

## New York – 1976

I am sitting in a modest deli restaurant on 52<sup>nd</sup> near Central Park. The elegant lady opposite just come from her ride says:

John Maynard Keynes was the most evil man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I wish I could have strangled him at birth. I'm in bonds and I think New York should pay its own way.

She tucks her riding crop under her left arm, tucks her pants into her riding boots, removes the burger from the bun and carefully applies the pickle.

My secretary discovered this place. I eat here every day after riding. She smiles. I wonder, does she want to fuck?

It's not right that those politicians should just trip on down to Washington for more money. Why should others pay?

No, this is definitely not right, I think, why a waste of the bun, I think, as I slather ketchup all over my fries. No right at all.

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A black man with a radio blaring disco walks purposefully, followed a little white guy dancing. A sequined fairy godmother glides down St Christopher St. A cream coloured caddy cruises Delancy with two black dudes collecting cash. Campfires in oil drums under the Williamsburg Bridge. Roller disco in front of Time-Life.

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The city is a junk store. The city is a bridge, always between something. It is a harbour, bringing it in and taking it away. It is dark cellars with flickering visions, dreams and dramas, squalid and elegant.

The city is that fat newspaper telling me the best month for brie and who was Purcell, really, and what the President meant to say.

The city is special line at the bank for gold transactions.

The city breathes fear and greed, from limos and galleries and opera halls, wearing fur and gold trinkets.

The city is a jungle of despair. I see them crying on the corners, junkies, heads and freaks, snorting, sniffing, cranking, popping, drinking, drinking, drunk unto death, lives in paper bags.

If this is the city, what am I? What am I?

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On 11<sup>th</sup> St, west of 7<sup>th</sup>, an old lady, her arm in sling, her open purse dangling, staggers across the road to me and asks me to close her purse. And I know instantly this is a cop trap. This is the city.

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Would it be different, sir, if we followed you to your room? Do you cry alone?

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I am here to ask to ask a question. But what is the question.

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I see ten million faceless people, never knowing,  
Ten million doors to other places,  
Streets without numbers,  
I hear songs in other languages.  
I wander but I am not lost.  
What primordial instinct brings me back, holds me prisoner?  
I am reporting back, but to whom?

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No one here is merely human.  
Unemployed actors all, or would be actors, or actors friends,  
Or artists between commissions, or exhibits.  
Every conversation is a competition to be noticed  
By the eye of fate  
To be taken into the bosom of fame.  
If ever there were degenerate poets or video rebels  
Or artists indifferent to the mob  
Or undiscovered musicians  
Or untainted talent ...  
They are under contract now to an uptown gallery  
And glad of it.  
No one here is merely human  
Except the rich who own the galleries.

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### Times Square

Things are safer when you look down ... and just in front ... and watch where you step  
... and keep your hand on your wallet. But such a posture!

But when you look up, into the opulent corruption of this billboard heaven, to the visions  
and the wonders, the promises, the Gods, the future is unfurled in flashing neon ... fast  
cars, big boobs, clear skin and great rum.

Yes friends, God is here in his heaven, blowing smoke rings all over you, out his vinyl  
mouth, pulsing in perfect sync with that maroon sign over there ... *Hamburgers*,

*Hamburgers, Hamburgers!* The Winston Man. knows better what you want than you know yourself. - *good taste in a cigarette.*

Yo, Hamburger. If you're man enough, you can - Join the Marines! Over there!

What are you doing, fool! All this you can buy, and more. Spend, you fool! Spend!

*This is a large re-write of a '76 memo.*