

12/31 Even tonight, as crystal Humpty plummets toward the great white way, former paper billionaires, legions of 'em, will be scouring Darktown's back alleys in search of an uncle with three balls.

Comet 8P/Tuttle appears to pass close by spiral galaxy M33. Of course they're billions of miles apart, light years as it were, but their seeming proximity makes a great pic, the emerald green globe a balancing act for the sapphire dragon. Tuttle's heading our way though and on New Year's day it should zip by at a distance of around 24 million miles, bright enough to eyeball if you lived, say, in Amagansett. Or the Atlas Mountains. Or were to stand on High Point, atop Lookout Mountain, GA, within whose limestone cave, deep underground and fed by numberless streams, since time immemorial, Ruby Falls.

Chickamaugua and Chattanooga.

*Well, a Tom cat's sittin' on a bale of hay*

*Bull dog's sittin' on the ground*

*I went and pinched the bull dog's tail*

*And they went around and around and around*

*They went around and around.*

*It's the same old tale that the crow told me*

*Way down yonder by the sycamore tree*

*It's the same old tale that the crow told me*

*Way down yonder by the sycamore tree.*

*Well I just found out why ham's so high*

*Only two hind legs on a hog, that's why.*

*But cross a hog with an octopus and ham'll come down*

*There'll be hog in the middle and ham all around.*

*Yes it's the same old tale that the crow told me...*

Predicción: 2K8, the year in which los EEUU becomes the standard by which all others are juggled.

The outro is the intro, versa vice, and the devil take the foremost.

*And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!*

*And gie's a hand o' thine!*

*And we'll tak a right gude-willy waught,*

*For auld lang syne.*

*Je craque!* – Les derniers mots d'Humpty.

White khimar, black op.

How many toxic doxas, Brother,

Does it take to make you wise?

In the mail arrives an envelope from cousin J. and her husband. On the card's face, an embossed dove. On the inside, in three languages, printed messages for peace. Small, at the upper left hand corner, Jane's penned two lines of Rumi:

*The light changes.*

*I need more grace than I thought.*

Gorgeous sunset.

Visit Uriel, angel of shoes and watches. He'll put heels and tips on Gwen's suede boots and fix, as best he can, the place on the upper where a hole's been wearing. Brand new paneling, bright lights in the shop, plumbing against the west wall. He's moving his operation to the very back of the store so that his son can set up a two-chair barber shop in the front. Opening on the 7th.

"What's your son's name?"

"Gabriel."

Gorgeous sunset. Turn out the light.

5, 4, 3, 2...

January first – oh, wait!

*Can't wait.*

OK, we'll catch up. Or if not, meet you on the other way round.

*And tak a cup o' kindness, yet...*

1/1 *Doce de la noche en Darktown, Nueva York*

Resolución:

*We renounce all fear-based systems of authority.*

The year won.

Bienvenue à la réalité.

A path is formed by walking on it, sez Chuang Tsu.

This morning's café interchanges begin with several people apologizing to you for things that have not inconvenienced or offended you at all. Who are they sorry and what for?

Off with your sweater. Hmmm. Forgot belt again. In Ba Gua, the waist must move freely. *The body is like the king and the waist like a minister.* Or is it that you'd rather play the 0 than the 8?

At Table 4, Aeneas tells Dido about the fall of Troy.

Twin sycamore guardians of your building's curving path. Rain-wet their bark: divine camo.

Après midi.

Attention! Ciel bizarre:



*Can I get a witness?*

*Can I get a witness?*

*Can I get a witness?*

*Somebody.*

*Est-ce que ce monde est sérieux?*

1/2 L'aube:



Harsh and freaky winds. The bike's parked outside Le G. for an hour and a half. On the way home, even the plastic handlebar grips icy cold.

Nature against itself.

The Institute for Supply Management issues a report declaring a manufacturing slowdown, hence an economy in contraction. Put to the task of rhetoric, the *Messenger* describes these tidings as "unwelcome for investors wading into the first trading session of 2008." Like so many polar bears at a Coney Island of the Mind. Or marooned on those ever-diminishing ice floes.

Ahoy, Greenland! And they're not kidding. Just name it Neo-Cretaceous, and get ready for the new bestiary.

If a Hummer meet a Hummer comin' thru the rye...

Ach!

Mega-omnivorous-venomous marsupials. Swimming in the Northwest Passage. Swinging in New Vineland. Bienvenue!

Mais, if Sarkozy, what then is a Sarkophage? His limestone coffin, or a creature which lives by eating him?

