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Happy New Year, everybody!

January is in many ways a false start. Besides the year, one of the few things to begin again are school terms. And those aren't even the start of a new school year! At my university, the month was dedicated to intensive month-long classes, and I partook all three Januarys during which I was enrolled. Chemistry was a review and thus dull, Buddhism and Yoga at the same time was enlightening, but by far, my favorite class was Cultural Psychology in Japan. It was my first visit to this fascinating country we live in.

Of the fourteen students in the class, I was the only one that could say anything beyond ありがとう and こんにちは, which proved to make me a highly sought-after travel buddy as we listened to lectures and explored the culture in places ranging from Tokyo to Hiroshima to

Wakayama. As far as first visits go, it was pretty jam-packed and educational. It also served to nurture the seed of my wanting to live here. I anticipated only one year.

To start your year off right, we have many articles for you to peruse. Newcomer Jappy shares her experience of volunteering with the deaf and blind and how [language](#) impacts our lives. Rackle advises us on [inexpensive transportation](#) options for traveling around and there is also a review of [Nagasaki](#), just in time to plan before the Lantern Festival next month. Scott returns with an entertaining take on [onsen](#). Sometime Last Week also returns with its [fifth chapter](#) and is joined by the [first part](#) of a story about one thespian's darkest deed. There is also a review of the most recent [book club](#) meeting, an alumni article by former Hyogo JET [Louie Bertenshaw](#), and a piece on the decision to [recontract](#).

Mere weeks into my first JET year, I knew one year would be insufficient. Sometime between then and last January, I amended that sentiment to two years wouldn't be enough. But alas, now I must go. I have decided to make way for the new and get back on track with my chosen career path. Only you will know when is best to stop your road trip. Do keep in mind that we're not even halfway through this year, though: keep your eyes peeled for fun experiences, regardless of whether you will stay or go. Let's make the next eight months unforgettable.

Brittany Teodorski



Photo courtesy of Caitlin Ellerbe.

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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

H

appy New Year, everyone.

This is Sadie, the Tajima (read: boonies) Representative.

If you're reading this, then there's a good chance you're back from holidays and getting settled into your kotatsu to wait out the remaining months of winter. Good, good, as you should be.

I've lived my entire life in a cold climate, but I never experienced the winter blues like I did my first year in Japan. Especially if your work environment is less than satisfactory and you can't get over the fact that the insides of buildings are just as cold as the outside, it can be rough. So I'd like to remind everyone to take care, both physically and mentally, as we head into January and February. Now is an important time to reflect on all the good things you love about Japan and indulge in them somewhat gluttonously.

My personal favorite things to do on a regular basis are eating nabe, visiting onsen, and shelling out the extra money for strawberries. I highly recommend buying the slightly expensive food you've been eyeballing, and perhaps laying-off the alcohol a bit. You probably need the vitamins anyway.

And, if you need to get away, or would like to enjoy the snow, then please come up and visit Tajima. We don't have the greatest amount of things to offer, but winter is our shining season in my opinion.

January 23rd will be our annual AJET Ski Trip. Beginners to Advanced are welcome, and we're trying to find a trainer for anyone who's never gone

skiing or snowboarded before. In the evening, you'll get to stay in a ryokan, and eat and drink to your content.



February 6th and 7th is the annual [Tajima Yuki Gasen](#) or Snowball Fight Tournament. Make a team and enter to try and win a trip to Hokkaido! Or just come up to watch. Should be good either way.

And right now, this very moment is crab season in [Kinosaki](#). Fresh crab is almost non-existent where I live back in the States, so take advantage of the quality and quantity! Do a nabe, donburi, platter—you name it, they got it! Is it cheap? No. But it's affordable, and you'll likely never have such easy access to this level of quality for the price again, so don't miss out! And afterwards, you can take a romantic stroll among the willow trees before relaxing in the onsen.

Hope to see you around.

Stay warm, everyone!

Sadie Cornforth

I

t's the year of the Monkey and in celebration here is something sweet to eat!

Zenzai is a dessert that can be enjoyed year round and, of course, in winter it is served hot. In some parts of Japan, zenzai or oshiruko お汁粉 (the more watery version of zenzai) is served as the New Year's main soup dish known as Ozōni お雑煮 (though most Ozōni consists of a variation of meat, vegetables, miso, and mochi). The zenzai is topped with either mochi 餅 or shiratama dango 白玉団子, which marks its main difference with its Chinese cousin, the much more watery hóng dòu tāng 紅豆汤.

Ingredients:

- ½ Cup Anko (red bean) canned or in a packet
- ½ Cup Water
- A pinch of Salt
- 1+ Mochi
- Sugar (to taste)

Note: dried red beans can also be used to make this, but it requires soaking the beans overnight and boiling them for hours on end.

Instructions:

1. Mix together the anko and water in a pot and bring to a boil. Add in a pinch of salt, mix well and turn off the heat.

Tip: Adjust the sweetness to your taste by adding

sugar if it's not sweet enough or water if it's too sweet.



2. Place a mochi or two or three into the toaster oven and toast 'til they puff up and are golden brown. The time it takes will vary from oven to oven, but about four minutes at 230°C should do the trick.
3. Transfer the soup mixture into a bowl and top with the mochi.
4. Wrap yourself in a warm blanket, sit down (preferably under a toasty kotatsu) and enjoy.

Variations: In summer, let cool, refrigerate and serve cold. In fall, if you're feeling extra fancy, top the warm zenzai with roasted chestnut halves.

Have a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

mandy

When travelling in Japan as a tourist, getting around is easy. The rail pass makes travel a breeze and the tourist tracks are clear and well-travelled. However, it is once you become a resident that you realize that travelling within Japan is a lot more convoluted and expensive than it originally seemed, especially if you want to travel to some of the more unusual spots. Many times we have looked at the google routes offered and shuddered at the price tag. So below I list several sure fire ways to save yourself time and money while ticking off your bucket list here in Japan.

Number 1 – Car



Photo courtesy of Emily Blair.

If you are a lucky JET that already has a car then congratulations! All those hard to reach places are now that much simpler to get to. Woohoo! For those of us with an international driver's licenses but no car, consider hiring one for your more cross country adventures from companies like [Toyota-Rent-A-Car](#) or [Times Car Rental](#). Both companies have multiple offices all across the country and even in remote areas. On top of that, the cost can be for as little as 7000 yen for 24 hours, so depending on the size of your travel group and the length of the journey you intend to make, you can save quite a lot of money. Alternatively, you can also do what I did and make friends with someone who has a car and volunteer as navigator whenever they have a journey in mind.

