

# Orleans Perish

By Lindell Kay

She was young, beautiful, and had just stepped off the bus.

She tried not to appear overtaken by the sites, but as anyone who has ever been to New Orleans can tell you, it was impossible. She stopped at a small coffee shop on Decatur to collect her wits and decide what to do next.

She had run away from home determined to make it in New Orleans as a dancer or singer. She was not naive. She knew she would have to start in the strip clubs and work her way up, but every star had to pay a price to get where they were, right?

“New here, huh?” A policeman, handsome in his uniform, sat next to her and ordered a cup of coffee.

“Huh? Oh...why do you ask?” She smiled at him, always aware of the power of a young girl’s smile.

“The bus tags on your bag. I’d tear them off. They’re a dead give away that you’re new to New Orleans. The purse snatchers and muggers know what to look for.”

“Thank you.”

“Listen. I’m not tryin’ to be nosy-”

“Then don’t be.” She thinned her smile.

“Okay. Listen, here is my card. You run into any trouble here and you can give me a call. Fair enough?” The policeman wrote his cell number on the back of the business card and gave it to her.

“Thank you.” She took the card and slid it into her purse.

“Be careful here.” He told her as he got up to leave. “Be careful who you talk to and be careful who you trust.”

“What’s he being so serious about?” She asked the waitress once the policeman had left.

The waitress leaned over, “Honey, this is New Orleans. The Missing Persons Capital of the World. And most of the missing people are just like you. Young, beautiful, and new.”

“How’d you know I was new to town?”

“Honey, you got bus tags on your bag.”

“You have a pair of scissors I can use? I got to take these tags off.”

Later, she rented a hotel room for the night just outside the French Quarter.

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When she woke up, her hands were tied to the bedposts. She kicked violently in panic and realized her feet were tied also. She screamed so loud her head felt as if it would burst.

Then real terror gripped her. She could not open her eyes. Why could she not open her eyes? She squeezed her eyes shut tight and felt ridges running long ways across her eyes.

*Oh my God!* Her eyelids had been sewn shut.

She tried to get free. She twisted her arms until the ropes burned her wrists.

She screamed again. She screamed until her voice failed. She screamed after that until she was hoarse.

She felt utterly helpless and panic seized her again. Her body trembled and she began to cry.

Her eyes welled up and finally single teardrops found their way out of the corners of her eyes.

She rallied her strength and tried to free her arms or legs again. She failed. She made several more attempts followed by failure and an ever-increasing horror that began to grow heavy in her stomach.

Hours, maybe days, went by. She would struggle to free herself, give up, give into despair, and wish to die. Then the cycle would begin again.

She wondered then if she was dead and this was hell. Her answer came moments later when she heard a door open.

A man, if he could be called that, climbed on the bed and had his way with her. He was like an animal. He growled and bit her. He was violent and angry.

She begged at first. Then she cursed. Then she prayed. Then she tried to imagine that she wasn't even there. That this was happening to someone else. It was not her body, but a friend's. She was not here, tied to a bed being mauled by some man-beast. She was sipping mocha at an upscale coffee house in the French Quarter.

Her attempted self-delusion failed when her torture climaxed in sodomy. She could not ignore the pain and came back to herself, crying and whimpering like a wounded dog.

The man-beast left her after that. It took several long minutes for her to realize she was free. During the violence he had untied her and did not bother to tie her back up. No wonder there, since she could barely move. She touched her eyelids and felt the thread that stitched them closed. She wished for death. She was too frightened to get up.

But she saw this as her only chance to escape. Whoever held her was sure to kill her now. She slid off the bed, but instead of the hard floor she expected to find, her feet rested on another mattress. She walked; as best she could, which was more akin to a crawl, several feet in each direction. Everywhere the floor was covered with mattresses. She moved in a straight line feeling for a wall. What her hands found were more mattresses. She circled around feeling everywhere. Mattresses surrounded her.

She came to understand that she was trapped in a ten by ten room whose floors and walls and no doubt ceiling were covered with mattresses. More than likely for soundproofing. Her screams never made it out of this ten by ten hell.

After temporarily postponing her panic attack, she mounted an inch-by-inch search of the wall. She was looking for and found the latch to the hidden door.

It was unlocked.

She took a deep breath and ventured out of the mattress room. Her feet touched hardwood floor and her hands found a panel wall. She felt around the entire area.

The thought that the man-beast could be toying with her, watching her from just outside her reach, sent a shudder down her spine. But, she knew she had no choice.

Within minutes she had discovered that this was a living room. She felt a sofa. She found a TV and a recliner. She felt around until she bumped into a footlocker. She opened it to find over two dozen purses and pocketbooks of every shape and size.

The property of previous victims, undoubtedly.

She continued her search until she found a window. She was extremely disappointed when she opened it and found iron bars. She shouted as best she could into the void, but there was no answer.

She returned to her search and found a door with six deadbolts. *It must be the front door!* Her elation died when she realized that the bolts required keys even from the inside.

She was ready to give up when she bumped into a small table and heard a telephone hit the

floor. She dropped and felt around for it. She grasped it in her hands just as she heard footsteps outside the bolted door.

She scrambled to dial 911. She heard a key slide into the top bolt and the tumblers turn.

“911 Emergency.” A female voice answered calmly from the receiver.

“Help me!” She spoke as loud as she could into the phone, straining her hoarse throat.

“Hello?” The voice on the phone said. “Hello? I can’t hear you.”

Desperate, she began to tap the buttons making beeping noises.

“Listen, this line is for emergencies. I have a machine that tells me who you are. I suggest you knock it off.” Then the operator hung up.

Hearing the second and third locks being opened, she dialed 911 again.

“911 Emergency. Please hold.” A different voice told her.

She crawled across the floor to the footlocker and sifted through the purses until she found hers. She heard the fourth lock turn as she spilled out the contents of her purse and found the business card tucked away within. Only then did she realize that she could not read it because she could not see it.

As the fifth lock turned she concentrated as hard as she could and rubbed her right index finger along the numbers written on the back of the card. Her fingertip felt the groove of numbers that had been carved into the soft paper by an ink pen. She dialed the numbers she sensed and held her breath. This was her only chance.

The sixth lock turned and the man-beast stepped in. He eyed her on the floor among the purses with the phone in her hand.

Suddenly, the cell phone in his pocket began to ring. He laughed and slammed the door shut.

She screamed as he locked each lock and each deadbolt slammed into place like thunderclaps.

He laughed like a hyena, “I told you this is New Orleans. Be careful who you trust.”