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Kansai's Cat Cafes

**Forbidden in Jade: An Interview with Author
& JET Alum Kevin Lang**

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April Features

- 5 Kansai Cat Cafes
- 7 Author Interview: Kevin Lang

- 2 Hello! Message from the Editor
- 3 Hello! Message from the PR
- 4 Kicchiri: Onion & Cabbage Soup
- 11 No Zen, No Life: The Tigers, The Colonel, and the Curse
- 13 When it Hits: 5 Albums
- 15 The Refuge: The Durants
- 17 Prefecture Spotlight: Fukuoka

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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, 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

Message from the Editor:

hello!

After flailing about at PunkSpring 2015 and relaxing in what may have potentially been my last overseas trip while on the JET Programme (shameless plug and thank you for Brittany Teodorski's [Cambodia review](#)), I can't help but hear Alien's voice whisper, "Spring break forever," over and over again in my head. For those pop-culturally uneducated wondering who Alien might be, it is in fact James Franco's Floridian, rapper persona in the movie [Springbreakers](#) - a movie I continue to go back and forth as either a work of pure genius or absurdity, although that may require a much lengthier analysis than is allowed here. However, besides suffering from post-March Madness depression, I also know that the "Spring break forever" mentality can survive just a little while longer since April and May are filled with AJET and HAJET events. The [AJET Block 6 Car Rally](#) is on Apr 18, [Tajima Pub Quiz XII](#) is on May 16, The AJET Block 6 [Biwa Boat Ball](#) is May 23, and the HAJET Awaji Camping Trip is on the same day. Sure these events won't provide the potential for drug use and violence that Director Harmony Korine's movie promises, but that's not to say they won't allow for the same levels of fun. Make sure to RSVP on Facebook and get in on the action before your school year gets too busy.

Now, not only is it a new school year for us all, but for many it is the last term we will teach in Japan. I know I've already beaten to death the idea of making lasting impressions on your students and JTEs, and Ryan's PR message this month does a great job confronting our fears about moving forward, but given my enormous consumption of everything American collegiate basketball related over the past few weeks there are some similarities I want to point out as April gets underway.

- **Be the underdog or giant-killer.** Maybe the bar wasn't set too high for you last year and your school's expectations fell far short of what you yourself expected. Don't let that stop you from pursuing a lesson or initiative you really want to do. Just make sure it's well planned and thought out before going up against the more powerful forces at your school.

- **Be a consistent free-throw shooter.** There's nothing more frustrating than watching your team miss free-throw after free-throw when the other team allows for the opportunity to catch-up with easy points. And there is nothing more frustrating than watching an ALT fail at doing the simple tasks of our job consistently. If you can't

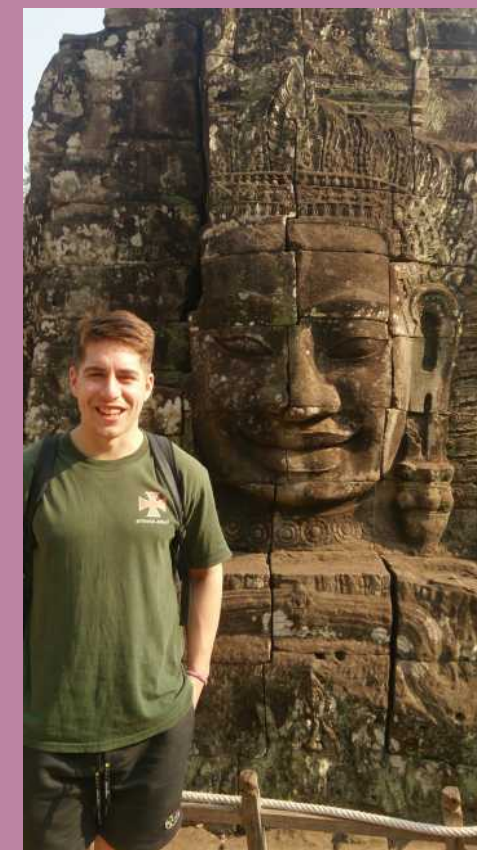
make it to school or class on-time, if you always forget your inkan at home, or if you have a tendency not to print enough materials for your students, people are going to notice. It's these small failures that can add up and make it nearly impossible for you to get the ok to pursue your bigger, better ideas.

- **Avoid the buzzer beater.** We all know last second shots, make for one hell of a win, but the skyrocketing anxiety that leads up to it is extremely unpleasant and the odds are you'll miss the shot more than you'll make it. Plan your lessons well in advance and have a general idea of how you'll tie everything together throughout the year. Also be sure to have those grab n' go lessons ready for last-minute teaching requests from your JTEs.

If you have already done these items, you're well ahead of the game. Take some time and enjoy this issue where you'll find the usual sections and a [glimpse](#) of former ALT Kevin Lang's novel, [Forbidden in Jade](#). If you're still in the process of figuring out how best to tackle this new year, don't be afraid to reach out and best of luck. As a friend once said, "You be the moon, I'll be the earth and when we burst

start over o'darling. Begin again. Begin again."

Sean Mulvihill



hello!

Message from the Prefectural Representative

[Inhale.] As we get older, our bodies change. There's hair where it never was before. Members of the opposite sex no longer seem icky. Broccoli is suddenly not the worst thing ever. We acknowledge that we only said we were a Phoebe to be different and there's nothing wrong with being a Rachel. Sometimes we borrow the neighbor lady's dress from the drying rack outside to see if we really do have "dem dress hips," like we tend to claim. These are just normal parts of growing and developing that everyone goes through.

As spring and summer are rapidly closing in like drunks at a bar with an inebriated sense of what personal space looks like, it's time for many of us to start to panic ourselves into debilitating stress piles as we prepare to move onto the next stage of our lifespans. Many people will be leaving this island and heading back to the lands of our spawning. Some will be hopping to other parts of the island to do that grass is greener thing. Some will stay where they are and become newly-crowned senpais. Most of us will question why so many people have started wearing crowns that, by all accounts, are pretty expensive as well as tacky. However, fear not the new. New is good. New is fresh, so it should be embraced with open arms, which are then closed to make closed arms in the form of a hug. Hug the future, people. Hug it and get ready!

