

11/9 And lo, the red ink sea parted, and the children of Capital passed safely through. And other Mosaic fairy tales.

Today would've been Bea's 98th. Raise a glass to Gwenny's grandma.

Now let me make sure I heard that right, son. JP Morgan's exposed to the tune of what? – eight times thirteen oh's – that's what you're saying? Holy cow, that'd be real money if money was real.

Au café, Dylan's coming in, you're heading out. Shake hands. You: "Did you see the sky this morning?"

He nods, raises eyebrows as in, *you bet I did*. Says, "They're getting on it."

For an instant, you hear, *They're getting honest*, but then the sun breaks through.

A.'s father, according to his son, your interlocutor, is deeply engaged in the study of contrails and UFOs. He's a former pilot. Interesting conversation one might have with this man. And it is notable too, probability-wise, that A. – who seems open to entertaining many subjects that require more than a conventional dose of imagination – regularly gravitates to the chair on across from you on the north side of Table 4.

In context of another bit of conversation, he transmits the morning's mot juste: *Envoûtant*: a spellbinding quality in a thing or person – utterly absorbing, requiring full attention, mesmerizing. Enchanting, but minus the glitter.

*The oil of human kindness.* Nope. Doesn't ring right. Kick it back to the copy desk.

"WHAT'S IN YOUR DREAM BUBBLE?" asks the subway ad for New York Lottery Mega Millions.™ This line against a graphic of globules floating in a creepy blue-gray background. *Hey, you never know.*®

Ecce fuckin homo New Yawk.

Cruelty of theater.

And from so many voices, half stifled by their masks, issues the cry: *A donde es mi cuerpo?*

*If You Take a Mouse to the World Bank*

" " *the G-8*

" " *the Hague*

All sequels to the timeless classic *If You Sell a Mouse a Derivative...*

"Wall Street Set for Slide," reads the headline. As in ready, set...

Fall, and the brisk wind of social catastrophe in the air.

Congress confirms the new AG. Mukasey at the bat. But no worries. He won't

change González's policies toward detainees. An extraordinary rendition flight plus a stay in the U.S. interrogation archipelago still comes with room and waterboard.

11/10 In one of today's headlines, the *Post*, past-meistersinger of disaster kapital-spiel, invokes the image of "Wall Street's battered levees...".

While over your internal sound system, the longing strains of Ella Fitzgerald: *someone to watch over me...* transmute to *wash over me*. But truly, who is going to watch over Wachovia? The Fed?

At what point does a CDO transmute into a COD that's DOA? Have we fished our outer banks into extinction? Just how dead is cod? Chips! Chips! Buy 'em by the milliard, wrapped in yesterday's *Times*. Hot and to be eaten quick, before the oil soaks through.

Your sources report, however, that deportation futures are through the roof. INS gone wild. Irrespective of nationality, no reason given, nor based on any malfeasance. Simple blues progression. Gonna send you back to Walker.

Mailer's sent too. Aged 84. Who'll be company in his heaven?

Shaped by forces beyond our control or ken. Is there any residuum of autonomy? Que lucha.

Memorial at Judson Memorial Church for Moe Fishman, Penn South neighbor and Lincoln Brigade Veteran, wounded at Brunete, who died in August, aged 92.

Everywhere these days, the thinning of the veil, the closeness between living and dead. And the music swelling to a roll *¡Ai Manuela!* as rank upon row, the vernacular saints march in.

*B'shem hashem elohei yisrael*

In the name of the Name, the Power of Israel:

*miyemini michael umismoli gavriel*

On my right Michael, on my left Gabriel,

*umilfanai uriel ume'acharai refael*

Before me Uriel, behind me Raphael,

*ve'al roshi, ve'al roshi shekhinat el*

And above my head, and above my head, the Shekhinah of the Divine.

*¡Viva la Quince Brigada,*

*rhumbala rhumbala rhumbala!*

Another skirmish in the ever more anomie-filled playing out of class and race war in a city whose soul has turned to stone. And which section of the news to put the story in: Police Blotter, Real Estate or Style? Natavia Lowery, 26, of Metropolitan Avenue, Brooklyn and “personal assistant” to rock promoter turned broker-to-the-stars, Linda Stein, 62, of Fifth Avenue, has confessed to bludgeoning her boss to death with what the papers describe as the murderess’s “yoga stick” – whatever that means.

