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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, photos, poetry, prose, and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community. Submit by the 15th of each month to hyogotimespublications@gmail.com

Ah October. The one month of fall in Japan. Leaves are changing, autumn festivals are happening, and Halloween is heading our way! I hope to see your pretty faces at the Block 6 [Halloween party](#) in Osaka!

In my first year of college, I was incredibly excited for Halloween (okay, okay; I'm incredibly excited for Halloween every year): our "residence hall" (yay pretentious small liberal arts universities) had a decor theme of Peter Pan, so I decided to dress up as Tinkerbell. I was going to be decked out in lots of sparkly green things. Unfortunately, my body had other plans. On a Thursday maybe a lot like today (and mere days before Halloween), I had to drag my fluffy pink bedding onto the floor so I could more easily go and expel not so sparkly green stuff (even once there was nothing but bile left in my stomach). In the morning, after talking to my panicking, lovable, hypochondriac roommate and crawling to the health center, I was informed I'd need to go to the ER. While my parents were freaking out, I instead acted like a kid in a candy store while at the hospital. Who cared that I was having an appendectomy? I got to see the machines and environment that I strive to someday work in.



To prepare yourself for other such uncontrollable happenings, consider attending the Disaster Preparedness event put on by AJET and JETAA. Reserve on the [Google document](#) by tomorrow, October 2nd. Our very own Rackle Beaman has written an [article](#) previewing the event for your reading pleasure, as well as advice on [teaching](#). Other articles this month include a kettle corn [recipe](#), a review of the breath-taking [Ogasawara islands](#) and an overview of some [Shinto deities](#), the [third part](#) of Sometime Last Week, musings on the fairness of [life](#) and a seasonally appropriate [short fiction](#) piece, and a review of the horror-prison themed restaurant [The Lockup](#) and [cosplay advice](#). Our alumni this month is [Belinda Kyle](#), an Australian who went through five years of JET and is still in Japan teaching.

Sometimes, you'll run into bad situations in your classroom, your personal life, your appendix, or your cat's litterbox. In these trying times, attempting to view the glass as half full is good for your mental health (though, to be technical, glasses are always full. Air molecules exist. #YesAllGlasses!). You'll learn a lot more about classroom management in less than ideal times. Your character will build tremendously after overcoming setbacks. You'll never have to worry about appendicitis again and you'll get cool little scars. Your cat could have defecated on the carpet instead. It's like getting stuck on the side of the road with a broken down car and waiting for your knight in shining armor (or a tow truck). I'm gonna choose to marvel at the stars.

Brittany Teodorski

Dear ghosts, skeletons, youkai, zombies, and Hyogo-dwelling JETs,

I am Jillian, a Hyogo AJET member and the book club supreme leader. I love books, cats, and tea, so basically I was born for book clubs. I work at a part-time high school in Nishinomiya (my students are mostly adorable punks), and though we will prepare for our culture festival at the end of October, I really don't think that's the case for most of you...but I think you will have sports day? Well, whatever is going on at your respective schools, I hope it's fun!

October has always been one of my favorite months. Everything is coming out in pumpkin, but not in pumpkin spice! WTF Japan. Self introductions are pretty much over (even though you can't remember anyone's name). You're starting to get into the swing of things at school (even though it feels like you're still figuring stuff out). The weather is finally cooling off (even though some hot days will still sneak in). And best of all you have an awesome sugar high to look forward to at the end of the month. Block 6 is hosting a [Halloween party](#) in Osaka (on the 31st), so you should come! On Halloween night in Osaka, you will find that although neighborhood trick-or-treating has not caught on, the tradition of bizarrely inappropriately sexy costumes sure has. The Halloween party my first year is the first and only time I ever stayed out in Osaka all night. The city sure looks different at 4 in the morning and you want to kill anyone who talks to you or who gets in the way of your first train. This year

I've done a little planning ahead and booked a capsule hotel. Hopefully this prevents me from committing any crimes! You also have a three day weekend (10th-12th), so get out and do some exploring. I know that the Shikoku rafting trip booked out fast, but there are still many things that you can do! Like read the book for the next [book club](#) (October 25th).



Most importantly, do you have a fantastical costume all ready? No? Well no worries, because you can throw together something whippity-quick from your local 100 Yen shop. Just get a goofy hat and you are good to go!

Happy Haunting.

Jillian MacKenzie

Have your own movie night in and kick back and relax with this munchable and simple kettle corn recipe <3

Yield: 1 Large Bowl of Popcorn

Essential Cooking Tools:

Large sauce/saute pan with lid*

*can also be substituted with a large metal bowl and a makeshift aluminum foil lid poked through with small holes for air ventilation, and tongs for swishing

Ingredients:

- ¼ Cup Popcorn Kernels
- ½ Cup Sugar (brown, white, or mixed!)
- ½ Cup

Vegetable Oil (olive oil works too, and doesn't really leave that olive oily taste, surprisingly)

Instructions:



1. In a large sauce or saute pan, mix together oil and sugar with 3-5 popcorn kernels.
2. Pop on the lid and cook over medium heat while swishing the pan to continue semi-stirring the ingredients together.
3. Once the popcorn kernels have popped, add the ¼ cup of kernels into the pan and continue swishing. Shortly after, the popcorn kernels should start popping. Be sure to continue swishing the pan to allow the unpopped kernels to settle to the bottom.
4. After the popping has slowed to about 5 seconds between each pop, turn off the stove and remove the pan from heat. This will help ensure that the popcorn at the bottom of the pan doesn't get burnt.
5. Leave in pan, or transfer to a bowl or container of choice.

Making this recipe in smaller batches usually turns out better, but in case you're looking to make a larger batch, just follow the ratio: equal parts oil and sugar to 2 parts popcorn kernels.

Enjoy your movie and popcorn!

mandy

For a small country, Japan is surprisingly full of remote and beautiful places. The Ogasawara islands take the cake, on both remoteness and beauty. Accessible only by a ferry from Tokyo—a ferry that takes 25 hours in good weather, runs once a week, and costs 25,000円 one way—few people ever make it out. This summer, I found that the journey was well worth the time and money.



The Ogasawara islands, sometimes called the Bonin Islands, are about 1,000 km south of Tokyo. Only two are inhabited—Chichijima, population 2000, and Hahajima, population 400. Human history here is short, but intense. The first settlers were a group of Europeans and Americans who set up a whaling station in 1830. Commodore Perry stopped by on his way to open up Japan. The Battle of Iwo Jima was here. Ghosts of WWII still haunt the island, from the sunken Japanese ships off the shore, to the crashed American plane in the jungle, to the bomb bunkers at the lookout point. The islands are now a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site, thanks to large percentages of endemic species and the land snails (over 100 different kinds!!) that provide

an excellent example of evolution. Efforts to protect the environment and remove invasive creatures are ongoing (curse you to the depths of hell, rats), and visitors must obey the rules—no camping and no entering some areas without guides.

Ryo-san, a once-upon-a-time Ginza salaryman now sporting a mane of gray hair, met me at the port to take me to my first accommodation, Pelan Eco-Village. Located away from the two streets of shops and restaurants that make up the “town,” Pelan is in the jungle half-way up a mountain. The little wooden cabins connected by narrow platforms and steep stairs could’ve stepped out of the Swiss Family Robinson. I had a cabin all to myself, since the only other people staying were a German couple on their honeymoon and a 15-year-old WWOOFer. Pelan prides itself on its sustainability. Traditional soaps are banned because the water goes straight to the organic garden, and well, if you ever want to hear an old man gleefully explain how to use a composting toilet by likening it to making croquettes, this is the place. But don’t worry: if you’re not comfortable pooping in a bucket of leaves, there is a more traditional option using the water leftover from the laundry to flush.

