

CockTails

a book by Jennifer Garza-Cuen

“I love the sports book! My thing is, where else are you going to go watch sports, hang out with boys and make massive amounts of money...where I ask you?!?”



VAUNGAYLYN D.

“I worked as a dominatrix and there are a lot of similarities in cocktails... Not exactly of course. As a Dom, you kick a guy and tell him to lick your boots... and for them it’s a release. They tend to be very wealthy, powerful men who need a catharsis. They need to be weak and I allow them that. For me it’s the opposite, being female and small and raised in a very abusive and emotionally crippled household it allows me to find my power.

“After I stopped being a Dom I ran a Cigar Store, same sort of guys really. Now I cocktail in the poker room... SAME GUYS! They like to push my buttons and they like it when I snap back. I like cocktails, and it’s still on the verge of being legitimate.

I can still say, “Yeah, but I keep my clothes on... well sort of”



ALICE W.

“It’s made me a huge man hater, being a cocktail waitress. Men look at me and think they can live out all their sick fantasies with me. They say such sick shit to me. I mean not just ‘Oh, nice tits’. They say sick ass shit to me. ‘Are you gonna spank me?’ ‘I wanna fuck you with a ballgag in your mouth.’ Shit like that.”

YVETTE H.



“I had a guy come in, his name is Dennis, really small crippled Italian guy, he’s a high roller in the pit, nice but he’s got a major foot fetish and he didn’t like anyone else’s feet but mine because I would wear the big tall shoes. So he’d come into the Casino and they would pull me out of my section to serve this high roller in the pit. It would piss off the other girls of course cause they had seniority and they would have me take over their pit so that I could serve this guy. He would give me 100 dollars for each drink but the only thing was he’d want me to put my foot up on a chair beside him so he could rub my foot. He would flat out tell me, in front of dealers, ‘Oh, god I’ve got a hard on, yeah...Oh, I’m gonna cum.’ Seriously, shit like that and you know what, it makes me sick! But then I get mad at myself...I’m going, ‘god why am I doing this?’ It’s that money. I’m thinking this is evil, it’s such...It’s almost prostitution. But he’s paying my rent in one night! At the same time I’m saying to myself THIS IS WRONG! I always think of stuff like, I know my mom didn’t raise me to do this.

That’s Cocktailing, that’s the kind of shit that happens that they don’t want people to know about. Sometimes I like it, I guess I have like, dual personalities. They ask me why I make so much money in the poker room. The other girls make like thirty bucks an hour and I make a hundred an hour just because I know what to do in there, I know these guys, I do, I pay attention to these things. I know like, to wear my hair down, pull my dress down to show more cleavage, wear red super glossy lipstick because I think of shit like that. I know they’re looking at my mouth and thinking, I’d like her to suck my cock. And I know that sounds really bad but I do it on purpose and I make sure I smell good and my skin looks glossy cause most of the guys in the poker room are miserable, they probably haven’t been laid in years and they’re angry.”

YVETTE H.



“I did my graduating thesis on the service industry in Nevada, specifically the Casino Industry. Cocktail waitresses, bartenders, dealers etc. We are the new American blue collar work force, what in the early part of the century would have been assembly line and sweatshop workers. Right now I am a blue collar worker. Do I strive for that for my future? No! But if I want to be upper management, if I want to own my own casino one day, I need to be on the ground floor. I need to work my way from the bottom up. I see it as a two birds with one stone situation, I’m learning the industry and it’s paid for college. And you know what, I served the Former President, George Bush Senior once... and General Schwarzkopf. Bush ordered a Bloody Mary, extra olives and Schwarzkopf ordered a Chardonnay.”

“‘Your Bloody Mary Mister President’, I said it just like that”

SARAH B.

