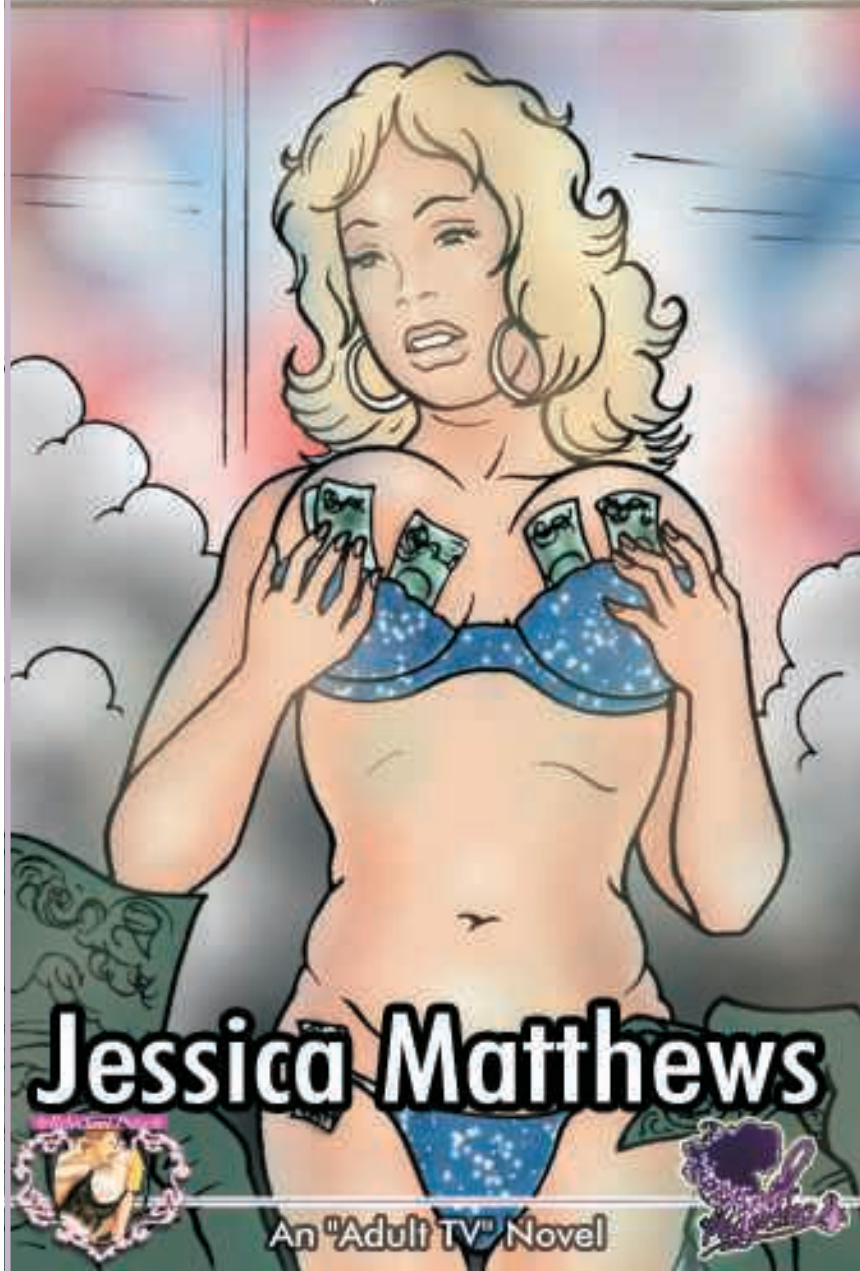


The Go Girl, No Girl Review



Jessica Matthews



An "Adult TV" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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The Go Girl, No Girl Review

By Jessica Matthews

“No, no, no,” Craig shouted. “I’m not doing it.”

“But we need you,” Kate replied.

“I don’t want to fall out but what part of ‘no’ are you having trouble with?” Craig turned to walk away. “I can’t. I’m not, so that’s it. Subject closed.”

The door slammed, followed by the squeal of angry tires as Craig’s elderly Miata left the car park.

“Well, that went well,” Gary said. “What do we do now?”

“I’ll think of something,” Kate replied. “I can usually get around him.”

“You’d better,” Gary said. “We can’t have ‘The Go Girl, No Girl Review’ without a star performer.”

