



Convenience

As I sit here tapping out this story on my laptop keyboard, I'm kind of hungry. Actually, that's not quite true; I'm really hungry. This is not a cause for great concern, because the situation will be resolved any minute now, once the waitress brings me my order. I'm sitting in what is known here in Japan as a *famiri resutoran* (actually a Denny's), having a bit of an 'evening out'.

I don't come here often; it's a long haul on my bike, right across the river valley and up a long steep hill, far too much effort to spend when just trying to grab a bite. But the close approach of typhoon #11 yesterday caused a number of changes in our routine, and left me this evening with a bag full of unsorted mail, as well as an empty fridge, so the triple itinerary of post office, supermarket, and restaurant made the trip worthwhile.

It is a point of no small sadness to me that we have so few interesting restaurants here in Ome. The population is just too low (and too old), to support anything but the bare minimum of coffee shops and restaurants like this one. People who have visited my home know that there *is* a noodle shop right across the street from me, but how many times a week can you eat udon!?

As a consequence of this, I live a *konbini raifu* - subsisting for the most part on prepared dishes from one of the local convenience stores. I live right smack in the middle of a triangle formed by three branches of the 7-11 chain, but as we all know, that doesn't afford me any extra variety, because no matter which way I head, I will return with exactly the same selection of food!

But change is on the horizon! Actually, no longer on the horizon, but close underfoot. Preparations for our new shop in Asakusa have been moving ahead steadily, we now have a signed lease, and are making the final construction plans. We start tearing walls out in early September, just a couple of weeks from now.

I myself am going to be part of the crew swinging the hammers, and my son-in-law loan will be joining me from Canada to help out. There is no way that he and I can waste the four hours it would take to commute back and forth from Ome every day, so the first evening I will be introducing him to the wonders of the capsule hotel. We'll book our 'rooms' and then head out into the back streets of Asakusa to hunt up some interesting dinner. At last, easy access to real food!

But the first thing I'll do is ask him to keep a lookout for a 7-11, because that's where we'll be going ...

Eh? Am I joking? In the middle of all those 'riches', eat at a 7-11?

No, of course not. We'll be doing some banking first. I am preparing a bank card for him to use while he is here, and I'll do this with the '7-Bank', as that will be the most convenient for him, with so many branches everywhere. We'll make a small withdrawal to show him how to use the ATM, and *then* we'll get to the main course.

But even once loan has returned to Canada, I myself will be spending many days each week down at the new shop, and will be 'crashing' in Asakusa four perhaps five days a week. Am I looking forward to those evenings?

You bet! And you can probably look for another Story a Week some months from now, that might just be dealing with the strange behaviour I will be encountering from the weigh scale in my bathroom. "Surely, this is broken? I've never seen it display such numbers before ..."

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>