

A,B&E (novel extract)

by Marc Nash

Still in the mood for yet more ? A man after my own appetites. Okay, let's go swing by The Strip. Appositely labelled. A little cutting of concrete Britain, torn off and transplanted here in the Greece of antiquity. Strip teasing. Divesting the flush Northern Europeans of their pleasure tokens, in return for token pleasures. Blistering and skinning them of their bruisable rind, exposing a seedless kernel. Neon guarantees shoring up against failure.

All comers cannot but succeed in attaining escape velocity, within this low slung firmament. Note how each gaudy fleshpot is smeared in alcoholic nectar. The cheapest shots, the happiest hour, the most potent admixtures. All competing to compound the greatest alchemical transformation upon the teeming host. Of course, it's all locked up tight through deals struck with the holiday reps. In return for prolonging their stay for the whole summer, scantily clad young women hand out sure-thing vouchers for staked promises of patronage. Victorious bar owners eke out the rocket fuel of choice, by adulterating it with ersatz vodka from Stuttgart and Munich. In order to recover their clipped margins. And so it goes round and round, this galvanized wheel of commerce. Everybody gets to scoff a slather of the pie. It's all so charmingly artless as to be almost endearing. If it's true competitive advantage they're after to sort the wheat from the chaff, they ought to have the likes of native Damons setting up protection rackets and be done with all the fannying around. I could offer myself as a consultant.

By the same immersion that you cannot but be surfeited with booze, nor can you fail to score a coupling along the jostling Strip. Running its fingerlessly gloved gauntlet. Groped and fondled by the denizens of this lurid corral reef. Take a trip down amnesia lane. Stumble through fumble alley. Draped along rape cull de sac. The first few may turn him down and knock him back. Yet by the end of

the booty hunt, some girl is bound to be acquiescent. By dint of the attrition engendered by attaining her own current location. And even if that fails to turn up an opportunity and an offering, the boy has been put in mind by the very propulsion of the Strip; stud squadrons and female flights strafing one another, before sweeping in for the dogfight rolls and spiral dives. Thereby he can just seize what he wants and down some blackedout girl who's lost her mates, lost her way and lost her wits. Nothing is denied in this free-for-all market. This bulimic culture of monstrous need. The Strip. A channelled architecture of the spree. A wheelchair ramped ziggurat of binge consumption. Where a once timeless land has been assailed by degeneracy. Time lapsed kineticism. A whirligig of constant motion for motion's sake. A depleted inoculation against stasis and death. Here is Arcadia transmogrified into amusement arcades. Greece transmuted into Little Britain.

Nightly these acolytes oblate their flesh to the Trickster God, the ruttish goat totem. Listlessly yearning for some sort of transcendence. They surrender their bodies to the fetish and awake the next morning purged of recall and blearily probing their unexplained stigmata and scars. But come the waxing of the moon and they will again be abroad. Picking at the scab so that it will not heal. Yet for all their carnal abrading, they remain spectral. Unable to spark feeling. Lemures sundered from their operational husks. Topside, this barren stomping ground, they are shades wandering blindly in search of sensation. While somewhere in the nether world, my bailiwick, their carcasses clamour dumbly for sentience.

