

Better Half

By Shoji Kokami

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Cast of Characters

Yuta Suwa, 29

Haruka Hirasawa, 21

Migiwa Kobayakawa, 27

Yoshiharu Okimura, 43

Introduction

Each of the four characters is portrayed in sketches to music. For example, Yuta Suwa is giving a PR presentation. Haruka Hirasawa is taking a dance lesson. Migiwa Kobayakawa is standing on the platform of the station in her hometown, about to embark on a journey. Yoshiharu Okimura is gazing up at the sky from his office's rooftop, waiting for a girl to fall to him from the sky. Gradually the movement of the four turns into a kind of opening dance. At the end of the dance, only Suwa remains on stage.

Chapter 1

A plaza in front of a train station. SUWA is looking around, aimlessly. He lets out a sigh.

SUWA

Why am I here in front of a glitzy building in front of the train station plaza, the most sacred of meeting places at seven o'clock in the evening? Of course, there's a reason: On the billboard behind me, a female celebrity holds a famous brand perfume as her hair flutters behind her. I have no idea what her name is, but I feel like I've seen her somewhere before. Once there was a hidden camera TV show where an ordinary person strolled around a shopping mall with a fake bodyguard. It only took one plant to ask them for their autograph. Soon they were surrounded by people, and witness accounts of them spread like wildfire on social media. Even though they were not a celebrity. People decide what's real based not on facts, but on feelings.

OKIMURA enters. The space he is in becomes a conference room in Sky PR Firm. There is a vending machine.

SUWA

(To audience) This was an hour and a half ago.

OKIMURA

You OK? Working too hard? Need a coffee?

SUWA

No thanks, I'm fine.

OKIMURA

No, you've been working too hard. You need a change of scenery.

SUWA
Change of scenery?

OKIMURA
Or, as they say, you need a “breath of fresh air.” Repeat after me: “I need a breath of fresh air.”

SUWA
...Breath of fresh air.

OKIMURA
Good! Go meet a girl at seven o’clock.

SUWA
A girl?

OKIMURA
It’ll be a great change of scenery.

SUWA
What do you mean, “a girl”?

OKIMURA
Migiwa. She’s a good girl.

SUWA
Who’s Migiwa?

OKIMURA
Migiwa is Migiwa. She’s cute, probably.

SUWA
Probably?

OKIMURA
If she isn’t, you can come back right away.

SUWA
Mr. Okimura, I don’t understand what you’re talking about at all.

OKIMURA
You want to see what I’m talking about?

SUWA
How will I know what I’m looking for unless I see it?

OKIMURA

Suwa, listen. At seven o'clock tonight, you are going to meet a girl and have dinner together. You will get your a breath of fresh air, Migiwa will be happy, and I will be rescued. Three birds with one stone, OK?

SUWA

I didn't get the last part.

OKIMURA

Three birds? It's a win-win-win situation.

SUWA

No I meant the "I will be rescued" bit.

OKIMURA

Never mind that, just go and meet her. I'll pay for dinner.

SUWA

I don't have time for this. You know I've got my hands full with the "Engawa Drink" account.

OKIMURA

(suddenly) Say, for instance, there happens to be a boss who wants only the best for his staff. He's deeply concerned by his staff who works everyday until the last train, and he wants to treat him to a moment of relief. As the staff member wouldn't the human response be one of gratitude?

SUWA

The human response...?

OKIMURA

So go, have fun. Oh but Suwa, don't tell her your real name. Your name is "Yoshi."

SUWA

Yoshi...

OKIMURA

(calling him) Yoshi. *(SUWA is silent)* Why don't you respond?

SUWA

Why is my name Yoshi?

OKIMURA

Why? There's no deep meaning to it.

SUWA

Mr. Okimura, your first name is Yoshiharu isn't it?

OKIMURA

(suddenly) Say, for instance, there happens to be a boss who is very lonely. And once, he encountered a lovely young lady named Migiwa on the internet.

SUWA

This isn't a hypothetical situation! Did you meet her on an on-line dating site?

OKIMURA

Every night we had all sorts of conversations for the last two months. And finally we're going to meet, face-to-face, just imagine.

SUWA

So, the real Yoshi should go and meet her. Why should I go?

SUWA begins to exit.

OKIMURA

(emphatically) It's you who has to meet her.

SUWA

Why?

OKIMURA

Migiwa is 27 years old, but she's very responsible and mature for her age. Ah, I don't want to lose her, I was hoping we could exchange emails forever, but,

SUWA

But?

OKIMURA

She asked me my age and... Yoshi told her he was 34.

SUWA

That's ten years your junior!

OKIMURA

Nine.

SUWA

Same difference.

OKIMURA

No, it's very different, it's totally different.

SUWA

It'll be fine. If she doesn't believe that you're 34, then come clean with her and say you're 43. If you're just honest and apologize, I'm sure you'll be OK.

SUWA tries to leave.

OKIMURA

(more emphatically) It's not that simple.

SUWA

Why not?

OKIMURA

I sent her a picture of you.

SUWA

What?

OKIMURA

I sent her a picture of you, saying it was a picture of Yoshi.

SUWA

A picture of me? Why did you do that?

OKIMURA

Why? Because I wanted to keep talking to Migiwa. *(SUWA is speechless)* That's why you have to go. It's your destiny. Suwa, It's your destiny.

