Sitting huddled next to the kerosene heater that really got a five foot radius nice and toasty with its mini polite Japanese roar, but neglected the rest of the house.

The dry grassy warmth of the tatami mats in the bedroom that served dual purposes of comfort and making us feel like we really were somewhere completely different. The flat hard mattress on top of those mats, more comfortable in its spareness than we would have thought, and having someone to lie next to me every night. Someone I was fairly certain would still be there the next night.

The squeak of motorcycle tires against the heavily veneered wooden floors, since there was no garage, and the naughtiness of parking my illicit Honda in a house where even shoes weren’t allowed.

That wonderful deep, hot bathroom. True to its name, only a tub and a showerhead and a drain. To sit and talk and read and replay the days in the deep snow and mild cold of a north island winter.

The odd English language programs that would get replayed on NHK. And we’d watch them, not because they were good, but because you got *all* the jokes and references and subtleties in a way that you rarely, if ever, did during the rest of your day. Afternoons of *Boy Meets World*, and the old *Mission Impossible* and *So Little Time* watched and followed like great literature.

That feeling of adventure in even the small tasks of grocery shopping, and shoveling snow and ordering a pizza for delivery, when you couldn’t use your hands to gesture or point at picture menus. That excitement of not knowing how it would turn out, but of not being too worried if it didn’t.