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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

The peak of the sakura is upon us, as is the beginning of a new school year, with new teachers, students, and seating arrangements. April is here!

My first ever hanami was preluded by a night of making yakisoba and peanut butter cookies (sorry Sarah!). My friend and I were not the greatest of cooks at the time (and I remain thus), so the slightly congealed noodles we ate the following morning necessitated copious amounts of adult beverages to wash them down. After the revelry, around 14 of us descended upon El Zocalo near Amemura and completely overwhelmed the staff, as well as taking up practically all of the restaurant. This was then followed by stomping through the rain to an hour of カラオケ. All in all, a good time was had.

In our biggest issue of the year thus far, we have a plethora of articles to entertain you as you take breaks from frantic lesson planning (should you happen to be a procrastinator and/or have received your class schedule ridiculously late). To button up the end of the year before moving on, Rory shares not [one](#), but [two](#) opinion pieces on the institution of junior high school graduation, and Scott reflects on the [staff shuffle](#). Should you want to get out of your town on the weekends and explore, Larisa and Emma both return after hiatus with articles on the [Hanshin Tigers](#), and alternative [transportation](#) methods to KIX respectively. In addition, there are articles [Gokayama](#) and the [nerdiest stretch of shops](#) in Sannomiya. Mandy shares a [novel recipe](#) and a [poem](#) for our newest section. In The Refuge is the [seventh part](#) of Sometime Last Week and [a tale of a man](#) who catches both an unexpected

disease and visitor. Our alumni this month is [Ryan Hertel](#).



Should you want to get in on the hanami action happening this weekend, there are a great number throughout the prefecture, some of which can be found in our [calendar](#). AJET also has two events for your blossom-viewing pleasure. The [Block 6 & 7 party](#) will be happening at Osaka Castle tomorrow, and the following day, Himeji Castle will host [HAJET](#). On this road trip that is JET, what will it amount to if you don't take the time to enjoy the company and consumables? It can only be made better by looking at the flowers.

Brittany Teodorski

April has always seemed to be one of the most standout months in Japan. Since my time coming here, I have thought of it as Japan's "second New Year's." It is certainly a season of rebirth, as the Sakura come out for its annual celebration, the animals come from their hibernation to nab the picnic leftovers, Buddha's birthday is celebrated at a variety of temples, and new faces of both students and teachers alike come to the schools. For some of you, this will be your first time experiencing this immense change. For others, this will be just another happening during your JET tenure. For a select few, this will be your last time dealing with such an adjustment. Regardless of your JET year standing, I would say embrace whatever change you encounter while you can. It will pass sooner than you realize, just like the Sakura does every year.



However, one of the most important things to do during this month is get outside! Your body will be craving some sunshine after the long stints inside during the winter. This is the perfect time to take a hike, visit that local shrine, temple, or mountaintop, and soak in the Vitamin D. It will do your mind and spirit good, I promise.

Hyogo AJET and Block 6 will be hosting a variety of events to help all of you get out and enjoy the outside as well. The first weekend of April will have both the Block 6 Hanami party at Osaka Castle and the Hyogo AJET Hanami event at Himeji Castle. Make sure to check out your local area's Hanami events as well! The Block 6 Biwa Boat Ball will be held in May, and the annual Awaji Island Camping Trip will be held in June. I'm currently working out the details for the camping trip, but I promise it won't be something to miss!

I mean it when I say I look forward to Spring in Japan every year. I like opening my door in the morning, feeling the warmth of the sun and seeing my apartment's tree in full bloom right in front of me. Even taking the bus from Awaji to the mainland, I love looking over the patches of pink along of the mountaintops. Back home, I grew up among corn fields and the flattest lands around, so being able to be in a place that revels in the coming of spring (and actually has some altitude) is really special. As this is my last year, I don't know where I'll end up next. But I know that Japanese Spring will always have a special place in my heart, even if I have to accept the pollen that gets into the rest of my system as well.

Kyle Cardine

If you grew up in the States and are of my generation, you may remember that KFC once sold the most delicious corn bread ever! So in honor of the なつかしい (nostalgic) food memories of times passed, and the beautiful pink sakura of spring, I present a new creation! Tada! Strawberry Corn Muffins!

Servings: 13~18 standard sized muffins



Ingredients:

- 1 cup Flour
- 1 cup Cornmeal*
- 1/2 cup Sugar
- 1 Tablespoon Baking Powder
- 1/2 teaspoon Salt
- 1/2 cup Butter, softened
- 1 cup Whole Milk (or Half-and-Half or Cream if you're feeling fancy)
- 1 Egg
- 7 Strawberries, diced or sliced

*you may have to buy this off of iherb or search very hard at an international store. Sorry!

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 200°C/400°F. Line muffin tin with cupcake liners or set-up the nifty ¥100 store muffin cups on a baking sheet.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
3. Add butter and mix til crumbly.
4. In a separate bowl, beat together the milk/half-and-half/cream with the egg.
5. Fold in the liquid mixture into the flour mixture a little at a time.
6. Fold in the diced/sliced strawberries.
7. Spoon into liners filling ¾ to ⅝ of the way to the top. Using a cookie/ice cream scoop makes this part a little less messy.
8. Bake for about 25 minutes.
9. Top with honey, butter, or both! (If you are so inclined.)

Happy Hanami-ing ^-^

mandy



Spring is here! That means a brand new school year with new students and staff, your un-insulated house is finally livable again, and you can day-drink under the cherry blossoms. It also marks the return of something else incredibly important: baseball season!



I was first introduced to Kansai's most famous team during my second month of JET. I had a passing interest in baseball and was curious about the local team, but I mainly went so I could drink beer and meet new people. Little did I know that that first game would lead me to joining the official fan club, making some fabulous friends, following the team across Japan, and spending nearly every week at Koshien Stadium.

The Hanshin Tigers are one of the oldest baseball teams in Japan. They are owned by the Hanshin Railway Corporation and represent the Kansai area in the Center League for Nippon Professional Baseball. Their home stadium, Koshien, is the host of the Spring and Summer National High

School baseball tournaments and is considered holy ground amongst Japanese baseball players. There is actually a Shinto shrine just outside the stadium.



Photo courtesy of Devon Morgan.

Baseball in Japan is unlike any other baseball game I have ever attended. I think the group mentality of Japanese culture lends itself quite well to team sports. The result is massive, choreographed cheering. The fans actually take turns and when the opposing team is batting, and you get a rest. (I mean, how else would you have time to drink your beer?) When your team is up to bat, however, you best put down the Asahi, because things are about to get crazy. I'm talking about a full brass band, thunder sticks, giant flags, synchronized chanting and cheer leaders. (Cheer leaders in the truest sense of the word— these people will actually be leading your section in which cheer to chant.)

If you haven't memorized all the players' cheers, lyric booklets are provided, and you can still clap along to the beat. Even with limited Japanese knowledge, it's not difficult to figure out "go, go, rettsu go!" or "kattobase, <Player Name>!"