SUWA tries to leave.

OKIMURA

Where are you going?

SUWA

Back to work.

OKIMURA

Please, help me out. I have to know what Migiwa is like. Go meet her and take a picture of her. That's all I'm asking. Please, Suwa.

SUWA

Mr. Okimura, you ought to go yourself.

OKIMURA

There's no way I can go! I sent her a picture of you!

SUWA

Why are you getting mad at me?

OKIMURA

Can't you see I'm in trouble? Don't you have a human heart? Don't you have any desire to help your lonely boss? I'm ordering you, as your superior. If you don't do as I say, I'll give you a horrible review and your salary will take a big hit. I'll blame you for failures and get you fired. Please, I'm begging you, Suwa. Help me out. You're my only hope.

SUWA

Can you please make up your mind as to whether you're begging or threatening me?

OKIMURA

You need to gather all materials for the "Engawa Drink" account, right? I'll do it. While you go out and have a happy time with Migiwa for two hours, I'll get everything from all over the world together. Please, Suwa. I'll fire you, Suwa. Help me, Suwa. It's an order, Suwa. I'm begging you, Suwa.

OKIMURA gets down on his knees and bows.

SUWA

Mr. Okimura...

OKIMURA

Suwa, go, for me. Go. Please. It's an order. Suwa!

OKIMURA looks at SUWA. SUWA sort of nods.

OKIMURA

Thank you! I'll send you Migiwa's profile from my computer. Read it before you meet her. Oh, and if she is cute, don't fall in love with her. Never fall in love!

SUWA is dumbstruck. OKIMURA exits. Lights on SUWA.

Chapter 2

SUWA

(to the audience) Mr. Okimura sent a picture of me, but Migiwa hadn't sent a picture of herself at all. She had told him that she didn't want to send a photo of herself to anyone on-line until she met him in person first. I think that's smart. Migiwa knew what I looked like but I didn't know what she looked like. Anyway I went to Mecca of meeting places and displayed my face.

SUWA thrusts his face out, looking around, while HARUKA HIRASAWA enters, looking down at her smart phone. She looks around and she and SUWA back up into each other. They turn around at the same time.

HARUKA
Excuse me.

SUWA
No worries.

HARUKA
(looking at her smart phone) Oh!

SUWA
Huh?

HARUKA
Yoshi!

SUWA
Migiwa?

HARUKA
Yes, I'm Migiwa. And you must be Yoshi.

SUWA
Yes, I'm Yoshi.

HARUKA
(Finding the name "Yoshi" amusing, she is half laughing.) So you're Yoshi.

SUWA
Yes. I'm Yoshi. *(Pause. Then suddenly.)* Shall we go? I've made reservations at a restaurant near here.

HARUKA
Yes, Yoshi, let us go.

In another area, OKIMURA appears, facing a keyboard. As he types, he speaks.

OKIMURA
I reserved a table at a popular Italian spot. You can relax and enjoy your meal there. Except don't spend more than 3000 yen on drinks. If you get an expensive wine, you're going to have to pay for it yourself.

The two sit at a table in a restaurant.

HARUKA

So Yoshi, you're 34 years old, right?

SUWA

Uh, yes.

HARUKA

You look young.

SUWA

Uh, yes. That's what people say.

OKIMURA

Migiwa plays piano in a hotel lounge.

SUWA

You're a pianist? That's amazing.

HARUKA

No it's not.

OKIMURA

Sometimes she sings, too.

SUWA

And you sing sometimes, too?

HARUKA

Not often. Yoshi, you work for an advertising firm, right?

OKIMURA

I've told her about my work vaguely.

SUWA

No, it's not an advertising firm, it's a PR firm.

HARUKA

What's the difference?

OKIMURA

If she's not cute, you don't have to waste your time. Just eat up and come back.

SUWA

For example, which would you choose, a restaurant that advertises a lot on TV and in magazines, or a restaurant that's featured a lot on TV and in magazines?

HARUKA
What?

SUWA
A restaurant that advertises a lot, or a restaurant that's written up a lot.

HARUKA
Well, I suppose the restaurant that's been written up a lot.

SUWA
So that's the work a PR firm does. Advertising firms make advertisements, but the work of PR firms is to get mass media to pay attention.

HARUKA
I see... That sounds pretty interesting.

OKIMURA
If she's cute, you absolutely mustn't fall for her!

SUWA
It is interesting. In Japan the ideas are still pretty minor, but in America, they think about PR strategies, which means,

SUWA's voice and movement go in fast forward. HARUKA looks on curiously. SUWA suddenly stops moving.

SUWA
(*seeing her expression*) What's wrong?

HARUKA
Yoshi, you must really love your job.

SUWA
Oh, well yes, I do.

HARUKA
I wasn't expecting that. I had the impression that you were more disenchanted about work.

SUWA
What?

HARUKA

You wrote yourself that you were looking for something more fun than work.

SUWA

Uh, yeah, yes, I did. That's right. But it's gotten more interesting recently.

HARUKA

I see.

SUWA

Would you like dessert? Your favorite dessert was...

HARUKA

What did I say?

SUWA

What did you say? What did I say?

HARUKA

You? Mr. Yoshi, you said your favorite dessert was... I'm sorry, I can't remember.

