

2.

Boom, boom, boom!

"Whaddaya want?"

"Work!"

There was some shuffling, and Rudy opened up, and I could see at once there was some sort of problem, for Rudy was very long in the mouth. He managed to shorten it up enough to share this news: "Ruth moved in with th' hippies."

I held mine counsel, though I was dying to say, "Oh yes? So she has no roommates and must pay \$250 by herself?"

But Rudy seemed to have lost his head. "She turned into a hippie."

I did refresh Rudy's memory. "Rudy, you don't believe in hippies."

"That's th' problem!"

I had about had it. "Rudy! You are saying she does not exist? Because hippies do not exist? What about me?"

Unfortunately, there had evidently been some misunderstanding here, as even I could see a lightbulb had gone off in Rudy's thought balloon.

"Rudy! No! That's not what I meant! I did not mean I would be your girlfriend in place of Ruth."

"Yet yer free!"

"Rudy! That's the problem! I cannot be your girlfriend. I am too free!"

Not only that, I was his employee. So in one sense I was free, but in another, \$3/hr. And I needed the work.

Boom, boom, boom! I was back, knocking at Rudy's door. "Naturally," I added, "we can still have sex." In those days you could. We did. Not in the hall, certainly. On the kitchen floor.

And thus did begin a beautiful relationship. For it was the best of both worlds. I remained free, at \$3/hr. Which is to say, I was not entirely free. And Rudy saw that in me. Takes one to know one. I was cheap, too.

To this day I don't entirely understand what Rudy did. I believe he was some sort of trader. We drove the Chevelle to obscure parts of the city as, the Kosciusko Bridge, the Gowanus Canal, the Flushing River, and Little W. 12th St., where we collected various large

items. Or we did take the bridge to Ho-ho-kus, or Rockland County. Rudy drove, and I did the heavy work. Occasionally, I brought mine own junk along. I managed to get some sardines for mine gomasio. For Rudy's stupid parka he got boots without traction, and for two of mine cloths I got paper, which I did put into the Royal typewriter and use in Rudy's closet.

We came home and put the stuff in piles. There were LPs, old paperbacks, various small items. We did stuff these in the closet. Then I did stuff Rudy in me.

Oof! Sit/kneel combo. Ram! Then we did wipe off, zip up, sit down on the couch, and settle. \$3/hr. I was putting down 1/3 of every hr's wage toward the Royal. Sex was free.

We worked and slept together for several weeks. When I say slept it is a figure of speech, of course, for I rarely slept in those days. Rudy, no. Once the fun was over, he was out like a light: "Z-z-z."

I looked at his ceiling, considering the ideas of the times.

Often Rudy woke up with his own ideas, which I sat on. Ram! Oof! Mmm. At times like these I wondered how Ruth had ever brought herself to leave him, even for hippies.

Me (murmuring): "Rudy? Say something."

Rudy: "Yer not rilly a hippie."

"Rudy!!!" At moments like this, I understood.

The summer did proceed, the air did reek, the doors did swell and stick, the locks did jam, and mine vulva, forget about it.

Now Rudy was, as I believe I mentioned, somewhat rodent-like, having long yellow front teeth, and whiskers. As for mineself, I was narrow to the waist, and big below, with breasts long and pendulous. Rudy had no spare fat, no butt to speak of, and a persistent moisture. Nevertheless, he did possess a good pink rod, dark pink, and rubbery, like a plunger.

I would often climb down the back stairs, cross the courtyard, climb up the front stairs, and sit on Rudy's plunger. And it did fix the plumbing.

I fixed his, too.

I did fix it on his linoleum floor, and in his armchair. Once on the toilet. On the mattress. In the closet.

And I did rub those pendulous breasts in Rudy's whiskers. Yet Rudy did not notice, for he was otherwise occupied. Wedged in tight. Sunk in mire. That mire was me. Could not get out if his life depended on it.

Then I did rise, go down his stairs, cross the courtyard, climb my stairs, and return to my rooms, smelling like New York Harbor, at low tide, in July.

Thus did Rudy steal into mine heart not like a thief in the night but like a plumber, who does fix the plumbing. Then you get the bill.

"Rudy! This is highway robbery!" Zip! "I thought you were cheap!"

He wished to marry me. Zip! That was Rudy's price.

"I don't believe in marriage, Rudy!"

"Get married! Then, if yer not married, you were right!"

"Rudy! I refuse to even discuss it!"

Yet as the summer did progress, discuss it I did. On the mattress. On the landing. In the

bathub. On the highway. Coming back from Key Food. Carrying large boxes. "Why marry me? I'm not the marrying type. I'm a slut, Rudy!"

"You won't go off to fuck hippies"

"Because I am a hippie."

"Yer not a hippie."

"Rudy, get over it! Cut it out!"

But Rudy would not.

"Look, Rudy, if hippies do not exist, then nobody can go off to fuck them, therefore you can marry someone else."

This had no effect whatever.