Like everything in life, a little effort goes far. Learning a cheer and belting it out alongside all the other fans can absolutely be one of the

most rewarding experiences you do in Japan. It is said that Hanshin fans are known amongst Japanese as some of the craziest, most die-hard fans of baseball. I would have to agree, but I have also found them to be the most accepting group of people. There is something magical that happens at Koshien. When you're sitting in the crowd and cheering and clapping along, you are no longer gaikokujin, you are simply a fellow Hanshin Fan. Day after day, being seen and treated as a perpetual outsider is tiring. The rare sense of community and belonging one receives at a Hanshin game always heals my cranky jaded heart.

This magic transcends the baseball diamond, too. My interest in Japanese baseball has led to meeting some very interesting people in Japan. It has been a constant source of new friendship and even helped my relationships with my coworkers. Teachers and staff whom I would otherwise never interact with sometimes seek me out to talk about the team or to sing the cheers together. My students undoubtedly find it hilarious to see me at the station in my Hanshin gear, but they usually just wish me a hearty "itterasshai!" The Hanshin charm on my phone has led to many impromptu conversations with strangers on trains, in super markets, and on the street. Being out and about in my jersey has even



led to the occasional free drink or some food at izakayas.

I think that Japanese people like it when a foreigner embraces their culture arms-wide open, not caring about looking silly or foolish. My experience is that Japanese people are less likely to seek you out and that you have to put yourself out there if you want to make friends. It is undoubtedly worth it, and can be a window into a side of Japan life you might not ever see. For me, the absolute best way to do this has been baseball, but it could just as easily be something else for you.

Stay tuned next month for my tips on how to get the most out of a visit to Koshien. And be sure to RSVP for the [HAJET Hanshin Game](#) event on May 21st!

Larisa Kile



Japan has great trains. Coming from Canada, where we have basically none, I have really enjoyed the convenience of the trains in Japan. That being said, there is always a point when the trains are no longer fun or convenient. Mostly, any route that's over 45 minutes long, constantly busy, and that you take frequently enough (or is very urban) that it's not interesting to look out the window. I'm sure many of you have routes like this that you dread taking. Mine personally is the trip to get to Kansai International Airport.

With Golden Week fast approaching, many of you may be making the trek to Kansai International to start off your vacation. Depending on where you live in the prefecture, it might simply involve taking the train from Osaka, but for those of you not living in Amagasaki, you might have just as long a trip to Osaka as you do on the train from there to the airport. But did you know there is another way to get to the airport? And if it's faster and easier for you to get to Kobe than Osaka, then this tidbit of information is for you.

At Sannomiya Station, there is a separate line called the Portliner, which takes you down to Port Island. It's quite a nice line with fancy driverless trains. The very last stop, 8 stops and 25 minutes from Sannomiya, is Kobe Airport. So now you're thinking I've taken you to the wrong airport, but wait, because there's a

handy-dandy shuttle ferry that goes across the bay to Kansai International. For 1850 yen you can get to the airport in just 30 minutes, and there is a shuttle on the Kansai International side that will take you to Terminal 1 and 2! Plus, instead of being on a crowded train after dragging your luggage through Osaka station, you can relax in the spacious cabin with plenty of seating and special places for your luggage as you speed across the water. And the view is really pleasant when the weather is nice. However, as with anything in life, there are a few drawbacks. The ferry runs less frequently than the trains at only about once per hour.

You buy your ticket at the ferry terminal, at which point you can choose one-way or two-way if you would like to return by ferry. One-way tickets bought at Kansai International also include your Portliner fare for the same price. Also, starting April 1st and going until the end of March next year, two-way tickets will be on sale for 3000 yen.



Photo courtesy of Bonkers The Clown via Wikimedia Commons.

Using my location as an example of the time it saves, from Kakogawa (between Himeji and Akashi) to the airport for 10am by train only, I would have to catch the train at 7:30am, it would cost me 2920 yen, and take 2 hours and 8 minutes. To go by ferry, I would have to leave at 7:56am, it would cost me 2940 yen, but only take 1 hour and 30 minutes. So for the same price I can get there half an hour faster, meaning I can sleep in for half an hour longer. It really depends on how much you value your time, or hate being on trains.

I took the ferry for the first time when I was catching a flight to Sapporo. The way the ferry schedule was, it was either going to get me to Terminal 2 ridiculously early or cut it way too close. However, I really didn't want to take the train all the way round, so early it was. I knew as soon as I got on the packed morning rush train bound for Osaka via Sannomiya that this was a good decision. The Portliner was very peaceful after the first train. They plan the ferry departure times to coincide with the Portliner arrival times, but I felt like it wasn't quite enough time since I speed-walked from the platform to the ferry terminal and they opened up the doors to let us on the ferry just as I finished buying my ticket. So next time I'll probably catch a slightly earlier train. It was fairly clear that day so from the ferry you could see across the bay, and Akashi Bridge could be seen in the distance. There basically was no rocking at all, for those concerned with possible sea-sickness (Disclaimer: it was a nice day with no wind. I don't know about rougher weather). I was curious whether or not you could stand outside on the deck, but I

didn't see anyone else doing it, and I couldn't read the signs by the doors. Upon arriving at Kansai International, the crew herded us on to two different buses, one going to Terminal 1, and one going to both Terminal 1 and 2. There wasn't a lot of room at first, but I basically had the bus to myself after we dropped people off at Terminal 1. They also list the times for arriving at either Terminal on their timetable which is quite convenient when planning your timing.

I really enjoyed using this ferry. It was fun being on a boat, having something new to look at out the window, and less congested than the usual trains. This alternative route obviously won't be quicker for everyone, but even so if you are traveling and want a change of scenery, I recommend trying the shuttle ferry.

For more information, including ticket prices and timetables, you can check out their [website here](#).

Emma Wicks



ame

a. An active interest or pursuit, especially one involving competitive engagement or adherence to rules



Three Card Monte is a confidence trick that originates from the turn of the 15th century and is, ostensibly, an easy chance to make quick money. The dealer, or shill, in the local parlance, usually aided and abetted by two

nefarious associates, will set up a rudimentary table, a cardboard box say, and lay three playing cards face down. One will be the “money card,” which is more often than not a queen. The aim of the game is to watch the dealer shuffle the cards before they are set down and try to remember which the queen is— and if you can point to the right card you’ll win your stake money back and then some.