SUWA

I can't remember either. I'm sorry. I don't like sweets that much. I'll just have coffee.

HARUKA

Then I'll just have some tea.

SUWA raises his hand to get the waiter's attention.

At the same time, OKIMURA appears in the office.

He is pulling petals off of a flower.

OKIMURA

Beauty, beast, beauty, beast...

SUWA and HARUKA have finished their coffee and tea.

HARUKA

Um, what do you think about transgender people?

SUWA

Transgender? Is that...

HARUKA

For example, someone who was born a man but identifies as a woman.

SUWA

Like she-males?

HARUKA
Some people use that term. So?

SUWA
So what?

HARUKA
Are you against them?

SUWA
Against? Against them how?

HARUKA
Like, would you sleep with someone who's transgender.

SUWA
With a she-male? Hm, I can't really imagine it... Why do you ask?

HARUKA
No, nothing, it was just a question.

SUWA
Oh. ...Um, Migiwa, can I take a picture of you?

HARUKA
What? A Picture?

SUWA
Yeah, I really want to take a picture of you. Please?

HARUKA
But...

SUWA
All right?

HARUKA
OK...

SUWA takes out his smart phone.

SUWA
OK, ready?

HARUKA

Yes.

SUWA
Oops.

HARUKA
What's wrong?

SUWA
No, uh, it was on video.

HARUKA
Video?

*OKIMURA enters, looking at his smart phone. Light go out on HARUKA and SUWA.
The office. SUWA is there.*

OKIMURA
She's cute! She's really really cute!

SUWA
Congratulations.

OKIMURA
It's a miracle. I can't believe I'd meet such a cute girl on-line.

SUWA
She seemed to have a sweet personality too.

OKIMURA
Suwa, haven't you ever gazed up at the sky and whispered, "Oh, I wish a girl would come falling from the heavens"?

SUWA
Nope.

OKIMURA
Haven't you gotten depressed thinking why does "boy meet girl" so easily in the movies, but not to me in real life? But miracles do happen! Suwa, you aren't in love with her by any chance, are you?

SUWA
I'm not in love.

OKIMURA
Listen, Migiwa is mine, all right? You can't fall in love with her!

SUWA

So, can I get back to work now?

OKIMURA

Before you do, I want you to write and submit a report on the details of your conversation with Migiwa.

SUWA

What? Just let me work.

OKIMURA

I can't email her unless I know what you talked about. I've already gotten things together for "Engawa Drink".

SUWA

Give me a break...

OKIMURA

No breaks for you. Need a coffee?

SUWA faces his keyboard at his desk. OKIMURA leaves to get coffee. In another space, HARUKA enters, followed by Migiwa Kobayakawa. They have beverages in hand. They are in a fast food restaurant.

MIGIWA

So, how was it? What's the deal?

HARUKA

Slow down, slow down.

MIGIWA

Well, come on!

HARUKA

He was all right. He looked like his photo.

MIGIWA

Isn't he cute? He had an adorable smile, didn't he?

HARUKA

But what's with his name, Yoshi? That would have been a deal-breaker for me.

MIGIWA

What's wrong with Yoshi, it's a cute name. Like Mario's little friend?

HARUKA
Really? Isn't it just short for Yoshio or something?

MIGIWA
So, what did you talk about?

HARUKA
You couldn't hear us?

MIGIWA
How could I hear you? You guys were sitting way far away. What were you talking about?

HARUKA takes out her phone and presses some buttons.

MIGIWA
What's that?

HARUKA
I thought that might be the case.

MIGIWA and HARUKA's previous conversation in the restaurant plays softly.

HARUKA
It recorded pretty well from my pocket.

MIGIWA
You recorded the whole thing?

HARUKA
Yeah, I mean I can't remember everything we talked about.

MIGIWA
Oh my gosh, *(shifting her tone)* I am indebted to you.

HARUKA
(playfully) Don't worry about it... I'll send the file to you, so you can listen to the whole thing at your leisure.

MIGIWA
Thanks so much, really.

HARUKA
But I'm not going again.

MIGIWA

What?

HARUKA

Next time, you have to go yourself, Migiwa.

MIGIWA

Haruka.

HARUKA

In what world do you date people by proxy?

MIGIWA

Life is so mysterious.

HARUKA

What's even more mysterious is you following us on our date, all the way to the restaurant.

MIGIWA

That place was really yummy.

HARUKA

Next time, you're going. All right? *(Silence.)* It's OK. Migiwa, it will turn out OK.

MIGIWA receives a message on her phone.

MIGIWA

(looking at her phone) It's from Yoshi.

HARUKA

Already?! What follow-up.

Light on OKIMURA in the office.

OKIMURA

Migiwa, today was really fun. Thanks for meeting with me. I think you're a lovely person, Migiwa, perhaps too lovely for me. To tell you the truth, I have a boss whom I respect very much, and I'd love to introduce you to him. I'd love to get you together for a meal soon. What does your schedule look like?

HARUKA and MIGIWA peer into the phone screen.

HARUKA

What does that mean? Why does he want to introduce his boss?

MIGIWA

Did he say anything about it tonight?

HARUKA
Nothing.

MIGIWA takes the phone and emails back.

MIGIWA
(reading aloud) Thank you so much – I had fun tonight. The restaurant was delicious. But why do you want to introduce me to your boss?