The crime preceded, according to the media narrative thusfar, by a winding of the spring: boss habitually upbraiding assistant with racially-demeaning remarks. Marijuana smoke blown by boss into assistant’s face. It’s reported too that Lowery’s name was listed with several temp services, from which it’s implied she was looking for

another job when her spring sprung. But all we really know is that Stein's 18th floor apartment on 78th Street, with views over Central Park, was worth \$3 million plus, and that today her agency, Prudential Douglas Elliman, planted a glossy, full color, eight page pullout section in today's *Post*. On a proximate page in the local news section, the days coverage on Stein's murder concludes:

"'I'm glad they caught somebody,' said Leon Wolf, 80, a friend and neighbor of Stein. 'I was a little on edge. I double locked everything.'

"Stein was famous not only for punk connections – her ex-husband, Seymour Stein, founded Sire Records – or for finding pads for the likes of Billy Joel and Angelina Jolie, but was also a breast cancer survivor known for supporting cancer charities.

"The Breast Cancer Research Foundation officially announced yesterday that its annual gala, hosted by Elton John, will be in her honor next April."

OK, so it's not English. The real problem is that taken all for all, it just feels scripted. Perfunctory and predictable. And entirely too bland to be the *Post*. Kick it back to rewrite. Get some drama in there. Good lord, the story's all about Hate with a capital H. Can't they at least find some juice, however vitriolic, in the affair?

11/11 We have a baby sister. Up of a Sunday early to Congregation Anshe Chesed – the same synagogue wherein Danny Berman's bar mitzvah was celebrated – to witness the naming ceremony, *Simhat Bat*, for Gustavo and Bena's second child.

After the candle-lighting, Ayelet Batya Medjuck-Brückner receives her name, a blessing from her parents, and then, from a hundred voices, including that of her three year old brother Noam, the communal one:

*B'ruḥah haba'ah b'shaym Adon-ai*

Welcome little one!

*B'ruḥah at ba'ir, uv'ruḥah at basadeh*

Blessed may you be all your days, all your life;

*B'ruḥah at b'voyah, uv'ruḥah at b'tzaytaykh.*

Blessed may you be wherever you are,

In all of your comings and in all of your goings!

In Bena's arms, Ayelet sleeps.

Does she hear, in her sleep, even now, as you do, the groaning of Jericho's walls, the mystic poetry of this moment?

Headline: "Pentagon Spends Billions on Choppers That Can't Fly in Hot Weather." Yawn. Try not to fall asleep.

Lakota, is what the military call this turkey, purchased from Germany's European Aeronautic and Defense Co. Supposed to be used for medevacs. Were they thinking Wounded Knee. Ghost dance?

*Tonto, we're surrounded.*

*What do you mean "We"?*

And when the *Times* says that "Benazir Bhutto spoke today from behind barbed wire outside her home..." can they really be certain who's in front, and who's behind?

As you break bread together, A. offers his cousin Veronique's explication of the fine distinction between *engagé* and *impliqué* – both of which connote close involvement. In your eggs and bacon breakfast, so her formulation goes, the hen who laid the eggs is *engagé*, whereas the pig is *impliqué*.

For a little while the ruins fool you by continuing to stand.

No age like unto this age.

Latest stat: 25% of the world laughs with you.

11/12 CPS = conquered peoples' syndrome.

Gauze in effect.

Darton. Shortened from Darkton. Shortened from Darktown.

Take the time to forget.

Elegant man, Shelton Brooks. And some of what he had to say, ninety years gone, was:

*I'll be down to get you in a taxi, Honey,*

*You better be ready about half past eight,*

*Now dearie, don't be late,  
I want to be there when the band starts playing,  
Remember when we get there, Honey,  
The two-steps, I'm goin' to have 'em all,  
Goin' to dance out both my shoes,  
When they play the Jelly Roll Blues,  
Tomorrow night at the Darktown Strutters' Ball.*

Tomorrow night. We got a date, right?

Non nobis domine. Pro nobis Fats Domino. Fats, ora pro nobis!

*Pain-proof Rubber Girls: Ula and Sarka, contortion duo extraordinaire!* That's what they say. They say it's true.

Sometimes a story is a cover story.