Of course, this isn’t really a game, not in the truest sense of the word, as the participant, or “mark,” has almost no chance of winning. The shill and his associates will create an elaborate scam using sleight of hand and misdirection to fool the mark into parting with their money. One simple trick is that the shill will actually have four cards in their hand, and will show the mark the queen before depositing it up their shirtsleeve like a rat up a drainpipe. The other three cards will then be placed face down on the table, and the mark will have only one chance to choose the right card. Another is to actually use the queen, but to only accept the highest bidder on the outcome, so if the mark bets say 10, the shill’s associate, masquerading as another mark, will bet 20, with the cumulative total prize fund going to the highest bidder. No matter how high the mark bets, the shill’s associate will always bet higher, and once you’ve put your money in the pot— there’s no getting it back out. Now all the shill has to do is give his associate a signal to which is the right card, a twitch of a particular finger perhaps, who will then find the queen and “pocket” the money, to be given back to the shill at a later convenience. No matter

which way you look at it, it’s a scam, which the mark can never win except by some mistake on the part of the shill or his companion(s).



And so April brings the start of the new year here in Japan, where the office desks are shuffled as well as the personnel, where the hands that do the shuffling are never seen and move without warning, where longstanding bonds are broken, be they the steel of teamwork and mutual respect, or the knotted mucus strings of disinterest and unfounded criticism. Yessir, April means it’s one more time to play the relationship game. I found out a few weeks ago that a few bum cards were being switched, which after 2.5 years was a real relief. However, the hands weren’t done and I just found out that my two queens, so to speak, albeit one in the guise of an erratic 60 year old English teacher with involuntary tics and OCD, and the other the most batshit crazy amazing wonderful office lady who chewed out (in American terminology) two stunned kyoto-senseis when the photocopier broke in front of a packed office, were being moved too. This morning was a rough one,

and as I write this I’m still getting over the fact that the two people that have shown me the most kindness, given me the most eye contact and stopped for a chat, the two people who have shown the most interest in me without wanting something in return will not be here in a week’s time.

And so this will be my third time at the table, and so far the queens have been few and far between, the pocket stuffed with not cash but optimism, desire and an eagerness to learn and build bonds has been dipped into one too many times, and I’m cautious about what I should put on the table this time around. Investing in those around you is an important deposit, which yields high interest, or so they say, but there’s only so long you can play the mark.

Maybe the queen is already tucked into the shirt cuff, but, with over a year left to go on JET, I know I have to put my hand in my pocket one more time. And so, here we go again, time to watch the shill and try to figure out the trick one last time.

The ol’ switchamaroo, yessir.

Scott Patterson

*Update: Not only did two more of my good cards leave, but I was also stuck with the worse of the two bum cards left in my hand.

On the 2nd and 3rd floors of San Center Plaza lies a stretch of shops catering to the geekier shoppers in Kobe. I've taken to affectionately calling this sweet haven Nerd Lane. Here, you can find many nerdy things to get your fix. If you tend to be weak of will when encountering the excitement of anime, video and card games, and manga merchandise, you should definitely consider setting a budget before you delve in too deeply.



Animate

Surrounded by many ガチャ and conveniently equipped with a change machine for your 1000 円 bills, Animate is usually my first stop whenever I make a round of Nerd Lane. It's located on the 3rd floor and has an associated cafe a short jaunt down the hallway (though thus far, I've not found any of their featured franchises fascinating). This is your go-to for popular merch recently released. If it's super popular, though, stuff can sell out rather quickly. I recently went to buy a batch of the newest *Sailor Moon* stationery (because cute, functional things are my weakness) and all but a few things

were already gone (Loft and especially Tokyu Hands are good backups for stationery; apparently no one thinks of the latter for whatever reason).

Volks

On the way from Animate, the first section of Volks houses cases of figurines and other goods you can purchase using a handy-dandy slip of paper (provided in-store; how exciting!). Some rather risque figurines that I find more hilarious than sexy, personally, are there, though apparently someone has complained recently: they're now wrapped in opaque packaging so their goods are not bared for all to see. The shelves are often overwhelming and have little in the way of organization, but you can find rarer things for a reasonable price. There are also rumors of an R2-D2 nabe pot. Moving through the shop, you'll then see a build-your-own doll section, a model (primarily of the Gundam variety) section, and a section with new-in-box items.

Taito Game Center

This arcade has the cheapest 太鼓の達人 (Taiko no Tatsujin) machine in the area, alongside Round 1. At 100 円 per play, you can play twice as many times for the same price as at Namco next to the Hankyu station. Dissidia and crane games galore are also draws for me (though I'm not particularly good at either).

Lashinbang

I've enjoyed looking around their stores in other cities, but this one seems predisposed to idol anime goods. That's not my thing, though have at if it's yours! Apparently there's another on the 2nd floor somewhere, but I haven't come across this (at least recently; I have a vague recollection of stumbling upon it outside of what I consider Nerd Lane).

The rest of the 3rd floor doesn't hold many more shops I find interesting, but there are some great knock-off ガチャ machines. On the 2nd floor, there used to be a shop of nearly ancient goods, but it's been shuttered the last several times I've ventured down the lane, so perhaps the shop owner and his *Sailor Moon* cells of which he was so proud are now gone.

Indian

This has a fairly eclectic selection of mostly Western toys.

章芳堂

Cramped but worth looking into. They have dirt-cheap figurines of dubious authenticity. Also, their online presence is not very good.

Ax

I rarely venture in, but there are plenty of retro games and toys that can give you whiplash from the 懐かしい feeling they'll instill in you. I especially love looking at the old *Sailor Moon* toys that look atrocious and which I will never, ever buy.



Rental Showcase Collections

Extremely overwhelming and with little in the way of sensible organization, this shop is nevertheless a great place to stop. They have some of the best

prices. If you're claustrophobic, it may be best to wait until it clears out, though.

Yellow Submarine

While probably the most expensive option in Nerd Lane, Yellow Submarine has a great selection of ガチャ, so instead of inserting 100 円 after 100 円 and getting the same thing over and over again ("Dave Guy!"*), you can simply buy what you want right off the bat (assuming, of course, they have it in stock). There are plenty of other goods as well. Once, shortly after returning from Tokyo one summer, I happened to find the *Sailor Moon* pen set I'd been looking for in their case and fell to the ground in excitement (are you sensing a theme here?). They have many 一番くじ if you want to further test your luck.



If, however, you decide the thrill of the crank really does it for you, there are a plethora of ガチャポン machines right across from Yellow Submarine, in addition to throughout Nerd Lane.

Hobby Fester

I haven't found a whole lot here I'm interested in, but it's still fun to look and the prices seem agreeable.

Should you find yourself in Kobe with time (and hopefully money) to spare, along with an interest in the geekier offerings in Japan, do visit Nerd Lane. You never know what wondrous, joy-bringing item you may discover.

Brittany Teodorski

*VPN required; alternatively, go [here](#) and skip to 3:02 for the relevant bits

By the time you see this, gentle readers, the third years will have graduated and the school year will be over. Unless you're exclusively an ES ALT at which point, the sixth years will have graduated and the school year will be over; also have a drink on me, you must be exhausted.

I'm trying to figure out how I feel about the school year ending in March, even though I know that it doesn't matter how I feel because it's not like anyone important cares. Still, I like airing my opinions, as you might have noticed.

