

**LOVE IN JAPAN: COMING CLEAN AND FOUR MORE WAYS
OF F**KING UP**

FELICITY SAVAGE

A collection of stories about women on the wrong side of the world.

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GOOD MONEY

I had psoriasis on my arms, recurrent stomach pain, and occasional trouble focusing my eyes on things in the distance. I was also a heavy smoker. When I lay down to sleep, usually at seven or eight o'clock in the morning, my heartbeat would speed up and random parts of my body would go numb. I had a permanent collection of pimples on my forehead. Sometimes I thought my symptoms were those of a fatal disease. Sometimes I thought they were psychosomatic symptoms of moral decay. At these times I would fantasize about quitting my job in Tokyo. I'd have been giving up the best money I'd ever made – more money than I ever *could* have made at journalism, my first career, or teaching – but all you can do with money is buy stuff, anyway.

Besides, my conscience wasn't the only thing that had its limits. I was twenty-eight.

Soon I wouldn't look nineteen even in the dark. Rather than deceive myself, I'd worked the aging process into my agenda. On the day I found my first grey hair I meant to apply for a Lay Missioner position with my favorite charity, the Salesians. For years I'd been sending them the money I didn't spend on other stuff and getting back newsletters filled with photos of happy poor children. These had affected me deeply, and now I was anxious to make a bigger contribution. I wanted to work in the field, preferably in Southeast Asia, teaching school or helping to run a health clinic. In case the Salesians had no use for a Comparative Literature major with a censored resume, I'd also researched several other organizations that seemed to fit the bill: Heal The Nations, the Maryknoll Mission Family, VICS, and VOICA. If worst came to worst I meant to apply to the Peace Corps.

I didn't talk much about my plans to anyone except Dorothy, my coworker and best friend. She sympathized, but that was all, and that was all I expected from her. She was completely different from me, which was why I loved her.

With my twenty-ninth birthday approaching, I used a hand mirror to examine my scalp under the fluorescent light in the bathroom of my tiny apartment in Ikebukuro. On the day I finally found a strand that glittered suspiciously, someone jumped in front of a train somewhere on the Yamanote line, causing half an hour's delay throughout the system. I got to work with six minutes to spare, sweating in the cool September night.

The club was on the seventh floor of a grimy commercial block at the déclassé end of Roppongi. Jimmy the bartender, a handsome Filipino, was running the vacuum cleaner among the low tables and sofas. I went through the velvet curtains in the corner behind the karaoke stage. A fog of deodorant, hairspray, perfume, and cigarette smoke filled the dressing-room. Elena, Irina, Anastasia, and Tania were all talking at once and doing each other's eyebrows. Dorothy had the only chair. A Marlboro was growing ash between her fingers. "Hey girl," she said without moving a muscle.

I started to tell her about my discovery and then interrupted myself to ask, "Where's Natalia?"

Dorothy shrugged. "Halfway to Moscow, I expect." In her accent it was *Ha'fway d' Mawsko, Ah speck*, but that wasn't what I consciously heard. I'd gotten used to filling out her sentences in my head. "They say she went to the convenience store and never came back."

I laughed. It actually would have been funny if it hadn't been Natalia, who I'd gotten along with to the extent that her Japanese and mine permitted. Sad to say, it was funny, anyway. I tried and failed to find an appropriate tone in which to say, "She told me she wanted to die. I hope she hasn't..."

"Don't be stupid, Ruth. She is not enough brave to kill herself," said Elena irritably. Elena was the only one of our coworkers who spoke English, and she always spat out the

words as if they tasted bad. “She want to go home, sure. But she can’t escape Japan. She has overstayed visa. It’s big trouble if she go to airport. Anyway she has no money.”

“I think she run away with boyfriend,” said Anastasia in Japanese.

Irina, wriggling into a silver boob tube, said in the same language, “I think she run away with *your* boyfriend.” All of us burst into laughter. Outside the curtains, Jimmy turned off the vacuum cleaner, which made our voices sound fragile.

“Good morning, girls!” Mrs Kikuchi parted the curtains, her wig in place, her lipstick just a bit wonky.

“Good morning, Mama-san!”

