

March 24th, 1995

Hi everyone,

It's a beautiful Friday afternoon: the sky is clear, the sun is bright, it becomes quiet and peaceful here in the university as people start vanishing into a long weekend, and - I have just finished grading the finals in my course and I won't have to deal with students at all until 2:00PM on Thursday, September the 28th, when I'll start my next year's course!

Exactly a week from today I'll start my long way back home and needless to say that I can't wait. Two of my best buddies in LA will not be here anymore when I return two months later, as they earned their PhD in math and are about to go away: Marcus to Brazil and David to NY. They have already realized that this will force them to enter my mailing list... Therefore, we are trying to squeeze into the short time that is left as many unfulfilled plans as possible. Since our grand plans of major trips (Yellowstone, going down into the Grand Canyon, a cross-country trip -- you name it, we planned it!) were somewhat impossible to carry out in the several free hours that we had, we needed to concentrate on the smaller-scale plans.

For instance, Marcus and another Brazilian student, Marcia, have never seen the sun sets into the sea (and they never bothered to wake up early enough to see the sun rises over the Atlantic ocean in their patria Brazil). Therefore, we all went yesterday to one of my favorite places in the area (15 minutes from here) - Ocean avenue in Santa Monica. This is a beautiful and wide avenue, parallel to the sea, where you can sit in a coffee house and watch the sunset. Alas, yesterday was the coldest day ever in LA (at least, this is how it felt) and it turned out that the sun sets over a curve in the shore line and not exactly into the sea (Marcus protested that he wanted to hear the "pssssss" when the sun touches the water).

David, to my bad luck, recalled that he simply must take me to a Japanese restaurant. A year ago, I went with a large group to one of the best Japanese restaurants in LA - "Sushi on Sunset". The name tells you where it is located and what is the main dish served there. The next day I told David (who's French) how terrible it was. He was shocked from the blasphemy and uttered his theory that Japanese food is "an acquired taste". Namely, with time and the right guidance, everyone can learn to love that food. I couldn't stop laughing and never ceased to remind him again and again of this poor theory of his. But then, on Wednesday afternoon, during swim and lunch break, he recalled that this is his last chance to prove his theory. "Trust me and I'll take you to a terrific Japanese restaurant and you'll love it". We, and Luca (another math-related friend), were among the only non-Asians in that restaurant. Luca and David immediately embarked on their mission: 6 bottles of sake and dozens of sushis disappeared in their welcoming throats. I, trying to be open minded, managed to swallow some sushi; it tastes exactly as it sounds (wet sticky rice and raw fish). The chicken/other creatures/noodles dish that was ordered for me was full of ginger. Since I cannot touch ginger even with a long stick and find it as one of nature's most repulsive creations, it was as eatable as the sushi. I just kept washing my mouth with water and watched with contempt the French and Italian guys in front of me who betrayed their friend and their great national cuisines. We finished with green tea (don't even ask) and left, two thirds satisfied. One good thing came out of this: the acquired taste theory went down the toilet (along with...).

Anyway, I am looking forward to be embraced in the bosom of our beloved country at dawn on Sunday, April the 2nd. Lehitraot,

Tamir