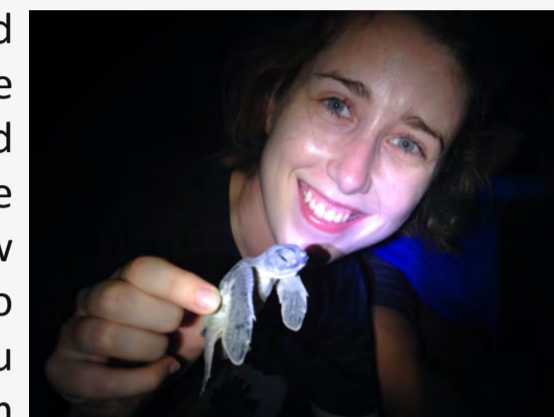
I joined Ryo-san for a kayak tour. We paddled around to a couple different beaches and he showed us the good places for snorkeling. He cooked lunch on the beach with freshly caught fish and homemade miso. Throughout Ogasawara, the heart of hospitality was in eating meals together. Both Pelan and the youth hostel I stayed at next emphasized community through potluck dinners and parties.



In order to visit Minamijima, Ogasawara poster-child, I joined a boat tour. We tried to swim with dolphins, but after hearing stories from people who met pods of 20+ I was bound to be deeply disappointed. We only met one animal who swam away from us as fast as he could. Our sea snake encounter went much better. The boat took us to the Marine Park (possibly the best snorkeling spot) and lured out 5 or 6 beautiful yellow and brown spotted snakes with the help of a couple fish. Next, we landed on Minamijima, cleaned off any stray seeds from our shoes, and started exploring the white beach. Turtle tracks, both adult and baby, run down towards the turquoise water. We watched where we stepped so we didn’t accidentally wander into a nest. Even the four children in my group couldn’t put a dent in the serenity.



For the second half of my trip, I stayed at the Ogasawara Youth Hostel. I’ve never been in a hostel with quite so many Japanese women in their late 20’s traveling alone before. This was perfect because it was easy to find a group to explore with. On an island this small, once you’ve met a few people, you run into them wherever you go. I ran into them on the night tour, when we held baby sea turtles and released them on a dark beach. I ran into them while souvenir shopping, where we all bought the same things to dump on our coworkers’ desks. Best of all, the night before the ferry departed, the hostel hosted a party, complete with alcohol and a talent show.



When our ferry left Chichijima, half the village turned out to say goodbye. They sent us off with taiko drumming and flowers. A flock of boats followed alongside the ferry, the people waving and waving, until they all jumped off in unison. Even until we were far away, we could see the flash of signal mirrors. As we slept on the ferry that night, I’m sure we were all dreaming of the day we could return to Ogasawara.

Jillian MacKenzie

“Life’s not fair” is in the running for my least favourite phrase in the English language, along with “Don’t forget to subscribe” and “Sir, that’s not the umbrella you came in with.” Obviously, I hate that life demonstrably isn’t fair— and I know that life is much more fair on me than on many people— but I hate that as adults we’re not allowed to point out when something is patently unjust or even to expect that people will try and make life as fair as possible. If we call out blatant examples of unearned favouritism or stigma or even bemoan completely random twists of fate that somehow cheat us, we’re labelled as childish, petulant or somehow unworldly for not realising that’s just how it is. And that’s awful.

That being said, I’m now going to object to life being made fairer. When I was in school, the teachers were massive bloody hypocrites: the Health teachers smoked outside the bike shed, the English teachers couldn’t spell and I’m pretty sure our Physics teacher believed in ghosts. The most egregious example of this was when we got a new Assistant Head halfway through my time there: he apparently had a background in business, the same way you might say the Boy who Cried Wolf has a background in sheep-herding. Even if you fail massively at something and have to run away with your tail between your legs, you’ve still technically done it. I think. Anyway, this new Assistant Head was apparently upset that people didn’t prostrate themselves before him in the corridors— he kept complaining about a “culture of disrespect” while adamantly refusing to do anything to earn our respect in any

tangible way— and he decided that the problem was our schoolbags.

Yep, you read that right, our schoolbags were somehow akin to red kryptonite, turning good children bad, changing order into dirty chaos and driving down property values in the area. So, he decided to ban the bag. No joke, he put up posters to that effect. Of course, everyone ignored his suggestion, as we are taught to do with counterproductive ideas like “jump off that bridge” or “lick that socket” from a young age. This only made him more enraged and he used to stalk the school halls, shouting at people carrying schoolbags, all the while a plump, bulging bag, no doubt ripe with chocolate bars and Wall Street journals to remind him of his failed dreams, dangled from his shoulders. This was the crux of the problem: he expected us to carry our not inconsiderable amount of school supplies in our arms while being entirely unwilling to do this himself. He’d berate and plead and hold assemblies accusing of us of being, I kid you not, “delusional anarchists” — he’d do everything to try and corral us except act in the way he expected of others. He refused to do as he would be done by.

This is not the case in Japanese schools— I was asked to stop bringing apple juice to school because the children are only allowed water or tea, I have to wait to say grace to eat and I’ve had to sneak to the toilet to use my phone because the kids can’t even bring them into school, let alone whip them out in the corridors. There is no special consideration for teachers.

Nowhere is this more apparent than during Sports Day. I hated Sports Day as a child— sitting

there, baking in the sun, every single adult and child I knew gathered, watching, just waiting for humiliation and shame to be wrought, with no way of stopping it. I thought as a teacher, what with their water bottles and their fold-out chairs and their copies of the Guardian, that the experience might actually be bearable.

Nope.

The children aren’t allowed parasols, so neither are we; they can’t bring their books, so neither can we; they only go to the toilet during designated breaks, so really so should we. I mean, the nerve of it! Having to do as we preach! Ugh!



Photo courtesy of 明宝 出版 via flickr commons

Of course, I understand deep down that this is a good thing and it’s exactly what I wished for as a pupil: for the teachers to actually have to experience the conditions they were pushing on people who had no means of legitimately fighting back. And I genuinely think that were this the case, a lot of school policies in England, for example those regarding uniforms, would change— certainly that Assistant Head would have had to drop his insipid “bags cause delinquency” routine. But teachers in Japan seem able or willing

to withstand a much greater deal of discomfort. They will work fourteen hour days and wear full business suits in thirty five degree weather and come to school even if there is a literal typhoon in their way. Naturally, they can then ask as much from the students with a clear conscience.

I admire this approach immensely but just want an exemption for me because I’m special and it’s hot and I want to check if anyone has liked my latest hilariously witty comment on Facebook. But no such exemption came. I had to endure with the rest of them. And, as I stood there on the top field, the sun bearing down on me like I was a rabbit on a racetrack, trying to pay attention to the students’ marching, all I could think was that I’d had the worst of both worlds— I’d had to watch cackling, tyrannical hypocrites enjoying every privilege that they denied to us and now I had to suffer to prove that everyone is indeed equal. All I could think was that this was really unjust for me to be on the losing side both times through mere geographic dictation, and no fault of my own. All I could think is that life isn’t fair.