“I wish we hadn’t been talked into this,” Kate said. “A sure fire winner,” the agent said. They let us take over the bar, do all the publicity, and then they tell us that they can’t supply the performers. We’re on our way to bankruptcy.”

“It’s not that bad. Something has to turn up.”

“You said that last week and what did we get?” Kate asked. “A pantomime dame who looked like the back of a horse, two ton Tessie from Albuquerque, and a couple of chancers with big egos and bigger expectations of what we could pay.”

“But we’re not bankrupt yet.” Gary tried to be optimistic.

“Maybe not yet, but unless we do something quick, I can hear it calling,” Kate said. “There must be some talent out there. I’d better go find it, otherwise we’re sunk.”

“How do you propose to do that?”

“I have no idea,” Kate admitted. “But there must be an answer. I’m going to save this darn business if it’s the last thing I do. I need to get on the internet. There must be something out there. I need to know how to find it.”

* * * * *

“Is that Daniel?” Kate hoped she’d called the right number.

“Yes, who’s calling?” he answered cautiously.

“I’m Kate from ‘The Go Girl, No Girl Review’ and I’m hoping I’ve found the right Daniel,” she said. “I think you choreographed some cabaret shows a few years back.”

“Yes, that’s me.” He was not very forthcoming.

“I need to get a choreographed drag show at my club in a few weeks’ time. I wondered if you might have an opening in your schedule,” she asked.

“What are you offering?”

“Well, that’s the problem.” Kate’s heart sank. “I have to explain. We contracted for a show, paid our fees, and then they’ve absconded. We’ve no money left and no show.”

“Sounds like you’ve no chance either,” he replied.

“But you’re not working at the moment. You crashed and burned after you fell out with Girls Incorporated a couple of years ago. The way I heard it, they said you’d never work again.”

“So you heard all the calumnies they heaped on me. It was a lousy cast. Not even Busby Berkeley could have made them into an act.”

“And your drinking proved that?” Kate snapped.

“No need to go there. I think this conversation is over.”

“No, please hear me out,” Kate begged. “We’ll offer you accommodation while we get it all together and then we’ll pay you a percentage of the receipts when we get the show running. Imagine if it all comes together. You’ve got a show, you’ve got your reputation back, and who knows where that could lead?”

“Keep talking,” Daniel said. I think you need to know I’m dry this last couple of years. I’m tempted by your offer. What sort of cast do you have for me to work with?”

“I don’t have any right now,” Kate admitted. “I want you on board, then it might help me to recruit some girls better than TwoTon Tessie from Albuquerque, and we’ll have a show.”

“Tell me that wasn’t her name.”

“No, it’s just an accurate description,” Kate laughed. “Seriously, we need some girls, and I’m on my way to recruit them. How can I fail? I’ve the power of Google, and total desperation to help me.”

“I’ll give you a try,” Daniel replied. “I admire your optimism, and I’ve nothing to lose anyway.”

“I hoped you’d see it like that.” Kate told him where to find the theatre and rang off.

She rang Gary. “We have a director,” she told him. “He’s been through it, but he could be great. Now all I have to do is find the girls for him to work with.”

“And where are you going to find them?”

“I don’t know yet,” she replied. “But I’m going to.”

* * * * *

College doesn’t really equip everyone with a lot of interchangeable skills to make a living in the modern world, and not everyone can settle of routine work in an office or call center. For some, the lure of the open road calls; for others, it’s the bright lights of the city. Some feel that they don’t fit in anywhere.

Harper Poole didn’t set out with a name like that, but he decided it was as likely to get him noticed as the one he was born with. He drifted through college, drifted through a couple of jobs and then decided that he’d do anything to avoid the drudgery of a boring day job.

He cashed his meager savings and sold all that he could. He decided what was essential and packed his rucksack to head out to the coast. There was no money for tickets, so he decided to make it an adventure and hitch his way. He didn’t get as far as he hoped before his funds for living expenses ran out.

Ending up in a lakeside resort, he saw a sign outside a cabaret bar that had clearly seen better signs. ‘Acts Wanted,’ it read. He pushed at the front door

but it was locked. He walked round the back and saw a van.

“Let me help you with that,” he said to a sweating man in overalls who was struggling to unload a couple of big storage trunks.

Harper dropped his rucksack which contained all he possessed, and took some of the weight.

