

STOP!
You're reading the wrong way!
This is the final page



This is Japanese manga - it is read from *right to left*. Go to the other end of the book and start there. Enjoy!

About Rica Takashima



Rica Takashima was born in the Shinjuku neighborhood of Central Tokyo. She graduated from the Art Department of Tokyo University of the Arts.

In 1994 she founded Aozora/Bluesky Art in the trendy Harajuku neighborhood of Tokyo. Currently, she is living and working in New York City.

In 2003, she and Erica Friedman founded ALC Publishing in order to publish lesbian manga with happy endings.

“Rica ‘tte Kanji!?” first published in *Phryne, Anise* magazines 1996-1998.

“More Rica ‘tte Kanji!?” published in *Yuri Monogatari, Volumes 3, 4, 5*. 2005-2009.

“Miho-chan’s Memories Part 1,” first published in *Yuri Monogatari 6*, 2010.

"Fight! Cutey Beret!" first published in R-Kids doujinshi, 1995.

"Grace & Miki’s Guide to Yuri" published in *Women’s Review of Books*, Fall 2011.

All other work is original for this collection.

Honorifics are endings to names and titles that Japanese people use to indicate relationships between people. Some of these are used very commonly, some less so. Here are some of the most common honorifics:

-san: Adding -san to the end of a name, like “Michiru-san,” is very common. It indicates a “normal” level of respect and can be used in the place of Mr. or Ms. by attaching it to a family name, as in “Takashima-san.”

-chan: Adding -chan to a name indicates one of several things - affection, closeness, or that the other person is younger than you, or some other diminutive. -chan is often used between women, especially close friends, and parents and children. Although Rica calls Miho, “Miho-san,” and Miho calls Rica “Rica-chan,” there’s nothing particularly unusual about this.

-kun: Where -chan is commonly added to girl’s names, -kun, which also indicates an inferior (by age or position,) is often added to boy’s names. It’s also used in offices by supervisors to address people below them in rank regardless of gender.

-sama: This is an honorific that shows great respect on the part of the speaker. It’s sometimes used in the business world, but is way more common in comics and cartoons than in real life.

-tan: a cutesy, childish way to say “-san.”

-sensei: This is a word that means “teacher” in Japanese, but is used as a title of respect for many different occupations - Professor, Teacher, Doctor, Artist, etc.

ALC Publishing preserves the honorifics attached to names because we want to give you, the readers, the most authentic manga reading experience possible. A Japanese audience would understand the relationships these honorifics denote, and we hope that it will add to your understanding of the characters, as well.



EF: This journey started nearly 20 years ago, before I knew Rica, but the last 10 years or so, we've walked in a kind of fated lockstep. I come up with an idea, and she tells me that she had the same idea. Or she writes me with an idea and I think, "Weird, that was just what I was thinking about." We've both felt our meeting was fate.

And what Rica said about the way she felt that publishing *Rica 'tte Kanji!?* seemed perfectly natural...I feel exactly the same way.

A little over ten years ago, I had the idea to start publishing Yuri manga, because no one else was. Now there is more Yuri than ever before, in more languages than ever before and I still think there are stories that haven't been told yet. But if I never publish another book again, I'm proud of everything we accomplished here with *Rica*. I regret nothing and have cherished every moment of the process - even the ones that gave me heartburn. (laugh)

Although you can't see me, personally, in the stories, the way you see Rica, I am also always a little scared to put our work on display. It's not always visible, but every manga is as much the work of the translators, editors, layout people, retouch and letterers as it is the author. We all hope you like it.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters and friends at Yuricon with special shoutouts to Bruce, Sean, Serge, Donna, Kelli for all the many years they've tromped around the globe with me.

Thanks to everyone who has worked on ALC books over the years; Erin, Takami, Diana, James, Paulette, Sparkle, and extra thanks to Editor Ed for all his help.

I'd like to thank Rica for walking into a lesbian bar and becoming the opening line of a joke that has changed my life.

Always first in my thoughts, I want to thank my wife, who not only puts up with this, but encourages it. And, thank you...for reading our story.











RT: I glibly said that I started drawing manga because nobody else was creating the kind I wanted to read, but the truth is, I did have some misgivings about publishing it. I think I'm the sort of person who's open about myself, but trying to distill my thoughts into a form I can share with others has been an adventure for me.

It's completely different from reading something that someone else has created and then sharing their opinions and discussing your views on them. It's more like you're standing naked on stage with a spotlight on you and everyone staring at you.

When you're building on other people's works, it's like you're putting on a costume they've already created and reciting the lines they've already written. It's safe. But this? Deep down, it scared me. I wondered whether I should be drawing it at all. It was like stepping outside of my safe zone.

But at the same time, I was also scared when I started doing a street art exhibit, "Aozora Art," in the Harajuku pedestrian paradise. I wasn't sure if what I was doing was all right, since nobody else was doing it.

Looking back on it now, I think that they were both times when I felt I had to expose and define who I was and what I was thinking. I won't get into the question of whether self-expression should be conscious or unconscious, but I do think it involves overcoming the barriers we've built up to exposing our true selves. I don't think I chose when that would happen. It felt like it just sort of worked out that way.... I suppose a part of me wanted to take responsibility for my feelings and my life.

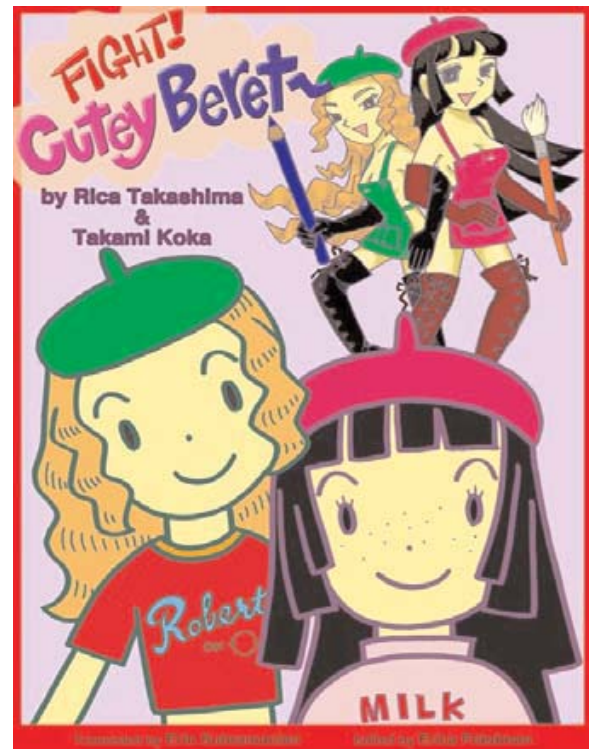
Well, now you know that I actually have a serious, scaredy-cat side to me, too!

START!



Rica Gallery IV

Doujinshi



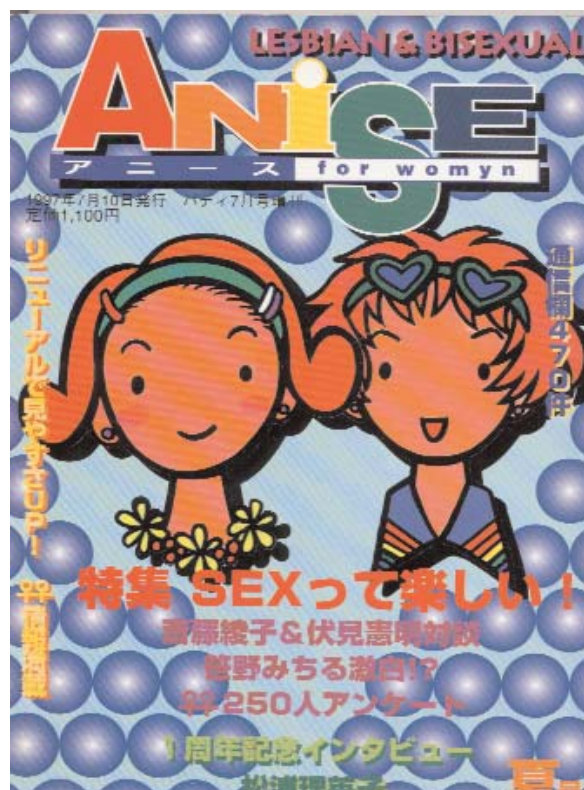
Rica Gallery III

Rica 'tte Kanji



Rica Gallery II

Anise Covers



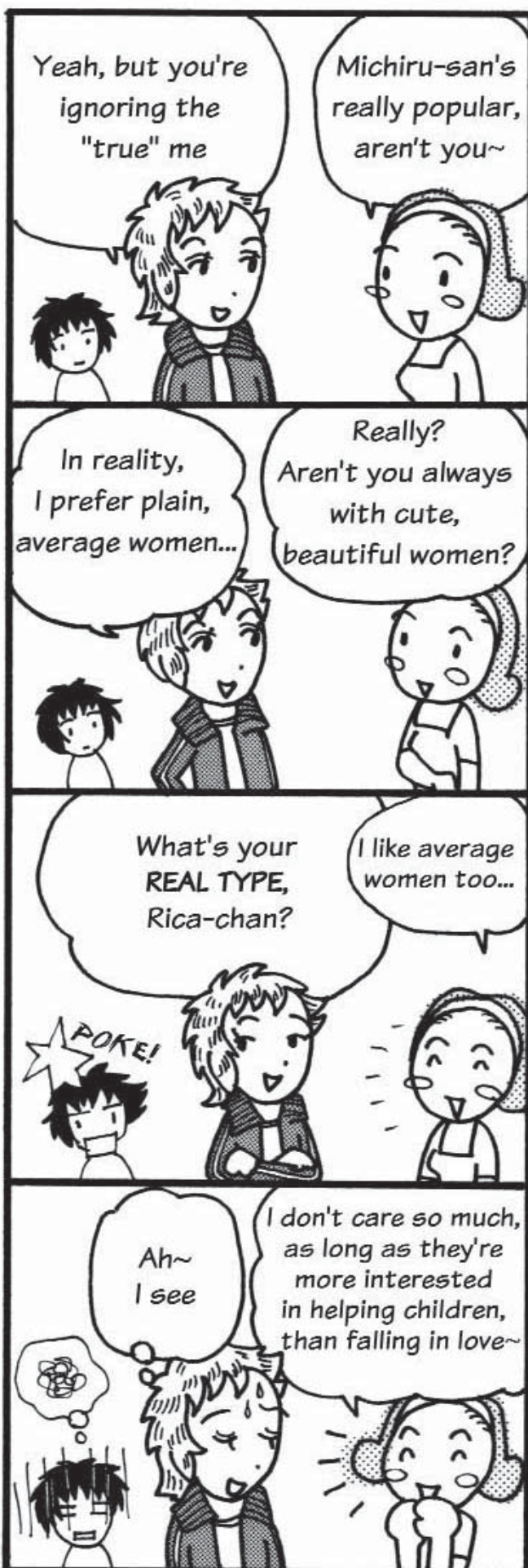
Rica Gallery I

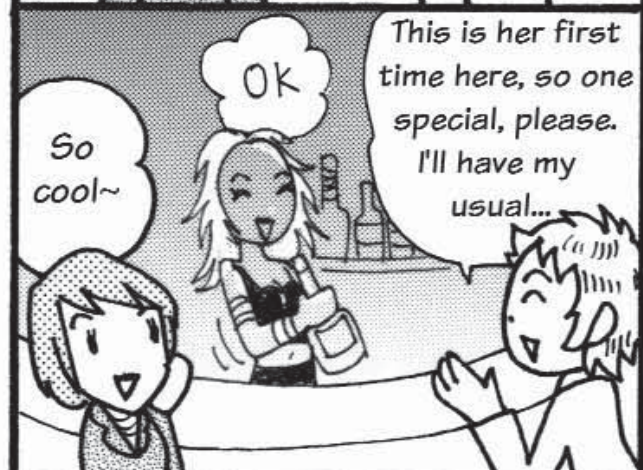
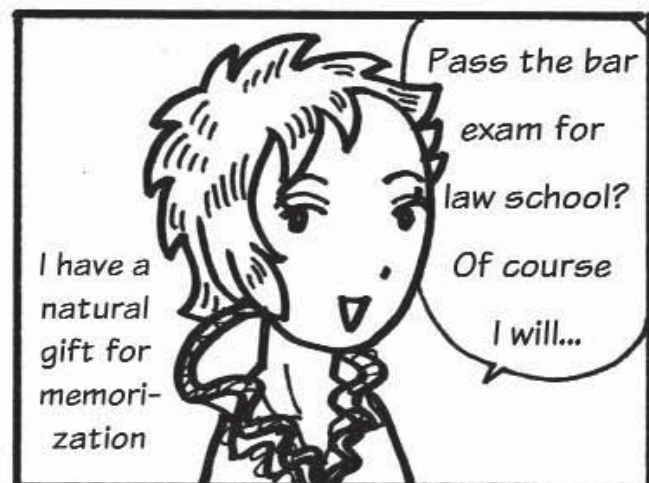
Anise Covers





* Umekobucha: A type of drink, flavored with ume (pickled plum) and kobu (seaweed)

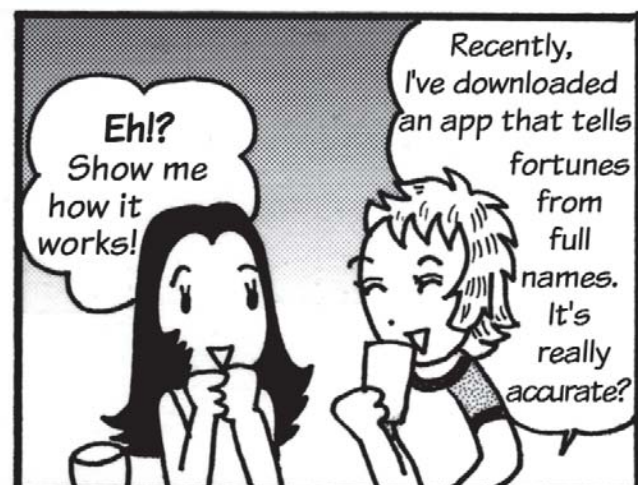




A few hours later

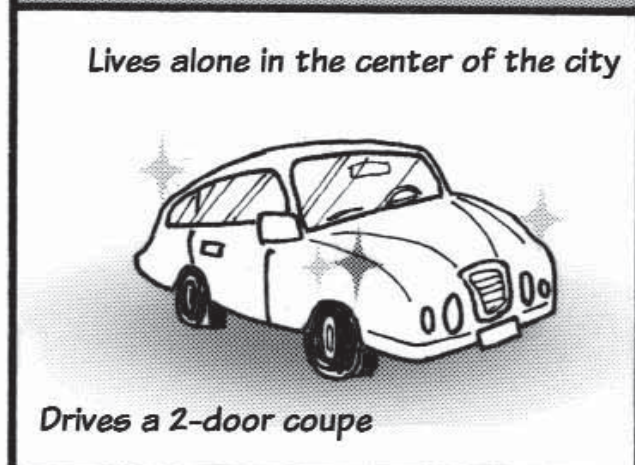


Really safe driver



Michiru, are you a stalker, or what!?

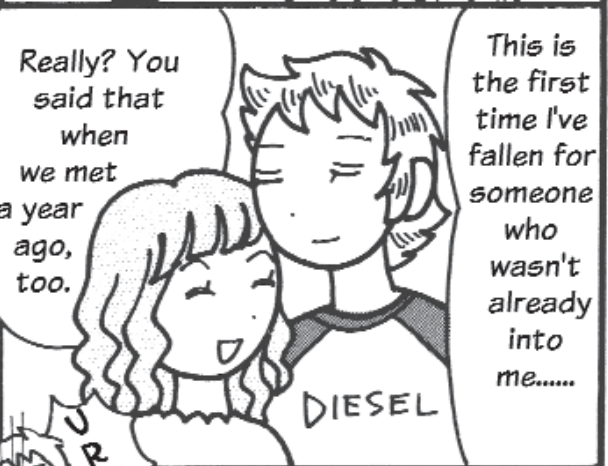
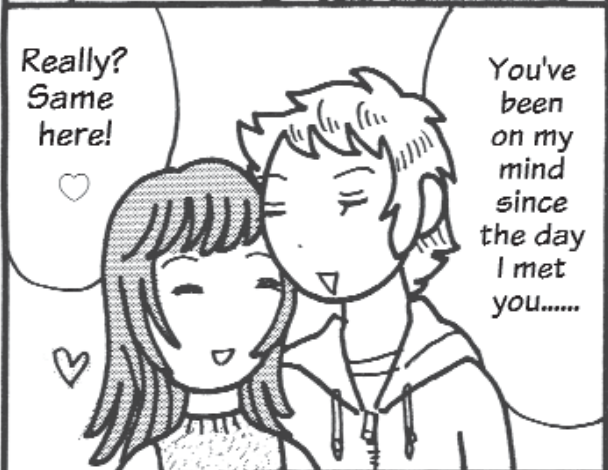
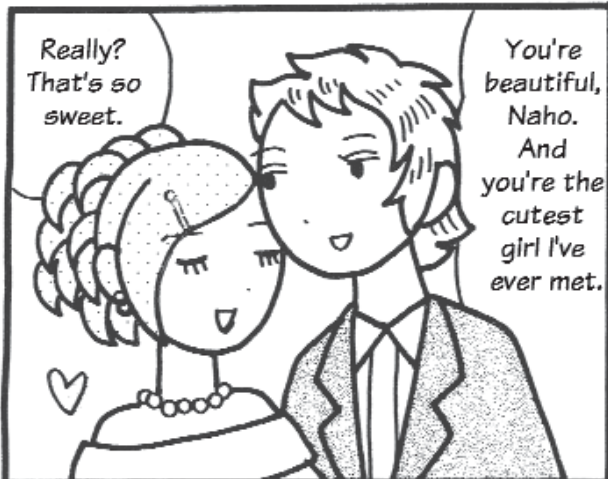




SAVING HER FOR LATER



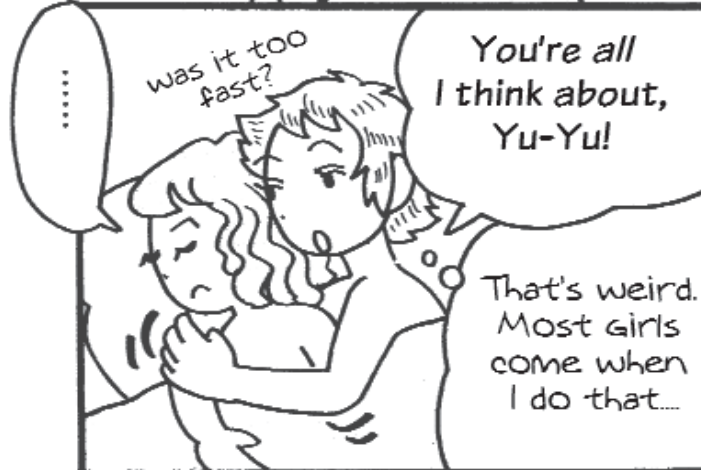
SAME AS ALWAYS



MICHIRU STILL HAS A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT LOVE...

IN HIGH SCHOOL

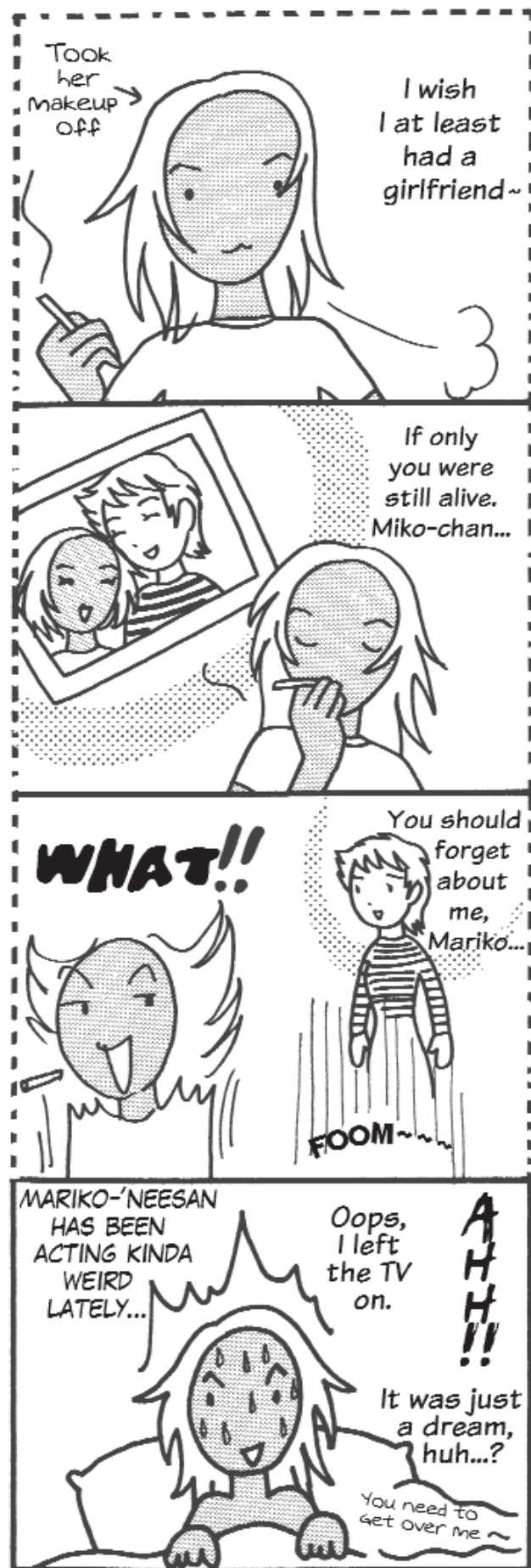
MICHIRU-CHAN



SHE'S STUDYING TO BE A LAWYER



STILL IN HER HEART



WON'T SOMEONE PLEASE GO OUT WITH HER?

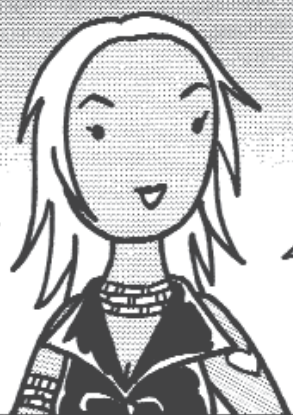
HOW OLD IS SHE?



* SHOWA 30'S - THIS IS THE TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DATING METHOD, EQUIVALENT TO BETWEEN 1955 - 1964.

AN ALTERNATE CAREER

In my line of work...



Welcome.
Oh, hey, it's been a while

IT'S BEEN ALMOST 15 YEARS SINCE SHE OPENED LILY'S...

You hear about all sorts of relationships



m m I see

That Keiko~ She asked me to give her back her key...

uh-huh



She's testing you, that's all, Masae-chan.

Really?



That's why she suggested you break up.



So, you get a good sense of how people's minds work...

I knew it!



I see you working as a therapist



But your talent only manifests when you've been drinking



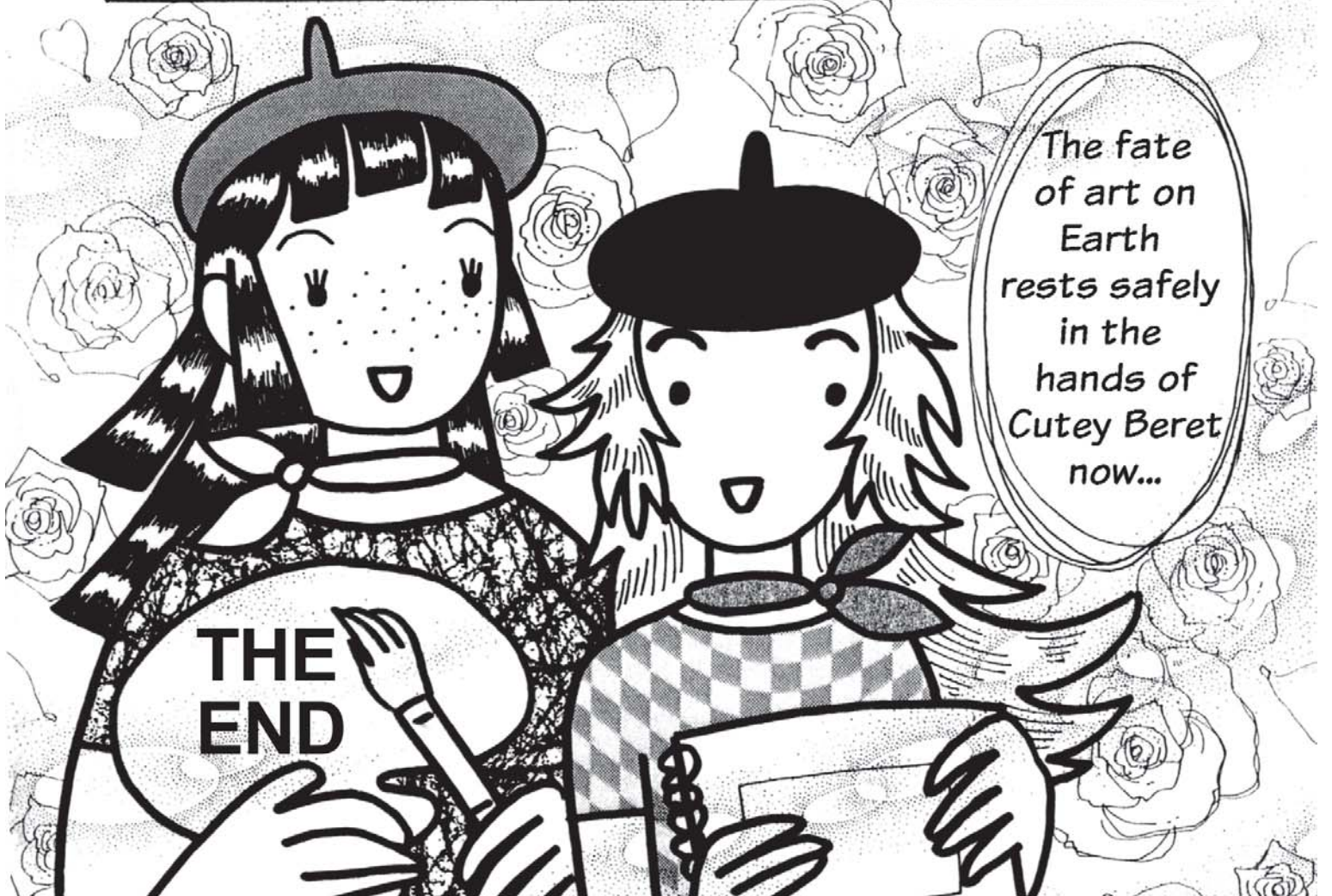
Gah!

Sign: Fortune Teller



MAR-KO-ZUMAZ









That is what
opens our
hearts...
setting
us free...
I see now,
Picasson-
sama!!
It's a
superweapon!!

Stop
Drawing!
Stop
Enjoying
yourselves!

**STOP
THAT!**

The joy of
creation,
the
love and
passion
we have
for art...

... that
is
what
sets
our
hearts
free...!



Weapons aren't
the answer,
Beret-oneesama!
Self-expression
is!! We have
to defeat the
AAA with our
passion
for art!!

Nothing
can quell
our passion
for art
now!

Cutey
Beret
showed
us how
fun art
can be!

An ARTIST
is a person
who can
express
themselves
anytime
and
any-
where!!

That's right!
Emi, Ai,
stand up
and
express
yourselves!

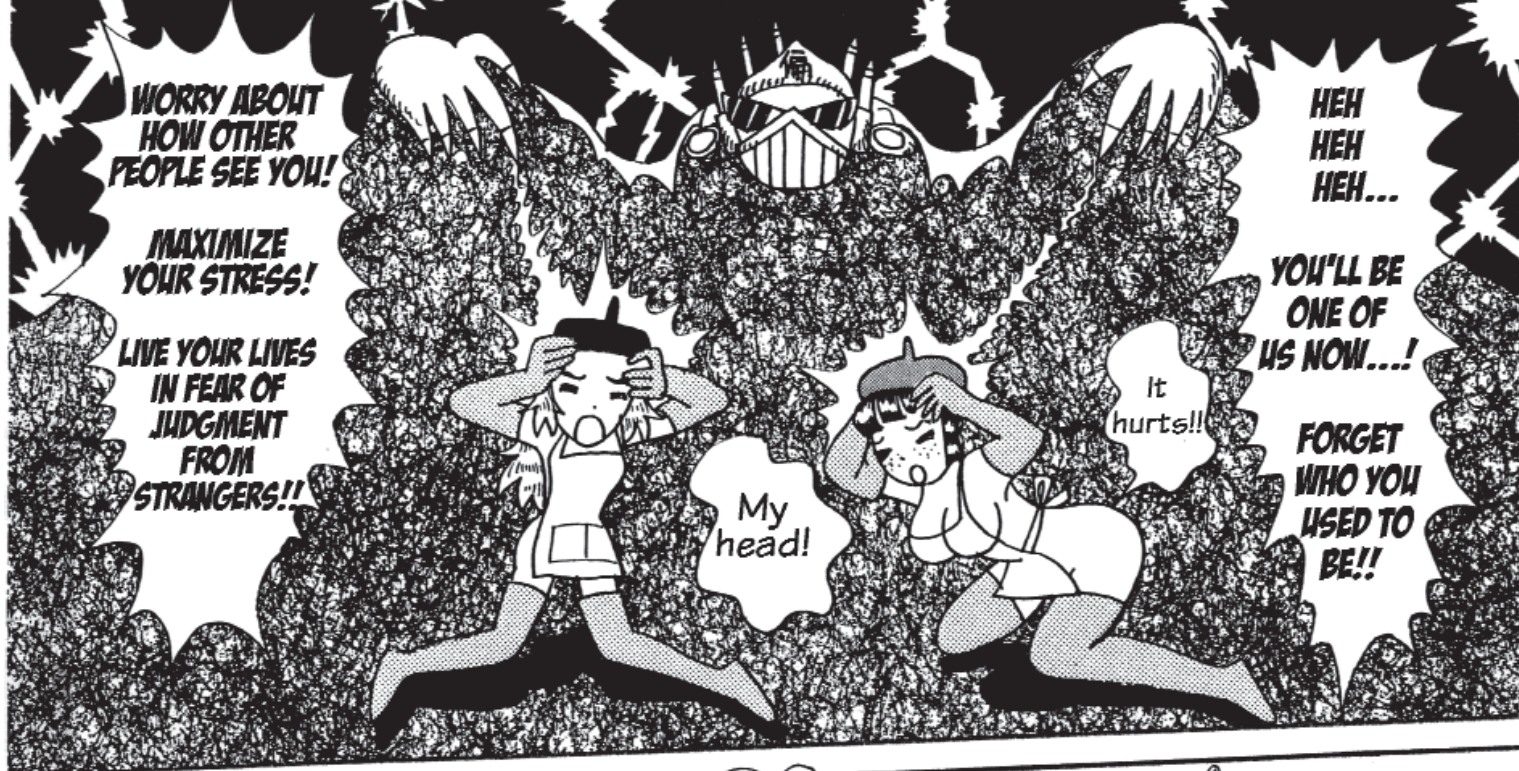
That's
what it
means to
be an
ARTIST!

GRAB

Even if an artist is
dying or in pain...
they can express
themselves...

Not
weapons,
self-
expression...

Only our love
and passion
for art can
defeat our
enemy...



WORRY ABOUT
HOW OTHER
PEOPLE SEE YOU!

MAXIMIZE
YOUR STRESS!

LIVE YOUR LIVES
IN FEAR OF
JUDGMENT
FROM
STRANGERS!!

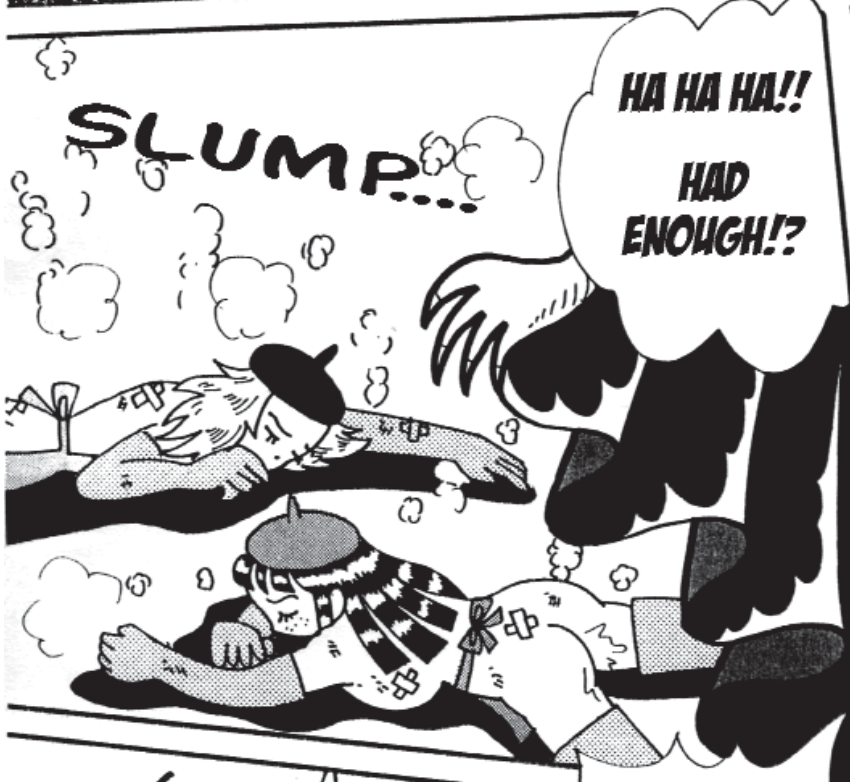
HEH
HEH
HEH...

YOU'LL BE
ONE OF
US NOW...!

FORGET
WHO YOU
USED TO
BE!!

My
head!

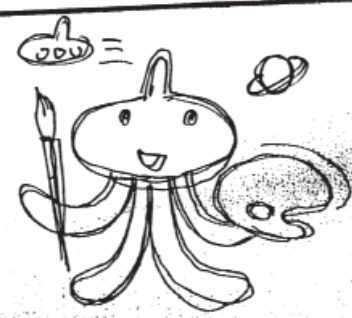
It
hurts!!



SLUMP...

HA HA HA!!
HAD
ENOUGH!?

Ah...
I'm sorry...
Cutey Beret...
will be
no more...



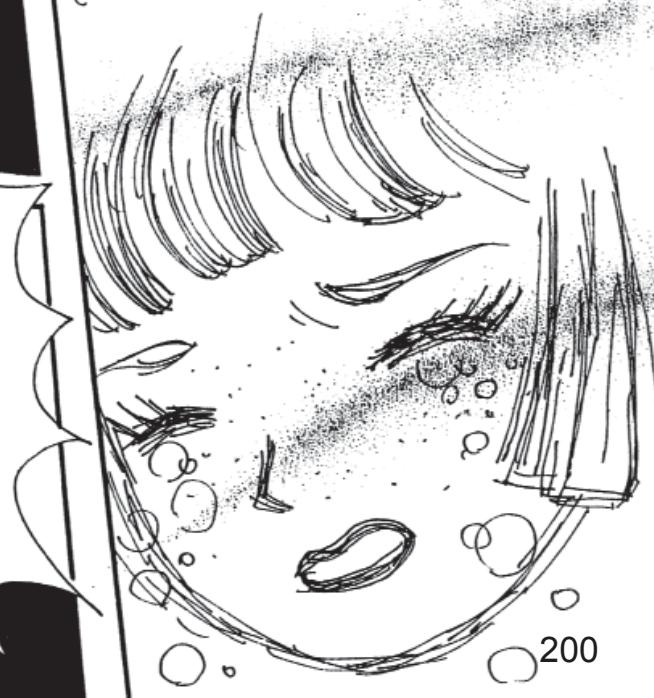
Picasson-sama...
we just can't...
save the Earth
with art...
It's not possible...

That's
enough,

King
of
AAA!



WHAT?





HMPH!
THAT
PUNCH
COULDN'T
HURT
A FLY!

AR-GH



AAACK!

THUD

FLAP



Color
Pencil
PUNCH!

B
A
M



A LITTLE
BREEZE
WILL TAKE
CARE OF
THAT

WAAAA

phoo-



We
don't
stand
a
chance!

W-
what
will
we
do
now?



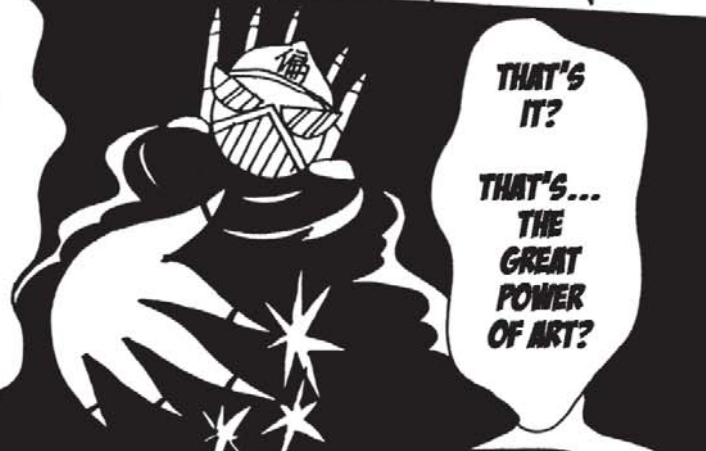
Air-
brush
FLASH



KYAAH!

NNNNN
A A P...

ALLOW ME TO
THANK YOU
IN KIND
FOR THE
TREATMENT
YOU GAVE
MY
UNDERLINGS...



THAT'S
IT?

THAT'S...
THE
GREAT
POWER
OF ART?



It's the

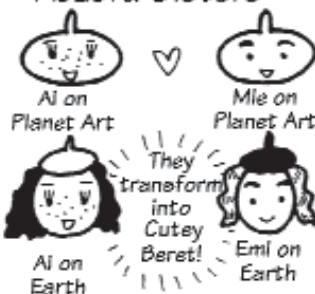
F
i
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d
o
w
n
!

FIGHT!! *The Deeply Moving Finale!* **Cutey Beret~**

by Rica Takashima

x

Aozora Sisters



The Story So Far:

An evil force menaces the children of Earth: the Army of Academic Achievement. Other planets are sending warriors to fight them. Ai has come to Earth from Planet Art, leaving her lover, Mie, behind. There, she met Emi, an Earthling. This is a record of their battles as Cutey Beret.

*It's the
King
of the
AAA!*

Heh
Heh

Heh
Heh



*You're
the one
who's
going
to be
elimin-
ated!*

**I'VE COME TO
ELIMINATE
YOU...**



Hee
Hee
Hee...

**PLAYTIME
IS OVER,
CUTEY BERET...**



We won't let the law
limit our relationship.
We trust each other,
and we'll keep working
to change things.

LET'S GO
GET A HOTEL
ROOM, AI!

You're so cool?

Thanks,
Beret-
onee-
sama!

We're only
in 2nd grade, but
we want to get
married. We can't wait
until we're grown up!

Heh
Heh
Heh....

**THIS ENDS
HERE,
CUTEY
BERET!**

Y...You're
the King of
the AAA!?

Has the
time come
for our
final
battle...!?

Cutey Beret

ARE ON THE SCENE!

whoosh

Whooosh

whoosh

AAH!!

OUCH!

PACKING
TAPE,
MASKING
TAPE,
GAFFER
TAPE,
ETC.

Triangle Squall!

4040

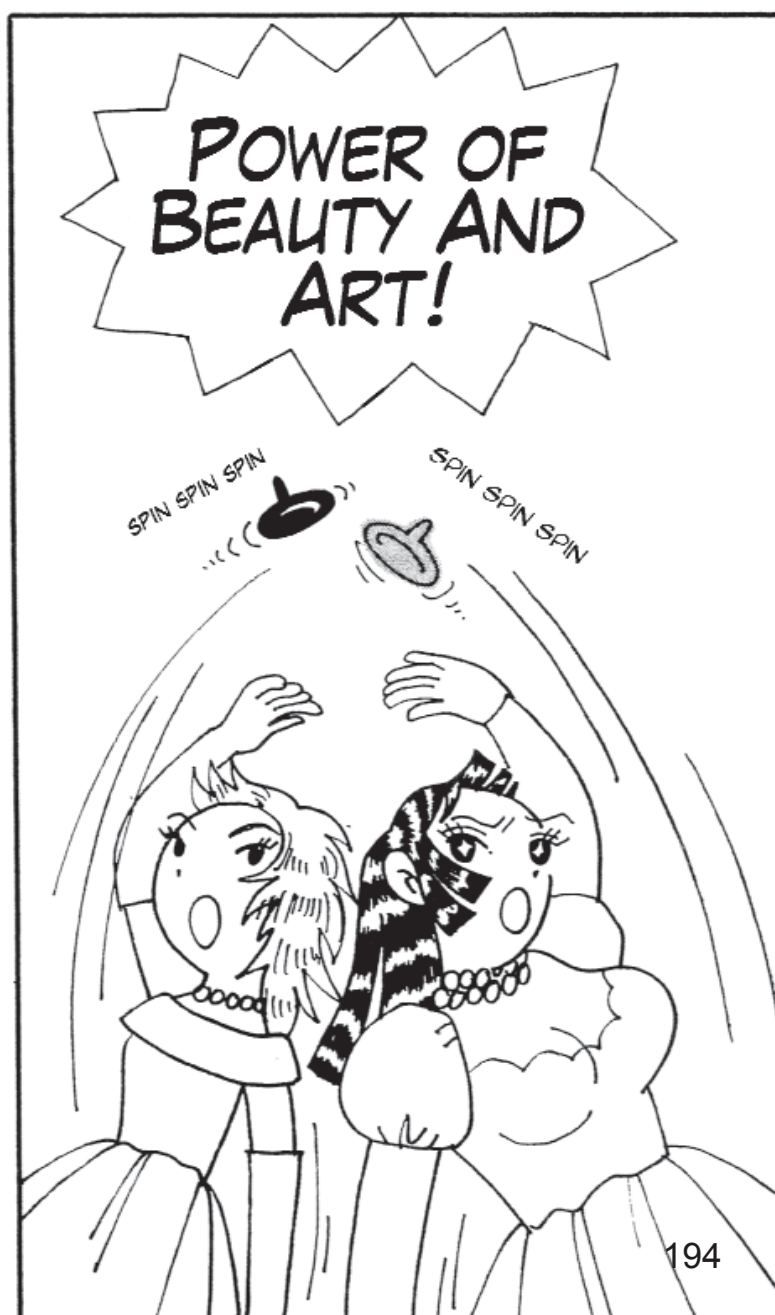
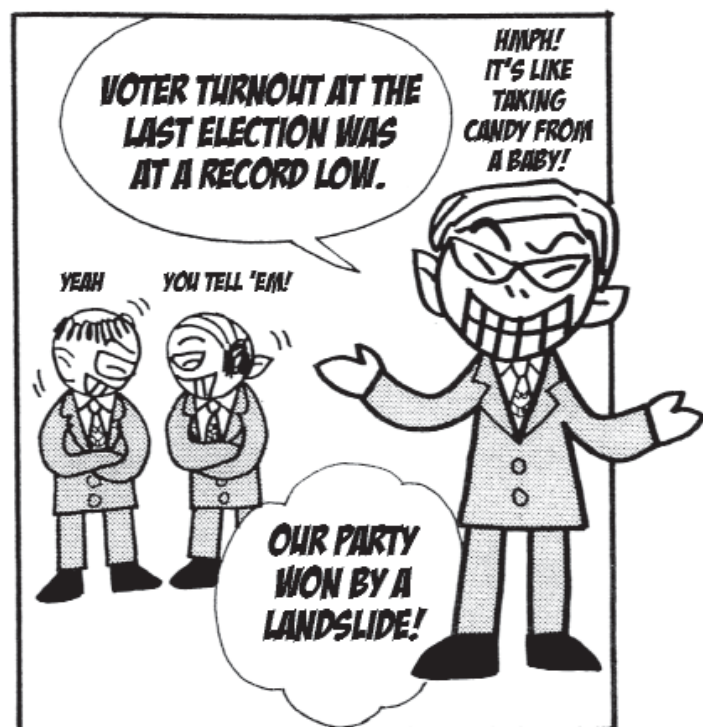
Tape

THEY GOT US....

EEH

RUN AWAY!

МАДАН!



This is a work of art called
"Love Love Ceremony."
It's about the freedom to marry.

You see, same-sex
couples can't marry in Japan,
and the Diet won't even pass a bill
to let married couples have
separate family names.

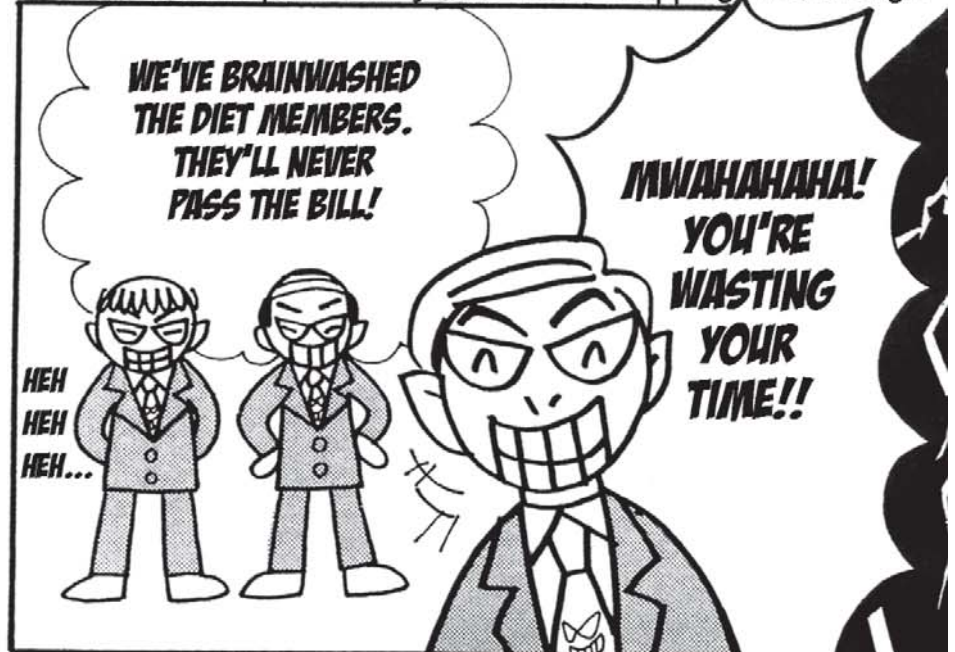
The message we want to send
here is that all loving
couples should have
a chance at happiness!



FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT [HTTP://AOZORAART.COM](http://AOZORAART.COM)



...she doesn't particularly care about stopping Mie, though.



Mie,
you
fool...

ALL
ALONE...

WAH!

FLASH

Please
stop!

TO
EARTH!

WHUMP

Humans
have a
long
way
to go,
huh?

I can talk camp,
like a gay man...
Fabulous?

Planet
Art has
moved
beyond
gender...

...you
ap-
pear
to be
a man.

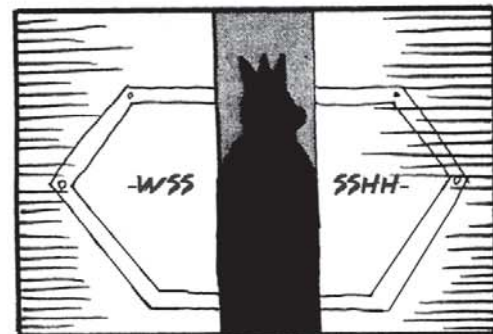
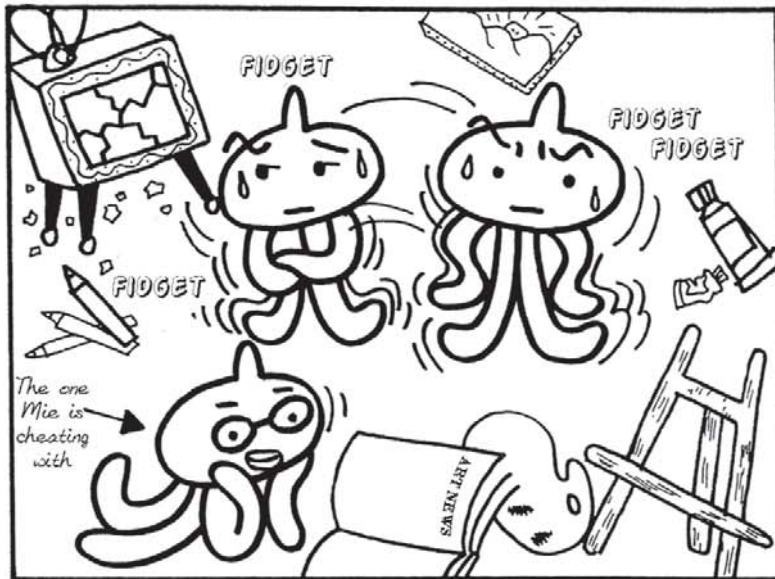
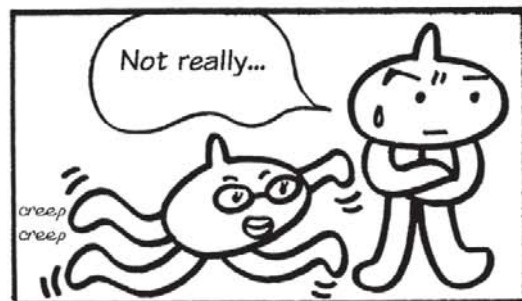
Mie-
tan...

I did
it!
Look, we're
human!

