

thedragonbone.com 2004 old archives

List of Contents:	page number
January 2004	2
February 2004	6
March 2004	14
April 2004	23
May 2004	24
June 2004	25
July 2004	26
August 2004	27
September 2004	28
October 2004	29
November 2004	30
December 2004	31

January 27th, 2004

5:44 p.m.

I am at my desk. It is early in the evening but it is night outside. My space heater is beside my feet, keeping them warm. There is a pile of letters right here next to my laptop. I will leave shortly to go to Starbucks to begin replying to them one by one over a cup of cappuchino before heading into Tokyo to have a drink with a friend who has lived in Vietnam and traveled through Cambodia and Laos (he is going to give me some advice on what to do and where to go in Southeast Asia).

The pile of letters have come from friends, and their parents, who have been a part of my childhood. They are all wishing me a very happy 27th birthday. My mom explained that she had been contacting old friends, letting them know that I was going to be 27 soon and that I was finally leaving Japan. It was a very thoughtful idea for my mother to do so. I have enjoyed very much each and every letter I have received.

Thinking of my childhood, and the people who surrounded me while I was growing up in an apartment building at 6007 N. Sheridan road in Chicago, I would like to mention someone very special to me. His name is Chris. I have a habit of giving secret nick names to people who hold a special place in my heart. The nick name I have given Chris is Espiritu (he who planted the seeds of inspiration).

Chris was one of the first of my childhood friends to move away from 6007 N. Sheridan road. On several Superbowl Sunday occasions my family and I would drive up to Chris's house, along with some other friends from 6007 N. Sheridan road. I spent most of the time with Chris playing with his terrific Lego's collection or trying to figure out how to use the keyboard of his computer to play the space invader games he had (he didn't have a joystick).

I remember how he used to beat his younger brother up. I would learn a few techniques from him for the times my sister and I would fist-fight or kick the crap out of each other (don't you miss being a tiny kid?). I remember very vividly Chris's father taking Chris and I to get some pizza on a night I was sleeping over at their house. I have a lot of memories of my time with him as a kid.

The last time I saw Chris was about eight years ago. He had just returned from a trip through Poland. He mesmerized me with all the photo's he had taken on his travels

and all the stories he had to tell. He was so happy and so sure of himself. I wanted to be just like him (he had a nose ring at the time . . . I settled for a traditional ear ring after graduating college). I was a bit lost after finishing my first year at Indiana University. Since that day eight years ago I have followed in his footsteps (trying to be like him). I left Indiana University behind to live in Sevilla, Spain, for six months. I then went on a solo trip through Europe. A year later I returned to Spain for an archaeological dig with my Boston University crew and took a two week trip through Morocco. Now I am a three-and-a-half year veteran of Tokyo, Japan, and two months away from going on a four month journey through all of Southeast Asia, China, Mongolia, Russia, and Eastern Europe.

Chris's spirit has always been with me on my travels and journeys. He has inspired me and by inspiring me he has inspired others to travel and explore.

We all Love you and Miss you Chris.

Your old friend (still trying to be like you),
Domenico

January 27th, 2004

5:04 p.m.

My parents were with me here in Tokyo for Christmas last month - I believe it was the fifth time my father had been to Japan to visit me, and the third time for my mother.

After my mother - a few months back - expressed to me how much she enjoyed the book, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, I made it a point that we go to Kyoto to see the Maiko in Gion; my father rested in Tokyo while we were away for the day - he had already been to Kyoto.

It was relaxing, pleasant, and entertaining to be with them again: I had breakfast with my mother nearly every morning overlooking a wonderful waterfall within a beautiful Japanese garden at the New Otani Hotel; both of my parents attended one of my shows with Favorite Underdog at a dark and mysterious underground venue; my father continued to make me laugh with his old jokes and comments.

My mom mentioned to me that her only wish for Christmas was to have breakfast with

me. I smile every time I think about that. I am very happy and proud to have my mother, Lucy, and my father, Domingo, as my parents. They have been through a lot together. They are incredible people. I am very proud of them both and thankful to them for teaching me through the life they have lived together.

I have lived in Japan for three-and-a-half years now. In that time I have made my peace with my father and mother. It was here that I finally saw how important they are to me.

A friend of mine once said, "I have always believed in family." His words have become a kind of folk wisdom for me. Family is sacred. It must be protected.

Now, I look forward to my return to my home country. I look forward to being with my sister and her loving husband, Billy. I look forward to becoming an uncle one day (Uncle D will be my name) for my sister's children and for the children of my closest friends. I look forward to being with my parents again; listening to their stories as I share mine with them.