OKIMURA replies.

OKIMURA
(reading aloud) You were so lovely, Migiwa, that I thought you might be a better match for my boss. He is a wonderful person.

HARUKA
(looking at the screen) He wouldn't pass me onto his boss because he didn't like me for himself, would he?

MIGIWA
No way...

HARUKA
I'm in shock... What the hell is wrong with this guy?!

MIGIWA
If he's passing on you, Haruka, then I'd never be good enough for him.

HARUKA
What?! No way.

Lights come up on SUWA at work. OKIMURA stands right by him.

SUWA
Absolutely not! I don't have time for this!

OKIMURA
Just one more! It's just one more date, and all you have to do is introduce me as your exemplary boss. Let's do sushi this time.

SUWA
I'm putting my wager on "Engawa Drinks" Sweet Green Tea.

OKIMURA

Get real, Suwa, have you even tried the Sweet Green Tea?

SUWA
I have.

OKIMURA
And how was it?

SUWA
I mean, it's a challenging product, but I think it's worth the risk.

OKIMURA
That's not what I mean. Was it good or not? There's no way sweet green tea will sell.

SUWA
Why not? Sweet green tea is more popular overseas. In the U.S. and Southeast Asia, they all put sugar in their green tea.

OKIMURA
It may be standard for the States, but never in Japan.

SUWA
It's possible. We need a sound strategy, set the tone for it, and we can even change the standards.

OKIMURA
You don't have to get so heated over sweet green tea.

SUWA stands up. Lights up on Migiwa and Haruka.

HARUKA
I don't think so. Migiwa, you are beautiful.

OKIMURA
What's wrong, Suwa?

SUWA
I'm going home. I'm going to work at home.

MIGIWA
Haruka, thank you for today.

HARUKA
Migiwa!

MIGIWA exits.

OKIMURA
Suwa!

SUWA exits. Lights go out on OKIMURA. Lights up on HARUKA.

Chapter 4

HARUKA
The first time I had a conversation with Migiwa was three months ago, on a night that the worst and the most tedious converged.

*Titles appear: Three months ago.
HARUKA begins to speak into her phone.*

HARUKA
This is Lina. I just got out.

VOICE ON PHONE
What, that was fast. What happened?

HARUKA
He wanted to go all the way and wouldn't give up. I told him I don't do that again and again but he wouldn't listen.

VOICE
So, what happened?

HARUKA
I got out of there in the middle.

VOICE
I'm surprised you were able to get away.

HARUKA
I squeezed his balls and ran out while he was doubled over in pain.

VOICE
Come on. Lina. Mr. Sakurai is a valuable client.

HARUKA
But he wouldn't take no for an answer.

VOICE

You know, Lina, we aren't doing too well these days, our client numbers are down. You know what I'm saying?

HARUKA
Huh?

VOICE
We won't survive unless we can beat our competition.

HARUKA
So?

VOICE
Don't make me spell it out for you. I'm talking about what happens between adults. You understand me.

HARUKA
So you're telling me to go all the way even though I'm not supposed to?

VOICE
That's not what I'm saying. If I said anything like that I'd be arrested. But you know, I don't know what happens behind closed doors.

HARUKA
I will never go all the way.

VOICE
Oh really. And did you get payment from Mr. Sakurai?

HARUKA
No. Because I ran out in the middle of our session.

VOICE
Well that's no good. You're done for the day. You can get out.

HARUKA
What? No, I'll keep working.

VOICE
You want to work? Then go back to Mr. Sakurai's room. I'll let him know you're coming.

HARUKA
What?

VOICE

If you won't go back, Lina, we don't need your help.

He hangs up. During the phone call, the stage becomes a hotel lounge with a piano. Migiwa is playing. Haruka is stuck, not knowing whether to go back to the room or leave the hotel. Migiwa begins to sing.

"If I were to die" by Doji Morita

MIGIWA

"If I were to die

I want to be forgotten, gently

When you feel lonely, cry

In the field of yellow flowers I loved

If you cannot sleep at night

Call my name gently

From a window on the dark seaside

Let the wind carry my name

If it rains down

And the apricot blossoms have fallen

With my jacket collar turned up

I walk on, having left my hometown

If I were to die

I want to be forgotten, gently

When you feel lonely, cry

In the field of yellow flowers I loved"

HARUKA stares at Migiwa as she sings. Migiwa finishes singing.

MIGIWA

Thank you very much. *(One or two people applaud)* Enjoy your evening.

Migiwa leaves the piano. She passes by Haruka to exit. Haruka calls out.

HARUKA

Um,

MIGIWA

Yes?

HARUKA

What was that song?

MIGIWA

“If I were to die” by Doji Morita.

HARUKA
If I were to die...

MIGIWA
Do you want to die?

HARUKA
What?

MIGIWA
Whenever I feel that way, I sing that song.

HARUKA
Well somehow I feel encouraged by that song.

MIGIWA
You do?

HARUKA
So you sing.

MIGIWA
What?

HARUKA
Usually you just play piano.

MIGIWA
Once in a while. If there aren't too many guests, they allow me to sing.

HARUKA
Allow?

MIGIWA
People come here for meetings. So often they find singing disruptive.

HARUKA
You should sing more.

MIGIWA
Thanks. I always wanted to talk to you.