It seems to me strange to have the big school holiday not be immediately after the end of the academic year, although I can't muster any sound pedagogical arguments against it. I just get the vague sense that something's wrong with it, like a chair that's been made into a horcrux or Donald Trump's wig. It just doesn't sit well.

But bad vibes are not admissible in court and, if anything, the Japanese system might hold the advantage. After all, here the students won't spend all summer worrying about what their next school year will be like— after all, they'll already be a third of the way finished with it. Fear of the unknown can be replaced with just a mild sense of dissatisfaction about having to return to what you already know.



Photo courtesy of BostonJerry via Wikimedia Commons.

I remember that tremulous month of August, terrified of what lay ahead. Wondering if I'd keep up with my homework, if I'd ever make any friends at all or if this would finally be the year when I snapped and straight up bitch slapped Mr. Thomas. For seven weeks, these worries would circle in my head, tormenting me, and generally tainting any fun activities involving ice cream or beaches or whatnot. Japanese school children, instead, get a summer of certainty and just a mildly anxious Easter and Easter's always a bit naff anyway.

Another advantage would be not having to

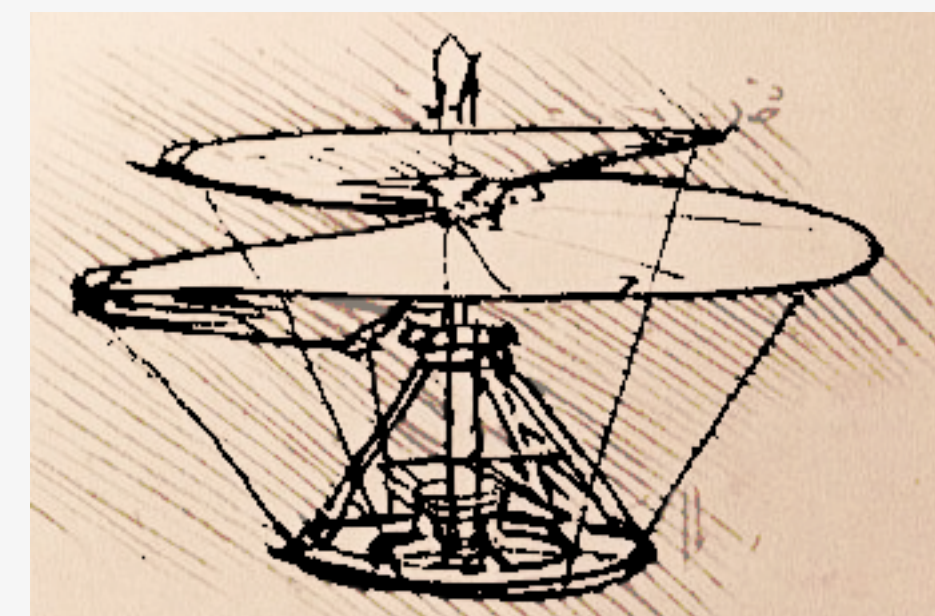
sit end of year Exams in the ovens that are classrooms in summer. And, of course, the vagaries of that season will no longer be able to distract the students from their crucial end of year cram.

Conversely, this does mean there is a big break in between a single syllabus' lessons and I'm sure it does make it difficult to keep the thread of a lesson or topic prevalent for an entire fortnight in the minds of both students and teachers (I'm imagining teachers stopping mid-sentence as the bell rings, packing up and going home silently, sitting throughout the holiday saying nothing and then resuming flawlessly when classes resume).

But then, if we're honest with ourselves, that happens in English schools over the summer holidays too— a lot of time is spent reviewing material from the last year and even just catching up to where classes were previously. The lessons which are interrupted may be technically of a different level, but one would hope that the transition in material between years would be smooth enough that they would dovetail somewhat. The only way to avoid that entirely would be to cancel summer holidays like that dude in the Recess movie and I don't think any of us want a repeat of that. TJ and friends, you deserved better.

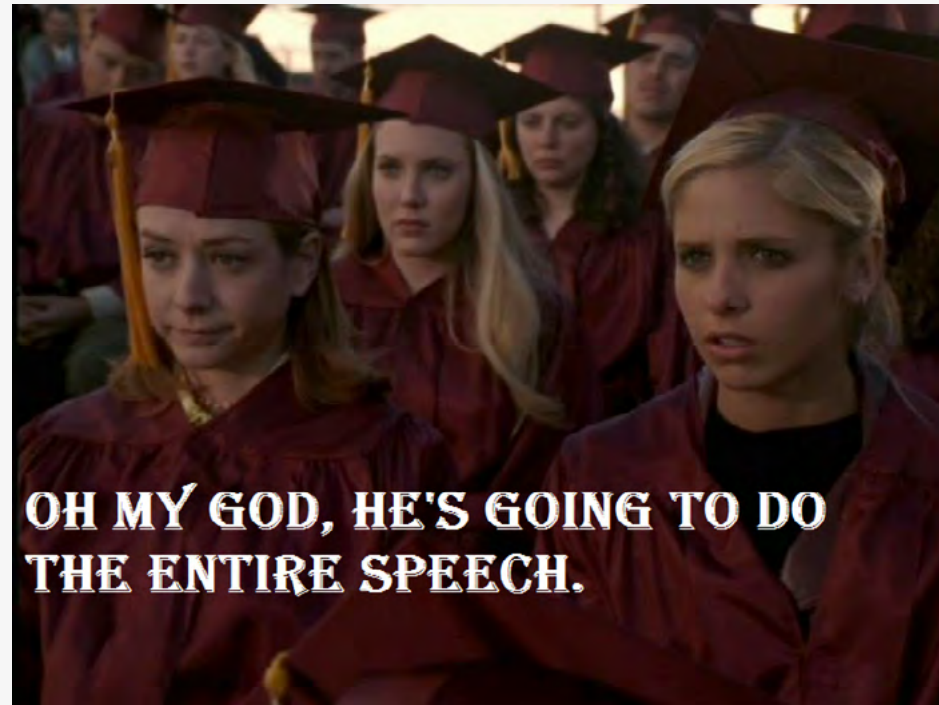
Despite this, it still makes me uneasy and I think it's largely for reasons of symmetry, which I admit is tubthumpingly stupid. Symmetry can be aesthetically pleasing, yes, but you mustn't let it rule your life or else, like Da Vinci and his

mirror-writing, someone steals your idea for the helicopter. And, of course, the Japanese school year is still pretty symmetrical— it starts and ends at the same point in the year, there's just a chunk missing near the beginning. And, if I ever wanted to go for optimum symmetry as well as lovely thematic resonance regarding endings, beginnings and opportunities, I'd ascribe to the Antipodean way of doing things, whereby the academic year is split much like the Calendar. But then the big holiday would come when everything was cold and awful AND I'd have to admit that Australia did something better than England and I don't think I can live with that.



