

I think I mention this often in my journal, but time has gone by so fast since I came to Japan last summer. I can't believe that it is already getting warm (hot, in my opinion) and unfortunately the bugs are starting to come out! I hate bugs. The first memorable experience I had in Japan was encountering a giant spider in my apartment on my first night. My neighbor came over to introduce herself and when she was standing in my doorway, spotted the biggest spider either of us had ever seen. We instantly bonded, chasing it around the apartment and screaming like maniacs until we finally gave up. We didn't find the spider and, needless to say, I didn't sleep too well that night. Always looking on the bright side of things, I convinced myself that seeing a huge spider like that on my first night was a good thing. That way, I figured that any other bugs I see in Japan wouldn't seem so scary. If I knew that that spider was just the beginning of other insect invasions to come, I would have been a lot more concerned.

I am afraid of everything that moves. My family has never had any pets in my life and I have always preferred quiet inside activities (reading, drawing, sewing, or baking) to getting dirty and exploring nature outside. Dogs, cats, bees, squirrels... you name it, it scares me. Logically, I know that a small dog isn't going to hurt me. I think they're cute, but I can't help backing away or freezing up when I see one running towards me. If I'm afraid of dogs and cats, imagine how seeing a spider the size of my head in my apartment made me feel.

About two weeks before I came to Japan, I read about the dreaded "mukade." Just the idea of a giant black and red centipede that bites really made my stomach turn. I honestly think that if I had known about these before I came to Japan, I might have made a different decision. I was told that mukade are pretty rare, but that I might see one or two during the rainy season. Then why is it, I wonder, that I have seen about 5 in the past week? My first encounter was at school when a teacher found one in the hallway and brought it to the office to kill. I was horrified that there was one of these on the second floor near my desk, but happy to see that they are pretty easy to kill with some boiling water. I enjoyed believing that I didn't have these in my home, but on the contrary, I did. On the weekend, both I and my neighbor encountered these awful insects in our apartment building. I'm guessing that if we saw two in two days, there are probably lots more where they came from. My first reaction was "AH! Mukade! I want to go home!" but I managed to pull myself together with the help of a friend who basically killed it for me.

I guess I can *probably* stay in Japan even with this new fear of mukade stinging me to death in my sleep. Whenever I get home to my apartment now, my heart starts beating a little faster as I inspect the door frame for creepy crawlers. Will

a fortune's worth of gokiburi dango and mukade poison keep these evildoers out of my home? Or will I just have to live in fear until the cold winter weather grants me solace from these beasts? I'll be sure to keep you posted.