

11/21 Will eat for food.

Riffing at the café, Leslie W. outs with: *How many Zoroastrians does it take to change a lightbulb?*

Statement arrives from Commerce Bank. Seems redundant, the name. Aren't all banks commerce banks? Or is this a subtle inference that somewhere out there, perhaps in the Kuiper Belt, there exists an as-yet-unidentified Withholding Bank?

The Canadian dollar. Aka el euro del norte.

While south of the border in Gringolandia, the latest escalation in the long war between the vested interests of New York State and New York City. Gov. Eliot "I am a fucking steamroller" Spitzer has offered billions in bribes the state don't actually possess as of yet – these first have to be looted from us lowly Joes and Josephines in the form of tax abatements – with which to entice Merrill Lynch to move into Tower 3 of the newer, shinier and uber-securitized WTC to come. Forget that midtown gang, we got a better deal for you.

Oh, they'll take Manhattan alright. But which one?

While Holmes and the solar system are busy doing whatever they do out there in the neighborhood of Jupiter, NASA points at the Pleiades and shouts: *Look! Over there!* A classic diversion, of the sort where when you shift your attention back, you find your luggage is gone.

Or, put another way: *Do you have a leesense for zat minkey?* And we're supposed to play Clouseau.

Someone's kicked a gazillion zeroes and ones into the tall grass, never to be seen no more. Unless the grass is mown. Officially the story runs thus:

"Britain Loses Data for 25 Million.

"LONDON (AP) – Prime Minister Gordon Brown tried to reassure Britons their personal details were safe Wednesday after the one of the biggest security breaches in the country's history left millions of people exposed to identity theft and bank fraud.

"Two computer disks that went missing while being sent from one government department to another contained names, addresses, birth dates, national insurance numbers and – in some cases – banking details for 25 million people, nearly half the country's population.

"The disks were password protected but the information on them was not encrypted, officials said."

Not encrypted. Extraordinary. And this is Albion, land that raised, robbed and royally screwed over the late Alan Turing.

*Identity – it's the crisis can't you see?!*

Sang Poly Styrene (née Marian Elliott), a twenty-two-year-old British-born, part Somali proto-punk rocker in the X-Ray Spex, back in 1979, *kan ya makan*.

*We've been bought and sold, sang Robbie Burns, for English gold.*

*What a parcel of rogues in a nation.*

Closer look at the movie poster featuring Will Smith, his dog, gun and the destroyed Brooklyn Bridge. The tag line reads “The Last Man on Earth is Not Alone.” Sic. “A loan.” Or is he?

Does the Will Smith movie slogan imply there may be a woman, or women – perhaps multitudes of ‘em – on earth, but not yet in the frame?

PetroEuros.

Once upon a time: the good, the bad, the naked, the ugly, the quick, short, nasty and brutish...

Lunch with M. who’s just back from Hugolandia. She shows you a brightly colored flyer from the international literary festival in which she participated: FILVEN 2007, la Feria Internacional del Libro de Venezuela. The slogan for this year’s program: *¡El libro libera!* – the free book – this message, paradoxically, emanating from a country on the verge of sliding into true dictatorship. And the theme? *Estados Unidos, una revolución posible. Sure, se puede, pero...*

The most prominent graphic on the flyer, a red-tinted Statue of Liberty. She raises her left arm in a clenched fist salute and cradles in her right a portrait of Malcolm X. Whew.

Brings to mind an *artefacto* of soi-disant antipoet, Nicanor Parra:

USA

*donde la libertad es una estatua.*

“Stockings Fall as Oil Flirts With \$100 a Barrel.” Correction: “*Stocks* Fall as...”

“Millions,” says the *Times*, “Set Off for Thanksgiving.” Millions of what – firecrackers? Or ordinance less festive?

While the Travel section headline reads: “Grazing From Delhi to London.” Ah, transhumance of the profane cows.

If we be over a barrel, then let’s roll.

Yet, to quote once again the paper of wicked: “Oil Hesitates on Drive to \$100 a Barrel.”

And oil’s balking, say the petro-cognoscenti, “was a pause, not a retreat for energy futures that reached as high as \$99.29 in electronic trading overnight.

“‘Not exciting enough to get us over the hump just yet,’ said Phil Flynn, an analyst at Alaron Trading Corp. in Chicago.”