Dorothy’s and my voices added an ironic note to the chorus. Mrs Kikuchi didn’t notice. Her greeting wasn’t ironic; it was merely an acknowledgement that our day started after dark. She was immune to all forms of humor except slapstick, and Dorothy and I got a good deal of fun out of being sarcastic to her. In many ways, working at Pub Club Paradise was like being back in fourth grade. In other ways, it wasn’t like it at all. Mrs Kikuchi’s little eyes clocked Natalia’s absence, but maybe she’d already dealt with it, because she uttered nothing more except her standard exhortation: “Let’s do our very best today, too, girls!”

I whipped off my jeans and sweatshirt and threw on a plain blue shift that was sexy only by virtue of stopping about two inches below my crotch. Clothes shopping in Japan is an exercise in frustration if you’re not Japanese. On the rare occasions I found something that fitted right, I bought five of it, so I owned this shift in every color they made, and I wore the same strappy white sandals with all of them. Elena, Irina, Anastasia, and Tania solved the problem by dressing exclusively in Lycra. Dorothy solved it by wearing what she would have worn anyway – vampire slut gear from the gothic boutiques in Harajuku: heavy flounces and frills held together with zips, her long legs always on display in fishnets. She’d changed into her stilettos before I got in, and now she began taking off the denim jacket she wore in the street to hide her cleavage. Her skin was the color of peanut butter where it wasn’t covered with black freckles and moles. She had a heavy jaw and a big nose. Her hair was frizzing out of a French braid, currently on its third day, that ended in a silver barrette the shape of a spider. This was a unique accessory made for her by one of her more viable friends. I coveted it, but I could never have worn it, because the spider was Dorothy’s trademark. She had one tattooed between her shoulderblades and another on her upper thigh which she would show to customers when she was feeling provocative, first warning them that it was ¥1000 a look, and afterwards making them pay up.

She’d lived in Tokyo for six years, mixing with artists and socking away her salary. She spoke better Japanese than the rest of us put together, and she was the best of us at milking Pub Club Paradise for fun and profit.

“What gets me mad,” she said as we filed out of the dressing-room, “is she owed me money.”

“Natalia?”

“The same. And I’m not talking peanuts.”

We had no customers. We seldom did until nine or ten o’clock on a weeknight. But we opened at eight o’clock and that was that. The plastic candelabra on the walls glowed pink, the disco ball showered sparkles over the karaoke stage, and to a soundtrack of lite rock (if Mrs Kikuchi was in a better mood it would have been country and western) we arrayed ourselves on the sofas to the left of the door. Dorothy unwrapped a chunk of Bubblicious. I pinched one of her Marlboros and lit up. Mrs Kikuchi nailed us with a look of loathing and took it out on Jimmy behind the bar. Jimmy owed Dorothy the price of the digital camera he’d recently sent his mother for her birthday.

“Is there anyone who isn’t in debt to you, Dorothy?” I said, meaning: Apart from me. “How much did you lend Natalia?”

“Enough for her to run away on, obviously. All I’m going to say right now is, she’d better not come back. Not without my money, anyway. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, it gonna be the *worse* for you.”

“That’s not how it goes, Dorothy. Fool me twice, shame on *me*.”

“You think I give a fuck how it goes?” Dorothy rolled her eyes to heaven. We both screeched with mirth. Elena, Irina, Anastasia, and Tania regarded us contemptuously. All of them were more or less blonde, with blue eyes and high cheekbones mantled in blusher. Even after you got to know them individually, they could give the impression of being sisters. All of them had grown up in the countryside, which explained why they were so cynical.

The door chimed and in came Mr Himemiya, their manager. He was the Japanese representative of the talent agency that had recruited them in Russia, flown them to Tokyo, and installed them in a shitty little apartment a few stops from Pub Club Paradise on the Oedo line. He’d charged each of them a hefty introduction fee that they had to pay off in full before they started earning their own money. That was the spiel, anyway. The reality was that he banked their salaries and gave them just enough pocketmoney to keep them hanging around for more. That was the theory, anyway. The reality was that they were getting fucked over. No wonder they resented Dorothy and me. Mrs Kikuchi had hired us locally to break up the Hotpants Barbie wallpaper effect. She paid us generously and regularly, and we could quit any time we felt like it. We had the luxury of objectivity where Mr Himemiya was concerned. Dorothy saw him as a funny little pimp. I saw him as symptomatic of a diseased society. But our coworkers saw him as a monster. At every

opportunity they frustrated and annoyed him with a glee that suggested the outlines of a Soviet paradigm.