“Sure be grateful,” the man replied and together they heaved and grunted until the trunks were in the rear of the building.

“I haven’t seen you before.” He rolled up his sleeves and held out a hand. “Jasper Fulbright, proprietor, cook and bottle washer at this fine establishment.”

Harper took his hand and introduced himself. “It said you were looking for acts on the notice outside.”

“And are you an act?” Jasper asked.

“I play piano, and sing a little. I did a lot in college; plays, shows, dances, cabaret, did a bit of everything, even fixed the costumes.” Harper embellished the truth shamelessly but he needed a job right now.

“Okay, we got a piano in there, I need to get my breath back, and then I’ll hear you. It’s the least I can do after you helped out,” Jasper said. “Are you staying in town?”

“I only arrived today,” Harper replied. “I got a lift on a truck, and dropped off here. Here is where the money ran out.”

“You’re in the middle of nowhere in particular,” Jasper said. “Most kids head out of town when they get the chance. This is the entertainment hot spot of the County. I get a country band in every month or two and the place really rocks. The rest of the time, it’s a few locals and a bit of passing trade.”

“But this place is quite grand.”

“It was when the mines were open, but they closed a decade ago and most people who could, left for better jobs. Now it’s a small town in the middle of nowhere in particular.”

“I haven’t had time to look round.”

“You’ve seen it already,” Jasper said. “Let’s hear you play.”

He led the way through a door, then some double doors, down a short corridor, and then they were on a low stage with dusty curtains open halfway, showing a dimly lit bar with a small dance floor and seats and tables at the side. Harper walked to the piano, sat down and played a few chords.’

“When was this last tuned?” he asked as he adjusted his seat.

“I can’t rightly remember,” Jasper replied, helping himself to a drink from the bar. “They never listen anyway.”

Harper flexed his fingers and started to play ‘Exactly Like You.’ The old favourite was his opening number whenever he got a chance, and he started running through the melody. The old piano rattled on under his fingers, out of tune, but not too badly.

After running through, he started to sing. He sang it sweetly and plainly, exactly as the song had been written. No trills or R&B effects, just the simple words, enunciated clearly.

He changed a few chords and slipped into ‘Someone to Watch Over Me’ and finished with ‘As Time Goes By.’

Jasper applauded. “Where did you get that singing voice? It’s real high for a guy. If I’d closed my eyes, I could have sworn I was listening to some blonde cabaret singer in a slinky black dress, cigarette holder, long gloves, and dangling earrings.”

“I can’t help your fantasies,” Harper replied. “That’s the voice I have.”

Jasper scratched his head. "You play really well. I'd like to use you, but I can't do much more than give you somewhere to stay and feed you. You'd get decent tips off the audience and if you waited on at the bar, I'd pay you minimum for that. Do you want to stay for a week or two?"

"How many days do I work?"

"Thursday evening through to Sunday lunch and I'd expect a bit of help around the place on the other days. There are rooms out back that haven't been touched in years that need clearing out and you could bed down in one of them if you like."

"I like the idea of staying a while," Harper said. "It'll be good to rest in one place, get cleaned up, and think what to do next."

"Okay, you wait tables through to ten, then you do your cabaret on Thursday through to Saturday," Jasper said. "Play an hour or so, or until the audience start to throw things."

"Are they likely to?" Harper was against violence, especially when directed at him.

"I'm only joking," Jasper replied. "Play an hour and then go back to waiting tables. The more they drink, the better I'll be able to pay you."

"What if they want more?" Harper asked.

"We'll worry about that when it happens. I've got to get some supplies from the wholesale," Jasper said. "I'll get you a key and you can come and go as you please. I'll introduce you round on Thursday."

"Which room should I use?" Harper asked.

"Take any you like," Jasper said. "They're old dressing rooms, wardrobe and storerooms from when this place was busy. Make yourself comfortable."

* * * * *

“Kate, it’s so lovely to see you.” Diane hugged her and then they went to sit in the conservatory at the back of the house. “How are you doing with the old show bar? I heard you and Gary took it on. I hope you’re going to make it fun again.”

“It’s more of a millstone than a flying success right now,” Kate confessed. “I’ve a show director ready and waiting, just no show for him to produce.”

“I’m sure you’re planning something spectacular,” Diane replied. “I know you, you’re never without plans.”