Okay. We're accepting this inevitable future. Now, let's focus back to the now. Never forget that time is a confounding concept that no one really understands and nothing is real. Now, existentially crisis for a bit. Are you back? Okay, deal with the now, now. Take the next several months to write a bucket list. You only have so much time. What concerts do you need to see? What sights do you still need to see? Who do you still need to proclaim your love to and then never speak to again out of embarrassment? Get these things done, because it's all about to change, folks! Attend some events. Meet with the people around you. Check in with the people around you and form that support group you need. I would certainly recommend adding the [Awaji camping trip](#) (May 23; details on the [Hyogo A-JET Facebook page](#)) to your bucket list, as it will be a cure (placebo) for much of the scariness I've described above. [Exhale.]

Watch out for the badness, people,

Ryan Hertel



New Onion & Spring Cabbage Salad

kicchiri kitchen



After a teasing taste of warmer weather in March, the seemingly never-ending winter is finally gone and spring is well and truly upon us. April means sakura season, and as the craze sweeps across the nation, it turns everything in its path pink and sakura flavoured or scented.

Although welcomed with less fanfare, April also brings with it a bounty of fresh new vegetables. Vegetables such as shin-tamanegi (new onions), shin-jaga (new potatoes) and haru-kyabetsu (spring cabbage) are milder and tenderer versions of their year-round equivalents and are best prepared using simple recipes that bring out their delicate flavours. Like all seasonal things in Japan though, they are only available for a brief period of time so enjoy them while you can.

This month's recipe is a super simple cabbage salad with marinated onions that is surprisingly moreish. For those of you who don't like raw cabbage or don't see it as a valid substitute for lettuce in salads, this might just change your mind. The tender, sweet leaves of the haru-kyabetsu pair well with the light, tangy shin-tamanegi dressing and has a slightly nostalgic, izakaya-esque taste to it.

Ingredients

- >> ½ shin-tamanegi
 - >> ½ teaspoon salt
 - >> A dash of pepper
 - >> 1 Tbsp. vinegar (I used rice vinegar but any white vinegar will do)
 - >> 1 Tbsp. olive oil
 - >> A dash of sesame oil
 - >> ¼ haru-kyabetsu
- >> Serves 2
>> Prep time: 3-5 minutes
>> Cooking time: 3-5 minutes

Method

One Trim the ends of the onion, remove the skin and slice finely lengthwise.

Two Place the onion slices in a large bowl and add the salt. Mix with fingers until soft. The salt should have dissolved and the mixture should be sticky.

Three Add the vinegar and mix.

Add the olive oil and sesame oil and mix again. Add the pepper.

Four Rinse the cabbage, remove the hard core and tear or cut into large pieces. Mix gently with the onion dressing. If possible, refrigerate (or just leave to marinate) for at least 30 minutes.

Helen Yuan

Kansai Cat Cafes

Though most think of Japan when they hear about cat cafes, the world's first actually opened in Taipei in 1998. After the first one opened in Japan, they've exploded in popularity. Now you can find them in most Asian countries and in a growing number of European and North American cities. Most are fairly similar: you pay an hourly fee (usually) and spend that time reveling in feline glory. Drinks of the alcoholic and non-alcoholic variety are offered, and you can buy treats that will summon a swarm. The rules are common sense: wash your hands before petting the cats, don't pester them, don't use flash, don't force the cats into situations they don't want to be in, and no shoes in their space (honestly, these should be rules for interacting with humans too). What follows are the six cafes I have had the pleasure of going to, though this is by no means an extensive list.

Nekobiyaka (Himeji)
 >> Open 12-9 (Sun. until 7);
 Closed Tues.
 1st hr: 1000円 Every 30
 min. after: 500円
 Hyogo Prefecture, Himeji,
 Ekimaecho, 322, ミフネビ
 ル 2F
<http://nekobiyaka.jugem.jp/>

This cafe has become a home to only black cats. They are fitted with adorable collars/ties, which you can also purchase for your own furry friend in their 3rd floor shop. There weren't any cat toys last time I went, but the cats were perfectly satisfied playing baseball with crumpled up paper. I enjoyed each of my visits.

Nyanny (Kobe)
 Open 11-10; Closed every 3rd Tues.
 1st hr: 1000円 (1200円 Sat.) Every 30 min. after:
 500円
 Hyogo Prefecture, Kobe, Chuo Ward, Motomachidori, 2
 Chome-6-11, 徳永ビル3F
<http://nyanny.com/>

5 << Hyogo Times >> April



Nyanny, Kobe



Nekobiyaka, Himeji

at least one will aggressively pee on it), or buy treats. The orange cats are particularly fond of them and will paw your hand closer. The very second you run out, though, the felines will be off on their own once more.

Neko no Jikan (Osaka)
 Open Mon.-Sat. 11-9 (Mon. until 7); Sun. &
 Holidays 10-7
 Weekday 1st hr: 1100円 (includes drink); Free-
 time after 6: 1200円 (includes drink)
 Weekend/Holiday 1st hr: 1200円 (includes
 drink)
 Osaka Prefecture, Osaka, Kita Ward,
 Kurosakicho, 5-16, HEARTビル2F
[http://www.nekonojikan.com/kitahonten/
 index.html](http://www.nekonojikan.com/kitahonten/index.html)

Opened in 2004, this location was Japan's first cat cafe. Many of its residents are unusual in some way: munchkin; Maine Coon; squished face; indescribably thick. A few were playful, but this location charges a fee to use toys for every 10 minutes (a huge rip-off, in my opinion). I noticed that at least two of the cats were injured or otherwise sick, which is concerning. The drinks offered in the separate drinking area

The cats here are largely aloof. That is, until you do or have something that piques their curiosity. Toys here are (thankfully) free to use, but many won't be very interested unless you do something novel, like drag the fabric one behind you as you walk around (careful, though; aggressively pee on it),

you don't have to leave the cat area to enjoy them, unlike at the Kita Ward location. The cats (especially the calico sphinx) are usually quite interested in the drinks, so guard them vigilantly.

were boringly standard, but on the plus side, there was a slightly scruffy shiba inu that graced us with its presence.

