

# *Traces—on and on*

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Translated by Mari Boyd

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Source: Playtext Digital Archive (<https://playtextdigitalarchive.com>)

**Cast of Characters** (in order of appearance)

**MOTOAKI KUROSAWA**, witness

**TOSHIKAZU KIMATA**, independent cameraman

**TAKEO YOSHIKAWA**, fugitive

**YUKI**, as a child

**HIROYA OKI**, perpetrator

**SEIKO ORIDE**, mother of the victim

**EIKO SHIMIZU**, sister-in-law of Seiko

**SUMISUKE NISHIDA**, Mei's older brother

**SHUN YOSHIKAWA**, Takeo's common-law son

**MEI NISHIDA**, Takeo's common-law wife

**MISAO OKI**, Hiroya's wife

**YUKI ORIDE**, employee at a Korean barbecue restaurant

**LARA**, hostess at a Korean barbecue restaurant

**HANAKO YAMADA**, hostess at a Korean barbecue restaurant

**SEARCHERS**

**WORKER 1**

**WORKER 2**

**WORKER 3**

## Prologue: The Testimony of Motoaki Kurosawa, the Former Bartender

*The night of the storm is revived. Thunder roars through the darkness. Heavy rain continues. The wind howls.*

*The rain suddenly dies and a hush descends. The figure of Motoaki Kurosawa in a bartender's outfit emerges from the dark. One of Kurosawa's eyes is a dull white. Drying a glass, he faces an unidentified camera and starts to speak.*

**KUROSAWA:** Ahh, ah. If you're going to say that your life was derailed on that stormy night, count me in. I will never forget August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, ten years ago. It was a strange night. Looking back, I recall it was a terrible night from the very beginning. Knowing a storm was approaching, I opened the bar anyway, which was a mistake in the first place. Hours after opening, unsurprisingly, not a single customer had shown up. There I was, wiping a glass just as a bartender should, since I had nothing else to do.

*The wind howls and the windows creak loudly.*

The ceiling lights blinked uncertainly, the old TV screen only showed waves of distortion. The window by the counter was shaking hard enough to crack at any moment. At times like that, even an adult man feels afraid. Yet I couldn't decide to close the bar either. Around 9:00 pm, I was looking out the window and saw a man on the other side of the street.

*Lightning lights up a man walking toward the bar from afar. This businessman is Takeo Yoshikawa, 35 at that time, holding up a broken and flattened umbrella in the storm and tottering from side to side as he walks in the strong wind.*

This miserable-looking man, holding an utterly useless broken umbrella above his head and as wet as could be, came dragging himself along the river on the other side of the street. See that river with a bridge across it? That's Awahi River. I hear that because it winds, it often flooded during storms in the old days. On that night, the waters had risen right up to the bank edge. Walking by that swollen river, the man stopped suddenly midway across the bridge and looked down at the flow. I felt an unpleasant presentiment and, the next moment, the man was standing on top of the bridge railing.

*Takeo is standing on top of the bridge railing and gazing down at the river. Kurosawa rushes out and shouts at him.*

“Hey you! What the hell are you doing?!” Without thinking, I’d dashed out of the bar. Isn’t that the right thing to do? I absolutely will not be witness to a suicide. “Get off at once! Stop it!” At my shouts, the man slowly looked my way. And at that moment, what do you think he did?

*Takeo descends from the railing and gradually approaches Kurosawa.*

**TAKEO:** You still open?

*Takeo takes a seat across from Kurosawa.*

**KUROSAWA:** He actually came into the bar. I was thrown by that. Frankly, a soaking wet customer is not very welcome, but under those circumstances I couldn’t refuse.

**TAKEO:** Draft beer.

**KUROSAWA:** The man sat at the counter, quiet. I passed him a glass of beer in silence, but in my consternation, I’d poured the beer into a whiskey glass. He took an hour to drink that one glassful; then he left without much ado into the storm. Concerned that he might try the same thing, I stood on guard outside for a short time, but nothing like that occurred. To tell the truth, once he was out of sight, the rest was...you know. As the storm showed no sign of abating, I finally decided to close up for the night. (*A beat.*) So far it’s just the prologue. Excuse me for taking so long. It’s from here that the incident begins.

*From afar, a nine-year-old boy, Yuki Oride, wearing a bright yellow poncho raincoat, comes trotting this way.*

As soon as I got back to the bar after the man left, a little boy came walking along the embankment. Alone...Of course, it’s not as if I didn’t question if he was all right in this storm or why he was alone so late at night. But I’d been shaken up by the earlier event and, wanting to close up as soon as possible, I went back to the counter to tidy up...

*A car comes rushing by and brakes suddenly—immediately the sound of a terrific crash follows. A small shadow resembling the little boy slowly dances into the air in*

*Kurosawa's line of vision.*

The next moment I looked out of the window, the boy was flying through the air. The shadow faded beyond the Awahi River. I froze and, unable to move, I watched from the counter window. After a while, another man came by.

*Also a businessman, Hiroya Oki, age 28, slides along the wet street and runs into the bar. In a half-crazed manner, he looks around.*

That must have been the driver of the car. He seemed upset and was running up and down the river. Of course, he must have been searching for what he had hit. Unable to see the man's face very well in the dark, I stayed glued to the window.

**HIROYA:** Ugh.

*Holding his head, Hiroya crouches down as he looks around. A powerful ray of light emanates from above. Hiroya stiffens and looks up at the sky.*

**KUROSAWA:** Lightning lit up the sky momentarily, and the man raised his face, so I opened my eyes as much as possible. As a witness, it was the one thing I could do. That was the last time this eye of mine saw anything.

*A strong wind blows in, and the windowpane cracks loudly. Kurosawa's hands go to his eye as he falls over.*

Aaaaargh!

*Screaming, Kurosawa writhes in agony. Hearing his cries, Hiroya comes to his senses, goes back to where he was, and drives off.*

*The cameraman is training his video camera on Kurosawa who has fallen down on the ground while covering his eye. Eventually, Kurosawa sits up and starts to speak to the cameraman, Toshikazu Kimata, again.*

If you're going to say that your life was derailed on that stormy night, count me in. A fragment of broken glass destroyed one eye. The man I saw vanished, and the boy

who was thrown into the river was also never found. Anyone could guess the fate of the boy who fell into the muddy current of the Awahi River, overflowing with rain as it was. The police, the boy's bereaved family, and newspaper reporters came many times to inquire about my story. There was little I could do, and that sad hit-and-run case of nine-year-old Yuki Oride was slowly forgotten as the flooded river water receded. But just as my eye has turned and stayed a dull white, and just as this bar continues to stand here, the traces of that night must remain somewhere.

*Three persons walk in from the dark. Hiroya, Takeo, and a haggard-looking middle-aged woman.*

The mother who lost her son, the driver who fled, the man who stood on the bridge railing—what are they doing now? (*Touching his blind eye.*) I will continue to recall the events of that night on and on in this vague, half-sighted way.

*Kimata shifts the angle of his camera away from Kurosawa. Perpetrator, victim, witness, and fugitive cross paths then separate in different directions.*

## **Title: Traces—on and on**

### **#1 Seiko**

*At Seiko's house.*

*Seiko Oride and her sister-in-law Eiko Shimizu are sitting formally, Japanese-style, facing each other. Holding his camera, Kimata sits next to Seiko. Eiko presses a handkerchief to her face, shoulders shaking.*

**EIKO:** I couldn't hear what you said...

**SEIKO:** Half a year.

**EIKO:** Half a year...?

**SEIKO:** Uh-huh.

**EIKO:** What is...?

**SEIKO:** My life.

**EIKO:** Your life...?

**SEIKO:** Half a year.

**EIKO:** Half a year...?

**SEIKO:** Left...(*Eiko sobs.*) Eiko, please don't cry.

**EIKO:** You never told me.

**SEIKO:** I'm sorry.

**EIKO:** Why didn't you tell me? You know my occupation. I could've been of some help to you.

**SEIKO:** There was a lot going on.

**EIKO:** You mean the divorce? That was a whole year ago. Were you hiding your illness even then?

**SEIKO:** No...

**EIKO:** You're horrid, Seiko. Even if my brother isn't around, you and I are family. Aren't we?

**SEIKO:** I didn't realize I was sick.

**EIKO:** Do you mean you found out recently?

**SEIKO:** Uh-huh.

**EIKO:** What does half a year mean?

**SEIKO:** Um.

**EIKO:** And who is this person sitting with us?

**KIMATA:** Ah...

**EIKO:** A doctor?

**SEIKO:** This person is, uh...

**EIKO:** Please help my sister.

**SEIKO:** He's not a doctor.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) Your lover?

**SEIKO:** Of course not.

**EIKO:** Have you told my brother? About this?

**SEIKO:** Not yet.

**EIKO:** He won't be able to take it. Losing Yuki and now you.

**SEIKO:** About that.

**EIKO:** I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said such an unbecoming thing. You must never give up on life.

**SEIKO:** It's not that...

**EIKO:** Check into our hospital. We can get you the best doctors. My hubby will work

all his contacts to get you the best.

**SEIKO:** Um, thank you for that, Eiko.

**EIKO:** So, who is this person?

**SEIKO:** Eiko, you have to pay attention. (*Pause.*) He's a cameraman.

**KIMATA:** My name is Kimata.

**SEIKO:** He's a freelance journalist who's doing research on Yuki.

**EIKO:** What do you mean by "on Yuki"?

**SEIKO:** On what happened that night.

## #2 Takeo

*At the dry-cleaning factory where Takeo works.*

**SUMISUKE:** Takeo, Takeo.

*Wearing a worker's white apron, Takeo is pulling a cleaning cart with linen in it when heavyset Sumisuke Nishida, in a business suit and clutching documents in one hand, enters with a swaying gait.*

**SUMISUKE:** Takeo, you free this evening? I'll take you out to din-dins.

**TAKEO:** Why?

**SUMISUKE:** We're friends, aren't we?

**TAKEO:** The water stinks.

**SUMISUKE:** Eh?

**TAKEO:** The second drum's gotta be all moldy. When we wash clothes in it, there's the smell of rotting water.

**SUMISUKE:** Tonight's the night for Korean barbecue.

**TAKEO:** The one we went to last time? No way.

**SUMISUKE:** Oh, come on. Let's go.

**TAKEO:** It's super expensive and the food sucks. "Authentic Korean cuisine"! Hah, what an awesome lie! The staff are all Chinese, yeah?

**SUMISUKE:** That's true.

**TAKEO:** It's a sex joint fronting as a restaurant. (*Sumisuke gives a cute shrug.*) Oh no.

**SUMISUKE:** We're going, right?

**TAKEO:** I don't want to have to take shit from your kid sister.

**SUMISUKE:** Why do we men get into trouble for having dinner at a barbecue joint?

Give it straight to her. "Don't interfere with what your husband does."

**TAKEO:** Which girl are you sweet on?

*Also wearing a white apron and carrying an empty basket, Shun Yoshikawa enters with office staffer Mei Nishida. She heads off to another work area while Shun sniffs the sheets in Takeo's cart and sorts some into his own basket.*

**SUMISUKE:** Lara.

**TAKEO:** Huh?

**SUMISUKE:** Lara.

**TAKEO:** Is that someone's name? (*To Shun.*) What?

**SHUN:** The second load has to be redone.

**TAKEO:** Told you so.

**SUMISUKE:** Takeo.

**TAKEO:** It's drum mold, after all.

**SUMISUKE:** Come on, Take-boy.

**TAKEO:** Don't call me that.

**SUMISUKE:** Let's go Take-boy. (*Waves the papers in his hand.*)

**SHUN:** What's that?

**SUMISUKE:** Huh? Our Homepage.

**TAKEO:** Homepage?

**SUMISUKE:** It's our HP design. C'mon, Take-boy.

**TAKEO:** You're actually going to make one?

**SUMISUKE:** We've always had one, you know.

**TAKEO:** Yeah? (*Takes the sheet of paper and looks at it.*)

**SHUN:** Before, it was all filled with writing, but we're making a new attractive one.

**SUMISUKE:** Yep, the flyers are brand new, too. Shun, you wanna join us for barbecue?

**SHUN:** Barbecue?

**SUMISUKE:** Red meat.

**TAKEO:** He can't go.

**SUMISUKE and SHUN:** Why not?

**TAKEO:** He's just a kid.

**SHUN:** Who says kids can't go to barbecue joints?

**TAKEO:** That's not what I meant.

**SUMISUKE:** Shun's an adult already. Hey, how about just you and me go?

*(Shun doesn't reply.)* What now, pulling a face like that!

**TAKEO:** Wait a minute, Sumi, what's this about?

**SHUN:** Is it some weird place?

**SUMISUKE:** March to "Authentic Korean cuisine"! President's orders.

**TAKEO:** Wait, tell me what this is about.

**SUMISUKE:** As I said, it's the HP.

**TAKEO:** My pic's on it.

**SUMISUKE:** Where?

**TAKEO:** Here.

**SUMISUKE:** Oh, this? It's been up all along.

**TAKEO:** Why'd you put up pics without permission?

**SUMISUKE:** It's just a workplace thing.

**SHUN:** Am I in it?

**SUMISUKE:** No chance.

**TAKEO:** This is unacceptable. Get rid of it. Delete.

**SUMISUKE:** A tiny little thing...

**TAKEO:** Delete it!

*Takeo takes the cart and walks off with it.*

**SUMISUKE:** *(To Shun.)* You can barely see it, you know.

*Shun shrugs and gets back to work. Sumisuke chases Shun around chanting "bar-be-cue, bar-be-cue."*

### #3 Eiko

*At Seiko's house again.*

**EIKO:** Seiko, that is a bit...

**SEIKO:** This is the last chance I have.

**EIKO:** Seiko.

**SEIKO:** I want to look one more time.

**EIKO:** I can understand how you feel, but really...

**SEIKO:** There's not much left that can be done, but this person will help me.

**KIMATA:** If things go well, we may get this shown on TV. If so, new information may come in. Already, I've had a friend who runs a video site put up what I researched, and viewer response has been good.

**EIKO:** Are you trying to exploit my sister-in-law?

**KIMATA:** That is certainly not my intention.

**EIKO:** This lady is my older sister-in-law. She and my older brother have divorced, but she is forever family...And, Yuki is my nephew.

**KIMATA:** Of course, I understand that. However—

**EIKO:** (*Cutting in.*) It's true that my brother is the lowest of the low, tormenting my sister-in-law with his affairs and such. But for him, that was a way to escape the pain of loss. Oh my goodness, is this fodder for you? For the TV show?

**KIMATA:** It hasn't got as far as TV yet.

**EIKO:** If you want to shoot, go ahead. Go on. (*Turns the camera forcibly onto Seiko.*) This married couple has spent years in terrible sorrow. To go back and dig it all up again when she is nearing her end is terrible. A desperate mother with only half a year to live searches frantically for her lost son? What a tearjerker of a story for a talk show. (*Seiko remains silent.*) I'm sorry.

**SEIKO:** Never mind. I just really want to try again to find him.

**EIKO:** Seiko, I know you don't want to hear this, but please listen. Yuki, Yuki...

*(Seiko does not speak.)* I don't think he's in our world anymore.

**SEIKO:** I thought of that, too. So, I tried to think that meeting him half a year later in the afterworld would be all right. But the heart doesn't move like that. (*Eiko sobs.*) I can't give up on him. To be here, so far away from that town, and just wait for my time to come. (*Eiko doesn't speak.*) That's why I want to go back there. If nothing happens, then I'll stay until the half-year is up.

**EIKO:** What are you going to do?

**KIMATA:** We can stay over there for a while. I've found accommodations and then I can rent a car.

**EIKO:** I see. That's how it'll be.

**KIMATA:** Excuse me?

**EIKO:** (*Drying her eyes bravely.*) I will go with you, Seiko.

**KIMATA:** What?

**EIKO:** Yes, I will accompany you.

**KIMATA:** You will?

**SEIKO:** Uh, Eiko?

**EIKO:** That was the purpose of your sharing with me, right? As a professional nurse, I can be of assistance to you.

**SEIKO:** Uh-uh, I just wanted you to tell your brother for me.

**EIKO:** Oh, no, no. I will compensate for my brother's misdeeds. I will attend to you as long as you wish.

**SEIKO:** Eiko.

**EIKO:** That's all right then.

**KIMATA:** Wait a moment—

**EIKO:** When do we leave? I have to apply for time off. My son can stay with his father's parents for a while. Have you already arranged for a rental car?

*Eiko swiftly gets prepared for the journey. Seiko and Kimata exchange looks and follow her.*

#### #4 Oki

*At the bullet train section in Nagoya Station. Hiroya Oki stands abstracted with a luggage cart by him. His pregnant wife, Misao Oki, comes running up, holding numerous carrier bags.*

**MISAO:** Sorry to keep you waiting! (*Hiroya doesn't answer.*) Hiroya.

**HIROYA:** (*Taken by surprise.*) Uh, ooh.

**MISAO:** What's up with you? It's so hot, hot, hot. (*Passes the bags to him.*)

**HIROYA:** What were you doing? The train'll be here in a minute.

**MISAO:** Sorry. I was being choosey about the boxed lunches and forgot the time. But here it is! This is the famous local Okazaki Kakukyu miso pork cutlet bowl.

**HIROYA:** Is it good?

**MISAO:** You bet. Whenever I go back to my parents, I always get them this. It's so popular that it sells out quickly. I had to check out three shops to get them. Here's one for you.

**HIROYA:** I'm not going with you.

**MISAO:** I know. Eat it at home. You're going to pull another all-nighter, aren't you?

**HIROYA:** Yeah, too bad, huh.

**MISAO:** I've got carriage eight.

*The couple pushes the cart.*

**MISAO:** What was on your mind?

**HIROYA:** Huh?

**MISAO:** Just now, you were in a total daze.

**HIROYA:** I was recalling what happened when I first came here.

**MISAO:** Oh, so that's what it was.

**HIROYA:** Eh?

**MISAO:** You were in a dark cloud.

**HIROYA:** Yeah?

**MISAO:** Like, “I’m working in a sweatshop, and I’ve reached my limit.”

**HIROYA:** Was my mood that transparent?

**MISAO:** Remember how tough it was? You had to work every single day without any sleep or days off. Then you suddenly got sent to Nagoya. Remember? In the beginning, you had nightmares and would startle from sleep in the middle of the night. During the day, you were panicky and acting nervously all the time. (*Hiroya remains silent.*) You were probably having a nervous breakdown.

**HIROYA:** Coming to Nagoya cured me.

**MISAO:** Maybe this place suited your temperament. We’ve ended up staying here for almost ten years. If we’d stayed in Tokyo, I might have been pulled down into a depression, too.

**HIROYA:** Not you.

**MISAO:** Yep, you’re right. My daily bread is too good to pass up.

**HIROYA:** Don’t overeat at your parents’ place.

**MISAO:** Never you mind. Now’s the time I can and should overeat.

**HIROYA:** Here’s the train.

*An announcement for the bullet train to Tokyo is broadcasted. Misao gives her husband a ticket.*

**MISAO:** Here you go.

**HIROYA:** Huh?

**MISAO:** For the week after next. I’ll be waiting.

**HIROYA:** You’ve bought a ticket already?

**MISAO:** The Bon Festival<sup>1</sup> is coming up, so I got your ticket now rather than later. I wouldn’t want you to use the excuse that with your exam prep you missed out on

purchasing a ticket. Not acceptable.

