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## Fort Cochi, India

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FORT COCHI, INDIA

Vasco de Gama landed here during the spice trade  
and it feels European with its whitewashed buildings and exposed beams  
but a man is cooking nan bread in a roadside tandoori  
and Emily and I have traveled over the mountains  
in a bus with no doors or windows.  
Two white owls watch us from the darkness  
as we walk past the tree-lined park and church  
into town for dinner. I snap a picture.  
We eat outside and listen to German tourists  
bark orders to one another  
and I assume they are discussing  
their team's chances in the World Cup  
though maybe they are talking about  
all-night parties in Goa.  
I order fish curry and a beer  
and we talk about how much we don't want  
to ride in the bus back over the mountains.  
We can hear the ocean whining in the candlelight  
of certain inchoate things we're only vaguely aware of.  
We have only just been married.  
The next morning we awake to shouting  
and open our window to children  
playing soccer in the park. We walk  
around the island and discover an old synagogue  
next to a junk shop with a decent collection  
of vintage door knobs. I buy a book  
about the Jews of Cochi and we keep walking,  
along the edge of town, and then through it, into  
a residential neighborhood where a cow  
is being butchered on the street.  
I try to take a picture but I am waved off  
by a very unhappy looking man.

We stop to take a picture of a woman  
whose daughter had her face painted like a clown  
and then we stop for dinner  
at a yacht club full of westerners  
and we feel uncomfortable in our sandals  
because everyone else has on shoes.  
Much later, back in Boston,  
I scan our developed pictures for the owls  
but when I get to the one in Cochi with the trees at night  
there is only the night and the trees and that is all.