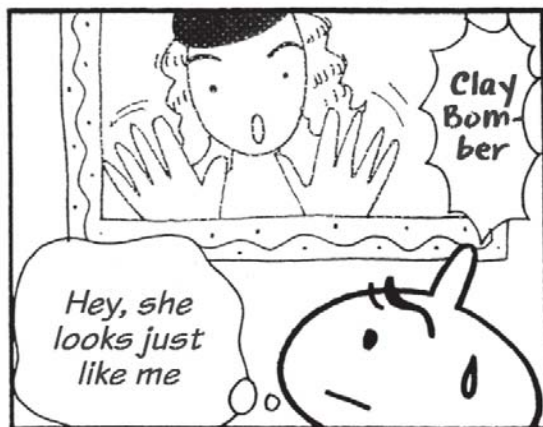
Oh,
right.

Oh!





Back on Planet Art, Mie is jealous...

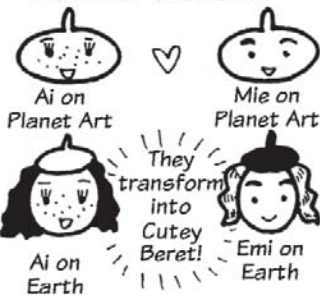


FIGHT!! Cutey Beret~

by Rica Takashima

x

Aozora Sisters



The Story So Far:

An evil force menaces the children of Earth: the Army of Academic Achievement. Other planets are sending warriors to fight them.

Ai has come to Earth from Planet Art, leaving her lover, Mie, behind.

There, she met Emi, an Earthling.

This is a record of their battles as CuteyBeret.

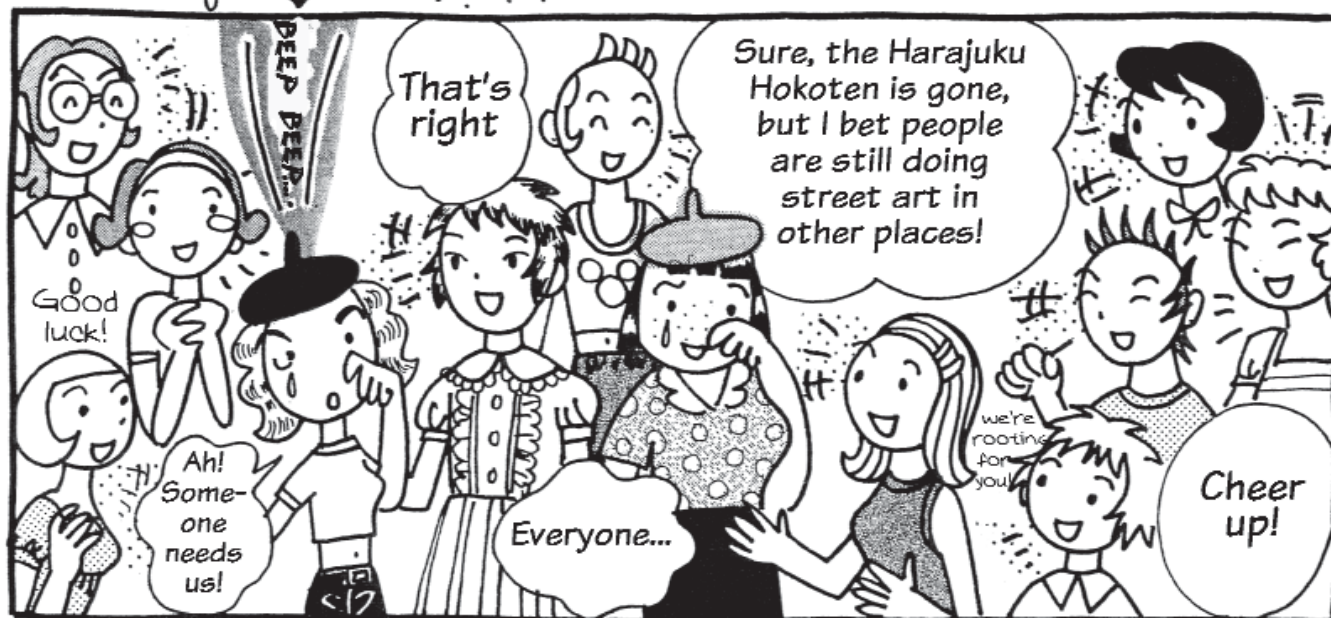
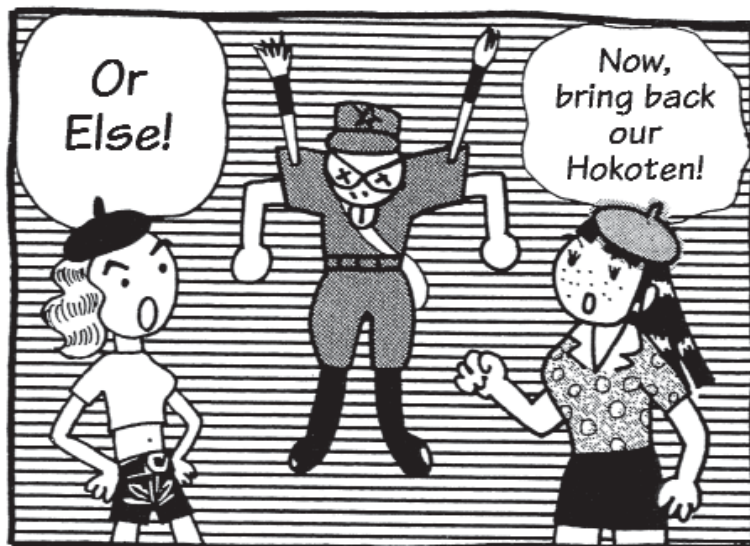
I-I can't. Our leader has brainwashed the top officials. You should give up on the Hokoten.



What?

Or Else!

Now, bring back our Hokoten!



That's right

Sure, the Harajuku Hokoten is gone, but I bet people are still doing street art in other places!

Cheer up!

NEW YORK HERE WE COME!

Let's go Emi!

What's going on there?

HEH HEH HEH...

To Be Continued...?

I-is that the Manhattan skyline?



YOU CAN MEET THE INHABITANTS OF PLANET ART ONLINE! [HTTP://WWW.AOZORART.COM](http://www.AOZORART.COM)

WARRIORS OF ART

Cutey Beret

APPEAR!!

THAT
WAS
SO
STAGED!

SO, YOU'VE
DECIDED TO
SHOW US
YOUR TRUE
FORMS!

DO IT
ONE
MORE
TIME!

Clay
Bomber

boof

boof

boof

boof

gurk!

Thank
you
Beret-
onee-
sama!

Piece
of
cake

hmp

thunk thunk thunk thunk

Brush
Shuriken!



Yes,
it's time
to take
out the
trash.

GLINT

It looks like we
need to save
these kids first,
before we can
bring back
the Hokoten.

WHAT
DID
YOU
SAY?

FLA SH

AAAH! WHAT IN THE WORLD-

THUD!

POWER OF
BEAUTY AND
ART!

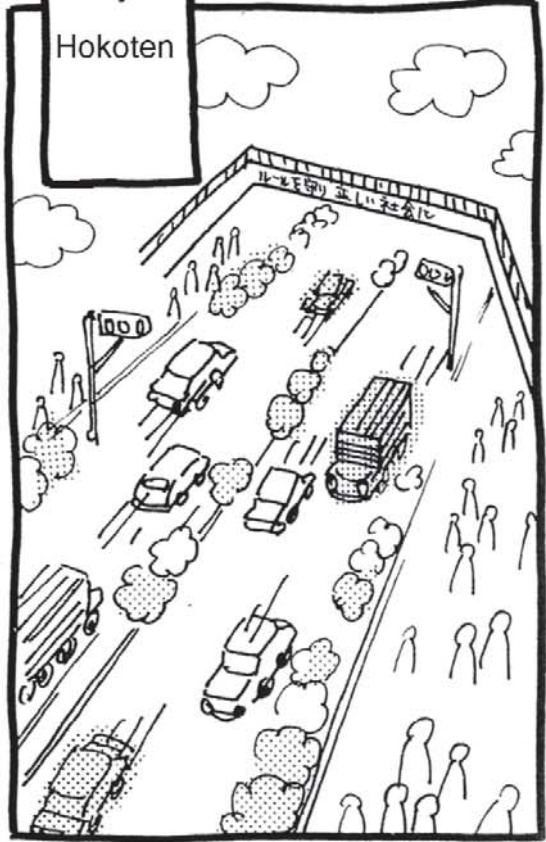
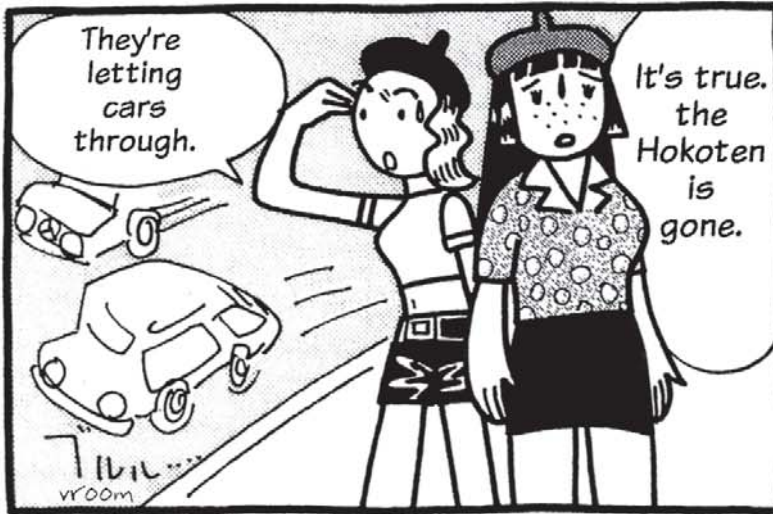
SPIN SPIN SPIN...

SPIN SPIN SPIN...

Sign on Overpass: Let's follow the rules
so we can have an orderly society

Harajuku

Hokoten





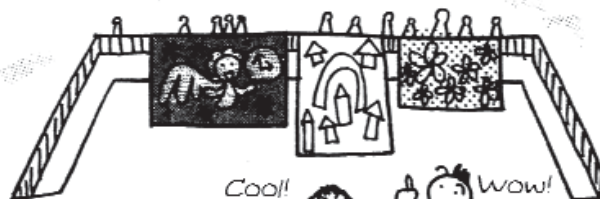
"ORDER MADE FAMILY"

"AOZORA GRADUATION
AND
ENTRANCE CEREMONY"

"INSTANT GENDER"

set up Peek-a-Boo
boards where they
can take
commemorative
photos of people,
involving them
in the
creation process...

They've hung
Emi's giant
paintings from
the pedestrian
bridge...



Cool!

Wow!

"MONTMARTRE
IN HOKOTEN"

Ai and
Emi
have
exhibited
their own
street art,
Aozora Art,"
in the
Harajuku
"Hokoten."



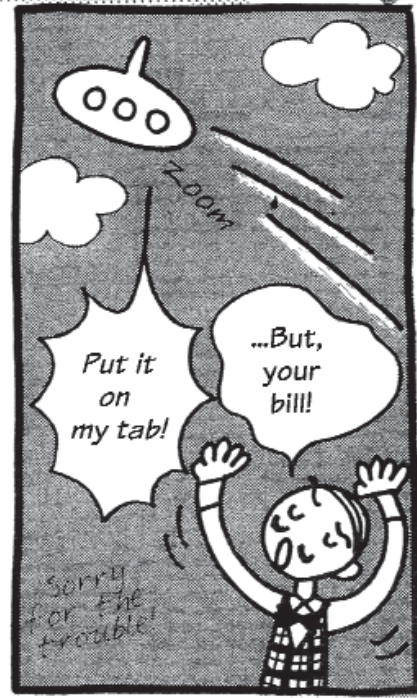
...and helped
participants
become
the protagonists
in their own
manga, with
the theme
"I'm sorry for
everything I did
this year."

"APOLOGY
ART"

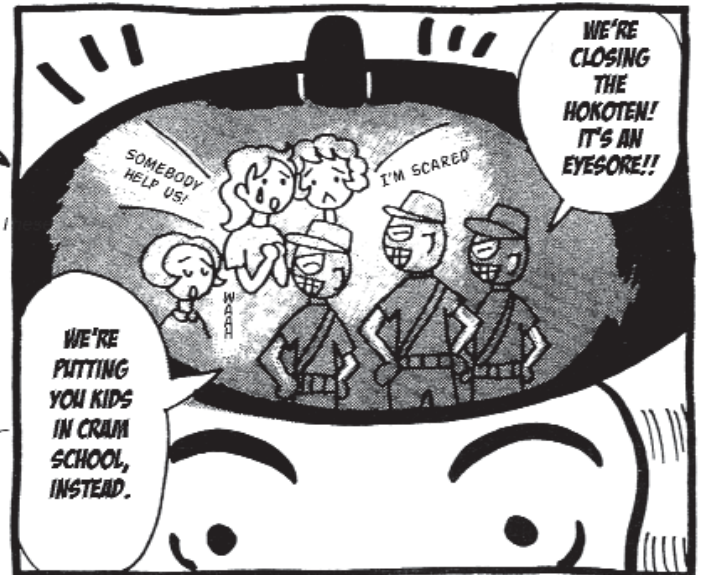
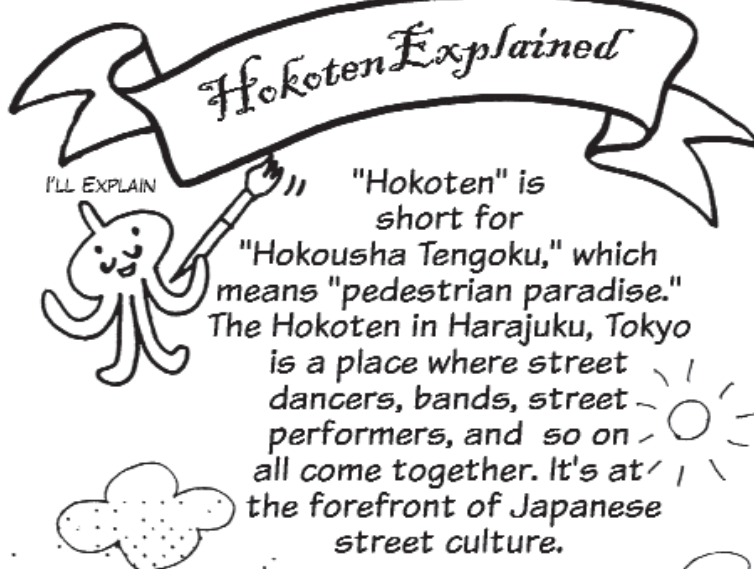


...gotten
passers-by
involved in
"sketch
rallies"...

"HOKOTEN
SKETCH RALLY"



They're
trying
to take
away
our
Hokoten!

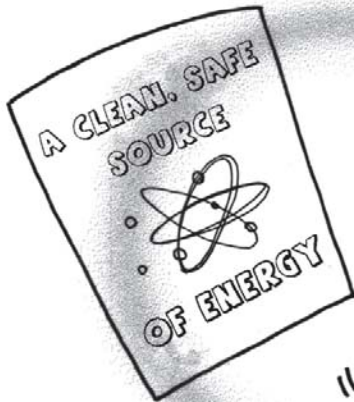


HERE YOU GO

Who cares if our grandchildren will be deformed? Let's build lots more nuclear plants so we can continue to enjoy lives of luxury!



The Army of Academic Achievement is spending a lot of money to brainwash people in Japan so they'll accept nuclear power, too. They're brainwashing politicians, academics, the media, and even the common people...



I can get a free game if I make a poster about nuclear power! I'm gonna do it!



They're even having children draw posters in school that say nuclear power is safe. The Ministry of the Environment is running a contest, with prizes.

They told everyone that the radiation wouldn't damage their health. They didn't make the real data public at the time when people most needed to know about it. Instead, they waited for half a year, and then snuck it onto their website. They raised the acceptable food contamination levels to the heights they would be at during nuclear war, and let people eat food that wouldn't otherwise have been considered safe.

This area is safe!

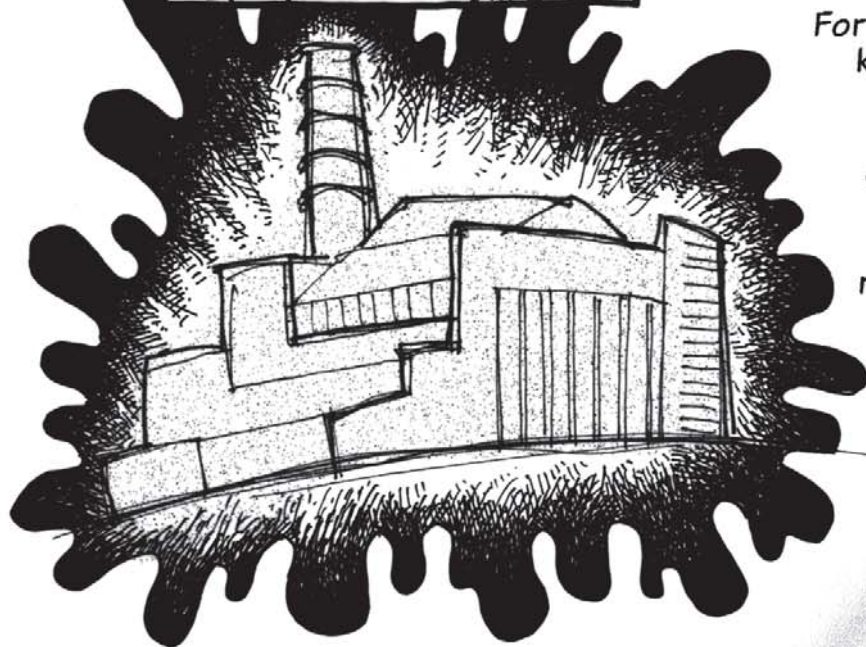
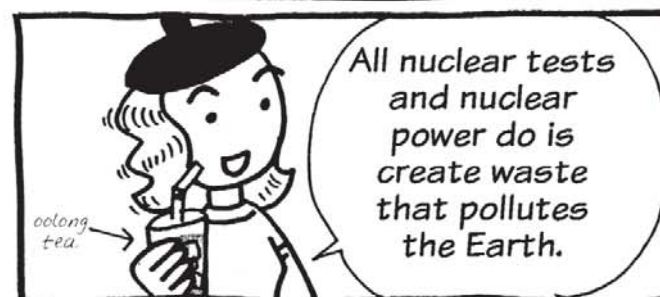
So it's all right for us to stay here?

An "Authority"

If it's safe, why is he in that suit?

She should have asked him that, but no Japanese people will do that...





For example, over 700,000* people were killed as a result of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. The nuclear reactor was enclosed in a concrete sarcophagus, but mere decades later, the concrete has broken down enough that radiation has started leaking out.

They say that 80%* of the children of Belarus developed diseases like thyroid cancer because of the radiation.

Th-that's horrible...



This is what the surgery scar looks like. They call it a "Chernobyl necklace"...

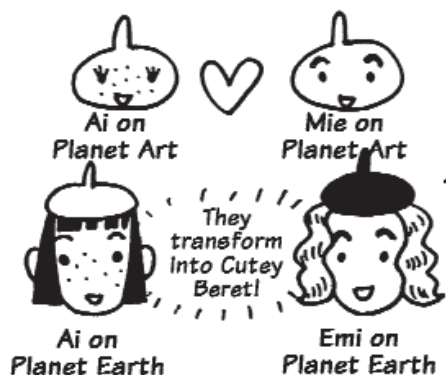




FLIGHT!

Chapter 3

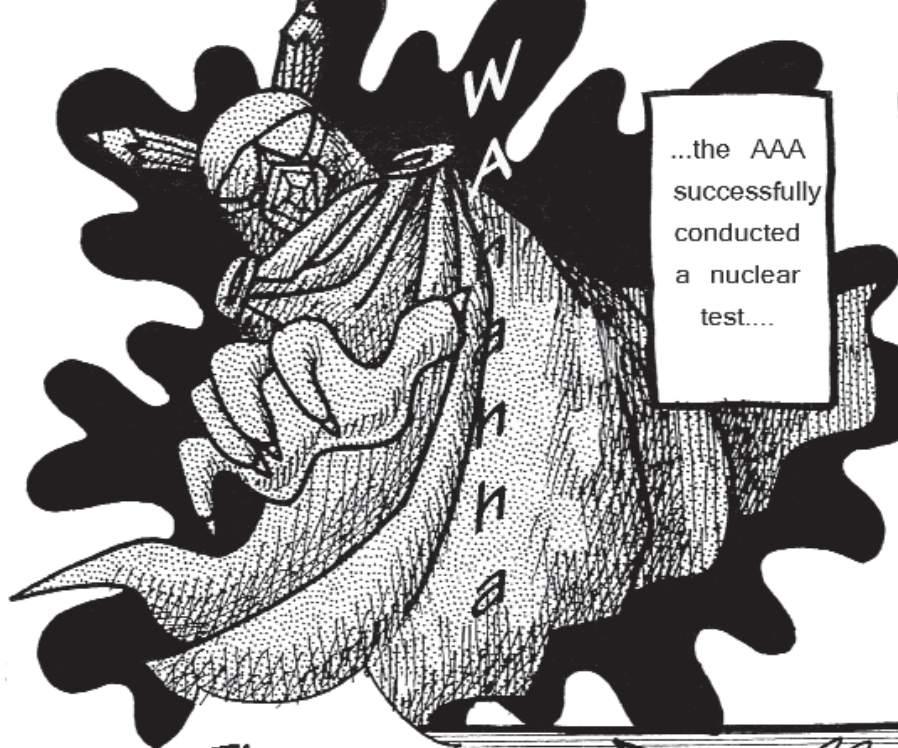
Cutey Beret



THE STORY SO FAR:

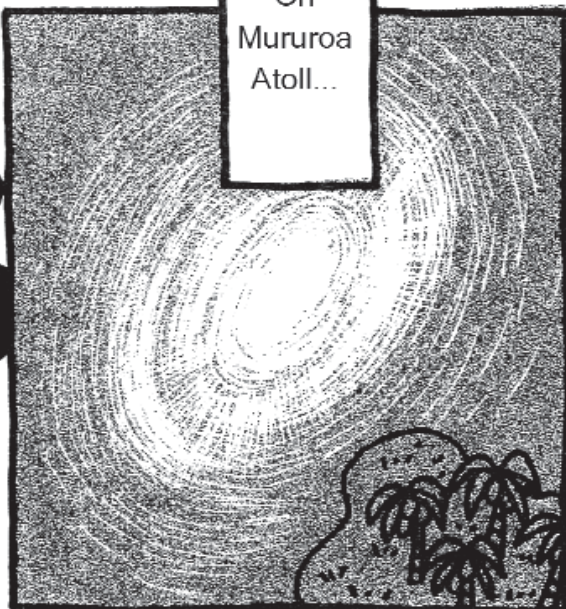
AN EVIL FORCE MENACES THE CHILDREN OF EARTH:
THE ARMY OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT. OTHER PLANETS ARE
SENDING WARRIORS TO FIGHT THEM.

AI HAS COME TO EARTH FROM PLANET ART,
LEAVING HER LOVER, MIE, BEHIND. THERE, SHE MET EMI,
AN EARTHLING. THIS IS A RECORD OF THEIR BATTLES
AS CUTEY BERET.



...the AAA
successfully
conducted
a nuclear
test....

On
Mururoa
Atoll...

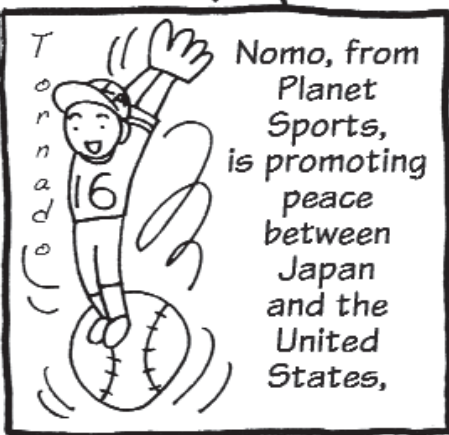


That
damn
AAA!



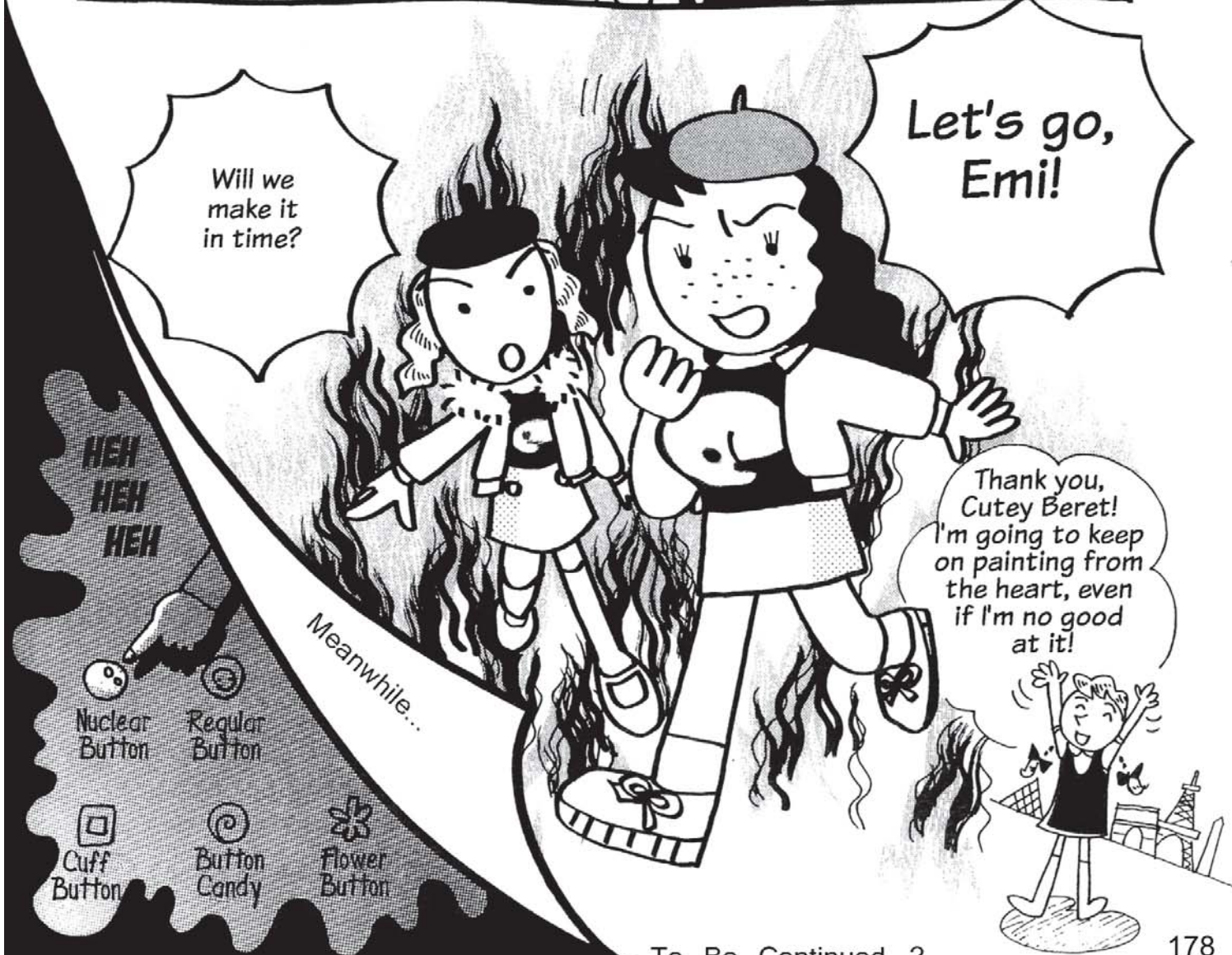
Damn
it!

WHAT
WILL
THE
AAA
DO
NEXT
TIME?





ARE THE FRENCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTS THE WORK OF THE AAA??



To Be Continued...?

WARRIORS OF ART,
Cutey Beret!
TRANSFORMED!

W...WHAT
IN THE
WORLD...?

Onee-
sama...

You're trying to steal
children's freedom and
dreams! You won't get away
with this!!

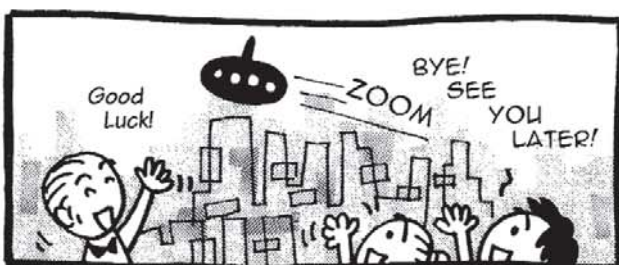
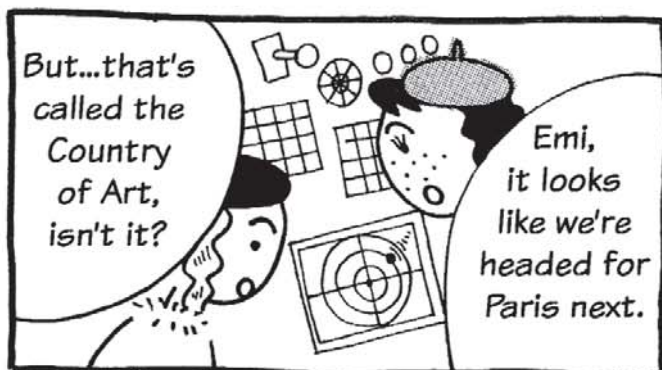
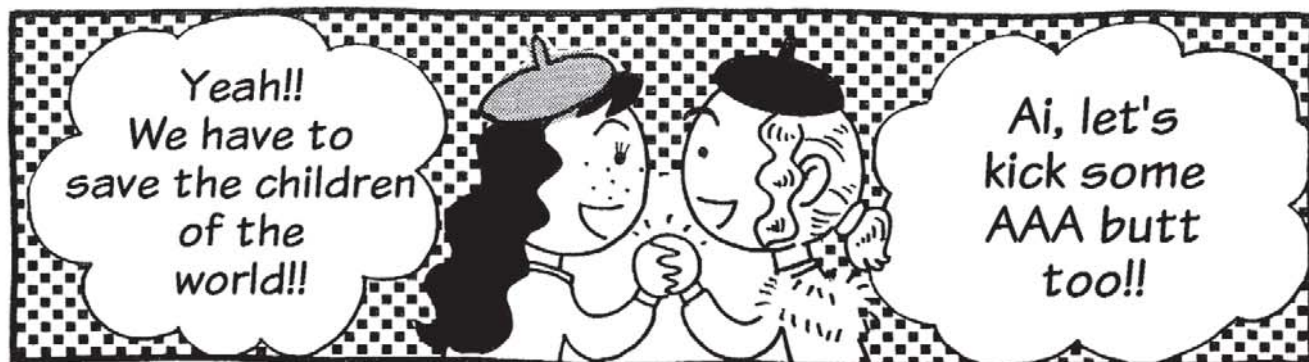
Paint Be-am!

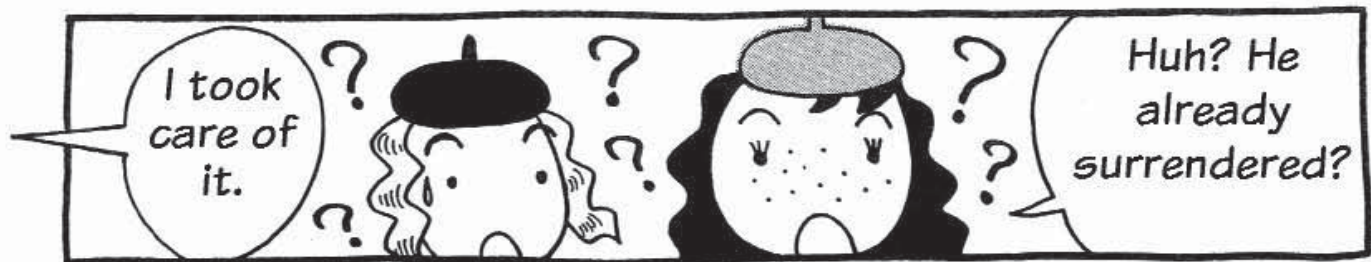
ACK!

SMACK!

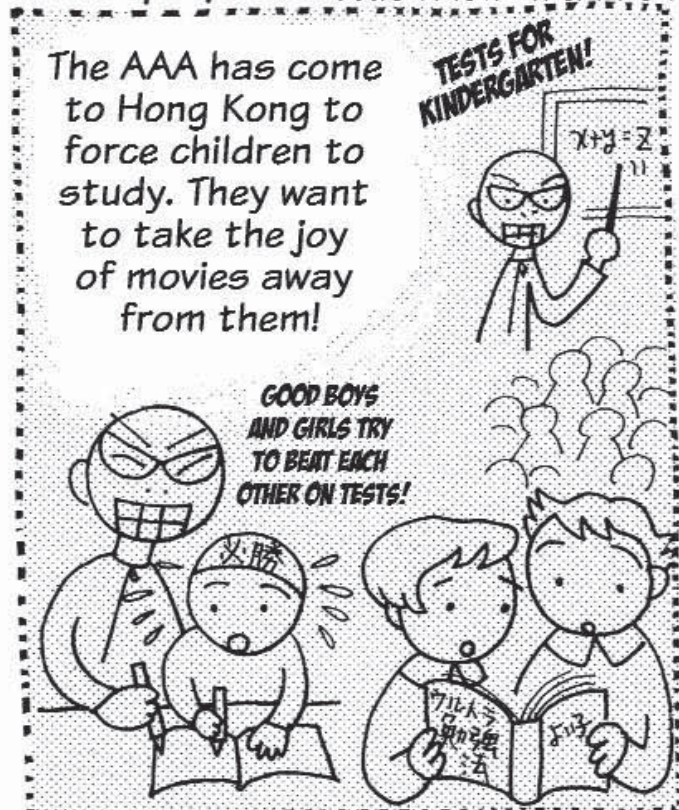
Boomerang!



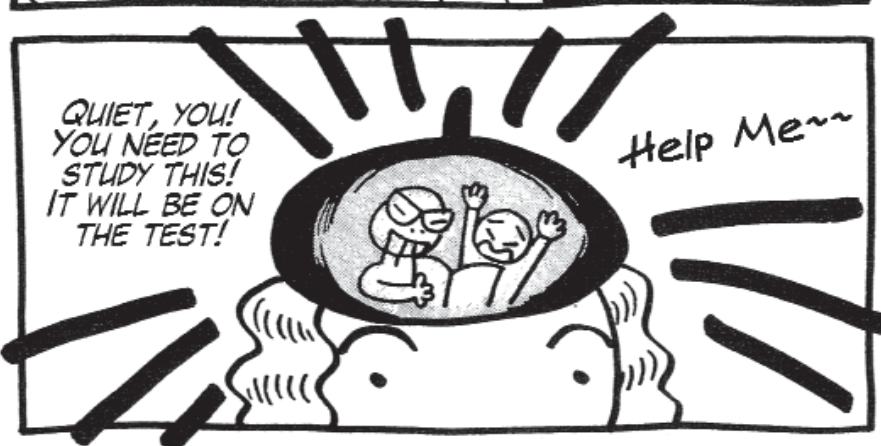




*God of Gamblers is an action movie from Hong Kong

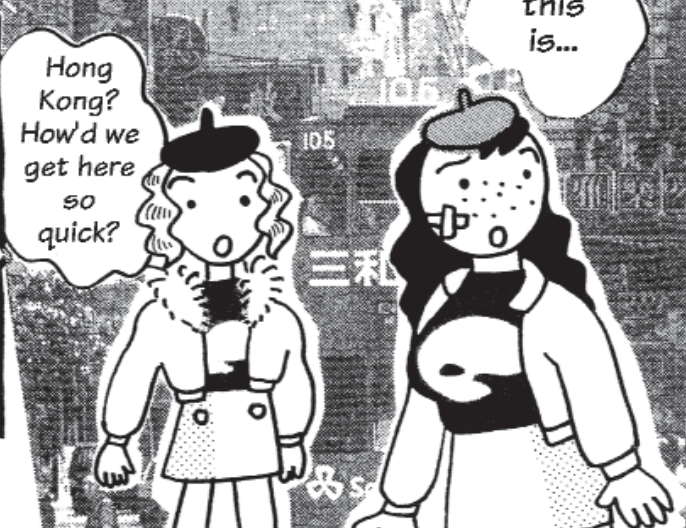
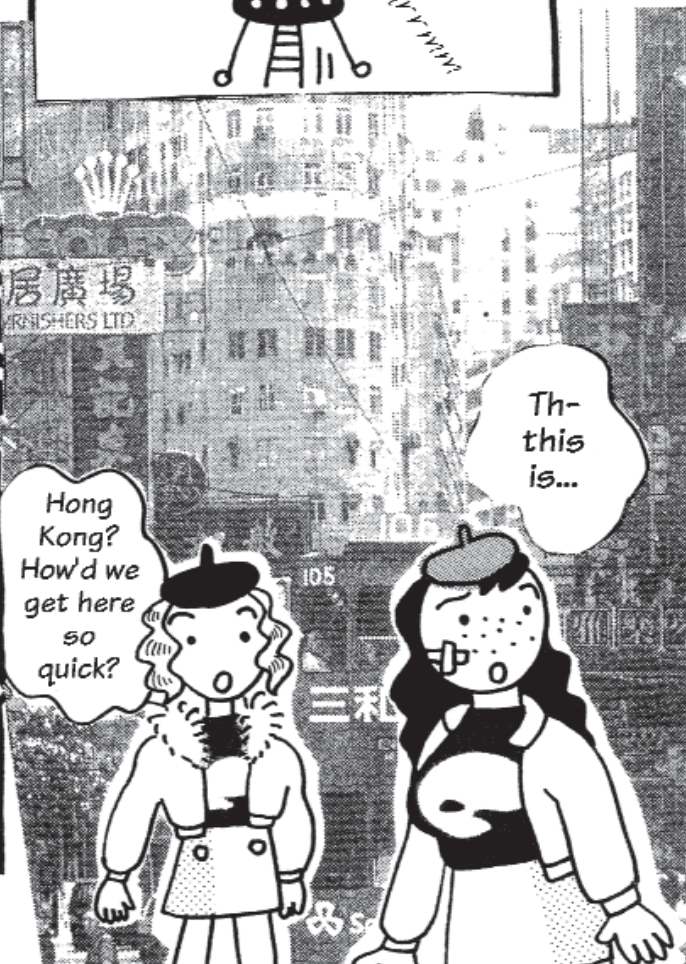


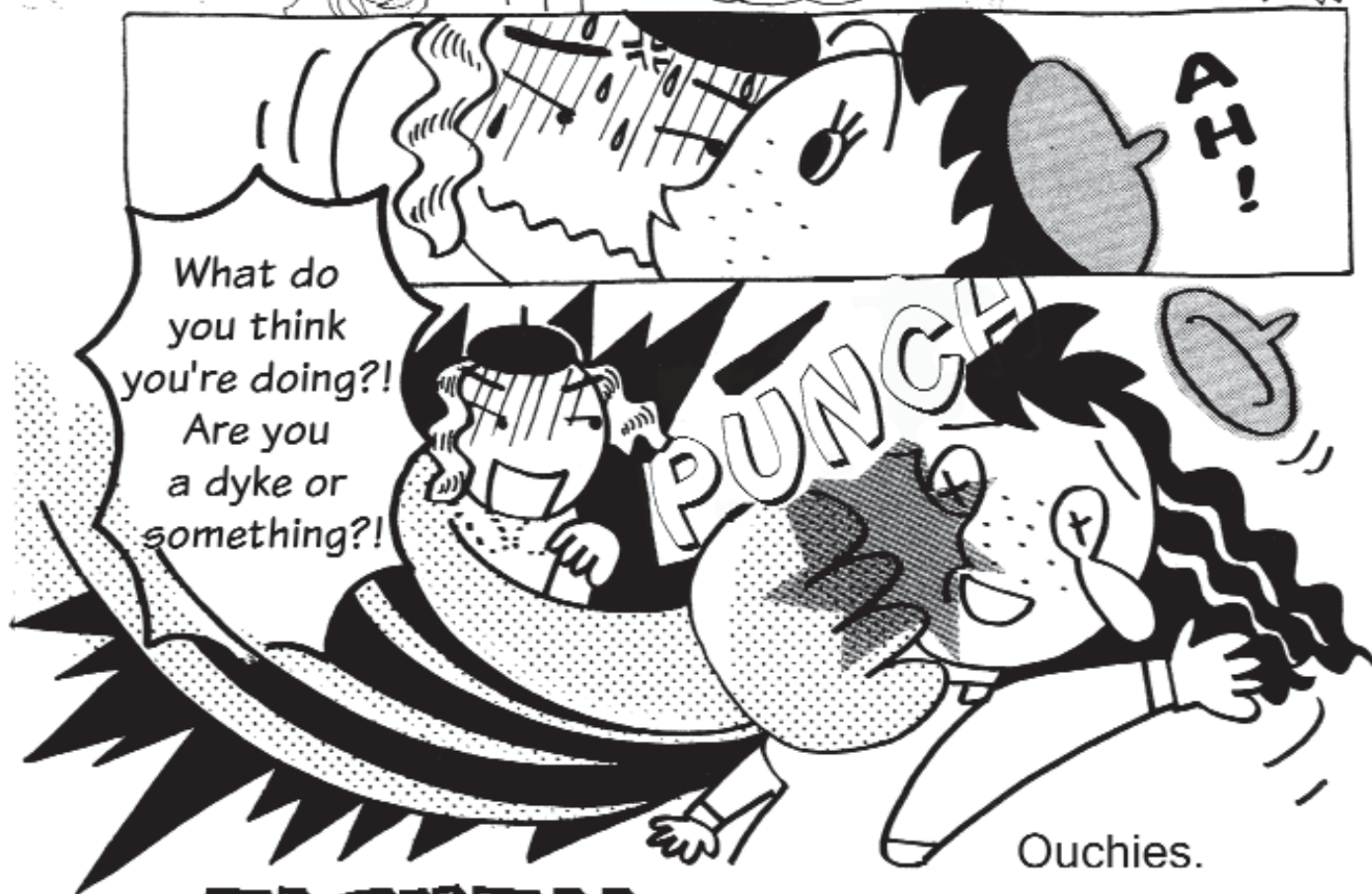
Headband: Victory Book: Ultra Study Method for Good Children



Zoom ~~~~~

ART UFO ©





FIGHT!! Cutey Beret~

by Rica Takashima

x

Aozora Sisters



The Story So Far:

An evil force menaces the children of Earth: the Army of Academic Achievement. Other planets are sending warriors to fight them.

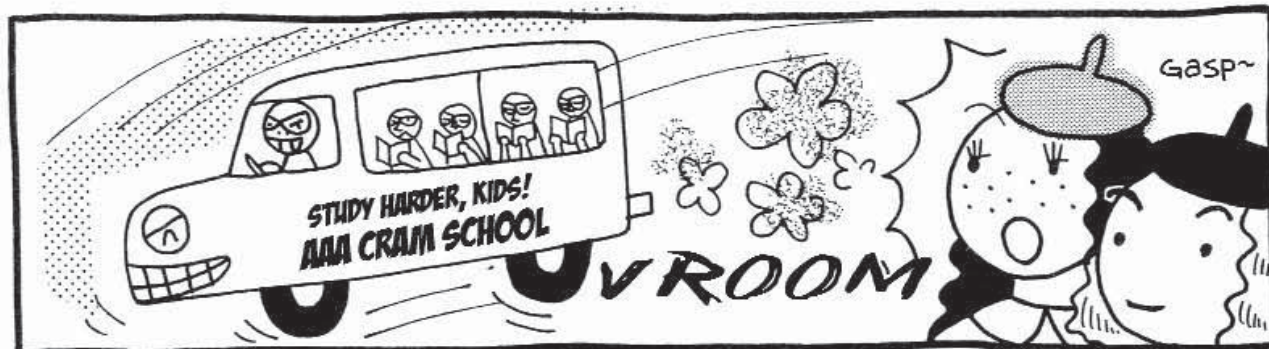
Ai has come to Earth from Planet Art, leaving her lover, Mie, behind.

There, she met Emi, an Earthling.

This is a record of their battles as Cutey Beret.



And that was how Ai, from Planet Art, and Emi, from Planet Earth, first met. Their quest to defeat the Army of Academic Achievement was just beginning!



WAIT FOR ME, MIE!
I'M GOING TO
TAKE DOWN THE AAA,
AND THEN I'M COMING
BACK HOME TO YOU!!

Well, they won't know what hit them...

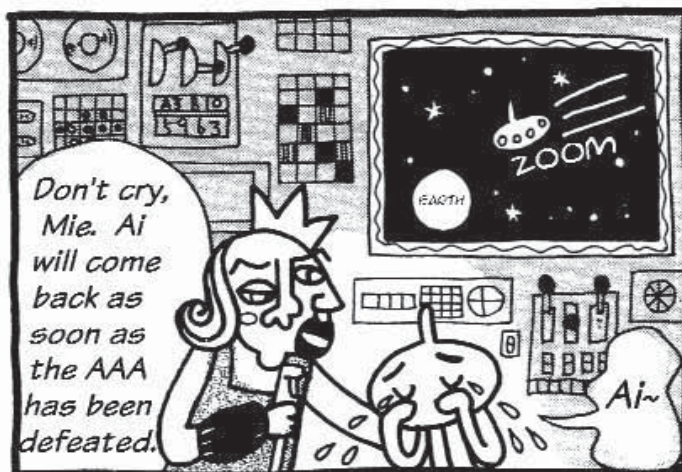
So, that's the AAA, huh....

Back on Planet Art, Mie was already cheating on Ai...



Ai-chan and Emi-chan are fighting day and night to defeat the AAA! (No, really!)

To Be Continued....?



Don't even try to argue with me! My word is final!

WHAAAT~?

AI, I'M SENDING YOU TO EARTH!

WELL, I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH YOU!

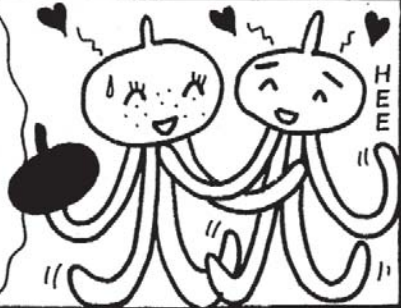
BUT THE AAA DOESN'T FIGHT FAIR! THEY'RE SUPPRESSING CHILDREN'S TALENTS AND DESIRES IN THEIR QUEST TO CREATE A UNIFORM SPECIES...

THE OTHER PLANETS ARE SENDING WARRIORS TO SAVE THE EARTH FROM THEM,



RIGHT NOW, A GROUP OF EVIL-DOERS CALLED THE ARMY OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS TRYING TO TAKE OVER PLANET EARTH!

Can't I at least take Mie with me?



When you get to Earth, you must find a human partner to wear this beret.



NO! THE TWO OF YOU NEVER GET ANYTHING DONE TOGETHER!

STEAM
STEAM

Your partner will be enthralled with the beauty of art, and will agree to fight the AAA with you.



there...

A A A A

DOO-T LOOK!

I'M...

don't
tease

Aaahn~

HEY!



FIGHT!! Cutey Beret~

A Legend
Is Born

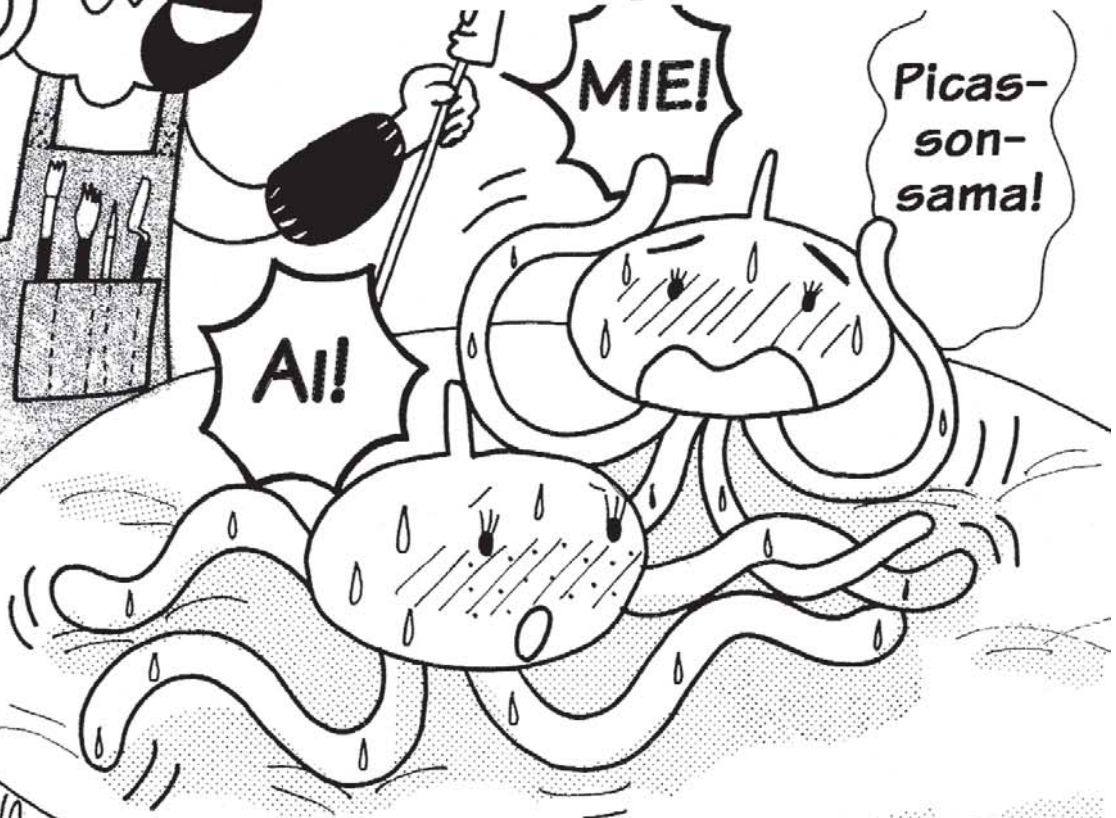
YOU'RE
SUPPOSED
TO BE
WORKING!
INSTEAD I
FIND YOU
HERE, DOING
FILTHY THINGS!

