

Case 5

“Gin & ‘Sin’”

Jillian grew up in the little hamlet of Jackpot, Nevada, less than a mile from the Idaho border. Jillian's father had been a pit boss at Barton's Club-93 for years and she spent her summers during high school busing tables at its coffee shop. For Jillian the most enjoyable part of those summers was sitting in the lounge off the casino floor sipping gin and tonic with her father and his friends after his shift ended. Sometimes these soirées lasted for hours as workers returned to work and those on break or finished for the day ambled in to claim the recently vacated seats.

Jillian's standard gin-invigorated rant was the injustice of the State law that restricted dealing and bartending to those 21 years of age or older. “I could run circles around Gus up there,” she challenged, gesturing toward the bar where an avuncular man with thinning hair and shaggy mustache struggled to align the handful of bills in his hand. “Sweet as the day is long, but still not exactly sure what a Tom Collins is.” “A Collins for Sweet Jill,” shouted Jack mischievously. Jack worked at the Phillips 66 across the street and went to high school with Jillian. He loved a cold beer on a hot day and occasionally joined the group when his Mom was working the counter in the coffee shop, just across the casino floor. Jack threw her a wave as he waited for the verdict on the Collins.

Jillian celebrated her eighteenth birthday a few days after graduation, and soon found work about 70 miles south, in Wells. She was sad to leave Jackpot, but busing tables wasn't the key to independence. Opportunity was down the road, not around the corner.

Jillian landed at Bella's Hacienda Ranch, a very popular brothel in Eastern Nevada. She found prostitution to her liking. It was lucrative (at least for attractive teenagers), the hours were great (two weeks on and two weeks off), and, frankly, she liked the men. In the brothel, she was in control and she liked it. As an independent contractor, she had power, too, except at the bar. Drinking under the age of 21 is prohibited in Nevada, unless the minor is in the presence of a parent or guardian. It was always awkward negotiating a price for her body with a stranger while explaining that she was too young to legally accept a drink from him.

Two years later, when Jack turned 21, he proposed to Jillian who was now 20. The wedding and reception, they decided, would be at Jack's parents' home in Rogerson, Idaho, only a few minutes up the road from Jackpot. The property had a largely empty red barn that Jack transformed into what could best be described as a German beer hall. Rows and rows of tables pointed toward a raised dance floor and stage for the band. Along the back of the room six feet of beer taps, spaced six inches apart, stood at attention. Blue and white bunting hung everywhere. Although the polkas and toasts sometimes grew loud, the crowd was well behaved, perhaps because the entire communities of Jackpot and Rogerson were in attendance, parents and neighbors included.

This would have been the end of the story, were it not for Francis. Francis, Jack's second cousin and a reporter for the Twin Falls News, decided to write a story about the “Munich Wedding in Rogerson” when his editor complained that the newspaper was under attack for not including enough rural content. “What's more rural than Rogerson?” he thought. With the newlyweds' blessing, the story appeared the next day, Sunday, along with pictures of the happy couple toasting their guests.

On Monday morning, as Jillian and Jack packed their Mini Cooper for their honeymoon in Pocatello, an Idaho State Police car pulled up to Jack's parents' home in Rogerson. Jillian and Jack were taken away in handcuffs: Jack charged with providing alcohol to a person under 21 years old, and Jillian for underage drinking.