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Two Men at the Met

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BRIEF NOTES ON TWO MEN AT THE MET:
the mud of complicated memories

Two men in their early thirties are sitting across from me in the cafeteria of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. It is December 2004. It is twenty minutes of five. I'm really tired after a day of walking around. Although I bought something to eat, I'm just killing time waiting for the bus back to Kingston, RI. For some reason, both men looked over as I was shuffling around looking for my pen. Both are straight appearing, definitely straight acting. Both are also good looking. One has the persona of a used car salesperson. The other, the one in whom I'm interested, seems the strong, silent type. He has a strong body but does not have overly developed muscles. He's really handsome and he looks of Northern European descent and he has a heavy five o'clock shadow. Oops, I just glimpsed the cuticles. They are long and thin. Cuticles are important to me. Those short, thick half moons on a guy are a "no-go" immediately. Something flashes through my mind from the past. The red, pulsating memory sinks my heart and takes me from my fantasy to the bombastic realities of years of yesterdays.

My scoutmaster sexually assaulted me on several occasions. He always forced me to sit in his lap as he played with my "equipment." When he did this to me, I could only see his hands at work and they had ugly, small cuticles. He was also my junior high school social studies teacher and he "got" me at school, in the rector's office of the local Episcopal Church that sponsored the troop, in the woods when camping, at his house, and in his car. He did it to all the boys. They all thought it was funny and we all talked about it. I laughed when I was with them but I was really troubled by all this. I think I was the

only one who was struggling with his gay identity while all this was going on. At the time, I was trying to separate these unwanted trespasses from what I was feeling toward other boys. I knew I was gay long before I met the scoutmaster. I knew I was gay long before I knew the words to describe the fact that I was attracted sexually to other boys.

I would never allow myself an erection while the scoutmaster was “playing” with me. I always focused on something else, even though what he was doing felt “good.” I usually focused on the Blessed Mother and kept saying “Hail Marys.” I sometimes tried to focus on St. Francis of Assisi and what the “alter Christus” did when he had “bad” thoughts. He threw himself into snow banks or into the thorns of rose bushes. Neither was available to me in reality, but only in my adolescent imagination.

One time, though, his manipulations felt so good I started to get an erection. I began to transcend who was creating the pleasure despite all my attempts at imitating Francis. Into my ear the scoutmaster said, “Ah, you do like this!” I immediately became flaccid and never gave him the satisfaction of feeling me hard--ever. This somehow made me feel triumphant over his unwanted attacks.

I complained to my Latin teacher one day and she told me to just stay away from him. He kept it up so I don't think she ever said anything to him. I told her because I saw her at Mass frequently and I thought she would know what to do. I think she thought ignoring it was the way to go. It wasn't. I should write more about the scoutmaster someday.

I was going to tell my Dad one night but when I went downstairs to tell him, I could see that he was drinking. I decided not to tell him. I was also afraid he would

blame me. I was ashamed. I know now he wouldn't have blamed me, but I thought it was my fault. What had I done to cause this?

I am conscious of the real again. I am back at the Met. The guy I'm attracted to has short blondish/brown hair. He has well formed thighs. He's "clean cut." Two women have just sat at the same table. One is older than the other. The older woman is definitely interested in the same guy I am. "Get lost!" I think to myself. The younger one might be interested too, but she seems to be playing it "cool." The two men don't seem interested in them at all.

The Northern European fellow is definitely aware of me looking, gawking, at him. I think he likes it. I think he at least likes the attention I am obviously giving him. Oops, he's taking a big lean back in the chair showing me the crotch and the upper muscular chest. His face turns a little red. He wants to see if I am actually looking. "Oh, yeah, I'm looking!" I think to myself.

The other guy just keeps talking and staring at the Northern European. Sounds like "bull" to me. Talk about jobs, how much money they should make. Women! Oh God! Shit! Talk of women! The Northern European is still aware of me. But he is talking to his friend now. He just gave me a definite look. I wasn't looking. I was writing. Perfect. He still has a little doubt. Oh, he just spread his legs toward me....right leg wide enough to give me a complete view of crotch. He's smiling and laughing with his friend about whatever the other guy is talking about, but this guy knows EXACTLY what he is doing. He just scratched his sack and then his armpit and turned red in the face. Oh, ya, he's aware I'm looking at him. He just slid forward in the chair, what a

great ass! Oops, older woman just began a conversation with them. She wants one of them badly.

He's now back in conversation with his friend. They are talking about buying property. Sounds like they are from out of town. I think I heard the word "Denver." Oh, he just laughed out loud and he has a deep, manly laugh. I love it. They are talking about dogs now. He's leaning back in his chair and it is a great exhibit!

Crap, they are leaving. Oops, he's standing up; he walks toward the tray bin with beautifully measured steps that array before everyone his taut body. I have an erection. At the mere sight of him, even my medicines can't stop the blood from pumping into my usually inattentive groin.

They have left.

Not so much as a little peek in my direction as they do so. I smile to myself as the fantasy ends and my member returns to its slumber.

My mind is strewn like a desk in total disarray with mail from today, and the unanswered mail of so many yesterdays. Amid all this anti-Zen clutter of thoughts, I still find happiness in such frivolous things, like people-watching, like the line of the muscular formation of the Northern European's thigh as seen through his taut pants. Such fantasies, such trifling, trivial, yet blissful encounters amid all the thick mud of life's complicated memories and the pain they sometimes bring help me to endure yet another day.

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