

Tokyo Threshold: Paul Etoné

After a night in Haneda Airport we caught the monorail to Hamamatsucho Terminus in the early morning. Once we figured out the complex subway system we reached Shin-Okubo Station on the green line and searched out Okubo House. Our luck held and there was a room. Facilities were shared and our room was small with tatami flooring.

Carmel was exhausted and now very worried about how we might go about getting a job. I told her not to worry and that I was going to check out the neighbourhood. Actually, once on the street I sat down for a bit of a ponder. If one of us didn't get a job immediately we might well be on a plane to Manila the next day. I took out my packet of cigarettes - there was one left.

The cigarette is in my mouth as I rustle about in my pockets for matches. Just then a hand holding a lighter presents itself and a voice says '*dozo*'. I accept the light, inhale and look up to see a snappily dressed young man a little older than me and I reply '*arigato*' which up until now is one of my three Japanese words. Then the following strange conversation takes place:

You are from?

Australia ... thanks for the light.

My name is Ringo.

Hello, Ringo, my name is Paul.

Paul-san, would you like to teach English?

When I return Carmel is in the shared kitchen having tea. She seems to be in a place somewhere between concern and despair. After I tell her that we have both been offered jobs with a company that plans to open an English school at some stage and that it comes with free accommodation in Hamamatsucho she thinks I'm joking.

The next day we find the address and knock on the single door off the stairwell. Ringo greets us and we get the first glimpse of our new home - approximately 30 x 20 metres of empty office space. Off to the right is a round table and three men dressed very much like Ringo. Ringo introduces us to John, Paul and George.

Ringo shows us our bedroom which is an empty manager's office with vinyl flooring. He points out the office bathroom which has a urinal, some hand basins and six toilet cubicles. We put our packs down and look at each other.

Paul Dufficy

396 words (excluding title)