

3/14 Mi meltdown es tu meltdown.

Est-ce que ce monde est sérieux? Sí, sí hombre, es un derrumbamiento increíblemente rápido. Y mataremos otros.

Push come to shovetime at the appallo.

Why you can count the number of contractors on one hand who've _____
[fill in the blank].

Basra, mon amour.

Meanwhile in greater Spitzerlandia, occasionally amidst the fine print of the numerous "Disgrace!" articles, one finds a reference to a certain QAT Consulting Group. QAT served as the corporate umbrella under which Emperor's Club VIP operated, and Emperor's Club VIP, as everyone in the free world now knows, was the prostitution agency that employed Eliot's bombshell, Ms. Ashley Alexander. But who be QAT? Let a hundred fingers click. At the QAT Consulting web address you may read this vely vely inteesting description of bigshot capatarist enteplise:

QAT Consulting Group, Inc provides wide variety of business related services including financial, legal marketing and design services directed toward the mid-size American, European, East European and Asian international business community.

From financial point of view we specialize in all legal ways in arranging suitable and lawful USA offshore structuring both for your business and your private affairs. As our client, you will be protected with “attorney-client privilege of information”, as defined and secured by the Law of the United States – your privacy is strictly yours and your business/ tax affairs will always remain yours private matters.

From marketing and promotional point of view we will provide right business connections, assist in promoting your business, and consult you on marketing your products and services.

From design point of view we will assist you in designing your office, website and etc., applying feng shui principles that should enhance your profit capability.

Our services are comprehensive and hands on. We combine our business management and financial expertise with the expertise of our highly qualified associates-investment consultants, lawyers, bankers, independent trustees, marketing and promotion specialists, artists and feng shui masters.

Ah so, Eriot, what you say now? You rikee – you buy. Foh you, we make good plice.

And, kan ya makan, the author(s) of what’s come down to us as the Thirty-Six Tactics – who knew something about both diplomacy and diplomacy carried out by other means offered *Plot of the Charming Beauty* as one eternally-useful mode of

deception.

Click on the various services QAT offers and the world gets even stranger. Though it occurs to you that by the time this bit of *Born Witness* gets published – assuming it does – the QAT website may be digital history. Gone the way of all zeroes and ones.

And what riddle liad you berong to, clazy QAT?

As has been said more'n once, in many a differing tongue: *A stiff prick knows no law.*

What bother you, lo fan? No rikee poriticree incollect diarect? No rikee economic crapse?

Yet at least to a few, it will soon come clear: The Dow is only a small part of the Tao.

All hidden in plain sight.

Down by the ocean, it was so dismal

Women all standing with shock on their faces,

Sad description, oh I was looking for you...

...are you gone gone?

Like eternal children, we make scant use of history. Don't pay it no nevermind. So is it any surprise that history has little respect, or tolerance, for us?

Ironic how, in retrospect, Friedman's ideas appear as a misguided attempt to correct, albeit badly and for all the wrong reasons, the post-war Keynesian economic Leviathan run amok, transformed into a debt and crap-making machine that lived entirely for itself and leveraged both finance and awareness beyond any sort of recall to a base-line common sense. Distanced utterly from the production of real things, or, for that matter, any sort of *raison d'être* beyond its own multiplication.

Not everyone can take the cure.

When everything else has holes in it, our baseline dignity is the only fiber we possess. As it has been all along. Like simple kindness, all undervalued. Even scorned.

Whilst JP Morgan picks up Bear Stearns for pennies on the dollar, subsidized by guess who?

Who, Yogi?

Why you, Boo-boo.

Reports the *Messenger*:

"Early in the day, the Fed issued a statement that it would 'continue to provide liquidity as necessary' to keep the wheels of the financial system turning. But investors

seemed to take little solace in the pledge.

“‘It’s a little like that saying about the fire truck in front of your house,’ said Brian Gendreau, a strategist at ING Investment Management in New York.

“‘The good news is that the fire truck’s here. The bad news is your house is on fire.’”