Rory Kelly

So you've finally made it through all the self-introductions and slightly awkward Q&A sessions with your new students. Congratulations! Now it's time for the real fun to begin: you're going to have to actually teach for real now. What a joy.

For those of you feeling more or less paralyzed by fear and anxiety over this prospect, fear not. The fact of the matter is only a small percentage of ALTs are actually teachers by trade and we have been muddling through this role with success for nearly four decades or so. This means that statistically speaking, you're probably going to do just fine. However, it's very easy to say that now with all the experience I've accumulated since being here and to someone just starting out, this could all seem very contrite. Therefore, I have a couple nuggets of wisdom as you make your first foray into education. As a senior high school ALT, I also appreciate that not everything will be applicable to your situation.

The first thing to realize about teaching is that it's mostly about how well you can bluff your way through things while desperately googling behind the desk and how confidently you can explain activities and give directions. I am firmly of the opinion that teenagers can smell fear. The fact of the matter is you will not ever know everything there is to know about English. None of us do, except maybe Steven Fry, but for us regular laymen, explaining the difference between using by and with will remain a gnarly conundrum to articulate to a group of expectant tweens.

Therefore, this whole job really has very little to do with how well you actually know English but instead is about how you interact with your class and help them find enjoyment in one of the most notoriously fickle languages on the planet. Very few of our students will be anywhere near fluent when we teach them. Some will most certainly have you wanting to bash your head on the blackboard with their inability to answer the most basic questions and a lot of the time you will believe your students genuinely fear talking to you due to the way they avoid any and all eye contact. With all of this in mind, I give my second piece of advice: don't take this job too seriously because ALTs are there to be fun.

ALTs are more or less large, interactive encyclopedias of modern English and other interesting facts. For most of your students, you will be one of the few foreigners they have met in real life and are thus their first impression of the world beyond the local train line. Let them ask their silly questions, let them stare at you, let them laugh at your bad pronunciation and giggle over your "strange" habits because you are what makes them want to learn more. The young students are still full of abundant curiosity so you are there to enrich it. For the older students, they are already growing tired, so you are there to revitalize their attention. As banal as it may be to say, we are entertainment. I know my students often don't understand me, so I use a lot of gestures, onomatopoeia and sounds to convey meaning in my stories. They laugh and they smile and mimic but most of all I can see they understand. How I draw their attention and share new knowledge is based largely around how I express myself. Which brings me to the next point: Your teaching style is your own creation.

Developing your own teaching style can seem like a bit of daunting task, especially if you've never considered it before. In order to get you started I recommend two things. Firstly, think about how you've interacted with kids in the past in a positive way. How did you conduct yourself? Think about what made them enjoy being around you and see what elements you can replicate in your classroom. After all, ALTs are basically the cool aunts and uncles of the staffroom, so you don't need to worry about being too strict or distant. Secondly, think back on your own school experiences. What made your good teachers good? What made your bad teachers bad? Then see if you can incorporate these traits into your own classes.



Additionally, think about what makes for a good or bad lesson. We all have memories of those few really awesome lessons during our time in school, but what made them so good? The fact of the matter is it's going to take you a few months to get your bearings: more than a few times, an activity is going to go completely belly up like

your 5th grade goldfish. Just last week, a lesson I gave about past tense fell into complete disarray and I've been teaching for well over a year now. This brings in my next advice nugget: We all make mistakes, so be prepared to think on your feet. There is nothing wrong with scrapping a lesson mid-class and making it up on the fly because your activity failed. There is no shame in having a small collection of English games on hand to pull out when you need a 10 minute distraction while you scramble to rearrange. Personally, my favorites are Simon Says, Scattergories (not actually), Hangman and Who Am I just in case you're interested. No lesson is bulletproof, so don't feel defeated when something fails; it happens to the best of us.

Finally, and perhaps the most important piece of advice: Your kids are good kids even if they don't always act like it. There will be few cases where you meet a student who is truly Evil™. There will definitely be days where you understand why children are so often the focus of Japanese horror films, but there will also be days where you want to cry over how happy they make you. I have felt my heart swell with pride over speech contestants, beamed with joy when the quiet student answered a question, and sat back in awe of the book review in front of me. These will be the majority of your experiences, positive ones. Yes, the Friday afternoon class will make you feel like a dentist for all the teeth you're pulling to get answers, and yes, you will want to confiscate literally everything that group of three boys in the back has on them, but at the end of the day, you will love them if you let yourself and they will definitely love you.

Rachle Beaman

Many children participated in cosplay growing up, knowingly or not. Donning “Jedi” robes and fighting siblings with lightsabers was a staple in my household, and you can bet that Halloween would treat the parental units to the endearingly awful acting of young’uns. But why stop dressing up and acting after Trick-or-Treating has become inappropriate for you to continue? While in the world of anime conventions, cosplay can become a fierce competition with costumes reaching ever more ludicrous designs, the humble layman is certainly capable of procuring a costume through one of several ways. As Halloween is approaching, I will bequeath unto you my oh-so-vast experiences with these methods (/s).



Buy It

Feeling lazy? Overwhelmed? Incapable? Look no further than Etsy, eBay or one of the many cosplay selling websites to buy your very own Chinese-made costume (occasionally they’re not Chinese). Many of these— especially the simpler ones— are quite good. However, you should always look at reviews

(if there are any), as they can sometimes be a cruel approximation.

As with everything, you get what you pay for. Cosplay up to 20,000¥ is typically decently made, but with not the highest quality of materials. Really consider what you want out of the outfit: Will you wear this more than once? Can you justify the cost? Will you be okay if parts of it fall off throughout the night? (This is especially common for accessories with shoddy attachments. Consider bringing a small sewing kit for repairs.)

If you want to buy around Kansai, Animate (locations in Himeji, Kobe, Kyoto, and Osaka) carries wigs, costumes, and various accessories. Mandarake and several shops in Den Den Town in Osaka also sell costumes. Places like Don Quijote may offer (low-quality though more affordable) costumes as well. Online, I’ve had good experiences using [this shop](#) on eBay for wigs.

Wing It



Daiso and other 100¥ shops have many items that can easily be bent to your will. With a little creativity, your costume will be easily recognizable. Admittedly, the details aren’t present usually, but if that doesn’t bother you, this is probably the cheapest method to fancying yourself up. I tend to buy makeup for costumes here as it’s cheap and I don’t own much in general. Get that guy-liner going, people!

