

## ***Osaka Ya!***

The other day, I was talking to a friend of mine about the interesting posters used by the Osaka police to recruit new officers. It reminded me of a quite funny experience I had with the police, shortly after I moved to Osaka myself. I came to Japan after graduating university, about 15 years ago, but I moved to Osaka just a couple of years ago. Anyway, since I lived for a long time in the countryside of Tohoku, I had a habit of leaving my door unlocked. That's where my story with the police begins.

One day I was at home, working on my computer, and listening to music with my earphones in. It was about 3pm, when I heard a sound at my door – I heard such a sound once a month, as the person who read my water meter would put the bill in the letterbox at my door. I guessed it was the water meter person. Anyway, two or three minutes later, the sound hadn't stopped, which I thought was strange. When I turned around to look at the door, I was shocked to see a middle-aged man – a total stranger – had taken off his shoes at my entrance and was looking into my rooms.

Surprised, I asked "Who are you?" in Japanese. The man looked confused, and after a moment he asked who *I* was. His behavior was very odd, and so I just told him it was *my* house, and he needed to leave. After a very strange discussion, he wouldn't leave, so I pushed him outside and locked my door. I wondered if he was just a drunk, confused old man. Unfortunately, he kept ringing my doorbell and just wouldn't go away. So, I decided I had to call the police.

Because the man didn't seem dangerous, just confused, I was quite calm when I called the police. Speaking in Japanese, I described what had happened. The responder asked if the man smelt like alcohol. I said that he seemed drunk, but no, that he didn't smell like alcohol. The funniest part of the story came after that. The responder, of course in Japanese, asked my address so he could send two officers. I gave him my address. Then he asked my name. When I told him, 'Robert Paulson,' his next, almost robotic, question surprised me: "*Nihongo daijōbu desu ka?*" But... we had just been speaking for several minutes in Japanese! I was so surprised, I just said "*ee, ichiō...*," and hung up the phone.

When the police arrived, the man had already gone. The police were very friendly, speaking in a thick Osaka dialect. After asking me a few questions, they teased me a little bit, too – telling me this wasn't the *inaka*, and I should probably lock my doors. Lesson learned.

### **Questions, Answers and Hints:**

**1. About how old is the narrator?**

**Answer:** Probably mid-late thirties.

**Hints/Clues:** The narrator mentions that he 'came to Japan after graduating university, about 15 years ago.' Considering he should have been at least 20 years old when graduating university, he is probably in his mid to late thirties now.

**2. According to the passage, is the countryside in Tohoku generally safer than Osaka?**

**Answer:** Probably yes.

**Hints/Clues:** The narrator mentioned that he had 'a habit of leaving [his] door unlocked,' because he had 'lived for a long time in the countryside of Tohoku.' This suggests that he probably felt very safe with his surroundings. Also, he was very surprised that a complete stranger entered his house.

**3. Does the narrator live in an apartment, or a stand-alone house?**

**Answer:** Probably an apartment.

**Hints/Clues:** The narrator mentioned that 'the person who read my water meter would put the bill in the letterbox at my door.' While such letterboxes do exist on some stand-alone houses, they are much more common in apartment buildings.

**4. Is the narrator a strong speaker of Japanese?**

**Answer:** Probably yes.

**Hints/Clues:** The narrator has lived in Japan for at least 15 years, so probably has some degree of proficiency. Also, he was able to speak calmly on the phone to describe the situation to the responder, and could understand the police officer's Osaka dialect, all of which suggests he is a strong speaker of Japanese. (However, credit may also be given for a 'no,' answer, if, in tandem with the answer to Question 6, students argue that the responder on the phone couldn't understand him because his Japanese wasn't very good).

**5. The narrator eventually decided that the strange man was probably not drunk. But he was acting very strange, anyway. Why do you think that might be?**

**Answer:** Possibly suffering from mental illness – although answers may vary.

**Hints/Clues:** There are no specific clues apart from the man seeming confused and acting strangely. Credit should be given for thoughtful answers.

**6. Why do you think the police responder asked the narrator if he could speak Japanese, even though they had been talking in Japanese for several minutes?**

**Answer:** Probably because he has had many interactions with foreigners that do not have strong Japanese proficiency.

**Hints/Clues:** Again, there are no specific clues apart from the fact that the responder's question '*Nihongo daijōbu desu ka?*' appeared 'robotic,' suggesting it was an instinctual reaction to hearing a foreigner's name. Credit should be given for reasoned answers.