

So Proudly Ex-Hailed

Stanley Kelman Jr.

The gentrified are to the manor born,
guarded by divine rivers that carve the land—
Hudson, East, Harlem—
moats ordained by God's own hand.

These waters rise as sacred walls,
a birthright to keep unpolished masses
from storming the castle.

Manhattan, swaddled in privilege,
cradles its elite in gilded arms,
their feet never touching the ground
where peasants tread.

It wears a crumbling crown,
a city of borrowed lights,
staring down bridges and tunnels
like a monarch mocking an exiled court.

In the shadow of its towers,
the peasants gather—
discount bottles in hand,
flat-ironed dreams in their heads,
cloaked in polyester armor.

Wall Street nobles guard their citadel
with hedged funds and market shares,
sneering: "Let them eat craft beer,"
as Williamsburg falls to siege.

Brooklyn, alive with soul no more,
becomes a parody of itself—
a land of artisanal pickles,
rooftop yoga,
authenticity sold by the pound.

From Queens, from Jersey,
from the unlit outskirts,
they march—
tanning memberships their shields,
Top 40 playlists their war cries.

They breach the moat,
filling the streets with SUV exhaust
and reality TV accents.

Even Chelsea reels—
Hell's Kitchen renamed Clinton,
as if history could be erased
with a real estate listing.

And then there are the transplants,
wide-eyed, fresh from Iowa,
clad in thrift-store irony,
all black everything.

They drop their R's,
perfect their disdain,
and call themselves New Yorkers.
But Manhattan knows.
It eats them too.

The peasants want their piece—
Instagram posts under Times Square lights,
bottled nights in clubs
where overpriced vodka
glistens like fool's gold.

Yet, the Upper East holds.
Museum Mile fortified with haute-couture trenches,
artillery of Fifth Avenue culture.

Nobles sip espresso on sidewalks,
ignoring the siege,
pretending not to hear
the bass thumping across the moat.

This is their city—
a fortress of polished stone,
whispered wealth,
where even John Lennon's ghost
must stay quiet behind Dakota walls.

The bridges bow under the tide,
the tunnels churn with bodies.

The peasants storm Midtown,
lay siege to the Garment District,
claim Times Square's electric thrones.

But Manhattan never falls.
It swallows the invaders whole,
digests their suburban dreams,
and spits them back across the river
before morning.

At sunrise, its streets lie still—
a fortress undefeated,
reflected in the water,
waiting for the next tide.

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