

SIPPING WITH SANDY



By PattRose

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illustrated by Kernel

Jim and Blair had a horrible week at the station and outside the station, so on Friday they looked forward to getting home and relaxing. Simon walked up to the two of them and said, “How would you like to meet me for drinks at the pub?”

“I’ve got a better idea, Simon. Why don’t you come to the loft and I’ll make up a wonderful drink for you. You can sleep over if you feel like having more than one,” Blair suggested.

“Okay, you talked me into, Sandburg. I’ll be there in about thirty minutes. Drive safe.” Simon walked back into his office, looking a lot more tired than even Jim or Blair.

Blair turned to Jim and said, “We’re going to make his evening good. In fact we’re going to make this evening rock his world.”

“Don’t say it like that, Chief, it sounds dirty.”

“Oh... Well, you know what I mean. We’re going to give him a relaxing evening and we’ll just unwind and vent to each other about our week. He looks like there are some other things on his mind, too.”

“Well, let’s get home and get ready for company, then,” Jim said.

Blair laughed. “Yeah, because the loft is so dirty with your house rules and all.”

“I know where you sleep. You better watch it.”

Blair smiled and the two of them walked to the elevator and waited to go downstairs.

Once they were changed, cleaned up and relaxing at the loft, Jim asked, “What drink are you making tonight? I know how you love to play bartender, but what brand are you up to now?”

“Bailey’s. So every drink I’m going to make for the next two weeks or more, are all going to have Bailey’s Irish Cream in them. Tonight’s is called Bailey’s Banana Vanilla Thrilla. Doesn’t that sound fun, Jim?”

“Oh yeah and I imagine that Simon’s going to find it fun too.” Jim started to laugh, and Blair reacted as if he was pissed off, knowing that would amuse Jim even more.

Jim got up without saying a word and opened the door. Simon was standing there getting ready to knock.

“I have told you how much I hate that, right?”

Jim started laughing and said, “Blair’s going to make you a mixed cocktail and you’re going to sit in the living room and just relax for a change. This has been a tough week for all of us, but for you especially. And I know you hated missing that game that Daryl was in. I’m sorry about that.”

“Well, it sure wasn’t the fault of anyone. What am I having to drink tonight, Blair?”

“I’ll tell you when I get over there. I’m making up one for all of us,” Blair answered.

Simon whispered, “What’s up with him and the drinks?”

“He thinks he wants to be a bartender.”

Simon burst out laughing. He couldn’t help it.

“I just know you’re not laughing about me becoming a bartender, right? I like mixing drinks and I like people. I’m thinking about opening up my own bar.”

“Sandburg, you never cease to amaze me. Get my drink and we’ll talk about me investing in your business.” Simon was kidding but Blair was very serious. Since he couldn’t teach anymore, he didn’t know what he wanted to do.

The two men in the living room couldn’t hear themselves think because Blair was running the blender. And he was singing. Simon smiled at Jim and said, “I needed this, damn it.”

“He makes everyone feel better, Simon. Now wait until you try his drinks. He’s memorizing the entire book on drinks. There are a lot of fucking drinks.”

Simon saw Blair heading over with a tray with three tea glasses. They were filled with what looked like a malt or shake. “So, what do we have here, Blair?”

“It’s called a Bailey’s Banana Vanilla Thrilla. It’s so good. It’s got Bailey’s Irish Cream, coconut milk, a banana, ice cubes, sugar and vanilla bean ice cream. Add all the liquids in the blender with banana and ice cream, blending until smooth. Then you add the ice and sugar and you’ve got a smoothie. Enjoy, Simon and Jim.”

Both men picked their drink up and took a drink. Both men took another swallow.

“Sandburg, this is excellent. Do all your drinks taste this good?” Simon wondered.

“No, just some of them. Now tell us what’s going on with you, Simon.”

“I’ve been thinking about retiring. I don’t know what I want to do. I’m tired of being in charge of you hooligans.” Simon took another drink and smiled.

“What would you do if you retired, Simon?” Jim asked.

“I have no idea. I was hoping that you two could help me decide what to do.”

Blair thought about it for a moment and said, “I wonder how you would like working with me in a bar. We could get one near the precinct, so we could stay in touch with everyone. I think it might be fun.”

“You know, it’s not a half-bad idea, Blair. I might consider it when the time comes.”

“Oh...I thought you meant right now,” Blair replied.

“I think you should own an odd type of bar, Blair that only serves Bailey’s drinks. You wouldn’t be as busy, but people do love their Bailey’s, don’t they, Jim?”

“I never thought about that, what do you think, Chief?”

“I think it’s a wonderful idea. I love to make Bailey’s drinks and it would be fun listening to the problems of people that might want some help. I might be able to pull this off. It could be a small cozy place instead of a huge bar.”

Simon thought about it for a moment and said, “I’d invest in that, Blair.”

“Are you serious or just pulling my leg?” Blair sounded almost worried about how they would see him if he failed.

“It wouldn’t cost as much to open up a Bailey’s Bar and you could get by with just one or two other people to start with. Think of the money you would save.”

“I’m going to do it. Thanks guys for listening to me and helping me decide what to do. But Simon we sure didn’t help you at all.”

“Blair, I think that if I invest wisely, I might be able to stand working where I am for a few more years. Do you mind me investing in your place?”

“Oh no, I don’t. I think it would be most cool. How about you, Jim? Did you want to invest, also?”

“I’m thinking something a little bigger. I think the preppies and yuppies are going to go crazy about this place. So, I’ll help you find your perfect place and I intend on helping

pay for it. It can be by the university if you wanted it to be. Or downtown near the library. There are some wonderful places there. My dad would probably like to invest too.”

“Wow, you guys are really gung ho about this. I need to pass my bartender exam first. Then we’ll start looking for a place. You two are the best friends in the world. I can’t wait to move on from this place we’re at right now.”

Simon held up his drink, Jim held his up and Blair joined them with a soft clink of the glasses. “To us,” Blair said.

When Blair went in to make another drink for them, Simon asked, “Since when do you have to have a diploma or whatever to be a bartender?”