Or both? For if sarcophagus means "flesh-eating stone," then what are we to make of a man nicknamed, roughly, Flesh?

La corrida. All it would take is one slug from a 9mm semiautomatic police revolver to put the Bronze Bull of Bowling Green out of his misery. He could stay there, no problem of putrescence for bronze, oxidation only, and tourists could pose against his four upright feet. The more adventurous might balance on the bottom of his hooves.

But wait, you're wrong. As if in anticipation of just such a coup de grâce, the NYPD has given the order: Out to pasture go the trusty old fifteen-in-the-clip-and-one-in-the-hole high-velocity Glocks. The stated reason is that ordinance with this kind of penetrating power is hard to trace in the aftermath of a typical police firefight.

The *Messenger* describes two fatal shootings wherein the Finest allowed as "the bullets were so badly deformed that it was impossible to trace [them] to the police weapons that fired them."

So... on-line for 2k8: "New bullets, part of .38-caliber Winchester Western plus P, [with] more lead content to make them softer, [and] more likely to spread out on impact.

"...This gives the bullet more 'stopping power.' It also reduces the chance of a bullet penetrating one person and killing another inadvertently."

Progress!

These slugs might not pierce cast bronze though, even at close range and with the bull in retreat. So perhaps the solution, such as it is, will be to redefine Bullish as more Ferdinand-like. Roses? Too expensive. Better stop and smell the tulips instead.

And where are the Cretans when we need 'em?



*I said hey Joe, where you goin' with that gun in your hand?*

*Goin' down Wall Street to shoot the bull,*

*You know he's had 'bout as much as we can stand...*

Say Ferdinand, how are things in Glocca No-Mora?

Over croissants this a.m., your first conversation of the new year, A. relates an act he saw on French TV, part of a New Year's eve variety show. Suspended from on high, spotlit, center stage, hangs a sumptuous mink coat. A slinkily-gowned woman enters, removes the coat from its hook and drapes it over her shoulders. Parades about in it. Upon an inaudible signal, the several score trained minks who have formed themselves into a garment for the purpose of Illusion, disperse artfully, and with enthusiastic leaps and gambols, exit left and right.

Head downtown to pick up M. for lunch at MLA headquarters in the old Standard Oil building at 26 Broadway. The downtown #1 stalls forever between Chambers and Rector while several trains jammed up at or near Bowling Green turn around. So near and yet so far. Besides you, the sole occupants of the car are an Asian family from Houston, a sweet-seeming man and woman and their teenage – possibly twin – sons, both headbanded and otherwise attired as Manga heroes spiced with hip-hop.

Lovely conversation, waiting for the wheels to turn. They've reservations for the Statue of Liberty. Back to TX tomorrow. Next time, you say, take the Staten Island

Ferry. You give a brief description of the ride and they look excited – mom and dad anyway. Son fils are prowling the car like a pair of caged tigers suspicious that someone's going to throw them poisoned meat.

Up the stairs at last. Quick backward glance over your shoulder at the unbuilding of the Deutsche Bank's great vertical Petri dish of horrors. Looks to have shrunk a bit since last time, which, if memory serves, was mid-September.

Progress!

Once we get electricity, we'll be unstoppable!

Cross Broadway to get to the other side, and there he is, still bolted to the sidewalk, surrounded by a slipknot of turistas. Funny, you never noticed before. El Toro's looking a bit peak'd. Maigre too. His ribs stick out, more old mule than brave bull. And his left foreleg's buckling, shoulder dips. Could be he's going down.

Tuck in your horns and roll, taureau, roll.

Vibe this toward the bull, then through the revolving door of 26 B'way and into the old Standard Oil Building you go. Behind his semi-circular marble security counter, the reception cum security guard is having a fit and here's why. Just to the right of his enclosure, two maintenance workers high up on an extendable aluminum ladder are in the process of removing a fairly huge Christmas wreath. Beneath them, the security bloke dances about, trapped, his only means of egress – short of vaulting over the counter – blocked by the ladder. Frantically he sweeps wreath needles, real and imaginary, from off his head and shoulders. You approach and attempt to engage. "Wait a minute, wait a minute," he shouts, too unnerved by his predicament to contemplate signing you in.

Like a duo of deliberate bears, the maintenance guys descend bearing the wreath and shove it, balls and all, into a green metal dumpster. "Take that thing outa here!" the guard yells at the bears' backs, even as they're trundling it away. When at last they're well clear, Mr. Security brushes himself off again. Gives an after-shudder. "Pine," he says, to no one in particular, his voice like Cagney's in *White Heat*. "I hate pine."