So, yo Brian, the fire engine’s tapping into the fire plug which is connected to the water supply, right? Tha’s cool. But, uh, how big a lake you think they got back there?

Another bank done gone

Another bank done gone

It had a long chain on...

GWB comes to town and bolluxes up the city’s traffic, addressing, of all things, The Economic Club of New York – though neither you nor anyone you know was invited to the assembly at the Hilton, which, for some reason, the *Messenger* didn’t name but rather referred to as “a Midtown hotel.”

“Mr. Bush spoke only moments after the Federal Reserve intervened to help the investment bank Bear Stearns secure financing to stave off collapse.

“‘Interesting moment,’ he said as he opened his remarks, appearing to refer to the latest news about Bear Stearns.”

Interesting *times*, boo.

You found the transcript of his remarks not in any American source, but rather on the Spanish website Noticias Infobolsa. But as it turns out, W. didn’t say much,

other than to assert that it was fine for sovereign wealth funds to buy presumably American financial institutions and that the Congress better damn well pass the free trade agreements pending with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. Wondrously circumspect he was otherwise. Hmm, QAT got his tongue?

Funny, though you'd think by now you'd be inoculated against such things, you occasionally find the language of the *Messenger* literally breathtaking. For example:

"The move [to bail out Bear Stearns] underscores the extreme stresses that the credit crisis has imposed on the financial system and raises the once-unthinkable prospect that major Wall Street firms might fail." To whom exactly was this "unthinkable" besides the *Messenger*, and a thundering, now self-trampling herd, of financial true-believers?

Part of what systems of any kind do is fail. The sun, light of our lives, eventually, will fail. Even in the shorter run nothing can truly be failure-proof since all possible circumstances, including those which might cause failure, cannot be known. How is it possible to render certain types of failure unthinkable when from the time we become sensible to the operation of systems, we observe that, from whatever cause or causes, they tend at times to malfunction?

Is there some deep repository of distorted idealization in us that makes us, time and time again, send our Titanics out into iceberg country imagining that somehow, this time, our hope ships are proof against nature itself and all will go well? This will be different. Yes, and it is. Triumph and catastrophe are never the same in particular, only in principle. How magical does thinking have to get before it qualifies as madness? And what to say about those who seize their opportunity at a moment when,

all around them, their fellows are reeling in shock? Or those who engineer the shocks in order to seize the opportunities they offer? Isn't that sort of person commonly known as a terrorist?

Now, curiously, it's rhetoric mutating toward thinly suppressed panic as the story develops, the *Messenger* refers to crash of Bear Stearns as a "Run on a Big Wall St. Bank..."

3/15 And again, on the morning of the Ides, the *Messenger's* language shifts anew. This time, instead of conjuring newsreel images from the opening moments of the Great Depression, the headline shifts, borrows a trope from the Vietnam-war era – one that's since become a kind of shorthand for misconceived, misguided policies, sure to fail: "Behind Bear Stearns Rescue Plan, a Wall St. Domino Theory." Click click click.

The woman sitting next to you at Table 6 – you learn her name because her male companion embarks on a cellphone conversation wherein he booms "My girlfriend Ursula is right here and would love to talk to you..." – barks her order to Andres, the waiter, but you can't make out what she says because the combination of Johnny Cash over the speakers and the general room din shear any identifying phonics off her words.

Ursula's BF is easier to understand than she because of his louder volume and a timbre that seems to filter through interstices in the cacophony. He wants a crêpe and coffee. Andreas heads for the counter to relay their order, but Ursula calls him back to demand what sounds like "paramecium," followed by a terse "thank you."

Johnny Cash's bass thrums. *I walk the line.* You read the end of the chapter on

Zhan Zhuang, standing postures, then on to the introduction to Ding Shi, fixed posture Ba Gua. There's a thirty-someodd Asian woman dressed completely in a pink jogging ensemble and a cornfed, grass-finished-looking white fellow of early middle years sporting a navy blue hooded sweatshirt and jeans sitting on your other side at Table 4. Their conversation veers from plans to head shortly to their respective gyms for bouts of power yoga – are they Bikrams of circumstance? – to his mother's financial incontinence, a subject which seems to disturbs him as greatly as it excites her, since she twists in her chair, head thrust forward and eyes popping, as if hooked up to a dynamo.

