

MANHATTAN

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FILE

FEAR OF A FASHION PLANET

MALIBU TO
MANHATTAN:
ANATOMY
OF A MURDER

EXCLUSIVE
FICTION FROM
BRET EASTON ELLIS

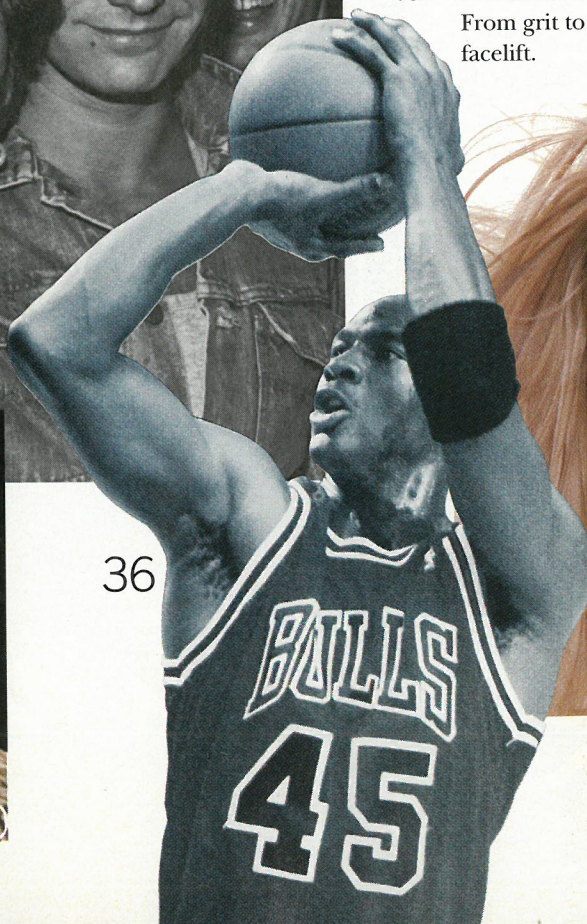
ISABELLA
ROSSELLINI
UP CLOSE

MICHAEL
JORDAN
GETS BULLISH
ON WALL STREET



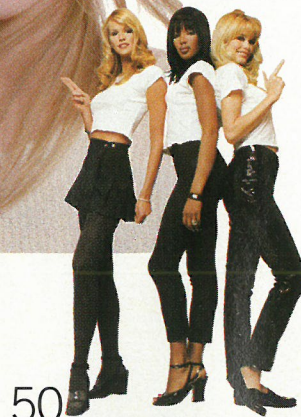
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"SPECKS..."

Fact: the average lifespan of a nightclub is less than a year. In the spirit of ephemera, and on the heels of the opening of the Fashion Cafe, **Bret Easton Ellis**, our man at the door, fabricates this running dialogue revolving around, uh, specks.

specks all over the third panel, see, no, that one—the second one up from the floor. I wanted to point this out to someone yesterday but a photo shoot intervened and Yuki Nakamori or whatever the hell the designer's name is—a master craftsman not—had no idea who I was so I couldn't register the complaint, but gentlemen—and ladies—there they are: specks, annoying tiny specks. They also look accidental—as if they were somehow done by a machine—so I don't want a lot of description—just the story, streamlined, no frills, the lowdown. Who, what, where, when, and don't leave out why, though I'm getting the distinct impression by the looks of your sorry face that 'why' won't be answered. So, come on, what's the story?"

Nobody around here has to wait long for someone to say something.

"Darling, George Nakashami designed this bar area," J.D. quietly corrects. "Not, um, Yaki Nakamashi, I mean Nakagami, I mean Nakayami—Peyton, get me out of this."

"Yuki Nakamori was approved for this floor," Peyton says.

"November 4th, 1992" (election day), is an exclusive short story for Manhattan File.



"Oh yeah?" I ask. "Approved by who?"

"Approved by, well, *moi*," Peyton says.

A pause. Glares targeted at Peyton and J.D.

