



The Quentin Pizza

Catherine Sinow

Every piece in Erika's art show involved the name "Quentin." Seven dancers wearing leotards reading Q, U, E, N, T, I, and N performed a tap routine. A black tunnel ran a whole room's length, speakers playing people uttering "Quentin" in all conceivable tones. There was a computer you could go on with a fake version of Facebook, and every one of your 452 friends was the exact same Quentin.

I joined Erika by the front of the gallery. A circular white pin reading "QUENTIN" stuck to her breast pocket.

"I like what you've done this time around," I told her, grabbing a cookie with "Quentin" iced onto its surface.

"Thanks a bunch, Theo," she said. "This one definitely took some mental expansion. Lots of mediums involved!"

"So, what does Quentin think of all of this?" I asked.

"Can't be sure. No contact so far."

"Are you worried about some kind of lawsuit or

restraining order?"

"Actually, that would be great. I'm not going to give it all away yet, but the second part of The Quentin Project will be performance-based."

I walked home, contemplating the quietude of closed stores and gazing up at house parties on 4th floor apartments. One blasted the song "Moves Like Jagger" and I found myself feeling alienated.

I crossed the street a few times to avoid looming shadows. I attempted to avoid puddles on the sidewalk and failed. A few blocks before home, I heard Moves Like Jagger again. I looked around; there was no party or other human being to be seen, yet the song felt so nearby. It followed me into my building and only disappeared when I clicked the door to my apartment shut.

At my job interview the next day, I sat across one woman

and one man in a back room piled with filing cabinets and old mops. The man had a tall face and a necktie with green hexagons on it. The woman had short hair in loose curls and a strange glassy-eyed look to her.

"So, what brings you to HexaRoni?" asked the woman.

"I guess I just enjoy pizza," I said. "I think I could bring a lot to your company. I'm a quick worker."

"But you should know that we are not an ordinary pizza company," said the man.

"That's right," said the woman. "Our pies are exclusively in the shape of hexagons!" She and the man looked at one another, smiling uncontrollably.

"I saw that when I walked in," I said. "And on the website, too."

"A six-sliced pie is just so convenient," she said. "You can eat one piece per person if you're a party of six, two pieces per person if you're a party of three, or three pieces per person if you have a party of two and you're feeling mighty hungry! And our chefs know just where to cut! None of that frightening ambiguity of that undefined, slippery circle." She shuddered as she thought of this shape.

"I think it's a pretty revolutionary tactic," I said.

"Do you enjoy hexagons?" asked the woman, in the way that some would ask "Do you know Jesus?"

"I think they're a good shape," I said. "Definitely better than octagons." Then the woman put her hands over her ears and started to scream. The man reached over and grasped her shoulders, compassionately whispering "Six sides, six sides, everything will be alright." She eventually took her hands off her ears and opened her eyes, hyperventilating.

"We don't like to speak of the eight-sided polygon here," he said.

I apologized. "How much do you guys pay?" I asked.

The two perked up, having apparently recovered from the octagon incident. "We may not pay a six-figure salary, but we do pay a six-sided salary," the man said, grinning. He and the woman smiled and nodded at one another.

"What does that mean? How can a salary be six-sided?"

"Hexagon," said the woman.

"Hexagon," said the man.

"Do I have the job?" I asked.

"Hexagon," they said in unison.

My training involved a lot of dough throwing. It made my arms feel weak and I almost (but not quite) fantasized about making spreadsheets at a desk. I did find myself competent at taking fistfuls of mozzarella and sprinkling it all over pizzas, so I figured this was something to be proud of. Before long, I was hard at work making "HexaPies" and topping them with hexagon-shaped pepperoni (we called it "HexaPepperoni" to avoid confusion with the name of the store, HexaRoni, which itself was also a portmanteau of "hexagon" and "pepperoni").

"Who cuts the HexaPepperonis?" I asked my silent and serious coworker Mitch. I said this quickly since he seemed like the kind of person who would snap if asked to exert emotional energy.

"Guy over in Petaluma," he said, keeping his head down. "We have connections."

I was just starting to wonder if there was a HexaMafia when the shift manager announced that they needed

another person on delivery.

While driving the HexaRoni Mini Cooper, Moves Like Jagger came on the radio. I switched the station, annoyed, only to find Moves Like Jagger on the other station. I grumbled and turned it off. Then I realized that my next delivery was for Shampoooch and my heart jumped into my throat.

Shampoooch had ordered three pizzas. When I got there, I opened up the box on top of the stack. Surely enough, half was a normal, hexagon-shaped pizza suited for human consumption, and the other half looked like frozen dirt and smelled like dog kibble.

I walked into the salon, where I saw Quentin soaping up a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever. He and Erika had dated for three years when we all attended college. Now he was an entrepreneur with three dog washes to his name.

"Take over for me, Nickerson!" he snapped, and a guy mopping the floor quickly ran to the Retriever. Quentin tipped me \$5 and set the pizzas out on a table. Humans and dogs flocked. He came back and stood next to me, implying he didn't have to be anywhere anytime soon.

"So how's it going, Theo?" he asked. He was buff, tan, and covered in tattoos of tropical plants and woodland creatures.

"Not bad," I said. "Just working at HexaRoni."

"I always knew you would never amount to anything with that Anthropology degree," he said.

"I had a minor in Geographical Information Systems," I replied.

"Say," he said, his muscles flexing a little. "I heard you and Erika have been hanging out."