Love,
Domenico

January 15th, 2004

I recently discovered that my website has been added to the links section of a literary fantasy website in the Netherlands. Check it out at: www.homeoffantasy.nl. As a result there has been an unprecedented number of downloads of the first three chapters of my book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity*, in northern Europe and Scandinavia.

I will post a new PDF file of *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity* by the end of February; the new PDF will include revisions of the first three chapters as well include chapters four and five.

Domo,
Domenico :)

January 8th, 2004

I went to see Dr. Eugene Aksenoff a couple of days ago to get vaccinated for my trip

through Asia and Russia. I spent quite a bit of money, and there are still more shots that I need. So far I got a shot for typhoid fever, rabies, and Japanese encephalitis. I still need to get shots for hepatitis `A` and `B`, meningitis, polio, and tablets for malaria.

It was good to see Dr. Aksenoff and his nurse Yamamotosan again. I met them three years ago when I had a massive infection. Dr. Aksenoff is simply the kindest and most knowledgeable man I have ever met in Japan. Our meetings have been brief but there is an aura about him that commands admiration and respect. After the doctor irrigated my ears canals of the wax that had accumulated over the past year he went and sat behind a large cabinet, and as I spoke to nurse Yamamotosan he began snoring; he always finds a way - even if not intentional - to make me giggle. I should also mention that the good doctor has treated such musical legends as Eric Clapton and Michael Jackson.

Also of note: I have in my possession a video tape loaded with episodes of the British comedy show *The Office*. It is absolutely brilliant! If you haven't seen it I strongly urge you to find a way and means to do so.

Cheers,
Domenico

P.S. I'm hard at work at editing chapters four through six of my book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity*. I hope to have a PDF available on my site of the chapters by February or March. Also, chapters one through three have been revised so a new PDF of those chapters will also be available soon.

February 26th, 2004

It is 7:11 p.m. and I am updating a few things on my website, like my resume. I finished working at Berlitz last week and I can not tell you how happy I am to be done with teaching English. I am now a full-time writer. I have been getting up every morning at 8:00 a.m. to work on the final draft of my book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity*. Yesterday, I didn't even leave my house. I spent about 12 hours revising and editing one of the chapters of my book. I am so happy to be able to completely focus on my book. My goal is to have the final draft finished by the end of March, just before I am to leave Japan for my travels.

My father came to visit me last weekend with his friends Cesar and Ramiro. It was great seeing my father and hanging out with his friends. Ramiro always finds a way to make me laugh. I love my father very much and I am so proud of him. It was great seeing him relax with his friends as we all explored Tokyo together. I honestly can not wait until I am back in my hometown of Chicago with my family. I miss my father, mother, sister, and her husband terribly. There is nothing more sacred than family and friends.

I saw *Lost in Translation* for the first time yesterday. It was a bit not what I had in mind but I am happy with it nonetheless. The film will serve as a beautiful memento of all my experiences and time here in Tokyo. I know that I will not watch the film often in the future because it will only remind me of how much I will miss my life here in Tokyo. I am now saying goodbye to people and it is upsetting to know that it is now time to close this major chapter in my life. I love Tokyo so much. I will miss my life here and all my friends so, so much.

The uplifting things about the film was that I saw two of my friends in it. There was Brad Holmes who is the band leader of *The Hit Men*. I worked with Brad and *The Hit Men* for two years in Japan playing gigs at weddings, corporate events, and summer festivals. Brad was an extra in the film. He was the musician playing a black acoustic guitar in one of the hotel bar lounge scenes. And in the behind-the-scenes footage that you can check out on the *Lost in Translation* DVD there was Stina Matson who was a girl I met several weeks ago. She is a fantastic singer from Estonia and a model. She was hired by the *Lost in Translation* crew to be a stand-in for Scarlett Johansson. You will see her sitting next to Bill Murray in the shabu shabu restaurant.

Now, what I would like to discuss. On Tuesday of this week I visited Hari of Lifeforces. Hari has been doing holistic therapy in Japan since 1994. I have been open to western, eastern, and spiritual forms of therapy and medicine since high school. I go every month for a shiatsu massage and acupuncture - I need this especially because I am a drummer and my upper back can become very tense after gigging and playing for a few weeks. In any case, I have seen Hari three times - once a year. With me he performs Reiki (a Japanese form of channeled energy) and hypno-psychotherapy. My sessions with him are truly unbelievable experiences. They are beyond words. What I can tell you is this. He leads me into myself and guides me as I address the symbolic objects that both he and I find through out my body. The objects represent devices that I have created (perhaps at a subconscious level) to protect aspects of my mind, or my heart, or my genitals (I'm getting a little too personal there). What we do is find out what event in my past caused me to create these objects so that we understand why it is there and what purpose it is serving before removing it so that it does not continue to allow me to repeat certain behavioral patterns, or to hold on to my anger, or bitterness, or defenses.

