

It's better to be hated for what you are than loved for what you're not.

- Andre Gide (also attributed to Kurt Cobain)

finished, can't find the handle, mugged in the backalleys of  
nowhere, too many dark days and nights, too many unkind nouns,  
plus a steady fixation for the ladies of death

- Charles Bukowski

It was a pleasure to burn.

- Ray Bradbury

**"Aphrodite"**

I go to the strip club

Maybe three times

A year

depending

On how I'm doing

Financially

And only if I'm

Single,

of course

I've been

single

Most of my life

Anyway,

This past April

I went to the Vu

And took my seat

On the right side

Of the showroom

And took in the  
General sadness  
Of the place

A blonde with thick  
Hips sat down and  
Started making  
Chit-chit, she was  
26 and blah blah blah  
Did massage therapy  
blah blah blah

I decided she was attractive  
Enough to spend money on  
But I wanted someone younger  
Ideally

She spoke of her roommate  
Who also worked at the Vu  
And this roommate was 19  
So I had her call the roommate  
Over

The roommate was a sexy little thing,  
tattooed hips,

wearing big glasses,  
she looked biracial  
with gorgeous bronze skin,  
I remember thinking  
she looked like a  
young, short, nerdy  
Rosario Dawson

Her name was Aphrodite  
The blonde's stripper  
Name escapes me but  
I eventually found  
Out her real name  
was Stacy

we went to the VIP room  
All three of us and had our  
Sad brand of fun, I had them  
Remove their bellybutton rings  
And made out with their tummies  
And felt them up and we all cuddled  
And Aphrodite laid down in front of me  
And I felt her stomach and her small  
Breasts and she said that my fingers  
Felt amazing and the blonde who's

Name escapes me now gave me  
A massage from behind and then  
I massaged Aphrodite

"This must be the best time you've  
Ever had at a strip club," Aphrodite  
Said as I counted their money

I think we spent  
45 minutes in VIP together once  
All was said and done

A couple months go by and  
I get the itch again, no female  
Attention, no chance for it  
Because of the night shift  
I'm working and also my  
General inability to attract  
Women to begin with, plus  
I'm falling asleep  
In my childhood bed at the  
Age of 30, and I decide I need to  
Go back

Once I have the extra money in my

Bank account I head down to the Vu

After checking everything out for  
About ten minutes, I see Aphrodite  
Again, although at this time I couldn't  
Remember her name

I pass her when she's standing by  
The ATM waiting for a client to  
Bleed his bank account for her

What's up, I say, waving awkwardly

Hey, she says, what's up, and there's  
Zero recognition on her face

I don't see anyone else attractive or  
Young enough to bother with, though,  
So after a bit I see her again by the bar  
And I go over and tap her from behind

"Excuse me," I said, "I'm sorry, you  
Don't remember me, but I was here  
In April, we did the VIP with... (and  
I've since forgotten the blonde's stripper

Name, so I leaned in and whispered to  
Aphrodite) her real name was Stacy...

"OHHH," said Aphrodite, "Yeah, she  
Doesn't work here anymore, she's a  
Crazy bitch."

I ask Aphrodite for a dance and we go  
Back and then I mention what I really  
Want is an hour in the VIP so she says  
We might as well just do that and we  
Bullshit while we wait for a room to  
Open up and talk about music, apparently  
She used to sing, which is really interesting  
We talk about electronic music festivals,  
I tell her about my novels that I'm writing  
The album I'm recording, blah blah blah

The room opens up and we go in and  
She mentions that she hurt her neck  
That week and I say that's fine I only  
Want to cuddle mostly and then she's  
Happy about that and she gets on me

After some initial touchy-feely action she

Asks if I want her to take her bellybutton  
Ring out again

"You do remember me!" I say.

She does and I make out with her  
Bellybutton, treating it like it's her  
Clit, I'm extremely horny and hoping  
This somehow leads to us in a hotel  
Room later this morning, I need to fall  
Asleep with someone again

She's got two tattoos on her hipbones  
Royal crowns with cursive over them  
One says, We'll never be royals and  
The other says They're forever nobles

She's got another one on the front of  
Her right shoulder that says  
Me Myself and II, which is a  
Tribute to her being a Gemini

I call her beautiful and ask if people  
Call her that every night



It's usually sexy or hot, she says

There's four levels to attractive girls,  
I say—cute, pretty, hot/sexy, and beautiful  
Beautiful encompasses all the bottom four

She gives a half-hearted laugh, the only  
Kind of laugh she gives all night, and says,  
I like the way you think

I tell her she's a strong person to do  
What she does, and she's like, what,  
Physically? And I'm like, no, no, you  
Just have a strong soul and she smiles  
And says thank you for that, it's been  
A rough week and then she tells me  
Her mother might have breast cancer  
And her grandmother is going through  
Some shit and I say I'm sorry to hear  
All that

I ask what ethnicity she is, guess she's  
Italian, and she says she's native  
American, as well as black and white

"You're a real 21<sup>st</sup> century woman,"

I say

"Really?"

"Yeah, multiple race descendants are

Wave of the future."

We're not connecting, I know what

Female connection feels like

(Believe it or not)

and this isn't it,

but it'll have to do

She dry humps my semi- boner

and we bullshit

Some more, then we lay down

And she cuddles up and falls

Asleep for a good twenty minutes

Or appears to

System of a Down plays, Toxicity, and

I drum out the thumping guitar riff on

Her shoulder with my fingers, I think

God I love this song, I love Serj Tankian's

Voice, his shouts and daffy, aggressive  
Performance quirks

She wakes up and I tell her I'm going  
To want to do another hour

She takes a smoke break while I go to  
The ATM and the second  
Hour consists of more of the same,  
Nipple sucking and bellybutton licking  
And cuddling where she seems to doze off  
Completely for up to half the time, I don't  
Mind at all, this is what I came for,  
Essentially paying someone to take a nap  
With me holding them, and them holding  
Me, it's better than  
Falling asleep in a narrow bed alone  
Night after night after night or in my  
Case morning after morning

I look down at her and kiss her on the  
Lips and she doesn't seem to mind  
So I do it again and try to slip her  
Some tongue but her teeth are closed  
And she says, "You're gonna get me

In trouble" so I back off

I have noticed there's a little black  
Dome up on the wall with a camera  
Lens winking at us

We cuddle and then when the guy  
Comes and calls Time on us she's  
Asleep and doesn't hear him, I don't  
Say anything, but a couple minutes  
Go by and she's like, did he come by  
And say time or did I imagine that?

He did, I say.

Then comes the next step

"you're off at 6, right?" I ask as she  
Gets up and adjusts her hair

"yeah."

...cause I'd love to continue this somewhere  
Else if you're up for it."

She sits there and thinks about it for a bit,  
Probably keeping herself from exploding  
With irritation or also maybe possibly  
Probably just thinking of a way to let  
Me down without pissing me off, for  
A second I think I'm in but then she  
Says, "I'd like it to continue...  
but I shouldn't,  
It just leads to trouble."

"I'm not trouble," I assure her.

"I have to get up early," she says,  
"my grandma's coming over blah  
Blah blah" it's not happening

"all right then," I say

I give her her money and she gathers  
Her shit and we walk out

I follow her into the showroom past  
The ATM where I first said hi to  
Her that night, she turns around  
And gives me a brief one-armed

Hug and mutters have a good night  
And she looks at me one last time  
With what could be revulsion or it  
Could be contempt or maybe a mix  
Of the two but it's just for a second  
And I say you too and then I'm off  
Down the hallway to the exit,  
Tearing off my wristband and stuffing  
It in the ashtray outside

## **"Nyx"**

She says her name is  
Nyx as we sit in  
The lap dance booth

I struggle to imagine  
How it's spelled, ask  
Her to repeat it a few  
Times

She says it's from old  
Comic books but is  
Unable to explain  
Which specific  
Comics or anything  
Else

I've come back to the  
Vu two weeks since  
My last time

It's Sunday afternoon

I drove to work expecting

A shift only to find the  
Parking lot empty, so i  
Took a drive and ended  
Up here

I sat in my car in the  
Parking lot in the sun  
Wondering if I really  
Wanted to spend the  
Money

I decide I have nothing  
Better to do, and the  
Movie I want to see  
Isn't playing for a  
Few hours anyway

I go inside and pay  
The entrance fee,  
Which I'm happy  
To find is only  
Twelve dollars  
On Sundays

According to the



Girl at the front  
Desk, there's only  
Two dancers on the  
Floor, and it won't  
Pick up until later

I decide to try my  
Luck and after a  
Quick bathroom  
Break, head onto  
The floor

The dread-locked  
Bartender, a small  
White girl, is talking  
To a thick-hipped  
Blonde who's dancing  
On the stage, neither  
Of them acknowledge  
Me and I take a seat  
On the right side of  
The room like I  
Always do

There's no other

Customers

In the show room

The bartender comes

Over and introduces

Herself as Brie and

Tells me where to find

Her (the bar) if I need

Anything

I look around the room

And see another dancer,

A small girl with lovely

Skin in the pink light and

Wavy cascades of chestnut

Hair falling over her slight

Shoulders

She's sitting behind the

Wall that the ATM stands

Against, hiding

She's on her phone, but as

The blonde onstage twirls

On the pole to an empty

Room I walk over and  
Ask if she's a dancer

She says she is and  
Tells me her strange  
Name

"How about a dance?"

She agrees affably enough  
And we head to the room

I ask her how old she is-  
She just turned 20- and  
If she's ticklish

Uh... it depends...

