

3/1 Mars, god of war arrives, a day late and a greenback – which is in any case worthless – short. Clanking and stinking of death. And in the sky, behind the cloud cover, Venus and Mercury, love and communication. And the waning moon winks saucily on us all.

Folks do whatever they need to do to feel alive. Whatever they need to do to feel dead. And all shades in between.

Suspend judgment, suspend fear.

Rien à faire. Por ahora.

Though Cousin L. is not on the list to receive weekly doses of *Born Witness*, by some sort of strange synchronicity, just after you send out Installment 16, several paragraphs of which concern the Darton family, she calls on the telephone – an occurrence most rare. Turns out she’s planning a Cousin’s reunion for the end of May – the gathering to take place at a former Dupont estate just over the Maryland-Pennsylvania border near where she and her family live.

As you’re writing down the particulars in your schedule book, she asks “So who are you for?”

A brief discussion ensues wherein you declare your equal and wholehearted support for all non-candidates, to which she responds, and you can only take this as a backhanded compliment: “Ah, you’re one of the true Dartons!”

As opposed to...? You let that one hang in your mind. “Surely,” she continues,

“you’re not for that lunatic Nader?”

You reply that while you cannot vouch for Nader’s mental health, his political thinking seems cogent enough.

“And you, who are you for?” you ask, though you’d wager Buffett’s remaining billions that you already know the answer. And indeed she affirms, her voice filled with the pride and expectancy of a child presenting a papier machée art project to her first-grade teacher, that her heart’s set on X-ing the little round hole at the center of “Wow.”

What a strange thing it is, storing up all this energy and sentiment in anticipation of the moment, instant really, when you can flip a lever or press a virtual button on a touch-screen and register...what? It’s as though some gigantic force said *Hold your breath* and pointed to a clock that told you exactly what time you’d be permitted to exhale.

*“His Master’s voice is calling me,”*

*Says Tweedle-dee Dum to Tweedle-dee Dee...*

Some zero game.

Still, if you were Ralph’s advisor, you’d counsel him to change his surname to Apex. Top of the pyramid, ma.

As a rain of Israeli rockets shreds scores of civilians and “militants” alike in the human fishbarrel of Gaza, the *Messenger* lends its voice to the cause of greater Abramic

unity by headlining: "Obama on Difficult Path as He Courts Jewish Voters." Well, duh... all Barack needs to do to court Jews is select a Court Jew as his running mate. Easy as that.

Could the Bloom be off the Berg, or have we ain't seen nothin' yet?

Of course, in the meantime, if Obama's worried about being identified with the Nation of Islam's endorsement of his candidacy, he could take a page from Sarko's book and say: "Casse toi, Farrakhan."

And then the *Messenger* begs the question of whether the press is sweet on O. and hell on Hill. To answer which they ask Lee Cowan, an NBC reporter assigned to the O. campaign if this indeed be true. "I don't think that it's kind treatment versus unkind treatment," he replies. But then he allows that "Even in the conversations we have as colleagues, there is a sense of trying especially hard not to drink the Kool-Aid. It's so rapturous, everything around him. All these huge rallies..."

*Tell all the people that you see*

*Follow me*

*Follow me down*

*Tell all the people that you see*

*Set them free*

*Follow me down*

*You tell them they don't have to run*

*We're gonna pick up everyone  
Come out and take me by my hand  
Gonna bury all our troubles in the sand, oh yeah*

*Can't you see the wonder at your feet  
Your life's complete  
Follow me down...*

Robbie Krieger wrote the message and James Morrison uttered it, two score years gone, on an album called *The Soft Parade*. A decade afterward, another Jim, surname Jones, (né Warren), ladled out to his faithful a thousandfold cups of Flavor-Aid, laced with cyanide sufficient to transport them all the way, one way, to the promised land.

*In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

The Rapture.

Oh Christ. Not again.

*...Can't you see me growing, get your guns  
The time has come*

*To follow me down*

*Follow me across the sea*

*Where milky babies seem to be*

*Molded, flowing revelry*

*With the one that set them free...*

Central Europe clobbered by lethal winds.

“The Office as Architectural Tombstone.” Say wha’. Oh. Right. That’s “Touchstone.” But you read a bit of the *Times* article by David Dunlap and realize your first take was more accurate:

“It will be either one of the most challenging fixer-uppers in the history of modern architecture or one of the most significant tear-downs.

“In any case, Alcatel-Lucent Bell Labs in Holmdel, N.J., is for sale. A decade ago, as many as 6,500 people worked in the low-slung complex, whose pioneering mirrored-glass facade reflects a gleaming three-legged water tower that looks like a giant Bell Laboratories transistor and pond-speckled landscapes where waterfowl outnumber humans.

“Today, it is empty but for a few caretakers. On a winter day, its vast atriums shudder with the sound of wind buffeting the sawtooth skylights. The only things moving along the miles of corridors are shadows.

“And a prospective owner – probably more attracted by a contiguous 473-acre parcel near the Garden State Parkway in Monmouth County than by a vast, unwieldy

monument [monument!] – could demolish every bit of it.

