

6 August 2003

Odd day

...on the hottest day in London ever...

It was 7:30 although my alarm clock was insisting that it was 7:34. My alarm clock, a fusia pink plastic affair that had been personally graphiteed with gold glitter nail varnish was attempting its habitual alarming act.

Meanwhile I was dreaming... of hair clips. Metal hair clips were around the room at locations where an alarm clock may have been placed. I was reaching for the hair clips that I was convinced were my alarm clock and pressing them to switch off the alarm... of course none of them — upon touching — I realized were in fact emitting the alarm: they were clearly decoys apart from one. As I dredged myself to a higher alertness for the more perceptive task required — the detecting of the non-decoy alarm clock — all of a sudden I had the brilliant sense of lucid recognition that my alarm clock was in fact the cause of the alarm. I sheepishly pressed the pink plastic and then sat up wandering what omen for the rest of the day this could be.

I opened the fridge and reminded myself that I had run out of milk the day before as, when I had gone to the shop to buy it after work I had forgotten that I had forgotten to replace my purse in my bag the preceding day when I had removed it. Earlier that day I had gone to purchase bread, as it happened without my purse, and as I stood at the till in the realization of its absence the guy looked at me as if to say: why did you come out shopping knowing that you were without your purse...

I left the house for the station. I, along with many others boarded the train. I veered left. Unpredictably a passenger arose and alighted yet leaving the impression that the particular vacant seat had always been set aside for me, although it obviously had not.

As I exited the station my footsteps followed the same path in reverse that I had made the previous evening — as I had caught the later train which does not stop at my preferred destination. I must have been looking footward to notice again — as had caught my attention the preceding evening — out of the corner of my eye the red tomato. It looked so solitary but still succulent. And there, again, was the other now squashed where I had first seen it drop unexpectedly, apparently from the man crossing when the green man was indicating to walk. I had not, then expected to see another... just how many tomatoes had the man dropped, presumably without noticing although he had not appeared to be carrying any shopping?

I was on my way to work — on this following day. I slipped under the underpass and felt the heat of this hottest day ahead of me already penetrating, permeating all matter now crossing the Thames bridge as if a new invisible kind of weld was tentatively beginning to tighten its grip. And then, again, another tomato — and a little farther on another — still unscathed baby plum tomatoes. I re-pictured the man, who had apparently been dropping them unnoticed as I was retracing his steps. The real red appearance of the tomatoes was like the unusually high temperature — out of place — and yet a perfect accompaniment — the tomato dressed in its hot red,

a tension in its skin of promise. And then distracted... a girl, walking towards me across the bridge was wearing a bright red skirt of the same hue with a scant hot orange top. Summer dress redness, summer flesh flowers but hotness and coolness of slender arms.

I arrived in the office. The hues were now cool and stale in the air-conditioning. Later, in the afternoon, the new recruit returned from the 'Induction'. She was wearing a startling red dress with dainty kitsch gold slippers.

On the way home I didn't notice the tomatoes as I retraced my steps. However before arriving home I remembered to purchase milk. On my way to buy the milk I passed a man and woman with their new baby who I recognise but have never spoken to — our gazes met and lingered in an instant but remained anonymous.

The day was still being red... when I entered the wine shop I remembered that a friend had recommended a red wine that is drunk chilled. In the small shop, once I had entered, I realized that the man and the woman with their baby who I had just passed were at the till and saw that it was me, again, who they did not know. For no reason I felt momentarily uncomfortable as I waited, while their conversation with the guy serving continued, as if I had been caught following them there when I had not followed them and knew that they knew that I had not followed them there. Actually as I had passed the shop at the last moment I had made the decision to buy the wine. The temperature outside the shop was still intense but the shop was air-conditioned. My body was still overheated from the temperature on the train carriage and sweat was making my clothes stick to my flesh.

It's now the day after that I write this and reflect again on oddness and redness. I recall that as I stood there in the shop in my bag, unusually, I had four boxes of toothpaste.