



I'm Not Making This Up!

IRL Confessions of

Candyjane Marie Darling

I'm Not Making This Up!
My Incredible Life as a Stripper, Drug Addict,
Prostitute and Biker Chick

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First published 2024

By CJMamaBear Press

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ISBN: 979832457257

To Aunt Tina, Aunt Jackie, Uncle Jim, all my grandchildren,
my late brother Ricky, and to the brothers and sisters that stood by my side.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter One. Can I Help it that I was Attracted to Violent Men?

Chapter Two. Born in a Bad World

Chapter Three. I Was a Teenage Mom

Chapter Four. My Life as a Stripper

Chapter Five. Secrets of Strippers and Strip Clubs

Chapter Six. Stripping in Las Vegas and New Jersey

Chapter Seven. I am Andromeda

Chapter Eight. Biker Chick in a Biker World

Chapter Nine. Raising Six Kids.

Chapter Ten. Changing My Life

Chapter Eleven. My Best Advice for Girls and Women

Chapter Twelve. Happily, Ever After

Chapter Four. My Life as a Stripper.

Delivering cocaine didn't work for me; neither did selling drugs. Then I tried dancing at private parties. That didn't turn out to be a winner either. So, why not dancing in strip clubs?

If I could be a dancer at private parties that Sid set up around Detroit, why couldn't I be an exotic dancer? Could it be any worse than private parties where us girls had to double as hookers and were subject to rape and abuse?

If you said, "Right" to that question, then for sure you've never been a stripper.

But the story of my career as a stripper picks up after I had been raped by two guys at a private party Sid arranged in Detroit. I thought I was through with being raped when I left home and got away from my mom's pedophile boyfriends. I was ready for the next step in my life. I just didn't know what it would be.

I thought about going back to school and finishing high school. Getting my high school diploma, even if it was a GED, would qualify me for some other kinds of jobs. But then the property manager in the apartment building on Edwin Street in Hamtramck where I was living introduced me to a man. His name was Mike.

Unlike other strip club agents who were sometimes oily and looked like pimps, Mike was this ordinary looking guy. Although he was six feet tall, he wore jeans or jogging pants, a colored T-shirt and a baseball cap. Instead of trying to hustle us girls or take advantage of us, he was always trying to give his girls good advice. He would press an accountant's card in our hand or tell us to keep things legal. He even told me more than once that I should ensure my body – or at least certain parts of it. "Your legs are your greatest asset, aren't they?" he said. "If you can't dance, then you are not making money. Ensure your legs." I didn't take his advice, but maybe I should have.

One of the first things out of Mike's mouth after we said hello was: "You're a beautiful girl. Do you work?"

"I was thinking of going back to work," I said.

By then, I was 18 and not only had my son Al, but I had two other children: J.D. and Peanut. Their father came from a family of drug dealers. Another loser in my life.

“Have you done any dancing?” Mike asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “At some private parties.”

“How did that work out for you?” Mike asked. He already knew the answer to that question. I didn’t have to do more than shrug.

“You could make real money,” Mike said, “and it would be safer.”

“More private parties?” I asked.

“No,” he said. “I’m talking moving up. You’re pretty enough to dance in nightclubs. A girl like you with that beautiful face and your nice body, you could do very well for yourself. It’s easy work and you don’t have to be afraid. Nightclubs look after their dancers.” He made it sound like I’d be a star.

“I’ll think about it,” I said.

I discussed it with my mom. As usual, she was short on helpful advice. “You’re smart; you’ll do the right thing,” Mom said. Gee thanks, Mom!

Her support, though, was unending: “I’m behind you whatever you do.”

I didn’t talk to anyone else about it. Just my mom. I mean who else was there that I could trust for good advice?

The next day, I told Mike I’d do it. I’d become a dancer in nightclubs. Neither one of us used the term “stripper.” But we both knew what we were talking about.

Mike told me he would take me to a club to audition. The first one he took me to was The Grind in Detroit. The Grind was in a dingy grey brick building off Griswold in downtown Detroit. It seemed like a tall building to me, although it was really only about four stories high. We parked across the street in a parking lot and I got out of the car with my costume bag. Mike told me I had to have a classy-looking costume bag. I packed it with toothpaste, thongs and high heels.

We entered through a heavy wooden door on Griswold and we were immediately in a dark room with a long bar to my right and three dimly lit round stages to my left. Mike spotted the manager and waved him over.

