



Desert Heat

December 2019 | Issue 12

Magazine™

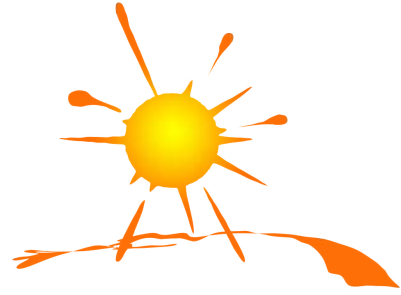
Scott
Magnussen

Sexy Bearded Midwestern Bear

Jon Malcolm
Interviews
**Hunter
Harden**

The return of
Jezebel

Erotic
Artwork by
Groeg



DESERT HEAT MAGAZINE

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Desert Heat Magazine

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A full-page photograph of a man with a thick brown beard and a baseball cap, sitting on a tree stump in a forest. He is shirtless, showing tattoos on his arms and chest. He is wearing red and black plaid shorts. The background is dark and wooded.

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INTERVIEW WITH
HUNTER HARDEN

A man with a beard and short hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light purple button-down shirt that is open at the collar, stands on a rooftop. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a clear sky, with a prominent tower on the left.

MODEL CALL

MEN OF ALL SIZES

Desert Heat Magazine

is looking for men to feature in the Magazine!

DO YOU WANT OUR READERS TO SEE YOU?

GOT WHAT IT TAKES?

CLICK THE IMAGE AND WE'LL GET BACK TO YOU!

Ramblings From the Editor

So I was perusing Twitter, which I seem to do more and more these days, checking out a Hollywood actor who has come onto my radar do to his sheer sexiness. This actor had a new headshot posted and various people were posting comments of that image. One of these comments caught my attention and then my ire.

A good looking African American man had posted a comment which read *"No Homo But You Do Look Handsome"*. While normally I just write these kind of comments up to closeted men who are not comfortable or sure of their own sexuality or even possibly just a bigot towards gays in general.

However, upon contemplating the comment, it hit me that this was probably just a case of ignorance run amok. After all, what African American male would possibly think it was ok to disparage a group of people based on a difference? Why would he feel it was ok to say something that belittles a whole group of people with one word?

After all, the word "homo", said the way he said it, could not be considered a compliment. It was definitely derogatory in nature simply by the way he used it.

Now my mind wandered down a dark path when I started to ask myself how he would reactive if someone used a comment like one of the many derogatory comments used towards African American people. Would he be ok with some regular white male making a comment that disparaged all black men? Would he be ok with a white person using

terms meant to cause hurt against his race?

I think it's safe to assume, which we know that sometimes comes back to bite you in the ass, that he would NOT be ok with either of those instances! He would be appalled, in fact angry, if someone dared to make those comments on a social media site.

So then it comes down to why it should be ok for someone to use that term against gay men? Why is ok to make it sound like it is a bad thing to be gay?

Being gay is no more of a choice than being Black or being feminine or being short. It is what it is; the card that someone is dealt. Haven't there been enough lines drawn in our society already to keep us seperated? To keep us from all getting along?

Nobody responded to that man's comments. Nobody stood up for the incorrectness that the comment was. Well, nobody until myself, actually.

I wasn't rude about it. I didn't insult him for his ignorance. I simply asked him how he felt if the shoe were on the other foot.

While I am sure I didn't make much of a difference as the comment is still up. I did, however, feel the need to stand up for my kind, my tribe. We all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

And now I will get off my soapbox. I hope you all enjoy this new Issue of the Magazine!

Thanks for your continued support!!

John





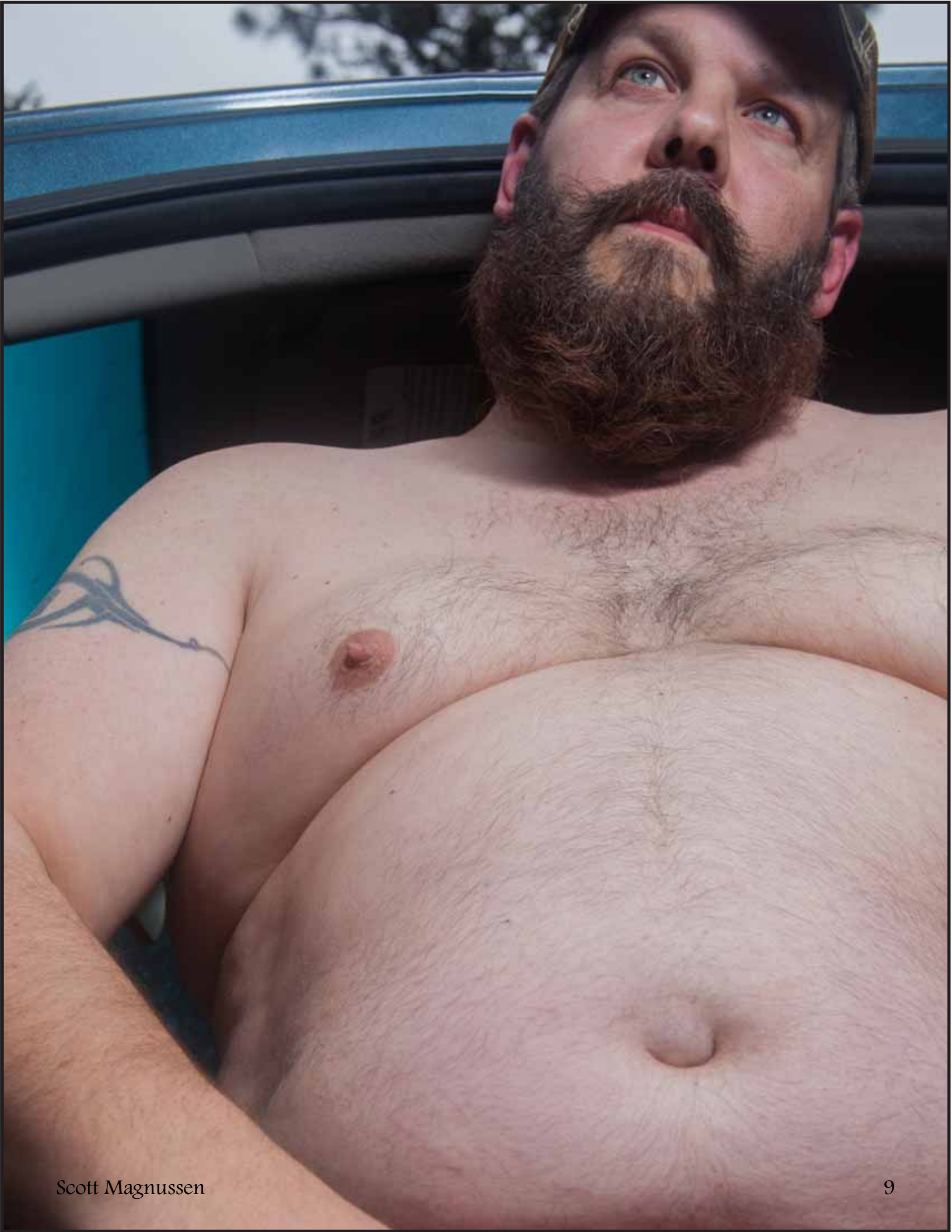
Scott Magnussen

Images by Desert Heat Images



Scott Magnussen















The lady, “Jezebel”, continues her song, and with her hunky animalistic male dancers as her backup, who lift her, while she acts as a temptress, she removes her gloves. She throws them to the crowd, as she touches her body while dancing, the other male performers, all large and muscular, touch her as well as if worshiping her like the idol of a goddess, and lift her as she dances.

Jezebel

Story by Elijah James Barrett

The club surroundings and Blake’s vision are swirling around in a sparkling blue mist (or fog). His vision swirls around like a kaleidoscope, as if Blake had been hit in the jaw or straight between the eyes. (The images of his surroundings spin in a circle, and appear to change or warp the faster they go.) Blake’s vision focuses on a place from his past, a door to an old haunt he used to frequent, an old jazz club, the neon sign above said “THE JUNGLE”.

Blake walks up to the place, up the steps, under the neon sign, which glowed bright bluish white in the night, and goes to the door. He could see the shadows of people moving around inside from the window on the door. One of the shadows approaches, a tall figure in a fedora, which mirrors his (Blake’s) own shadow. The man opens the door, he’s a bouncer, who seems familiar to Blake. He looks like the same “bear-faced” guard from the hideout in the hotel.

“What’s the password?” asks the bouncer.

Blake raises an eyebrow at the bearish man. Blake didn’t remember why, but this bearish man asking him this question struck him as strange. Blake and the large bearish man stand, eyes locked (their eyes glowing in the dark) staring down each other in the doorway, before the bearish man cracks a smile. He laughs.