Was that one hump, Phil, or two?

Cloudcover meant that you missed seeing, with your own eyes, Holmes conjunct Alpha Persei these last three nights. But the available visuals posted online are pretty stunning. Given our vocabulary of symbols, its hard not to read these images somehow, as the fertilization of an egg.

11/22 “This week,” said an investment strategist, “it’s been all about fear overtaking greed.” On the road to Damascus?

Then popped into your head the words of a Thai banker you must’ve read ten years ago. In the immediate aftermath of the Bhat plunging to the status of a virtual non-currency he observed: “The market was not afraid.”

Dangerous opportunity knocks.

Just say whatever scums to mind.

Whatever succumbs to mind.

Thanks, Gibbon!

The clam before the storm.

11/23 Suddenly Friday, Black Friday, featuring a copper-gold dawn. Off to café. Pick the papers up off the rack. Ah. What pushes you over into a post-turkey tryptophany is the *Times* headline: “Where the Voters Are, So Are All Those Calories,” wherein, right up front you learn that: “Running for president is like entering a competitive eating contest and a beauty pageant all at once. Candidates are expected to eat local specialties often and with gusto, yet still look attractive and fit...”

Jumpcut to the last few graphs: “...Mr. Giuliani has sometimes seemed

ravenous on the trail. At a stop in Greenfield, Iowa, this summer, he asked photographers to put down their cameras so he could eat undisturbed. And on a springtime stop at a pizzeria in Des Moines, he traveled from table to table of voters, filching some of their food as he went.

“Chewing on the remains of one slice, he approached another group of diners. ‘You ate all your food,’ he said. ‘I have no food I can steal.’

And with that, the would-be president of the United States moved on to the next table.”

With which phrase, the chain completes, the tumblers fall: *New York Times*, *Paper of Record*, *Paper of Wretched*, *Paper of Wicked*, *Wicked Messenger*.

Colleen enters, sits down across the table, saves you from reading the paper. In the course of your chat, she trippingly outs with the line “and, of course, with all this helicopter parenting...”.

Wait, hold up. Say what? You’d never heard that one. “Yes,” she says, “you know – those parents who are hovering above their kids all the time.”

Right. Right. Meet the Sickorskys.

Eggsile. Comes any style: internal, external, scrambled, poached, over easy. Homefries. Toast.

Which stress is better, distress or dat stress?

Any style. Billions served.

A film about an every-day heroic barber wins every priz'd laurel wreath. *He knew he couldn't shave the world, but if he lathered up just one face and scraped it smooth, it might make a difference...*

"Brilliant..." "Edgy." "Incisive."

You are who you are, *sans blog*.

*¿Por que no te callas?* has, according to the BBC, become an immensely popular ring tone. Juan Carlos's greatest hits. Excitos del Rey.

No age, baby, no age lykuntu...

Last night over turkey, in a side-conversation with Alejandra about the authoritarian tendencies from the Left, Hugo in particular, she stunned you with a formulation. Earlier, the talk of the table had briefly touched on muscle spasms, and somehow she spun that into the image-idea of an autocrat as someone seized with "a muscle spasm of the soul."

And when this spreads among the collective...

Or perhaps that's where it originates and finds a figurehead. Or is the process a reciprocal one?

And at around the same time as you were having this conversation, an enterprising 18-month-old in the Bronx crawled out an open window, dropped two stories and landed with a bang on the roof of the store below. Must have been

something felicitous in the tumbling 'cause *mirabile dictu*, he's fine.

You've seen enough of this color to last ten lifetimes. The latest condo going up and before the facing's stuck on, all those bright, medicine-yellow panels of sheathing: GP DENSGLAS GOLD®.

A tabloid sheet beneath your feet on the curving path toward your building's entranceway. Stark block capitals, white on black:

ARE YOU A VICTIM

OF ENVY?

- BROKEN MARRIAGE
- UNEMPLOYMENT
- HEAVINESS
- FAMILY DIVISION
- ADDICTIONS
- DEPRESSION

*RECEIVE THE SPIRITUAL*

*CLEANSING*

*AGAINST ENVY*

And beneath this, a date and time, an address in Brooklyn, a phone number and the injunction to:

CALL NOW FOR A FREE SPIRITUAL EVALUATION



Josh Anderson for The New York Times

“Retail Desperation on Display in Early Hours,” quoth the *Messenger*. This illustrated by a photo of some folks milling around a parking lot, and in the foreground, two girls recumbent on the damp-looking ground – hard to tell how old, teenagers maybe – both blonde, eyes closed, sharing a pillow. And the caption “Kimmy Simon, left, and her friend, Tate Madden, try to keep warm under a blanket early this morning before the opening of a Best Buy store in Cincinnati, Ohio.”

