

*I think I found something I think I was
looking for, I think I found it and besides
I found a little bit more*

Toulouse Saturday 21st May 1994.
Matabiau station, 9.45am. 8 hours from Austerlitz,
settling back into my corner seat, yawning and
wishing I'd brought more food to eat and then
suddenly smiling, suddenly remembering last
night at Le Bikini, and Mark walking onstage in
that shabby old priest's robe he'd bought in the
market that afternoon, striding on, palms upraised,
blessing the crowd. Wraparounds, fag dangling
from the corner of his mouth, oh I wish I had a
photo, in my head it's a beautiful photo and look -

- that's me in the corner, the stupid dozy-
looking one, just come across from St. Etienne the
long way via Marseille because suddenly it'd struck
me I'd managed to get this old without ever seeing
the Mediterranean - yeah that's me... in my corner...
eyes closing...

... train jerking, shaking my shoulder, come
on then, sleepyhead, wake up and tell us what
you're thinking. Mmmmmmm??? Oh... just stuff...
you know. Nice stuff, mostly. Tram-lines. Coal-
mines. A hill-top Madonna made out of concrete
and steel and a whole city spread out below.
Scruffy brown-skinned kids who point at me and
shout out "Allemand!" as we wander back down
through the edge of town estates. A goodbye kiss
in the 5am silence, she naked, soft and still warm
from bed, coming to the door of her room to watch
me go. A leaden walk through the sleeping streets
to the lights of Chateaucreux; feeling emptied, a bit
sick, a million other things... yeah. That sort of

stuff. A lump of stolen coal at the back of my
rucksack, a keepsake. St. Chamond. Rive-de-Gier.
Changing trains in Lyon's harsh anaemic dawn.
South south south, bleary fields on either side
ripening into colour and suddenly there are
vineyards. And then Marseille, scorched into my
memory now and forevermore as a flight of white
steps ablaze in the hard noon sun and me running
down them with just 40 minutes to get to the
harbour and back before the next train leaves, the
long slow sticky train back west along the coast and
inland to Carcassonne and rush-hour Toulouse
where I'll waste half an hour trying to understand
the ticket machines on its fabulous shiny metro...

And now it's tomorrow, and I'm on another
train, but heading north now, to Paris, Dieppe, and
the boat home. I need to sleep. I need to eat. I need
to...

Four rows down, across the seat backs, I see
her: coal-eyed, Mediterranean, black hair pushed
back over one shoulder. She smiles. I smile. She
smiles again, looks away, then back, and we smile.
I press my face against the glass and watch the
forest falling away and when I look back she smiles
again. And so on and so on. There's something
electric about today. The air is sapphire. In love
with the whole fucking world. Longer looks now.
Daring. Defying. Holding my gaze. Look away,
look back, knowing she's waiting and that in a
second she'll look up again and smile. On and on.
Why don't I know the French for any of these
thoughts? How many miles have we travelled like
this? What's the name of this town? Then at Brive-
la-Gaillarde she suddenly rises, picks up her
raincoat and leaves - just a glance back through the

window as she walks along the platform, close against the side of the train. Other futures shine like stars in other people's eyes, we glimpse them and blink them away. We move on, we move on. Towns whose names I've never known. People come and go. Across the huge flat empty fields north of Orléans it begins to rain, soft sobs of rain that I want to go on forever.

Killing time on the Place de Clichy, I buy Burger King coffee and a warm filled-baguette from a stall. The air's like sticky leaves against my face and sweet with the smoke of distant summers. There is traffic somewhere very close I know but I don't see it, it's just a dim noise. Figures babble past me; my footsteps make no sound. I walk for miles, my head is hollow, I'm drunk on something exquisite that I don't remember drinking and I love the smell of Paris in the evening. Maybe I'll just stop here, let go, become part of the sad little cluster of lives that fills up these deep-walled alleys behind Pigalle, because it wouldn't really matter, would it, not really.

Breathe in. Oh breathe in.

On the boat-train the heating's jammed full-on - people haul the big half-windows down as far as they'll go and lean out laughing. We move on through the suburbs, and the carriage fills with the night-honed sounds and scents of the Paris night. I think this may have been the best day of my life. It has nothing much to do with popmusic, I suppose.

I couldn't see the bottom of the glass till closing time

The King's Arms, Bristol, Tuesday 21st May, 1991. I forget when exactly it was Stuart from Hope remembered that the only reason their previous gig here had been OK was that they broke into the noise-limiter and rigged it... I just wish he'd remembered before we booked *this* gig, or at least while we still had a chance to do likewise, because now it's obviously been re-set and The Orchids are NOT having fun... all five stare grimly at the little red light... you get 10 seconds grace once it comes on, 10 seconds to quieten things down before the power goes off... Ha, quieten things down!!! Chris is already playing with brushes instead of drumsticks, and even Brighter kept cutting out. Oh Christ, we shouldn't even be *doing* this fucking gig, it's only because The Fleece lost their licence and we had to take over at the last minute... and now I'm dying every time I see Hackett roll his eyes up to the ceiling in despair...

... and in the end I just get so embarrassed by the whole fiasco and by the fact we've charged people three quid to get in that I just think fuck it and get horribly drunk. And afterwards... oh, fuck knows... I guess everybody must've gone home, and I seem to remember Pete-next-door trying to climb out our back-window... and The Orchids wanting to buy some dope, and me sending them down to St. Pauls, only they couldn't find any, and then when the taxi brought them home they bought it off the driver instead. Yeah. Next time they brought their own down from Glasgow and The Sweetest Ache smoked it.