

THE BLACK WIDOW'S PREY

by N. S. Wikarski

EXCERPT

Freddie transferred his attention back to his sandwich until he heard a loud wrapping sound. Several other patrons turned to gaze at a woman standing outside the saloon and tapping on the glass with her parasol.

“Ye gods, no!” Freddie exhaled in alarm.

Evangeline LeClair tapped again, then pointed emphatically at her friend seated at a back table. She crooked her index finger as an invitation to join her.

A murmur of alarm immediately arose among the patrons. They sounded like a bleating herd of sheep who had just spied a wolf.

Doc swung around the end of the bar. Shaking his fist, he thundered loud enough to be heard outside, “No women allowed!”

Undeterred, Evangeline smiled sweetly and waved at Freddie.

“Damn temperance advocate!” Doc cursed. “I seen her around. One of them do-gooders from Hull House. She’s out to wreck my business.”

Mason chuckled. “She’s no temperance reformer, Doc.”

Relenting only slightly, Doc growled, “Well, if you know her, tell her to go around to the alley door. She can get packaged goods there. I won’t let no damn woman set foot in this place.”

“She’s a lady,” Bill retorted. “I doubt she’d drink in an establishment of this low moral order, my friend.”

“Fine with me if she don’t! Let her go and drink champagne with her society friends while they hatch more schemes to shut down the honest liquor trade in this city!” Doc stalked off to calm his flock of agitated customers, growling about the Anti-Saloon League under his breath.