Number 2 – Bus



Photo courtesy of Tennen-Gas via Wikimedia commons.

The bus on both day and night time routes is a popular option for many travel-hungry JETs. Depending on the day and time of travel, tickets generally range from 3000 to 10,000 yen for most journeys so there is a lot of saving to be done. Companies like [Shinkai Bus](#) (Japanese only) and [Willer Express](#) are regular favorites with a wide selection of routes and prices. A word of warning though: these buses are not made for light sleepers or the vertically unchallenged. Many a time, I have found myself cramped,

uncomfortable and wide awake as a salary man snores loudly and blissfully beside me. The bus is by far the cheapest way for an individual to travel in Japan.



Photo courtesy of KushujiRapid via Wikimedia commons.

Number 3 – Slow Shinkansen

Of course we all know about the zippy, sleek and stylish shinkansen that frequent the station, but did you know that there are several “local” shinkansen services, for example the [Kodama line](#) between Osaka and Tokyo? The journey takes about four hours compared to the usual two and a half but costs only around 10,000 yen compared to the usual 15,000 of the regular shinkansen. Tickets can be booked either at the counter by asking specifically or through a JTB travel agent, who will also throw in a drink voucher to use when you travel. So if you have time to spare and want to take a scenic route, the slower shinkansen are a way to go.

Number 4- Cheap ticket offices

Many a station and side street has one of these stores. Often barely bigger than a lotto ticket booth and remarkably similar in design, these stores are worth their weight in gold. Generally, they are open similar hours to regular stores and

offer a wide selection of locations and journeys. Look for the tell-tale green of the JR ticket behind the glass to find one. Often they can save you anywhere between 10% to 50% off regular ticket prices, for example a round trip from Himeji to Osaka may usually cost around 5000 yen, but with a cheap ticket purchased before hand, it can drop to as low as 2500. Usual prices for a ticket between Shin-Osaka and Tokyo is about 15,000 usually but drops down to 13,500 and can be swapped for reserved seats on any shinkansen line at the ticket office in the station. Not bad overall.

No matter what your travel plans are, be sure to shop around before you make the final booking. I hope this all helps, and have fun on your next big adventure!

Rackle Beaman



Photo courtesy of Mitsuki-236 via Wikimedia commons.

I can honestly tell you that one of my biggest challenges while living here in Japan has been the language barrier. Most of the things in my daily life are affected by this. I never thought it would take me minutes before someone could understand me, and another set of minutes for me to comprehend what they said. Nobody said that buying laundry soap and fabric conditioner would require me to bring out my smart phone and use Google Translate. Even using the washing machine, rice cooker, and air conditioner has become a real struggle. Some of these things used to be very easy and almost no brainers back home. But, now that I have decided to live in Japan, I must do my best to overcome the language barrier. がんばる! But for the past 4 months, I can say that I haven't fully broken down this wall yet. Nihongo isn't that easy, but it isn't that hard either. If you think about it, the complexity of the Japanese language is almost the same as my native language, Filipino— just exclude the hiragana, katakana, and kanji. We say that through language, we can determine the uniqueness of a culture, yet at the same time, using a common language helps us understand one another. But how much can language help or hinder us? Can words really convey the messages we want to express?

One Saturday, I chose to do something different. I decided to finally meet Pearl, a Filipina and one of the coordinators of the JET Christian Fellowship. I remembered the last time I contacted her was when I found out about my placement, which was last July. She posted an event on the JCF



page and sent me a message. With so much excitement and because I needed to add some meaning to my weekend, I volunteered for charity work with an organization in Osaka for deaf and blind people. It didn't require Japanese ability, so I jumped in. I met Pearl and the others at Tsuruhashi Station that Saturday morning. Some people arrived late because of important arrangements, so it provided ample time for me and Pearl to talk about ourselves and random things. As we reached the building of the organization, we were welcomed with big smiles and some sounds of joy ('cause they were trying to speak). I was in awe. We started by giving self-introductions (jikoshoukai) to some of the volunteers and staff. Afterwards—the challenging part— we gave our jikoshoukai in Japanese sign language. I never knew that there is a special sign language for Japanese (日本手話). With the little Japanese that I have, it became difficult for me to learn shuwa. But, nonetheless, everything was worth the challenge. It was past 1pm when we arrived. Some of them were busy doing handicrafts. Though it wasn't a new scenario for me because some deaf and blind people back home also do similar things, I was still amazed. After the introduction, we just spent our time

helping them with their work while talking to them. Thanks to the people who taught me how, I could communicate with these lovely people who unfortunately cannot see or speak. By 3pm, we called it a day. They packed up and went back home. Tomorrow's gonna be another day.



On my way home, as I recalled the things that happened, I took the time to thank God for using this experience to meet new friends, to learn Japanese sign language, to be more motivated in learning Nihongo, to be inspired with everything that I do, and to realize that neither language nor cultural differences will ever become a barrier— unless we allow them to become so. It was a very good learning experience for me. I realized that if we want to understand or to be understood, we just need to speak and listen from our hearts. Words may be powerful, but actions speak louder. A simple smile, handshake or hug could mean so much more than a simple “hello.” Spending this day with the deaf and blind inspired me to do more with what I have.

We have our complete senses, but are we using them properly and for the good? Have we opened our eyes and hearts to see the goodness in everything? Do we listen to the needs of others? This world may be full of misunderstandings and differences, but being human requires no language, except love.

Jappy Molina



I've just signed my reappointment papers. Well, by the time this is published, it won't be "just," but you get the idea: I've made my mind up: I'm staying for another year.

If a woman were to get knocked up right now, she could carry the baby to full term, birth it, realistically travel once around the world Jules Verne style, get pregnant again, carry that baby to full term and have the damn thing before I finish my life in Japan. Put like that, my plans for the next twenty-one months sound dull by comparison. Maybe I should try and find that woman; she's clearly got a lot going on.

Anyway, the decision to reappoint caused me more anxiety than it realistically should have. I enjoy my life in Japan a whole awful lot: I have friends, money and enough free time at work that I can not only write this article but also google "how long would it realistically take to travel once around the earth Jules Verne style?" Also, there are bars with penguins inside them, so I'm pretty sure this might be the best country ever. However, it's not all sunshine and updating Facebook at work; there are issues.

For one thing, I don't know what my next school will be like— I have a grand total of six schools (four Elementary, two Junior High), and I've only seen five so far. My next school, a Junior High, will be the institution where I actually spend the majority of my time, as I'll be there from January to July. I've visited the school twice and everyone seemed nice but experience tells me not to make

judgments after only one showing— after all, Jack Sparrow seemed cool at first.