How much Mr Himemiya knew about Soviet paradigms was a good question. He was small and pudgy with a beard that looked glued on, dressed tonight in navy slacks and a tweed blazer with cuffs short enough to flash his Rolex. Mrs Kikuchi seated him at his usual table. A stack of manila envelopes came out of his briefcase and scattered their contents over the oak-look veneer. Without having to be told, Jimmy poured drinks at the bar: noname whiskey on the rocks for Mr Himemiya and oolong tea for Mrs Kikuchi. She was an alcoholic but had most people fooled, including herself. Without waiting to be told no, Dorothy hopped up and seized the tray. While serving Mr Himemiya she spoke to him with a dimply smile.

“Portfolios,” she said, sitting down beside me again. “If Natalia’s coming back she’d better make it snappy.”

“Are they girls from Lithuania?” asked Tania. Her Japanese was heavily accented. “My friend is coming to Tokyo, very soon, she say to me.”

“Honey, I can’t tell a Lithuanian from a Siberian,” said Dorothy. “I *can* tell you none of them were worth taking pictures of. They’re probably working their asses off at some grimy old roadhouse in the boondocks, waiting for their chance to get a piece of Tokyo. But they’re going to be waiting some time yet. I told him he might as well put those snaps away, ‘cause we’re not interested.”

She probably *had* said it, too. Being Mrs Kikuchi’s righthand girl, if only by default, she could get away with that kind of thing.

“This would appear to be where I come in,” she whispered to me. One corner of her mouth was twitching with excitement. “I’ve got a friend who’s looking for a job this minute. I’m gonna call her and tell her to haul her ass down here.”

I mentally riffled through the roster of Dorothy’s friends, who were also my friends to some extent. I couldn’t think of anyone who would fit in at Pub Club Paradise, or even want to give it a go.

“You haven’t met her. Her name’s Kathy. No, wait up, Kirsty? Carly? Something like that. She just got here a couple of months ago. From New York. Speaks Japanese; studied it at school. She’s crazy.”

“The whole procedure strikes me as unnecessarily complicated,” I said. “Why don’t you just set Himemiya-san’s beard on fire and steal his wallet?”

“Fuck him. He’s nothing but a smalltimer. And that Russian guy that hangs around him sometimes? That Vladimir?”

“Vasily.”

“He acts like he’s a badass, but he’s nothing.”

The door jangled again and five men came in at once, evidently for no other reason than that they’d ridden up together in the elevator. Three of them were salarymen with inflated expectations written all over their faces. “Welcome to Pub Club Paradise!” we chorused, tailing off as we recognized the other two. Elena and Anastasia jumped up, cooing in Japanese, and steered the salarymen clear of them. They both had all their fingers, they wore double-breasted suits and carried oversized snakeskin wallets instead of briefcases, and they seemed to be in excellent spirits. But that’s what you’ve got to look out for these days. Mrs Kikuchi greeted them with the bonhomie of resignation. This was the first time I’d ever seen Mr Himemiya in a position of having to interact with them. As they bore down on him, he leapt to his feet and started bowing. Barely acknowledging this servile display, they made themselves as comfortable as was possible on the squidgy velour sofas. They spoke to Mrs Kikuchi without turning their heads.

“Now you’re looking at a couple of *real* badasses,” said Dorothy, languishing against me cozily.

I went downstairs at ten o’clock to stand in front of the convenience store on the first floor of the building. One of the Chinese girls from Club Mirabelle on the sixth floor was already there, importuning pedestrians. So was Kaito, who worked for Club Vector on the fifth floor. The girls at Vector were all Japanese and they never came outside, probably because it would have been too much trouble for them to get dressed. Nineteen, tanned darker than Dorothy, Kaito was rocking the regulation hustler look: baggy black suit over a white shirt, pale purple hair, and diamond studs in his ears that weren’t. He squatted in front of the convenience store talking on his cellphone and talking to his friends when they passed by. Every so often a group of men said hello to him and went upstairs. “Best job in Tokyo,” he said to me with the smirk of a high school dropout who’d beat the system, and you could see where he was coming from. But it wasn’t always September. Kaito was out here on sticky summer nights, too, and in wet winter weather, manfully defending his two square meters of sidewalk against crazy Chinese girls, drunken salarymen, U.S. servicemen looking for beef, Iranians with territory issues, and men in double-breasted suits who said they wanted everyone to enjoy themselves and acted as if they thought everyone would be better off dead. If Kaito didn’t find a different job in the next twelve months or so, I calculated his chances were better than even of winding up – not dead maybe, but just as gone: in hospital or on the run.