**HIROYA:** I wouldn't forget to get mine.

**MISAO:** You don't really want to go back to Tokyo?

**HIROYA:** That's not true.

**MISAO:** Not to worry, everything has changed since then.

**HIROYA:** What do you mean by that?

**MISAO:** You're not working in a sweatshop, are you?

**HIROYA:** Nope.

**MISAO:** You have to come home. I really want you to be there, body and soul.

**HIROYA:** (*A beat.*) I know.

**MISAO:** My parents are really looking forward to this.

**HIROYA:** I said, I know.

**MISAO:** You don't have to come any further. The stairs are right there.

**HIROYA:** Take care now.

**MISAO:** Go for it, "prospective CPA"!<sup>2</sup> When the exams are over, we can relax.

**HIROYA:** Uh-huh.

**MISAO:** Next time we meet, you'll be a real accountant.

**HIROYA:** Hold it, the results are announced in November.

**MISAO:** I know. It's a matter of how you feel. The feeling. (*Putting her hand to her belly.*) I won't let baby out until you come to Tokyo. If you don't come, no baby!

**HIROYA:** I'm coming back. Don't worry.

*Misao waves and walks along the platform.*

## #5 Agashi

*Sumisuke and Takeo walk shoulder to shoulder.*

**TAKEO:** Where is this place?

**SUMISUKE:** Ahhhh.

**TAKEO:** Let's not go.

**SUMISUKE:** We're going.

*Behind them come Shun and then Mei, who is swinging one of her arms in circles.*

*They are heading together to the Korean barbecue joint.*

**MEI:** Bar-be-cue, bar-be-cue.

**SUMISUKE:** Korean barbecue.

**MEI:** Kobe beef bar-be-cue.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Sharply.*) It ain't Kobe beef, I tell you.

**MEI:** Then what kind of meat?

**SHUN:** Like honeycomb tripe?

**MEI:** The tripe kind of barbecue?

**SUMISUKE:** (*Sharply.*) Don't go on about it.

**MEI:** Bar-be-cue, bar-be-cue.

**SHUN:** Korean barbecue.

**TAKEO:** Mei, the food isn't all that good, so don't get so excited.

**MEI:** As long as it's meat, it doesn't matter what kind.

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**SUMISUKE:** Awww, I wanted to do this buddy-buddy with Takeo.

**TAKEO:** You could come on your own.

**SUMISUKE:** If I did that, it'd be too much like I'm just pursuing flesh.

**TAKEO:** You're prejudiced against yourself.

**MEI:** You can stuff yourself today.

**SHUN:** Yay.

**SUMISUKE:** Don't you talk like that.

**MEI:** Well, today's the pre-celebration, isn't it?

**SUMISUKE:** Of what? If it's crowded, you go home.

**MEI:** Huh? A table for four is the norm.

*Sumisuke and the others enter “Agashi, Girls Barbecue.” Happy music is playing loudly. The shrill voices of the hostesses cry out, “Welcome—.” Dancing up to Sumisuke is Yuki Oride, wearing a vest and bow tie.*

**YUKI:** (*Sing-song.*) With our supreme hospitality and superior grade meat, your heart and body will feel *masshiso*.<sup>3</sup> This is authentic Korean barbecue, Agashi. Welcome.

**MEI:** Say that again.

**YUKI:** (*Sing-song.*) With our supreme hospitality and superior grade meat, your heart and body will feel *masshiso*. This is authentic Korean barbecue, Agashi. Welcome.

**MEI:** Again.

**YUKI:** (*Sing-song.*) With our supreme hospitality and...(*Not willing to bother anymore.*) How many are in your group?

**SUMISUKE:** Four.

**YUKI:** Would you like to name someone? (*Sumisuke behaves furtively.*) No need for that. Please come this way—

*Guided by Yuki, the foursome sits at a table. Right away two hostesses, Lara and Hanako Yamada, come by. Hanako wears a super-short Chinese dress while Lara has on a cheap chima jeogori.<sup>4</sup> Her chest area is stuffed with ball-like padding.*

**LARA:** (*In broken Japanese.*) I am Lara. Good evening.

**HANAKO:** I'm Hanako Yamada.

**TAKEO:** There isn't a shred of consistency to this place.

**HANAKO:** We're using our real names, so.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Waving.*) Lara sweetie.

**LARA:** (*Waving back.*) Ooh, so round.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Happily.*) Memory of form.

**MEI:** Lara, you're, you're quite something.

**LARA:** (*Holding her breasts.*) They are both real—

**MEI:** Oh, she sounds as if she's used to being asked.

**LARA:** Both real.

**SUMISUKE:** They are real.

**TAKEO:** See, it's this kind of joint. You OK with that?

**MEI:** I just want to eat some meat.

**HANAKO:** What would you like to drink?

**SHUN:** Can I drink, too?

**TAKEO:** Stay with the cheap ones.

**MEI:** Your lucky day.

*Yuki returns with the menu.*

**YUKI:** Here's the menu. Is this your first visit to our restaurant?

**SUMISUKE:** We've been here before.

**MEI:** (*Hitting Takeo.*) You've been here before?

**TAKEO:** We didn't know what it was like.

**YUKI:** (*Speaking very fast and fluently.*) Allow me to talk you through the menu. Our top recommendations are these three courses: "Eat de Meat," "Kiss de Meat," and "Touch de Marbled Meat." We also have many single dishes you can order.

**SUMISUKE:** I prefer “Touch de...”

**MEI:** Shun, what do you want to have? Go ahead and order lots of single dishes.

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**HANAKO:** Are you two a couple?

**MEI:** Oh, do we look like a couple—?

**HANAKO:** You do, you do.

**YUKI:** You’re just made for each other.

**LARA:** Sure do—

**MEI:** Too bad, all wrong. He’s my son.

**YUKI:** Whoa, no kidding.

**LARA:** They do, they do.

**MEI:** Our son’s birthday is coming up, so my big bro is treating us.

**YUKI:** Ohh—so kind! Your big bro’s so generous.

**TAKEO:** So generous.

**LARA:** So big, big belly.

**SUMISUKE:** Well, well.

**MEI:** Whatever you say, my bro is the president of his company.

**HANAKO:** Wow, that’s fantastic!

**YUKI:** That’s cool—Big Bro, you’re a cool guy—

**LARA:** Mr. President.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Quickly distributing his flyers.*) Let my company take care of your laundry and dry cleaning.

**YUKI:** Wow, the flyers are cool, too—

**SUMISUKE:** This is still the old version.

**YUKI:** I like the sepia tone.

**TAKEO:** (*Testily.*) Don’t hand out those flyers.

**SUMISUKE:** Next time, I’ll bring the new ones.

**YUKI:** No problem at all. Just bring a whole bunch of them. We’ll display them in the restaurant.

**SUMISUKE:** So how about letting the president spoil you all, eh?

**SHUN:** Yay.

**YUKI:** Right on. Let him spoil you. Let him spoil you all the way!

**#6 Shun**

*Some time has passed. Takeo and Mei are so full they can barely move. Attended by Lara, Sumisuke is taking care of the bill.*

**YUKI:** The total is ¥67,200, sir.

**SUMISUKE:** Huh?

**YUKI:** ¥67,200.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Sinks into thought.*) What?!

**YUKI:** We accept credit cards.

**LARA:** Soo goood. Thank you.

**TAKEO:** Ah—Thanks.

**MEI:** Big Bro, you are the man. Shun, Mom and Dad'll go out ahead.

*Takeo and Mei stand up heavily. As they exit the restaurant, they pat Sumisuke on the shoulder. He is trying to pay the bill.*

*Shun is still talking with Hanako.*

**SHUN:** Is that your real name?

**HANAKO:** Uh?

**SHUN:** Hanako Yamada.

**HANAKO:** Is it strange?

**SHUN:** It doesn't suit you.

**HANAKO:** Really? I like it myself.

**SHUN:** Isn't it a fake name?

**HANAKO:** Are you really twenty-four? (*Shun doesn't answer.*) It's OK. Don't look embarrassed. You're twenty-four, I'm Hanako Yamada, and Lara's boobs are real. What's necessary for you is what is true.

**SHUN:** Gotcha.

**YUKI:** I'm twenty.

**HANAKO:** That's a lie.

**YUKI:** It's true. Lara, one of your boobs is sagging.

**LARA:** Uh-uh. (*She corrects the imbalance.*)

**SHUN:** Shun Yoshikawa.

**HANAKO:** Uh?

**SHUN:** That's my name...

**HANAKO:** Shun, like “in season”?

**SHUN:** What do you mean?

**HANAKO:** Which Japanese character for “shun” is your name...?

**SHUN:** Uh...

**HANAKO:** Shun, like “agility” shun?

**SHUN:** Uh...

**HANAKO:** Or like, “a moment” shun?

**SHUN:** That one!

**HANAKO:** Yay!

**SHUN:** Do you think it fits me?

**HANAKO:** Yeah, I do.

*Shun smiles.*

**YUKI:** Excuse me, sir, this is your copy of the receipt for your card payment. Please come again. *Kamsahamnida.*<sup>5</sup>

**SUMISUKE:** Lara, sweetie, I'll phone you.

*Lara gives Sumisuke a big, bold kiss. With their lips pressed together, Sumisuke gives her a huge hug.*

**YUKI:** (*Pushing them out of the restaurant.*) *Kamsahamnida*—

*Sumisuke carries Lara outside. Shun stands up.*

**HANAKO:** Come again.

**SHUN:** Bye for now. I'll come again.

**HANAKO:** Really?

**YUKI:** If you're coming again, bring the big president with you, OK?

**HANAKO:** Don't push it.

**SHUN:** (*Handing her a flyer for the laundry.*) You can visit our place if you like?

**HANAKO:** Me?

**SHUN:** Yeah, I'm always there. So, drop by.

**HANAKO:** (*Laughing.*) I'll think about it.

**MEI:** (*From outside.*) Shun, what's keeping you?

**SHUN:** See you.

**YUKI:** *Kamsahamnida*—

*Shun leaves.*

**YUKI:** (*Laughing.*) Are you going to go on a date with a laundry worker?

**HANAKO:** Who says I'm going?

**YUKI:** (*Looking at his watch.*) Those customers held out long.

*When Shun exited, Lara returned. Both of her breasts are now sagging dangerously.*

**YUKI:** Lara, Lara!

**LARA:** Uh-uh. (*Starts fixing her attire.*)

**HANAKO:** Yuki, can we close up, now?

**YUKI:** Yeah.

## #7 The Testimony of Seiko Orida, the Mother of the Victim

*Alone, Seiko sits down on a chair. She begins to talk quietly to a camera placed somewhere nearby.*

**SEIKO:** For ten years after I left that town by the Awahi, I lived in many places. Iwate, Tottori, Fukuoka, Seattle...The last was Kyoto. To my husband, a bank employee, branch transfers were a part of life, and the transfer orders were always very abrupt. One time, three days after the official notice arrived, we were already living in another place.

*The sound of rain. Thunder can be heard in the distance.*

The night of that storm was the same. We were sorting out our luggage in preparation for a move to Iwate up north the next day. Though we had started in the morning, the work was still not finished. After Yuki went to bed, irritated by the cloying humidity brought by the rain, my husband and I started arguing in the living room. I thought I understood my husband's job, but I was probably exhausted by the way my life was being made to shift this way and that by some impenetrable

force. Additionally, there were difficulties in our marital relationship. Our son must have overheard us shouting at each other among the piles of cardboard boxes. Why hadn't we noticed that Yuki was there?

Past 23:00, I went to Yuki's room to find one of the packed boxes opened and the yellow poncho removed. The bulging futon still retained the hollowed-out shape of the boy who had slept in it.

*Little boy Yuki in a bright yellow poncho is walking.*

From this point, I can only give what I imagined from pursuing the traces of my boy. Along the path by the river was a park called Oyama Park with a small tunnel. Imitating sci-fi anime, he used to call it a time tunnel. Maybe, he was trying to reach it. Farther on in the park lived a friendly granny type of neighbor, whom he might have wanted to say a last goodbye to. Maybe he went to a friend's house on the other side of the river. Or maybe he was wandering around without any sense of purpose. What we knew was not where Yuki had gone, but why he had left.

*When Seiko turns around, Yuki vanishes, and instead the shadows of children dancing in the sky become visible. Armed with flashlights gleaming into the dark, men in black raincoats search for the boy.*

We were alerted that a hit-and-run incident had occurred along the Awahi and that the victim, a child, had fallen into the river. As the characteristics of the child resembled those of Yuki, a search at the river was conducted in the storm throughout the night. We, the parents, were slow in noticing Yuki's absence; also, the witness, a bar owner, said his call to the police was delayed due to an injury he sustained during the storm. The police informed us that if the boy had fallen into the river, which had risen and was flowing extremely fast by that time, it would not be surprising if he was already washed considerably farther downstream. But I could not fathom why that boy should be mine. Surely, he must be someone else's...

**SEARCHER:** Hey, look at this.

*One of the searchers comes up, clutching something. When the others turn their flashlights on it, a thoroughly muddied yellow poncho is revealed.*

**SEIKO:** The search continued the next day and the day after that. However, Yuki was not found; rain washed away the criminal's traces, and eventually, the search was terminated.

*One by one, the search party members turn off their flashlights and exit.*

On the same day, some witness reports came in. A father-son pair checked into a hospital not very far away. The son was about the same age as Yuki. Another boy looking like Yuki was spotted at a completely different place. But reviewing the circumstances of the accident, we thought that the hypothesis of his being washed down the river seemed the most convincing. My husband delayed his transfer for a month, but by that time he seemed to have accepted that Yuki was no longer alive. Unable to give up, I stayed in town alone. But as my grief peaked, in inverse proportion the concern of the townspeople diminished. Feeling left behind, I became withdrawn, and half a year later, moved out. There must have been more I could have done. In hindsight, I regret so many things.

*The last member of the search party exits. In his place, Kimata captures Seiko with his camera.*

During the ten years since I left this town by the Awahi, I lived in many places, and now I have returned. My son has already been declared legally dead. I now suffer from cancer and have little time left to live. Without doing anything, I will be able to meet him in the next world. But I cannot help returning.

## #8 Temporary Living

*In a narrow six-mat<sup>6</sup> room, Kimata, Seiko, and Eiko stand astounded. Eiko is carrying a thin futon. Next to them Kurosawa, the landlord, stands with more futon. This room is the upstairs of the bar.*

**EIKO:** Are we going to live here?

**KIMATA:** It's merely a temporary arrangement.

**EIKO:** The three of us in this tiny room?

**KUROSAWA:** I apologize for the size. But you can do as you please up here. I've

only used this room for storage, so it is a bit dusty.

**EIKO:** What's wrong with the hotel we were at?

**KIMATA:** If we continued to stay there, we'd run out of cash in no time.

**EIKO:** I don't mind paying.

**SEIKO:** This is the place we want.

**KUROSAWA:** As for a fridge and such, please use what there is in the bar. Closing time is 12:00 midnight, so it may be a bit noisy sometimes. But as not many customers come here, you don't have much to worry about. As you can tell, this area is not heavily populated.

**EIKO:** Look at that. Isn't it an insect? What kind?

**KIMATA:** (*Checking.*) It's all right. It's dead.

**EIKO:** What's all right?

**KUROSAWA:** There's no bath, so you'll have to go to the public baths. You can use my bicycle to get there. (*Hands over the bike key.*)

**KIMATA:** Thank you. For a while longer, we will still have the rental car.

**KUROSAWA:** Ah, that's right.

**SEIKO:** Thank you, Mr. Kurosawa, for all your trouble.

**KUROSAWA:** Not at all. This is about all I can do for you. I've been feeling regret ever since that incident. If I hadn't had that injury, I could have called the police much earlier, you know. If there is anything I can do, please let me know.

**SEIKO:** Thank you so much.

**EIKO:** If I may, could you get rid of the insect?

**KIMATA:** (*While restraining her, he addresses the bar owner.*) Would it be all right if we added this location as our headquarters in the flyers we've prepared? We'd like locals to drop by if they have any information to share.

**KUROSAWA:** Go ahead.

**KIMATA:** And on the dedicated homepage I'm making now?

**KUROSAWA:** I see, then could you add the Bar Kurosawa logo and a sample of the menu?

**KIMATA:** We're not the GuruNavi.<sup>7</sup>

**KUROSAWA:** Oh.

**EIKO:** May I open this window?

**KUROSAWA:** Go ahead.

**EIKO:** See, it's stuffy inside. Seiko, please come to the window and get some fresh air.

*Eiko opens the window, and Seiko looks out.*

**KUROSAWA:** So, how's it going? Is your investigation making progress?

**KIMATA:** We are doing some legwork, talking with the policemen from that time, but there are no new clues so far.

**KUROSAWA:** Having them take a look at the documentary you are shooting would help. You did a good job shooting me—

**KIMATA:** You see, the search has only just started.

**KUROSAWA:** Well, in that case, if there's anything else you need, let me know.

**EIKO:** What about the futon?

**KUROSAWA:** Hm.

**EIKO:** We are one futon set short.

**KUROSAWA:** This is all I have.

**EIKO:** You must be joking.

**KUROSAWA:** I'm sorry.

**EIKO:** How are we to sleep if there are only two sets of futon? Seiko has a serious illness. (*Glares at Kimata.*)

**KIMATA:** (*Low sigh.*) I will sleep in the car.

**EIKO:** (*Satisfied.*) Thank you.

**KUROSAWA:** Well then, I'll head back to the bar. Oh, come downstairs and have a drink.

**KIMATA:** That's a good idea.

**KUROSAWA:** You can have a discount!

*Kurosawa finishes laying the bedding and leaves the room.*

**EIKO:** What a state! First thing tomorrow morning is you-know-what.

**KIMATA:** Flyer distribution?

**EIKO:** No, cleaning of course. We have to clean this room. Seiko, how are you feeling?

**SEIKO:** It's really dark outside.

**EIKO:** Huh?

**SEIKO:** On another look now, I see this area doesn't have any streetlights. You can't see the other side of the river at all.

**KIMATA:** That guy took a risk opening a bar in this area.

**EIKO:** The land here is cheap.

**SEIKO:** The storm made the area even darker for sure.

**KIMATA:** Has the scenery changed from ten years ago?

**SEIKO:** I wonder. I walked around a lot, but my memories are only fragmented.

**EIKO:** It was too painful for you to remember. That's how it is.

*Seiko shuts the window and exits the room.*

**EIKO:** Where are you going?

**SEIKO:** Downstairs. (*Exits.*)

**EIKO:** To the restroom? Could she have gone down for a drink?

**KIMATA:** She wouldn't do that.

**EIKO:** My sister-in-law is surprisingly tough. I couldn't take lodgings right by the site of an accident.

**KIMATA:** She is prepared for the worst.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) But she seems to have gotten better.

**KIMATA:** Yes, she has a mission to carry out.

**EIKO:** She must have always wanted to do this search, I bet.

*Kurosawa comes back upstairs.*

**KUROSAWA:** Excuse me.

**EIKO:** Did you find more futon?

**KUROSAWA:** No, your sister has left the premises. Do you think she will be all right?

**KIMATA:** What?

**KUROSAWA:** She said she'd take a walk.

**KIMATA:** Now?

**EIKO:** Really, Seiko shouldn't go out at this time of night.

*Kimata and Eiko go downstairs, followed by Kurosawa.*

**KUROSAWA:** Should I have stopped her?

**#9 Mei**

*At the Yoshikawa apartment.*

*Takeo is lying down on a futon, and Mei is next to him with his feet on her knees, trimming his toenails. Next door, Shun's voice talking happily on the phone can be heard.*

**SHUN:** Yeah? Is that real? Hahaha, the movie you were talking about last time?

**MEI:** Hanako Yamada?

**TAKEO:** Huh?

**MEI:** She's on the phone.

**TAKEO:** Um, I suppose.

**MEI:** This is no good. You give a teenager a cell phone, and right away he's chatting with girls.

**TAKEO:** You gave it to him. You tell him. Yikes, don't nick me like that.

**MEI:** Isn't it inconvenient not to have a cell phone? Granted it's the type that doesn't have an internet connection. (*Shun's laughter is heard in the background.*) You bitch, Hanako. Give him back to me.