"Who the fuck's *Moi*?" I ask. "I have no fucking idea who *Moi* is, darling."

"Victor, please," Peyton says. "I'm sure Damien went over this with you."

"Damien *did*, J.D. Damien *did*, Peyton. But just tell me who *Moi* is."

"*Moi* is Peyton, Victor," J.D. says, quietly.

"I'm *Moi*," Peyton says, nodding. "*Moi* is, um, French."

"Are you sure these specks aren't supposed to be here?" J.D. tentatively touches the panel. "I mean it's supposed to be, oh, I don't know—'in' or something."

"Wait." I hold up a hand. "You're saying these specks are in?"

"Victor, we've got a long list of thingies to check." J.D. looks over at his list. "The specks will be taken care of."

"By tomorrow night?" I roar. "By tomorrow night, J.D.?"

"It can be handled by tomorrow, Peyton, no?" J.D. looks at Peyton. Peyton nods.

"Around here, by tomorrow night, could mean anywhere from five days to a month," I point out.

"None of us have been exactly sedentary, Victor."

"I think the situation is simple enough: those—" I point out, "are specks. Do you need someone to decipher that sentence for you, J.D., or are you, uh, OK with it?"

The girl "reporter" from *Details* stands with us. Assignment: follow me around for a week. Headline: "The Making of a Club." Girl: push-up bra, scads of eyeliner, plastic-flower jewelry, rolled-up copy of *W* tucked under a pale, worked-out arm.

"Hey, baby." I inhale on a Marlboro someone handed me, studying her. "What do you think about the specks?"

Girl reporter lowers her sunglasses. "I'm really not sure." Thinks about it. "I'm really not sure I'm part of the story."

"You think any of *these* bozos are?" I snort. "Spare me."

From the top floor, Beau leans over the railing and calls down. "Victor, Chloe's on line one."

Girl reporter immediately lifts the *W* up, reveals a notepad on which she doodles something.

I call up, "Tell her I'm busy. Tell her I'm in a meeting. Tell her it's an emergency. I'll call her back."

"Victor," Beau calls down. "This is the sixth time she's called today. This is the third time she's called in the last hour."

"Tell her I'll see her at Cafe Tabac at ten." I kneel down along with Peyton and J.D. and, pointing out where the specks begin and end, I run a hand across the panel. "Specks, man—look at these fucking specks. Jesus—they're everywhere." I've suddenly noticed an entire new patch. "And they glow. They're glowing, J.D." I'm gaping. "And I think they're spreading. I don't think that patch was there before."

"Didn't Damien discuss the design with you, Victor? Didn't you know the existence of these specks?" J.D. asks.

"I don't know anything, J.D. Nothing. Nada. Remember that. I...know...nothing. Never assume I know anything. Nada. Nothing. I know—"

"I get it, I get it," J.D. says wearily, standing up.

"I really can't see anything, darling," Peyton says, still on the floor.

"See—even Peyton can't see anything," J.D. says.

"Ask Peyton to take off his fucking sunglasses," I snarl. "Spare me, man."

"Oh shit, Victor, this place is lit like a cave anyway," J.D. says.

"Victor—we must chat." The chef, Bengo, from Venezuela—via Vunderbar, Moonclub, and Masa Masa—lights a

THEME ON

Ask for a toothpick at the Fashion Cafe and they'll send you one of the owners. If this high-concept bistro craze had started thirty-five years earlier, Audrey Hepburn would have been franchising Breakfast at Tiffany's (Eggs Golightly, \$1.98). Here are some future specials we've concocted for Manhattan's theme-restaurant menu:

WINDOWS ON THE PORT AUTHORITY

Slogan: "The management is not responsible for personal belongings."

Location: A revolving restaurant above the bowling alley.

Decor: Milk-carton portraits of missing children, wanted posters, instructions on what to do if you're choking, and the last cab that drove through the window.

Specialties: Chicken hawk salad.