“Sy, I want you to meet my friend Candy,” Mike said.

He reached out his hand. I shook it.

“How long have you been dancing?” Sy asked me.

“This is my first time, at least in a club,” I managed to get out.

“You’re a good-looking lady,” Sy said as he looked me up and down. “Let’s see what you can do. Go up to the third floor and change.” He pointed to an unlit staircase near the stage. I could barely see it. I looked at Mike and he nodded okay, and I walked toward the stairs.

Going up those steps to the dressing room, I had some kind of intuition. I had the feeling that girls were raped upstairs in this club. I shivered as I slowly climbed up to the third floor. When I first walked in, I was sure there was security in the club – just not on the third floor. And there was always loud music playing throughout the club. If you were up on the third floor and needed help, no one would hear you.

When I got to the third floor there was an open room with pool tables. Four guys were playing pool, but they barely looked at me as I looked around for the dressing room. I could only see one room and it didn’t have a door. A sign next to the doorway said “Dressing Room.”

I went in, but I was feeling cold and scared. I instantly had the feeling that a lot of things were wrong in that dressing room. But on the plus side, the room was bright and there were mirrors on all walls with little tables in front of the mirrors and each table had a wooden chair. Curling irons, bottles of perfume and lotions were scattered around on most of the tables. I looked around for a private place to change and there wasn’t any such little room or even a curtained off area. So, I stood on the wall with the door so no one could look in and see me and I changed into thongs and threw on a short dress as a cover up and high heels.

Then I had to maneuver down the same three well-worn wooden stairs. Somehow, I managed to get down to the main floor. I walked over to Mike and Sy who were talking. I saw

for the first time that Mike and I were the only white people there. A guy stepped out of the shadows and asked me what music I wanted. I said I didn't have any with me. I was so nervous I couldn't think of any songs. So, he said he would just pick out a song for me. It was a rap song.

I tottered unsteadily over to the closest stage and did the two steps up on the stage. I grabbed on to the first pole I saw, but almost flipped off the stage because the pole was a moveable pole. And I was trying to deal with my nerves. I tried to forget this was an audition and that there were a dozen sets of eyes watching me as I moved around. I knew I wasn't really dancing.

After about 30 seconds, Sy yelled up to me to take off my top. I froze. I wasn't sure what to do. Desperately I tried to find Mike. Finally, I saw him by shielding my eyes from the spotlight. "Mike!" I shouted. "I've got to get out of here!" As I said that I jumped off the stage, kicked off my high heels and ran up the stairs in my bare feet to change my clothes. I got dressed as fast as I could and ran back downstairs. I didn't look at Sy or say anything. Mike guided me out the door and to the car.

We didn't say very much on the ride except Mike said, "I guess The Grind isn't the best fit for you." I shook my head in agreement.

The next day, Mike drove me down Seven Mile Road toward Van Dyke on Detroit's east side, and I saw the sign for My Bar 2. There were several police cars parked around the building. I later found out a dancer was found dead in a dumpster nearby. She had apparently overdosed and her body got placed in the dumpster. As we were walking into this bar, I turned to Mike and said, "I guess this is welcome to the jungle." All he said in return was "Yeah."

My Bar 2 was different from The Grind. It was in a different part of Detroit and it was smaller. And as it turned out, it was run by a mother and daughter – Carol and Anne. The DJ was a young guy named Michael.

When we first walked into My Bar 2, I had a different feeling. After I was introduced by Mike to Carol and Anne, who both seemed pleasant and friendly, they showed me to the dressing room – that had a door! – and I got into my costume. I came out wobbling in high heels. Michael, the DJ, could see I was nervous.

“What’s the name you use?” Michael asked me.

“I don’t know,” I said.

“What did they call you at the last bar?” he asked.

“This is my first one,” I said. “I don’t what you should call me.”

Michael looked down on the piece of paper and it had my full name on it.

“Hey, there’s your name,” he said. “Candy Jane Marie. You’ll be Candy.”

Michael knew I was scared, but he made me feel like it would be alright. I guess he knew better than to ask me what music he should play. He just said, “I’ll pick out some music for you.”