YOU NEVER
DO ANYTHING
ELSE! NO
WONDER
EVERYONE THINKS
PLANET ART
IS FULL OF
INCOMPETENTS!

Ai!

MIE!

Picas-
son-
sama!



FIGHT! Gutey Beret~

by Rica Takashima
&
Takami Koka



Translated by Erin Subramanian

Edited by Erica Friedman

Free Talk



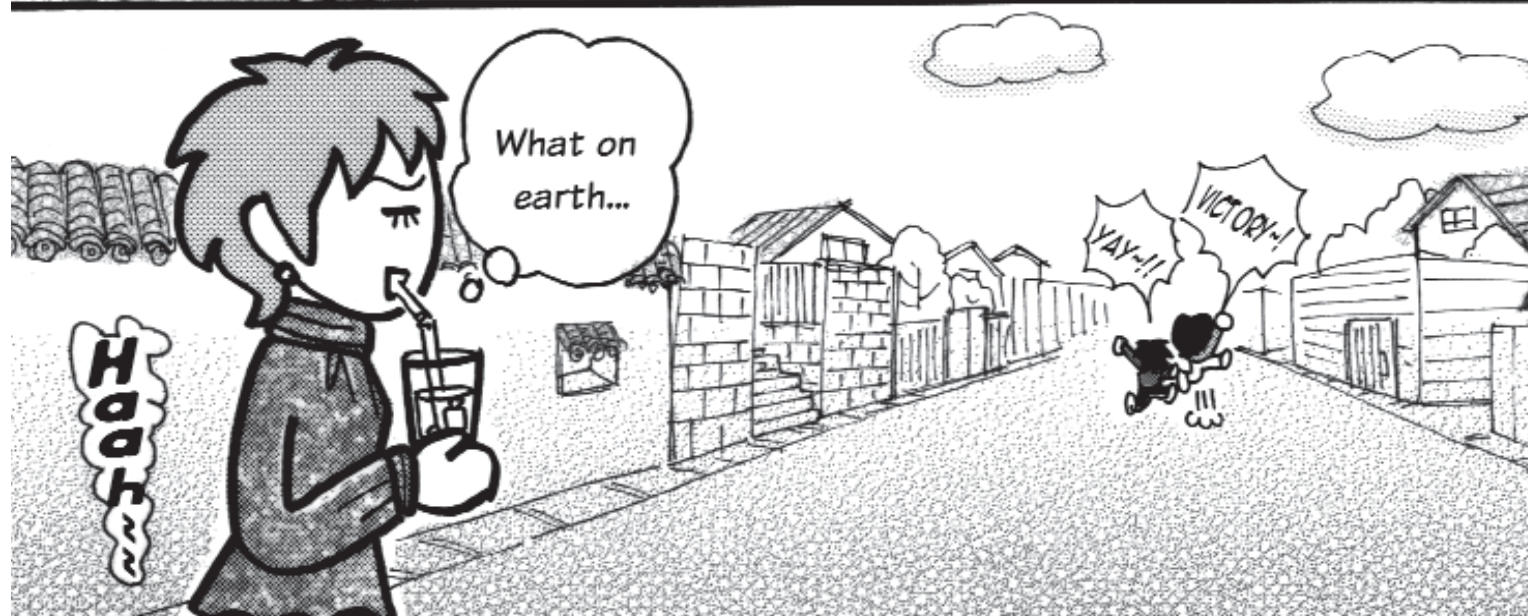
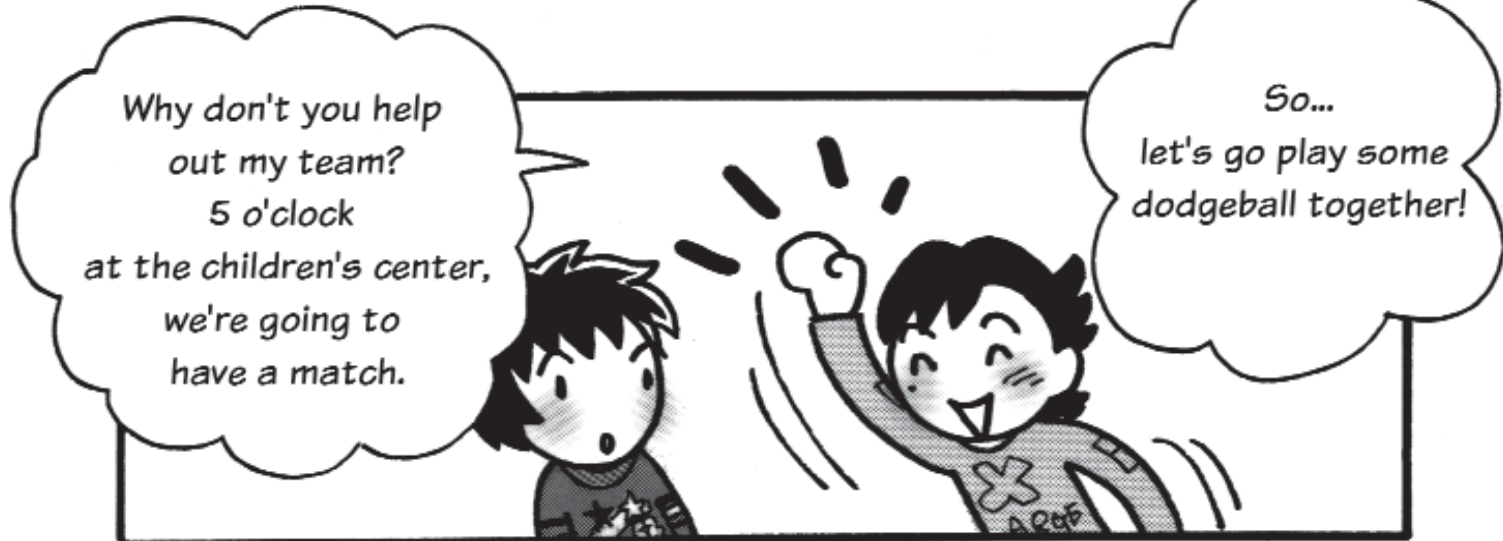
EF: So, *I read Fight! Cutey Beret! and wanted to add it to this collection. Tell us a little about when you first drew it and what you thought about it being published now. It's still very relevant.*



RT: In 1995, I had the opportunity to meet a lot of “erotic manga” artists. And, they had a circle called R-Kids, which produced *doujinshi* (self-published comics). I was invited to draw some comics for them. The others were producing derivative works based on anime and manga, for an adult audience, with risqué art and themes. In those days, my partner in art, Ai-chan, had her eye on work by older manga artists and would draw layout and storyboards she had memorized in those styles. I would ink the rough drafts, and then students who came in and out to work would apply the tones. It was actually a lot of fun. Thinking about the *doujinshi* we made then, I feel very cheerful. When we went to Comiket (a large comic-selling event in Tokyo) as vendors for the first time, it was like “We sold *doujinshi*!” We were surprised.

After we did that for about two years, the circle broke up, so the truth is, I never expected that last chapter to be published. Even though it was the long-awaited, deeply moving final chapter. (laugh) So, it was like the Phantom Manga, and I couldn't truly imagine that Erica wanted to put it in this book. I think my artwork and the story might be unclear to readers. It mixes things together like Harajuku culture and a story about nuclear bombs. If someone can read it now and find it interesting, I will be very happy.

EF: I read it and thought it was interesting! And with the old school manga references mixed together with the nuclear energy story (something that is once again very relevant to Japan) I thought it made a perfect addition to this collection. I'm glad the world can read that long-awaited, deeply moving final chapter. (laugh)





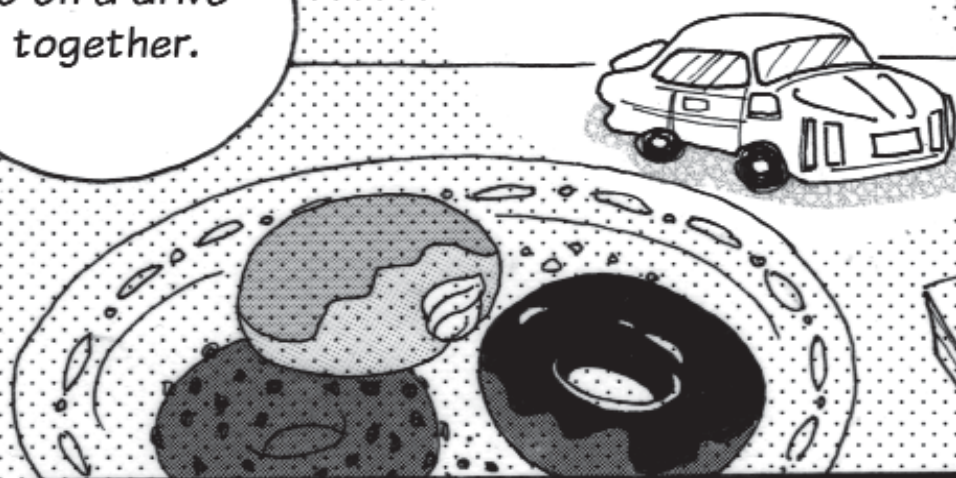
He's a good kid,
isn't he?

What does
he mean?



and we'll
go on a drive
together.

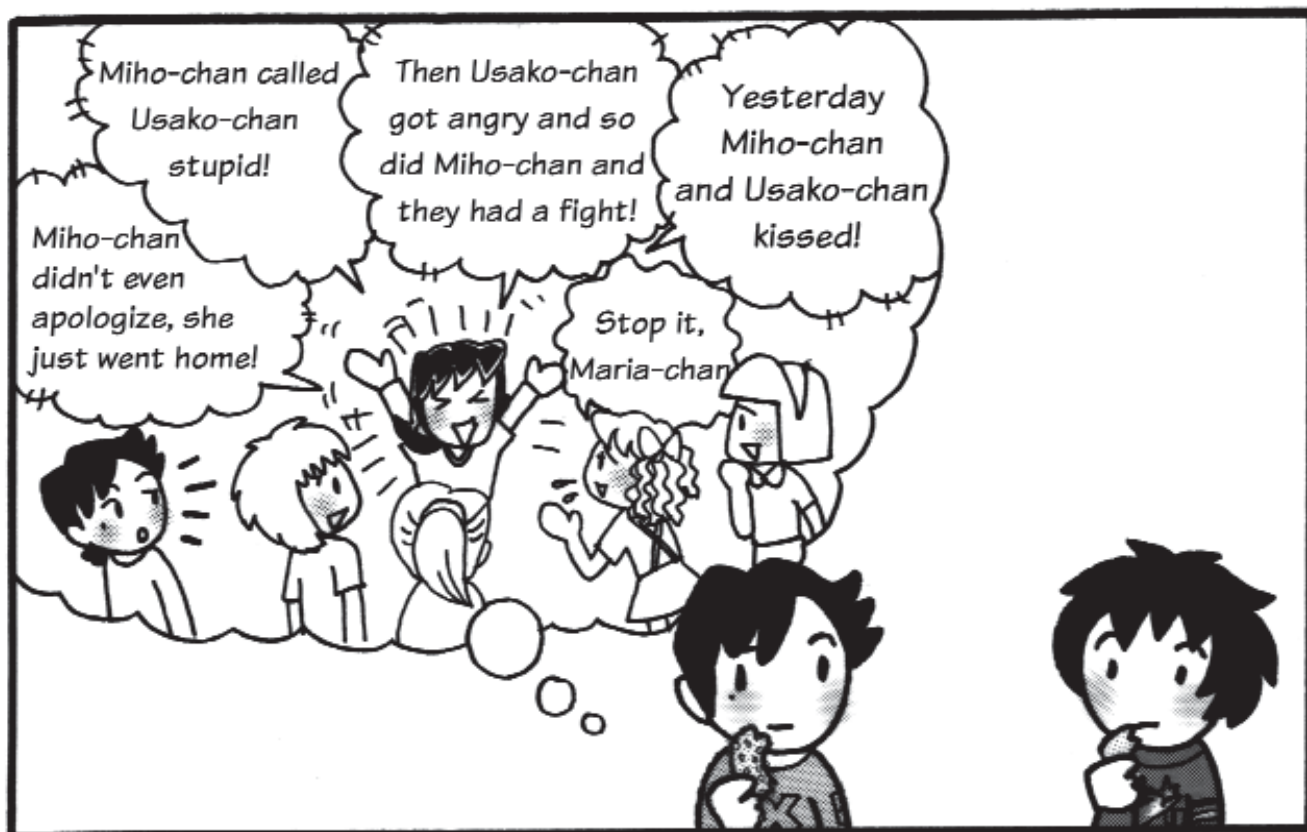
...when I get bigger,
I'm going to
get a real car
just like that and
come here
and get you

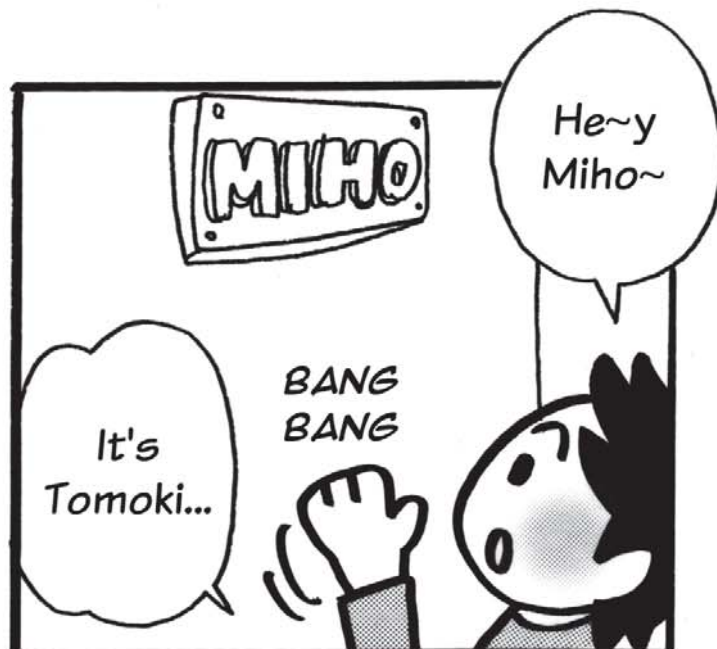


So, cheer up!

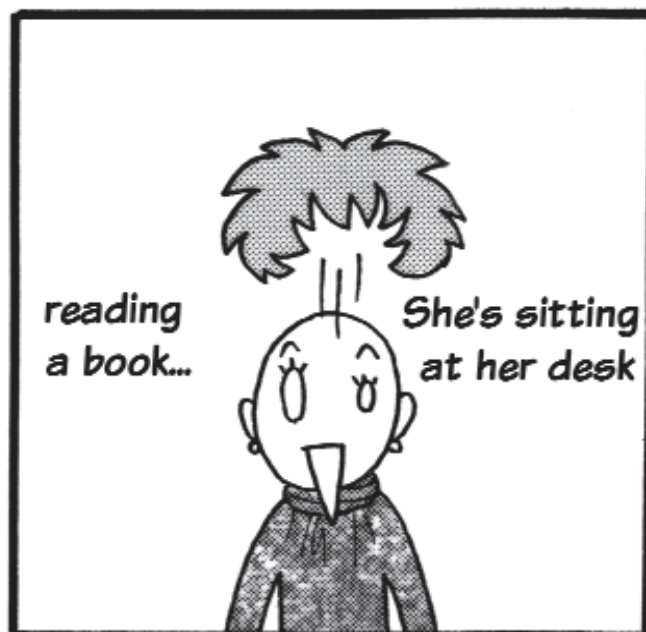
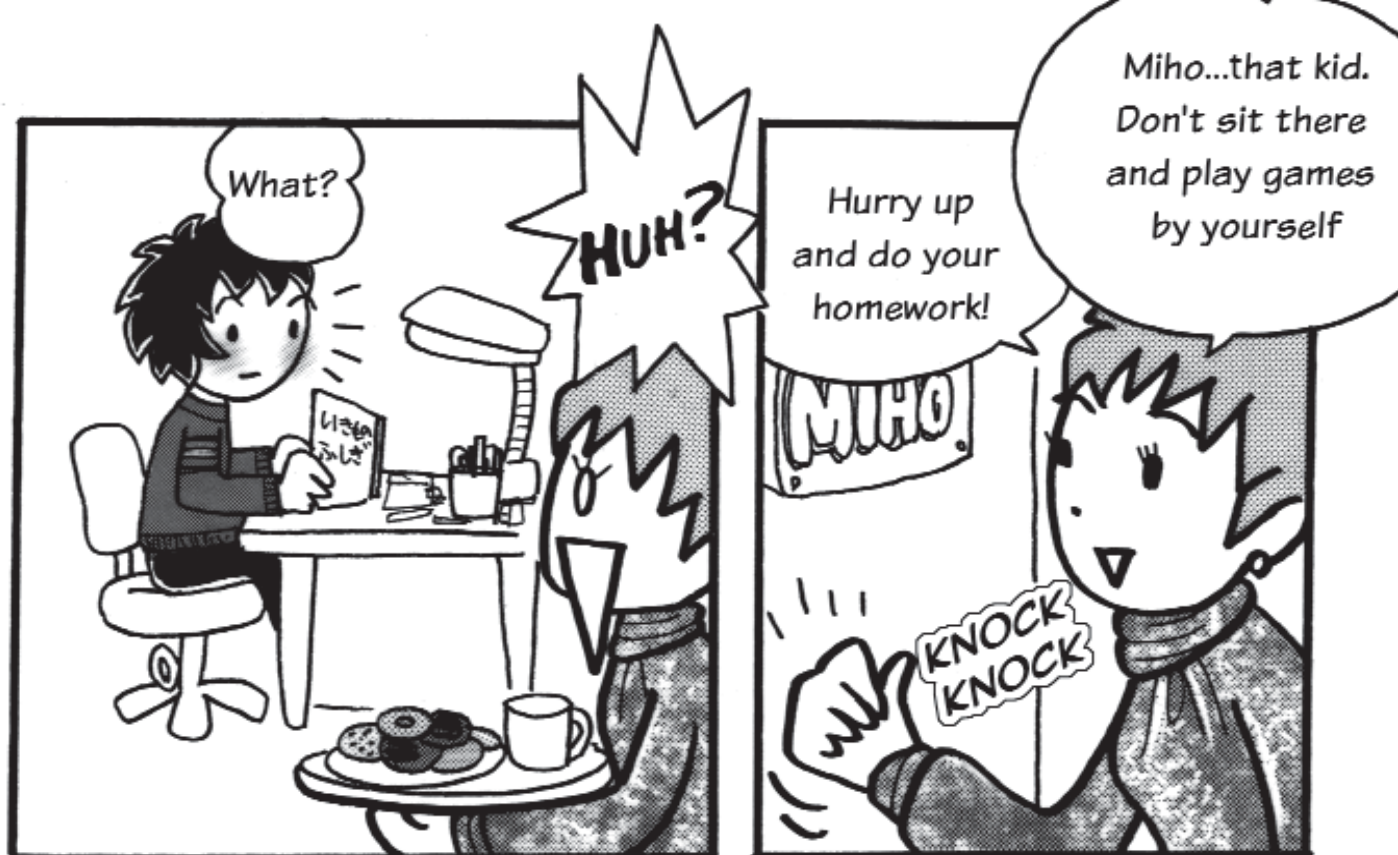


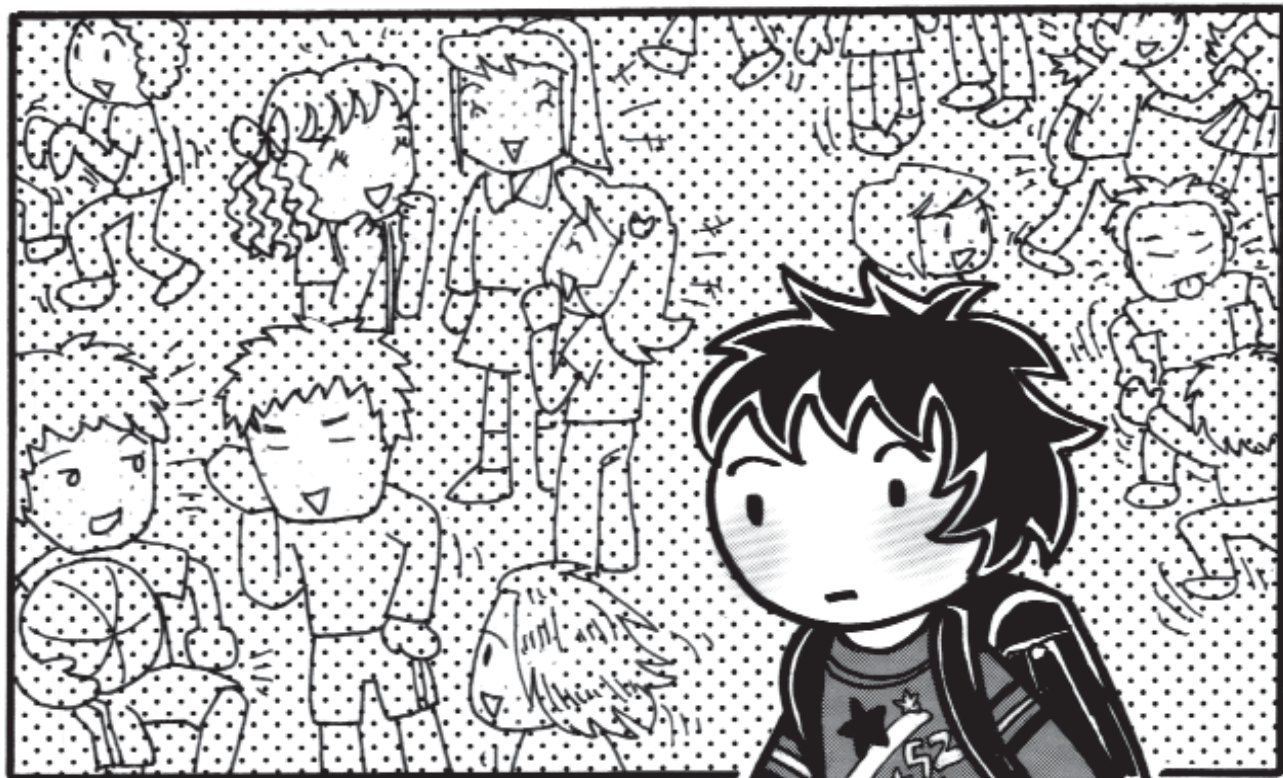
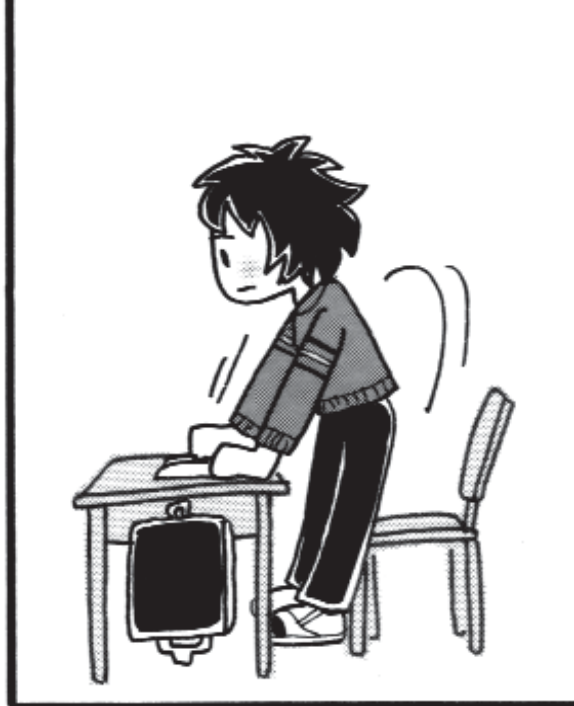
It's not like you
to be down...
so...um...





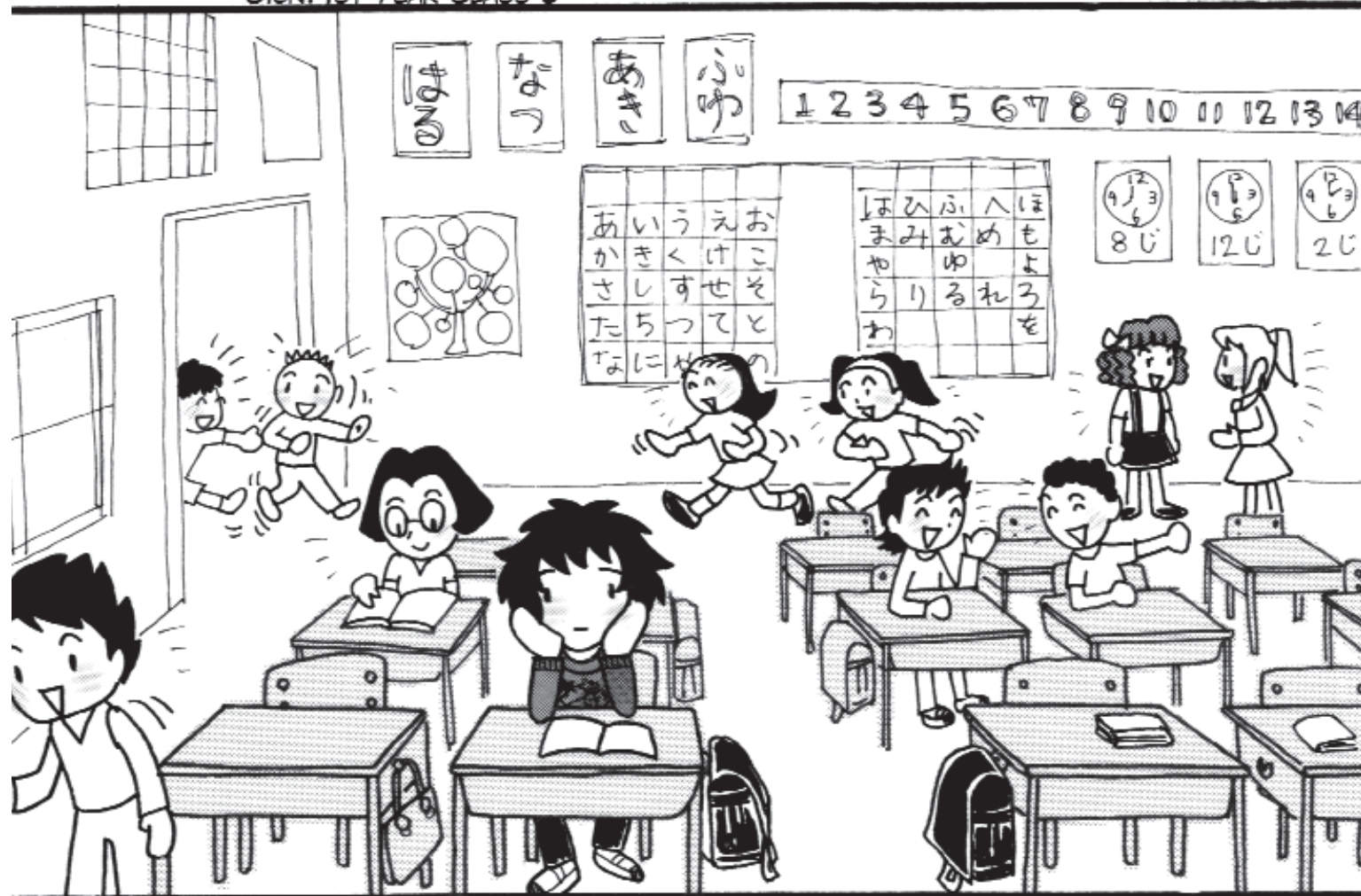
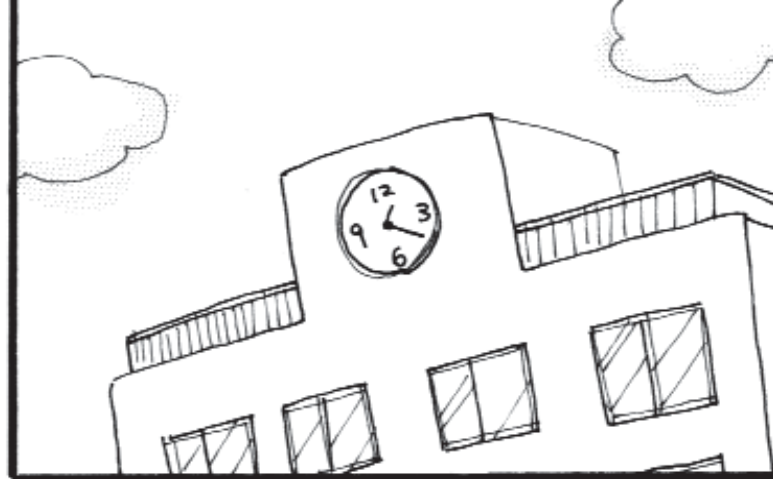








SIGN: 1ST YEAR CLASS 3



Huh?



Let's run away



from home
together!



It's...
Usa-chan's

favorite pendant...



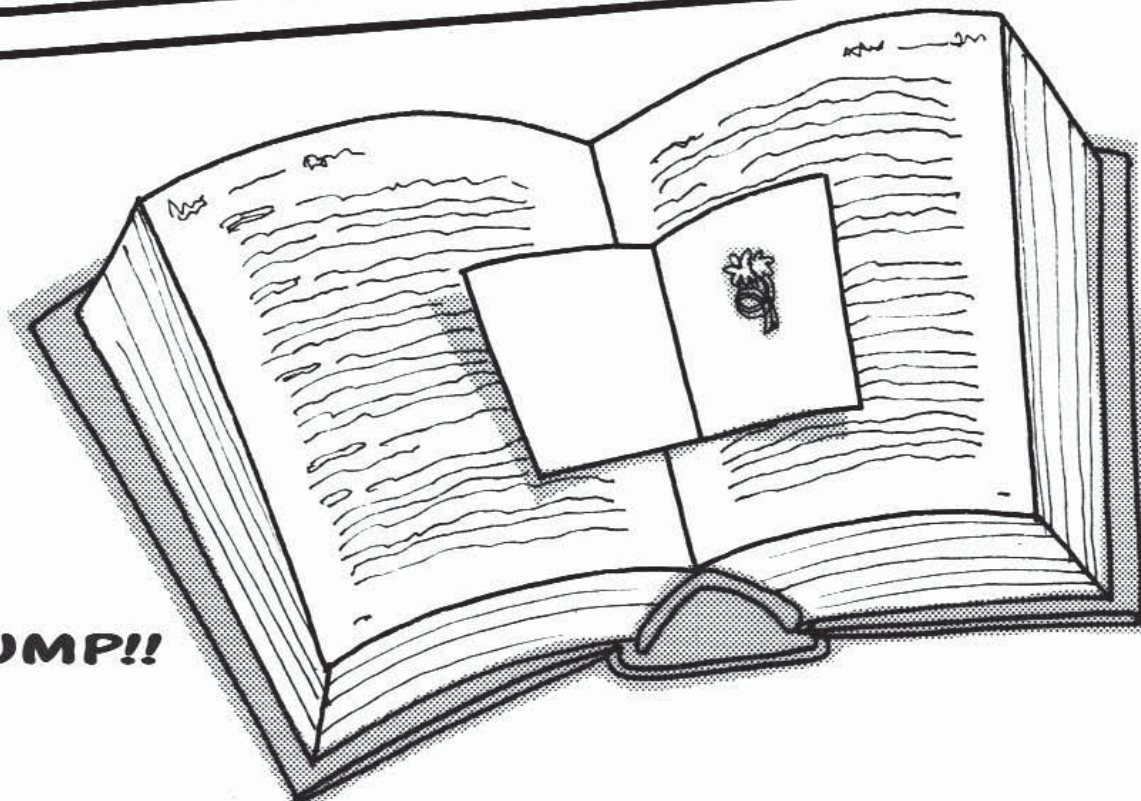
Usa-chan,
you meanie!

Meaniemeanie!

Speaking of which
I'd completely
forgotten that
pressed flower.

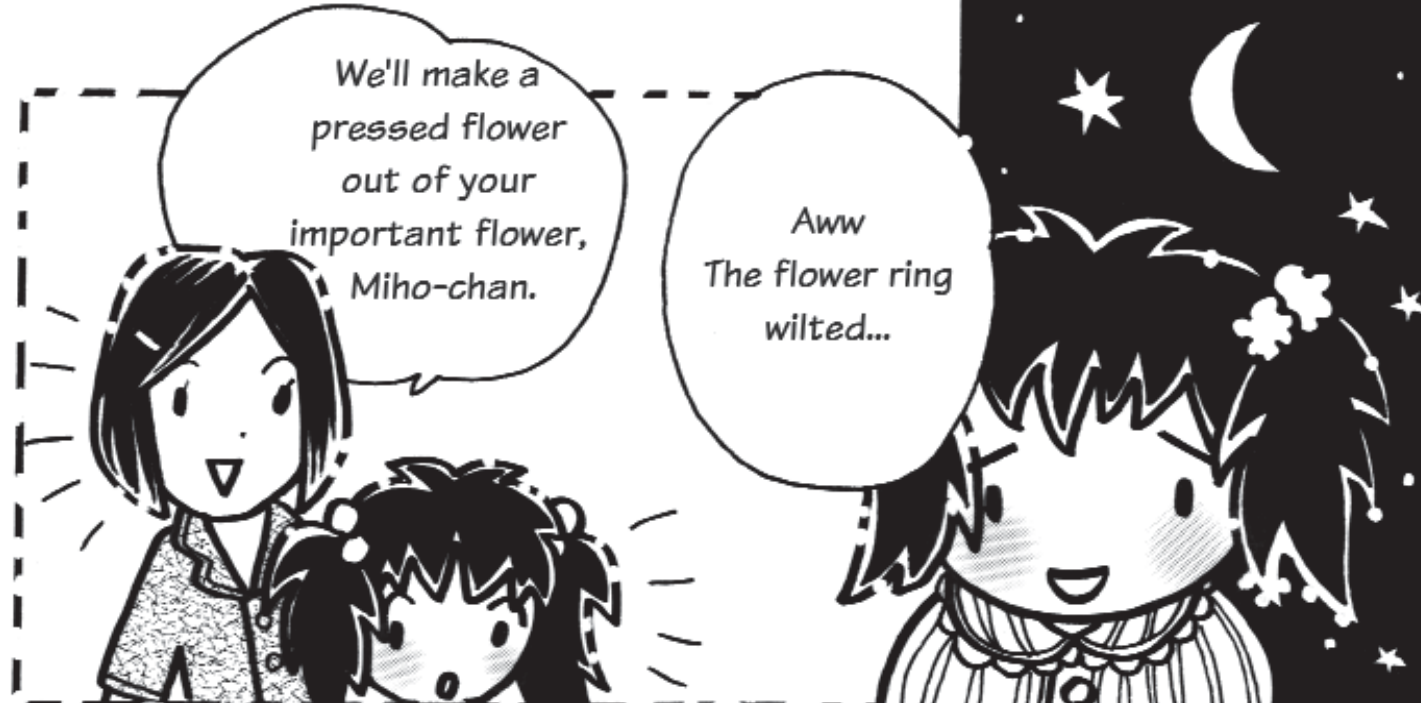


I wonder
what
happened
to it...



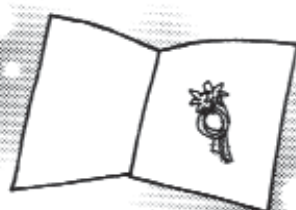
AHH~

THUMP!!



We'll make a pressed flower out of your important flower, Miho-chan.

Aww
The flower ring wilted...



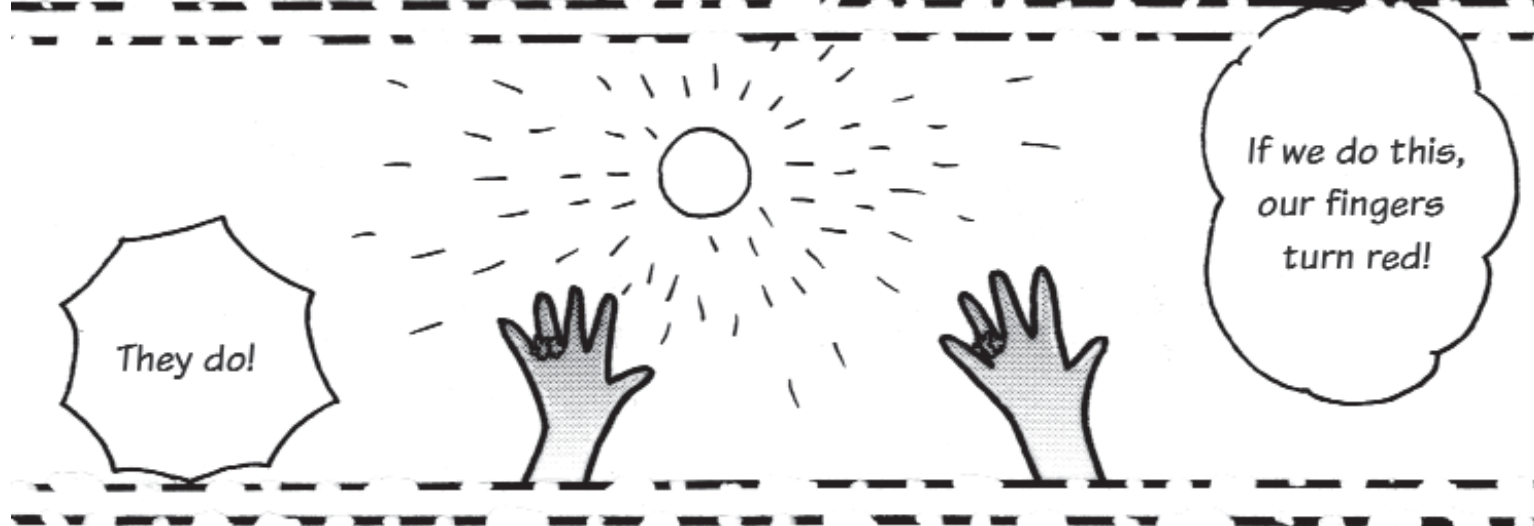
Like that.
Place it between
two folded
pieces of paper.

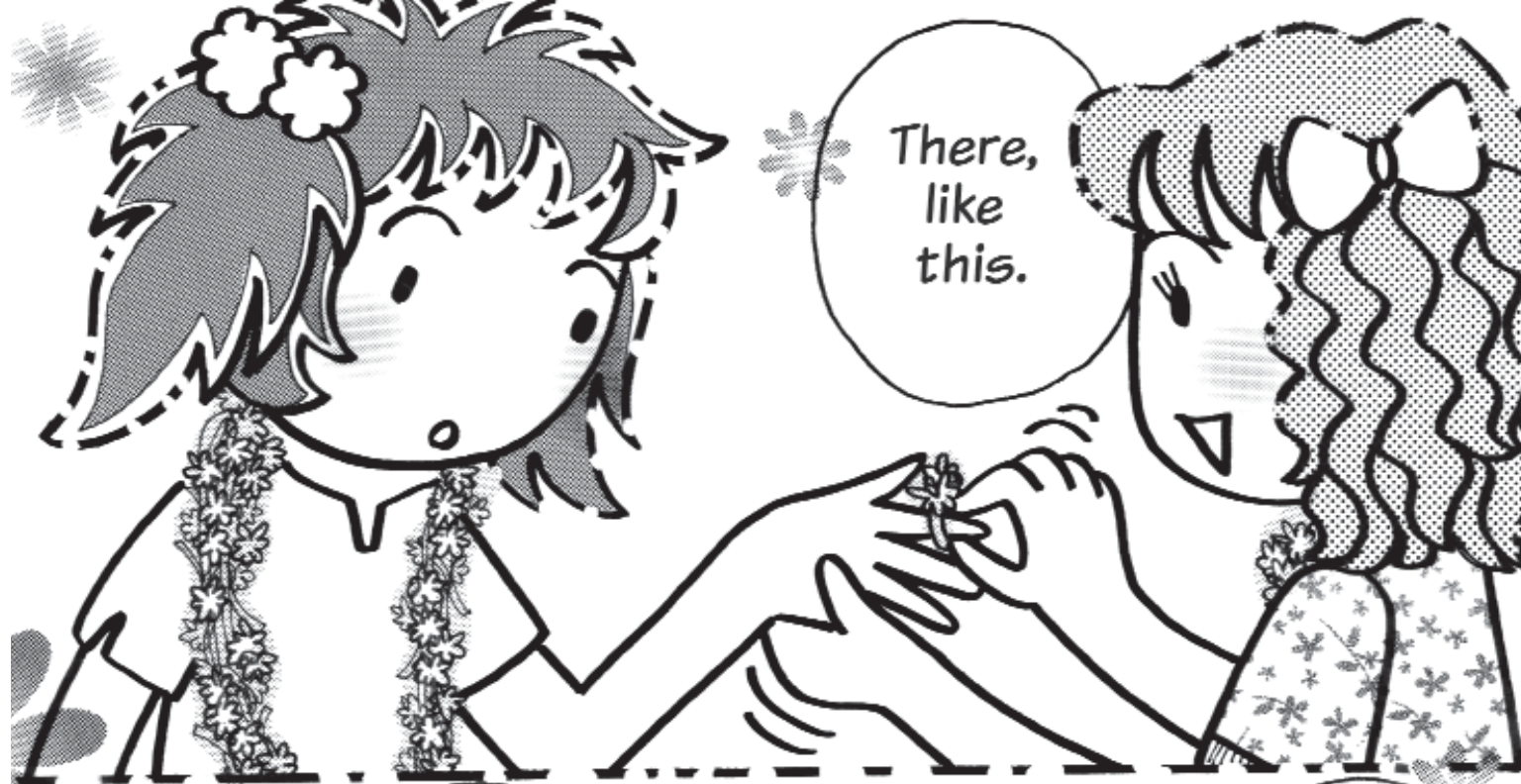


Mmm....

It's called
"pressing
flowers."

We'll put it in a thick,
heavy book.
Let it dry for
about a month,
and it'll stay beautiful
for a very
long time





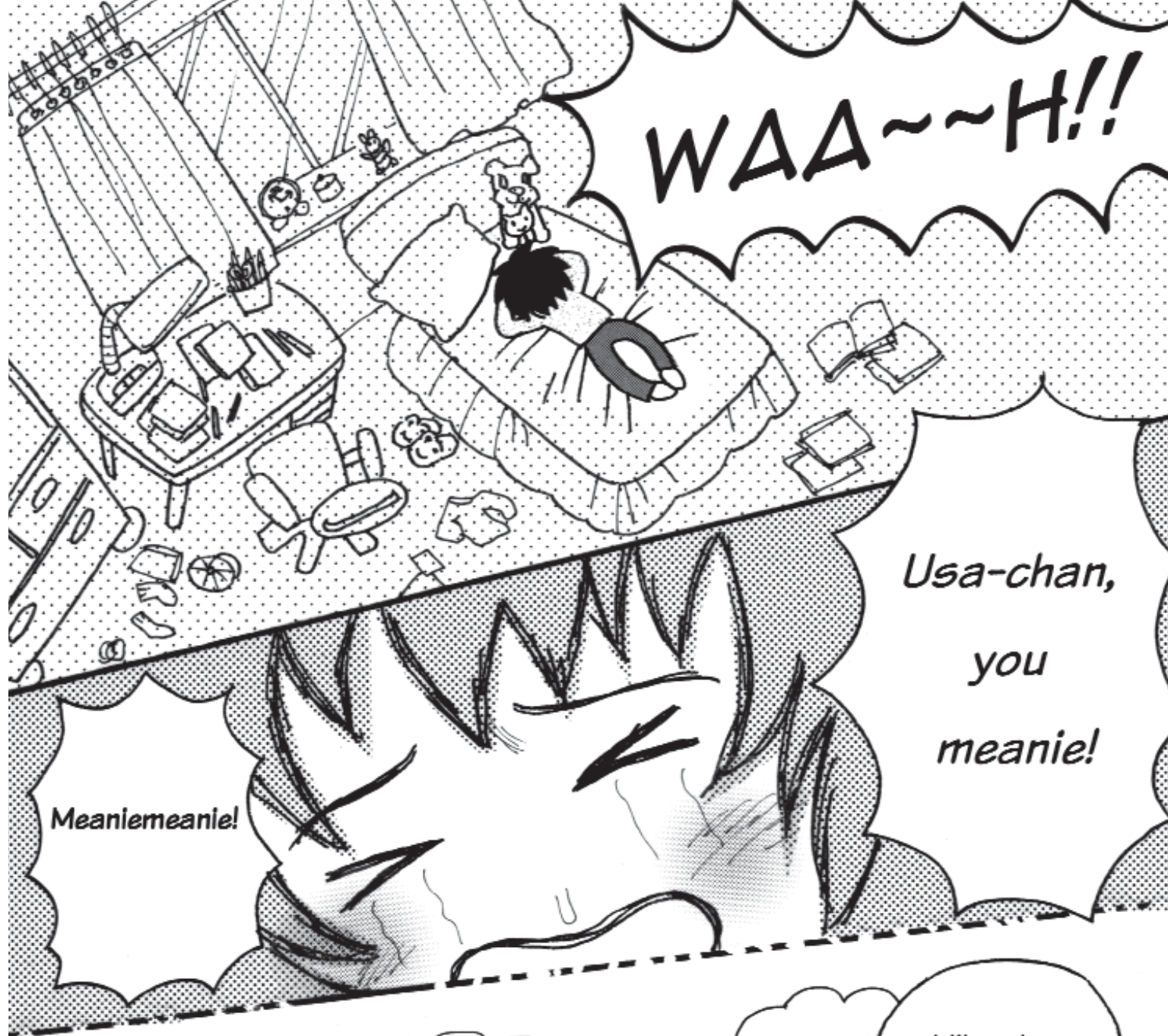


I made a
promise ring.
Give me
your hand.

Here.



No, no.
This hand.
The same hand
Mama and Papa
wear matching
rings on.
Don't you
know that?



WAA~~H!!

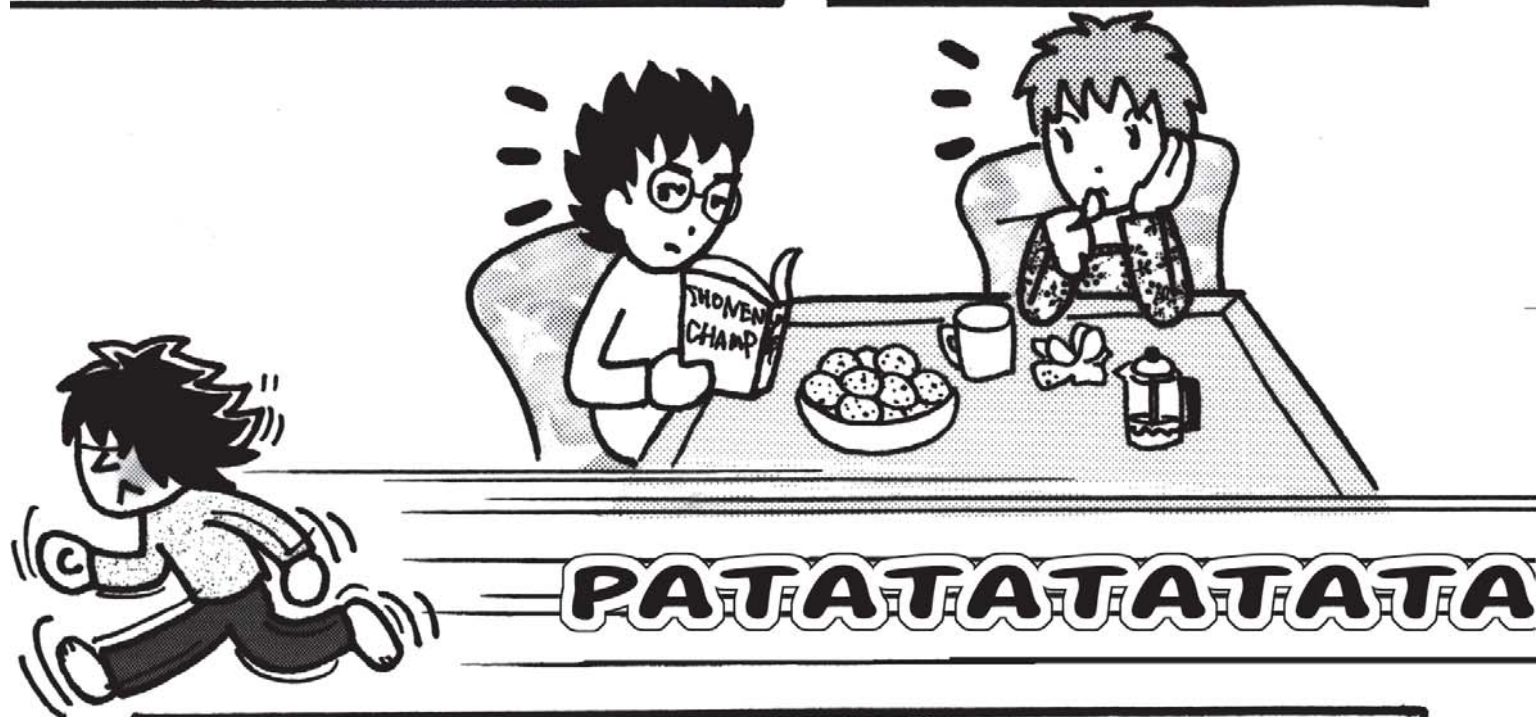
Meanie meanie!