Another problem is that I know my own temperament: if something starts to irritate me— and, much like a Pokémon battle, it really can begin with next-to-no provocation— that irritation will consume me until I can't see the forest for the hateful, hateful trees and I just absolutely have to remove that thing from my life immediately or I can't think about anything else. This is why I gave away all my Yu-Gi-Oh! cards when I was ten and haven't seen the finale of House, despite watching for eight and a half seasons. At the moment, I love Japan and my life here, but that could all change at any given moment and that worries me (not least because it seems to suggest some greater problem in my general personality).

And finally, I realise that Japan is really just a stop-gap. I'm not Anna in The King and I, bravely forging a new life for myself in a foreign land, I'm Pinkerton in Madame Butterfly, having a bit of fun and then shoving off (though I plan to be less of a dick than him). I'm checking out the Penguin Bars, taking a few selfies, maybe teaching some kids if I have the time and then going back to reality. Life here is beautiful but temporary, like a sexy mayfly, and while I'm all about mining all the good you can out of any seam, eventually I have to surface and face the light that is adult life. And I think that light will be harsher the longer I spend underground.

But, countering all of that is optimism. I tell myself and others that I am an optimistic person, but very rarely do I actually follow any of the tenants of the movement: I'm a bit of a Christmas Eve

optimist, except that Christmas usually makes me gloomy. But, in reappointment has come the perfect opportunity to put my money where my mouth is while simultaneously earning more money: despite the objections listed above, I think I'll regret it if I leave.

Like I said, I know my own temperament and, honestly, my fear of missing out outweighs my annoyance at being wrong. I've attended a fair old whack of shit parties—I used to date a bus spotter—but I've usually been able to console myself by saying that at least I was invited and reminding myself that the love of my life or Geoffrey Rush might have been there (that totally happened once) and would I really wanted to have missed that? And lots of times, parties have turned out to be so much better than I'd anticipated and I get to act smug and enjoy a good party: I don't know which is better! (Being smug.)

In the short-term, staying for a year and hating it will be difficult but in the long-term, wondering constantly about what would have happened had I stayed would be torture. And, happily, at the moment all the signs are pointing to an enjoyable tenure in Japan. So, even if it goes pear-shaped, I can console myself that I made what was the logical decision at the time.

There is a lyric in Sunday in the Park with George which I think may be the wisest sentiment hidden in rhyme since "he who smelt it, dealt it": "I chose and my world was shaken/So what?/The choice may have been mistaken/The choosing was not." If you are forced by circumstance, time or your employer to make a decision and you really don't know what to do, then just pick an option and ride it out. Don't blame yourself for the outcome,

but congratulate yourself for your decisiveness. And then google more Penguin Bars.

Rory Kelly

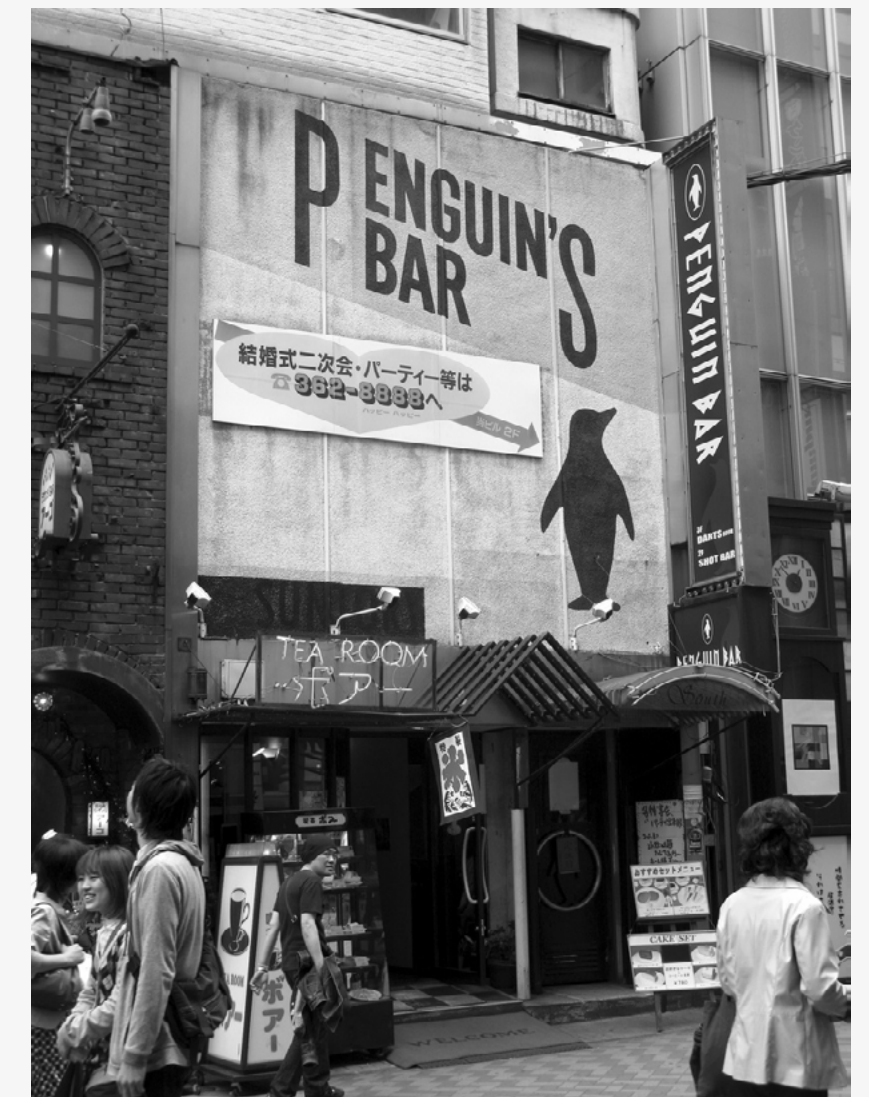
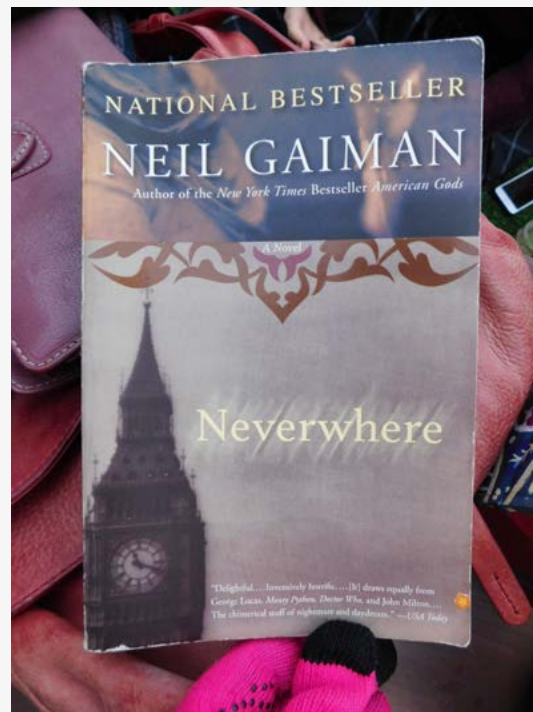


Photo courtesy of Douglas Sprott via flickr commons.