**TAKEO:** At age twenty, he should have a girlfriend.

**MEI:** (*Crisply.*) He's only nineteen. Well, so what're we going to do about his birthday?

**TAKEO:** We did already.

**MEI:** Huh? You said next month.

**TAKEO:** Right you are. Ha, I thought you might've forgotten.

**MEI:** That time, I wanted to eat some beef so I went along with you. So?

**TAKEO:** Nothing.

**MEI:** That's not good enough. This year, you must give him something proper. You've hardly ever given him anything.

**TAKEO:** Remember that game player I got him.

**MEI:** Game player? That old DS? That's a dinosaur. And if I remember correctly, you won that at our family year-end bingo party. This year, let's travel.

**TAKEO:** I don't have that kind of money.

**MEI:** For ¥30,000, we could go to a nearby hot spring, you know.

**TAKEO:** It's no use going on a family trip now.

**MEI:** I've already thought of something. Guess.

**TAKEO:** A cell phone, isn't it?

**MEI:** That one's ancient. A much better present.

*Shun's laughter rises.*

**TAKEO:** Hey, don't stay on the phone too long. Who do you think is paying the bill?

*Shun lowers his voice so his parents can't hear him.*

**MEI:** Something much, much better.

**TAKEO:** What?

**MEI:** I won't tell you yet.

**TAKEO:** Oh, come on. Ouch! D'ya realize you've been nibbling away at the cuticles and more with that frigging nail cutter?

**MEI:** Look forward to it. Last one.

**TAKEO:** Yeow!

**MEI:** Game over for today.

**SHUN:** (*Showing his face.*) Are you two doing OK?

*Mei finishes trimming Takeo's toenails, deals Takeo a sumo wrestling backward pivot throw, and exits to dispose of the clippings. Takeo is left painfully stroking his toenails.*

## #10 Flyer Distribution

**KIMATA:** Please take one, please.

*Seiko, Kimata, and Eiko are distributing flyers in the street. They proactively talk to people who show interest, and if some copies get tossed away, they pick them up and redistribute.*

**SEIKO:** I am searching for my lost son. Please help me.

*Seiko wipes the perspiration from her brow and actively raises her voice as she hands out the flyers. Eiko assists unwillingly and follows Seiko around even as she rubs her calves swollen from wearing high heels.*

*Misao Oki comes passing by with her carrier bags.*

**KIMATA:** Please accept a flyer.

*Just as she is about to take Kimata's flyer, another passerby whips it away. Noting this*

*display of interest, Kimata calls out to that passerby and walks along with him/her. Misao's cell phone rings, and she takes it out of her eco bag.*

**MISAO:** Hallo? Uh-huh, it's OK. I'm shopping for dinner. How'd it go? Did you do well? The examination. Hallo?

*At a different spot on the stage, Hiroya Oki is calling from Nagoya Station.*

**HIROYA:** Um.

**MISAO:** Huh?

**HIROYA:** I did well, I think.

**MISAO:** Really?

**HIROYA:** Probably. I was able to tackle all the questions.

**MISAO:** Oh, that's great.

**HIROYA:** (*Tempering his sense of accomplishment with a deep breath.*) Maybe, just maybe, I have a chance.

**MISAO:** It was worth studying for 16 hours a day.

**HIROYA:** Ah, now I feel more relaxed.

**MISAO:** You really tried hard. I'm so glad, so glad for you. (*She wipes her tears.*)

**HIROYA:** Are you crying?

**MISAO:** Of course not.

**HIROYA:** Remember, this doesn't mean that I've passed yet.

**MISAO:** Um, but for now, you can do no more. Thank you for your hard work.

**HIROYA:** Thank you for your support.

**MISAO:** (*Bashful.*) Hey, you never talk like that in broad daylight.

**HIROYA:** No, I just said what should be said on this occasion. I'm coming home.

**MISAO:** (*Wipes her nose and takes a breath.*) Ahh...What day?

**HIROYA:** Tomorrow, I'll be back.

**MISAO:** Tomorrow? That's too early.

**HIROYA:** Not to worry. I want to see how you two are doing.

**MISAO:** Of course. Do come home.

**HIROYA:** Right.

*From their respective positions on stage, they start to walk.*

**MISAO:** Oh, on the way back, could you buy some *uiro*<sup>8</sup> bars?

**HIROYA:** *Uiro?*

**MISAO:** The citron-flavored kind. My dad wants to have some.

*They exit together in good cheer.*

## #11 Lara's Wedding

*The Agashi restaurant before opening hour.*

*Yuki, Lara, and Hanako are inside preparing to open the restaurant. Yuki is on the phone and taking memos. Beside him, messing with a ball in each hand, Lara jumps about in great excitement, listening to Yuki's phone conversation.*

**YUKI:** Yes. Yes, yes. When next week, when...

**LARA:** Next week?!

**YUKI:** *(Skillfully dodging Lara's erratic movements.)* Yes, August 3<sup>rd</sup>. *(Lara jumps about.)* Mr. Taniguchi.

**LARA:** Taniguchi!

**HANAKO:** *(Reprimanding Lara.)* Lara.

**LARA:** Taniguchi next week. Taniguchi next week. *(Hugging Hanako in joy, she speaks in Chinese.)* I'm going to get married, too.

*Hanako strokes Lara's head without saying anything.*

*Shun enters the restaurant.*

**HANAKO:** Oh.

*Spying Hanako, Shun happily raises his hand, approaches, and gives her a dry-cleaned outfit.*

**HANAKO:** Is it ready already?

**SHUN:** Yeah. *(Bows lightly to Lara.)*

*Lara makes the peace sign and then, out of sheer happiness, throws the balls to him.*

**HANAKO:** Thanks. That was fast. I'll get my pocketbook.

**SHUN:** Uh, don't bother.

**HANAKO:** I want to pay you.

**SHUN:** I did yours after work, so it doesn't count.

**HANAKO:** Thanks. Lara, why don't you get your *jeogori* dry-cleaned? It smells sweaty, you know.

**LARA:** Hmm. (*Sniffing her underarm.*) Uh-huh.

**HANAKO:** Have you lost your sense of smell?

*Lara chases after Shun to make him sniff her underarm.*

**HANAKO:** (*Laughing.*) Quit that.

**YUKI:** (*Watching Hanako and the others from the corner of his eye.*) Yes, sir, I understand. Thank you. Goodbye.

**LARA:** Taniguchi, next week?

**YUKI:** Yeah. (*Lara hugs him. Then to Shun.*) Hey, you over there.

**SHUN:** Ah, me. Yeah.

**YUKI:** Don't come here before opening time, OK? If you're going to pay for services, then that's a different story. But we're in business here.

**SHUN:** I'm sorry.

**HANAKO:** He delivered the dry cleaning, that's all.

**YUKI:** Don't make her your lady companion just for one dress. If you've finished your business, please leave—Mr. President!

**SUMISUKE:** Excuse me a moment.

*Sumisuke brings a bundle of flyers into the restaurant. Yuki immediately puts on his professional smile; Lara stuffs the balls into the front of her dress.*

**SUMISUKE:** Sorry for coming before opening time.

**YUKI:** What's up, what's up, what's up? The President is accompanying his nephew. You should have told me earlier, please.

**SUMISUKE:** What's this? Shun? (*Sharply.*) Is that you?

**SHUN:** Um.

**YUKI:** Then you weren't together. Never mind. As you are both here together, light your morning fire and feel the burn!

**SUMISUKE:** Before opening hour?

**YUKI:** Of course. We have deep insight into our clients' desires.

**SUMISUKE:** Ah, then, the new flyers are ready. (*Holds out a bundle.*)

**YUKI:** Wow! Hey! Fantastic! More than I expected...(*Slightly annoyed.*)

**SUMISUKE:** Sorry, are you sure it's not a burden on you?

**YUKI:** Not at all. We'll put the old and the new side by side!

**LARA:** President! (*Running up to give him a hug.*)

**SUMISUKE:** Lara!

**LARA:** President! (*In her excitement, she tosses the flyers about like tissues.*)

**SUMISUKE:** Ah, ah, ah.

*Hanako looks at the flyers as she picks them up.*

**HANAKO:** Oh, that's Shun.

**SHUN:** Wow, you noticed. (*Looks closely at the flyer.*)

**HANAKO:** You're working.

**SHUN:** Dad didn't want his photo taken, so I got in instead.

**HANAKO:** You look real cool.

**SUMISUKE:** Lara's all worked up.

**YUKI:** (*Picking up the flyers.*) Excuse me. This one's very excited today.

**SUMISUKE:** Huh? What's this? What's happened?

**YUKI:** No, it's nothing at all.

**LARA:** Marriage!

**SUMISUKE:** What?

**YUKI:** That's enough.

**LARA:** I'm getting married next week, to Taniguchi!

**YUKI:** Lara, you don't need to tell customers that kind of thing.

**SUMISUKE:** Marriage.

**LARA:** Uh-huh.

**SUMISUKE:** Who is?

**LARA:** Me, Lara.

*Sumisuke looks questioningly at Yuki.*

**YUKI:** Jeez, I don't know. This one may be deluded.

**LARA:** I'm getting married!

**SHUN:** Is that true?

**HANAKO:** Yeah...

**SHUN:** Congrats.

**SUMISUKE:** What's he like? This guy.

**LARA:** Huh?

**SUMISUKE:** Is he a real cool dude?

**LARA:** Dunno.

**SUMISUKE:** Dunno?! That's impossible. You're going to get married, and you're thrilled about it. "Dunno" is impossible.

**YUKI:** But you know, Mr. President. Just between you and me, there are, you know, so many loveless marriages in the world. (*Sumisuke doesn't respond.*) How to explain? Marriages that are simply a method for keeping alive. A piece of paper. (*Sumisuke starts to leave.*) Hang on. Mr. President, please wait a moment. Are you going to leave? Mr. President!

## #12 Depressed Sumisuke

*At the dry-cleaning factory. Takeo, Shun, Mei, and other laundry workers are busily moving back and forth doing their work. Sumisuke treads his way unsteadily through their constant weaving. The workers passing him encourage him with a tap on the shoulder.*

**WORKER 2:** (*Patting Sumisuke's shoulder.*) President. (*Sumisuke grunts.*)

**WORKER 1:** (*Patting his shoulder.*) Cheer up. (*Sumisuke grunts.*)

**WORKER 3:** (*Patting his shoulder.*) Women aren't everything. (*Sumisuke grunts.*)

**MEI:** (*Strikes his belly.*) Fatso.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Startled.*) Whozzat? Who called me fatso? (*Looks back, but Mei, reading with zest a book with a wraparound cover, has disappeared.*) Mei, what are you reading? Stop messing around and get back to work. (*To the other workers.*) Don't walk around leisurely. (*To another worker.*) Hey you, you're clumsy with the iron! (*Demonstrates how to iron.*) Use your body weight to press down on the stroke. Press down.

**TAKEO:** (*Passing by.*) 'Bout time you stopped taking it out on the workers and sheets.

**SUMISUKE:** Takeo, I—

**TAKEO:** It's best that you had to give up on her before playing sugar daddy got you

into embezzling company money.

**SUMISUKE:** I've spent a tidy sum on her already.

**TAKEO:** It's beyond me why you'd want to waste your money on that.

**SUMISUKE:** You wouldn't understand, Takeo. Men like you who take a woman like my sister as their wife simply don't.

**TAKEO:** I haven't taken her as my wife.

**SUMISUKE:** Oh, that's right. Haha, (*to Mei*) shame on you! (*A beat. To Takeo.*) Why won't you take her as your wife?

**TAKEO:** We're not discussing my case.

**SUMISUKE:** Lara's up on cloud nine about the wedding. What kind of guy is she marrying?

**TAKEO:** It's a fake marriage.

**SUMISUKE:** What?

**TAKEO:** It must be a fake marriage to get permanent residency.

**SUMISUKE:** Im-poss-ible. (*Dismayed.*)

**TAKEO:** It's not that unusual. She's happy because she'll become a legal resident.

**SUMISUKE:** I see. (*Beams.*) Takeo!

**TAKEO:** What? Nooo, you mustn't resort to a fake marriage.

**SUMISUKE:** It won't be fake—so there.

**TAKEO:** Not to you.

*Takeo comes by Shun, who is ironing. About to continue on, he sees it is Shun and turns back. Pulling out ¥30,000 from his pocket, he throws the banknotes roughly onto the ironing board.*

**SHUN:** (*About to iron the notes.*) Whoa, eh, what is this?

**TAKEO:** Your birthday.

**SHUN:** What?

**TAKEO:** Spend it on something.

**SHUN:** It's not my birthday quite yet.

**TAKEO:** The present can be at any time, right?

**SHUN:** Thanks. This is great.

**TAKEO:** Are you going to travel somewhere with it?

**SHUN:** Nah, I'll buy something.

**TAKEO:** Oh yeah.

**SHUN:** Is this what Mom was referring to?

**TAKEO:** Huh?

**SHUN:** She said she was going to give me something big.

**TAKEO:** She's up to something.

**SHUN:** I can't tell, but I thought it might be a baby brother.

**TAKEO:** What?!

**SHUN:** A baby.

**TAKEO:** Mei said that?

**SHUN:** Uh-uh, just my intuition.

**TAKEO:** That could be...(*Trips on Sumisuke, who is crouching.*) You're in my way.

**SUMISUKE:** Congratulations.

**TAKEO:** No, that's very unlikely. Uh, what made you think so?

**SHUN:** Weeell, she was up late doing internet searches and reading books. When I took a peek, I saw the title *Mother and Child Health Handbook*.

*Feeling the gaze of Shun and Takeo, Mei, who's been working, turns around and gives a warm smile.*

**SHUN:** And she's been grinning a lot.

*Takeo says nothing.*

**WORKER 1:** Shun!

*Called, Shun turns around and sees Hanako standing by the entrance. She is in street clothes, not her restaurant costume. When Shun waves to Hanako, she waves back.*

**SHUN:** (*Seizing the ¥30,000, then to Takeo.*) Thanks for this.

*As Shun heads toward Hanako, the other workers start hooting.*

**SHUN:** Shut up already you guys.

**SUMISUKE:** (*Standing up.*) Are you going to have a child?

**TAKEO:** Why the heck are you still here?

**SUMISUKE:** Takeo, you will have to marry Mei.

*Takeo falls silent. Sumisuke nods his head as he leaves. Takeo turns back toward Shun*

*and then returns to his work.*

**SHUN:** What's the matter?

**HANAKO:** You invited me to come here. (*Showing him the dry cleaners' flyer.*)

**SHUN:** Hah.

**HANAKO:** But you're working.

**SHUN:** The boss isn't looking, so pay no mind. You look different today.

**HANAKO:** Do you prefer my usual costume?

**SHUN:** (*Shakes his head.*) As you are now is better.

**HANAKO:** So, you work here. It's hot.

**SHUN:** The steam is on all day long.

**HANAKO:** Have you always done this?

**SHUN:** Um, since childhood.

**HANAKO:** Wow. That's why you're a bit different from other kids.

**SHUN:** Oh yeah? What's different about me?

**HANAKO:** You're more mature. I'm praising you.

**SHUN:** Gotcha.

**HANAKO:** Yeah, that's great. (*Shun smiles.*) But...

**SHUN:** Yeah?

**HANAKO:** Why do you hold on to the ¥30,000 like that?

**SHUN:** I forgot.

**HANAKO:** (*Laughs.*) Put it away.

**SHUN:** You want to spend some?

**HANAKO:** Why? Did I look hungrily at the cash?

**SHUN:** No, that's not what I meant. I got this for my birthday.

**HANAKO:** Then you should spend it on something important to you.

**SHUN:** Yeah, so...Let's go somewhere. For my birthday.

**HANAKO:** (*Nods her head.*) Where do you want to go?

**SHUN:** I'll give it a think.

**HANAKO:** Show me how you work.

**SHUN:** Yeah, you wanna go to the press machine then?

**HANAKO:** Yeah.

*Shun and Hanako go toward the workshop.*

### #13 Hospitalization

*In the waiting room of a hospital. Kimata and Seiko are sitting on a bench and discussing something intensely. Seiko is wearing a hospital inpatient outfit.*

**SEIKO:** Go on!

**KIMATA:** The informer said he remembered because the name was unusual.

**SEIKO:** Uh-huh.

**KIMATA:** Having verified the facts, I found that he is living in Hachioji.

**SEIKO:** Really?!

**KIMATA:** I know his place of work. We can go tomorrow.

*Eiko, in a tremendous hurry, rushes in from the front door.*

**EIKO:** (*Fretfully.*) Seiko.

**SEIKO:** I'm over here.

**EIKO:** (*Calmly.*) Seiko.

**SEIKO:** Ye-s. Sit over here.

**EIKO:** (*Angrily.*) Seiko, really.

**SEIKO:** You don't need to modulate your tone. I am here.

**EIKO:** (*With anger and pity.*) Seiko, really, I worried so much!

**SEIKO:** I'm sorry.

**EIKO:** I got a phone call that you had suddenly collapsed. I cut my manicure session short and came rushing over here.

**SEIKO:** "Collapsed" is an exaggeration. It was like a touch of heatstroke.

**EIKO:** Oh.

**KIMATA:** Was my explanation insufficient?

**EIKO:** Of course it was. It was too insufficient!

**KIMATA:** I'm sorry. But you hung up while I was still explaining.

**EIKO:** Anyone would think it was a crisis! In the taxi, I intoned the Heart Sutra all the way here. How are you?

**SEIKO:** Um, I had a check-up.

**KIMATA:** Seiko is suffering from fatigue.

**EIKO:** Of course she's fatigued. You drag her around everywhere.

**KIMATA:** You could help while getting your nails done.

**EIKO:** I distributed too many flyers, and it took my manicure off!

**KIMATA:** Seiko is waiting for an intravenous drip.

**EIKO:** Indeed. (*Looking around the hospital.*) If that's so, why are you waiting here?

**SEIKO:** Now please, Eiko.

**EIKO:** (*Stopping her.*) I mean, is a tiny clinic like this good enough for you? I noticed a university hospital nearby.

**SEIKO:** A large hospital will require me to stay hospitalized.

**EIKO:** But at a place like this, the most they can do is a drip.

**SEIKO:** Quiet. I know the doctor here.

**EIKO:** Is that right?

**SEIKO:** When I was living in Awahimachi, he was my doctor. Yuki was treated by him many times. Ah, and, speaking of Yuki, you know Kimata has found something.

**KIMATA:** Yes. At last, we have some news.

**EIKO:** Oh?

**SEIKO:** Kimata just now received a phone call.

**KIMATA:** A person who saw the flyer said there is a Yuki Oride in Hachioji with the same name and about the same age.

**EIKO:** Really?

**SEIKO:** Yes!

**KIMATA:** He said that the young man may still look like his boyhood self though as an adult his height or build may differ.

