

"Escapes From the Suburban Dream"
A poem in a 4pagezine
by D.E. Morgan

Great deeds languish
in the fetid air,
unlike the breeze
which wooshes through trees.
They float about me,
then disappear into nooks,
hide from strangers,
and peer out casually.
Verdant escapes from suburban nightmares
float about the memories,
coax one to rise
like a ghost from its haunt.
There are prairie dogs
near the Devil's Tower
which has indentations
scratched with the claws of dragons.
They look up furtively
then dive into their holes
which are sometimes filled with snakes
that devour them whole.
The Badlands: moon-like
but by no means bad;
I remember them on this sofa
of lost dreams.
But my mind races to a walk
across the Golden Gate bridge:
with my father I walked
across its orange expanse.
It was a long walk,
but we made our way back
as a cargo ship floated under us
in the San Francisco Bay.
There was Tokyo (enormous and crowded)

but with a strange peace missing
from the cities of America.
There were ramen shops I spied
with rudimentary Japanese.
Kanji-lettering was confusing,
but sometimes deciphered.
The subway had many people;
some wore masks
to prevent disease
even before the plague which hit us these last years.
There was a conformity
that adorned the faces
of salary-men
and well-dressed women.
Kyoto seemed ancient,
temples mixed in better.
Priestesses were around,
the buses were crowded,
the hotel was nice.
I stayed at Hiroshima
and went to the Peace Park
which is the place
where the atom bomb was dropped.
I stood there where decades ago
over a hundred thousand were killed
by a bomb from a plane
that the Americans dropped.
It was strange to stay
in the hotel that was there,
knowing that if I were there in 1945
I would have been blown to pieces.
But the debris was long gone,
except for a building
which stood as a monument
that caused discomfort.
There was much capitalism
that filled the streets

once occupied by buildings
that had been destroyed
by a nuclear bomb.

I remember a supermarket
near the blast site
that sold bouquets of flowers
around an English sign
that said: "Flower".

The word "flower", though used incorrectly
(as it should have been plural)

seemed beautiful
among all of the groceries.

There was the bullet-train.

I tried to order green tea.

I asked for "ryokucha",
which offended the server
(though it was technically correct).

I apologized and said something like

"O-cha o kudasai"

and he gave me the bottle
and I said "Arigato gozaimasu"

The manners of this land
were difficult to absorb,
as developed as they were
to keep the order over centuries.

There was a peace among people,

a politeness (though not honest)

that was simply functional
and served its purpose well.

I have heard the conformity was stifling,

that it hampered innovation,

but about these things

I was not inclined to think.

I went to a video game store,
and bought an old video game

that cost a lot of yen
that came from money

I had earned selling old games
from this land that I visited.

The airplane ride there
was uncomfortable but well-executed
by All-Nippon Airways
who did their best to accommodate us
in our 14-hour wait.

The ride back was on United,
which was quite full of discomfort
rude waitstaff,
and other non-niceties.

But am I to expect order
from workers whose employers
care not for them?

To have workers who care,
you must care for them
or they will do their jobs poorly
just to barely get by.

There were other places:
the beaches of Myrtle Beach,
the woods of Maine,
an unwelcome stay
in Cadillac, Michigan
that wasn't as bad
as we made it out to be.

But Japan is in my memory
it softly makes me feel better
on this couch that feels awkward
and makes me want to escape.

So, in my thoughts I escape
to the places I have been.

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