“Once you pass the exam, you get a certificate of completion and you frame it and hang it in your bar. You don’t have to have one, but it looks good for the customers and that’s what’s important to Blair.”

“He was always an over achiever. I like that about him.” Simon smiled and waited for the next drink and snacks that Blair was building in the kitchen.

Megan Connor was on her way home from work and decided she would stop off at the loft and talk to Blair. Simon had told her about Blair’s big idea and Megan wanted to show her support of the cause.

She parked and walked up the stairs, loving the exercise. She was one of those odd people that loved to exercise. She never tired of it. Once she got to 307, she knocked. Blair opened the door and smiled.

“Megan, what brings you by?” Blair asked, opening the door wide for her to come in.

She walked in and asked, “Can we sit and talk?”

“Sure, sit, take a load off,” Blair teased.

Megan smiled at her best friend and said, “I wanted to show my support of your new idea. I think it sounds wonderful. Simon said that you have a terrific mind for ideas and he also thinks it’s going to be big.”

“Simon has a big mouth. It was supposed to stay small until I decide what I’m doing. And it was Simon’s idea. What do you mean you want to show your support?”

“I would like to be one of your test dummies.”

Blair burst out laughing and said, “Do you mean you want to try out the drinks I make?”

“Yes...Simon said I could be a test dummy.”

“Simon was teasing you, Megan. You must know by now, he and Jim are almost always up to no good.”

“I do now. So does this mean I can’t taste one of the Bailey drinks?”

“Actually, I just made some Bailey Martinis and I would like an opinion on them. Stay here and I’ll bring us both one. We can be test dummies together,” Blair said as he went into the kitchen. He came back carrying two cocktail glasses filled with something that looked very tasty, Megan thought.

“This is a Bailey Martini. Drink and tell me exactly how you feel about it. Don’t worry about hurting my feelings, I need to know what’s going to sell and not sell.”

Megan took the drink and took a sip. “Oooohhh this is so good.”

“Do you really like it, or are you just being nice?” Blair asked.

“Sandy, taste it and see for yourself,” Megan said.

Blair took a drink and said, “Whoa! You’re so right, Megan. This is delicious. Would you like to hear what you’re drinking?”

“Yes, I would, Sandy.”

“It’s one ounce of Smirnoff vodka and one and a half ounces of Bailey’s Irish Cream. I just shake the two things together in the shaker with ice, strain and pour into the cocktail glasses. It’s absolutely delicious. This one’s going on the menu. I have two so far. Thank God, I’m not in a hurry to start this business. Jim is being quite good about letting me stay here without paying anything right now. He really wants this to work for me. So, for his sake, I hope it does work out. Although, he says sleeping with him pays the rent.”

Megan laughed about the sleeping with him joke and said, “Sandy, I really think it will. And I’ve been putting some thought into the name for your new place. It can’t be anything with the name Bailey’s in it, since that’s their name, not for you to use. So I looked up some other names and these aren’t being used. Sandy’s Swill, Sandy’s Swig, Slurping with Sandy and Sipping with Sandy. What do you think?”

“I love Sipping with Sandy. That sounds nice doesn’t it? It has a nice ring to it. And people will be doing just that, sipping their drinks.”

Blair got up and got a pad and wrote it down. She watched him get all excited about it and she asked, "So are you serious? You're going to go with one of my suggestions?"

Blair smiled at her, big time. "Not only am I happy with that last one, but it's the one I'm using. You're certain there are no others in town?"

"Yes, I'm certain. I put the check-out to it. And it came back clean on all of those names. Most people would have just said it was because they are stupid names, but I didn't think you wanted something like Blair's Brew, Blair's Pub or Blair's Place. I figured you would want something completely different for a change. I love Sipping with Sandy. It's very cute and attention grabbing. I think it's perfect."

"So do I, Megan. Thank you. And this drink here is now going to be the Megan Martini. How is that?"

"You are so sweet. Thank you. So have you looked at any buildings yet?"

"Jim and I are looking at some this weekend. They're downtown where most of the yuppies hang out. Jim thinks I'm going to make a killing. I'm going to have a special deal with the cab company for anyone that has over one drink. I refuse to get sued because of someone being irresponsible. What do you think of that idea?"

"That might be pricey, Sandy. Maybe put that on your back burner until you figure out where you're going to be first."

"I actually have so many things on my back burner already, there is little room for any more. What do you think about seating? I was thinking bistro tables and chairs, but Jim thinks I should have bar stools and little private booths. What do you think?"

"I don't want Jimbo getting mad at me, but I like the bistro look myself. If you're going to be Sipping with Sandy, you need Bistro tables and chairs."

Blair wrote that down and asked, "Wow, two decisions made out of 200?"

"That's two more than you had this morning, am I right? I like the idea of a little bit of a fancy look to this Sipping with Sandy. Those Bistro tables and chairs will make it look so posh. I'm so excited for you."

"You don't happen to know of anyone looking for a job do you?"

"I do. I know about four people looking for a job. What will you pay?"

"Hell, I have no clue, Megan. I have to figure out the budget first. This is going to take me a long while."

“How about another one of these martinis? I really like it.”

Blair went into the kitchen to make up two more drinks as Jim walked in the door.

“Hey, Jim. You’re home early,” Blair said softly. He could tell Jim had a headache.

“What’s for dinner, Chief?” Jim was grumpy.

“I’ll get out of your way, Sandy. I don’t want you guys fighting because I took up your afternoon.”

“He can do whatever he fucking wants to do, Megan,” Jim stated, coldly.

“Don’t take your crummy attitude out on Sandy.”

“His name is Blair.”

“Speaking of that, he has something to tell you.” Megan walked in gave Blair a kiss on the cheek and walked out without saying a word to the grump.

Once the door shut, Jim asked, “What is she talking about?”

“She gave me a great idea for the new bar. A name and I like it. I know you’re going to hate it, but I love it. And it’s going to be mine, so I want this name.”

“So what is it?” Jim wondered.

“Sipping with Sandy. I love it. Sounds like a perfect place for Bistro tables and chairs. The people are going to love it.”