HARUKA
What?

MIGIWA
You come to this hotel a few times a week, right?

HARUKA's phone rings. HARUKA answers it.

HARUKA
Hello? ...I'm not going. I'm quitting.

She hangs up. Silence.

MIGIWA
Shall we get a tea?

HARUKA
Huh?

MIGIWA
I have 30 minutes until my next performance.

HARUKA
And after that?

MIGIWA
I'm done for the day. Why?

HARUKA
Shall we go get drinks? I mean, if you want.

MIGIWA
Yes, sure.

HARUKA
...That's how I met Migiwa. I always wanted to talk to her. I don't know why. Maybe because her solitude and my loneliness were similar. For the first time since I moved to Tokyo I'd found someone I could talk to freely.

A park at night.

MIGIWA
Ah, I am so drunk! I haven't gotten this drunk since I moved to Tokyo.

HARUKA
Don't you drink much?

MIGIWA

Back home I drank everyday.

HARUKA
Everyday?

MIGIWA
You're not drunk? You must have a high tolerance.

HARUKA
I am drunk, it just doesn't show on my face.

MIGIWA
Do you have classes tomorrow?

HARUKA
Yes. Dance and acting.

MIGIWA
The entertainment industry. I hope you get your big break.

HARUKA
I will, for sure.

MIGIWA
It's wonderful. It's wonderful that you know exactly what you want to do.

HARUKA
What do you want to do, Migiwa?

MIGIWA
Me? I wonder what I want...

HARUKA
(looking at her watch) Oh no, we've got to hurry if we want to catch the last train.

MIGIWA
Well then, do you want to stay over at my place tonight?

HARUKA
What? Why? We just met today.

MIGIWA
Does time really matter? There are people you can talk to for years and never get close.

HARUKA

That's true but...

MIGIWA

You have a look on your face like you want to talk to somebody. And,

HARUKA

And?

MIGIWA

I wanted to talk to somebody too. *(Pause)* I'm transgender.

HARUKA

Transgender...

MIGIWA

Do you know what that means? I'm a woman who was born in a man's body.

HARUKA

Like, a she-male?

MIGIWA

I don't like that term. I'm not a sex worker, I'm not trying to break into the entertainment industry.

HARUKA

I'm sorry.

MIGIWA

It's fine, it's fine. Let's drink more. Shall we buy something and bring it back to my place?

HARUKA

I'm a stripper. That's why I'm always at the hotel.

MIGIWA

I see.

HARUKA

Do you know what the worst part is of being a stripper?

MIGIWA

What? Dealing with disgusting old men?

HARUKA

I can tolerate that. The worst is when they want to go all the way with me. When I'm alone with a guy, it's really awful.

MIGIWA

I'm sorry, I don't know what strippers do if they don't go all the way.

HARUKA

Right. We should have a long talk.

MIGIWA

I'm sorry, I'm really a late bloomer when it comes to that stuff.

HARUKA

What? You're not the kind of person who licks it while holding it in your hand, are you?

MIGIWA

What are you talking about?

HARUKA

What I'm saying is, you can't lick it while you're holding it in your hand. Because the guy will feel like he's being controlled. Guys really enjoy it when you just use you mouth, no hands.

MIGIWA

I have no idea what you're talking about.

HARUKA

I'm talking about blowjobs! *(loudly)* Blowjobs!

MIGIWA

(covering HARUKA's mouth) What are you saying?!

HARUKA still muffled, rips MIGIWA's hand away from her mouth and in a loud, clear voice, shouts:

HARUKA

Blowjob!

MIGIWA

...Maybe you should go home tonight.

HARUKA

Migiwa, are you embarrassed?

MIGIWA

You're not a cheerful drunk; you're a raunchy drunk!

HARUKA

All right, let's talk about everything tonight. I'll teach you everything about sexstrategies from the urethra to the underside of the shaft.

MIGIWA

Are you the devil's child?! You must be the sex devil!

MIGIWA gleefully runs away and HARUKA chases her.

HARUKA

Blowjob!

They exit.

Chapter 5

Titles appear: Five days later.

In front of a train station. OKIMURA and SUWA enter.

SUWA

This is really the last time.

OKIMURA

Of course.

SUWA

You'll put me in charge of the entire "Engawa Drink" contract, right?

OKIMURA

Of course.

HARUKA enters.

HARUKA

I'm sorry. Were you waiting long?

OKIMURA

No not at all, we just arrived.

HARUKA looks at him quizzically.

SUWA

Oh, this is my boss I was emailing you about. I just had to introduce you to him.

OKIMURA

I'm Okimura. You can call me Okie.

HARUKA
Okie...

OKIMURA
At your service!

Silence. OKIMURA coughs deliberately.

SUWA
Oh, uh, Mr. Okie is my very reliable, respectable, talented and wonderful boss.

OKIMURA
(embarrassed) That's too much. That's enough, Yoshi.

SUWA
Are you sure?

HARUKA
Um, I also have someone I want to introduce you to.

SUWA & OKIMURA
What?

HARUKA
Mimi!

MIGIWA enters.

MIGIWA
...Hello.

HARUKA
I thought I had to introduce her to Yoshi.

SUWA & OKIMURA
To me?

HARUKA
What?

OKIMURA
Ah, never mind.

SUWA
To me? Why?

