



JET Alumni Association

About the JET Alumni Association of Southern California

The JET Alumni Association is an organization composed of former JET Program participants and people who have shown a vital interest in the JET Program. It was established to promote mutual understanding and international exchanges between Japan and the United States through the members' experiences of living, working and carrying out local activities in Japan, and to promote fellowship among JET Program alumni.

JETAASC not only supports the Consulate of Japan in JET related activities such as recruitment, candidate selection, and orientation, but also organizes activities that provide JET alumni with opportunities to volunteer in the Japanese community, friendship, and professional development. Please take the time to browse our Web site for more information and upcoming events. www.jetaasc.org

How I Met Your Mukade

By Angela Perrone, ALT Innoshima 2006-2008

Every country has its legendary monster, whether it be the Loch Ness in Scotland or Big Foot from the Northwest US. Some are even legends of animals past like the Dodo Bird or the Quagga. Japan's monster is alive and well. It comes with its own folklore. And depending on who you ask, you will get as many stories as the creature has legs.

The events leading up to my encounter with this beast began like any other summer: humidity, no air conditioning in the schools, outdoor *yaki-niku* (BBQ). For weeks I spent every night throwing shoes at my front door to scare the cicadas away so I could enter my building. I even tried jumping out of my apartment window to

avoid the large metallic flying beetle that resembled the scarab from Aladdin (you know, the one that opened the Cave of Wonders). But I had yet to meet my worst nightmare.

You would hear people talk about how one bite from this creature could send the strongest of men to the hospital, too weak a match for the beast's venom. People in town warned that this darkness of nature preferred to bite the person who had been drinking (so beware of alcohol). At this point I knew it was only a matter of time.

I had just shut the lights off in my apartment when I heard it. Something was crum-

pling a plastic bag. At first I thought I was imagining the sound, but I knew something was awry. So I grabbed my flashlight (surprised that I had one) and followed the noise. And there, standing straight up, T-Rexing on the top of plastic bag was the most vicious, devilish and possibly most limber of all beasts, with its bajillion legs and glowing yellow horns, was the Mukade.

I was trapped. And I was certainly no match for this prehistoric monster. The only weapons I had were my cell phone, sofa and electricity. I turned on the lights, jumped on the couch and called my friend who lived in the next town over. I thought of waking the neighbors but I couldn't let the Mukade have an option to make a move. In what seemed like an eternity (5 minutes in Mukade time), my friend arrived and slayed the creature! I thought I was safe.

The next day more stories of the Mukade came into the picture. "Oh they never travel alone. They are always with their mate." Oh, of course. In Japan even the bugs have significant others. "When one is killed another one always comes and sniffs out its blood." Okay. That was it. I went home, packed and moved into the Mukade Slayer's house for about two weeks until whatever death ritual or whatnot had to be done by the other Mukades who were expected to parade through my apartment, was completed. It was the first and last time I came face to face with Japan's legendary monster.

Everyone has a phobia. Summers, that's what I feared most of all in the Japanese countryside.



About the JET Program

The JET Program stands for the Japan Exchange & Teaching Programme, which invites university graduates and young professionals to assist in international exchange and foreign language education in local governments, boards of education and junior and senior high schools throughout Japan. It aims to both enhance foreign language education as well as cultural understanding at the grass roots level. The Program encourages participants to foster ties between Japanese citizens (mainly youth) and JET participants at the person to person level.

The JET Program started in 1987. Since then, the program has grown from four countries to 37 participating countries. JET is one of Japan's most extensive exchange programs and is conducted by local governments in Japan in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Home Affairs, and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). More information can be found at:

www.jetprogramme.org.