

Nuits Beyrouthines

★★★★★

Various authors
\$35 Editions Tamyras
French and English



Under the cover of night, Beirut unveils itself to partake of sensual pleasures. Its coverings – nudged, tugged, licked or swept aside, torn off, unbuttoned one by one or merely imagined away – are the gateway to a kinky, erotic version of the city, full of characters that are complex, daring and seductive. Produced under the expert guidance of local publisher Editions Tamyras following a pitch to writers at last year's Salon du Livre, in this new venture the in-your-face Beirut we all know so well is invited to explore its subtler, sexier side. The project has also expanded its range – local artists as well as writers

have been coaxed into submitting illustrations, photos and short stories for this come-hither new collection.

Here, teasing sensuality can be as erotic as the most detailed sexual fantasy. 'I find myself alone with my determined marching step,' writes one, '3 inches closer to a higher state of seduction, 5 inches wider as my dress dances around my thighs and brushes past strangers on the narrow sidewalk.' (Sleepless in Beirut). Others favour a more complete unveiling; the art of the blowjob, we are told, is a delicate one; '*Un phallus c'est comme une lolly-pop qu'il faut sucer parfois Chuppa Chups parfois Pierre Gourmand. Les lèvres doivent avant tout embrasser, reconnaître le terrain, le clamer pour soi...*' (Claude el Khal). Is there a better book bet than stories of sex in your own city?

Of the 26 contributors, familiar faces – Maya Zankoul, Largo Inch, Mazen Kerbaj, Sleepless in Beirut – are sandwiched invitingly between a host of new names, in what promises to be a pleasurable addition to many a bookshelf, and the stimulus of many an X-rated daydream. Beirut just got even sexier. *Ellen Hardy*