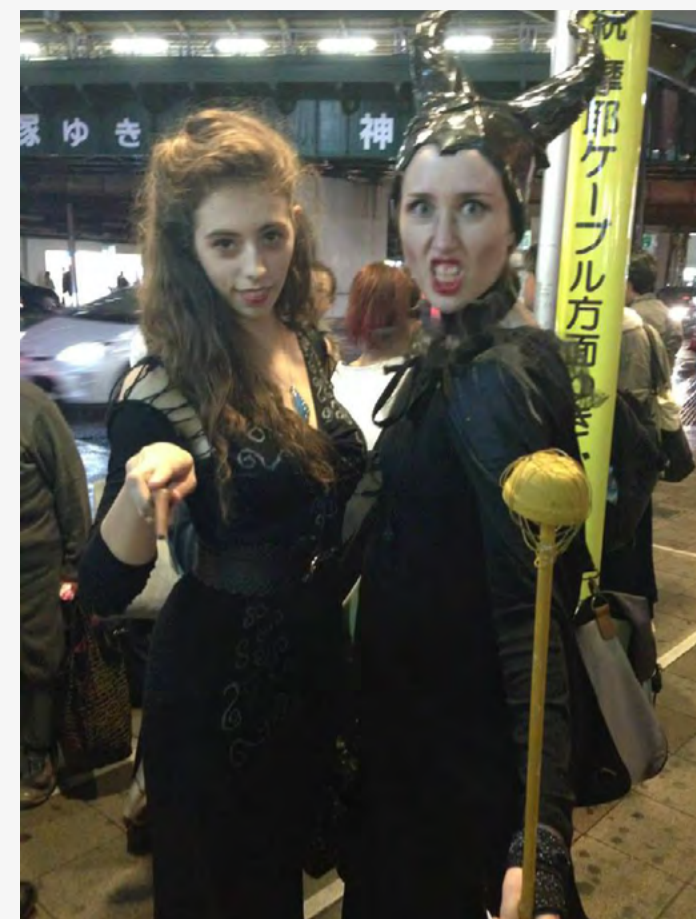


Photo courtesy of Sarah McGowan

and I used our gowns from graduations, pinned on printed out house crests, and duct-taped ties to be the proper colors. Simple (though cheap-looking) and effective.

Alter It

This has been my go-to method for many years. Buy a relatively simple costume of the character you want to portray then add in details to your heart’s content. One of my favorite projects was painting an accurate design onto an obi. Another one was adding wefts and absurd amounts of gel to a wig for the proper aesthetic. Supplies for altering can be found at your local craft store or Daiso.



Looking in your closet is another great place to start. For the final Harry Potter movie release (in case you didn’t already realize that I’m a gigantic nerd), my friends

Make It

Daunting but worthwhile, creating your costume from scratch is highly rewarding. While I’ve made pieces here and there, I’ve only sewed my whole costume once. This Halloween will be attempt #2. You will need a good sewing machine— do not be fooled by the cheapest options on Amazon: they are largely useless and can’t even sew backwards to close stitches.

After you’ve acquired a sewing machine and before you get anything else, you’ll need a plan. Who will you cosplay? What fabric will you use? How much will you need? Then you can purchase your material (and matching thread— visible stitching is ugly stitching) and have at. Yuzawaya on Center Gai in Sannomiya has a good selection of fabrics and other crafty needs, as does Toraya in Namba.

Tutorials (see below) are extremely helpful if you’re inexperienced in the ways of creating clothing, but don’t let their number daunt you and make you hold back from getting started. Personally, I learn best by doing. I learned a lot making my costume last year (all of which I’ve promptly forgotten as it’s been a long time since I’ve sewed).

[Cosplay Tutorials](#) and [Cosplay.com](#) are great resources for tutorials.

A note on colored contacts: PLEASE get a prescription and buy from a retailer that requires one, even if you have perfect vision. The risk of faulty lenses to your health is not worth the convenience.

Have fun crafting!

Brittany Teodoriski

While for most of us October is the Month of Halloween, on the Shinto calendar it is the Month Without Gods. That's because they are all at Izumo Taisha in Shimane Prefecture deciding on your love life for the coming year! But who are these gods? And where are they when they're not matching up dating profiles? With all the shrines in Japan (and the tendency for everything to be in Japanese), it can be a little confusing. Hopefully this guide, gleaned from two years of shrine visits and Google searches, will give you a leg up when you want to go pray for those perfect test scores, your one true love, or just lots of money. Since the Shinto gods are uncountable—and include everything from mountains and trees to still living people—I'll be focusing on just a couple that I run into the most.

Thanks to a long and colorful history, the deities enshrined at most places are often mixtures of Shinto gods, historical figures, and Buddhas! I'm not quite sure how; the process of Shinto-Buddhist syncretism goes over my head. So please forgive me for sacrificing complex truths in favor of simplicity in this guide!

Izanagi and Izanami

Tidbit: This brother and sister couple gave birth to the islands of Japan (Hyogo's own Awajishima was the first!). Though they gave birth to many, many, many gods, their relationship was not without strife: after Izanami died giving birth to a fire god, Izanagi went



to the underworld to retrieve her. But when he saw that being dead hadn't improved her looks any, he high-tailed it out of there. Izanami swore to kill 1,000 people a day as payback, so Izanagi replied that he would give life to 1,500 a day.

Gods of: creation, life, death

Notable shrine: Izanagi shrine on Awajishima, said to be built on the sight where Izanagi lived as a mortal after leaving Japan to Amaterasu.

Amaterasu

Tidbit: Mother of the imperial family. After her brother destroyed some of her stuff (and threw a dead horse at her loom??), she locked herself away in a cave. The world was in pretty bad shape without the sun, so the goddess Ame no Uzume came up with a plan. The plan was to perform a strip tease. The noise of the other gods' cheering successfully lured Amaterasu out, and all was well.



As her direct descendant, the Emperor of Japan spends a big part of his year in Shinto ceremonies! God of: the sun

Notable shrine: Ise Jingu in Mie Prefecture

Susano-o

Tidbit: Amaterasu's brother. He's the one who pissed her off so much she hid in a cave. He didn't act like an asshole all the time (though he got kicked out of heaven for being a jerk) and he killed an eight-headed serpent that had been plaguing the people in current-day Shimane Prefecture. He killed it by

getting it really, really drunk.

God of: seas, storms

Notable shrine: Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto, home of the month long Gion Matsuri in July

Inari

Tidbit: Inari's gender is unknown/non-existent. Representations of this god depend on the area, and range from young women to old men. You can always recognize Inari shrines by the guardian fox statues (other shrines will have guardian dogs). Inari shrines are the most common type of shrine.

God of: rice, agriculture, fertility, sword smiths

Notable shrine: Fushimi Inari Taisha in Kyoto



Hachiman

Tidbit: Hachiman shrines are the second most popular type of shrine. Hachiman was the god of the Minamoto (Genji) clan, the founders of the Kamakura period. Because of Hachiman's association with warriors, the enshrined object is often a stirrup or a bow.

God of: war, warriors, archery

Notable shrine: Iwashimizu Hachiman shrine in Kyoto Prefecture (not the city!)

Sugawara Michizane

Tidbit: A scholar from the Heian period, he was unfairly persecuted, and thus was enshrined after his death in order to put a stop to plagues caused by his angry spirit. The moral of this story is that if you want people to worship you after you die, you

should haunt them. Writing brushes are often used as enshrined objects, and once I saw a shrine where hopeful scholars could leave their used brushes (or pens or pencils) as offerings! His shrines can be recognized by bull statues, plum trees, and hoards of stressed out students preparing for entrance exams.

God of: students, scholarship

Notable shrines: Kobe's Kitano area has a small shrine dedicated to Sugawara. There is also a larger one in Osaka, home of the famous Tenjin Matsuri.

Ebisu

Tidbit: You can recognize Ebisu because he is the fat laughing guy holding a fish. His is one of the Seven Lucky Gods, and the only one to have originated



in Japan, rather than China or India. He is especially popular in Kansai because he is a friend of merchants. You will often see his image incorporated at fugu restaurants! His festival at the Nishinomiya shrine on the 9th and 10th of January starts with a race: first one to smash into the giant sake barrel is the Lucky Man of the year!