HARUKA

I just thought she might be perfect for you.

SUWA

But that's...

OKIMURA

Shall we split up into pairs then?

THE OTHER THREE

What?

HARUKA

Oh, sure, Mimi, you should hang out with Yoshi just the two of you.

MIGIWA

Oh no, I mean, we've only just met and...

SUWA

I agree.

OKIMURA

Great. Let's split up then.

HARUKA

Done. Come on, Okie!

HARUKA takes OKIMURA's hand and leaves.

OKIMURA

Wow, take charge.

SUWA and MIGIWA remain. Silence. SUWA is dumbstruck; MIGIWA tries somehow to start a conversation.

SUWA & MIGIWA

(simultaneously) Um.

SUWA

Yes?

MIGIWA

Yes?

SUWA

Go ahead.

MIGIWA
No, you go ahead.

SUWA
...I guess, shall we go to a café?

MIGIWA
Sure.

In another area, OKIMURA and HARUKA enter into a café.

OKIMURA
Are you sure this café is OK? There's a great sushi place nearby.

HARUKA
I'm not hungry yet.

OKIMURA
I see. Um, Migiwa, how old would you date?

HARUKA
Huh?

OKIMURA
50? 60? 70?

HARUKA
It's not really about age, is it? It really depends on the individual.

OKIMURA
So you don't have an upper limit. I see. No limits. Wow.

OKIMURA happily mimes drinking coffee. Meanwhile, SUWA and MIGIWA have sat down in a separate café.

MIGIWA
I'm sorry.

SUWA
Huh?

MIGIWA
For showing up to this.

SUWA
Huh, oh, no,

MIGIWA
Are you OK, physically?

SUWA
Physically?

MIGIWA
You're always writing about how you're overwhelmed with work, Migiwa said. Isn't your firm like a sweatshop?

SUWA
Oh, well, all PR or advertising firms kind of function like sweatshops.

MIGIWA
Really?

SUWA mimes ordering a drink from a waiter, as does MIGIWA.

OKIMURA
I think that I could fill the void of your loneliness, Migiwa.

HARUKA
Huh?

OKIMURA
Yoshi told me. That you emails seem imbued with loneliness.

HARUKA
That's what I wrote because I was writing to Yoshi.

OKIMURA
Yeah, right, of course.

HARUKA
I wouldn't say that to Okie.

OKIMURA
Right, of course you wouldn't. Except, Okie and Yoshi are pretty much the same.

HARUKA
You guys are completely different.

OKIMURA

No, we're actually the same. How can I put it?

MIGIWA

Yoshi, are you really unpopular with girls?

SUWA

Huh?

MIGIWA

In you emails, you always wrote that, Migiwa said. But it certainly doesn't seem like that's the case.

SUWA

Oh... uh, I'm sorry. I really have to get back to work.

MIGIWA

Huh?

SUWA

I was always intending to go back to work once I'd introduced Migiwa to Okie.

MIGIWA

You work on Saturdays?

SUWA

Sweatshop, remember?

MIGIWA

Are you all right?

SUWA

Huh?

MIGIWA

I mean, you'd been talking to Migiwa for two months, and to just hand her over to Okie... I know he's your boss, but you're OK with that?

SUWA

I wasn't handing her over...

MIGIWA

Don't you care about Migiwa at all?

SUWA

I'm in a place where my work is really engrossing. I just don't have time for love.

MIGIWA

That's completely different from what you wrote in your emails.

SUWA

Ah, well that's...

OKIMURA

If you want to, you can cry on my shoulder.

HARUKA

Huh?

OKIMURA

You're always welcome to come home here. *(indicating his chest)*

HARUKA

Why would I do that?

OKIMURA

You've had a rough time back home. You didn't tell me exactly what it was, only that it was so difficult you wanted to die. So come, please cry. *(offering his chest)*

HARUKA

If I cry, what happens next?

OKIMURA

If you cry? You'll be comforted, and rescued, and then

HARUKA

Then?

OKIMURA

You'll fall in love.

HARUKA

Love?

OKIMURA

To be honest, I've already fallen.

HARUKA

Already?! Why?

OKIMURA

Why? Love is always a surprise.

HARUKA

I'm sorry. I don't have time for love or anything.

OKIMURA

What? Why not?

SUWA

So, I'm off. Oh, I'll pay for the drinks. I'm sorry. Please give Migiwa my best.

SUWA exits. MIGIWA looks on, speechless.

HARUKA

Please excuse me. This is for the coffee.

HARUKA mimes leaving money. OKIMURA left behind.

OKIMURA

Migiwa!

OKIMURA and MIGIWA, both left behind, fade into darkness.

Chapter 6

In front of the station. SUWA enters hurriedly, and HARUKA also enters, hurriedly. They run into each other on the street and are astonished.

HARUKA

What are you doing here?

SUWA

What about you, Migiwa?

HARUKA

What happened with Mimi and your date?

SUWA

No, I had to go back to work.

HARUKA

What?

SUWA

But what about you, Migiwa, what happened with Okie?

HARUKA

That guy is a creep.

SUWA
Creep...

HARUKA
Because he talks like he knows everything about me. *(Pause.)* What happened with Mimi? Did you guys have a connection?

SUWA
Connection? What do you mean?

