

MATHEMATICA

by Juan Carlos Pareja

So it's like I was tellin' you, y'know. I see this one guy talkin' to this other guy, round the corner:

- How can he say those things?
- Who?
- ...the Dalai Lama.
- What things?
- I don't know...you know...things....
- ...Oh?
- Y'know...about the soul and happiness....
- Who am I? The Pope?

He knew he was talking to a tree. This was his best friend here. But he knew. So this guy jumps on the B Train to fuckin' nowhere, crosses the entire city to get to work and the whole time he feels this thing inside, like a certain oppression on his chest. So he rides through the entire town without ever seeing anything.

He gets into work and sits down at his desk. He looks up and sees people around he don't really know and for the first time in his life he feels disgusted, I mean really sick. I'm not talkin' 'bout a fuckin' mid life crisis or numbness like that Pink Floyd shit, I'm talkin' bout real physical disgust. Like when you smell a dead rat under the fridge.

But he stays put. Eats his own shit the rest of the day until its five o' clock doing who the fuck knows what. Gets on the B Train: direction home and gazes out the window for the next fifty or so minutes. He feels nothin' no more. He just moves when he has to.

He looked pretty fuckin' miserable walkin' home from the station, I can tell you that. But it didn't really matter because everyone looked pretty fuckin' miserable walking from the station that afternoon. But he knew.

At home, his wife sat. They kissed and said nothin'. Y'know women: they're smart. So he walked up and down the house, not wanting to turn on the TV nor listen to his old records. He gazed out the window that night like on the bus but this time he could see clearer. He saw an entire town under a spell, an entire nation acting like a fool and he saw himself, helpless on his window stool, realizing that his entire life is a scam, a sad fuckin' scam.

So the next mornin' he woke up and felt a little better. Remembered none of his dreams which I can assure must have been of the strangest nature and felt somewhat better. Like something was forgotten or better yet, stolen during the night. He stepped out the door that morning and felt the breeze hit his chin. It felt good, right? So he listens to one of these birds chippin' gaily in one of them trees. And he thinks he's got it under control. Yeah, it's all about mental toughness, don't let yourself slip into one of them moods. You're a fuckin' man, keep it tight in there. He's walkin' down the road, saluting who knows what on his way, feeling king of the hill and realizing that people care for him, love him and better yet, respect him. Until he sees that wall. That one there on 3rd and Washington. Tallest wall in town, I tell you. But it's the first time he sees it and he doesn't understand no more.

He feels weird, not like yesterday but definitely not good like ten seconds ago. Where's all that toughness, tough guy? Where's all that swagger? Where's your fuckin' tweety bird now? He doesn't have it no more. He stares at the wall for a while, y'know, like a mad man staring at his hand and he has answers to nothing in his life. Not even his dumb stupid friend to snap him out of it. He's doomed, right there, right now. Doomed. And nothing he can do about it.....

- ...And then what?
- I don't know...probably got the B Train to work.
- Then what?
- ...don't know....probably got the B Train home.
- Then what?
- You do the math...

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