

Susan Petrone

A Body at Rest



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CHAPTER ONE

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the biggest drunk at the table will hit on the cocktail waitress. There's a strange sort of comfort in that kind of predictability, though not enough to make up for being groped. A woman can go years—four, in my case—subjecting herself to night after night of cigarette smoke, mediocre bar bands, the stench of spilled alcohol, and the mating calls of intoxicated humans before the moment she decides she has had enough.

For me, that moment came on a hot, humid Saturday night in mid-August, a time when the breeze off Lake Erie is just a damp mass that sticks to your hair and your skin and you need something to happen to break the monotony and remind you that you're still alive. When the most drunken guy at the table put his hand on my rear end and made a rather ungentlemanly proposition, I didn't slap him. I didn't call the bouncer. I quoted Shakespeare.

"Drink provokes the desire but takes away the performance," I said. The unwanted hand was still on my rear, but you could see that he was making an honest effort to understand what he'd just heard. "Macbeth. Act two, scene three," I added, although I knew the attribution wouldn't make a difference. A couple of his friends started laughing.

"Wham!" the cute one said.

"Eddie, she shot you down, man," the burly one said.

Eddie the drunk took his hand off my rear and mumbled something about just kidding around. The cute one did the "Sorry about my friend, he's really drunk" routine.

“Don’t worry about it,” I said, “Just make sure one of you drives him home, ‘cause I sure as hell ain’t gonna do it.” They laughed again, and I knew I’d get a nice tip from them for being a good sport.

Cocktailers who are good sports generally make good tips. You banter, you talk, and you earn your tip. Then there are people like Nina. Nina is a sexy cocktailer. While good sports need to hustle in order to make good tips, sexy cocktailers make great tips simply by showing up.

... excerpt from Susan Petrone’s *A Body at Rest*