“I have plans, just no one to fit them,” Kate confessed. “I asked Craig, but he took offense.”

“He’ll come round.” Diane rang a bell and a few moments later a maid appeared. Kate looked at her friend in puzzlement.

“This is Gerald,” Diane said. “Curtsey for Kate.”

He did so rather elegantly, or as elegantly as a boy could, dressed in full maid’s uniform and wearing ridiculously high heels.

“I’m training him,” Dianne said in response to Kate’s raised eyebrows. “He confessed a liking for women’s things and I’m exploiting it. You like it, don’t you?”

“Yes madam,” Gerald replied, curtsying again. “Shall I do tea now, madam?”

“Yes,” Diane said, and he left the room.

“Honestly, Diane.” Kate held out her hands. “I don’t know where you get them from.”

“He came to me, after I’d given a talk. We dated a couple of times and when he let me put him in makeup, I decided I could use him. Despite appearances, he’s fun when we’re alone.”

“I always knew you understood the importance of fun.”

“Not only fun, but trust funds too. He has a great one, with full powers which he’s kindly assigned to me, access unrestricted. We can’t touch the capital, but the income is fabulous. I’ve become his trust chairman. There’s irony. Who’d have guessed that my accountancy qualification would ever be useful?”

“Is he a lesbian? I mean, if that could happen.”

“Of course not. He’s straight, but dresses female for me,” Diane replied. “It’s a bit like having a best girlfriend, so gentle, but with a penis when I need one.”

“How does that work?”

“I don’t know but it works for me, and he does what he’s told. He’s going blonde when his hair’s a little longer, then he’s getting implants.”

“Isn’t that taking it too far?”

“I don’t think so,” Diane said. “I always fantasised about having a male wife to cook and clean, and to look pretty for me. He came along, and with a little coaxing he’s turning out rather well.”

“But he’s still a he?” Kate said.

“When we’re finished he won’t look like a he, however hard he tries, but the important bits will still be working.”

“Does he know that?”

“I’m sure he does.”

“Gosh. Does he want a job at the show bar when he’s complete?” Kate almost begged.

“I’ll tell him that’s what he’s going to do,” Diane replied. “It’s no good giving him choices. There’s got to be one person in charge of any relationship and it’s always me.”

“We really need him,” Kate admitted.

All you have to do is tell me where and when. I’ve decided he’s going to be outrageously glamorous anyway, so he might as well be a show-off in a show bar.” Diane laughed at her joke.

* * * * *

Caspar hated his name. “It’s nasty and sounds brutal,” he told his stepfather. “I don’t know why anyone would give their child that name.”

“Maybe your father didn’t like you either. Did you ever think of that?”

“My mother loved me.” Caspar held back the tears. “I wish she was still alive.”

“But she isn’t. And the sooner you’re able to look after yourself, you’re on your own.”

Caspar went to his room. “There’s no point in having another row,” he told himself. “It’s better to dig an escape tunnel. I can’t stay here.”

He knew he was different from about five years old. He never wanted the rough and tumble, the toy guns, or the bruises he inevitable got from ball games.

“You’re just like a girl,” they’d tell him. He said nothing but deep inside his heart, he would agree.

It wasn’t too bad at his first school. The teachers looked after the children and seemed to take special care of him; as he grew older, he knew he identified with the girls more and more. He joined their games and learned their special language. He wondered if he was really one of them.

High school got harder and harder. He stayed with the girls but the boys used him as a punching bag, and worse when he was older. He was beaten and used brutally until he gave in and let them use him for their sexual fantasies. It was easier to suck a cock than be beaten for refusing.

The more he gave in, the more he was expected to do. The girls sympathised with him, but couldn't save him. The boys were unspeakably cruel.

After his mother died and he was left with a stepfather who hated him, his thoughts turned to escaping. The staying factor was that he didn't know how.

It all came to a head one Saturday night. His stepfather came home more than a little over-served from the bar.

"Come down here, you little fag," he shouted up the stairs. "I've heard what you do for the jocks; you can come and do it for me."

Caspar felt a tear of terror rising in his eyes but then a new resolve shimmered through him. "I'm going," he resolved.

He collected all the money he had concealed in his room. It didn't amount to much, but it was a start. He stuffed what clothes he had into a holdall and grabbed his coat.

"Get down here," came a bellow from below.

