

Taiwan...

...The smoggy Asian country known better for its cheap cadmium-laced toys than its beauty...

...has a particular way of breathing its life into a traveler's jet-lagged eyes.

I figure getting out to Taipei would beat being stuck around an airport all morning.

You know, get some culture.

And I find myself deeply entranced by the warmth that runs through the streets.

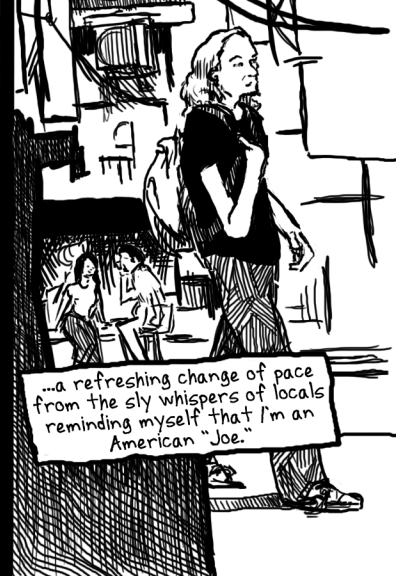
Even the Taipei School for the Deaf, with its giant plaster hand formed with "devil's horns" sitting in the courtyard...

... kindly greets me as I arrive in the city on this foggy Saturday morning in June.

Rock on.

Seven Hours to Kill

by Erik Thurman



The sprawling labyrinth of the city only serves to get me lost as I delve deeper from the bus station.


I end up stumbling around with the high humidity drenching my shirt for the better part of a couple hours as I try to find something resembling a landmark.

Not to mention a bite to eat.

Luckily, a small vendor fixes one of these problems. I try to gesture to her (and fail horribly) for anything that looks like it would fill my gut.

The old hunched over woman finally gives up and hands me a couple small rolls.

I don't bother to ask what's in them.



I decide then to duck into a nearby coffee shop to drown out lunch and to see if I can get any luck with an internet connection.



Unfortunately, black coffee sets me back 90 NT.

\$3.50 for you Americans.

I just secretly hope that I didn't give them my bus fare back to the airport.




And apparently "free Wi-Fi in America" does not equate to "free Wi-Fi in Taiwan".

I try to jack into any sort of signal for the next hour but it seems the Taiwanese are devilish enough to block their routers.

It leaves my coffee cold and me slightly annoyed.


Fun Fact: Most of the Wi-Fi signals in downtown Taipei begin or end with the word "Wang".




It's getting late and if I don't want to be stranded here, it's best to grab a bus and get back to the plane.

The ride back to the airport feels shorter than the trip to Taipei.

I look quietly into the scars of red clay that cut into lush green tropical canopy along the highway as heavy machinery piles girder after girder of steel.



And as I finally arrive at the terminal, two things keep skipping through my mind.



One is reuniting with my family in a few hours in Manila.

What a beautiful country.

The other to come back here someday.

END