The same calculation applied to me, of course. I’d worked at Pub Club Paradise for eight months and at another club called Sweetheart’s for nine months before that. While

this was a mere fraction of Dorothy's career, it made me a Roppongi veteran. The talent agency girls seldom hung around as long as I already had. In Russian, as Dorothy said, *salvation* was spelled "spouse visa." I was on a three-year working visa courtesy of Howdy English Center, the company I'd quit a year and a half ago. I examined the ends of my hair, trying to find the grey strand again. Could I go back to teaching English? Why not? Well, in the first place I didn't think I could readjust to dealing with people so naïve they thought Roppongi was dangerous. And in the second place, I'd hated teaching English. I'd hated it slightly more, if anything, than I'd hated writing up press releases into articles for the *Concord Bugle-Tribune* of Concord, MA, pop. 18,000 and change.

Dorothy's visa arrangements had been opaque to me for so long that I'd wondered if she was an overstayer. In fact she was married to a Japanese Rasta who lived in Kichijoji producing avant garde CDs. I'd met him once when we came on him playing his bongos in Yoyogi Park. Their marriage had been a nonstarter for obvious reasons: apart from being black, Dorothy couldn't have been further out of step with the Rasta way of life. One of the reasons she'd come to Japan in the first place was because she'd heard this country was free of drugs.

Our local hash dealer, Hassan from Tehran, stopped to talk to Kaito. A clique of white girls passed by and stared at me. Not quite able to bring myself to stare back, I lit a cigarette and gazed at the giant fiberglass ape scrambling up the façade of the building across the street. I made no attempt to hand out flyers, which was what I was supposed to be doing. If anyone wanted to stop and ask for one he was more than welcome.

"Hi. God, aren't you cold?"

The girl who'd spoken was wearing a witchy black dress over black leggings and clodhoppers.

I said, "I'm so damn sexy I don't feel the cold. Besides, smoking warms you up. It's an empirically proven fact."

She wasn't sure whether to laugh or not. She was tall and shapely, with long ragged hair dyed the shade of blonde that's supposed to look dyed. She said, "You must be Ruth. I'm Casey."

This went some way towards alleviating my insecurities. "Go on up," I said. "Seventh floor. No, hang on. Kaito! Can you hold the fort for a few minutes?"

"Sure. My pleasure." Kaito straightened his back and looked capable. He regularly touted for us when we girls were all busy. He got an insignificant kickback for each punter he brought up to Paradise.

"Your Japanese is very good," said Casey in that language, smiling widely enough to make it a backhanded compliment.

“It’s my hobby. When I run out of things to say to customers, I ask them to teach me some slang. I doubt I’ll ever be as fluent as Dorothy, but she says she learned everything she knows in Roppongi, so maybe there’s hope.” What was I saying? I didn’t give a damn about improving my Japanese any more. “I hear you studied it at college?”

“Yeah, well, I’m still studying it.” We stepped into the elevator. Casey added modestly, “I’m at NYU now, but I went to Columbia for undergrad, and they make you take a foreign language. So I got started earlier than most people. I think it’s a good policy, actually.”

“I think it’s a *fabulous* policy,” I enthused. “I might even write and suggest it to my old adviser at Harvard.” The closest I’d ever been to Harvard was waitressing at a bar in Somerville, but Casey believed me. She looked dumbfounded for an instant before she managed to reboot her smile.

“So what’s a nice Ivy League girl like you doing here?” she demanded playfully.

“Researching my autobiography. It’s been a long slog, but I’ve almost decided on the title. What about you, Casey? What brought you here?”

“Well, I’ve always been fascinated by the culture. I...”

“Really? Any aspect of it in particular? Ikebana? Kendo? Anime? Haiku? Pachinko? Rice production? Robotics research? Automobile manufacturing?”