Neko no Jikan-Amemura (Osaka)
 Open 11-9 (Sun. and Mon. until 7)
 Weekday 1st hr: 1100円 (includes drink) Every 30 min.
 after: 500円
 Weekend/Holiday 1st hr: 1200円 (includes drink) Every
 30 min. after: 600円
 After 6 (includes drink): Weekdays: 1200円 Weekends/
 Holidays: 1300円
 Osaka Prefecture, Osaka, Chuo Ward, Nishishinsaibashi, 1
 -9-16
<http://www.nekonojikan.com/amemura/top.htm>

Similar to its predecessor, the Amemura branch of Neko no Jikan houses several odd types of cats, with the addition of sphinxes. There are more interesting drinks available and you don't have to leave the cat area to enjoy them, unlike at the Kita Ward location. The cats (especially the calico sphinx) are usually quite interested in the drinks, so guard them vigilantly.

Cat Tail (Osaka)
 Open 11-8
 1st hr: 1200円 Every 15 min.
 after: 200円
 Osaka Prefecture, Osaka, Chuo Ward,
 Nishishinsaibashi, 2-10-22 第二多
 田ビル2F
<http://cattail.jp/>

Cat Tail also has many more time options available (with food and drinks!) than what's listed here. There are two rooms you can sit in, and cats go back and forth pretty regularly (Let me out! Let me in! Let me out! ad infinitum). One beast of a cat is apparently bitey; signs have been put up warning patrons of his ill-intentions, but as long as you don't pester him, you'll be fine. The other cats are pretty friendly and sleepy. If you sit down in a place they like with a blanket on your lap, you'll get one or three cats nuzzling into you. This is hands-down my favorite cat cafe in Osaka.



Neko no Jikan, Osaka



Neko no Jikan, Amemura



Cat Tail, Osaka

Neko Kaigi (Kyoto)
 Open 11-8; Closed Tues.
 1st hr: 900円 Every 30
 min. after: 400円
 Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto,
 Nakagyo Ward,
 Oikedaitocho, 590, 御池
 加納ビル2F
<http://www.nekokaigi.com/>
[http://www.nekokaigi.com/
 english/top.html](http://www.nekokaigi.com/english/top.html)

Ah, Neko Kaigi. This is the first cat cafe I ever visited, so I have very fond memories. My first time was a bit of a mess, however. Many years ago, a friend and I decided to go. We found the street it was on easily, but after that, we were clueless. I asked a clerk at a nearby コンビニ, though I could only understand yellow and 2. We wandered down the street, asking others where it could be found. Our answer was always 「え? 猫カフェですか? ちょっと変ですね。」 Our salvation came through a Family Mart clerk. Full of hope, we marched down the slightly shady alleyway to the elevator and found that the cafe was...closed. Fortunately for us, we were able to squeak in the next morning.

At any rate, the cats here all have food names. These are written on their collars and provide good ひらがな and カタカナ reading practice. They also like being slapped pretty hard on their butt. It's disconcerting initially, but the staff will assure you that they enjoy it. A couple will violently play with your feet if they smell interesting enough. One cat has to wear clothes due to allergies, but she's happy to lie on laps.

Cat cafes are only continuing to rise in popularity. They're a fun and relaxing way to spend an hour or three. The time passes so quickly, especially if you're an absurd cat-lover like myself. I would recommend the experience to nearly everyone.

Brittany Teodorski



Neko Kaigi, Kyoto
 photo by Melanie Barth

Hidden History: An Interview with Author Kevin Lang

What years were you on JET? Where did you live and teach?

It was a long time ago, from 1996-1999. I lived near Gakuentoshi. Koryodai, Hazetani Oshibedani and Sakuragaoka were the schools I worked at. The shenanigans of the ninensei at Oshibedani still make me shudder.

When did your interest in Japan, its culture and history, begin?

I studied judo when I was a child and karate at university so I wanted to come to Japan. I trained at the Kobe YMCA karate club. (Oh yes, I can hear some of you now: Young man, there's no need to feel down.)

Can you give a quick synopsis of the book?

Forbidden in Jade is a novel about the samurai and the ninja in seventeenth-century. It describes many historical sites in Kyoto, Kobe and Nara with accounts of historical battles, warlords and notable characters.

Kotaro is the main character and it is his story: his birth and almost immediate abandonment by his father (Himeji); the samurai school (Kobe); young adulthood (Kyoto & Nara). The book also delves into the mind of a sociopath.



Where did the idea come from? How long did it take you to write?

Bizarrely, in England, we Brits have a certain unhealthy interest in our dark past. If you go to London there are tours about Jack the Ripper, execution sites and, of course, the London Dungeons. However, Japan seems to be ashamed about their darker past. There is so much interesting, grim history around Kyoto which many tourists, and for that matter the Japanese, don't know about. I thought about the *Da Vinci Code* and how the novel mixed historical sites into the story. I decided to write a novel in a similar manner and inform readers about history which some Japanese would prefer we didn't know about.

In 1997 a JHS student from Tomagaoka School (Suma-ku) cut off the head of a fellow student with a hand saw. He put the decapitated head on the school's gate. Eventually, the boy was caught: alias Sakakibara. In custody, he admitted to killing another girl and attacking other children with a hammer and knife. This event gave me the idea to write about Shun: the sinister character in the novel. I rationalized that sociopaths are not a modern phenomenon. They have always existed. In 1966, a classic samurai movie was made: *The Sword of Doom*. It is about a sociopathic samurai without

compassion or scruples.