“Sounds like you’ve got your mind made up already.”

“Jim, what is your problem? I’ll make dinner now. You’re home early. You could have called and given me a heads up. Why so grouchy?”

Jim walked over to Blair and pulled him into his arms. He just held him really close until Blair could hardly breathe anymore. “What’s wrong, Jim? Did something happen to someone?”

“No, I just missed you at the station. God, I hate that you aren’t there anymore. It sucks. And I wish we could make decisions about the bar together. Without Megan Connor.”

“I’ve made these two decisions, but I will calm down and try and include you in everything else. Okay?” Blair asked.

“I love you so much. Let’s go out for dinner.”

“Jim, call and order some Thai food and I’ll make you a new drink. Then you can tell me if it’s going to be on the menu or not.”

“Now that sounds like a plan,” Jim agreed.

Jim called in their order and Blair started making a drink for the two of them. “Jim, did you want to ask Simon over, too? I mean, he’s going to have some say in this.”

“Yes, let me call him. I’ll order some more food.”

Jim called and invited Simon over and then called and ordered more food for their delivery.

When the food got there, Simon arrived about five minutes later. They all sat down at the table and Blair said, “I made us a dinner drink. Then you have to tell me truthfully if you like it or not.”

“I can do that, Blair. I have no problem giving my opinion and I don’t think Jim has a problem with it either.”

They all laughed and Blair went in to get the three drinks.

He brought out three shots. They were a layered type drink and they looked nice, but they were very small. Then Blair took a match and set them on fire. Jim and Simon both jumped when it happened. They weren’t expecting that at all.

“Now what, Chief?”

“Watch me,” Blair said as he licked his palm and laid it over the shot glass. Simon and Jim did the same thing and then they drank it fast, just like Blair did.

“Whoa! I thought it looked a little puny and not very exciting, but I take it back. This was good. What’s in this one, Blair?” Simon asked.

“It’s called a Bailey’s Comet. It has a half ounce of Bailey’s Irish cream, one half ounce Goldschlager cinnamon schnapps and one splash of Bacardi 151 rum on the top of the layers. That’s what lights up so easily. What do you think?”

“I think it was great,” Jim answered.

“So this one will go on the menu, too?” Blair asked.

“You know what Blair, you make those decisions. Some of this has to be your idea. I think maybe Jim and I are stealing your thunder.”

“Funny that you mentioned that Simon because he’s decided on two things today and didn’t talk to us about it. But I think he did a good job.”

Blair smiled at both men. "Guess what the name of my place is going to be called, Simon?"

"I'm not going to guess, just tell me."

"Sipping with Sandy. Is that cool or what? These people are going to be sipping drinks, so this is perfect. I love it. I hope you guys will begin to like it."

"So you don't want to use your own name?" Simon asked.

"Not really, although, it is a little like my name. Sandburg. So I think it works."

"Tell Simon what else you decided, Blair." Jim just sat back and waited for Blair to tell him about the chairs and tables.

"I decided that I wanted a Bistro type place, with Bistro tables and chairs. It seemed like it would work better for what I'm trying to do."

"That makes sense, I like the idea," Simon remarked.

Jim looked surprised and Blair looked happy. Simon had been okay with his choice. Blair had never been so happy in his life.

"Have you looked at any buildings lately?" Simon asked.

"We have an appointment to look on Saturday and Sunday. They are all downtown and in the price range that I can afford. They might need a lot of work, though. We'll have to see," Blair said, hoping that they would find something that they could fix up nicely.

"I was telling everyone at the station about it today and they all seem to be on board with cleaning, painting and things like that. So you can count on Joel, Megan, Rafe and Brown. That's four extra hands, Blair. We'll have it knocked into shape in no time." Simon stated.

"Did you ask them not to tell anyone else?" Blair wondered aloud.

"I didn't know it was a secret," Jim said.

"Well, it would be the only place in town like it and what if someone beat me to the punch because they heard about it?"

"I guess that's true, Chief. We better stop telling everyone, Simon."

"Sorry, Blair. Lord only knows how many people they already told."

"It's okay, Simon. Don't worry about it. We'll try and get busy. I take my test on Monday for the bartender's exam. So things are moving right along."

They talked about another hour while they finished dinner and then Simon took his leave. “Thanks for the great drink, Blair. I think I’m going to be an alcoholic by the time we’re done with this.”

Blair and Jim laughed all the way to the front door. Once he was gone, Blair went in to clean up the kitchen. Jim could tell that Blair was still mad at him. Jim was a king sized jerk and he knew it. Now he just had beg Blair’s forgiveness.

Once he was done cleaning up, Jim put his arms around Blair and said, “I’m sorry for being a jerk.”

“Jim, what’s really sad is you don’t even know what you did.”

“Yes, I do. I second guessed everything you did today and then tried to get Simon to side with me.”

“Wow, you do know what you did. You are a jerk.” Blair pulled out of his arms and headed for the bathroom.

Jim could hear him brushing his teeth and all that and when he came out he walked right past Jim and went upstairs.

Jim got ready for bed next and then also walked upstairs. He slid into bed and asked, “Are you ever going to forgive me?”

“Yeah, but you’re still a jerk.”

“But am I your jerk?” Jim asked.

“Yes, you are indeed my jerk.”

They started kissing and before long, they were making love. Jim loved that Blair was so easy going. Anyone else would have made Jim wait a month for sex. But not Blair.

When Blair got up the next morning, Jim was already gone to work. The phone rang and Blair answered, “Sandburg.”

“Hey Hairboy, I hear you’re going to open a shop selling my favorite drink in the world,” Rafe said, happily.

“Rafe, how would you like to come over after work and try out one of my new drinks for the shop?”

“That’s sounds great, Sandburg. I’ll be there at about 4:00. I get off early today. Your boyfriend gets the rest of my shift.”

Blair laughed and said, “See you at four.”

Blair took his shower, got dressed and then got his tablet out for notes and his laptop for looking for things.