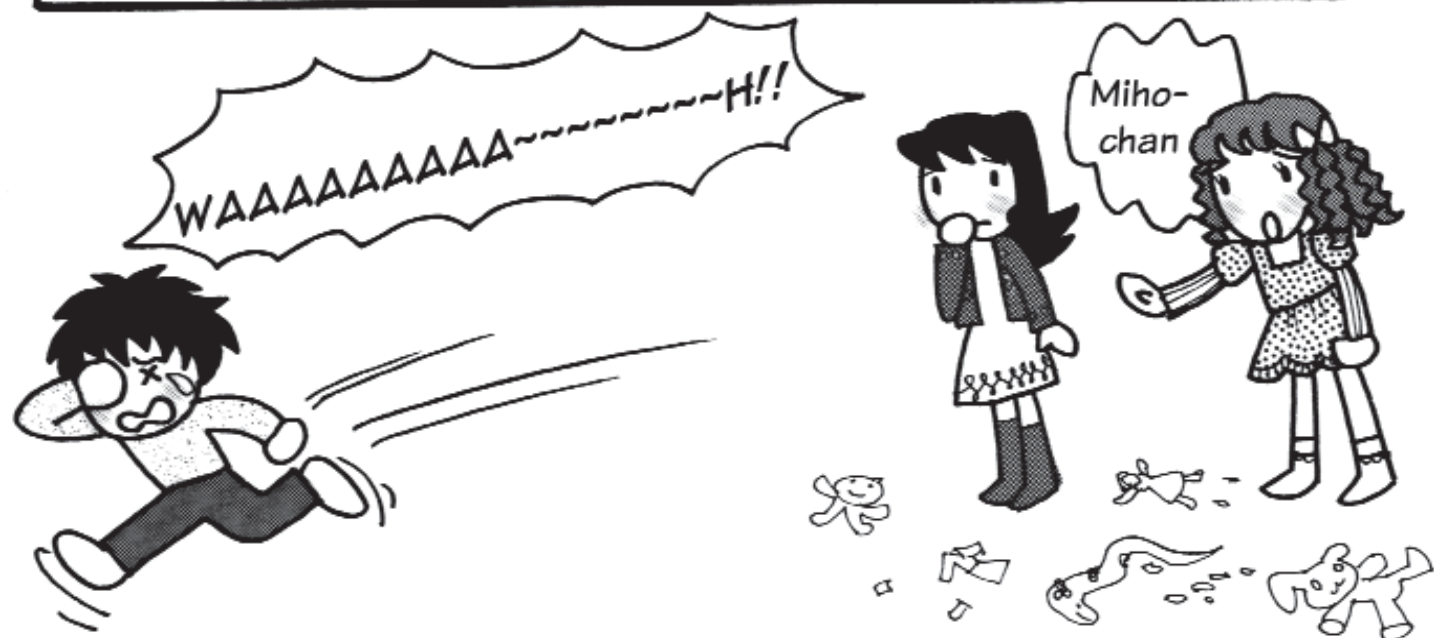
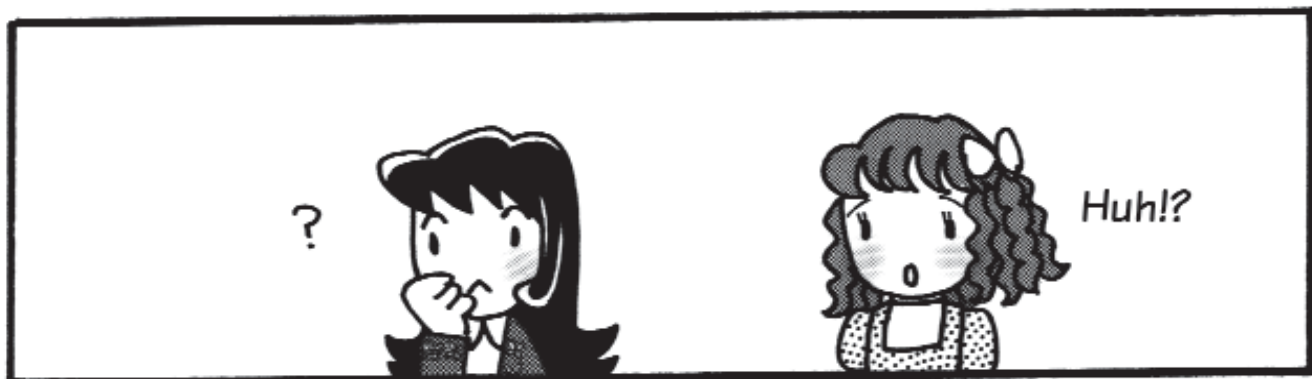
Usa-chan,
you
meanie!



Miho-chan,
when we grow up,
let's live together.

Mm, okay.
We'll be on a
great
adventure
together.





Usa-chan
wants to be
Miho-chan's
bride tooo~!

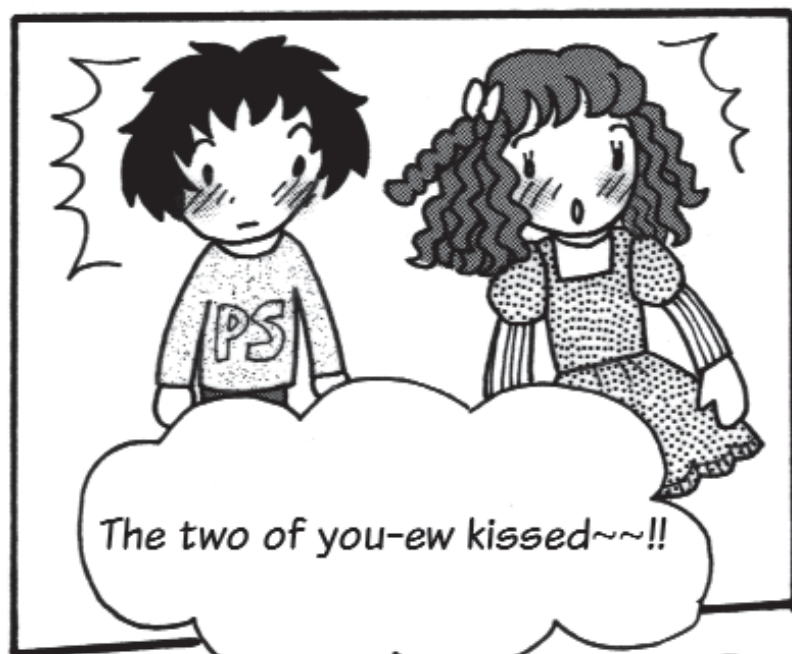
COOL

When you
grow up,
you'll get
marrie~ed!

**STOP
IT!**

Usa-chan can't
marry
Miho-chan!!
'Cause
Miho-chan's
a girl!!





The two of you-ew kissed~~!!

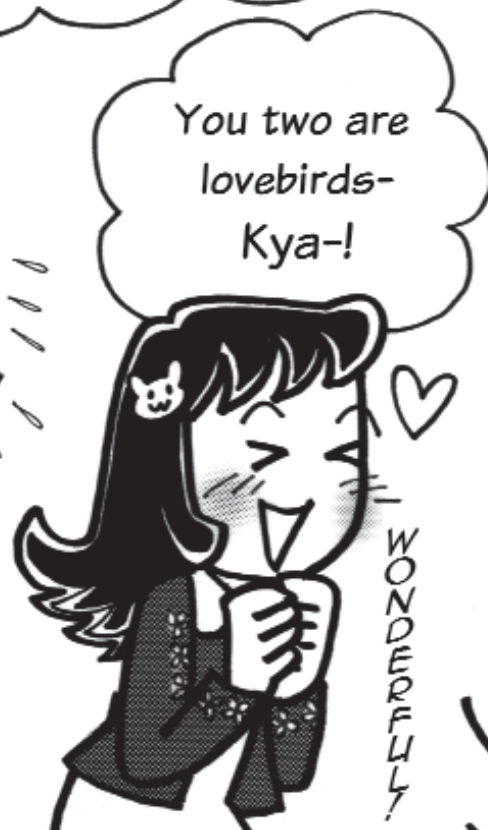


I
saw
it~!!

GRIN



Mari-chan,
Please
stop



You two are
lovebirds-
Kya-!

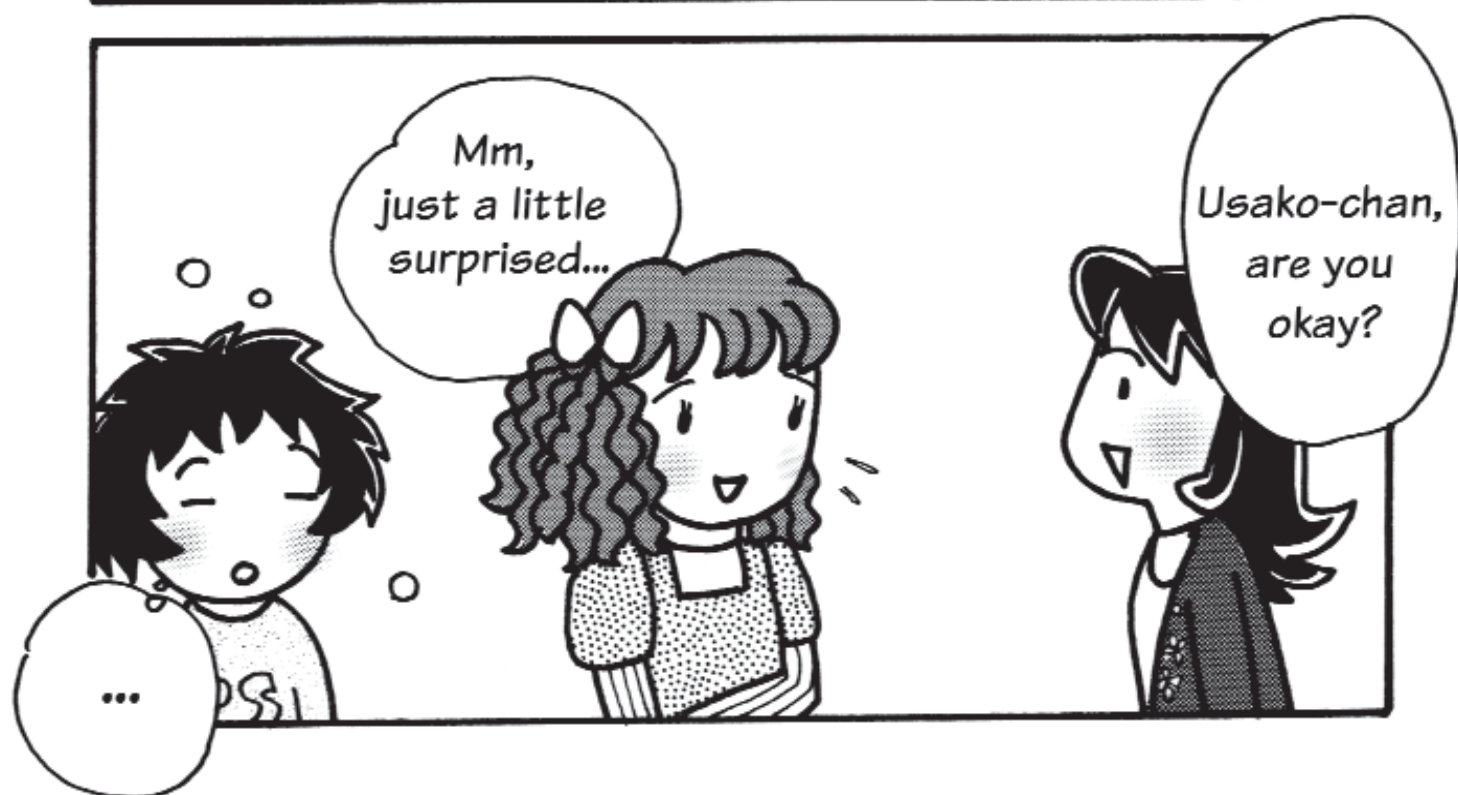
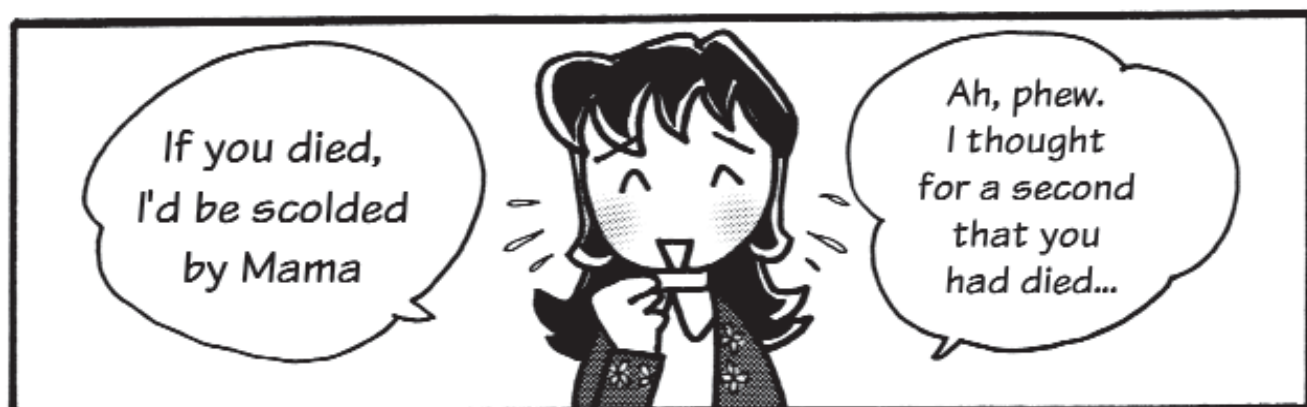
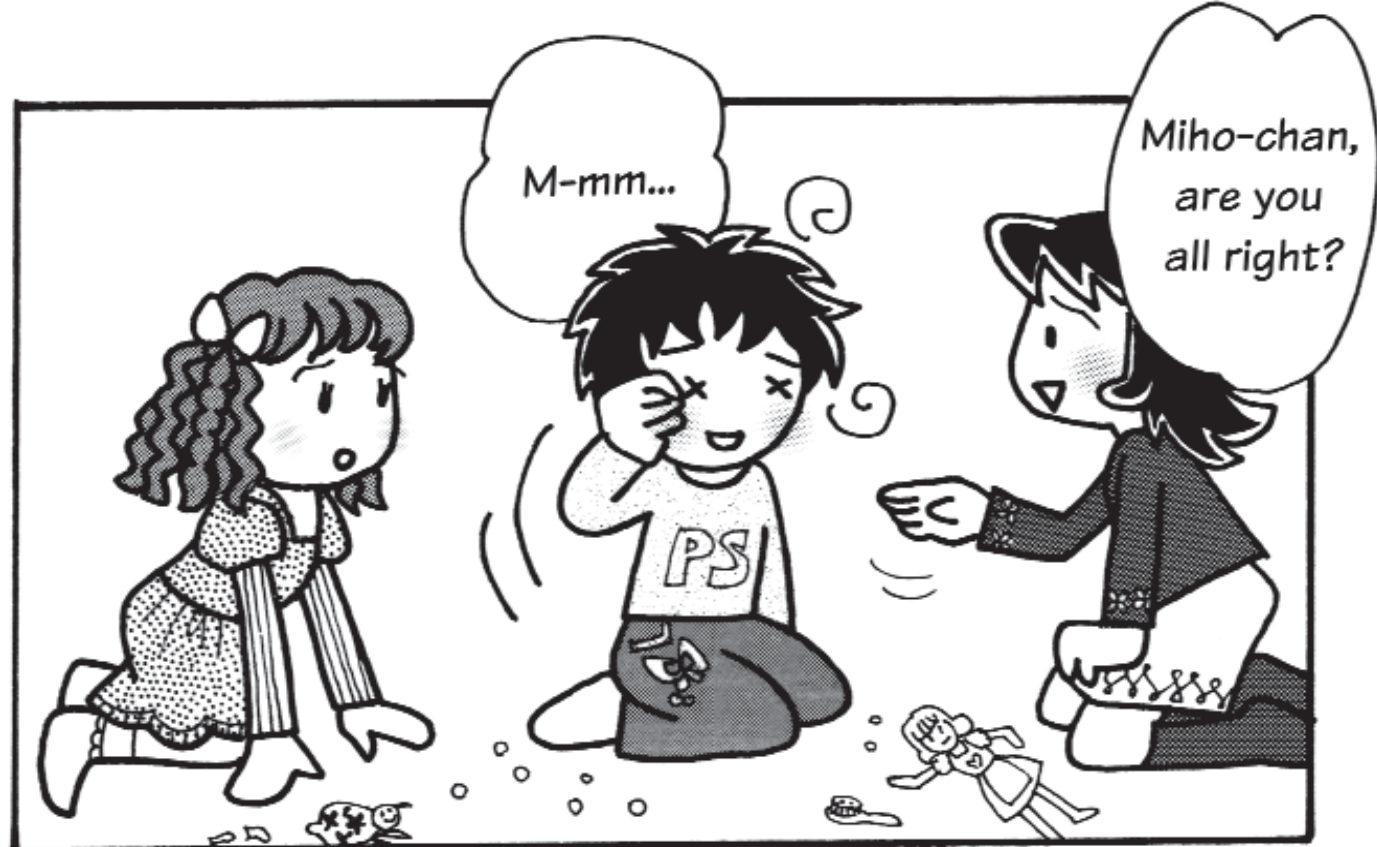
WONDERFULLY



We just bumped
by accident!!



'Cause Miho-chan's
just like a boy...
She's got short hair,
she's rough.



...give you a
big hug and
Miho will be
super strong
again....

!
Chie-nee-nee
will...

Give me
an even
tighter one

Miho-chan!

Miho-
chan!!

Miho-chan!

Mi-ho-

-cha~an

Where, where...
Let big sis
see it

It's better
when you're
cheerful,
Miho

There, there
Let's play together.
That'll be fun, won't it?

THERE
THERE

I scraped
my knee,
it hurts~

Yay! Look,
your knee wasn't hurt,
because the pants
protected it.

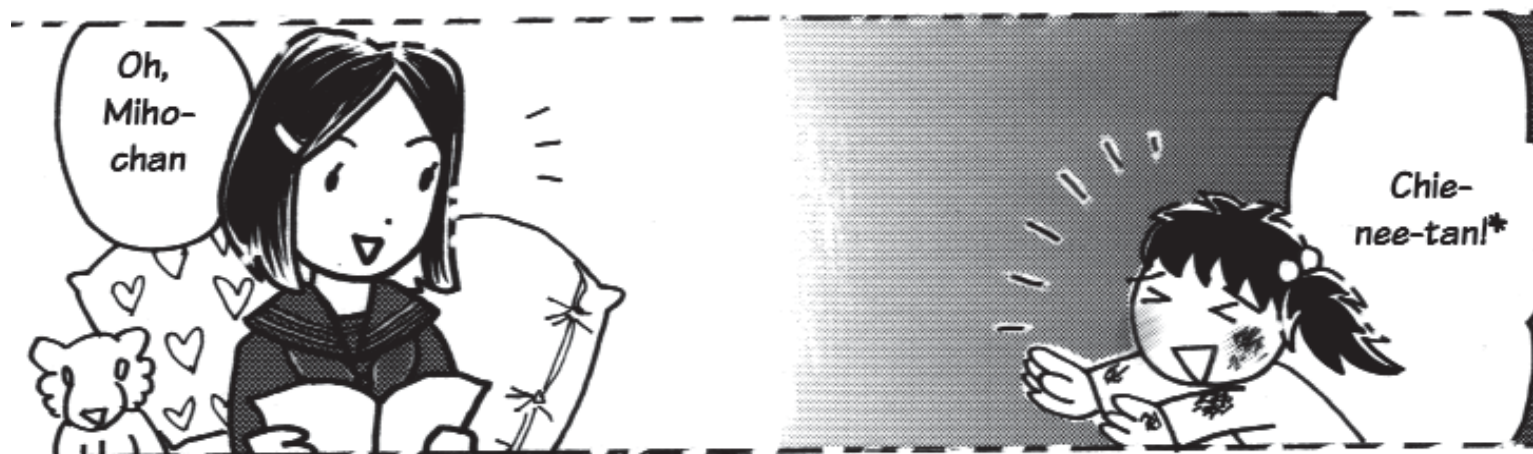
Big sis
will sew it up
for you.

Mm

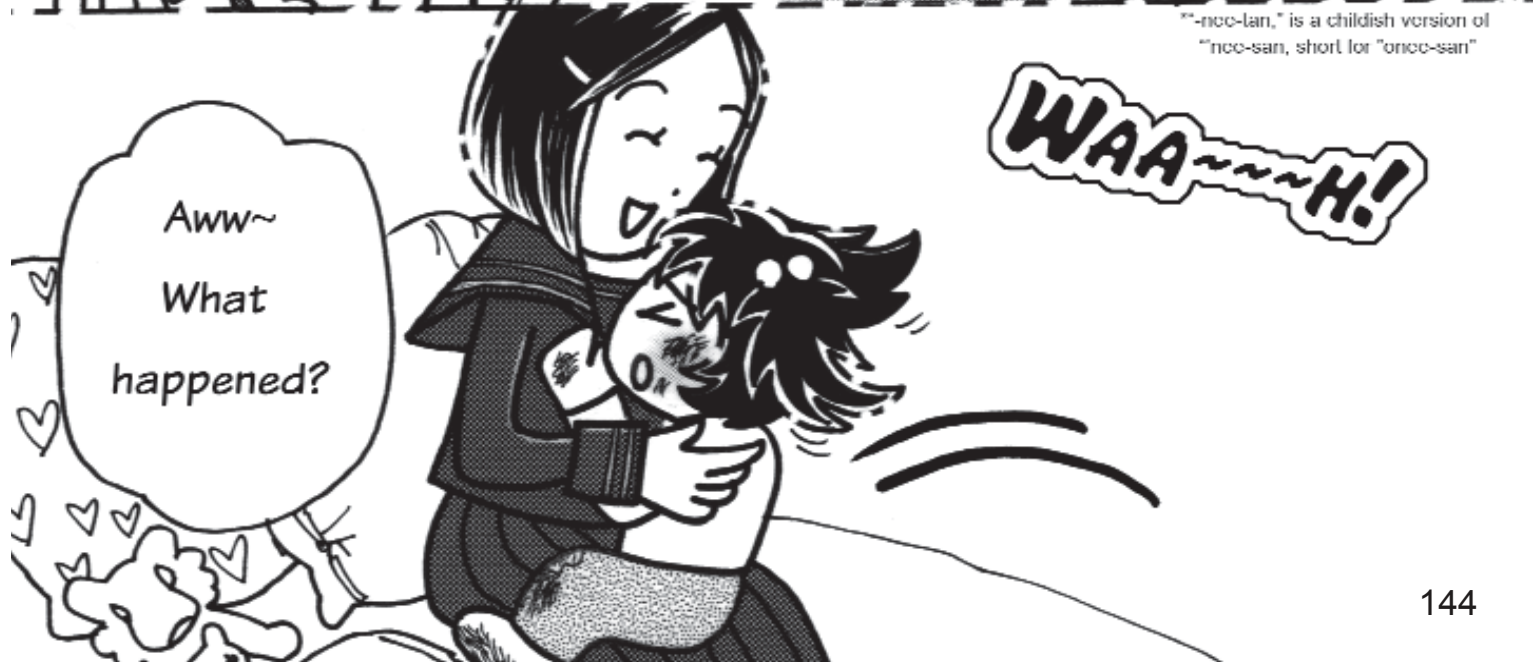
HERE~

HE~
RE~

Ah, you didn't
scrape yourself,
only the pants
are ripped.

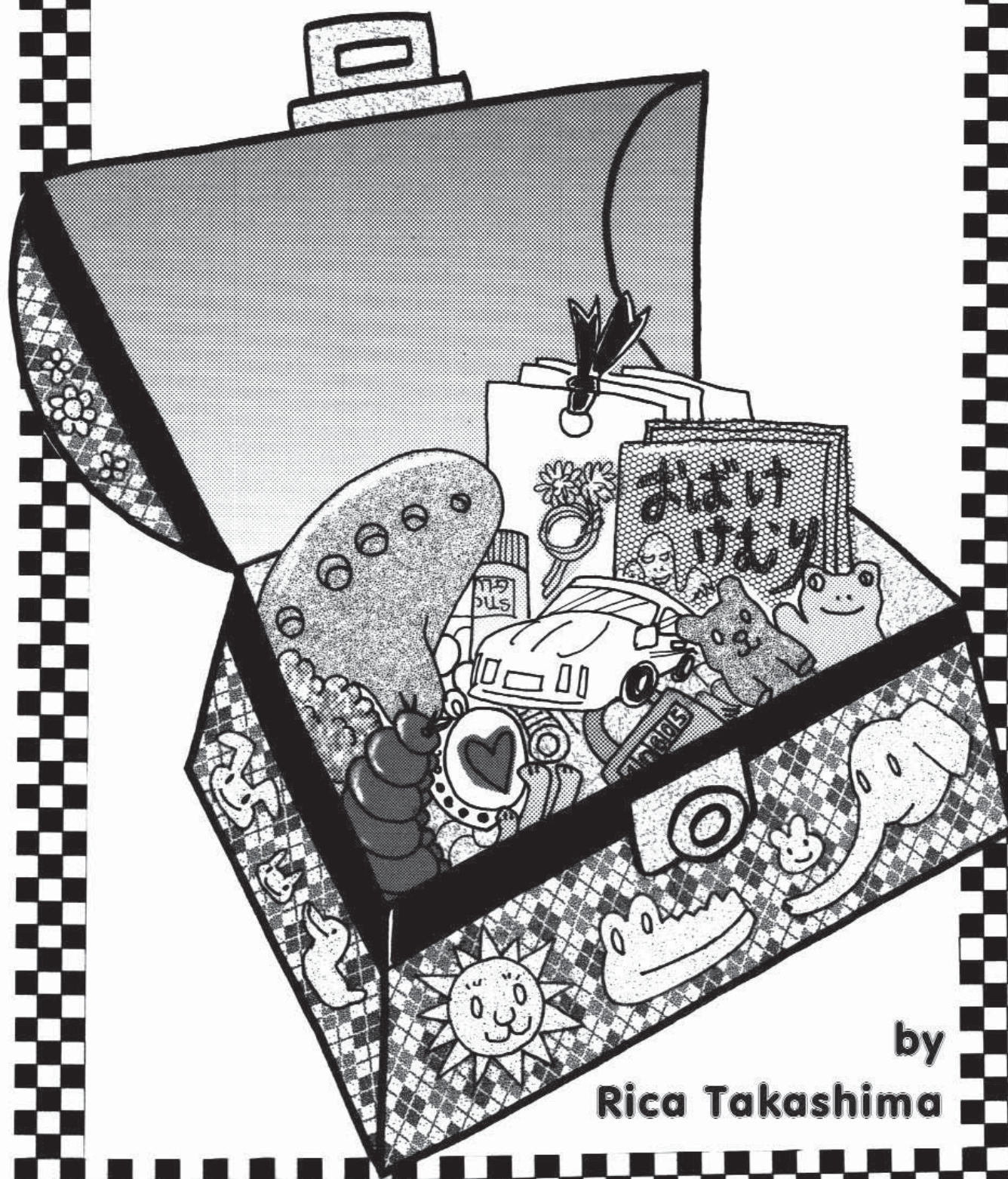


*"-neo-lan," is a childish version of "neo-san, short for "onco-san"



Miho-chan's Memories

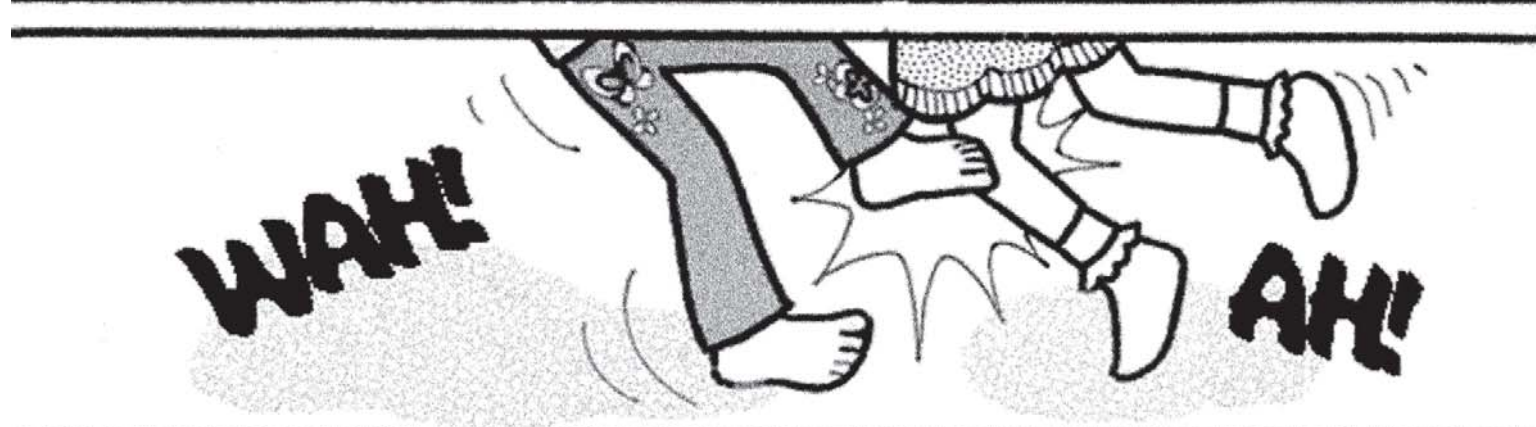
Part 2



by
Rica Takashima









And a
dinosaur!

RAAR~

It's a
poisonous
spider!

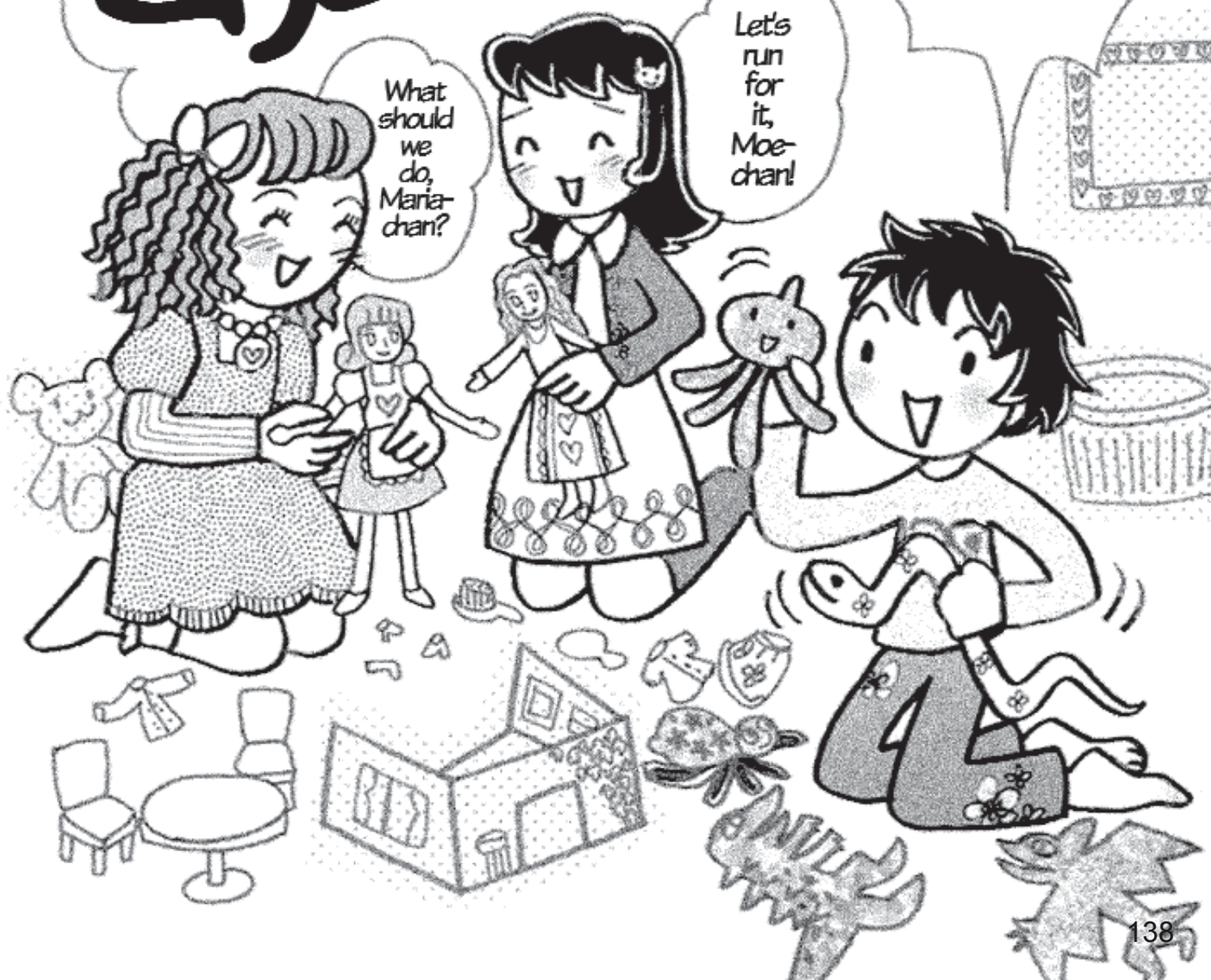


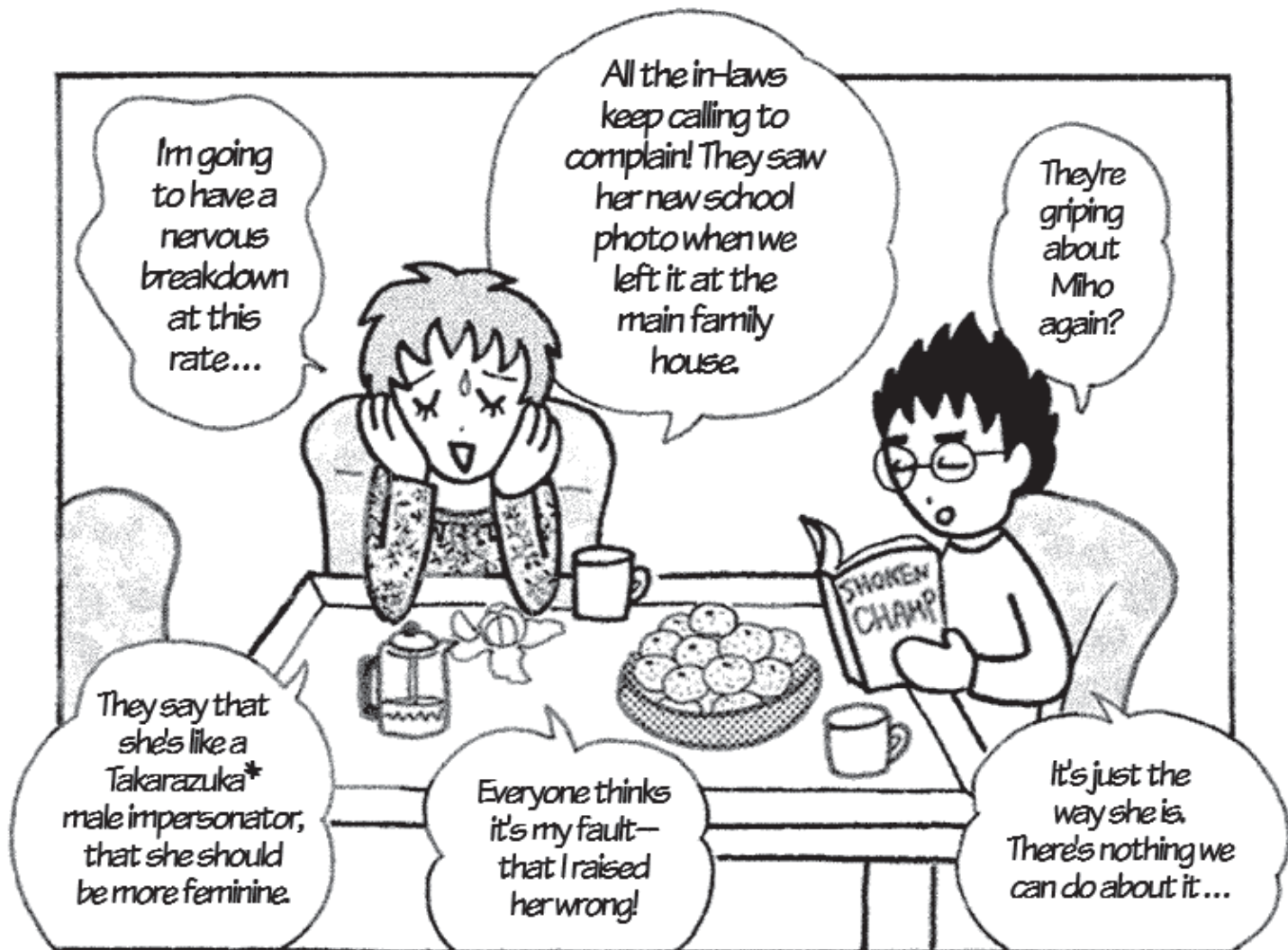
Gyaa~!!

And a
snake
and an
alien!

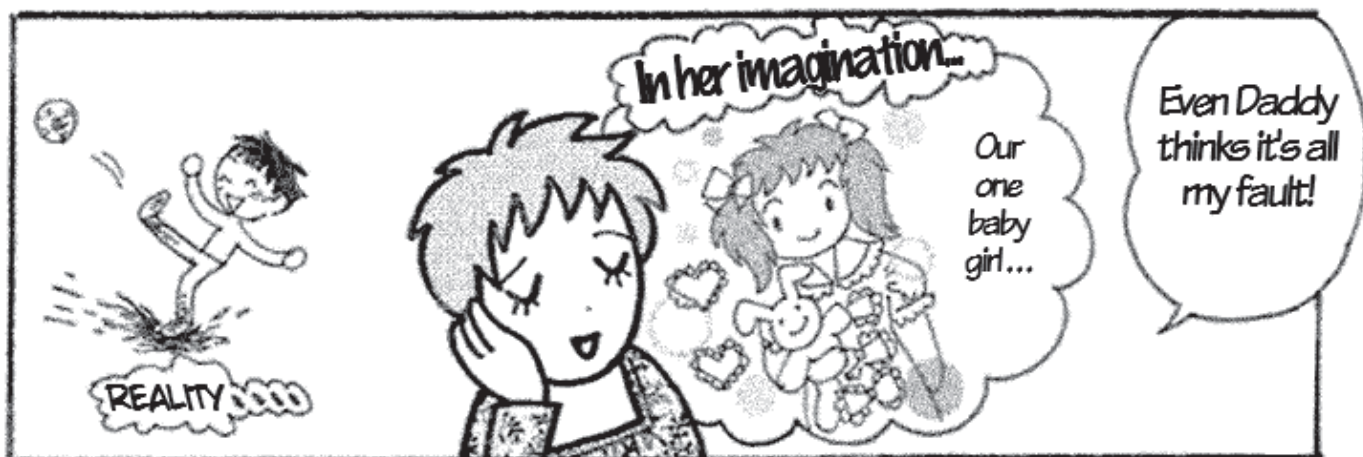
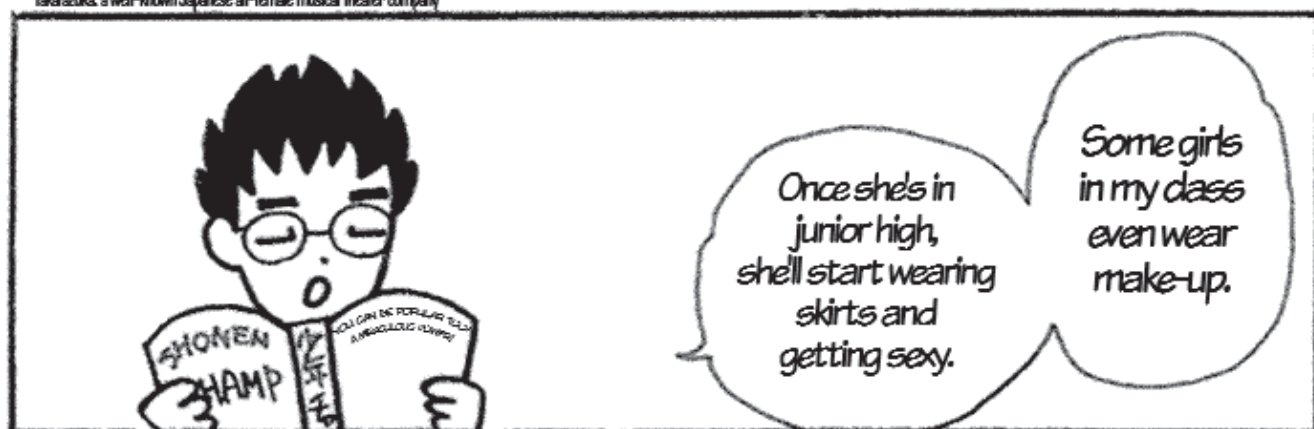
What
should
we
do,
Maria-
chan?

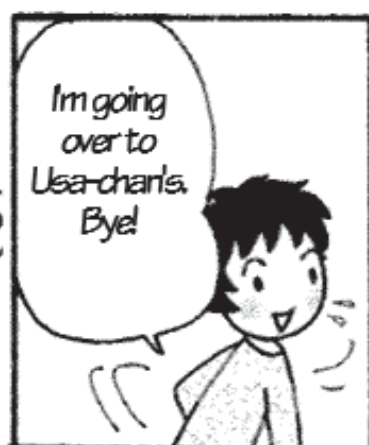
Let's
run
for
it,
Moe-
chan!





*Takarazuka: a well-known Japanese all-female musical theater company







YES-MA'AM!

HAHAHA









Pants are good 'cause it doesn't hurt when you fall down, and skirts are nice in the summer 'cause they're lighter!

I don't want this ribbon! Why is it always pink for girls?



I'm so sick of this! Mom and Dad are always going on about boys' and girls' clothes, and now the school is separating us into boys and girls too. I hate it!



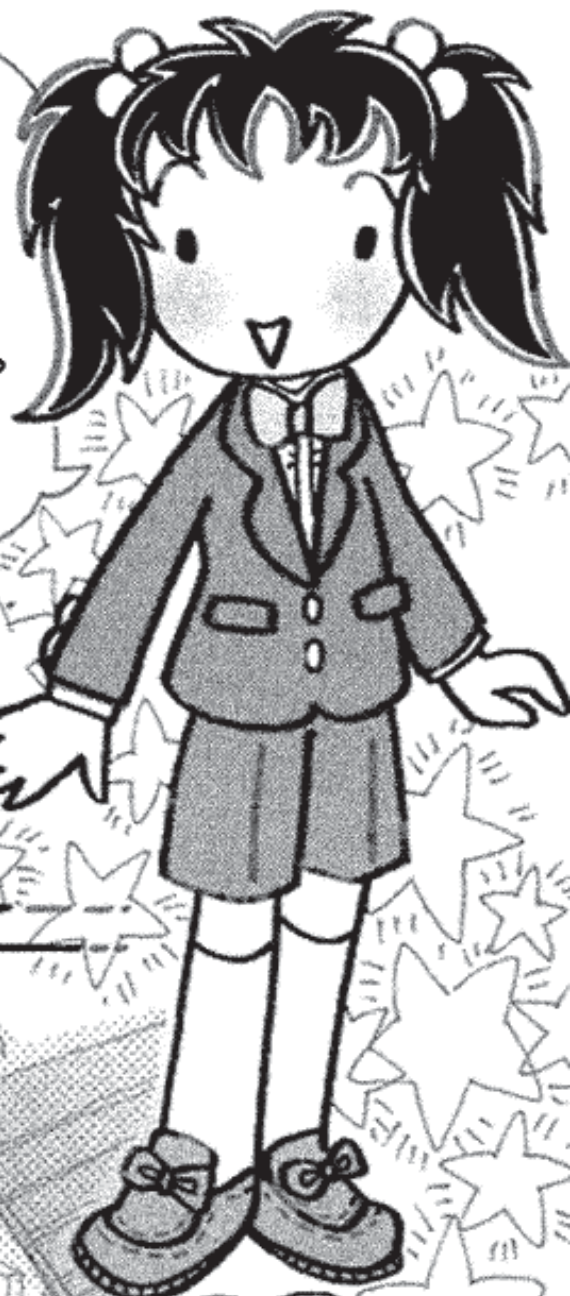
Miho!!
What have you done?
They'll be taking
pictures at your
school entrance
ceremony
tomorrow!!



And how about a black backpack,* too?



Look isn't it just perfect?



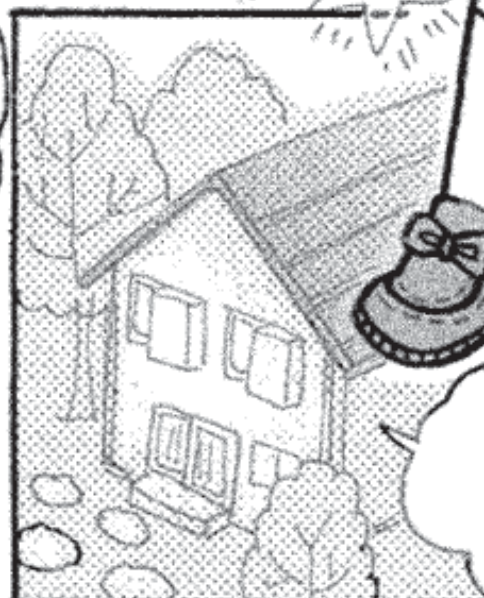
* In Japanese primary schools, boys use standardized black backpacks and girls use red.

But you're a girl.
Oh dear...



Mom bought me a backpack!

Dad!
Dad!



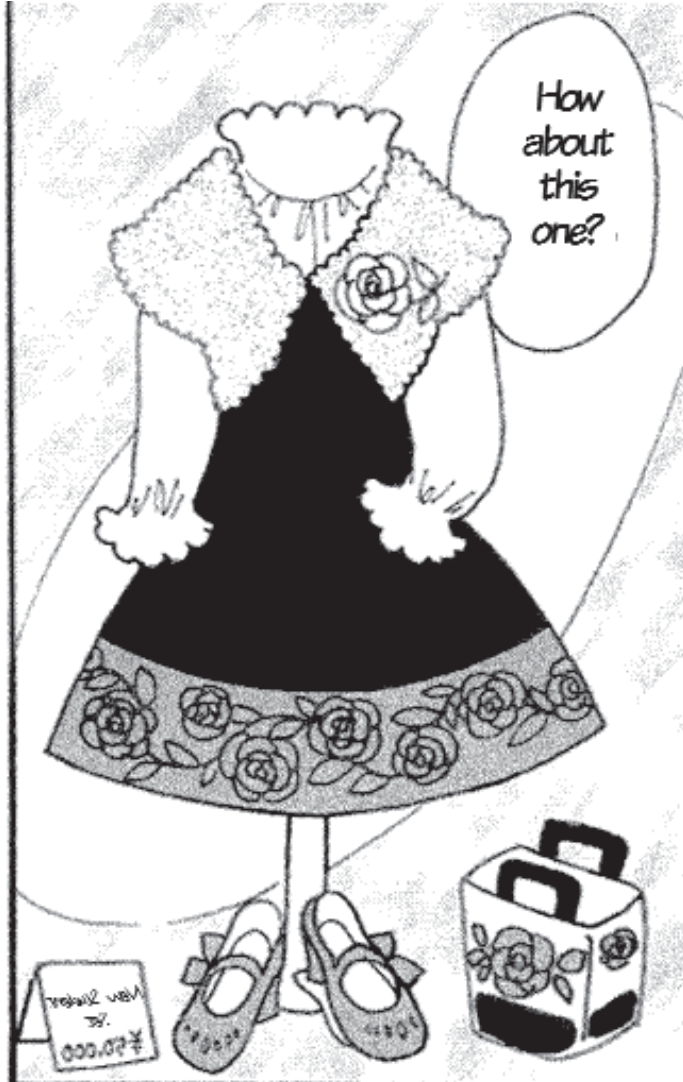
We're home!

Those are boys' clothes...!

