

*Love—No Filter*¹

By Momoko Takeda
Translated by Jeremy Kuhles

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

KIMIKO TOMITA, the second daughter of the Tomita family and manager of Naya, a failing fish-smoking factory

KEIGO ISAYAMA, a man who has broken into Naya

KIHACHIRO YOSHIDA,² Naya factory worker. Known as Yoro

TERUNOBU SAKAMOTO, Naya factory worker. Known as Nobu

SHIORI TOMITA, the eldest daughter of the Tomita family returning home after a divorce. She has a disability in her left hand

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Early evening. An office on the second floor of Naya, a fish-smoking factory. The air is pungent; a heady aroma of fish and smoke. The entire room is stained and blackened with soot. The office furnishings include a work desk, a table for staff to use during break times, and a jumble of mismatching chairs. Several rubber aprons hang on the wall. Underneath the aprons lie a messy pile of rubber boots and sturdy trays used for transporting seafood. Over the last six months, orders have plummeted and the factory has been dormant.

A partition in the middle of the room blocks the view of the work desk from the entrance. On the desk, a woman is slumped over an open laptop computer. The woman is Kimiko Tomita, the second daughter of the Tomita family. Kimiko took over management three years ago after her father, the owner of the factory, suddenly passed away. The sound of a ticking clock echoes through the office. Kimiko looks up, her face illuminated by the light of the computer. She begins to speak.

KIMIKO: Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to be burgled. In 3...2...1...Go.

Kimiko points to the entrance. The door slowly opens and the intruder, Keigo Isayama, enters. He is holding a “Full Pull All Purpose NEO”³ weed puller as a makeshift weapon.

KIMIKO: Oh, what an idiot. Look at this guy. He couldn’t have picked a worse time. Is he stupid enough to think a place like this has got money right now? And today of all days. Breaking in when we fire up the smokers for the first time in two months. And look at his weapon. Good grief. Oh, and his clothes. He is not exactly dressed the part. He’s got some serious life-choice issues going on. I guess that’s why he’s resorted to burgling. I can hardly talk, though.

Kimiko sniffs the air.

KIMIKO: Yoro’s prepped the smoking baskets. First time in two months. Bonitos are a decent size, too. That’ll be around a 75-minute smoke. (*Sighing.*) Ahhh... We are back up and running.

Kimiko returns to the desk and faces the computer. Isayama slowly moves around the partition to find Kimiko sitting there. Their eyes meet and Isayama freezes in panic.

KIMIKO: First crime?

Isayama remains frozen and doesn't respond.

KIMIKO: First crime?

Isayama remains unresponsive.

KIMIKO: Are you any good?

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: At stabbing. Are you any good?

Kimiko takes off her glasses and turns her shoulder.

KIMIKO: Actually, it's perfect timing. Come on, stab me good and hard. Right here.

Kimiko pats her shoulder.

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) Excuse me?

KIMIKO: Do it a bit roughly. I don't mind.

ISAYAMA: Huh?

Kimiko closes her eyes and waits.

KIMIKO: (Pause.) Get on with it.

ISAYAMA: (Realizing he is out of his depth.) I'm sorry.

A frightened Isayama hurries back toward the entrance. He discovers the door he just came through won't open.

ISAYAMA: What the...? What the...?

Kimiko approaches.

ISAYAMA: Argh. Arggghhhh.

KIMIKO: Oh, come on, just a quick stab. What's the problem?

A panicked and puzzled Isayama tries to escape the small office.

KIMIKO: (*Spotting the weed puller.*) Oh, I know that. You can pull weeds straight up from a standing position, right? You know, you just jab and twist and the weeds come straight out. Do it like that. Jab and twist, jab and twist. I guess jabbing like that, you'll go straight into the nervous system and strip away all the nerves and sinew. A bit gruesome isn't it? Oh, are you the type who narrows their eyes at gruesome stuff? In that case, go ahead and narrow them, but just get on and stab me. How about I go round the partition and you just stick it down and twist from the other side?

ISAYAMA: What the fuck?

KIMIKO: Wait, "What the fuck?" should be my line. What are you doing here? Is that Full Pull All Purpose just for show?

ISAYAMA: Full Pull All Purpose?

KIMIKO: That's what it's called. The Full Pull All Purpose NEO. It was propped up outside, right?

Isayama tries to open the door once more.

KIMIKO: Hey hey, at least bring your own gun to a gunfight.

ISAYAMA: And what the hell's up with this door!? This is some scary stuff.

KIMIKO: I'm the one who's scared.

ISAYAMA: No way. Much scarier being me right now. What's with you? Are you some kind of half-dead spook or something?

KIMIKO: Huh? What do you mean? What's a half-dead spook?

ISAYAMA: I don't know. Don't come near me.

Isayama tosses the Full Pull All Purpose aside with a loud clang. The echoes die out and the office falls silent.

KIMIKO: Come on, mister. Pull yourself together. Take a bit more responsibility here.

Kimiko picks up the Full Pull All Purpose.

KIMIKO: What's a half-dead spook?

ISAYAMA: Seriously, just leave me alone.

KIMIKO: I'm asking you, what's a half-dead spook?

ISAYAMA: Well...I mean...you said you wanted to die.

KIMIKO: I never said I wanted to die.

ISAYAMA: You just told me to stab you.

KIMIKO: Yes. I asked you to stab me "nicely." I didn't say kill me. Wait, what?

You were going to kill me? Wow, scary stuff. Phew, that was a close shave. It's always important to check the details, right? You can't assume that people will understand everything you say. You know, as soon as long-time married couples stop communicating, they end up at complete odds with each other, right? Look, this is the first time we've met and I really should be more polite. I'm sorry. My bad.

Kimiko and Isayama face each other.

KIMIKO: Right.

Kimiko hands the weed puller to Isayama and turns her back.

KIMIKO: Come on. Come at me.

Isayama doesn't respond.

KIMIKO: Come at me. Just not enough to kill me.

Isayama tries to open the door again.

KIMIKO: Look, seriously. Why did you come here?

ISAYAMA: I didn't come here to hurt anyone.

KIMIKO: Well, why did you bring the Full Pull?

ISAYAMA: Huh?

Kimiko juts her chin out at the Full Pull All Purpose.

KIMIKO: The Full Pull.

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) Well, you know. Just in case something happened.

KIMIKO: What, like meeting somebody?

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) I guess.

KIMIKO: Well, now's your chance.

ISAYAMA: I didn't want to use it if I didn't have to. I'm just a sneak thief.

KIMIKO: A sneak thief?

Isayama nods.

ISAYAMA: I thought the factory had shut down for a bit.

KIMIKO: We started back up today. We finally got an order in. I've got some good-quality fish too, so we are smoking some tonight. The freezer is overflowing with stock.

ISAYAMA: Whatever. Oh, I can't do this. Enough. Just call the police or something, will you?

KIMIKO: Huh? Why? You want to be caught?

ISAYAMA: No, I don't want to be caught. It's just...this situation. I can't handle it. I can't handle being here with you. It's too weird.

Kimiko takes a menacing step toward Isayama. Isayama is terrified. Kimiko laughs.

KIMIKO: No way. You're not leaving until you've stabbed me.

Isayama seems about to wet himself. At that point, the door suddenly opens and Yoro enters holding a kitchen knife.

ISAYAMA: Arrrggghhh.

Yoro walks into the room. The door swings shut.

ISAYAMA: Arggghhh.

Yoro acts as if Isayama is not there.

YORO: Smokers all prepped.

KIMIKO: Great. Thanks.

Yoro turns toward Isayama.

YORO: Customer?

Isayama is speechless.

YORO: Customer?

KIMIKO: Customer.

Yoro bows slowly and deeply. Isayama follows suit.

YORO: Pocari?⁴

Isayama looks puzzled.

YORO: Pocari?

ISAYAMA: Po...cari? The sp...sports drink?

KIMIKO: (To Yoro.) Pocari.

Yoro slowly places his hand on the door handle before suddenly giving it an aggressive shake. He pulls open the door with great speed before walking through it slowly. Isayama watches Yoro and tries to replicate his movements to no avail.

KIMIKO: No way you can do that, buddy. Yoro has been here for 30 years.

ISAYAMA: It's screwed up. That door.

KIMIKO: You could say that.

ISAYAMA: I could say that?

KIMIKO: There's a knack to it.

Isayama tries the door again.

KIMIKO: No point, no point.

ISAYAMA: What was all that about “customer”? What’s with you? What do you want from me?

KIMIKO: I’ve told you, haven’t I? Just stab me quick and then you can leave.

ISAYAMA: Why should I?

KIMIKO: Umm...you need a reason?

ISAYAMA: Of course. Use your common sense, it’s not a normal thing to ask.

KIMIKO: You're telling me to use common sense? (Realizing that Yoro is about to return.) Ah.

Kimiko beckons Isayama over to the office desk. Isayama walks toward Kimiko with trepidation. Yoro comes back through the door before slamming it shut. Isayama is clearly dejected. Kimiko notices and laughs heartily.

YORO: Pocari.

Isayama goes to take the bottle.

YORO: Oh.

Yoro takes the bottle back and wipes it with the grimy hand towel hanging around his neck. He measuredly wipes around the mouth of the bottle.

YORO: There.

Isayama takes the bottle with an incredulous expression on his face.

ISAYAMA: Thank you.

KIMIKO: Thank you, Yoro.

YORO: Hard work.

KIMIKO: Yeah, you tired? Come and sit down. It's going to take an hour and a bit after all.

YORO: Ninety-five minutes.

KIMIKO: Right. Those fish were a good size.

Yoro sits down and takes small sips of his Pocari.

YORO: (To Isayama.) You, too. Come and sit.