God of: fishermen, prosperity, luck

Notable shrine: Nishinomiya Ebisu shrine in Hyogo, just 10 minutes from my school ☺

Jillian MacKenzie

Perhaps while wandering near Tits Park, you've come across the innocuous skull and crossbones sign announcing the presence of The Lockup. Though only one of many locations across Japan, it is not an experience to be missed. The commitment to a horror-prison themed restaurant from the staff, menu, and ambience leads to a fun and memorable adventure.

Getting In

Across from a カラオケ館 is the entrance to The Lockup. There is a skull you can paw near the entryway to the elevator. After your ride up to the 3rd floor, a staff member will ask if you have a reservation and your party size. Reservations can be made [online](#) or you can call at 078-327-7757 if you are confident in your Japanese abilities.



You will be ushered into a room that would have an epilepsy warning in America, then into the main dining area. Yet another staff member will ask who among you is the worst person and what their crime is.

All staff at The Lockup are dressed as police officers, prisoners, or monsters. Due to this, you are not allowed to wear school, police, or prisoner uniforms. Keep this in mind if you decide to visit around Halloween and are also dressed up.

Food

Shortly after you order, you will receive service popcorn, comprised of three flavors: salted, caramel, and cheese. All are quite delicious, especially if you forget that they are probably covered by your table charge.

My favorite foods on the menu are the Camembert cheese potato もち, the fried cheese (some of which have pepper in them and are amazing), and the French fries, for which you can pick a powder. Clearly, I have health in mind.

Other foods on the menu are many and varied, which is maybe why the quality isn't spectacular. For appetizers, the chopped salad has a salty dressing and is good, "but it's still a Japanese salad, so I give a C," as said by a dining companion, and the Devil Eye Eggs were enjoyed by those who consumed them.



Main courses were more hit or miss. The Zombie Entrails Yaki doesn't look quite like its advertisement and has a mysterious protein that may have resulted in an upset stomach for another one of my fellow diner/prisoners. The Napolitan spaghetti is acceptable. Two of the dishes take a while for the kitchen to prepare, and while the Guillotine Rotisserie Chicken is great, the Steak Torture Iron Maiden is quite overdone. The signature sauce it comes with is a delicious addition to the

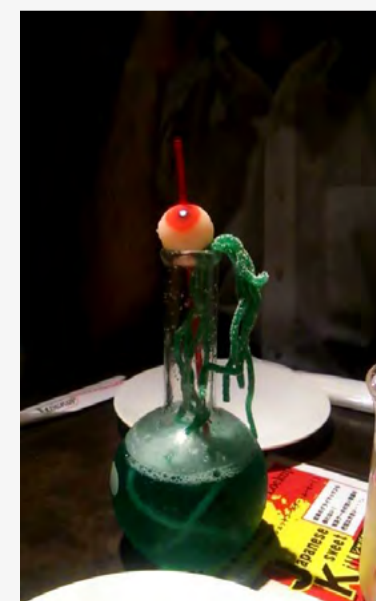
taco rice, which is otherwise unremarkable and, unsurprisingly, can't hold an olive/cheese eyeball to what you can get in Okinawa.

Non-liquid sweets I've tried were the Exorcist Parfait, which is cloyingly sweet, and the Fondant Chocolate. The latter should be split between at least three people as the richness makes it unpalatable past a couple of bites. Also, I do not recommend eating the eye.

Drink

More sugar than anything else, the drinks of The Lockup are nevertheless delectable. On the less entertaining side of the menu, I've only partaken of the Assassination Syringe. It is Calpis with blood orange juice and is refreshing, though it looks less than such when mixed into a muddy mess.

The fun drinks are served in a variety of methods. The most illegal (at least in America) is the Capsule Bomb. These look like pills and, as such, should NOT be chewed. You have been warned. Everything else I've had was delicious, though with the exception of the Jack Honey Highball, they're also pretty weak. Served in syringes with beakers are Dark



Shadows, Interview with the Vampire, and the aptly named Chocolate Syringe (also comes with marshmallows!). The Mukichoueki (mango and strawberry over cotton candy), Mummy Dress (berry watermelon), Sixth Sense (caramel corn, iced tea and milk), Psychopath Medusa (green apple and ginger with

sour candy; eyeball also not recommended), and Devil's Blood Transfusion are the most intriguing presentation-wise. The last one is especially amusing to play around with.

Ambience

The dim lighting and prison bars surrounding most of the tables lend to a deceptively intimate experience: it was fairly easy to forget other people outside of your cell are there. I also greatly enjoyed their music selection. Muse's "Dead Inside" hit my soft spot big time.



At some point during your meal (so long as you stay long enough—perhaps around 90 minutes?), you will be treated to a show that makes the horror-prison theme make as much sense as it can. You can join the armada of screaming Japanese women, or you can interact in more exciting ways. One werewolf was touched by our offer of fries and a fancy skeleton wordlessly requested a dance (ignore the fact that the cells are much too small for such antics to actually take place). If you decide to reserve the birthday package, you'll receive an intense cake, a hat, and a silly song that contrasts hilariously with the rest of the performance.

All in all, though the food is forgettable, the sheer ridiculousness of The Lockup is definitely worth an evening of your time. Bad boys and bad girls, monsters and criminals, angels and devils: all are welcome to be imprisoned.

Brittany Teodorski

Japan is a country of many wonders, delights, sights and experiences. Unfortunately, those experiences are occasionally negative, even terrifying. We are talking about natural disasters. Few other countries in the world experience the sheer number and variety of natural disasters that Japan does, from floods and typhoons to earthquakes and volcanoes: they have it all.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the great Hanshin earthquake, perhaps one of the worst natural disasters in Hyogo prefecture's history. Even more recently, during the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, three JETs lost their lives along with nearly 16,000 other people. This led to the creation of the documentary *Live Your Dream: The Taylor Anderson Story*, as well as the Taylor Anderson Memorial Fund which seeks to support survivors of the 2011 disaster. The fact of the matter is, prepared or not, all of us can be affected.



Photo courtesy of the Taylor Anderson Memorial Fund

So what does that mean for foreigners living in Japan? Many of us have never encountered a natural disaster anywhere near the scale of what is in Japan. On top of that, we have no spectrum of preparedness if such an event occurs. That means we need to educate ourselves.

On the 18th of October, the National Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET) and the Japan Exchange and Teaching Alumni Association (JETAA) will be hosting a disaster awareness and preparedness seminar (D-prep event) at the Canadian Academy on Rokko Island in Kobe. It will be a day-long event from 10am to 5pm and cover a range of activities. There will be a screening of portions of the Taylor Anderson documentary. A survival skills demonstration and seminar for a variety of useful tasks will be held, such as how to create and cook on an emergency stove and how to make your own survival kit. There will also be numerous speeches and lectures covering a variety of disaster prevention and awareness skills. In addition, there will be a full scale simulation to let you test out all your new skills.

It's true we can't stop a natural disaster, but after this seminar, should one occur, you'll be feeling far more ready than you would without it. So sign up on Facebook for the ["\[JETAA/AJET\] D-Prep: A disaster awareness and preparedness event"](#) and go along and enjoy a day of information and activities. And in case you were wondering how this awesome day could get even better, guess what. It's free.

