

John's Worldly Ramblings



Photograph taken by Scott Lousier

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Wedded Bliss

There exists a duality about Las Vegas, one of which you first become aware as your plane approaches at night and the city is awash in light, every street and building lit up and laid out in so perfect a grid you can see the borders of the city against the desert as if someone drew a line with a straight edge on a piece of paper. As you get closer, you fly past Las Vegas Boulevard, “The Strip,” and you can see the gigantic casino-hotels that make Las Vegas such an attraction. Among the brightly lit architectural curiosities, there is a perfect triangle of a blackened void with a shaft of light shooting straight out of its top. This is the Luxor, a lightless black pyramid amid continual neon orgasms. From the sky it looks like a mistake, a forgotten triangle of nothing, but this is only a further comment on the Las Vegas duality.

Everyone warns you not to go off the Strip. My first night there... I went off the strip. I left my hotel the same way I came in which was the rear entrance, twenty paces later, I realize I’m walking around the back access roads, half-lit, deserted, unfriendly. Occasionally someone would walk past at a brisk pace, no eye contact, far or the edge of the sidewalk. On a map Vegas looks simple, even childish, but when you hit the ground, the arteries of a complex maze of pedestrian and motor traffic swirl nonstop. Twenty minutes of walking finally brought me to the Strip.

Before I go on let me say: Mud Wrestling... way hotter than I ever imagined.

There are lots of cities that don’t sleep, but none do it so well as Las Vegas. Vegas also does a good job of keeping the sleep-deprived awake and in constant danger of epileptic fits.

A city built by mobsters, every nook and cranny specifically designed to take your money, taken over by corporations, every nook and cranny left intact to take your money to report earnings to their stockholders.

My first night there, while walking back to my hotel, I passed the Treasure Island, on the other side of the road, while their free show was going on. Pirates singing... happy songs. It was around midnight and there were kids watching the show, happy families together in the city affectionately known as Sin City watching pirates sing happy songs.

There’s a Denny’s right on the Strip. Blinking bulbs surround its sign.

In Las Vegas, no one would hear you scream... just like the rest of the world.

It's a city that likes to present itself as a family-friendly environment with one hand while placing free drinks in one of your hands while you stay on sixteen with the other and your eyes are drawn to Cleavage Valley.

Not that there's anything wrong with that: some of my best friends are bottles of booze and titty-balls, I'm just saying... I'm just fucking saying!

Illegals stand on the sidewalks and hand out tiny flyers advertising whores. It's the craziest thing. When it's late out, and you're on your own, the sound of a line of them flicking the cards to grab your attention is more than a little eerie: clickity-clickity-clickity-clickityclickity-click. Some of them flick the cards in one hand against those in their other while others use a free finger on one hand on the edge of the cards to make that wild, attention-grabbing sound. The cool thing is, you can take a look at them when they come to your room before committing to paying anything. I did see something that kind of horrified me. I was walking alone and was a few steps behind a group of three black guys. Ahead of both of us were three illegals with the cards: clickity-clickity-click. They're handing out the cards promising the hottest barley legal girls and the most beautiful Asians to pedestrians: clickity-clickity-click-click. But when the black guys reached them, it was like someone flipped a switch: they were motionless. As soon as the black guys had walked past: clickity-clickity-click-clickityclickity-click. I couldn't believe it. Racism... coming from wetbacks.

I enjoyed walking around Las Vegas. I enjoyed the slightly chilly evenings and didn't mind the strong winds where you could see sand blowing across the street where Tupac received his fatal gun shot wounds. I didn't mind being solicited by hot prostitutes. I didn't even mind that bitch in the white '88 Mustang who hit me with her car.

Noah, in his tux, mentioned something about the Ramblings. I told him there would be one. There are others in various stages of completion, but it's hard to organize my feelings or my thoughts... or my feelings.

I thought one about a wedding in Las Vegas would be easy enough to finish, but unified field theory tells us we're all connected, so that throws out my idea about a nice, easy, enclosed Rambling. I wish we weren't so connected.

I kept looking up at the wedding party's table at the reception and couldn't get over how much it looked like "The Last Supper." Maybe it was the lighting.

Noah married Nicole. I don't know her from... from... Eve, I guess. I met her once before, at a wedding, funnily enough. She seems incredibly sweet, and if she can keep him from acting like a dick-tater, I anticipate lots of good things for them.

At the dinner, I kept zoning out. I'd pull myself out of an odd trance and wonder who saw what on my face. Months ago I'd remember these things and think they were so inappropriate to think of them at work and it would be a sly kind of hee-hee memory, couldn't wipe the smile off my face. But they never went away and now they're like slaps in the face, each vivid visual or auditory lapse that blanks out the rest of the world, dimming my peripheries and taking me back through time.

I did manage to get off my ass and spend a little time dancing with a beautiful woman who shocked me by telling me she had a daughter my age. When my jaws began to work again I said something, probably dumb, but perhaps slightly sweet. Because I can be. Because I wanted her to know she was lovely.

Don't you ever get that? The need, the want to stop women you don't know, tell them how pretty they are and have that be it? Like the woman I met at Treasure Island from Arkansas who showed her early thirties when she smiled.

I saw legs bouncing around, people anxious to leave and go gamble. I closed my eyes, ignored the burning there and replaced the face in my mind, if only for a short time. I imagined being old. I imagined outliving my wife. I imagined having a good reason not to find someone else.

For a time, everything was perfect. True love manifested itself in the form of a wedding. You forgot about your broken heart, you believed in the inherent goodness of people and you found true, if momentary, contentment looking into the eyes of an older, beautiful woman you'll never see again. At least you kissed her cheek goodbye. By "you" I, of course, mean "me," as per usual.

John

Everybody likes something too much. Find out what yours is and run.