“I’m just kidding, Blake, you can come right in.”

Blake stares him down, unamused.

“Aw, come on man, you’re always so serious. It’s like trying to talk to a big cat.”

“Not tonight,” says Blake.

“Alright, well, later, pal,” says the bear bouncer as Blake passes by, and goes inside the bar/club. “Oh, one more thing, we’ve got a new singer now,” says the bear man.

“Yeah?” asks Blake, “Who is she?”

“Not sure,” says the bearish man. “You’ll have to stay and hear her. She’s got the most beautiful voice I’ve ever heard. She’ll be on in five.”

“I’m just here for a drink, bud,” says Blake. “Really bad day today.”

Blake walks through the hall, to a door and into the main bar. Blake goes inside to have a drink.

“The Jungle” was little more than a small watering hole for the local thirsty nocturnal life, here on this side of the city (where many kinds of thirsts were quenched). Even that was being generous, Blake thought. While it billed itself as a nightclub wet bar, it was more of a dive bar and rundown saloon, the only thing jungle-like about it being it’s patrons, who acted more rowdy and savage as the night progressed, especially in the

back rooms, some nights Blake was included in those animalistic gatherings and rituals. In addition to its activities, there were a few extra flavors to this seemingly dim and derelict bar that were added to try and make the place more atmospheric, or give it more taste. These included fake trees and plants with twisting boughs and branches near the stage curtains and the piano, fake vines and leaves twisting around the trees, and wooden beams, and along the overhang of the bar, false Indian idols that looked like they were from a playhouse version of a Srirangapatna or Mysore temple, and “authentic” looking African tribal and witch doctor masks, all along the walls, with giant teeth and tusks (which screamed of bad taste, and which anyone in their right mind would find offensive). Not to mention the array of wild animal heads on the walls, which really scared Blake for some reason (most of which were animals that could only have been obtained through poaching). The bar itself was lined with various “talismans and trinkets”. There was also a giant fake Gorilla in the corner near the stage. To Blake, this place looked like a bad dream someone would have if they fell asleep after too many drinks and reading Rudyard Kipling’s “The Jungle Book”.

Blake made his way to the bar, while being watched by an array of witch-doctor masks and deceased tigers, boars and wildebeest (and a moose), and sits near an empty glass, next to what appeared to be a lions tooth. Blake winced at the sight of the tooth, and orders a drink from the bartender. (The bartender’s name was Marlon Cliff, Blake remembered that for some reason, and he always seemed to hate being there.) The bartender pours Blake a double scotch on the rocks.

Blake sits at the bar with his drink, while all sorts of sounds happen all around him. Blake tries to listen to the piano and jazz, while at the same time an old vaudeville routine is taking place on stage, warranting some extreme and negative reactions from the audience.

“Boo! Vaudeville’s dead!” yells one of the bar patrons as they boo the vaudeville minstrels off the stage. The minstrels leave and instead, another figure approaches from behind the curtains, dressed in a modest blouse and skirt, and some sort of necklace, Blake could see her familiar silhouette behind the curtain, but could not believe it was her. She wouldn’t be in a place like this.

She walks out from behind the curtain, singing a song Blake has never heard before, and yet it feels like he’s heard it many times before. The young, slender woman singing the song had dark ebony hair which draped to her back, just past her shoulder blades, which was unfamiliar to Blake, but the rest of her was. The eyes, the face, her body, it was all familiar. It was her, Christina, the same beautiful young lady from the automat he’d had lunch with many times, the same one who had asked him to the beach, and the aquarium, on his first date in years. The very same Christina he had been to the movies with, and watched “Blues in the Night” with, saying it was a movie that both inspired and saddened her, and Blake had never bothered to ask why. But here she was, showing another side of her. Blake heard that other side to her. That voice, it was beautiful. The song she sang seemed to captivate everyone inside the establishment, even those who had been rowdy, and disrespectful, and whistling, and howling like wild dogs when she had first walked on the stage. She stood still, in place, at the center of the stage at first, her hands clenched together, and eyes closed as if in a prayer, in her pale indigo blue button up blouse and skirt, while singing the first verse...

“Would be better had I never known a lover such as you...”

Everyone in the audience was silent, transfixed, most of all Blake. The sound of her voice was haunting, not only beautiful. It echoed across the small, unworthy establishment, filling not only everyone’s ears, but their minds as well.

“...forsaking dreams and all, for the siren call of your arms.”

She reached out her arms and then opened her eyes. Blake was immediately struck by the intense cobalt blue of her eyes, even more so that now she was wearing a black wig, it seemed to bring out the color of her eyes even more than her usual blonde, and matched the tone of her skin. Her eyes seemed to have a power over him when she opened them, as if he could not look away, even if he’d wanted to (“*Why on earth would I want to look away?*” Blake thought). He felt like he was falling into them, as if falling in to a pool of water. She continued to sing...

“Like a demon, love possessed me, you... obsessed me constantly...” it felt as if she was singing the song directly to Blake, even though he

knew that she couldn't possibly know that he was in the audience. Or had she all along? She brought her hands up into the air, as if trying to reach for something, desperately, "...*What evil star is mine, that my fate's design should be?*" She brought her arms slowly down to her breast, as she emitted a smile Blake had never seen come from her face, as if she was tainting him, her hand clutching her blouse and then, she uttered and sang a name, one that would haunt Blake for years to come, in a voice that sounded completely different than her own, as if, by singing the name, she was metamorphosing into a different person.... "Jezebel...."

She pulled open her blouse and shed her clothes with the ease of a butterfly coming out of its cocoon. Blake felt his face flush, as she danced, across the stage, seemingly naked, or was it a very form fitting dress, Blake couldn't tell, as the light went dimmer to silhouette her and bathe her in shadow.

Blake didn't know how to take this, after seeing her slowly stripping off her clothes into what was wither a very provocative outfit, or she was naked. *Either way, I can see her tits*, he thought. Blake's face went hot. Blake is embarrassed, he blushes. This is the first time he's seen them, her breasts, or her (seemingly) naked like this. He felt even more embarrassed that he liked what he saw. This was so sudden.

Blake continues watching her performance. He's captivated and mesmerized. He didn't know she could sing or dance like this. He was turned on. Like she was connecting and communicating to some primal part of himself he had kept hidden. She brought it out of him.

Christina twirls across the stage, spinning, with the grace of an experienced dancer (or ballerina), and as she does, the stage seems to fill with a blue mist (Christina herself appears to turn into mist or smoke as she dances), and everything seems to dissipate as the memory fades into the present...

"...Jezebel..."

* * * * *

At the Blue Rose Club, "Jezebel" continues the song and dance. It looks like she's naked, in the shadows, with only gloves on and an

exotic flower in her hair (an iris?). It was the same flower that Blake remembered Christina wore (when Christina wore the black wig back at her performance nights at "The Jungle" back then, because the proprietor of the bar/jazz club thought it made her look more "exotic".)

"*If ever a devil was born...without a pair of horns, it was you. Jezebel it was you.*"

She made her way to the front of the stage, closer to the audience.

"*If ever and angel fell, Jezebel, it was you. Jezebel, it was you...*"

At one point, the "Jezebel" singer, flirted, non-verbally, with one of the waiters near the stage, as she danced and sang. The waiter was a big burly bear of a man, and she seemed like a tiny dancing nymph or faerie next to him.

"*If ever a pair of eyes promised paradise...*" She kneeled down at the edge of the stage, to play with the big burly waiter's hair and strokes his beard.

She descends the stage, and the big strong waiter helps her. "*Deceiving me...*" She danced down the stage as she sang, and rubbed around him, and twirled, and he obliged and twirled her around, lifting her over his shoulders, as she almost seemed like she danced on top of him. Blake wondered if this was part of the performance or if she found this big bearish waiter attractive. It was only after a few moments that Blake realized that the waiter in question, who had caught the eye of "Jezebel" was Mick.

"...*Grieving me...*"

Mick, the waiter, lifts her (seemingly) naked form to the stage, where she lays on her belly for a moment, one leg lifted behind her, grabbing his tie as she sang a verse, pulling him toward her face. "...*Leaving me blue...*" Mick took the flower from her hair as they appeared to kiss. Blake blushed. Their kiss breaks. "Jezebel" then pushes Mick away, her hand still gripping his tie. "...*Jezebel...*" She looks at him longingly, stroking his bearded face one more time, letting go of his tie, slowly rising from the stage floor. "...*It was you...*" She then appeared to place something on his silver tray, as she got up onto the stage, and danced to the center.

