

Saturday, January 15, 2005  
Cape May

3 hours ago:

I woke up to see the sun over the ocean for the first time in years. Not that it was in my room; rather I dashed outside through the open-air hallway – it feels like you’re running right through the parking lot –into the main arm of the hotel. Preemptively barefoot for the yoga, cold, I found the elevator, bound for the fifth floor. It’s a skyscraper for Cape May. The largest hotel in New Jersey south of Atlantic City, but who verifies these things? The elevator doors opened as if in scripted suspense and hints of sunlight were immediately visible. The rest revealed itself slowly, stretching along with us in our vinyasanas.

The windows were fogged up and streaked with wet, like my glasses on a cold Sunday, walking in to a steaming hot bagel shop, too tired to slip into my contact lenses. But the hotel windows were much more dramatic, the rising sun disintegrating the drops of condensation until the glass itself seemed to melt, evaporate. Surreptitiously stealing glances out the floor-to-ceiling window to my side, I’m sure my posture suffered with a head tilt in every exercise, dooming me to star in V8 commercials in thirty years.

This is the way yoga should be done, with sun salutations taken literally. In Manhattan, we practice in the evening, when full days of phone calls and jammed faxes already ravaged our weakly worshipful bodies with stressful bites. We squeeze forty people into a former office space – limber, lithe people granted, but there’s still way more movement inside than the city’s constructors ever conceived. You bump your neighbor’s hands with every broad sweep upward. This oscillates between annoying and tantalizing, based on the gender and fitness of your next-door yogi. Either way it’s every bit as distracting as the car horns and sirens that reach in from below through the paint-flaked window.

In the hotel, we spread out spaciouly, reveling in a sense of spirituality that seeps in from the sun itself. Fitness isn’t the preoccupation here, but stillness, contemplation. It hardly feels like a workout at all, but I don’t mind. It’s a relaxing thought to realize how deeply different two fifth floors can be.