I ask her if she's up for a  
VIP, and she tells me  
Half hours are only 100  
Dollars on Sundays

I've clearly made  
The right decision to

Come in

Nyx is tiny, only  
Coming up to my  
Chest when she  
Takes off her  
Heels

"I want to find  
Your ticklish  
Spots," I tell her

She's interested  
In this, and so  
she goes off to  
Tell Brie the bartender  
About our VIP to  
Measure for time,  
And I walk over  
To one of the  
Corners, where  
I see a pair of  
Feet sticking out  
From beneath the  
Curtain

There's a guy  
In there on his knees,  
Showing plumber's  
Butt, moving his  
Shoulders slowly  
Up and down

Realizing I've  
Intruded, I choose  
The other booth and  
Wait for Nyx

She strips off when  
She gets back and  
Asks where I want  
Her

I tell her to climb  
Onto my lap and  
Start feeling her  
Up, she is small  
And bronze-skinned

We start bullshitting

About work and things  
I keep trailing off as  
I look at her in my arms

"Sorry, I'm distracted,"  
I tell her

She's very ticklish on her  
Ribs, giggling and doubling  
Over when I spider my fingers  
Over them

She lays across my lap and  
I tickle her belly but she's not  
Really showing much response  
Except on her ribs

We talk some more about stuff  
I suggest we cuddle so she curls  
Up against me and rests her head  
On my chest and we talk some  
More

She says "Thank you" when  
I call her beautiful and compliment

Her tummy

I tell her about my novel and  
My music recordings and my  
Job and she tells me about her  
Life and her family and her  
Dom, who's my age and whom  
She met at a gas station they  
Used to work at, during the  
Day she works as a lifeguard

She has several tattoos, and  
Wears a necklace around  
Her neck with a black band, its  
A metal heart that says "Toy", she  
Mentions she got it from her  
Dom, who she does "whips  
And chains and things" with

"We fuck all the time," she tells  
Me.

"That's a lucky dom," I tell her  
"Do you have any friends who  
Need a dom?"

"Not really," she says, "I don't  
Usually hang out with people  
My age."

She's only been doing this  
(stripping) for four  
Days, and I'm her second VIP  
Ever, she says it's very relaxing

While in the middle of a story  
About her grandmother, she lets  
Her real name slip—Alana or Illona  
Or something like that

She's Hispanic and speaks very  
Little Spanish

When the half hour is up I ask  
For another one, and we cuddle  
Some more and I discover that  
Her belly is ticklish if I lightly  
Pinch at the flesh around her  
Midsection, she doesn't mind  
Being tickled, she seems



To perhaps even enjoy  
It given her submissive nature,  
To the point that as we switch  
Between cuddling and tickling,  
She ends up being the one who  
Suggests I tickle her again

When the second half hour  
Is up I ask for a third, and  
She asks for the money for  
The first two

I pay up and she climbs  
Back on, we do our tickle/  
Cuddle dance for another  
Half hour, she offers me  
Her card that shows her  
Schedule, I tell her I'll be  
Back next week for sure

When we're done she gives  
Me her card, I see how Nyx  
is spelled, and she  
Follows me out to the ATM  
Where I get another 100

Dollars out for her

She takes it and gives me

A hug and kisses me

On the cheek, remarking

At how tall I am

She follows me out to the

Front door, asking about

The movie I'm going to

See, I give her an awkward

Wave and head out into

The sunny evening where

The clouds are like mountains

Over the rooftops of downtown

Ypsilanti

## **"Nyx pt 2"**

I sit in the room  
And get a dance  
From this nasty  
Blonde chick  
Who says she's  
Twenty one but  
Looks 35 and  
She's got deflated  
Balloons for tits  
And her ass is  
Sagging but she's  
Nice and I ask if  
Nyx's there and  
She says she doesn't  
Know but she can  
Find out

I tip her 5 after  
The dance, 25  
Percent

I see Nyx  
Once I get back out

To the showroom  
She's topless and  
By the bar

She acts happy to  
See me and we go  
To the VIP room

We cuddle for the  
First half hour, then  
She asks if I'm going  
To tickle her, she says  
She thinks it's interesting

I say I want to cuddle for  
Now, I wait until the half  
Hour is up and I get another  
One and I tickle her and  
She lies on my lap and  
Spreads her legs with  
Her clean little cunt  
Right there in front of me  
A little puckered hole  
Of flesh and I tickle  
Her around it and

On her butt and she's  
Laughing and going  
Crazy with her arms  
Over her head

I tickle her feet and then  
I have her lie next to me  
On her back and I tickle  
Her tummy and sides and  
Armpits and she's really  
Ticklish and I tickle her  
Small nipples, girl has  
Got no breasts at all but  
Goddamn she's a cutie

We cuddle some more  
All in all we find about  
Three more ticklish spots

I want to tie her up and  
Go to town on her but  
That probably isn't  
An option in this  
Environment, too  
Bad for me, oh well

The DJ plays Flagpole Sitta  
And I can feel the spirit  
Of Harvey Danger watching  
Over me and shaking its head  
And going, "you're never  
Gonna learn, are ya kid?"

Nyx talks about her dom  
Some more, mentions  
He's married with a kid,  
She says she's fucked  
Him in front of his wife  
Before, I think about asking  
If she's fucked him in front  
Of the kid (as an ironic thing)  
but think better of it

She says no one else is  
Allowed to touch her clit

Our session gets cut off  
By five minutes due to  
The place closing but  
She says we can just

Add on five minutes

Next time I'm in, she

Gives me another

Half-off entry card

With her schedule

On it, I pay her

### **"Nyx pt 3"**

I caved and went and saw  
Nyx for a third time last  
Sunday and pretty much all the  
Same shit happened, my fingers  
Moving too slow for my brain  
But we cuddled and I tickled her  
And we switched VIP rooms and  
She mentioned she wanted to see  
Suicide squad but had no one to  
See it with so I offered to bring her  
To see it when I got back from  
Vacation and she gave me her number  
At the end of the session



## **"Nyx pt 4"**

I went to the movie with Nyx

Texted her on a Wednesday, asked  
About seeing the movie that Saturday  
It took her a couple hours but she said  
She had to work at heritage fest on  
Saturday and would I be available Sunday  
Afternoon and after some more texts  
We have it set up

Sunday afternoon came and I drove  
To the theater worrying I was going  
To be arrested for some reason

The affair went okay, she came in  
Wearing a t-shirt  
And sweat pants with her hair in a  
Ponytail, no make up on and glasses

She looks trashy as hell and I almost  
Didn't recognize her, I think she must've  
Noticed this

Yeah, this is what I look like outside of work,  
She says

We stand in line for her to get popcorn,  
I'm not hungry, and she shows me pictures  
Of herself dressed as a giant chuck-e-cheese-like  
Dog mascot costume for the heritage fest,  
Tells me about all the kids she had to hug

We saw the movie and then parted ways,  
She said we should do this again

Then later that evening,  
I went and saw her at the vu again

This will be, unequivocally, the last  
Time I do this, I tell myself,  
I blow 600 dollars  
On VIP

We sat in the show room and watched two  
Other dancers named Harmonia and Echo  
do pole dances and banter for awhile

There was no dj and no music and only  
One guy down in the front row

Nyx tells me her parents are divorcing, Nyx's  
Mom was in town and called the cops on  
Her dad for something and her dad found a  
Bunch of cocaine in her mom's dresser after  
Disposing of his weed and her mom ran off  
And is in Minnesota now, Nyx seemed really  
Worried, particularly  
About her brothers and where they'd go if  
Their dad can't keep them

Last time I'd asked her what her parents  
Would think of this and she says her dad  
Would come drag her out of the vu by  
The hair if he ever found out

That means he cares about you, I tell her

We shot the shit and then we went and did  
Our cuddling, then I had Nyx invite Harmonia  
Back and we cuddled and then we tickled Harmonia  
And then we cuddled some more and then we  
Tickled Nyx, shit was pretty cool, the most

Decadent I've ever been but I only  
Had a semi for pretty much the whole time

Harmonia and Nyx talked while we cuddled, they  
Talked about this hot cop that came in, they talked  
About drama amongst the dancers, they talked about  
All sorts of shit and I listened

I remember one exchange where Harmonia was like,  
"if you can survive this job, you can survive—" and Nyx  
Cut in and said, "-a HOLOCAUST!" both of them  
Snuggled up against my chest, my arms around their  
Shoulders and my hands cradling their asses

Nyx and I did one last VIP, it was really hot (temperature-  
Wise that is) and we Were sweaty, and then I paid her  
and saw I was 20 Dollars short, I'd already given  
Harmonia and Nyx their Money for the first three VIPS  
which means one of them got one more twenty than  
they were supposed to and Either didn't see it or  
did see it and didn't tell me, so that's Another  
reason why I should cut this shit out forever

Nyx let the twenty I owed her go, and went up onstage  
To dance and I sat in the back and watched her work

The room, she came and sat with me for a bit after

She said she really enjoyed our time together tonight

And it took her mind off everything with her parents

And I said I was glad

Then we're all out of stuff to talk about so she

Went back to work and I take off

## **"Nyx pt 5"**

Two weeks and no word from Nyx

I stopped going to the Vu, it was  
Time and I blew all the extra money  
I had anyway

I'll never forget her, our month-long  
Fantasy that bled into a screening of  
Suicide squad

I'll remember her petite body and  
Falling asleep with her while the  
Music blared and waking up and  
Hoping she hadn't stolen anything  
From my wallet

I'm keeping the cards she gave me  
As a souvenir to remind myself that  
Spending money on women is a waste  
Of time

Hope her dom is good to her, and

Her dad never finds out about her  
Career, and hope her mother gets  
Help and that her parents' situation  
Gets sorted out as smoothly as  
Possible

I'll remember her brown eyes and  
Her brown skin and how she felt  
Straddling me and how she didn't  
Mind cuddling and the cadences in  
Her speech patterns

Farewell, Nyx, the stripper I saw a  
Movie with that one time

**"Nyx the epilogue"**

Wasn't expecting to be  
Writing this, but this  
Past Tuesday I got a  
Text asking what I  
Was doing this weekend

I was shocked, I thought  
It was completely done,  
I'd made peace with it,  
I was good

Working, I said, not sure  
If it's both days or just  
Saturday, what's up?

I'm expecting a long  
Gap before a reply but  
Not long after comes,

I'm off this weekend  
Wanted to see if you  
Wanted to do something



I'm probably working  
Both days, but what the  
Hell

I wait a bit, then reply  
Yea I'm working 2:30  
To 11 on Saturday. We  
Could go get a drink  
Afterward

She has her "read"  
Settings for texts on  
And that last text  
Doesn't get read

The week goes by

No word

I text her on Saturday  
Before I go into work  
Even though I'm pretty  
Sure there won't be a  
Reply

Hey did you want to  
Something later?