Blair spent the rest of the day looking at glasses, cups and dishes. He wanted everything to look like it belonged in a Bistro. He figured he could serve some desserts if he got the okay from the health department. It all depended on what type of building he got.

Blair had chosen everything he wanted, tables, chairs, glassware, dining ware and everything else he would need. Then he remembered he needed coffee pots and tea pots. Designated drivers didn't necessarily want a soft drink and having tea or coffee available for them would give them an alternative. He wanted to have all choices for them.

At a little after four o’clock there was a knock at the door and Blair opened it to Rafe. “Hey, Sandburg. How are you doing?”

“The big question is, are you ready to taste this delicious new drink?”

“I’m ready. I’ve been ready all day long and it took forever to get to it,” Rafe teased.

Blair said, “I knew you were coming, so I just made the new drink. It’s called Bailey’s Dream Shake and you’re in for a treat. I’ve had two already,” he obfuscated.

Rafe let out a bark of laughter, throwing his head back in amusement. “I’m ready.”

Blair brought him a Collin’s glass filled to the rim with the shake.

Rafe took it and began to drink it. “Oh my God, it’s heaven. This is the best Bailey’s drink I have ever had. What’s in it?”

“Very simple, really. Two ounces of Bailey’s Irish Cream, two scoops vanilla bean ice cream and one ounce cream. Put all of them in the blender, blend until smooth and pour into a Collin’s glass. Do you really love it, or are you just being nice?”

“I really love it, Blair. It’s the best I’ve ever had. I would pay good money for this one, especially on a warm day like today.”

“Thank you for tasting it, Rafe. I keep needing to practice on someone and Simon is accusing me of getting him drunk all the time.”

“I could take one more if you wouldn’t mind.”

“Then you have to eat a sandwich here before you drive, okay?” Blair asked.

“Hell yah. You mean I’m going to get to eat and drink for free?” Rafe asked, laughing.

“The perks of being friends with the owner, eh?”

Blair went into the kitchen and made another drink and got Rafe a sandwich. When Jim came home at 6:00, Rafe was still there eating another sandwich and drinking the rest of his drink.

Jim walked in and said, “What in the hell is going on, Blair? Every time I come home another person is here.”

Rafe started laughing and said, “He’s naming a drink after me, Jim. He’s the best.”

“How many of these have you had?”

Rafe smiled at his worried friend. “Three or was it four? Anyway, a cab is on the way to pick me up. Right, Blair?”

“Right. In fact, I hear him honking now. Better get down there before he leaves. I’m glad you liked the drink. See you tomorrow when you pick up the car.” Blair walked him to the door and then shut it after he walked out.

Once Rafe was gone, Jim pulled Blair into his arms for a much needed kiss and hug. Who needed it more was a toss-up.

“I don’t know, Jim. Second thoughts here. I’m not good at saying no to four drinks. I think the cutoff for anyone should be three. Don’t you?” Blair asked.

“Fuck if I know, Blair. It might be hard keeping track if there’s a group of six all buying a round - how would you know they were having six drinks, not just three, especially if the place was really busy? I think you’ll do fine. You’re just trying to find problems so you don’t have to do this.”

Blair kissed Jim again. “You’re right. I’m going to get a more positive attitude.”

“How are classes going?” Jim asked.

“I just have the final test to take and then I’m officially a bartender. I’m so excited. I wanted to tell them they made the classes too easy, but some of the people in the class were having a hard time, so I shut my mouth.”

Jim threw back his head and laughed. “Wow, I would have liked to have been there for that moment. You kept your mouth shut when you really wanted to say something?” Jim was still laughing.

Blair pinched Jim's ass and they started to make dinner.

The weekend went truly fast because they looked at so many properties. When they got home Sunday night, Jim asked, "So which building was your favorite, Chief?"

"The one that you didn't like. The big one that needed so much work. It has such great windows for the seating area and tons of room for everything. I didn't think it would take much to fix it up, either. And it was one of the cheaper buildings. I liked that a lot. It had wood floors that would polish up nicely and lots of room for the kitchen."

"Chief, I think you should get what you want, but not because it's cheaper. Get it because it speaks to you. Which one called your name out?"

Blair thought for a moment and said, "That one that I like with all the windows. Think about nice clean windows with Bistro tables sitting in front of all of those windows. I can just picture it in my mind and I love the idea. Not to mention the nightlife will be able to see what's going on downtown through those same windows. Yes, that's the one. I like it. The kitchen is quite large, so no problems there. I've decided against food, though. It takes too much work for that. I just need to be able to wash out my blenders, coffee pots and have a dishwasher for the glassware."

"Then, let's call and make an offer on it. I think we could get them down a few thousand dollars. Do you want to call him or do you want me to do it?" Jim asked.

"You call him since you're buying it. But remember, you're my landlord. Don't cut me any slack, babe."

"I won't. I'll charge you what it cost for the payment, plus a percentage for utilities, how does that sound, Blair?"

"It sounds perfect, but you wouldn't be making any money on it at all." Blair looked alarmed.

"But think how nice it'll be to be able to take me out sometimes and buy me dinner or lunch."

"That's another thing, I have to figure out what days I'm going to be open. I don't want it open seven days a week. That's just foolish. But I think six days a week would be good to start. Since you're off on Sundays I'll close on Sunday. Then we'll have a day off together."

“Sounds perfect. Let me call Abe about the building.” Jim wandered off into the office and Blair was somewhat nervous. He really loved that building. And the parking was perfect too. Lots of free parking for his customers right across the street. That was part of the appeal. In the kitchen, he could put two dishwashers, so that they could be running all the time. He was going to need a lot of glassware to get this thing off the ground.

Jim walked out of the room and said, “Well, Mr. Sandburg, you are the proud owner of Sipping with Sandy.”

Blair jumped into Jim’s arms and they began to kiss like crazy. Blair couldn’t believe it. This was finally going to be coming true.

Jim set Blair down and asked, “Want to go out and celebrate with me tonight?”

“Sure, that sounds fun. Thanks for everything, Jim.”

“You are most welcome. We have to sign papers at the bank tomorrow. I’m paying cash, so it’s not a big deal. An inspector has to inspect the building first and then they’ll get their check if we okay it.”