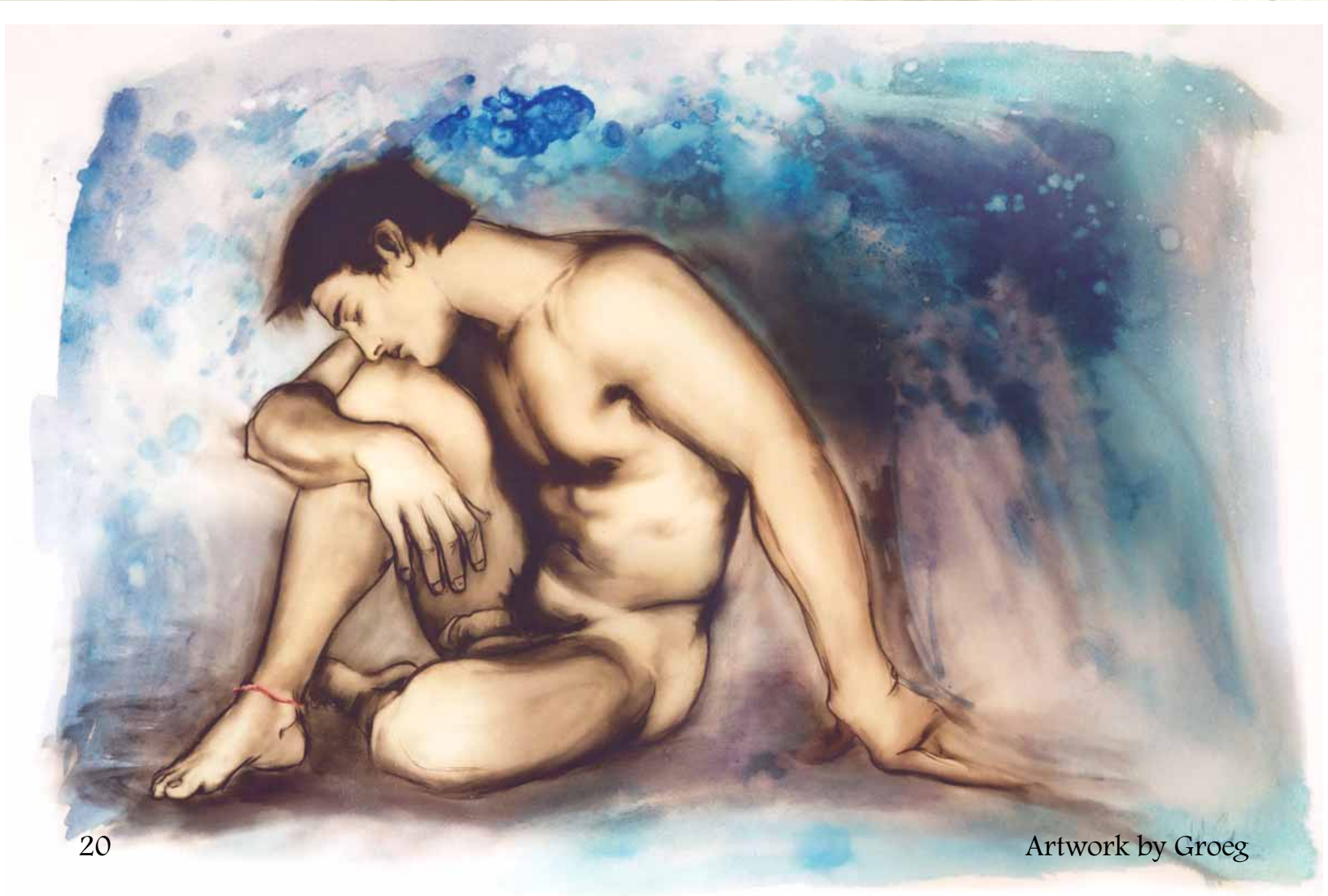
A jazzy, jungle-rhythm like musical interlude

Continued on page 26



Artwork by
GROEG











A MESSAGE FROM GROEG

Most of these pieces are created with wax on mylar, which is a frosted plastic. Some use ink for color, and when finished they are translucent creating an almost stained glass effect. It's a process I developed for a commission by a client who intended to put it in his bathroom (In Dean Martin's old house) so I needed to come up with something that could withstand moisture and not mildew like paper can.

Keep tabs on my Twitter for new art as I come out with it. It's slow as I spend a lot of time doing the fine art watercolors which take forever to create.

I enjoy creating erotic or sensual art of the male form and will probably branch out into more explicitly sexual material.

Artwork by Groeg

If anyone wants to model for me, please contact me. I also do commissions.

I've also set up a special promotional code for Desert Heat readers, so that they can get 15% off orders through January. Just put in DESERTHEAT in the coupon code in checkout.







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in the song began, with drums, brass, and guitar, as the “Jezebel” singer/dancer did a slow (naked) samba toward the center of the stage.

Another curtain lifted as “Jezebel” danced to the center of the stage and struck a pose, revealing two silhouettes of staircases, against a backdrop of a backlit deep blue curtain, each stair occupied by a large, robust, muscular male figure, seemingly as nude as Jezebel herself. Blake couldn’t take his eyes off of the strong, well built, full and chiseled male forms. They looked like they each possessed beastly strength. The only thing peculiar about these silhouetted big, strong naked men was that they each possessed the head of an animal, like Egyptian gods, standing on the stairways like they were ancient hieroglyphs or powerful godlike statues.

For a moment Blake thought his eyes were still under the influence of that “blue mist” from the bottle of “buru-bara”, but after shutting his eyes, and opening them again, the animal heads remained. He realized that they too were part of the show, probably masks or headdresses worn by each of the large male dancers (but Blake wondered, way in the back of his mind, if they were real). They stood for a moment, as still as statues, against the blue backdrop, before descending the stairs, in rhythm with the music, their heavily muscled bodies causing almost audible thuds with each step, as if they were indeed made of stone.

They began to converge and circle around Jezebel in a tribal sort of dance. Blake now realized that the animal heads of the naked built men were all those of canines, wolves, dogs, coyotes, jackals, and the like. Blake suddenly recalled the bible story of Jezebel he had read, and been told during his southern Baptist upbringing when he was a child, and suddenly felt nervous. What exactly was going to happen on stage during this performance? All of the performers naked. ...Blake suddenly felt he was not so much witnessing a dance, or nightclub performance, but a ritual.

Jezebel stood at the center of the stage, awaiting the massive, beastly dog and wolf men. The large men stood tall over her, surrounding her like a pack of ravenous wolves, almost completely blocking her from view. Blake’s heart sank... What were they going to do? Then the circle of powerful

men covered her, bowing their heads and showing their backs, as if they were eating her. But then they lifted her into the air, as she seemed to dance and spin on thin air, they acted as if they were her slaves or servants, worshipping her. Half of the big, dog-headed men turned out toward the audience, the outer circle like a circle of Roman guards, while the inner circle lifted her up and down, in an overtly sexual manner. Blake wondered how far this would go.

When the circle broke, “Jezebel” danced across the stage, taking a turn with each one of the men, in poses so close and intimate, it looked as if they were indeed having sex on the stage. The fact that they were all silhouetted in shadow kept their actual actions masked enough from the audience as for it not to be completely explicit. The dance had the energy of a roman orgy, as “Jezebel” goes to each of the large, virile men and “dances” with each one of them in an erotic fashion. She seems to connect with each of their bodies, sometimes their hips locked together, sometimes one of their doglike heads between her legs, or hers between theirs, but there was an elegance to each one of their sexually charged moves, which made it difficult for Blake to call it pornographic (though he did have a big hard-on developing in his pants, that was for sure).

When the strong, buff male dancers weren’t making love through dance to her, they turned on each other in grinding, pumping moves, against each other’s big bodies. “Jezebel” danced around them, as if influencing these men to have heated, frenzied sex with each other, but at the same time, it was all a dance. Blake felt very flushed at seeing all these big, big men naked, dancing, with animal heads, but still all identities in the shadows, sharing one woman, but then having sex with each other. It reminded him of an erotic dream he’d had when he was younger, when he first was coming to terms with his sexuality.