Yoro taps the chair next to his.

ISAYAMA: Right...

Isayama sits next to Yoro, wary of the kitchen knife on the table.

KIMIKO: So, where were we?

ISAYAMA: What?

KIMIKO: Oh yes, the reason I want you to stab me.

ISAYAMA: Eh? What? No, I...

Isayama is conscious of Yoro's presence.

KIMIKO: Ah. Don't worry. It makes no difference if Yoro is here or not.

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: Right, Yoro?

YORO/KIMIKO: (*Delivered together in an elongated way.*) R-i-g-h-t.

KIMIKO: What's it to you if Yoro is here or not?

ISAYAMA: (*Beat.*) There is something really wrong with you.

Kimiko sits down at the computer and starts working. All the while continuing to speak.

KIMIKO: You know, I was just thinking to myself...I wonder if someone might suddenly turn up here and stab me. And then, you show up with that thing. Pretty amazing, don't you think? So of course, I naturally thought you'd be happy to stab me. But then you drop a bombshell saying you won't stab me when I really need you to. You won't get away with that.

The tapping of computer keys resonates around the office. She presses the return key.

KIMIKO: (*Sighing.*) Give me a break. (*Pause.*) All that bonito we're smoking. Do you have any idea how much it's all worth?

Isayama shakes his head.

KIMIKO: Peanuts. Just 150 yen⁵ a kilo. Dirt cheap. That's messed up, right? That's it, you're just gonna have to stab me.

ISAYAMA: (*Pause.*) So, your business is in trouble?

KIMIKO: Of course it is. Sorry, mister, we've got a ton of debts and no cash.

Anyway, who are you? Are you from around here?

ISAYAMA: You think I'd tell you?

KIMIKO: I guess not. Whatever.

ISAYAMA: But as you say, the factory has started back up, so you'll have lots of work to do. It'd be a real shame if you had some kind of injury now.

KIMIKO: Right. It'd be a real shame.

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: That's what I want them to say... "a real shame."

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: "Kimiko, it's a real shame." That's what I want them to say. Oh, I'm Kimiko by the way.

YORO: Kihachiro Yoshida.

Kimiko gestures to Isayama as if to say, "And your name is?"

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) No, no, no way. I'm not falling for that.

KIMIKO: Nearly got you.

ISAYAMA: Not nearly. Anyway, who is "them"?

KIMIKO: Everyone. All of them. The whole world. All of society.

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) Why?

KIMIKO: (Beat.) Listen to me, jabbering on and on.

Isayama doesn't respond. Kimiko picks up some snacks and starts nibbling.

KIMIKO: Yoro, is it just you today?

YORO: Terunobu Sakamoto.

KIMIKO: Ah, Nobu will be in, too.

ISAYAMA: What? Someone else is coming?

KIMIKO: (Pause.) I'm not sure how to put this, but...you're really shit at it.

Isayama looks confused, failing to understand what Kimiko means.

KIMIKO: At sneak-thieving. (*Isayama looks puzzled.*) You had no clue if someone was in or not, that's 101. You're not cut out for it.

ISAYAMA: You're probably right.

KIMIKO: Then why do you do it?

Isayama remains silent. His attention shifts to Yoro, who is meticulously eating the snacks that Kimiko gave him

KIMIKO: If you tell me, I'll open the door for you.

ISAYAMA: Money.

KIMIKO: Yeah, right. If it's money you wanted, surely you'd break into a house with a nice car outside.

ISAYAMA: Give it a rest, will you? I do it just because.

KIMIKO: Just because? Is it like playing a sport or something? Is sneak-thieving what all the cool kids are doing these days?

ISAYAMA: Just give it a rest.

KIMIKO: Tell me straight or I'm not opening that door.

Isayama remains silent.

KIMIKO: You're not making this easy. Let's ask Yoro. Yoro, why did you come in today?

YORO: The phone rang. Said you want to smoke eight tons of fish. Start at six.

KIMIKO: Right. Thanks. I feel bad making you work on your day off.

YORO: Fine. I was free. I don't mind.

KIMIKO: You enjoy lining up the fish in the smoking baskets, right?

Yoro nods in agreement.

KIMIKO: So, Yoro came in on his day off to smoke some bonitos for us. Now, why did you come here today?

Isayama looks at Yoro's kitchen knife. Yoro, noticing Isayama's gaze, gently places his hand on the blade and holds it close to him.

ISAYAMA: Today, I was just...interested to see what's inside.

KIMIKO: (*Nonplussed by Isayama's answer:*) Right. Oh, Yoro, feel free to come in after lunch tomorrow.

Yoro nods.

ISAYAMA: I guess thieving is a kind of habit. I'm not after money or anything. I'm just interested to see what's inside.

Yoro and Kimiko both nod.

KIMIKO: Right, right.

ISAYAMA: (*Pause.*) Especially a place like this that is usually full of people. You know, when it's empty...I get this feeling of curiosity. Sometimes I steal things, but more often than not I don't. Stealing isn't the main reason I suppose. It's just a more interesting way to have fun. It's kind of like...making memories.

KIMIKO: That makes you a bit of a jerk, doesn't it? Stealing stuff just to make memories.

ISAYAMA: I don't steal things that people would miss. You know, I never take anything of value. I don't touch work tools or anything expensive.

KIMIKO: So, you mean, trash?

ISAYAMA: Not so much trash... (*Quickly glancing around the office.*) So, if I was going to take something from here, I'd probably go for a pen. Or (*scanning the room again*) maybe a pair of those work gloves. As a memento.

KIMIKO: So, you take the pen home? And then what?

ISAYAMA: I just, you know...look at it sometimes.

Kimiko pulls a disgusted expression.

ISAYAMA: Yeah, I suppose you're probably right.

KIMIKO: I'm not sure I get any of this. So, it's not something you do because you need money?

ISAYAMA: Right. I'm alright for money.

KIMIKO: (*Responding ambivalently.*) I see.

ISAYAMA: Honestly, it's just...pure curiosity.

KIMIKO: OK. So, you've got a fetish? For buildings?

ISAYAMA: Not really. Even if no one is there, I just want to know if the inside still exists.

KIMIKO: Inside?

ISAYAMA: Inside. I want to see the inside of the building.

KIMIKO: Right. That's enough, now. I can't take any more of this.

ISAYAMA: Wait, wait. It's just sort of checking. Inside. Really, it's just that.

KIMIKO: So, you say to yourself, “Good, there is an inside,” and then you wander about in the gloom?

Isayama nods.

KIMIKO: Freak.

Yoro nods.

ISAYAMA: Well, how else am I supposed to do it? If someone said, “I just need to check the inside, so give me the key and I want to be left here alone,” would you hand over the key to a total stranger?

KIMIKO: Absolutely no way.

ISAYAMA: Right? So, recently, the schools have been closed, haven’t they? So, I’ve been taking a look around...

KIMIKO: (*Thinking for a moment.*) Why here, though? How long have you had your eye on us?

ISAYAMA: I always drive past here for work. I’ve thought for a while that it looks like a good target.

KIMIKO: Freak.

Yoro nods.

ISAYAMA: (*To Kimiko.*) That’s rich coming from you.

KIMIKO: You’re basically saying as a hobby, you sneak into places and get off on being in there by yourself. That’s the definition of “freak.”

ISAYAMA: It’s better than thieving.

KIMIKO: I don’t know, I think I prefer thieving here.

ISAYAMA: Why? I’m not causing trouble for anyone.

KIMIKO: I think thieving is the healthier option. For normal humans.

ISAYAMA: Why? Oh, whatever. Just let me out of here. I’ve already said too much embarrassing stuff.

KIMIKO: Don’t come any closer, freak.

Yoro picks up the kitchen knife and stands. Isayama readies to fight.

KIMIKO: Ah, hold this for a second, will you?

Kimiko takes an ornament from her desk and hands it to Isayama.

ISAYAMA: Eh?

KIMIKO: Careful with it. It's worth 10 million yen.⁶

ISAYAMA: What?

Yoro slowly leaves the room clutching the knife.

ISAYAMA: Arrrrgggh.

By handing the ornament to Isayama, Kimiko has made sure he misses the chance to escape the room. Kimiko laughs heartily.

KIMIKO: Of course it's not worth 10 million yen.

ISAYAMA: Where did he go?

KIMIKO: Went to check on the fish.

ISAYAMA: So, I told you why I came here.

KIMIKO: Right. We get that you're a freak.

Isayama lets out a sigh.

ISAYAMA: (In a menacing way.) Let me out.

KIMIKO: (Mocking.) Oh, tough guy.

ISAYAMA: Let me out of here. You promised you would.

KIMIKO: I like it. Let's play it this way.

Kimiko picks up the weed puller and tries to hand it to Isayama.

ISAYAMA: What is up with you? What's the reason? Why deliberately get injured so people will say it's a "real shame"?

KIMIKO: If I tell you, will you do it?

Isayama doesn't respond. They both remain silent. The phone rings, breaking the silence. Kimiko goes over to the desk to answer.

KIMIKO: Tomita Shoten. (Beat.) Shiori? Oh, you're back today? Right. (Listens.) What, really? Wait there. I'll come to the house... Yes. Stay where you are.

Kimiko places her hand over the receiver and looks over to Isayama.

KIMIKO: Here you go. Here's your reason.

ISAYAMA: What?

KIMIKO: Take the phone for a minute.

ISAYAMA: What? No way.

Kimiko forces the phone into Isayama's hand.

KIMIKO: You better not hang up.

ISAYAMA: No, wait. You're not serious? Surely. Um, hello... Hello.

Kimiko takes a ruler from her pencil case. Slotting it in the gap between the door and the wall, she quickly yanks the door handle and leaves the room.