At the most recent book club, which took place on December 13th, we covered *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman. A relatively short novel (at least for bibliophiles), coming in at a little under 400 pages, it nevertheless succeeds in painting a Wonderland-esque parallel reality that is rather dark and well-fleshed out. In addition, it is essentially the extended version of the BBC show of the same name. You can find various clips on YouTube and revel in the camp so characteristic of many of the network's offerings.



In a perfect world, our book club would have met at Motomachi Station, traveled together in an unwieldy mass of bodies, and found ourselves happily seated over café fare in Modernark, complete with more than four not-quite-White-

Elephant gifts. We live in reality, however, so the twenty minutes leading up to our designated start time involved our fearless leader discovering Modernark (who does not take reservations, at least not for absurdly-sized parties) could not accommodate us, followed by me and another participant scrambling from café to café trying in vain to find somewhere suitable. Alas, it was not to be. On the upside, happily, the weather was uncharacteristically warm, so we opted to settle

into the nearby Kenmin Oasis Park.

No outing is complete without refreshments, so a lone Family Mart suffered our barrage. In a shocking show of self-restraint, I purchased only orange juice. Afterwards, I helped form the Ring of Foreigners™, which I'm sure the passerby were thrilled with, judging from their longing stares. After our circle was completed, it had to disband again as we redoubled our efforts to reach the park.

Upon discovering our chosen locale, we immediately noticed an intimidating security guard scrutinizing us from the corner. We hesitantly entered and placed ourselves near one of the benches. Though it became slightly chilly the longer we sat, it was a pleasant first completely-outdoors experience for the book club. As we broke into our goodies, we introduced ourselves and put forth any gifts we'd brought (my favorite attempt was a half-eaten bag of popcorn). Using the much-loved rock-paper-scissors, we broke into smaller groups to discuss questions about the book.



Photo courtesy of Jillian MacKenzie.

We had generally favorable things to say about the novel, and it received an aggregate 3.25 stars (out of 5) from those who had read and finished (all but two of the first wave!). Personally, I really enjoyed Gaiman's prose, which lent the story a cheeky and entertaining tone.

Following our discussions, several of us reconvened to visit the Luminarie. This was my first visit even though I've been here for two and a half years (I know, I know), so it was a pretty great experience despite the ridiculous line situation. Should you visit next year, definitely go during a weekday if you can.



Photo courtesy of Stephen Crafton.

The next book club will be held on January 31st, when we will discuss *Slade House* by David Mitchell. Like his other novel that we've read, *Cloud Atlas*, it hops through both time and genre, weaving seemingly disparate threads into one tapestry of a narrative. Keep an eye on the [Facebook event page](#) for further details on time and location!

Keep your eyes peeled for a small black iron door.

Down the road from a working-class British pub, along the brick wall of a narrow alley, if the conditions are exactly right, you'll find the entrance to Slade House. A stranger will greet you by name and invite you inside. At first, you won't want to leave. Later, you'll find that you can't. Every nine years, the house's residents—an odd brother and sister—extend a unique invitation to someone who's different or lonely: a precocious teenager, a recently divorced policeman, a shy college student. But what really goes on inside Slade House? For those who find out, it's already too late. . . .

Spanning five decades, from the last days of the 1970s to the present, leaping genres, and barreling toward an astonishing conclusion, this intricately woven novel will pull you into a reality-warping new vision of the haunted house story—as only David Mitchell could imagine it.

(from [Amazon](#))

Brittany Teodoroski



暇

つぶし(ひまつぶし) is a Japanese word whose meaning, as a JET, is probably extremely familiar to you by now. It literally translates to “crushed time,” and is the Japanese equivalent of our “killing time.” In my case, killing time at work usually involves drinking copious amounts of coffee that comes in wee little bags that clip onto the side of your cup: one to two bags down and you’re well lubricated, sashaying down the aisles of the office exchanging small talk with co-workers with the grace of a world champion ping pong player, pinging conversational ping pong balls down the social ping pong ball table with precision aplomb. Three to four and you’re hunched double down the back of the photocopier, legs akimbo, huge egg-like eyes peering out from behind the paper tray

Tonsil Tennis

There are other ways, of course, to make use of the not insignificant amount of downtime that is part and parcel of the JET experience: brush up your Japanese skills by taking an online course, get up and brush the area around your desk, (if you can collect enough compacted dust and lint, you can make a rudimentary stress ball– makes a simple yet effective Christmas stocking filler), brush the hair of your colleague sitting beside you when he’s having his bi-hourly nap (it looks great on you Mr. Yamada, trust me), take an hour of “nenkyuu” and go out to the shop and buy a few brushes (leave one inside every lunchbox you can find next to the sink– trust me your coworkers will be in stitches), pop out to the gym

and play ping pong with a brush instead of a bat and a bat instead of a ball (every time you score a point, shout out “brush”)– trust me the kids will love it, and so on.

Cometh the man, cometh the hour

But what about Onsen you say? Two paragraphs in and nary a peep about Japan’s secret past time, and all this stuff about brushes too! Honestly, I just don’t know where to begin. Onsen (pronounced “awn-sayin” if you are fond of wearing tight stonewash denim, and even if you aren’t, you probably should) are part and parcel of Japan’s leisure industry. They aren’t really somewhere you can go when you’re supposed to be sat at your desk crushing time by compacting balls of hair, dead skin and rotten food into seasonal presents to send home to your family but hey, in a world where yes means no and “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” are de rigeur, anything’s possible.

A Muppet Christmas Carol

Onsen are one of the cornerstones of Shinto Buddhism in the sense that a healthy, clean body equates to a mind and spirit of similar disposition. Most Onsen that you will encounter are not Onsen at all, but in fact Sento, Onsen requiring mineral infused water to be present in at least one bath, and no cheating like adding minerals to regular bath water either. The ritual for bathing is precise– when you walk in, you’ll see a plastic stool on the floor with a showerhead above it, and if you’re lucky, some large bottles of industrial strength body soap and shampoos that’ll take five years off you (as well as about 40 percent of your epidermis). To avoid absolute catastrophe,

follow the following rules like a malnourished frostbitten man on a mountain following a yak along a treacherous ledge– one false move and you’ll be an early Christmas dinner for the societal vultures circling above you.