It took about 3 years to write the novel.

What do you think this portion of Japanese history has to offer today's readers?

The past is connected to the present. The novel goes into depth about Shintoism and the connection between the emperor and the Sun Goddess. I wrote about the burakumin (outcastes) who are still ostracized today and the yakuza. The origins and rituals of the yakuza come from the 17th century.

What specific sites in Japan would you recommend to a reader who wanted to create a deeper connection with the events in the story?

I wrote the book so people can visit Kyoto and visit many sites to learn some hidden history. For example, the old brothel area of Kyoto (Shimabara), Enryaku Temple (where 10,000 monks were slaughtered), Fushimi Inari Shrine (which was founded by the Korean Hata clan), Nijo Castle (originally guarded by the ninja), Yogen Temple (blood ceilings: a dozen samurai slit open their stomachs in Fushimi Castle and the bloody floorboards were taken to a few temples around Kyoto and used to make ceilings) and Yamazaki (not only can you visit the Suntory Whisky Museum but it is the site of a decisive battle which acted

as a stepping-stone for Toyotomi to gain control of Japan).

Are you working on anything else at the moment?

I have written a few chapters for my next book. It is set in Osaka and Edo and is about samurai, ninja and hidden treasure of the shogun.

What advice would you give to a JET who also hopes to write in the future?

Get off the internet and start writing. I had no desire to write a novel but four years ago my old LAPD friend unexpectedly contacted me. He asked me to check his novel that he had written. I rewrote parts of the book. He liked what I had done and said I should write a novel myself. So I did. If I can write a book so can you.

Anything else you'd like to add?

You can read the first seven chapters on Amazon Kindle. I must admit, the first couple of chapters are a little brutal. Also Lucy Ridout was the editor. She was a JET: pre-earthquake Kobe. She has edited many bestselling books and she wrote *The Rough Guide to Thailand*.

Forbidden in Jade

Below is an excerpt of the first chapter from Kevin Lang's book *Forbidden in Jade*.

Fushimi Castle, near Kyoto

Some say that the darkest and coldest part of the night is just before dawn. It is also the time when great armies are susceptible to attack. Sleep is usually at its deepest, sentries are fatigued and raiders can escape in the morning light.

Concealed by the forest one hundred paces from Fushimi Castle, a group of men were intently watching the movements of a handful of fully armoured samurai who were patrolling the battlements.

'It's time,' the leader whispered to a young man.

'Hai,' Hayato softly replied.

Reaching for his pocket, Hayato pulled out a strange-looking object. He pressed the dog's paw to his lips and kissed it before putting it swiftly back. He had every faith that his talisman would keep him and his clan invisible to the enemy.

Hayato slowly got to his feet from his squatting position. He, like the others, was dressed head to foot in dark blue. Scarves covered their faces, making it hard to distinguish one from the other. All were short and slender, with overdeveloped forearms and wrists. Adhering to a strict diet kept their weight to a minimum. Their bodies were built to climb walls and cling to rooftops.

'Go!' the leader said.

Crossing through the undergrowth, the others followed Hayato. With grappling hooks and ropes, the group of men expertly scaled the castle battlements undetected. Staying in the shadows, the intruders carefully crept along wall tops, up and down stone stairways, hoping to catch the sentries napping. The humidity, even in the early hours, was draining. The

samurai on guard, smelling of sweat, found it difficult to stay vigilant.

In the moonlight, the intruders caught sight of a lone man standing at his post and staring out into the darkness.

The leader made a hand signal.

While the rest stayed motionless, Hayato pulled out a knife and stayed close to the wall. He moved in for the kill. The samurai was taken from behind. Hayato wrapped one of his hands around his victim's mouth and pulled his chin up and back while his other hand drew the blade across the man's throat, slashing it from ear to ear.

Stepping over the twitching body, eight dark shapes moved silently towards the storey keep.

When they reached the tower, the leader stopped and sniffed. He smelt blood. Hayato was covered in it. The young man was too much of a liability to go any further. 'Search the battlements for other samurai,' the leader said calmly.

'Hai.' Hayato bowed and watched his clansmen climb up to a small window. It was skilfully prised open and, one by one, they slithered through. Hayato pivoted away and scanned the battlements, then went in search of sentries.

Inside the keep, the team of ninja climbed the narrow flight of stairs. A few sleepy samurai guards were taken by surprise and garrotted. The plan went smoothly until they reached the corridor outside the bedchamber. Although dry floorboards naturally groan under pressure, these floors were designed to sound a warning.

'Uguisubari.' Nightingale floors. The leader cursed.

The sound of a faint creak snapped the warlord from his sleep. The fifty-seven-year-old man sat up nervously on his mattress. Instinctively, he reached for his scabbard, unsheathed his sword and slowly got to his feet. The man was overtly suspicious, and he had good reason to be. These were dangerous times. In feudal Japan, fragile truces were habitually broken, turning allies into potent enemies. No one could be trusted. Paranoid, the warlord was convinced

that everybody was busily scheming behind his back.

Hideyoshi Toyotomi was ruthless and cunning. He was a man who was blessed with neither good looks nor tall stature. His great army had slaughtered thousands upon thousands of rival samurai during his campaign to seize control of Japan. Once in power, he tightened his grip, imposing a rigid class structure, restricting travel and taking weapons away from peasants and merchants. His despotic plans didn't end there. He had set his sights on conquering both China and Korea as well. He had untold enemies.

Toyotomi crossed the large, tatami-mat room and placed his ear against the doorframe. Listening intently, he heard footsteps somewhere outside. Silence. His heart began to race.

Spinning around, he strode nimbly across the room to a square window and pulled open the wooden shutters. Looking into courtyard, he saw that the sentry posts were all unmanned.

He moved across to the wall. Groping in the darkness, his fumbling fingers struggled to find the hidden lever. After a few nervous seconds, a door finally swivelled open. He escaped into a hidden chamber.