"Hi, my name is Jacob," says the fellow who, at the Simhat Bat, plunks suddenly down at a vacant seat next to you and extends his hand. You find out he's a film maker, but not much more because within fifteen seconds he's sussed you out and decided you're not important enough to converse with further. Abruptly, he turns toward the others at your table, a music producer and his honey, a Mona-Lisa-like singer. Aloud he repeats, *Hi, my name is Jacob*, but then, unspoken: *I am a precision-guided system out to further my career – can you help me?*

The Black Sea's gotten blacker. Oilslick. Bodies wash up: fish, fowl, biped. Where was the oil traveling – all of its hundreds of thousands of gallons borne across the water – when it became, minus a ship, borne upon the water?

Freak storm. Half a tanker here, the other there. In toto, five ships down. And twenty sailors missing.

If you invested, it would be in blank stare futures.

But no, your are the self-appointed Crier of Darktown. After whose passing comes the Night Watch.

The Christmas show at Radio City. For which there's a poster ad on the subway platforms: a photo of the chorus line in high kick caught from behind at a low angle and illuminated by spots, footlights and a glow emanating from some ineffable source. At a distance, you're struck by the amazing unison of the collective gesture. But draw closer and you see, though the photo's heavily worked over, how the apparently uniform is varied by micro distinctions of physical form particular to each woman, whose arms extend, with ever so subtle variations in placement and touch, to clasp the waists of her immediate neighbors, linking the whole company into a single stage-wide chain. Beneath the nearly audible brass and tympani, a sub-message whispers: *This be Art, not Rockette science.*

Try to treat the truth as though it's a newspaper you're carrying for your

master. Hold it gently in your teeth. Proudly, but without ego. This is no time to get distracted. Clamp down hard, you'll tear it. Not enough jaw pressure and it falls on the ground. Drool too much, it gets wet. The idea is to bear it lightly, get it home so that your master can sit and stare at its pages, make some significance out of all those little markings. Imagine it's a very delicate bone.

Under what circumstances does the helping verb obstruct?

11/13 City of players played. Actors re and distr-acted. And where, where in the world do all these blondes, jolie and otherwise, come from?

On a rainy morning, feel, more feel than see the circle drawing round, connecting Darktown in its hay day, its bonfire outburst to the saw grass waves of the chain gang. Every footfall, high-heeled or otherwise, a sledgehammer's sound:

*Another man done gone*

*Another man done gone*

*Another man done gone*

*From the country farm...*

Stay on it. Don't go back. Stay on it.

"Until we die," said Caged John, "there will be sounds." Was the man channeling Gitmo?

Désouvement. Unwork it. "Nothing to say." Unsay it. The shuttle flies, the tissue unweaves.

Names of Al-lah: 99

Keys on a piano: double infinity.

Sunset strip.

Get your kicks.

Double nickels.

Twice twenty-two.

Speed of a long playing record minus  $1/3$ .

Caliber.

Seven come.

Oh, oh.

Halt your footsteps just west of Seventh on 21st. Double take by morning's

light. Isn't this where you and Tobias, walking back from dinner last night, saw the flashing lights of police cars at the intersection, a swarm of cops, one of whom walked along surreally rolling a pedometer on little wheels, from the crosswalk towards a Jersey-plated beige SUV, stationary, mid-street, going nowhere – fenced in with yellow tape as though it were a bomb. Then into focus: the man's shoe, black, on the asphalt, cat sand sprinkled on the bloodspill, the SUV's crunched-in bumper.

Rain, heavy last night, started just after you came on the scene, and now not a visible signifier anywhere. You think for an instant about saying something to the doorman who stands under the canopy of the white brick highrise – you've an impulse to connect with him, create some mutual weave out of these moments separated by only a few hours. It takes a beat to logic out that this fellow can't be the doorman who was there last night, on top of which this guy looks nothing like the other one, and for all you know, he may not have any idea what happened twenty feet from where he's planted. Crazy to project some osmotic organic collective awareness among doormen. Reminds you of when you walked down the hall from Paul's office after the plane hit tower two, half-expecting to find the elevator would out of order, somatically linked to its traumatized brothers a few miles downtown.

You move forward, under the awning, but feel death expand outward, turn you round and push you back toward the corner, whereupon suddenly you remember: probiotics! You're out of them, need more. Up Seventh Avenue then to the corner of 25th. Pull open the hinged door alongside the revolving one and enter the precincts of Whole Body.