Rory Kelly

Much like Buffy before me, I've decided to split my Graduation episode in two. Also, to bring a stake to school.



At time of writing (about three weeks before time of publishing, if you're interested, which I know you're not), I have just finished watching my third year JHS students graduate.

I say "my"; I really had very little to do with them. As per the terms of my contract, I changed schools in January and the students have been engaged in furious exam-cramming since February so, all told, I had around three lessons with them. I gave five of them interview practice and of course I'd see them on my way to school and they'd give me grief over my new haircut but apart from that, we never really crossed paths.

Maybe that was why I found Graduation

something of a slog. In England, the vast majority of secondary schools are not split into Middle and Senior— you stay at the same institution from 11 to 16, and then, if you want, attend a Sixth Form college (most of which are attached to secondary schools anyway). I think we might have had some kind of year-wide assembly at the end, but I also think I might have skipped it. We certainly didn't call it a "graduation"— that sounds very grand to me. Much too grand for a ceremony that only tells you that you're officially too old for the school to care about you anymore.

Because, in Britain, like in Japan, but, crucially, unlike the USA, you can't be held back a year. If you survive to the end of your school year, you automatically go on to the next one. I'm not saying that's a superior system, nor that it's a worse one, it's just how things work. But it does mean that moving on to the next year holds no significance or air of accomplishment. You just aged sufficiently.

There were several people crying during Graduation— some parents, some teachers and a lot of the students. One of whom had been chosen to go up and give a speech and who, with the best will in the world, should not have been chosen for that task if she was going to blubber all the way through it and thus take twice as long as necessary.

Frankly, I found it ridiculous that people were crying, especially the adults. By the time I was fifteen, I hadn't even quite realised that I hated everyone yet, let alone become half of

the shining beacon of maturity that I am today. There is nothing special about secondary school or the completion thereof; hell, you're not even moving anywhere. If you want to keep in contact with the people from your class, it is entirely within your power. If you don't, it's because they're not really that important to you. Dry your eyes, it's just not sad.

Two years after I left secondary school, I'd started to forget most of my contemporaries, to the point that I met one in a pub and had been talking to her for half an hour before I realised that we'd sat next to each other twice a week for five years. Now, eight years later, the only names I remember are the guy who hacked the computer system, the girl who stuck a thermometer in a Bunsen burner and showered us all in mercury and the guy who now works in the supermarket that my parents frequent. So, kids, best get to distinguishing yourself like that otherwise you'll be relegated to the "Acquaintances" section on Facebook and they don't even get to see my life events.

Of course, it's easy to be cynical. It's also fun. I heartily endorse it. But I'm sure those who were crying were doing so honestly and I shouldn't belittle their emotions (he wrote, having just spent a page belittling them). I guess I'd find it easier to care if I felt it mattered in any way, but it's probably not as easy to see the staggering unimportance of something in which you're intimately involved. This still, to me, doesn't explain why the adults were weeping— they should know that in about six months these kids will be blanking each

other on the street intentionally and in two years it will be unintentional. I guess maybe the teachers will miss the students ("Why?" my heart of stone cries, "They'll get new ones next term! And Sturgeon's law says they'll be largely identical!") and the parents are proud of their kids or whatever ("Why? They haven't done anything except grow older!") but I thought Japan was meant to be the land of stiff upper lip and public dignity, not smearing your mascara and glubbing through your lines. It's just graduation, not a bloody Pixar film.

Rory Kelly



Photo courtesy of Pava via Wikimedia Commons.

While the most famous of the UNESCO status gashou-zukuri villages is Shirakawa-go, nearby is Gokayama, which houses several intriguing locations. Of these, I recently traveled to Ainokura and Suganuma with two companions. As befits their World Heritage status, the houses have been remarkably preserved and there are seasonal celebrations at various points throughout the year.

Getting There and Around

You can make reservations for highway buses about a month in advance.

[Hankyu](#) has a 5PM bus from Umeda if you can get there in time (as well as some amusing shops near its bus terminal). JR also has an overnight option, though I find its [website](#) less intuitive. You can buy tickets for either line at the last minute, but why subject yourself to the stress of wondering if it'll be sold out? Also, don't be a complete idiot like me and throw out your ticket at a rest stop. Alternatively, you can take the Thunderbird if you want a more flexible schedule, but this is the most expensive option at around twice as much for a round trip.

There are several buses you can use to get down to Shirakawa-go (and probably parts of Gokayama as well). The one we ended up riding was the [World Heritage bus](#) after training to Takaoka. This is one of the easiest options as you don't need a reservation to ride it! We first asked where to buy tickets at the Information Desk and were subsequently flagged down by the employee after to ask where we're from. Another woman was wandering around us and

kept asking us if we knew how to get to the proper platform. We found this strange until we realized that we'd somehow gotten it into our heads that the bus was half an hour later and had just missed it by a couple minutes. Once you actually get on, you can hop on and off freely between Ainokura and most other stops (just let the bus driver know ahead of time, and flag it down on the road it will go down). We were a little nervous about this when we went a little off the beaten path (by which I mean the listed bus stops), but our frantic waving intimated to the driver what we were after.



Where to Stay

We stayed at a minshuku called Yomoshiro. Unfamiliar with the term? Minshuku are family owned accommodations, and subsequently, their quality depends entirely on the effort of the owners. At Yomoshiro, the family is very kind and seeks to entertain and connect with their guests. Upon arriving, we were invited to sit in what you could call a living room and given a sweet and green tea. Fortunately, my companions are avid tea drinkers, so we were able to switch our cups with little notice. Dinner and breakfast was also included, and boy was it a ton of traditional Japanese food! After dinner, we were encouraged to watch the festivities, and

once we returned, our futon, complete with a box of hot coals to keep us warm, were laid out for us. In the morning, after discovering we had plans of visiting an onsen, we were gifted coupons. All in all, I highly recommend the experience and found the steep price worth it.

What to Do

In Suganuma, after shaking off some stalkers, we ate at Gorobe. The noodle dishes were quite enjoyable, from Tempura Soba to Nabe Udon. We also played several rounds of Hello Kitty MadLibs, which is always a great way to pass the time. Around the town, there are also a couple of shops, a closed up shrine (at least when we went), a tunnel to another side with museums (but it isn't as cute as the other part), and the view with the water is absolutely breathtaking. If you go in the winter, making turkeys from handprints is entertaining, as is inserting a sculpted heart which you've been gifted by a dear friend.

Ainokura, where we stayed, has a washi making experience from May to November; we wish we could've gone! Climbing up to the viewpoint to observe your subjects is fun but treacherous in the snow, especially for a clumsy and poor-footwear-choosing individual such as myself. The so-called Folklore Museum is highly recommended, and you can practice playing the *sasara*! Matsuya has a restaurant if you decide to stick around for lunch



(when the minshuku do not provide a meal), and my companions enjoyed their zenzai. During the winter festival season, the houses are lit up and residents perform traditional songs and dances onstage. The illumination was beautiful despite the relative lack of snow, but I hope future years are blanketed further!