“Designed in 1957 for Bell Laboratories, part of the former Bell System, by the architectural giant Eero Saarinen and the landscape firm Sasaki, Walker & Associates, the complex no longer suits today’s much smaller Bell Labs or its corporate parent, Alcatel-Lucent.

“The property is on the market, but it is hard to imagine finding a new occupant for a structure custom-built two generations ago for physical lab work by a giant monopoly that no longer exists. The main building, with 1.675 million square feet of space, is organized into four pavilions set among atriums and linked by sky bridges. The perimeter circulation pattern leaves few offices with their own windows. Concrete walls divide many spaces.

“While the fate of the Holmdel building is the most compelling preservation drama of the moment, it is not the only suburban corporate campus confronting 21st-century realities...”

No, indeed not, nor the only confrontation between the corporate and “reality.”



David W. Dunlap/The New York Times

**IMMACULATE LINES** The facade of I.B.M.'s research center in Yorktown Heights, designed by Eero Saarinen, is transparent at night and reflective by day.

This morning, in the air, the sense of spring unwinding toward besprung. Late afternoon, early evening, a sky full of Hopper.

3/2 Ah *reality*, that mutable, ineffable, thing ever invoked by evangelists of the profit, see?

Winds fast as runaway locomotives take their course through Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria.

Playing with water hidden within fire.

From one *qi* turning, a thousand things appear, from one technique, a thousand can be created.

Inch power.

Funny, cousin L. calling you, half-accusingly, a “true Darton.” Now there’s an old saying: *It’s not what you call me, it’s what I answer to.* So do you answer that call? And if so, how?

True Darton. True Leveller, Digger. Dartonian. Funny too how the circle turns, brining up Carman’s nickname for you from twenty years back: Dartonian One.

Is a name a description or a definition? Well, it cannot be the latter in the ever-moving play of things. L. seeks you as a noun, when all’s transmutation around you and within you both. Dart out, dart in. And on. Born and borne on the verbal tide. Sometimes flotsam, sometimes sinksome, always jetsam. All of which is true. And false within that truth.

*And I know you won’t believe me*

*Though it is the truth to tell*

*That the living it is hard, oh,*

*But it suits me well*

How does your other half live?



Write and lick and stamp. Send yourself as a letter addressed to where you are.

*Don't need a sword to cut through flowers, oh no, oh no...*

Got lineage?

Train heart and intention.

Which buggers the question of...

L.'s dad was your uncle Joe. Joe's mother, Annie Freeman, born mas ò menos 1881, most likely in Whitechapel, took her husband's name when they got hitched in England circa 1905. Around 1945, uncle Joe married Linette Milano, who changed her name to Darton. When L. married, she de-Dartoned in favor of her husband's surname, Caruso.

Hidden within the Darton: Freeman, Milano. And Kroll, Bea's father's name (her mother's had been Friede). Hidden within Caruso, Darton. And on.

In the midst of your writing, a certain Evan Lim emails you on the subject of "bray cadaver winslow."



Kan trigram. Water. Winter. Kidneys and bladder. Kan is full in the middle,

showing yang fire hidden within the yin.



Li trigram. Fire. Summer. Relates to heart and small intestine. Empty in the middle symbolizing hidden water within fire. Together they exist in relation and in balance with one another. Their dynamic forms the internal alchemy, the inter-transformation of fire and water.

You've got the *qi*. Turn the lock. Turn the corner. Completion.



3/3



Holmes meets the California Nebula. The photo's by Richard Noltheneus, taken two days past from Bonnie Doon, CA. The blue spots, he says, are UV leakage caused by his lens filter.

Not long into March, but already you can feel Zhen rising.



Yang hidden within yin. *Qung long*, green dragon, aka *long lei zhi huo*, dragon-thunder fire. Hips and liver. Movement incited. The dragon awakens from its winter's rest within the earth. Uncoiling spring. Zhen is an upturned bowl. Water on the cusp of fire.

Yesterday all afternoon, daubing an otherwise severe clear sky, the most amazing mares' tales and mackerel clouds. Then, toward sunset, contrails by the dozen and the weirdest flightpaths over the city since a classroom full of white-shirted kids, mostly African-American, rose out of their chairs to say "Good Morning, Mr. President" seven years ago this coming September.

The web is chockablock with documentation of that morning's visit by GWB to Emma E.. Booker Elementary in sunny Sarasota. You choose a shaky, hand-held video clip, which at ten minutes, is the longest you can easily find. GWB sits in a chair to the left of the blackboard, apparently listening to the children as they're put through their reading paces by a very on-it teacher who begins the lesson by having them "sound out" several two-syllable words: "rob-ber," "run-ning...." Then, as she points to one-syllable words on a chart and prompts them, the kids respond in a unison so rapid-fire and intense that, absent the image one could easily imagine these voices belonging to the members of a crack infantry drill team and their sergeant.

"Get ready to read this word –"

"Smile!"

"Yes, smile."

"Get ready –"

"Smiled!"

"Smiled – that's right. Now boys and girls get ready to read these words the fast way – get ready!"

"Kite!"

"Yes, kite – get ready!"

“Kit!”