KIMIKO: We've all got our ways.

Kimiko takes the ruler as she leaves. Isayama realizes he has been caught out by Kimiko again.

ISAYAMA: And they've hung up anyway...

Isayama huffily puts down the phone. Trying to find something thin, he scavenges through the drawers of the office desk. Eventually, he finds a wire-like object. Copying Kimiko's actions, he wriggles it into the crevice and pulls the knob. The door doesn't open.

ISAYAMA: Arrgh. I can't take this anymore.

The door suddenly opens frightening Isayama. Yoro enters with another employee, Terunobu Sakamoto. Terunobu is wearing a mask.

TERUNOBU: Eh? Who's this? Who the hell is this!?

YORO: Customer.

TERUNOBU: A customer?

Isayama reacts with an ambiguous expression. Terunobu catches sight of the wire in Isayama's hand.

TERUNOBU: So, what exactly...?

The men face each other. The door remains open. Isayama strengthens his resolve.

ISAYAMA: Ev'ning.

TERUNOBU: Oh, ev'ning.

ISAYAMA: I've um...come to fix the air conditioner.

Isayama takes several steps back and pulls a mask out of his pocket.

TERUNOBU: Ah, right. Thanks. Um... Is Kimi...ah, I mean, is the manager here?

ISAYAMA: She went out to see a customer. She told me that Naya was opening up again and the office air conditioner needed fixing. And you're smoking eight tons of fish today, right, Yoro?

Yoro nods in agreement.

TERUNOBU: Ah, you know each other?

Yoro's affirmative reaction puts Terunobu slightly at ease.

ISAYAMA: If you don't mind, I just...need the bathroom.

With the door left open, Isayama spies a chance to escape.

TERUNOBU: Ah, sorry. Did you say we're smoking eight tons today?

ISAYAMA: Yes. That's correct. Right, Yoro?

YORO: Smoking eight tons today.

TERUNOBU: So, three more smokes, then...

YORO: That's fine by me.

TERUNOBU: No way we can do all that by tomorrow. There's not enough hands on deck. We need to put on the steam too, right?

While Terunobu and Yoro are talking, Isayama edges closer to the door.

TERUNOBU: You know where the bathroom is, right?

Isayama nods.

TERUNOBU: Oh, no need to go downstairs. There's a bathroom on this floor, next to the elevator. I'll show you.

Terunobu and Isayama leave the room together. Yoro is left alone and begins to murmur to himself.

YORO: I said it's fine. Whatever. I like using the smoking baskets. I like how they sway during cooking. It's been such a long time. Eight tons of fresh bonito today. A good batch. Meaty. A 95-minute cook. Seventy minutes to go now. The perfect size. Much better than the smaller ones. Herrings, mackerel. Smoking them isn't as pleasing. *(Shaking his head and looking toward the door that Isayama just exited through.)* If you're asking me, I don't think he's a bad person. And good people are customers, so we need to give them Pocari.

The door opens. In walks Shiori, the elder sister of the Tomita family.

SHIORI: Oh, Yoro. It's been a while.

YORO: *(Nodding.)* Pocari?

SHIORI: Pocari.

While Yoro leaves the room to fetch the Pocari, Shiori wanders aimlessly around the office. It hasn't changed since she was a child. Every corner is blackened with soot and the smell of fish is thick throughout the office. She opens up the computer and checks the data. Shiori does everything with her right hand.

SHIORI: Ahh...

Kimiko enters the room. She strides over to where Shiori is looking at the laptop computer and slams the lid shut.

KIMIKO: Escaped...

SHIORI: What?

KIMIKO: (*Pause.*) I said I'd meet you at the house.

SHIORI: Does it matter? I wanted to drop by Naya—it's been a long time. Anyway, there's some stuff I can't talk about in front of mom.

KIMIKO: What stuff?

SHIORI: (*Avoiding the question.*) Still the same old Naya, isn't it?

KIMIKO: What do you mean?

SHIORI: (*Pulling a disgusted expression.*) Down and dirty.

KIMIKO: (*Pause.*) Wear those fancy clothes in here and you won't get the smell out.

SHIORI: I don't mind.

KIMIKO: Anyway, why the sudden visit?

SHIORI: I said I'd come home, right? When things calmed down a bit.

KIMIKO: What's with all the luggage?

SHIORI: I got divorced.

KIMIKO: Huh? What?

SHIORI: Don't make me say it again.

KIMIKO: Divorced? From Yoichi?

SHIORI: Who else would I get divorced from?

KIMIKO: That's...um... (*Struggling to comprehend the big news.*) Why?

Shiori pulls out a cigarette and goes to light up.

KIMIKO: No smoking.

Shiori puts the cigarette down.

SHIORI: (*Pause.*) An affair.

KIMIKO: You're kidding? Seriously?

Shiori nods. She goes to light the cigarette.

KIMIKO: No smoking.

Shiori puts the cigarettes away.

KIMIKO: How do you have an affair in these times? I mean, I never saw that coming.

SHIORI: (Beat.) Right.

KIMIKO: How are you holding up?

SHIORI: You know, good days and bad days.

Yoro enters holding a Pocari. He passes it to Shiori.

SHIORI: Thanks. (Sipping the Pocari.) This takes me back. What's in this stuff, again? Basically the same as sweat?

KIMIKO: Think so.

SHIORI: In that case, maybe it's the same as tears, too?

Unsure what to say, Kimiko doesn't respond.

SHIORI: I guess I need to stock up then. I think I've cried a lifetime's worth, so I'm probably running on empty.

Shiori fakes a bright laugh. Kimiko finds the situation painful.

KIMIKO: You were so good together.

SHIORI: Yeah...I thought so, too.

KIMIKO: I guess you can never tell. I mean, he seemed so proper.

SHIORI: Well, I was probably in the wrong, too. Just so busy all the time.

KIMIKO: That's not a valid reason.

SHIORI: Yeah, well. (Pause.) On the flipside, I now feel kinda sorry.

KIMIKO: What? Why? You shouldn't be sticking up for him.

SHIORI: Yeah.

KIMIKO: (A long pause.) How did you find out?

SHIORI: Eh?

KIMIKO: About the affair. How did you find out?

SHIORI: Eh?

KIMIKO: I'm guessing his cell phone. You found some messages or something?

Short period of silence.

SHIORI: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. I had the affair.

KIMIKO: What?

SHIORI: Right, I thought we were getting our wires crossed. It was me. I had the affair.

KIMIKO: What?

SHIORI: It happens.

KIMIKO: It happens? You just said you'd cried a lifetime's worth of tears.

SHIORI: Yeah, I did. Breaking up is difficult. It's not as if I don't have any feelings.

KIMIKO: Wait wait wait wait. You just said that on the flipside you felt kinda sorry.

SHIORI: Right.

KIMIKO: On the flipside? It's not flipped! You need to apologize combunctiously!⁷

SHIORI: Combunctiously?

KIMIKO: Combunctiously! Completely. Utterly. You are 100 percent in the wrong here.

Shiori gestures as if to say, "Who, me?" Kimiko nods vigorously. Shiori gestures as if to say, "Really?"

KIMIKO: You're a devil woman.

SHIORI: Yeah, but...it was like having sex with a stick insect.⁸

KIMIKO: What!?

SHIORI: Yoichi. It was just mindless picky pokey picky pokey.⁹

KIMIKO: What are you talking about?

SHIORI: You think you could put up with that? Thirty years of picky pokey.

KIMIKO: How should I know?

SHIORI: You know because I'm telling you now. Just think for a moment, imagine it.

Thirty long years, dealing with picky pokey picky pokey.

Terunobu and Isayama enter the room together. Kimiko doesn't notice.

KIMIKO: Just shut up will you. I've never seen a stick insect having sex.

The whole room freezes.

YORO: Picky pokey picky pokey.

A short period of silence before the sound of a door slamming shut.

ISAYAMA: (Realizing he has missed another chance to escape.) Arrrgggghhhh.

YORO: Picky pokey picky pokey.

Another short period of awkward silence.

TERUNOBU: So, um... Anyone want a Pocari?

ISAYAMA: I'm good.

TERUNOBU: Right. Um, everything OK?

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) Yes, fine. Just the door closing. Made me jump. I was thinking to myself, "Doors, they close!"

TERUNOBU: (A little confused.) Ah, right...

Terunobu spies the snacks on the table and begins munching while talking.

TERUNOBU: So, Shiori, you're back?

SHIORI: Here I am.

TERUNOBU: So, what is it? You get divorced?

SHIORI: Bingo.

TERUNOBU: Whoa, seriously?

SHIORI: Yep. Signed and sealed.

TERUNOBU: No way.

SHIORI: Great guess. What gave it away?

TERUNOBU: Don't know, I was just messing around. But I knew you couldn't stand being with him forever, right?

SHIORI: Double bingo.

TERUNOBU: Whoa...

SHIORI: (Aware of Isayama in the room.) Who's this guy?

TERUNOBU: Oh, right. He's from Matsuda Electrics. He's come to fix the air conditioner. Local guy—from Isano.¹⁰

SHIORI: Oh really? Which part of Isano?

TERUNOBU: Over the way, next to the old nursery school.

SHIORI: Ah, I know the place.

TERUNOBU: There was a goat that lived in the yard.

SHIORI: Yes! The goat. I know. Place had a blue roof. The old lady would get

pissed because we fed paper to that goat. Right, so you must be the son? So, what happened to the goat?

ISAYAMA: It's um...not around anymore.

TERUNOBU: He was on the softball team. Not the same time as me, though. He was with Makochi and all those guys—the golden generation. They went to the regional championship in Ehime.¹¹ That was pretty much the end of that golden period. The coach got sick and had to give it up. Mizoguchi's uncle took over the reins but the team was never the same.

