

Naked to the Flame

Peter Hammill

She was waxed up to face the camera like butter wouldn't melt in the back room Agencies hammered out a deal: points on the pelt. In the airlessly frenzied atmosphere she was the mistress of misrule, seeming careless of everything except her look, cooler than cool. And she's singing for her supper and she's dancing in the dark and she's running for her life if she but knew it. And though her heart is hard as stone that's still the flint from which she'll spark.... Like a moth to the flame she was so eager to make it her ambition became naked.

How iconically arched the eyebrow pluck, how vaselined the lens. Now ironically even highbrow critics rush to her defence.... And she's spinning in the spotlight, but increasingly confused about the context that she finds herself wrapped up in. Is it in this skin she's living or in the last one she abused? Nothing quite like a dame, was she the broken or the breaking? The girl, the woman became naked.

I preferred her in anonymity, but now that cover's blown and, absurdly, she stars, eponymously cast: it's Salome's show. Oh, be careful what you wish for as your own head might get turned you might find the biter bit before you know it; though ever eager for the spotlight she was never quite ready to be burned. At the end of the game the signature dish will get plated. She'll go out as she came, written in light as her fate is.

The moth discovers the flame's naked.