**EIKO:** How far away is Hachioji from here?

**KIMATA:** About an hour.

**EIKO:** People with identical names may be quite common?

**KIMATA:** The Oride family name is unusual. What's more...

**SEIKO:** (*Lightheartedly.*) Exactly.

**KIMATA:** When you ask him about his past, he is apparently reluctant to share.

**EIKO:** Amazing.

**KIMATA:** It's not an impossible trail, is it? What's more—!

**SEIKO:** Do you remember that Yuki had a small bruise-like birthmark on his arm, like a spot?

**EIKO:** Uh-huh...Hm? (*Lacking confidence.*)

**KIMATA:** Have you forgotten?

**SEIKO:** The informer says he saw it.

**EIKO:** That's fantastic!

**SEIKO:** Isn't it?! (*Her excitement triggers a coughing fit.*)

**EIKO:** Seiko...

*Seiko's coughing gets worse. She tries to stop but cannot, and she doubles up and continues to cough violently. Kimata and Eiko stroke her back.*

**KIMATA:** Are you all right?

**SEIKO:** Sorry. *(She tries to laugh but ends up coughing again.)*

**EIKO:** *(Bringing out a plastic water bottle from her bag.)* Have some water. You must rest. We can talk later.

**KIMATA:** Excuse me, I'll go and call the doctor.

*Kimata heads toward the examination room.*

**EIKO:** Sis, you had better check in today. If there are rooms open, you could stay a few days.

**SEIKO:** But tomorrow, we go to Hachioji.

**EIKO:** No. You must rest first.

**SEIKO:** But...

**EIKO:** It's all right. This man is not going to vanish in a few days.

*Seiko does not respond.*

*Kimata returns with a doctor, who turns out to be Misao Oki in a doctor's white coat.*

**KIMATA:** Seiko, let's go.

**MISAO:** Are you all right? You took a long time.

**SEIKO:** I am very sorry.

**EIKO:** Doctor, please take good care of my sister. She says that you were her family doctor when she lived here.

**MISAO:** Ahh, that was my father, not me.

**EIKO:** I see.

**MISAO:** I am a nurse. I'm back at my parents' home helping out. With this belly, I can't get into a nurse's outfit.

**EIKO:** So that's it. I see.

**MISAO:** Let's go.

**SEIKO:** Yes.

**KIMATA:** I'll wait here.

*Misao, Seiko, and Eiko head for the examination room.*

**EIKO:** Doctor—I mean, Nurse. I am also a nurse. Could I talk with the doctor briefly?  
I would like to explain about the symptoms.

**MISAO:** Yes, indeed.

**SEIKO:** Your father seems to be as cheerful as always.

**MISAO:** Oh yes, he is still vigorous.

*The three leave. But immediately Eiko returns and runs to Kimata.*

**KIMATA:** What?

**EIKO:** I'll go instead to Hachioji.

**KIMATA:** Excuse me?

**EIKO:** To meet Yuki.

**KIMATA:** Seiko wants to go herself.

**EIKO:** If we take her without any certainty and find we were wrong, Seiko may collapse, take to bed, and, this time, never get up again.

**KIMATA:** (*Overwhelmed by her.*) I see. But...

**EIKO:** If it really is Yuki, we can bring him back together with us.

**KIMATA:** Will you be able to verify his identity?

**EIKO:** Huh?

**KIMATA:** Will you?

**EIKO:** Of course I will. How could I not recognize my own nephew?!

## #14 Yuki

*At Agashi.*

*The usual staff members are working.*

**HANAKO and LARA:** Welcome—

**KIMATA:** He's the one.

*Eiko stares at the person Kimata refers to, trying to ascertain who it is.*

**KIMATA:** You have forgotten! I knew it.

**EIKO:** I just got here.

**YUKI:** Well, well...welcome!

*Yuki dances in front of Eiko and Kimata.*

**YUKI:** (*Singsong.*) With our supreme hospitality and superior grade meat, your body and soul will feel masshiso. This is authentic Korean barbecue, Agashi. Welcome.

**EIKO:** E-e-excuse me.

**KIMATA:** Excuse me, are you Mr. Yuki...Oride?

**YUKI:** Wha—Oh...

**KIMATA:** That is your name, right?

**YUKI:** Are you looking for Yuki?

**KIMATA:** Uh-huh.

**YUKI:** I'll let him know.

**EIKO:** (*To Kimata.*) That's not him.

**YUKI:** (*Calling to the back.*) Yuki, Yuki! (*Comes rushing back.*) Yes, I am the young master Yuki—(*Kimata does not speak.*) For two customers. Would you like to name a hostess?

**KIMATA:** Hm, you.

**YUKI:** (*A beat. Suspiciously.*) You want me to be your host?

**KIMATA:** If you have the time.

**YUKI:** (*Smiling.*) I have been appointed! Please come this way.

*Guided by Yuki, Kimata and Eiko reach their table. About to sit down, Kimata reaches out and taps the shoulder of Kurosawa, who has the table behind him.*

**KIMATA:** Kurosawa, Kurosawa.

**KUROSAWA:** Huh?

*Lara has been sitting on Kurosawa's lap and feeding him barbecued meat. Kurosawa suddenly stands up with a cry, and Lara slides off his lap.*

**KUROSAWA:** (*Moving to Kimata's table.*) Ah, good to see you. I came here early to investigate.

**KIMATA:** Your view was blocked, right?

**EIKO:** Uh, is our landlord involved?

**KIMATA:** Well, he is also a witness of Yuki.

**KUROSAWA:** I'm a back-up in case you couldn't identify the young man.

**EIKO:** I'm not the same as someone who's only seen Yuki once.

**KUROSAWA:** You see, I told him so. I wanted to check this place out myself. Girly barbecues are the rage.

**EIKO:** That's irrelevant.

**KIMATA:** Well, what's your opinion? About him?

**EIKO:** That's not Yuki.

**KIMATA:** Are you sure?

**EIKO:** Yuki's not as flashy.

**KIMATA:** Don't be led astray by his contrived persona.

**EIKO:** This Yuki's face is different from his childhood one.

**KUROSAWA:** Faces can change through injuries in accidents. Like mine.

**EIKO:** Besides, a nephew would remember his auntie.

**KIMATA:** Really?

**KUROSAWA:** If he doesn't want to know you, he would bluff it.

**EIKO:** What do you mean by that?

**KIMATA:** By clowning like that?

**KUROSAWA:** Maybe he really doesn't remember. It may be a case of lost memory.

**EIKO:** Then how are we going to recognize him?!

**KIMATA:** You claimed to be able to do that.

**EIKO:** Oh no—

**KIMATA:** How about you?

**KUROSAWA:** Impossible.

**KIMATA:** Why did you come here?

**KUROSAWA:** I'm missing an eye.

**KIMATA:** That's just an excuse.

**YUKI:** Excuse me—

*Yuki comes back.*

**YUKI:** Allow me to talk you through the menu. We recommend the courses “Eat de Meat,” “Kiss de Meat,” and “Touch de Marbled Meat.”

**KIMATA:** Excuse me, Yuki.

**YUKI:** That's me, Yuki—

**KIMATA:** How old are you?

**YUKI:** Twenty—

**KIMATA:** Have you worked at this place long?

**YUKI:** Not really, I'm still young.

**KIMATA:** Where are you from?

**YUKI:** Ho-ho. Is this a pre-order free-talk session?

**KUROSAWA:** Three draft beers, then.

**EIKO:** A glass of rosé champagne for me. (*To Kurosawa and Kimata.*) What is it?

**YUKI:** Got that?

**HANAKO:** Yes, sir.

**KIMATA:** Were you born around here?

**YUKI:** Nope.

**KIMATA:** Is your name your real one?

**YUKI:** Well, yes, it is...?

**KUROSAWA:** (*Pointing at Lara.*) Are her boobs real?

**YUKI:** Oh no, oh, you are killing me with these questions.

**KUROSAWA:** What are they made of?

**KIMATA:** Kurosawa.

**YUKI:** And your order, please?

**EIKO:** Yuki, I'm your auntie. (*Eyes him seriously.*)

**YUKI:** (*Stares back at her, but stays in character.*) You're still sooo young and...

**EIKO, KIMATA, and KUROSAWA:** Wrong.

**YUKI:** What?

**KUROSAWA:** That response was off-key.

**YUKI:** What's going on?

**EIKO:** What about the birthmark?

**KIMATA:** Could you show us your left arm?

**YUKI:** My arm?

*Yuki rolls up his sleeve and displays his arm. The three stare intensely.*

**KUROSAWA:** A rose tattoo. (*Kimata and Eiko sigh heavily.*) Is this about Akina Nakamori?<sup>9</sup>

**YUKI:** (*His professional smile fades.*) Look here, are you guys cops or something?

**KIMATA:** Uh no, sorry.

**YUKI:** If you aren't customers, why don't you leave?

**KUROSAWA:** The beer's coming.

*Hanako brings beer and champagne.*

**KIMATA:** Please excuse us for intruding on you like this. To tell you the truth, we're looking for a missing person.

**LARA:** Welcome to Agashi!

*Sumisuke enters with a tense look.*

**YUKI:** Mr. President! We've been missing you! (*He tries to leave Kimata's table.*)

**KIMATA:** It's about a boy who disappeared ten years ago. (*Handing him a flyer.*)

**LARA:** President, please, over here.

*Despite Lara's words, Sumisuke doesn't move. Yuki accepts Kimata's flyer.*

**SUMISUKE:** Ah, Lara...

**LARA:** Uh?

**SUMISUKE:** About last time, about the ma-ma...

**LARA:** About mama? (*Sumisuke falls silent.*)

**YUKI:** (*Reading the flyer.*) Yuki Oride?

**KIMATA:** Yes.

**YUKI:** (*Pointing to himself.*) Yuki Oride.

**KIMATA:** We wondered if you might be...

**YUKI:** I see it now. I understand. That explains things.

**KIMATA:** There are very few fully identical names.

**YUKI:** You have been searching for ten years.

**EIKO:** Oh, not quite. We gave up once, but have renewed the search recently.

**YUKI:** Oh, recently. That must be troublesome. He may look different as an adult, in facial features and name.

**KIMATA:** Uh-huh, right.

**YUKI:** I feel for the lost boy who shares my name. Now may I go? (*Tries to move away.*)

**KIMATA:** If you don't mind, take one of these.

**YUKI:** Yeah, yeah, I'll let you know if something comes up. This phone number, eh?

**KIMATA:** Whatever it is, the smallest piece of information will do.

**YUKI:** I get it—

**EIKO:** Excuse me, are you sure you are not this person?

**YUKI:** Unfortunately not. (*To Sumisuke.*) Please excuse me for keeping you waiting! What has happened, Mr. President? You are looking as stiff as a guardian deity for kids.

**SUMISUKE:** Let me see, what was it? Ahh, do you want some of the new flyers? (*About to bring some out.*)

**YUKI:** No, no. (*Pulling out the old ones from the counter.*) We have so many of the oldies still. Please, Lara is waiting for you.

**SUMISUKE:** Um...ah...g-got to go to you-know-where.

**YUKI:** Hold on, Mr. President? You'll have barbecue tonight, right?

*Sumisuke flees to the restroom. Concerned, Yuki follows him out.*

**KUROSAWA:** Shall we leave?

*Eiko continues to look toward where Yuki exited.*

**KIMATA:** Eiko.

**HANAKO:** He's not the one you're looking for.

**EIKO:** What?

**HANAKO:** There are no Japanese working here.

**EIKO:** Is that right?

**KUROSAWA:** We were wrong.

**KIMATA:** It's worked out when you come to think of it. Now Seiko's been saved a meaningless trip.

*Eiko doesn't speak.*

**KUROSAWA:** Let's leave.

**KIMATA:** Bill, please.

*Hanako goes off to get the bill. Yuki returns.*

**YUKI:** Oh, are you leaving? I am sorry I couldn't be of any help.

**KIMATA:** Please excuse us for troubling you.

**YUKI:** Keep at it. But if I were you, I wouldn't search anymore.

**EIKO:** What?

**YUKI:** Even if he were alive, if he hasn't come back in ten years, that probably means he doesn't want to come home.

**EIKO:** H-how can you say that? He was only a child.

**YUKI:** Even kids abandon their parents sometimes.

**EIKO:** How dare you say such a thing!

**YUKI:** Didn't you people? You decided he was lost for good, right?

**EIKO:** Explain yourself!

**YUKI:** Until recently, you'd decided he had died.

**EIKO:** ...decided he had died? There were circumstances that forced our hand.

**YUKI:** Due to these so-called circumstances—the boy is allowed to live or has to be dead...The poor kid must be greatly inconvenienced. Eh?

**EIKO:** The pain my sister, that is, Yuki's mother, went through must have been...

**YUKI:** Yeah, well, of course, I can't tell. But if his mother suddenly popped up and said, "Here I am, I'm your mom," I'd think, "Why the fuck are you showing up now, ya bitch."

*Eiko throws champagne at Yuki. Lara screams.*

**YUKI:** What the—

*A sour silence permeates the restaurant. Sumisuke comes back from the restroom. Yuki takes off his champagne-splattered vest.*

**SUMISUKE:** Lara, sweetie, you may refuse, but, you know, I...What's happened?

*For once, Yuki does not speak.*

**KIMATA:** We're very sorry, we...

**YUKI:** *(Smiling again.)* No, no. I am sorry. I'm the one who said weird things. I can't catch the vibes, you see.

**HANAKO:** *(Taking the vest.)* I'll wash it.

**YUKI:** No, don't, don't. *(Handing a dry cleaners' flyer to the nearby Kurosawa.)* I will bill you later for the dry cleaning.

*Kimata does not respond. Eiko dashes out of the restaurant. Sumisuke fearfully approaches the group and peers at the flyer Yuki gave Kurosawa.*

**SUMISUKE:** Ah, please take a new flyer, instead.

*The others look on disapprovingly as Sumisuke hands Kurosawa a fresh flyer.*

## #15 Family Registry

**MEI:** Hi.

*At the Yoshikawa apartment. Takeo returns home and approaches Mei, who is reading a book.*

**TAKEO:** Yo, Mei.

**MEI:** So, you gave Shun ¥30,000? He was real happy.

**TAKEO:** Yeah.

**MEI:** (*stroking her belly.*) Cash isn't the most exciting thing to give, but teenagers probably prefer it to presents.

**TAKEO:** Look here, you.

**MEI:** Uh?

**TAKEO:** Are you?

**MEI:** Am I what?

**TAKEO:** Your belly.

**MEI:** What?

**TAKEO:** If you're pregnant, come clean and say so.

**MEI:** What are you going on about? Ooh, OK, Shun mentioned that, I remember now.

The birthday surprise? (*Takeo waits.*) Constipation, constipation. It's been going on three days, and my abdomen feels stretched tight.

**TAKEO:** Really?

**MEI:** Why are you taking some stupid rumor at face value? I'm more than happy with Shun, our one and only.

**TAKEO:** Then what's the fucking present about?

**MEI:** Huh? You want to know already?

**TAKEO:** It's because you're assuming airs that everyone around starts gossiping.

**MEI:** I was going to save the surprise until his birthday.

**TAKEO:** What the hell is it?

**MEI:** A family registry.

**TAKEO:** What?!

**MEI:** We can give Shun a family registry. We're becoming a proper family.

## #16 Encounter

*In front of the hospital.*

*Seiko, having completed her discharge procedure, is walking along with Misao, who carries a paper bag and flyers.*

**SEIKO:** I can carry my own bag.

**MISAO:** Not to worry.

**SEIKO:** You should be careful about carrying heavy things. Your body needs extra attention.

**MISAO:** It's not so heavy, really.

**SEIKO:** The flyers and things in it get heavy.

**MISAO:** We are almost there. (*Looking around.*) The taxi hasn't arrived yet.

**SEIKO:** You've been so very kind. You took care of me for two whole days.

**MISAO:** Not at all.

**SEIKO:** Please convey my gratitude to the doctor.

**MISAO:** Can you really get back home alone? We can wait until your sister comes by.

**SEIKO:** Oh no, today she is going to Hachioji on a related visit and is likely to be late.

**MISAO:** (*Sighing as she looks at the flyers.*) It didn't occur to me that you had such issues to deal with. I understand now why you didn't want to go to a larger hospital.

**SEIKO:** Thank you. I really don't want to leave town at the moment.

**MISAO:** I remember that accident.

**SEIKO:** Really.

**MISAO:** At that time, I was still living with my parents. An emergency call came to my father, too. As we don't have outpatient emergency facilities, we weren't able to help. My father said this time he would make inquiries to other doctors he knows.

**SEIKO:** Thank you very much. If I find out anything new, I will let you know.

**MISAO:** I'll pin this up. You must get sufficient rest and avoid straining yourself. You should have regular hospital check-ups, and it doesn't have to be at our hospital.

**SEIKO:** Yes, thank you.

**MISAO:** If you strain yourself, you won't have enough stamina to give your son a hug

when he returns.

**SEIKO:** Yes, that's right.

*Hiroya comes by dangling a carrier bag.*

**SEIKO:** Finding him is not the ultimate goal of this search.

**MISAO:** Right, right. You must start with that spirit. (*Raising her hand to Hiroya.*)

**SEIKO:** Oh.

**MISAO:** My hubby and caddy.

**SEIKO:** How do you do.

*Hiroya nods.*

**MISAO:** Did you find the pastries?

**HIROYA:** Not the kind you wanted.

**MISAO:** Oh, darn—

**HIROYA:** I got something else.

**MISAO:** Show me. (*Takes the bag and peers inside.*)

**HIROYA:** Don't look now. Please excuse her.

**SEIKO:** She gets hungry, you know. She has to eat for two.

**HIROYA:** My wife eats enough for four.

**SEIKO:** He-he.

**MISAO:** That's enough. Ah, here's the taxi.

**SEIKO:** Well, thank you so very much.

**MISAO:** Take care of yourself.

**SEIKO:** Thank you, thank you.

*Seiko gives a bow and walks toward the taxi. Hiroya turns toward the hospital, but a whiff of concern makes him turn around and watch Seiko as she leaves. Misao keeps her eyes on Seiko while fishing out a pastry from the carrier bag.*

**HIROYA:** Are you going to eat right now?

**MISAO:** Well. (*Holding up Seiko's bag.*) Oh no, I forgot! Mrs. Oride, wait!

**HIROYA:** What's this?

*Misao hands the carrier bag and flyers to her husband and runs after Seiko with the*

*paper bag.*

**MISAO:** Mrs. Oride, Mrs. Oride, you've forgotten your bag.

**HIROYA:** Don't run!

*About to run after his wife, Hiroya inadvertently looks down at the flyers and freezes. The cicadas buzz. Overlaying that harsh sound comes the roar of the storm and the dark waters. In the distance, Hiroya can hear Seiko thanking Misao. He slowly turns his face in the direction Seiko departed. Eventually, Misao returns.*

**MISAO:** That was a close call. I almost took it home. Ooooh, my back hurts.

**HIROYA:** Here...

**MISAO:** Yes, of course. It's her son. Could you pin it up? On the notice board over there? (*Hiroya doesn't answer.*) The poor kid. It was a hit-and-run case.

**HIROYA:** Is she still searching for the...?

**MISAO:** Seems so. But surely the boy must be dead by now. (*Hiroya does not speak.*) The poor kid. (*Taking the carrier bag from her husband.*) Yay, pastry stuffed with fried noodles. Hmm, lucky me. You know my tender pressure points!

*Misao goes back inside the hospital. Hiroya remains frozen on the spot.*

## #17 Raising Another's Offspring as One's Own

*At the Yoshikawa apartment again.*

*Mei is showing Takeo a book and explaining.*

**MEI:** In other words, I can claim not to have registered his birth. I hear there are quite a lot of people who don't submit birth certificates so that no one can find out they'd given birth on their own when they were young or so that their abusive ex-husbands can't locate them. I can say I had circumstances for not registering at birth.

**TAKEO:** Mei.

**MEI:** Usually, if the hospital where you had the baby delivered can't provide a birth certificate, you can't register a birth. But it's not impossible to give birth at home alone, right? I found out that there are parents who bring up other people's kids as their own.

**TAKEO:** Hold on.

**MEI:** You see, I did consider adoption. That's the alternative plan. When I inquired at the City Office about the certified copy of the family registry, I found—(*turning a page*)—when you want to adopt an adult, the adopting parent, that's me, can file so that Shun wouldn't have to. Such cases exist. See, so you can fudge the certified copy.