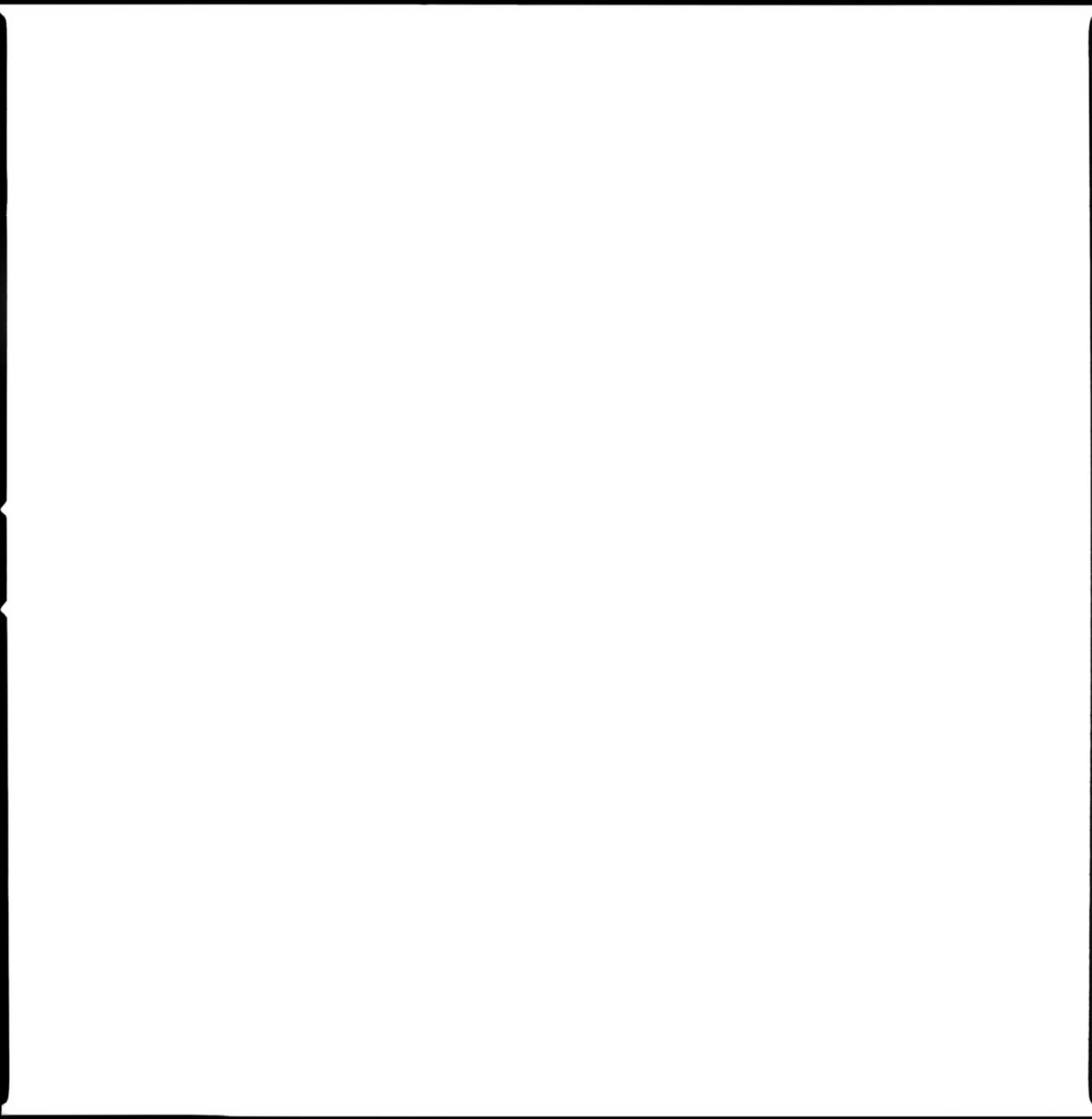


“I work in it, I see what it does to people when they are addicted. They spend their whole pay checks and it’s sad but it’s how I make my money so have at it! Gamble away, drink away cause I’m gonna take your money. It’s my pit-bull, survival instinct. I turn my caring side off. At work I’m about making money and hustling. Some of us turn on the dumb side, you know, play the part when we’re all smart, educational women. You almost have to play the role of the cocktail waitress, it’s just acting you know and we do a pretty good job at it. I mean, some of us should be getting Oscars for the roles we play.”

SHANNON W.



“I slept with somebody once because I was late on rent. I needed 300 dollars, so yeah I did, I slept with a customer for 300 dollars...one time. Once in my life I did that and it was just horrible... He wanted to take me to dinner and I told him it would cost him 300 dollars, ‘my time is valuable!’ I said. It would cost him 300 dollars to take me out to dinner so you know I had to sleep with him, it was dinner and ... we both knew what it meant. I needed the money. Another thing I swore I would never do but I did it and I don’t feel bad about it, I mean it was gross at the time. And no, of course, it’s not as if it would have happened if I wasn’t working in a casino, if I was working as a grocery clerk... or at Target.”