Unlike at The Grind where I felt out of place, once I got on stage at My Bar 2, it felt like I had found a home. Afterwards, as I got to meet some of the girls who worked there, they were nice to me. The older girls especially were friendly and kind. After meeting me they would say, “You’re so pretty!” or “You’re so young!” I appreciated how they welcomed me into the club of strip dancers. But they also asked me how old I was. When I told them I was 18, Dirty Diana, one of the older dancers, said, “You poor dear! You can’t drink!”

The owners of My Bar 2 were also more friendly than they were at other strip clubs. As I found out later, at some strip clubs the manager would measure your waist, hips and breasts to compare them to a standard they had. Some also weighed you. If you put on weight, you’d get fired. So, I ended up at My Bar 2 for three years.

As soon as I started dancing at My Bar 2, which was little more than a truck stop bar, I made friends with three girls: Dirty Diana, Sam and Cat.

Dirty Diana and I hit it off right from the beginning. She was a class act in a trashy bar. She was a Chaldean and Irish brunet, who whether on stage or off would always wear thigh-high boots with high heels. She laughed and joked around a lot and she enjoyed messing with the guys who would come in to watch us perform. That was why she was popular with the guys and with the other girls. One of her favorite ways of messing around with the men who hung out at the club was to joke with them. She’d dance over to the edge of the stage, get a grip on the pole and lean down and say to a guy, “You wanna climb up here and dance with me, Buster?”

She could get aggressive with the men in the club, too. After a dance, she'd walk among the tables and all of a sudden reach down and grab a guy's crotch. "How ya hangin'?" she'd ask. The men who came in seemed to love her boldness. With Dirty Diana, they knew they would have fun.

Dirty Diana knew I was nervous in the beginning, and she offered me advice and hints about how I could be a better dancer and make more money. First, she told me I had to dance in higher heels. Which took some practice for me because I wasn't comfortable in super high heels. Then, she would introduce me to the regular guys who were sitting in front of the stage watching our bodies move around the stage to the music.

Jeffrey was one of the guys she had me meet. He'd come in three nights a week and always ordered lots of food. The first thing he'd order was chili. Then anything on the menu with beans. And he'd drink beer. When we got done with our dance numbers, Jeffrey who was a 54-year-old with an infectious smile, would wave us over to his table.

"I ordered you some food," he'd say grinning at us. "Let me get you a beer." Then he would insist we eat and drink with him.

When he first asked me to his table to eat his food, I told Dirty Diana that everything he was sharing was food which would make me fart.

"That's the whole idea," Diana said. "That's what he wants."

"I don't get it," I said to her.

"Honey," Dirty Diana said, "that's what he wants us to do. When you get up on stage and are twitching your butt in his face, he wants you to fart. He gets off on us farting in his face."

"Gross!" I replied.

"Yeah, it might be," Diana replied, "but he tips damn good for it."

So, I ate his food and drank his beer after that. And I didn't complain when he'd slip a few twenties in my G-string.

Dirty Diana also introduced me to the chalkboard in the back near our dressing room. This chalkboard had all us girl's names on it. At first I thought it was the schedule or something and I didn't pay any attention to it. I found out what it meant one night when I was doing a private dance for a guy and he jumped up and ran out.

"Hey," Dirty Diana said with a broad smile on her pretty face, "you get a mark on the board for running a guy out of here." That meant that I got a guy to come in his pants – that was running a guy out. The girl who had the most marks on the board, got something special from the manager – like a free drink or something. Most strip clubs had something like that.

When I started out, you were just supposed to dance in front of the guy. Then, they wanted lap dances and finally you could grind on him. But, it didn't take much for some guys to ejaculate in their pants.

Sam was also a good friend. She was a little itty-bitty thing, but she had big hair and even though she was white her red hair was like an Afro. But Sam was a lady. She was short and slender, but she was never crude and never used curse words. She was always a lady. I think the men who watched her dance could see that she wasn't crude.

Then my third good friend at My Bar 2 was Cat. I called her the rebel. She had jet black hair and looked like she would fit right in with a biker gang. Cat had ankle tattoos before they were popular. One of her favorite tricks was to dance with a rope on stage. She'd swing the rope like a cowgirl or rub her crotch with it. Dragging it behind when she left the stage, she'd walk up behind a guy who was intently watch another girl dancing, make a noose around his neck and lead him around the club like she had a horse on a lead.

I learned a great deal from Dirty Diana, Sam and Cat. I would watch what they did. I would try to learn from the kind of show they would put on. And since I was so much younger than they were, they were willing to give me advice when I asked for it. I knew I could always go to them with questions.

