

## I Only Have Thighs for You

Seduction and a new life direction weren't on my agenda that fateful night. My comfortable life would soon be so uncomfortable that it ceased to fit me anymore, kind of like underwear from junior high school. But, let me start at the beginning.

After college graduation, seven years ago, I stayed in a low end job working for a small newspaper in Champaign, Illinois. I was just a regular guy, kind of dorky, and immature. My college sweet heart and I were engaged; I drank beer with my buddies at the Esquire Lounge. Tonight I was in Chicago for the first time, covering a transgender revue at The Baton Club. To make sure people knew I was a real journalist, I wore my Hunter S. Thompson t-shirt.

The lights in the club were turned down to cabaret mood. This setting seemed to mute the tacky décor and lessen the weariness; so, I figured it might do the same for the performers. The whole joint was like a tired old broad who only looked good in shifting shadows. But, as I felt the pounding bass; I experienced a surprising charge of electricity. The crowd was a mixed bag of pedigrees, and they were wired. A slow drizzle of sizzle was licking the edges of the room. Soon, we would all have the fever.

I settled into my stage front seat, sipping my first watered down martini. The make-up and costumes on the troupe were stunning and fabulous. No family jewels on these girls, (either they were taped or a nick of the knife changed their life). Chili Pepper, Maya, Sherei and Victoria were all succulent and sassy. They sang and danced their transsexual hearts out for the rowdy crowd. Their nasty gyrations and acrobatic moves brought vulgar hoots from the gallery.

I was busy taking notes, so, I wasn't ready for the unexpected slice of silence. BOOM! The lights died and a blue spot hit center stage. A languid sax moaned "I Only Have Eyes for You" as Mimi Marks, the headliner, slithered from the labia folds of the ruby red curtain. She was perfection in porcelain. Mimi stopped and waited. Once our hearts started beating again, she beguiled us into her garden of

hedonism. Mimi kept her movements tight and private, as if she was in her own dressing room, unobserved. Those dual promises of titillation and dismissal assaulted my immaturity and fired up my emotions like bottle rockets. When Mimi tossed off her cape, my heart plummeted. I dropped my pencil, held tight to my drink and bought a ticket to heaven. Mimi's sculptured ivory thighs skimmed the stage in her six-inch stilettos, no singing, no dancing, just Mimi. Her geisha face showed no emotion, it just couldn't be bothered by the effort.

Barely winning the contest against gravity, Mimi's nickel sized pasties clung on for dear life as she pranced across the worn pine. Mimi was the cream of the crop in this field of dreams; nobody came close to her flawless exhibition. Her tiny shorts didn't even give a nod to her previous gender. The sax made love to Mimi and she rebuked the guttural notes with her indifference. All the air in the room was held between my parted lips. What had come before was now crude. What had been done before was now lewd. Mimi erased the sins of the prior performances. When she exited the stage, my eyes felt like I had been staring at the sun.

After the finale, I was still in a puddle of primal ooze when I spotted Mimi sitting alone at the bar. From the shadows, I watched her creamy crimson mouth circle the end of a Virginia Slim. Her exquisite face was scattered into prisms from the mirrored lights, the sadness and pain etched on that façade was haunting. Mimi had been at the Baton for fifteen years and some change, that's a long highway of bumps and grinds. As I watched her, I experienced a soul-crippling and claustrophobic gut punch. Waves of extreme need surged through me as I suffered a shattering realization. Mimi and I both had settled; different venues, but similar fates. I felt the first stirrings of discontent at my life choices.

With my tail wagging, I introduced myself and asked for her autograph. Mimi gave Hunter S. Thompson a smoky gaze and pivoted away for a moment. But, before she swung those alabaster thighs

around, she slid a napkin toward me. Mimi then winnowed through the crowd, getting ready for set two.

I wondered at what age Mimi Marks closed her eyes, blew out the candles on her birthday cake and wished to be a girl and does she still gently fan new dreams to keep them burning bright? Sadly, Mimi looked like life had worn all the dreaminess off her.

Mimi's weariness had whacked me hard in the head. I was settling for crumbs when the whole cake was waiting. Her plight awoke my hunger for what was around the corner, down the bend and across the river...

Marley, my new drinking companion and roommate, squawks from his cage, "Where the Hell ya been?" as I open my apartment door. Covering art openings for a five dollar magazine has paid our bills here in Harlem for two years. My smoke upholstered walls hold only a framed paper napkin and a map of the world.

I'm becoming restless in New York, so, I pour two beers and throw a dart at the map. Marley spreads his wings and dunks his entire feathered head into his glass; he's acquired a serious drinking problem.

I sip my PBR and salute the framed napkin; it has a burn hole at the top and a lipstick kiss near the edge and reads,

Stan,

"Go set the world on fire for both of us. "

Love always,

Mimi Marks

