

## Mark Doty

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### *Magic Mouse*

Scrap of fur or fabric scrambles hand  
to hairy wrist, flees into the hole thumb and forefinger make  
in the fist, most warm days, Sixth Avenue and 14th Street:

big-headed guy squats hands outstretched and the toy  
slips knuckle to back of the other hand, scurries to the nest  
as if of its own volition while he blares over and over

same flat vowels, somehow half the time trumping  
layered horn and airbrake and din without apparent origin,  
raising his terms above the avenue as if he peddled

not the thing itself but its unprintable name:  
MAHJIK MAOWWZ,  
his accomplishment, a phrase the alphabet refuses,

MAH as in Nah as in No way,  
JIK the voice's arc fallen hard back to the sidewalk, MAOWWZZ  
a bridge with a long slide in the center. It won't work

unless you're loud, seal your nasal passages,  
inflect five syllables in blat and euphony,  
then the little three syllable follow-through,

price-tag vocalize tailing away like an afterthought:  
ONE DOLLAH. Even halfway down the block he's altered the air,  
made the spine around which some fraction

of city arranges itself, his beautiful thing  
in diminishing coda as you're farther away:  
Magic Mouse, one dahlah. I practice, I can't

get it right. Maybe what's required is resistance:  
indifferent citizens impelled in four directions,  
scraps of cell-phone recitations into private ethers,

mechanical sobs his syllables cut through and against.  
Maybe it's the sheer persistence of the ugly span  
of phrase lifting up and over what it's built to represent,

or else the engine of his song's the nothing  
that could contain that tumbling scrappy model  
of a living thing in his hands,

so he says it again and again

—while the little toy, all the word  
won't hold, always escaping,  
goes on with its astonishing work.