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He Wrote to Me From Taipei (An Excerpt)

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He Wrote to Me from Taipei (An Excerpt)

He loved how everyone smoking cigarettes wasn't aware they were smoking cigarettes. He loved the claw machine arcades, the men who could use the weakest of metal cranes to extract heavy, oblong objects. He loved how you almost never saw cops or guns. He loved Carrefour supermarket, their soon-to-perish French butter and cheese at half price, the dragon fruit, the wines. He loved the ubiquitous espresso machines in every convenience store, how you could have a hot or iced latte in your hand in 30 seconds. He even loved the little black mosquitos in Hualien that gave you bites that itched for a week. He loved that there were mountains called Taroko, Ali, Jade. He loved the pocket-sized neighborhood temples and the elderly who would wake up early to sing each other love ballads on old karaoke machines. He loved having health insurance and that the doctors spoke excellent English. He loved the calm before the storm and the purity of the storm. He loved the bullet train, how it could take you from the top of the island to the tropics in an hour and a half. He loved how taking out your own trash with your neighbors made you reconsider everything and how the garbage trucks announced themselves by playing Beethoven's *Für Elise*. He loved being out on Taiwan's remote islands, their old prisons strewn with wildflowers, their horses with blue eyes, the shy goats you could never get close enough to pet. There, you could see the stars by finding a stretch of road away from the streetlamps, lay out on the pavement, and gaze up at the spinning cosmos. He loved the slender ladies selling perfume and makeup in the department stores, how they seemed to be a different species from the near future. He loved how the constant humidity taught him that an embrace could last for years. He loved the elderly people risking it all to drive their golf carts through the intersection as the yellow lights switched to red. He loved how, because the rainclouds took away the sun for weeks at a time, he had to find ways to reinvent the sun. He loved getting tea at any time—oolong, jasmine, passionfruit—how bright and clean all the shops looked, perhaps to catch the eyes of a passing motorist. He loved how even though God had forgotten the old buildings, every rooftop had an angel. He loved how it happened once, and therefore forever. How it happened once, and therefore forever.