When I went to my second session with Hari we discovered a deep anger within my heart caused by certain events in my past. After we addressed it I broke out with a terrible acne through out my face and neck for two months. All my anger was boiling up and out of my skin in a very literal sense. Since then I have not had an acne problem and find the destructive patterns that I used to fall into with certain friends and family no longer repeating.

These experiences with Hari are beyond the physical. They go after the spiritual source of what ails us so that we can remedy ourselves and move on with our lives full of openness, understanding, and love.

With magic,
Domenico

February 22nd, 2004

Today was my last performance in Japan as a working freelance session drummer. It is now time to pack up my sticks, drums, and cymbals and send them back home to the U.S. of A. so that I can start my musical career over there.

I performed with Favorite Underdog at the Blue Gill which is a venue that is literary just under Tokyo Tower. It was a great and successful show and I am proud to say that as a result of our performance Favorite Underdog is now in talks with an independent record label that will front the money to take them into the studio to record a few tracks. I wish them all the luck in the world and will pitch their music to producers in the States when I return.

The highlight for me was being approached by the band members of a band that performed with us (it was a three band show) called Flying Spaghetti. The members were all in their early 20's and were blown away by us during our sound check. As a result they came up to us in awe and we kind of took them under our wing that night giving them advise. Of course, I had to show them pictures of my performances with t.A.T.u. and Lene Nystrom (Aqua), and my picture with Sting backstage at the Kokusai Forum in Tokyo after I opened for him with Lene. They were amazed by my accomplishments and it felt great . . . hee hee hee. I am now the Elder musician giving advise to Younger musicians about how to make it in the music industry. I was very happy and very thankful to Akiko who was by my side translating for me. Thank you so much Akiko!

February 16th, 2004

For all you Japanese anime fans out there, there is a new movie coming out here in Japan next month that you are sure to love. It is called Innocence and takes place in the same universe as Ghost in the Shell. It looks absolutely astounding. It combines both traditional animation with computer generated animation. I know that this movie is going to go right up there with Blade Runner on my list of all time best science fiction movies.

Also, don't forget. My last live performance in Japan is this Sunday, February 22nd, with the pop-rock band Favorite Underdog. We will be performing at the Blue Gill in Akabanebashi (Oedo line, two stops from Roppongi), Tokyo. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. and the Favorite Underdog show will begin at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are 1,500 Yen + 500 Yen drink (You can contact me at thedragonbone@hotmail.com to purchase tickets).

February 15th, 2004

Just as I am about to finally depart from my three-and-a-half year stay in Tokyo, Japan, I am discovering, via email, that a few old friends of mine are now considering the

move to Japan. I guess it is the will of the gods that I am not here when they arrive. But, I am a guide, and happy to be of service in answering any and all questions about life in Japan as an expatriot. I remember the months before I first came to Japan. I contacted - time and time again - a friend, of a friend, of a friend who had lived in Japan, and fired away about a thousand questions. Now it is my turn. I am the Tokyo Elder. The veteran expatriot of Tokyo. I have been sending off emails these past few weeks answering all the questions I once asked nearly four years ago to these old friends of mine.

As a result, I would like to list the books that I have recommended to these old friends of mine that I have found very informative, and very true, about the various aspects of Japanese contemporary culture and history. And in no particular order:

1. Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician, August 6 - September 10, 1945: Fifty Years Later by Michiko Hachiya. A trip to Hiroshima, Japan, is a must for the expatriot living in Japan and reading up on what happened there is a must before you go.

2. Japan: True Stories of Life on the Road (Traveler's Tales Guides) by Donald W. George. I strongly recommend this book to all those who will be living in Japan. After living here I can relate to every story in the book. It will give you, the soon-to-be expatriot living in Japan, a good idea of what to expect in your first six months.

3. Dogs and Demos: Tales from the Dark Side of Modern Japan by Alex Kerr. Alex has lived in Japan for well over 10 years and is more patriotic about traditional Japanese culture than the Japanese - he runs a traditional style Japanese ranch somewhere near the mountains - I read an article about this guy in Metropolis. In any case, his book is a very critical look (perhaps too critical in parts) at the corruption and hypocrisy of Japanese politicians (by the way all politicians, including Prime Minister Koizumi, are all right wing radicals - they are inept, corrupt, and steal millions in government funds), corporations, mafia clans, construction companies, and the media and how they all work together to deceive the Japanese people. The Japanese government has prohibited this book from being translated into Japanese - just one example of how the government controls the masses of Japanese lemmings.

4. *Women on the Verge: Japanese Women, Western Dreams* by Kathy Kelsky. An interesting feminist look at Japanese women and their want to escape their male-dominated country by running off with western men. After dating a few Japanese girls I can tell you that most of the material in this book is absolutely true.

