



The Steve Machine

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Auden flees the small town of Capreol for Toronto, bewildered, HIV positive, and in search of an entirely new personality. He falls in love with orgy maestro Wrik, mainly because the old Auden would never even have talked to him. And through Wrik, he meets Steve Reinke, his new best friend.

Steve – and here’s where it gets confusing – is, in real life as well as in *The Steve Machine*, a renowned video artist, someone who makes television for one person at a time, small-screen excursions designed to cure arthritis or night blindness.

Despite being a virtuoso with video, however, Steve is not so good with love. He falls for a football star, and, with his medium-is-the-message videotapes, is able to slow down the other players so his beau can run past them all at normal speed. Though the team wins, Steve does not, and the jock dumps him.

Then there’s the chess whiz, followed soon after by hustlers and tattoo artists, and and then Jody, who’s got a mouth so big and red that Steve is overcome with lust. Truth is, it’s a mouth used to settling scores, only Steve doesn’t catch this. Blinded by passion, our fictional Steve contracts HIV, then sets to work building a videotape that will relieve him, and the millions of others afflicted, of their illness. On the way, he stars in a reality TV show, decides to wear only white paper suits, and meets childhood idol Yoko Ono.

Auden accompanies Steve in this quest that is at once a plague narrative, a love story, a reflection on media technology, and a joy to read. As an added bonus, this volume has been written both as a regular hold-in-your-hand novel with a beginning, middle, and end (though not necessarily in that order), and as a machine designed to replace the voice of the inner monologue with something (or someone) far more soothing and satisfying. Like the videotapes of Steve Reinke, the book itself is a machine. *The Steve Machine*.

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