

# “Future Land”

*A short-story by: Mary Margaret Park*

The prisoner shifts in his seat; the leather straps cutting into his arms, sweat pouring from his brow. He squeezes his blue eyes shut against the bright lights. The crowd’s murmuring swells as a figure approaches the podium holding a gavel.

The gavel falls with a harsh bang and the audience exhales a collective sigh.

There’s a couple on their first date sitting in the third row. Their names are Roxy and Devin. Roxy wanted to go to the movies; Devin wanted to see a boxing bout; they’ve come to “Reality Theatre” instead.

Roxy has a metropolitan edge. She wears her black hair in a short angular cut with her eyes draped in dramatic shadow; bold statements against her porcelain skin. Devin is ‘Mr. Cool’; dressed in black leather from head to toe...and it suits him; his hair is gelled in a Bowie-esque manner.

There’s a young woman with dark hair and overly red lip stick sitting three seats down from them, she keeps glancing over at the two, her eyes sultry; her gaze suggestively warm.

Roxy grins, her porcelain veneers flashing like sharks teeth, “I think she wants to join us.”

Devin shrugs his shoulders and motions for her to look at the stage.

A man dressed in a bright yellow suit grabs the microphone, “I have the lucky winner of tonight’s drawing, Connie Winters; please stand up.” he sweeps the crowd with his eyes; the young woman sitting by Devin and Roxy pops up to the roar of clapping and shouting.

The lone prisoner on the stage is illuminated by a narrow shaft of light. He’s shaking violently; his convulsions of fear, stilled by restraint. A drum rolls...the shaft of light rolls across the stage to a red telephone.

“I don’t know about you, but I say get it on...yeah, let’s get it on.”

Devin looks at Roxy; then takes a sip from his martini; the olive floating in the glass is the size of a cherry tomato. He traces the line of Roxy’s jaw with his finger tips; then slips his hand between the smooth silk of her shirt and breast. His hand idles until he kisses her. She moans, pulling away, “I’m wet....let’s get out of here.”

The lucky winner makes her way down the aisle towards the stage, looking directly at Devin and Roxy. When she passes, she lingers a moment too long, as if posing for display.

She’s escorted to the executioner’s chambers, doing a funky little dance as she goes. She places her manicured hand on the switch and smiles.

The beat of the drum slows. The spot light shifts to the prisoner, his leather mask puffing in and out with each rabbit like breath as he continues to twitch. The announcer joins the slow drum beat counting down.

“Come on everybody....Ten...nine....eight...”

The crowd joins in.

Devin slips his hand underneath Roxy’s skirt.

“Seven...six...five...” the audience chants.

She squirms and shifts forward.

“Four...three...two...”

She cries out as the crowd roars “One.”

A loud sizzling hum fills the auditorium.

The prisoner's chest and legs strain against the straps, taunt with electricity. The crowds roar grows louder as he does the 'shuck-n-jive' with each intensified surge. Roxy turns to Devin, her face fully flushed.

"Let's go."

The sizzling din quiets, then cycles down and stops. The smell of burning flesh and cordite rinses the air. A man with a stethoscope approaches the prisoner, waits for a nod, then checks and removes the body from center stage.

Roxy and Devin exit the theatre, the voice of the M.C. fading.

They trade knowing glances, pulling closer together. The night is still young. They head downtown, the skyscrapers flashing by in collages of colored light as they approach Roxy's flat. Her sultry eyes tilt up with her smile, "It's time for dinner Devin.....and I'm desert."

[mary@mmp-publishing.com](mailto:mary@mmp-publishing.com)

<http://www.marymargaretpark.com>

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