

“SEX IN KNOXVILLE”



COULD SUCH A THING POSSIBLY EXIST?

WE ASSEMBLE A PANEL OF WRITERS TO SIFT THROUGH YEARS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN SEARCH OF AN ANSWER.

BOOK LUST

Are Knoxville's libraries its true dens of iniquity?

by Kieron Barry

I DEFY ANYONE to spend more than 20 minutes in a library without beginning to feel the latent sexual tension that hangs about the place. Where does it come from? Are pheromones pumped in with the air conditioning? Or is it that being surrounded by books written centuries ago serves as a reminder that



nothing of us will survive unless we either create or procreate?

I suppose it's all that repression. The library is a social world as restrained as Imperial Japan. One communicates with hushed tones and ambiguous glances, and in the aisles every elaborate sidestep and swish of fabric seems laced with significance. Compare these heightened emotions to those sustained during a walk across Market Square during Sundown in the City. There, given the thickness of the crowds, you can't go five yards without being subjected to a bit of exuberant frottage-by-proxy from some young nymph in two items of clothing, yet the wanton mood of the place means the process never seems more than a dull trudge. But in an environment where even speech is forbidden, how delicious seems the prospect of touch.

Plus there's the boredom factor. It's difficult to concentrate in the 21st Century, even in a library, and however passionate we feel about our research it's never long before even the most chaste

of us will begin to wonder if there's something more stimulating in the offing.

The humblest of Knoxville's libraries offers this capacity for frisson. But it is the Hodges Library at UT that takes its readers to Olympian heights of temptation. It's like the Playboy Mansion in there. Regardless of your sexual calibration, at least one person in three who walks past is sufficiently beautiful to make you burst into tears or, in extremis, flames. Where do they find these people? Is there some policy that grants borrowing rights only to third-generation supermodels? Crossing the lobby of the Hodges is like entering a safari park of dazzling, convex beauties with thick, tuggable blonde hair and perfect teeth, their skin a deep Krispy Kreme tan glazed with the sheen of youth.

But never mind the aesthetics; what of the ethics? There are those who would consider such a superabundance of breathtakingly impregnable starlets as anything but a force for moral good. I

am not of their number. On the contrary, I see this improbable display of relentless, tyrannical beauty as proof that monogamy is the only route through life that doesn't end in madness. The Hodges Library reminds us that once you start chasing after the next pretty young thing there's no logical stopping point. One is forever tied to the wheel, and just when you think you've found the ultimate example of flawless physical splendor an even more dainty morsel is destined to flutter by.

That's my theory, anyway. I just wish I knew where to find a book on the subject...