A moment later, noiselessly, the paper screen door to the bedchamber was slid open. After carefully peering into the dimly lit room, one of the ninja took a cautious step forward. His movements were precise but relaxed. He trod silently, scanned constantly and then gave a hand signal. Half a dozen sure-footed masked ninja followed. The last man in closed the door quietly.

They wore no armour. Samurai carried their swords on their hips, but the ninja had theirs strapped to their backs.

The vast room appeared to be empty, yet a distinctive sour, musky odour hung in the night air. The men moved silently to the wooden pillow and quilted mat. One of the assassins quietly sank down onto his haunches and sniffed the silk blanket while his free hand pressed down on the mat, feeling the warmth.

'He's here,' the leader whispered. 'Search the corridors and other rooms.'

The group of men immediately obeyed and disappeared

into the darkness.

Alone, a small, muscular man scanned the large, opulently furnished room. A lamp in the corner illuminated the rare and extravagant artefacts that decorated every corner. It was a beautiful room. No, it was more than that. It was exquisite. Three walls were ostentatiously covered with gold leaf and the fourth bore an intricate wall carving. The place had an aura of power.

Getting quietly to his feet, the ninja padded over to the wood-carved relief of pine trees, mythical dragons and hawks. He began to sniff, catching a faint whiff of body odour. The warlord was close. He sensed it.

Lightly, the ninja swept his fingers over the yew panel: once, twice and finally a third time. His hand stopped, hovering over a dragon's wooden claw. Something wasn't quite right.

Pressing, pulling and twisting, the ninja worked the lever until a door finally glided open. As he stared into the dark passageway, he didn't see, or expect, the slab of dark oak embedded with steel rivets that came swinging at his head.

Blood streamed from his nose. Semi-conscious, the assassin, now flat on his back, saw the face of Hideyoshi Toyotomi staring down at him, holding the club above his head, ready to strike a second time.

Very few knew the assassin's face, yet most knew his name. It was Kirigakure Saizo – Hidden Mist – and his attempt to assassinate the most powerful man in all of Japan had just failed, dismally.

Hidden Mist unobtrusively reached into his jacket and pulled out a small bottle of poison. He pressed it to his lips, about to swallow, but before he could the oak club smashed him across the head. The bottle was dropped. He fell into unconsciousness.

Those who committed serious crimes in Toyotomi's fiefdom – crimes such as murder or arson – faced severe punishments. They were boiled alive, burnt at the stake, crucified, decapitated or sawn in half with serrated bamboo.

The fate awaiting Hidden Mist would be even worse.

Kevin Lang

no zen,
no life

The Tigers, The Colonel, & the Curse: One Inch Deep in the Skillet

Colonel Harland David 'Colonel Sanders' Sanders was an Indiana native who set the world alight, or at least to about 175C (lower temperatures will result in soggy, grease coated chicken) in 1930 when he was entrusted to manage a service station in Corbin, Kentucky by The Shell Oil Company. Disenchanted by dwindling sales of out of date newspapers, overpriced ham sandwiches and Magic Trees, Harland traded piston rings for onion rings and lube jobs for loose bowels and set about polarizing the U.S. with his secret blend of 11 herbs and spices, three vials of which were permanently tucked inside the left breast pocket of his grease sodden seersucker suit.

One of the instigators of the franchise business model, the colonel expanded quickly and soon the skies across the southern states were a rich fug of hydrogenated vegetable oil, emulsifiers, artificial flavorings and preservatives.

Emboldened by his initial success, it was not long before the 'chicken express*' was juddering through America, Canada and Europe, long plumes of acrid smoke tarnishing the storefronts of the long established local poultry restaurants left in its wake.

Excrement-filled

In 1973 the wheels quite literally came off the gravy train when Sanders sued Heublein Inc., the then parent company, for allegedly serving 'sludge' like gravy and removing the beard dye, minced string ties and crushed wire-rimmed spectacles that had been, until then, a staple of the Southern meat sauce industry. Sadly, Sanders died in Louisville, Kentucky in 1980 at the age of 90, but his legend lives on through the innumerable life size plastic statues that beckon countless Japanese inside to sample authentic western style New Year's cuisine at the



1,552 KFC restaurants currently operating nationwide. Only there is one branch that welcomes its visitors not with an avuncular plasticized embrace, but rather a grim sense of foreboding. Or it would, but it closed down. But you get the point.

Creamy Buffalo



The Hanshin Tigers are the second oldest pro baseball franchise in Japan and were founded on the 10th of December, 1935. Winning back to back championships in 1936-38, and singularly in 1944 and 1947, their fans, a swarm of yellow and black, are a familiar sight to those living in the Kobe-Osaka region. Each team in the Japanese baseball league has an allowance of non-Japanese players that they can draft every year; these players, often on the fringes of MLB, arrive in Japan to much fanfare and provide an invaluable

service; holding up B4 size pouch laminated flags of their native countries to somnambulistic high schoolers, sitting blank faced and prostrate at slate grey Formica desks for 8 hour stretches in complete silence, wearing regulation blue suits and any kind of tie whilst drinking refrigerated red wine from highball tumblers in Japanese-Belgian fusion restaurants and nodding politely: 'Isn't it delicious?' 'Yes, yes it is' - their skills are almost without limit.

In 1985 the Tigers drafted Randy Bass. Up until that point Oklahoma native Bass, his blue eyes and ginger hair offset by a height that is not listed on Wikipedia, was a sparsely used pinch hitter for the Minnesota Twins. He is now, however, firmly ensconced in Japanese sporting folklore as the driving force behind the curse of the colonel. (Colonel Sanders that is. Remember him? I wrote about him at the start for a bit.)

