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Open the scene on the corner of New Montgomery and Post Street at daybreak in downtown San Francisco in July. Shops stand closed by tarnished steel folded doors. Few citizens stroll the sidewalks.

Main activity centers on whiskered homeless souls popping from the subway tunnels like hairy-faced marmots. Grubby bags or tattered packs swung on their shoulders or strapped to their backs license street status. Red sidewalk tiles trace effects of the passage in cigarette butts and bottle caps and strange grease spots.

One of the more ambitious assumes the job of doorman at McDonald's. He makes a big to-do about opening the door, bowing if he receives a coin.

City folks appear to be focused straight on the way to or from work. No one whistles and no one sings, least of all the pitiful cases off to one side in an alley, draining the last drops of wine from the previous night's bottles.

Not always, but most of the time, a shout or a scream signals danger. At the mouth of a wide alley cornered by a closed toy store on one side and a franchised delicatessen on the other, a fight erupts over territory. A tall, red scalded-faced fellow minutes before mesmerized by a loud chant denouncing unjust treatment by the country, explodes

into throwing mysterious white balls at an encroacher wrapped in a grease-soiled sheet for a cape.

The white balls remain mysterious. Life on the '09 Divide teaches no street sense; nevertheless, the instinct to avoid hitting a low tree branch on horseback offers good enough practice to catch on not to go bogging off into a fight to identify the missiles.

From a stool inside the deli, you can tell the caped Sir Lancelot hombre feels strongly about his rights. He bows up his chest and stamps the foot he holds forward, orchestrated by a steady stream of foul profanity.

The old chanter continues to hurl objects like smashed cans or fruit rinds. His already inflamed face reaches the glow of a turkey gobbler in spring rut. No one pays the slightest attention. The boy setting up the outdoor tables in front never looks up.

The Starbucks further down the street allows drifters to sleep in the small straight-backed chairs over a cup of coffee. If you find close association with the unwashed unpleasant, or the alley brawls disquieting over a Starbucks coffee latte or a delicatessen croissant, the hotel where the convention opens tomorrow serves breakfast in a palatial colored glass-domed restaurant for 38 bucks

(plus 15 percent gratuity) among styled, gracious and perfumed guests from all over the world.

The cheapest way, however, to prepare for city odors and lower life is to ride the oldest cabs in the line up at the airport. The cabbies in the old wrecks sleep in them at night. Should you be too squeamish to do this, fork over 50 bucks or more for a limousine ride.

Diagnosis and action by Austin doctors made it possible for me to be here to speak before the California Wool Growers Association. Back in February, a cardiologist offered the option of a heart bypass or expiring in two more years. He added that my life expectancy increased three years with a bypass.

He talked too fast to calculate leap year, or to figure calf shipping projections in the three-year span. But to shorten this, by March 17th, Austin surgeons slashed open my chest and installed a bovine tissue valve made from the sack around an old cow's heart without any more questions of survival. (You may want to note the heart sack is the *pericardium* in case a discussion arises on how to make a valve from a sack.)

In fact, neither the donor, the cow, nor myself, the patient, were ever contacted in the matter. Oh, a nurse asked right before the operation was it cold three feet off

the floor on a stainless steel slab on rubber wheels covered in a thin blanket? I told her, "No, Hon, I am gonna' buy one of these carts to take home to sleep on next winter at the ranch."

One thing I kept quiet and didn't open my smart mouth about was that I was going to come up here and speak to the California Wool Growers whether they froze me to death or cut too deep in my chest for it to heal. You may have guessed by now why I'd take so much risk. If you guessed ego, you'd hit it right.

Those poor wretches down sleeping in the subway caverns tomorrow night will have more sense than to climb up on a stage with the wires barely rusty holding the ribcage together to make a speech. But that's what's going to happen. The old ham just has to show off one more time under the klieg lights.

We will know then if that cow sack works for a new valve.