Yes, kit – get ready!”

“Steal!”

“Yes, steal – get ready!”

“Plane!”

“Yes, plane – now this one –“

“Must!”

“Yes, must! Now get your reader out from under your seat and open your book up to lesson 60 on page 153...”

In one smooth wave of movement, the children, their chairs ranged in an arcing double row, bend forward and down to reach their books. As they sit up, an aide approaches GWB and whispers in his ear. The President’s in long shot, face a blur, so it’s hard to gauge his reaction to what he’s heard. Curious audio: in the momentary lull in vocalizations, a blend of paper rustling as the kids hasten to find their page and the click-wind-whir of what must be several still cameras positioned near the mic, but outside the video’s frame.

“OK,” says the teacher. “Everybody touch the title of your story – fingers under the title – get ready to read this title – the – fast – way –“

A kid in the first row begins to cough and the teacher pauses until it subsides.

“Thank you. Fingers under the title of the story... get ready...”

“*The Pet Goat!*” chorus the children as the teacher thwacks her book with her pencil, one thwack per syllable.

“Yes, *The Pet Goat* – fingers under the first word of the story – get ready to read the story the fast way – get ready!”

“A – GIRL – HAD – A – PET – GOAT!” Six thwacks.

“Go on...”

“SHE – GOT – TO – GO – RUNNING – WITH – HER – PET – GOAT...”

“Go on...”

Someone’s given the President a copy of the book which he holds in his lap, apparently reading along.

“Go on.”

*I can’t go on like this.*

*That’s what you think.*

Onward the story, like *Empire*, the story takes its course. Teacher continues beating time on the book – exhorting the children, when their words begin to sound uncertain, to repeat a sentence from the start.

“Get ready –”

“One – day – her – dad – said – ‘he – ate – too – many – things. That – goat – must – go.’”

*Well? Shall we go.*

*Yes, let’s go.*

[They do not move.]

Borne on a tide of alliteration, the *Messenger* posts its Baghdad Bureau Blog: wherein it is reported that “violence fell drastically” last year in a certain town, Arab Jabour in the “Sunni Triangle.” Not so long ago, the dispatch says, the area was “a no-go zone for the Iraqi Army...”

Go no no go.

*Why don't we hang ourselves?*

*With what?*

*You haven't got a bit of rope?*

*No.*

*Then we can't.*

[Silence]

*Let's go.*

*Wait there's my belt.*

*It's too short.*

*You could hang onto my legs.*

*And who'd hang on to mine?*

*True....*

*No go. Let's go.*

*We'll hang ourselves to-morrow. [pause] Unless Godot comes....*

*Or, alternatively, try He no know go know.*

*And when he or she do, goat tell it on the mountain.*

*"O" is for oil. Oil of the snake that bit, and sold, you. And costs \$104 per barrel.*

*Don't need a gun to blow your mind, oh no, oh no...*

*Y mataremos otros...*

But no, no never, must she be sacrificed, that paragon of hoof'd creatures: Zlateh, the goat who gave her milk and saved a child – that both might live another day.

*No Age Like Unto This Age*, when so many blind men grope the same poor elephant.

The Europeans slump while Asian markets tank. And tankwise, crude oil and the dollar fly their separate yet convergent ways toward that crossroads out on Highway 61. Venezuelan tanks roar toward the Colombian border, Israeli tanks roll in and out of Gaza. GM, Ford and Chrysler sales decline by double digits. And the Dow? Trala, trala, it flutters about then sweeps to a close at -7.49.

The Plunge Protection Team in action, bien sur. Yet, *What* – to paraphrase the incredulous line from the gastank finale of “White Heat” – *What’s holding them up?*

On the day before Hillary Clinton faces putatively do-or die primaries in Texas and Ohio, the *Messenger* offers up this choice nugget of petit histoire:

“After a full day of campaigning in Ohio on Sunday, she [Hillary Clinton] reached Toledo after midnight, and then was up well before dawn to shake hands at a factory gate, beginning at 5:35 a.m. Eastern time on Monday.

“She stood just inside the turnstile at Chrysler’s Toledo North Assembly plant, greeting workers as if she were running for a city council seat rather than leader of the



free world.

“‘Help me out tomorrow, please,’” she implored as workers passed by. ‘I’d be honored to have your vote.’

“The reactions from the workers ranged from thrilled to startled. ‘Hillary, all right!’ exclaimed one. ‘Hillary Clinton, you’re a very strong woman,’ said another.

“‘Hillary, you look so young!’ enthused a third. Mrs. Clinton, 60, liked that. ‘Did everyone hear that? Did you get it on tape?’ she asked the camera operators clustered around her.

“A number of workers conspicuously avoided the candidate, walking through a muddy area to enter the plant. One worker was pulled along by the crowd and ended up shaking Senator Clinton’s hand. ‘Aw, man,’ he said. ‘Now I have to go home and wash my hands.’ He declined to give his name....”

Now the *Messenger* does not report whether this was said within her hearing. Nor if so, what response she made. Still, one feels the ghostly touch of Sarko in the early morning light.

Mud stepping on the slippery road ahead.