Trop d’or. Avis nil.

How many horsemen does it take to – blank blank – Apocalypse?

Sunset molten copper in the windows downtown. Gold no more.

As typhoon Mitag approaches the Philippines, a quarter million people evacuate Bicol and officials of Albay province declare a “state of calamity.”

*A country road. A tree.*

*Evening.*

Tonight as last night, in ascending order, the upper two tiers and spire of the Empire State Building bathed respectively in illuminations red, orange and yellow: hues of the first three body chakras.

The writing muse: promise her anything, but give her a page.

11/24 *Chelsea Now* headline: “Former (Hudson River) Trust Chairperson Pleads Guilty to Tax Fraud.” Lovely word that: *trust*.

Behind every great crime lies a great partnership.

CN headline number two: “Peeing Behind the Curtain on Hudson Yards.” No. Can’t be. This is not Versailles. Come again? Ah. “Peeling Back the Curtain on Hudson Yards.” The models, supermodels really, on display. Or more accurately, the five megadevelopers have run up slightly variant jolly rogers up their mastheads – a kind of pirate’s tall ships flotilla: Brookfield Properties, Tishman-Speyer (partnered with Morgan Stanley), Related Companies (in league with Goldman Sachs), Durst (in

tandem with Condé Nast), Extel Corp.

Broadside after broadside. And amidst the smoke and cries and bedlam, grappling hooks at the ready. Draw cutlasses! Aaaargh! Midtown's boarded and captured. And now me proud beauty, I'll have that ring off your finger!

*Five for the gospel preachers*

*Four for the fore-closures...*

Part of the game is outright piracy, true. But another element consists not in Magic, but in sleight of mind. You see, every great development scam consists of three acts: *the first act is called The Pledge – the magician shows you something ordinary, but of course, it probably isn't. The second act is called The Turn – the magician makes his ordinary something do something extraordinary. Now if you're looking for the secret, you won't find it, that's why there's a third act called The Prestige – this is the part with the twists and turns, where lives hang in the balance, and you see something shocking you've never seen before.*

Like an apartment where every bedroom costs a million dollars. Now the Developer-Magicians have a special language they use only among only themselves. And their own secret name for the third act, the one where they pass the risk on to the next idiot, is called The So Long Sucker.

*Ah, Captain Quire, are you waving goodbye?*

*And there's garbage on garbage, right up to the sky...*

Sang John Cale, kan ya makan.

Quire, in Michael Moorcock's novel *Gloriana*, is an Elizabethan would-be magus of extraordinary ambition who kills remorselessly in attempting to further his art. A character who somehow rings a familiar, contemporary-sounding bell.

The luters of the past often indulged in madrigal thinking.

There now exists within Congressional purview a Brain Injury Task Force, seeing that as many as 150,000 – a full tenth – of the 1.5 million American troops who have served in Iraq suffered some form of head trauma, commonly resulting from soundwaves pulsed outward from an IED blast. Extraordinary to imagine so many (mostly) young brains littered with tiny, immedicable, pressure-blown holes.

According to Reuters, "the U.S. military has stepped up chartering of tankers and requests for extra fuel in the U.S. Central Command area, which includes the Gulf, shipping and oil industry sources say." Twice as much ship and jet fuel, a million barrels, is being moved this November than in an "average" month since the start of the Iraq war. Drums along the Hormuz. Strait is the gate.

*The sun sinks in the sky and the west winds rise.*

*Do they sink and rise with one mind?*

– from Ito Jakuchu, *Happy Improvisations on a Riverboat Journey*, circa 1770.

11/25 Your café friend Bill, whom you associate with the Number Devil, was born 03/05/28. Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili, aka Uncle Joe, aka Joe Steel, died on the

day Bill turned twenty-five, 03/05/53. Iosif Vissarionovich would've died earlier, but he was stalin'.

A grand conjunction can give you conjunctionitis.