No reply

Shrug

Guess that's the end  
Of that

**"Eris"**

So my strip club habit

Continues unabated

Although this last

Foray to the Vu

Would make a

Wonderful little

Bookend to this

Whole saga so

Maybe this will

Be the last time

I write about this

I wrote in the first

Aphrodite poem in the

Last book about how

I only go to the strip

Club a few times a

Year at most, but that was

Before I made decent

Money and lived at

Home, clearly, I admit

It, it's addicting, but

If I'm in a certain mood

(horny and depressed)

And feel I've been wronged  
Or have any excuse whatsoever  
I'll take a detour home and  
End up in Ypsi

Nyx blew me off last weekend  
Texted me and asked if I wanted  
To do anything and then didn't  
Reply after that, so fuck her but  
I'm not surprised by it

I go back and she's there but  
I don't talk to her, she's up onstage  
And I see this other little brunette  
I've been meaning to get a dance  
With come in from her smoke  
Break and I ask her for a dance

What's your name again?

Eris, she says

I ask if we  
Should do it now or...

Oh, yeah, I'm not allowed  
To go anywhere, she says

We go to the back and get  
A dance, she's 25 and a  
Talker, she talks the whole  
Time, so much that I can  
barely recall everything she  
Said, just talking, talking  
Talking

We get a VIP and she talks  
Some more and we cuddle

She takes out her bellybutton  
Ring and the fastener goes  
Shooting off to some unknown  
Location in the corner of the  
Room

"oops," she says

She's a mother with two  
Sons, one she had when

She was 16 and she  
Doesn't know what happened  
To his father, she says people  
Made fun of her for getting  
Pregnant in high school and  
Other girls got pregnant and  
Didn't get made fun of so  
She was pissed about that

The kid lives with her parents

She just got a job at wal-mart  
Working in apparel

We cuddle and I ask if she's  
Ticklish, she is very ticklish  
Though not very responsive  
She clams up and scrunches  
Her face when I tickle her

Errrr, she says, grimacing,  
holding in her reaction

She only works on Sundays

She doesn't have a driver's license  
But she does have a 94 Chevy Corsica,  
that she keeps in storage  
For whenever she does get it

She takes the bus everywhere  
Right now, or has one of her  
Two male roommates drive  
Her around

Her younger son lives with  
His father, and I didn't ask  
Much about that

Her older son got caught  
Strangling a 6 year old girl  
On the playground last year  
Eris told her parents they  
Need to get the kid therapy  
Or something cause he's  
Got issues

Clearly, I say

We get another VIP

And she continues talking  
And we dry hump a bit  
And she dances on me  
And I tickle her some  
More

She has grey teeth and  
Her breath stinks, she  
Smokes too much

"You're a cutie," I  
Tell her as we lie there

I'm trying to show her  
She has value, I'm trying  
To show her I appreciate  
Her physical presence as  
We lie here for 100 dollars  
A half hour

She puts a fist up into  
The air

"Yay," she says. "I win  
The night!"



She refuses to keep her  
Head on my chest, she  
Keeps lifting it up to  
Look and talk at me,  
She's such a talker

I wonder if it's because  
I have BO but I covertly  
Sniff an armpit and that's  
Not it, she's just only  
Able to maintain the  
Fantasy for so long

When the time is up  
I help her look for her  
Lost fastener for her  
Bellybutton ring and  
We discover it lodged  
Between the floor board  
And the cloth partition  
To the VIP room, I lend  
Her my keys to get it out  
And she puts her bellybutton  
Ring back in

I pay her and we leave, she  
Heads right back out to the  
Show floor without a  
Goodbye or a hug, I go out  
To the entrance and Harmonia  
Is there, didn't seem to remember  
Me from before which is probably  
Good, but I show her my wristband  
And she gives me my hoodie and  
I leave

I have to say, I really enjoy strippers,  
Listening to their hardscrabble stories  
and feeling their bodies close to mine  
It's not like having a girlfriend but  
It's better than nothing, that's for  
Damn sure

**"the landing strip"**

The place is more lit up than  
I was expecting, and it's  
Right next to train tracks  
In downtown Romulus

The valet guy calls me boss  
About five times and gives  
Me a ticket for my car

I go upstairs and pay the  
Fifteen to get in, I tip the  
Doorman 5 bucks

I get inside and it's crowded,  
Not a seat to be had, I stand  
By the bar and order a  
White Russian, stand  
Awkwardly

After some examining  
Of the premises, I see  
Literally every girl is

Occupied, there's a  
Ratio of about 12 men  
To every dancer

I see a skinny brunette  
On the lap of some schlub  
At the bar watching football  
And pretending to care when  
Points are scored

She gets off his lap and walks  
Off

I pursue her

I am addicted to this

I tap her on the shoulder and  
Ask for her name then forget it  
Instantly, I ask for a dance,  
We go downstairs and begin  
The ritual, she gets on me  
Grinding enthusiastically  
and we bullshit about life

she grows pot and wants  
to go to school for health  
insurance billing, she's from  
the southern part of the state  
She's been dancing for a year  
So she can pay her bills  
blah blah blah

she drinks my white Russian  
and says it's the best thing  
she's ever had

she's 21 but looks 26

I ask if there's another room  
And there is

It's in the back with  
A couch, another 20 dollars,  
I pay her 100 for the dances  
I've already had, she dances on  
Me some more, we do this  
Awkward cuddle thing that  
Doesn't really work because the  
Couch is so narrow, rage against

The machine is playing and zach  
De la rocha is screaming  
*Fuck you I won't do what you*  
*Tell me, fuck you I won't do*  
*What you tell me* and she starts  
Talking about her mother who  
Died of pancreatic cancer back  
In March and I can't tell if she's  
Making it up or not, she says  
She doesn't know how to feel  
And can't talk to any of her  
Friends about it, she feels more  
Comfortable talking to a stranger

I kiss her on the lips, several  
Times throughout the encounter,  
Wondering how many random  
Dicks I'm kissing

I pay for her "skip" or the time she's  
Supposed to be onstage, she abruptly  
Asks me to pay for a second skip and  
Like an idiot I oblige her because i  
Want to get back there again and  
Feel her body on mine

"you want a blowjob?" she asks when

We get back to the couch room

"If you have a condom," I say

"I do."

She takes off my pants, I struggle to

Roll the condom on my cock, she goes to

Work, it doesn't feel that great,

She uses her teeth too much, she's cute

in an anna kendrick kind of way

But with the music blaring and the

Hurried motion there's not much

To get me where I need to go, it costs

Me 150 dollars

She works on it, plays with my balls,

I jerk off, at one point the condom

Slips off, she stands up and dances

In front of me while I jerk it looking

At her

I don't cum, rihanna sings *work work*

*Work work work*

"K, I'm going home now," she says

After a while

"It's the atmosphere," I tell her, "I've

Actually never done this before."

A lie, I've done it one other time,

Though that was even nastier

Than this

"Neither have I," she says. "I feel

Like we connected."

and we go back upstairs

Where the ATM is broken and so I have

To get a cash advance from this fucking

Chode of a bartender who high fives me

And charges 20 percent on the debit

Withdrawal, I take out 500 because

All my blood is in my dick and not

My brain

The girl hugs me and says she works



Thursdays and I know I'm never going  
To see her again, she says she's going  
Home even though the place doesn't  
Close for another 2 hours

I hang around, see another cutie by the  
Rail, I wait until this chad looking guy  
Is finished talking to her then ask her  
For a dance, we stand at the bottom of  
The stairs about 10 minutes waiting  
For a room to open up, it's busy as hell,  
And we go back and she's ticklish but  
Thinks bellybuttons are gross because  
She saw the matrix when she was like  
6 and that scene with the implanting of  
The probe in Keanu reeves' navel  
Freaked her out

Her name is Thalassa, she's 22 and from  
Lansing, down here hiding from her  
Family because they wouldn't approve  
Of this kind of work

She grinds on me, we cuddle, she  
Doesn't do extras which is damn shame

She has to run because they need her

Onstage, I pay her for the 8 songs

She leaves with a quick sorry, I hear

The DJ a couple minutes later, "Ah,

Thalassa is here, she's an hour late, but she

Made it..."

On way back out I see the first girl

Standing by the computer at the

Bottom of the stairs, she's alone

And surprised to see me, deer in

The headlights

"Figured you'd stick around, eh?"

I say to her, there's about five

Other people in line

She says something about leaving

Soon or something, I turn without

Another word and get the fuck out

Of there

I'm never doing this again, and I mean

It this time, I'm ashamed of the money  
I've spent and I'm ashamed of the whole  
Process, it's exploitation both ways,  
Lies and sorrow and noise

The drive home is long and I worry  
That my dick is now contaminated

I shower when I get home, have  
A quick jerk off session to finish  
The tension, I understand and  
Realize what I've been chasing  
All along is love and companionship  
And you can't buy that, average  
Guys like me can't just go out and  
Find someone, it's a dice roll and  
It comes when it comes, I read  
A life protip on reddit about  
Addiction, you have to want  
To stop doing it NOW and  
I do, I will replay the moments  
where she ripped me off by  
asking for the second skip  
that probably didn't exist and  
all that extra bullshit about

connection and blah blah blah  
I will replay how shitty I feel  
When I leave the bar, how  
Dirty and the quiet apprehension  
In the back of my head about  
An STD smoking my poor dick

I will not go back to the Vu,  
And I will not come back here  
Enough money has been  
Spent, enough money was  
Spent last summer, what i  
Really want is something i  
Won't find in those places  
anyway and that's final

**"Nyx pt whatever this is"**

I can't believe I'm still writing about this

I went back to the Vu today for some good  
Clean stripper fun, no blowjobs and nothing  
Expensive

It's Thursday so I wasn't expecting to see  
Nyx, I haven't heard from her or seen her  
Since a month ago

But there she is, standing against the front  
Desk when I walk through the doors

"What are you doing?" she asks, grinning  
a little too tightly

I'm so shocked to see her I just say, "What  
Does it look like I'm doing?"

"You're never here on Thursday."

"I got a new job."

The place is deserted since it's early evening  
And so she comes and sits with me, we chat  
"I thought our paths would never cross again,"  
I tell her

she got a new phone, she says

I tell her about my new job

"How have you been?" I ask.