Meanwhile they join together in brutally massacring their breakfast, ingesting some of it as they talk and redistributing the rest in the general vicinity of their plates, with the result that their table soon begins to resemble a gustatory Antietam. Over the speaker, Johnny laments *She loves you big river more than me*. It dawns on you that this is a terrific time to leave. But while you're putting your stuff in order, the sweatshirtedfella leaps out of his chair and into the aisle from which vantage he seizes the opportunity of Ms. Pink remaining momentarily seated to clap her from behind in an affectionate (?) headlock which, as she rises up, she somehow twists her way out of. They sweep toward the door as Johnny segues into "Ring of Fire."

And the big winds, those fierce exchanges of air pressure, continue to bedevil our earthly affairs. Tornado visits downtown Atlanta. Makes a statement about high-rise plate glass real estate, then moves on.

Messenger: "The storm smashed hundreds of skyscraper windows, blew furniture and luggage out of hotel rooms, crumbled part of an apartment building and rattled a packed sports arena.

“Streets around the Georgia Dome, Phillips Arena, the CNN Center and Centennial Olympic Park were littered with broken glass, downed power lines, crumbled bricks, insulation and the occasional office chair. Billboards collapsed onto parked cars.

“CNN said its headquarters building suffered ceiling damage that allowed water to pour into the atrium, and windows were shattered in the CNN.com newsroom and the company’s library. A water line inside the building broke, turning a staircase into a waterfall.

“‘It was crazy. There was a lot of windows breaking and stuff falling,’ said Terrence Evans, a valet who was about to park a car at the Omni Hotel when the storm twister hit.

“Although a tornado warning was issued, there was no announcement of the approaching storm for the 18,000 fans inside the Georgia Dome for the Southeastern Conference basketball tournament. The first sign was rumbling and the rippling of the fabric roof. Catwalks swayed and insulation rained down on players during overtime of the Mississippi State-Alabama game, sending fans fleeing toward the exits and the teams to their locker rooms.

“‘I thought it was a tornado or a terrorist attack,’ said Mississippi State guard Ben Hansbrough, whose team won 69-67 after an hourlong delay under a roof with at least two visible tears. A later game between Georgia and Kentucky was postponed. SEC officials said the tournament’s remaining games would be played at Georgia Tech.

“‘Ironically, the guy behind me got a phone call saying there was a tornado warning,’ fan Lisa Lynn said. ‘And in two seconds, we heard the noise and things started to shake. It was creepy.’”

Good job overall, *Messenger*. Excellent quotes and very dramatic descriptions as well. But whatever else the storm may have done, technically it didn't blow "furniture and luggage out of hotel rooms." Rather an accurate description of such an event would be "Thar she sucks!" Or "he," depending on how you gender your wind gods.

Enlil blew an evil storm; silence lay upon the city...

Ningirsu wasted Sumer like milk poured to the dogs.

Or just a stronger child than me?

And what play of forces here in Gotham caused, according to AP, "the big, white crane, which looked to be at least 15 stories tall, to topple across a street and crash into the side of another skyscraper" this afternoon at 51st near Second, killing at least two people and trapping several others?

It is not, from what you can tell, a very blustery day. In fact, the local weather reports and your own observations agree that the atmosphere's calm. Trees motionless below. The cumulus might as well be painted on the skydome for all the movement you can detect up there. Which was not the case this past Saturday, a week ago, when 50mph gusts prompted several highrises under construction in SoHo and the West Village to, as *Chelsea Now* put it, "rain debris."

4:20 and the online *Messenger* puts up a pic which indicates that part of the crane, which is big and white indeed, seems to have fallen *through* a four-story building.

An hour later and the death toll is up to four. And the crane's former height has grown to twenty stories tall.