Last Minute Points

- Should you find yourself with extra time in Takaoka due to a misreading of the bus schedule, you can visit Zuiryuuji and a Daibutsu. You may also come across a swing set and decide to let out your inner child (while singing dorky songs, of course).
- An NHK reporter and cameraman may join you on the bus. And follow you off the bus. And film you exploring the village you have chosen. This was pretty off-putting for us, so we asked them to stop. I feel fairly confident they would have followed us into the restaurant at which we ate otherwise.
- Very near Suganuma is Kuroba Onsen. From the baths, you can see the spectacular river in the area. Especially if you get a discount from your lovely minshuku family, it is well worth the trip.
- ICOCA and other IC cards are not usable on Kanazawa's trains. Apparently they are on buses.

The World Heritage villages are well worth visiting at least once, ideally during a seasonal celebration. Ainokura and Suganuma are both quieter than



Shirakawa-go and may be better for those overwhelmed by too many bodies.

Brittany Teodorski

P

lacement + years on JET

I spent 3 years (2012-2015) in Minamiawaji-shi, Awajishima, Hyogo-ken. It was actually the sister city of my (since disowned) hometown of Celina, OH, so it was nice to get to live in the same town I visited 12 years earlier as a middle schooler.

Favorite JET memory

Runners up are exploring every nook and cranny of Hiroshima and Fukuoka, spending 11 days in Korea, spending 5 or so days in Taiwan, and seeing countless shows from various punk, metal, and noise groups from all over the world throughout Japan. However, my favorite memory is probably spending a few days in Okinawa with this pretty lady I know.



I ate everything in Okinawa I could find, including stewed pork cubes, pig's feet udon, dried pig's face, taco rice, donut balls topped with taco ingredients, raw beef sushi, raw goat, tiny salty fish on cubes of tofu, snake wine, fermented smelly tofu, and all of the sea grapes I could find. Pretty lady and I also did a crazy, awesome stamp rally at Shuri Castle that was most definitely designed for kids but we were better at. Renting a car to check out the Peace Memorial, the aquarium, and King Taco was a fantastic decision too. Loved me some Okinawa

aside from the loud, drunken American marines that tended to pop up and cause a scene.

Most valuable thing he learned

Beware of the know-it-alls. As many JETs come straight out of college or never grew up beyond then, many of them tend to still be in the pretty, pretty princess zone where they think they're infallible and brilliant. Spoiler Alert: Many of them are unspectacular idiots from unspectacular places such as Port Washington, New York or Cleveland, Ohio who go back to those places to waste space, create more space wasters, and remain a drain on precious resources, like oxygen. This certainly doesn't apply to everyone, but it can definitely be theme among many JET communities that continues throughout anywhere you go. I've learned to be a better judge of character and to seek out the truly spectacular, potential-filled individuals that you can find anywhere if you look hard enough. For the most part, I learned not to just trust someone because they're geographically close to you but to seek out excellent people.

Recommendations for current JETs

Do what you want to do and don't wait for others to go along or give you permission. There are so many opportunities available to you, both in Japan and everywhere else that you just need to hop at. Waiting around for a group or trying to plan for everyone's schedule means you'll have to miss many. Learn to talk to strangers, eat their delicious candy, and get out and experience things (and stuff). If I waited for others to plan things for me, I never would have found my favorite punk rock basement bar ([Bar 混沌](#), pronounced Konton), visited an animatronic Kappa statue in Fukusaki, Hyogo, or seen Tokyo noise legend Merzbow live in the SuperDeluxe basement with 200 very intensely focused fans and

one childish jerkbag who tried to ruin it for them, which in its own right was a great story.



Go to as many random places as you can! Find new bars, stores, museums, restaurants, and strange little temples just by wandering into weird paths and dimly lit basements. Wandering into one creepy basement led me to Osaka's only Satanism, goth, and occult store, [Territory](#), which was the first discovery that opened me up to searching out eeeeeverything neat and wondrous in Japan.

Something he wishes he'd done

I never made it to Yakushima. It's the awesome, forested island that was the inspiration for Princess Mononoke. While I was in Japan, I got really into hiking through nature, including climbing up Mt. Yuzuruha in Minamiawaji a few times in an attempt to commune with the deer and monkeys. Yakushima would have been an excellent cap on my nature exploration/attempt to build a bloodthirsty deer-monkey hybrid army. Everyone should go to Yakushima and send me souvenirs.

What he does now

I'm in San Francisco having the time of my life with my buddy Wesley, who I brought back with me from Japan. A few people tried to talk me out of moving here, since it is currently the most expensive city to live in the US. However, I'm no stranger to throwing

myself into difficult situations, once having lost 40 pounds in 5 months on the "I don't have money for food" diet in Los Angeles.

I spent 2 and a half months working at a tech company as an office manager, and now I'm making the most of my unemployment time to hike every wooded area, see every museum and silly tourist attraction, attend every wrestling or music show, and eat every bit of awesome food. I'm pretty much using the insane "what looks neat" research skills I honed in Japan to keep myself busy while waiting for a new job to appear. I've also made a ton of friends by joining a WWE/Wrestling watching club, hanging out at a silly bar called Kozy Kar, and starting to volunteer for Maximum Rock n Roll magazine. I may be nearing 30, but I refuse to slow down or compromise what I want to do. I'm fairly firm in the belief that it's silly to not have as much fun as you can in the time you have.

Also, a new Japanese ramen place, Mensho Tokyo, just opened a block from my house. The ramen is insanely amazing, but, for the record, Premium Malt's beer is still terrible, even after you haven't had it in a while after leaving Japan.



Contact information

Drop a line if you have questions or want to share any wicked pasta recipes/maps to buried treasure: ryan.r.hertel@gmail.com

Ryan Hertel

I turn back, but the shepherd is trekking back across his field, toward his rock. Did he mean my mother is proud of me? Did I mishear him? I must have. Or maybe he does know of the Margravine. Perhaps the birds have been speaking to others. I never thought of that. It's not like they are MY birds. They can speak to whoever they want, I suppose. Really, I don't think I'm jealous, so I'm just going to go to the store, and maybe ask Henwyn when I get back.

The store is quite quaint. Can I use the word "quaint" now that I've been to Wales? I think I will. It's very accurate. It's actually made of stones, not those pre-formed concrete building blocks that look like stones but are all the same, either. These stones are old and rough and all different sizes and covered in green moss, or lichen. How does one tell the difference between moss and lichen? Inside, it's just a store. There are shelves and food and a refrigerated back wall. I'm a little disappointed. I wanted the store to be strange. As strange as the shepherd.

Henwyn isn't in the cottage attic when I get back, but Sybil is. The pink crane is annoyed with me as always. He responds indignantly when I ask about the shepherd.