"Shitty," she says. She's working here more often  
since her other job cut down to 20 hours a week

She asks how my music is going, I ask how her  
Family is

We get a VIP, 15 min then half an hour then another  
15 minutes

We cuddle and chat

she broke up with her dom and  
He left her standing on the side of the road in Detroit  
About three weeks ago

I tickle her and rub her and feel her up and touch her  
Nipples and her neck and her bellybutton and all the  
Other same shit. We do some light grinding. She's  
Straightened her hair and has dyed it red but you  
Can't tell that in the light

We talk about hanging out again, after some brainstorming  
She suggests I come over to her house on Sunday early  
Afternoon, if I don't mind her grandmother being there

Not at all, I say.

I ask since she's dom-less at the moment, if she wants to  
Further explore the tickling thing in another setting

"I'm just looking to have fun," she says,  
"But I'll hang out with you"

Her family has found out she works here now, somehow, via  
Facebook, but as they're all in New Mexico there have been  
No repercussions, they were apparently like, "It's your life."

We swap phone numbers again.

Later I go out and sip a coke in my chair while she dances  
onstage

I chat with another dancer named Aurora and wax philosophical  
With her about the stripper profession

Nyx comes over after one of her many smoke breaks,  
Vape in hand, and talks to me, I'm all out of shit to  
Talk about and so is she and we both know it

Nyx will yell, "Yeah baby!" in an Austin Powers  
Drawl every time one of the other dancers goes onstage  
And does pole tricks

The first time she comes back from a dance she says  
She injured her leg, the second time she says she injured  
Her shoulder, I rub both spots and gently stroke my hand  
Down her back, it looks tentative and awkward, an attempt  
At tenderness where it's not reciprocated, whatever, I'm  
Lonely as hell

I accidentally step on her poor little toe, clad in a fuzzy  
Ankle sock, when I stand up to leave

"OW!" she says.



She hugs me, I hug her, I say shoot me a text on Sunday

I leave, and my hands smell like her the whole way home

**"Nyx, the final poem"**

Sunday has come and gone

No word from her

I was kind of expecting this

And kind of hoping for this

Time to move on

I will not do this again

**"Nyx: the ongoing saga"**

no, I didn't go back to  
the Vu, I'm happy to  
report, I couldn't even  
if I wanted to but  
last Sunday I woke  
up to a single-word  
text

"Hey"

and so an hour and  
a half later I responded

"Sup"

and then another hour and  
a half after that she responded

Nothing much at home watching  
Netflix what about you?

I waited a little while longer then  
responded

Just mowed the lawn. About to go  
To the record store and get a brush  
And cloth for my vinyl. Want to  
Come along?

That sounds fun and I would  
Love to go but I'm sick  
: (

Aw nuts. Sorry to hear that.  
Head cold?

Yeah I'm debating wether or not  
To work tomorrow (spelling errors hers)

Hope you feel better

Thank you. (kissy face)

How was your week?

Shitty I've shown up every day at

The club and didn't really make anything!  
That's probably why I'm sick

Bummer. I'd say another day off would  
Do you good. Sucks that the Vu is so slow.  
You thought about other employment?  
What happened to your other job again?

Me and my cousin have been fighting  
So pretty much she's my boss and screwed  
Me over. And yeah I'm just lazy ive been  
Working hard my whole life and to have an  
Easy job is awesome

Ah. What are you fighting about?

Shes mad because im a stripper and I make  
More money than her well that's what I think  
Even though ive sucked this week

(laughy face)

Maybe she should be a stripper then

Lol... I don't mean to be mean like  
I think my cousin is pretty but she doesn't have

That type of body or personality

(translation: she's fat and ugly and probably old)

(Hours later...)

Her: lol I guess I'm going to work anyways

Me: Have fun.

(Next day)

Me: How'd it go last night?

Her: (hour later) It went okay

Paid my phone bill and rent

Then nothing for the week

Once again, I figure I will not

Hear from her ever again

Then, on Sunday, right

As I'm sitting down to dinner

Hey what are you doing tonight?

Me: (excitement, maybe she wants  
To hang out) Right now eating dinner, after that  
Nothing. What's up?

Nothing I gotta go into work tonight,  
Was wondering if you wanna keep  
Me company

(goddamn it)

I wait until I finish eating then text her

I'll come hang for a bit but I won't  
Be spending any money. Could you  
Get me in for free?

(grinny face)

I could give you a pass but not for free :(  
Maybe next time Sundays have been  
Slow and I don't wanna be bored

Aw. How much off would the pass be?  
They haven't accepted those half off cards  
You gave me for awhile now. (They haven't.  
One time I was in there and the guy was like,

We can't accept those after midnight. Then  
Another time I was in there early and the  
Girl was like, we can't accept those before  
8)

I wouldn't mind hanging but let me know  
Cause I'd need to leave soon

After no response, it's getting late

Should I come down or not bother?

Some more time passes...

Nahh I think its going to be slow

Then, cause she's a sexy little  
Twenty year old and this is  
The effect they have on lonely  
30 year olds who live with their  
parents, I say this:

K. Maybe next week. Hope it's  
Not too boring.

I assume she's



Got numerous other clients (re:suckers)

she can

Text and lure in for the evening,

maybe they'll even

Spend some money on her

The attraction is so powerful, and

I know she's using me for my money,

this is exactly why I stopped going in

The first place,

I've said I assume this is the end

Several times now and it hasn't

Been, maybe if I leave it open

Ended that'll really be it

## **"stripper confessions"**

all right, so I'm going  
to get the rest of this out

I last saw Nyx back in  
November, last time, I  
Went there to visit her  
It was probably a Sunday  
And I waited for her for  
Half an hour but she had  
Gone off with another guy  
And I was sitting there like  
Why the hell am I still here?  
And I got up and left and I  
Got a text from her on the  
Way home, it says "I'm  
Sorry, are you still here?"

It's the last time I talked  
To her at all

Then I went to the Flight Club  
In late December and I got  
One dance with a girl who  
Clearly hates being around  
Me and admits that she hates  
The job and I admire her  
Honesty and I sip my beer  
And she half-assed-ly dances  
On me and won't get too close  
And doesn't like being tickled  
and I leave after two dances  
we hear two people having  
sex in the curtains next to us

then I go to another girl  
named Dominique and  
she gives me a blowjob  
and I have my first orgasm  
at a strip club ever into  
the condom and I'm sure  
the people in the next

curtained off rooms can  
hear me, Nemesis  
and I started off cuddling  
and then one thing led  
to another, I don't remember  
what it cost me

Then in January I went back  
To the Vu and I saw Aphrodite  
One last time, and she raised  
The price on me for a VIP  
And we just cuddled and she  
Grinded on me and all in all  
It was a waste of money

Then in February I went to  
A club out in Battle Creek  
When I went to a local  
Band show and I had a  
Couple dances and this  
One black woman came  
Up to me and kept wanting  
Dances but I said no thanks  
She was too big for me but  
She 100 percent thought I  
Was racist, oh well, I guess  
I am anyway, but there was  
This 18 year old I got a  
Bunch of dances from

But the real story from  
That club (I can't remember  
The name of it) is Selene  
This tall Russian blonde who  
Says she and her sister do  
Tickling sessions all the  
Time and so I suggest we  
Get a hotel room for the  
Night and to my astonishment  
She accepts, I go to the  
Show and come back and  
She says its fine for me  
To just come over, I wait  
For her to get off and then  
Head over to her place,  
It's about half an hour away

In Kalamazoo, this nice  
Apartment just off WMU  
Campus, and her sister  
Comes over, her name's  
Hecate and she's cute  
With red hair and we talk  
A bit and then we go into  
Selene's bedroom  
And they put their hair  
Into pigtails at my request  
And I undress them and  
Take turns tickling them  
Selene is not ticklish much  
But Hecate is and it's a good  
Time and we do it for an hour  
And then it's time to leave

I go back to tickle Selene  
Once during the day later  
In the month on a break  
Between jobs, and after  
That we text but so far  
Nothing's happened and  
She's asking for more  
Money now anyway so I doubt  
Anything will

## **"Metis"**

I was listening to Bruce  
Springsteen's I'm On Fire  
Out of nowhere this week,  
Listened to it on the way  
Home, love his falsetto  
Love the lyrics, great song

I went to the Flight Club,  
A strip joint in Romulus  
Sat around, it was 6:00  
Hot black girl dancing up  
On the stage, guys slowly  
Coming in, all of us pathetic

I got one dance with Aphrodite  
Back in January but that was  
The last time I went there  
The Flight Club is better—  
Sex happens behind the red  
Curtains they set up in the private  
Areas, the girls are way more  
Willing to help you out with that

I'm not seeing many girls, I sit there  
An hour and half and don't see anyone  
I like

I talk to the hot black girl when I  
Catch her when I'm coming out  
of other bathroom, she says she'll  
Go for a dance but she needs to  
Put her shoes on, an hour later  
And she's not around

I talk to the doorman, David,  
He's got a huge beard, he says  
The girl, Molly, left with the shift  
Change. We bullshit about the  
Business and everything else

I go back to my seat at the bar

A girl in a pink net onesie  
Walks by, she's got a very  
Cute face, I ask if she wants  
A dance and she accepts

She's got poofy auburn hair  
And freckles and a soft little  
Body, her belly button ring  
Is a cross

Then Molly shows up

I offer to take them both

They go up and have a cig  
While I withdraw money

I dance with the pink onesie  
Girl first, her name is Metis  
She's from Detroit, the east side,  
White girl, half-Albanian, from the  
East side

And she has the sweetest face,  
A teardrop tattoo on her cheek  
And Father Forgive Me tattooed  
In elegant cursive across her  
Shoulder blades

I ask her if she's killed anybody

No, but I lost somebody

The name "Kejdi"- pronounced  
Cody-is tattoo'd under her left  
Breast, in the soft, sensitive skin  
Under her left breast, it's her  
Father's name

She says its 200 for a blowjob  
300 for everything but she'll work  
with me on prices

She's ticklish, squeaks when  
I tickle her

We do three songs, then I get  
Molly, Molly and I do two songs  
She's not ticklish, she asks if i  
Want to have fun, but she  
Her prices are higher than Metis  
and after two  
Songs she asks if I'm done

I go back down to the floor,  
Metis is dancing onstage  
Conversing with a guy in a tux  
At a table by the stage

I put three dollar bills in her  
g-string and tell her to come see  
me when she's done

I watch her the whole time

When she comes off stage I get her

We go back upstairs

She strips naked, I tell her  
I want everything but can only do  
200, she agrees

She gets a condom from the bouncer

"You have got such a sweet face, oh my God,"  
I tell her, and I mean it

She sucks my cock and puts the condom on,  
Then she mounts me.

