

Real or Fake?

Two teenagers discover a secret place in Chinatown, NY, where boxes of sneakers are stored.

"Wow," Jen said. "I know." Acting on instinct, I pointed my phone and took a picture. "Wow," she repeated. I reached out, and my hand glowed in the shaft of sunlight, as if the shoes were infecting me with their magic. The texture of the panels was something I'd never felt before, as rough and pliable as canvas but with the silvery shine of metal. The laces flowed through my fingers as softly as ropes made out of silk. The eyelets^① seemed to have tiny spokes^② that turned when I flexed the shoe, using the same effect as those 3-D postcards that change when you look at them from different directions. But the individual flourishes weren't what made the shoes incredible. It was the way they called to me to put them on, the way I was sure I could fly if I was wearing a pair. The way I needed to buy them now.

She was pointing at a circle of plastic set into the tongue, where the client's logo stood out bright white and proud. With my brain gradually recovering from its dazzlement^③, I saw what Jen had spotted right away. The logo - one of the world's best-known symbols, (up there with the white flag of surrender^④) - the golden arches had been cut through with a diagonal line in bright red. Like a no-smoking sign. A symbol of prohibition. It was an anti-logo.

"Bootlegs^⑤" I murmured. That was another thing that went on in the shadows of Chinatown. In rows of small, discreet shops on Canal Street you could buy watches and jeans, handbags and shirts, wallets and belts, all with the labels of famous designers sewn onto them by hand. All cheap and fake.

- ① oeillets
- ② rayons
- ③ éblouissement
- ④ capitulation
- ⑤ produits de contrebande



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