

# Opening

Izumi Kuremoto

"AbandonMint" is spray painted to the crumbling wall. Bricks have broken loose and lie in glass. My hands stop the empty space I cannot see. My fingers are frozen unable to release it.

Turning off the route 20, I become aware of this city, the night. I park in a metered space, across the street, in front of the closed Santeria. The window merchandise includes candles, incense, lotions and books concerning spells, numerology and means of obtaining wealth and health.

The city's main artery pumps multi-wheeled vessels through the heart of this land. Unconsciously driving the green light/red light routine my mind drifts slowly, yearning for hope.

Shadowed by a mountain I lie in it's ceremonial circle, mindful of vultures circling. I fight sleep, force my eyes open. The sky is flat, a blue papered roof, barely high enough to allow a she-devil to swoop into a domineering role. Her life size red body silently sways, hovers above. My body lies heavy as I stare at it.

A grey sickle protrudes from,...No, protrudes as part of her heart. The wings, arms, back and legs arch as she makes her descent. Allowing nothing but her heart, like a scalpel, to touch my chest. Satisfied, she raises the roof, disappears into my flesh.

Cheerful yet tired from work she enters the office to rent a room for herself and her two children. We talk and laugh as she assists me in the folding of sheets, pillowcases and towels. She asks for extra towels and washcloths for the kids. So pleasant. I allow her use of the machines to wash and dry her nurse uniforms and kids stuff. She has such a cute face along with a scar which runs mid-temple and disappears into her well trimmed hair. That's the first thing I noticed and it was soon forgotten. She's that way. Her face glows away the scarification. Yet I had to ask her the cause...

I spin in lights and colors till I awaken alone once more. Footsteps approach. I rise. Brush dust from my clothes. I see no one. No response. I follow the sagebrush, the trail you embrace.