Things to do

1. Wash the wee plastic stool thingy before you sit on it with the shower head.
2. Wash your hair and then your body once, with the complimentary exfoliants as a pre-wash cleanser, then follow with a secondary, vigorous hair and body wash. Finally, follow with an in-depth deep pore pre-bathing penetrating wash. By now, your body will be stripped of all dirt, sweat, natural oils, vitamins and minerals and you will resemble a freshly embalmed Egyptian princess (yes that applies to you too boys).
3. Fold the B4 paper sized wafer thin towel that you were given at the reception desk (oh you didn’t forget to get one, did you?) into a small square pie shape. Balance it on the top of your head. DO NOT allow it to fall in the water.
4. Gently lower your red raw body into the 40c plus water and enjoy.

Things don’t do

1. Getting the small pie shaped towel wet
2. Non-stamping of nenkyuu forms with personal hanko resulting in unauthorized nenkyuu or stamping of personal hanko on nenkyuu form

in incorrect position resulting in unauthorized nenkyuu.

3. Heavy petting

Terminator Genysis

There’s a great Onsen I go to near Komabayashi subway (Kaigan line– you know, the blue one). Is it really an Onsen? I’m not sure, there’s brown water in some of the baths, but the cause of that is anyone’s guess. Sometime last year, there was a large bulbous squash on display in the foyer. Probably not there now, mind.

END

Scott Patterson

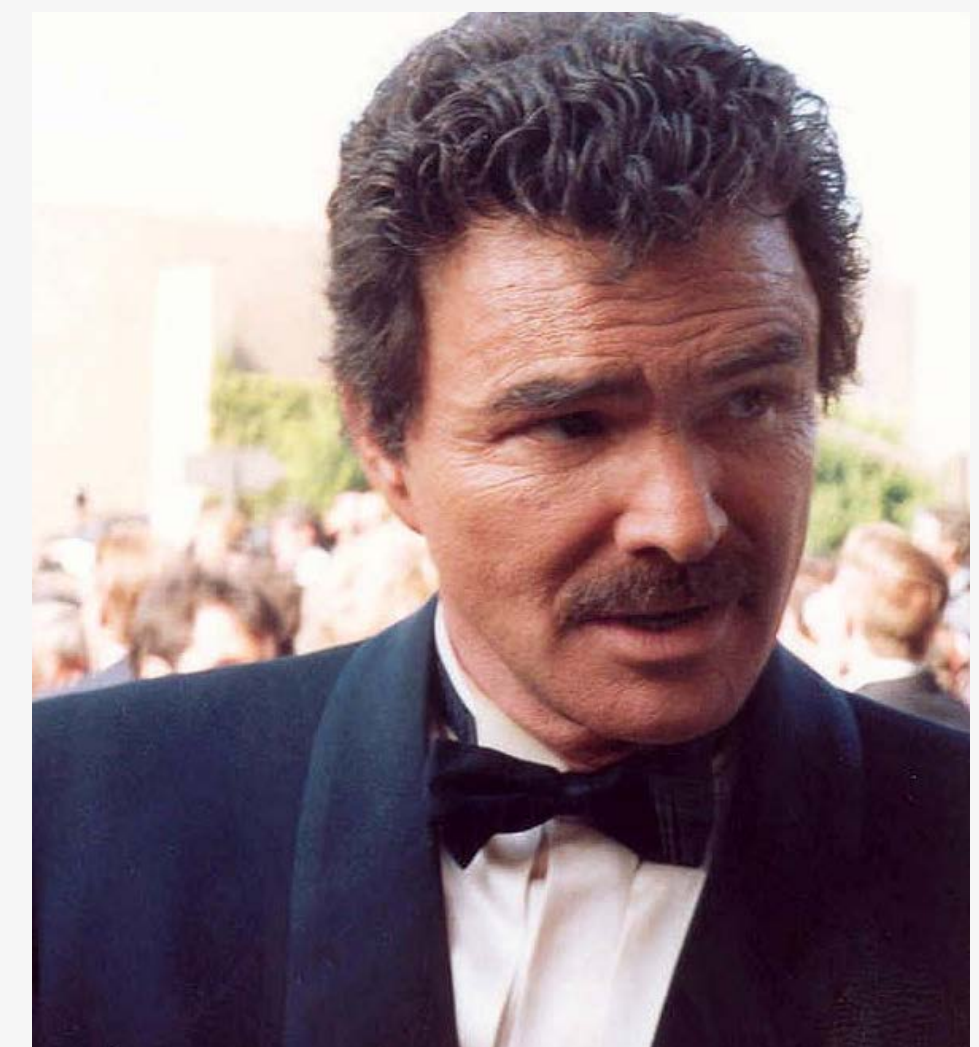


Photo courtesy of Alan Light via Wikimedia commons.

Nagasaki served as one of Japan's primary ports for many years, with the result that the city now has a very distinct atmosphere compared to other mainland Japanese cities. Chinese and European influences are easy to observe, largely through cuisine and religion respectively. The Chinatown is one of three in the nation, and one of its notable celebrations, the Lantern Festival, is coming up in February. Beyond this, there are many delights on offer.



Getting There and Around

For once, Peach is not one of the cheaper options, and it has the added detriment that their flight schedule for Friday through Sunday does not line up well with ALTs' work week. Instead, Skymark is your best bet for flying. Not only are they cheaper and have several options for flight times each day, but they are also based out of Kobe Airport, which is closer than Kansai International. From the airport, you can catch a bus into the city center.

If flying is not an option, you can also take a night bus to Hakata in Fukuoka for about half the price when considering money saved on accommodation. From Hakata, you can take another bus down to Nagasaki. You can make reservations [online](#), or you can buy tickets last minute at the bus station.

Within the city itself, trams are the best way to get from point A to B. Happily, they are also inexpensive and have a flat fare so long as you stay on the same tram. Unhappily, ICOCA does not work on them. Be prepared with plenty of change.

Where to Stay

There are several places in Nagasaki, though due to poor timing and planning, we had to resort to the Cybac internet cafe. Fortunately, it was really nice and lets you leave for a couple hours as long as you leave a deposit. In addition, their second floor is dedicated to billiards, darts, and karaoke, all of which is included in your price. Though you do have to purchase a member card, it is a mere 300円. I've found mat booths the easiest to sleep in. I would also recommend an eye mask to block out light if you, too, have trouble sleeping in the absence of darkness.

