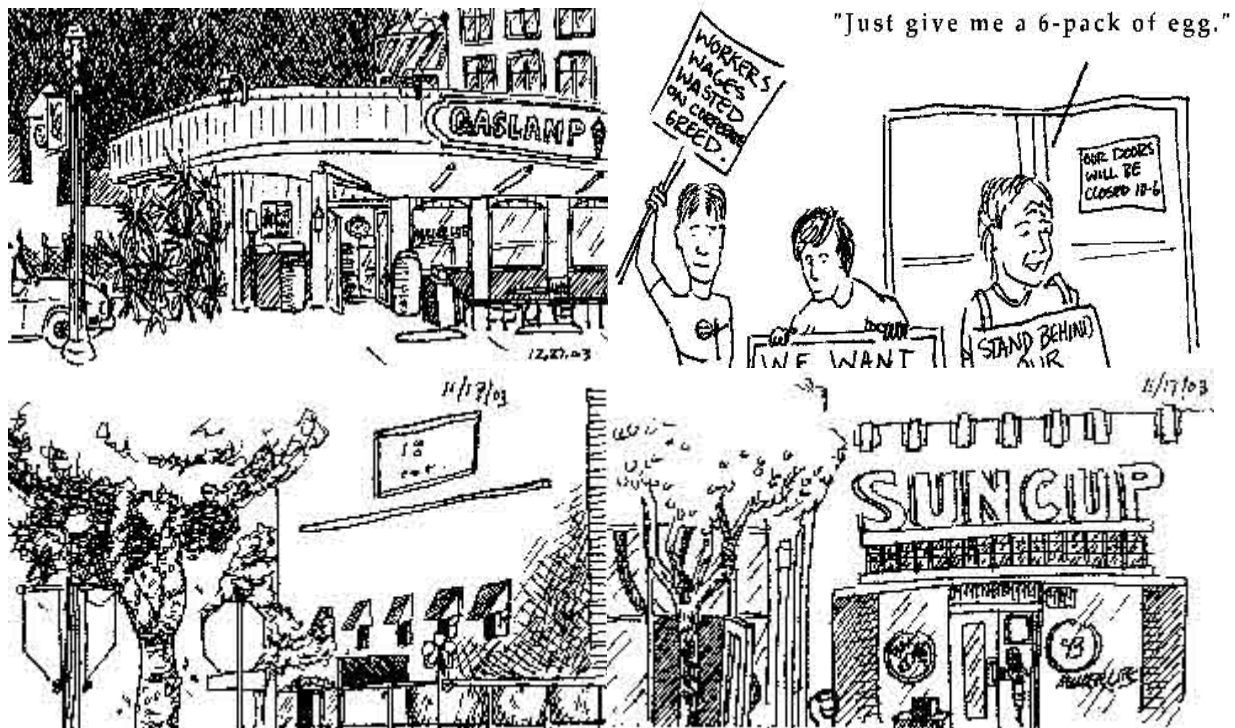


A SAN DIEGO MORNING HAZE

A TRAVELLER'S STATE OF MIND

By David Hayes



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A TRAVELLER'S STATE OF MIND

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The morning brought a gloomy fog across the skyline of San Diego. At the cusp of the continent, where Pacific coastal waters form the weather for much of America's soil, a perpetual calm hangs over the city. The alarm clock, which was adjusted last night to sound at an ambitious 5 a.m., failed to go off. Still, perhaps out of the formation of a new habit, I woke up a quarter past to venture out from the clammy room that I rent on a weekly basis. Just south a couple of blocks I learn that every morning concierges cater to guests in a nearby hotel lobby and that prospects for a complementary cup of coffee await. Standing outside the large glass automatic doors, I pause sleepily for a moment to take in the morning air. Then, entering the lobby incognito, I notice today's specialty: a rich blend of macadamia nut. Yawning ferociously, as if I'd just rolled out from under the covers of a warm king size bed, I shuffle across the entrance and begin to pour myself a small cup. The role that I play out continues to go unnoticed. Taking in the scene, I am in an observers' position but quickly join airline pilots, tourists, and business travellers for the latest addition on the Headline News Channel, via 72 inches of television screen.

By this time I have become one of them. Some people show a keen interest when hearing the up-to-date news on "America's New War". Others look away indifferent or are centred on organizing their day's schedule. At the first sign of news repeating itself I decide to leave the lobby, but not before picking up a daily paper on the way out ...compliments of the hotel of course.