*Qu'est-ce que ça me fait?* Asked Citizen Donatien Alphonse-François de Sade.

Nor is he alone.

The subterranean peace that comes from the form.

Y2K = yet to come.

A curious historical conjunction, or nearly so. Certain authorities on the zero say place its development in the subcontinent and date it to, *mas o menos*, the seventh century. Now in Europe, not long afterward, came in to being what Wolfgang calls "a new mode of battle, 'mounted shock combat,'" a result of "the technical innovation of the stirrup." In the "History of Shock," a chapter in his book *The Railway Journey*, he quotes the military historian Lynn White:

*The stirrup, by giving lateral support in addition to the front and back support offered by pommel and cantle, effectively welded horse and rider into a single fighting unit capable of a violence without precedent. The fighter's hand no longer delivered the blow: it merely guided it. The stirrup thus replaced human energy with animal power, and immediately increased the warrior's ability to damage his enemy. Immediately, without preparatory steps, it made possible mounted shock combat, a revolutionary way of doing battle.*

And what is a set of stirrups, for all their lateral support, but two hanging 0's, through which one puts one's feet? Taken as an ensemble, a leverage engine.

Oh oh.

Werner Sombart, historian of the military-industrial complex avant la lettre, considered the type of mounted armies that devolved from the stirrup to be an important motive forces behind the early development of capitalism, not least because it fused the disparate energies of many warriors into a single tactical unit – a new form of social organization, driven by a technical innovation.

And the zero, what did that nothing make possible? What did that stirrup spur. Stir up.

Strange how certain insistent forms of stability beget chaos.

Comet Holmes – is it forming into a minor planet or will it pass on through or break up? Strange if it started revolving around the sun. Came Holmes, as it were, to roost.

Meanwhile, on planet Erathgasm, Fortune Magazine's millennial threat-promise comes evermore true. In their May 2000 issue, the editors owned as "privatization of water by large companies" constitutes "one of the world's great business opportunities. It promises to be to the 21st century what oil was to the 20th."

*You may talk o' gin and beer  
When you're quartered safe out 'ere.  
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it;  
But when it comes to slaughter  
You will do your work on water,  
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.  
Now in Injia's sunny clime...  
Sang Kipling *kan ya makan*.*

#### RAIN FOR RENT.

Fortune, fortuna, turning the wheel. Last night at the Met, you stepped up to a case containing a pair of wheel-lock rifles, made circa 1670, their surface elaborated in extravagant wood and ivory carvings by one Johan Michael Maucher.

Adorning the outside face of each gun stock, an ivory plaque depicting in relief a voluptuous nude Venus or Fortuna, balancing atop a sphere. Curious the belly-buttons of these goddesses, enlarged and protruding. Read the card more carefully. Turns out these buttons are just that. When pressed, the plaque slides back to reveal a hidden chamber. A hidden chamber for what? That, the card does not say. Only Fortuna knows. Touch her navel to find out.

What's this? A rounded goblet, in which mix, what – water and oil?

Salud!

Nor forget the crop circle center of her belly heaped with wheat and set about with lilies.

*Arise my beloved, my beauty, come away!*

Blood-red wine.

*Tui na* – pushing grasping, or push-pull.

The tipping point.

Not everything can be securitized.

Stocks return as punishment, just like Pilgrim days.

But what, exactly, is a laughing stock?

Soy latte means “I am Italian milk.”

Retail turns tail. Down the drain, the last drops of mood-based economics.

“Venti half-caf”: fragment of nonsense poem in a dead language.

Down Sauchiehall Street!

*A kiddley divey doo*

*Wouldn't you?*

Anaclasis.

And now, we penned-in sheep of Darktown are dutifully to hope that Brookfield wins the Hudson Yards deal since they're offering a tad more "public space," and not, seemingly, an utter foreclosure of the waterfront. And they say – *say* mind you – that they'll build the residential component as an 80/20 development – meaning that one fifth of the apartments will be slated for folks who can credibly claim not to be millionaires.

In truth, if you possessed billions and billions and billions, you'd pay these pirates to do nothing at all. Nothing for the next seven generations. Just let it lay. But the forces of capitalism, which contains its own built-in wrecking ball, and one that swing so precipitously, may do the job for you. Could that ringing sound signify the long distance crawl you've been waiting for all these years?