She has rules—she doesn't kiss, no playing with  
Her pussy or eating her out. No problem.

She's a good little performer. I fuck her cowgirl  
And then missionary, she makes the most  
Perfect little noises "Oh-oh-oh, right there!  
Rightthererightthererightthereooooouhhhhh!"

She asks if I came several times. I tell her it takes  
Me a long time to cum

She sucks my cock some more and I finally  
Cum when I'm jacking off into her mouth while  
She plays with my balls

While I put my clothes back on I ask her  
How long she sees herself doing this,  
She says this is the last year, she wants  
To go to Detroit Mercy and be a nurse

I try to tell her how strong she is and how  
Much I appreciate her doing this for me and  
For all the other pathetic strangers that come  
In here looking for a little semblance of love

"It's my job," she said, "I mean, I'm not doing it  
just for the money"

"Thanks, bub" she tells me.

She kisses me on the lips and hugs me. We do this  
twice.

I wait for her while she tips out the doorman and  
Steps back into her onesie

I give her one more hug by the bar as she sits  
For another cigarette, I tell her good luck

When I get home  
I listen to I'm On Fire  
and think about Metis  
And her sweet face

*Hey little girl is your daddy home  
Did he go away and leave you all alone  
I got a bad desire  
Mmm, I'm on fire*



### **"more strippers"**

I go back to the strip club  
A couple times in june, once  
After an open mic night I go to  
The coliseum and fuck around  
With this stripper named Eos  
Who looks like a thick selena  
Gomez and who lets me finger  
Her and sucks my cock and  
I bite her nipples which I'm  
Worried hurts her, she says  
She'll come out and hang again  
But as I'm sitting at the table  
Another dancer comes up and  
Asks what I'm doing and I say  
I'm waiting for Eos and she's like  
Yeah she won't be back out here  
And I realize how stupid I am

Then I go back to the flight club  
And fuck this bitchy little blonde  
Most unpleasant experience ever  
She's barely able to contain her  
Disdain for me, I'm pretty sure  
She's a victim of human trafficking  
When I ask why she got into this  
She just shakes her head and says  
"My friend has some crazy ideas..."  
She keeps raising the price as  
We're doing it, and I have to go  
To the atm, and there's a huge  
Fee for it and she's like, "sorry"  
And I'm like, "so am I"

For a few weeks I'm afraid I got  
Herpes from her or Eos but it  
Turns out to just be ingrown pubic  
Hairs so whew

Then I go back to the vu in late august  
and I spend 200 dollars on a dance  
With this black girl with acne named  
Imani, she takes my picture (without

My face, I check) and gives me these black  
Wristbands as tokens of our time  
Together, we just sit and I tickle her  
A little bit and it's nice to have someone  
There for a bit but whatever

There is nothing cinematic or poetic about  
These latest encounters with sex workers  
I get no real nourishment out of them, I am  
Just fulfilling a bodily urge, they are  
Cardboard cutouts

I had a fling with a girl I met off of seeking  
Arrangement.com, I bought her a new car  
And she fucked me for about three months  
Before getting back together with her ex  
I took her to my buddy hutch's wedding  
And all the wives hated her because she  
Was 21 and they were all pushing 30  
The guys were all cool enough to her, tho

I met her at the end of march, it was the  
Same day the trailer for It came out, and  
We met in Howell on a Friday night and  
Got a hotel room and I fucked her and  
We watched aqua teen hunger force and  
Family guy and it was April fool's day

Then the next day I followed her up to  
Lansing and we saw Beauty and the Beast  
and drove through the sunset countryside  
together and I spent the night at her house  
and we watched when marnie was there  
and the prince of Egypt and she showed me  
a video she'd put on youtube of a bunch of  
clips of her and her friends with the cinematic  
orchestra's to build a home playing it's really  
simple but really effective, very touching and i  
start thinking about when I was 21

she comes to see me when I'm in a hotel room  
in lansing a week later, and I give her a grand so  
she can buy a new car, she spends it on this shitty  
beater, the guy totally ripped her off, I should've been  
there

she comes down to my new apartment a few times and we hang out, I buy her a nice dress for the wedding and in the cabin after the wedding we lie and talk to each other

but shortly after the wedding she says she's getting back together with her ex and I say fine but it's a bit sad, I remember the last night we watched Pinocchio together and she took a morning after pill before she takes off, and as I'm closing the door and saying goodbye to her I go, "and always let your conscience be your guide" and it's the last I see of her

there's another girl—Eirene, she's 20 and very hippie-ish I meet her in ann arbor once at crazy wisdom and we go To the Fleetwood and she doesn't eat anything and I Figure I won't see her again but she comes over and We chat and then I tickle her on the bed and before i Know it we're both naked and she's jacking me off and I'm cumming and we cuddle for a bit and then she leaves And I never hear from her again

**"you already know what this is about"**

I'll be as brief as I can

Had 300 dollars to blow  
couldn't decide if i wanted  
to go to the vu or the flight  
club

decided on flight club

get in there, get booth  
shot girl comes over  
we bullshit chat, she  
says she likes to watch  
the guys with the girls  
and i ask her what  
she thinks it's like  
to be a guy at a  
strip club

what do you mean?

you don't sense a  
nervous tension masking  
a sense of shame and  
self-loathing?

well, what's it like for you?

she's got me

she tells me how she  
fucks around with her  
boss, who's this chubby  
guy with glasses and  
a goatee who walks  
around in a full suit  
she opened up to him  
at an afterparty once

my morose self-  
consciousness  
eventually drives  
her to another table

more time goes by  
i drink my coors light

a 34 year old comes over  
and tries to chat, i'm not  
interested and she picks  
up on it, i feel bad for her  
but i also am not here to  
spend money on women  
i'm not interested in

finally give on waiting  
for someone, go over  
and give a one to this  
blonde on the pole

two others come over  
two thick-hipped  
hispanic girls named  
missy and angelica  
and they sit with me  
and also bullshit chat  
neither of them seem  
like they want to be  
here

i mention i'm waiting  
for the blonde and they  
go get her for me

she comes over, we  
bullshit, she makes  
1400 a night, her  
name's Artemis  
she openly talks  
about making her  
money from sex  
and blowjobs, i  
say let's go up  
stairs and we  
do, we dance,

we cuddle, she  
sucks my dick  
and i cum while  
jerking it while  
she's licking my  
balls

she gives me  
a baby wipe  
and i clean  
up

we have the  
usual parting

i walk outside  
and wait for  
valet and the  
night smells  
amazing

**"Artemis and Callisto"**

i go back to the flight club  
on a Sunday, get a booth  
get a beer, it's almost midnight  
and no one's there

i go upstairs and see  
Artemis sitting with a  
blonde at the bar, both  
of them holding cigarettes

i go up an introduce  
myself again, she  
doesn't remember me  
but i mention i was there  
last week, the other girl's  
name is Callisto

i ask if they want  
to come hang in the  
booth

Artemis is 20 and Callisto  
Is 19, or so they say

they come downstairs  
and sit and are quite  
eager to get me to  
the VIP section, very  
enthusiastic about  
earning that money,  
saying things like

"how did you get the  
two hottest girls in the  
room?"

and

"you ever had a threesome  
before?" (I say I have,  
mentioning Selene and  
Hecate from the previous  
february)

"how about this month?"



"No, not this month, not  
yet..."

and

"you have a nice dick"

the latter is said as  
Artemis feels me up

at one point she  
leans down and  
gives my engorged  
manhood a suck  
through my jeans

Callisto is less about it  
but they both work it  
and i'm easily swayed

it doesn't take much  
and we're upstairs  
again

the bouncer gives us

the big room, the same  
one i had the first time  
i got my dick sucked in  
this place

they get topless and  
ask what i like to do

i start making out  
with Callisto, wondering  
how many dicks i'm  
kissing right now  
but while Callisto and i  
make out Artemis  
takes off my pants  
and starts jerking me

the price is raised from  
last week, 200 apiece now  
is what is agreed upon

we go to it

i ask Artemis if she  
has a condom, she

does and says, I  
wasn't gonna put your  
dick in my mouth without  
one, sweetie."

"i figured," i say,  
"just checking" and  
Callisto is on me, let  
the games begin

Artemis sucks me off  
while Callisto straddles me  
and i tickle her and suck  
her tits and make out with  
her and feel her up

Callisto says she's ticklish  
but is not

then they switch places

Artemis mentions we're  
two songs in and if she  
should finish me off

"Sure."

two minutes later  
and i'm cumming  
while jerking off  
into Callisto's mouth  
(through the condom  
of course) while  
Artemis sucks my  
balls

the whole thing feels  
very rushed but it's  
worth the money

Callisto says that i'm  
going to have to  
pay her for the songs  
as well as she puts  
her bra back on, in  
a mean sort of voice

i give them 40 dollars  
extra apiece

they say how generous  
i am

i ask if they want to  
hang at the table some  
more

we do and Callisto and i  
chat about her life

she's friends with  
a local band called  
space trash

i ask if the two of  
them want to  
come on the podcast  
and they say they do  
Callisto and i exchange  
numbers

then we go upstairs  
so they can smoke  
at the bar, and this  
other guy, big bald

head makes him  
look like his face  
is carved from  
stone comes over  
and starts feeling  
up Callisto, both of them  
staring me down

I look into his beady eyes  
I think about mentioning  
I just ejaculated into her  
Mouth not twenty minutes  
Ago but think better of it

she mentions he's  
a good regular, gives  
her 500 a song, but  
not to mention that  
she does extras

i don't give a fuck  
but they're both  
eyeing me for  
jealousy and i  
betray myself,

can't help it,  
it's just how  
I'm wired, I'm  
Trying to talk  
To her about  
The podcast  
And I stammer  
A bit

Artemis and i  
talk about her  
life and how her  
mother owns this  
wedding production  
company, they  
film weddings  
and also do  
these interesting  
first date reinactions  
where an actor  
and actress will  
act out your first  
date, Artemis  
mentions justin  
timberlake and

jennifer aniston have  
done videos for them  
before

how stupid do  
these women  
think i am?