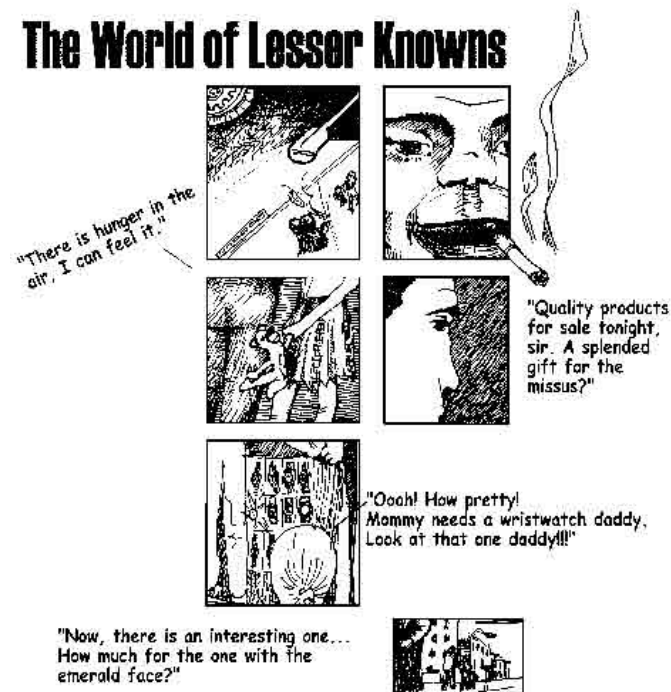
This particular traveller's technique I learned while making a trek along the 101 Pacific Highway from Seattle to Southern California years ago. In an attempt to save money on food my travelling partner and I made several stops at comfort lodges for continental breakfast, taking advantage of the cornucopia of fresh fruits, bagels, Danishes, and variety of coffees or breakfast juices. It was a stark contrast from the canned foods we prepared over the campfire, plus conversations with guests of those lodges filled us with enlightenment.

In early June of last year I made the move to San Diego from the heart of New England: escaping the winter is what I tell people but the truth be told I enjoy the travellers lifestyle. In San Diego's Gas lamp district there are new housing developments and businesses opening up daily, making it an exciting place for people seeking opportunity to live. With each new day life in the city brings something different, whether it involves meeting someone new on the street or discovering a boutique has just opened up a few blocks away.

In the neighbourhood where I live many new travellers arrive everyday and with them they bring insight into what the culture is like where they are from. Many of these travellers are foreigners visiting the United States for the first time. Having a curiosity and an affinity for language I often ask them questions about themselves to try and discover what their impressions are about America and generally just make them feel welcome in my country. It never hurts either to learn a little Hungarian or Arabic along the way.

Meanwhile, back at the hotel where I live, I read over the details of the daily news more carefully and discuss some of the issues with the morning desk clerk. I notice outside on Island Avenue, the street is just beginning to bustle with produce workers. They are preparing palettes of vegetables and fruit to be sold in what I am guessing is the real Market Street. During the recent Street Scene Music Festival their work went on with little interruption as commerce mixed with the arts. I remember walking about the neighbourhood checking out the stages constructed for the yearly festival. A single tomato had fallen off a truck to be overlooked by a group of Mexicans who were standing around talking up the deals of the day. As I walked by I swooped my arm down to scoop up the ripe vegetable. To my delight it was used for sandwiches and mixed in with my favourite pasta salad later that week.

The World of Lesser Knowns



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The events of Street Scene came and went leaving people who attended with fond memories of a weekend well spent. As much as I enjoyed the variety of music, food and drink that accompanied the festival (and most of all the fact that for one weekend, I would be treated as an honoured guest with full resident privileges, due to the central locality of where I lived), the brief chaos came to a welcome close with the start of the following workweek. Since then life in the city is once again back to normal, or as normal as it gets around any prospering metropolis. The nightlife on the weekend is enough to keep any urbanite entertained and the occasional convention brings in the latest waves of social change.

As a rule the lifestyle of anyone living in the city is constantly subject to change and that change brings an excitement and newness. It's perhaps the single most definable reason people choose inner city living. We have all heard it said before "The sights... the sounds... and the nightlife." But perhaps a scene from Jean Luc Godard's film *Breathless* says it best "If you don't like the sea... And don't like the big city either. -Go hang yourself!!!"