Their builds reminded him so much of Mick’s, large and bearish, and almost pure, thick slabs of muscle, with pecs so big they bounced, so much that he suspected Mick had stripped out of his waiter uniform and was one of them. He looked near the base of the stage. Mick, in his waiter get up, was nowhere to be found. Was he taking part in the performance as one of the dancers? Blake wouldn’t put it past Mick to have this be part of the

plan to get close to her, and not tell him, and with the intense shadows that hid all the big husky male dancer's identities, along with their wolf and dog headdresses (or masks) he could very well have been one of them. There was one in particular (the largest and beefiest of the pack), who seemed to act as the lead, with glowing orange eyes, whose nude, muscular, heavy body seemed just like what Blake remembered of Mick's, who was being very hands on with Jezebel, as she engaged with him. It wasn't likely it was him, but Blake found the idea exciting. The big men all looked very well endowed between their legs as well, and Blake was impressed when Jezebel was lifted up by the male dancer that Blake suspected was Mick, and she wrapped her legs around his thick waist, and seemed to take him in her, as she leaned her head back in a very provocative dance move, his head between her breasts, and his hand sliding up and down her body as he bounced her on his groin, his large beefy ass thrusting, balancing her with his big tree-trunk-like legs, and holding her in his big arms. After the climax of their coupling seemed to be achieved, he threw his head back, then spun her around in an impressive dance move, that reminded Blake of swing dancing, then lifted her up, throwing her into the air, then, catching her, then lowered her, sliding her down between his legs, on the floor, then pulling her back up as she jumped into the air, and he seemingly "tossed" her to the next "hungry wolf". The way the largest of the men (of the pack) moved, the way he had thrown his head back when he "climaxed", reminded Blake SO much of Mick. Was that really him? "Lucky dog", Blake thought in envy, as a primal part of him wished he could join those sexy male dancers on stage, with the mesmerizing and intoxicating "Jezebel" and be one of her "dogs".

Blake shook his head, trying to force himself out of these thoughts. Mick couldn't be the "pack leader" dancer on stage. That was impossible. He wouldn't be dancing, let alone having sex with his former flame, or a girl who looked like her, on stage, with a bunch of other big men. He couldn't be seeing this. This must have been another dream or hallucination from the "Buru-Bara". They could not be having some sort of sex ritual onstage, not in a nightclub... or could they? No one spoke of what happened at "The Blue Rose" after all. Was this what...?

Jezebel

... Before Blake could think on this anymore, the dance resumed, as all the males, in a heated, orgasmic frenzy, then turned to Jezebel again, and circled her in a tribal-like dance, stomping. It was like a tribal ritual, as the men put their dog, wolf, coyote, jackal, and canine heads between her breasts, against her body, between her legs, then rubbed against each other, as if bathing in her scent. She was their master, their mistress, their goddess.

The lady, "Jezebel", continues her song, and with her hunky animalistic male dancers as her backup, who lift her, while she acts as a temptress, she removes her gloves. She throws them to the crowd, as she touches her body while dancing, the other male performers, all large and muscular, touch her as well as if worshiping her like the idol of a goddess, and lift her as she dances. Blake tried to make out in the darkly lit stage, whether the beautiful young woman, dancing nude amidst the captivated audience, and strong male worshipers, was indeed Christina/Jezebel. She seemed so like her that he was willing to bet money on it. She had most of her features, but the lighting kept him from identifying her face. He was too captivated by the melody of her song to pay attention to the details, (only the details of her body as she danced, as she moved too fast in the dark for him to see her face), and felt that the song put an intoxicating spell over him, as when it finally came to an end, he felt as if he was coming out of a deep sleep. He couldn't even remember most of the lyrics he had just heard, and felt as if the performance had just started.

All of the sudden, while lifted by the arms and hands of the giant muscular men, she turned her head toward the audience, as if looking at Blake, and for one moment, Blake thought he could see her eyes...

"If ever the devil's plan was made to torment man it was you..."

She breaks away from the men for a moment, dancing toward the front of the stage, facing the audience, wrapping her arms around herself, and her naked body, then turns back to the pack of male dancers.

"...Jezebel it was you..."

She teases the men, who come after her,

Continued on page 47



Steve

IMAGES BY ARKTOS PHOTOGRAPHY



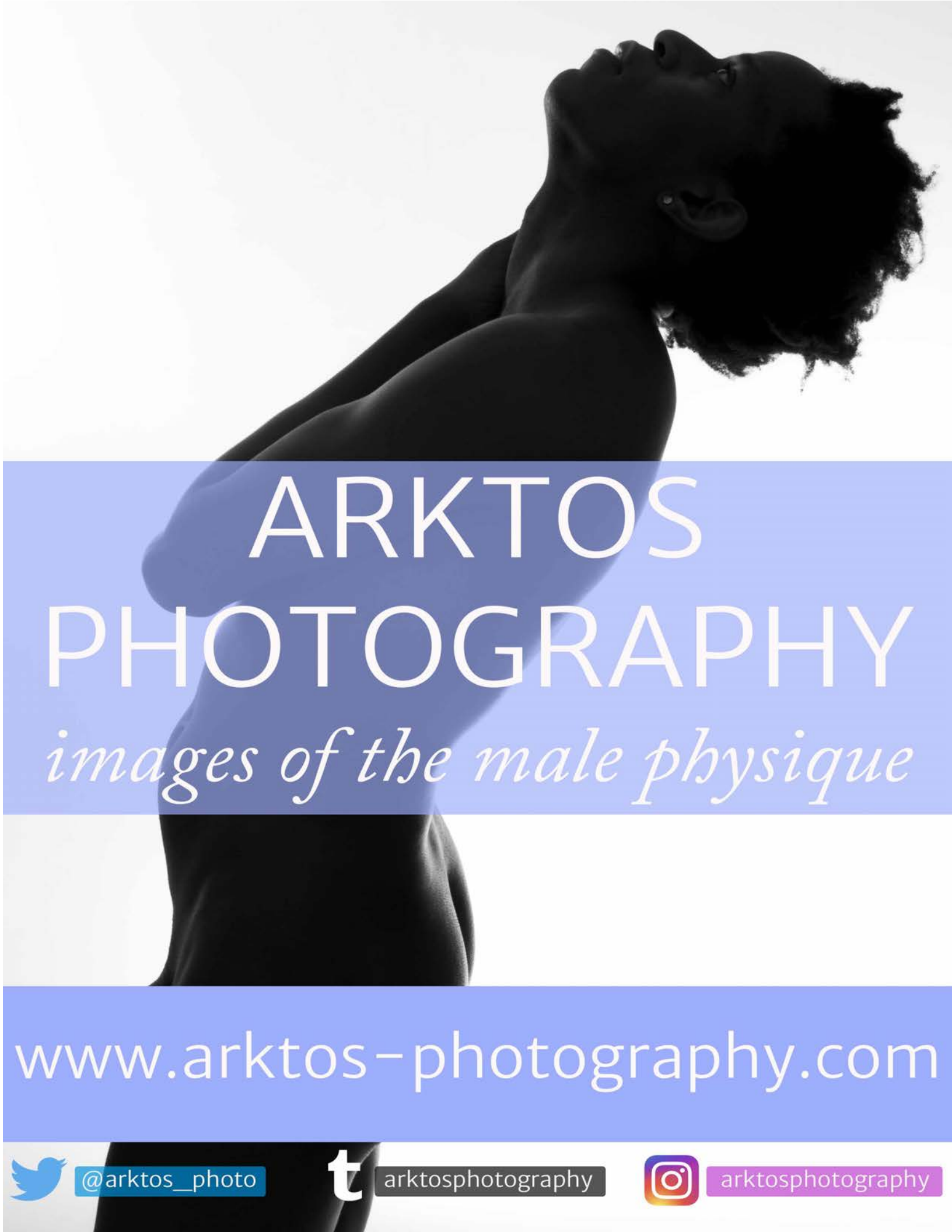












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The Hairiest Puppy Bear on Instagram

Behind the scenes
with **Hunter Harden**

Interview by
Malcolm Jon

Hunter Harden has been heating up Instagram for a while now, with his rugged good looks and handsome smile. Hunter was kind enough to take some time out of his busy life to answer some of my questions about who he is and what projects he has for the future.

What were you like as a kid?

As a kid, I was very excited to do anything. I always wanted sleepovers and parties and to go on adventures. Unfortunately, I was kind of a loser in each group of friends I joined growing up. I was the butt of the joke most of the time and I did not get invited to a lot of things. So I grew up an outcast and alone most of the time.

Once I hit my junior year in high school, I started making friends that were more like me. I did not do well in school at all but if I enjoyed and was really into a class, I would get an A+. I loved art classes and anything that fed my creative side. I was always daydreaming about my male teachers or just daydreaming in general during school so other classes could not keep my attention.

How was it for you when you came out? Did you have a supportive family?

I went through a long depression of not wanting to be gay. But after my 21st birthday, I decided to get a boyfriend and I had one date and fell in love. A couple of months later on National Coming Out Day, I came out to my 4 older sisters and mom. My mom took it hard. She was afraid for my safety and did not want people making fun of me. The Bible also had a play in my mom's fears. But after she saw how much of an improvement I made within myself, she was happy. She came around and is



very proud and very supportive of me. My sisters all supported me right away. I was very lucky.