HARUKA
...Hey, why, after two months of talking to Migiwa, I mean, me, did you introduce me to your boss? Was it always your intention to introduce me to him? Were you always acting as his proxy?

SUWA
No.

HARUKA
Then what were those two months about? Why were we writing to each other every night for two months? Weren't you trying to get to know me?

SUWA
What happened?

HARUKA
Don't "what happened" me! Who is Yoshi? Is he just Okie's pawn? Is that what you business-types are all like? Are you OK with that?

SUWA
No! You're misunderstanding me!

HARUKA
How am I misunderstanding?

SUWA
I'm, well, I'm just a stand-in.

HARUKA
Stand-in?

SUWA
I'm not Yoshi. Okie is Yoshi.

HARUKA

What are you talking about? That photo was of you, Yoshi!

SUWA

Okie sent my picture, claiming it was Yoshi, but the real Yoshi is Okie.

HARUKA

I don't understand what you are talking about at all.

SUWA

Listen,

HARUKA

Then who the hell are you?

SUWA

I'm Suwa. I'm neither Yoshi nor Okie.

HARUKA

Liar.

SUWA

How could I make up a lie like this? My boss, Okimura, sent a photo of me without my knowing. That's why I went on that date first.

HARUKA

Why would you do that?

SUWA

He asked me. He begged me to go.

HARUKA

I can't believe it. Who would be a stand-in on someone else's date?

SUWA

I'm sorry.

HARUKA

Nobody else in their right mind would ever do something like that except...

SUWA

Huh?

HARUKA

I'm a stand-in too.

SUWA

Huh?

HARUKA

I'm not Migiwa. Mimi, whom you met today, is Migiwa.

SUWA

Huh?

HARUKA

Is "huh" all you can say?

SUWA

Why did you do something like that?!

HARUKA

She asked me. She wanted me to go instead of her.

SUWA

I can't believe it! How could you do something like that?

HARUKA

Look who's talking.

SUWA

But why? Mimi is really pretty; she has no need for a stand-in.

HARUKA

Well...

SUWA

(suddenly realizing) Does this have to do with she-males?

HARUKA

Why?

SUWA

I just had a feeling, when I was talking to Mimi. Just a "hmmm" ... *(pause)* You asked me about it when we first met. What I think about she-males.

HARUKA's phone rings. She looks at the screen, makes her decision and answers it.

HARUKA

Hello?

In another space, MIGIWA appears.

MIGIWA

Hi, Haruka, what happened with Okie?

HARUKA

We had a drink and then went our separate ways.

MIGIWA

I see. Thanks for today. Haruka.

HARUKA

No problem.

MIGIWA

I'm glad I met him. Yoshi was a million times better in person than over email. I definitely have to see him again, at least once. Next time, I want to tell Yoshi the truth. That I'm Migiwa. I was a coward, but you gave me a push, Haruka.

HARUKA

Huh, oh, yeah. You know,

MIGIWA

Thanks again. See you later.

Call ends. MIGIWA exits. Silence. SUWA's phone rings.

SUWA

Yes?

OKIMURA appears in another area.

OKIMURA

Suwa, what's going on over there?

SUWA

I'm about to go back to the office.

OKIMURA

You already parted ways?

SUWA

Yes.

OKIMURA

I see. Suwa, Migiwa is great. She's the best. I'm going to go after her hard, so you'd better keep your hands off of her.

SUWA
I will.

OKIMURA
You'd better. Absolutely do not fall for her.

SUWA
Don't worry. I will absolutely not fall for her.

HARUKA, responding to his words, looks at SUWA.

OKIMURA
Good. See you.

OKIMURA hangs up and exits. SUWA senses HARUKA looking at him and looks at her. They gaze at each other. Silence. Blackout.

Chapter 7

Titles appear: Two weeks later

The lounge. Migiwa is playing piano. OKIMURA appears and gazes at her. Migiwa finishes playing.

OKIMURA
Good evening.

MIGIWA
Good evening.

OKIMURA
You're name is... Mimi, right? I didn't know you played here too.

MIGIWA
What?

OKIMURA
Migiwa plays here at 9 o'clock, right?

MIGIWA
Oh, um, yes. Um, Okie, what are you doing here?

OKIMURA
To tell you the truth, I came to see Migiwa.

MIGIWA
Did Yoshi tell you to come?

OKIMURA
What?

MIGIWA
Did you come because Yoshi's not coming?

OKIMURA
Well, I mean, how should I put it...

MIGIWA
Excuse me.

MIGIWA takes out her phone and quickly sends an email.

MIGIWA *(voiceover)*
"Yoshi, could I meet you at the lounge tonight?"

OKIMURA of course does not hear MIGIWA's voice. MIGIWA finishes typing quickly and looks at OKIMURA.

MIGIWA
I'm sorry.

There is an alert on OKIMURA's phone. OKIMURA takes out his phone.

OKIMURA
Excuse me.

OKIMURA looks at the screen and then types an email.

OKIMURA *(voiceover)*
"Of course. I can't wait to see you, Migiwa."

OKIMURA finishes typing and says to MIGIWA.

OKIMURA
I'm sorry.

There is an alert on MIGIWA's phone.

MIGIWA
Excuse me, I'm getting an email...

MIGIWA looks at the screen and she is relieved. Then she types back.

