

Point Vicente (sample)

I lost my virginity to my boyfriend Cid while looking up at an upside-down drawing of the Point Vicente lighthouse. The picture hadn't been hung upside-down; it just looked that way on the wall from my perspective. The real lighthouse had been built on a cliff that jutted into the Pacific at the southwest tip of Palos Verdes Peninsula, which itself jutted out from the southwest corner of Los Angeles. It was supposedly haunted by the crazy wife of a lost sailor. The drawn lighthouse was different from the real one in that it not only was upside-down from my position, but it also had a crudely-built electricity-generating windmill on its roof.

The windmill I saw in Los Alamitos was another story. It was one of those old Vanderlip coffee shops, with a big Dutch windmill built into the roof. The windows of the diner were boarded up, but judging from the "For Lease" signs lodged into the surrounding shrubs, they had probably been nailed up before the Burn. The massive blades of the mill had fallen from the tower, crashing through the roof of the restaurant, which said a lot about the integrity of either the roof or the blades.

I had spotted the windmill just after I left the army airfield. Los Alamitos had been a ghost town. Ditto with Seal Beach. Even Pendleton, the spot I was certain would still be occupied and in operation - it was empty. The plan had been to head northwest, explore downtown for other survivors, and then head on to Mugu for another shot at government assistance. *Seek federal government facilities first, then dense metropolitan areas, for supplies and survivors*, Cid had told me years ago.

I had wondered ever since leaving San Diego six months ago if Cid had survived and made that hybrid structure of his. Survival techniques always trumped omens and superstitions, but it was hard to deny a sign like this. There I was, back in L.A. County, staring at the shattered remains of a windmill. Sure, going around Palos Verdes would add at least a day's walking, plus most of that stretch was sparse housing with no real resources. Downtown was the safer bet for finding survivors, but even a whole colony wouldn't have the survival know-how of Cid.

Before I headed westward down Katella Boulevard towards Long Beach, I grabbed a chunk of chipped concrete from the curb and hurled it through the window of the diner's door, the only piece of glass not boarded. That was my marker, my way of telling other wanderers "someone unaffected was here."