Should you prove to be more organized, there are many options throughout the city. Akari International Hostel seemed to have a good location, as does Casa Blanca Guesthouse. The latter does not handle reservations through their own website very well, however. I tried to book through them for dates that were said to be available, but they told me they needed to wait until the next week to confirm the reservation. Two weeks later, they said they'd received too many from other booking websites. Another option is the Catholic Youth Center, located close to the Peace Park. They will ask if you're Christian (so, presumably, be prepared for conversion attempts if you're not) and don't seem to take reservations from their website.

What to Do

The Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Park were

my main draws to the city. There is some overlap in information between the Hiroshima museum and this one, but I found it to still be a worthwhile experience. I also appreciated the monument marking where Fat Man's hypocenter occurred, as in Hiroshima, it is over a rather unremarkable building. The main statue in the Peace Park is beautiful while being both hopeful and sobering: its outstretched hand represents an offering of peace while the one pointing up reminds viewers of the threat atomic weapons pose. We didn't get the chance to visit them, but the Memorial to the Victims and Sannou Shrine (which houses the half-torn-down torii) both sound interesting.

Chinatown is a relatively small couple of blocks, but it houses some great food and sights. Upcoming next month, from the 8th until the 22nd, is the [Nagasaki Lantern Festival](#). Definitely book now if you haven't already and have designs on going.

For any Kirin Beer aficionados, history buffs, or those who just like to see pretty things, Glover Garden is a great trip. Thomas Glover, after whom the garden is named, helped internationalize Nagasaki, along with Chinese and European immigrants. Some say the Kirin mascot was given its moustache in homage to Glover, who founded the company that became Kirin. Be wary of accidentally kicking cones over here. Nearby are a fantastic champon restaurant and Oura Church, one of many churches throughout the city.



One of my favorite places to relax was Megane Bashi. Watching others take pictures of the bridge and the koi swim up to you is good fun. Don't

fall in if you decide to venture across the stepping stones, though.

Last Minute Points

-Champon at the restaurant near Glover Garden is good, and there's a free Champon Museum on the 2nd floor.



-You can get free samples of pork buns (kakuni manju) from Iwasaki Honpo (we partook whenever we passed one), but other shops in Chinatown have larger/cheaper offerings.

-Castella cake is the omiyage for Nagasaki. I liked the chocolate covered version.

-Yasuragi lojima onsen on lojima stopped their ticket deal. You can probably take the free shuttle bus from Nagasaki Station even without a reservation there.

-Paranoia and (especially) Panic Paradise are fun bars, though their patronage is much lower than they deserve.

-It was closed while we were there, but the ropeway up Mt. Inasa evidently offers a fantastic view of the city.

Nagasaki City is great for a weekend trip and you probably don't need much more time to explore all of the city's offerings. However, there are other things in the prefecture which sound cool, such as Sasebo, also known as 99 Islands (there are actually more).

Brittany Teodorski

*H*erzlichen Glückwunsch aus Österreich (or Austria)! I am writing you from what I've dubbed the Beverly Hills of Austria—a community far too wealthy for me to be living in, as evidenced by students riding to school in BMWs and Hummers. I am still effectively an ALT, just entirely self-sufficient this time as I can speak German. I'll touch base a little bit on what it's like here in a bit, but first: how did I get here? Well, I flew... but before that, I stormed into the Austrian Embassy in Tokyo and threw the entire operation into a state of chaos. An American, living in Japan, wants to move to Austria? Even when I arrived in Vienna and went to claim my residency permit, I was welcomed as "Oh, you're the guy from Tokyo."



Monastery down the street from my apartment; no big deal.

But before I moved into The Sound of Music (fun fact: no one in Austria has heard of it), I was a Hyogo Prefectural ALT living in the heart of Kobe. During my tenure, I taught at Hyogo Technical High School and, in my second year, part time at Hyogo Kokusai in Ashiya. I appreciated having these two very different schools, for they allowed me to really focus on differentiating my teaching. Here in Austria, I teach at a Gymnasium, which focuses on a well rounded, university-preparatory education. I would equate the rigor to that of the first year of college in the U.S. Students in my English classes are reading works like *Old Man and the Sea* and *Give a Boy a Gun*, and broaching topics that generally would be "off limits" in American classrooms.

That said, I remember fondly those "breaking in" years in Japan. I can tell you that if you can survive a Japanese classroom (and its deafening silence), you will be prepared for just about any classroom in the world. Though I found it a lot harder to teach in Japan, I graciously enjoyed the instructional latitude I was given to create my own material, deviate from the text from time and time, and even make my own schedule. Rarely was anything foisted upon me and my JTEs were very supportive, if not unabashedly patient. For aspirant teachers, you will likely never quite find that kind of space and freedom again in your careers. Relish in it while you can and experiment, experiment, and experiment! Almost never again will you have so much freedom to try new methods and strategies with very low stakes.

For ALTs making this their last year, I have very little sage advice to offer. Though it's wretchedly cliché, "make the most of it" is a given. Ultimately,

I think you will find that once January rolls around, the next six months will absolutely dissolve into the ether. You will have no idea where the time went and all the trips, places, and things you wanted to do or see will start to overwhelm you. Don't focus on doing everything possible; you will exhaust yourself. Instead, focus on taking in the little things all around you everyday.



My school - where the magic happens.

For those in decision mode, I can't offer any advice, as that's too personal a decision. Personally, I had maxed-out my teaching potential at my schools in Japan. In Austria, I have grown a lot more as an educator simply for the fact that I have more techniques and tools at my disposal than in Japan. As someone who plans to have a career in education, this move served a purpose. If you are not looking to be a career educator and have more of a cultural interest in Japan, then maybe extending works well for you. Oh Lord, every situation is different.



職員室 (or the Konferenzzimmer) - where the magic is destroyed.

I do miss the modus operandi of Japanese schools, though. I had grown accustomed to the morning meetings (which I was always late for), the central staff rooms, and the frigidly cold classrooms come December. In Austria, we have the same kind of staff room, functional and unadorned buildings, but we do have central heating! Overall, it's been a smooth transition, as I feel like an "old pro" at this teaching assistant gig. I do have the option to extend my contract for one year, but don't plan on doing that. Instead, I'm looking to hit at least one more place on the map before returning to the U.S. to pursue my teaching licensure. If anyone's interested in learning more about your post-JET options that still involve teaching internationally, I have a wealth of info for you! You can write me at louiebv88@gmail.com. Until then, enjoy, no, abuse your time in Japan! It was certainly a defining experience for me and I hope it has been/will be for you, too! Tschuss!