MIGIWA (*voice over*)

"I'm so relieved. Where are you now? I go on at 9pm so there's no rush."

MIGIWA

(*to OKIMURA*) Would you like something to drink?

There is an alert on OKIMURA's phone.

OKIMURA

Excuse me. I'm getting an email too.

He looks at his phone and then types a response.

OKIMURA (*voiceover*)

"I'm at the lounge already. I'm right by the piano."

OKIMURA

I'm sorry.

There is an alert on MIGIWA's phone.

MIGIWA

Excuse me, another email...

She reads the email, looks around and then types a response.

MIGIWA

"You're by the piano? I'm at the edge of the lounge, near the piano too."

There is an alert on OKIMURA's phone.

OKIMURA

Another email. (*He reads the message.*) What?

OKIMURA types a response.

OKIMURA (*voiceover*)

"I'm with Mimi."

There is an alert on MIGIWA's phone.

OKIMURA

What?!

MIGIWA

I'm getting another email too. (*She reads*) What? (*She types a response*)

MIGIWA (*voiceover*)
"I'm with Okie."

There is an alert on OKIMURA's phone.

MIGIWA
What?!

OKIMURA
What?!

Silence. The two show each other their phones.

MIGIWA and OKIMURA
Whaaat?!?!

SUWA and HARUKA appear, in separate areas, calling each other. Lights go out on OKIMURA and MIGIWA.

HARUKA
What? Today? They're going to meet up today?

SUWA
Yeah. At lunchtime today, Mr. Okimura was telling me about it and he was really excited. She finally emailed him and asked him to meet at the lounge.

HARUKA
I thought Migiwa had given up on him.

SUWA
What should we do?

HARUKA
I'm going to the lounge!

SUWA
I'll meet you in front of the hotel!

SUWA and HARUKA exit hurriedly. Lights up on MIGIWA and OKIMURA.

OKIMURA
Why did you send someone else to meet me? That's like committing fraud!

MIGIWA
Why did you send someone else's picture?

OKIMURA

That's because, well, I mean it's not a fair comparison! You're very pretty and young, and can play piano; you have no need to send a proxy! Look at me, with a face like this and hair like this, and I'm past 40! It makes me really sad to even say this myself! Were you just making a fool of me?

MIGIWA

No.

OKIMURA

Then why did you lie? *(Pause)* Why?

MIGIWA

I have to get ready for my performance. Excuse me.

MIGIWA exits. OKIMURA stands there, stunned. From the other direction, HARUKA and SUWA enter, her arm around his shoulder.

SUWA

Are you OK?

HARUKA

I'm so sorry.

SUWA

I think it's just a sprain but you should go see a doctor tomorrow.

HARUKA

I'm really sorry. I tend to fall a lot.

SUWA

You were in a rush. Wait here for a sec.

SUWA lets her go and tries to check out the lounge.

HARUKA

Are they in here?

HARUKA tries to take a step, but stumbles. She let's out a painful cry. SUWA rushes back to her support. HARUKA smiles at him, as if to say she is fine. SUWA smiles back at her. At that moment, OKIMURA comes close and sees them.

OKIMURA

Suwa. What are you doing?

SUWA
Oh...

SUWA and HARUKA separate.

OKIMURA
And you, you said you were Migiwa but you're not Migiwa, who are you?

HARUKA
Good evening.

SUWA
Mr. Okimura, are you all right?

OKIMURA
You didn't know, did you?! That Migiwa wasn't Migiwa, and Yoshi wasn't Yoshi?

SUWA & HARKUA
Yes. *(They nod)*

OKIMURA
(suddenly) What are you two doing? What are you grinning about? What are you doing here? Suwa, have you fallen for her? Are the two of you together?!

HARUKA
No! We aren't dating.

OKIMURA
Then go out with me. Love knows no age, right? Are you on Whatsapp?

OKIMURA
Mr. Okimura.

OKIMURA
What, Suwa? Have you got something to say? You haven't fallen for her have you?

SUWA
I have.

OKIMURA
What?!

HARUKA is shocked.

SUWA
I'm sorry, Mr. Okimura. I'm starting to fall for Haruka.

OKIMURA

How painful and sad and pitiful for me to find out her real name like this! I told you so many times not to fall for her!

SUWA

You told me too many times. If you're told "Whatever you do, do not imagine a pink alligator" you'd definitely imagine a pink alligator.

OKIMURA

What kind of nonsense are you spouting?!

HARUKA

Mr. Suwa, I never said I'd go out with you.

SUWA

I've fallen deeper and deeper for you. I don't want to hide it from Mr. Okimura anymore. (*HARUKA is shocked*)

OKIMURA

What the hell is that? Are you doing this to spite me? Are you showing off? Reveling in your real life? Throwing a party in your village of good-looking people?

SUWA

Mr. Okimura, please clam down.

OKIMURA

How can I? Suwa! You'll regret this. I'll torture you at work. I'll drag you down and pull off your pants. "PR strategy" you say? I'll get you fired!

OKIMURA exits. HARUKA is silent.

SUWA

What do you want to do?

HARUKA

What?

SUWA

Do you want to find Migiwa?

HARUKA

Maybe today's not the day.

SUWA

Well, then, would you like to get a drink?

HARUKA
What?

Lights out on these two.

---- *INTERVAL* ----

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