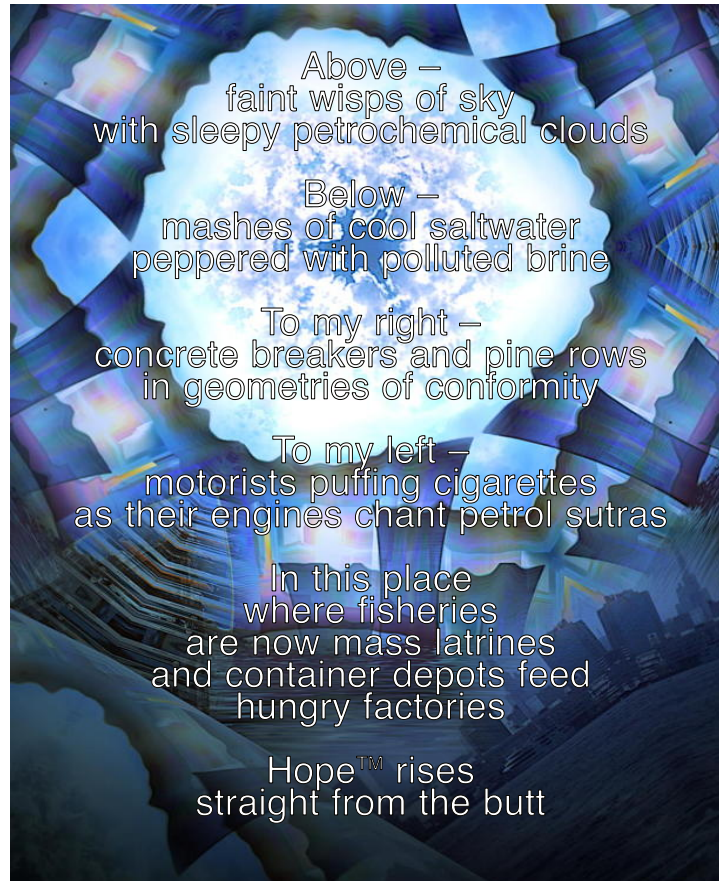


# TOKYO BAY 1972:

## A dystopian coastal landscape



Daiki leaned against the railing, his eyes scanning the murky expanse of the water. The distant Tokyo skyline shimmered in the afternoon sun, but closer to the concrete pier, the water told a different story. "The waters of Toyko Bay have improved in recent decades," he said, his voice flat, "but it is still heavily polluted."

Bhāraté stood beside him, watching an iridescent slick across the surface of a gentle swell. He let out a long, heavy sigh that seemed to carry the weight of the tide. "Yeah," he murmured, shifting his weight uncomfortably. "Many environmental problems hide beneath the surface." He pointed toward the water. "A lot of the pollution comes from illegal dumping at night, and the endless wash of micro-plastics grinding down in the surf. Every wave grinds discarded plastic into smaller fragments, until it becomes a cloud of microplastics drifting through the entire food chain. Out of sight doesn't mean out of existence."

"Merely creating new laws on paper is not enough to change human behavior," Chariya interjected. He stepped forward, his expression intense and hands gesturing sharply to emphasize her point. "Governments can print all the regulations they want, but to produce a deep, lasting change, we have to go deeper. Unless people's values change—unless our awareness deepens—we'll keep finding new ways to exploit the world while pretending we're protecting it."

For a moment, only the slap of waves against the pier filled the silence. An-Yi looked out toward the horizon, a wistful, faint smile touching her lips, though it carried no real warmth. "It's a noble hope," she said quietly. "I wish I could believe it." She paused, searching the polluted water as if it held the answer. "But pessimists like me say it's futile. The hard truth is that human consciousness is still incredibly primitive in many ways. Emotionally, we're often still children—impatient, tribal, and obsessed with immediate gratification. We sacrifice tomorrow for today's convenience, then act surprised when the bill finally arrives."

The four friends stood in silence, listening to the restless water lapping against the concrete. Beyond the glittering skyline, the bay seemed to offer its own verdict: beautiful from a distance, troubled up close.

*Note: This piece was partially generated with AI tools for styling and ideation; human editing was then applied.*

**- T Newfields**

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