5. *Japan: A Reinterpretation* by Patrick Smith. Great overview of modern Japan from a historical and sociological point of view.

6. *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* by Haruki Murakami. Mr. Murakami is a famous contemporary Japanese writer. After the gas attacks in Tokyo he interviewed many, many victims and composed this book. It will disturb you when you read of how the Japanese rail-riders simply endured the awful smells of the sarin gas just to get to work on time instead of getting off the train and hopping on another one.

Japanese are conditioned to suffer at the expense of their own health so as to not inconvenience their company or fellow employees. It's a very stoic, samurai mentality - and retarded in my opinion - I'm being harsh but it's ridiculous, really. You will see if you come to Japan. Imagine riding a train packed at 200% capacity (you can't even open a newspaper because it's so packed) everyday of your life for 40 years to get to and from work. These people suffer on these god-awful trains every morning and night. Riding a packed train in the morning in Tokyo is worse than any hell imagined by any religion! But no one complains about it here, they all just endure it like cows on a packed truck being driven to the slaughter house.

7. *Speed Tribes: Days and Night's with Japan's Next Generation* by Karl T. Greenfeld. This is a fantastic book. I loved it. Each chapter paints a portrait of a Japanese individual involved in the Japanese underground scene. From porn (Japan has the biggest porn industry in the world), to drugs (hang out in Shibuya's teen town and see Iranians in all corners selling heroin, acid, etc. - and the police never bother them. Why you ask? Because these Iranians work with the Japanese mob and the Japanese mob has an understanding the Tokyo police. By the way good luck trying to spot a Tokyo cop - they nearly don't exist in this city), to the mafia, to Eastern European hostess girls making big money kissing Japanese businessmen's asses. Very insightful book on Japan's underground societies.

8. Tokyo Underworld: The Fast Times and Hard Life of an American Gangster in Japan by Robert Whiting. I get a kick out of this book because my doctor - Dr. Eugene Aksenoff of the International Clinic in Roppongi - is in this book.

9. Yakuza: Japan's Criminal Underworld, Expanded Edition by David E. Kaplan and Alec Dubro. This is a very well researched book on Japan's mafia clans. There are over half a million Japanese mobsters. Japan has the largest number of people employed by the mafia than any other country in the world. They run drugs, guns, the sex trade (tens of thousands to perhaps hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children each year are smuggled into Japan to work the red light districts - HIV is a problem here but no one will admit it), sex tourism (tens of thousands of Japanese men each year travel to assorted countries in Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, China, and so forth, to have sex with girls as young as 9 years old), gambling, contracted killings, and extortion. They also own stocks in corporations, and they own construction companies and pay off politicians for massive (and usually unnecessary) public works projects.

10. Confessions of a Yakuza: A Life in Japan's Underworld by John Bester. A personal account of a Yakuza looking back at his involvement with the mob back in the 1930's and 40's.

All these books will give you a good understanding of contemporary Japan. There is very much a separation between what is public and private in Japan. On the outside. What you will see is a very serene city (Tokyo) and country. Everyone getting along and life is all peaceful and wonderful. But, beneath it all, underneath you will find a cruel and heartless country. Domestic violence is high but never reported - saving face is more important for no one wants to bring shame to their family by admitting that there is a problem in their home. The suicide rate is insanely high. 300 suicides a day in Japan. Over 30,000 suicides a year. If you live here long enough you will know someone who has killed himself/herself or a friend who does know someone who did. The porn scene is unbelievable - especially comic book porn. For example, all Japanese sports newspapers are littered with random photo's of nude women; you will often see business men reading these newspapers openly on the trains.

In the end though. I sincerely love Tokyo. It is a very exciting and vibrant city. Creativity permeates throughout here. All the lights, architecture, technology, product designs, art, music, and fashion, is funky, punky, totally cyber, and an interesting insight

into what the future has in store for all of us as we find technology blending more and more into our very being.

Mata ne,
Domenico desu

February 4th, 2004

Well, I am 27 years of age now. I celebrated the day of my birth on the second of February. I am proud of this age in part because seven is my lucky number. Looking into the future I feel that this year will be a year of transition for me. I am slowly falling into a state of feeling lost - Lost in Transition or is it Lost in Translation? Last year was fantastic. I was very sure of myself as I pursued my very successful music career here in Japan. But now I want to let go of my accomplishments - leave them behind for a time. I want to get lost in my travels and forget about all that I have done - I am slightly burnt out.

I would like to thank everyone who wrote, called, and emailed me on my birthday. Thank you all so much. You all mean so much to me. I am spending a bit of time each day now mailing letters, emails, and cards back to all of you.

