

Tokyo air is an ecstatic exhale that I gulp down fervently. As I inhale, the feel of a foreign fever ignites in my lungs. It's been two days into my tour of Japan and there's nothing I find more awesome than the citric streetlights casting orange spells of light against the star-studded indigo sky. That's a lie. I know immediately that everything I see I take in with the same awe-struck appreciation. I gape at the shrine standing proud, emblazoned red, in the middle of the city's skyscrapers. It smells of incense and baking sweets. At the random flower shop in the middle of Shibuya train station. At the old man selling momos—peaches— for 200 yen on the corner of Akihabara. At the people reading brown paper-wrapped books on the train in the stagnant golden afternoon light. At the compact car parks three stories high. At the food. Don't get me started on the food. I will myself not to blink, knowing all too well a blink's power to waste time.

The heat is slick. It's sweat. It's an insulated blanket that rests on all of our foolish tourist shoulders. Even under the raven's wing of night, this city is still feeling the dragon's scorch of the daytime sunlight. Our little group of high school graduates on our overseas adventure meander down the shadowy street, neon storefronts and lantern lit alleyways. We are young, not tired enough to go to bed. No one tells us to. For now we keep our eyes open, walk one more mile, and stop in a convenience store for refreshments. I grab a bottle of barley tea and a soda flavored popsicle, fumbling for change so I can pay and eat. Wandering outside I ask, "Where next?" and give my best friend Maddy the first blue icy bite. This country will soon be memory melting away, ice on our tongues.