Louie Bertenshaw

I have asked the birds what this is all about, and Henwyn, at least, has been helpful. She agreed to come down out of the attic for a chat. And now she is telling me about the flock's journey to this house from their world in search of the Margravine. Though they speak to each other when I am near, I get the idea that the birds don't always use words when they communicate to each other, but something about me or being in this world forces them into new ways of thinking. Henwyn often seems confused or frustrated when trying to tell me something, but then her eyes suddenly clear and the words flow.

Apparently, the Margravine was like a queen, or God, or wizard, or all three. And, the birds are her followers? Priests? Floundering Dependents? Anyway, they're here to find the Margravine and take her back to their world so it stops falling apart. Henwyn thinks that taking the Margravine back will stop the Earth from falling apart too. From what the box said, and what I felt, I agree with her. But Henwyn also says that the bones in the box are the Margravine, and if that's so, why did the box come to me? Why not just appear in the attic where the birds could pick her up and fly away home as quickly as possible?

Somehow I think there is more to this than what Henwyn is telling me. And she's still telling me. It's like she's just now figured out how much fun it is to talk. I wonder if the birds really actually talked before they came here? Henwyn also flips her tail and ruffles her wings at me while she speaks, like I should understand what that means. Maybe one day Fireflight, or I guess it would have been Nevermore, the raven, cocked her head, flipped a wing, and voilà! The whole flock decided to cross dimensions and invade my attic. Maybe that's why Fireflight doesn't talk to me. Maybe he has been talking and I just didn't get it.

"... seem pompous, but he just wants what's best for the flock, so don't hold it against him, dear. Fireflight really is a good leader." Henwyn continues her monologue. "We really were relieved when Nevermore went back home.

She was great at starting this journey, but you know how some people are. She just ran out of steam once we arrived. And now, we have the box, so we can finally move forward, right?" She's really on a roll, and barely glances at me to see if I'll answer. I don't. "Soon, we'll have our Margravine home safe, and you can get back to your normal life. We'll see what Fireflight says, but I think the flock will be out of your attic as quickly as tomorrow."

Again, I don't disagree with her. Instead I want to ask one of the questions the box wouldn't answer. "What am I supposed to do?"

"Nothing, dear. I think the box had to appear to someone of this world because it's been here so long that we of the flock wouldn't have recognized it." She looks away when she says this, and I don't believe her.

So, I ask another question, "Why did the Margravine come to Earth?"

She's flustered. Her feet move on the back of the kitchen chair she is standing on. Shoulders hunch, and then relax. She finds the words, and the will, to tell me. I take a bite of my cereal and wait for the story to begin.

"A long time ago, long before I or any of the flock was born, the Margravine left our world. The birds of that time were sad but not really surprised. They knew the Margravine wasn't happy in her world. And they could still feel her, still hear her spirit, no matter where she went. So, they wished her strength on her journey and went back to their homes and lives not very changed for the loss. However, a few of the birds worried about why the Margravine left, and what would happen if she stayed away. They began to meet together to ask the Margravine why she left, and what she was doing now."

I interrupt Henwyn, "But if she had already left, how could they ask her these questions?" She blinks her eyes at me and it's obvious she's having trouble wrapping her head around this revelation of my ignorance. Another bite of soggy cereal, and she continues the story.

"I don't know how it is on this world, but in my home, all the birds understand all the other birds. It is hard to explain, but we are connected by the Margravine and the

Duke and the Fool. So, of course we can speak to them at any time, in any place. Still, as the years have gone by, we have become somewhat rusty at communicating with the Margravine. In fact, that became one of the purposes of the Esteemed Flock; we work to keep ourselves in practice. Many of us are still not very good at it. And these days, no one outside of the flock even tries. But let's get back to what I was saying.

"Those few who worried discovered that the Margravine was looking for someone. She left our world because she was lonely. They kept in touch with her, even as the people of our world grew further and further from not only the Margravine, but all three of our Founders. Generations came and went. The few passed on their knowledge and passion to younger birds, and they continued to follow the Margravine's travels vicariously. She went from our world out into the spaces. There, she met no one but saw many beautiful sights. The few who spoke to her wondered at the things she showed them. They were fascinated and constantly asked the Margravine about the spaces and how they worked and why they were. As always, the Margravine was very patient with us, her children, and perhaps even discovered things she herself wouldn't have looked into without our questions. That was a fantastic time in our world's history. These few shared the words of the Margravine with others who were too busy to speak to her themselves, and many of the birds turned what was discovered into useful tools and entertainments that benefited our world to no end.

"But, soon, the Margravine exhausted the realms of the spaces, and because she found no one to be her consort, she left. Again, the world was sad, but we adjusted. The inventions the Margravine left behind her sustained us quite happily. Again, few even noticed that it was harder to communicate with the Margravine now that she was farther away. I don't think anyone noticed that it became harder to communicate with each other too. It was some time later, when we looked back at how the birds were before, that we realized how far we have fallen. As you can imagine, over much time, the group of a few grew in numbers and complexity. Eventually, the world stopped caring at all, and the few wrapped themselves in melancholy and perseverance, becoming what we call the Esteemed Flock. Now, we are a way of life and a self-sustaining whole that can not only listen to the

Margravine, but also act on her behalf.

"When she left the spaces, some of the few couldn't contact her at all, and others found it very difficult. They had to reduce distractions and spend a lot of time just thinking about what the Margravine had said and done in the past in order to keep her connection fresh. Of the cohort that sits in your attic, Fireflight has perhaps the strongest connection to the Margravine. However, all of the magistrates, and a good percentage of the Flock, keep their thoughts attuned."

"What are magistrates?" I interrupt again. My cereal is finished, and I get up to put on some coffee.

Henwyn chuckles, a funny clacking of her beak, "I, my dear, am the Empirical Magistrate of Care and Forward Thinking. It sounds much more cumbersome here than it did back home. I suppose you could call me a manager, or a mother, or perhaps a teacher. The Mohawk is His Highness, the Magistrate of Confluence and Resolution. And Sybil is obviously the Executive Magistrate of Admin--"

Suddenly, The Mohawk is flopping on the table in front of Henwyn quite furiously. He's not using many words but I gather that he doesn't think Henwyn should be talking to me.

"What are you doing!?" He finally spits out, with a tail wiggle I'm glad is directed at Henwyn and not me. Henwyn squints down at him from her chair back, and doesn't answer. "The human! Why are you telling the human all these, these, these private details of our lives?" he stutters. I have decided to pour the coffee and ignore The Mohawk, since he wants to act like I'm not here.