So, here I was this thin, blond gal when I started out. I was trying to learn to dance as well as the other girls, but when I was in my first few weeks dancing on stage, I noticed this grey-haired man sitting right in front of the stage. I was whirling around as I swung my legs

around a pole near where this man was looking up at me. I did another whirl around the pole and when I looked at him again, his head dropped right down to the stage. And he didn't move. He was facing head down on the stage. I signaled to the bouncer and pointed to him. "What's wrong with him?" I mouthed.

The bouncer walked rapidly to the old gentleman and tried to pick up his head. "He's dead," he said – as if this were an everyday occurrence. I was thinking, Geez! The guy looked at me dancing and he's dead! Did I really have that effect on men?

There was another middle-aged man who was a regular. He dressed in a grey suit with a tie and didn't sit right in front. Sam told me his name was Thomas. She said his nickname was "teabag."

"He likes tea," Sam said.

Okay, I thought. He doesn't drink beer or liquor, he likes Lipton or Earl Grey. But the girls would always laugh when they talked about Thomas. I didn't understand. Finally, one night Sam explained it to me.

"Some night Thomas is going to ask you for a teabag," Sam said.

"So?" I said.

"It's not what you're thinking," Sam said. "He wants you to give him one of your used tampons so he can put it in a cup of hot water and drink it."

I almost barfed when I heard that! But sure enough, one night Thomas asked me to bring him one of my tampons. I refused and walked away – I lost out on a fifty-dollar tip.

Being a stripping, dancing in front of men every night was nerve wracking. Since I wasn't old enough to drink at first, I started smoking weed. I soon learned that most of the other girls were smoking marijuana and drinking before they would go on stage. As Dirty Diana said to me once, "Girl, you got to do something to function as a dancer. You can't do this job while you're sober."

And she was right. Actually, as I soon discovered, being a stripper made me sick to my stomach. It was like being molested as a kid. I know I was being paid good money to perform for

men, but I felt like they were using me. Taking advantage of me. There were times, before I deadened my thoughts with weed or, later, alcohol or cocaine, that I felt like I could go into a rage and beat the shit out of the men staring at me.

But we all found a way to live with ourselves and our anger and rage. If it wasn't alcohol or drugs, it was focusing on the money we collected and took home with us each night. When I started out, I was paid \$14 an hour by the agency. But I could make \$300 to \$500 a night in tips. Where else could a girl make that much money without turning tricks?

There was something else I had to put up with in My Bar 2. Being hit on by other dancers who were gay.

One day at My Bar 2, this woman walked in. The girls told me to watch out for her because when she gets drunk, she tries to rape the new girls. Her name was Vampire and she looked like a vampire – or at least like Morticia Addams. She had jet black hair that hung below her shoulder blades and her cheeks were pale and sunken. She was a beautiful woman and very erotic. I was on one of the stages dancing and sure as hell one night Vampire, wearing a black, slinky dress sidles up to the stage. She looked up at me dancing and then, like a snake, reached out grabbing my ankle.

“I'd like to eat you, Sugar,” she said.

“Get away from me,” I said shaking my leg and trying to get her off me. She wouldn't let go. I signaled for the bouncer and he came over.

“Get her the hell off me,” I said.

Instead of letting go, she ignored the fact that the bouncer was right behind her. She pulled me so I fell on my ass. Before the bouncer could restrain her, she jumped on the stage, straddling me and trying to push her body between my legs.

“Are you crazy!” I hissed. “Get the fuck off of me.”

Many of the men in the bar thought this was good fun, but the bouncer didn't. He grabbed Vampire by the waist to pull her away from me. A couple of other guys came over to help out. It took all three of them to get her off the stage.

A few days later, after she had a scolding from the manager, she came up to me in the dressing room.

“I want to apologize for what I did the other night,” Vampire said.

“That’s okay,” I said. “But don’t ever try that shit again with me. I’ll hurt you next time!” I’m not sure I could hurt her, but I wanted to sound tough. Anyway, I always watched myself around her and tried not to put myself in a position where she could grab me or get me in a vulnerable position.

Around this time, I was getting tired of what I had to put up with at My Bar 2. But what really made me start looking at other clubs was after I got a suspension.