I wonder

And I

Immediately

Answer

Myself

"it doesn't matter"

Artemis says she's  
invested over half  
a million into the  
company over the  
past year

she says she gets  
a thousand a night  
minimum, down  
400 dollars from  
what she told me



last week

i think of how poor  
i am compared to  
them

Callisto's regular has  
disappeared, and  
she makes off down  
the bar and starts  
chatting up another  
patron

Artemis has to  
go to the bathroom  
and says she'll  
be back

k, i say

i chat with the  
bartender a bit

finish my coors light

i look off the balcony  
and i see that  
Artemis is downstairs  
in another booth  
and then she  
gets called onstage

i take off, wait in  
the sprinkling  
october rain,  
unseasonably  
warm, while  
Callisto's 500 a dance  
regular chats up  
another guy, i'm  
pretty sure he works  
there, he has the look  
of a bouncer but who  
gives a shit

on the way home i  
contemplate whether  
the podcast will  
actually happen

when i get home  
i shower and wash  
my cock and balls  
religiously

**"Artemis: that was fun"**

Went to the Flight Club yet again

Going to stop beating around the  
Bush here—this is an addiction I  
Have

I'm bored, I go to the strip club

I make excuses, blah blah blah

It is what it is

I go in, get my booth, my beer

I notice a pretty brunette, tall and  
Skinny, as tall as me with her  
Heels on

She gets off the bar stage and  
Tries to chat up a guy at the bar  
But he isn't interested

I follow her and ask her if she  
Wants to hang out

Her name's Moira

She's pretty, will be twenty one  
In December

We sit and bullshit, nothing worth  
Mentioning here

I ask for a dance

We go upstairs

I ask her to take her shoes off so  
She's not so tall

"The floor's nasty" she says

We dance for a bit, her breasts  
Are small and pointed, her body  
Is of the tall model type, her  
Brown hair is straight and down  
To her ass

She's not ticklish

She looks miserable

"So what do you like?" she  
Asks after a bit

I tell her

"How much are you willing to  
Spend on me tonight?"

"I can do 150" I say

"I start at 550"

"Oh, fuck that"

She dances for awhile,  
Very uninspired, and  
Then I suggest we cuddle

She sits down next to me  
With her legs curled over mine  
She massages my boner  
Through my pants

She looks utterly miserable,

Again, just this look of complete  
Defeat on her face

"You look unhappy" I tell her

She gets offended by it but  
Is too depressed to really  
Work up a response

We call it a night after the  
Second song. I pay her and  
Go looking for someone else

I find a pretty black haired girl  
In glasses, and we go up to  
The bar and as fate would have  
It the only two open seats are  
Next to Moira

Don't even remember this new  
Girl's name, because we talked  
For a little bit and then she says  
She has to go onstage but will  
Come back

I'm not expecting anything so  
I go downstairs and also not  
Surprisingly my booth has been  
Given away

I go back upstairs and sit at the  
Bar next to Moira again, she's  
Eating a salad now, and we  
Don't say anything to each other

She still looks extremely unhappy

Some seats in the middle of the  
Bar open up, I get a Corona and  
Move over to one

Im not there two mintues when  
Who sits down two seats away  
But Artemis, the girl from the  
Last time I was here

I strike up another conversation  
She remembers me

She's been at the Coliseum this  
Whole time, it's closer to her house

She's not making much money tonight

"Got some ones," she says.

After some light conversation I suggest  
We go to the back so she can make some  
Money

We get an extremely tiny curtained section  
And get to dancing

She strips naked—she's wearing a new  
Outfit, this see-through onesie that looks  
Like it's made of spider silk—and make  
Out a bit

There's people talking behind us  
The bouncer who regulates the  
VIP section is pissed about  
Something

"Do you wanna have fun?" Artemis asks

I do

She undoes my belt, removes my pants  
Sucks my dick without a condom for about  
Ten to twenty seconds, I'm too weak to  
Stop it

I lean forward and ask if she has a condom

She nods

She takes off her panties, I didn't ask for  
Sex but it looks like I'm getting it

I hope this doesn't exceed my budget but  
My libido is in control now

She mounts me, fucks me, and the bouncer  
Literally two feet away behind the curtain is  
Angrily talking to another dancer, being  
Really nasty, these guys have to make  
The girls afraid of them if they're to be  
Taken seriously

Artemis is riding me, asks if I like any other  
Positions, but I don't want to switch because  
I'm worried we'll be heard

Artemis mews in my ear as she rides me,  
My dick gets harder in the condom, I finish  
In her and she dismounts

"Are you done?"

"Yeah."

"Good."

She hands me a baby wipe (she's such a  
Professional) and I clean myself up, tuck  
The condom away with the baby wipe  
And we dress

I pay 200 for the encounter, she asks for  
250 but 200's all I have and she's fine  
With it

We say our goodbyes and walk out, she  
Tosses the used condom and baby wipes  
In with all the other tissues and used condoms  
The trash bag behind the bouncer's table  
Is full, I can see

I follow her all the way down to the main floor  
And she keeps walking, doesn't turn back and  
I almost walk out the front door before realizing  
I'm still holding my corona

I go to the bar to set it down and this blonde  
Is sitting there, she says she's seen me before  
I tell her I've been there before, she says her  
Name is Tyche, she's cute, and I tell her  
I'll remember her next time

### **"Galene"**

Went to the Flight Club  
Again last night

Got booth

Saw Stone-face the  
Bald Gargoyle talking  
Up a petite blonde with  
A shock of curly blonde  
Hair, so blonde it was neon

Place was quiet, tall thin  
Blonde on the stage

No one there otherwise

I got up and asked the  
Girl to hang out, I thought  
It was Callisto at first, asked  
If her name was Callisto

"Galene" she says

She comes back to the  
Booth and we start bullshitting  
She's been there 2 days, she  
Says

"That's funny," I say. "Every  
Girl I've talked to has said



It's their first or second day"

After some chit chat—she's  
From Brighton and graduated  
In 2013, about half of the girls  
At the flight Club are her classmates  
("Wow, Brighton high school didn't  
Do that well," I say.), she works  
During the week selling paint, she  
Might want to go to school for  
Nursing but she hates school...  
I say let's cut to the chase

She asks my budget

200, I tell her

We go up, get a room, it's the  
Same curtained area I had  
With Artemis the first time

We start kissing, she kisses  
Quite hard, she takes off her  
Top, pierced nipples, she's  
Insecure about her small  
Breasts

She gropes me, I grope her

I'm hoping this escalates into  
Something but what feels like  
A song goes by and she says  
"I hope you enjoyed this honey"  
And she asks for two hundred

"Uh, we're not going to do  
Anything else?"

"I just gave you two songs  
And it's a hundred a song."

"It's 25 a song, I told you  
I've been here before"  
I say, looking her in the eye.

"Well, we're not supposed

To let you touch us or  
Anything."

I glare at her, we both know  
This is bullshit, she breaks,  
Gets all snippy with me

"Well, how about a hundred?  
Hundred and fifty?"

"We'll do a hundred," I growl,  
Relenting, letting her beta me

"I'm going to need like three  
Dollars to tip my bouncer, too"

I give her ten for the "bouncer"  
And get the fuck out of there

"See you out there, honey," she  
Says. I let the curtain swish  
Behind me and she doesn't follow

I go downstairs and right out  
the front door

I hope that little cunt had a nervous  
Breakdown after I left, I hope she  
Broke down in tears on that red  
Cushioned chair that's got the  
Ass sweat of a thousand horny  
Dudes soaked into it, and bawled  
Her eyes out because she knows  
Her life is never going to get any  
Better, she has to get up and put  
Her clothes back on and go downstairs  
Where Stoneface is waiting to man  
Handle her some more, she doesn't  
Deserve anyone's sympathy any  
More than a lonely average male  
Like me does, the world is a power  
Game and you take what you can  
And fuck the rest, this is what we  
Get when people are treated like  
Objects

I'd say this is the last time but  
We both know that'd be a lie

### **"Nyx returns"**

so i went to the vu  
again tonight

i get in, there's a  
bit of a line, i pay  
give them my coat

go into the show  
room, it's packed  
no one i know, i  
take a table over  
by the dj booth

two decent skinny  
girls hanging out  
at the bar behind me  
i go up and ask one  
of them for a dance  
but she's going  
onstage so she says  
She'll find me when  
She's done

Whatever, I say

i go back to my table  
and see a flash of  
black hair whip past  
me, headed for the  
dj booth

I turn my head and  
See her mount the  
Stairs and speak  
With the dj

it's Nyx

her hair is different  
it's fluffier now and  
shoulder-length but  
other than that she  
looks the same

i watch her talk to  
the dj for a second  
and then go over  
and say hi

"Nyx!" i say

both her and the  
dj look my way  
with irritation

she sees me  
and at first she  
doesn't register  
anything but then  
the look on her  
face is forced  
happiness in  
its purest form

it takes her a  
second but she  
comes down and  
hugs me, says  
she'll come sit  
with me and  
she comes  
over to sit at the  
table and i say  
why don't we  
just get a vip

we go back

get a room

start talking

she's been through  
a bunch of shit in

the past year since  
i saw her

rehab in march for  
alcohol abuse  
abusive  
relationship over  
the summer, she'd  
stopped stripping  
while at rehab  
and came back  
in august to supplement  
her income working for  
a car parts factory in  
new boston, she has  
her own place in flat  
rock now

she looks okay, but her  
voice is scratchier and  
she has a world-weariness  
about her now, her pep  
is dampened, everything  
she says seems to have  
a helpless sadness behind  
it

she mentions her life  
insurance at one point  
her mother would get  
200 grand if she died  
she talks about it, and  
i could totally see her  
offing herself

the girl i knew last year  
is gone  
this is a woman

she dances for a second  
while we catch up before  
i tell her she doesn't have  
to, i'm tell her i'm paying  
her 175 dollars a half hour  
to talk with me essentially

we cuddle and i tell her  
all the shit i've been up  
to, she asks about the  
music I was making

the conversation is forced

i tell her if she doesn't  
remember me it's fine

no, we went to the movies  
i remember you

she brings up the last time  
i was here, when i walked  
out because she wasn't  
coming out, she says it  
was terrible that night and  
she took a dance and when  
she came out i was gone

i tell her i don't remember

she doesn't do the dom/sub  
stuff anymore, she says she's  
settled down quite a bit

she seems really depressed  
but there's nothing i can do  
for her, there's nothing she  
would let me do for her

i mention hanging out again  
she says we'll exchange #'s  
and she'll "pencil me in"

we talk some more and  
the vip ends and we switch  
rooms for another one, it's  
the one we used to have

we cuddle some more

i ask if she needs a sugar  
daddy, she says she likes  
being independent

i tell her about Antheia

she talks about how horny  
she's been lately, well let me  
help you with that, sweet girl

i feel her nipples and her  
belly, rub my hands all over  
her, wrap my hand around  
her neck at one point

"That doesn't help  
(with the horniness)" she  
says

"that's the idea," i tell her

"Someone's gotten sassy,  
she says. "I like it!"