I am very much looking forward to my travels throughout Southeast Asia, China, Mongolia, and Eastern and Western Europe. These travels will begin at the end of March. I will let my mind rest and simply absorb everything I see, hear, feel, taste, and touch. I will be bringing a pair of drum sticks with me to keep my chops up and I will have my M.D. player so that I can listen to a lot of Dennis Chambers, Mike Stern, and John Scofield - this will be my musical mind-training during my travels. I will have my journal as well so that I can write, and write, and write. I am nearly done with the final draft of my first book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity* (I will have a new PDF posted at the end of February of Chapters 1-5), and so I am preparing myself to begin work on Book II of *Dark Legacy* as well as thinking about writing a book about my up-coming travels through Asia and my experiences here in Tokyo, Japan.

Of Note: My friend Gunter introduced me to a fantastic website by Italian journalist Tiziano Terzani. Tiziano has lived and traveled all over Asia and has written several books about his thoughts and travels.

My friend Thomas Lee, my brilliant editor, has been educating me on Japanese anime recently. I am really starting to love watching these great animated stories. I am currently fascinated by an anime called Last Exile.

As for my website January marked the largest number of hits it has received: 3,912 hits in total from all over the world. My site received hits from: Mauritius, the Philippines, Indonesia, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Switzerland, the U.S., Austria, Portugal, Belgium, Australia, Argentina, Israel, Poland, Finland, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Norway, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada, and - of course - Japan.

I also have begun organizing the development of another website with my friend Pete Mitchell. More news about that in the weeks to come.

With Magic,
Domenico ;)

March 24th, 2004

This will be my last entry in Japan for my website. I will depart from Tokyo on the 29th of the month for Korea. I will be in Korea for about a week before flying to Singapore where I will begin my five to six month trek through Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandinavia, and Eastern and Western Europe. Since I will be unable to update my site directly during my travels I will keep a digital journal at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

In the mean time please have a look around my site and be sure to read the newly revised version of my book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity*. I am pleased to announce that I have finally submitted the first few chapters of my book to Tor books.

I would like to mention that my neighbor and good friend Davin Tikkala has had his story, *Wise words*, published in *paperplates* magazine. It is in Volume 6, Number 1. Davin will be leaving Japan mid-April for a two-and-a-half month journey through Africa.

If you are in a sci-fi sort-of-mood check out *The Marker*. It is a sci-fi web comic that I have been working on with my editor Thomas Lee and my web designer Pete Mitchell. Also, Pete and I have been working with Nir Z on the development of his web site at www.nirz.com which will launch sometime before the middle of April.

If you are inspired by my many projects, words, passions, travels, music, books, thoughts, and website and would like to make a donation to my efforts as an artist then please feel free to email me at: thedragonbone@hotmail.com

I am indebted to Japan. It has been a wonderful experience to have had the opportunity to live for three-and-a-half years in such a curious and inspiring country.

With Love and Magic,
Domenico Italo Composto-Hart

March 16th, 2004

Nikko was our destination for today. It was time that I finally take Stephanie out of Tokyo to see a bit of the history and essence of traditional Japan. Nikko is a about 2 to

3 hours away from Asakusa station in Tokyo. It is up in the mountains of central Honshu and is incredibly beautiful during peak foliage in the fall. Nikko is famed for its intricately detailed temples and shrines which is an uncommon characteristic of Japanese traditional architecture. As a result, the carved details seen of animals, mythical creatures, and ornate scenes of trees and leaves gives one the feeling that you are not looking at a Japanese temple but a Chinese one. A famed relief carving in Tosho-gu Shrine is the life-cycle of the monkey which includes the trio of monkeys that 'hear no evil, see no evil, and speak no evil'. We did our best to see as much as we could before all the temples and shrines closed at 4:00. We climb an exhausting number of stairs to see Ieyasu's Tomb (1542-1616). We also saw Jinyosha, which is a storage room for Nikko's mikoshi (portable shrines that are paraded around Nikko during the festivals in the spring and fall).

Before returning to the train station in Nikko Steph and I stopped for a bite to eat at a quaint little yakitori bar. The owner of the bar is a Japanese grandmother who loves everyone who comes through her doors. This was my fourth time eating in her establishment. The walls of the bar are littered with photographs, business cards, International Student Identity Cards, and currency notes from every imaginable country. I pinned my meishi (business card) on the wall. Steph used a piece of paper to design her own business card and before we left I pinned it on the ceiling for her. So, if you are ever in Nikko, Japan, please stop by this yakitori bar that is listed in Lonely Planet and look for Steph's self-made business card on the ceiling.