"I'm coming," he said sweetly. "I'm a bit embarrassed, can you put the light out and get ready with your pants down?"

"Hurry up." The voice came from the living room as Caspar crept to the top of the stairs and started down.

Taking a deep breath, Caspar hurled himself down the remaining steps, struggled with the lock on the front door, and hurried out into the night. He heard his stepfather shouting and guessed he fell as he struggled to pull his pants up.

Caspar ran into the night, and ran and ran until he had no breath left. "What do I do now? I can't go back ever."

He walked the back roads, heading for the freight yards, a half-formed plan to hide and hitch a lift anywhere.

* * * * *

Left alone, Harper explored the theatre. In front of the bar was an admission desk that looked disused and double doors which would open to the street. Posters, mainly home-made, advertised a few gigs. A price list and menu – drinks and burgers only – was pinned to the doors. He walked back through the main area, over the stage and began to explore the backstage areas.

“This must have been quite a place when it was new,” he thought to himself. “These dressing rooms were designed for quite a cast.”

He saw rooms with bright lights and mirrors on the wall, a counter and hanging space. Two were bigger than the others; he chose one of them with a full-length couch and bathroom to be his temporary home. He left his rucksack there and went to explore further.

The old wardrobe room was obvious. A sewing machine, a long table and an ironing board were still there. Racks of clothes under dust sheets were pushed against one wall.

Small dressing rooms held packing case after packing case; big ones, small ones, others like huge cabin trunks. Some had labels with faded names and addresses of theater companies which must have passed through. Where there were dates, none were more recent than ten years ago.

“I wonder what these can be,” Harper asked himself, trying the fasteners on one of the more accessible cases.

“Whatever they are, they’ve got good locks,” he decided after trying several without success.

He switched on the lights, nothing happened. The bulb remained unlit and in the fading light there was little to do. He walked back to his chosen room, ate a few biscuits from his rucksack and settled down for a long and dreamless sleep.

* * * * *

Although he wasn't a professional piano tuner, he had a good ear and an electronic tuner. The piano had to sound better. A visit to the local auto shop produced a wrench that could double as a tuning key. Several hours later, it was making a sound nearer to the norm.

"Hey Harper, when are you going to start the rehearsals?" Jasper returned from re-stocking the bar. "I'm tired of that one-note samba you're playing. The customers will be coming in on Thursday. You got to have something ready for them. What am I paying you for?"

"You're not paying me, remember?" Harper replied. "And without tuning, whatever I do isn't going to sound great."

"You sounded good to me when I hired you."

"You must have cloth ears," Harper replied. "I was in tune, but the piano was nowhere near."

"Okay, you win, but please make sure you're ready. I've been telling people you can do the good old standards and play a good soft lounge jazz." Jasper coughed with the exertion of lifting another crate of beer. "They'll like the change from those noisy bands."

"And you'll probably get an easier class of customer too."

"As long as they spend, I don't care."

Harper sat at the keyboard and started to play. 'Autumn Leaves' was followed by 'You've Got a Friend' with rippling chords as he changed keys be-

tween the songs. He paused, thinking what to play next.

“That’s really good.” Jasper clapped. “Did anyone ever tell you you sound like a girl? You sing much higher than you talk.”

“I have been told that before,” Harper admitted. “I try to sing lower. I even tried to sing like Tom Waites but it doesn’t work. The voice goes where it’s comfortable.”

“I still get the image of the slinky black dress when I close my eyes and listen.” Jasper came round to the front of the hall. “Did you ever try that?”

“What do you mean?”

“The dress and all,” Jasper replied. I bet you could look real good and get better tips too.”

“Oh sure. I could grow a pair and strip for an encore,” Harper scoffed. “Don’t be silly. It would be a disaster.”

“Okay, only sayin’, that’s all.” Jasper turned and left him to his rehearsal.

Harper ran through a few more standards, a few old popular hits, and tried a bit of country too. “I’m going to have to study a few more lyrics,” he told himself as he hummed where the words failed.

* * * * *

Casper woke to the sun shining into the bushes where he had spent the night. There was a bustle around the freight yard with wagons and trailers being hitched and loaded; tractors pulling containers here and there. He edged closer and, taking a chance, ran up to a container, hauled himself in, and hid behind the pallets. An hour or so later, the doors slammed shut and the motion told him that he was on his way.