ISAYAMA: Eh? Coach got sick?

TERUNOBU: Yeah, didn't you hear? He collapsed at New Year's.

ISAYAMA: Was he OK?

TERUNOBU: Seems so. Still a bit numb apparently, but doing OK.

ISAYAMA: That's good.

TERUNOBU: Yeah, he lost his love for the game, though. He never goes to the batting cages anymore.

ISAYAMA: Ah, is that so?

Isayama catches Kimiko's eye. She is fixing a cold stare on Isayama.

KIMIKO: Look who's had his pants pulled down.

ISAYAMA: Have not.

TERUNOBU: Ah, Kimiko... So, I used to keep a stick insect. They, you know...do their thing in the springtime and...

KIMIKO: (*Cutting Terunobu off mid-sentence.*) I think I've had enough of that conversation.

TERUNOBU: Sure. Good.

KIMIKO: Thanks.

YORO: Picky pokey picky pokey.

KIMIKO: (*Gesturing to Yoro to cut it out.*) Yoro.

ISAYAMA: Um, so, I'm just going outside. Outside to look at the unit.

TERUNOBU: Sure.

ISAYAMA: So, could someone open this door for me?

TERUNOBU: (*Terunobu goes to open the door for Isayama.*) Ah, right, right. We really need to fix that door, too.

KIMIKO: Wait.

Terunobu's hand freezes on the door handle.

KIMIKO: (Realizing that Isayama is on the verge of escape.) So, um, uh...I'm coming too.

ISAYAMA: Eh?

Kimiko pulls Isayama in close, linking arms with him so he can't escape.

KIMIKO: I'll show you the way. After you.

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: Open the door.

TERUNOBU: Huh?

KIMIKO: Open the door.

Terunobu does as he's told and opens the door in his own unique way. Isayama and Kimiko walk through the door arm in arm. Taken aback, Shiori and Terunobu watch them out the door. The door closes with a bang.

SHIORI: (Trying to figure out what she has just seen.) What was that...?

Isayama's shriek and struggle can be heard from offstage.

ISAYAMA: Argghh. Not aggaaiiiin.

KIMIKO: Wait wait wait wait.

The hubbub fades away. The office is silent.

SHIORI: Those two, are they...together?

TERUNOBU: What? No idea, no idea. Yoro, are they? You know that electrics guy, right?

YORO: (Pause.) Stab me good and hard.

TERUNOBU: Huh?

SHIORI: What do you mean?

TERUNOBU: Electrics guy said that?

Yoro shakes his head.

SHIORI: Kimiko did?

Yoro nods. A long pause as Shiori and Terunobu let their imaginations run wild.

SHIORI: Kinky stuff!

TERUNOBU: No no no no no, it can't be that.

SHIORI: Here? That's so kinky. While Yoro was watching? Kin-ky stuff.

Yoro nods.

TERUNOBU: Wrong, wrong, wrong. No way no way no way. There's no way that happened. Right, Yoro?

Yoro nods.

SHIORI: So, what on earth's going on here?

YORO: Wanted to see inside.

TERUNOBU: Who said that?

YORO: Electrics guy.

Another long pause as Shiori and Terunobu let their imaginations run wild again.

SHIORI: Eeeeeeeek. Oh, come on, it has to be that... What else could it be? Has to be.

TERUNOBU: Shiori, just stop, stop, stop, *don't stop*.

SHIORI: Which one?

TERUNOBU: (*Gesturing as if to say, "Calm down."*) Stop. You're having too much fun with this.

SHIORI: You're right. Sorry. Kimiko's not the type for that.

TERUNOBU: Exactly. This is just about the air conditioner.

SHIORI: I get it, I get it.

A pause as Shiori and Terunobu both calm down. Shiori sits at the office desk and Terunobu sits in a chair. Terunobu takes off his mask and pulls on the strings. His ears appear to be hurting.

SHIORI: But if there is something going on...

TERUNOBU: Shiori.

SHIORI: No, listen, I'm being serious. I think having a boyfriend would be good for Kimiko.

TERUNOBU: Ah. Yeah, you're probably right.

SHIORI: You haven't heard any rumors? About Kimiko?

TERUNOBU: Not me, no. Heard nothing at all.

SHIORI: Oh right, OK.

TERUNOBU: But, you know, since your dad passed away, she spends her life just going to and fro between the house and this place. She even has her lunch at home. And I don't ever see her wearing anything other than her work clothes.

SHIORI: Right.

TERUNOBU: I feel kinda sorry for her. You know, she's still young and all.

SHIORI: (Pause.) You feel kinda sorry for her?

TERUNOBU: Umm... Yeah, I guess I do.

SHIORI: Why exactly?

TERUNOBU: I don't know... She doesn't seem to be doing the job because she wants to.

SHIORI: Yeah, but it was her choice to take this place on.

TERUNOBU: I know. Your mom came to discuss it with me.

SHIORI: Right.

TERUNOBU: But, you know, if I'm really honest...I don't think she's cut out for it. I feel bad saying it, but especially right now. A year ago, there wasn't a problem. Even for Kimiko. I shouldn't have said it like that. I'm sorry. We got by, just on your dad's connections, that was enough. But...the order we have now is down to you, right? Kimiko didn't do anything for the two months we were shut down and you know, a few of our customers went bankrupt. We talked about it, I told her things aren't going to be like they were before. Even so, we just waited for orders to come in. And then when Toyoshima¹² went under, the writing seemed to be on the wall for us, too. But then you set up the internet shop thing and we survived. I don't really know how you did it or what you actually did, but it's a new way of selling our stock, right?

SHIORI: Right.

TERUNOBU: You know, we make good-quality products here. But none of us are good at selling. I'm really pleased you've come back.

SHIORI: You really think so?

TERUNOBU: Definitely. It's going to be easier for Kimiko. Now that the factory is up and running again. It'll be a weight off her shoulders.

SHIORI: Right.

TERUNOBU: (*Looking up at the clock.*) Oh, it's time. Have to go and collect the overflow. Yoro, we need to go collect the overflow. Give me a hand, will you?

Yoro had stashed some of the snacks from earlier in his pocket. He pulls some out and starts munching on them slowly.

TERUNOBU: Yoro?

Yoro continues to munch slowly on his snacks, ignoring Terunobu.

TERUNOBU: Ground control to Major Yoro.

SHIORI: (*Laughing as Yoro continues to ignore Terunobu.*) Yoro is tired out.

TERUNOBU: Is that right? No problem, I'll take care of it.

SHIORI: You need some help?

TERUNOBU: (*Adjusting his mask.*) It's fine, it's fine. You can't handle the overflow dressed like that.

SHIORI: OK, see you later on.

YORO: (*Responding to Shiori without actually moving to go.*) See you later.

TERUNOBU: (*To Yoro.*) You're staying here.

Terunobu and Yoro smile at each other. Yoro giggles. Terunobu leaves. Shiori and Yoro remain.

SHIORI: (*Breaking the silence.*) Are those snacks any good?

YORO: Not really.

SHIORI: (*Laughing.*) Really not really? (*Pause.*) You know, Yoro, you're pretty smart sometimes—getting out of the overflow work like that.

YORO: Not really.

SHIORI: (*Laughing.*) Really not really? (*Pause.*) You get on well with Terunobu, don't you?

YORO: Not really.

SHIORI: (*Laughing.*) Really not really?

Shiori continues to laugh kindly while looking at Yoro.

SHIORI: Say, Yoro. If Naya wasn't here anymore, what do you think you'd do?

Yoro suddenly stops eating.

SHIORI: Just an “if” question. It’s not going to happen. Definitely not going to happen. I just wondered, you know, what you’d do if Naya wasn’t here.

YORO: Just an “if”?

SHIORI: If, if, if. Sorry, Yoro. Just an “if” conversation.

YORO: I’d go to Sunflower Heights.

SHIORI: You what?

YORO: Sunflower Heights.

SHIORI: Oh, you mean the Sunflower Heights group home on the top of that mountain in Tsumuro?¹³ Why would you go there?

YORO: Social worker said so.

SHIORI: Seriously? Oh, you’re being serious.

YORO: Serious.

SHIORI: Ah, I see.

She opens up the computer lid and starts it up. She stares at the screen for a while before gazing up at the ceiling.

SHIORI: Seriously?

YORO: Seriously.

SHIORI: I do feel kinda bad about it all. You know, it’s always been the same. Whatever Kimiko does, she always ends up being “Shiori’s sister.”

YORO: Seriously.

SHIORI: Yoro, you remember, right? When I was in junior high, Kimiko and I saved that kid from drowning in the river. Police gave us an award and we were in the local paper.

YORO: Seriously.

SHIORI: What did they write again? In the paper.

YORO: (*Reciting the article off by heart.*) July 7, 1998. Page 35. Despite the disability in her left hand, Shiori Tomita, parentheses, right, and her sister, Kimiko, parentheses, left, rescued a child from drowning in the river.

SHIORI: (*Pause.*) That was... Trust you to remember it.

YORO: Shiori Tomita, parentheses, right.

SHIORI: Right, right... I was the “right.” You know, it’s that kind of thing that...

Yoro has clearly stopped listening to Shiori. Instead, he is concentrating on the snack wrapper, folding it into smaller and smaller pieces.