Here I blew mine top. "Rudy!! What is it with you. I get it! Hippies represent the unattainable. You fuck a hippie, they are by definition not a hippie!"

Rudy: "Yer not exactly unattainable."

"So?"

"Therefore you are not a hippie."

"Rudy!! I thought there was no hippies!!!"

"And that's my point!!!!"

"Rudy!!!! Call it what you like!!!!!! But!!!!!!!" Things were rilly escalating here. "I will always wish to fuck with others!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

"You kin wish to fuck with others!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!" That gave me pause. "You just kinnot do it!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Well! I never!

"College girl, right?"

"Well! Er." I began to feel a little faint. For the truth was, while I should have been irate that Rudy was putting the screws on me, I was having a not altogether unpleasant sensation, as of a lightbulb being screwed in. And by its light, or I should say glare, I saw certain ideas, which, however did appear in flashes only. Nor could I entirely follow. "Yet, you did fuck me despite Ruth."

Rudy did explain, "Ruth said I could."

I was having a little trouble with that.

Rudy spelled it out. "Say I can, I do. Say I can't, I don't."

Then it did seem to me that I would not be enduring Nick's racist remarks as the price for lightbulbs. I had one or two in mine own thought balloon.

I told Rudy, "You can't. Not even Ruth."

"Yer as bad as me."

And he was right. I tell you, it was such a relief to be as bad as Rudy, I threw him to the floor, flipped him over, and set him up missionary style, though Rudy went native on the spot. Boom! Boom! Boom! I was so sick of transcending mine own limitations. I was sick of fucking as a discipline. I was sick of not acting smart. I was sick of nonviolence toward vermin.

All my life I had been trying to be better than I was, through discipline. Now I got the idea of being worse than I was, but just a little worse. Just take a step down the stairs. Maybe just down to the next landing. Maybe a flight. Maybe two flights. Maybe five flights. Across

the courtyard. Up the front.

Boom!

And so I became Rudy's girlfriend. Next, all we had to do was fight about getting married!

Freedom! I'd had it! Freedom was discipline! I was ready for something else. And I tell you, these ideas were in the air.

Rudy, too, sniffed them, unfortunately. And he was on mine case from noon till midnight, nor did I mind, for it was such a relief to fight again, I cannot tell you.

"I will give you the typewriter."

"Rudy! I already paid off half!"

"Believe in property, yer not a hippie!"

"Rudy! Get over it! What is this, anyhow? What is yer problem?"

He was in a rage. All I must do is get married.

"Rudy! You think I would marry you for a half a typewriter?"

"Delivery included!"

"Oh! Who will carry it, then?" For, I did the carrying.

"I will get a winch!"

"What will you trade for the winch?"

"My tail!"

"Rudy! You cannot trade your tail. It is a part of you!"

He was giggling like a schoolgirl.

"You've done this before!" He was as bad as me.

Worse, for Rudy got sloppy and fell out here, what with giggling, and I had to finish off with that damn tail, which I rilly failed to see the charm of, for you never knew where it had been.

Well, to make a long story short, I began to cave in, influenced by his argument that if I did not believe in marriage, how could it hurt to marry him, as in effect it would not happen. Also, there was that Royal. The next matter was to provide some sort of identification for me, as I did not believe in papers.

I made a phone call to mine mother, who saved everything, but as she did not believe in papers either, she had not saved mine. Nor did she believe in marriage. That was probably where I got it from.

Next I suggested the use of Ruth's birth certificate. She did believe in papers. Therefore she would not let me use hers.

Finally, Rudy did find a birth certificate.

"Where did you get this thing? What kind of name is this?"

"Haitian, I believe."

"Now yer talkin' like me! Yer talkin' like a hippie! Get out while you still can! Or all the girls will be after yer damn tail!" It was a good try, but Rudy didn't bite.

So! There you have it.

"Do you, Robin Cruet--"

"Hold on, I thought it was Robin Crouton."

We checked. Cruet.

"--take Paul Rudenoff."

"Hold on. If I am Robin Crusoe, he must be Friday!"

We checked. Nope.

The clerk did give us dubious looks, but we got through it. I was wearing a sort of sheet. Rudy looked good, though.

And as I did not necessarily believe in marriage the wedding-night sex was purely routine. Tail, yes. There was some tail. I believe. Rather ticklish. Perhaps I am old-fashioned. I prefer the penis.

The truth is, though I did not believe in marriage, nor papers, I was old-fashioned in other ways, for I had no quarrel with names and was glad to have one. Naturally I kept it after marriage. For I was not so old-fashioned as to believe in giving up mine name when I entered marriage which in any case I did not believe in, even assuming I would have been willing to give up a name Rudy had, presumably, paid for. Traded for anyhow. I didn't dare ask what.

So. The next day the tail was gone, a bandaid remained, and the Royal typewriter was in mine little home under the roof.

So, I married Rudy and got a Royal typewriter and a name. So, I was no longer free.

But I was still extremely cheap.