was naive and didn't know there were actually people out there that were willing to steal the lively hood of another. He was standing out side of my bank with a check in his hand. He stopped me before I entered the bank.

Shawn: Excuse me, miss.

I walked over to him to see what he wanted.

Shawn: Hi. My name is Shawn. I'm from out of town. California to be exact. I lost my wallet on my trip up here, and I can't cash my check without proper ID. Do you think you can help me?

Me: Well, how much is your check for?

Shawn: Four hundred dollars.

Me: Four hundred dollars. That's a lot of money, wouldn't you say?

Shawn: Yes, but it's the only check I've got. My checkbook is with my ID. If it's the money, you don't need to worry about getting the money back. I have more then enough to cover the check in my account. You'll only have to wait three working days for the check to clear, because it's an out-of-town check.

I wasn't sure how the banks worked. This was my first time having a bank account, and I had only had it a month. But he kept reassuring me that it would only take three working days for his check to clear, and on the check under his name was a California residence. It all sounded legitimate. Plus he was a tall, clean-cut, good-looking man. I thought, surely this isn't the kind of person who would steal from another person. So I didn't give it a second thought. After I cashed his check, \$100 remained in my account.

Shawn: Wow, thank you so much. Listen, you've got to let me buy you a drink. You've been so helpful to me.

Me: That's not necessary. Besides, I'm under age.

Shawn: That's no problem. I'll just stop by a liquor store.

I kept saying no, but he insisted, and he kept on insisting until I finally said yes. So from the bank we went to a liquor store and he bought some tequila, orange juice, and vodka.

At first we where drinking in a park, but soon our party made its way to his

hotel room. I'm not quite sure how the transition from the park to hotel room happened, because I was intoxicated after drinking a pint of vodka. I hadn't touched alcohol since I was 14, and here I was at 17 drunk and in a hotel room with a perfect stranger.

Me: I think I should be getting home now.

Shawn: Are you kidding? The party's just getting started.

He sat next to me on the bed.

Shawn: Do you mind if I kiss you?

I thought, yes, I mind, but I didn't want to sound rude, so I complied. He kissed me and he kept kissing me as he ran his hand up my left leg and on my breast. I was nervous and really didn't want to do this.

Me: We don't know each other well enough to be doing this.

I pushed his hand from my breast.

Shawn: I feel like I've known you for a long time.

He stood up and pulled out a condom from his right front pocket.

Shawn: I never leave home without it.

He sat down next to me. I had never seen a condom.

Me: What is that?

Shawn: It's a condom, silly. What, you've never seen one of these?

Me: No.

Shawn: I'll show you how it's done.

He pulled off his pants and ripped open the packet. I was intrigued and nervous for what would come next. He pulled the condom out and pulled it over his penis.

Shawn: That's how you do it.

He put his arms around me and pulled me onto the bed. I didn't put up a struggle. I didn't want this, but he wasn't hurting me.

Me: I'm not sure if I should be doing this.

Shawn: Sure you should. Just lie back and enjoy yourself.

He pulled down my pants, exposing my genitals. He reached down between my legs and massaged my clitoris, and with his other hand he put his finger in my vagina. Then he slid his penis inside of me. He held my hands down and until he climaxed. He rolled off of me and walked into the bathroom. I quickly pulled up my pants and laid there waiting for him, but in the waiting I fell asleep. When I woke up, he was gone. I thought, that was a little odd. A week later, I realized why he'd disappeared when I went to the bank to withdraw my rent money and it wasn't there. I was given back the check I had cashed for Shawn. The teller said the account didn't exist anymore. She asked if I wanted to report it, I was so afraid of getting into any trouble I didn't want anything to send me back to lock up so I said "No" and walked out of the bank. I couldn't believe it. I went home with this nauseated feeling that wouldn't go away. This can't be. As soon as I got home, I called the operator and asked for a Shawn Smith and gave the address that was on the check. I was given the number and called it reluctantly.

Shawn: Hello.

It was a woman's voice.

Me: Hello. May I please speak to Shawn?

Shawn: This is Shawn, Can I help you?

Me: Is this 555-2297, L.A.?

