

## Nina Simone's Gum

Terry telephoned me earlier. I was on the Underground. He left a message, Nina Simone's Gum. Nothing more! After all, was he referring to one of her gums? Had she been chewing gum? Neither option particularly attracted me to the subject, particularly if it was a reference to the state of her gums or something she had taken out of her mouth during one of her last concerts. Jesus it doesn't bear thinking about.

He said it might require a visit to somewhere liquid and solid. Why did he have to taunt me with an enigma like that? It makes me feel sick just thinking about it. I had to telephone him.

He asked me to look into it. What, her mouth! I just wasn't interested!

He added, "Her voice by then, sounded like an old frog. Sorry, Nina but your voice really had gone by then. And I do have some of your earlier recordings. Fine they are, too.

He had just been listening to a good read! A good read! I ask you! I just wanted to throw up in a paper bag.

"So, what's it all about, I asked.

"She took it out before she started singing," he said.

"Who said?"

The writer!"

"The writer?"

"The writer of the book, of course."

"And what happened to it after that?"

"She put it on a towel. I think it must have been a paper one. I mean, a bath towel on a grand piano would appear odd, wouldn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"She began to sing."

I thought you said her voice had gone!"

“It had but people still came to hear her. For old times sake. That kind of thing. She berated the audience somewhat!”

“Why? I mean the audience had come to hear her. Paid to see her sing”

“She was quite old by then.”

“Grumpy too. by sounds!”

“And the chewing gum?”

“Oh! She left it there when she left the stage.”

“What! For her next appearance?”

“No, she took it out before she started to sing, remember.”

“So where is it? I mean a book’s been written about it.”

“Yes, the writer waited until she had left the stage.”

“And...”

“He took it.”

“What! When no one was looking?”

“People were getting up by then and walking out of the venue.”

“Where did the writer put it?”

“In his pocket, I suppose, or in a bag perhaps. I dunno! I’ll have to do a little more research”

“Is it still there?”

“No, it’s in a museum in Denmark.”

“A museum!”

“Yes.”

“Stuck to what?”

“It isn’t stuck, it’s in a temperature regulated cabinet.”

“What! For all to see?”

“For those who want to.”

“Are they queuing up?”

“Not queuing exactly it’s just on display for those who want to take a look. It’s an attraction.”

“Doesn’t sound attractive to me.”

“You’d be surprised.”

“I would be, indeed.”

“And that’s the subject of the book.”

“It doesn’t seem to be enough to write a book about.”

“There are lists of things, too.”

“What kind of things?”

“Things to collect.”

“Like chewing gum! How many kinds of gum are there?”

“No, other things that belonged to musicians.”

“But it didn’t belong to her, anymore! She had discarded it.”

“Yes, but that’s the point it used to belong to her. Can’t you see that?”

“I’d rather not!”

Post Script.

I looked into it further. The writer has also had the bitten into gum, cast in gold and silver.

Fancy that!”

Note: There is also a conceit here. I am using the voice of the person who I sent the voice mail to because I thought he might be interested as he works with first thought, best thought. His work is part calligraphy part graffiti but in a pictorial form.

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