

Black Widow - Snack Whore

by tommy klehr

"Psst."

I paused in my tracks as I walked in front of the building where Two Doughboys used to be.

I looked around. The streets were deserted. I saw the big "For Rent" sign in the empty window where the sweet smell of pizza used to emanate.

"Over here," said the voice.

Twisting my neck, I saw a head peeking around the corner of the building — a woman's head, topped with a black beret, below which curly, peach-colored hair nestled on her shoulders.

"Hey, baby," she said. "I got what you need."

"What?" I asked.

"You lookin' to score some sugar, sweetie?" she asked. It took me a second for it to sink in. I'd never been solicited by a snack whore before. Gracefully, she stepped forward from the alley.

I looked around to see if anyone was watching. *You see — I'm not one to go around breaking the law, but then again, some laws were meant to be broken.*

"How much?" I asked.

"Depends on what you want, baby," she said as she leaned on the corner of the brick building.

I paused for a moment to study her. She wore a ruby red leather trench coat, which came down to her thighs. Below it, the tan skin of her legs peered through the diamonds of black fishnet, followed by black stiletto heels. Her hands were shoved deep into the pockets of her coat, which was cinched tightly around her waist — the wide belt tied rather than fastened. Against the darkness of the alley, she

looked like she could be found on the belly of that infamous spider.

"Whatcha got?" I asked.

"Oh, I got it all, hun," she said. The corners of her mouth raised; a smile formed on her lips, which were a shade brighter than her coat. She stood upright and walked toward me, staying just beyond arm's reach.

"Mounds?" she said as she raised her left eyebrow. I watched her lips trace the outline of that word. She left them hanging in a glossy red pucker.

She lifted her right hand from her pocket, revealing the red and white wrapper of the aforementioned confection.

"Un-uh." I shook my head.

"No?" she said. "Maybe you'd prefer this?"

She lifted her left hand from the other pocket. One long pretzel rod, the bottom of which appeared to have been bitten off, dangled from the tips of her fingers. She twisted the rod, making the large salt crystals sparkle like diamonds reflected in the street light.

I shook my head again, my tongue swimming in saliva.

"What the unhealthiest thing you got?" I asked. *I mean, if I'm gonna break the law, I might as well enjoy it, right?*

She dropped the pretzel and the Mounds back into her pockets. She stared into my eyes as she began slowly untying the belt of her coat.

"Oh," she said as she shook her head slightly, slowly from side to side, never breaking eye contact. "You wanna be naughty, huh?"

My head conjured up images of what delectable treats she might have in store for me under that trench coat.

"Wait till you see wh—".

She raised her head suddenly, and stared into the distance over my left shoulder. She quickly retied her belt, then shoved her hands into her pockets as she took two steps backwards into the alley.

The sound of footsteps grew louder behind me. Hushed voices. I turned my neck toward the couple as they walked by me on the right. The woman sneered at me like I was some common criminal.

"Don't judge me," I said to them.

They sped up their stride.

"I'm a man," I added. "I have needs," I shouted at the backs of their heads.

I turned back toward the alley. She was gone. Black widow was gone.

"I have needs," I repeated to the emptiness.

I put my hand in my back pocket and removed a small, folded piece of paper. I carefully opened it, the creases worn through in spots. After the last fold, I picked up the sole content: a flat, pale, four-inch long piece of wood, which was splintered on both ends. I put the used Popsicle stick in my mouth and sucked, savoring the sweetness from that summer all those years ago.