Shawn: Yes, you've got the right person. What can I do for you?

I was blown away. How could he do that to me? I hung up the phone without another word. Not only did he steal my money, but he robbed me of

my dignity.

I needed money quick. I didn't have enough to last me until my next paycheck, so I went around looking for another job. I wandered into an adult bookstore because the sign on the door said, "Help Wanted."

Me: Hi. Can you tell me what job is open?

Don: Sure. Nude modeling. Have you ever modeled before?

Me: No. Does it pay well?

Don: Cash daily. Some of the girls make a hundred dollars a day. Sound good to you?

Me: Yes. I could use the money.

Don: My name is Don. I'm the owner. And your name is?

I thought about it for a moment.

Me: Christine.

Don: Let's go to my office and get you an application.

We went downstairs to his office.

Don: Here's the application, but first I need to see what you look like.

Me: What do you mean, take off my clothes down here?

Don: Yes. I need to see what you look like before I hire you.

Me: Okay.

I took off my shirt and then my bra.

Me: Well, how do I look?

Don: Fine. Now take off your pants. You don't have to take them off all the way. Just pull them down to your knees.

And so I did, but I quickly put my clothes right back on.

Don: I have a rule here that all of the girls hired first have to give me a blow job.

Before he had time to unzip his pants, I started to leave.

Me: Thanks anyway.

I proceeded to walk out of the office.

Don: Hey, I was just joking. Come in here. Of course you're hired. You can start anytime.

And so I did, I started that same night.

Don: Hi, you're ready to start?

Me: Yes.

Don: Okay. Come with me. I'll show you where to get dressed, and I'll introduce you to Jessica. She'll help you with the rules and whatever else you'll need to get started.

From an intercom he had at the front desk, he called for Jessica to come to the front. She took me back to the booths.

Jessica: Simply clean up after yourself and watch out for the cops. This is how it works. The customer comes into the booth, and you tell him to put a token into the pay phone that is on the other side of the wall made out of glass. After he does that, you tell him to put money through the hole in the glass and you'll do to yourself whatever he asks you to do. Just keep telling him to stick the money through the hole. The customer always jacks off in front of you, so just hand him the paper towel through the hole in the glass when he finishes. Do you have a negligee?

Me: No. I've never done this before.

Jessica: So why are you doing it now?

Me: I need the money.

Jessica: Don't we all. Well, today you can use one of mine. Just slide right into the booth and put this on.

She handed me a light blue negligee.

Jessica: Good luck.

Every time I was finished with a customer, I would cry. I couldn't handle what I was hearing and what I was seeing. The men that came in would tell me to touch myself and to spread my lips apart so they could see my vagina. I was then told to get into different positions and to talk dirty to them, but I didn't know what to say. I really didn't know what I was doing. All I knew is that I was uncomfortable with all of this.

I wasn't making any real money and I was getting desperate to the point that I left with a customer after work one night, he told me he would give me a ride home and that if I were nice he would give me some money. So I went and once we got to my apartment he shower me a \$50 bill.

Man: Do you want this?

Me: Yes

Man: All you have to do is let me lick you between your legs.

I hesitated holding on to the car door handle, I only made \$20 I needed money so bad, so I did it. I leaned back and unbuttoned my pants. He did the rest he was down there for some time, I was disgusted with the noises he was making and the anxiety for what I was doing.

Me: Stop.

He handed me the money.

Man: That was good, can I come in?

Me: No, I have to go.

Man: Do you live alone.

I didn't answer him I just left. The next day at work I was obviously upset. There were only five of us who worked in the booth that day. The girls were all very nice to me, especially Laura, who befriended me and eventually told me about dancing.

Laura: Chris, you don't belong here. Why don't you go to a dance club?

Me: What do you mean, dance?

Laura: You know. Go to a club and dance.

Me: Okay. I'll try it. I'm not making any money doing this. At this point I'll try anything.

She then gave me the name and address of a club called Bare and Boogie it was somewhere in Denver. I was so grateful to her and wished her luck as she did me.

Betty: Hi. Can I help you?

Me: A friend of mine told me about this place. I'd like to dance here.