Seemingly then, he snaps out of it, makes furtive eye contact, asks which office you're visiting. Hands you the code to enter on the elevator keypad. As you walk across the lobby, you glance upward to check out the vastly high coffered ceiling, newly painted a hideous shade of Mylanta green. Pin spots illuminate the names of the company's bigwigs inscribed on marble plaques along the frieze, John D. among them. This illumination is recent too and serves to pop the monikers into sharp relief: Harkness, Pratt, Brewster, Payne, Flagler, Rogers. Hmmm. Why highlight these names, and why now? In celebratory expectation of the \$100 per barrel as the new high oil mark? A new standard?

Walking with M. to Noodle Station on Hester Street, you pass under a scaffold near Eldridge and the sign of a shop, down a short flight of steps catches your eye: Romantic City Hair Design.

*Even a ploughing ox fears the reverse bending of the bow.*

Which Li Zi Ming interprets thusly: "For example, the ox is big in body and very strong in its power, but if its horn is turned, it is possible to throw the ox down. Therefore, it is possible to conquer the opponent just by an intelligent move."

And yes, today oil does it, bursts through the Ben Franklin curtain.

Castor 'n' Pollux, blow me to Bermuda!

1/3 At every opportunity, separately and in herds, arrantly mediocre people complaining about the decline of standards.

Urinated, a pissed participle.

Darktown, snap frozen. Lunar winds. À bout de souffle.

All along the midway, blind folks debating which mirror in the fun house is the most accurate.

Tonight if it stays clear out, folks in the Northeast, even light-polluted Octopus Park, should be able to glimpse fifty-plus shooting stars per hour as earthgasm passes through the Quadrantid shower. These bright bits made up, purportedly of debris from a friendly neighborhood asteroid. If one can stand the cold.

In Ba Gua one method of opening up the opponent's defenses is called "removing the clouds to see the sun." No need just now. Severe clear all the way. Zero condensation, and not a trail of trace.

On their own personal planets, the stone deaf set themselves up to judge the mockingbird competition.

Certain café comrades were seriously buried under avalanches of fear this morning. Only the most pathetic scraping sounds were heard from within their icy cocoons.

The medium's the message. While we're decoding that, the sender and receiver disappear. The milkman becomes the owner of the farm, yea even the cow herself and her cud. And to the mailman is attributed the authorship of the letter.

Forget a muse of fire. O for a singing telegram!

Within her, the fish carries the river, even unto the pan.

Obama seems very vulnerable. He vibes a little too much RFK and Malcolm. However misplaced, people have projected "hope" onto him – on his intelligence, straightforward eloquence and seeming openness. Beware of representing a gateway into someone's imagined future. The world is full of bad actors who only want to replay the past. It's a rigorous but limited repertoire, mostly done with masks, and they don't give up the stage easily.

If you were Barack's advisor you'd quote him the Fat Boys: "Don't be stupid." And the older wisdom: Don't get caught where three roads meet.

Duck who fly upside down quacks up.

The radical is someone who, from whatever motivation, has stepped through the looking glass and finds themselves definitively on the other side. She or he realizes that there is no going back and that they have and will continue to pay a price for their separation from their former lives. If the promised land existed in prehistory, no path can retrace it now. Hansel and Gretel, for all their cleverness and courage could not take what they had accomplished, won at hard cost, and venture deeper into the woods. For the radical, survival to maturity is not only not enough, it's not really the point. Nor is golden age restoration, a retrogression, after appropriate killings, to that time before the witch, or evil stepmother, or bad giant, or whomever poisoned the apple of our innocence.

Is it possible that the radical, so marginalized and living constantly under threat, is actually hyper-socialized? Might she or he represent workers on a bridge, half built across a chasm, a great arc of material and spirit which can only be completed by others who live burning, like them, to reach the other shore? From the time a radical discovers his or her identity, often in late adolescence, each day becomes a struggle with the physics of making a thing no one has seen before. But whatever befalls these creatures – haulers of stone and their own living will to the brink and beyond – they invariably hold to the belief that their work will be realized. Under the moon. Over the sun. On earth, where anything can happen.

The future is in the act. But the act may consist in doing nothing.

Just under a month ago, a window washer's scaffold peeled off the side of a highrise way east on 66th. Two men fell forty-seven floors, nearly five hundred feet. One of them, Edgar Moreno, died on hitting the ground. The other, his brother Alcides, managed to ride the scaffold down and was found sitting upright and semi-conscious. Somehow he survived. Has begun to speak again. Move his arms. Not at all impossible that in time he will walk. Walk!