John Milks Booth

A trip to the adult “boothstore” recalls the South of France

May 12, 1995 By Dominic Hamilton-Little

After a glorious evening in charcoal silk moiré spent flirting unsuccessfully with the six-foot-six Latvian warrior I’ve had my eye on for a couple of lifetimes, I return to my Petit Trianon. Alone and horny.

This dilemma doesn’t arise, so to speak, on a weekly basis. Being the pagan I am, it’s usually in conjunction with ganging seasons and the movements of the planets. With the vernal equinox upon me, there is an alarming hormonal surge in my system. This, combined with an ever-present desire for the unattainable romance of grand opera (or at the very least of a good drawing-room comedy), makes solitude unbearable tonight. Screw “at-one-ness_: I need a man. For, when these libidinal tornadoes occur, it’s not that I can’t live sans paramour as an HIV positive man in these approaching-the-fin-de-siècle days, but I simply have no self-identity unless I’m getting royally shafted.

I sued not to be this way—I used to enjoy doing the shafting. But as I enter the home stretch of my youth and feel the ravages of a lifetime as a professionally barfly, and as two exes and other friends join the choir eternal, I am suddenly craving to be held hard—even for as brief a moment as it might take for generic-but-handsome Him to reach ecstasy.

So on nights like tonight, after removing my soi-distant Molyeux turban and donning my gay courting apparel—tight gray sweatpants and a leather jacket—I go with head held high to my favorite bookstore. (A better moniker I think would be the boothstore, since the few magazines for sale in the front room really cannot be described as books, unless you’re Camille Paglia, for who said magazines become high-art photographic essays.) Of the available urban queer fornicatoria, the boothstore wins out over the bathhouse tonight, not merely because it is so very close to home but because of the relative speed of the average encounter. Ejaculation is, after all the primary focus in these coital reading rooms.

But in these hallowed halls of horniness, I am reminded this night during a brief encounter with a divine Latino that tenderness can be found in such a moment of carnal satisfaction. He kisses like a dream… not sloppy at all, but excited and interested. As his lips brush my neck, with his head on my shoulder and his arms wrapped tightly around my waist, I run my and over his warm, smooth back and, irretrievable romantic that I am, close my eyes and take us to a marble terrace in the

South of France on a moonlit summer night. There, I call him Raoul, and as we sip champagne cocktails, all the while laughing over our exploits in the casino, he removes his dinner jacket and takes me in his arms as we slow-waltz for eternity.

When later recalling these episodes for masturbatory assistance and fantasy, I frequently forget—due no doubt to the sordid reality of the turnstile gate into the tunnel of lust, sticky floors, groping hands and the carnal detritus of condom wrappers littering the ground—how easy it is, body to body, man to man, locked in a wooden box, to imagine a million thoughts of love: “Hold me close and hold me fast/the magic’s got to last/ this is not la vie en rose.”

The only instance words are used is when I urge him to give it to me, and he, embarrassed, says he has no condom. Foregoing my usual lecture, I hastily open the carton of 10,000 that I always carry for such occasions, and, handing him the sheath of love, slip him one of those ultra-discreet and useful travel-size sachets of lube. He grins, kisses me again, puts on the condom with startling speed and agility, rips open the lube with his teeth, turns me around and we go. I get to be held—hard—and for a few blessed moments the two of us are nothing more than boys at play, hurting no one, forgetting the hate an the rage… and… and.. oh God, it’s good!

There’s that five-second lull in which we’re suddenly still, nothing but pounding heartbeats, out own ragged breath and pleasure next door. With a shy smile he collects himself, hugs me quickly and is gone. As I walk slowly out, my knees wobbly with fantasy and release, the oppressive squalor of the locale wants to diminish the incandescent joy of lust unleashed. Banishing intrusive messages of false shame, I am grateful for these worn, darkened halls that are so distant from the glare of antiseptic fluorescent lights in the secretarial pool, and grateful for those glorious minutes of connection in which I was held, and held hard.

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