

1/16 Mysteries upon mysteries. This a.m. in this rare and rosy dawn, three UFOs flashing their lights, perfectly stationary in the south eastern sky. On inspection through binocs they reveal themselves as choppers. Some action on the ground going on over there. Read about it later, maybe.

But that bright, unmoving thing way up to the east above the Met Life lantern, what is it? Can't really get it in clear view, even when you lean the binoculars against the window frame to keep them steady and adjust the focus. The image keeps splitting in two. Venus. Got to be. Yet, it is gone, entirely gone when you finish morning Ba Gua. Fifteen minutes and it doesn't seem the sky is that much brighter. Mysteries. Look again tomorrow if it's clear. Same time, same station.

It's a weird time to be carbon.

Once upon a time, bankers were part of the guild system just like wool manufacturers, carpenters, stone masons, and silversmiths. Back in that day, circa 1400, the Florentine company, Arte del cambio, commissioned Lorenzo Ghiberti, best known for his baptistery door panels, *The Gates of Paradise*, to carve a statue of St. Matthew, aka Levi and "the toll collector," for the Guild's niche in Chisea di Orsanmichele.

Levi, Levee, Levy.

Levy en masse.

You don't have to be Jewish...

Just Levantine.

Or Levalloisian. Levallois-Perret, a suburb northwest of Paris. Of or relating to a lower Paleolithic culture characterized by a technique of manufacturing tools by striking flakes from a flat flint nodule.

Levallois-Perret borders, just across the Périphérique, the 17th arrondissement where you stayed last time in Paris, '06. Keep going in that direction, cross the river, and you come to Asnières-sur-Seine, lieu of your hotel in '01 and '02. Next stop out, one more river crossing, Argenteuil, home of your grandparents. Aunt Gladys and momma Bea were born there, in '06 and '09, respectively, of the preceding century. The American Century, as opposed to whatnow?

North by northwest. Each site on the shore of a bend in the meandering Seine.

Unwinding rivers flowing

from the meadows to the sea,

Paths of glory

through shifting glades to fall,

Present laughter and the memory

of troubles you have seen,

It is written

in your mind.

Sang Bryan Ferry *kan ya makan.*

Levant storax. A fragrant balsam obtained from the bark of an Asiatic tree (*Liquidambar orientalis*) of the witch-hazel family.

In English, this oil is known under several names, shortly as Storax, to englobe all sweetgum oils, or as StyraX Levant, Asiatic Storax, Balsam Storax, Liquid Storax, Oriental Sweetgum Oil or Turkish Sweetgum Oil. Diluted with a suitable carrier oil, it is used externally to treat, in alphabetical order: abrasions, anxiety, bronchitis, catarrh, coughs, cuts, ringworm, scabies, stress-related conditions and wounds.

What do you take me for, a Buffon?

This past weekend began your unraveling. In Woodstock, pretty much by surprise, you reencountered an old buddy from the '80s – yet another Eric – who, with his wife A., recently moved there. As the merry company broke up after dinner, you and E. hugged each other and out of the rush of his parting phrases of goodfellowship emerged the words “Blues Magoos.” Immediately the signature riff to the band’s one big hit came into your head, though the song lyrics and title kept hidden behind the veil. Why, you thought, getting into G. and A.’s car – whyever did he say Blues Magoos? Up the mountain, not long afterwards, you fell over backwards and saw Comet Holmes. And ever since then, like a sweater being frogged: désouvement – one flashback after another to a Farfisa organ spiral that sounds evermore tantric, or Sufi, but in any case ecstatic:

One day you're up and the next day you're down

You can't face the world with your head to the ground

*The grass is always greener on the other side, they say
So don't worry, boys, life will be sweet some day...*

*...We made enough mistakes
But you know we got what it takes
Oh, we ain't got nothin' yet
No, we ain't got nothin' yet...*

Flint people, keep flaking!

