

Keeping the Faith Beyond Anaheim Street

I

This close to shipping lanes, the marine layer persists into midday. It diffuses whatever light filters through streets and over men bent to welding and alignment jobs, or auto wreck shops in the screech of what hungers for oil, a world shared with the bright pink and red blossoms that paint the window front of Rosita's Flowers, a block from a drunk who howls the garbled cipher of his mind under the awning of Angel's Clutch & Brake.

II

A longshoreman wonders where a coworker could have gone. Whether he cut toward the 'A' Street pier to find his foreman, or diverted through a park no more than a weedy bed for drunks now, to a woman friend who works in a *lavanderia*, or eastward to Anaheim Street, past the wary windows of Bonnie Lee Hotel, or circled back to the Dispatch Hall to stand with the crush of chain-smokers still awaiting the day's assignment, the strip joints beyond Alameda salient in their reckonings.

III

A laid-off welder, drunk on longshot pipedreams of a lottery score, will mumble all night to absinthe and pork rinds. His mother in her dirty sweaters sells rose bouquets from a Shell station lot. Held high in her fists, she waves them to catch the eyes of drivers, clustered red semaphores few will read in the blistering air, where the drunk's voice drifts like alibis entangled in the breaking light.

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