"Why would we speak to anyone? We don't even want to speak to you. But Her Grace chose you so we must adjust ourselves. It hasn't been pleasant, but I, at least, have come to understand most of your words. What does 'shepherd' mean? That word has a strange feel to it. Is it a common name

in this world?"

I'm a little surprised by Sybil's question and answer it automatically.

"It's just someone who takes care of sheep. I don't know. There aren't many sheep around. But maybe here it's pretty common. Or maybe they use a different word? I guess it also means a leader, someone who takes care of a group. I never thought about it."

He answers with a flip of wing that I don't understand, and turns to one of the other birds. I guess I'm done talking too, so I should just go back down stairs. As I back down the ladder, I glance around at the other birds. All the birds in the attic, besides Sybil, are ravens, and there are quite a few. I start counting and get to fourteen before Sybil turns around and spots the half of me still sticking through the hatch between the attic and the rest of the cottage.

"You know it's generally considered rude to hang about in doorways. In or out? Make a choice."

Make a choice? In with the birds, or out in the cottage? Is it really my choice to make? In or out? These are not my birds. These are not even the birds that came to my attic two months ago. Or maybe they are? Where did the ravens go when Nevermore disappeared? In or out?

I climb back up into the attic and sit on a joist near the east window. Sybil huffs and turns back to the raven at his side. Is it that easy? Why did I feel locked out of the attic back home? This attic is welcoming and I like the way sunlight comes through the slats in the window. The birds shuffle

around but don't seem too concerned with me. I reach towards the nearest raven. She's sleek and cunning, with a hump to her beak. She had been preening, and just like any bird would, she stops and looks at my hand. Then she tips her head up to look me in the eye, and asks,

"What are you doing?"

These are not my birds.

I apologize and look back out the window. The raven tips her head the other way, still watching me. She hops onto the window sill and looks down into the yard. My mother is finally pulling the curtains off the clotheslines and piling them in a plastic tub that she found in the cottage's washroom. We watch together for a moment before she speaks.

"It's hard to be chosen isn't it? You don't understand us and we don't understand you."

"Mm, I think I'm learning though. What happened to Nevermore? Why are you here? All the ravens were gone, but here you all are." I respond.

The raven turns back to face the attic and muses, "Ravens? Nevermore returned home, but we of her faction came here. Nevermore felt a spark here, but Fireflight and the others decided to stay with the house that called us... your house I suppose it was."

The raven pecks my hand gently and flies across the attic, just like the pet cockatiel I had years ago used to do. I stare at my hand and suddenly realize she wants me to follow her. Across the attic, she is at the other window looking back at

me. I really am learning to understand them!

At the other window we both gaze west. This side of the house faces open land with nothing in view but a small curve of the road and some hills in the distance. The raven, I suppose I shall have to name her too, places her foot on the wooden slats over the window pushing them open. Several of the ravens swooped past us out of the attic and away towards the horizon. Nope, I don't understand them. I missed whatever signal they had to have given that they were leaving. I ask the raven, still standing at the open window, where they are going.

"Do you see that hill there? The small one next to the one that looks like the Mohawk. Beyond that hill, there is a cave, and that cave is the spark that Nevermore felt. We watch but do not enter there. Today we came to report but now we must return to watching."

She turns to look at me again and gives one parting sentence before leaping into the air to follow the others.

"The shepherd calls me Tivvy, and you can too."

Louise Warren

She picked the worst time to tell him, when they'd just finished. They were lying, side by side but not touching, sweaty and sore but almost happy. He reached over her and grabbed his cigarettes from the mantel, pulling a lighter from under his pillow. He only smoked when he was afterglowing. Or drinking. Or driving. Or working. Or seeing his nephews. "Those things will kill you, you know," she said. He shrugged; he'd heard that a million times before. Then, just as he was holding the flame to the tip she blurted out "I'm cheating on you."

Joseph paused. He took a drag. Maria gazed at him intensely, trying to gauge his reaction. He took another puff and then got up without a word. He pulled on his trousers, shrugged on a shirt which felt like sandpaper and smelled disgusting, put on his shoes, no socks and let himself out. Maria felt like she should call out something facile like "Where are you going?" but she realised she'd lost that right.

Joseph reached the street. It was pitch black—he went to check the time and realised he'd left his watch and his phone back at Maria's place but he couldn't go back. Luckily, he still had his keys, wallet, lighter. He'd have to buy a new mobile. He set off down the street, towards his flat, which he hadn't visited in a week.

As it turns out, he might as well have stayed. It was too late anyway. He was already infected.

Joseph William Ryusei Nakamura had been drinking since he was fifteen. He'd been having sex since he was seventeen and smoking since he was twelve. He tried marijuana for the first time at seventeen, cocaine when he was twenty. He'd been a lifelong addict, layabout and loser. However, he'd only been a vampire since 1:18 that morning.



Photo courtesy of Stefan-Xpvia via Wikimedia Commons.

Joseph awoke to find his hand on fire. He screamed and jumped up, trying to shake the flames out. He backed into a shaft of sunlight streaming in between the curtains, instantly starting to burn and bellowing in pain. Diving back into the shadows of his bed, instinct driving him to shun the light, he pulled off his pleather jacket (he'd slept in his clothes) and wrapped it around his hand. The flames went out. To his shock, there was no pain; Joseph pulled the jacket from his hand and found absolutely no damage to his skin. He turned it to look at the other side—completely unblemished, although

somewhat paler than usual.

Gingerly, he poked his index finger out into the excoriating light and then instantly withdrew it as it began to smoke. He knelt on his bed, trapped in between two shafts of abrasive sunshine. A gaol made of light. He thought to try and phone someone, but realised he'd left his phone at Maria's. He couldn't leave the flat; immediately outside his front door there was a large window overlooking the street. He'd be ash before he reached the stairs.

He realised he didn't even know what time it was and looked around—there was a clock in the kitchen which had stopped he didn't know how long ago. He'd pawned his laptop two months ago to pay his rent. He'd never bothered to programme the timer on his VCR. He was trapped in an ageless bubble, outside of the time-space continuum.

He sidled up to the window and managed to close the curtains without the sun hitting his skin. He sank down to the ground and put his head in his hands. "Fuck," he said to the room at large. He went to the kitchen and tried to find the kettle—it was hiding beneath a pizza box. There were no clean mugs, naturally, but he'd managed to snag some paper cups from his nephews' birthday party the week before. He found the pack, which he'd stashed in the dishwasher (the only spotless place in the whole flat) and there were no clean paper cups either. Eventually, he found an old Fanta bottle and made the tea in that.

He took a sip and spat it out; he hadn't expected it to be good, but he also hadn't expected it to taste like rot. Orange-flavoured rot. He poured

the concoction down the sink and went to the fridge. There was nothing in there that wouldn't also taste like mould. He slammed the fridge shut and then the shriek of a telephone made him jump.

