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d a m R e e d

california

Stretched across dark water the lights of small boats, anchored alone or tethered to moorings, shine as reflected constellations: Andromeda, Lyra, the Pleiades. They are as cells of iridescent protozoa, an organic extension of the city -- the unfirm depths of the Pacific have tugged at their broken colony. The Californians have released themselves onto the ocean and cast the boundary line out over the face of the water like a fisherman's net. As our plane turns to the shore to descend, Los Angeles emerges as a brilliant crescent.

We have sangria in the shade of a palm tree. The breeze lifts the leaves and light falls on her face. She smiles behind tortoise-shell sunglasses. *Right now you're my entire world.* We rise and her apple-green skirt flashes in the sun like the scales of a fish leaping from water. It's hot. Glass clinks as she clears our table and the small chain on her neck sparkles silver-white as she turns silently to return to the interior. She collects her tips and then secretly refills the sorority girls' drinks. She laughs at their flirtatious insinuation as I hold the door open to Santa Monica Boulevard.

okonomiyaki

Inside the museum I learned that on August 6, 1945, at 8:15 a.m., the bomb killed 200,000, including 10,000 Korean prisoners. I looked at before-and-after pictures of the port city, saw twisted bicycles and charred shoes, and medical photographs of radiation burns. I was more comfortable outside, despite the rain. The Peace Park contains a number of monuments: the Peace Flame, Sadako's memorial, the Atomic Bomb Dome. At the entrance is the Memorial Cenotaph, a curved, stone roof that represents the A-frame houses which were here before the war. Beneath is a simple chest, carved of the same stone, into which the names of the dead were placed. An inscription, translated into English, reads "Rest in peace, for the error shall not be repeated."

I walked to one of the last stalls on the fourth floor and ordered okonomiyaki with shrimp and a draft beer. She poured crêpe batter onto the grill, and wound it into a thin circle. Onto this she mixed cabbage and soba noodles, and then cracked an egg and stirred. The noodles became wet and glossy. Steam rose. I sipped the beer. She then added the shrimp and a thick, black sauce. She flipped the meal, and pushed it toward me. As I'd been leaving the park, a Japanese boy had turned from his group to greet me. He'd bowed and said in unaccented English, "How do you do?" "How do you do?" I'd repeated.

duals

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