**TAKEO:** Mei.

**MEI:** Hm?

**TAKEO:** What the hell are you going on about?

**MEI:** (*A beat.*) Take. It's something I've been thinking all along. When Shun reaches his twentieth, I want to give him his own family registry.

**TAKEO:** Do you know something about me?

**MEI:** Nothing.

**TAKEO:** What?

**MEI:** But it must be something you can't do for him.

**TAKEO:** Can't do what?

**MEI:** You can't give him a family registry. (*Pause.*) You probably lived under a different name. Something happened, and you had to give up your original name. (*Pause.*) I never asked, but you don't even have a health insurance certificate. And Shun isn't...

**TAKEO:** Mei.

**MEI:** Shun probably isn't your own child. That's what I thought. (*Pause.*) But I'm not asking about what happened before we met or whose child he is. My big bro probably has his own opinion about you, if not about Shun. You don't have to speak up. I am OK with this arrangement, too. But...

**TAKEO:** (*A beat.*) Uh?

**MEI:** But Shun can't stay like this forever, can he? He'll become an adult. He'll want to marry one day, get a driver's license, choose his own cell phone.

**TAKEO:** Did he say all this to you?

**MEI:** Uh-uh. Shun understands.

**TAKEO:** Huh?

**MEI:** He knows that this is his life. Otherwise, he wouldn't call a strange woman "Mom."

*Takeo doesn't answer. From a formal Japanese sitting position, he shifts to prostrating himself on the floor and then buries his head in Mei's lap.*

**MEI:** But this time, we are going to become a proper parent-child. I'm going to become a real mother.

*Takeo doesn't raise his face but clutches Mei's knees. Mei strokes Takeo's head. Blackout.*

## #18 The Testimony of Yuki Oride (pseudonym)

*Sitting next to Lara, Yuki starts to speak to the camera.*

**YUKI:** Whether you're happy or unhappy isn't something others can decide. But when I share my story, people usually consider it pitiful and feel sorry for me. So, I don't want to bring it up...

Well, I had no nationality until a few years ago. I don't know where I was born. Ever since I can remember, I've been in Japan, but one parent always spoke Cantonese. Oh, this one? She's Chinese, has recently married, and taken a Japanese name.

**LARA:** Lara Taniguchi.

**YUKI:** The other parent? I don't know. I had five different fathers at various points in my life. I never thought any of them was my real father. In fact, I remember little of my childhood. Maybe that's because I don't want to.

*Lara gets off the chair and is amusing herself near Yuki.*

What period of my life do I remember? I was eating grass in front of the apartment we were living in.

**LARA:** Grass?

**YUKI:** Yeah. The kind that grows anywhere. My mother, well, my surrogate mother, said she'd go to McDonald's and never came back. I waited days, weeks, even though there was no McDonald's in the neighborhood. I believed that I'd get a filet o' fish if I behaved myself. Even when I was really hungry and chewing grass, I imagined that it was, you know, the cabbage in the Chicken Tatsuta hamburger. Of course, it didn't taste the same at all. (*Lara laughs.*) My fifth father wasn't much of a father, but he was better than the others, who'd break my ribs as a kind of salutation. He taught me all kinds of things—how to know your limits, how to live

without having to resort to eating grass. The most useful thing was how to abandon your parents and yourself. In other words, how to be reborn by acquiring a new name.

**LARA:** Lara Taniguchi.

*Words float around Yuki. Lara crawls around looking at those words. “Passport,” “license,” “pay slip,” “health insurance,” “certified copy of the family registry,” “certificate of registered seal,” and so on.*

**YUKI:** The documents that prove who you are can be made surprisingly easily. Did you know that? Driver’s licenses, insurance forms, student IDs, and diplomas from first-class universities—look them up on the internet. Suppliers are rife. You can become a totally fabricated character or borrow the name of someone—dead or alive. Then you can be reborn. (*Lara stands up.*) The risk? Sure, there is. If you’re alive, there’s always risk. If you’re going to end up munching on grass, you might as well take risks and gorge on barbecue. What do we say...?

**LARA:** With our supreme hospitality and superior grade meat, your body and soul will feel masshiso. This is authentic Korean barbecue, Agashi. Welcome—

*Kimata enters and starts shooting Yuki with his video camera.*

**YUKI:** Whether you’re happy or unhappy, you should decide yourself. (*Reading out loud from his driver’s license.*) Yuki Oride, 20 years old. This is me. I am happy now...Wait, aren’t you using tessellation? Change the voice, too. OK?

*Yuki and Lara walk away.*

## #19 Garbage along the Embankment

*Kimata and Kurosawa are walking along the Awahi River. Kimata is shooting the river; and behind him, Kurosawa, lost in thought, is pushing a bicycle loaded with bottles of alcohol.*

**KUROSAWA:** Uumph, uumph. (*Kimata is distracted but goes back to his video shoot.*) Uumph...

**KIMATA:** What's up?

**KUROSAWA:** Uh, is it recording my voice as well?

**KIMATA:** No, it's all right. What is it?

**KUROSAWA:** Do you know the film *Moulin Rouge*!?

**KIMATA:** Sure.

**KUROSAWA:** That actress...the one who married Tom Cruise...Kee...

**KIMATA:** Kidman, Nicole Kidman?

**KUROSAWA:** That's it, that's it, that's it, that's it. The name starts to surface, but I can never get it right.

**KIMATA:** Is that what you were thinking of?

**KUROSAWA:** No, it was something else, but such foggy windings of my mind continue...

**KIMATA:** Oh yeah.

**KUROSAWA:** What are you shooting?

**KIMATA:** The river.

**KUROSAWA:** I can tell that.

**KIMATA:** The embankment.

**KUROSAWA:** Embankment?

**KIMATA:** There's garbage collecting there.

**KUROSAWA:** Garbage?

**KIMATA:** You see, sometimes something shines in the sunlight. When you take a good look, it turns out to be someone's lost property or household goods that are half buried.

**KUROSAWA:** Right, right. Like the wheel of a bicycle.

**KIMATA:** Exactly. Furniture that makes you wonder how it got there. But such things used to have an owner, and if you pursued the history of each item, you'd amass a huge amount of memory for every single one. But all it is is something stuck in the mud by the embankment.

**KUROSAWA:** Forgotten by everyone, like that actress Kee...Kee...

**KIMATA:** Kidman.

**KUROSAWA:** I forgot again already! In fact, as I'm blind in one eye, even when I walk like this, I don't notice the garbage. Applying the same principle, a part of my memory is beyond access.

*Kurosawa takes out the dry cleaners' flyer from his pocket and gazes at it.*

**KIMATA:** So?

**KUROSAWA:** You know, in this flyer I got at the Hachioji joint, this guy here resembles someone I've seen somewhere.

**KIMATA:** You kept that?

**KUROSAWA:** Well, that yakuza-like brat may try to play tricks with the dry-cleaning fee. This flyer gives the rates we can go by if he tries to make us pay through the nose.

**KIMATA:** (Sighs.) Will he charge us? We have to conserve our resources.

**KUROSAWA:** The rental car's been returned, too.

**KIMATA:** Um.

**KUROSAWA:** How long are you going to continue? ...This search?

**KIMATA:** Until we reach a point of closure, I guess.

**KUROSAWA:** A point of closure.

**KIMATA:** What would that be?

**KUROSAWA:** It can't be garbage by the river. That's not good enough.

**KIMATA:** I know that.

**KUROSAWA:** Oh, shit. I'm sure I've seen this face before.

**KIMATA:** Hallo there—Are you going now?

*From afar, Seiko and Eiko are walking toward the two men. Both women are in mourning.*

**EIKO:** We will be back as soon as possible.

**SEIKO:** Eiko, dear.

**KIMATA:** Please be careful.

*Without further conversation, the two women continue walking.*

**KUROSAWA:** Are they attending a funeral?

**KIMATA:** They are holding a memorial service for Yuki.

**KUROSAWA:** Huh?

**KIMATA:** It's today, exactly ten years since the accident.

**KUROSAWA:** Oh no!

**KIMATA:** Her ex insists they have a memorial service to keep up appearances. Eiko was furious.

**KUROSAWA:** (A beat.) So that's it.

**KIMATA:** To mourn at an empty grave.

**KUROSAWA:** Today is the memorial. It all happened on this day of the month. (*He places his hand over his blind eye.*)

**KIMATA:** Today is an unforgettable day for you, too.

*Kimata pats Kurosawa on the shoulder and walks ahead.*

**KUROSAWA:** (*A beat.*) Ah. (*Looking at the dry cleaners' flyer.*) Yes, got it! Kimata, wait!

*Kurosawa has recalled something and chases after Kimata.*

## #20 Birthday

*At the dry-cleaning factory.*

*As Takeo walks across the factory workshop, Mei, with the workers, comes along, spots him, and waves.*

**MEI:** Take-boy, Take-boy, come over here for a minute.

**TAKEO:** Huh?

*Mei gets Takeo to come over. A worker brings a cake with lit candles on top and hands it to Takeo. With Mei leading the chorus, they begin to sing.*

**MEI:** One, two, three—

**WORKERS:** Happy birthday to you—

*As they sing, they look around for Shun.*

**WORKERS:** Happy birthday to you—Happy birthday, dear...

*Shun is nowhere to be seen. Instead, Sumisuke walks in.*

**WORKERS:** (*Making a fresh start.*) Happy birthday, dear...

*In an abstracted manner, Sumisuke takes the cake from Takeo, who is standing in front of him.*

**WORKERS:** *(Singing the last phrase.)* Happy birthday to you. *(Sumisuke blows out the candles.)*

**MEI:** No, no, no! Where is Shun?

**SUMISUKE:** He's gone home.

**MEI:** He has?

**SUMISUKE:** Before lunch, he said he'd take the afternoon off. He has a date with Hanako!

**MEI:** Oh shit—!

*The workers grumble as they go back to work. Mei apologizes to them as they leave.*

**SUMISUKE:** *(To Takeo.)* He's gonna make a big move tonight. He was dancing around with joy, saying he'd take her to the river.

**TAKEO:** Uh.

**SUMISUKE:** Where's he really gonna take her?

**MEI:** *(Runs up to Takeo and in a low voice.)* I'm going to tell Shun tonight.

*Grabbing the cake from Sumisuke, Mei and Takeo leave. Takeo exits from the opposite side.*

## #21 A Date

*At the Awahi River bridge.*

*Carrying a picnic basket, Hanako runs in energetically. Shun follows.*

**HANAKO:** Yoohoo!

**SHUN:** *(Smiles at her, but warns.)* People are living right nearby.

**HANAKO:** Sorry. I just wanted to get into the mood. *(To the residents of a nearby house.)* Excuse me. It's nothing at all. *(A dog barks offstage. To Shun.)* This is the kind of river you meant?

**SHUN:** What kind did you imagine?

**HANAKO:** Oh, I don't know, a river in the mountains maybe? Not a river in a

residential area.

**SHUN:** Yeah?

**HANAKO:** That's why I'm in this picnic style. I even packed boxed lunches.

**SHUN:** Sorry.

**HANAKO:** It's OK. (*Laughs.*) You are strange, Shun.

*The two walk leisurely across the bridge.*

**HANAKO:** What's the name of the river?

**SHUN:** Awahi.

**HANAKO:** So, you like this spot.

**SHUN:** No, I don't.

**HANAKO:** No?

**SHUN:** But I come here sometimes, alone.

**HANAKO:** (*Pause.*) Oh yeah?

**SHUN:** Yeah. Don't tell my parents, OK? About this spot.

**HANAKO:** Of course I won't. (*Pause.*) Is it a memorable place for you?

**SHUN:** (*A beat.*) It's where I can't remember.

**HANAKO:** Huh?

**SHUN:** You see, I don't remember my childhood.

**HANAKO:** Till what age?

**SHUN:** About ten or so. (*Hanako listens.*) But I once asked my dad where I was born.

He said the Awahi River. Some years ago, I looked it up on a map and came here.

**HANAKO:** And how was it?

**SHUN:** Nothing came to mind.

**HANAKO:** Haha.

**SHUN:** But since then, when I get all confused, I come here.

**HANAKO:** (*A beat.*) Is this the first time you've ever brought someone here?

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**HANAKO:** I see.

**SHUN:** Sorry, it's such a dumb thing.

**HANAKO:** Oh no. Then let's have a picnic here. You might remember something. If you don't, we can make our picnic your memory.

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**HANAKO:** Is there somewhere specific you want to go?

**SHUN:** (*A beat.*) Yeah.

**HANAKO:** We can have lunch there.

*The two walk on.*

## #22 Confession

*At Misao's parental home.*

*Hiroya enters carrying a bundle of laundry. From an offstage room, Misao calls out to Hiroya. Her next few lines are all said offstage from the wings.*

**MISAO:** Did you take it all in?

**HIROYA:** Uh-huh. (*Starts folding the laundry.*)

**MISAO:** You know, I don't think I'll go to the yoga class after all. You made the booking for me last time, right?

**HIROYA:** Yep, d'you want me to cancel for you?

**MISAO:** Oh, could you?

**HIROYA:** Uh-huh.

*Hiroya takes out his cell phone and is about to call when he stops himself. He does a quick search to access a site and then concentrates so deeply on reading the contents that he doesn't notice Misao's return from the room offstage.*

**MISAO:** (*She watches him for a while.*) Are you canceling the yoga appointment?

**HIROYA:** (*Startled, he shuts off the cell phone.*) Ohh...

**MISAO:** What were you looking at?

**HIROYA:** Nothing.

**MISAO:** (*Suspicious.*) Give that to me.

**HIROYA:** It's nothing.

**MISAO:** Give it to me. (*Looking at the screen.*) Oride's site? Aren't those the people making a documentary?

**HIROYA:** (*A beat.*) Look here...

**MISAO:** (*Throwing back the cell phone in relief.*) Is that all?! I thought you were cheating on me.

**HIROYA:** Nah, I wouldn't do that.

**MISAO:** Ouch, ouch, ouch. Here we go.

**HIROYA:** (A beat.) Well, I'll call the yoga place.

*Misao begins to fold the laundry.*

**MISAO:** Never mind. I can call myself. Forget that, and come over here and massage my back. I've been feeling sluggish since morning.

**HIROYA:** Sure.

*Hiroya rubs Misao's lower back.*

**MISAO:** Are you concerned, too?

**HIROYA:** About what?

**MISAO:** What's on that site. We were over there at that time. It's exactly ten years since then, so it says. (Pause.) Do you remember anything?

**HIROYA:** Not really...How 'bout you?

**MISAO:** Just that you were in a terrible state.

**HIROYA:** What...?

**MISAO:** That was at the deep end of your ordeal. You couldn't get any sleep. If your boss called you, even in the middle of the night, you'd go bounding off like a hunting hound. Keep up the massage, please...

**HIROYA:** Yeah... (Rubs.)

**MISAO:** I hated that time, even when I know that our present stability is because of what we had to go through. (Pause.) You know, I talked with Mom yesterday. Why don't we stay here?

**HIROYA:** Huh?

**MISAO:** Even if you become an accountant, it'll be tough until things get underway. When this baby's born, I won't be able to work for a while. If we stay here, Mom can help us.

**HIROYA:** I...

**MISAO:** I like Nagoya, but there's no particular reason to be over there.

**HIROYA:** (Stopping her;) Misao.

**MISAO:** Uh?

**HIROYA:** I...I...you see...

**MISAO:** You really don't want to live together with Mom?

**HIROYA:** (Shaking his head.) I'll think about it.

**MISAO:** You do as you think best. I'll go with you wherever. (A beat.) Thanks, I feel

better now.

*Hiroya stops the massage. Misao takes the folded laundry in her arms, stands up, and looks out the window.*

**MISAO:** It's nice outside. It doesn't look like rain.

**HIROYA:** Is it going to rain?

**MISAO:** Uh-huh, there's a typhoon brewing tonight. (*Pause. Strokes her belly. To her yet-to-be-born baby.*) Don't you show your face today. (*She's about to exit.*)

**HIROYA:** I did it.

**MISAO:** Huh?

**HIROYA:** Misao, I'm sorry. (*Prostrates himself on the floor.*) I'm sorry.

**MISAO:** (*Alarmed.*) Wha-what, what happened?

**HIROYA:** (*With lowered head.*) I did it...

**MISAO:** Did what?

**HIROYA:** I drove into that kid.

**MISAO:** What? What...did you say? I couldn't hear you.

**HIROYA:** I killed him.

**MISAO:** What on earth are you saying?

**HIROYA:** I drove into that boy and killed him.

*Hiroya stays prostrated while confessing. Misao also remains standing as she listens.*

## #23 Irritation

*At the smoking area of the dry-cleaning factory.*

*Mei comes in chasing Takeo, who has come for a smoke break.*

**MEI:** Why can't I?

**TAKEO:** What are you talking about?

**MEI:** Give him a family registry. (*Having said that, she looks around to see if anyone is within hearing distance.*)

**TAKEO:** I'm not happy about it.

**MEI:** You were.

**TAKEO:** Forget it.

**MEI:** Forget what?

**TAKEO:** Have you phoned Shun?

**MEI:** The line was busy. Look.

**TAKEO:** Try again.

**MEI:** No, I won't. He's gone off on a date.

**TAKEO:** Call him. (*Unable to light his cigarette, he puts it away.*)

**MEI:** Why are you so irritable?

**TAKEO:** Have you heard anything from him?

**MEI:** Nothing.

**TAKEO:** About the river or such. Did he say anything?

**MEI:** I don't know. Why are you all of a sudden...?

**TAKEO:** He's never gone to the river, right?

*At another spot. Hanako and Shun have opened their picnic basket and are eating their boxed lunches.*

**MEI:** What?

**TAKEO:** You've never taken him there, right?

**MEI:** Why are you suddenly worried about that? I'm the one asking you. You say OK then not OK. What's going on?

**TAKEO:** It is OK now.

**MEI:** But this is for his birthday.

**TAKEO:** It's not today.

**MEI:** Huh?

**TAKEO:** (*A beat.*) I don't know when it is.

**MEI:** (*A beat.*) But...

*The work bell rings. Takeo is ready to go.*

**MEI:** Wait.

**TAKEO:** The break's over.

**MEI:** But, but I'm serious about this idea.

**TAKEO:** It won't work. Impossible.

**MEI:** Why not?

**TAKEO:** Turning someone else's kid into your own is obviously impossible.

**MEI:** Then whose kid is he? (*Pause.*) Whose son is he really, huh?

*Without answering, Takeo goes back to work. Clearly irritated, Mei storms off in the opposite direction.*

## #24 Place of Birth

*At the highway in front of the police station.*

*Shun and Hanako are sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, eating sandwiches. An automobile goes charging by right in front of them. Hanako coughs at the exhaust gas.*

**SHUN:** Are you OK?

**HANAKO:** Um, dust got into my face.

**SHUN:** I'm sorry I chose such a place.

**HANAKO:** Uh-uh, not to worry. Oh.

*A patrol car with its siren screaming shoots out from the police station.*

**HANAKO:** (*Standing up.*) An unmarked police car.

**SHUN:** Don't shout, "Yoohoo!"

**HANAKO:** (*Laughing.*) Look, the policeman at the gate is suspicious of us as we're watching from a place like this.

**SHUN:** We are suspicious, aren't we?

**HANAKO:** He might think we're like Bonnie and Clyde wondering whether to turn themselves in.

**SHUN:** Oh yeah.

**HANAKO:** Hehehe.

**SHUN:** Who are they?

**HANAKO:** (*A beat.*) Never mind. Why is the police station a memorable place for you?

**SHUN:** The first time I came to Awahi River, I just happened to be walking around and found the river. I remembered I'd come here once before with my dad.