You're a semi-nude model, what made you want to get into modeling and bare it all for the world?

I got into modeling to help push myself from my social anxiety. I always wanted to be in the entertainment industry but I was always unsure of myself and scared to do anything. I started to become agoraphobic and I knew I needed to push myself. I had friends that needed models for school projects. I slowly started modeling more and more for friends in my town. My first real shoot was with Victor Crulich and I was body painted to look like a werewolf. I started traveling to San Francisco by myself and started shooting with MR. S Leather. Then my photos got around to Mack Strugis and the rest is history. I never thought I would get this far in my modeling career. It's all still very surreal to me. I still get horribly anxious and sweat so much during shoots because I am still battling

social anxiety. You can see in a lot of my shoots that I'm glistening. It's because I'm sweating through every pore in my body.

Who is your favorite photographer to work with and why?

I don't have a favorite photographer. I have made special friendships with every photographer I've shot with. Each one captures something different and that's what makes them unique. I love each one for a different reason. It would be impossible to pick a favorite.

You're a pretty face with a gorgeous body, but who is the real Hunter Harden beneath the sexy exterior?

The real Hunter Harden is shy until my social anxiety wears off. Then I'm loud and like to have a lot of fun. When you walk up to me at a bar or event I instantly get shy and nervous about saying the right thing. I am always trying not to stumble over



my words. I'm just a goofball, I'm dorky, and clumsy. I love the people in my life very deeply and sometimes I get taken advantage of because of my kindness. However, I'm learning every day to be a better man and improve myself so that I'm a better friend and partner.

We have a strong relationship built on actions of trust between us both. He loves hearing about my success and reading peoples comments on my

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Thousand's of guys, including my husband, ogle over you. How do you deal with all that attention?

At first, I was a bit overwhelmed by the attention. It was harder to deal with the negative attention. Every once in a while I would get someone's anger thrown at me and I would be called every name in the book. I learned not to let it affect me. The positive attention is what to focus on. It's really amazing to hear that you're someone's role model or fitness motivation. So I try to uphold a good status with my fans and be a positive influence in people's lives.

How does your partner deal with all the attention you get being a sex symbol to many?

My boyfriend is very very proud of me.
Hunter Harden





Rico

Images by
JGPhotography













and lift her...

"...night and day..."

...and bear her towards the pedestal where she began her dance, as she still sings while they carry her.

"...every way..."

The group of men then begin to spin her in a circle, with her on top of them...

"Jezebel..."

...The big men form a path, using their bodies as stairs for her to ascend to the pedestal. She climbs on them to her destination at the top ...

"...Jezebel..."

All the lights go out for a brief moment, as the music reaches as climax then silences, right before the crescendo of the song. The lights come back on to reveal Jezebel on the pedestal, which is now higher than before, surrounded by all the male dancers, who look as if they are holding her up on the pedestal itself with their strength. She strikes a pose at the top of the male dancers and the pedestal (or was it an altar?), as she sings the last line of the song.

"JE...ZE...BEL!"

All of the dog men turn and lift their arms in the air, revealing the pedestal to be floating, suspending itself in mid-air, they then throw themselves against the pillar, where she stands, reaching up for her. Then something large seems to appear behind her, at the back of the stage, behind the blue curtain, a large, looming shadow. The curtain behind her opens to reveal the large face of a statue, a dragon-like face, its large jaws open, unveiling a mouth full silvery blue flame, the same color as its eyes, which seem to glow with life. The silver-blue dragon's maw sits open, seemingly welcoming her. Blake suddenly realizes that the face of the great statue, which he thought for sure was that of a dragon, now looked like that of a giant wolf or dog. By the time he realized this, the "Jezebel" dancer/singer turned on her pedestal to face the giant "wolf/dragon" and leapt into its mouth, disappearing into the flames.

The jaws of the humongous "wolf dragon" suddenly snapped shut, as a wall of blue flames engulfed the stage with a bright flash, almost blinding Blake and the audience. All traces of Jezebel, and her large, husky "dogs" who Jezebel

worshiped her, disappears. The entire room seems enveloped in a blue smoke, most from the blue flames.

It seemed to be awhile before the lights came back on, the audience was under a daze from the blue smoke, or under a spell from the performance, which reminded Blake of the same reaction back at "The Jungle" jazz club. But this was different, they looked almost frozen in place. Blake shook his head again. He felt like he was out of his head and mind at the moment. The smoke in the club made it hard to think.

Blake waits for the smoke to clear, but the clouds of blue smoke instead grow thicker. It was hard for him to breathe. He coughs...that smell... the smell of this smoke...he remembered it. Blake covers his mouth and tries to back away from the large, ever-growing cloud of smoke. The blue smoke seems to come in torrents out of the giant wolf dragon head's eyes and nostrils, and from between his teeth.

Blake feels like he's choking on the fumes, but it is the same flowery scent that he remembered from the bottle of blue alcohol he tried with Mick in the Japanese restaurant. The same scent that was coming from each of the tables that the revelers were seated at, drinking, as Blake noticed, the same blue, champagne-like fluid. The scent coming from the smoke, which almost appeared to sparkle, as it filled the room, smelled much more concentrated. Blake remembers the effect it had on him, and becomes terrified.

Blake tries not to breathe in and backs away, trying to leave the room, when he backs into another guard. He felt his big, strong body behind him, like a mountain of muscle. He panics, but it's only Mick. Mick puts a hand over Blake's mouth.

"Shh...Blake, it's me," says Mick. He's still dressed as a waiter, though his neck-tie is undone and askew, and his shirt is half-open, revealing his big hairy chest, as if he buttoned his shirt in a hurry. "Now come with me...and try not to breathe in any of that mist, fog, smoke stuff."

Blake nods, and Mick pulls him through the crowds, to the back of the room. As Blake and Mick pass the tables, none of the people in the nightclub appear to be phased by the smoke at all, they all appear tranquil, and unusually still. Since Mick was pulling him back, with his arms around him, Blake couldn't see where he was going, but soon he was

facing the door to the kitchens in a dark corner of the room, with the circular port windows, swinging open and shut.

Blake and Mick stand just inside the kitchen doors, peering through them into the club room, Blake gasping for air, Mick looking hot and sweaty, his shirt all the way open now, his large hairy chest heaving as he panted for breath as well (Why was he so out of breath? Blake thought.) His muscles under his open shirt looked very much defined, and bulged more than usual, as if he had just finished with an intense workout. What had he been doing all this time? Blake's suspicions of Mick being one of the dancers on stage came back to his mind, but how did he do it?

"Hey, you okay bud?" asks Mick, panting like a dog.

"Yeah," says Blake, his head still clouded, and his nostrils full of that potent scent. He coughs. "That stuff, it's the same stuff I breathed in before," Blake starts to say.

"I know," says Mick. "We've got a bit of a situation as well, there's no doors or windows that lead out of this place."

"What?" asks Blake.

"Yeah, strange isn't it? There's no way to get to the back of this place. Not from here anyway. I've got another way though. I'll be back in a moment. I'm gonna go grab my hat and coat. Be ready."

"Hey, where are ya...?" But, like always, Mick was already gone.

Blake watched the club, from inside the kitchen, looking through the porthole windows. Nothing seemed to be moving outside the kitchen, in the nightclub itself, except for the ethereal looking blue smoke, and the twinkling lights from the roof, which looked like starlight. Blake waits for Mick to come back, standing amid a line of large boxes, all marked with the initials "C.B.", looking out for any movement outside the kitchen doors. Everything seemed uneventful for a few minutes, until Blake started to smell that very peculiar aroma, from the blue smoke, again. This alarmed Blake, and he looked out the porthole windows again, to see them completely shrouded in blue, which almost seemed to glow. Blake started to choke again. He backs away from the kitchen doors, to find that the blue smoke is creeping in to the kitchens through the cracks at the base of the

doors, like a crawling, living mist.

Blake tries to call for Mick, but he can't speak, he feels frozen. He didn't know how long he had been unknowingly breathing that stuff in, but he felt it take its effect on him already. His mind was blurring again, and he could hear a voice...a faint familiar voice, beckoning him from inside the club. It was her voice...she was calling to him. Blake saw the blue smoke swirl around the kitchen windows, and a light, which seemed to flicker on and off, a cold cobalt light, the color of her eyes. He heard her voice say his name whenever the light appeared.

"...Blake..."

Blake felt himself being pulled forward, like the time back at the subway, like back at the docks, as he unwillingly walked closer to the kitchen doors, and the flickering light, where the voice awaited him.

"...Blake..."