I pinch her nipples until  
she grimaces, one at a  
time, she pulls away and  
I ask if it's too much

"yes but no," she says  
grinning

she leans  
forward and i kiss her  
shoulder and the nape of  
her neck and she puts her  
nipple in my mouth and  
i sink my incisors in and  
bite down  
hard  
and she is breathing hard  
and she holds it there for  
a little bit and then pulls  
away

we cuddle some more  
then the guy from behind  
the curtain calls out "JJ

You're all set!" and  
I ask her, "JJ?"

That nickname stuck,  
she says, they used  
to call me Ka-Jay-Jay  
and then that got changed  
to JJ and now they don't  
even call me Nyx  
anymore

I give her her money, she  
shows me her new vape  
asks if i'm sticking around  
i'm not

then i'll walk you out, she  
says

we go down the hallway  
and she pulls out her phone  
And hands it to me and  
i type my number in and  
now it's in my phone again

we'll see where that goes  
probably nowhere

she starts talking to a guy  
at the end of the hall about  
going for a smoke and i get  
in line for my coat

she comes over and hugs  
me

take care of yourself, i say

hey, yeah, as long as i keep,  
you know, breathing through  
my nose and out my mouth...  
she says, trailing off, that  
Forced smile still on her face  
Everything about her forced

see ya



see ya

and that's it

i feel bad for her, i admit it,  
i'm worried about her now  
but i also know there's not  
much i can do about it, i  
can tell she's a young,  
scared girl in a hostile world

and I'm one of her regulars  
so there's nothing i can do  
except write about it here as i  
lick my incisors and worry  
if i bit down too hard

Epilogue:

I'm not expecting to hear from her

But the following night, I get a text

What days don't you work again?

I wait an hour and then reply

Just Sundays

Half an hour later

Dang :/

And that's it

## **"Iris"**

Been awhile since I've had a stripper story  
So here we go

Went to the vu the other night  
200 bucks in my pocket

They remodeled everything  
A guy with a snakebite takes  
My intro fee and I check my coat

The place is blue now, not pink, and  
Way less trashy, walls are smooth and  
Blue now, stage is bigger, there's only  
One pole instead of two

The bathrooms are actually lit, like lit up  
They appear to be regular bathrooms,  
Not the dank, dark pits that were here  
Before, they could easily fit in an office  
Or a hotel lobby, I'm seriously shocked

I sit in the back, talk to the waitress, remark  
On how clean the place looks now, all the

Hanging silver moons and stuff are gone

I mention the bathrooms

Yea, you know why that is?

Why?

The darkness was to hide the uggos

The ugly guys so they wouldn't feel bad

About it, I guess they don't care now

Guess not

I get a water, I don't touch it

A couple dancers come by, I ask

About Nyx, she's not there

When I got there they were doing

The parade of strippers

I saw a dark-haired greek-looking girl

With hair like black licorice coming

Towards me, make eye contact, she

sits down, her name's Iris, let's get

A VIP

How long you been doing this

This is her first day at the vu

Bullshit

It's a lot of work, she says

In we go; she takes her boots off,

Her feet stink so she puts them on

Again

She has diamonds attached to her

Nipple piercings and says getting

Them caught on things is painful

As I take her into my arms, she tries

To tell me that touching is extra, but

I tell her I've been here before

She dances but I tell her I want to

Cuddle and she seems pleased that

She doesn't have to move so much

She puts her arm around me and i

Do the same to her

We talk

She worked at legend's in Detroit, hated it  
Came here, lives nearby, she's from Brighton  
She's 23, she looks kind of demi Lovato-esque  
But with sharper features and a thinner physique  
Olive skin, hair that's as thick and black as tar-  
Colored yarn, Mediterranean features, her  
Front teeth are kind of fucked up and her  
Eyeshadow is applied messily but she's  
Really quite pretty

She's friendly enough; we talk about her life,  
She tells me she wants to move out of Michigan  
She's going to California in a month, or maybe  
She'd just got back from seeing a friend who  
Just bought a 6 bedroom house, they're a couple  
Guy works with autistic kids and his wife works  
Doing something else I can't remember  
They're friends, I wonder if they all fuck each other

We talk about our shared love of reading—Stephen  
King is brought up and she mentions how she read  
One of his son Joe Hill's books earlier that year and  
It was actually pretty good, she describes the plot to  
Me and it actually sounds interesting

She tells me about how she cried at legend's one  
Time when a guy grabbed her pussy while she  
Was dancing and his friends were "acting like  
Assholes" even after she told them to get away  
From her stage. They tipped her a dollar and  
Said, "Thanks for trying, honey."

I tell her about my story, tell her I want to write  
I mention being an average guy is really fucking  
Lonely and she says I have personality and I'm  
Not ugly, god bless her for being nice

I pay her her money and I help her put her top  
Back on, she gives me a hug and a peck on the  
Cheek

Good luck, I say, and we part ways without  
Goodbye, I get my coat and walk out again

## **"Cyrene"**

i plan on going to  
the colosseum but  
i pass this place called  
players and decide to  
give it a try

valet, 7 dollars  
doorman, 10  
coat check 3  
booth 20

Not going to bother

With descriptions

Here because

Everything always

Looks the same

Anyway

place is dead  
couple black dudes  
ogling the onstage  
girls, one middle  
eastern dude getting  
served a scoop of  
ice cream with a  
sparkler for his birthday  
in one corner, few old  
fucks at the bar

i wait for the girl  
onstage to get off  
she's white, cat-like  
names kitty  
invite her to my  
table

we bullshit, she  
asks what brought  
me in, i'm horny,  
she doesn't do  
things like that  
but she'll hang  
for a bit, we  
bullshit some  
more, talk about  
her day job that  
she left, i don't  
care,

I'm gonna go to

The bar and see

My friend, she says

You do that

She leaves, i go  
over and see if  
any of the girls are  
worth approaching

one blonde at the bar might be

she takes the stage next

i go up, put dollar bills  
in her underwear, say  
come see me

she dances, i watch  
the espn coverage  
of the stanley cup  
finals

she gets off, comes  
over, names Cyrene  
tall and blonde, 21,  
i tell her i want a vip  
what do i want?  
let's figure it out up  
there, we go up



rooms aren't rooms

they're partitions with  
what look like heavy  
mardi gras bead curtains

not much privacy

she starts dancing,  
i feel her up, we  
make out for a second  
she asks what i want  
what do you do  
i'm good with my  
mouth, i take off  
my pants, do you  
have a condom

i don't

oh well

she sucks me off

at one point i notice  
a tattoo on her shoulder

love fearlessly

in some serif font

what's that mean

it's all fucked up, she  
says

what is

everything

she bends down  
and goes to work  
again on my bare  
dick, i grab both  
sides of her head

and move her up  
and down until  
i cum in her mouth

she gags

we dress

we go downstairs

bye

good luck

back out to car

back home

wash dick

In the days following

I think more about poor

Cyrene (if that's how it's

Spelled) and her thin

Judy greer-esque face

And the way she kept

Pulling her lank blonde

Hair back out of her

Face when she would

Go down on me and

Her thin lips and her

Cigarette tongue and

The two moles on her

Belly under her left

Breast and where

She's going

**"Harmonia"**

Went back to the Vu Saturday night  
Just that time again  
Place wasn't very active  
I haven't been here since over a year ago

I thought about Nyx on my way there  
I don't expect to see her but I hope she's  
All right

Harmonia, from way back in 2016, was there

Get a VIP with her, I pay up front

You look familiar to me

Yeah, I used to be a regular for Nyx

When did you see her last?

December of 2017, I think

Yeah, that was a moment for her

(moment meaning she was going  
Through some shit, which was obvious)

Harmonia tells me Nyx's in Arizona now and  
Doing better,  
she moved away eight months ago

Harmonia and I cuddle, stroking each other

She says she's a professional cuddler

Pressure's on, I tell her

She's blonde now, cleaner than she  
Was when Nyx and I did that tickle

VIP way back in September of 2016

We shoot the shit

We talk about reading, we talk about  
Music, we talk about all the dumb shit

Conversations thread into each other

I tell her all about Vestal Phases, don't  
Know why, I'm drunk on physical touch  
She looks up Adrien Carver, says she  
Wants to read it, hopefully she doesn't  
Tell some rich friend about it and I get  
Ripped off, I really gave her all the details  
I wanted her to be impressed

She listens, asks questions, not just about  
The novel, keeps making that, "Ohhhh...!"  
Noise people make when they're trying to  
Sound interested but clearly aren't

We do an hour, lying there, I tell her about  
The poem I wrote about that VIP in September  
Of 2016

Nothing much happens, there's basketball  
Playing on the TV in the corner, the Vu is  
Cleaner now, doesn't seem so dive, someone  
Came in and remodeled the fuck out of it, it's  
Even better than when I was here last year,  
There's parts that are still getting remodeled,  
Open doorways and unpainted drywall

That's my timer, says Harmonia when her watch  
Beeps

I invite Harmonia on the podcast, I'd love to have  
A stripper on

She says she's interested but when I ask how  
We'll get in touch with each other she says  
Me coming back in would be the best way