"As a matter of fact, we have been. She actually had a lot to say about you in her new exhibit," I said, trying to brag about my connection with her. We were so close that I even went to her art opening! Except she had sent the invite to all 300 of her Facebook friends in our city.

"I do know of that exhibit," Quentin said, twirling a rubber dog bone around his finger. "My friend's actually writing a review of it."

"You going to file a restraining order?" I said, hopeful that he would so he could jump-start the performance segment of her art.

"She's harmless," he said, doing a sweeping motion with his veiny, hairy right hand. "All I gotta do is hold my head high and live my life."

"It doesn't even make you feel, well, hurt?"

"You know, why do you keep asking me about her? You like her, don't you?" I felt myself turn red.

"It's always been a 'just friends' arrangement," I said. "I love her like a sister."

I once tried to send Erika a love letter. I didn't know how stamps worked and I put a sparkly duck sticker in the corner. It was returned to me two weeks later.

"Say what you want to say, Theo," said Quentin. I glanced over at Nickerson, who was blow-drying a Maltese in the back of the shop. "Erika is a charming, talented woman and it makes all the sense in the world to love her."

I drove back to HexaRoni listening to the classical station. Over the course of five minutes on the road, the orchestra smoothly transitioned from a Bach symphony to an orchestral interpretation of Moves Like Jagger. I raised

one of my eyebrows in disgust and turned off the radio.

The next day on my lunch break, I gorged on a veggie HexaPie while reading the local paper. It was then that I saw it.

Obsessive 'Art' Show Creepy, Not Artistic

My heart dropped into my stomach as I read this article by Tom Teitelbaum. He was, simply put, not into the gimmick.

"Seeing the same name just got boring after a while," he admitted. "It's my brother's name, too. He was the favorite child. I've heard it enough!"

I seethed with fury.

When my grueling cheese-sprinkling shift finally ended at six, I stayed for a while longer and crafted a HexaPie. I sort of wanted to make it a circle, but I knew that might cause everyone in the building to need emergency psychiatric attention, so I stuck with the six-sided shape. I made a 10" HexaPie with HexaPepperoni arranged into the name "Quentin." I got in my beat-up car and drove to Erika's apartment.

I decided not to ring her buzzer for an element of surprise. Instead I waited outside the building for someone to leave so I could slip in after them. This opportunity came via a scruffy middle-aged man who eyed me suspiciously. I took the stairs to Erika's floor and knocked on her door, which she had adorned with a Gustav Klimt poster.

She opened the door. She wore a periwinkle kimono, hair tied up messily with tears streaming down her cheeks. It seemed that she had too learned of Tom Teitelbaum earlier today.

"Theo!" she exclaimed, embracing me and almost making me drop the pizza box.

"I thought you could use some cheering up," I said. We went inside and I showed her my creation.

"It's beautiful," she said. She ran over to the coffee table and grabbed her film camera. She snapped a photo of me holding the pizza, which made me feel vulnerable.

We sat on her couch and ate the HexaPie. "Do you ever hear the song Moves Like Jagger a little too often?" I asked her.

"That song is totally overplayed," she said.

"I'm talking more like, hearing it at really odd times."

"Don't think I've experienced that," she said. "But that song sure is weird, huh? I mean, Mick Jagger kind of sucks at dancing. Why couldn't it have been about Michael Jackson?"

"I think they're talking about, uh, sex moves," I said, realizing I had just spoken about sex in Erika's presence. She blushed a little. Maybe Moves Like Jagger was like a

metaphysical spirit guiding me toward Erika's love.

We played a round of Scrabble. I played the word quilts, which I was proud of, but she came back with flapjack on a triple-word square, which cost me the game. We drank the boxed wine she kept under her sink and made a collage out of medication advertisements in her magazine basket. I think she might actually be into me, I thought, noticing how she nuzzled up to my shoulder while applying Elmer's Glue.

We found the newspaper's address online and mailed Tom Teitelbaum one of these collages, prominently featuring a new medication for high blood pressure.

"I hope he needs to actually take these pills soon," she said with a dash of fury in her eye.

"Now now," I told her, feeling buzzed and cuddly as hell. "Please don't wish for other people to get illnesses that prohibit them from eating muffins." I found myself inching closer to her.

"How tasteless of me," she said. And with that, I fell into her arms.

We held one another for a good ten minutes, saying nothing. When I finally spoke, I felt my throat creaking as if I hadn't talked in hours.

"If we have a drawn-out romantic relationship that ends in a breakup in several years," I said, "will you make an art exhibit about me?"

"I couldn't say," she said. "But if I do, don't be surprised if it's just 200 pizzas."

"Oh you," I said. I watched her slowly doze off, and I found myself thanking the gods for this little marvel of nature. I was drifting off myself when Adam Levine's head poked through the window, his hands curled around the windowsill. He began singing the chorus of Moves Like Jagger, a bluebird on his shoulder accompanying him during the whistling part.

"What are you doing here?" I asked. "Get out! This is my moment!"

"Sorry, pal," he said, and he lowered himself. His hands and head slipped out of view, leaving me to fall asleep to the sound of chirping crickets and Erika's nose-breathing. 🐛



CATHERINE SINOW is a recent graduate of Colorado College, where she majored in fiction writing. She resides in her hometown of San Diego, figuring out what she wants to do with her life as well as listening to copious ambient music and making zines. Her other work can easily be found by Googling her name, as she is the only Catherine Sinow who has ever lived.