

The Addiction By Michael Barton

Punctuated by thick grey cumulous nimbus, the angry twilight sky is closing around me. A deep crimson band of cloud hovers menacingly above the obscure silhouette of the mountains on the horizon, like a bloodstained knife over an unknown victim. Very soon, the pitch of the sky will match my own darkness.

I have an addiction, and the need to feed it is swelling within me. It always does when there has been a period without a fix.

The lack of satisfaction eats at me, ripping into my inner being. I argue with unseen demons, telling myself I have no need to sate my desire. It's an argument I know I will lose.

Rain starts to spot on my windscreen, the sky growing bleaker. The mountains now appear dark and lonely. It's like looking into a mirror.

My body aches with the need. My head is pounding with my internal suffering. My cold, clammy hands move grudgingly on the steering wheel. I remind myself it has been only a few days since the last time, and yet it feels so much longer.

I try to convince myself I can wait.

I've considered seeking help, confessing to my nightmare, but no one will understand. Even I don't understand. The one certainty I have is that this addiction is now more than just a part of me. It defines my very existence.

A red Mercedes cuts across my path, fat tyres squeezing filthy rainwater up, out, and against my windscreen. I hit my horn, and hammer my fists against the dash.

Then I am calm.

I realise it is futile to make such trivialities a contest.

My internal argument is forgotten as my headlights bathe a billboard in a yellow haze. It announces an approaching town. I laugh at the coincidence, and see it to be a personal prophecy. After all, who's ever heard of a town called Obsession?

I pull across to the inside lane. A car sounds its anger at me. I hope it's a Mercedes.

Others now speed past me, but they are no longer a consequence. There is more pressing business to which I must attend.

I have second thoughts, a small modicum of doubt. What if this place called Obsession is unable to feed my desire?

I castigate myself for having such fears. I chide my self-questioning. I remind myself I have never failed to find what my heart desires, what my mind craves, and what my body yearns for. When the need has taken me, there has always been someone willing to feed my addiction. I've never failed to find a place to provide for my need.

Tonight that place will be Obsession.

I pull off the main carriageway, onto the slip road and into the darkness beyond. The smooth black tarmac of the motorway turns to potholed concrete before making its quiet descent to the Promised Land.

I stop and survey the town in the depths of the valley - if it can be called a town. From here, it looks no more than a hotchpotch of dimly lit houses. Perhaps I am wrong, after all. Perhaps this isn't a place for me to feed my addiction.

Those doubts again! I quickly force them out. I continue down, with the certain knowledge that in such deserted places I always find my next fix.

I drive slowly through the desolate main street. There are few cars, and even fewer people. The rain has stopped, and the whole place is lit in shimmering blues and reds and greens like a seedy pick up bar, which is exactly what I'm looking for.

I find it at the end of the street, and park a few yards away. I check my wallet, take the cash out and put it in my pocket. In a place like this, I have a wad big enough to look like millionaire.

I walk across the street, and enter the bar. No one looks in my direction, which is good.

I order a beer, and flash the cash. That gets a couple of looks. I sit at the bar, alone. Have another couple of beers.

I watch three local girls in the corner, all high heels, low cut tops and belts for skirts, playing pool and starting to pay attention to the stranger at the bar. The brunette, the tallest of the threesome, puts her hand in her pocket, turns her back to her audience and gives a small package to one of her friends who disappears for a few minutes and then returns with a renewed enthusiasm for life. Bingo!

I send drinks over, and soon Miss Brunette comes over to say hello. It doesn't take long to persuade me to leave with her. After all, a stranger with a pile of cash and an obvious addiction is an easy hit.

We get in my car. Her legs are long and sensuous, as is her voice. But that's not what

I'm after.

She pulls her belt across her and tells me to drive. I obey her command.

Ten minutes later we stop.

Only the half-light of the moon creeping in through the windscreen lights the little package she has taken out of her pocket and is now holding up. I go to take it from her, but she withdraws the offer.

'First we have a little fun' she says, pouting.

Her choice - it always has to be her choice.

I agree, and lean across her.

Her sweet perfume invades my senses. She lets my hand brush against her pert breast, signalling her willingness.

I open the glove box, and withdraw my present to her slowly.

My head is clear, my hands sweat free.

The blade shimmers in the moonlight.

Miss Brunette makes to scream, but it's too late.

My knife hovers over her limp body like a deep crimson band of cloud above an obscure mountain range.

For now, Obsession has fed my addiction.