March 15th, 2004

Domenico's Words:

Today I had to run to Toshi's studio in Tsujido (about an hour out from Tokyo station) to finish mixing the drum tracks that I recorded for Favorite Underdog's maxi-single album back in December/January. The tracks I cut sound fantastic. I am really excited for the band and for this single album that will hopefully release in the spring to summer of this year. As a result of my appointment with Toshi Stephanie had the day to herself to explore Japan. I recommended that she take a 15 minute train ride from my station to Kawagoe, "Little Edo".

Stephanie's Thoughts:

I was very excited to go on my first solo trip in Japan. Dom sent me to "Little Edo" with a hand drawn map and the instructions to walk straight out of the station for about

20 minutes. I walked through another "teen town" type mall and eventually found myself on a little stretch of street without powerlines, flashing lights, or manga. One of the first things I noticed were the small produce stores with giant apples and mouth-watering oranges. Everything looked delicious. As Dom instructed, I kept walking straight - right out of little Edo. I realized my mistake when I started seeing big stores and gas stations everywhere - I found that I had walked about 20 minutes outside of Little Edo, so I turned around and walked right back. I was basically on the side of a highway. On the way back I found the "candy street" Dom had mentioned and I had my first "buying" experience - purple ice cream; I couldn't distinguish the flavor. After Kawagoe I headed back towards Shiki. Eventually I ended up in Ikebukuro, shopping for Lonely Planet SE Asia, for Dom's upcoming trip. If you are ever looking for travel guides in English you can find them in the bookstore in Tobu (a department store at Ikebukuro station). I ended the day safe and sound, back at "Hostel Dom's".

March 14th, 2004

11:11 p.m.

Today is White's Day in Japan. What is White's Day? Well, to explain let's begin with Valentine's Day in Japan. On Valentine's Day Japanese girls give gifts to men. Japanese men do not buy a dozen roses and make a reservations at an expensive restaurant on Valentine's Day. They simply sit back and receive gifts of chocolate from the women at their work, their girlfriends, mistresses, wives, and whoever else. Then on White's Day these men reciprocate the act by giving gifts back to the women who gave them gifts on Valentine's Day.

My friend Madoka, whose birthday is actually today, had sent Steph and I tickets to a play called The Dining Room to see her boyfriend Bob Werley perform. The tickets we had were for today's performance. It was the first time for me to see the expatriot acting community in action in Tokyo. The play was made possible by a non-profit organization called Tokyo International Players. Steph and I both enjoyed the play very much. I was very proud of Bob and his performance as a professional actor.

After the play Steph and I went to Yoyogi Park to see the Japanese "goth" girls and boys play "dress up". The entrance gates leading to Meji shrine is a very popular place for Japanese teenagers to dress up in their most outrageous goth and manga character costumes. All these kids love to pose for pictures so if you ever see them doing their

thing feel free to ask them to pose for a few pictures.

From the Far Side of the World,

Domenico

March 13th, 2004

It was time for Stephanie to finally see some temples in Japan and so I took her to Senso-ji in Asakusa. Senso-ji, which was built in the 7th century A.D., is probably the most popular temple to visit in Tokyo. The temple is entered through Kaminari-mon (Thunder Gate). After passing through the gate you must walk down Nakamise-dori which is a street loaded with tourist shops and shops selling various delicious treats such as sembei (rice crackers). Directly in front of the temple there is a large incense cauldron where you will see Tokyoites wafting and rubbing smoke over their heads and bodies in an effort to bring themselves good health. There is also a large water fountain near the incense cauldron where Tokyoites purify themselves by washing their hands and drinking the fountain's water.

After purifying ourselves Steph and I climbed the stairs leading to the temple's shrine. At the top of the stairs we could see people tossing coins into a large metallic bin that was positioned directly before the shrine (the bin had a lid of wooden bars that prevented anyone from dipping their hand into it to retrieve the donated coins). I explained to Steph that we had to make a donation to the temple before praying; I recommended that we both throw in a 50 yen piece since the number 5 was a good luck number in Japan. We threw in our coins, clasped our hands, and prayed. I prayed for my family and friends and for luck and protection during my upcoming travels through Asia.

Then it was time to eat. Near the temple there was a line of food stalls. I was in the mood for yaki-soba (fried noodles) and so we sat down at one of the stalls to have some but Steph, who is a strict vegetarian, found some tiny dried fishes in her noodles while she ate. As you can imagine she was not pleased. After a stroll through a few streets in Asakusa we then headed to Akihabara (Electric Town). Akihabara is "the" place to go in Tokyo for all your electronic device needs. You will find store after store after store of digital cameras, video cameras, computers, laptops, DVD's, DVD players, and anything else your computer geek mind can imagine or need.

