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Miyajima is known for blue and white dyed curtains. A string of intricately patterned squares is hung along the window of an old ryokan along the forest path. There's a photograph of me taking a photo, reflected in the glass. You are also in the image in your black hemp dress.

Down in the township is the famous torii gate in the sea, Itsukushima Shrine. The island was considered so sacred that even the shrine had to be built off shore. To this day no one is allowed to get sick or die here (there are no hospitals or cemeteries). The torii gate is fire engine red with blackened feet. It reminds me of the most photographed barn in America. Whenever we go down, the tide always seems to be out. Deer, with dustings of delicate white spots, mill about to see if they will be fed the diet of tourists. I read that the shrine's goddess is jealous of couples and endeavours to break them up.

We've found a great restaurant to eat in. You like the freshwater eel specialty (rating it above the more common saltwater eel which we get in Australia). I like the huge oysters being char-grilled on the street. You also like the maple leaf sweet rice cakes. They come in perfect packages in the tourist shops. 'Domo arigato gozaimas' as the offer is made and accepted.

In the morning we set off to go to the top of Mount Misen, hoping to drink from Kiezu-no-hi, the sacred fire tended to by the monks that has been continuously burning for over 1,170 years. Drinking tea from the iron kettle is reputed to cure all ills. To get to the summit we take the sky-way, which hoists us high up above the forest almost instantaneously. I have a panic attack. It should be stunningly tranquil being above the trees and listening to wind in the leaves. We can see the ocean and the hidden inlets. Perhaps whimpering is the right, operatic response. Or perhaps I spoil the moment of transcendence for you.

At the top, we are greeted by a monkey colony. The sign says not to look at them directly. The monkey in the cartoon says 'We go for the eyes!'

There's another sign in kanji with a short English translation which we take in only cursorily. Something about a fire.

This place is totally picturesque, in a way which can't be solely attributed to any Western or orientalist imaginary. It's summer and stiflingly hot. Last night we went

swimming in the mountain stream that runs outside our ryokan. You'd swear it was ornamental, that management might switch it off at mid-night. We swam below a little bridge. Above us young Japanese couples in their yukata strolled past on their evening constitutional. We felt we must be breaking some unwritten code by swimming there.

From the sky-way station there's still a reasonable walk to the summit. I covet every sip out of my water bottle in the heat. At the first Buddhist temple we come to there is a tap to refill. Buff monks chop wood. We imagine this is for the fire, but we are not sure where the thousand year tea stand is. Further ahead a monk takes an elderly couple into a temple and conducts a service.

When we finally reach the summit, after climbing over granite rocks covered in lichen, there's somewhere to buy a drink. But no sacred fire. The narrative conclusion we draw is that the temple has burnt down, that this was what the sign at the sky-way station referred to. There's just a monk drinking a can of beer.

It's a cooler walk down the mountain along the ancient forest path. I spend a lot of the time wondering what you have made of this trip. You speak of experiencing dysmorphia, yet you've been strangely self-contained, quite in control. I feel like another patch of quicksand you don't want to step in to. You've kept your thongs clean. There are new thresholds to observe, beyond which we mustn't carry dirt. I was worried you'd feel like I've taken you to see a movie that I've seen before and now I'm watching to see what you think of it. Never satisfying for either party. Though neither of us are colonising the story. We are leaving gaps and spaces. I am wrapping my waist in fisherman's pants and my toes in Birkenstocks. Enjoying the simple side of my body. I'm sure my own autisms are also amplified to you.

Banana Yoshimoto could write the perfect novella for us. I remember someone I know saying self-effacingly, yet knowingly, that she feels such a distance between the books she reads and her own staid life, like imagination is a wondrous, but hived-off portal. I don't really feel like that. I don't think you do either.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Keri Glastonbury.