

2000

Dull Girl Wild Thyme

Lori Anderson

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Margaret and Belle

Belle had come downstairs earlier that day an asked me to go out with her. I knew Belle just wanted me with her for a front. She just took me along to fool the bar owner, but I didn't have nothin better to do.

Anyway Belle come downstairs rushin me, talkin 'bout she don't want to miss nothin. I had her number.

She looked kind a nice. A lot better than when she first got here from down south wearing them high heels and anklets with them six kids an that no-good husband pullin on her skirt.

She was stretchin out on my bed tellin me how I was so good lookin an how I could really make me some money if I would make half a effort. I laughed an finished gettin dressed, half listenin to her talk trash an shoutin out at the girls to get ready for bed.

We hailed a cab up on Woodward and headed over to the Apex. Its just a neighborhood bar, but the jukebox is always playin somethin good an it had a good crowd that night. There was a few couples on the floor grindin to B.B. King an somebody was payin up at the pool table in the back. I wanted to slide into one of the booths an sit back an watch the folks, but Belle headed straight toward a couple of stools at the bar. She slid onto the stool slow, deliberate-like with her back against the bar an her body aimed at the crowd. Pullin out her Pell Mell's, she order a Bud. I ordered one too an sat down next to her.

We sat there awhile sippin our beer, talkin a little. Belle just puffin her Pell Mells an pointin out guys who might be holdin a little cash. I ask her why she drink her beer out the bottle, an she say it taste better that way. The music was soundin nice, an Belle was crackin on the dudes. I was beginnin to feel pretty good when this big ole guy come up to me an start talkin trash. He ain't exactly old, but he a big one. He ask me was I havin a good time, an Belle come gigglin an whisperin somethin about yellow bein like honey to a bee. I shove her a little, warning her to behave, then I smile back at the big fella an say "Tryin to." He ask me do I want another drink, an I tell him that me an my friend was just about to order another one. Catchin the bartenders eye, he raise two fingers an point to us, then he say his name Johnnie. I tell him mine an introduce him to Belle. Seems he a truck driver, own his own rig. Say he live at home with his momma an daddy, for the time being, since him an his wife separated. Talk a lot, but I was beginnin to get interested. I like his warm, homey, open way an I had just about forgot Belle when she ask did I have a quarter for the jukebox. Johnnie reach down in his pocket, come up with a hand full a change an hand it to her. She take a couple a quarters an strut over to the box.

Belle glancin back at Margaret, shakes her head. That silly yellow bitch, over ther playin games with that niggah. Cain't she see he got a pocket

full a money, just wantin to give it away. I swear some folks! I don't know why I'm gettin so mad. I just brought her over here to keep the owner off my ass, an besides I knew she'd draw these men out. Let me play somethin slow an sexy to get these mens in the mood.

Margaret smiles over to Belle. I feel a little guilty for not payin attention to her, but she don't seem to mind. She over there leanin on that jukebox far enough to give everybody a peek up that short dress an movin to the music like she was doin it. Yeah, she alright.

Belle turns back to the jukebox. Besides, the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice, an I know this blackberry look good tonight. Let me see, one more, what do I want to hear? Then I'm gon. . .

"Hey mamma, it got to be a sin for one woman to look as good as you do."

I get up slow an say why thank you baby an let him talk a little more shit. His suit kind a cheap, but his shoes shined. He steady nudgin me up against the wall, all the time smilin, showin me this gold teeth right in the front. I smile too, lowerin my eyes shy-like, playin the game. All the while wantin to laugh at this country fool. Talkin 'bout I look like the kind a girl make a niggah fall in love. He close enough to kiss me now, but I turn my head, an he tell me how sweet I smell.

We dance to a slow one an this niggah so hard, I hope he don't come while we dancin. I won't let him slow drag like he want to. Instead, I make him move his feet.

He talkin plenty shit now while he lead me in the back near the pay phone. Tellin me all he want to do to me. I say, people in hell want ice water. He say don't be so cold baby, an start kissin me on my neck. My dress is low so he headed that way. His lips ticklin me a little, but I just stand there an he tellin me how soft I am an how good I must be. I say yeah, that, I am. Then he ask do I have a man, an I tell him that don't matter, but I got kids, an I don't fuck for free.

He stop kissin for a minute an look at me with a little grin. Then he kiss the crease between my titties an ask how much. I tell him twenty the regular way an he say let's go.

We go over across the street. I got this arrangement with this lady who rent rooms over the hardware. Its pretty clean, cheap, an she mind her own business. Anyway we get there an this niggah try to get his an a couple a other folks money worth. I mean, first he rush in an claim I got him so hot he cain't wait, then he on me for what seem like half the night. Finally, he come. Then he roll over, an I have a Pell Mell.

After awhile I ask the trick for my money an he look up at me with this

this shit-eatin grin an tell me he ain't got no twenty dollars. He tell me he know I liked it, an say I probably should be payin him. I look at this mother-fucker an I get cold. I mean for real, my toes an fingers start icin up. I say, "What did you say mother-fucker?" 'cause I know he jokin. But he still layin there smilin up at me.

Well, I did the only thing I could do. I get up an put on my clothes. Then I reach over in my purse that was sittin on the night stand right by his side of the bed. I didn't say nothin else to him. Just pull my straight razor out a my purse an tried to slit that son-of-a-bitch's throat. He look up at me surprised an start bleedin right away. I didn't look to see if he was dead or not, I just got the fuck out a there.

Belle come back in the bar all wide-eyed. Talkin about let's get out a here. Pullin on me an stuff. Johnnie an me had settled back into one of the booths an I was enjoyin my fourth beer. I tell her shoot, I'm havin a good time, why don't she come an sit with us awhile. Then she pull me to the side an whisper that she might a killed a man an she got to go. So I tell Johnnie we got to leave, an he offer to drive us home. Belle ask him where his car, an we got out a there.

Esperanza Malavé Cintrón