

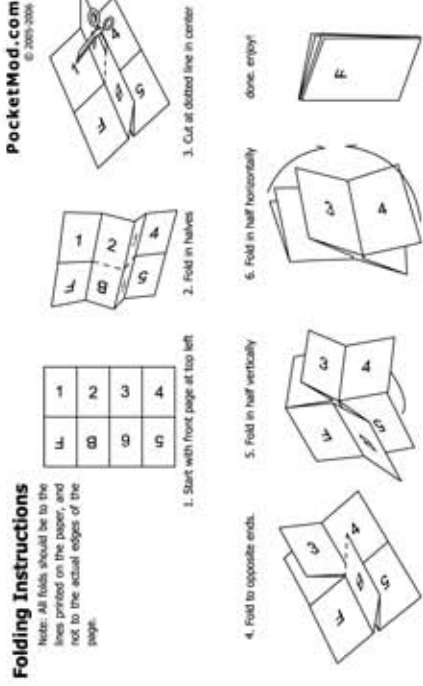
On my wrist, my watch beeps and says in a tiny computer voice "Do you remember the nineties?" I look out from the top of the 8th largest ferris wheel in the world built on the top of a thirteen story building with my hand down the pants of a girl wearing a tshirt that reads "There is no now, only Cou- ture". There's more lightbulbs flar- ing at me than visible stars in the sky.

Through her hair I see fields of neon hustle for my shifting con- sumer whims. I think of the oil that lubes the gears of it all and the grim ugliness that will come when it runs out, the darkened grey buildings, the unfashionable desperation of hunger and the dust of stalled progress and I shift my hand down a few more centi- meters to the places forbidden here on video.

written by Aaron Cael

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submarine

I told several people I was on a submarine making a documentary on polar lichen so they shouldn't expect any quick replies. Now I get letters from ex-lovers that read like *I think of how we could of been and far away under the icy waters and I feel frozen like the lonely lichen and...*

The letters usually wrap up with something about Jesus, pot brownies or trying a new prescrip- tion on advice of an ad in a wom- en's magazine. These are the thoughts that stagger through my brain while I'm clicking glasses with salarymen to Health, Wealth and Stealth and still telling lies in bars and on phones and acting completely simian.

This is the stuff of daily life, so far out of context that the only point of reference I can grasp is a dim idea of a slow, quiet apocalypse approaching behind the jumped skyline like the flat grey clouds of a summer storm.

I email back home from under a table:

I'm talking to you from the future where there's an electronic board that lists the date and hour of your death. I have a cell phone that looks like a ten year old's idea of what cell phones are like in Japan. Its the size of a baby hamster and can tell the future if you type to it in Kanji. I eat bento for lunch that I buy from a man wearing a rubber horse's head.

These were important last steps, the calls and the bars, because I figured I ought to make myself good and sick of where I'm from by over- exposure and I just might need that last hit of barroom wood panelling, pointless gossip and dusty neon beer signs that are part of my DNA, for better or worse.

Besides, there's that whole theory of relativity where time moves dif- ferently in different spaces and at different speeds and while I live my life here a day in the future, back home they may be all aging terribly or enslaved by a race of superintel- ligent lizard men or something. It's important to establish a base line measurement of lies and hazy last memories to figure out the path you've taken once you return. If you return.

Admission is five hundred yen, which I chop the last two zeroes off of to get dollars. I pay for both our tickets even though we never said this was a date. The attendant closes the door behind us silently and the rivets on our jeans click together as we sit down next to each other. When the ride slows near the top, my thumb is tracing the underside of her bra back underneath her shirt. A man comes on the inter- com and says something I tune out and she translates: "He say we stop." We stop moving. I slide my arm down and she moves closer.

Before I moved to Japan, I spent my last month or so drink- ing in local bars and making a lot of calls from the payphone to lie to old friends and acquaintances.