SHIORI: I mean, did they have to write it that way? Kimiko was the one who jumped in. I was just in a panic running around in circles. By the time I’d decided what to do, Kimiko was already in the river. Things were looking bad, so I went up on the bridge and threw a PVC plastic pipe thing in the river. That ended up hitting the kid. Worked out OK because Kimiko grabbed the pipe and with the kid in her arms, managed to get to shallower waters, where Kimiko could stand. As soon as she got to safety, Kimiko burst into tears... That’s when I waded into the river to get them both. So, that’s all I did. Hitting the kid with a plastic pipe and wading around in the shallows. Oh... (*Realizing that Yoro is not listening to a word she is saying.*) You know, in the end, it would have been better if I hadn’t gone in the river at the last minute. It would have been better if I hadn’t helped at all. That way, I wouldn’t have got my clothes wet and I could have explained things properly to all the adults.

Right, Yoro?

YORO/SHIORI: (*Together:*) R-i-g-h-t.

SHIORI: What’s that anyway? What are you making?

YORO: *Sfincione.*

SHIORI: (*Confused.*) *Sfin...*?

YORO: I get off pretty lightly on some things. There are things I can’t do as well as others. There are things I can’t do, but there are things I *can* do. There are things I can do that other people think I can’t do. And sometimes I pretend that I can’t do them. Usually, it’s better that way.

SHIORI: (*Even more confused.*) Sorry, what are we talking about?

Yoro hands the completed “sfincione” to Shiori.

YORO: *Sfincione.*

SHIORI: *Sfincione...*

Yoro stands up and walks out of the room to go and help Terunobu. Shiori is left by herself. Her eyes are glued to the sfincione made out of snack wrappers.

SHIORI: (To herself.) What on earth is *sfincione*?

As Shiori is about to look up the meaning of sfincione on the computer, the door flies open. Kimiko walks in still tangled up with Isayama. Kimiko pushes Isayama inside and slams the door. Both of them are breathing heavily. Isayama is making a gagging sound.

SHIORI: Eh? Are you alright? Pocari, drink some Pocari.

ISAYAMA: No, enough... I'm bloated.

SHIORI: What?

ISAYAMA: (Gagging.) Bloated.

SHIORI: Right.

The office is silent apart from the sound of Kimiko and Isayama breathing heavily.

SHIORI: So, I um, need to discuss something with Kimiko... Are you done with the air conditioner?

ISAYAMA: All done.

KIMIKO: Not yet.

SHIORI: Eh?

ISAYAMA: All done.

KIMIKO: Not yet.

SHIORI: Eh? Which is it?

KIMIKO: Not yet. He's barely looked at it.

ISAYAMA: It's all done. Come on, give me a break.

SHIORI: If the pro says he's all done, then he's all done. What do you mean he's barely looked at it?

KIMIKO: The guy hasn't lifted a finger.

ISAYAMA: (To Shiori.) Look, I'm all done. Try it. Turn the air conditioner on and see for yourself.

Shiori fiddles with the remote control and presses the on button. Isayama holds his breath.

ISAYAMA: Come on, come on, come on.

Kimiko and Isayama hold their breath. With a dull grinding sound the air conditioner starts to whirr.

ISAYAMA: There it is!

KIMIKO: Argggh.

ISAYAMA: So, I'll be off then.

KIMIKO: You're staying here.

ISAYAMA: (*To Shiori.*) Please, can you open the door for me?

Kimiko stands in front of the door, blocking Isayama's exit.

KIMIKO: I'll tell.

ISAYAMA: I'll tell.

Kimiko is at a loss for words.

ISAYAMA: (*Realizing he has a hold over Kimiko.*) I'm guessing that you don't want me to tell. That you wanted me to stab...

KIMIKO: (*Cutting Isayama off mid-sentence by putting a hand over his mouth.*)
Argggghh.

SHIORI: Kimiko. Stop messing around, we need to talk. Just let the electrics guy go home. (*Kimiko doesn't respond.*) Look, I know he's important to you. You can introduce me properly another time. OK?

KIMIKO: What?

SHIORI: He's your boyfriend, right?

KIMIKO: No.

SHIORI: Oh, he isn't?

KIMIKO: Ah... (*Realizing an opportunity.*) He is.

SHIORI: Eh? Which is it?

KIMIKO: He is my boyfriend.

ISAYAMA: Hang on a minute.

KIMIKO: This is my boyfriend. He's an electrician.

SHIORI: Oh, right. Well, nice to meet you.

With a puzzled expression Isayama makes a slight bow.

SHIORI: So, I appreciate you taking care of my sister. But I really need to speak to her, so can we do this another time?

ISAYAMA: Yes, of course.

KIMIKO: Hold it. If it's something important, you can tell the both of us.

SHIORI: Why?

KIMIKO: (*Thinking on her feet.*) Because he's important to me...isn't he?

SHIORI: What? You're already at that stage? He's going to be taking over the business?

ISAYAMA: What? Take over? No, no way.

SHIORI: (*Exasperated.*) Kimiko, please... Today, I need...

ISAYAMA: (*Cutting Shiori off mid-sentence.*) That's right. Please excuse me. (*To Shiori.*) Could you get the door for me?

KIMIKO: (*To Isayama.*) You're staying here. (*To Shiori.*) What have we got to talk about?

SHIORI: We have everything to talk about? What's your plan for this place?

KIMIKO: (*Pause.*) Um...because of what's going on...there's nothing I can do at the moment.

ISAYAMA: Um, the door...

SHIORI: If that's your attitude, Naya is definitely going under.

KIMIKO: I'm trying my best to make sure that doesn't happen.

SHIORI: You know, when managers say, "I'm trying my best," it basically means "no comment."

KIMIKO: It's easy for you to say that, but right now we have nobody to sell to. Tell me what I'm supposed to say.

SHIORI: You could say you want to change the factory setup, say we can package ourselves and sell online. Or start selling products to individual buyers.

KIMIKO: All impossible. You mean we have to get new machinery? Where's that money going to come from?

SHIORI: We could downsize a bit. Sell what we can and borrow the shortfall. Invest a little.

KIMIKO: I'll think about it.

SHIORI: You don't think at all. That's why we are in this mess. (*Kimiko does not speak.*) I know it's hard, but you have to keep up with the times. The world is changing and it won't wait for you.

KIMIKO: I'm doing all I can to protect this place.

SHIORI: And I'm saying, simply protecting it is not enough.

KIMIKO: Sis, thank you. The latest order has been a lifesaver. But we haven't dealt directly with a ramen shop chain before. They have no clue about the market price for bonito, they ask us to suggest new blends for the broth and other stuff completely

outside of what we do. They ask for samples and other incomprehensible things and tell us to pay for shipping. Look, to be blunt, I can't handle customers who don't understand the way we do things at Naya.

SHIORI: Kimiko, customers are not the enemy. They are our partners.

KIMIKO: Partners?

SHIORI: Our products have got to be a win for both sides. Both have to see that and learn from it. It's good to develop new perspectives, right? That's fun isn't it? Learning new ways to do things. You shouldn't be scared of it. Much better to try and enjoy it.

Kimiko does not speak.

ISAYAMA: She's right.

SHIORI: You're still here?

ISAYAMA: Um, Yes.

SHIORI: You should have said.

ISAYAMA: (*Sarcastically.*) Well, I didn't think you'd forget about me in such a short time.

SHIORI: Sorry.

ISAYAMA: I was thinking, "Wow, she's really letting it all out, even though I'm right here."

SHIORI: I said I was sorry.

ISAYAMA: (*To Shiori.*) You are right, though. I get it. I'm kind of dizzy.

SHIORI: (*Confused.*) What?

ISAYAMA: I get dizzy when I'm close to someone who is so right. I get it. This person (*referring to Kimiko*) wants to give it all up.

KIMIKO: What...?

ISAYAMA: You should just come out with it. Say that you can't take it anymore and want to quit.

SHIORI: (*Beat.*) Is that how you feel?

KIMIKO: No, not at all. (*To Isayama.*) Don't put words in my mouth.

SHIORI: Kimiko, do you actually...seriously want to ruin Naya?

Kimiko isn't sure how to respond to Shiori's question.

ISAYAMA: Um, you know...let me put it this way.

SHIORI: This has nothing to do with you.

ISAYAMA: It doesn't...but I just want to say. (*To Shiori.*) You know, you're clearly more motivated to work things out. I don't know the ins and outs of the business, but you should take care of the management. Then, Kimiko, why don't you just quit? Pure and simple.

Kimiko looks downcast.

SHIORI: That's shoddy.

ISAYAMA: Eh?

SHIORI: You're a shoddy boyfriend. Just get out of here, will you?

ISAYAMA: Yes, but the door...

SHIORI: Oh pleeeease, enooouugghhh.

Shiori stands up and drags Isayama toward the door. She shoves him out before Kimiko can stop her.

KIMIKO: Ah.

SHIORI: Sorry. But please, I want to hear what you are really thinking. What do you want to do?

KIMIKO: (*Pause.*) Do you think...?

SHIORI: (*Cutting Kimiko off mid-sentence.*) It's not what I think. I'm asking you. What do you want to do? If you don't like it and want to give it all up, then do. You don't have to carry on.

KIMIKO: He's right.

SHIORI: What?

KIMIKO: Like being dazzled by the sun.

SHIORI: What? We're not talking about the sun.

A pause in the stalemate between Shiori and Kimiko. The door, which should have been closed, slowly opens. Isayama fearfully pokes his head through the door.

ISAYAMA: Um, sorry, it's just...my jacket. The one hanging over there...

Isayama remains in the doorway, afraid to enter the room. He peers through the door gesturing to Shiori to bring his jacket to him.

SHIORI: You...you've got a nerve coming back here.

At that moment, Terunobu and Yoro return. They are both wearing masks. Yoro's mask is extremely small. Terunobu shoves Isayama inside the room.

ISAYAMA: What the...?

TERUNOBU: Came back to me. This guy's name. It's Isayama.