“It’s kind of a long story,” she said rapidly, “but I’m working towards my master’s in Comparative Literature.” I made a note to myself not to say anything more about my own college days. “I’m doing my thesis on Yukio Mishima, so I’m here to research his literary and cultural legacy. I’ve done interviews with some pretty big names, and now I want to check out the underground scene and listen to the voices of the next generation. I’m also doing some work for this professor my supervisor knows at Waseda University, but that’s only a few hours a week, so...” she followed me out of the elevator. I could hear Ricky Martin’s *She Bangs* pumping at showtime volume beyond the club door. Casey finished, “I’ve been partying my brains out, basically. I met Dorothy at Mortuary a couple of weeks ago. Didn’t she say? She’s been a huge help with my research.”

I looked at her again. In addition to multiply pierced ears, etc., etc., she had black fingernails and an ornate crucifix dangling on the bodice of her black dress. This, I thought, was a woman lying to herself in a big way.

“You should tag along with us next time we go out,” she said. “It’s a hoot.”

“So many parties, so little motivation,” I said, and pushed the door open a crack, letting the music out. Floodlit on the stage, Irina removed her bra and twirled it. Her breasts didn’t jiggle because she’d had them done in Seoul a couple of months ago: she’d gone from B to DD for less than \$2000, and so far as she knew none of her internal organs were missing. A small bald man crawled out of the darkness and tried to insert a bill in her G-string. She

snatched it, turned around, and wiggled her bottom in his face. He made a desperate attempt to throw his arms around her. She pranced out of reach.

“Go girl!” whooped Casey, startling me. “Yeeeah! *Shaking* that bootay!”

Irina danced around for another thirty seconds and then darted offstage with her G-string still in place. Mrs Kikuchi believed that girls should preserve an aura of mystery. The clapping died into a buzz of conversation, the music sank to its normal volume, and the darkness reverted to pink dusk, revealing Tania and Anastasia snuggling with a regular in one corner, Elena in another corner speaking English loudly to those first three salarymen, and Dorothy doing her best to entertain a corporate party that took up four tables pushed together. They must have walked past me while I was daydreaming in front of the convenience store. I counted heads and multiplied by ¥700. Mrs Kikuchi caught my eye and rose.

“Do *you* strip?” demanded Casey as I hustled her into the tiny, cluttered office behind the bar. “Not that I’d mind trying it, but Dorothy said...”

“She? Stripper?” tittered Mrs Kikuchi, whisking in after us. She spoke in English, a sign that Jimmy had begun serving her out of the jug of oolong tea that was half rice liquor. He premixed this evil stuff for her every night and colluded in her charade of concealing it from us girls. At a loss to know why, we’d speculated that they were sleeping together. I thought Jimmy was probably just trying to help her kill herself faster, but I found it helpful to visualize the other possibility when Mrs Kikuchi came out with things such as, “She can’t stripper. She is small body and skinny like Japanese girl. Ugly! Guests don’t want see! You can stripper, maybe. You have beautiful chest, elegant like Russian. You native English speaker? You name?” Casey looked flattered. Mrs Kikuchi pushed me with a veiny claw. “Go! Table five! And six, seven, eight!”

“Don’t worry,” I said over my shoulder. “They don’t really expect it of us.”

“The stereotype is that we’re uptight and headstrong,” Dorothy was lecturing her party in Japanese. “You hear people saying this shit, right? American girls! They think the world owes them a living. You set them straight and they smack you upside the head... you’ve heard this shit, right? Well, let me tell you, it’s mostly true.”

She let the laughter die down.

“Funny thing is, in America we’ve got our own stereotypes. For instance, girls from Texas, they’re dumb bimbos. *Black* girls from Texas, they’re dumb ho’s.”

The man on her left asked her if she would do it with him.

“You wish,” said Dorothy. “But you’re out of luck, big guy, ‘cause I am an educated woman. Yeah. I got a degree in Japanese male psychology.”

This killed them. I sat down and introduced myself to as many of them as I could

reach. Some of them just stared cross-eyed at my hand; others shook it. The mirthful silver-haired guy on Dorothy's right lunged across the tables, seized my hand, and planted a wet kiss on it. A roar of laughter proved my initial guess that he was the boss. He had a face like a crumpled paper bag and he was egging on the spotty guy who kept propositioning Dorothy.

"Now this is my girl Ruth from Massachussetts! You all know where Massachussetts is?"

"America," hazarded the spotty one.

"That's right. New England. And you know what we say in America about girls from New England? They're frigid." She used the English word and winked at me. "Means they don't like doing it. But that's not true, is it, Ruth? She's just waiting for the right guy to come along. Aren't you, Ruth?"