I can’t believe this is all coming true. I’m so excited.”

Monday, Blair took his test and passed with flying colors. They gave him his certificate that he planned on framing nicely for the bar. He needed to stop at the station to see if everyone wanted to help clean and paint that following weekend. After everything was set, then he could put in for his liquor license. That would probably take up to a month after inspection. Then he needed to get the health department on board, which he didn’t see a problem with since there was no food. Just drinks. But they would have to check out the refrigerators for the drinks like milk, cream, ice cream and so on. Blair knew he needed at least two dishwashers, two refrigerators and a large freezer. Man, this was going to cost a fortune. But, he was keeping track of everything and in time would pay Jim back every dime.

Blair walked into Major Crimes and said, “Who would like to help this new bartender get his new place cleaned, painted and ready for opening?”

Everyone got up and hugged him, including Jim and Simon. Which surprised Blair to no end. They didn't usually show any type of affection in the bullpen. Everyone said they would help Blair on their days off and evenings after work. Blair was thrilled.

In the next two months, with all of the help from the bullpen gang he was able to get everything ready for inspection. The man from the liquor license bureau said it would probably only take about three weeks. He promised he would push the paperwork. For some reason, Blair believed him. The health inspector came out and Blair passed with flying colors. After she left Blair was all alone in his place, dying to open the doors.

Blair glanced at his new life. It certainly wasn't what he expected, but it was going to be fun and exciting. He had hired two girls from the university, for the waitress jobs. Both of them needed to make money so Blair was going to pay them a set salary, not a small one plus tips. He was going to pay them ten an hour, flat out. They were thrilled. Now he just needed to make enough money to pay for everything. He was going to charge quite a bit for the drinks. Liquor was very expensive and he had to consider his wage, also. Blair continued to look at the place and smiled. It turned out so nice. Megan had helped him choose the Bistro tables and chairs. They were lovely. The place looked like some place that Blair would like to go with Jim. The menu only had 25 drinks on it. But they were good drinks and Blair hoped this was going to work out.

Jim called Blair and said, "Hey, I just got a notice that the neon lights are going up today. You didn't even tell me about them."

"It's coming out of the money that you gave me. I've been very frugal and I don't believe we're going to need much of anything else."

"Did you get paper products and all that?" Jim asked.

"I swear you're more excited about this than I am," Blair teased.

"I am excited. This is a brand new start for you and you'll still be able to see all of the station friends and your university friends, too. It's going to be great."

Sipping With Sandy

Cocktails

Bailey's Martini

Smirnoff vodka
Bailey's Irish Cream



Bailey's Shake

Bailey's Irish Cream
vanilla bean ice cream
cream



Bailey's Comet

Bailey's Irish Cream
Goldschlager cinnamon schnapps
Bacardi rum



Bailey's White Russian

Bailey's Irish Cream
Bailey's Coffee Cream Liqueur
Smirnoff Vodka, milk



Bailey's Banana Vanilla Thrilla

Bailey's Irish Cream
coconut milk ,banana, sugar, vanilla bean ice cream

Blair got his liquor license one week later and then he called the girls he had hired and told them they would be opening the next afternoon. The shift was 6:00-11:00, Monday through Saturday. Sue and Sally both said they'd be there early the following day. Blair figured that he could handle the place from 3:00 until 6:00. That would give them time to study.

Blair went to the shop and did an inventory for good measure. (He had already taken two) Then he got everything set up for the next day. The open sign he got printed up said the hours and everything else. Blair was so excited. He was actually going to have something to do during the afternoons and evening from then on. Blair had also received the menus he had printed for his new place. It barely had room for the 25 drinks, but it looked great. It was going to be easy for the girls to remember, because everything had a number before it.

Two Months Later:

Jim couldn't believe how well Blair was doing at the bar. He was packed every single night. But he had standing room only on Friday and Saturday nights. Jim sometimes went in during the evening and did dishes and got things ready for the next day to help Blair out. It was a little more than Blair was expecting.

Jim listened to Blair making a drink for a girl sitting up to the bar. "Has anyone ever told you how gorgeous you are?"

"As a matter of fact, he tells me every day," Blair answered sweetly wearing a big smile and pointed at Jim.

"Figures, it seems everyone is married or gay. It's not fair."

"I have some friends that are coming in Friday night if you'd like to meet them. They are neither married, nor gay. They're very nice guys, but there is something about them. They're cops."

"Oh, I love cops. I'll be back Friday night. My name is Diana."

"Bye, Diana. See you on Friday." Blair started working on his next order and finished it in no time. Actually only making the 25 drinks really helped him out. It wasn't as hard to keep up.

Jim walked out of the back room and said, "Playing matchmaker, are you?"

“Diana comes every week and she’s really nice. She works at the library. I think one of the guys could go for her.”

“You just shouldn’t have put the guys on the spot,” Jim pointed out.

“They can always leave, you know?” Blair was getting pissed off and he didn’t even know why.

“I’m sorry, Chief. Go back to doing your thing. You know what you’re doing, I don’t. See you home at about midnight.”

Jim kissed him quickly and walked out the front door. The place was packed, but Blair knew that it would slow down about ten. And it did, thankfully. The girls shared their tips with Blair because they said it was only fair.

He walked the girls to the door and unlocked it at eleven and they walked to the parking lot. Blair watched them get to their cars before he locked up. But that night it was a mistake. He wasn’t watching what was going on and a man pushed the door open and shoved Blair inside.

“Man, the money isn’t here.” Blair was freaking out.

“Lock the door and shut out the lights, like you do any night. Then walk to the back with me.”

Blair was scared out of his mind. “What do you want?”

“Do you think your business is worth protecting?” the man asked coldly.

“Of course.”

“Well, that’s what I’m going to do is protect your business. You’re going to pay me twenty percent of your take home each week and you’ll say nothing to anyone, or we’ll make sure that you never do well.”

“Who are you? Who sent you?” Blair asked.