Raele Beaman

P

lacement + years on JET

I was placed in Shiga Prefecture (requested from a prior JET's recommendation) as an ALT at Kawase Junior and Senior High School. Initially thinking I'd be a short-term JET, my position there as a fully utilised teacher saw me stay the full 5 years.



Favorite JET memory

Of course there's a whole bunch of great and often amusing memories I have from my students, but I guess the one time all those memories (plus those from teachers and friends, travels, or accomplishments in my learning etc.) came together into one super feel good moment was completing my first Mid-Year Seminar (now called SDC). Being able to distil and translate my varied experiences and learnings into tangible materials that tested my love of design (and ability to help others) shot all those good memories into a new stratosphere of satisfaction. Thankfully,

the presentation itself came out much better than my pre-presentation nerves had led me to expect and seeing the ALTs and JETs in the room comically and aesthetically appreciating my presented experience— and finding it worthwhile (phew!)— was amazing. The positive feedback I continued to get afterwards (especially from my often scowling but kind JTE) lit a "fire in my belly" telling me I was able to teach myself and that's a pretty cool feeling that still lingers.

Most valuable thing she learned

There are a few "valuables" I've racked up being here. The three I can cut my list to here are as follows:

- One is to watch and learn. Not speaking Japanese when I got here, I watched how to behave and got comfortable quicker than I expected at being able to read situations and people and how to respond in turn. It's also given me so much information about my students, which has helped me tweak my teaching to get more responses and have more fun. People are also watching you more than you might be aware of (often unknowingly from the sidelines) and will help you (if you've earned it) when you least expect but need it most.
- Secondly, with teaching students, even though you can aim to do so much with them (or maybe frustrated you can't) just liking them is the biggest and best step forward. They sense

it and will lend you greater trust. You'll find yourself enjoying teaching more too.

- The final thing that helps is aiming to be good. Hearing about a previous "super ALT" in Shiga, I wondered what she'd done. Why couldn't I do it too? Taking a sense of personal responsibility to be good in my position and in turn "making it my own" led me on a path of (somewhat) determined professionalism that returned a lot of satisfaction and success. Being considerate of local manners adds further icing to the cake.



Recommendations for current JETs

Four things:

1. Walk around, get lost (occasionally) and embody a willingness to meet people. There were no Google maps or bikes for me when I got here (only the latter by choice). I walked most places on foot and guess I wore a friendly enough expression for people to stop and greet me. I didn't mean to build up acquaintances but it happened and from there networks took hold helping me settle in, enjoy and discover more of

Japan.

2. Find a hobby or something outside of school. Becoming a bit of collector of pottery while here, I've travelled to different pottery areas of Japan and built my Japanese from zero in the want of finding out more about places, events or people in the field (plus the shopping lingo!). It also helps relax people into conversation having a talking point to start with and they love to recommend stuff when they can. Through my growing reputation, I've also been given use of an old Japanese farm house to act as a display space for my pieces (yay!).



3. Don't forget to learn Japanese body language alongside verbal language. Japan, being a group-orientated society, means that social nuances are well ingrained and often unsaid. We often rely more heavily on direct verbal communication between people in the West. Not being flexible enough between these cultural differences in communication can cause friction and misunderstandings. Also, teach these underlying cultural differences in communication to your kids so they can see the importance of speaking up and out!

4. If frustrated by the role you've been ascribed at work and you've had barriers towards changing it, stay dedicated to working hard in areas you

like in your job (for me, illustrating and designing a lot of my work, then for larger school events). By gaining recognition and respect in one area, doors will open for you to put your keen teaching tendrils into other aspects of your job.



Something she wishes she'd done

Hmm— not much, as I'm pretty selfish and driven to do what I want. Though, in hindsight, seeing how much I like interacting with a lot of non-English teachers now, I wish I'd made a lot more effort to talk to the teachers at my first school. Being the biggest (or most salient) outsider, I expected them to talk to and welcome me but they didn't (I guess mostly out shyness—I hope!). Then, sadly, I got used to it and not many of us ever made the effort (apart from the odd enkai moment). I've been back to my old school a few times since, and have found the shyer teachers of old are not so shy after all!

I've also been slack on taking the more "local" chance to visit Mongolia.

What she does now

I still happily work as an ALT (though on a 4-day

a week schedule that I managed to negotiate with my school, Shiga Gakuen). On the other 3 days of the week (if I'm not doing other English related community stuff), I visit craft markets around Japan, set up small exhibitions of my collections and host different events from experimental movie nights to day cafes and the odd tea ceremony. I've also run tours of my local area and Kyoto focusing on interesting spots and gallery cafes. Then there is my volunteer role as one of 3 core members of a group called "Be Wa" (a play on words coming from "Lake Biwa," the most prominent feature of our prefecture). Be Wa centres around a [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page showcasing the people, places and events of Shiga in English. I also made a teacher training manual for ALTs called "An ALT Skill Set" a few years back funded by my school that I must get back into circulation when I can squeeze it in! I've also started to try to balance my time a bit better between Japan and Australia. This year I will spend a total of 3 months Down Under during the school holiday seasons. I've also thought to collaborate in the future with craftspeople I know in Japan to offer design products to local and overseas markets. I need more time!

Contact Information

I don't get to spend a lot of free time online, but do please contact me at taleola@yahoo.com if you have questions, comments, etc.

Belinda Kyle

I stare at the bones for several seconds before I realize just how angry the birds are. I'm confused. They ruffle their feathers, heads jogging back and forth. A clack of a beak, a small whistle that sounds more like a growl.

"Why here, Fireflight?" asks Henwyn.

"Why her? Can't we go now? Can't we take care of this ourselves?" Sybil huffs even more than usual.

The Mohawk flops one wing on the table, "The Margravine! The all loving! My despairing heart, mother mine!"

"I can't stand this flittering. Sit down, Mohawk!" that also from Henwyn.

Finally I look up. Fireflight, the ever silent, still stares into my eyes. After a moment, he turns his back and flies from the kitchen. I haven't seen him in flight before. I really haven't seen any of them flying, not since that first night when they arrived. They must though, come to think of it. Some of them must go out because they always know what's happening with the fires before I tell them. Even though I've been feeding them, someone goes out.

He flies like a slowmo movie, pulling in his wings to fit through the door and then opening in this grand sweep to turn up the stairs. I want to see it again, but the other three follow him instantly, with much less aplomb. Henwyn looks back at me with concern just before she disappears around the corner.

So here I sit, with a box of bones on the table in front of me. I've seen animal bones before, in my woods, and now I'm sure these belong to a bird. Many of the pieces are hollow, and I can see one that looks like the part where a skull becomes a beak. By the size of what I think is a femur, it was a large bird. Not as big as an

ostrich but bigger than a turkey. There aren't enough bones here for a whole skeleton, but maybe all the dust in the bottom of the box is what's left of the rest. I can feel the story here, just like the other things that come to this house. Will this box answer my questions? The other items are human. I can tell those stories, while tragic, are simply a part of this world's history, or perhaps the future. But here, in this box, there lies a story beyond any I've heard before. This story is of the birds.

Where DID they come from? It's finally time for answers. I'm going to march upstairs and they are going to tell me what's going on!

I'm still sitting in the kitchen.

