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#7

by stanley lieber

The branches and leaves turn back on themselves, an uncertain autumn, folding into security, is it me, is it me, is it me.

The mail came and Shinji climbed out of bed to retrieve it. The stairs were steeper in the morning. It was a big box. Cutting the tape with confident strokes of his pocket knife, green boards of Nabokov smiled up at him. He left the box on the table and went to make some coffee.

04:13. Just enough time to walk to work. He arrived with minutes to spare and greeted the early arrivals. It was all the same. Shinji switched himself off and got on with his day.

The smuggling business had proven hard to control. Shinji was desperate. He flashed on his cousin, in New York. Here was a guy who'd always help out. Making sense of the details could wait for later.

He didn't know how to say goodbye to Cameron and Andrew. Figured he wouldn't. that would alleviate the need to discuss his debts...

He'd simply not return to Japan.

Shinji was ready to return to Japan. All that was left was for him to set a date of departure. His uncle had made the arrangements. No slow boat for him, this time.

It was out of his hands. They'd cut off the tip of each index finger. He couldn't play the piano. He couldn't gamble. Shinji realized he couldn't visit his cousin while he was still using his name. He practiced calling himself Carmine in the mirror. It didn't feel very natural, anymore.

What did they expect him to do?