Ok then

I walk out, the dude running the private booths,  
Or the kid as I should say as he looks like he's  
The same age as the dancers and is shaggy hipstered

His middle finger is prominently placed on the board  
Underneath Harmonia's name

### **"Echo"**

i hit up the vu again tonight

sat there for a bit, had one  
girl come over, tall and skinny  
named lydia, asked me the  
questions introductions and  
asked if i wanted a dance  
no thanks

thicc girls dancing onstage

another girl came over,  
thicc, asked if i was  
enjoying the commercials  
i said she could have a  
seat so she did, i didn't  
get her name, we chatted  
a bit, about what i don't  
remember, but then i saw  
two skinny things at the  
bar and i excused myself

i asked the one on the right  
for a vip, an hour, her name  
was Echo, gap in her teeth  
5'5'' skinny, long legs, c-cup  
breasts, breath stinks of weed  
she's 22, 23 in october

she's not ticklish except  
on her feet so i don't bother  
with that

we cuddle the whole time  
and talk

she tells me her story

she smoked a woody with  
her best friend, i ask how  
high she is, she's got  
stretch marks and a bit of  
a distended belly, she has  
two kids, and recently  
got into an altercation with  
their father and his father

she became a mother at 22  
has a 5 year old son and  
a 2 year old daughter

she has a tattoo on her side  
for her son whose name is  
myles and will get one for  
her daughter

she's from milan and her  
grandpa was an evil person  
who had brain disorders

he left her mother a lot of  
money and her mother  
and father, though they're  
drug addicts, raised her  
as best they could and her  
mother spent a lot of the  
inheritance money on Echo's  
kids

she's the youngest of 4, and  
her oldest sister died of a  
heroin overdose recently

she has a cat named midnight  
toker with a rare immune  
system disorder that causes  
him to need regular blood  
transfusions

she likes indie rock, alternative  
i list my 25 bands for her and  
she says she likes goo goo dolls,  
clutch and smashing pumpkins

i tell her about myself throughout  
the conversation, but she never  
asks me anything other than my  
name

we cuddle, and that's it, just  
lying there, she says she  
hates the other couch in the  
other VIP room because they're  
all falling apart, they take 100  
dollars of her 300 for the hour

she's been here on and off  
for three years, works at a  
diner and goes to school

she told me a story of how  
her five year old son just  
turned five and had a  
birthday party, he wanted  
his dad to come but his  
dad didn't come until 7:30  
at night and the kid sat  
in the driveway all day  
and missed his own party  
because he wanted his  
dad there so bad

she called it traumatic for  
him and i agree

she talks about working  
here, it's a lot of smelly  
chinese businessmen  
who are rude about her  
stretch marks, she was  
in a bad mood when she  
came in which is why  
she smoked

the dj is an older guy  
named victor who plays  
a lot of 80s shit and calls  
her "juicy Echo" which  
she says she hates

at one point she asks  
if there was a girl sitting  
with me before i came over

yeah

if that was me i would feel  
so rejected, she says

well, with all due respect,  
now she knows how it feels  
to be a guy, i tell her

"i never thought of it that way."

i tell her i can't afford to feel  
guilty especially when no one  
gives a shit if such a thing  
happens to me, the girl is  
at work, but of course now i  
feel a bit guilty



i note it was nice of her to  
think of that other girl's feelings  
she says she doesn't know  
the other girl and the other girl  
would probably not think of her  
if she had gotten the private  
instead

i listen to her talk and feel  
her in my arms and smell  
her hair, it'll do for now

when it's over she asks if  
i want another but i say no

she hugs me lying down

nice talking to you

we walk out

good luck, nice meeting you

you too

ypsilanti is warm and

Night has fallen

**"Melinoe"**

Vu time again

Went last night

Woman at counter  
Says its fifteen  
There's another  
Guy there, too,  
In a blue suit jacket  
Bald, black, he was  
Busking out by sidetracks  
Earlier

I give the woman twenty  
She says I can donate my  
Change, I pass but after  
She takes my wristband  
For my coat check (I'm  
Wearing my hoodie)  
I forget to ascertain  
She gives it back

I go to the bathroom  
And realize I forgot it,  
When I go back and  
Ask she says she thought  
I said she could have it  
She says she was going  
To use it for food

No

I wash my hands and the  
Blue-jacket guy is in there  
Talking about how he  
Doesn't know if he's going

To be able to get money  
For the month

I go and sit, the place is  
Empty, chubby girl onstage  
Dancing, one guy at stage,  
One other guy at back

Couple girls packed over  
By dj booth, dj is young  
Guy with ponytail, asks  
Me if I want anything  
And so does the bartender  
No  
Stripper comes over, clusters  
Of acne on her chin, makes  
Small talk, not interested

I notice waifish blonde sitting  
With dj, wait a bit, go over, dj  
Asks if I need anything, I ask  
Him how much an hour VIP  
Is, half hour for 100, oh, so  
An hour is 200, right

Waifish blonde gives me  
Indifferent look

Dj gestures at her, we've  
Got plenty of lovely ladies  
Here for you

I don't know, man, she  
Doesn't look interested,  
I say, she looks busy

Oh, yeah, I'm so busy

What's your name, I ask

She's cute in an odd way,  
She's got that weird Slavic  
Face thing going on where  
Her nose is big and her chin  
Is sharp and it looks like  
Someone took both their

Hands and made a sandwich  
Motion and came down on  
The top of her head and under  
Her chin and smushed her face

Her name is fairy, but I later  
Learn its spelled Melinoe

I ask for a VIP, we go back,  
She's incredibly tall, taller  
Than me in her platforms  
She's skinny, wearing a  
Onepiece leather thing

We get to the booth, I just  
Want to talk, we sit and talk  
She talks about her relatives  
Asks me about myself, tells  
Me about her sculpture-ing  
She made a set of hands out  
Of tin foil and newspaper and  
Wire, it's to symbolize the loss  
Of an infant, she had a step-brother  
Who only lived two hours  
She tells me about her Hungarian  
Ancestors, I blank out, one of her  
Tits is hanging out of her leather  
Get-up, she keeps adjusting her  
Hair

She takes notes in this fat little  
Notebook, I write down my  
Pen name when she asks for it  
I tell her about the podcast,  
Danger slater, an author I just  
Interviewed

We spend half an hour talking  
It's nice enough

I ask to cuddle, she cuddles me  
Good, whispers in my ear, blah  
Blah blah, I kiss her on the side  
Of her head, platinum blonde  
Hair

Everclear's wonderful plays,  
I say I've never heard this song  
In a strip club before but it's  
About divorce so I guess it makes  
Sense

I ask her to get naked, she slips  
The leather thing down but  
Says she doesn't want to take  
It off because she's not wearing  
Underwear

I like to be personal but I'd like  
You to be personal, she says,  
Or something to that effect

I assume she means being  
Conversational

She's got a banging body,  
One tattoo up her left  
Side that her sister designed  
Of a strange vine-like thing  
With skulls and birds on it

Her skin is clear, her nipples  
Are pierced with hoops, I play  
With them, her breasts are  
Well-formed little a-cups  
She keeps talking to me  
About meeting women in  
Bars and grocery stores

We cuddle more, I tickle  
Her armpits and she turtles

Are you ticklish

Maybe

Maybe is a yes

No it isn't

We cuddle more, I kiss her  
Shoulder and collarbone

You have to keep your  
Mouth to yourself, she says,  
Taking my hat off and  
Putting it on, she's 22

Her belly button is  
A neat little innie, i  
Finger it gently

She runs her fingers  
Over me

That's time

I give her the 200

Is there anything else

That was pretty easy,  
I say, so no

That's not what we  
Agreed to

Yeah, it is

No, it's not

...

It dawns on me

Oh, wait, that's  
What you meant by  
Personal

I give her an additional  
13 dollars, lucky 13

She asks for a hug

Good luck to you

Grab my hoodie, the  
Guy behind the counter

Doesn't look at me, he's  
A young guy, looks like  
A student, probably plays  
Video games, has glasses  
Probably thinks working  
Here will get him laid in  
The decadent way he's  
Always wanted, seems  
Unhappy

Out I go into the night

**"epilogue: five years later"**

Years go by

The world goes through a global pandemic

My father passes in Feb 2021 of glioblastoma

I switch careers

I'm much happier

But

Without a good paycheck

I cannot afford strip clubs

Or sugar babies anymore

I do not get laid these days

It has been since the pandemic

I moved home, enrolled in

A program for my new job

The vu closed then opened again recently



No websites, no strip clubs

It is exclusively porn of  
Various kinds, I keep my  
Online philandering to  
A minimum, I am the  
Brokest I've ever been  
In my adult life by  
The time I get to the  
Summer of 2023

I am starving

I am living at home again  
With my mother

I have gotten a new job  
And a new career  
I am 37 turning 38 now

I am on a more wholesome track

It is better overall

Much better

I don't mind it at all

I am thankful

But I am starving

So I look up escort services

Tryst.link suggests reddit

One weekend I sign up and

Message but don't want to

Buy a burner to text

I'm doing better emotionally

but not better financially

Another week or two goes by

I'm starving

I go to tryst again

I buy the burner

I text four escorts

I get a message back

She's available

She's 400 dollars

She's in Dearborn

She sends a selfie

I talk to her on the phone

I shower

I send a selfie

I'm driving there through

The night, it's 1 in the morning

I get to the room, she's responsible

She wears nurse scrubs, wants

The phone playing music because  
Everyone's watching her  
Or so she says

We talk about music, about tickling  
I relay my tickling community experience  
With her, say it's been a few years

Looking into her eyes down on the bed  
I tell her it's been 3 years since I had  
Anything, I'm breaking a cardinal rule I say

She's 20, turning 21 in a few days

I take off her stuff

I tickle her

She's fun, very lovely

She touches me, I'm naked

She sucks me off, condom on

"I got you," she coos as I finish,

Hands moving up and down

She gets up, goes to the bathroom,  
I dispose of the condom, flush it  
Whatever

She wants me out, doesn't say it  
I got what I came for, I say

We text, I delete everything a few days later

I will not do this again, and I don't

This is no longer me

I will have to live with my starvation

Living with it is way easier when  
Other emotional needs are sated

My pleasant, sexless life

It is what it is and I'm thankful

