



# THE VAGRANT

It's a lovely sunny spring day in Brussels and a few people I know are up early. There are food banks in the different neighbourhoods that open early where you can go and pick up food that the supermarkets donate as they are about to expire. You get lovely chicken salad, diced carrots in a spicy marinade, frozen chicken breasts and even gourmet pizza. One of the regulars is a lovely older lady from Mauritius. She shuffles along in her headscarf and with her little cart in tow and picks up food from the different places that donate. She often speaks fondly of the chicken. She's been here for many years but still remembers the places of her youth in Mauritius such as Grand Bay. She comes and stands in line but if there's a corner with some sunshine she will head straight for it and bask in the rays of the sun, perhaps like she did in Mauritius. By visiting the foodbanks she manages to get enough food to feed herself.

I remember an idyllic summer spent in Grand Bay, riding a bicycle through the island in my striped overall with my bikini top showing underneath, wearing a white scarf on my head and mirrored John Lennon glasses protecting my eyes. I remember fighting over a wind sail with my brother so all the beach goers later spoke of the two feisty youngsters who didn't want to share and who peppered the air with their arguments. I remember going so far out into the sea that we had to be rescued by some passing boaters. Later the same boaters would approach me after sunset and tell me they were military recruits from a nearby base in a neighbouring island. I was momentarily mesmerized by the notion of an affair with a Francophone army recruit whose crew cut and self assurance was magic to my young inexperienced eyes. It was nothing more than a conversation but it was part of the magic of that summer.

Another regular is a painter who lives close to one of the food banks. She sells paintings but the lack of a regular income means she relies on the food banks. She paints beautiful landscapes and seascapes but how many famous artists of the past could not make a living from their work. The food bank provides a much needed source of food for her too.

I remember visiting the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. It was a rainy day and we had hired bicycles to tour the city. We visited the famous cafes, the red light district and marveled at the old houses on the canal that looked crooked and about to tumble down. It was a small museum with small whitewashed rooms but the paintings spoke for themselves and needed little in the form of surroundings to sing their magic; a symphony so loud you left intoxicated.

Another regular who is often there at 9am when it only opens at 10 is a house painter from Romania. He has 4 boys who he has raised in Brussels and he proudly lists their accomplishments. One is a social worker and another studied politics. He recently tried to buy a house but he fell ill and lost his job and when he recovered the job was no longer there. He is now looking for work but as he is older he tends to lose out to younger applicants when he applies for jobs.

I asked if his wife worked and he pointed to his full belly and smiled and said no but she's a great cook.

I remember years ago helping a friend paint his studio in Florida. He was a photographer who had countless love affairs. His true love was the camera though and he made love to everyone of his subjects.

You never know what you will get at the food bank. There are even times when they have artichokes but whatever hardships each of the people who go there are going through they are always willing to share a laugh and tell you their stories. When they wait 45 minutes in line and manage to bag 6 artichokes and a whole chicken they walk away with glowing smiles on their faces, feeling like it was worth the wait and ready to enjoy a good meal.

It not only provides necessary sustenance, it also unlocks a treasure trove of memories. Did I tell you what the artichokes reminded me of?

**Patty Braun**



C'est avec émotion que je me suis vu offrir ce magnifique tableau de DOPARTMINE, pour me remercier de l'avoir mis à l'honneur en couverture du DoucheFLUX Magazine n° 31. Je savais parfaitement où il trouverait sa place dans mon living.

Après l'avoir ramené chez moi en métro et en bus, le tableau emballé (122 cm X

33 cm) sous le bras, un gros sac à dos sur le dos et un plus petit sur le ventre, je l'ai tout de suite accroché au mur !

Un tout grand merci à DOPARTMINE pour ce magnifique cadeau. Du fond du cœur.

**Aube Dierckx**