“It’s not important that you know who sent me. Just know that your neighbors all pay me, you can ask them. If you go to the police it’ll be the sorriest day in your life. And I’ll make your nice neighbors pay for your stupidity also. Do you want that?”

“Of course not. But twenty percent of my take home will hurt me so much that I won’t be able to stay in business.”

“That’s not true, I know how much you make and how much you take home. So, I don’t want you to go under, I’m just taking my cut.”

“And just what are you protecting me from?” Blair wondered.

“Gangs show up now and then, you wouldn’t like that would you? Your little Bistro Bar would go under with no customers. I could bring in those gangs to ruin your business.”

“When do I have to do this?” Blair asked.

“I’ll be here every Tuesday night, so watch for me. I don’t like being made to wait. I will wait until your waitresses leave and then I’ll be there. Remember what I said. I know how much money you make, so don’t think you’ll pull a fast one over on me.”

“I’ll have it for you on Tuesday. What is your name?”

“You’re getting stupid, Sandburg. Don’t ask names and you won’t suffer.”

He smacked Blair on the side of the head and walked up to the front door and left like he was the owner. Blair rubbed his head. He didn’t appreciate being smacked like a child. Although most people didn’t smack a child on the side of the head. He needed to ask the neighbors if this was true. Blair couldn’t believe he was getting shaken down in his brand new business. And what was he to do. He couldn’t tell Jim. Jim would probably help destroy Blair’s business. But did he really want to pay this stranger every week for something Blair would never see happen. And that was protection.

Blair put all the money he had into his safe and left for home. He had all of his paperwork ready for the weekly session with the bookkeeper who worked four doors down from Blair. Blair usually went on Friday’s after he went to the bank.

Blair locked up and left for home, not knowing exactly what he was going to do.

When Blair walked in the front door, Jim was waiting on the stairs going up to their bedroom. “I was worried, Chief.”

“Well, I had to take care of some things and clean them up. So, sorry. I didn’t mean to worry you.”

“There’s something wrong, I can tell. Do you want to talk about it?”

“Jim, could I sleep tonight and then talk tomorrow night if I feel like it? No one hurt me or anything like that. So stop worrying.”

“I have to trust that you’ll talk to me if something is really wrong. I’ll let this drop for now, but tomorrow we’re going to talk about it when you get home from the bar.”

“Thanks for not making it into a big deal, Jim. I have to go to the bank tomorrow and the bookkeeper. I might be a little late tomorrow night. Don’t go worrying. Okay?”

“Get ready for bed. I’m exhausted.”

“Jim, I told you to go to bed at night. You sure don’t have to wait up for me.”

“I like sleeping with you, what can I say?” Jim drew him in for a kiss and then pushed him towards the bathroom. Wash up, then bed.”

Blair smiled all the way into the bathroom. Jim was such a good man and a great lover. He was going to have to tell Jim about this, but he didn’t want Jim investigating it. Maybe Megan could do it. She could pretend that she was a waitress.

The following day, Blair went in early so that he could take everything to the bank and the bookkeeper. The bank deposit was huge. He didn’t usually keep that much money around, but he didn’t have a chance to take it at all before then. The bookkeeper’s name was Morris Wilson.

When Blair came back to the bar, he was so happy. For his second month of business, he had made enough to pay the loan to Jim, Simon and the utilities, the waitresses and himself. He was making a good living. All from selling Bailey’s Irish Cream. Morris had told him he could do it and he was right.

Blair took inventory of everything so he needed to know when he was going to have to order again. He had his order list and inventory list all set and kept good track of what was going in and out. Blair was very good about charging quite a bit for these drinks so that he could pay for everything with ease. At first he thought that might be a mistake, but now he realized, people liked spending a little extra for special occasions.

That night Jim came in and asked, “Would you like me to run to the bank for you with tonight’s deposit? You look really busy.”

“That would be great, Jim. Thank you so much.” Blair went in the back, opened the safe and took out his bank bag. He had three ready to go. Friday nights were busier than any night.

He got an order for a Screaming Orgasm and laughed. But luckily he knew what that was. And he just so happened to have the ingredients for it. It took two ounces of Bailey’s Irish Cream, two ounces of Cointreau and put the ingredients into the shaker with ice and strained and poured into a cocktail glass. It was delicious. It was one of

Blair's favorites, but he had not put it on the menu yet. A friend named Elaine had given him the recipe and he intended to tell her how big a hit it was. He was going to change the menu on Sunday and have them printed up for the tables and the bar. When Blair first started this, he really thought it was going to be a woman's hangout, but come to find out, men liked Bailey's as much as women did. He had couples every single night.

There was a fitness gym down the street and a lot of the young people were coming from there. They would work out and then celebrate at Sipping with Sandy.

Jim got back and Blair was just watching the girls go to their cars when the shift was over. Jim was just in time. He walked in and Blair locked the door once his girls got into their cars. That's how Blair thought of them. His girls. He felt very fatherly about them and was always super careful about watching who said or did what.

"Chief, you gonna tell me what's on your mind since last night?"

"I hate when you do that. You treat me like a thug that you're investigating."

"I must certainly do not. Now, stop stalling and tell me what's going on."

"Fine, but you have to promise me you won't over-react, Jim."

"When have I over-reacted?" Jim asked, honestly.

"Oh please. Almost every day you say or do something that involves over-reacting. Promise me."

"Blair, I promise I will be good. Who hit on you and where can I find him?" Jim smiled after he asked and this made Blair smile for a moment. That's when Jim realized it was something more serious.

Jim sat down and waited for Blair to tell him what was going on. He didn't have long to wait.

Blair started pacing and said, "There is a man demanding protection money from all of the businesses in this area. He wants twenty percent and he's going to pick it up on Tuesday night at closing."

"And you thought you weren't going to tell me this?"

"I was thinking, Jim. A person has a right to think something over before he makes his decisions, am I right?"

“Yes, of course you’re right. What do you want to do? Needless to say, I can’t be here on Tuesday night. So how about Megan stepping in for a waitress? She can head out to her car and then come back for something she forgot.”