I took Steph into a Japanese manga (comic book) store called Animate while in Akihabara. I wanted to give her a taste of how large the manga industry is in Japan by showing her the incredible, and almost unbelievable, number of comics that are available. There are comics of all genres and tastes. There are soccer comics, curry chief comics, school girl comics, fantasy comics, sci-fi comics, businessmen comics, office lady comics, hard-core porn comics, lesbian comics, bisexual comics, freakshow sex comics. You name it there is probably a comic for it in Japan.

At 6:45 we met up with my friends Thomas, Phil, and Suzy in Shibuya and walked over to The Pink Cow for my "Sayonara" party. Actually it was a "Sayonara" party for Phil, Suzy, and me. Phil and Suzy will be departing Tokyo on the 20th. So many good friends came to the party. I was most pleased to see Maxine (a fantastic manga writer and illustrator) and Philippe for I hadn't seen them in over six month. Thank you to everyone who came. I will miss you all so much.

With Love,
Domenico ;)

March 12th, 2004

Today Stephanie and I returned to the Embassy of Myanmar so that I could drop off my passport for my visa. Since the Embassy was near Odaiba we went there for lunch and further explorations. Odaiba is a kind of mall bliss for Tokyoites. Full of stores and restaurants on a kind of island within Tokyo bay that has a wonderful view of the Tokyo skyline at night. We went to a giant Toyota car exhibit where we road in a car that drove itself around a track. Not very exciting in-and-of-itself but it was cool to have the experience of sitting in a car that can pilot itself.

In the afternoon Mas Hino left a message on my cell phone explaining that he got us on the guest list to see John Scofield at the Blue Note Tokyo, and so Steph and I decided it best to head back to my apartment to freshen up and get properly dressed for the show. We met Mas at the Blue Note at 9:00 and the show started at 9:30. The show was fantastic. John is a true disciple of Miles. It is great to see him keeping jazz fresh for a younger generation of jazz enthusiasts. Adam Deitch completely blew me away on the drums. It is amazing to see and hear him play these drum-n-bass/electonica grooves. He is a human drum machine. I would love to see him one day team up with Square Pusher for an album, or for a show, or for a series of shows. After the

show Avi Bortnick took Mas, Steph, and I backstage to meet John. John was very cool and laid back. Mas and John got caught up on old times. Then it was time for us to catch our train. I strongly recommend any and all jazz cats to pick up John Scofield's last two albums: Uberjam and Up All Night.

March 11th, 2004

I took Stephanie on a walking tour of Tokyo. We started in Harajuku by taking a stroll down Takeshita street where we both ran into Moto at his small sunglasses shop (I first met Moto at Alfie's Jazz club a couple years ago). He is a drummer and will audition for Favorite Underdog to replace me now that I have officially left the band. While in Harajuku Stephanie and I checked out the exhibits at a very punky art gallery called the Design Festa Gallery. I love this gallery. It is a wonderful haven for all the young and aspiring artists in Tokyo. There is a great restaurant in the back that has an incredibly friendly atmosphere. If you are ever in Tokyo and you want to see a fine example of the kids here that are thinking outside the box then stop by the Design Festa Gallery.

After a pasta lunch in Harajuku Steph and I walked to Shibuya to watch the crowds take over Shibuya crossing (the busiest cross walk in the world). Then we had to make a run for the Embassy of Myanmar in Kita-Shinagawa so that I could pick up my visa, but we discovered that the visa pick-up hours are from 1 to 3 p.m. when in fact on their website they list their hours from 3 to 4 p.m. We arrived at 3:30 so I have to return tomorrow :(

In the late afternoon Steph and I explored what I like to call Teen Town. Teen Town is an area of Shibuya loaded with clothing, jewelry, restaurants, video arcades, and music shops geared toward Tokyo teenagers. There are suspicious street-corner men selling fake calling cards and an assortment of drugs. They are never harassed by the Tokyo police because the police are simply nowhere to be seen. Regardless, these street-corner men operate with the consent and protection of whatever Japanese mob group or groups (yakuza) controlling the area. Generally speaking the yakuza have certain arrangements and understandings with the Tokyo police, a kind of mutual respect if you will, that would boggle the minds of most Westerners. If you would like to read more about the mob in Japan check out a book called *Yakuza: Japan's Criminal Underworld*, Expanded Edition by David E. Kaplan and Alec Dubro.

Within Teen Town we checked out a video arcade, a manga kissaten (internet cafe), and the love hotels surrounding the area. Then we went to Shinjuku for a stroll through Kabukicho (the red light district). I should probably elaborate on my understandings of why manga kissatens are so popular, why love hotels are necessary, and how extensive the sex industry is in Japan, but I have to run. It is 11:14 a.m. and it is time for Steph and I to continue our tour of Tokyo.