X.

“I started in '65 so I've been cocktailing for 43 years. Yeah, '65, I told you that I'm the oldest cocktail waitress in the world... I am!

Time goes so fast, so fast... you know, you look back and think 'gee I just started', so fast... Gee do what you want because it goes so fast.”



LINDA L.

“It’s kind of what I grew into. I feel like I’ve cocktailed so long it’s become a part of me. But is it really me? And the cowgirl just kind of happened to me I think that’s why I’m having such a hard time. I’ve grown into something I don’t really recognize, it’s not that I don’t like it it’s just that it’s so different from the way I used to be. I don’t know, the way I grew up...in Switzerland, I was a city girl but I’m so country now. I can’t believe it. When I see myself I think I look really rough...rough in the face.”

VERONICA T.



“This job is like a monkey on my back...Some people have alcoholism, drugs or cigarettes. I have cocktail waitressing. I know it’s not the best thing for my physical or mental health and I know that others look down on it. But for me it’s like fly paper...I’ve gotten close enough to stick to it and now I’ll probably die or at least lose a wing or two fighting to get away.”

ROSE G.



“I came to Reno and I was just looking for something to do. Then I met him, I didn’t really know who he was and his friends thought it would be a great joke if I got a job where he was and they got me a job. I didn’t know he worked there, in fact I ran into him on my first day on the job. I was like ‘Hi, oh you work here!’ He said, ‘Yeah, down in the pit.’ I mean he did work there, technically. He owned the place. I didn’t know who he was and I didn’t know he was married right away. It was my first time ever in this environment. I really got caught up in it at the beginning. I thought ‘Wow, this is crazy!’ I mean, this is like adult Disneyland for sure. Everything was so fast, the drugs, the alcohol, the partying I just got caught up in the whole Reno syndrome. I didn’t know he was married until later. I confronted him and he said, ‘Yeah, things aren’t going good, I’m getting out of it’. You know the old story. He did eventually get out, but not in the 10yrs I spent with him.

It made the job fun, he’d get me off work to go watch a football game or drive to Tahoe. I was just really naïve, I didn’t realize what a little bitch I must have looked like. I just felt good, it was exciting... it was baaad.

It’s the same show now. They have just moved on to younger models. I feel like my eyes are open now and I’m watching the show. I’m just not in it anymore. They don’t want me to talk. So now, it just feels like if I keep my mouth shut and don’t say anything then I can keep clocking in and out... for now.”



JULES C.

“As a cocktail waitress people treat you like you are more important...special. But when they moved me to bar back because I ‘didn’t fit the uniform’ the difference in how people treated me was dramatic. People barely acknowledged me. It was like going from a movie star to a homeless person...It was night and day.”

CATHIE B.



“Cocktailing is a cake job, Cake!

I love swing shift, I hate getting up with an alarm clock, that’s like the ball and chain, that’s jail to me. I wake up when my three girls come in and say ‘Morning Mom’, that’s beautiful, I love it.”



HOLLY P.

“What stands out most about the job is just doing so many drugs. There are whole sections of my life, years even that are just a blur.

I don't know what happened to years! I can't even think about putting it down chronologically, I have no idea.”



LINDA B.

“I wonder where the word ‘Cocktails’ came from?”

Anyway, I’m an entertainer now, do I have to say stripper? Ok, stripper...but only part-time and yes, I feel much more confident now. I walk with my head high like, people think I’m hot! Anyway, screw cocktail. I make so much more money now.”



NICOLE S.

“I’ve been through a lot, everything... abuse, drug addictions, alcoholism, you name it. I know what it’s like to be one pay check away from the street. I’ve worked as a bartender, nurse, cigarette girl, truck driver, a Madame in an Elko whore house and I’ve cocktailed now for 10 years...So I’m proud I got through it and I feel better now, stronger. But I’m still terrified I might lose my job, I just hope I can keep my looks up a few years longer so that, at least, I can pay the rent and stay off the street... I’m 51 years old and I know I’m not that far from being the donut lady... but I’ll keep going as long as I can. And I guess I am kind of the Madame now, Mama Gretch.”

GRETCHEN H.