Blake pushed open the kitchen doors, and the kitchen filled with the dense blue smoke, as the lights inside the smoke flashed like lightening in a thunderstorm. Blake enters the cloud of smoke, not aware of why he was doing this, but unable to stop himself. Blake disappears into the smoky club, the kitchen doors shutting, and swinging behind him... Blake couldn't see or hear a thing in the fog.... everything was going dark... He was fading back into memory again...

* * * * *

...

Back in "The Jungle", the "Jezebel" singer (who Blake thought looked so much like Christina) finishes her performance, with the line "...it was you..." The lights fade on her, and the crowd of men in the bar cheer, whistling for more. At the end of her song, the lights come up for her to take a bow. As the lights come up in the house, Blake gets a clear view of her face, and body. This confirmed it. It was her. Though her black hair (whether it was real or just a wig) made her look almost like a completely different person, there was no mistaking her face, and those captivating, almost shimmering, cobalt eyes. Blake's face went as red as his hair and beard. Christina bows, with nothing but a large blue feather fan, which she held in front of her, to cover her body, facing different directions in the audience, and finally turns to face

Jezebel

the bar, where Blake was sitting. She freezes mid-bow as she sees Blake, and recognizes him. A look of shock and shame comes over her face, her eyes growing wide. Blake and Christina stare at each other from across the establishment and over the crowds, their eyes locked for a moment, before she ran backstage and hid herself behind the curtain. The whistling and catcalling had done nothing to make her feel ashamed, or embarrassed for dancing and singing naked, but seeing Blake here and being in his presence apparently did.

Blake hears the crowd roar in disappointment. "What the hell?! Where did she go?!" Some of the bar patrons even started booing at her disappearance. "Where the fuck's our encore?"

Blake looks at the other men in the bar in disbelief, raising an eyebrow, disgusted with them. After such a beautiful and evocative performance, this was how these animals act? He sees the proprietor (his face blurred in Blake's memory) go to the stage and attempt to calm the crowd down, then angrily whisks himself behind the curtain.

Blake looks around, concerned, imagining what sort of ordeal Christina was dealing with back there, with the angry proprietor, then gets out of his seat at the bar. He had a bad feeling about this whole thing, he had to go make sure she was okay.

Blake cuts through the angry crowd, and follows backstage, through the curtain. He sees the proprietor, in his fancy black suit and tailed coat, disappear down a brick hallway to the right, toward a series of dressing rooms. Blake follows. Blake then sees the proprietor knock forcefully on a dressing room door. Blake hears a voice respond, irately from the other side.

"Go away, Charlie!" comes Christina's voice from the other side of the door.

The proprietor bursts into Christina's dressing room, and slams the door behind him. Blake felt a knot form in his stomach and chest. He knew he would have to go in there.

"What the fuck, Chrissy?" came the proprietor's voice from the door, shouting, sounding hoarse. He had a strange, fake-British upper class accent for running such a rundown place, as if he came from upper New York. Definitely not the sort of person Blake would have interacted with on a daily basis. Those rich snobby business types usually only thought of men like him

Jezebel

as hired muscle, not worthy to lick their spats, or the ground they walked on.

"I can't go out there, Charles," says Christina.

"You go back out there. You had no problem showing your tits to the men during the song. Take that towel off and leave the wig on."

"I'll show my body when I want to, and to who I want to, and I hate this fucking thing on my head."

Blake hears a crash. He runs to the door, and kicks it open. He felt full of rage, and an animalistic fire. His teeth were barred, like a wild beast, in anger. He was prepared to punch the proprietor's lights out to defend Christina, or beat him nearly to death if he laid a hand on her, but as the door flies open, he stops in his tracks. What he sees is Christina, in her black wig, dressed only in a towel (barely covering her breasts) with her fist and fingers clenched around the throat of the older proprietor, as if she had just shoved him into the wall.

Blake stands befuddled in the doorway, and Christina looks at Blake, her cobalt blue eyes locking with his again.

"Blake," she nearly whispers. Her eyes are fixed on Blake, while her grip tightens on the old man's neck.

"Chrissy," the old proprietor wheezes. Christina lets him go and holds the towel over her naked body. "Chrissy," says the proprietor (his face was still blurry in Blake's memory), straightening his collar and tie, and speaks coldly. "You're fired. Pack your things and get out of my place at once."

"Let her get some clothes on first, Mack. Jesus Christ," Blake speaks up, a southern twang in his voice. His southern accent always came out when he was angry or excited.

The proprietor takes one look at Blake, and sweeps haughtily out of the dressing room.

Christina stands for a moment, looking at Blake, then looks away. She looks like she doesn't want him to see her like this, she's ashamed.

"Are you okay?" asks Blake.

"Yeah...just fine," says Christina, still not looking at him. "Peachy," she says sarcastically.

Instinctively, Blake walks up to her, to comfort her. He puts his hands on her shoulders.

Continued on page 69



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pictures. He pushes me every day to pursue my goals

What is regular everyday life for you? Tell us about your partner.

Everyday life is basically working out and working on personal projects. I love crafting so craft stores are my jam.

On weekends I try to go out to the bars and mingle. I love to go to the outlet malls and walk around the

stores. I love nature walks, movies, video games, and laying in pools

My boyfriend is a tall strong sweet hairy bear. I call him Papa Bear. He is my rock and role model. He always keeps me grounded and supports me to be the best version of me. He was a choir teacher for 20 years. He has a beautiful voice and he plays the piano. We love watching Reality TV together and from time to time I make him watch horror movies with me. (If they are not demon possession movies).

You can find him on Instagram @superbearinutah

I understand that you are a designer on the side. Tell us a little about that.

Like I said, I love crafting and I have been dabbling in every medium from tattoos, pencil, charcoal, acrylic, oil, clay etc. I started @harden_design to outlet my crafts. I make costume accessories and costumes. I have specialized sunglasses, face masks, armor, wreaths, gloves, etc. Using leather, crystals, fur, feathers, metal and any material I can use.

You will see a lot of new designs coming through each year.

What is on the horizon for Hunter?

I have a lot planned for the future. I will be appearing in some music videos and reality shows that I can't discuss at the moment. There are plans for a podcast and I will be starting a calendar for 2020.

I am pursuing more acting and voice talent opportunities to show

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Self Loathing



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Self Loathe







"There's no need to be embarrassed, darlin'," says Blake, his southern accent still thick in his deep voice, "I'm not going to do anythin', and no one's commin' back in here. I'll guard the door for ya. Now you just get dressed and I'll get ya out of this joint."

Christina looks him in the eyes for a moment, as if trying to figure him out, looking for any signs of ulterior motives, or trickery, as if that's what she was mostly used to, then smiles appreciatively.

Blake stands facing her for a moment, before realizing that she's still dressed in nothing but a towel, and blushes. "I'll uh, turn around," says Blake, even though he already saw her breasts before. Christina smiles at him again, amused, seeming much more relaxed than before. He respectfully turns as she drops her towel and gets dressed.

"I should have known better, you know," says Christina, while Blake's back is turned, "Singing in a trashy place like this. What a fancy, sleazy dump. I'm never coming back."

"Me neither," says Blake.

Christina looks back at Blake, through her dressing room mirror, lined with big salon light bulbs. She has a confused and frustrated expression on her face, like she still didn't quite understand him. "Why do you come here?" asks Christina, "to a place like this?"

"To drink," says Blake. "...I guess... and you?"

"To sing," says Christina, "I always just wanted to sing. But...people want more than that, I guess..." Her eyes wander off for a moment, as she reflects, then she looks at Blake again in the mirror, while putting on her earrings at the vanity. "There's other places to drink," says Christina, sounding critical.

Blake shrugs. "There's other places to sing," says Blake.

Christina smiles over her shoulder, at him, still barely dressed.

Blake turns back, to take a peek, and smiles back at her.

"Want me to walk ya out of here?" asks Blake.

"Yeah, thanks," says Christina, still smiling

at him.

...

Later, Blake walks Christina home, they leave the back doors of "The Jungle", and walk down the dark and dank city streets. Soon the neon-lit sign of "The Jungle" was far behind them, a barely illuminated lamp in the distance, as Blake and Christina navigated their own jungle of streets and alleyways before them. For a while they said nothing, as if waiting for the sign behind them to fully disappear. Even when no trace of the club behind them could be seen, Christina still looked solemn.

"I'm embarrassed you had to see me like that," she says, after a long walk in silence, her hands in her coat pockets.

"Why?" asks Blake, looking over at her, raising an eyebrow.

"You know...because of how I was acting, behaving. I mean, I like you, we've become good friends, and...seeing me like that. Doing that kind of performance. I just hope it didn't ruin our..."

"It didn't ruin anything," says Blake, smiling at her, and speaking in a comforting voice. "I actually admire it. I didn't realize how talented you were, that you could sing and dance so well."