**HANAKO:** What brought you here?

**SHUN:** I don't know. But I remember I cried forever at that gate. Dad got furious and threatened to leave me there. I ran after him.

**HANAKO:** Oh no, that's awful.

**SHUN:** But after that, we went to a café and ate an ice cream parfait.

**HANAKO:** You must have done something bad and were being punished.

**SHUN:** (*Laughs.*) Maybe so.

**HANAKO:** That was your first memory?

**SHUN:** Uh-uh. Before that, we stayed at some hotel. But the time we ate ice cream parfait was more striking. I was tremendously relieved. “Ahh, he’s not angry anymore, so we can go back together.”

**HANAKO:** Yeah.

**SHUN:** That’s what I remember the most.

**HANAKO:** (*A beat.*) Then this is where you were born.

**SHUN:** Huh?

**HANAKO:** Your tears then were your first cry.

**SHUN:** (*A beat.*) I guess so.

**HANAKO:** Oh, Shun. We’d better get going.

**SHUN:** Huh?

**HANAKO:** That cop’s coming our way.

**SHUN:** Oh shit.

**HANAKO:** (*Tidying up.*) We’re in for routine questioning!

**SHUN:** Let’s make a run for it.

**HANAKO:** Let’s go, Clyde.

**SHUN:** Let’s go, Bobbie.

**HANAKO:** (*Laughing.*) It’s Bonnie.

*The two run off as if to escape, laughing.*

## #25 Ghost

*In front of Bar Kurosawa in the evening.*

*Kimata and Kurosawa are waiting outside when Seiko and Eiko return hurriedly from their visit to Yuki’s grave. Both women look exhausted.*

**KUROSAWA:** You’re back.

**EIKO:** (*Stopping Seiko from running toward him.*) You mustn’t run, Seiko.

**KIMATA:** Sorry, there’s no need to hurry back.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) We wanted to get back quickly. Did you find out anything?

**KIMATA:** (*Noticing that Seiko is in poor shape.*) Are you all right, Seiko?

**SEIKO:** Uh-huh.

**EIKO:** She's not feeling that well.

**KIMATA:** Uh.

**EIKO:** At the memorial service, my relatives made interfering remarks.

**SEIKO:** That didn't bother me. Go on.

**KIMATA:** Well, I don't know if it is enough to call a clue.

**KUROSAWA:** Yes, you can. This is it.

*Kurosawa pulls out a dry-cleaning flyer from his pocket and passes it to Seiko.*

**KUROSAWA:** This is the flyer I got at the Hachioji barbecue joint. See the man right there?

**EIKO:** What about him?

**KUROSAWA:** He came by this bar, right before the accident.

**SEIKO:** What? (*Takes the flyer from Eiko and looks at it hard.*)

**KUROSAWA:** This customer made an impression on me, so I remembered him.

**KIMATA:** You know, in the first Kurosawa interview I uploaded, he spoke about this guy.

**EIKO:** Oh yes, the one on the bridge?

**KIMATA:** That's right, that's right.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) But this one is very young.

**KUROSAWA:** Huh?

**EIKO:** He looks like 20-something, don't you think?

**KUROSAWA:** Er, that's not it. Here it is. (*Brings out another flyer and gives it to her.*)

**EIKO:** Ah?

**KUROSAWA:** The first was the new flyer. He is in the old flyer.

**EIKO:** Um, and so?

**KIMATA:** According to Kurosawa, the accident happened right after this guy left the bar. So, he may have seen something.

**EIKO:** Ahh, but you could be wrong? This photo is so tiny.

**KUROSAWA:** I wouldn't forget him.

**EIKO:** But if we made a mistake again...

**KUROSAWA:** So, I will go alone and find out.

**EIKO:** What?

**KUROSAWA:** A mistake would be unforgivable. I do want to check the facts.

**EIKO:** So you said last time about the girls barbecue joint.

**KUROSAWA:** This time, I am serious.

**EIKO:** (To Seiko.) So he says.

*Seiko is looking intently at the flyer.*

**KIMATA:** I will go, too.

**KUROSAWA:** Could you mind the bar for me, instead?

**EIKO:** Seiko, it's this photo, not that one.

**SEIKO:** (A beat.) Mr. Kurosawa, please take me with you.

**KUROSAWA:** What?

**SEIKO:** To Hachioji.

**KUROSAWA:** Wait a moment...

**EIKO:** Sis, you don't have to go. We don't know if this is the man we are looking for.

**KUROSAWA:** Exactly. Well, it is that guy.

**KIMATA:** We are just going to check.

**SEIKO:** I want to go.

**EIKO:** You were so tired this afternoon.

**SEIKO:** Eiko, you rest here.

**EIKO:** Sister.

**SEIKO:** Let us go at once, before night falls.

**EIKO:** You won't find him.

**SEIKO:** What?

**EIKO:** (A beat.) This has got to stop, sister. Handing out flyers no one reads. Every time something comes up, you hit the trail, make mistakes, and get hurt.

**KUROSAWA:** But...

**EIKO:** Does this guy know anything? If he did, he would have called. Even if we go there, nothing will come of it.

**KIMATA:** Eiko.

**EIKO:** Do you realize what they said today? They said that Seiko was possessed by a spirit. My brother was furious with me, saying: "What the hell are you doing with them? She collapsed, and you didn't even get her hospitalized."

**SEIKO:** That was heatstroke.

**EIKO:** Not heatstroke! It is cancer! (*Seiko falls silent.*) Let's stop this. It is endless.

**SEIKO:** Mr. Kurosawa, please help me.

*Seiko retraces the path she came. Kurosawa is concerned about Eiko but follows after Seiko. Eiko enters the bar. Kimata hesitates but follows Eiko.*

## #26 Judgment

*The afternoon sun lights up the room.*

*Hiroya is still lying prostrate on the floor while Misao, with the folded laundry in her arms, is now seated and listening to him.*

**HIROYA:** I am really sorry. (Pause. Looks up.) Misao.

**MISAO:** Why?

**HIROYA:** It was too dark to see. I got out of the car and searched.

**MISAO:** No.

**HIROYA:** I was totally exhausted at that time.

**MISAO:** That's not what I meant.

**HIROYA:** I wanted to tell you all along. I knew I had to tell you.

**MISAO:** That's not it. Why...? Why now?

**HIROYA:** Eh?

**MISAO:** Why tell me now? Why didn't you let it be? Why didn't you stay silent about it? (Pause.) I would've been happier if I hadn't known.

**HIROYA:** (A beat.) Misao.

**MISAO:** You shared this so that...so that you could feel easier.

**HIROYA:** I didn't want to continue betraying you.

**MISAO:** Betraying...?

*Hiroya is at a loss for words. Misao takes the folded laundry, slowly stands up, and tries to leave the room.*

**HIROYA:** Misao.

**MISAO:** (A beat.) The biggest betrayal you've committed...is to tell me your story.

*Misao exits. The surroundings have darkened, and rain has begun to fall. Hiroya looks out of the window.*

## #27 Rain

*The sound of rainfall gradually gets louder. In the flashing lightning, Hanako, already sopping wet, comes running in with her jacket over her head. Every time the thunder*

*rolls, she emits a small cry, but sometimes she turns her face toward the sky, lets the rain fall on it, and seems to be enjoying the experience. Similarly, Shun races in with the picnic basket on top of his head.*

**SHUN:** Hana, (as she doesn't turn around) Hana—

*Hanako looks back smiling but says nothing. In the rain, they look at each other and smile faintly.*

**SHUN:** Where'll we go?

**HANAKO:** What?

**SHUN:** Where'd you want to go now?

*Without answering, Hanako runs off. Shun pursues her, and Hanako playfully escapes.*

## #28 The Crux of the Matter—sans Conviction

*At the dry-cleaning factory.*

*Beyond the workshop, Sumisuke and Mei can be seen working. Kurosawa and Seiko enter. Kurosawa goes up to a worker nearby and gives him a message. He then returns to Seiko, who has been waiting at the door.*

**KUROSAWA:** Let us start. (Seiko doesn't speak.) I will do the talking, so could you wait here, please? (Seiko nods.)

*Prompted by the worker, Sumisuke comes to Kurosawa.*

**SUMISUKE:** Welcome. Can I help you?

**KUROSAWA:** Are you the company president?

**SUMISUKE:** Yes. (Sharply.) Is this a complaint?

**KUROSAWA:** No, it isn't.

**SUMISUKE:** (Smiles.) Excuse me. This is the workshop area. As you are customers, could you please go around to the shop in the front?

**KUROSAWA:** No, that's all right. I just have a few questions.

**SUMISUKE:** I see.

*From two dry cleaners' flyers and a missing person flyer, Kurosawa takes the two dry cleaners' flyers and, after comparing them, chooses the older one.*

**KUROSAWA:** Could you provide some information on this man, this one, in your flyer?

**SUMISUKE:** And who are you, sir?

**KUROSAWA:** Ah, here is my identification.

*From his trouser pocket, Kurosawa takes a black diary and opens it momentarily for Sumisuke to see. Sumisuke tries to peer in, but Kurosawa puts it away quickly.*

**SUMISUKE:** What is it?

**KUROSAWA:** Yes?

**SUMISUKE:** Who are you?

**KUROSAWA:** I am from the police.

**SUMISUKE:** You were at the barbecue joint.

**KUROSAWA:** Ahh.

**SUMISUKE:** Isn't that right?

**KUROSAWA:** (A beat.) You have a good memory.

**SUMISUKE:** Maybe I do.

**KUROSAWA:** Do you frequent that place?

**SUMISUKE:** Yes, but I don't think I will go there anymore.

**KUROSAWA:** Why not?

**SUMISUKE:** Well, I have many sad memories of that place.

**KUROSAWA:** Indeed, how did that come about? (Gets ready to take notes.)

**SUMISUKE:** It's a long story...Ah, what did you come here for, sir?

**KUROSAWA:** Oh, excuse me. This man in the flyer is one of your workers, I assume?

**SUMISUKE:** You mean Take.

**KUROSAWA:** Take. What is his full name?

*Mei overhears the conversation and listens from a distance.*

**SUMISUKE:** Yoshikawa...Excuse me.

**KUROSAWA:** (Raising the old flyer.) This flyer is older than (holds up the new flyer with his other hand) this one. Is he still working here? If so, I would like to talk with him.

**SUMISUKE:** (A beat.) First, tell me your business here.

**KUROSAWA:** Ten years ago in Awahimachi, a hit-and-run case involving a child occurred.

**SUMISUKE:** Uh.

**KUROSAWA:** Over there is Mrs. Oride, the mother of the victim. (*Sumisuke looks at Seiko, who bows.*) So far, the perpetrator hasn't been found, but this Yoshikawa guy may...

**SUMISUKE:** Take didn't do it.

**KUROSAWA:** Wait...

**SUMISUKE:** Take doesn't have a driver's license.

**KUROSAWA:** No, that's not the point. The child in the accident is said to have died, but the body has never been—

*The closing bell rings loudly. The workers start to leave.*

**KUROSAWA:** What's that?

**SUMISUKE:** That is the bell for closing time. Excuse me, but I think this is enough.

**KUROSAWA:** Excuse me, but could you look at this, please? (*Hands Sumisuke a missing person notice.*) This is the missing person...

**SUMISUKE:** In any case, it wasn't Take, all right?

**MEI:** What is happening?

**SUMISUKE:** Nothing.

**KUROSAWA:** Could we talk a little more?

**SUMISUKE:** He quit.

**KUROSAWA:** He wha—?

**SUMISUKE:** He's not here anymore. I'm sorry.

**MEI:** What did you say?

**SUMISUKE:** Never you mind. (*With some flair.*) Detective, Take is not the kind of person the police would need to go after.

**KUROSAWA:** I think you misunderstand.

**SUMISUKE:** What am I misunderstanding?

**KUROSAWA:** (A beat.) Well, for starters, I am not a detective. Also...

**SUMISUKE:** Then what did you show me a while ago?

**KUROSAWA:** You see, it's not that I believe he is the criminal.

**SUMISUKE:** What the—

**KUROSAWA:** You see...

**WORKER:** Goodbye, sir.

**KUROSAWA:** Holy shit—

*Having changed into street clothes, Takeo enters right in front of Kurosawa. Mei tries to stop Takeo from leaving in a hurry.*

**MEI:** Wait.

**TAKEO:** I'll go look for Shun.

**MEI:** Don't go out there right now.

**KUROSAWA:** Hey you! See, it is the same guy.

**TAKEO:** Huh?

**KUROSAWA:** Ten years ago you came to my bar, didn't you? That's right, isn't it?

Haha, Seiko, it is this man after all. There's no mistaking him. (*To Sumisuke.*) Why did you say that you had fired him?

**SUMISUKE:** Never mind. I just fired him today. Hey, why are you still around?

**TAKEO:** Whaaat—?

**KUROSAWA:** After you left that night, there was a hit-and-run accident. Do you remember? (*Takeo stares in silence at Seiko.*) You and I are probably the last witnesses.

**TAKEO:** Bar? What bar are you referring to?

**KUROSAWA:** Hey, don't act as if...

**TAKEO:** I don't frequent bars, you see. (*He's about to leave.*)

**KUROSAWA:** What's this?

**SUMISUKE:** That's enough, you've been fired, so get the heck out of here. Shoo, shoo, you filthy cockroach!

**MEI:** You don't need to behave like that.

**SEIKO:** Excuse me.

*Seiko approaches Kurosawa, snatches one of the new flyers, and then approaches Sumisuke.*

**SEIKO:** Well then, how about this man? The young fellow in this flyer?

**SUMISUKE:** Huh?

**SEIKO:** Is he still working here?

**SUMISUKE:** Is there some kind of a connection?

**SEIKO:** Please look at this. (*Takes the missing person notice and displays it again in*

*front of Sumisuke.) This boy here. Doesn't he look like the young man in this flyer?*

**SUMISUKE:** Hang on.

**SEIKO:** He is my son. If he is alive, he would be twenty years old.

**SUMISUKE:** This is...*(Exchanges looks with Mei.)*

*Standing apart, Takeo has been listening to the conversation but now tries to leave.*

**SEIKO:** This boy. Isn't he your son? Isn't the story that there is one father and one son?

**TAKEO:** *(A beat.)* Excuse me?

**SEIKO:** This may sound silly, but please hear me out. At that time, the police had told me something. On the same day, a father-son pair was sighted at a hospital. The boy was about the same age as my son. As the father went by a different name and the boy was not acting as if he were on guard, they did not suspect anything. However, looking at these two flyers made me wonder.

**KUROSAWA:** Seiko?

*Takeo is silent.*

**SEIKO:** Could you have saved the boy in the accident on the night of the storm and then abducted him? Isn't that right? *(Takeo remains silent.)* Hasn't the boy lost his memory of everything earlier than the accident?

*Seiko approaches slowly, takes Takeo's arm, and clings to it.*

**SEIKO:** Please, I beg you. If that was my child, please give him back to me. I beg you from my heart.

**SUMISUKE:** Take.

**SEIKO:** I beg you! I beg you!

*A long silence. Takeo and Seiko look intently at each other.*

**TAKEO:** *(Stares at Seiko.)* What the fuck are you going on about? *(Seiko doesn't speak.)* He...is my son.

**SEIKO:** Please...

**TAKEO:** *(Violently pushes Seiko away.)* Stop indulging in weird delusions. I haven't

been to a bar, and I know nothing about an accident.

**KUROSAWA:** Oh no...

**TAKEO:** I don't think the lost child looks anything like my son.

**SEIKO:** But...

**TAKEO:** Furthermore, this is the mother.

**SEIKO:** What?!

**TAKEO:** There she is. We are not just father and son.

**SEIKO:** Is this true?

**MEI:** *(A beat.)* Shun is my son.

*Sumisuke looks at Mei.*

**MEI:** The pregnancy and delivery were traumatic as I was in my teens. Isn't that right, Bro.

*Sumisuke is puzzled but nods assent.*

**KUROSAWA:** Ugh...

**MEI:** So, this is a case of mistaken identity. *(Seiko does not speak.)* If you are in doubt, I can get a certified copy of the family registry.

**KUROSAWA:** Shall we?

**SEIKO:** No...I apologize for making strange claims. It seems to be my misunderstanding.

**KUROSAWA:** I am sorry to hear that. I felt convinced, but...

**SEIKO:** No, no, I was in the wrong. Brooding over all this, my delusions grew, my selfish hopes have taken everyone on a wild goose chase. As Eiko said, this is...

**KUROSAWA:** Seiko.

**SEIKO:** ...endless.

*Seiko walks unsteadily toward the exit, bowing her head to Takeo and the others.*

**SEIKO:** I am very sorry to have been a trouble to you.

*Seiko exits. Dissatisfied, Kurosawa yet bows to Sumisuke and the others and follows Seiko out. Mei stands stunned and trembling. Takeo has gone rigid.*

**SUMISUKE:** Take, what is this all about, eh? *(Pause.)* If what those people said is

true, you are really in the pits.

**MEI:** Bro...

**SUMISUKE:** Even so, you keep my sister out of it, you hear!

*Takeo doesn't reply. Sumisuke leaves angrily. Mei approaches Takeo, whose eyes are downcast.*

**TAKEO:** I'm sorry.

**MEI:** (A beat.) Let's go look for Shun.

*Mei takes Takeo's hand, and together they exit.*

## #29 The Testimony of Eiko Shimizu, the Aunt of the Victim

*Eiko's figure emerges from the darkness. Across from her is Kimata's camera. She begins to talk to the camera.*

**EIKO:** I am Eiko Shimizu, the aunt of Yuki Oride. My occupation is nurse. My age is, well, never mind. My husband is a doctor, and we have a son who is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader. My main interest is tennis. I have always liked Shuzo Matsuoka.<sup>10</sup> My daily routine is to watch the videos on his official site, like "Listen to Your Heart." I like his golden saying "If you live to the best of your ability, you will never feel tired."

**KIMATA:** Excuse me, that's enough, please.

## #30 A Visitor

*At night. Kimata and Eiko are on duty tending the bar. Kimata, who was shooting Eiko's interview, turns off the video camera and returns inside the counter.*

**EIKO:** Wait a moment, why are you stopping the video?

**KIMATA:** You only talk of peripheral things.

**EIKO:** I have to clarify my personality before I get to the heart of the matter.

**KIMATA:** Your personality fills up your allotted time.

**EIKO:** Let me try again.

**KIMATA:** No need.

**EIKO:** I won't talk about extraneous matters.

**KIMATA:** Nothing about tennis?

**EIKO:** None.

**KIMATA:** Nothing about the nail salon? Nothing about the "incredibly real dream you had last night"? Can you really not talk about them?

**EIKO:** I promise.

**KIMATA:** Let's mind the bar.

**EIKO:** I'm saying, I promise.

*Kimata's cell phone rings, and he checks his email. Eiko peers in worriedly.*

**EIKO:** Was that Kurosawa?

**KIMATA:** Yes.

**EIKO:** What did he say about it? (*Kimata shakes his head.*) See, you can't believe what he says after all.

**KIMATA:** It must be a great shock for Seiko.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) You are blaming me. Aren't you?

**KIMATA:** You're mistaken.

**EIKO:** I know. I said some nasty things. I think so, too.

**KIMATA:** No, I was having the same thoughts.

**EIKO:** That's a lie. Shooting the video fills up your mind.

**KIMATA:** Certainly, to take a documentary, you need to be totally committed to the task. But you see, I can tell that Seiko's body is shrinking day by day even through the viewfinder.