I haven't even picked the cereal up off the floor. The bone box just sits there calling to me. Even though I closed it and pushed it away, it still calls to me. I'm not touching it, yet it calls. I hate the box, but it calls. Just shut up already. I don't want to talk to you, box of bones.

Fine! Fine, fine, fine, fine, fine. I will listen to this box. I will hear, and see what it wants, for it surely wants something from me. I will take it to my asking chair in the drawing room beside the dead lamp, and we will just see what this is all about.

What the Box Told Me (I think... I'm pretty sure anyway, it was all rather strange.)

When the world was young there were few of us in it.

(Not Earth, I could tell right away this was about the Birds' world.)

The Margravine, the Count, and the Fool lived in peace among the swift winds and the soft breezes. The fool danced, the Count grumbled, and the Margravine led. The Count loved the fool, for the fool was lithe and beautiful. And the Count loved the Margravine, for she was power and strength. The fool loved the wind, and the Margravine loved no one. This was

the beginning.

As time went on, more birds came into the world. Whether by magic or more natural means, we do not know. Most probably they came in the way all infant things come. Some belong to the Count, and some to the Fool. But most belong to the Margravine, for she was mighty. Still, she did not love them. Her children loved her, but she could not reciprocate that most ideal of feelings. Her heart was built on strength and righteousness. Her ideal was to rule life with efficiency and productivity. She built the world of her bones and the seas of her blood. She built everything for the Birds and taught them how to use it. Though they flew on the Fool's winds, all birds lived through the Margravine. Though they spoke with the Count's words, all birds thought with the Margravine's mind. What was love to one such as her? And yet, all the world, the Count, and even the Fool, came to love her in all her glory. This was the middle.

(I asked how there could have been a world if the Margravine didn't build it till the middle, but the box didn't answer me.)

After all was made, and all was finished, the Margravine grew lonely. Her children loved her with all their hearts, but their hearts were a part of the Margravine herself, and she could not feel their love. She knew she did not love the Count or the Fool; perhaps their hearts were also a part of her. And so, she left her world in search of another heart. She searched and she searched until she came to this place. (Earth? The box still won't answer me.) In this place, she found an infinity of hearts. And astonishing though it may be, each heart was unconnected. Each heart stood alone, choosing to love or hate as each saw fit. Here at last was the paradise for which the Margravine searched. Surely among so many, the Margravine could find one that her heart loved. And so, she began her hunt among birds unknown. And she did find many a wonder and many a strange individual, but still her heart did not quicken to any of them. This was also the

middle.

Back in the world, the Birds grew loveless themselves. The Fool began to despise the Margravine, partly in jealousy and partly in the pain of being rejected. The Count was befuddled. He didn't understand how both his loves could abandon him, for as the Fool became more and more morose, the Count counted less and less. Eventually the grievances caused by the Margravine's disappearance spread to her children as well. All the birds fractured into contentious factions fighting for the love they should have given to the Margravine. Among them, only the Esteemed Flock still loved her. This too, became the middle.

When the love left the world, the world began to break. At first, no one noticed. The seas ran slow and the winds blew slower still, but no one noticed. The fruit changed color and the leaves turned down, but no one noticed. The children died, and finally, the Esteemed Flock noticed. They chose a leader and set off to find the Margravine. And since the world was herself, the Margravine also began to break. Only when her bones grew old and dusty here, in this place, did the Margravine realize her mistake. Without the love of her children, the Margravine's strength dwindled. And without the Margravine, the world's love dwindled. The Margravine did not wish for the world to die, even though she did not love them. But because they would not love her any longer, she must die. And so she made a pact with the Esteemed Flock. If they fulfilled the pact, the world would live. If you fulfill your part, the world will live. This is the end.

"What is my part?" I ask the box, but it won't answer. It's dead again. It no longer calls.

I'm still hungry so I'm going to go eat my cereal now.

Louise Warren

This is chapter 3 of Sometime Last Week. Catch up on [chapter 2](#), or start from the [beginning](#).

Lynn lived alone. This had several advantages: she could smoke wherever she wanted, she could stretch out in the bed and have the blankets all to herself, she could eat, bathe and listen to music according to her fancies alone and she could practice the black arts without anyone interfering, trying to save her soul, or, worst of all, showing a polite interest.

Lynn lived alone, so she was surprised to hear a noise coming from her kitchen that morning. She walked in, naked— it was her cottage and they were the burglars, so they could bloody well just get used to it— when she realised the noise was the doorbell. She wasn't sure if she'd ever heard it ringing before. Had anyone ever visited her?

She decided this merited a change of plans, went back to her bedroom and threw on some clothes. She then went and opened the front door. Outside stood her sister, and the only child Lynn could even barely tolerate; "Alice!" She cooed in what she hoped was a welcoming voice.

"Lynn, I need a favour," Lynn's sister, Zoe, said.

Lynn looked from her sister to her niece and back again. Then it dawned on her. She had heard about this possibility when she'd told her friends in the coven that her sister was pregnant— apparently it was known as "babysitting." She'd understood that it was more dangerous than an ill-fortune cantrip or a demon-binding ritual. "Oh, no, I can't, Zoe, I absolutely can't."

"Please, I'm desperate."

Today was the day that Lynn had been hoping to try out her transmutation spell; she needed absolute peace and quiet if she wasn't to turn the walls to water. "No, Zoe, really, it's just not possible."

Zoe made a small nudging motion with her hand against the back of her daughter's head and rather mechanically Alice said, "Please, Auntie Lynn."

Lynn had never wanted children and, indeed, never would— but she had a soft spot for Alice, with her unruly jet-black hair and complete inability to hide her emotions. Zoe knew nothing of Lynn's occult practices, and Lynn would really rather keep it that way, but she guessed she could put off the transmutation spell for just an afternoon. "Two hours: no more."

"Oh God, you're a lifesaver," Zoe deflated with gratitude. She turned and kissed her daughter on the forehead and then was off down the garden path towards the gate, "Back by—" but the low, resonant wail of the gate hinges saved her from lying about when she intended to be back.

Lynn turned to look at Alice— the spitting image of her grandmother, down to the natural pursing of the lips when the face was supposedly in neutral. "Hungry?"

The little girl nodded and Lynn led her inside. In the kitchen, she realised that there was a problem— Lynn mainly consisted on a diet of gin and nicotine, with the occasional supplement of marzipan thrown in, for the vitamins. She threw open the cupboard, hoping to find an old forgotten packet of apricots, or at least some lentils for her niece to snack on. It was damningly empty.

She turned back around to her niece to find her trying, quite industriously, to open the massive

gas oven. Lynn swooped Alice up into her arms and dragged her clawing and pining away from the stove. Lynn plonked her down on the floor and knelt down to look her in the eyes, "Alice, sweetie, listen to me, this is very important: never— and I mean never ever, ever— climb into an oven, okay? They are very, very dangerous."

Alice stared at the floor, either out of shame or anger.

"Alice, are you listening to me?"

"Yes."

"So, what did I say?"

"Ovens are dangerous." She repeated petulantly.

"Exactly, now come on," Lynn took her niece's hand and lead her back into the kitchen, "I have an idea."

Lynn gathered up every cup, plate, bowl and flowerpot that she had ever used as an ashtray and tipped their contents onto the table. Then she took a stick of chalk from her pocket and drew a rough circle around the pile of grey soot.

"What are you doing?" Alice asked.

"Something very secret— so you absolutely cannot tell mummy, okay?"