ISAYAMA: Eh...? Eh...?

TERUNOBU: (Playfully.) Isayama, Isayama, the goat-house-guy.

Terunobu sits Isayama down in a chair.

KIMIKO: Isayama.

ISAYAMA: (Pause and then a weak laugh.) Yes.

TERUNOBU: (Taking mask off.) Kimiko, check sheet.

YORO: Check sheet. (Going to take the sheet off Terunobu.)

TERUNOBU: Sorry, sorry.

Filing the check sheets at the end of the day seems to be Yoro's job. The receipt holder he uses to organize the sheets has a stand and an upright needle. Yoro stabs the sheet with the needle with a look of satisfaction on his face.

KIMIKO: Thanks.

TERUNOBU: It's a small world, isn't it? Isayama and Kimiko knowing each other.

Ah, Yoro, you can take the mask off now. You only need it when meeting people from outside, to protect against...you know. But hey, for now it's, you know. So, Kimiko, tell me seriously, are you dating this guy?

KIMIKO: (Ignoring the question.) Isayama.

ISAYAMA: Yes.

KIMIKO: You're wrong thinking my sister is motivated to work things out. Whether she's motivated or not, she's just good at everything.

ISAYAMA: (Pause.) Right.

TERUNOBU: Ah.

SHIORI: What's this? Bitching?

KIMIKO: I don't know.

SHIORI: You don't know?

KIMIKO: I don't know. Oh, and I'm not sure if you realized. My sister has a disability in her left hand. Pretty amazing, hey? She's been amazing forever. She went through senior high school and then at university did some volunteering abroad. She came back, started working at a huge electrics company, bought an apartment, got married, had an affair, got divorced, and now she's back. Pretty amazing, hey?

ISAYAMA: Amazing.

KIMIKO: Get this. She's great at computers. She's always got Mother's Day sorted. She'll order a fancy cake from a fancy shop—you know, one you usually have to wait hours in line for and then organize a delivery...chilled. That cheesecake thing, you know. The one you defrost slowly in the fridge and then eat it half-frozen. Amazing, hey?

ISAYAMA: Amazing.

KIMIKO: And she always does it with a smile on her face. Amazing, hey?

ISAYAMA: Amazing.

KIMIKO: And (*pointing sharply at Shiori*) a man magnet!

ISAYAMA: A-ma-zing.

SHIORI: What is up with you?

KIMIKO: I doubt you would get it.

SHIORI: What wouldn't I get?

KIMIKO: The relief. The whole world has shut down, Naya has shut down. It's OK to take a break from the daily grind and do nothing for a while. I was enjoying the peace. But you, sis, you started this factory back up again...cracking the whip.

SHIORI: (*Not quite understanding what Kimiko is trying to say, Shiori lets out a sigh.*) You didn't want me to?

KIMIKO: Not so much that I didn't want you to...

SHIORI: You wanted to take a break? (*Kimiko doesn't respond.*) I just don't get it.

A long pause before Isayama ends the silence.

ISAYAMA: Um...

SHIORI: I told you, it's none of your business.

ISAYAMA: I know, it's just...I like rainy days.

SHIORI: Oh, give me strength!

YORO: I like them, too.

ISAYAMA: Right? You think to yourself, "It's raining, so I can't go out, even if I

wanted to." And that's it. It's easier staying at home when you know everyone else is at home. A typhoon is even better.

SHIORI: (Beat.) And?

ISAYAMA: And it seems to me that, right now, we are living through one long rainy day.

SHIORI: You're that lazy? So laid back about the situation?

ISAYAMA: Well, yes. Your head knows that you are in a tough spot. But don't you feel warm and fuzzy inside thinking that everyone is at home?

Kimiko doesn't respond.

TERUNOBU: Bit thoughtless, isn't it?

ISAYAMA: Yes. It's thoughtless.

TERUNOBU: (Beat.) Right.

ISAYAMA: Yeah, so...what do you think?

KIMIKO: About what?

ISAYAMA: Am I close?

Kimiko neither agrees or disagrees. The room is silent.

SHIORI: Just so irresponsible. You're an employer. You have to think about Terunobu, Yoro, and the others. If you aren't going to try and work things out, then who is? You don't have the luxury to sit at home like everyone else. You have to use your head, use your body, and work work work to the end. It's a huge mistake to think people would sympathize with you: "Oh you poor thing, there's nothing you can do."

ISAYAMA: (Beat.) It's exhausting.

SHIORI: What's up with you? Getting up in other people's business?

TERUNOBU: OK, OK, OK, OK. (To Shiori.) What's gotten into you all of a sudden?

Shiori doesn't respond.

TERUNOBU: (To Isayama.) And Isayama, I know you and Kimiko are an item, but you know, this is still someone else's house.

ISAYAMA: (Slightly taken aback.) Um, yeah, but... Right, I'm sorry.

TERUNOBU: And Shiori, there's no need to be so harsh.

SHIORI: I'm just saying it as I see it.

TERUNOBU: Right, well... (*Offering Shiori a chair.*) Come on, let's all sit down. Something to drink?

SHIORI: I'm fine.

TERUNOBU: Right... Here we are... So, Kimiko, you're having a hard time?

Kimiko doesn't respond.

TERUNOBU: If you're struggling, don't grind yourself down. How about leaving things to Shiori?

SHIORI: Nobu.

TERUNOBU: I want to support Kimiko as much as I can. But I don't want to see her struggling to do something she doesn't want to do.

KIMIKO: It's not that I don't want to do it...

TERUNOBU: Right. But you know, without Naya, we're going to be in trouble. I will be. Yoro, too. I've got a mortgage to pay off. And if Yoro has nowhere to work, he'll have to go to Sunflower Heights.

SHIORI: You know about Sunflower Heights?

TERUNOBU: Yeah, I went with Yoro to chat with the social worker.

SHIORI: Ah, right. Thank you.

TERUNOBU: As long as Naya is up and running, we are good with whatever. If you wanted to run the place together, that would make sense now that Shiori is back. You can support each other. In these times and all, right?

SHIORI: That's not going to work.

TERUNOBU: Why not?

SHIORI: Because...

KIMIKO: (*Cutting Shiori off mid-sentence.*) Because then I'll just be "Shiori's sister."

TERUNOBU: What?

KIMIKO: It always happens any time we do something together. I'm always "Shiori's sister." Isn't that right, sis?

Shiori does not respond.

TERUNOBU: What are you talking about? Of course you will be. I mean, you're both sisters.

KIMIKO: You don't get it. "Kimiko" always ends up being just "Shiori's sister."

TERUNOBU: Eh? What's the difference?

KIMIKO: I know what you're planning. You'll pull all kinds of strings to make it look like it's me running things. When it's actually you. You're not going to put your name on the joint venture, are you?

SHIORI: If you don't want my help, then just do things properly.

KIMIKO: You think it's that easy? I can't do everything brilliantly like you.

SHIORI: Kimiko.

KIMIKO: Just quit it with all these high hopes. Please. You probably won't understand this, but sometimes, just doing "normal" things can be a challenge for "normal" people. And there's someone like that sitting right here.

SHIORI: This is going nowhere. Look, you're not like me. For one thing, you've got a working left hand...

KIMIKO: (*Cutting Shiori off mid-sentence.*) I know. I get it. But what am I supposed to say? That's not fair, Shiori. Sometimes I wish... (*Kimiko swallows her words.*)

SHIORI: What? Go on, go on, what do you wish?

KIMIKO: It's nothing.

SHIORI: You wish you were the one born with a physical disability? You wish you didn't have a sister with a disability?

KIMIKO: I never... (*Kimiko is left dumbfounded and unable to respond. She lowers her head.*)

SHIORI: Yes, life is so much easier for me, isn't it? Lower expectations. I can do half the work and get double the credit.

KIMIKO: You really are spiteful, sometimes. You have no idea how hard I have to work to be your sister.

Yoro stands up, puts his hands in the pockets of his pants and slowly turns them inside out, one at a time.

ISAYAMA: Eh?

TERUNOBU: Ah, Yoro. Relax, relax, It's fine.

SHIORI: Ah, Yoro. Sorry, sorry. It's not a fight. We're not fighting.

Kimiko remains silent. Terunobu tries to sit Yoro down, but he stubbornly refuses. Shiori lets out a big sigh.

SHIORI: OK. You don't want my help. But you don't want to give up on Naya, either.

So what do we do?

KIMIKO: I don't know. I don't even know myself. That's why I wanted to get stabbed and end it all.

SHIORI: What?

KIMIKO: (*Looking in Isayama's direction.*) If it wasn't for this useless jackass.

ISAYAMA: What...?

SHIORI: What do you mean you want to get stabbed? With what?

ISAYAMA: Ah, um...

YORO: I could do it?

ISAYAMA: Eh?

YORO: I'll do it.

Yoro picks up the Full Pull All Purpose weed puller that was lying on the floor nearby. He points it in Kimiko's direction.

ISAYAMA: Hang on...

TERUNOBU: Yoro, wait. What are you doing?

YORO: If I do it, no one's in the wrong.

ISAYAMA: Ah.

TERUNOBU: What?

YORO: (*Yoro strides directly toward Kimiko holding the weed puller.*) Kimiko. I'll stab you. I'm good at it.

SHIORI: Yoro, what are you doing? What is going on? What on earth is that? This is freaking me out.

Shiori grabs a stunned Kimiko and they run around the room trying to escape.

SHIORI: Hey, come on, get a grip on yourself, Kimiko.

YORO: I'll do it properly.

SHIORI: Wait, wait. You're scaring me. What is that? What does that do? Somebody tell me what that is.

ISAYAMA: It's a Full Pull All Purpose.

SHIORI: No idea.