“Do you think it’s too risky, Jim? I don’t want Megan hurt for anything. This man isn’t nice. He smacked me on the head last night and I was dizzy for ten minutes. I wouldn’t want to mess with him.”

“Megan knows what she’s doing, so don’t worry about her. Are you saying you’re thinking about paying the twenty percent?” Jim asked. Jim was holding his temper because he couldn’t believe that someone had hit his lover and he couldn’t over-react.

“I don’t know what to do. I need to talk to Simon, maybe. Not you, because you’ll be mad that he hit me and go after him yourself.”

“Why did he smack you?”

“I asked a question. No questions are allowed and for some reason he knows how much money we all make. How could that be? He knows how much twenty percent will be and will make me pay extra if I’m late.”

“He doesn’t want you out of business because then he would be broke himself. He’s running a scam with someone that knows all of your weekly grosses. Who would know that?”

Blair thought a moment and answered, “Just my bookkeeper. I got his name from two of the neighbors. They both said he’s really good and cheap.”

“He might be in on this, Blair. You need to take in smaller amounts to him and show a loss and see if your weekly amount goes down.”

“I’m going to pay on Tuesday, then?”

“Yes, and then on Friday you’re going to take your paperwork to the bookkeeper and have him see you had a bad week. He doesn’t know you’re on to him. He would never suspect you, Blair.”

“Why, because I’m an idiot?” Blair was angered, suddenly.

“Because you’re too truthful and nice. You would never cheat or lie. He knows this just by dealing with you.”

“Do I talk to my neighbors about this?”

“No. We need to get this guy collecting. What has he threatened he would do if you don’t pay?”

Blair thought a moment and said, "He'll bring gang members in to kill my business and put me out of business."

"This is going to take a few weeks, maybe four to set up, Blair. But know that it's going to be worth it in the long run."

"Thanks, Jim. I should have talked to you last night. I was afraid you'd go ballistic."

Jim thought about that for a moment and said, "I might have. Right now I would like to kick his ass. If he touches you again, I'm going to kill him."

"No more talk about killing, Jim. Let me close up so we can go home."

"Now you're talking."

Before long, the two of them left in their separate cars and drove home.

The following week Major Crimes came up with a plan. Simon had everyone sitting in on the conference.

"Okay, Megan, you're going to be an exchange student looking for work and Blair will feel sorry for you and hire you. That will take up some of the money that he would have to pay to the hustler and they will then try to get rid of Megan. I think they might have someone on the inside watching Blair. For right now, guys, you're going to go in with your girlfriends and have drinks and not raise any suspicion. Keep an eye out for anyone that's watching Blair a lot. Take pictures with the little cameras we all got. Try and pretend you're taking pictures of something else and get me some faces to look at. Megan, do you feel okay working without a gun and backup?"

"I don't need a gun when it comes right down to it. They always look at me and think I'm an easy person to prey on - but I can kick their asses."

Jim laughed and so did everyone else.

"There will be no kicking asses, Megan. You have to appear to be afraid they'll send you out of the country. So, act accordingly."

She smiled. "Got it. This is going to be easy. And we'll set up cameras at the bar so that we'll have him on camera. Do we have cameras in the shop, Jim?"

"No, not so far. But it might be time. We could have him get held up and see if they'll let him put cameras in," Jim suggested.

Rafe said, "I don't think so. He's a hustler and doesn't want to be on camera. We're going to have to do this the hard way."

Brown asked, "Do we know who is fronting this guy?"

Simon sighed. "Henri, we don't even know who this guy is yet. We're going to have to wait and see who he is."

Megan stood up and said, "I could get a camera put on a locket and wear it on my uniform. How is that? That way we'll all be able to see him and he won't know."

Simon stood up next and said, "I like that idea, Megan. Go downstairs and get one put on a locket or something."

Jim seemed happy with the outcome of the meeting. "Thank you everyone for doing this."

"I heard we get free drinks," Rafe called out as he was leaving.

Jim said, "Wait! Everyone has to pay for their drinks or the plants will know we're cops."

Rafe smiled and said, "Jim, I was teasing."

Everyone laughed and Jim started to relax a little bit. Now, if only Blair could relax. Jim could feel the vibration of nervousness coming off Blair's body all morning.

Megan came in and applied for a job that afternoon. And of course, Blair hired her. He paid her enough to put them in danger of losing the business if Blair had to pay the twenty percent, also. Now they would find out if the prick that collected would lower the amount any.

Megan was enjoying working with Blair. She did a really good job. That afternoon it was going to be great because Sally called in sick. So it was only Sue and Megan. Things were going very well and Megan was a fast learner. She got the business so easily that it almost bothered Blair. He didn't really have to teach her much at all.

One afternoon, Morris came in and said, "I need to talk to you, Blair."

Blair took him into the kitchen and shut the door. "What's going on, Morris?"

"I would suggest you let Megan go. She's cutting into your living. You pay her an awful lot, why is that?" Morris asked.

Blair opened the door and asked, "Do you see how she's taking over for me while I'm talking to you? Well, Sue and Sally can't do that. But Megan can. She's one in a million. I'm not letting her go. I will just have to figure out something."

"I understand, I don't think you need to pay her twice what the other girls make. Why not talk to her about a decrease in pay?"

"I just know you're not telling me how to run my business. I pay you good money every week to do my books, but I can get the books done anywhere. If you're going to interfere with my workers or my life in any way, I'm afraid we'll have to part ways."

Megan walked up and asked, "Would you like a drink, Mr. Wilson?"

"No...I'm leaving. Thank you, anyhow." And just like that Morris walked out the front door and Blair knew he was pissed off.

"Sandy," Megan whispered, "that wasn't part of the plan. What are you doing?"

"He pissed me off, Megan. He might as well have just admitted he was in on it. What a fucker. Let's get back to work. I'll deal with the idiot on Tuesday and see how it goes."

"I'm staying in the back room on Tuesday. Can I have a key to the back door?" she asked.

"Yeah, here, I've got extras in the kitchen," Blair said as he grabbed one and gave it to Megan.

"Thanks, Sandy. Now, here are the four orders I need filled."