"Okay."

"And take your thumb out of your mouth."

"Yes," said Alice through her thumb.

Lynn knew she shouldn't do this— Alice would undoubtedly tell her mother exactly what they'd

done the moment she saw her— but if a four-year-old told you that her auntie had made food out of dust then you'd just think that you'd done some baking. And besides, this way, she got to practice her new spell and teach her niece about self-reliance and the usefulness of productivity. She drew a different rune at four equidistant points of the circle and then raised her hands.

"Watch now, you'll like this part." Lynn spoke the magic words and then clapped her hands together over her head. The ash began to rise into the air; each individual particle levitated up, in a mad attempt to escape from its siblings, rising higher and higher, but always staying within the chalk circle.

"Wow," said Alice, her mouth agape in amazement. Then, when the topmost flecks had almost reached the ceiling, they suddenly collapsed back down, crashing down through the air, colliding into the pieces below and bringing them down with them, until the entire pile hit onto the tabletop once again, sending up a grey cloud that obscured the centre of the circle.

Alice flinched, expecting some of the dust to hit her in the face, but still the ash remained within its chalk enclosure. And when the flecks settled back down onto the table, in the centre lay a pile of gingerbread men. There was no ash on them— indeed, the few remaining bits had landed far away from the confections, hedging themselves to the edge of the circle, as though afraid of the little biscuit figures.

Alice's face lit up and she reached greedily into the pile and grabbed as many gingerbread men as she could carry. "I like to bite off the heads!" She exclaimed and merrily began to decapitate her snack-time victims with her teeth.

Lynn smiled at her niece's delight. "Alice, look what else I can do," she waved her hand and the remaining gingerbread men sprang up and stood on the round stumps that constituted their legs. Alice dropped her current captives in amazement, her eyes wide with astonishment. Lynn flicked her fingers and the gingerbread men began to walk, their movements exaggerated but fluid, and formed two lines, one facing the other; Lynn swirled her index finger, and a waltz began. In perfect time, moving to inaudible music, the gingerbread men took one another in their arms and began to dance around the table, twirling each other, splitting apart and then re-meeting, with none ever missing a beat.

Alice's face was lit with an indescribable ecstasy—she had never seen anything like this in her life. The waltz continued, and one dancing pair swung very close to the girl, when she suddenly swept them up in her hand and, as they were still moving, still trying to follow the dance moves even as they were being carried away, she shoved their heads into her mouth and bit down.

They stopped moving immediately. On the table, the biscuit people all fell to the floor, no longer animate, as though mourning their fallen colleagues with their stillness.

Alice grinned, immune to the shock she had just caused to her aunt. It was true that the gingerbread men weren't alive— that was a trick Lynn would never want to learn— but she couldn't shake the horrible feeling that her niece hadn't known that when she'd bitten down.

"I want to try!" Alice yelled. "I want to try making gingerbread!"

"Oh, I don't think that's a good idea, Alice, your mother wouldn't like it."

"Please!" Alice cried, bearing her teeth where the remains of her prey still clung. And, even though a voice protested in her head that this was a very bad idea and a feeling in her heart told her that this was the start of something dark and terrible, Lynn agreed. She thought she could sense power in Alice— there was an aura about her of control and magnetism— and she was curious to see if she was right.

Under the pretence of making more ash for Alice she had a quick cigarette and let the flakes fall into the middle of the table. She then brought her niece back into the room and handed her the magic chalk— however bright Alice might have been, the ability to draw a circle eluded her. The wavy, arbitrary ellipsoid she made brought to mind spilled soup or perhaps a smushed apple. Her copies of the runes were sloppy, but a lot better than Lynn was expecting; but the real surprise was her pitch perfect pronunciation of the spell. Lynn raised her hands and bid Alice to copy her, then carefully and precisely over articulated the magic words— she'd seen far too many examples of what happened to those who were sloppy with their enunciation during casting— and Alice, with an ease, grace, quickness and elegance that belied an innate understanding of the unknown language she was speaking, reproduced them perfectly and then smashed her hands together over her head.

The lights went out. The windows cracked and the roof groaned. The beams creaked and the pipes shuddered. Alice jumped into her aunt's arms and curled upon herself, hiding her head.

The walls were made of gingerbread.

Lynn laughed—it was incredible. This little girl, this tiny little slip of a thing that she held in her arms— she could weigh no more than a cat— had managed to transmute mortar and brick into sugar and spice. It was amazing. It was terrifying. If Lynn

had thought about it, concentrated and tried, she could probably have achieved this effect— but Alice hadn't had to try. She had done it without thinking— without even meaning to, she'd displayed a level of occult prowess that Lynn hadn't accomplished until her early twenties. She was an Adept.

Lynn lowered Alice into a chair and stroked her hair. "It's ok, it's ok. There's nothing to be frightened of. It's fine— look."

Alice peeped out from under her arm as her aunt tried desperately to remember the words to undo magic. She waved her hand and, while simultaneously concentrating immensely and trying to make it seem like it was nothing at all, she chanted the words under her breath, partly so Alice wouldn't hear them. Hesitantly, the walls returned to their usual cream facade. Alice lifted her head and looked around.

"I'm sorry, Auntie Lynn."

"Don't ever apologise for talent, Alice. You have a very powerful gift, and you should be proud of that." Despite these words, and against Alice's protestations, Lynn declined to do anymore magic that afternoon, instead reading to her niece from a book of fairytales that Zoe had particularly enjoyed when they were little. Alice seemed especially taken with Babes in the Wood, enthralled with the idea of the lost children, parentless and in a seemingly endless forest. Lynn chalked this up to the novelty of the idea of independence from adults for the young girl, rather than malice.

When Zoe returned, much, much later, she found her daughter happily sat upon Lynn's lap. She jumped up when she saw her mother and started saying a lot of nonsense about dancing biscuits and magic walls. Zoe thanked her sister and then led Alice out of the cottage, down the garden path and

through her gate.

"Mummy, I know what I'm going to do when I grow up," Alice announced proudly as though this was a proclamation long in the making that the world had been waiting for.

"Oh, and what's that?"

"I'm going to live in a cottage, just like Auntie Lynn."

Zoe smiled, "Well, that sounds lovely. I hope I can come and visit."

"No," Alice said forcefully and stopped walking. "It's just going to be me and the children in the wood. No one else."

"What children in the wood?"

"The babies. The ones in the story."

"And why would they want to come to your house?" Zoe asked, feeling she had lost the thread of what her daughter was talking about.

At this, Alice began to walk again and smiled knowingly. "Because it'll be made of gingerbread."

Rory Kelly

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
All month:	British Museum Exhibition		1	2	3	4
	Rokko Meets Art– Art Walk 2015					
	Manga*Anime*Games from Japan					
	Cheese & Wool Festa (starts 10/3)					
5	6	7	8	9	10 Kaizuka Danjiri Matsuri (Osaka) Kobe Jazz Street Tamba Sasayama Food Festival	11
12 Tamba Sasayama Food Festival	13	14 Kinosaki Danjiri Matsuri Nada Fighting Festival	15	16	17 Tamba Sasayama Food Festival	18 D-Prep Event
19	20	21	22 Jidai Matsuri (Kyoto)	23	24	25 Book Club: Real World Live Jazz Rokko
26	27	28	29	30	31 Block 6 Halloween Party	