*Nothin' can hold us and nothin' can keep us down
And someday our names will be spread all over town...*

*...We got to make the break
'Cause we got too much at stake...*

Yeah, that's using your nodule!
*And we ain't got nothin' yet
No, we ain't got nothin' yet...*

For the first time since Mariner 10 in the early '70s, Mercury is ready for its close-up. But which is its good side? NASA's Messenger probe beams back pics of its heretofore unseen hemisphere.

Every riverine part of England turns, or returns, to a swamp.

Fossilized skull of a bull-sized rodent found along the Rio de la Plata in southern Uruguay.

Book of Wonderment, new chapters every day.

Apsatively posilutely.

Two-day cycle, otherwise known as *dry in a New Yawok minnit*. Standard procedure elsewhere is to pour a new concrete floor every four to five days, but Darktown's highrise contractors, particularly in diss kinda market, don't got no time to screw around, know what I mean? High-yo transitmix, and away!

Which is how a four hundred square foot wooden deck and scaffolding collapsed beneath a load of not-yet-cured concrete. And what happened to Yuriy Vanchytskyy, a worker on the Trump SoHo, aged fifty-something, an immigrant from Ukraine and father of three, who quite literally lost his head in the final days of the oh-oh's real estate boom. Which has, unlike Vanchytskyy, far more than forty-two stories to fall.

Sue for peace. Though it may be too late to get it now on any terms at all.

The concocted story of U.S. naval derring-do against the evil Persians rears up,

shows its stern and sinks like a stone. *Gotcha!* Aw shucks-like, the Navy owns up that it was all a cut-and-paste job worthy of YouTube. Nor was it them that hoked it up, rather the bigshots in the DOD made 'em do it. Still, a thousand rags and mags, newshours and just-breaking special reports chanted it like Gospel and in that moment, several hundred million fragments of consciousness shifted to the gestured spot. *Duuuh. Which way did he go?* Rattle east, strike west. Linkin wuz right but it don't matter. Fooling most of the people some of the time works wonders of insensibility.

This evening and all last night, a bizarro, ultra-bright shimmering of its upper floors makes 7WTC look like a bloomin' UFO. As if Stephenville, TX, has come north to roost. And then, there are the space aliens that "populate" Whole Foods...

It crosses your mind, the unlikely – indeed hallucinatory – thought, that perhaps the lights in the tower have cranked themselves far past their specified lumens in a spontaneous collective memorial for Yuriy Vanchytskyy. Perhaps even now, teams of crack electricians are fighting, and failing, to turn them off. Incandescent objects of the world unite...

Inanimate? Hell. It's not what you call me, it's what I answer to.

Only now, lo these many years gone by, do you notice that the release date for Dylan's *Love and Theft* was September 11, 2001 and that twins inhabit the opening track:

Tweedle-dee Dum and Tweedle-dee Dee

They're throwing knives into the tree

Two big bags of dead man's bones

Got their noses to the grindstones

Living in the Land of Nod

Trustin' their fate to the Hands of God

They pass by so silently

Tweedle-dee Dum and Tweedle-dee Dee...

...Neither one gonna turn and run

They're making a voyage to the sun...

1/17 Eight seasons.

The secret life of metals.

As always, misreadings. The exquisite face of the model in the poster on the subway platform. She sits alone in a theater full of empty red plush seats. The projection beam glows behind her. Eyes wide, she stares, enraptured, at images we cannot see. She has raised one hand to cover her mouth. Naturally, when you scan the headline it says *31 Days of Silence*. On a second, slower pass it's *31 Days of Sundance*. But truly your incomprehension is much more basic than that.

Pull come to shove time at the Appallo.

The son does battle for the father who was paralyzed long before the call-up.

Spastic erections.

The poverty of the reinvention of the not known. Sez André Corboz, kan ya makan.



7UFO Center. The image cannot capture the shimmer and intensity. At left, in concrete shell and shades of orange, the Trump Assassin.

Merrill Lynch we roll along, writing down \$16.7 milliards worth of junk loans. You, you write up – astronomically.

New MoMA acquisitions: Bankers Descending a Staircase Headfirst. Nude Emperor sur l'herb.

However it may appear, the pen is made of glass. The ink is red.

To make music, one foot tapping and a jew's harp is all you need.

