

## RICHARD TANNENBAUM

### *Rabid Transit*

Intercellular slowdown—a work stoppage to rival city workers and malpractice magicians. Plans and plots congeal like so many drops of blood: coagulation without representation. My mind picks up unfinished business and unwritten laws like burrs as I slide through the California Swamp. Here we find the fledgling jeweler of words—stringing monosyllables in chaotic disarray.

A canyon spreads out at my feet—crag and quagmires of self-doubt and delusion—coincidence is my sextant, Evil Knevil rides sidesaddle whispering “Don’t worry, Kid, you can make this jump deaf, dumb, and blind”. On the far side of the gulf sits a typewriter with Sanskrit letters and a slot for quarters. On this side a woman stretches out her arms and with the face of a Madonna tells an encyclopedia of lies without ever opening her mouth. I spend weeks with her—years. I writhe with compassion—I give speeches, pass out leaflets, entreat and implore. I plant seeds of understanding for her, sprinkle holy water at her feet with the care of a monk. I pass through disease and famine—I thrive on it—I am almost Saintly with guilt as they strap her down and the Doctor goes at her with a vacuum tube. She screams out like a wounded child—I jump: soaring, spinning, looping, arcing—pausing to wave to the crowd—a half gainer, a flip, a twist—I fall wordlessly, I crash gloriously, I disappear.

Coming up for air, sputtering in the milky froth. A drug like moss grows up and over my brain. Thoughts seem out of focus—as if viewed through a heavy rain. It is always raining here; I use sex as an umbrella and learn to breathe without oxygen. Swimming in a river of flesh—crawling tongues and schizophrenic logic: Vivacour—Norwegian

psychopath—waiting for a midnite bus dreaming of Bergman movies and camera angles. My swamplife degeneracy bubbles up like a tar pit and she is caught. We are so closely related it's almost incestuous—an energy exchange, palpable as any space shot, though it won't light up any computer matrix now in use, ties a knot in the subatmospheric plane of vagrant souls. We fall together like a rockslide without saying a word. Whole lifetimes, entire personalities bow in the face of a higher form of magic. The rhythm of Fuck drowns out pasts and futures: careers disappear, skyscrapers implode, friendships dissolve, all memory melts in the conflagration. My body swells—nerve endings shoot skyrockets, histories are rewritten into myths—truths into fantasy. Forget oaths of obedience—pledges of allegiance—vows and promises: I surrender in Bed, with my tongue slashing like a madman inside the cunt of a perfect stranger—preferably one whose language is gibberish and whose delusions are overwhelming. This is the Real evening news: communication that the F.C.C. can only guess at. Under a microscope—revealing protoplasm exchanges, in waves and swirls—Electrons bounce off each other: a few cells of desperation for her, a few protons of schizophrenia for me, and I swallow it all in one eager gulp. Vivacour, she said her name was, tossed around like driftwood. I could climb inside you and run for president or better yet pitch a tent. We soar, pleasure coating—prodding—exploding. Mindless Fuck—the cure for cancer and suicide! I come like a truck driver—she comes down for more but already the Saloon Door swings open and I walk back in: spurs clanging, a satisfied spring in my step—a strut—a smirk—a psychic bounce. She is still smoldering in several archaic languages when I fall asleep.

Wake to the sounds of Vivacour writhing and moaning in her dreamlife of auditions and Immigration Officers. For a brief instant she is Someone Else: feelings well up and then crash in the machine gun realization that Someone Else is gone and I'm still here, next to another abstract cunt without portfolio; without a clue.

I wake her gently and take her back to the bus stop in plenty of time for Rush Hour. Wonder how she makes it in Los Angeles, of all places, without a car.