Finger In

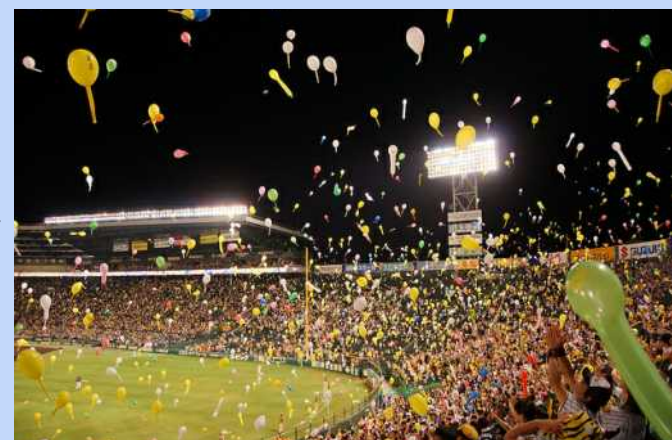
In 1985 the Tigers defeated the Seibu Lions to win their first, and to date, only, Japan Series which prompted riotous celebrations amongst their success starved supporters, who took it in turns to jump into the Dotonbori River in homage to the player they thought they most resembled. Unable to find a blue eyed blond haired Japanese with a full ginger beard, the crowd, intoxicated by a heady brew of watered down beer, fried octopus and centuries of ingrained societal repression, confused a five foot plastic effigy of a silver haired geriatric chicken baron for Bass, at that time not fashioned of plastic but skin, and not standing immobile outside the foyer of a fried chicken shop but in reality moving quite freely, approximately one foot taller and probably at that time somewhere else entirely.

Mingo Jones

And so began an 18 year losing streak for the Tigers, who tumbled down the league rankings like fried chicken down the back of a Collectramatic** 519 high pressure fryer, forever to be stuck behind a congealed oil covered table leg next to bits of old lettuce and what is that black stuff there? God I'm not touching that. No way. You can do that one.

Tropical Hardwood Fiber

The myth of the colonel was born. As each year passed, and the Tigers languished in the periphery, grief stricken fans convinced themselves that their team's inability to catch, throw, hit and sometimes even hold a ball was not due to a serious lack of investment in grassroots youth development, training facilities and sports technology but that an inanimate plastic statue, its lack of emotions and



consciousness undercut by simmering hatred and supernatural powers, had placed a curse on their beloved team from its watery grave.

Determined that the only way to lift the curse and restore the Tigers to the top of the league was to return the colonel to his rightful home, fans began searching the river. After numerous unsuccessful excavation attempts over the years by fan-led groups, the colonel was finally recovered in 2009 while a construction team dredging the river found what they believed to be a huge barrel at the bottom of the river bed. The elation at finding such a unique treasure was quickly replaced by horror when it was feared that this large, barrel sized hollow plastic shape in a molded cream dinner jacket and matching black tie was actually part of a human corpse. Horror quickly turned to relief, elation and then eventually dread, as the plucky river-men established that the lack of blood, skin, hair, internal organs, bones and DNA meant that this was, in fact, the long lost remains of the colonel.

Growth Hormones

And so the curse was lifted, the colonel was returned to his rightful place in front of the Dotonbori KFC restaurant even though it's not there anymore and the Tigers soared triumphant, winning back to back titles and crushing their opponents like bacon, Monterey Jack cheese and Colonel's sauce between two 100 percent white meat Original Recipe® filets.***

NB: The colonel currently resides in a branch of KFC near Koshien stadium.

Tigers fans had a replacement handmade to try and lift the curse, and there was some other stuff too, but this article really went on a bit didn't it? I thought I'd nip it in the bud. Does KFC even sell onion rings?

Scott Patterson

*not an actual term
** Some kind of oven
***They didn't

Photos: Dotonbori courtesy of Stephen Harlan, Hanshin Tigers Game courtesy of kimtetsu, both on Flickr commons

Five Albums to Listen to this Month

Ivy Tripp by Waxahatchee (7 Apr 2015)

Just one of the many female vocalists who have been taking indie music to unique places in recent years, Katie Crutchfield has been on a roll with the upcoming release of her third album in the last five years. Her soft voice, with an underlining raspiness supported by simple guitar and drum rhythms share stories of self-reflection, love, and heartbreak. She questions her relationships and struggles with decisions of staying or leaving, like in her single "Air," "We stand hand-in-hand idle in our course. When we are moving, we just pretend to be strangers lamenting a means to an end." Its simplistic tones surfacing above a much deeper, intimate meaning are what make her songs so relatable.

People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm by A Tribe Called Quest (15th anniversary, 17 Apr 1990)

Ever uttered the words, "Can I kick it?" to the gorgeous honey or fly cat at the bar on late Saturday night in the hopes of starting a discussion or hanging out later? If so,

you probably have A Tribe Called Quest to thank for making that 4-word phrase commonly known throughout our discourse. Yet that's not all. A Tribe Called Quest and their first album People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm have gone on to become essential listening for anyone interested in understanding the foundation of hip hop and rap. Although politically conscious like many of their early rap and alternative hip hop companions, A Tribe Called Quest became known for their positivity and clean lyrics on top of unique samples. Although with no opportunity to see A Tribe Called Quest live in the near future, fans of the genre will be happy to hear that Los Angeles counterparts, Jurassic Five will be playing at Big Cat in Osaka as part of their reunion tour on April 13.

Sound & Color by Alabama Shakes (20 Apr 2015)

As an American I know all about the stereotypes people – both local and foreign – have about Alabama and to be fair, I might even be willing to concede a few of them. Yet, there should be no doubt that this southern American state also births incredible musical talent. Not only does

the above mentioned Waxahatchee hail from Alabama, but as you guessed so do the extremely talented Alabama Shakes. After releasing their first studio album Boys & Girls in 2012 and receiving three Grammy nominations for it in 2013, Alabama Shakes have continued to combine their brand of folk, rock, and soul to offer an incredibly addicting sound. Frontwoman Brittany Howard's voice is a perfect mix between King of Leon's Caleb Followill and Macy Gray and fits nicely with bandmates who never shy away from an opportunity to get lost in their music. The newest album with their singles "Don't Wanna Fight" and "Gimme All Your Love" promises to build upon their previous success.

