

BODEGA

Roman à Clef

N. Dash, Anna Neighbor, Dena Yago
February 9 - March 24

I sit on the plastic seat of a cab on its way across the bridge, the floral musk of fresh makeup and perfume rising from my skin and filling the vehicle with a fragrance of denatured alcohol and agarwood.

As we drive I speed-write in gray pencil across the gridded pages of my thin blue notebook.

I'd been crossing in the other direction by subway only an hour earlier, watching the sun lapse toward its own reflection in the river below.

We had just pulled out of the city and the late day burst moodily upon us, light breaking from the shelter of tall buildings. Highrise windows flashed and shingled rooftop water tanks cast shadows on graffitied chimneys. From my seat on the pale blue molded bench I detected a stir of ardor in the expression of a woman gripping a pole near the doors. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other, embalmed by the gleaming presence competing with the fluorescent light of the overhead bulbs.

I felt cold and un-mammal-like, as if the stark shades of the setting sun were beckoning me into some primordial vacuum, massaging me with goosebumps as the train hammered along.

And now the long sunset burns robust and orange-gold through the bridge's suspension cables, growing ruby and devilish as the cab glides forward.

The taxi driver sits up straight, a turquoise turban wrapped around his head. His car seems intravenously fastened to the traffic pattern, sliding cleanly off the bridge and fluently navigating lanes up Bowery to 11th Street.

A rush of contentment passed through me, and for a moment it didn't seem to hurt that I felt restless and otherworldly, as if I were living in a hallucination, under the skin of a dream realm where I temporarily made contact with a truer version of myself, which I was sure existed in some other nearby dimension, and that from time to time aligned with me in my present body. I didn't experience these notions as real but they were compelling enough to worry and distract me, interrupting my work, which I had already been neglecting very badly - a condition that did not suit me well. For without working I felt my work oozing out in wrongful paths: into my thoughts and through my pores, how I walked the streets, the faces I made at people and the look in my eye when I went out. What I wrote in my notebook.

- Kayla Guthrie