ISAYAMA: The name.

SHIORI: The name? Stabbing with that? Stabbing Kimiko with that? Why?

YORO: Kimiko, stop.

SHIORI: What?

YORO: Stop.

SHIORI: Please, just, stop this. Nobu, do something.

TERUNOBU: Yoro, stop. It's dangerous. Isayama, Isayama, grab that weed puller.

ISAYAMA: (Looking at Yoro.) Yoro, you know...

Terunobu tries to grab the weed puller from Yoro but he is surprisingly strong and doesn't let go. The weed puller is swung around and everyone dives for cover. There is an uproar in the office with Shiori shrieking and Terunobu shouting.

KIMIKO: Owwww.

Kimiko is slower than the others to dive out of harm's way and the weed puller grazes her arm. Kimiko clutches her left arm and crouches down on the floor. Yoro heads slowly toward Kimiko. The room holds its breath.

YORO: Does it hurt?

KIMIKO: It hurts.

YORO: Enough?

Shiori rushes to intervene and puts her arms around Kimiko.

SHIORI: Stop it.

Yoro waits for Kimiko's response. Kimiko's gaze doesn't stray from Yoro.

KIMIKO: Enough.

Yoro puts the weed puller down with a crash that echoes around the office. The light fades. Shiori pulls Kimiko up and they leave the office together. Terunobu and Isayama follow them out. Yoro turns off the light switch in the office and leaves. Darkness.

Gradually, moonlight fills the room. The only sound is the crackling of wood from the smoking baskets downstairs. The empty office is bathed in moonlight. Nice music plays to seemingly signal the start of a pleasant interlude, before the scene is suddenly interrupted. Someone walks into the room and gropes for the light switch. Light floods

the room, revealing Terunobu followed by Isayama.

ISAYAMA: Ah, found it. Here it is.

Isayama has returned to pick up his jacket.

TERUNOBU: Whoa. It's hot as hell in here.

Terunobu switches on the air conditioner. He picks up a fan that was lying close by and fans the air.

ISAYAMA: Sorry to keep you here when you were about to go home.

TERUNOBU: No problem, no problem. Thanks for taking the two of them in your car. I couldn't leave the smokers halfway through.

ISAYAMA: Don't mention it.

TERUNOBU: You must have cut it pretty fine getting to the clinic?

ISAYAMA: Not so much cutting it fine—the place was closed. Shiori forced them to open up for us.

TERUNOBU: Seriously?

ISAYAMA: She tried to prise it open.

TERUNOBU: Prise what?

ISAYAMA: The door.

TERUNOBU: Whoa.

ISAYAMA: The nurse said, "The doctor's gone home." But Shiori wasn't having that. She said, "His Audi is still in the parking lot. He's in there." There wasn't much they could do after that.

TERUNOBU: I feel bad for the doctor. So, how is Kimiko?

ISAYAMA: Just a flesh wound. No big deal. But you know, because she was stabbed with that thing, they had to clean out the dirt. Went over and over it with a brush and running water.

TERUNOBU: That's gotta really hurt. (*He shudders.*)

ISAYAMA: (*Nodding.*) Bawled her eyes out.

TERUNOBU: I bet. Poor Kimiko.

ISAYAMA: Shiori was bawling.

TERUNOBU: Eh?

ISAYAMA: Not your average sisters.

TERUNOBU: (*Picking up the Full Pull All Purpose.*) They are both pretty extreme personalities.

ISAYAMA: You can say that again.

TERUNOBU: It's not the standard way of having an argument.

ISAYAMA: It seems they can't live with or without each other.

TERUNOBU: You know, the answer is just to marry the first person you meet, have kids, then get a loan to build a house.

ISAYAMA: That's a pretty out-there way to look at it.

TERUNOBU: If things are too easy, your mind finds problems for you. Much better to have to work day after day and not think about anything else. You're a similar type, aren't you?

ISAYAMA: Eh?

TERUNOBU: Can tell by your face you're thinking too much.

ISAYAMA: (*Unconsciously touching his face.*) Eh?

TERUNOBU: If you want to work properly, you have to have some kind of reason, some kind of anchor.

ISAYAMA: Anchor?

TERUNOBU: Yeah. You need some kind of weight to anchor you down. Max out with loans and the horsepower kicks in.

ISAYAMA: Yeah...I don't really like that idea. Get more "horsepower"? That's a bit old-fashioned.

TERUNOBU: (*Teasing.*) You're an idiot sometimes, Isayama. You can't actually see purpose or motivation with your own eyes, can you? But you can see a loan. The more you work, the smaller the numbers get. It's the best.

ISAYAMA: (*Thinking for a moment.*) Then, what happens once you've paid the loan off?

TERUNOBU: Idiot! You get another loan! It's the way the world works.

ISAYAMA: Right...

TERUNOBU: These are pearls of wisdom to keep you sane at work.

ISAYAMA: To stay sane? (*Pause.*) So, um, is Yoro actually...

TERUNOBU: Yoro's gone home.

ISAYAMA: Right, right. It's nothing. Forget I mentioned it.

TERUNOBU: Yoro is pretty talented. Talented at living. (*Pause.*) Call it a day?

ISAYAMA: Sure.

TERUNOBU: Hey, has the air con died?

ISAYAMA: (*Looking up at the air conditioner unit.*) Ahhh...

As Isayama is looking at the unit, Terunobu sneaks out of the door and slams it shut, leaving Isayama stuck in the office.

ISAYAMA: No, no, no. Not again.

Isayama has tears in his eyes. Terunobu opens the door and comes back into the room.

TERUNOBU: Haha. Got you good. You nearly wet yourself. (*Prodding Isayama in the ribs.*) Biff, boff, bam.

ISAYAMA: Cut it...

TERUNOBU: Turn off the air con.

Isayama looks at Terunobu suspiciously, worried he will play another prank with the door.

TERUNOBU: Don't worry. I'll keep it open. Quickly.

Isayama stretches as far as he can to grab the remote control off the table. After pressing the off button, he quickly plants himself back at Terunobu's side.

TERUNOBU: So, what's the deal with you?

ISAYAMA: Eh? Ah. If we start that conversation...we'll be here all night.

TERUNOBU: Right, whatever. Anyway, you get your ass down to the field and coach some softball.

ISAYAMA: Say what?

The two continue their conversation as they leave the room. Darkness. Time passes, accompanied by nice music that leads to the pleasant interlude suggested earlier.

A few days later. Around lunchtime in the office. Kimiko and Shiori are looking up at the air conditioner (in exactly the same places as Isayama and Terunobu before the blackout). Kimiko's arm is bandaged. Isayama's voice can be heard from outside.

ISAYAMA: OK, try it now.

Kimiko presses the button. A dull grinding sound and the unit begins to whirr.

KIMIKO/SHIORI: (Together.) Oh!

ISAYAMA: (Entering the room.) Did it work?

KIMIKO: It works, it works. You're a lifesaver.

Terunobu enters the room with Yoro who is carrying a kitchen knife. Yoro sees Isayama and heads off to get some Pocari.

TERUNOBU: Oh, is it fixed?

SHIORI: He fixed it.

KIMIKO: How much does that come to? Can we get an invoice?

ISAYAMA: Oh, right. Hang on a minute. (*Reaching into his bag to find the invoice.*)

TERUNOBU: So, you're actually a real electrics guy?

SHIORI: Right. He's pretty loose with his personal information considering he's a sneak thief.

ISAYAMA: Stop it, will you? And I wasn't thieving. I was trespassing.

TERUNOBU: Much of a muchness. They're both pretty bad crimes.

KIMIKO: (*Looking at the invoice.*) Oh? This is pricey.

SHIORI: Let me see. Wow, that much?

ISAYAMA: Well, you know, I had to replace the entire outdoor unit.

SHIORI: Even though you came here as a thief?

ISAYAMA: That's got nothing to do with this. And I told you, I was trespassing.

TERUNOBU: Come on. You can give us a freebie, right?

ISAYAMA: A new outdoor unit for free? That's ridiculous.

TERUNOBU: You should be grateful we didn't haul your ass to the nearest police station.

SHIORI: (*Prodding Isayama with a calculator.*) How about this?

ISAYAMA: You have got to be kidding.

SHIORI: (*Pause.*) How about we smoke you in the baskets?

ISAYAMA: Huh?

SHIORI: Nobu, can we smoke a human in one of those baskets?

TERUNOBU: We can lop the head off and carve the body into quarters, and dip them in boiling water. Then strip the backbone and pick out all the small bones. Then we can smoke them. You know, after we smoke, we can add a mold to remove all the moisture. It'll take a few years, but eventually it'll become rock-hard. (*Pulling out a hardened fish from a basket to show the finished product.*) Like this. So, yeah, you probably could smoke a human.

ISAYAMA: Huh?

KIMIKO: Who knew? Naya is well set up for the perfect crime.

TERUNOBU: Yoro, the smoking will be done soon.

YORO: Two hours, ten minutes.

ISAYAMA: Eh?

Yoro had slipped back into the room quietly. He slowly looks Isayama up and down.

YORO: Smoking would take two hours, ten minutes. Not so much fat on him. Be a high-quality product.

Yoro, carrying a kitchen knife in his left hand, offers Isayama a bottle of Pocari.

TERUNOBU: Oh.

KIMIKO: His last ever Pocari.

ISAYAMA: Eh? ...No, I...

Isayama pulls his hand back from the Pocari. Shiori holds up a calculator behind Yoro.

ISAYAMA: Fine, fine. Just go with that.

SHIORI: What, really? Nice one!

KIMIKO: Yoro, cancel the order for one smoked sneak thief.

YORO: Order canceled.

KIMIKO: Ah, let him have the Pocari.

