

Kiss & make up

by Ryder Collins

And we're in a bar. And we're in a bar. And I don't know where we are. Maybe Texas. But that's out of the way. Maybe Missouri. But they don't have any discos in Missouri. But they don't have any discos in Texas.

Either.

Ether.

Or do they?

It's a night club, I guess — the green lighting insists yes. The green light casts us all into absinthe shadows, into moonlit algae on water. Am I going crazy? I'm at a dock, a lone figure waiting in green light. No, that's not me, I'm the figure watching the figure celebrate the green light. The figures dancing and genuflecting under it.

And they've been playing “Brickhouse” and “White Lines” and “Ladies' Night” and “Save the Last Dance” and “Love Will Tear Us Apart” and I'm thinking what a weird mix and I'm thinking I'm an intellectual and I'm thinking what an intellectual mix, an eclectic mix, and I'm thinking what the hell am I doing here and I'm thinking who the hell is they who's playing the music and I want to go up and see the DJ or DJs and maybe they're cute and then I'm wondering about my sexuality cause the only guy I've ever wanted is Mark and my psychotherapist says this is sublimation for my desire for Cass, well she/he would if I had a psychotherapist and I self-assess myself all the time and I'm noticing that everyone here has tattoos and of course, I have a couple — I have a yin-yang, to symbolize the union of opposites, to symbolize the meeting of male/female (although Cass says this just reinforces the oldest binary in the world and then I have to ask her when she started reading theory, if she's going on to grad school, or if Mark knows what she's thinking — did she steal his books — like he'd read feminist theory, anyway, and of course, she would label me as sexist for asserting she couldn't come up with these ideas on her own and of course, she would label me as sexist if

she knew I was watching this chick's tits jiggle as she danced to Joy Division or if she knew I'd often listened to her and Mark doing it, fucking, you know, and it sounded like Mark was killing her and I almost ran into her bedroom to save her. Damsel in distress. Yeah, I'm sexist. And Cass likes to be rammed.) Oh, and my other tattoo is a lizard curling over my shoulder, sticking its tongue out. And I'm thinking about getting another one tattooed on my stomach, or maybe my pelvis, a poem, perhaps my own, about white lines, about yellow blending to white. The perfect poem. I'm going to write it.

And I don't go up to see the DJ cause Cass is dancing by me and I don't want to leave her alone cause y'all and maybe I am in Texas if I'm using these colloquialisms — and there I go again being the intellectual and I always try to play so dumb, except for my penchant for Greco-Roman allusions (I try to repress them, really I do, but they just slip out); my psychotherapist, well, if I had one, says I act dumb to attract smarter women like Cass but that actually works against me cause smart women like even smarter men and how the hell smart can Cass be if she ever fell for a loser like Mark?, well, y'all know what happens when she's alone — she goes off with some guy and gets knocked up. No, she usually doesn't get knocked up cause I'm sure she's had a lot more lovers than just Mark cause I asked her one night and she almost told me or maybe she told me and it was over twenty which for a female, I think, is a very high number of cocks. I don't want to leave her alone and where is the baby? Have we left the baby in the hotel, in the parking lot? And why does my nose feel so crusty? Did we, somehow, perchance (and there I go again with the high level of diction, with the elevated lexicon), score?

Anyway, Cass has stopped dancing and she's smoking a cigarette right by the dance floor and I think she's so sexy when she does that even though she makes a loud exhaling noise when she blows the smoke out, it's almost annoying, in fact, it is annoying, but I find it endearing, cause at least I can always find her in a crowded (but quiet, cause it's actually not that loud a sound, but maybe I'm so attuned to it, maybe it's her mating call to me) room and I love

the way her lips pout and then relax when she exhales, I love the way she poses.

But then I see this guy and he's trying to talk to her, I think he's harassing her, and he looks a little bit like Mark, in fact, I think he is Mark, yeah, stocky, but tall, dark brown hair, brown eyes (even though she always told me she loved blue eyes), good-looking, almost gorgeous even in this green light scheme — he can carry off the green, I mean, he fucking carries the green, and I think he's almost touched her. I think he's tried to grab her arm. I flick my cigarette at him (all of a sudden I notice I'm smoking, which I don't usually do unless I'm really fucked up, seriously— am I fucked up?) — this is my weapon, my defense. And Mark turns to me and says —

“You wanna fight.”

And I say yes.

And he says —

“First, we gotta make out.”

And I can't believe it. I kiss him, he kisses me back, hard, with tongue. I'm thinking this is not Mark, but it looks a lot like Mark and maybe there is more than one Mark in the world. Maybe there are a lot of different Marks running around and stealing your love and basically just fucking shit up. Some kind of weird balance thing or something. I come up for breath, look into Mark/not-Mark's eyes and what did Cass say about the first time they met — she felt like she knew him? It made her wet. Well, I'm feeling like I know this Mark/not-Mark guy that I just frenched and I'm definitely not — he's grabbing my head between his hands again, goddamn he's got big hands, big, hulking, somewhat calloused hands and this is not what I thought it'd be like — kissing Mark. Maybe I just wanted Cass all along. I pull away. I'm clenching my fist, pulling my arm back, ready to hit him, wanting to hit him, desperately wanting to hit him, wanting so bad I can feel my knuckles jarring against his meaty, thick chest, can imagine the dark purple Fig Newton bruises on them tomorrow, Cass's look of concern or disgust or both, until he says, very softly in what sounds like an English accent while looking straight at me, “Wait.”