There was this young girl, who danced at My Bar 2. She went by the name of Destiny. She was doing a lot of cocaine, liquor and who knows what other shit. But one night before we went on stage, she started accusing me of stealing her jewelry. I may be a lot of things and I did a lot of things for real, but I had my morals. I didn’t steal. Certainly not from other girls who were just trying to make a living.

So Destiny, who was a pretty platinum blonde with perky little breasts, gets in my face saying I needed to give back the jewelry I stole.

“Look Destiny,” I said, “I didn’t steal your jewelry. If you’re missing jewelry, it ain’t because of me.”

She didn’t pay any attention to what I said. “I know you’re stealing my shit!” she screamed. I pushed her away from me.

That really triggered something in her and she charged me like a bull. She knocked me down, but I rolled over on top of her and jumped up pulling her up with me. Wrapping my arms around her skinny body, I pushed her toward the dressing room door and threw her out in the hallway. Before she could get up, the bouncer appeared telling us to cut it out.

That fight got us both suspended for a couple of weeks, so I used the time off to check out a couple other bars in Detroit. The first one I went to was the Brass Key Club on Livernois Avenue, not too far away from My Bar 2. The Brass Key Club featured plush red

booths surrounding the stages. But it also had something unique: Stand-up showers. Men could pay the dancers to go in the showers. Wearing only a G-string, the man who was footing the bill could watch you dance and wash yourself with glow soap. What the hell, I thought, I could work there for a couple of weeks. Maybe make some good money taking showers. It was fun and a guy gave me two hundred bucks for showering. Not bad, but I decided that wasn't really my thing.

Next, I checked out the Manikins Strip Bar. It had a long bar and upstairs was a VIP Room where there was room for only three girls to dance on a stage. Manikins had all sorts of contests for the girls and the customers. A scout for the Jerry Springer show hung out there. The Jerry Springer scout invited me to come on the TV show, but I said no thanks. They wanted to see crazy shit on that show and I wasn't going to do something I would regret – in front of a television audience!

So, I went back to My Bar 2 when my suspension was up, paying my \$150 fine for the fight. I just didn't feel comfortable at those other strip clubs. But I always felt pretty much at home at My Bar 2. I was determined to stick it out there.

However, I had this boyfriend. His name was Jason. He told me he wanted to be the only guy in my life, and he told me how much he loved me and my kids.

"I'm here for you," Jason said, "and your kids' father isn't. Not a lot of guys are going to come along and love your kids like I do."

I told him he was right.

"Haven't I shown you a better way of living?" he asked.

Jason was persuasive and we were really close for a few months. But then he asked me to look for another bar. I thought he was being jealous of the men who paid me good money, but I also thought that showed his love for me. I went to Mike and asked him to look around for another bar for me to work at. Mike found the Please Station.

The Please Station was another strip bar off Seven Mile Road near Van Dyke in Macomb County. This would get me out of Detroit. The Please Station was a little hole-in-the-wall bar, but it didn't matter to me. Some Macomb County cops would come in there

regularly and I got to know them. I always figured it was a good thing to know some guys who were police officers.

It was while I was at the Please Station that a girlfriend asked me if I would ever think about being with a woman. I told her I never thought about it and related to her the story of Vampire attacking me on stage. We laughed about that, but she still asked me to think about doing it with her.

“I’d like to do it with someone I know,” she said. “Not with someone I don’t know.”

The next time she brought it up, I said I’d do it with her. She said she would arrange a hotel room and we could spend a night together when I wasn’t working. Making love to a man didn’t bother me at all. But I was nervous about being with a woman. Neither of us knew what we were doing, but it was kind of nice being with a woman in bed. However, I don’t think either one of us were cut out to be lesbians and we felt guilty about it afterwards. Our friendship ended soon after that night of gay sex.

After I ended a few months at the Please Station, I danced at Centerfold. Centerfold was a strip club on John R. on the edge of Detroit. This club was billed as a rock ‘n’ roll topless bar, but it was just a fancy strip bar. I made great money there and I started selling drugs when I was at Centerfold. Because I was selling to the other girls and doing a very brisk business, I was getting some drugs free. But I could handle it because I was living the good life. I lived in an expensive home with a swimming pool. I drove a Lincoln, I had a motorcycle and I had a boat. But to cope with everything, I started buying drugs for me. And then by the time I realized what the hell was going on, I was hooked on cocaine.



This is me as a young stripper.