

The Poisoned Martini

The Mysteries of Syracuse
by Brian Abbott

Part III.

Trish Riley really didn't care what Rick's story was, and half listened to him blathering on. Still it was a useful ploy. Get the man talking, get him interested in you, and then...well, he was easy prey. Of course there was some effort involved. She couldn't completely ignore him. There was always the chance he might ask her about or refer to something he'd said. So she faced him, looked him in the eye, and nodded at the appropriate times.

Richard was his middle name, but of course he preferred Rick. He was named after his father, making him a Junior, but naturally he didn't get along with good old dad. Blamed the domineering codger—really? Did he really use codger?—blamed him for any number of ills, including his mother's suicide. Good God! Just how many drinks had he had before she arrived? He rambled on about having recently broken up with some girl, but quickly—thank God!—switched topics. He talked about graduating from the University. About his hunt for some kind of job. Then he professed his passion for photography and wouldn't she like to pose for him sometime?

"Maybe," said Trish coyly, but her mind was elsewhere. She'd imagined arriving arm in arm with him at the party and pictured the look on Sharon's face.

Sharon Deveraux. How Trish would love to wipe that smug, superior look off her sorority sister's face. The privileged daughter of a banker, Sharon was hosting the sorority's end of semester soiree. After all, she's was the incoming president. Naturally she imagined she would be the center of attention. The soiree was supposed to be a farewell party for the departing sisters.

Too bad Sharon wasn't one of them, thought Trish, trying not to winch in front of Rick as she thought of her prospective senior year. Another year of dealing with Sharon!

"So what brings you to Alicia's?" asked Rick. He took a sip of whiskey and set it down on the bar.

"Oh..." Trish tried to set aside dire thoughts of Sharon aside. "Well, actually, I was looking for a date."

Rick furrowed his eyebrows questioningly.

"I thought I'd find Kevin here," Trish explained. "He's a friend who works here. He was supposed to be my date for a party I'm going to tonight, but..."

She let the word hang.

"He stiffed you?"

"Not exactly," said Trish. "He's just unavailable."

She considered Rick. He really was handsome. She would enjoy sleeping with him if she had to. She hoped he was the gallant type who'd come to her rescue. He was looking at her like he was interested...no, intrigue. He definitely seemed intrigued. Maybe he just needed a gentle push...

"Are you...by chance..."

"Available?"