Jettison the semaphores, unfurl the metaphors: Diver Dow(n)! 300 plus fathoms, and sinking off the continental shelf.

Cloverfield opens mañana. The “monster movie,” sez its director, “for the YouTube generation.” The trailer features all nightshots: vast explosions visible between skyscrapers to the south of the island, cut to the Statue of Liberty's head landing in Lower Manhattan like it's been flung by a catapult, whereupon it rolls along the street, spikes whirling, macerating cars.

A young man, one side of his head bloodied and his suit a wreck, trying to keep his composure, films himself on his cell phone: “My name is Robert Hawkins and approximately seven hours ago some *thing* attacked the city.”

Cuts of mayhem. Various members of Generation Y duck falling debris: “Run-run-run-run!” Two women, dazed, sit on a curb. One throws her arm around the other's shoulder in a gesture of comfort, looks up at the camera. Cleavage.

Cut. Breathless, a woman asks a helmeted camo'd soldier: "Do you know what that thing is?"

Gruffly he replies, "Whatever it is, it's winning."

Lots more mayhem. Tumbling buildings.

A white horse pulls a Central Park carriage, sans coachman or passengers, at a lazy clip-clop along a dark, abandoned street. We realize this is being recorded on a cellphone by someone walking quickly and panting. Male VO #1: "Still filming?" Male VO #2: "Yeah, people are going to want to know – you know – how it all went down."

Yessir boss, they surely will.

1/18 Zeta and her performing rabbits.

In light of changed circumstances, redefine "displaced persons."

More than midway through Janus's month – the month of entrances and exits. Over whose threshold we stepped dropping billions in real estate value and also, within one ten minute period, forty thousand pounds of high explosives on several targets on the agricultural outskirts of Baghdad. But we'd ramped up to that latter barbarity throughout '07 and continue it still. Close air support they call it. Or precision somesuch.

This is what Tacitus has to say about us, though he imagined he was describing the Roman military monster through the voice of the Caledonian warrior-chief Calgacus:

...The unknown always passes for the marvelous. But there are no tribes beyond us, nothing indeed but waves and rocks, and the yet more terrible Romans, from whose oppression escape is vainly sought by obedience and submission. Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious; if he be poor, they lust for dominion; neither the east nor the west has been able to satisfy them. Alone among men they covet with equal eagerness poverty and riches. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of empire; they make a solitude and call it peace.

In your commonplace book you write: *Resistance is resistant* and think it trite. Then open an envelope from a weaver friend in France, une soixanthuitarde, who concludes her New Year's greeting with *belle resistance active!* And for that reason, the resistant little banality makes the cut.

It's down to this. Only brotherhood saves us now, sister. And vice versa. The only resource that can't be commodified or used up while we exist, though it can deplete to the point of exquisite rarity. Brotherhood, though, cannot be traded, or bet upon. It possesses, neither a futures market, nor a past, but only the Now, however potential. Given the will, it may be freely dug out of any common ground. Like a blow, it begins with the hand.

Tonight, the voice of Charles Clifton Cox III, a young Southern Gentleman and one of your history instructors during the ill-starred semester you spent at Northeastern University in Beantown fortyish years ago, comes beaming into your head like a planet wave from another galaxy. The rhetorical style and drawl are exactly those he'd use when calling upon you in class, but the question's not his anymore – it emanates from inner space:

Ah, Mr. Dahton: The putative collapse of the American banking industry – does this perforce lead to widespread social calamity? Tell us if you please – if so, why so? – if not, why not?

Meet George Jetsam! Hopes to be Fred Flotsam.

Gyres and dolls. We're all dolls in this gyre. Turn turn turn.

Chas. Clifton Cox III, where be you now? For all your affectations – particularly absurd in a college full of Yankee proletarians and in the moment of the Tet Offensive to boot – you were one of our more engaged teachers. And your delivery! We could have listened to you say *Akkadians, Hyksos, Sumerians, Chaldeans* for hours. What kind of refugee were you?

Friedman the anvil, Greenspan the hammer. Greed the fire. Vanity the bellows. *Ifsowhyso, ifnotwhynot?*