

## Labadi

They are building booths to sell beer, Fanta, and Coca-Cola, with enclosures for the drinkers. Nearby, bathers eat snacks and lie in the sun on the sand with an eye on their Japanese cars. The fruit-sellers walk the beach, girls sell Chinese toffees and sweets, while thieves wait for their chance in the bush.

I heard people shouting and saw an old man in anger pulling out a post. What is happening to this place—our beach? Here, fishermen have fished—my father, grandfather, my people. . . .

Half toothless with a worn straw hat half hiding his eyes, and frayed trousers half covering his legs, he pleaded with his past while bathers in neat trunks smiled smugly and murmured, “conservative,” “backward.”

Behind the beach, a tall turreted block goes up with round towers like the coastal castles of slaver days. Littered with tins and the wrappings of imports, they build a wall around the palm-strewn ground to nurture it as naturally as an English garden. Soon, wintering whites will lie by chloric pools in the lamp of the sun while waiters serve whisky and wine, maids dust and tuck up beds and cooks blandly cook luncheon. Then, bathers will be as many as the particles of pale sand, the beach as touristic as Torremolinos.

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