YORO: Let him have it.

ISAYAMA: *(Taking the Pocari with some trepidation before getting ready to leave.)*

I've pretty much done all that work for free. A whole outdoor unit.

TERUNOBU: *(Standing in front of the air conditioner:) Ah, feel the breeze.*

SHIORI: Yoro, are the baskets ready?

YORO: Ready.

SHIORI: Right, let's go down. Thanks, Isayama.

Shiori puts on an apron, a pair of rubber boots, and prepares to go downstairs to the factory floor.

ISAYAMA: Just this once.

SHIORI: OK, OK. No more blackmailing from me.

ISAYAMA: Please. Cut me some slack over here.

Shiori slowly turns to face Isayama and pulls an ugly face.

ISAYAMA: Oh, come on.

SHIORI: Just kidding. If something else comes up, we'll give you a call. Full price.

ISAYAMA: Full price.

Shiori leaves the room, opening the door in her own distinctive way.

TERUNOBU: So, see you at softball tonight.

ISAYAMA: Um, yeah, about that...

TERUNOBU: You're coming. If you don't show up, I'll be straight round your house.

ISAYAMA: Seriously...

TERUNOBU: Yoro, come on, downstairs.

Terunobu opens the door in his distinctive way. Yoro follows Terunobu and is about to go through the door.

KIMIKO: Ah, Yoro. How were today's fish?

YORO: Bit too fresh, the meat might crack during the cook. Pretty small, too.

KIMIKO: Will you leave them overnight?

YORO: Leave them.

KIMIKO: Got it. Thanks.

Yoro opens the door in his own distinctive way. Only Kimiko and Isayama remain in the office. The room is suddenly quiet.

ISAYAMA: So, your arm... Is it OK?

KIMIKO: Ah, this? (*Clutching her arm from over the bandage.*) Actually, it's already healed.

ISAYAMA: Eh? So, why are you still...? Oh, are you trying to look cool? Like a teen with eighth-grader syndrome¹⁴ sealing her left arm by magic?

KIMIKO: No, no. Wouldn't do that even if I wanted to.

ISAYAMA: Right, so what is it?

KIMIKO: So, the cut actually healed pretty quickly and I had the bandage taken off after a couple of days. Then when I came to Naya, Yoro kept on asking me, “Where’s the bandage? Where’s the bandage?”

ISAYAMA: Yoro did?

KIMIKO: I first thought he felt some sense of responsibility and was worried about me. But I don’t think that’s the case.

ISAYAMA: Really?

KIMIKO: I think he just wants me to keep the bandage on, for some reason.

ISAYAMA: Eh? Why?

KIMIKO: I don’t really know. I guess that maybe it’s because he was the one who caused it and wants to kind of cling onto it.

ISAYAMA: Onto the injury?

KIMIKO: Not so much the injury... Perhaps the result?

ISAYAMA: Hmm...I don’t get it.

KIMIKO: Nor me. You never know how people really feel? And he’s started offering me snacks all the time.

ISAYAMA: What for?

KIMIKO: I really have no idea.

ISAYAMA: So, you’re going to have that bandage on for the rest of your life?

KIMIKO: I hope not. Yoro always has something he is obsessed about, which is the bandage at the moment. He’ll forget about it soon enough and move onto something else.

ISAYAMA: Right... You’re a good employer.

KIMIKO: In what way?

ISAYAMA: The fact you know your employees so well. That’s pretty amazing. Your sister doesn’t understand them the way you do, right?

KIMIKO: (Pause.) Well, she said she’ll be around for a bit.

ISAYAMA: So, in the end, you’re going to run things together?

KIMIKO: Eh?

ISAYAMA: Run the company as a joint venture with your sister.

KIMIKO: Hm, I don’t know.

ISAYAMA: You don’t know?

KIMIKO: I don’t know. When she’s around, it’s pretty hard-going for me. You know, if we were in the same class at school together, we’d definitely hang out in different groups.

ISAYAMA: I can understand that.

KIMIKO: But I've bought a car.

ISAYAMA: Huh? Why the "but"?

KIMIKO: A brand new one.

ISAYAMA: Why?

KIMIKO: It was Nobu. He told me to buy a car.

ISAYAMA: Eh...? You really shouldn't take that guy too seriously. He said something similar to me. The theory about the meaning of life and paying off a loan.

KIMIKO: Yeah. But if you have a car, you can store some blankets in there, a portable cooking stove, water, and some food, and then when things get tough, you've got a quick and easy way to run away.

ISAYAMA: You're setting up to run away?

KIMIKO: Well, if I'm all set up to run away, I don't feel tied down, and I can motivate myself a little longer.

ISAYAMA: Right...

KIMIKO: Also, thanks to someone who won't be named, my sister now knows that I'm not just unmotivated, but I can also be a pain in the ass. So, things have gotten a little easier.

ISAYAMA: Oh...that doesn't sound too healthy.

KIMIKO: I don't want to hear that coming from you.

ISAYAMA: But I'm doing it, you know. The softball coach thing.

KIMIKO: Oh?

ISAYAMA: Well, if I didn't, he said he'd come round my house.

KIMIKO: No thanks.

ISAYAMA: Right? But you know, actually, I don't hate it as much as I thought I would.

KIMIKO: Funny way to look at it.

ISAYAMA: Anyway, I've got to get going. (*Grabbing the Pocari and standing up.*) I'll take this with me.

KIMIKO: Ah, thanks. I'll sort out your payment soon.

ISAYAMA: Sure. Anytime. (*Walking toward the door.*) Let me know when you're going to run away. Do you have a destination in mind?

KIMIKO: Hmm...maybe Loch Ness.

ISAYAMA: (*Pulling the door handle.*) Loch Ness.

The door opens.

ISAYAMA: Ah! It opened! I opened it.

KIMIKO: Oh, good for you.

ISAYAMA: How come? Let me try it again. (*Closing the door, then trying to open it again. It won't open.*) That's strange. (*Rattling the door handle multiple times before it dawns on him.*) Loch Ness.

The door opens. Kimiko and Isayama's eyes meet. Isayama closes the door again. He tries to open the door without saying anything.

ISAYAMA: Hmm... (*Keeps trying but to no avail.*) Loch Ness.

The door opens. Kimiko and Isayama's eyes meet again.

ISAYAMA: You're kidding me. I'm...Loch Ness?

Isayama crouches down on the spot.

KIMIKO: Well, you know, everyone's different.

ISAYAMA: You know, this door gives me the creeps.

KIMIKO: Go on, go on, try it again, Loch Ness.

Kimiko closes the door.

ISAYAMA: Loch Ness.

The door swings open. Kimiko bursts out laughing.

KIMIKO: That's good, isn't it? You can come and go as you like. (*Patting Isayama on the shoulder.*)

ISAYAMA: I don't think I'll be back for a while.

KIMIKO: Thieving?

ISAYAMA: Trespassing.

KIMIKO: Much of a muchness.

The telephone rings.

KIMIKO: Ah.

ISAYAMA: Ah, OK, see you next time.

KIMIKO: Right. Next time.

ISAYAMA: Loch Ness.

KIMIKO: (*Stifling a laugh as she answers the phone.*) Tomita Shoten.

And so begins another day at Naya. Fade to black.

The End

1. Original title: *Ibishinai ai*. *Ibishinai* expresses a deep ingrained uncleanliness that would normally be kept out of public view. The reimagined English title alludes to the same concept with “No Filter.” *Ai* means love. The play is written in the Hata dialect of Kochi, a prefecture on Japan’s smallest main island of Shikoku. Kochi Prefecture has a strong reputation for seafood, and centuries-old methods of catching, boiling, and smoking are still prevalent. Naya is one such traditional factory, using “baskets” to boil and smoke the fish. The play is set during the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–21) and the factory has suffered as a direct result. While the characters allude to the pandemic throughout the play, it is never directly mentioned.
2. The character Yoro likely has neurodiversity, though this is never mentioned nor defined. Any performance of the play would have to consider the most appropriate way to cast and handle this role.
3. An invented product name for the weed puller. Called Gosotto Toreta NEO in the original.
4. Official product name: Pocari Sweat. A ubiquitous isotonic sports drink created by Otsuka Pharmaceutical to combat dehydration during Japan’s sweltering summers. The drink contains sodium chloride and potassium chloride (among other compounds), hence drawing Shiori’s comparison with sweat and tears. While well known across Japan, it is not a drink commonly offered to guests. It could be replaced by local variations (Gatorade in the United States or Lucozade in the UK, for example).
5. Approx. \$1.30.
6. Approx. \$80,000.
7. A neologism used to provoke a confused reaction from Shiori. The source text *mattaki* is not an invented word, but is suitably uncommon in Japanese to prompt confusion. As there is no comparable English equivalent, a word was invented.
8. In the original, the type of insect is not specified—Shiori compares Yoichi to a generic “insect” or “bug.” The introduction of “stick insect” was the translator’s choice to strengthen the imagery that follows.
9. A neologism to suggest an unpleasant sexual experience for a female and a self-centered act of gratification for a male. The original Japanese, *pekopeko*, is the character’s own onomatopoeia to describe that concept from her point of view. The English attempts to match the rhythmic sound and hint at the stick insect analogy.
10. A place name invented for the purposes of the play. Could be replaced by a local variation if required.
11. Ehime is the neighboring prefecture to Kochi, where the play is set.
12. An invented place name. Could be replaced by a local variation if required.
13. An invented place name. Could be replaced by a local variation if required.
14. Eighth-grader syndrome, or *chunibyo*, is a Japanese colloquial term describing early teens who have a strong desire to stand out, have elaborate delusions, and believe that they hold hidden knowledge or secret powers.