**EIKO:** Um.

**KIMATA:** So, how can I say it...It occurred to me that there would be an end to this search.

**EIKO:** (*Looking out the window.*) The wind has died out.

**KIMATA:** But with this rain, no customers will come. No one else either.

**EIKO:** Someone's coming. It might be a customer.

**KIMATA:** (*Looking hard.*) That can't be. She's pregnant.

**EIKO:** Oh, it's that woman...

*From the street, Misao walks toward the bar, holding her umbrella over her head.*

**EIKO:** Isn't that the nurse from the hospital when Seiko collapsed?

**KIMATA:** Oh yes, you're right.

**EIKO:** She's coming this way.

**KIMATA:** An expecting mother to a bar?

**EIKO:** Good evening.

*Eiko opens the bar door. Misao stands there without entering.*

**MISAO:** Ah...

**EIKO:** We met at the hospital the other day.

**MISAO:** Yes.

**EIKO:** It's good to see you. Please come in. You'll get wet standing there.

*Misao looks behind her. Hiroya can now be seen walking heavily toward the bar. Both Misao and Hiroya seem extremely tense.*

**EIKO:** Can I help you?

**MISAO:** May we come in?

**EIKO:** Yes, of course, please come over here.

*Misao waits until Hiroya arrives and then enters. Hiroya hesitates at the door but, responding to Misao's gaze, keeps his head down and enters.*

**KIMATA:** Welcome. (*Misao and Hiroya do not respond.*)

**EIKO:** (*Disturbed by their attitude, but still polite.*) I would like to thank you again for your assistance the other day. I am sorry I could not talk with you directly at that time. I apologize for that.

**MISAO:** Not at all...

**EIKO:** You're looking for my sister, right? She's out.

**MISAO:** Ooh...

**EIKO:** But, she will be back soon.

**KIMATA:** Please order a drink. The bar owner is also out, so...

**HIROYA:** Huh? (*Raises his head.*)

**KIMATA:** (*A beat.*) We cannot offer any cocktails.

**MISAO:** (*A beat.*) What would you like? (*Hiroya is silent. To Kimata.*) Do you have orange juice?

**KIMATA:** Yes, ma'am.

**MISAO:** He'll have Oolong tea...no, let's make that whiskey. (*Hiroya looks at her.*)

**KIMATA:** Uh...

**MISAO:** Straight, please.

**KIMATA:** What brand?

**MISAO:** I'll leave that to you.

**KIMATA:** Yes, ma'am.

*Troubled by their attitude, Kimata nonetheless prepares the drinks. Eiko, to allay her discomfort, strikes up a conversation.*

**EIKO:** Did you walk all the way here?

**MISAO:** Yes. Oh, this is my husband.

**EIKO:** How do you do. You are both wet. Let me get you a towel or something.

**MISAO:** No, it's all right.

**EIKO:** You'll catch a cold. (*Tries to touch her.*)

**MISAO:** (*Quickly twisting aside.*) I'm all right.

**EIKO:** (*Draws back her hand at this hypersensitive reaction.*) Ohh...

**MISAO:** Excuse me, I have a towel.

**EIKO:** I see.

*Misao brings out a towel from her carrier bag and wipes Hiroya's and her own clothes and hair.*

**MISAO:** How is your sister's condition since she left the hospital?

**EIKO:** Well, she is trying to rest as much as she can.

**MISAO:** That must be difficult considering the situation.

**EIKO:** (*A beat.*) When is your due date?

**MISAO:** It's coming soon. That's how it feels.

**EIKO:** Must be.

**MISAO:** Yes, since this morning I've been feeling a dull pain in my abdomen.

**EIKO:** Isn't that a sign of labor?

**KIMATA:** You shouldn't be in a place like this.

**MISAO:** Uh, these are still the pre-labor contractions.

**KIMATA:** But still...

**MISAO:** I'm all right. We want to have our last supper as a married couple before the

delivery. Or something like that.

**EIKO:** Is that right?

**KIMATA:** Here you are.

*Kimata places the drinks in front of them.*

**MISAO:** Go ahead. (Pause.) You'll feel more at ease. (Hiroya takes the glass in silence.)

**KIMATA:** You're shaking. (Misao takes Hiroya's hand and stops the trembling.) You must be cold.

**MISAO:** Excuse me for the trouble. Could we borrow a towel after all?

**EIKO:** Of course. I'll go upstairs for one.

**MISAO:** Thank you.

*Eiko goes upstairs.*

**MISAO:** And so...

**KIMATA:** Yes?

**MISAO:** What happened about that incident? The one about the child?

**KIMATA:** Well, we are still investigating.

**MISAO:** Has the perpetrator...been found?

**KIMATA:** Oh, no...in fact, we are not really looking for the criminal.

**MISAO:** You aren't?

**KIMATA:** Uh-uh, we are focused on finding Yuki.

**MISAO:** I see.

**KIMATA:** Of course, it's not a good idea to leave the criminal at large.

**MISAO:** Right, right...

**HIROYA:** What kind of a guy is he?

**KIMATA:** Huh?

**HIROYA:** That guy...What kind of life could he be leading? (Gulps down his whiskey.)

*Misao stays silent.*

**KIMATA:** I can't imagine. Maybe he is simply leading an ordinary life.

**HIROYA:** Yeah. He's living an ordinary life. He breaths normally, eats normally, works, has fun, gets married, maybe even finds a new hope for living. He pretends

he's forgotten about it and lives a carefree life.

**KIMATA:** I can't allow that.

**HIROYA:** Of course you can't. No one can allow that!

**MISAO:** My dear.

**HIROYA:** He should regret what he did and breath every breath in remorse for the rest of his life. But you know...He knows that while he can live normally now, what he did will be sure to catch up with him later on. Most certainly...

*Misao is careful not to speak.*

**KIMATA:** Is that how it goes? It should. (*Laughs.*) Excuse me, but are you feeling OK?

**HIROYA:** Me?

**MISAO:** Let's go. We'll go home.

**KIMATA:** Already?

**MISAO:** Could I have the bill, please? (*Hiroya is surprised.*)

**KIMATA:** But you haven't even...

**MISAO:** My abdomen is, um...I may be having real contractions.

**KIMATA:** Ahhh, in that case, sure. Eiko!

**MISAO:** Let's go. (*Hiroya doesn't speak.*) Come on, OK? (*They stand up.*) The bill, please.

**KIMATA:** On the house, on the house. Please hurry home and take care.

**MISAO:** Thank you.

**KIMATA:** Should I call a taxi?

**MISAO:** I'm all right, thanks.

**KIMATA:** But...

**MISAO:** Really.

*Eiko returns with a towel.*

**EIKO:** Are you leaving?

**KIMATA:** Her contractions are starting to bother her.

**EIKO:** Oh, I see.

**MISAO:** Well, thank you.

**KIMATA:** Good night.

**EIKO:** Take care.

*Kimata and Eiko rush about to see the customers off. Then they look at each other and shrug. Hiroya is holding the umbrella and supporting Misao as they head home. Just at that moment, Kurosawa and Seiko pass the couple on their return to the bar. In the darkness, with eyes downcast, Seiko has her umbrella low over her head so that she doesn't notice Misao, whose view is blocked by her own umbrella so she does not notice Seiko either.*

*As for Kurosawa and Hiroya, in passing each other, lightning makes both of them lift their umbrellas to look at the sky. Both stand still for a moment, in which Kurosawa sees Hiroya's face in the bright glare. But without noticing Kurosawa, Hiroya lowers his umbrella and heads home. Kurosawa looks at Hiroya's figure from behind for a while, as if trying to remember something, then shakes his head as if in dismissal of a misapprehension. With Seiko, he goes back to the bar.*

### #31 Risk

*Takeo goes to Agashi.*

*The barbecue joint is dimly lit, and only Yuki and Lara are there. Yuki, holding a broom and trash bag, is collecting fragments of glass scattered about the floor. Lara, covering her face, is crying. Both are exhausted.*

*When Takeo enters, Yuki stiffens and is on guard. Lara hides behind Yuki.*

**TAKEO:** *(Taken aback by their negative vibes.)* Excuse me.

**YUKI:** Who are you?

**TAKEO:** Is Hanako Yamada here?

**YUKI:** Why?

**TAKEO:** Well, you see...

**LARA:** *(In Chinese.)* Who?

**TAKEO:** Hanako and my son are friends.

**YUKI:** Huh?

**TAKEO:** He's called Shun.

*Mei enters late.*

**MEI:** Is he here? *(Noticing the weird atmosphere of the barbecue joint.)* Ohh, uh?

**YUKI:** Ahh, are ya from the dry cleaners?

**TAKEO:** Yes.

**LARA:** (*In Chinese.*) Who are you? Are you Taniguchi's friends?

**YUKI:** (*To Lara.*) They're customers. (*To Takeo and Mei.*) Excuse us, will you please.

As you can surely tell, we're closed for tonight.

**TAKEO:** Wait, where is Hanako?

**YUKI:** As you can see, she isn't here.

**TAKEO:** Isn't she with my son?

**YUKI:** How the heck should I know? She's taken the day off.

**MEI:** (*A beat.*) Has something happened?

**YUKI:** Oh, it's nothing. Hey no, don't come over here. You might step on broken glass.

**MEI:** What's up? You don't look too good.

*Lara steps back hiding her face.*

**YUKI:** There's nothing wrong with her.

**MEI:** Wait a moment, let me see. I won't do anything.

**YUKI:** Just leave her alone, will ya?!

*Mei approaches Lara with care so as not to frighten her and moves her hands, which hold up the sleeve of her jeogori, away from her face. Mei looks at Lara. Her face is scarred and swollen.*

**MEI:** Oh my god. (*Lara is on the verge of tears. To Takeo.*) Look...

**TAKEO:** Hey, what have you done!

**YUKI:** I didn't do that. What d'ya take me for? Lara's husband's to blame.

**MEI:** What?!

**LARA:** Taniguchi! Taniguchi!

**YUKI:** He came here with his bully buddies. They all got drunk, started fighting, and trashed the place. Vicious bastards!

**TAKEO:** Why did they pick on her? (*As Yuki doesn't answer.*) Hey c'mon!

**YUKI:** They said they were offended by her laughter.

*Crying, Lara clings to Mei.*

**MEI:** How could they beat up a girl's face so bad.

**YUKI:** She got involved with an ugly one. It's her bad luck.

**MEI:** Bad luck?

**YUKI:** It's not unusual.

**MEI:** Did you go to the police?

**YUKI:** (*Gives a low laugh.*) Of course not.

**MEI:** Why not? You should go and report them. (*Looks at her husband and shuts up.*

*He gives no response.*) I'll go to the drug store.

**TAKEO:** Mei...

**YUKI:** Don't bother.

**MEI:** I can do that much. (*To Lara.*) I'll buy some medicine. (*Lara nods.*)

**YUKI:** Why the fuck should you?

**MEI:** Because of what I've seen.

*Mei exits. Without Mei, Lara now clings to Yuki. As he sweeps the floor, he lightly taps her on the head.*

**YUKI:** Wanna drink?

**TAKEO:** Uh-uh. Have you checked that side of your body?

**YUKI:** Huh?

**TAKEO:** Aren't you injured, too?

**YUKI:** Oh, this? This is nothing. And, aren't you searching for your son? Isn't he with Hanako? Have you called him?

**TAKEO:** He's not answering.

**YUKI:** Are you in a hurry?

**TAKEO:** No, he's just late coming home.

**YUKI:** Huh? (*Laughs.*) Isn't it normal for him to stay over at a girl's place?

*(Takeo doesn't respond.)* It isn't? How old is he? Haha. You sure are an over-protective dad. (*Glancing at Lara.*) There really are parents like you in this world.

**TAKEO:** What're you going to do about this girl?

**YUKI:** Nothing I can do. She's still a newlywed.

**TAKEO:** Isn't it dangerous for her to have a man like that nearby?

**YUKI:** Getting married doesn't mean they're going to live together. Anyway, next time they meet, she'll know not to laugh.

**TAKEO:** Does she want to stay here so bad that she'll go that far?

**YUKI:** In Japan?

**TAKEO:** Doesn't she want to go home?

**YUKI:** You wanna stay here, right?

**LARA:** (*In Chinese.*) Wanna go back to China! Wanna go home!

**YUKI:** (*Laughs.*) She wants to go back.

**LARA:** (*In Chinese.*) Wanna go back home! Going home!

**YUKI:** Wanna go home but can't go home. Wasn't there a song like that? (*Takeo doesn't respond. Yuki sings.*) Wanna go home but can't go home. Not going home but wanna go home.<sup>11</sup>

**LARA:** (*In Chinese.*) I wanna go home!

*Yuki pours a little apricot liqueur into a glass, gives it to Takeo, and then continues to clean the area. Lara collapses on the floor and continues to cry.*

## #32 Two of a Kind

*Hanako's room.*

*After his bath, Shun, in PJs, watches Hanako lay out the futon.*

**HANAKO:** You look good in them.

**SHUN:** Do I?

**HANAKO:** Um.

**SHUN:** Whose are they?

**HANAKO:** I put old worn PJs in the dryer.

**SHUN:** They'd dry really quick at the shop.

**HANAKO:** Did you want to go to your workplace on your day off?

**SHUN:** Nah.

**HANAKO:** There's another futon set over there. (*Pause.*) Or we can just share one?

**SHUN:** Oh, (*hurriedly shaking his head*) I just realized that you had two sets.

**HANAKO:** Most homes would have two sets, wouldn't they?

**SHUN:** How about toothbrushes?

**HANAKO:** Hm?

**SHUN:** And slippers?

**HANAKO:** (*Laughs.*) Shun, you're pretty sharp. (*Pause.*) You know about Lara, right? I'm the same.

**SHUN:** The same?

**HANAKO:** I'm married, too.

**SHUN:** What...?

**HANAKO:** As soon as I arrived I was entered into his family registry. But it's OK.

My husband comes by only about once a month. He's not here tonight. (*Pause.*) Do you want to go home?

**SHUN:** No way.

**HANAKO:** The slippers, toothbrushes, twin mugs and such are proof that we live together. Sometimes an investigator comes to check up on us. So, we are ready to lie to him.

**SHUN:** Then it's all a lie?

**HANAKO:** Well, sure. We got married after two meetings. He's more than twenty years older. But he's nice. When we meet, he always takes me out to dinner. He's more like a father than a husband.

**SHUN:** A father.

**HANAKO:** Yeah, the man who gave me his name. (*Pause.*) As you took me to the place you were born, I decided to share with you, too.

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**HANAKO:** Don't tell anyone.

**SHUN:** Same here.

**HANAKO:** Today was fun.

**SHUN:** (*A beat.*) Hey, the futon. (*Stands up.*)

**HANAKO:** (*Grabbing his arm.*) We only need one set.

*In silence, Shun pushes her over. She falls.*

**HANAKO:** Hey, did you call home?

**SHUN:** (*Getting up right away.*) Ah, yeah, just a while ago.

**HANAKO:** Did you get into trouble?

**SHUN:** Uh-uh. They said I could stay over.

**HANAKO:** You asked for permission?!

**SHUN:** Yeah, but Mom was crying.

**HANAKO:** This is crazy!

**SHUN:** Hahaha.

**HANAKO:** It's not funny. She was genuinely worried. Look at all the incoming calls.

**SHUN:** I haven't developed the habit of checking my cell phone.

**HANAKO:** It's your first.

**SHUN:** Yeah.

**HANAKO:** Staying overnight is a first for you, too. You're a sheltered son, a sheltered son!

**SHUN:** Oh yeah.

**HANAKO:** Yeah, you don't even know such Japanese expressions.

**SHUN:** What the heck! You're only Chinese.

**HANAKO:** Shut up! (*Knocks him over with her pillow.*)

**SHUN:** (*Still lying on his back.*) Somehow, I couldn't leave home.

**HANAKO:** Huh?

**SHUN:** Somehow, I felt I had to stay with my dad.

*Hanako joins Shun where he is lying down on his back.*

**HANAKO:** But you're an adult now.

**SHUN:** Yeah, I am, aren't I.

**HANAKO:** When you were a student, didn't you go to training camp and such?

**SHUN:** I didn't go to school.

**HANAKO:** Hahaha.

**SHUN:** Hahahaha.

*They laugh together.*

**HANAKO:** It's stopped raining.

*The two stay lying on the futon, looking out the window.*

### #33 The Rainfall Stops

*Midnight. The rain stops after the typhoon passes through, and clouds travel leisurely across the moonlit sky. Seiko is walking alone along the Awahi River. After a while, Kimata comes running after her. He shoots Seiko's walk from behind. Seiko looks around, but they continue to walk without speaking. Kimata comes to a standstill, stops shooting, and follows Seiko.*

*Over in Hachioji, Lara, her face covered in gauze, clings to Yuki on their way home from Agashi. Takeo is a short distance behind them and, further behind him, Mei follows. When Yuki looks around, Takeo and Mei lower their heads slightly and go off*

*their own way. Takeo looks back at Mei and says something, upon which she nods, overtakes Takeo, and goes home.*

*Takeo stands still and looks up at the sky. He eventually drops his gaze and gives a deep sigh.*

*Blackout.*

## #34 What to Protect

*At the hospital, in front of the newborn nursery. Hiroya is looking through the viewing window at a baby.*

**HIROYA:** *(In a low voice.)* Hey.

*Hiroya smiles at the baby's reactions and waves his hand or taps on the window in rhythm with the baby's movement. Postpartum Misao comes along in her inpatient's outfit and watches Hiroya.*

**MISAO:** Please do not knock on the glass.

**HIROYA:** *(In a hurry, he removes his hand.)* Oh, excu...

**MISAO:** The baby will be frightened.

**HIROYA:** Oh, it's you.

**MISAO:** You were here after all.

**HIROYA:** Are you allowed to walk around?

**MISAO:** Uh-huh. *(Pointing to the other side of the glass.)* I came to see his face.

Starting tomorrow, I can take him to my room.

**HIROYA:** Isn't it better you don't move around too much?

**MISAO:** I'm completely well. I'm a super delivery mom.

**HIROYA:** The doctor said he couldn't believe this was your first.

**MISAO:** I heard the midwife and nurses clapping and saying, "Wow, so fast, so fast."

**HIROYA:** You were incredibly fast.

**MISAO:** To think those really were contractions.

**HIROYA:** *(Laughs.)* Amazing.

**MISAO:** If I'd stayed at the bar, my water would have broken.

**HIROYA:** Sorry.

**MISAO:** Thanks for being with me in the delivery room.

**HIROYA:** (*Nodding his head.*) Thank you, too.

**MISAO:** I'm really glad you were able to hold him.

**HIROYA:** So am I. He felt so soft in my arms...

**MISAO:** (*Interrupting him.*) I won't say anything.

**HIROYA:** Huh?

**MISAO:** To anyone about you-know. (*Pause.*) You don't need to tell anyone, either.

**HIROYA:** But...

**MISAO:** When we were at the bar, I wanted to force you to confess. (*Pause.*) But for his sake, too, I can't tell anyone.

**HIROYA:** I'm really sor...

**MISAO:** (*Interrupting.*) Instead...I can't let you hold him again. (*Hiroya is speechless.*)

You go back to Nagoya.

**HIROYA:** Misao...Misao.

*Misao heads back to her room. Hiroya calls out to her, but Misao doesn't look back.*

### #35 Withdrawal

*In the street before the bar; Seiko, Kurosawa, and Kimata have gathered to give Eiko a send-off. Eiko is hugging a travel bag and wiping her tears.*

**EIKO:** This is really a shame.

**SEIKO:** Eiko.

**EIKO:** I leave the house vacant for a short time and get suspected of adultery. My doctor-husband is such a weakling. That's why he still can't open his own clinic. It's true.