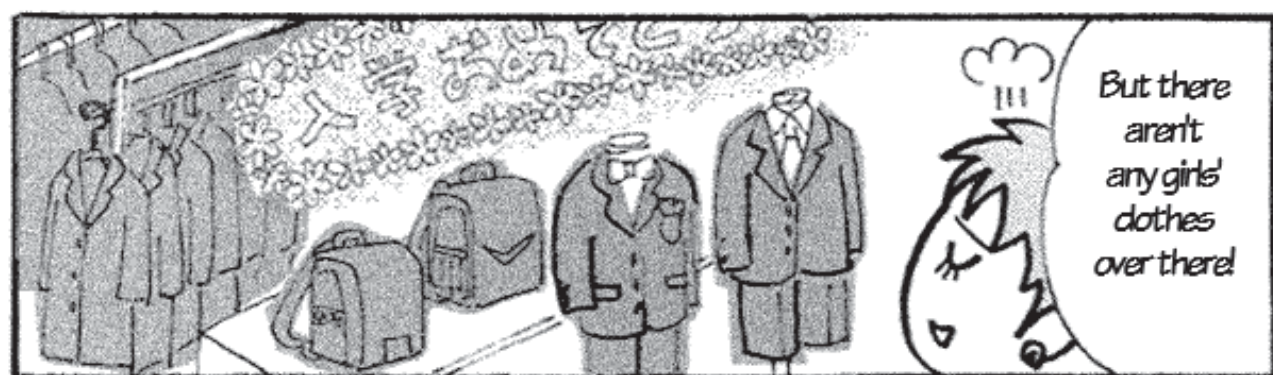
What the...

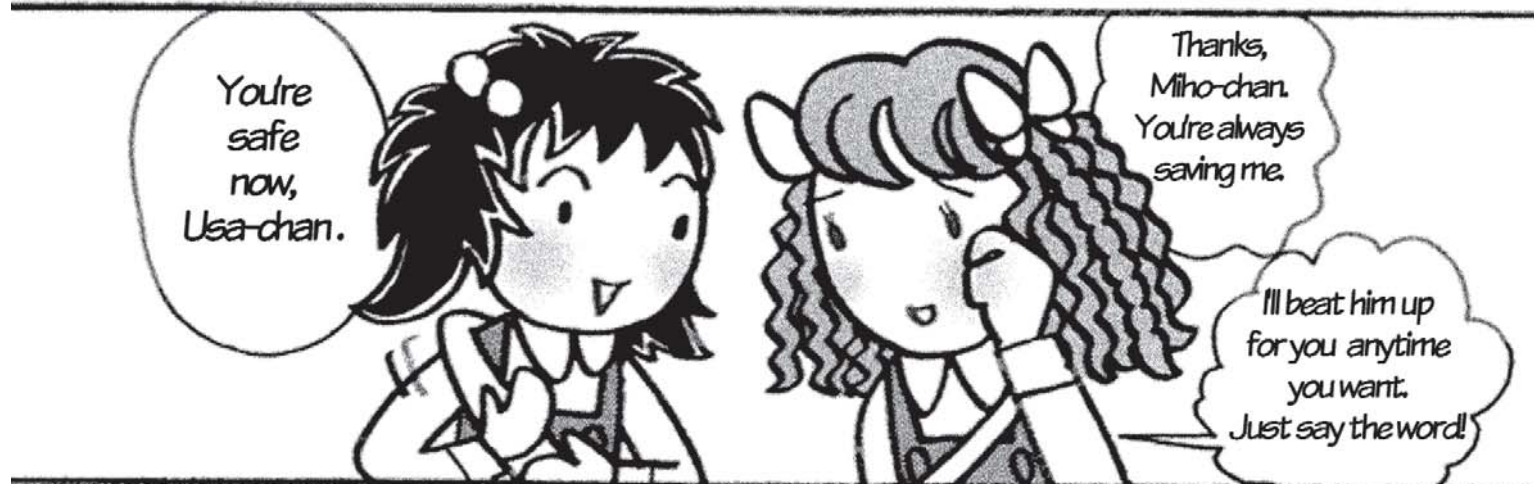
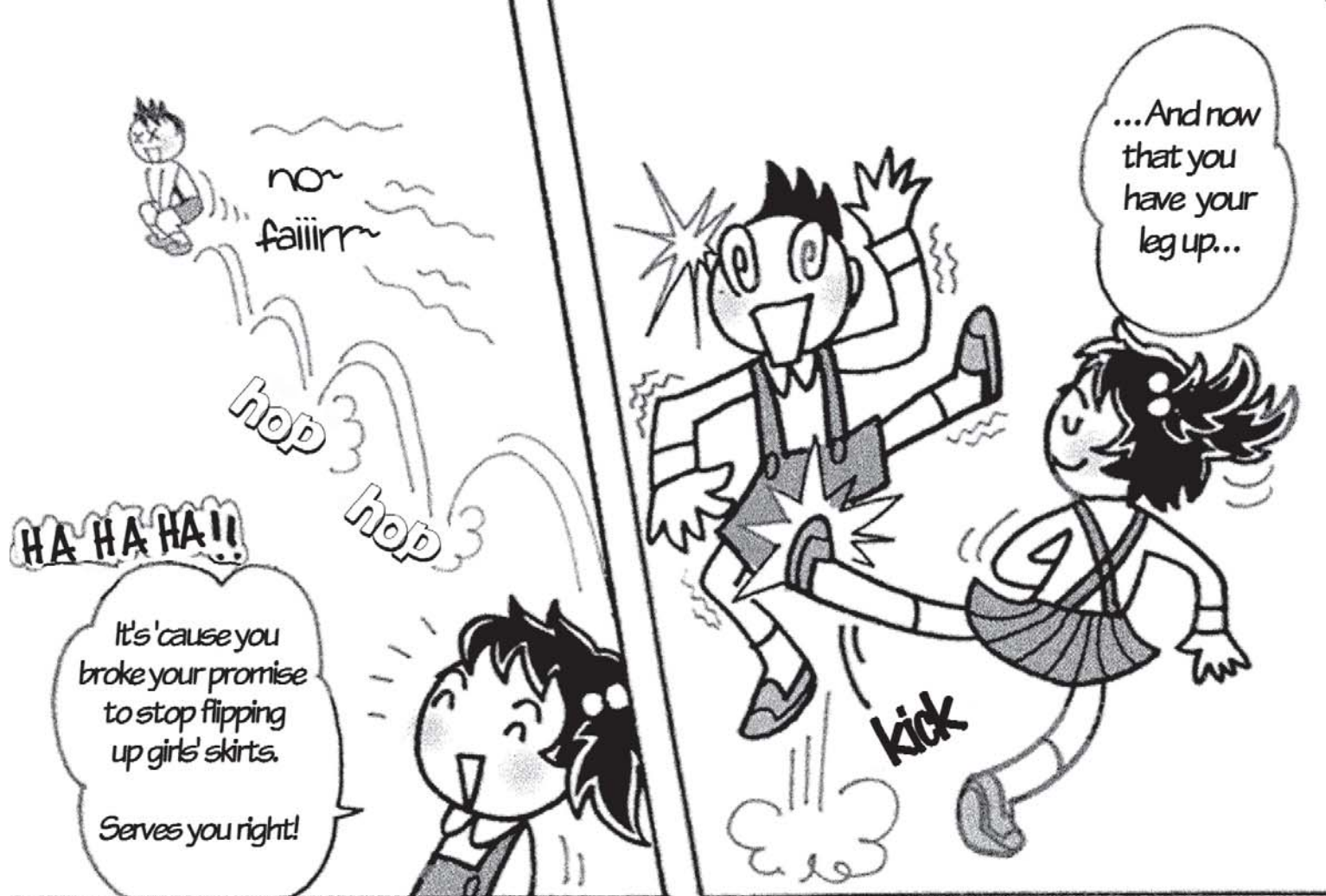


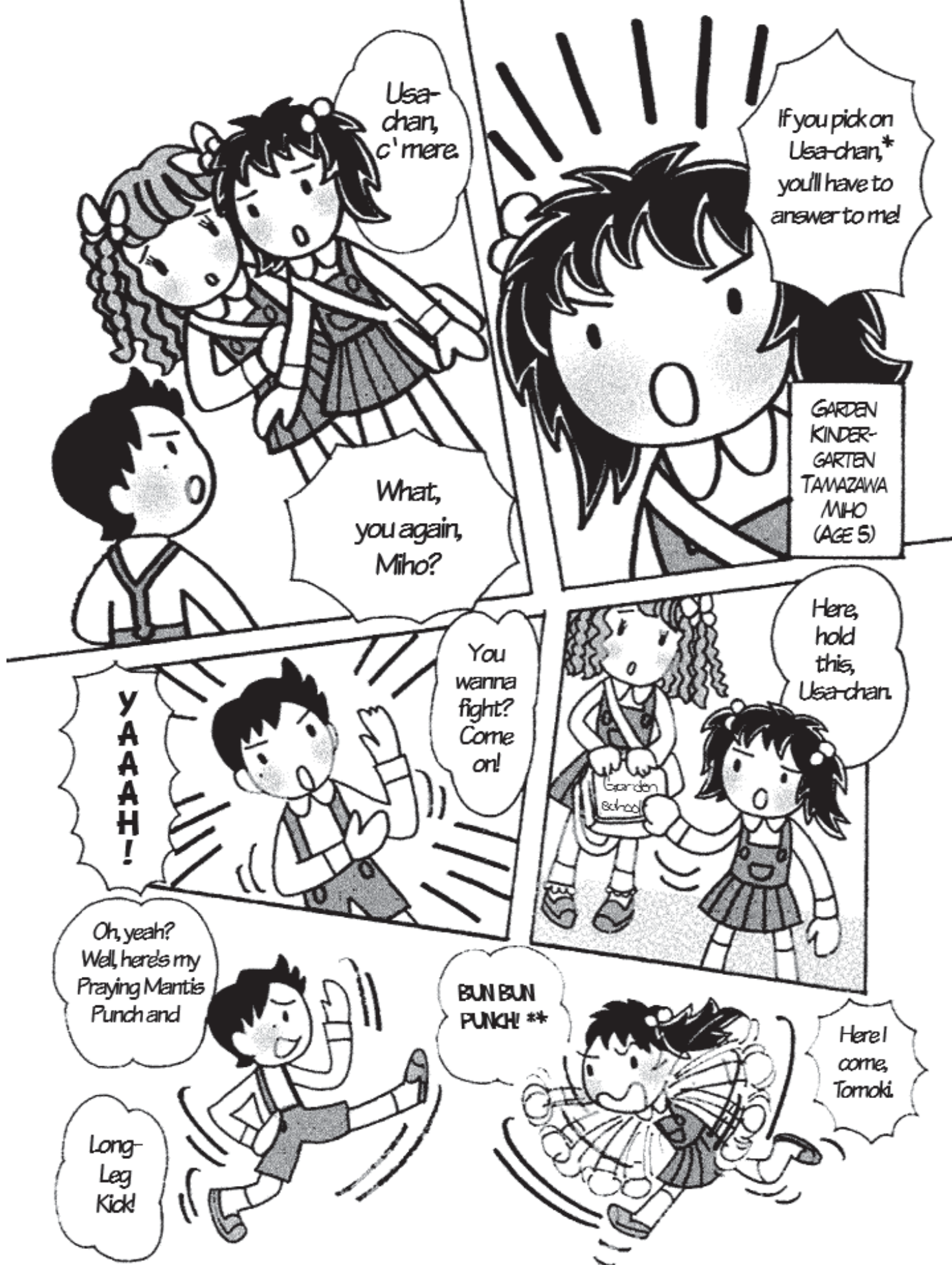
Look, look! Isn't it cool?



Sign:
Congratulations
New
Students







* '-chan' - is an honorific commonly used for (and by) girls and children

** An attack from a popular children's cartoon

Miho-chan's Memories

Part 1



by Rica
Takashima

translated by
Erin Subramanian

I wonder
if the milk
is delicious?

Let's try
and go to
Hokkaido!

Cows and
Chie-nee covered
in mud,
I don't want to
admit to it yet!

Yes...
But...

And **crabs**
are really
yummy too~

And
scallops...

And
of course,
**soft
ice cream!**

There's
ice cream

Thank you...

Chie-nee,
for being there....

Wanna see
Wanna
see!

Want to see
a picture?




That's a pretty
big gap of years
between you, huh?

How old is
your older sister?

Mm, there's 13 years
difference between us.
As a result,
Chie-nee was kind of
like a mother to me...

She's already 36,
with four kids...
I can't believe it!

She lived with our parents,
to help with the farming
and went to Hokkaido University
to study agriculture
and while there got married
to a student.



Miho-sa~an
There's a letter for you!
From your sister in Hokkaido

Ah,
Chi-nee

It was just her
birthday,
it's probably
because of the
present I sent.

Dear Miho-chan,
Thank you for the present.
It's a beautiful color,
it made me very happy!
I'll wear it proudly!
It's been 18 years since
I came to Hokkaido.
Time flies
so fast.





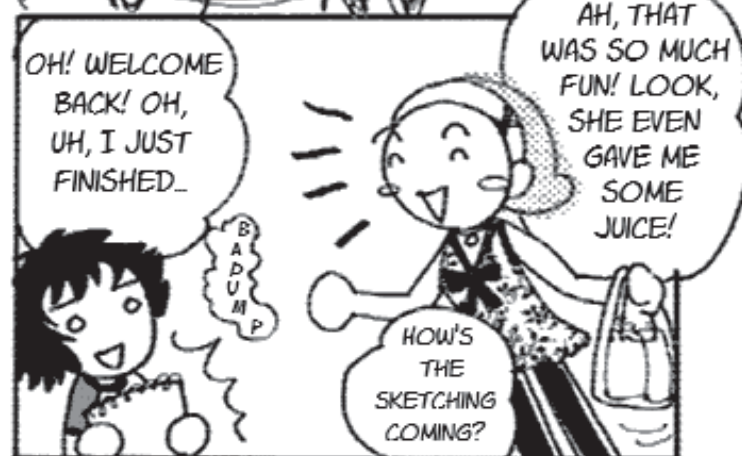
NO MATTER
HOW MUCH
RICA LOVES
CHILDREN...

IT'S NOT
LIKE
WE CAN
HAVE KIDS
TOGETHER
ANYWAY,
RIGHT?



SURE...

IT'S GETTING
LATE. WANT TO
PICK UP SOME
GROCERIES
AND THEN
HEAD HOME?

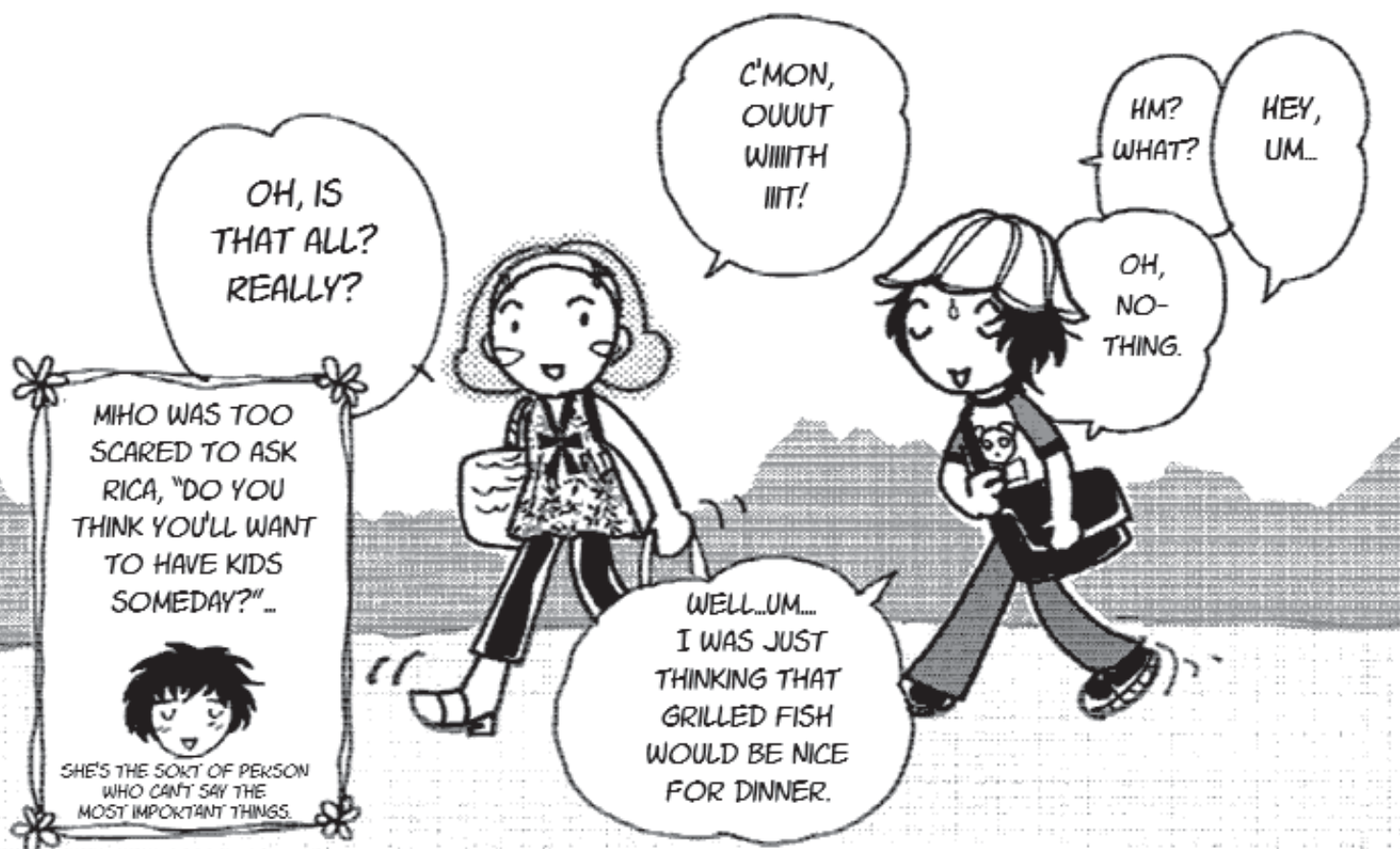


OH! WELCOME
BACK! OH,
UH, I JUST
FINISHED...

BAD
DUMP

AH, THAT
WAS SO MUCH
FUN! LOOK,
SHE EVEN
GAVE ME
SOME
JUICE!

HOW'S
THE
SKETCHING
COMING?



OH, IS
THAT ALL?
REALLY?

MIHO WAS TOO
SCARED TO ASK
RICA, "DO YOU
THINK YOU'LL WANT
TO HAVE KIDS
SOMEDAY?"...



SHE'S THE SORT OF PERSON
WHO CAN'T SAY THE
MOST IMPORTANT THINGS.

C'MON,
OUUUT
WIITH
IIT!

HM?
WHAT?

HEY,
UM...

OH,
NO-
THING.

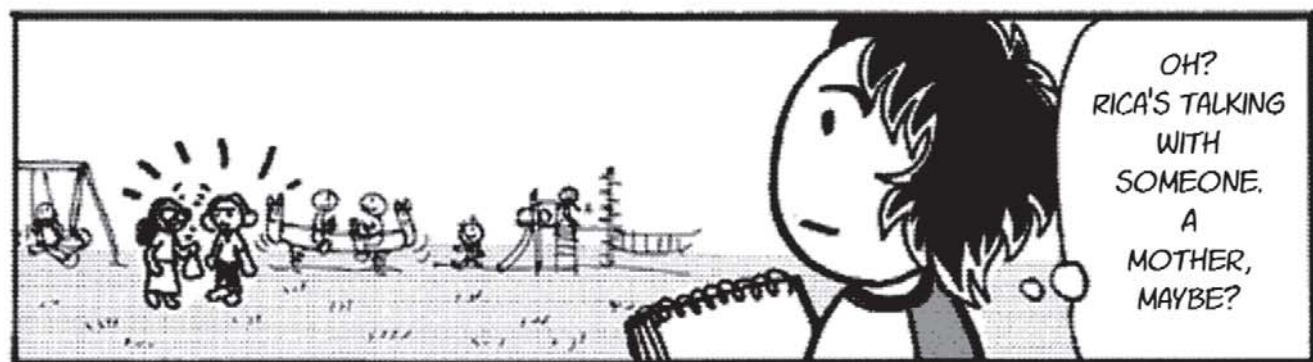
WELL...UM...
I WAS JUST
THINKING THAT
GRILLED FISH
WOULD BE NICE
FOR DINNER.



(NOTE: THE CHILDREN HAVE ALTERED A TYPICAL GAME--PRETENDING TO BE A TRAIN--BY INCORPORATING ELEMENTS TYPICAL IN JAPANESE FESTIVALS)



Rica In
Elementary
school



AND I DON'T
EVEN LIKE KIDS
AT ALL...
THEY'RE DIRTY,
AND THEY
ALWAYS WANT
TO HAVE THEIR
OWN WAY.

I CAN'T TELL
RICA THAT,
THOUGH...

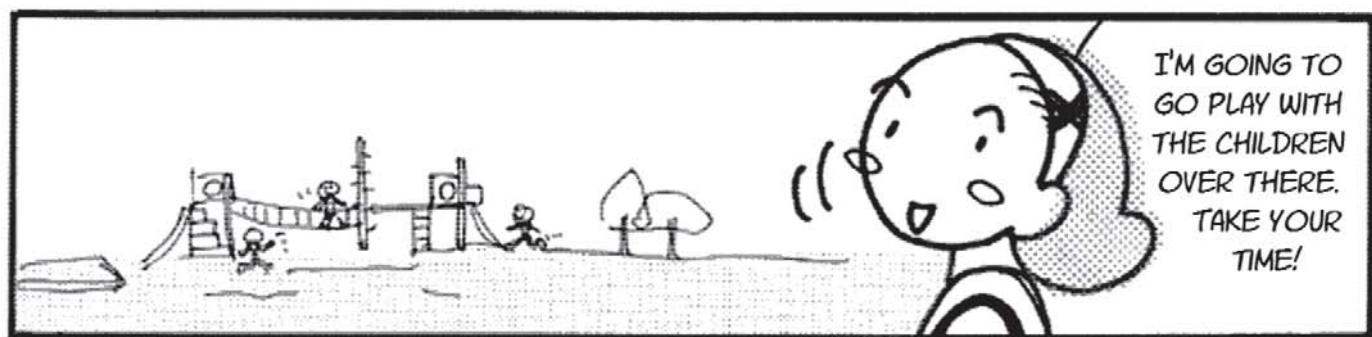
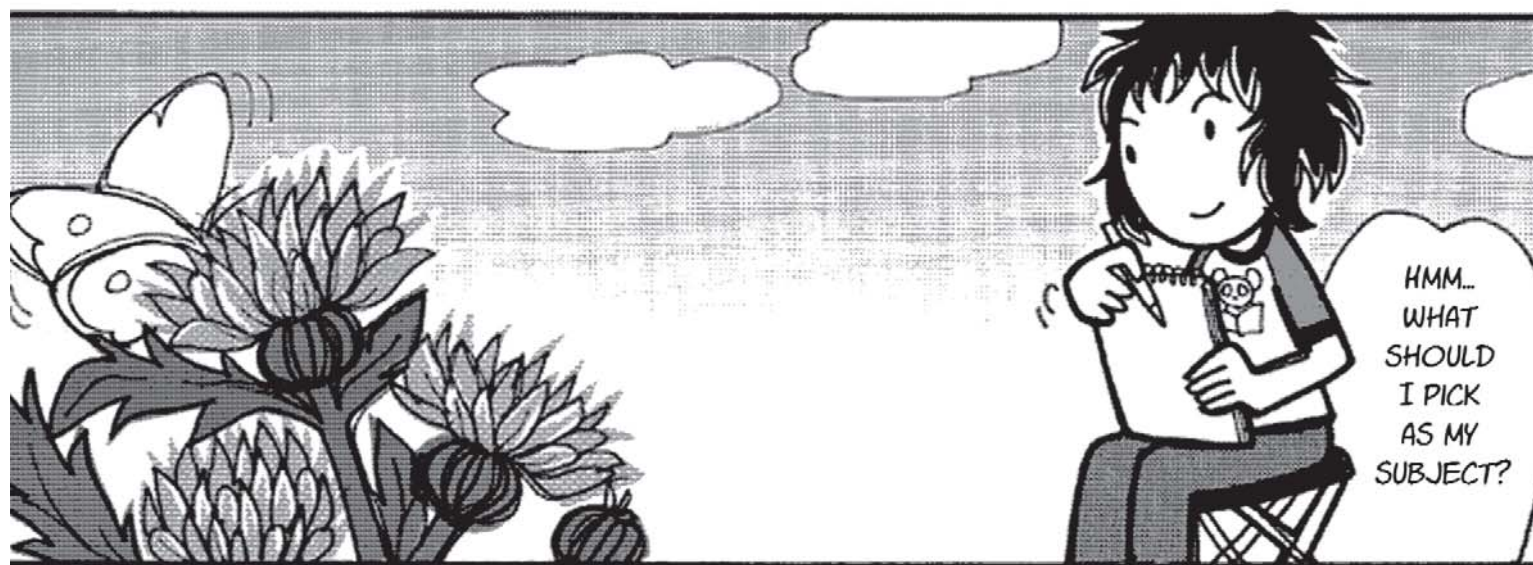


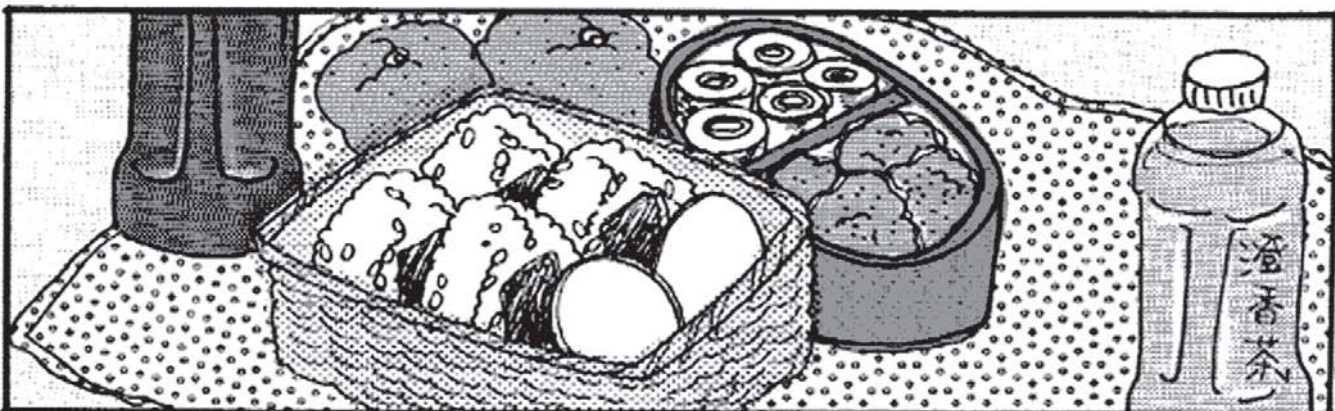
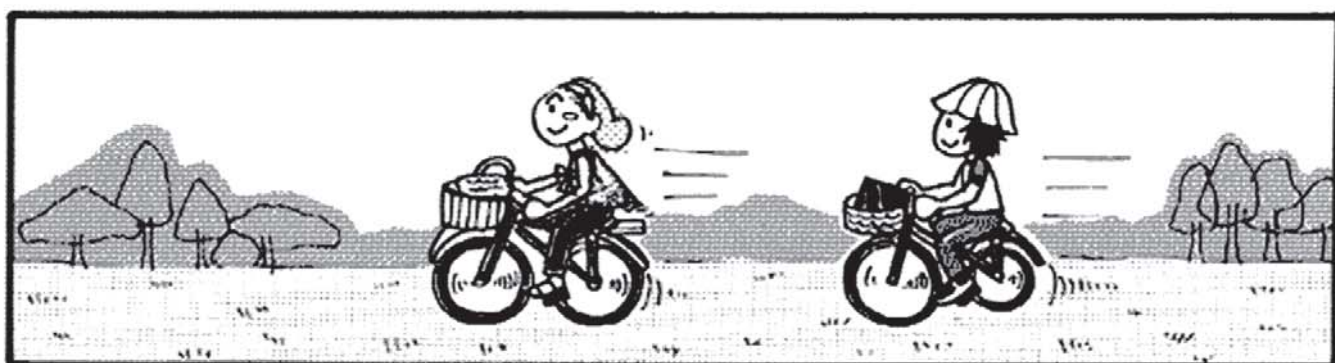
ONCE WOMEN HAVE KIDS,
THEY PUT ALL THEIR
ENERGY INTO THEM.
UGH. IT'S SO LAME!
WHAT'S THEIR PURPOSE
IN LIFE THEN? I'M GONNA
KEEP WORKING UNTIL
THE DAY I DIE! I'M
GOING TO DEVOTE MY
LIFE TO ART! I'M **NEVER**
GOING TO BE A STUPID
HOUSEWIFE LIKE HER!!
EVEN WHEN I'M IN MY THIRTIES
AND FORTIES, I'M STILL
GOING TO WEAR
COOL CLOTHES.



*ONEE-SAN = "OLDER SISTER" A CASUAL FORM OF ADDRESS FOR AN WOMAN OLDER THAN ONE'S SELF.







Rica 'tte Kanji!?

RICA

SECOND-YEAR
STUDENT AT A
WOMEN'S JUNIOR
COLLEGE, STUDYING
EARLY EDUCATION.

MIHO

THIRD-YEAR FINE
ARTS STUDENT,
STUDYING
TEXTILES.

Rica Takashima

IN THE MUSEUM



Advanced artist Miho Tamazawa sweeps all the new artist awards!!

-Daily News



Hot artist Miho's new lover is a female model!?

-Gossip Times



Daydream...

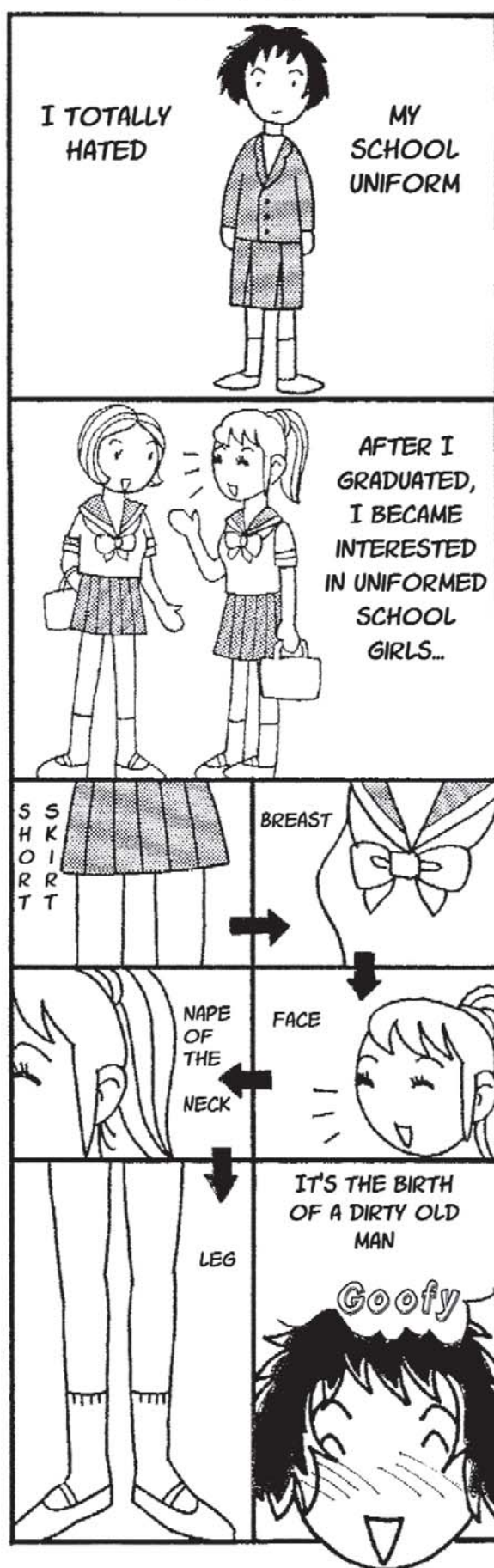
BUT FIRST, YOU SHOULD FINISH YOUR HOMEWORK!!

GO FOR IT, MIHO!

MOTHER KNOWS EVERYTHING



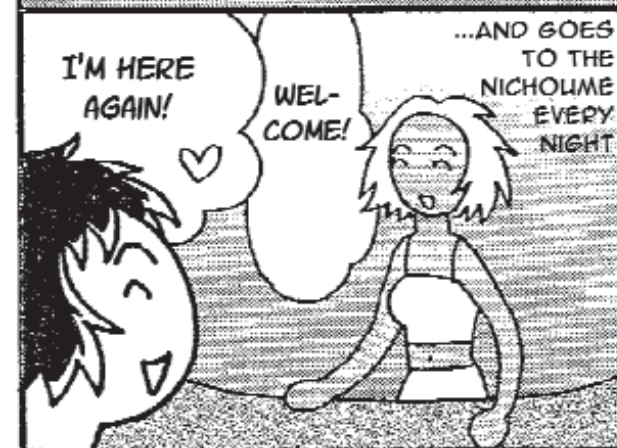
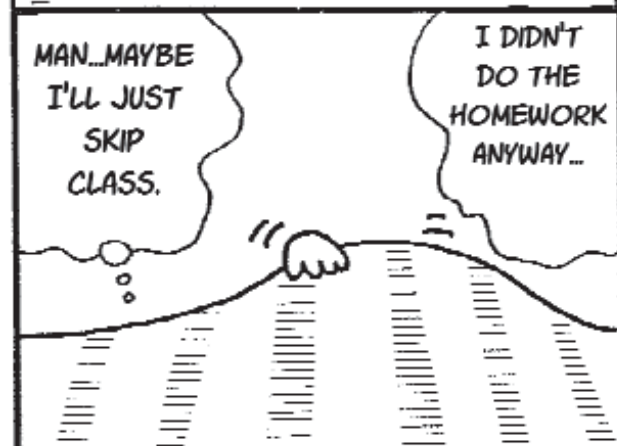
GLANCE



MOTIF?



DAILY ROUTINE

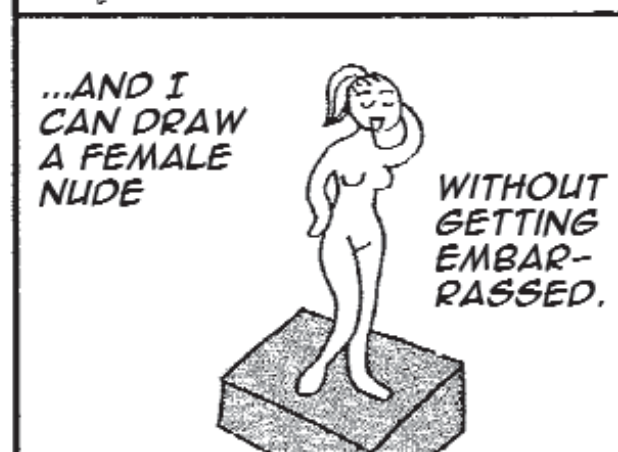
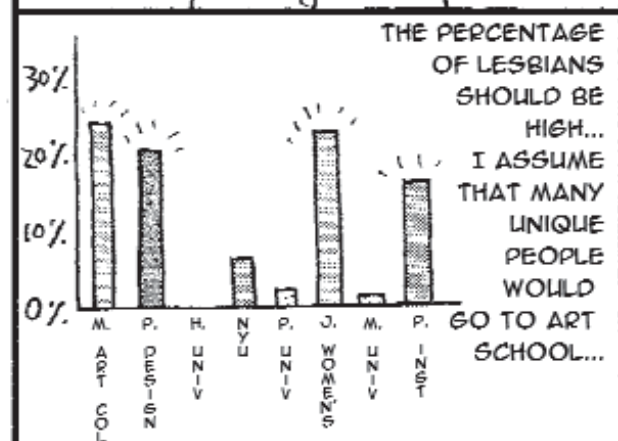
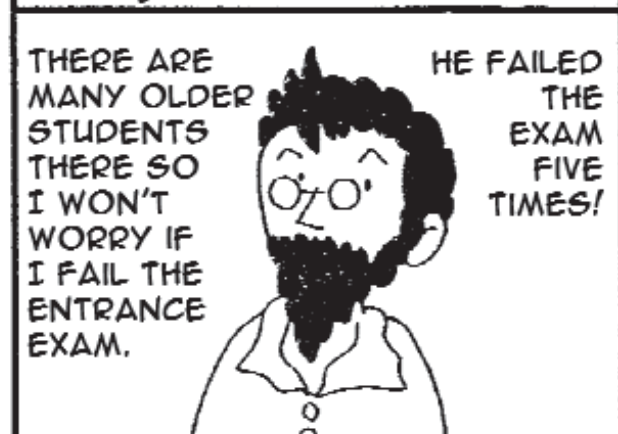
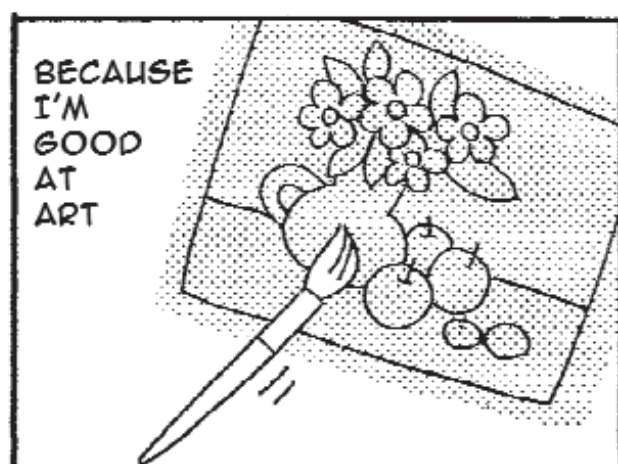


SUMMER VACATION

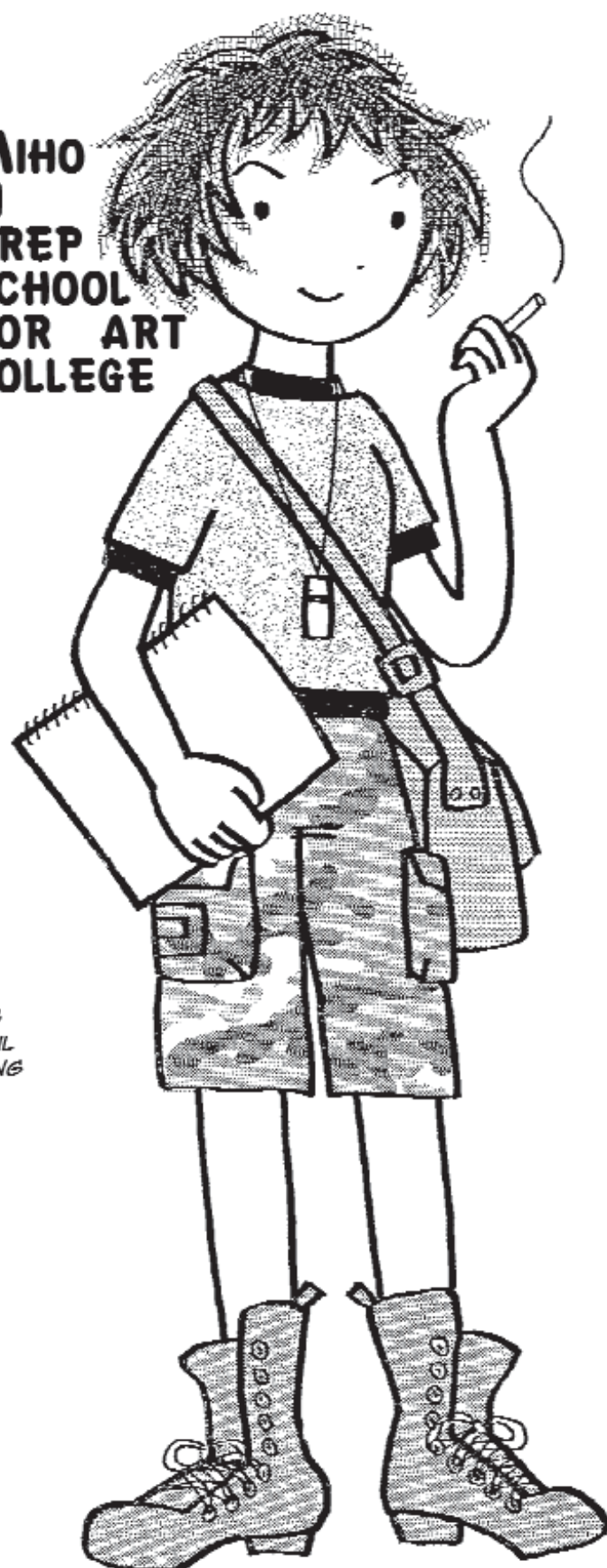


A
LITTLE
LIE

REASONS TO GO TO ART SCHOOL

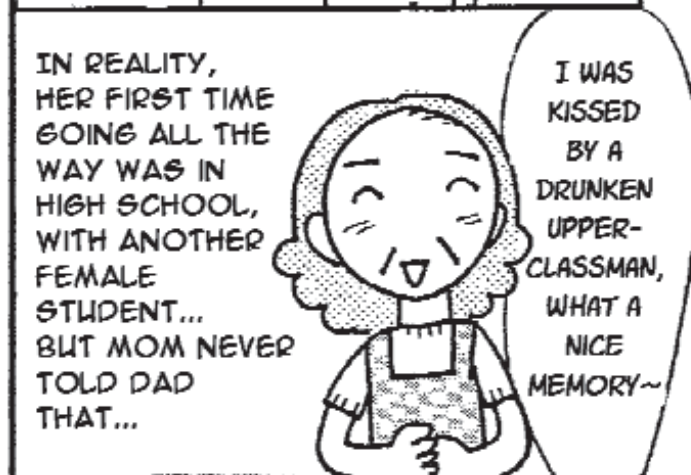
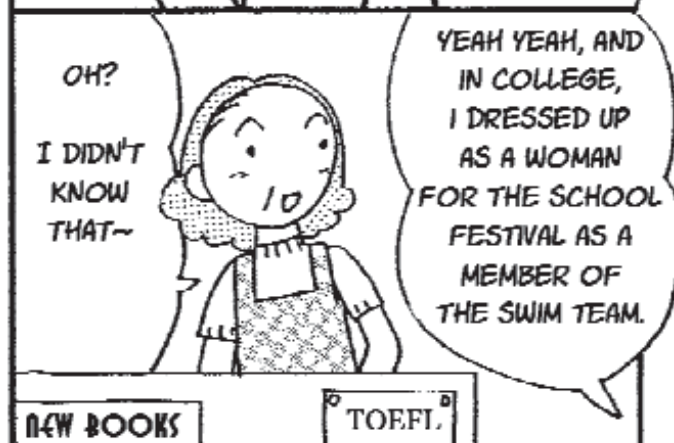
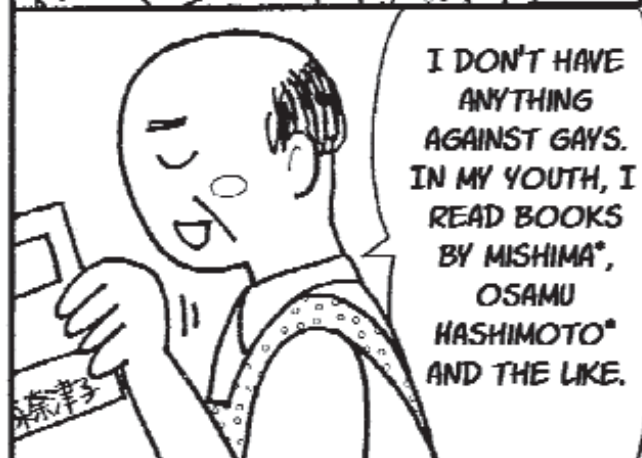


**MIHO
IN
PREP
SCHOOL
FOR ART
COLLEGE**



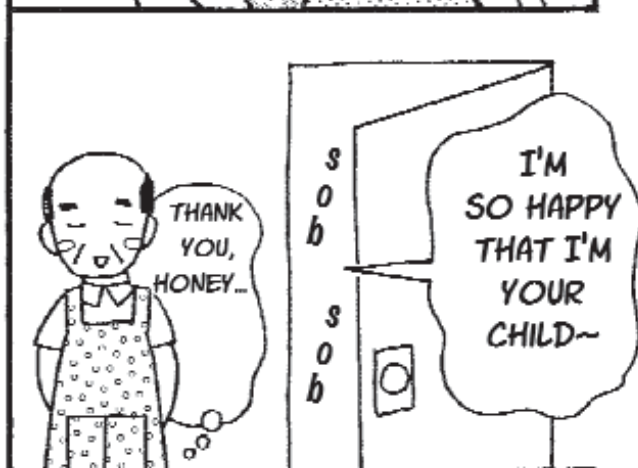
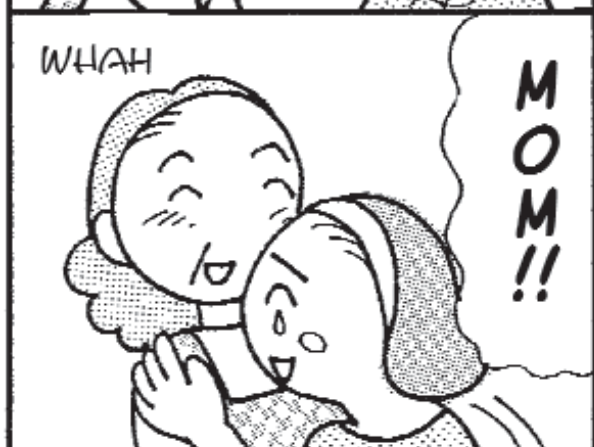
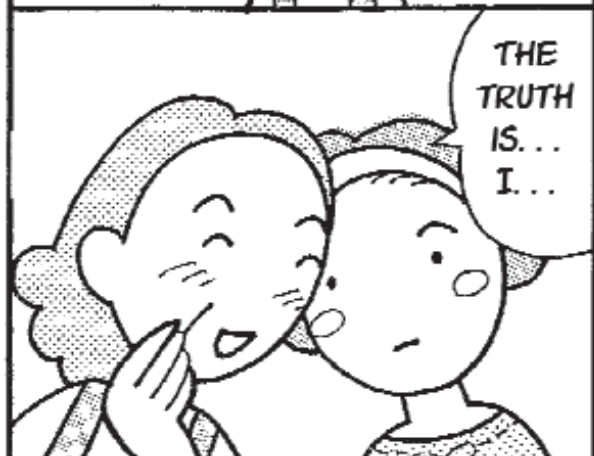
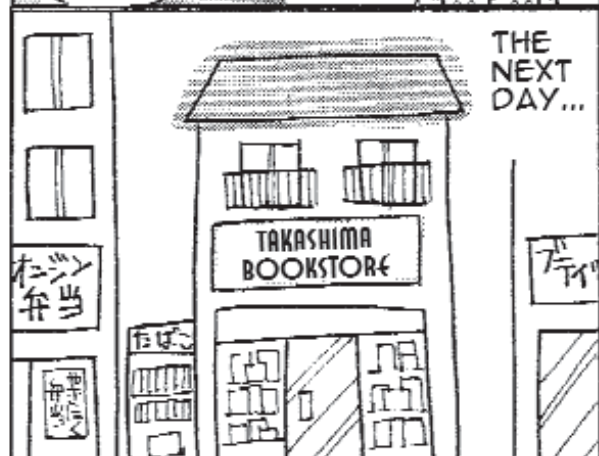
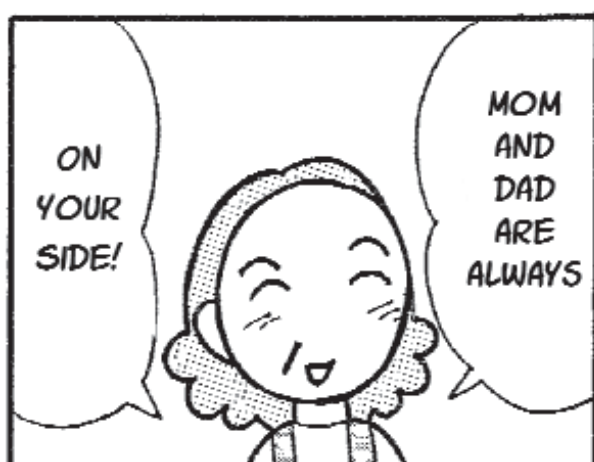
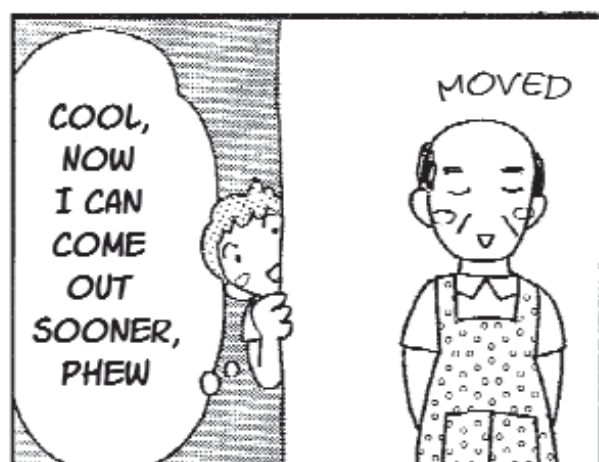
THIS CHART IS MIHO'S WISHFUL THINKING

KENICHI, 6TH GRADE.
HE'S AFRAID THAT HE'LL
BECOME AS BALD AS
HIS FATHER IN THE FUTURE....



THE END

* Yukio Mishima and Osamu Hashimoto are famous gay Japanese authors.



TODAY, DAD ATTENDED A MEETING OF THE LOCAL STORE UNION, AND SOMEONE THERE TOLD HIM ABOUT THE RUMOR THAT THE

TAKASHIMA BOOKSTORE GIRL WAS A LESBIAN,

AND THAT EVERYONE IN THE SCHOOL KNEW.



BUT SOMETIMES YOU SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU SAY. KENICHI IS STILL IN GRADE SCHOOL.