She looks at Blake, and realizes he isn't judging her for the kind of performance she's doing.

"Thanks, Blake, that means a lot," says Christina, "...Usually when people see this side of me, they regret me. They throw me out of their life."

Blake scoffs in disbelief. "Those people are idiots," says Blake. That performance was hot ... what I mean is..." Blake looks embarrassed.

"Now don't you be embarrassed. You really thought so?" she asks grinning.

"Well, yeah, we've all got that side to us," says Blake, trying not to flush in the cheeks as much as he was. Christina smiles wider at him, and laughs, almost through her nose. He found that adorable.

"Well, it's nice to know I have an admirer who I like as well," she says, nudging him in the ribs. "And someone who understands that side of me."

"Like I said, we all have that side," says Blake, shrugging, "I just wish so many people wouldn't try and hide it, or act like it's something to be ashamed of."

"Me too, Blake, me too," says Christina. "Man, if I told you how many times I've been rejected because the men in my life knew what I was and what I did. So many men just... disappeared because of it."

"People are hypocrites," says Blake, "People would kill for a woman like you. Someone who could perform that sexy of a song and dance, but then they'd also try to condemn you for it. That's some backwards shit."

"Yeah," says Christina, "It is shit."

"Shit," says Blake, agreeing, "So, fuck em' and be yourself. Hey, that's what you taught me!"

"Yeah, it is, isn't it?" says Christina. They both laugh, feeling very silly. Christina gets a mischievous smile across her face. "Soyou really didn't mind, huh?" she asks, fascinated by Blake, as if she's never encountered a guy like him.

"Nope," says Blake.

"Even though I was naked?" she asks, teasingly.

"I didn't mind," says Blake, "I mean, that you were naked, I mean..." Blake starts to blush all over again. "I mean I really didn't mind. I liked seeing your boobs ...I mean they're nice...what I mean to say is that you have a nice body as well as your...Aw...shit..." Blake was embarrassed, but Christina seemed amused at how he was stumbling over his words.

"It's fine," says Christina, "I wouldn't mind if I saw you naked either."

"Uh...really?" asks Blake.

"Oh, yeah," says Christina, "I like big manly men... there's a lot more to lick."

"Wow...really...that sounds...um..."

Christina then laughs through her nose again. "I'm just teasing you," she laughs. But the tone of her voice told Blake she secretly meant it. He would find that out later that night, when she made her move, and they had sex. It was a fun and memorable night for Blake. Like she said, there was a lot to lick.

Christina and Blake continued to talk all the way back to her apartment.

"Well, this is me," says Christina, as they near, a block of apartment buildings, "I guess I'll see you again, same time same place?" she asks.

"Of course," says Blake. "At the Banks building. Roof level? At the automat?"

"Near the frozen desserts," confirms

Christina.

Blake looks like he's ready to leave, but stands at the steps to her apartment building a moment more.

"I...hope you find another place to sing," says Blake. You're very good at it."

"Why, thank you Blake," says Christina, "Yeah...it'll be hard though. That guy who owns the Jungle, owns half the lounges and jazz clubs in town."

"Really?" asks Blake, "that old pretentious fuck?"

"Yeah, that's the one," says Christina.

"Well, then, maybe I can help ya," suggests Blake, "Tomorrow at lunch, we can look through the papers for nightclubs who are hiring over a cup of coffee, sandwich, and frozen pie."

"Sounds great," says Christina. "Or....we could start tonight..."

Blake almost said that they could wait for tomorrow, before he read between the lines, and saw her motion up the apartment building. Blake felt an overwhelming sense of euphoria cloud over him. He'd never felt wanted like this by anyone before this moment, and now felt he was a hunk of meat, being pursued by this beautiful young woman. As if he was a snack she couldn't wait to taste. It was a new sensation to him... he liked it.

"Sure, tonight works too," says Blake shrugging, trying to act coy, as if he didn't know what she wanted.

They head up the steps to her apartment building.

"Be the way, that song you sang, I don't think I've heard anything like it," says Blake, trying to make simple conversation.

"Oh, not many people do," says Christina, "It's so far only played in...well, underground places."

"Would you teach me?" asks Blake.

Christina smiles. She...

...

... The memory fades out again ...

...

"Blake...Blake" a deep warm voice brought Blake back from the kind, yet cold glow of her eyes, along with a gust of warm air on his ear. The deep

Jezebel

voice whispered. "Blake, we've got to go, now... .Now." Mick's voice was calm, but full of urgency.

Blake comes back to reality, he's standing in the middle of the hotel's club, surrounded by the curtains of blue smoke. He had thought he heard Mick's voice, but he couldn't see him anywhere.

"Mick..." Blake chokes, barely able to speak. "Where..."

"Right here, buddy," says Mick's deep voice, as a strong hand grabs Blake's shoulder.

Blake turns. Though he could barely see him in the fog, he could tell that the large, shadowy figure next to him was Mick, back in his "guard clothes", coat and hat back on. Blake places his hand on Mick's. Mick grabs Blake, as they make their way around the massive club room, toward the curtains that led backstage. The club was still shrouded in the thick blue mist, fog, smoke, or whatever it was, enough for Blake and Mick to pass unseen. As they cross the room, Blake's attention turned to the roof of the club. He realized the night sky roof of this room was actually a giant skylight, like one would find in a rooftop restaurant or club. It looked like they were on the roof level of the hotel, but that would be impossible. They were still on the ground floor...at least Blake thought they were. Blake starts to feel very sleepy, and dizzy, watching the stars through the glass skylight above, and seeing the room almost spin around him (was it slowly moving in a circle? He had heard of places that slowly turned, usually rooftop restaurants.) While he tried not to inhale the blue smoke, he couldn't help enjoying its fragrance. Soon the entire club became clouded again in the blue mist, and the room, the club, began to spin faster, the dark room glittering in the blue flames and the reflecting stars on the glass roof, and the sparkling smoke.

"Mick...I feel like I'm falling, man... I..." Blake looks at Mick, who now looks like the big, black, bear sized wolf again, in the fedora and trench-coat, with glowing orange eyes, his big paw holding his hand which now looked...like an orange tiger's paw... "Mick...it's starting to happen again ..."

"Shh...I know. It's okay, buddy," Mick speaks quietly, putting an arm around him, "Just hang in there one more minute. Don't look at anything, keep your eyes closed if ya have to. I'll lead ya."

Jezebel

Mick leads Blake through the crowds, along the edge of the room, while Blake keeps his eyes tightly shut. By the time Mick and Blake hid themselves behind the blue sparkling curtains of the stage, the lights were back up and there was a thunderous round of applause, as if the audience had been frozen in time, up to that moment, when the lights came back on, and had suddenly sprang into life.

Mick lets out a sigh of relief once they are safe behind the curtains. "Whew, we just made it buddy. I don't think anyone saw us, buddy... .Buddy?" Mick looks over at Blake, who has both hands against his face, shaking his head.

"Nnnn..." Blake is shaking, "No...What's happening to me? Please tell me they're not still claws. Are they claws, Mick?" Blake holds out his hands for Mick to look at them. Mick looks concerned at Blake, then at his hands, which looked perfectly human. "No, man. They're not claws." He gives Blake a spontaneous hug, as if he knows exactly what he's going through. "Now come on. We're almost at the other side. We'll be out of this place soon. "

Blake nods. He follows Mick along the curtains, backstage.

Mick leads Blake along blindly as they pass through the backstage area. The smoke was thickest back here, and Blake thought he could smell fire. Suddenly Mick came to a halt. Blake stopped next to Mick, and his eyes came open for a brief moment. What he saw in front of him was the giant gaping maw of the humongous wolf/dragon statue, against a backdrop of pitch darkness, but... it did not look like a statue anymore. He could see the silvery scales and hair all over its face, its saber-like teeth, and its fiery blue eyes, its long tongue outstretched like a carpet, welcoming them in. The smoke billowed out of its mouth and nostrils. Blake shut his eyes again.

"Don't look at it," says Mick, "Just follow me..."

Mick pulls Blake along with him as they race forward through the gateway-like mouth of the wolf/dragon, and through what Blake thinks is a wall of blue fire, which suddenly ignites as Mick and Blake pass through the blue smoke/mist.

Continued on page 82

Max

Images by Max





Max





Max





Continued from page 59

more of my personality. I will be appearing at more events Go-Go dancing and hosting. And of course, I will be doing more photo shoots with past photographers as well as new ones. Thank you to everyone that has been following my journey. There will be lots more to come.

Hunter, thanks for taking the time to answer my questions. If you want to keep up on what Hunter Harden is doing, check him out on Instagram @hunterharden and @harden_design. You can follow his boyfriend @superbearinutah.