Sucker by Charli XCX (15 Dec 2014, playing in Osaka 15 Apr 2015)

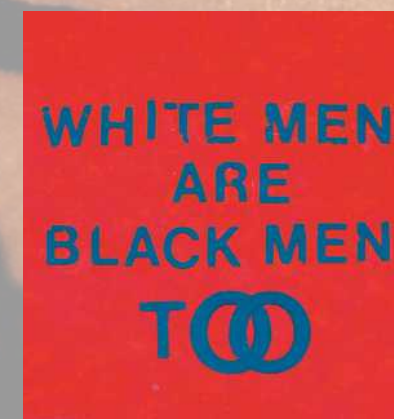
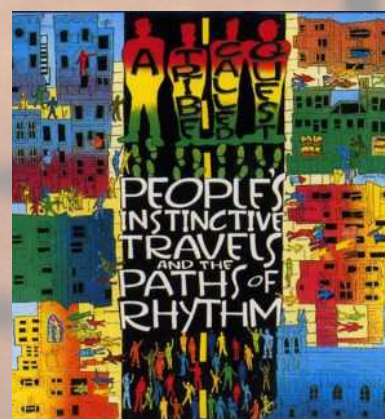
After a positive reception at last year's Summer Sonic, Charli XCX returns to Japan following the release of her newest album Sucker. Her songs blend of electric, pop, and rock align with many current J-Pop stars and allow her to garner a wide audience in Japan. At twenty-two and with two albums out in two years, Charli shows no sign of slowing down, despite complaints of selling out (a

theme the song "Sucker" addresses).

White Men Are Black Men Too by Young Fathers (6 Apr 2015)

Like the previous artists, Young Fathers's music combines a variety of genres and is too complex to simply blanket with an alternative hip-hop title. Instead what this group out of Edinburgh can be called with complete certainty is passionate. Although making music since their teens, the group, now in their late twenties, didn't release a studio album until 2014 where they went on to surprise many by winning the Mercury Award – best album from the United Kingdom and Ireland – for 2014. Similar to Alabama Shakes and Charli XCX, Young Fathers appear to continue defining their sound on their sophomore album and further address issues important to them as they did on their debut album Dead.

Sean Mulvihill



The Durants

Miss Something? This is the 9th installment of The Durants. Catch up on [part 8](#) or start from the beginning on the [Hyogo Times website](#).

IX.

"Stand down, Rakowsky." Orsin's large fist caught Rakowsky's, stopping its path toward Bionca's face. "Our priority is to escape back to our village. Let them be."

The slender man glared and wrested his limb back. "Whatever you say, boss." He shouldered his way past Drake, who yet refused to look at his son. Gaia's saddened, dulled eyes met with Oscar's. His were no longer wide-eyed and starry as they had been only a few short months ago; now they were passionless and devoid.

Mina cleared her throat. "You are going to Vaslera, yes?"

Orsin gazed at her stoically, his expression revealing nothing. "What makes you assume that?"

"I have heard whispers of you." She faced the woman. "You are Dr. Paget's child, are you not?" Beside her, her twin inhaled sharply, repeating the name under her breath.

Her face contorting into an infuriated grimace, she spat "That man's no father to me! He abandoned me after mom died. He probably doesn't even remember I exist!" She ground her teeth. Orsin laid his hand gently upon her shoulder.

"Sure you're not just trying to sell people to the guilds for him to experiment on?" Bitterness sharpened Gaia's

voice. "That's what you Vaslerans have always done."

"Cool off, lady. The times have changed." Rakowsky rolled his eyes.

Turning to her sister, Mina began, "Gaia, I realize you have been hurt. However, the Volarchy has been sending Vaslerans into the guilds as well for the past several years. This pair began a resistance movement." She waved her hand toward Paget and Orsin. "Let us accompany you to Vaslera. I believe it would be a balm for several of my sister's many wounds."

The revolutionaries stared at each other. Paget's burning eyes found Mina's and she nodded tersely. "Make yourself useful. We may run into trouble after we get out of here." She spun on her heel. The ungainly octet groped its way through the darkness, searching for a way to re-enter what they hoped would be light.

"Come this way," Mina commanded. She led them to a grate and pushed part of it forward to reveal a ladder. "This will lead to surface outside the city walls." One by one, they clambered up. The farther they ascended, the thicker the air became; eventually it caused Bionca to suffer an extended cough fit. Drake pulled her up after him onto the grassy fields around Taesh. Ash still clouded the sky.

"This way." Orsin began trudging to the northeast. He left large, muddy footprints in his wake. The others followed single file.

Three hours later, the earth began to tremble beneath their feet. All but Oscar and Rakowsky looked at the nearby volcano in alarm.

"Run, NOW!" Orsin boomed at his companions. Though their feet were weary, they sprinted as long as

they could. As they paused to catch their breath, the first spurts of lava erupted from the peak. Bionca stood transfixed. The red-orange of the molten rock against the dark grey of the ash was mesmerizingly terrifying. Once again, Drake dragged her behind him. They began to climb a hill, hoping the lava wouldn't be able to reach them.

From the top, they watched a shallow, fiery moat form. "Well this'll set us back just a couple minutes. Might as well enjoy the show." Rakowsky sat down and held his head with his hands. He whistled off-key.

Ending on a particularly shrill note, the slinky man stood up and began walking down the hill. "Don't worry. It should be cooled enough to walk on now. Just don't step on the thick parts." Rakowsky rattled off behind him. The air was sweltering.

"Are we sure we can trust him?" Gaia whispered anxiously to her sister.

The man smirked. "Lady," he started. "One of my past jobs involved taking loads of lava samples. Probably the least violent job I ever had." His eyes narrowed in haughty amusement. "Look, almost home free!"