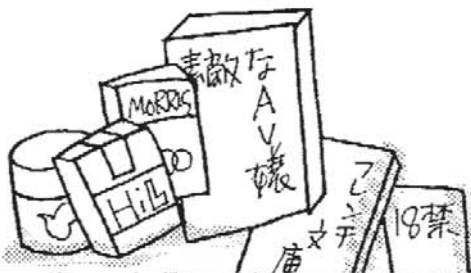
I REALLY LOVE YOU RICA, YOU'RE OBEDIENT AND YOU SAY WHAT YOU THINK.



OUR BOOKSTORE IS JUST A LITTLE LOCAL STORE, NOT LIKE A BIG CITY STORE, SO DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH TROUBLE THERE WILL BE IF THERE'S PETTY GOSSIP ABOUT US.



ACTUALLY, OUR SALES HAVE BEEN LOW, SO WE'VE RELUCTANTLY BEEN SELLING MAGAZINES AND BOOKS FOR ADULTS, AND CIGARETTES.



DAD WORKS VERY HARD ALL THE TIME TO GIVE YOU AND KENICHI A FREE AND EASY LIFE.



IN TOKYO

RICA... YOU SHOULD GO TO COLLEGE



HUH?

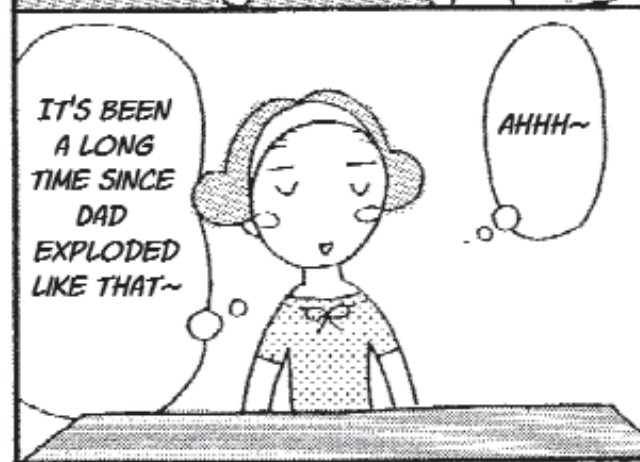
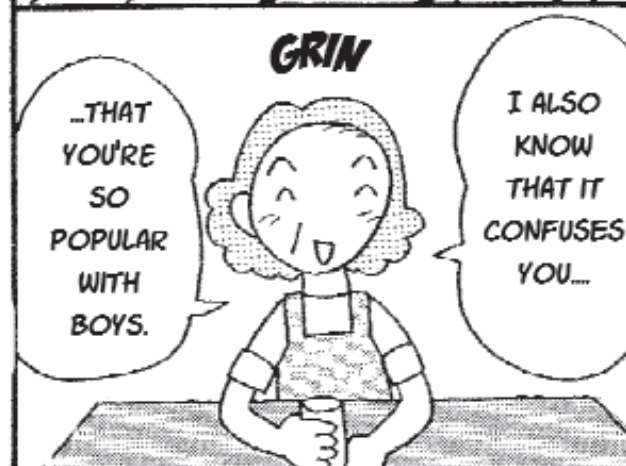
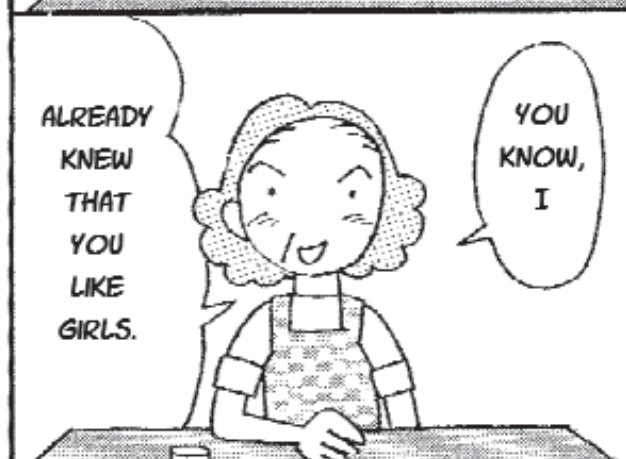
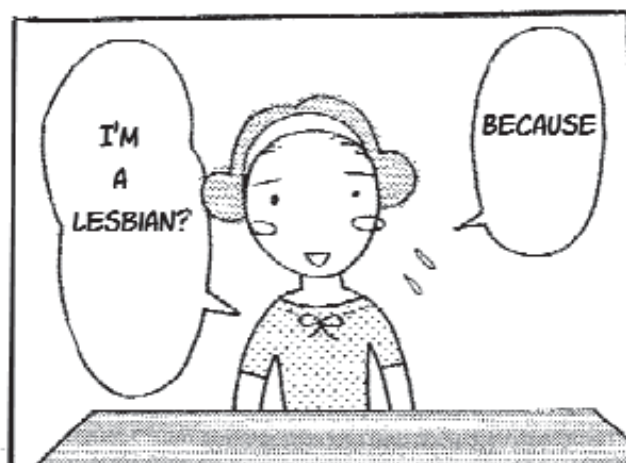


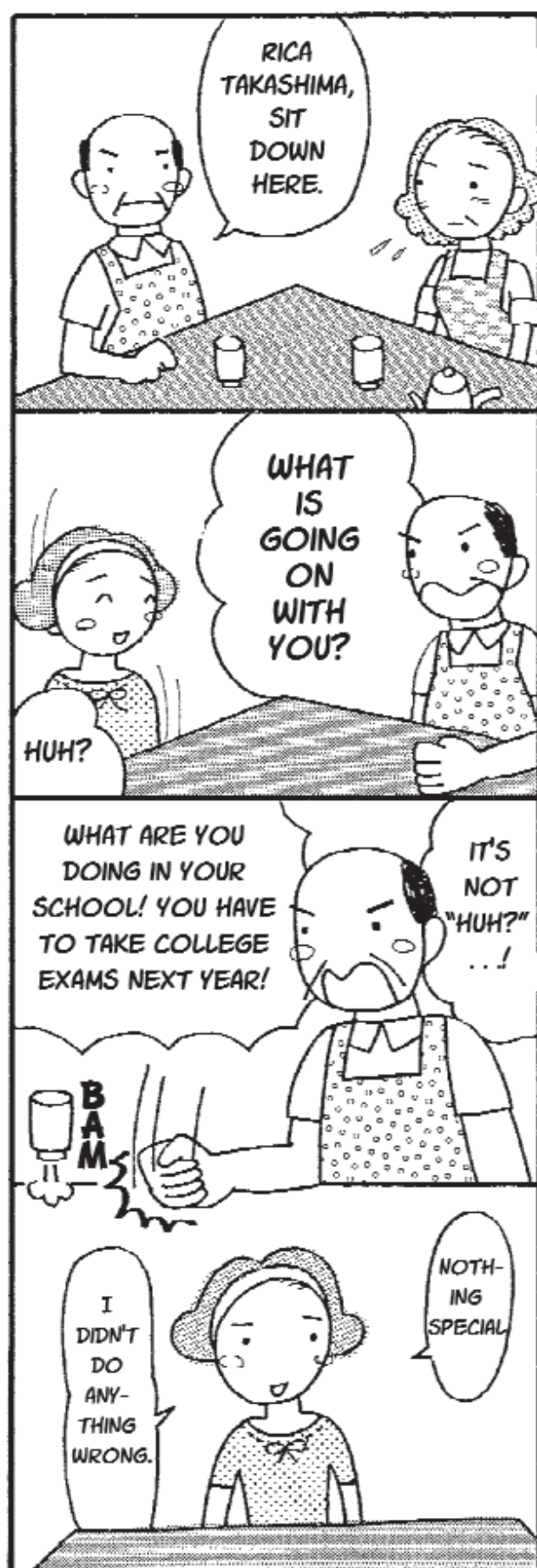
GO TO TOKYO AND LIVE THE WAY YOU WANT TO. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

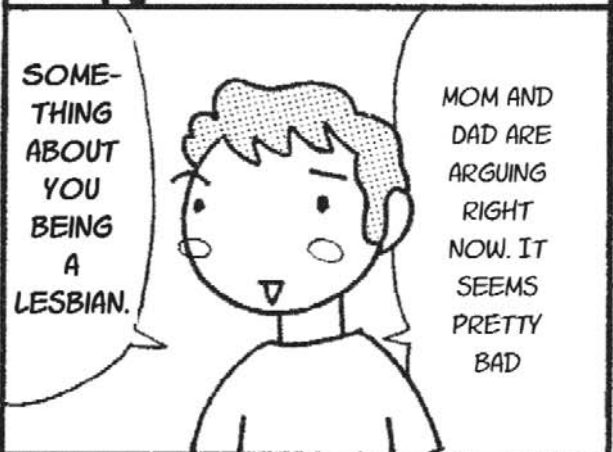
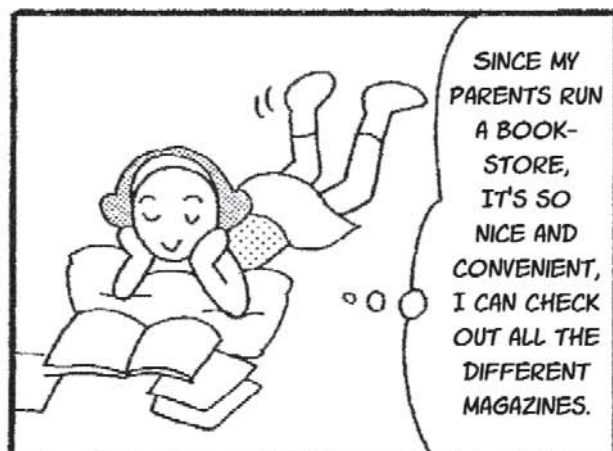
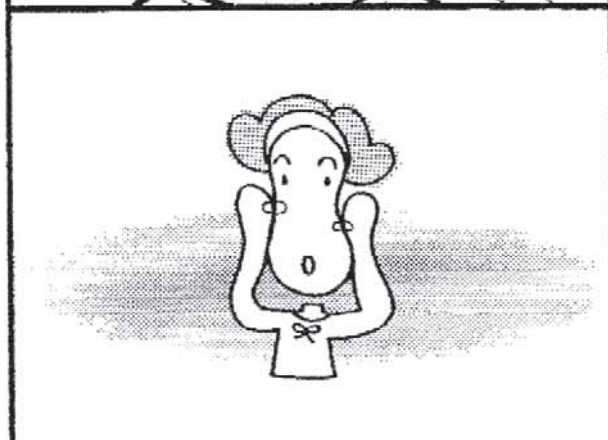
GRIN

IT'S WHAT YOU REALLY WANT TO DO, RIGHT?

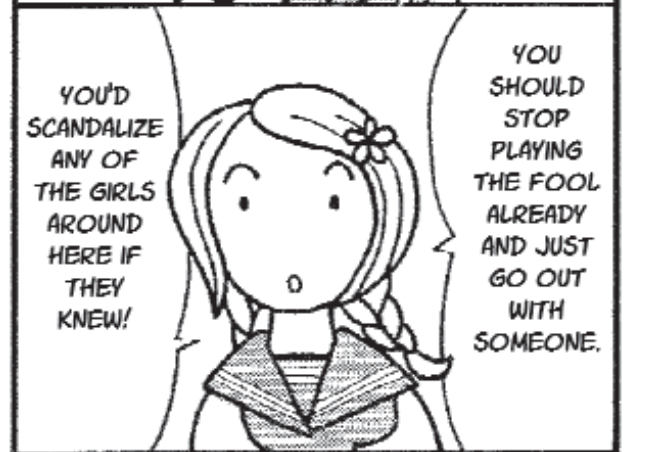
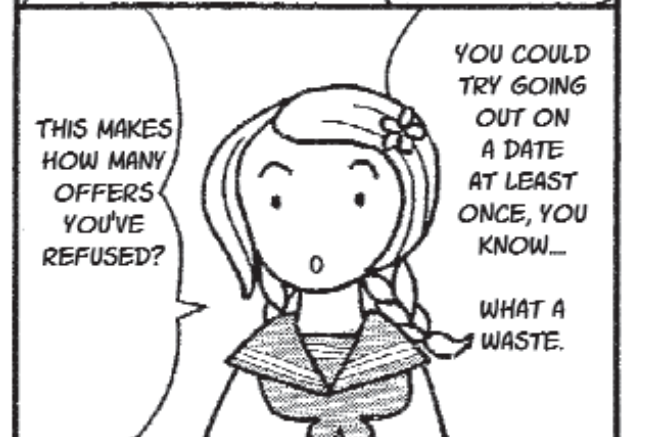
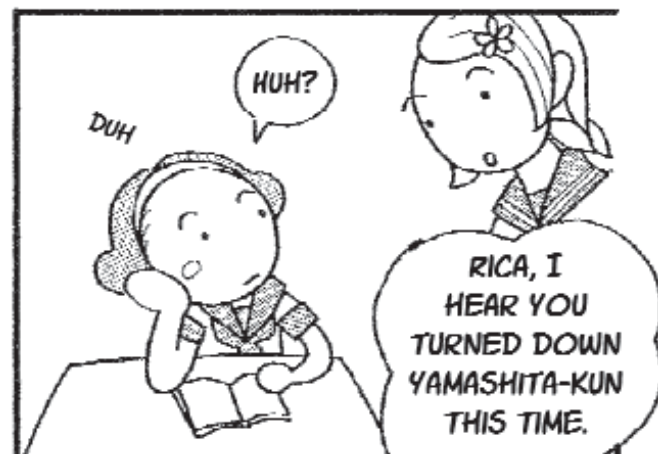
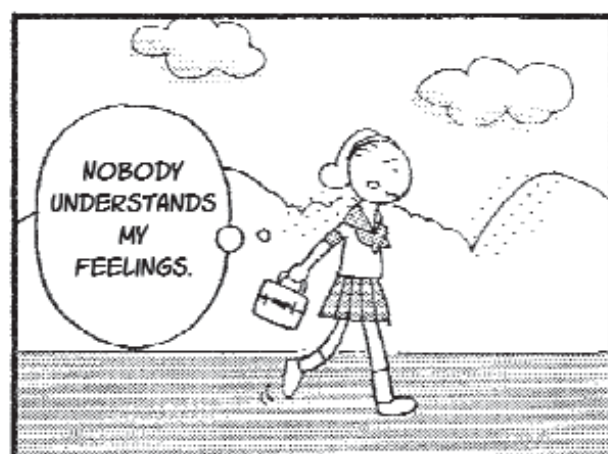




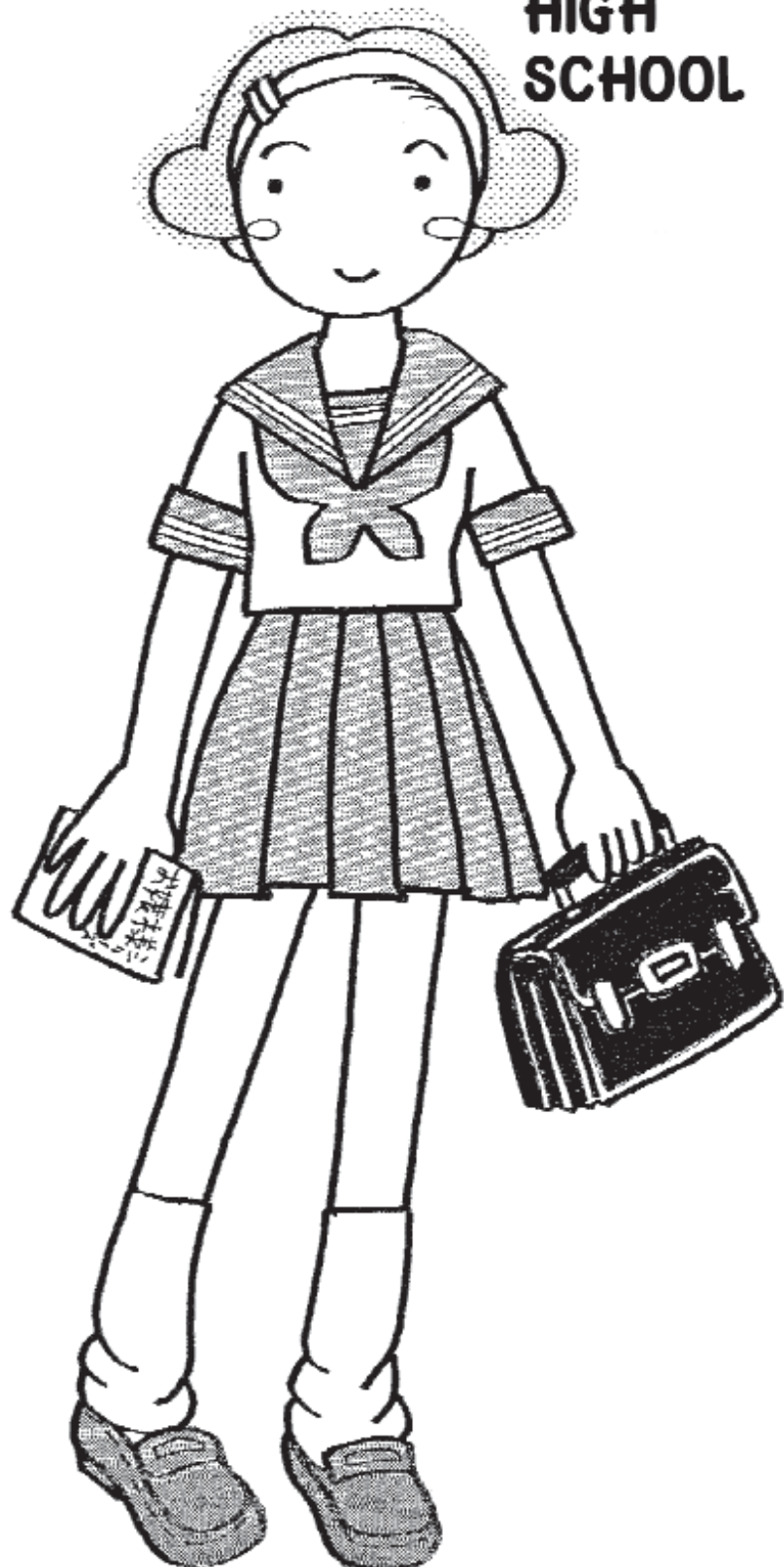
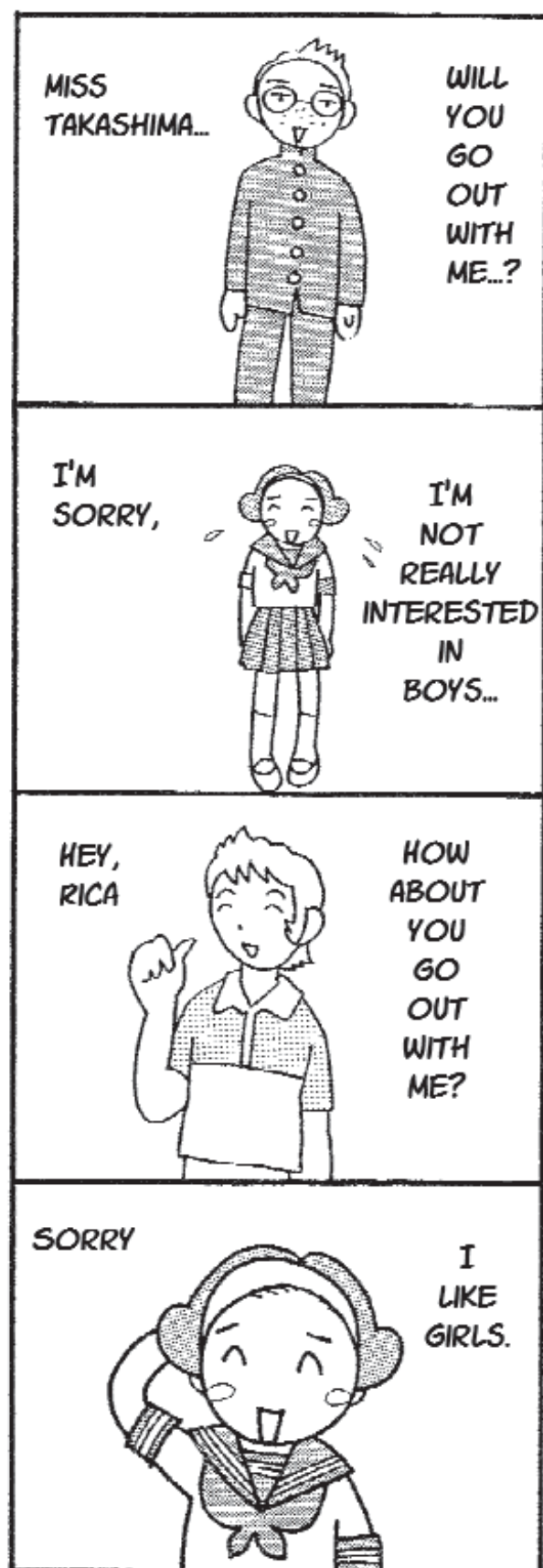


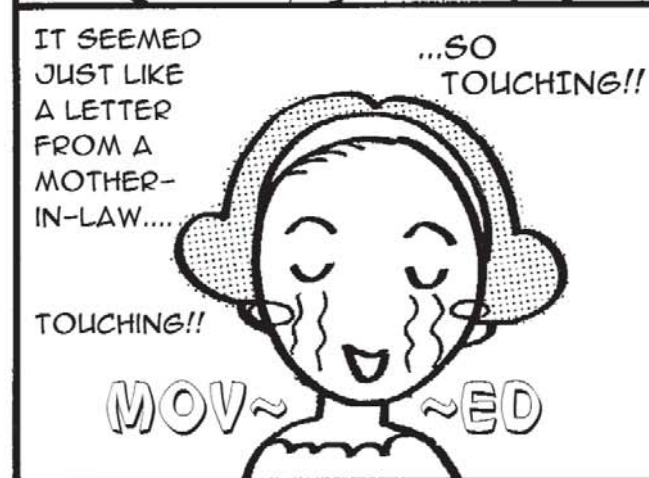
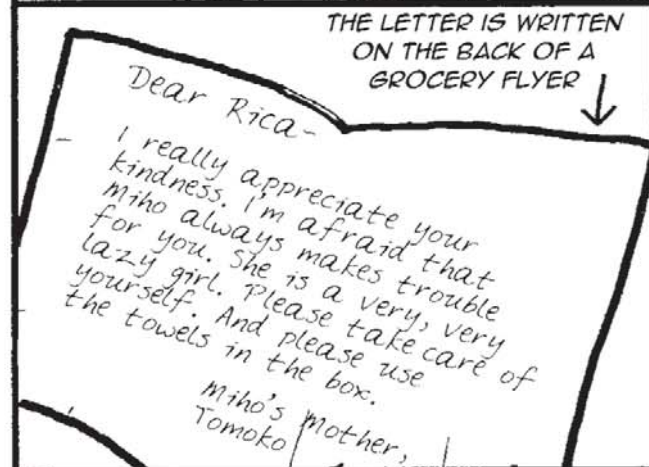
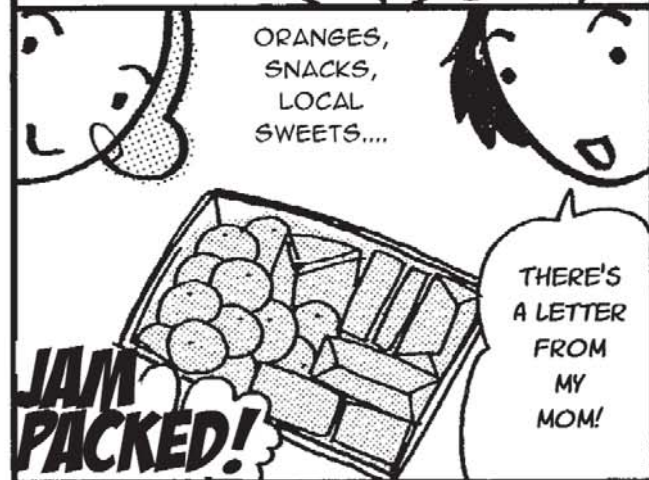


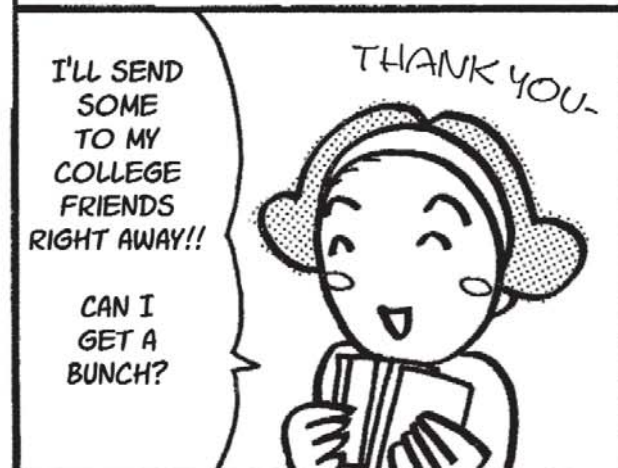
-KUN IS AN HONORIFIC WHICH IS
OFTEN USED FOR BOYS' NAMES

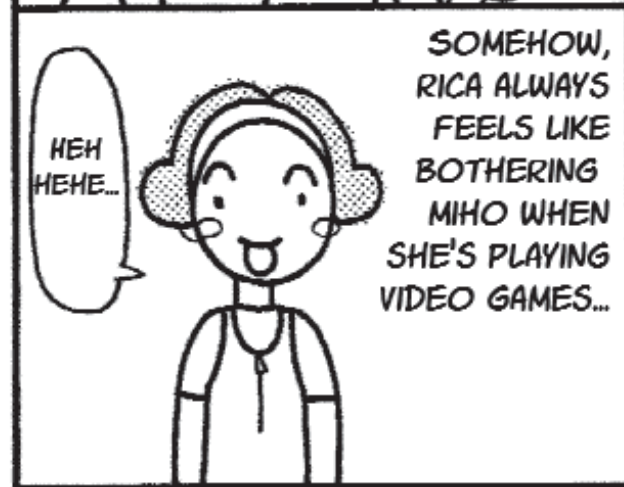
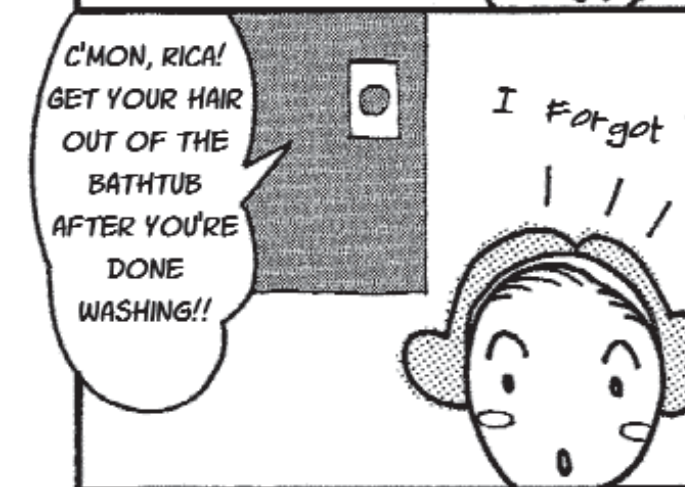
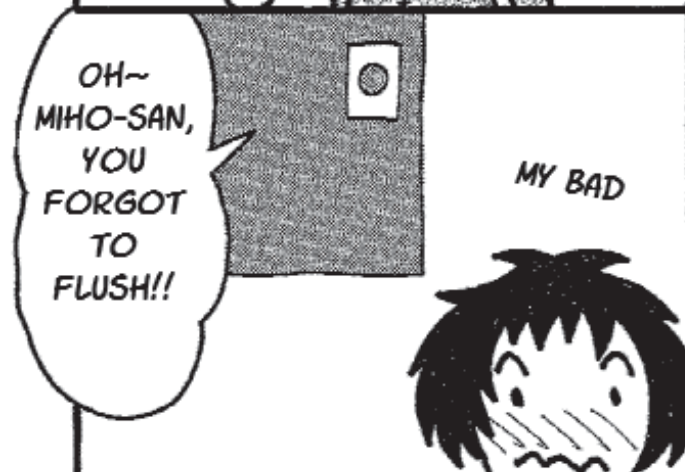


RICA IN HIGH SCHOOL









It's not easy living together, is it?

RICA~CHAN,
WHAT
ARE
YOU
DOIN'?

...

KISS

HONEY~

GEEZ~ HOW COME YOU'RE
ALWAYS BUGGING ME WHEN
I'M BUSY?
I HAVE A
REPORT
DUE
TOMORROW

SOMEHOW, MIHO
ALWAYS FEELS
LIKE
SNUDDLING
WITH RICA
WHEN SHE'S
CONCENTRATING
ON SOMETHING...

I
KNOW,
I
KNOW...

MIHO-SAN
IS LATE
COMING
HOME -

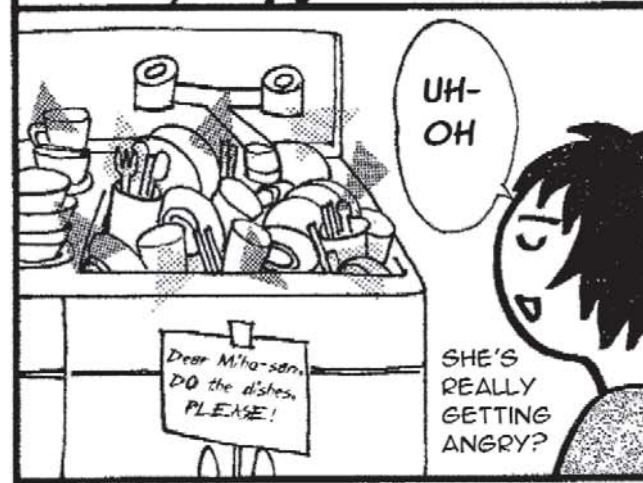
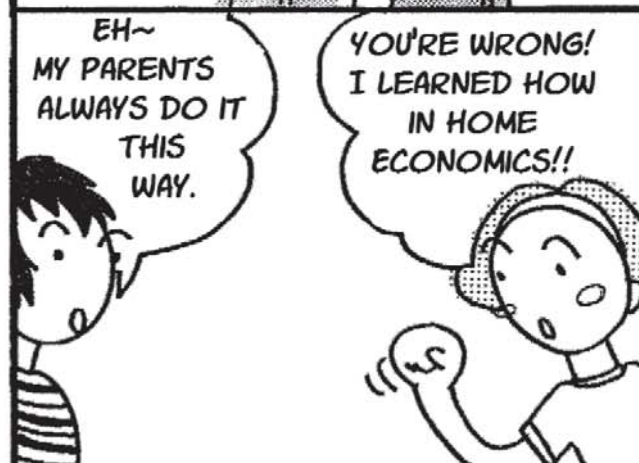
I'LL
GO
AHEAD
AND
EAT

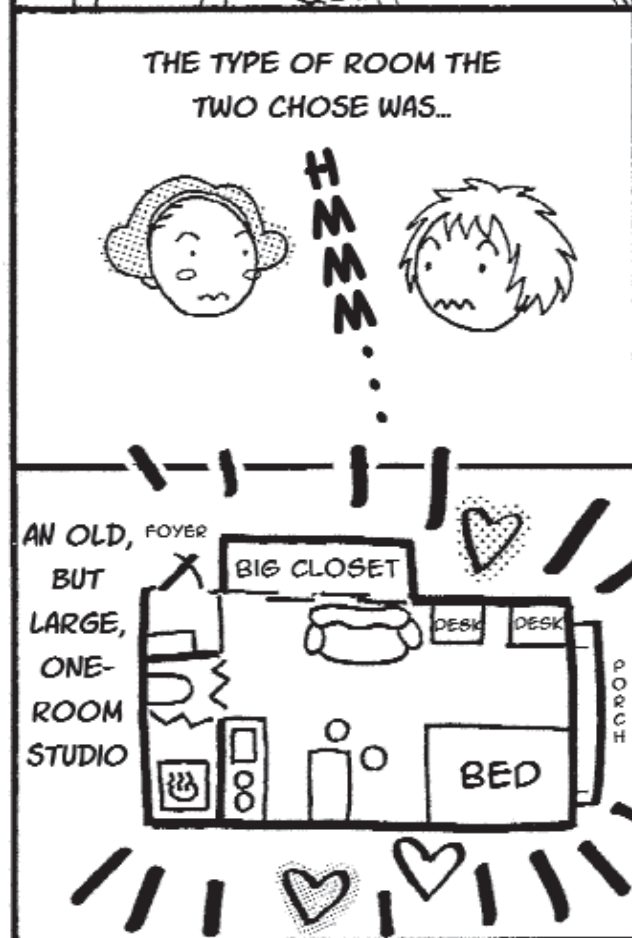
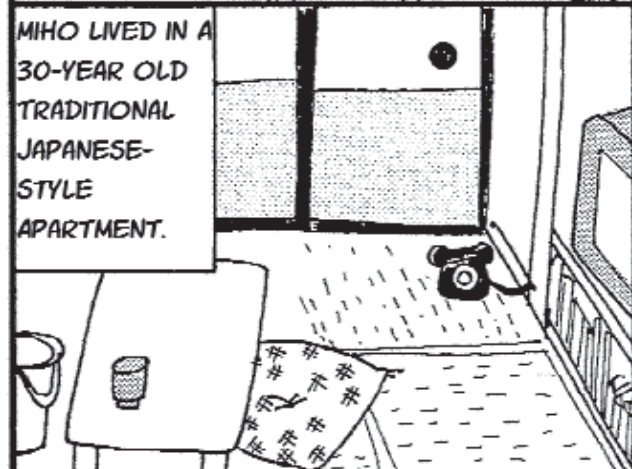
I WONDER IF
MIHO-SAN IS
STAYING AT
HER FRIEND'S
PLACE -

GEEZ,
I GUESS
I'LL
JUST
GO TO
SLEEP

OH, MAN~
I CAN'T
SLEEP
WITH THIS
ON MY
MIND~

Just call her already!!





THINKING ABOUT THE LAYOUT OF A NEW
APARTMENT IS A VERY HAPPY THING, ISN'T IT



Rica & Miho

MORE

Rica 'tte Kanji!?



ART & STORY
RICHA TAKASHIMA

RT: I knew that there would be a lot of things that those two would have to deal with when they began to live together, and I wanted to write about those issues.

In my head there were so many conversations between them, but now it's too late to draw those, please forgive me....

EF: *We start to learn about Rica and Miho's past history from this point on. Is any of this autobiographical?*

RT: Miho-chan's story is a series of episodes from my past. Well, that and stories I had heard from other people.

Liking a girl and being hurt by that girl. Then becoming timid and hiding those feelings of romantic love, you know, that kind of thing.

EF: *So you wanted to let people know they weren't alone in having those feelings or those experiences?*

RT: Exactly. When people face the things that worried and upset them from their past and say to young people "Your future is bright and something to look forward to," they release those things from the past and feel at ease themselves.

EF: *That's exactly why we're publishing Rica, right? We want to tell this kind of story so young people all over the world know that they don't have to feel isolated, that this is life anywhere and everywhere. That the future is whatever they make of it....*

RT: After all, even now, there are a lot of people all over the world who have similar feelings to those I had back then.

Free Talk



EF: *Years had passed between the time you first wrote Rica 'tte Kanji!? and the time you started the "More Rica" chapters for the Yuri Monogatari collections. What were some of the things that changed for you in those years?*

RT: The opportunity for drama in Ni-choume had diminished considerably! (laugh)



I had a child, and raising children had become a main focus of my life. Now that I didn't have to worry about the sales of a magazine like I did with *Anise*, I could take my time and draw more leisurely. I thought that was very nice.

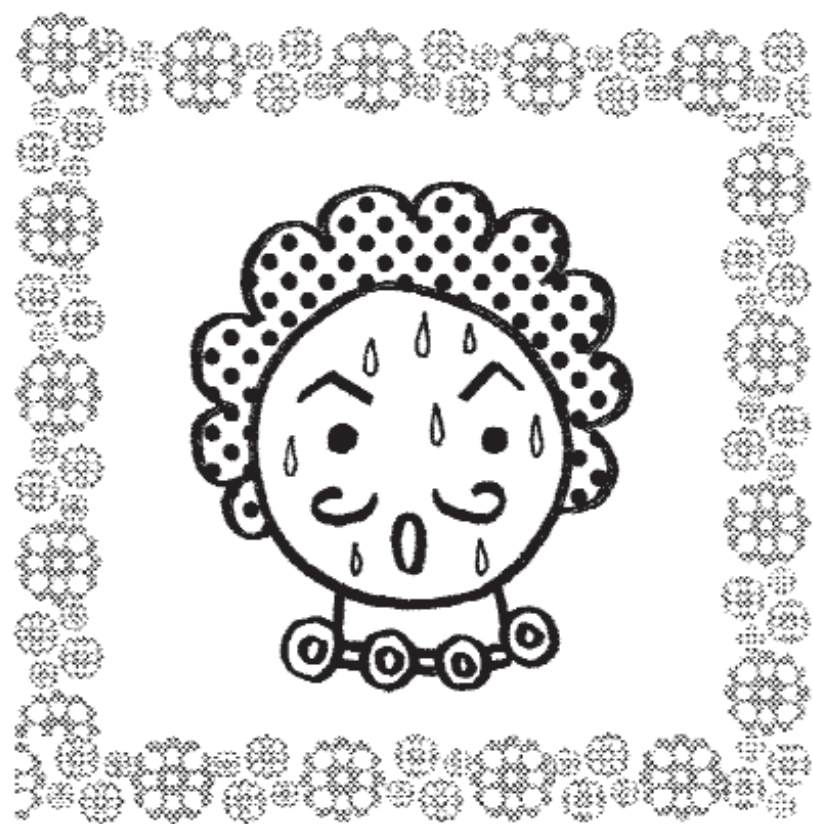
Yuri Monogatari had a wider set of themes to address than *Anise*, so I drew the episode about their feelings about children.

EF: *What themes had become more important and which themes had become less important?*

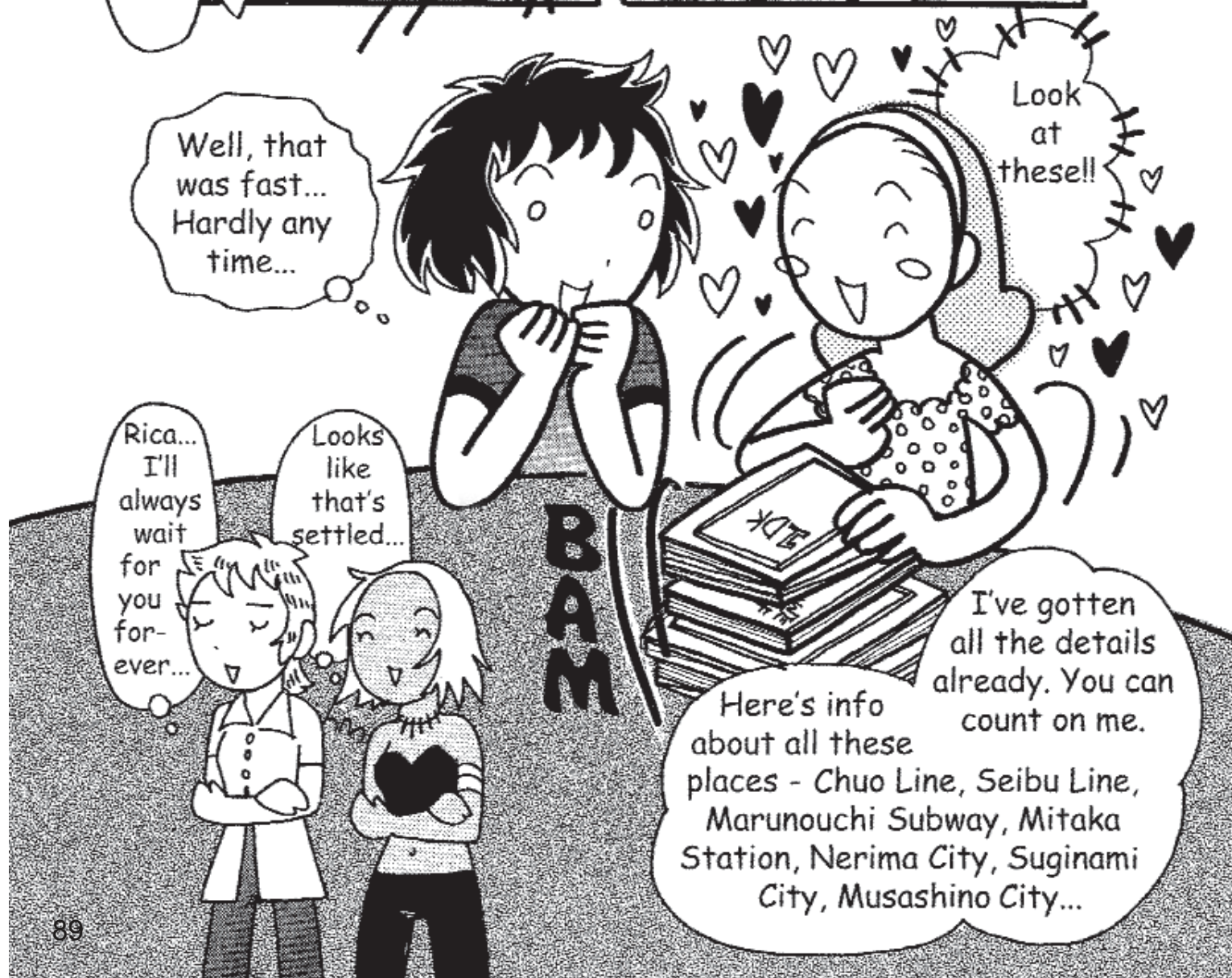
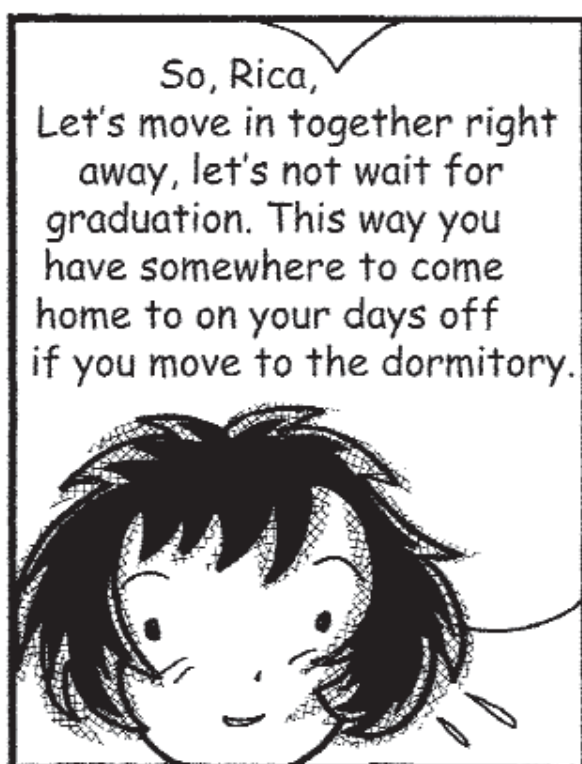
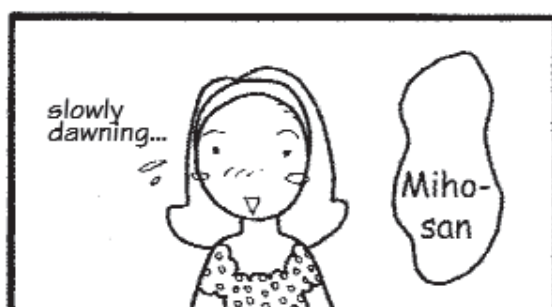
Up to this point, I had established a pattern of very typical life in Tokyo; going out on dates, debuting in Ni-choume, etc, trying to connect young people with cultural norms, but I had graduated from those things, so it didn't seem to really fit to keep drawing those kind of things. My feelings shifted to a more empathetic focus, wanting to see Rica and Miho mature and grow into adulthood.

EF: *What was the general feeling you were trying to express?*





?



The job will be tough, but you'll get decent work experience - so bring your portfolio!!



But...
I was really down, but then I got some information on a part-time job



Really?
That famous company?

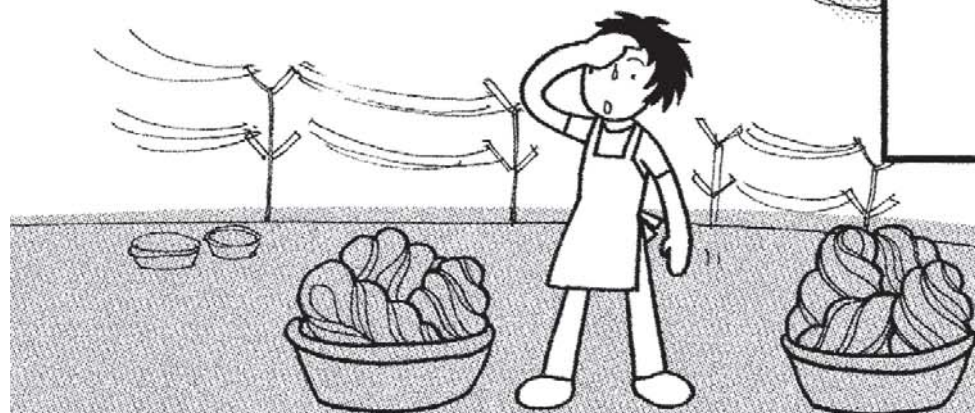
There's a textile dyeing company in Akikawa City looking for students for part-time jobs, right now. I think you have enough time to do it, Miho-san



I gained confidence that I can do good work...



So, I went right over
We felt good about each other~
In the beginning, it was very hard, but I felt more satisfaction than I ever had going to college.



They are
so adorable!

It's a foster
nursery...

I've wanted to
work there
for a long
time!!

There are many
cute newborn
babies there...

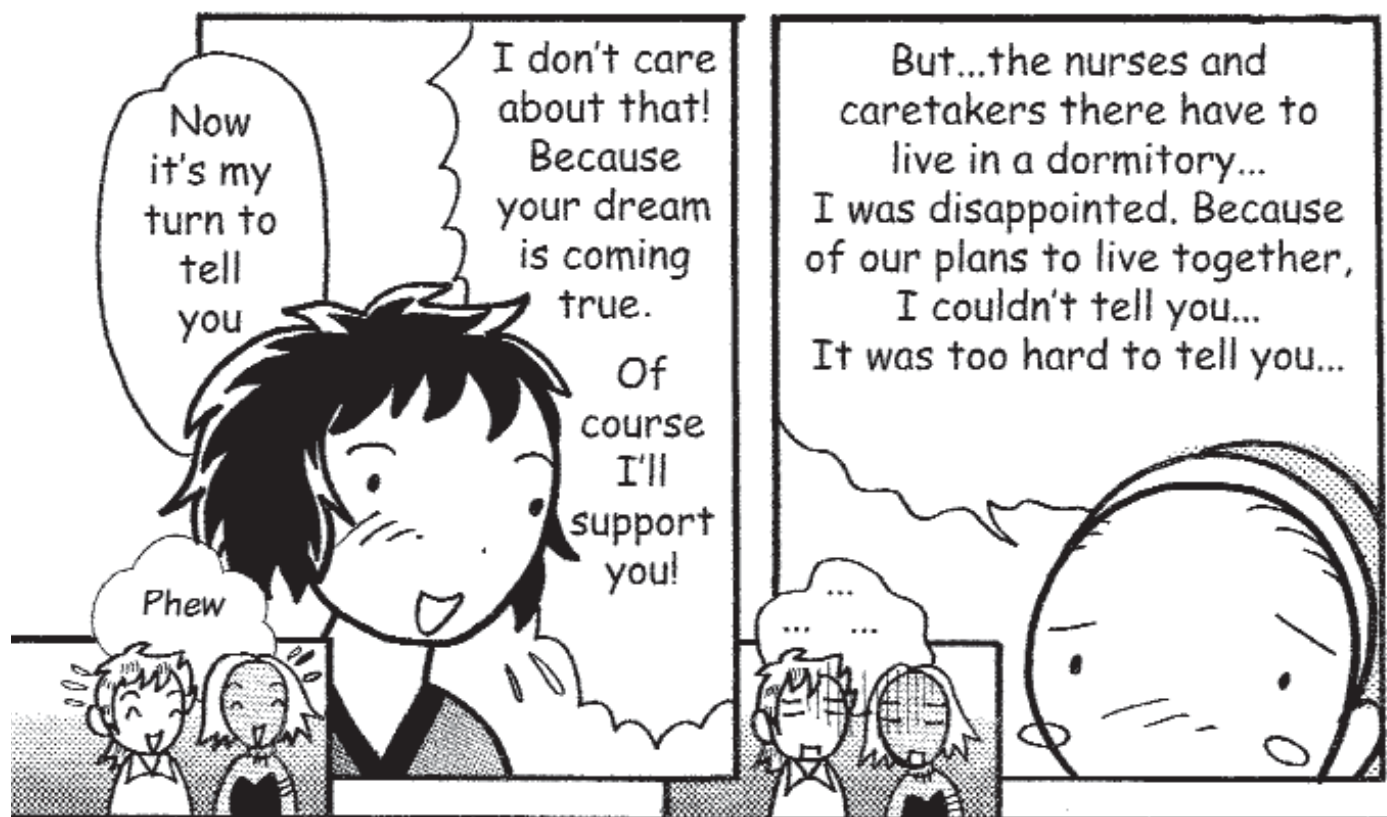


Now
it's my
turn to
tell
you

I don't care
about that!
Because
your dream
is coming
true.

Of
course
I'll
support
you!

