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#6

by stanley lieber

Drawn by morning to the glistening confusion of possibilities, awakening the self, conscripting the now reluctant, now impatient body in anticipation of the inevitable, predictably (yet nevertheless) violent shock to the senses, Shinji bin Sony places first one foot, and then the other onto the floor in front of him. He has overslept again.

He doesn't reach the community center until well after 06:30. Most of his regulars have already cleared out. This is fine. Shinji uses the time to tidy up the communal space. He gets the ones who stuck around to help. He'll pay them. Something.

There are a handful of remaining matters that must be attended to before he can return to Japan. He believes he is resolved; once these loose ends are tied up, there will be nothing left to hold him here. That's when he will find out just how resolved he really—he's pretty sure he wants to go home.

He doesn't remember being this... indecisive? This certainly isn't America talking.

That had been this morning, during the present tense. Before he knew it it was growing dark. The day was gone. Shinji shooed out the stragglers still poking at the afternoon dishes and closed up shop for the evening. Tonight he would walk the several blocks to his apartment alone. Inadvisable even during daylight hours, but Shinji needed the exercise.

Speed lace boots crunching snow, the gray of the walls, passing taxis, flickering selves caught red handed contemplating murder in retail displays. Shinji walked. There was nothing to stop him from doing it. He had the money. There was not even anyone he would need to say goodbye to. Just get on the boat.

Crossing over in the opposite direction had not been so easy. More than likely they'd never let him back in. But would that really be so bad? The point of leaving was to leave.

These were idle thoughts. Shinji climbed the stairs to his small apartment and sat down at his desk to write a letter to his cousin.