

Perdition

by Robert Crisman

Michelle was a hunter. Pretty boys, preferably monied--why not?--but any boy, really, who made girls growl and, hopefully, tear out their hair when Michelle roped him in.

Sarah, her buddy, had married her own boy a year or so back. She was happy and out of the game, no threat to the hunter at this point in time.

They'd gone through treatment together and bonded the way girls do there, an essentially narcissist pairing for sure. Both girls were pretty, tall, lithe, suburban, and shared a taste in music and boys. They also shared an absolute mastery of the blase rebellion that comes with a lah-de-dah shrug at the world's travails and all the efforts of keepers to keep them corralled.

Their daddies drove Benzos, boys trolled at their feet, and their treatment was paid for. They'd dipped their toes in the fast life and escaped with--what? Scratches?

The wars that they'd lived through, such as they were, now were giggles, except for a few: the near-rapes; Sarah's od; Michelle's night outdoors in the rain. She'd been kidnapped and robbed and threatened with death, then thrown out of a van by this fucker her boyfriend owed money.

Mere scratches! The dread that settles in all junkies' throats til their last dying breath had barely the time to take root and now, in the hindsight that young, buffered dopers possess, those scratches seemed merely the product of places and times left behind.

Michelle and Sarah were cynical, yes, their cynicism carefree and light, born of the relative, undeserved ease of their lives in a hard, mirthless world.

There existed within them the deeper perdition, of course, the perdition of culture, American culture, the 21st Century suburban version, made up of Strip Malls From Hell.

Strip Malls From Hell! Fool schools for young boys and girls who, by the time they are six have learned that to have is to live, and that

without *things* they are *nothing*.

Culture equals consumption! By the time they are nine these children are dressing as crack hos and pimps--pluperfect icons of consumptive culture for sure!--to go door-to-door hustling candy on Halloween Night. So *many* mommies and daddies think that's just cute.

Nine-year-old crack hos and pimps, shaking and baking on Halloween Night! Just think of those children whose Halloween Nights last forever...

In line with all this, Michelle and Sarah'd been raised to be blowup dolls pretty much, i.e., nothing but surface. Bait for the Movers and Shakers in Benzos and Beamers... Girls' price tags run higher or lower according to tit size, et al., along with whatever con and style and panache they can muster in places where buyers all gather to bid.

A baby doll's price will determine her *place*. Gilt-edged means status, security, safety...

Life in the prison of skin! Inside the skin it's shapeless and dark.

There are compensations: a girl can go shopping wherever the finest accessories are sold. She can shop, gild the lily--and push back the dread that comes from sure knowledge that tits, ass, and jowls will sooner or later succumb to the dictates of physics. After which--*horror*--the buyers will all turn away.

Women, you see, are forever for sale, even after having been bought. What is bought, after all, can always be dropped at the second-hand store for resale. Marked down to be sure...

Dread seeps into marrow and muscle, to molder, metastasize, kill. For some girls, those low in the running or those with a spark who seek to break free from the prison of skin, a recourse is dope.

There are girls as well whose price tag is up there--the Michelles and the Sarahs--whose dread is merely a dark, formless pressure. Their screams are silent and all the louder for that. For these girls, dope is the only Fuck You they can find.

