

Hi everyone, I'm Reuben, and over the past 15 or so years, nobody has sent and received more emails to and from Elliott than me. My gmail only goes back to March 31, 2006, but since then, Elliott has written me **17,015** emails. That was like a week ago, there's been about another hundred since then. And that's just the past five years, there are 10 years of emails before that, beyond my grasp, only recoverable by not yet invented techniques to be used by the archeologists of the future. Anyway those are my credentials as an expert on Elliott.

Elliott is a man of many notable distinctions, accomplishments, and virtues. However I do not wish to speak of these things today. Today I will celebrate Elliott's idiosyncracies.

* Elliott **walks in front of you**. Like five steps in front of you. It's not that he's walking faster than you, he's walking the same speed as you, but for reasons I don't think even he knows, he cannot walk next to you, only five steps in front. I have been dealing with this for most of my memorable life and I cannot get used to it. It's fucking weird.

* Elliott has an insatiable compulsion to **clip his fingernails**. He will clip his nails anywhere, with no regard for what happens to the shavings. If you've had more than a few meals with Elliott, you have probably eaten his fingernails. He has a nail clipper on his person at all times. When Elliott was called upon to present the wedding ring at his brother's wedding, he reached into his pocket and produced a nail clipper.

* Elliott has a small hole in his **nasal septum**. When he breathes through his nose it makes a very high pitched whistling sound that is audible only to dogs. In addition to this bizarre anatomic deformity, Elliott has asthma, and sometimes has sneezing fits, and he expects you to say God bless you after every single sneeze which is unreasonable and also intellectually inconsistent because Elliott does not believe in God. When Elliott was a teenager, his mom confronted him with a bag of marijuana she found in his dresser. She yelled at him, *what are you doing with this, Elliott?* To which Elliott replied, um, I smoke it. Robbie then got really mad and screamed **YOU SMOKE IT? WHAT ABOUT YOUR ASTHMA!!**

* When you talk to Elliott, **he does not listen to you**. And it's not that he's easily distracted, or that he has some sort of attention disorder, the reason Elliott is not listening to you is because Elliott is not interested in what you're saying. It took Juliet a while to get used to this, and, true to her nature, she took a compassionate approach and decided that the problem was that Elliott wasn't listening to you because he couldn't hear you. That Elliott had a hearing problem, like something

wrong with his ears, like he might need a hearing aid. She went as far as to arrange for Elliott to have audiometry testing, a hearing test. Of course it turned out the problem is not his ears, the problem is between his ears. Oh wait I don't mean *problem*, I mean *idiosyncrasy*. we're celebrating Elliott's idiosyncrasies. Elliott's charming idiosyncrasies.

* el has made short movies about birds, butterflies, and deceased relatives. he has also made a movie about his own circumcision.

Elliott and I have spent a lot of time over the years strategizing around how to be successful in romance. Elliott invented this concept called **positioning**. The idea is that you have to put yourself in the right environment to meet the right person. When I complained that I wasn't meeting any girls, he would tell me I needed to take a creative writing class. This always sounded ridiculous to me, but it was hard to dispute his commitment to positioning, as Elliott got not one but **two** masters degrees in fields he had no interest in, for the sake of positioning.

El also pioneered a strategy of that I have adopted wholesale, and strongly recommend, called **metaflirting**. Metaflirting is a two step program. In the first step, you latch on to something about the girl you're flirting with, and make up a story that couldn't possibly be true, having to do with this thing. The point is to be obvious that you are spinning a tall tale just for the sake of being charming. Then, at the end of this tall tale, assuming she's still interested, you confess that you made up a story just to be charming, and steer the conversation to flirting itself. you're now flirting by talking about flirting, and it turns out that talking about flirting as a form of flirting, metaflirting, is irresistible. The reason I am suddenly so alluring is because I am metaflirting with all of you, right now.

Anyway, I'm pleased that I can provide an example of this strategy in action. Years ago Elliott saw a lovely lady behind the counter at a Chicago coffee shop. Naturally, he utilized the positioning tactic, walked in, and brilliantly positioned himself by ordering a cup of coffee. When she asked about milk, yes, of course he wants milk, and then when she asked about skim vs. whole milk, Elliott sprang into action. Whole milk, of course he wants whole milk. Who would be lame enough to ask for skim milk in their coffee? The beautiful barista took the bait, oh absolutely, only losers take skim milk in their coffee. Elliott then told her how happy he is to hear that, because in fact he is the president of The Society for the Abolition of Skim Milk. In a further stroke of genius, he asked her if she wanted to get the society's newsletter, which was distributed by email. Who could resist that? Now el had her email address. And this is the email he wrote to her, on February

19, 2002.

Thank you for your interest in our group. I think the level of professional contact you have with dairy products will help you make a valuable contribution.

Issues surrounding the interaction of coffee and creamers are at the forefront of our agenda.

I have attached a photo of Jimmy, our charter member. Jimmy is a cow.

Perhaps the next time I am in Bucktown we should discuss directions forward in the cause of whole milk consumption.

Best Regards,

*Elliott "Milky" Malkin
President
Society for the Abolition of Skim Milk*

She did not respond. But Elliott had yet to hit her with the next part, the metaflirtation. So he sent her another email, in which he invited her to join *The Society for the Advancement of Pretext*. Pretty charming, eh? She didn't respond to that one either.

Ultimately it turned out that Elliott was right about positioning, except that he was right about positioning in the way that the horoscope is right about your future, which is to say that positioning is total bullshit, and that it only works in retrospect, by chance. The only positioning that turned out to matter for Elliott was a professional move; of course I'm talking about his move to the New York Times, five years ago, where he met Juliet.

I mentioned the thousands of emails Elliott has sent to me over the years. Now that we all communicate primarily by email, there is a written record of our lives, on our computers, in the cloud, the cloud where all our emails are being read by the ghost of Steve Jobs. As I was thinking about this toast a few days ago, I reviewed a tiny fraction of this record, not sure whether I was going to use it for good or evil. What I found was a record of ups and downs. And when you go back and read the

record, especially one written by a good writer like elliott, our lives are grand and adventurous. At one point, elliott asserted – let me get this exactly right – **on Sunday, July 6, 2003, at 9:35 in the evening, elliott concluded the following: "salvation is delivered through romantic love."**

No one is better positioned than I am, perhaps not even elliott himself, to appreciate how good juliet is for elliott. The written record reflects the past few years as the happiest of his life. And I know the grandest adventures are in front of them, and this narrative they will write together. I'm also sure that in future chapters, we will see emergence of elliott's latest strategy, *metam matrimony*. Mazel tov to elliott and juliet.