

Piece 1: Anonymous

In my slumber, I see a kaleidoscope of my youthful days, my childhood dreams and memories taunt me. The echoes of laughter and giggles scratch at my ears, a cruel symphony. How I long to revisit those carefree days of pure bliss and innocence. In my dreams, a younger version of me extends their hand, begging me to leave behind the troubles of adulthood and join them on the swing set of a late summer afternoon. I reach for the m - they pull me - I'm falling, spiraling down into darkness.

I hold my breath as cool, icy water clings to me and startles my senses. It was terrifying. I felt like a caterpillar emerging too soon from its cocoon, and falling to its doom. I searched desperately for that child. But thunder now replaced their chirps of laughter. I feel a tentacle wrap around my leg and pull me under the dark abyss - I struggle against it - another tentacle - I gurgle a scream just as I'm dragged below the surface.

I feel the world transform around me as I emerge from the surface of now crystal clear, blue waters, with my feet sunk in the golden sands. I watch the water lap at the sand like a puppy playing with its water bowl. Peace instead of fear settles over my body. My inner child amused by the cheeky waves and teasing sand that begs to be piled into sandcastles.

I kneel on the sand and use it as play dough when I feel a familiar presence sit next to me. A young boy, no more than 6 years of age, stares at my creation, a small smile playing on his lips. Abruptly, he stands up and runs towards the water. I chase after him, calling after him, "Hey, hey! Stop! Where are you going!". I dive into the water after him, trying to reach for him.

But he's gone. And I awake in a cold sweat to the sound of my alarm for work as reality pulls me back in.

Piece 2: Matthew Beattie

I feel an ungraspable attraction, the north to my south pole. It feels like a force is pulling me in. The beautiful cherry blossom trees roll with the wind. Towering bath houses and temples highlight the city's culture. Kyoto, an underrated Tokyo. the culture capital of the world, a dream of mine. The bamboo forests stand tall as walkways divide them like hairlines. From Mt Fuji to Osaka, Japan is filled with all kinds of activities. The feeling of gliding over fresh powder snow is like an old soul song that you can't stop playing. Sushi restaurants line the streets as red and white paper lanterns spectate from above. Small floral alleyways or bright open lanes, there isn't a dull place in sight. Unlike Australia, the rain only seems to make everything look better. Like thousands of tiny mirrors falling from above the bright storefront lights refract colours across the damp roads and packs of umbrellas. The Shinjuku streets are compacted with colonies of humble restaurants and cafes. The sacred Torii Gates line roads, paths and streets all over Japan. They are Shinto shrines and highlight the amazing culture and religion in Japanese cities. Canals like veins flow throughout Osaka, providing life and beauty for all to admire. The country seems timeless, you can walk through places at night and not have a clue of what the time might be. The streets are always lit, filled with billboards, signs and lanterns. The sea of light provides an amazing nightlife for those who visit Japan. The car life in Japan is on its own level, lowered coupes with floral decals, they're hard to miss. They become one with families and play an important role in Japanese society. Like a moth, I'm enticed by bright lights at night, they call me begging for me to edge closer.