Clientele: Undercover cops and unconvicted perps.

Gift Shop: Vending machines with French ticklers, ten-pack token holders and "I Love New York" mace canisters.

Note: No one ever uses the restrooms twice.

WASHINGTON SQUARE MEALS

Slogan: "Smoke? Smoke?"

Location: An architecturally significant prewar building that NYU will tear down to build more dorms.

Decor: Chess tables, a dog run, a leprous statue of George Washington, and lots of dirty white guys with dreadlocks.

Specialties: Moldy pretzels and stale falafel priced at whatever the management can get away with. (For the real special, just whisper to the waiter, "You holding, man?")

Clientele: Day-tripping teens in blue hair, black lipstick, and Green Day T-shirts.

Gift Shop: See your waiter.

PLANET BROADWAY

Slogan: "Our food is big. It's the prices that are small."

Location: Kips Bay (It's gotten too expensive to start a restaurant on Broadway.)

Decor: Crashing chandeliers and cat droppings.

Specialties: All-you-can-eat buffet: \$85 (the Angel food Cake in America takes two nights to eat)

Clientele: No one we know.

Gift Shop: What? And commercialize the theater?

HARD STOCK CAFE

Slogan: "Let's expense it!"

Location: One of the many empty floors of the World Trade Center.

Decor: "Like the floor of the Stock Exchange—but with attitude."

Specialties: Bonfire of the Crudités.

Clientele: Red ties, white guys, blue drinks.

Gift Shop: T-shirts of Mike Milken proclaiming "I'll be back."

GUY NICOLUCCI AND KENT JONES

to life. To just walk, to just be outside.

DS: I think that's attached to a psychological thing. Say, for instance, it's a nice, sunny day and suddenly clouds move in; it can create a feeling inside of you that reminds you of a dark place.

IR: Yes, absolutely.

DS: That's why Annie Lennox and I wrote a song called 'Here Comes the Rain Again.'

IR: Yes, yes, I know the song.

DS: We felt like, Oh no, here comes that sinking feeling.

IR: Absolutely. When we were shooting *Blue Velvet*, David Lynch had a code for that. My character was kind of anxious and crazy, so sometimes she would fall into a dark mood without anything provoking it. We used the line 'The clouds are coming' as a code.

DS: I always get attracted to that darker aspect in people. I find myself falling in love, and wanting to go out with somebody, and then I realize they're like that.

IR: Dark, you mean?

DS: They just have that thing where they suddenly go into a dark mood for no reason.

IR: Well it's good that you like it, because most people don't. *[laughs]*

DS: I don't particularly like it when it's happening, but I always find myself drawn towards those kinds of people. I think I'm a bit like you, actually. I do all these active things that I know will make it better, whereas some people don't—they just get into the dark. I'll arrange certain things in my day so that the darkness won't happen. If I didn't do that, and it rained, I'd just be sitting in my room going, Oh no!

IR: You can still be sad even if you do organize yourself, but if you organize yourself, you can avoid a kind of existential sadness.

DS: Do you have a fear of Sundays. I'm completely Sunday-phobic.

IR: Not really. One good thing about living in New York City is that everything remains open, so Sundays don't really exist. I live near the park, and on Sundays it's a great place to go. *[telephone rings]* That was Gary [Oldman]. We were just about to have lunch.

DS: I don't want to keep you. Say hello to Gary for me.

IR: OK. Bye bye. ■

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cigarette, lowers his sunglasses. "Please, my feet are killing me."

"*Uno momento*, Bengo. J.D., get him an Advil." I suddenly notice the worried

glances Bengo is throwing at Kenny Kenny who's connected in some weird way to Glorious Foods and who has not yet been told he's not catering tomorrow night's dinner.

I peer over the railing. "Shit, I've got four more floors and three more bars to check."

"Victor, no one would deny the existence of these specks," Peyton says carefully. "But you have to place the specks within a, um, certain, well, um, context."

