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Subject: May 7th tidbits & quotes

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Attachments: falafel_-_The_New_Yorker_Digital_Edition__May_13,_2013.pdf

Neighborhood Scout just recently named Barton-McFarland area of Detroit, Michigan to be the most dangerous neighborhood in America. This part of Detroit has a violent crime rate (per 1,000) of 149.48, meaning that you have a 1 in 7 chance of becoming a victim living there within one year. To put things in perspective, a 3,300 square foot property in foreclosure just recently sold there for just \$800. The same property sold for \$70,000 in 2002.

NEW YORKER PROFILES - THE CHAOS OF THE DICE - A backgammon hustler's quest to gain an edge. BY RAFFI KHATCHADOURIAN In order to meet Falafel, the highest ranked backgammon player in the world, I took a Greyhound bus to Atlantic City, and then hopped a jitney to the Borgata Hotel. Falafel's real name is Matvey Natanzon, but no one calls him that, not even his mother, who calls him Mike, the name that he adopted when they emigrated from Israel to Buffalo—one leg in a long journey that began in Soviet Russia. Now even Falafel calls himself Falafel.

Falafel was in Atlantic City to support a friend he calls The Bone, a professional poker player who was registered in a tournament at the Borgata. The Bone, who is from Ukraine by way of Brooklyn, used to play backgammon, but he switched to poker because there is more money in it. Falafel is either a purist, or unable to master poker, or too lazy to really try, or all of the above. He is committed to backgammon, which is his main source of income—to the extent that he can find wealthy people who want to lose to him in cash-only private games. There are more of these than one might expect, but not a lot. Finding them and hanging on to them is a skill.

The jitney that travels between the Atlantic City hotels is run-down and slow, a horrible way to travel. Falafel would never take it. He can make ten thousand dollars in half an hour playing backgammon; he can make many times that in an evening—and he can lose it all just as easily. The money comes and goes. Currently, he has no home. He has no driver's license. Until just a few months ago, he had no cell phone, no bank account, and no credit card. Pretty much everything that he owns can fit into a large black suitcase. Still, he allows himself certain luxuries, and one of them is to hire a car rather than sit in a jitney. *see attachment to finish...*