But...the nurses and
caretakers there have to
live in a dormitory...
I was disappointed. Because
of our plans to live together,
I couldn't tell you...
It was too hard to tell you...



Phew

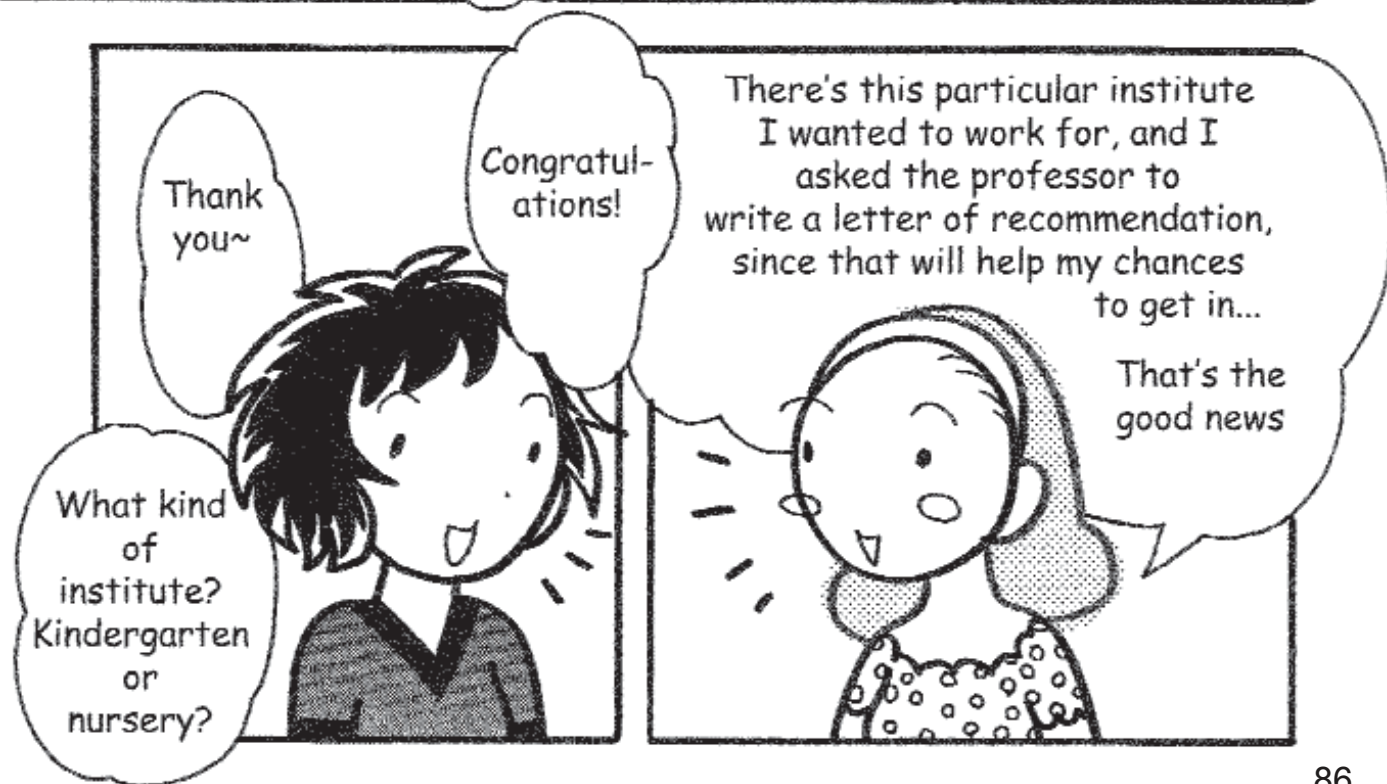
Huh?

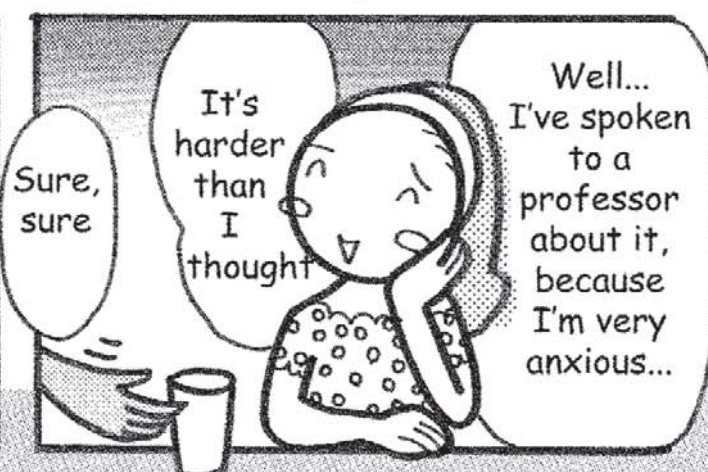
blank
stare

b
o
w

The really bad news,
the truth is, I...
I'm going to have
to repeat this year
of college.
I'm sorry I didn't
tell you







Don't
make
me
laugh



We
never
went
in the
first place



Student Cafeteria

TRAY RETURN

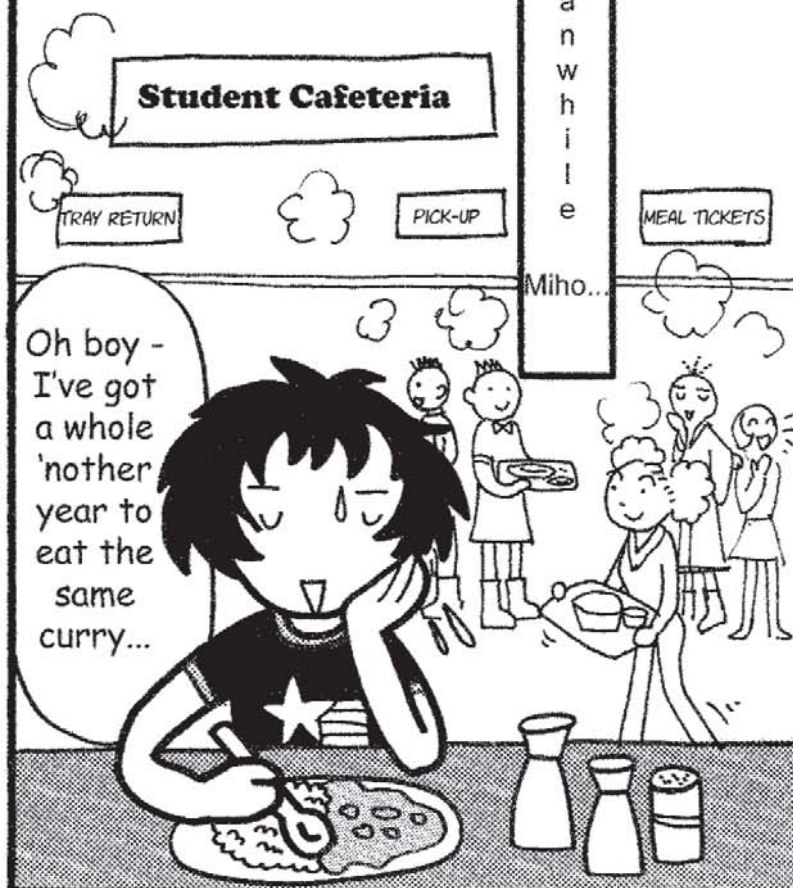
PICK-UP

MEAL TICKETS

M
e
a
n
w
h
i
l
e

Miho...

Oh boy -
I've got
a whole
'nother
year to
eat the
same
curry...



Ah~
Miho!!
I was looking
for you!!

Someone's
coming
again...



Ah - I can't tell my parents,
since I didn't pass the
college exam
and was a rōnin*
for two years...
now I have to
repeat a year...

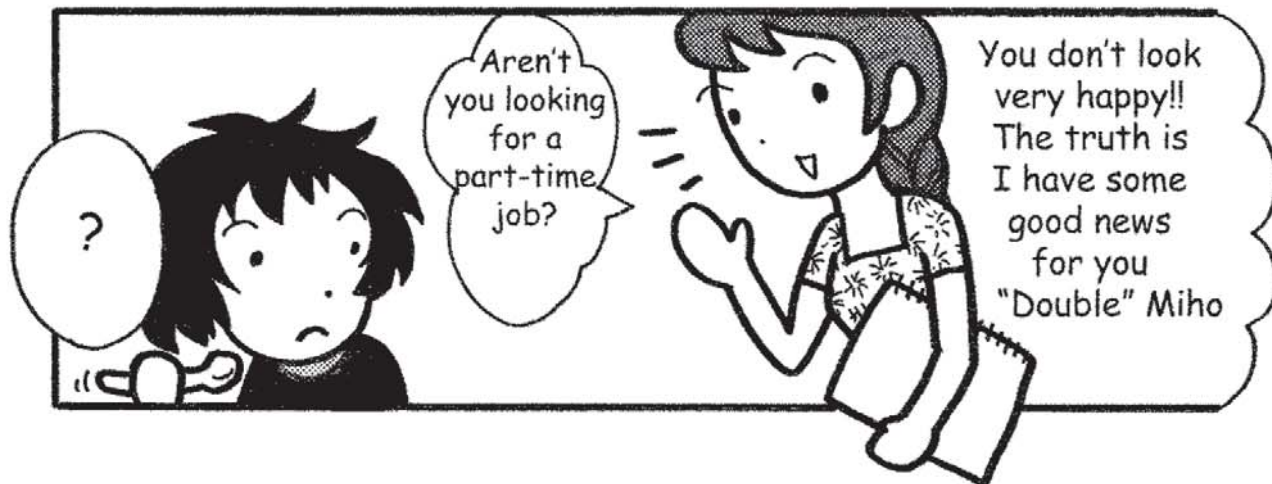
I wanna graduate already!!

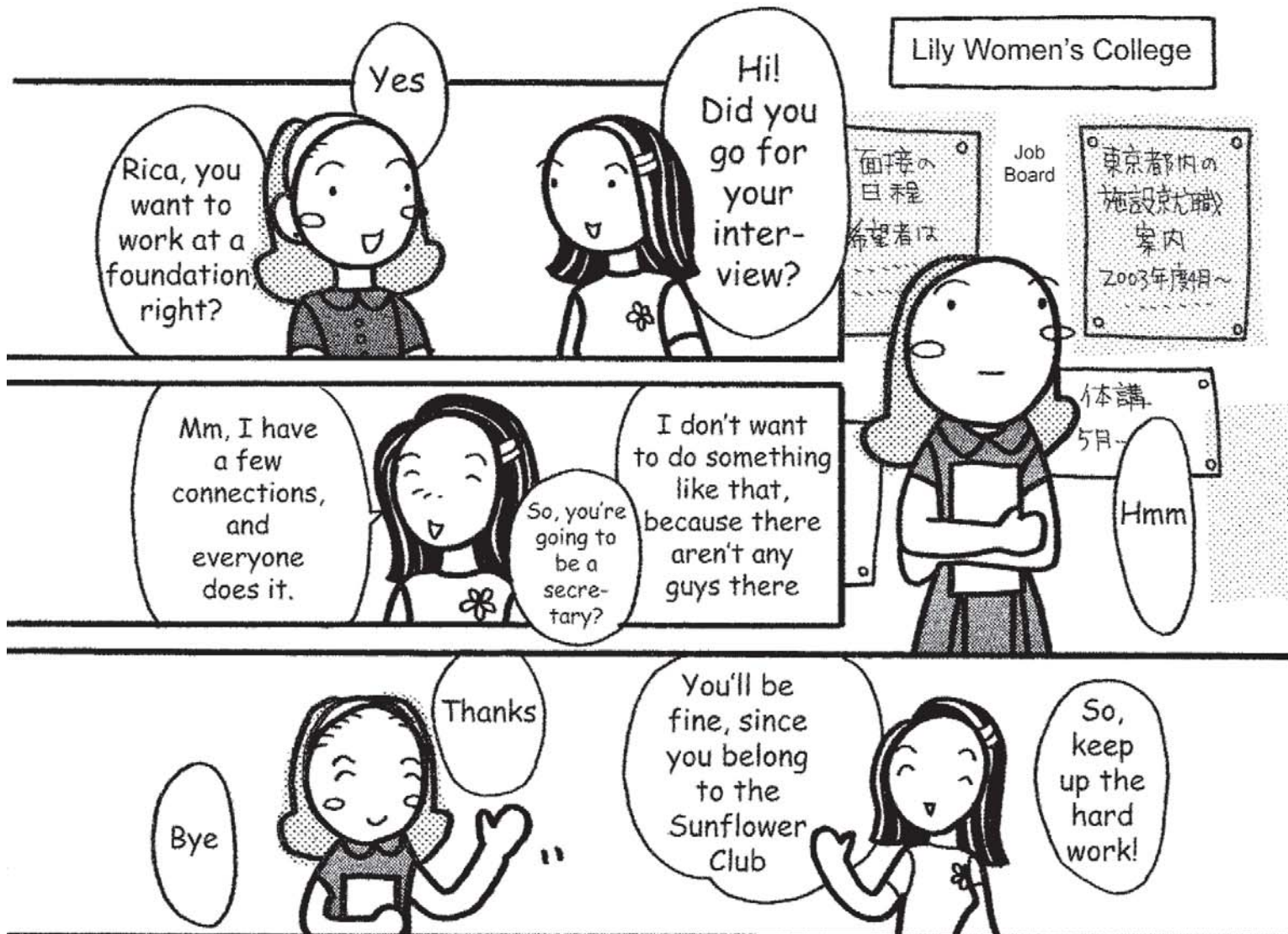
* A rōnin is someone who failed
the college entrance exam

?

Aren't
you looking
for a
part-time
job?

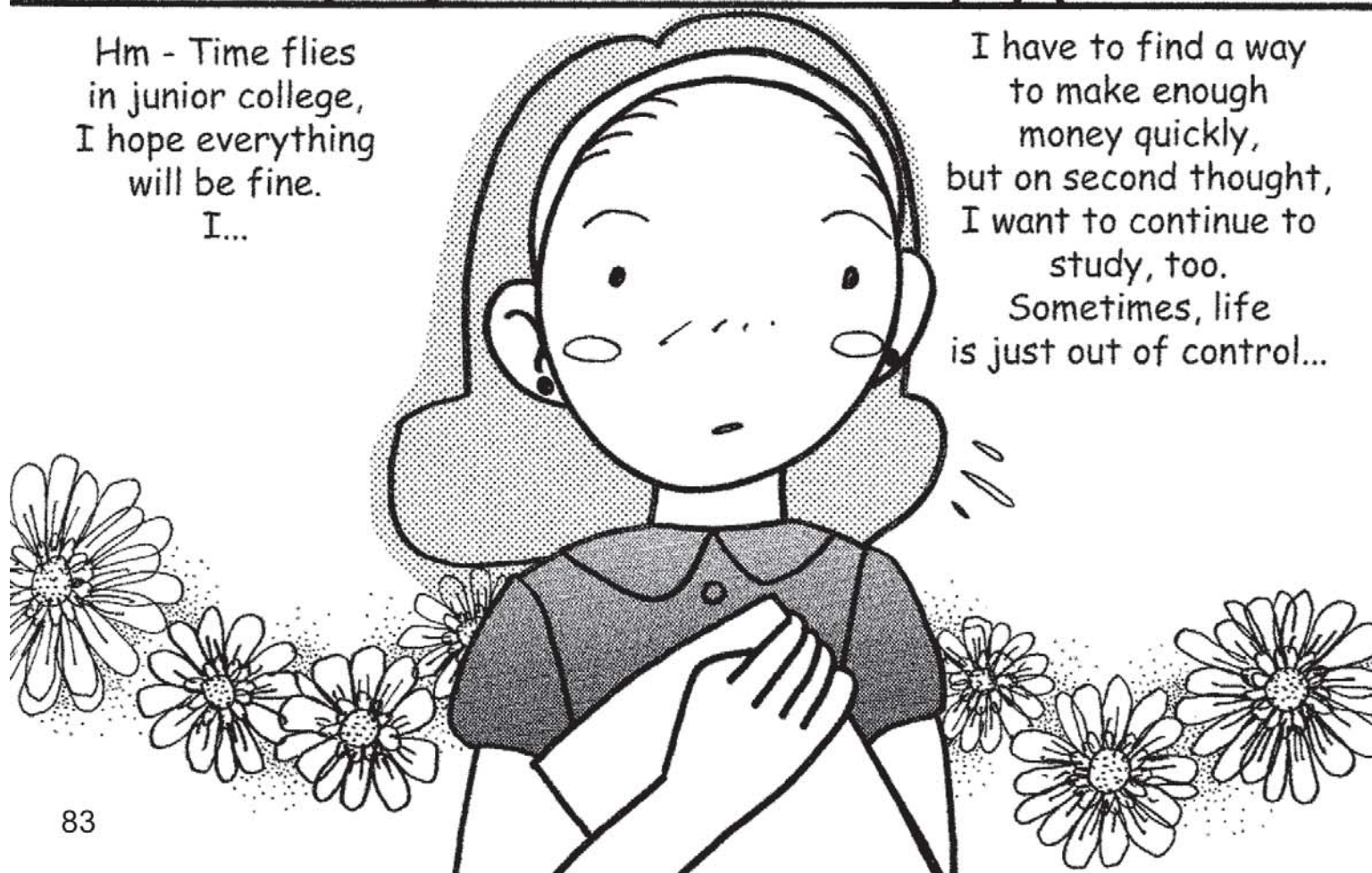
You don't look
very happy!!
The truth is
I have some
good news
for you
"Double" Miho





Hm - Time flies in junior college, I hope everything will be fine.
I...

I have to find a way to make enough money quickly, but on second thought, I want to continue to study, too. Sometimes, life is just out of control...





I let English and Literature drop...

Next thing I knew, I had flunked my third year



This school year came on so fast, before I knew it, the new term had begun...

Pachinko, that'd be a reason to stay back, but this isn't much of a reason.

If you were hooked on

we're going to have to talk about it. I'm so looking forward to that

And you haven't told Rica yet?

Not yet. But as graduation comes closer



Me too, I need to have a few, too

can't be helped. I guess.

I'm back!!

Today was pretty rough. I'm going to drink a lot~



That doesn't look like the face of love, though, does it?

Look at the variety of women coming today...

Good evening!

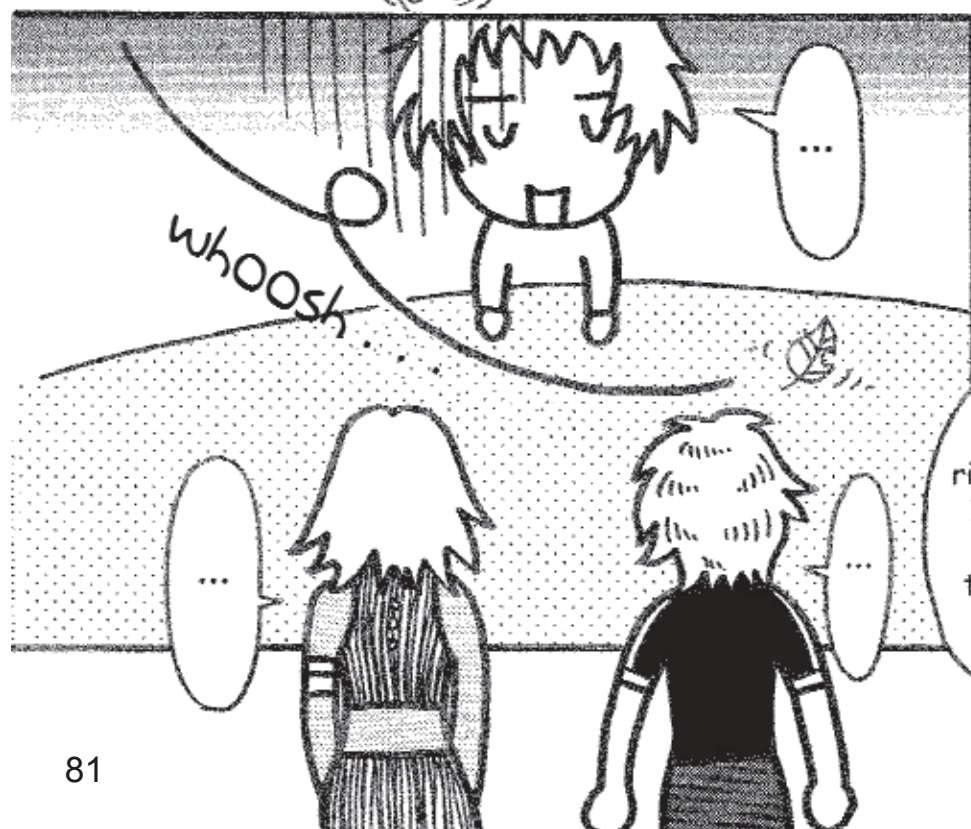
Long time, no see!



It's nothing! Nothing at all - just your imagination!

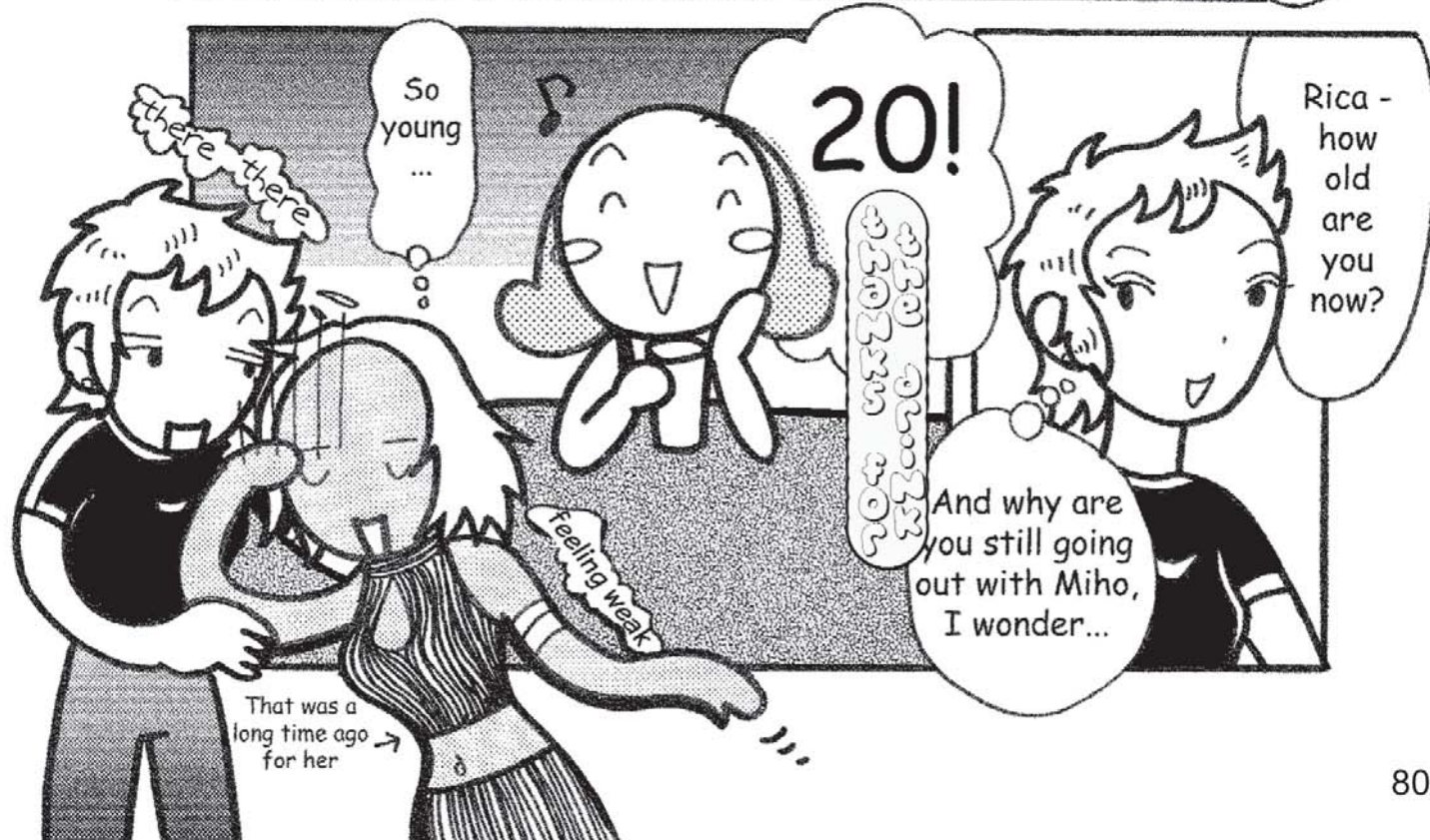
Eh-eh? Where? What?

Miho-san, what's the matter? When you walked in, there was a strange wind behind you, blowing all sorts of stuff around...



Really? Then that's fine

I'll be right back - I have to go to the ladies' room.

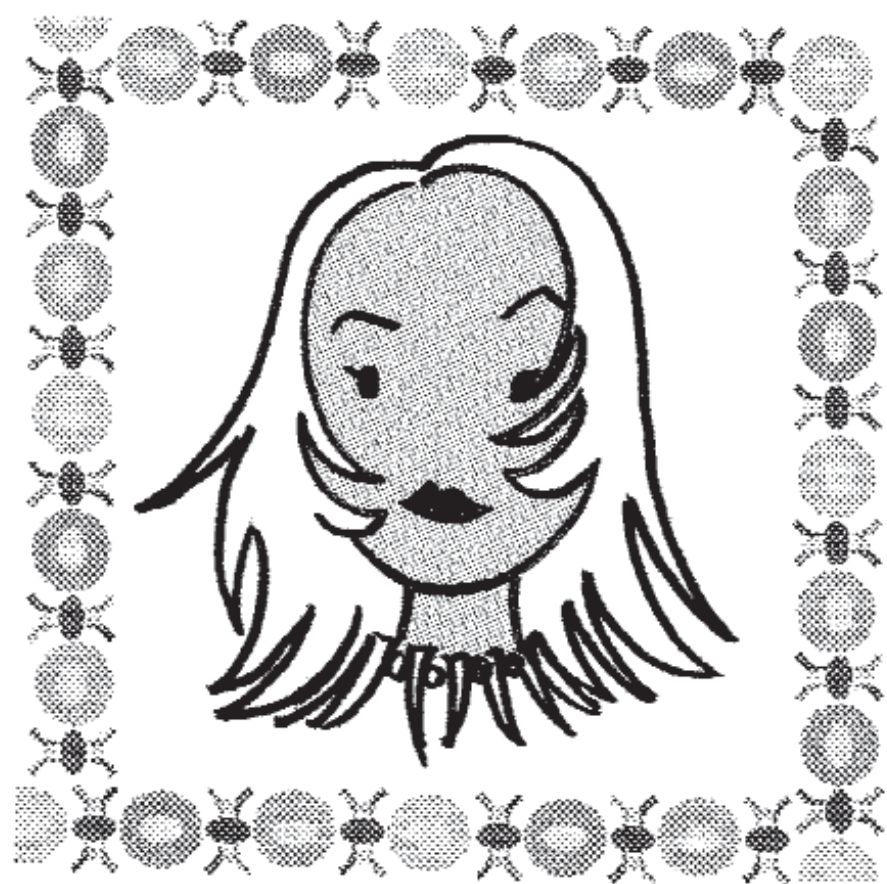


Rica 'tte Kanji!?

Miho: Fine Arts student, studying textiles
now entering her fourth year

Rica: Studying early education at a
Junior Women's College, in her
second year of busy days





MARIKO



"1118 3-chuan" Autumn 1996
Photo by 3木

I'm glad that you said that



That's because this meal was made full of love~ ♡

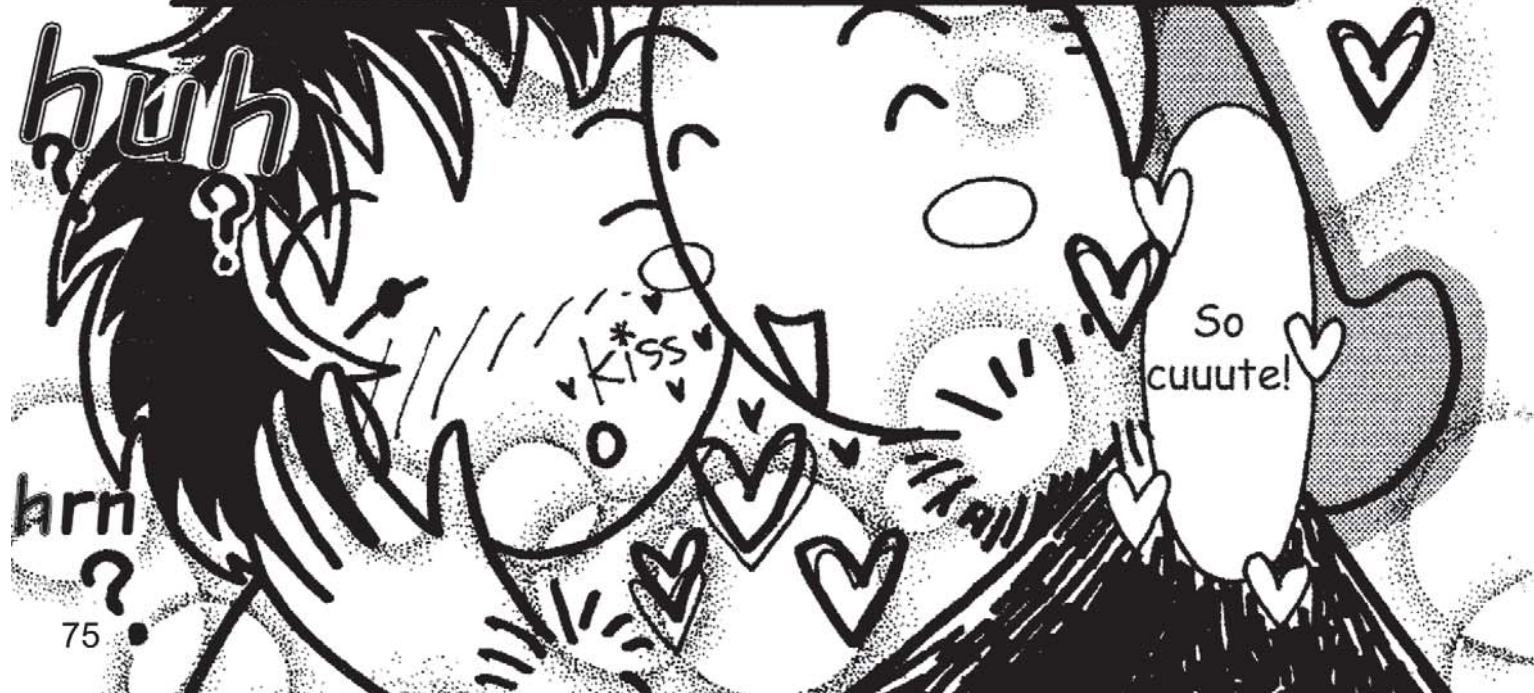
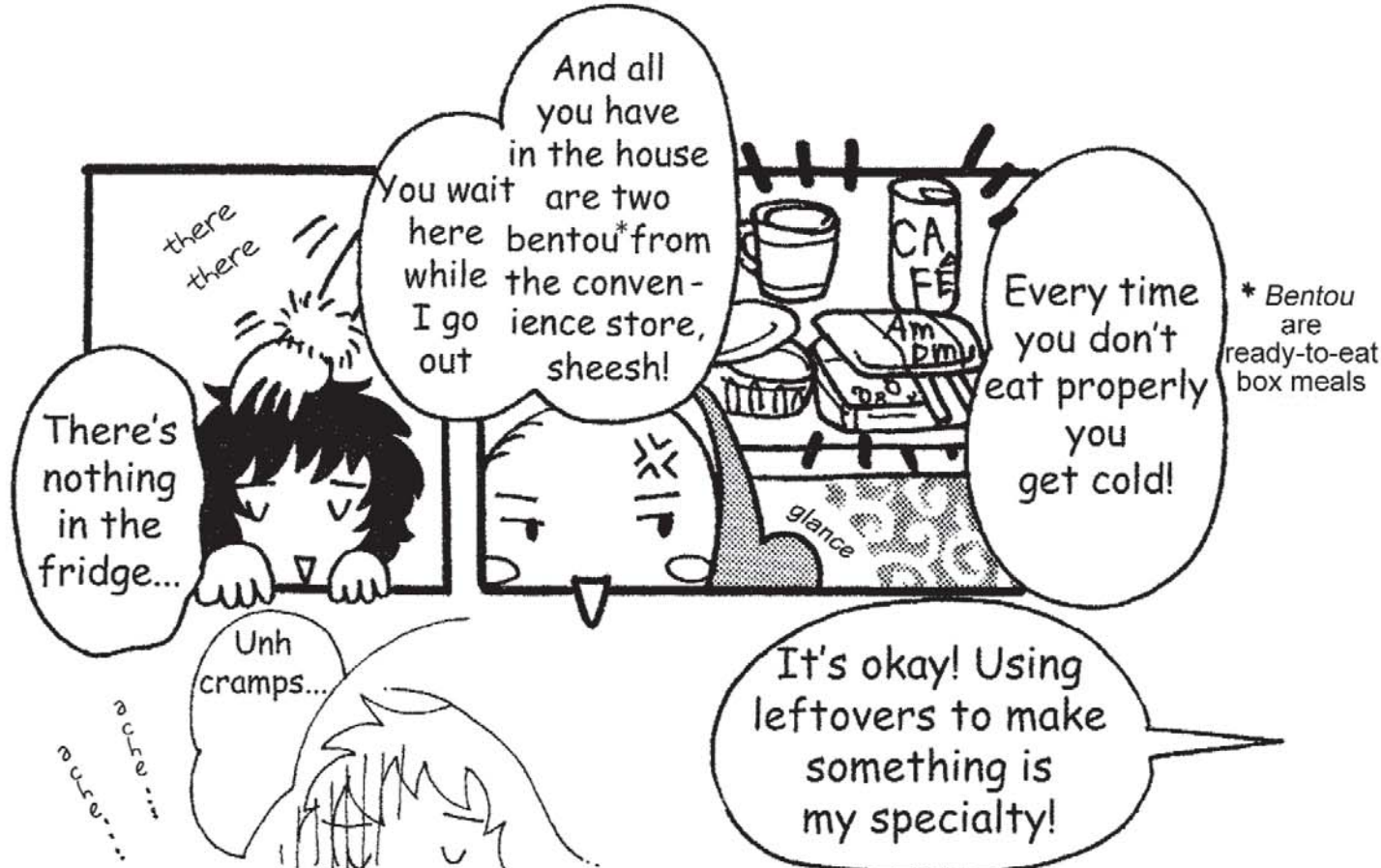
I'm feeling much more like myself!!

Miho didn't have the heart to tell Rica that the medicine she had taken earlier....