They both went back to work and worked their asses off. Blair wasn't sure, but he thought business was picking up during the week, making him even more money.

On Tuesday night, Blair watched as all three girls walked out to the parking lot. At the same time, the idiot came waltzing in like he owned the place.

“Just who do you think you are, Sandburg?”

“I guess I don’t understand the question,” Blair replied.

“You don’t tell us who you’re going to hire and who you’re not. Get rid of that Australian chick and we’ll be back to normal.”

“I can’t do that. It was too much for me to handle, I had to get a helper. Sue and Sally weren’t good enough to keep up with me. Megan is. She stays.”

The jerk popped Blair a good one in the right eye, knocking Blair’s head back and bringing it back like whiplash. Blair didn’t know right away that Megan was in the kitchen getting pictures of the jerk doing it. When he noticed, he thought, *Oh great, now Jim will want to kill him.*

“Either she goes, or your business goes. It’s up to you. Make up your mind. But you’re paying me the full twenty percent this week. I’ll take most of your pay.”

Blair counted out the money and gave it to him. “Get out of my bar,” Blair ordered as soon as the man had the money in his coat pocket.

“Listen here you little piece of shit. The only reason I’m not hitting you again is because you can’t work if you’re hurt. And I’ll be taking twenty-five percent next week.”

“Fuck you. I’d rather lose my business any day that have to deal with you. Get the fuck out of my place of business and don’t come back.”

The man went to grab Blair, but Blair was fast. He ran to the front door and opened it and said, “Get out.”

“I’ll be back on Tuesday and next time I am going to hurt you, you little fucker.”

The man turned around and he was surrounded by cops. Blair didn’t know it was going on tonight, but Simon, Jim, Rafe, Joel and Henri were all there and had the man handcuffed in no time at all. They were amazed that the idiot didn’t see them walking up to the door considering it was an all glass front.

“Extortion, assault and battery. Looks like you’ll be going away for a long while. And the bookkeeper is going along with you. He’s in one of the black and whites out front. In fact, we’re offering him a deal if he gives up all the information we need about you. You’re never going to hurt Blair Sandburg again,” Jim said, angrily. Jim had his hands along his sides and he was clenching his hands into fists over and over again. He was so pissed off to see the black eye that Blair was sporting.

Rafe took him and put him in a black and white after they read him his rights and patted him down for weapons. Rafe was happy when he found a gun and a knife on the man. They could add that to his charges.

Jim walked in and said, "Chief, are you all right?"

"What in the hell is going on? Why did you come tonight? You didn't even tell me." Blair had his hands on his hips and looked pissed off.

"I'll tell you why. You were antagonizing the perp. Megan called from the kitchen and said she was afraid that guy was going to kill you. Why didn't you stick to the plan, Blair?"

"He hit me again and started telling me what to do and I realized I wasn't going to keep doing this for a month while the DA found enough evidence. Jesus, my neck and head hurt. I was just fucking tired of him and couldn't do it any longer."

Jim got closer to Blair and asked, "Can I hug you?"

"Yeah, I could use one about now." Jim pulled Blair into his arms and just stayed that way for about five minutes.

Simon walked in the front door and yelled, "Sandburg, you have some explaining to do."

Blair pulled out of Jim's safe and loving arms and Simon saw his face, which was looking worse by the minute. Blair couldn't even see out his right eye any longer.

"Megan, get some ice from the freezer, please?" Simon ordered, but gently this time.

Megan brought a rag with ice in it and said, "It's going to be worse tomorrow if you don't put the ice on it right away."

"Thanks for everything, Megan. And thank you Jim and Simon. I think he wanted to kill me tonight."

"We wouldn't have let it get that far. As soon as Megan called us, we got the plan in place within moments. Then we just needed the asshole to come near the front door so we could arrest him. You did a good job keeping a straight face when you saw us behind him outside the door," Simon stated.

Brown walked in and said, "He's some nobody from Michigan. Do you believe it? He doesn't have any ties with gangs or with the mob. He was just someone out to get money and knew he was an intimidating person to have to deal with. We're questioning all of the other owners of the stores and they are all going to testify. This was one hell of a night's work."

Simon turned to Jim and said, "Why don't you help Blair close up and take him to the ER. Do you have medical with this job, Sandburg?"

"Hell yes, I have medical. This is a fine, classy joint that I work in. I take out taxes and pay insurance for all of my employees. People try for a job here all the time."

Jim looked troubled and said, "You might have to hire a third person to help out. You're getting busier every single night. Don't you agree, Chief?"

"I wish I could pay more and keep Megan," Blair teased.

Megan leaned down and kissed his cheek. "Thanks for the great time, Sandy. This is one of the best places I've ever worked."

Simon threw back his head and laughed. "She just wants a free drink."

"Honestly, guys, Sandy ran this place like you wouldn't believe. Everything went smoothly every single night because he was so careful of what he did each and every moment. It was great working for you."

"Thanks, Megan."

Everyone left and Jim helped Blair get the place back in order and then they went to the ER. Jim gave them a song and dance about how they needed Blair looked at right away to hold a perp in custody. Blair couldn't believe how easily Jim could lie sometimes.

The doctor took an X-ray of his head and found nothing out of the ordinary, so he let Jim take him home. But the doctor did tell Blair he needed two nights off."

They got out to the truck and Jim said, "You're worried about your business, right?"

"Hell yes, I can't afford to lose two night's business. And people will think I'm flighty. I'm going to work."

"That's fine...I'll be helping you and don't you even think about complaining about it."

"I'm not. That's awesome."

"How would you like to ask Simon to come in and help also? Then you could train him to take over for you now and then. You can afford to pay him well."

"You're damn right I can. This is a booming business I came up with. Thank you for standing behind me the entire time, Jim."

"No problem, Chief. I knew it was going to be a good business, but had no clue as to how much money you could make."

“Do we have any frozen peas at the house?” Blair asked.

“For your eye?”

“Yeah. And then I would really like you to make sweet love to me and remind me of how nice life can be when you do things right.”

And Jim knew he would do just that.

The end