Mata ne,
Domenico desu

March 10th, 2004

I was at the Narita airport today waiting to pick up my friend Stephanie, who I hadn't seen in nearly 4-5 years, and I ran into John Scofield, Avi Bortnick, and Adam Deitch. They're in town for a few shows in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. John is a friend of my friends, Kenji and Mas Hino. John explained to me that the first time he came to Japan was back in 1977 when he was hired by Kenji and Mas's father, Terumasa Hino, to gig and tour the country. John now has been to Japan countless times.

March 8th, 2004

I was invited to see Ani DiFranco perform live at Shibuya O-East today. It was my first time to see Ani perform and I must say that she is an incredible artist: she has an amazing voice, can slap her acoustic guitar like Marcus Miller, has amazing stage presence, and knows how to talk to and entertain her audience. The audience was composed of expatriot (40%) and Japanese fans who all showed great support for Ani.

There is a fantastic band under her label, Righteous Babe Records, called Drums and Tuba that I strongly recommend to all drummers and those into progressive jazz/rock and electronica music.

March 7th, 2004

11:16 a.m.

I just woke up and as I do every morning I checked CNN.com to find an article concerning the Republican National Committee's pathetic fight against MoveOn.org for their anti-Bush televised advertisements. Do we or do we not practice the freedom of speech in the U.S. of A.?

What are my thoughts concerning President Bush in this election year? This quote below fits nicely as an answer.

Man is the only Patriot. He sets himself apart in his own country, under his own flag, and sneers at the other nations, and keeps multitudinous uniformed assassins on hand at heavy expense to grab slices of other people's countries, and keep them from grabbing slices of his. And in the intervals between campaigns he washes the blood of his hands and works for "the universal brotherhood of man"- with his mouth.

- "The Lowest Animal" by Mark Twain.

March 7th, 2004

12:56 a.m.

I am dead tired. It was a long and eventful day today. The best part of it was the time I spent with my friends Phil and Thomas. They are true friends in every sense of the word. And I am very proud and happy for the both of them. They are incredibly talented and thoughtful. They, along with my friend Kirk who now resides in Toronto, have been my family in Japan. They are my brothers. Always do they encourage me and look out for me. Phil and his fiance Susie will depart Tokyo on the 20th of the month to explore a few other parts of Japan before traveling to Beijing where they will then embark on their journey via the Trans-Siberian Rail to Moscow. From Russia they will explore Scandinavia and Eastern Europe before returning to their home country of Australia (Oz). Thomas will continue to live in Tokyo to pursue some great opportunities and connections that he has recently made within the film industry. We are all very excited for him. I will officially depart Japan, after having lived here for over three-and-a-half years, on the 29th. I will fly to Seoul, Korea and spend about a week there before taking off for Singapore. Since I will not be able to update my website directly from my computer as I travel I will probably set up a link from this site to a message board where I can keep everyone informed on the progress of my journey throughout Southeast Asia, China, Mongolia, Russia, and Eastern and Western Europe.

I am also grateful to Isao (guitar) today for setting up my "Sayonara Jam Session" with Kouichi Korenaga (aka - Kore) (guitar), Hiro (bass guitar), Sawaka Kawashima (vocals), and Mas Hino (guitar). Isao is a fantastic guitarist. It is always an honor to play with him. Hiro has impeccable time as a bass player (better time than me) and he has a wonderful sense of the groove. He is honestly one of my favorite bass players to play with. Kore is one of the biggest Japanese recording session guitarists in the Tokyo

music industry and so as you can imagine I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to hang with him, learn from him, and jam with him. He is one of the kindest, most honest musicians I have ever met here. Roland Kelts (author, drummer, Editor-in-Chief of Japan Inc. and all around cool guy) met up with all of us after the jam session for drinks. His first novel will be published in the autumn of this year. His band will be playing this month on the 20th at The Fiddler in Takadanobaba. Hope to see you all there :)

My book, *Dark Legacy: Book I - Trinity*, is coming along very well. I will have a new PDF available before I depart Japan. Also, in the next couple of months a short comic that I have been working on with my editor Thomas Lee and web designer Pete Mitchell will be available on my site. The comic is called *The Marker*. To find it on my site simply click on WORDS > THE MARKER. I hope you will all enjoy it when it is done and up on the site.

Alright, off to bed I go.

Good night :)

Domenico

April 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

May 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

June 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

July 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

August 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

September 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

October 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

November 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.

December 2004

Please Note:

Domenico is currently traveling on a five to six month journey through Korea, Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, Russia, Scandanavia, and Eastern and Western Europe to research and gather his thoughts and ideas for the second book in his sci-fi/fantasy epic entitled, Dark Legacy: Book II - Travels.

He is keeping a digital journal of his travels at thedragonbone.blogspot.com.

If you wish to contact him you may do so at thedragonbone@hotmail.com

Domenico will update www.thedragonbone.com as soon as he returns to the United States in November of this year.