"I'm saving myself for marriage," I said. "But here at Pub Club Paradise we're one big happy family. And I consider Dorothy my older sister." That was all I needed to say, given that younger sisters traditionally couldn't get married until their older sisters cleared the way. The men yukked it up, loving me for teasing them about their own culture. They weren't to know that I'd learned everything I knew about Japan while researching my senior thesis, *Independent of the World: Bourgeois Values in 19th Century British Poetry*. "Others, I am not the first," I muttered, scratching my arms, "Have willed more mischief than they durst."

"No one gets married anymore!" the silver-haired boss told me. "And they wonder why the birthrate is declining. Look at these boys. Half of them over thirty and none of them anywhere near settling down. No plans, no dreams, no savings. Why?"

"Could it be because you don't pay them shit?" said Dorothy.

They were the entire staff of a commercial cleaning company, which explained why only the boss and his spotty sidekick were in suits and the others were dressed as if they ought to have been wearing coveralls. One of these was quitting his job in two days' time. They'd come here to give him a rousing sendoff. When I learned this, I felt a surge of pity for them and resolved to put my heart into it for a change.

"What are you doing here?" asked the guy who was quitting in two days' time. His name was Shinji, and he was lying on one of the sofas with his head in my lap. He reached up and fingered my hair. "You're an angel. My angel."

"You're going to have a massive hangover," I said. "Stop fighting it. Pass out. I won't take it personally."

"You're American. You don't have to be doing this."

"The money's pretty good."

“Better than scrubbing bathrooms?”

“Much.”

“Better than painting pictures?”

“I should think so.”

“Better than teaching English?”

“Yes, unless you teach college or cram school classes, and I hate lecturing people. I don’t think it’s fair when they can’t lecture me back. I don’t have a TEFL certificate, anyway.”

“Will you teach *me* English?”

“No.”

“I want to paint your portrait. I’d pose you at a piano with your head turned... yes, turn your head... like that. Do you play the piano?”

“No.”

“I have a piano in my studio. Well, actually, it’s not *my* piano, but there was no place else to put it. It’s not my studio, either. But I had to have a place of my own. Do you have a place of your own?”

“Yes.”

“Good.” He blinked up at me and grew almost coherent. “Japan is overcrowded. That’s the root of all our problems. No one should have to deal with other people on a daily basis. It’s just too confusing.”

“Now that you’re quitting your job,” I said, “you’ll be able to paint all day, every day. You won’t have to deal with other people if you don’t want to. Except for your mom, I guess.”

He took my hand and pressed it over his eyes. His eyelashes tickled my fingers. “I shouldn’t have quit. It was a mistake. I knew it was a mistake, too, but I went ahead and quit... that’s me all over. It’s stupid, but I can’t explain it. Not in words, anyway... I have a few good pictures at home. I’d like to show them to you sometime.”

“I don’t know anything about art.”

“All the better. I want you to see... I want you to understand...”

Thinking he’d passed out, I raised my head and caught Dorothy looking at us strangely. At first I thought she was looking at me. Then I realized she was looking at Shinji. I slid my arm under his head, meaning to shift him off my lap, then changed my mind and left my arm there. Dorothy dragged on her Marlboro. At her side, Shinji’s boss sprawled with his tie off and his face more crumpled than ever, talking about the company’s financial problems. The spotty one lay askew on a spare sofa, out cold. The rest of the company had crawled off home. In the corner of the club most remote from us, Elena and Casey were

struggling to keep up a conversation with a couple of salarymen who'd reeled in at midnight, dead set on groping some ass. Elena would probably have worked out a deal with them if Casey had cooperated. Casey was glaring piteously at Dorothy, hoping to be rescued.

"Why don't you just declare personal bankruptcy?" said Dorothy with a yawn. "Put your assets in your wife's or your son's name first, and your creditors will be shit out of luck."

"But it's my son I'm really disappointed in," mumbled the boss, his head dipping towards her shoulder.

Shinji awoke with a convulsion, saying, "Help me." He closed his eyes again, retrieved my hand, and pressed it to his mouth like a child with a teddybear. "I love you. Teach me English."

"Oh, get off me," I said.

"Help me."

I lifted him into a sitting position and steadied him.

"I want to go home." He put his head in his hands. "I *ought* to go home. But I can't."

"Why not?"

"The trains have stopped running for the night."