**KIMATA:** Now, now...

**EIKO:** Please talk to him yourself, too. Of the nights above a dirty bar, the three of us on two thin futon.

**KUROSAWA:** Did you three really share two futon?

**KIMATA:** After returning the rental car, we did.

**SEIKO:** Eiko, don't cry. You are only going back for a visit.

**EIKO:** That's right, sister. I will be back as soon as I can.

**SEIKO:** Uh-huh.

**KUROSAWA:** Is that so?

**EIKO:** Of course it is. After what I said last night, you may want to dismiss what I say now, but I cannot leave halfway when my sister is still doing battle. Seiko, I will accompany you to the bitter end.

**KUROSAWA:** Gee, you are just like a military officer.

**EIKO:** We must absolutely find Yuki.

**SEIKO:** (*A beat.*) I understand. (*Eiko hugs Seiko tight.*)

**KIMATA:** It's arrived.

*The sound of an automobile approaching. Kimata waves to the taxi.*

**EIKO:** Kimata, pay attention. I will give my husband a huge punch, buy my son a PlayStation 4, and then come back immediately. Until then, please take care of my sister.

**KIMATA:** Yes, I understand.

**EIKO:** Kurosawa.

**KUROSAWA:** Understood.

**EIKO:** (*Sternly.*) Please buy another futon set.

**KUROSAWA:** (*Sternly.*) That is all I have.

**EIKO:** Well, Sister, I will go.

**SEIKO:** Take care, Eiko. I feel deep, deep gratitude to you.

**EIKO:** I will return immediately!

**KUROSAWA and KIMATA:** Hip, hip, hurrah.

*Thus, Eiko departs to the cheers of Kurosawa and Kimata.*

**KUROSAWA:** She had better come back here as she promises.

**KIMATA:** Oh, she will.

**KUROSAWA:** All right, let's eat and then have a strategy meeting.

**KIMATA:** Strategy meeting?

**KUROSAWA:** For the near future. That dry cleaners bothers me, you know.

**KIMATA:** Are you going there again?

**KUROSAWA:** Let's see. I'll go as a customer and start from the shop side.

*As he speaks, Kurosawa exits. Kimata wants to follow.*

**KIMATA:** The two of us started this. Now they are all fired up.

**SEIKO:** Kimata.

**KIMATA:** Yes.

**SEIKO:** I am thinking of quitting.

**KIMATA:** I wondered if you would say that.

**SEIKO:** Oh, really.

**KIMATA:** Just a feeling. But you couldn't say that to Eiko, could you? She'd think that her harsh statements were the real reason.

**SEIKO:** I had no intention of quitting, whatever relatives said at the memorial service at the grave. As long as I could carry on, I intended to continue the investigation. But...

**KIMATA:** Was it the incident at the dry cleaners?

**SEIKO:** Yesterday, I pressed a stranger to give me back my son. That made me realize that I'd forgotten what Yuki looked like.

**KIMATA:** But that was...

**SEIKO:** I believed that however much he may have changed, I would recognize him. But unawares, I had let him go.

**KIMATA:** Seiko.

**SEIKO:** You see, I can't find him anymore. (*Kimata is silent.*) I'm sorry, I can't continue with the search.

**KIMATA:** (*A beat.*) For me, the result of the search was irrelevant as long as the video was interesting. (*Seiko looks steadily at him.*) I apologize. But it is true. The child didn't matter.

**SEIKO:** (*A beat.*) I see.

**KIMATA:** But spending time with you, and forming a wobbly team with Eiko and Kurosawa... (*He laughs, which Seiko faintly echoes.*) As we investigated together, somehow, my mind changed to wanting only one result, and I kept forgetting to get out the video camera so many times. (*Seiko listens in silence.*) I may not be suited for documentaries.

**SEIKO:** Thank you.

**KIMATA:** (*With style.*) The place you chose will become the last scene...

**KUROSAWA:** (*Sticking his head out.*) Aren't you guys going to eat?

**SEIKO:** Oh.

**KIMATA:** Ahh, it's OK. Never mind. I was getting too serious. Hey, that guy feels the vibes.

**SEIKO:** (*A low laugh.*) Mm-hm.

**KIMATA:** I can drive you as far as Kyoto.

**SEIKO:** (Shakes her head.) I will enter a hospital. It wouldn't be good for my son if I seem to hurry to death.

**KIMATA:** No, it wouldn't.

*The two start to walk.*

**SEIKO:** By the way, Kimata.

**KIMATA:** Yes?

**SEIKO:** I have a last request.

### #36 Victim and Perpetrator

*Takeo's apartment.*

*Takeo enters carrying a large sturdy bag. Shun follows in hot pursuit.*

**SHUN:** C'mon, what are you doing? Stop.

*He tries to stop Takeo from putting his belongings—clothes and personal items—into the bag. Mei is looking on in great consternation.*

**SHUN:** Wait. Why are you doing this?

*Shun shoves a wad of banknotes back at Takeo, who ignores Shun and continues to stuff the bag.*

**TAKEO:** I'm giving that to you.

**SHUN:** I don't want it.

**TAKEO:** Then leave it.

**MEI:** Take.

**SHUN:** Why? Why are you so mad I stayed out overnight? Why do I have to leave this home just because of that? (Takeo continues to stuff the bag.) Other parents don't blow their top over this kind of thing. I wanna have a good time. I'm an adult now.

**TAKEO:** Then get going and have a good time.

**SHUN:** Why do I have to leave home?

**TAKEO:** You said yourself that you're an adult now.

**SHUN:** You're gonna kick me out now I'm an adult, for this measly amount!

**TAKEO:** (*Holding back.*) I've done enough for you. I brought you up, didn't I?

**SHUN:** (*A beat.*) Huh?

**TAKEO:** Why the fuck do I have to keep taking care of someone else's brat?

**MEI:** Take!

*Shun is silenced.*

**SUMISUKE:** (*From offstage.*) Excuse me, Take? Are you there?

**SHUN:** I don't get it. What's that about?

**TAKEO:** You know already. I told you once a long time ago.

*Shun falls silent.*

**SUMISUKE:** (*Still offstage.*) I'm coming in.

**TAKEO:** Have you forgotten? You were crying up a storm in front of the police station.

*Shun remains silent.*

*Sumisuke enters from the front door.*

**TAKEO:** At that time, I took you home with me since there was no other solution.

But I've had enough. I'm angry, not because you didn't come home last night, but because you did today.

**MEI:** That's a horrible thing to say.

**SUMISUKE:** (*To Mei.*) What's up?

**MEI:** Take is trying to throw Shun out.

**SUMISUKE:** Huh?

**TAKEO:** You aren't the way you were then, right? You can play around until the cash dries up. You can live with some woman if you want.

**SHUN:** And after that? What do I do after that? I don't have any proof of identity. How am I to live alone?

**TAKEO:** Go to the police station.

**SHUN:** What?

**MEI:** Take, stop that.

**TAKEO:** Tell them that you're Yuki Oride. That you got lost ten years ago. Then your family will come and welcome you home.

**SHUN:** Who's that?

**TAKEO:** (A beat.) That's you.

**SHUN:** That doesn't mean anything at all to me.

**TAKEO:** You'll remember in time.

**SHUN:** (Laughs.) You pick up a stranger's kid and then send it back when you don't want it anymore. (*Takeo doesn't speak.*) Can anyone change that conveniently?

**TAKEO:** Change yourself. (*Shun doesn't answer.*)

*Takeo finishes filling the bag and practically throws it in Shun's face. Shun stands up angrily, throws the bag back, and heads for the door. Mei chases after him.*

**MEI:** (Catches Shun.) Wait, Shun. Your dad isn't serious.

**TAKEO:** Yes, I am.

**MEI:** I don't think so.

**TAKEO:** You're not his mother.

*Mei has no reply. Shun glares at Takeo, then runs away from the apartment.*

**MEI:** Wait, Shun. Shun!

**SUMISUKE:** Take.

**MEI:** (Coming back.) How could you? You didn't have to talk to him like that.

**TAKEO:** Sorry.

**MEI:** You were trying to get him angry so that he'd leave? You think he'll leave if you hurt him? (Pause.) And you think he'll go to the police? To his real family? That's not good enough, Take. You don't get that kid at all.

**SUMISUKE:** Mei.

**MEI:** He'll come back to his home whether you make him mad or hurt him or tell him that he isn't your son. He knew all along. He was here because he knew. Even if you believe you've forsaken him, that's just a blink in time.

**SUMISUKE:** That's how it should be.

**MEI:** What?

**SUMISUKE:** They should be separated for a bit. The one to leave is Takeo, not Shun.

**MEI:** What do you mean?

*Takeo does not speak.*

**SUMISUKE:** You know what I mean. He must turn himself in.

**MEI:** Take has to?

*Sumisuke goes up to Mei and, with both hands, grasps her shoulders.*

**SUMISUKE:** Shun isn't Take's son. Take found the boy and brought him up. What Take did was benevolent, but legally it's the equivalent of abduction.

**MEI:** No.

**SUMISUKE:** The mother who came by yesterday was the victim, you see.

**MEI:** No. Take saved the boy. He hasn't done anything criminal. Anyway, that woman has left.

**SUMISUKE:** But you can't hide such matters forever.

**MEI:** I can. I can get a family registry...

**SUMISUKE:** (*Interrupting.*) Then you will become an accomplice.

**MEI:** Is that why you hounded Shun out? To escape before he came back? (*Takeo doesn't reply.*)

**SUMISUKE:** That's why I came.

**MEI:** Huh?

*Sumisuke holds Mei in his strong grasp. Understanding the situation, Mei resists but cannot escape her brother's hold.*

**SUMISUKE:** All right then, Take. (*Tries to take Mei away with him.*)

**TAKEO:** Uh-huh.

**MEI:** I'm his mother. Shun belongs to Take and me. You said so yesterday.

**SUMISUKE:** Mei.

**MEI:** No! Take, don't go to the police. Don't give Shun back!

**SUMISUKE:** There's no other way.

**MEI:** Both of them are leaving?

**TAKEO:** (*A beat.*) I'm sorry, Mei.

**MEI:** No, no, no!

*Sumisuke practically drags the crying, screaming, resisting Mei away.*

## #37 The Testimony of Takeo Yoshikawa (alias), the Fugitive

*Left behind, alone, Takeo speaks into the distance.*

**TAKEO:** I apologize for committing a terrible act. I am Takeo Yoshikawa. My legal name is Makoto Obihiro. I will discuss the incident of August 3rd, 2004 and its aftermath. At that time, the business I had started failed, and with large amounts of debts, I was pursued by creditors. One stormy night...

*Rain begins to fall on Takeo.*

**TAKEO:** I tried to commit suicide by drowning, but failed.

**KUROSAWA:** “Hey you! What the hell are you doing?!”

*Thus did Kurosawa call out to Takeo on that night.*

**TAKEO:** I went to a bar for some alcohol to motivate me. After leaving the bar, I went down to the river and walked along the embankment, hoping that the flooded Awahi River would engulf me, when suddenly from behind—the sound of brakes and a great crash. (*Brakes screech and a tremendous impact noise.*) At the terrific sound, I turned around. (*Yuki's shadow is dancing through the sky.*) From afar, I could see a small shape flying through the air. It dropped in the river and eventually came flowing down my way. Looking intently into the dark river, I saw the hand of a child in a raincoat. Without thinking clearly, I ran along the flowing river with the child in its grasp and reached out for that hand. I ended up in the river myself and was able to draw the child to the shore. He had lost consciousness but did not have any obvious injuries despite the loud crash I had heard. He seemed to be asleep. Recalling the lifeguard work I had done as a student, I checked his breathing and looked for my cell phone to call for an ambulance. I must have lost it in the river. At a loss about how to get help... (*The sound of thunder suddenly rolls above his head.*) At that moment, a thought arose in my mind. Like this nameless child, I wished I could vanish. That thought changed everything that happened afterward, I think. Carrying the child home, I dressed him in my own clothes and, taking what I could, I brought him to a distant hospital. Only afterward I realized what a dangerous thing I had done. But in the moment, I just did it.

**HIROYA:** Ahh. Aaargh.

*On that night, Hiroya is scrambling crazily around the river bank.*

**TAKEO:** I knew that the car that had hit the child had driven off. If this was a hit-and-run case, I would be interrogated by the police. As I intended to vanish before the boy regained consciousness, I pretended we were father and son, and as it was just for a moment, I called him Shun.

*In front of Takeo's view stands the little boy Yuki in a bright yellow poncho.*

But concerned about his condition, I ended up staying at the hospital until he regained consciousness.

*Yuki looks around anxiously.*

When the boy woke up and could not say his own name, I regretted my imprudent actions. Yet, I couldn't admit that the boy was not my son. While the doctor diagnosed his condition, I explained to the confused boy that I was his father.

*Yuki walks up to Takeo and reaches out to him.*

From that day, we became father and son.

*Takeo takes Yuki's hand. The two clasp hands.*

As soon as Shun was discharged from the hospital, I came down with a high fever, a side effect of the cold I had caught on the stormy night. For a while, we stayed at various business hotels. Shun stayed close to me while I was sick and, as the days passed, seemed to accept fully that he was my son.

*News of those times is heard: "The victim Yuki Oride, age nine, is still missing. A desperate search continues."*

By this time, I knew from the news what Shun's real name was. I had to return the boy. Tomorrow I would take him. Tomorrow, I must take him. Thinking in this vein, I finally made the decision to take Shun to the police a whole month later.

To tell the truth, I became serious about returning him only when I began to feel

attached to him.

*Takeo takes Yuki to the front of the police station. But when he tries to let go of his hand, Yuki hangs on to Takeo's arm and resists.*

I was going to leave the boy in front of the police station without revealing my identity. I told him to tell the policeman that he was Yuki Oride and tried to loosen his hands. Shun resisted violently. I said, "You are not my child!"

*Takeo forcefully pushes Yuki aside. Yuki falls and lands on his butt. From this position, he looks up at Takeo.*

Shouting, I forcibly pushed the boy away from myself and tried to leave in a hurry. Shun came running after and clung to me.

*Yuki runs after Takeo, who is trying to get away, and hangs on with all his strength.*

As he thought he had done something bad, he said...

**YUKI:** (*Simultaneously with Takeo.*) I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

**TAKEO:** ...repeatedly that he was sorry. Looking at Shun clinging to me, I was...happy rather than fearful of what I had done. I was incredibly happy.

*Taking Yuki's hand, Takeo takes him away.*

After that, I went to the Oride's house once, but the family had moved. I haven't tried to return Shun since.

*Shun comes by and passes Yuki as a child. Shun and Yuki pass farther away from Takeo. Takeo watches Shun leave and then woodenly continues his testimony.*

I apologize for what I did. A stupid person's thoughtless action has hurt many people. I am deeply ashamed of this. Taking Yuki Oride's life and making Shun's mine—it can never be forgiven. I hope to carry the burden of my crime and atone for it.

*Takeo bows deeply in one direction and then exits quietly.*

### #38 The Last Scene

**KIMATA:** Hold on properly.

**SEIKO:** Yes!

*Coming down a slope in Awahimachi are Kimata and Seiko, riding together on a pedal bike. Seiko, seated on the back, is happily emitting little shrieks.*

**KIMATA:** Let's take a rest here.

**SEIKO:** My butt hurts.

**KIMATA:** Aha, I'm not surprised.

**SEIKO:** But this feels good.

**KIMATA:** Too bad the last Awahi tour is by pedal bike. Where shall we go next?

**SEIKO:** From here I will pedal alone.

**KIMATA:** Really?

**SEIKO:** Would that be all right? I would like to go by the river.

**KIMATA:** (*A beat.*) Will you be OK? You said earlier that you didn't ride bicycles.

**SEIKO:** Well, rarely.

*Seiko gets on the bicycle. She holds the handles in an inexperienced manner.*

**KIMATA:** Well then, as opportunity has come my way, I will shoot the last scene.

**SEIKO:** Oh no.

*Seiko starts to pedal the bike. Swinging clumsily from side to side, she is able to move forward. At a short distance away, Kimata points the video camera at her.*

**KIMATA:** Be careful now. Haha, that's it. You've got the hang of it.

**SEIKO:** I'm going to fall.

**KIMATA:** Seiko, have a good time.

**SEIKO:** Here I go.

*Kimata with his camera shrinks rapidly in the distance. Seiko cycles along the*

*embankment alone. The surrounding sounds die out, and only the sound of the river is amplified. Only the river and Seiko exist. As she rides along, she cries a bit. Without raising her voice, she cries. After a while, she raises her face. Seiko breathes in. Alone, she rides up the slope.*

### #39 Traces

*Shun is walking along. Hanako comes running up. They hold hands.*

**HANAKO:** What'll we do, Clyde?

**SHUN:** Bonnie, let's go wherever we want to go.

**HANAKO:** Hey, that sounds kinda like him.

**SHUN:** Haha.

**HANAKO:** Your mom came by the shop looking for you. Aren't you going home?

**SHUN:** No way.

**HANAKO:** Oh yeah?

**SHUN:** Not for a couple of days.

**HANAKO:** Two days. Aw, you're so fainthearted...

**SHUN:** But I'm not gonna forgive them until they apologize.

**HANAKO:** Won't forgive but will go home.

**SHUN:** (A beat.) I don't have anywhere to go.

**HANAKO:** It's not this place after all.

**SHUN:** Yoohoo!

**HANAKO:** Don't. The neighbors will sneak a peek.

**SHUN:** Yoohoo!

**HANAKO:** Yoohoo.

*Silence. The murmuring of the river. In the distance, the sound of a dog baying. Hanako bows to a neighbor who has recognized her voice and is looking outside.*

**HANAKO:** Excuse me for disturbing you so many times.

**SHUN:** I bet he regrets what he did.

**HANAKO:** Who?

**SHUN:** My dad. He's sorry he said such things and on and on.

**HANAKO:** Then you can go have an ice cream parfait again.

**SHUN:** (Laughs.) A parfait wouldn't be enough.

**HANAKO:** (Laughs.) Right on, right on.

*Hanako and Shun hold hands and start walking together, but Hanako happens to look afar and stops.*

**HANAKO:** (Looking ahead and laughing.) Hm...

**SHUN:** Ha?

**HANAKO:** Do you think she's OK?

**SHUN:** Who?

**HANAKO:** Look at her weave.

*Seiko is coming down the hill on the opposite side. She is barely able to keep her balance while she rides. Trying to avoid Shun and Hanako, she pulls on the brakes and the bicycle totters. She almost loses balance. Shun hurriedly grabs the saddle.*

**SHUN:** Are you all right?

**SEIKO:** Oh...

*Embarrassed, Seiko lowers her head and gets on the bike again. Shun lets go of the bike and goes off with Hanako. Seiko puts her foot on the pedal and is about to push off. At that moment, she suddenly feels that she has discovered everything she needed and looks back at the young man.*

**The End**

## NOTES

1. The Bon Festival is a three-day Buddhist event commemorating the spirits of one's ancestors.
2. CPA refers to Certified Public Accountant.
3. *Masshiso* is Korean for "so delightful."
4. *Chima jeogori* is a traditional Korean outfit for women consisting of a long skirt and top.
5. *Kamsahamnida* is Korean for "thank you."
6. Mats are used as flooring in Japanese style rooms. One mat is about 90cm × 180cm.
7. GuruNavi is an online *Gourmet & Restaurant Guide*.
8. *Uiro* is a traditional Japanese steamed cake. This and other Japanese cultural references can be changed to more familiar ones if necessary.
9. Akina Nakamori's rose tattoo of love appears in her song "Tattoo" (1988).
10. Shuzo Matsuoka is a popular former Japanese professional tennis player.
11. "Wanna go home but can't go home. Not going home but wanna go home." is a misquote from Tokiko Kato's song "Kaeritai, Kaerenai" (1970).