This coffee is good. I wonder if my mother would drink some. She hasn't eaten today but she says sometimes the smell of coffee perks up her appetite. I put a granola bar on the saucer with another cup and walk silently past the ruffled Mohawk. He doesn't stop yelling in Henwyn's unperturbed face. I wonder if she's tuned him out too.

Louise Warren

This is chapter 5 of Sometime Last Week. Catch up on [chapter 4](#), or start from the [beginning](#).

Did I mean to kill her? No. Of course not.

Am I sad she's dead? Not really. I didn't like her, she'd done nothing but make me miserable and/or angry, but she wasn't a particularly big part of my life. Honestly, I think me killing her is the most important interaction we ever had.

But then, she didn't know I was killing her at the time. How could she? I certainly didn't. I mean, maybe she had a flash of realisation as she fell but...I doubt it. She was only in the air for a second and then THUMP. Dead.

Come to think of it, maybe it was the ladder that killed her. I have to admit, I never read the police report or the death certificate or whatever. I'd just gotten away with murder; I wasn't going to muff it up by going around asking questions like "So what happened?" or "Are there any suspects? I was home all evening."

I don't remember how I found out she died. Okay, that's a lie, I saw it with my own eyes; I mean, I don't remember who told me.

Maybe I should start with what I do know, because that's the far more interesting aspect of this story—you already know the ending, but I can't change that now. I'm not going back and editing.

So, I had to come back to the theatre because I'd left my laptop. Not the laptop I'm typing this on. I got a new laptop shortly afterwards. I don't know why that's important. It isn't.

Anyway, by a stroke of luck, I hadn't realised that I'd left my laptop until I got home— I can say it was

a stroke of luck now but at the time, I was bloody pissed off, I don't mind telling you. But, because I didn't realise until I got home, I didn't say to anyone that I'd forgotten it or, crucially, go back to the theatre in front of them. As far as everyone knew, I went home and stayed there. But no, I got home, realised I'd forgotten it, reasoned that I couldn't do without it until tomorrow when I'd go back anyway and so had to trump back, in a foul mood.

I don't say the foul mood to justify it, by the way. I mean, that'd be a pretty poor reason to kill someone. Even accidentally.

But yeah, I went back to the theatre— Ian had forgotten to lock the side door, so he's complicit in this as well, because if I'd had to knock, then Celia would have had to come to the door and thus dismount the ladder and thus would have lived to see another day. And probably a few after that as well.

But no, the side door was unlocked, so I went through into the auditorium, saw my laptop bag on the front row and Celia on the stage, at the top of a rather tall ladder, affixing a light. I assume. I don't know what she was doing up there, and yet again, it would have seemed somewhat suspect if I'd suddenly developed an interest in the technical side of things the day she died. The important thing is, she was up a ladder and she spotted me.

She asked me for help.

I don't know why I did what I did. Well, I do, but as reasons for murder go, it's not particularly cool: she'd insulted me. No, it wasn't even that. That gives it an air of the Godfather, macho pride-y bullshit that at least gives me an air of superiority. She'd insulted a show I'd written. She'd said it was shit and she knew I could hear her and she'd said it anyway and honestly, I found that very rude. But more than

that, I found it hurtful that she'd disliked my show and I was embarrassed because I knew that other people hadn't liked it but she'd been the only one to say so and so I focused all my negativity on her and for the past few months, I'd been talking shit about her at every given opportunity (always when I knew she couldn't hear, you understand. I wasn't as bad as her.)

She asked me to foot the ladder as she came down and I nodded even though I thought it was really unforgivable that she'd say stuff about me (it wasn't about me, I know but at the time I couldn't tell the difference) and then ask me for help. As I was walking over, I got madder and madder because I really had quite the ego back then and then a wicked idea sprang into my mind.

No, that's wrong. The idea didn't come ad nihilo, I thought of it. I thought of a wicked idea and now Celia's dead and I killed her and that's what I should say. The wicked idea I thought of was: "What if I 'accidentally' knocked her ladder over?" Brilliant, I know. Truly, even Iago could not have devised a plan of such byzantine malevolence.

I thought she'd fall and hurt herself and I'd have a giggle knowing I'd hurt someone who hurt me and she'd probably blame me but everybody knew I was clumsy and hardly anyone knew I was hateful, so they'd all just think that my ungainliness had gotten the better of me and poor Celia, she bruised her knee (at least one part of me hoped that she would break her arm) because of it. There'd probably be a meeting about how we shouldn't allow people who are unfamiliar with equipment— i.e., me— around dangerous, unknowable tools— i.e., a ladder. Celia's friends would probably take a few pops at me, but I already hated them because of their association with her. And she'd still be hurt and that would feel good.

Anyway, I reached the bottom of the ladder— I wasn't that slow a walker, you must understand, it just took me a while to explain my thought process. So, as I got to the base of the ladder, I "tripped." My shoulder hit against the ladder's leg, quite hard because it was a heavy ladder and probably wouldn't have toppled if I'd just hit it normally— you'll be glad to know I bruised my shoulder in the attempt, so it wasn't completely karma-free.

So, the ladder came crashing down, and Celia with it; I don't remember if she screamed but my, what a noise the ladder made. I was lucky that the auditorium was sound-proof otherwise I would've been caught in the act. I immediately knew that something was wrong because she didn't shout at me or swear or anything. Plus, her neck looked funny.

I waited for a few seconds but she didn't move or blink and then I realised she wasn't breathing and that something had definitely gone wrong with my petty revenge. I remember thinking that I couldn't check her pulse— if she was dead, there'd be my fingerprints on her and that would be a dead giveaway. They were already on the ladder and the seats and stuff, but that could've been from any number of previous times when I'd been in there.

I should have phoned the ambulance, I know that. But then I should have done a lot of things— or rather, there is one big thing that I shouldn't have done. I think the customary thing to do would be to scream or to shake her and sob and say her name or whisper "What have I done?"

I didn't.

Rory Kelly

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday		
All month:	Kobe Illuminage			1	2	3		
	Abeno Tennoji Illuminage (Osaka)							
	Light and Flower Pagent Christmas Show (until 1/17)							
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
							Ikuno Illumination Road	
							Azuki Museum Event	
							Yabashira Shrine Ebisu Matsuri	
Toku Ebisu		British Museum Exhibition						
British Museum Exhibition								
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
							Toku Ebisu	
							British Museum Exhibition	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
							AJET: Ski Trip	
							Scavenger Hunt/Yamayuki	
							Minatogawa Mart	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
							Book Club: Slade House	

