

UNRAVELLING

By Lewie JPD

Today has been the best day of my life.

I will introduce... my name is Taro Takato and I am from Shinagawa, Tokyo, Japan. I arrived at Narita this morning on a Jalpak tour. I am forty years of age and this is my first time away from Nippon.

I am very excited to be in Australia – and I think, somehow lost my tour group. I started to follow a group of people with blue and red shoulder bags, just like mine... and began an adventure I will not forget for a long time.

In Tokyo, I work for Tanaka Electrics Corporation. Do you know? My job is assistant to the vice president of fiscal policy. I have been working here for 18 years, since my graduation from Waseda University where I majored in heuristics of flower arrangement and the sub textual comedic works of Yukio Mishima.

My job, like my life, has been predictable and bland. I don't blame anybody else. It is my own doing. It is not that I have been fearful to participate in a more involved manner with life – it's just that the opportunity has not presented itself.

One of my favourite Buddhist sayings is: "The mind that does not understand is the Buddha. There is no other." For the past forty years my mind has certainly qualified for the not understanding part. As far as being close to Buddha, I think maybe we all are in Japan. Because it is such a tiny island and everyone is squashed together.

I can't quite recall my other favourite Buddhist saying – but it has something to do with melted ice cream and the splendour of stickiness. Hmm... maybe I'm mistake – that is Lotte commercial from my childhood.

Since I was a child, I have many times dreamt of the unpredictable. It was not my destiny. But today, with this sudden and delightful journey, everything has changed.

The market place of Paddington is full of energy and expression. In Tokyo we have market shops, too: Lawsons, Family Mart and 6-11. My favourite snack from the corner supermarket is dried squid, strawberry chocolate koala and umeboshi. But not all at once! Or tummy becomes like Godzilla on rampage. Do you know Godzilla? I like him. But not inside me.

Since I was young, as a secret from my colleagues and even my family, I have been writing haiku poetry. Do you know it? It's a three line poem and it possesses much spirit of situation and comment on existence.

The only person I ever shared my haiku with is Sachiko Imamura. She was a gothic. She liked tartan miniskirts, fisherman's stockings and lots of mascara. I liked her.

On this day, adventure day, with the writing marathon I am swept up in – I have decided to share some haiku to commemorate the journey and special experience. It will be the first time to ever share my words with a public. And in English! I am so exciting. I feel like a mung beetle floating in bottom of sake bottle during cherry blossom season in Ueno.

Bondi Bitch ocean introduced me to feelings of expansiveness, fear of sharks and the melanomas (I saw many pairs!) I wanted so much to enter into the waves... but I was timid.

Next, in Bourke St. I got a tattoo! Usually in Japan it is just for *yakuza* people. You know – tough guys with missing pinky. But a girl in the parlour was having Arabic symbol for 'freedom' tattoo-ed on her near-the-bottom part. It was beautiful. And so was the tattoo. Ha, ha, I make in-your-endo.

So I asked the Philippine man called Happy if he can do Japanese kanji for freedom – *jiyuu* – on my above-the-crack part. He said, "If you draw it for me, I can do." The process was a bit painful, but no worse than when I was picked on by bullies during very competitive high school and they stapled my ears to bulletin board and forcefully invited me to eat eye of cockroach.

When Mr Happy was finished I felt elation and confidence. It was sadly that he had inscribed it upside down and made a different character and meaning. I now have forever etched a kanji that says: Daiben – which translation is: big log. Technical English term: faeces.

To make fix this problem I ask Mr. Happy to put a downward facing arrow underneath design. At least now it is functional.

I thought about asking them to remove the tattoo at St. Vincies Emergence room. But many peoples were rushing around and shouting new English words that were very exciting to me like: spasm, haemoglobin. Olfactory, breakthrough morphine and 'we got a blower!'

I was so delighted to hear these mysterious verbals that I forgot about the tattoo and composed my first haiku instead:

Hospital ER

Bustle, dramas, begging for attention
Private room before theatre
Curtains for some

At MacDonald's in Kings Cross, I wrote another one while having soggy flinch flies and a dolphin burger:

Maccas in KX

Slabs of terminated bovine between sugar buns
I prefer my sushi finger fed
By geisha wearing nothing but chopsticks in their lacquered heads

Kindly citizens from around Wayside Chapel taught me some new phrases for greetings:

"Hey, fucking trollop!"

"Mister, mister, girls inside, play flute – hundred dollars!"

And from hairy man in alley who smelt like lavatory car on the Bullet Train late on a Saturday night:

"Hey, squeezezy Japaneesy, you're just another time waster like the bloody rest of us!"

On the ferry from Circle Keys, I had another nostalgia for Sachiko – the girl who liked my haiku (and played brilliant flute). It was a melancholy memory for me because Sachiko actually drowned when she fell off a ferry to the island of Shikoku after too many Choo-hais. She was wearing a kimono, so she couldn't swim. (I like wearing kimono sometimes, too: another secret.)

The two of us had shared a passion for pachinko (Japanese pinball), creamy pastry puffs called Shoe Cream and most importantly, we shared a dream of running away to Paris one day.

Because her body was never recovered, I like to believe that it somehow floated trans-Pacific and was trawled up somewhere in Nice or other Gaelic coastal town by a villager with compassion or perhaps a touch of latent necrophilia- in the good, romantic French way... (or maybe he just had a love of pungent cheeses) ...and transported to Paris.

Anyway, I composed these haiku for her. To Sachi:

Harbour Bridge

Majestically resembling
A horizontal Eiffel Tower
About to give birth

Tempura Ferry

Harbour Essence

Like sweet soy sauce on dish

We are floating batter

I went to place next called MC – A gallery in Circle Keys. Do you know? There was some interesting modern Australian artworks but I am disappointed not to see the paintings on display of genius, Picasso of Australia – much revered in Japan – mister Ken Done.

Coming back to Berkelouw's Bookshop in taxi at sunset – I reviewed my day – and then my life. I must make a biggest decision...

I do chant Sachiko taught me (gargling sound) – she was drowning – but I knew what she meant. Kimono was too tight.

And when life binds us too tight – we die.

So, I am not go back to Japan.

I will walk into the Bondi ocean next time.

I will continue with my writing and my adventure.

I will follow my dream.