Next to him, Oscar spun suddenly, a flicker of awareness passing over his face. Rakowsky jumped aside, but lost his balance and fell near the advancing edge of the lava. He looked down in shock. The molten rock flattened like a cushion, then ignited on the man's leg. He remained motionless until Orsin dragged him up. His shin and knee were charred through their thin layers of fat and gave off the sickening scent of burnt flesh.

Rakowsky looked down impassively at his injury. "Let's get to Vaslera quickly. This'll need to be amputated." Orsin carried him on his back as the travelers trudged on.

Though the sun was still masked by ash, it became obvious that it had set. Sighing, Orsin suggested they camp for the night and tied a spare shirt around Rakowsky's

burnt limb. Soon, soft snores rose into the air, though two remained awake.

Bionca peered at her family's sword. It was packed snugly into a revolutionary's bag. She grabbed it and padded over to the burnt man's form lying far from the others, holding both the sword and her breath. Sweat beaded on her forehead as she reached the man.

"Come to cut your losses?" Rakowsky whispered at the woman, a wry smirk tugging at his thin lips.

"It's no more than you deserve," she responded savagely.

He rolled over to look at his assailant. "You're right. Go ahead. Avenge your fallen comrades." She swallowed nervously, her knuckles whitening on the sword's hilt. He felt its tip upon his chest. "If it wasn't for me, they'd both still be alive," he taunted.

Tears welled in Bionca's eyes and she fell down. "Don't you regret it at all?"

"I've killed too many to feel regret anymore. I'm just a heartless bastard who got your daddy killed." The woman's brows knit together, a tear slipping down her cheek. "Now do it!"

Faltering, she pulled back slightly before Rakowsky snatched her hand. She resisted, but his pull was insistent. The blade sunk into his heart. "There. Now you're a killer too...."

Brittany Teodorski

Fukuoka

Dia daoibh. I'm Caol Ó h-Úigín and I hail from Dublin, Ireland. I'm on my second year of JET. I teach at two senior high schools in Kitakyushu-shi, Fukuoka. I teach at one low-level school and one medium-high-level school.

Why did you apply for the JET Programme?

Honestly, I applied to JET because I just needed a year's teaching experience to get my teaching degree. My university's career office suggested I apply for JET and so I did. I more-or-less knew nothing about Japan so I never expected to be chosen. In fact, I even accepted a job with the Seville BOE but then I got the call for here and I haven't left.



How did you end up in your prefecture? Was it a preference of yours?

I originally requested Saitama solely because when I looked at the map it seemed pretty central. After that I stated that I'd be happy anywhere in Japan. I got lucky by being placed in the city center of the largest city (by area) in west Japan.

What has been your favourite memory in your prefecture so far?

My favourite memory was when I climbed Mt. Hiko, the largest mountain in Fukuoka. I'm an avid



hiker so it was instantly my favourite; following the route, getting kind of lost and making our own route up part of the way, and then scaling the final stretch using metal chains. Upon descending, we went to an onsen followed by a surprisingly nice yakiniku (I don't like yakiniku). After dinner we all headed out to bars and made questionable life choices. We also met my three oldest friends; Tequila, Shame, and Regret. But that whole trip is my favourite memory of Fukuoka.

Is there a "best" time to visit Fukuoka?

I would say the best time to visit would be in July and August. Kitakyushu's festivals are known nationally for their "cultural significance." Each ward of Kitakyushu has their own unique festival which then culminate in August with the Wasshoi Hyakuman festival. It's a festival that combines all the local festivals into one to celebrate the creation of the city. I especially recommend Kokura in July as taiko drums can be heard all around for the month.

What are your "Must-Do's" for visiting JETs?

1. Mojiko - craft beer,

banana curry, and Honshu.

Mojiko is a really beautiful part of Kitakyushu and the bridge between Kyushu and Honshu. There are two distinct ways to enjoy Mojiko. You can hike to Mojiko by way of Mt. Adachi. Start in Kokuraminami-ku and hike for 4-7 hours. Once there you can enjoy Mojiko craft beer with banana yakikare while looking at Honshu. Alternatively you can take a train to Mojiko and walk to Shimonoseki, Honshu using an underwater tunnel. Alas, the tunnel is made of concrete so no aquatic views. After exploring Shimonoseki you can take a 10 minute ferry back to Mojiko.



2. Mt. Sarakura and the famous night view

Mt. Sarakura in Yahatahigashi-ku, Kitakyushu is famous for being one of the New Three Major Night Views of Japan. The best way to experience this is to hike up the mountain in the evening, enjoy food and beer with your mates, take in the night view, and then use the cable car to come down.

3. Kokura and the Night Life

Kokura (where I live) is in many ways the heart of Kitakyushu and Fukuoka. Kokura station is supposedly the last major train station in Japan if traveling from north to south. Kokura has a bad rep due to its (pretty substantiated) associations with the Japanese mafia. But I think you're more likely to be shanked in Disneyland than in Kokura. Kokura is cheaper, the parties are wilder, and the locals are less reserved than their Hakata counterparts. If you're looking just to dance then Hakata is for you, but for everything else, Kokura is King. We also have the Holy Grail of gyoza: Tetsunabe. This will guaranteed be the best gyoza you ever eat in your life.

What do you feel is unique to your prefecture, something JETs can't find anywhere else?

I think what's unique to Fukuoka is people's attitudes. Being closer to Seoul than Tokyo, Fukuoka is more internationally

minded than most other prefectures. I've never had any horror stories being a foreigner like I've heard from JETs in other prefectures. I also think FUKers are crazy! They really know how to party and love to meet new people again especially here in Kitakyushu.



Anything else you want to add?

Just that writing this about Fukuoka was also a thinly-veiled attempt to advertise Kitakyushu. If you're ever heading to my city then let us know. I'm more than happy to show people how much fun this underrated city in this wonderful prefecture is.

Caol Ó h-Úigín