Betty: I'm the owner. Have you ever danced before?

Me: No. I don't even know how to dance.

Betty: Nobody starting out really knows what they're doing. Don't worry. You'll catch on quickly. In time, you'll fit right in with the other girls.

There's a lot of money to be made in this club. Why don't you think of a stage name, and I'll get you something to drink.

Me: What's a stage name?

Betty: It's just a name you're going to be called other than your real name. So people don't know you out side of here.

She placed a shot glass filled with a colorful liquor in front of me.

Betty: Here drink this it will make you relax, Have you decided on a Name yet?

I said the first name that entered my mind.

Me: Yes. Shannon.

Betty: Tiger, could you please take Shannon to the dressing room and help her get ready? This is her first time, so...

I was so scared. Tiger took me upstairs to the dressing room and introduced me to the other girls. They all coached me and told me how frightened they were at first, but how as time went on they figured out the rules and what they could and couldn't get away with. I kept telling them, "I'm not sure I can do this" but I knew deep down that I had no choice. I needed money now, and I didn't know what else to do. So there I was, overweight (due to the lack of exercise in lock-up), butch, and as white as a ghost. The dancers did what they could for me. One girl even let me borrow a dress and heels. Tiger put makeup on me, because I didn't know how to do it for myself. I never had the need for makeup until that day, yet here I was putting it on for men that I had never met before. It was like losing my virginity to someone I didn't love.

The faith I had in God sustained me throughout my childhood, but it also made what I was about to do that much harder. In the moments before I got on stage, I prayed silently.

Me: God, tell me what else can I possibly do besides this. I know it's wrong, but I don't know what else to do. I need the money right now! I have no family I can turn to, and I'm alone. Dancing is my only option. I'm just short of starving, I'm uneducated and unfamiliar with how things work. I've got to help myself. God, if what I'm doing is wrong please forgive me. Please, God. Please ...

Betty: Shannon, you're up!

I ran down the steps whispering to myself, "God, help me. God, forgive me. God, help me."

Once I got to the stage, I was so nervous I couldn't catch my breath. The first song I danced in a bra and panties, but the second song I had to take off my bra and reveal my breasts. As I did, I felt flush, my conscience told me to leave it on, but I took it off anyway.

As I looked around at the men looking at me, I wondered what they were thinking. As I looked down at myself, a sense of disbelief came over me. I thought, "Oh my God, they're looking at me. I don't have any clothes on. What are they thinking?" I was so horrified, I could barely breathe. I could hear the girls cheering me on. Some were clapping, while others would make comments like, "You got it" or "Go,

Shannon." I focused on their encouragement; it made this situation tolerable. I kept waiting (and hoping) for the song to be over, and when the next dancer was called, a sense of relief washed over me. After my audition, the girls followed me upstairs to the dressing room and bombarded me with questions.

Dancers: Were you scared? Are you going to stay? Did you like it?

After their interrogation, they told me about how frightened they all were the first time they danced on stage. It was as if they were all reliving their lives through my audition.

After I worked a while and put some money in my pockets, I hit the town. I went club to club and flirted with everyone I met. I broke out of my shell by experimenting with clothing, jewelry, music and make-up and anything else that caught my fancy. Usually I wore all of my jewelry at once, and my clothes rarely matched, but I didn't care. People would ask me why I dressed the way I did. I didn't have an answer for them, so I would say, "I'm dressing New Wave," whatever that meant. I heard the term before, but whatever it was, I was taking it to a new level. I went absolutely crazy, and I enjoyed every bit of my insanity. I was high, though not on drugs. The euphoria was freedom in every sense of the word. I was free to be me,

whoever that was. I listened to every type of music that was sung. Sometimes I just listened to the different radio stations at random, and I held conversations with people who didn't have to make any sense to me. I made friends with whoever felt good, even if they did bad things. And I made love to whoever quenched my appetite. At times my mistress was music, or a cloud in the sky. Every breath felt lighter, and the whisper of life was like music to my soul. But still, despite all of my wonderful feelings, I wanted to experience more. I knew there was more to life than what I was seeing before me, but where?