

MAGIC ANTENNAS



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FOR MARY REID

In the wake of a series of terrorist attacks in Paris in the summer of 1982 (that have since been attributed to Carlos the Jackal), the then head of the Élite Groupement d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale, Paul Barril, orchestrated the arrest of the three "Irlandais de Vincennes", "dangerous terrorists" according to documents that turned out to be forged by the gendarmes themselves. While the three Irish nationals were released after a lengthy incarceration in Paris, and Barril was forced to leave the GIGN, his attorney, the provocative French lawyer, Jacques Vergès, managed to keep him out of jail; he has since gone into the manufacture of paralyzing gasses and the protection of African heads of State.

*L'Ami Butte, rue André Barsacq,
'82, l'été après le bac*

*My window's sunny balcon au premier,
Makes for ambiance so authentique
It's backdrop to the film "Dimanche du Flic",
This summer's box-hit film policier.
Right here they shot the scene in which a flic,*

*In hot pursuit, houses a balle fatale
In the head of a gangster whose meurtres
Have shook the backstreets of Montmartre.
Enough for me to fork up vingt-cinq balles
Of profit hard-earned in the Place du Tertre.*

*I sell what's all the rage—antennes magiques,
Whose glittered balls and stars are tant disco,
A man who wore one read the météo.
He bought from me behind the Basilique:
—"Listen, weatherman, tiens, ils sont rigolo",*

*Says I... "they beat hands down those verts luisants
That next day are no good, they've lost their vert.*

Sport this on FR3, *semblable frère*.
And so he bought my last *moulin à vent*,
And kept his word—"regarde... *c'est lui, lecteur*",

Ten francs is all I pay the shift *beur*
Who drives a gorgeous souped-up *Citroën*.
He hooks me with a hundred new *antennes*
And smiles at my new joke: "*Les voyageurs*
Sont informés que la station Seine

Est fermée au public." *Twenty-five francs*
La pièce, *is my standard asking price*
(Pour commencer), *so, sure, I turn a nice*
'Tit bénéfice, *and join the vendors' ranks*
Qui font la foule, *and milk the tourist vice*.

Eh ben, un jour, *things took an ill-starred turn*,
Les CRS *came stalking through the square*.
"Votre permis, monsieur."—"Lovely weather,
N'est-ce pas?", *was all I could think in return*,
"J'ai non comprenez. Here. Try on a pair!"

"Vous êtes Ail-riche?" *they asked (way too curious)*.
"Oui, pas Anglais du tout at all", *says I*,
(Comme si le beurre ne fondait pas, *real shy*;
La foi d'un Irlandais *is never spurious*.)
"Quelle heure il est?" *one asked real quick and fly*:

—Putain! Ils m'ont bien eu, *I reached too fast*.
Et puis, de là, *things took a turn downhill*,
Un peu de deux plus deux, *then Interpol*.
Les poulets Irlandais *faxed through my past*
Au Commissariat, *where I, meanwhile*,

Jouais toujours l'idiot, *blank as a slate*.
L'intrigue s'embrouille, pourtant. *A cousin*
(Cousine plutôt), *living out in Vincennes*
(Une des "Trois de même"), *is made the scape-goat*
Du ministre de l'intérieur, *whereupon*

Moi—simple vendeur d'antennes—*gets sound advice*.
"Vaut mieux vous éclipser un peu *young man*.
Décamper. *We'll drop you off in the van*

A la gare du Nord *and give you the price*
D'un aller simple. *If another bomb*

S'explode ici, *we go looking for you.*"
Raisonnable *enough, you have to admit,*
D'ailleurs, mon père *who wants me in Maynooth,*
Exige que j'ai mon *B.A. to pursue;*
Et alors, je rentre, *to quell what hitherto's been hapless youth.*