

# Block Power— The Jane Street Story

By JONATHAN BLACK

**B**REEEEP! The tiny gold peephole flips open and an eye peers out. The eye stares at Michelle Sandberg's yellow laminated nameplate. The nameplate reads "Jane Street Block Association."

"We'd like to talk about the guard patrol," says Michelle. "And we'd like your support. It's \$28 for six months."

"We've already paid."

"Oh."

The peephole flips shut.

"These cards are a mess of macaroni," mutters Bob Herron, Michelle's teammate.

Michelle titters. She is retired; used to work in personnel training and co-managed a pet store. Bob is an Off-Broadway playwright and superintendent of a Jane Street walk-up. The three of us move down the dark corridor of The Cezanne, one of the high-rises on Jane Street, and halt at the next door.

Breeeep!

"Yah? . . . Yah? . . . Yah? . . . No, not interested . . . buncha ultraliberals. Get rid of Lindsay, why don't you?"

Breeeep!

"No, not now . . . I'm sick . . . I'm not dressed . . ."

"It's only five dollars a month."

"My business checks are all at the office . . . come back, why don't you?" Bob sighs.

"Maybe the other team's having better luck," encourages Michelle.

"Mmmmm," inhales Bob more cheerfully. "That's a wine-based stew!"

Ther, we luck out.

Breeeep!

A towed head and a hand sticks out the door with a check.

Breeeep!

"We're here to get your subscription for the guards."

"You already have it."

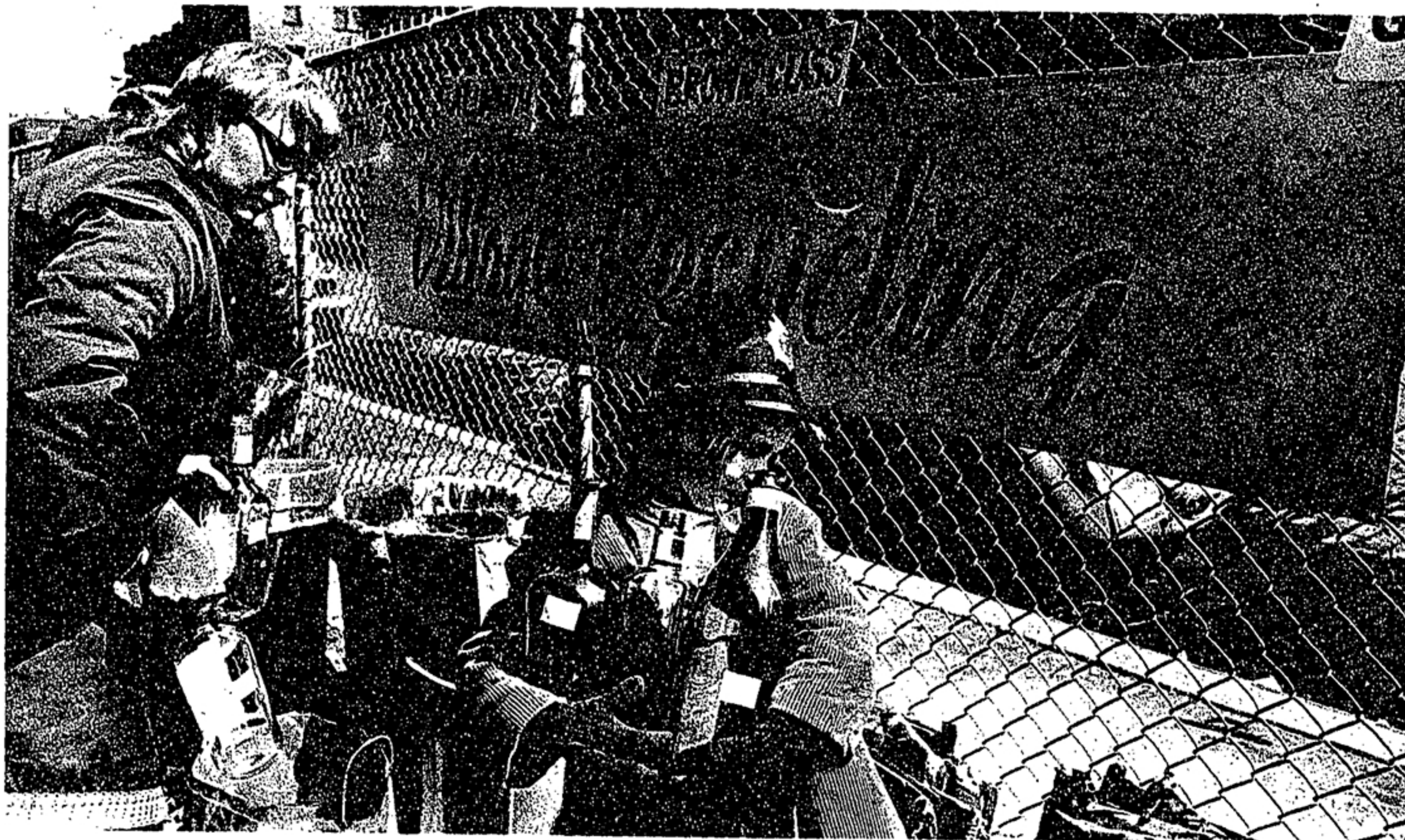
Bob scowls. "These cards!"

"But let me tell you I'm very pleased." The man knots his paisley bathrobe. "Before the guards, Jane Street used to be full of panhandlers and drunks and beggars. Now I see hardly any."

Jane Street is five blocks long, slashing west from the chic boutiques

(Continued on Page 38)

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**BLOCK-BUILDING**—The city's 4,000 block associations organize everything from security patrols to baby-sitting pools. Above, volunteers from the Jane Street Block Association bring trash to a recycling project, while, below, members of the Bank-Bethune Block Association demonstrate the "whistle security system" — whereby a crime victim blows a whistle, alerting neighbors to blow their whistles, all to scare off muggers.