He looked around wildly. The phone rang again. It was a landline. He had a landline? He followed the noise and discovered the phone had been living peacefully in a laundry cave near the toilet. By some miracle, it had not been unplugged. He wondered who'd been paying the bills for it.

He picked up the receiver but didn't say anything—he always let other people speak first on the phone.

"Hello?" It was Saul.

"Hey," Joseph replied, his voice breathy and low.

"I heard about Maria, man, I'm sorry."

"Yeah." Joseph coughed, but he couldn't seem to restore his voice to what it had been.

"That's really shitty man. Real fucking shitty. Do you know who the guy is?"

"No."

"Well, if she tries to get any money from you, you get a test, yeah? I mean, it probably is yours, but it never hurts to check."

Joseph's world stopped turning. "What?"

"Yeah, my cousin was getting child support from this guy for eight years before she realised—"

“Maria’s pregnant?” Saying the words aloud hurt him more than the sunlight.

“Well, yeah, I- I thought you knew.”

Joseph put down the phone. He swallowed hard and then shucked his jacket over his head and marched towards the front door. He’d just put his hand on the knob when a voice behind him drawled “Don’t do that.”

Joseph turned; stood behind him was The Devil. No horns, no tail, no forked tongue, but somehow Joseph knew. He had lank, light brown hair, which reached down past his shoulders, and a five o’clock shadow. His face was long, with a pointed chin and a roman nose. Joseph would have described him as “horse-faced” if he hadn’t been terrified. The Devil was wearing a red kaftan, and held a long, black cigarette holder in his left hand, a scotch on the rocks in the other. He was completely at ease, looked almost bored, in his surroundings.

“The sunlight will kill you, Joseph.” He took a swig from his drink. “And we need to talk.”

“What do you want from me?” Joseph found his voice surprisingly strong, in spite of his terror.

“To apologise mainly,” he said, vaguely waving his hands in the air, “I’m afraid I rather cuckolded you.”

“You’re the one Maria was sleeping with?” Joseph thought he might be sick.

“Sleeping with’.” The Devil scoffed and took another swig, “We’re both men, Joseph: I was fucking her.”

“Oh God.”

The Devil raised an eyebrow, “Quite. But, you know, monogamy is an outmoded concept anyway– it was enforced so that everyone knew whose child was whose.” He took a puff from his cigarette and waved his hands some more as he pontificated, “But, as refrigeration spelt the doom of kosher, so too does the paternity test eschew the need for such antiquated etiquette. We live in an enlightened age– we can all fuck whoever we like.” He suddenly looked nauseated at what he’d said, “Sorry– *whomever*.”

A horrible thought occurred to Joseph, “Is- is the baby yours?”

The Devil nodded, but didn’t seem particularly excited by the prospect, “Yes, this is one case where aforementioned technology is, in fact, entirely superfluous. I know that that baby’s my progeny– I’m what you might call ‘super-virile’.” He put his drink down on one of the many piles of shirts and then flopped down theatrically onto the sofa, “Which brings me to the other reason I thought we should talk.”

He took a long drag from his cigarette and blew the smoke out of his nose, regarding Joseph languidly. Then, he pointed at one of the windows and lazily flicked a finger. The curtain sprang open and poured light onto Joseph, he shrieked as his skin began to blister and his eyeballs dry out. The Devil watched this with mild detachment for a few seconds and then flicked the curtain back into place.

Joseph collapsed to the floor, although the pain was already gone and his skin bore no sign of the

recent trauma. The Devil yawned ostentatiously and then leant back on the sofa, crossing his legs. “I presume you’ve seen those absolutely tedious t-shirts that say ‘Life is an STD’; well, it turns out so is unlife.”

Joseph’s eyes widened, “I’m a vampire?”

The Devil’s nose wrinkled, “If you like. Personally, I feel that term is thrown around far too often. I’m something of a purist, you’ll find. I mean, taking Stoker’s text as the *de facto* bible, you don’t really meet the parameters.” He picked up his drink and swirled it a few times, “But you’re certainly not human.”

“Do I...drink blood?” Joseph put a hand to his stomach– it was growling at the thought.

The Devil rolled his eyes at this, “Yes, you ‘drink blood’,” here he mimicked Joseph’s voice and assumed a mocking, slack-jawed expression, “So does a mosquito, yet you don’t call it a creature of the night.” Joseph grimaced and The Devil said “You won’t be so squeamish when it gets to night time, trust me: you’ll be prowling the parks like any common reprobate.”

“Why- why did you do this?”

The Devil sniffed, “Well, I needed Maria for my Plan. And you were just the lucky loser who got to eat my sloppy seconds.”

“You’re disgusting.”

The Devil snorted, “I’m much more than that. I’m evil incarnate. And now,” Here he stood up and patted Joseph on the cheek, “You are too. Welcome to the counter culture.” He downed his

drink and dropped the glass; it shattered on the floor.

“What am I meant to do?” Joseph asked, his voice quivering.

The Devil shrugged, “Whatever you want: kill yourself, join the Klan, start a blog, watch Glee. Why not? It’s not like you can be a good person anymore anyway.” He paused, “At least from an absolutist stand point. Obviously, a meta-ethical relativist will tell you that there’s no such thing as ‘good’ anyway. But I think they’d change their mind if they knew that heaven was real. Anyway, I absolutely must be going. Valedictions.”

He vanished, no burst of flame or crack of thunder, just a faint pop and the smell of cheap wine. Joseph collapsed onto the sofa where The Devil had been sitting a moment earlier and then went to light a cigarette. He watched the flame of his lighter for a while and remembered all the times Maria had told him that smoking would kill him and he’d quit if he really loved her. Well, she could go to hell.

Rory Kelly

lords of the past that rue the day
flowers that blossom for today
enjoying the seasons as they rise and set
times and feelings of those you've met
ride on the petals carried in wind
recorded, kept, enfolded. begin
spin & spin as the cycle turns
soul, darkness & light adjourn
swords clash & arrows fly
evolve to renew in thine eye
caught between death & euphoria
the sight of ume & sakura

16200317

mandy wong

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
All month:	Izushi Sakura Festival			1	2 Block 6/7 Hanami	3
	Spring Carnival (free 4/3)				Himeji Sakura Kanoukai	HAJET Himeji Castle Hanami
	Miyako Odori (Kyoto)				Miwakare Park Sakura Matsuri	Squid Festival
	Spring Festival 2016				Ningyo Dolls Exhibition	
					Sakura Matsuri	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					Tamba Happiness Market	
					Spring Lodge	Takeda Castle Matsuri
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
					Folk Jamboree	Book Club: Burial Rites
						Soba Comp. (register 4/7)
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
					Adult LEGO Fan Event (Osaka)	
					Kinosaki Onsen Festival	
					37th Sasayama Rhododendron Festival	
25	26	27	28	29	30	
				Awaji Danjiri Matsuri		
					Infiorata Kobe	

