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You smoke on the balcony. The venetians cast strips of electric light across your profile, neo-noir style. The television is on. You say you need the company, you need other faces. But the talk (not your own, indecipherable) only makes loneliness sharper. So you keep the volume down.

I spread out on the futon and undo the stiff, navy and white obi on my hospitality print yukata. Yesterday I was reprimanded by the receptionist for wearing it inappropriately. I was shuffling up to the bath on the rooftop, and ran into her, ferrying a stack of white towels along as though it were something more precious, more delicate, than a stack of white towels. She looked at me silently for a moment, pointed to the two folds across my chest. You have made a mistake, she said, before explaining (with the flick of a finger) that the left-fold goes over the right, not the other way round (unless dressing a corpse). I walked out of the lift to the sound of piped shamisen Muzak following me like a retinue.

The quilt protectors on the futons make them look like soft Kleenex tissue boxes; as if anticipating night time emissions, from sex, or illness or sadness. Two separate futons lying side by side on the tatami floor. We're spared the trauma of the Western-style marital bed.

We make tea. You've heard that if you want more of a caffeine hit from tea you should take the bag out quickly. If you let it steep, tannins are released which counteract the caffeine. So you barely dip the green tea bag so as to increase the stimulant effect. You get today's quota of sweet rice crackers and place them on a square ceramic plate.

Lying open beside your bed is a copy of Akira the hustler. It's a photo essay and an auto-ethnography. Says he likes the sound of bodily fluids. No matter how exquisite the purchase, we are in consumer overload mode. Shopping bags take up all the spare floor space. Aesthetics amass their tiny alibi. I'm seduced by the rituals of service, the way you can leave a chain coffee shop and feel like royalty.

We wait for a plan to hit us. The guidebook is shagged and out of ideas, and was never very good company in the first place. You've had enough of quiet dinners and soba pudding and early bedtime. Of plastic-wrapped complimentary kaminari crackers and this bogus sense of portable home. You insist we go out for a drink.

There's a lesbian bar in Shinjuku Nichome. We head out, down the street, down the gullet of the subway and into its spaghetti.

When we emerge it's pouring rain. Not a *Bladerunner* constant drizzle, but a sudden summer storm. We slip into

the backstreets, and work ourselves deeper into the miasma. We scuttle from awning to awning. You've meticulously ironed your hair (as you do, everyday) and you don't want it to get wet.

Buildings seem so temporary. Grey. Makeshift and brittle as a wasp's nest. Like they could dissolve in the wet. We walk for what seems like hours, trying to decipher the map, hiding in newsagencies and flicking through porn manga. The rain has scattered everyone—people have disappeared into bars and houses for shelter, and the streets are suddenly empty. We keep walking.

Eventually we come across a couple of boys, moving quickly under a black umbrella, the cuffs of their suit pants rolled up to reveal their ankles, and their long-vamped shoes (this season's de-rigueur). As soon as they see us they presume we're lost. They walk over, and the one holding the umbrella extends it over our heads and looks at us. He looks about nineteen, with a small face. The other one is older, shaved head, the details of his face obscured by the shadow of the umbrella.

I'm obsessed with age this trip, wondering what comes after teen pop. Elegance is more your inheritance than mine. I wish we were the mirror image of these two, instead of defined in negatives. For so long I seemed to be chasing something unattainable, and now I've gotten what I wished for: another sweet hereafter; the David McDiarmid aphorism 'I want a future that lives up to my past' in reverse.

The younger one reaches into his satchel and pulls out his kai-tai. He takes the guidebook from my hands and dials the number. When he hangs up he moves off quickly, gesturing for us to follow, you me and his date under the black umbrella.

There, he says, on the third floor. We were only two buildings away but without a street numbering system and only the ideogram to guide us, no one was the wiser.

Lesbian bars are all the same. We are more chuffed to have found the needle in the haystack than anything. I guess we are always leaving generations behind. Behind the bar a tall, lanky Japanese dyke serves drinks, exposed sinew and army-cap pulled down low, like a butch pin-up. It's a tiny space. No one meets any body else's eye and it's mainly gaijin. There's nothing friendly, but it is sweet to be in a micro ecosystem all the same.

It's just one night. None of this defines us. We add it to the potlatch that, so far, we have been percolating on together. You order a beer and light a cigarette. On the other side of the room, a woman is laughing quietly.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Keri Glastonbury and Sarah-Jane Norman.