

Mentana Sexy

Nikki and I were walking over to the bar the night I found the drawing. It was lying on the sidewalk, soaking limply in the middle of a puddle. The sexuality of the image, combined with the overall sogginess of the support, made Nikki clench her teeth in revulsion.

"You're going to pick *that* up?"

"Yes," I said excitedly. This was too good a find to leave lying there. I grasped the image by its fragile corner in order to get a better look. It was a line drawing of a young man's head and naked torso done in pen on a white file card roughly three by five inches in size. The thin blue lines printed on the back of the card were already starting to run, but the black ink of the pen remained remarkably intact. I placed it carefully inside my coat pocket and we continued on our way.

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A few days passed before I emptied my coat pockets and discovered the drawing again. By now it was completely dry, and I was able to scrutinize it more carefully. A young man looking directly at the viewer, his face rendered in three-quarter profile. The features were disproportionate -- the eyes too large, the mouth badly etched -- but you could still tell that the subject was handsome. The nose small, the jaw strong, the hair cut short in an almost military style. The boy (his torso seemed small in comparison to his large head, lending him a boyish allure), had a thick neck and an overall Latin look to his features. His chest was bare, and his nipples were carefully rendered. He seemed to be leaning against something square; a bedstead, a wall or perhaps a chair. His legs were spread and he was wearing cut-offs, the top button of which was suggestively undone. The young man's arms extended beyond

the edges of the picture plane, one hand rested behind his right leg, the other hung down around the groin area, somewhere beyond where his genitals would be. The entire composition had been sketched in pencil before being filled in with pen.

Stranger than the image itself was the fractured text that was written in the margin on either side of the boy's head: *17/12... Mentana Sexy mec... Voulez-vous maquette pour moi? Bon \$\$ et fun sauf -- apres - 6.* 17/12 could have been when the drawing had been done; it was close to the day I found it. *Mentana* is a street not far from my home, and only a block away from where I retrieved the image from its watery resting place. *Mec* is French slang for 'guy' or 'man,' but can also mean 'boyfriend.' The next part didn't make sense: *Voulez-vous maquette pour moi?* A blank hung between *voulez-vous* and *maquette*. Perhaps the phrase was intended to read: *Voulez-vous sucer ma queue pour moi?* (Would you like to suck my cock for me?). *Bon \$\$* ('Good money' or 'Cheap') *et fun sauf -- apres - 6* ('Fun and safe after 6' or perhaps 'After 6 only'). The poor quality of the French seemed to indicate the author was English, or at least a person who didn't normally speak French.

What was the purpose of this drawing? Was it some kind of personal ad for sex? I was intrigued by the possibility of cheap, safe and fun cock-sucking being offered in my neighbourhood by some sexy guy living on *Mentana*. Was underground prostitution being carried out and promoted by leaving hand-drawn cards on sidewalks for unsuspecting passersby to discover? But how could you contact the sender? The answer was quick in coming. On the right-hand side of the card was a domino-like filigree: by reading the numbers from top to bottom I was given a phone number in my neighbourhood.

My curiosity was piqued: I had to call. I dialed the number and was answered by an aggressive male voice. English.

"Hello?" I hung up immediately. I was nervous. What would I say? And worse, what if he traced the call? He would have a way to contact me. I found this undesirable. I waited two days and made another call from home, but this time I took measures to prevent the call from being traced. This time there was no answer.

I wrote down the number on a small piece of paper and put it in my wallet. I would make the call from a pay phone at some point when I was out. A perfect time would be before a weekly rendez-vous I had every Friday night. This was usually after six, but still early in the evening. The first time I called, he wasn't in, but the second time, I was able to speak with the artist. Our conversation went something like this:

"Hello?"

"Hi. I was wondering, do you live on Mentana?"

"I don't live far from there."

"Oh, yeah. And are you an artist?"

"Yes... [unintelligible]"

"What was that?"

"Sorry. [laughter] I was just talking to the parrot."

"You have a parrot?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I... uh... I think I found one of your drawings."

"[silence] Oh-oh. [genuine concern]"

"It says, *Sexy Mec Mentana* on it."

"[laughter] Oh, yeah."

"And I found your phone number on it"

"Uh-huh"

"It was kind of hidden."

"[laughter]"

"I found it on the sidewalk one night."

"Geez, I guess I must've lost one."

"You lost it?"

"I drive down to _____ a couple times a week. I must have lost it when I was going down there."

"Oh yeah? Where's _____?"

"South of Montréal. About two, two and a half hours."

"What do you do with these drawings?"

"Oh I just do them. I hope to get a show some day.

[laughs]"

The man was definitely English. He sounded older, friendly, amiable and perhaps even jolly. I imagined him to be overweight, judging by his laboured breathing and the cadence of his voice. His laugh put me at ease initially, but as it repeated it began to seem less and less genuine; forced, a nervous reflex. I began to construct a mental image of the speaker: an older man who has erotic fantasies about young boys and does hand-rendered reproductions of pictures in porn magazines. But why would he put his phone number on them? What is he hoping for? I started to feel like I was making him uncomfortable and, to make matters worse, I didn't feel I had the means to carry on the conversation much longer.

"Yeah, I hope you don't mind me calling, but I just figured out the phone number in the drawing, and I thought I'd call you up and ask you what it was all about."

"(laughter) Sure."

"Thanks for talking. Talk to you soon."

"OK. Bye."

"Bye."

Nelson Henricks,
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