About the Author

My name is Malcolm and I am proud to call the Pacific Northwest my home. Having lived here all my life I started taking photographs of the beautiful scenery in and around my hometown of Portland in my 20's. I am self-taught photographer, and have taken my passion of photography to include the male form. While doing that I accidentally stumbled into interviewing interesting people all over the world.

I have been married to my wonderful husband for 5 years. In our free time we like the outdoors, hosting dinners, meditation and yoga. I am also a bit of a bookworm, which is new for me.

I am always out looking for the next guy to photograph and the next person to interview.





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DHIM FAN ~ Nathanael

Blake almost flails his arms up to block the flames, but they have already passed through, and to Blake's surprise, they are not burned. There is the same, strangely fragrant blue smoke, but no smoldering, no sign of ash or soot on their clothes, no burns on their bodies or hair, no sign of the flames touching them whatsoever. Blake would have sworn they had just walked straight through the fire.

Blake opens his eyes again, and sees nothing but dark all around them for a moment, before seeing a door and a blue exit sign ahead. Mick and Blake run towards the door.

"Almost there," says Mick, as he opens the door.

They leave through the backstage door, and come out the other side where...

...They're on the other side of the hotel, running down the backstage steps at such a speed they nearly fly off of them into the cold, wet ground below. They land in the crisp wet earth with a heavy thud.

Blake lifts himself from the ground, next to Mick and takes in a big breath of fresh air, his hands clenching the mud below. He could smell the rain, grass, mud and the breeze that blew along the harbors of the lake. Blake finally opens his eyes again and looks at Mick, who is sitting next to him, upright, as if he landed perfectly from their fall, sweaty, but clean, looking out at the night sky. Blake had a face-full of mud. More than that, Mick finally looked human again, and his eyes back to being their normal olive green color. Blake sighed in relief. That meant the side-effects of the smoke were already beginning to wear off.

"You...you alright?" says Mick, looking back down at Blake.

"Yeah, I think I am," says Blake. "I feel real bad that you've had to ask me that a lot lately."

"Well, the way you were acting...it did warrant some concern," says Mick, trying to sound polite about the whole ordeal.

"Yeah....Wow...Man..." says Blake as he lifts himself from the wet ground. "That place is something else, isn't it?"

"Yeah," says Mick, "And we weren't even there that long. I wonder if...Oh! Hey look we made it!" says Mick, suddenly sounding excited. He

points into the distance.

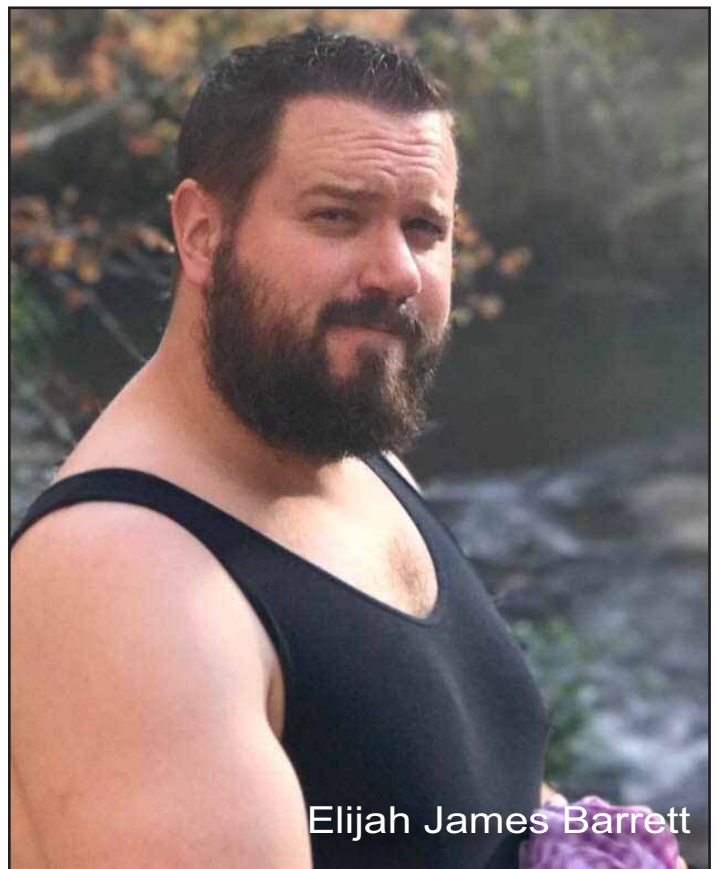
Blake looks to where Mick is pointing. They can see the ruins of the world's fair, and the fences around it in the distance, a series of tall looming shadowed buildings and attractions. They had finally made it. Blake and Mick smile, about to speak, but when they turn around, they notice that the building behind them looks different, it's not nearly as big, and the hotel looks dilapidated and dark, not glowing like the building they had entered. The only sign that glows is directly above the door they came out of, which reads, in neon blue cursive, "THE BLUE JUNGLE".

Mick and Blake look at the strange building behind them.

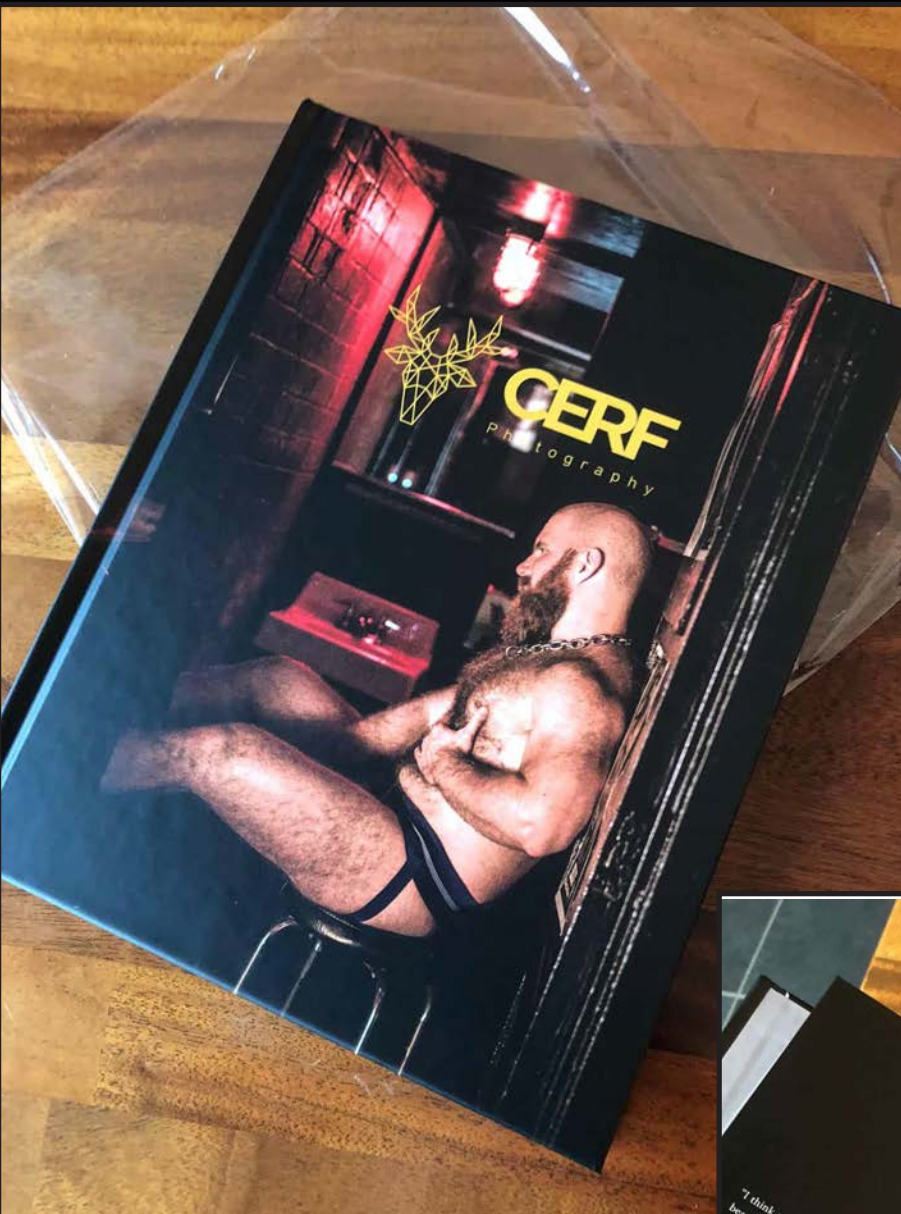
"Hey Mick...what...weren't we just in... why doesn't this look anything like the Blue Rose Hotel?" He looks around him. "Just where the hell are we?"

To be continued

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