On one of the monitors lining the walls of the third floor: MTV, a commercial, Helena Christensen, Rock the Vote.

"Beau!" I yell up. "Beau."

Beau leans over the railing. "Chloe says she'll be at Metro C.C. at 11:30."

"Wait, Beau—Ingrid Chavez. Has Ingrid Chavez R.S.V.P.'d?"

"I'm checking—wait—for the dinner?"

"Yes—check the C's for dinner."

Bengo grabs my arm. "Oh my God, Victor, I have got to speak to you." He says this in an accent so thick I'm unsure of its origin. "Bengo, why don't you just get the hell out of here," Kenny Kenny says.

"And you should go to hell," Bengo says.

"Because...because...because...you stink."

"Will both of you 'mos take a Xanax and shut the fuck up?" Then: "Beau—goddamnit speak to me."

"Naomi Campbell, Helena Christensen, Cindy Crawford, Francesco Clemente, Nick Constantine, Nicholas Cage, Cristi Conway—"

"Ingrid Chavez! Ingrid Chavez!" I shout up. "Has Ingrid Chavez R.S.V.P.'d?"

"Victor—celebs are complaining that your answering machine isn't working," Beau calls down. "That it's only playing thirty seconds of 'Love Shack' and five seconds to leave a message—"

"Beau, I don't care. These people should just say 'yes' or 'no.' It's not a difficult question. Are you coming to dinner? Yes or no? What else could they possibly say?"

"Victor, Cindy is not 'these people.' Veronica Webb is not 'these people.' Elaine Irwin is not—"

"Beau," I call up. "How are the A's shaping up?"

"For dinner? Three. Carol Alt. Pedro Almodovar. Dana Ashbrook."

"Shit." I light another cigarette then look over at the *Details* girl. "I meant that in a good way."

"So...it's like a good shit?"

"Uh-huh." I glance back at the specks then call up to Beau. "Beau, make sure that all the monitors are on MTV—one I passed had VH-1 on. Some fat hick in a ten-gallon hat weeping is—"

"Will you meet Chloe at Metro C.C. at 11:30 or not?" Beau yells down. "Because I'm not gonna lie anymore—"

"Oh, you'll lie," I scream up. "That's all you ever do—" then, glancing at the *Details* girl, "ask Chloe when she calls back if she's bringing Beatrice Dalle."

Silence. "Did you say Beatrice Dalle?"

"Do it, Beau."

"But Beatrice Dalle is shooting that Ridley Scott—"

"Specks! Oh holy Christ," I mutter, still staring at the panels.

"You know what, Victor?" Peyton asks.

"I'm getting, ah, the perverse temptation, darling, to, ah—now don't get scared—to..." he claps his hands together, wide-eyed and gushes, "keep the specks." Then, timidly, "To save the, er, specks."

"Save the specks?" J.D. gasps.

"Yes, save the specks," Peyton says. "Because—"

"People, people, people," I interrupt. "Is it possible to open this club without humiliating ourselves in the process?" I start to walk away. "Because I'm beginning to think it's not possible."

"Victor, wait up."

The group follows.

"It's just so, so, so '89," I blurt out.

"But that was a fine, fine year, Victor," Peyton says, trying to keep up. "A triumphant year."

I pause, turn slowly to face him. He's quivering.

"Uh, Peyton, you're really wacked out—aren't you?" I ask softly.

Peyton nods as if coaxed. He looks down.

"You've had a pretty tough life, right?" I ask.

"Victor, please—" J.D. steps in. "Peyton was joking. We're not saving the specks. I'm here with you. They're not worth it. They die."

"Will someone give me one spontaneous act of goodness?" I whisper. "Remove the specks." A huge expanse of French windows stare out over a leafless Union Square Park and while I'm yawning I hear someone say, "Come on Victor, the average lifespan of a club is what—four, five weeks, and by that time..." and then the voice fades, and I turn around and face the group and say, "I've made a decision about the specks."

Gasps, eyes widen, they lean in, waiting. ■