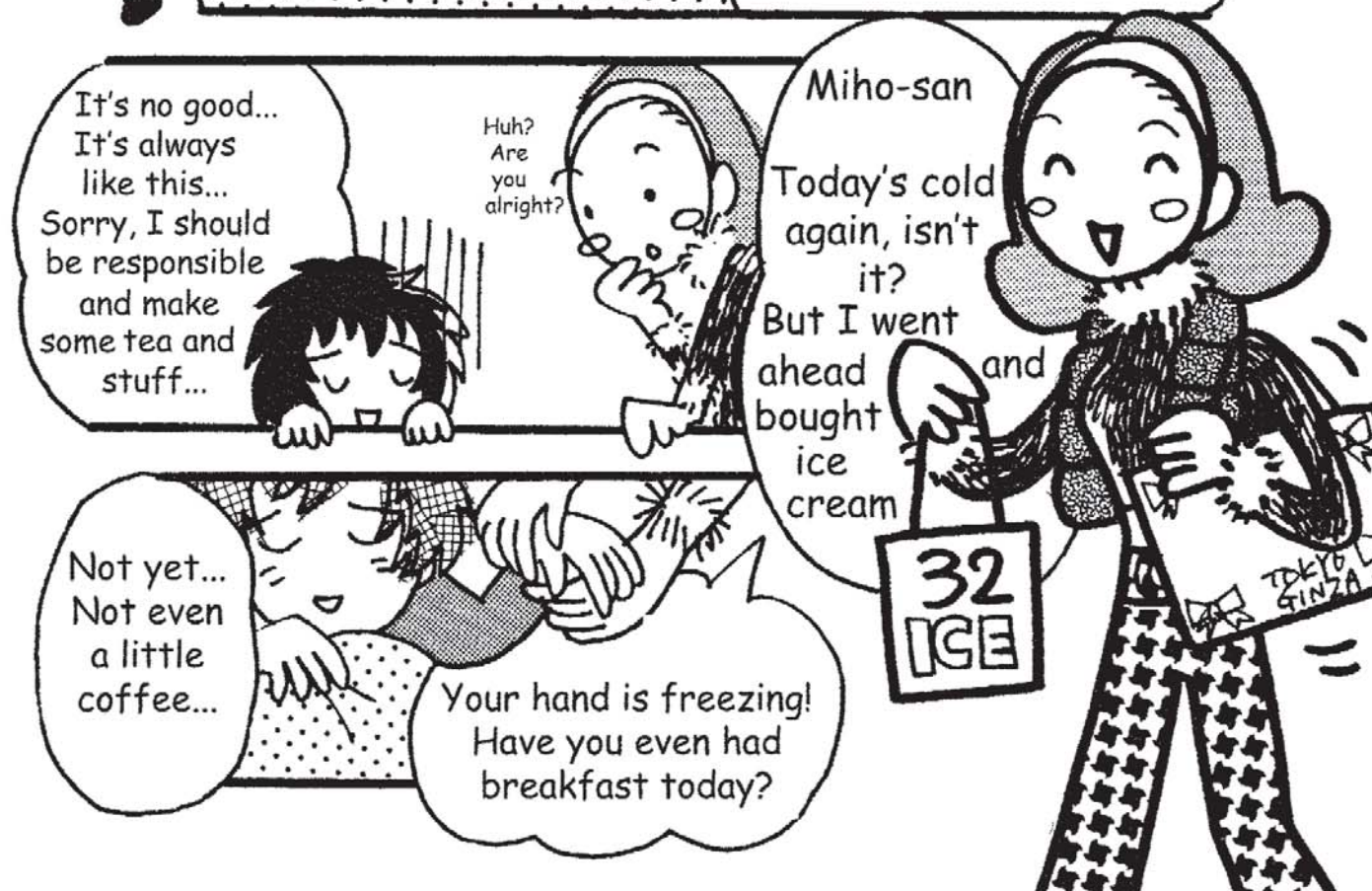
...had started to work





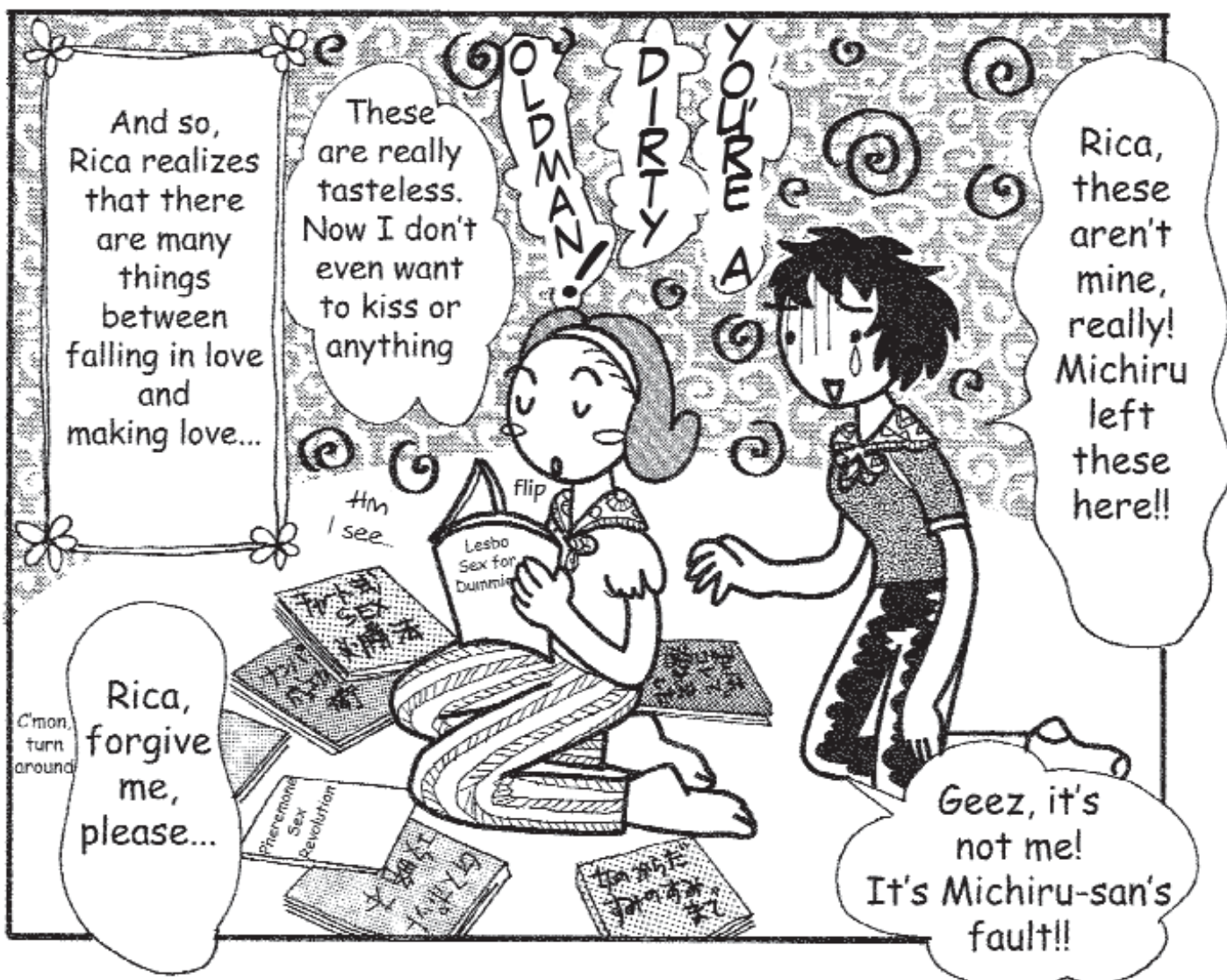


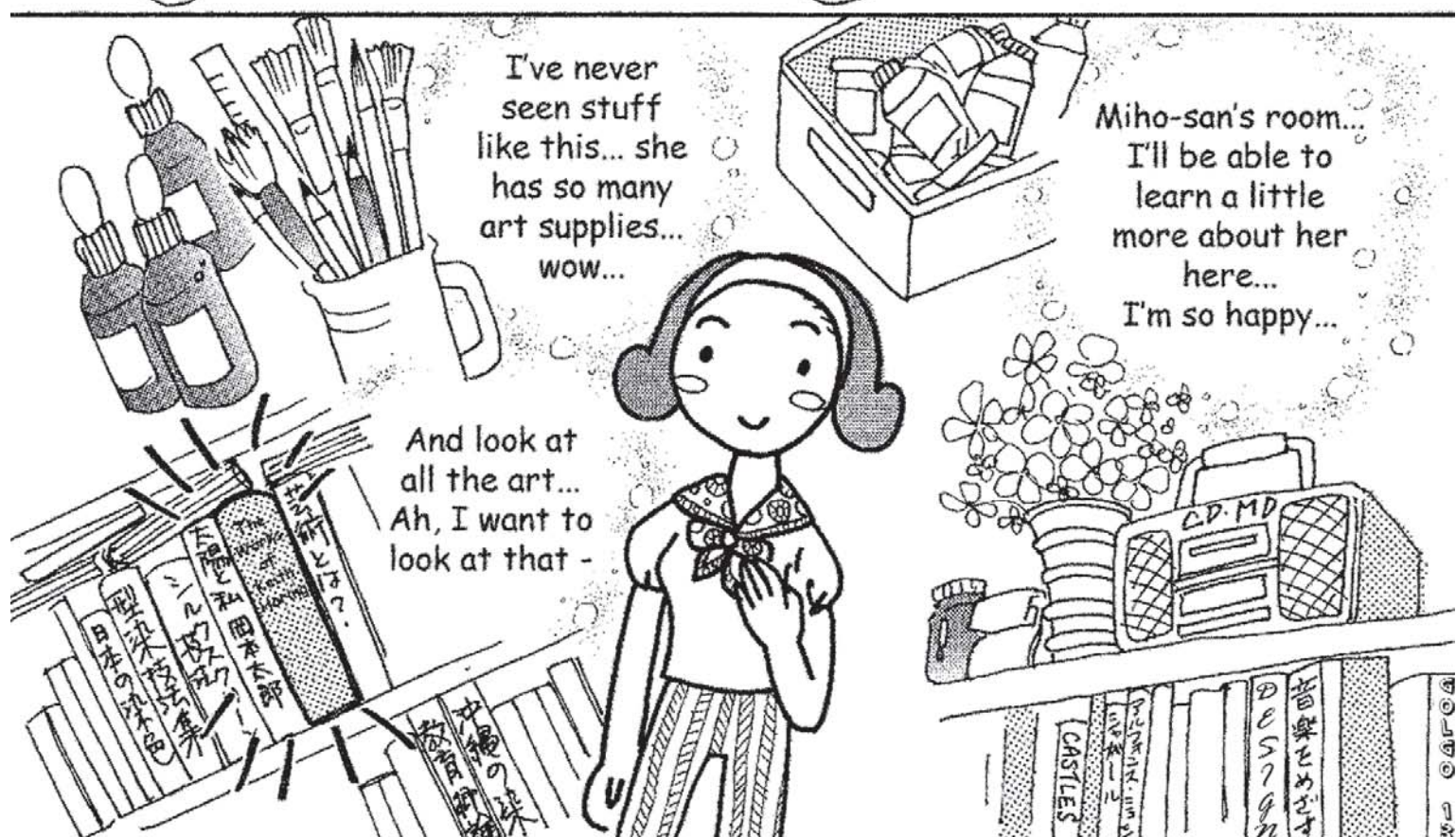
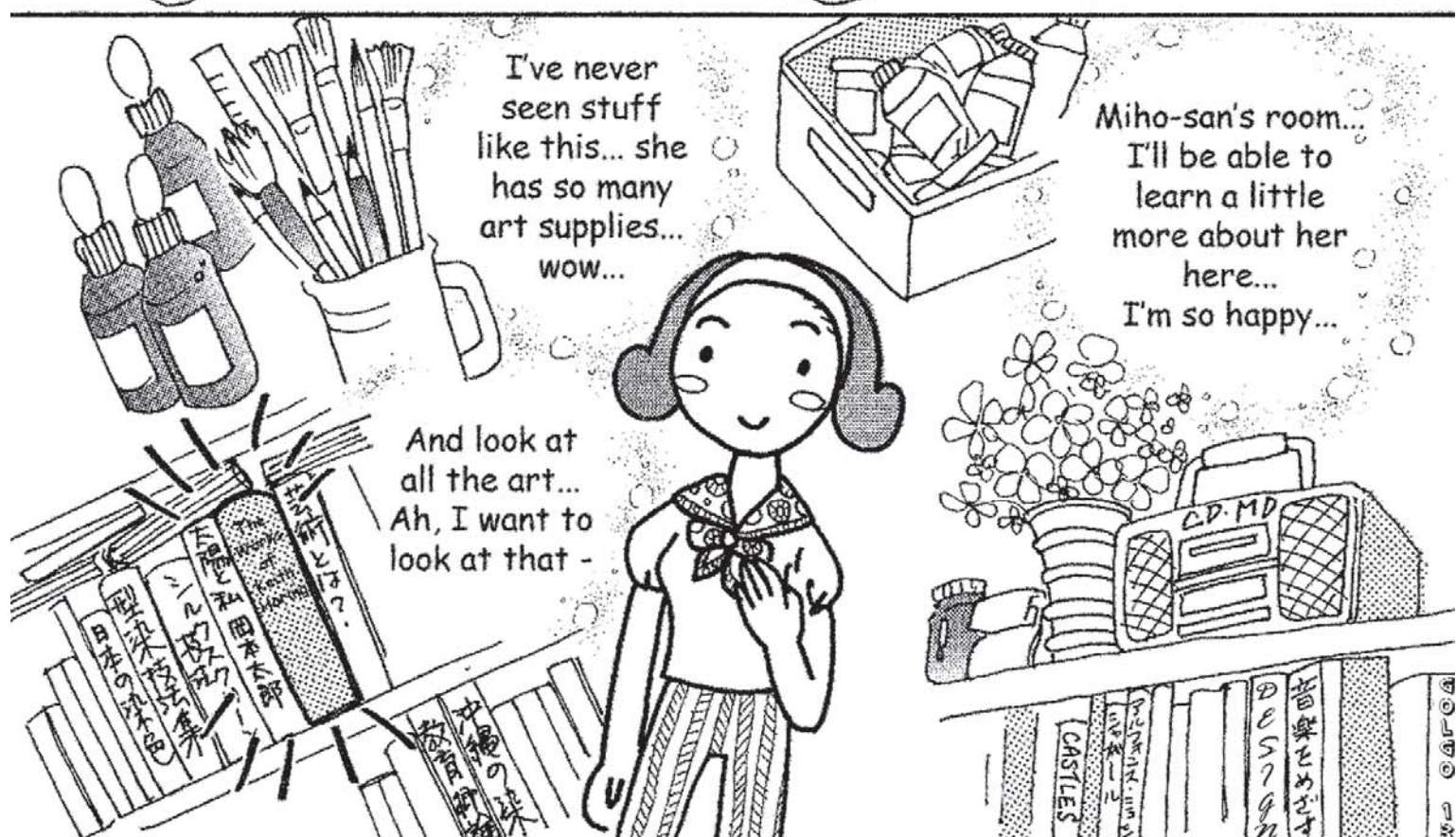
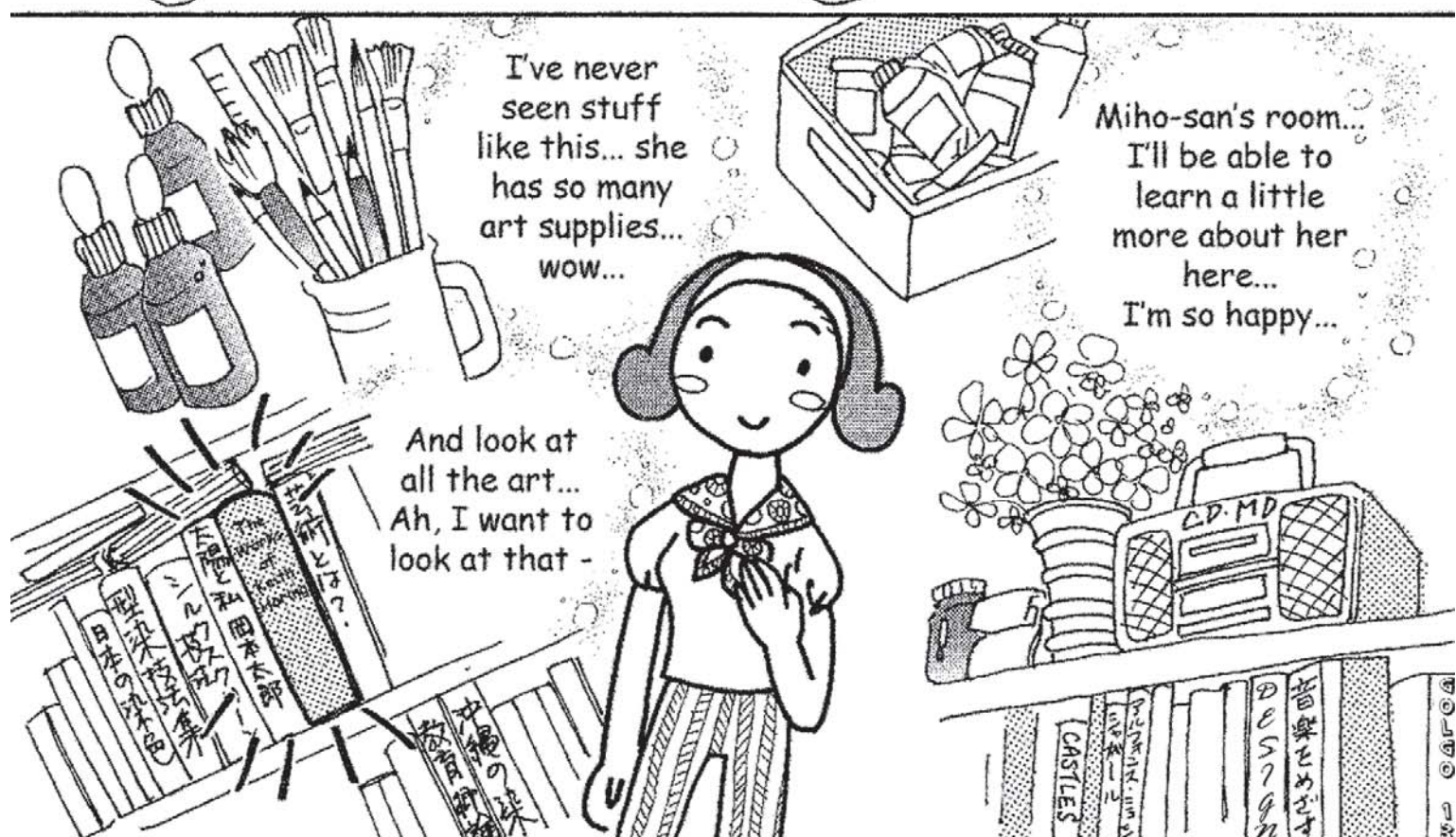
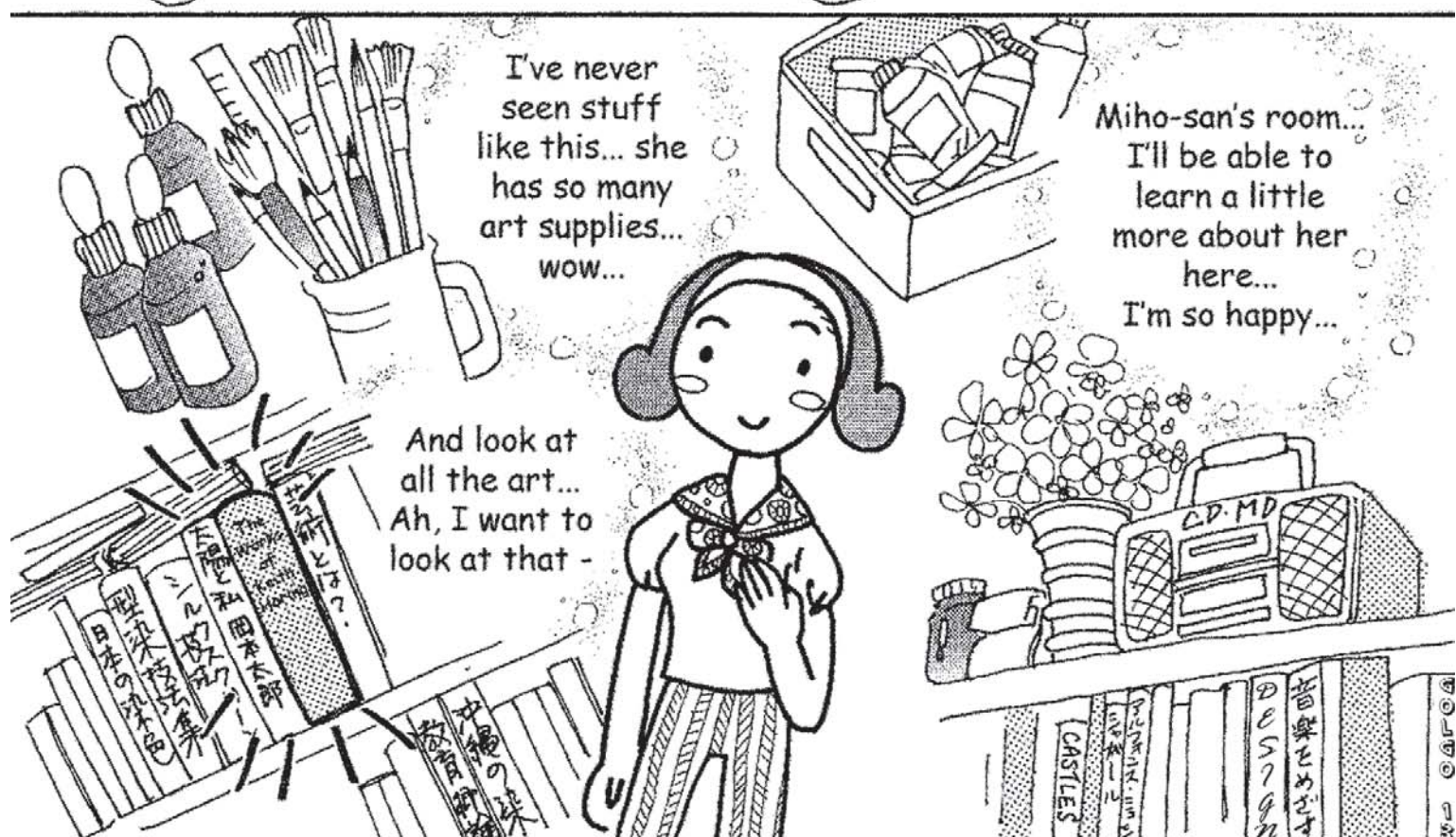
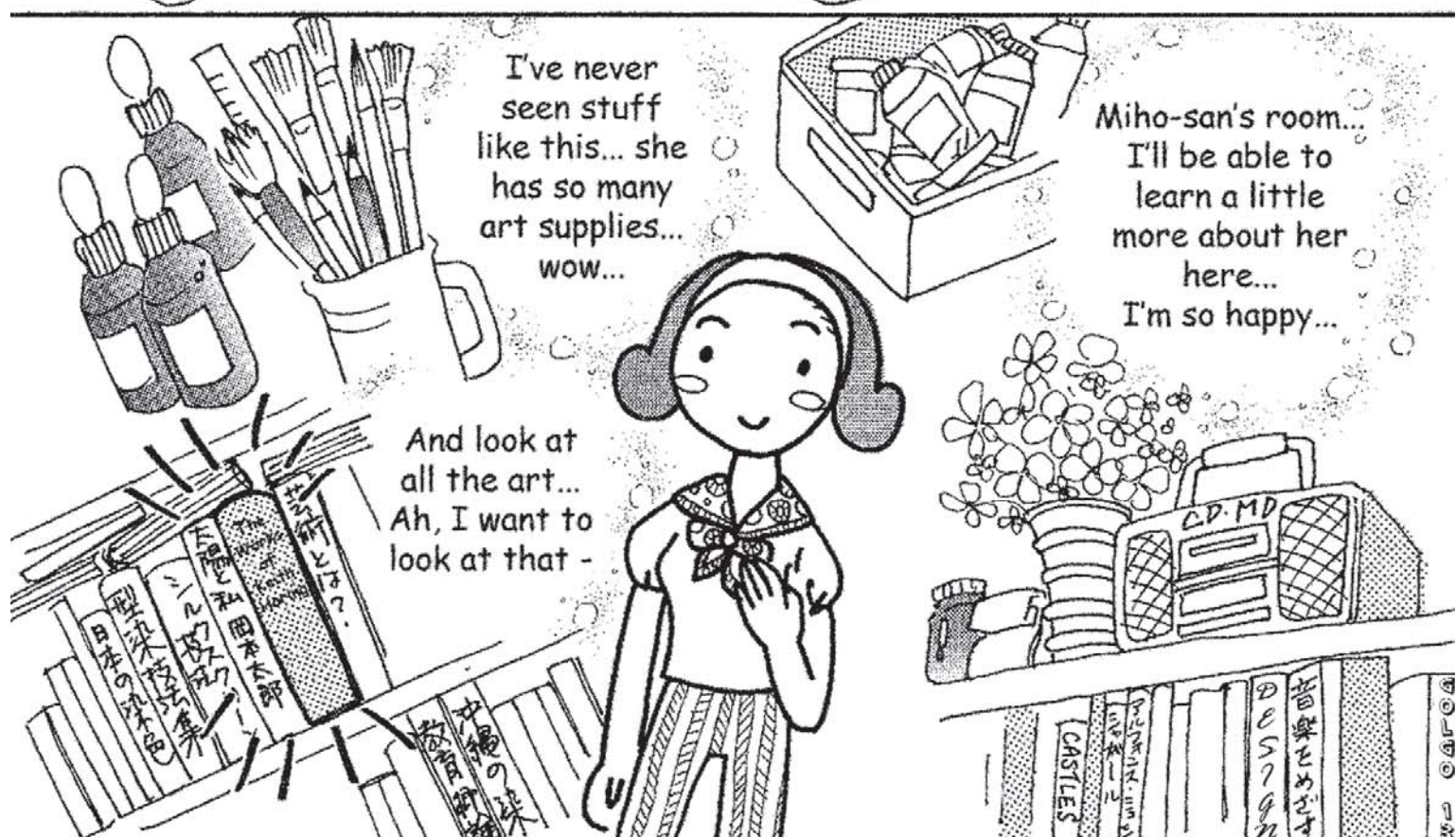
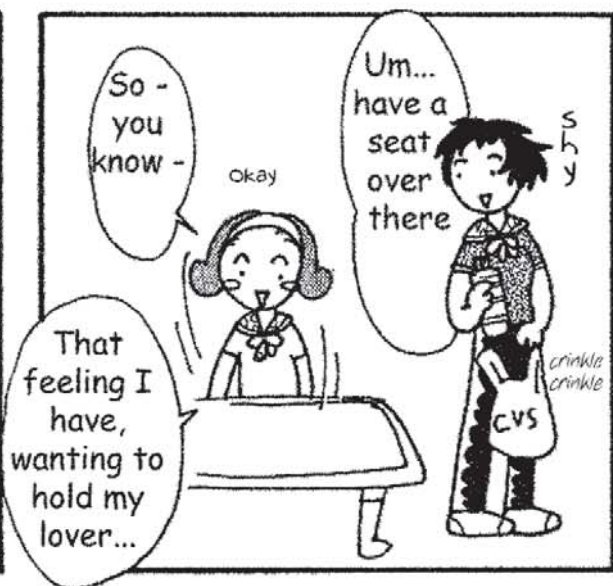
Ding Dong



Rica 'tte Kanji!?







It's a present for you.



DRAPPE

Yes, I like it! Let me see!



So, you like it? It looks good?

Did you make these by hand? Wow, that's fantastic!

We've been seeing each other a long time!



GRIN

Do you remember?



One year ago, today, I met you for the first time at Lily's



Do you know what today is?

I love you!

I'm so happy!!

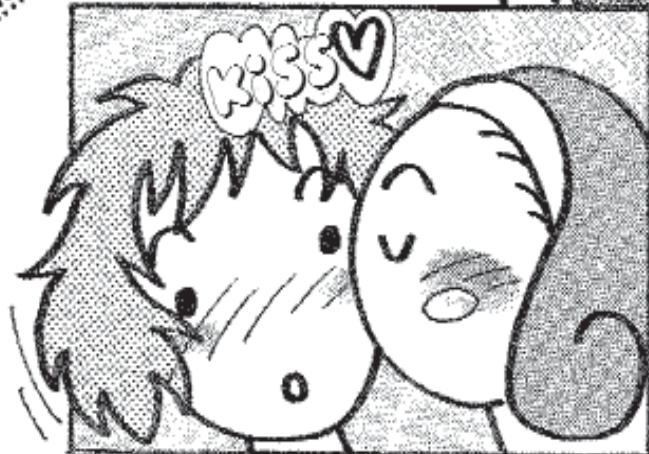
HUG



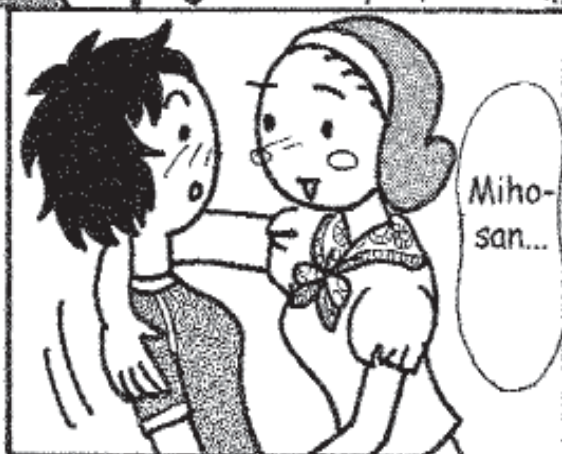
Thank you, Miho-san!



KISS♥



Miho-san...



Your effort
has really
stimulated me.
Recently,
I've been
applying myself
more seriously.
Well, more
than usual,
at least...
heheh

That's not true -
Since I'm only in
Art School
I've been really
laid back about
everything

Ha
Ha...

Eh?
I'm just a
generalist, though,
so I have to work
as hard as I can...
Your way is
much better,
specializing in
something,
making such
beautiful things!!

K'chak

Well,
come
on
in...

My place is
really messy,
sorry

So,
for
that...
thank
you!

It was
nothing...
Ahahah...

Waahh -
lovely!!

Those,
they're
scarves?

MILK

I have something I want you to see.



Hey... today, after this, why don't we go to my place?

Heh, something like that



You're thinking about taking care of cute kids, aren't you? You always get that happy look on your face when you do...

If I go to Miho-san's apartment... It's okay that I said OK... I'm all prepared for it... Got new underwear on... I guess it is time for us to do that...

NERVOUS



On May 25th, let's go out on a date, okay? Make sure you keep the day free

We'll do something you'll like



Ah, I bet that it is...



Really? I look forward to it - what is it?



But, you're really working hard because you like children so much, I know. I've been thinking that I can learn a lot from you

We haven't had time to just relax together

Practically since we've met, you've been busy with your studies for college.

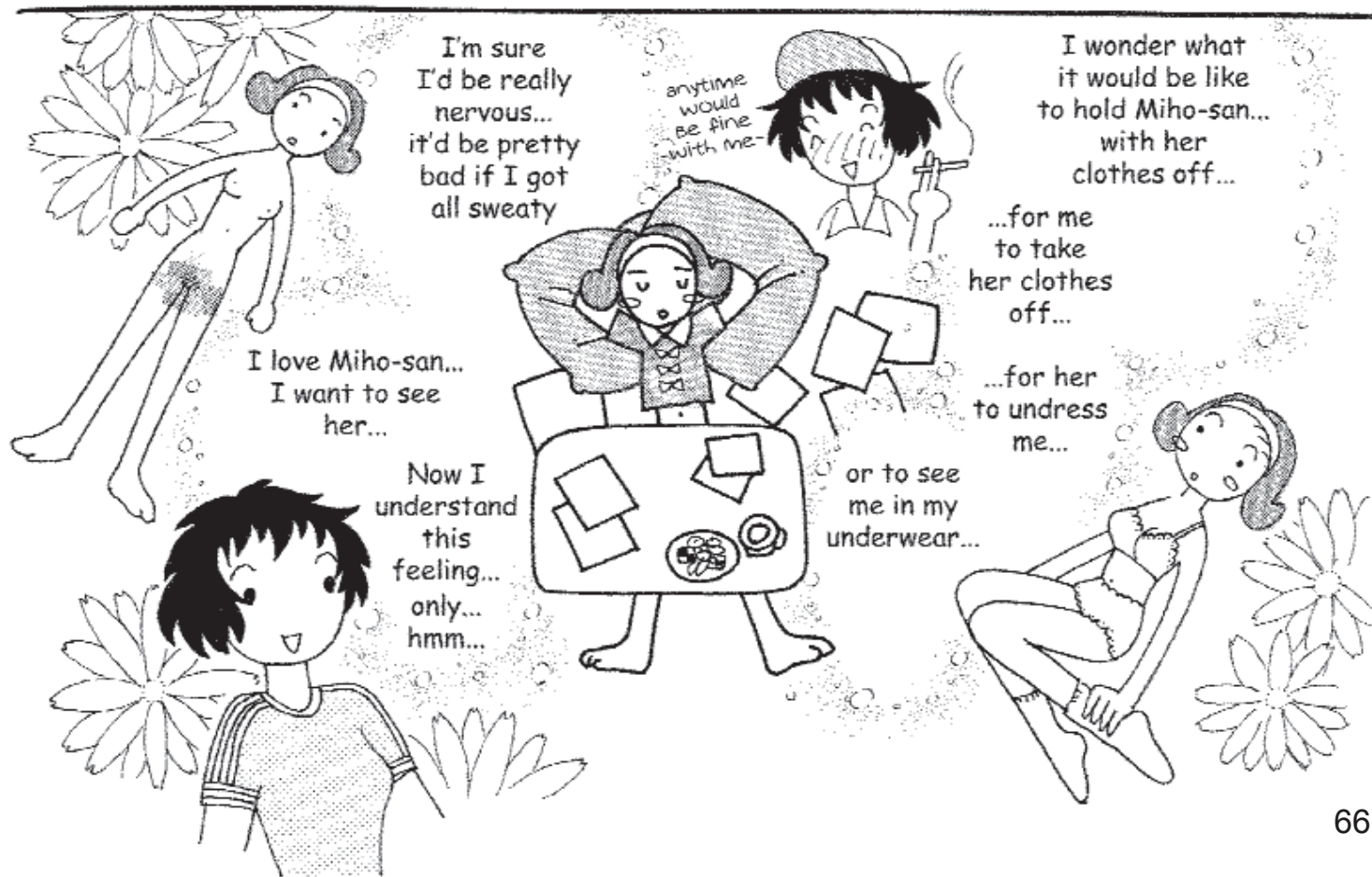
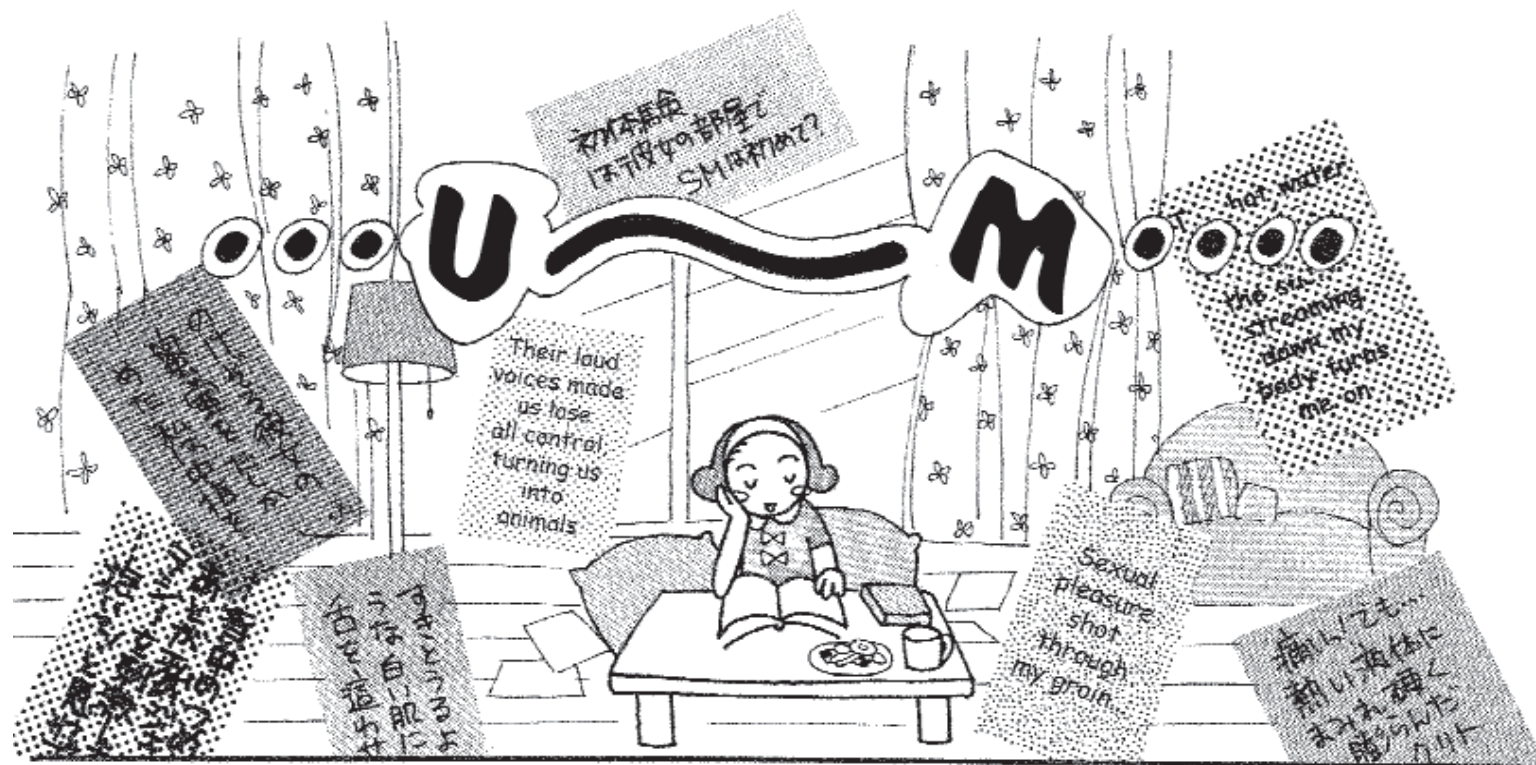
So, yeah, the truth is -

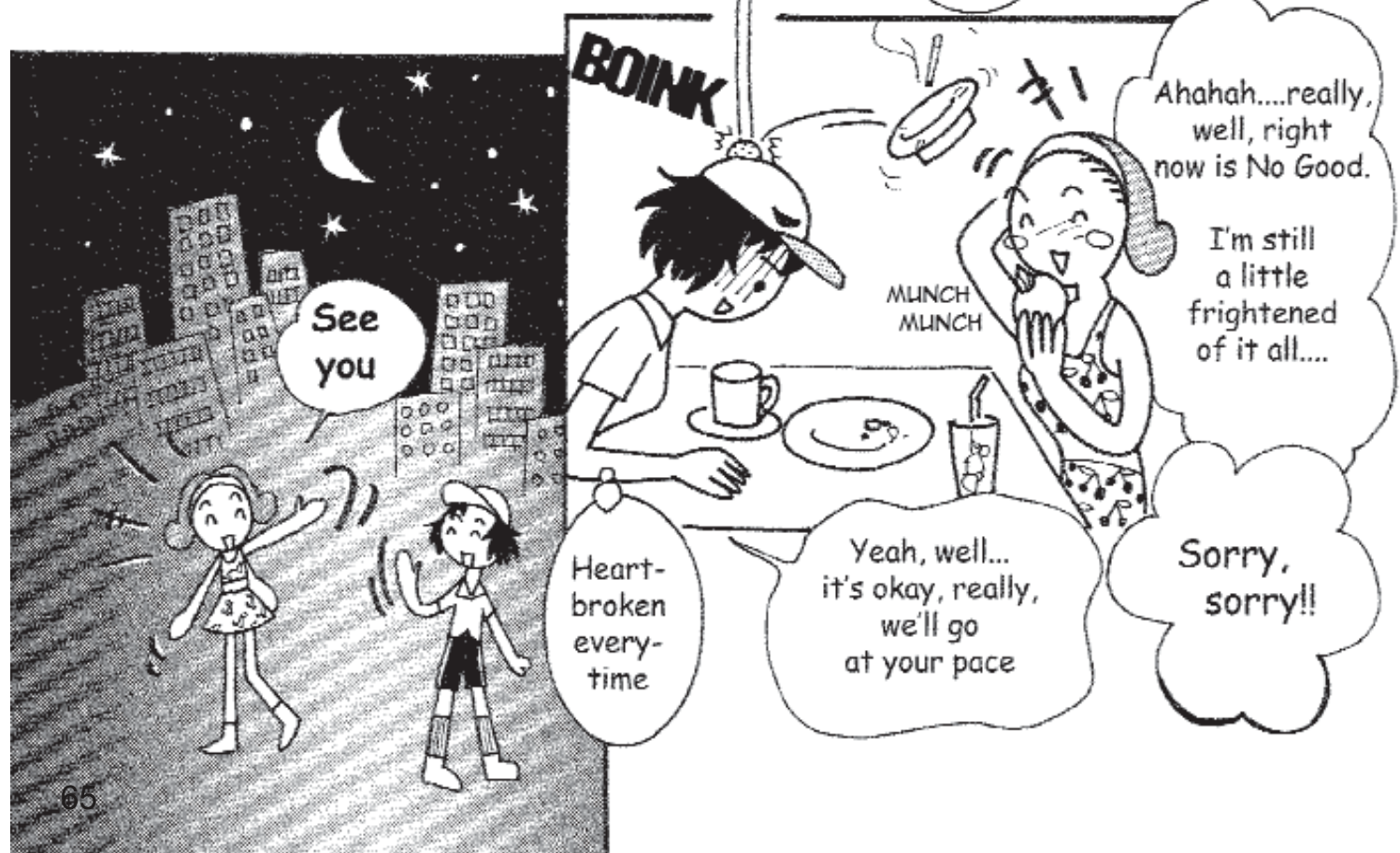
Hm?

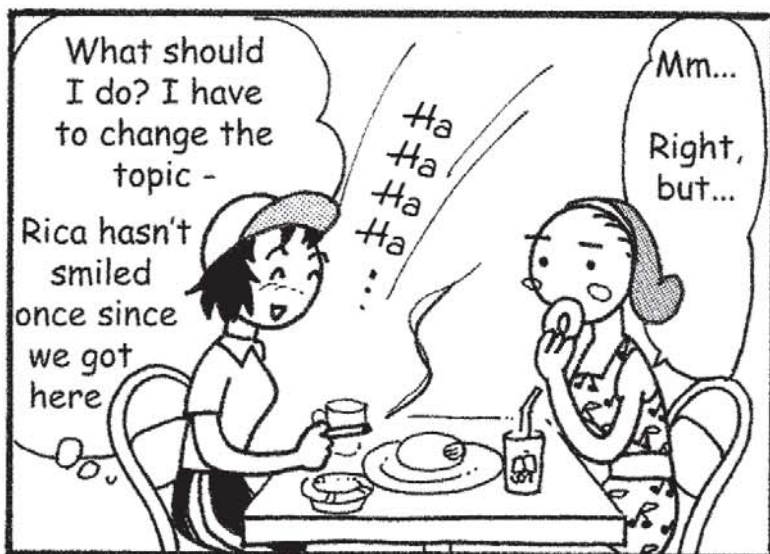


walk walk ...

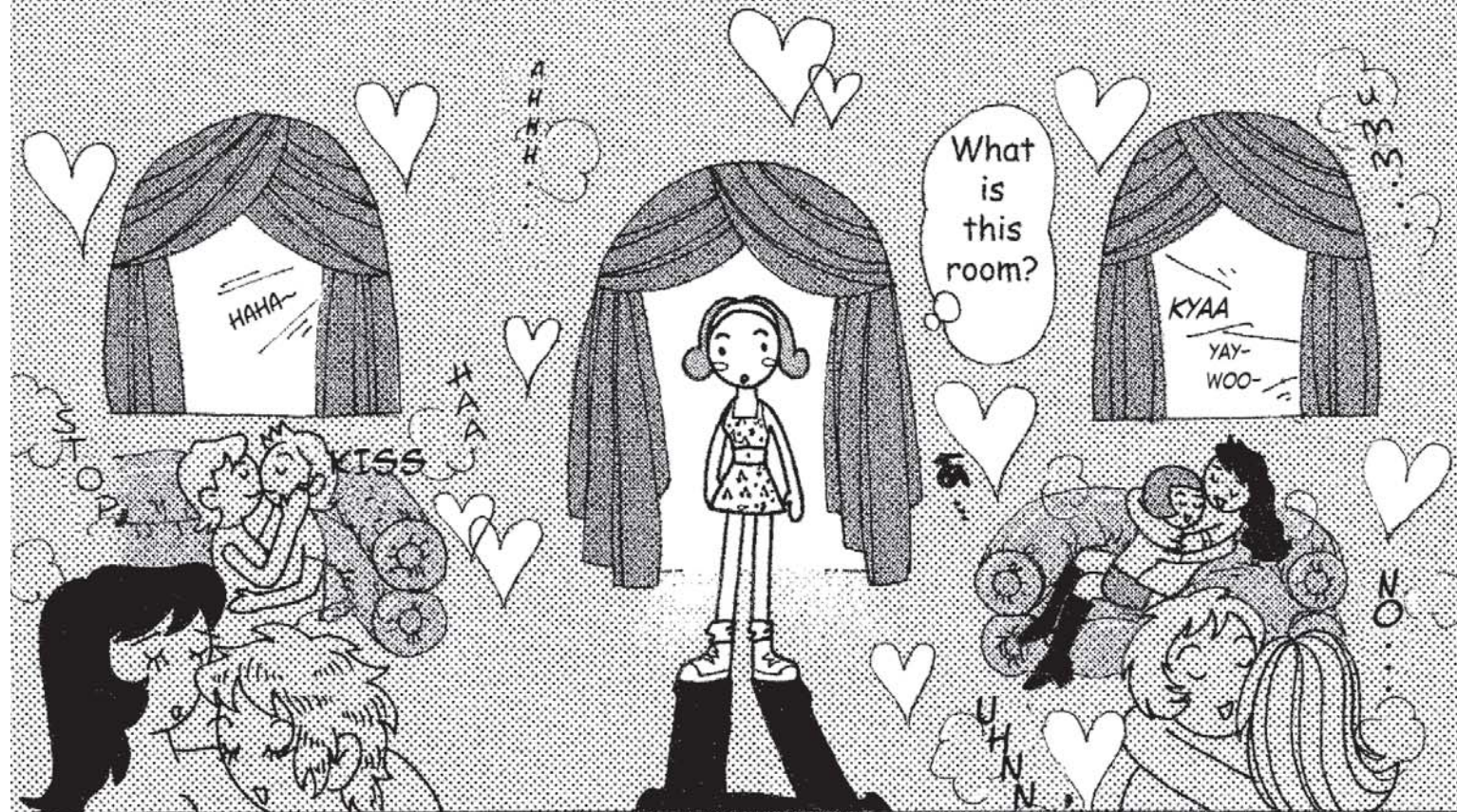


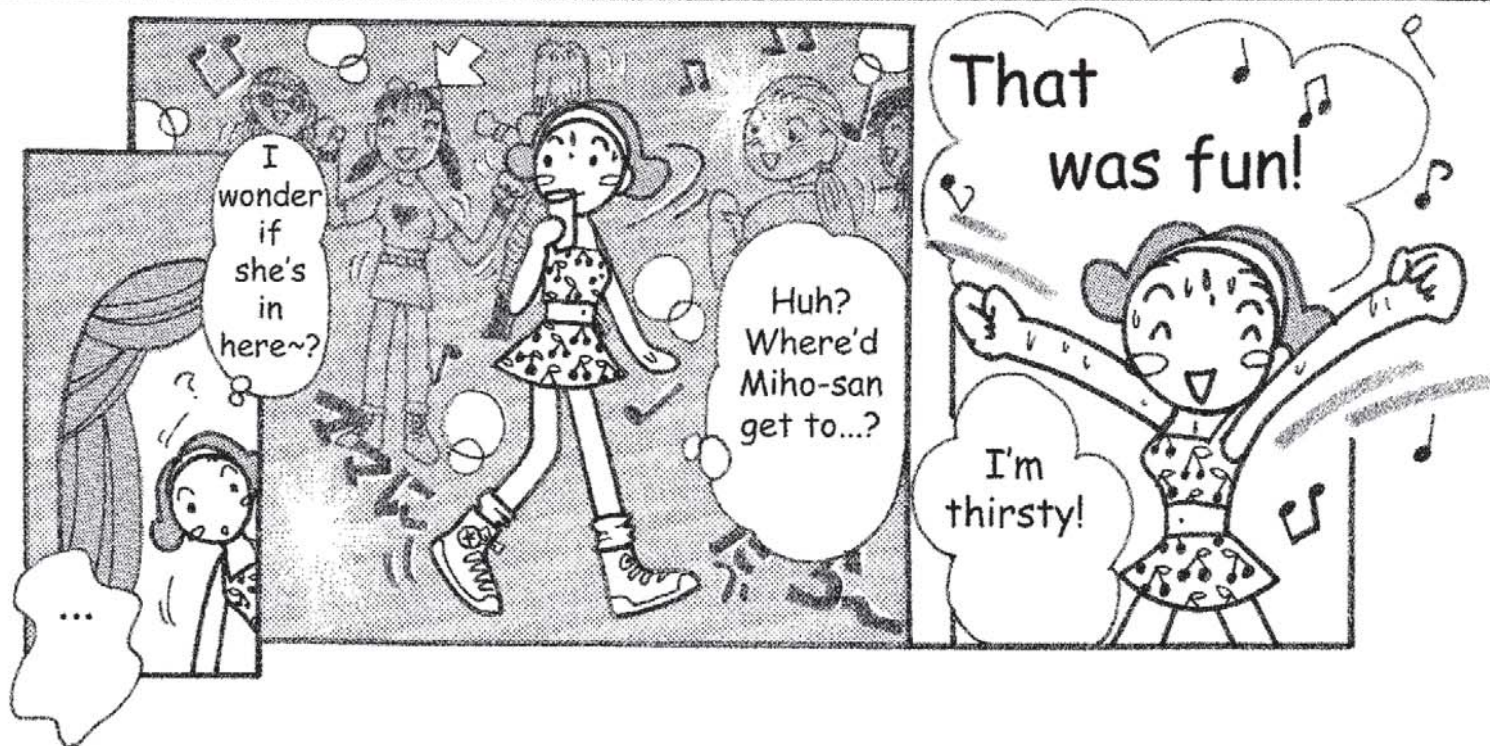
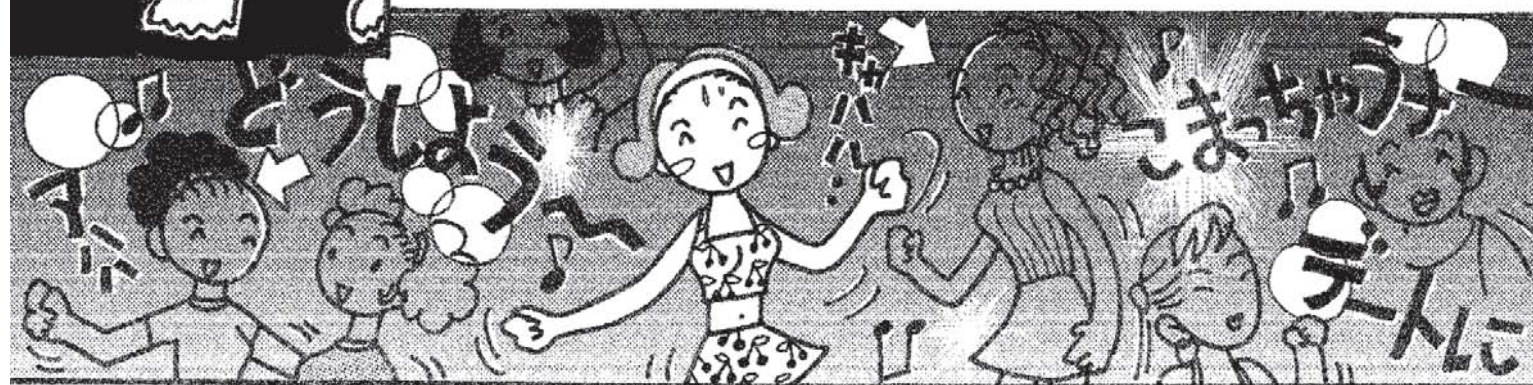




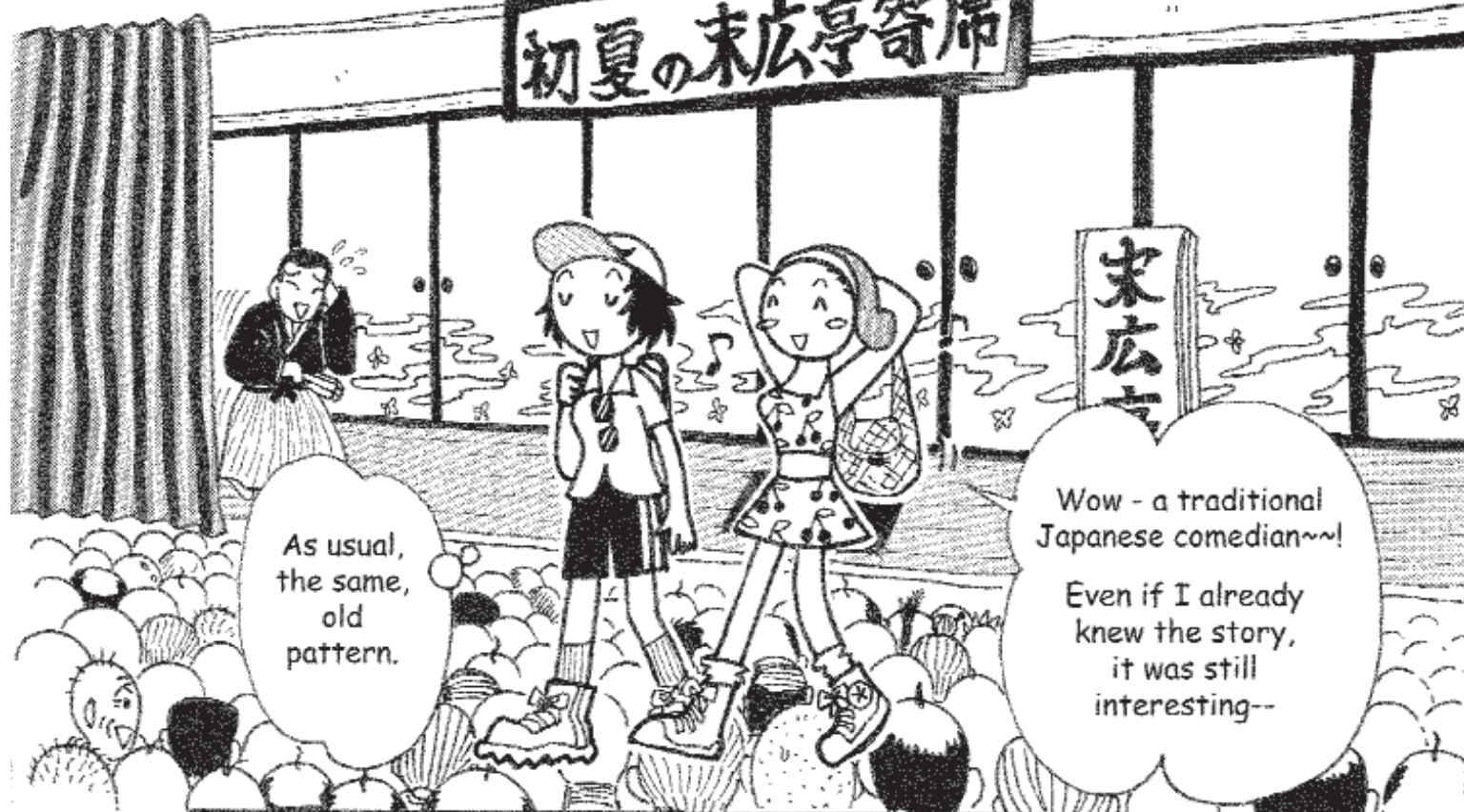








初夏の末広亭寄席



Signs for hotels, clubs



Kyonkyon was a nickname for 80's pop idol Kyoko Koizumi



When we go to her place,
I always end up helping
out with a project...
(which always turns out
to be an all-nighter...)

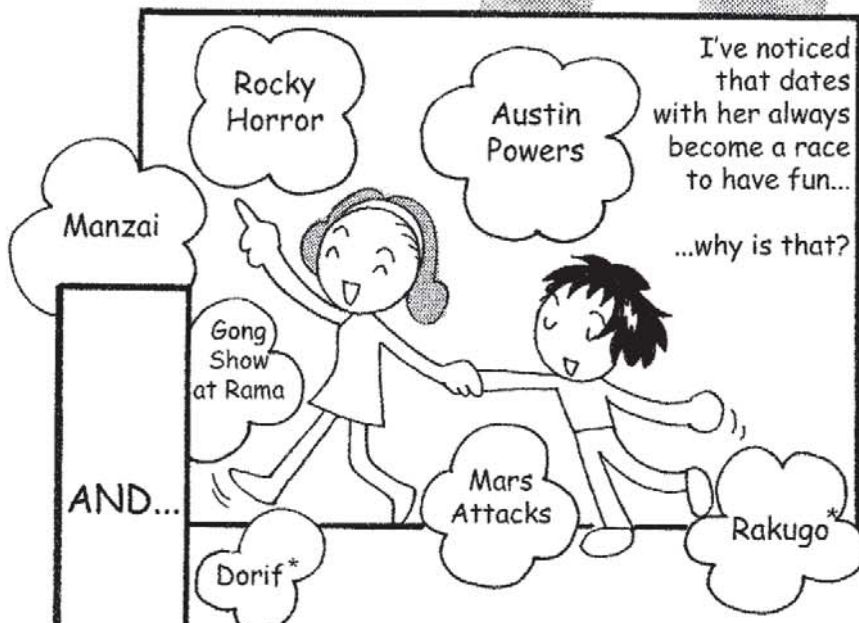
She's always
saying she's
busy with
school...

Since I met Rica,
I haven't slept with anyone
for about a year...

She never comes to my place...

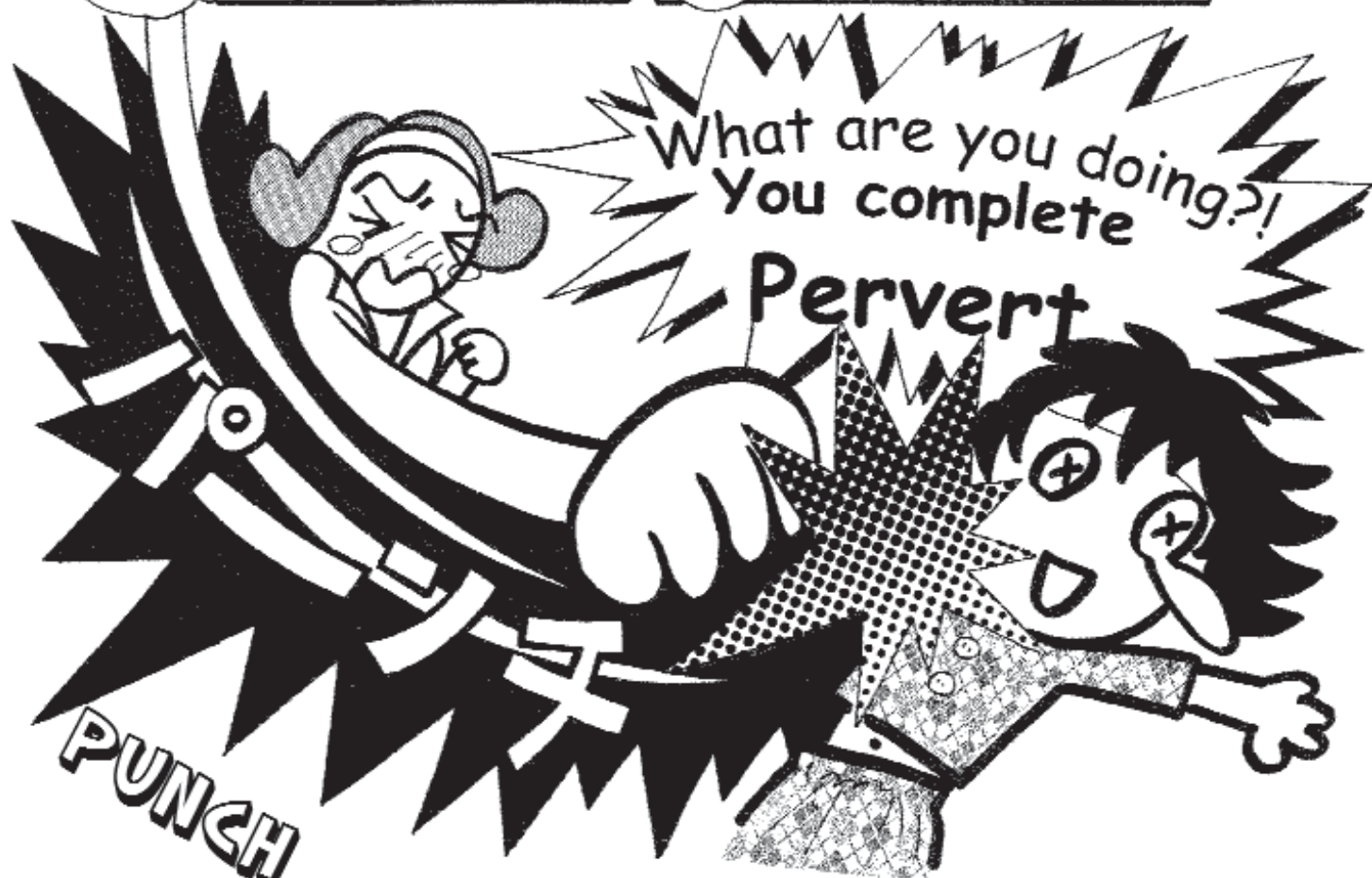
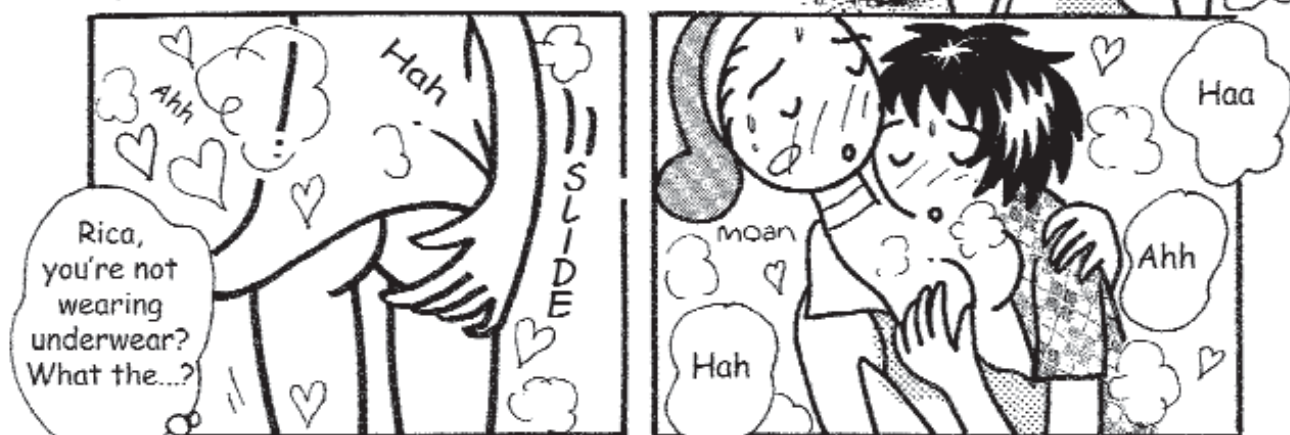
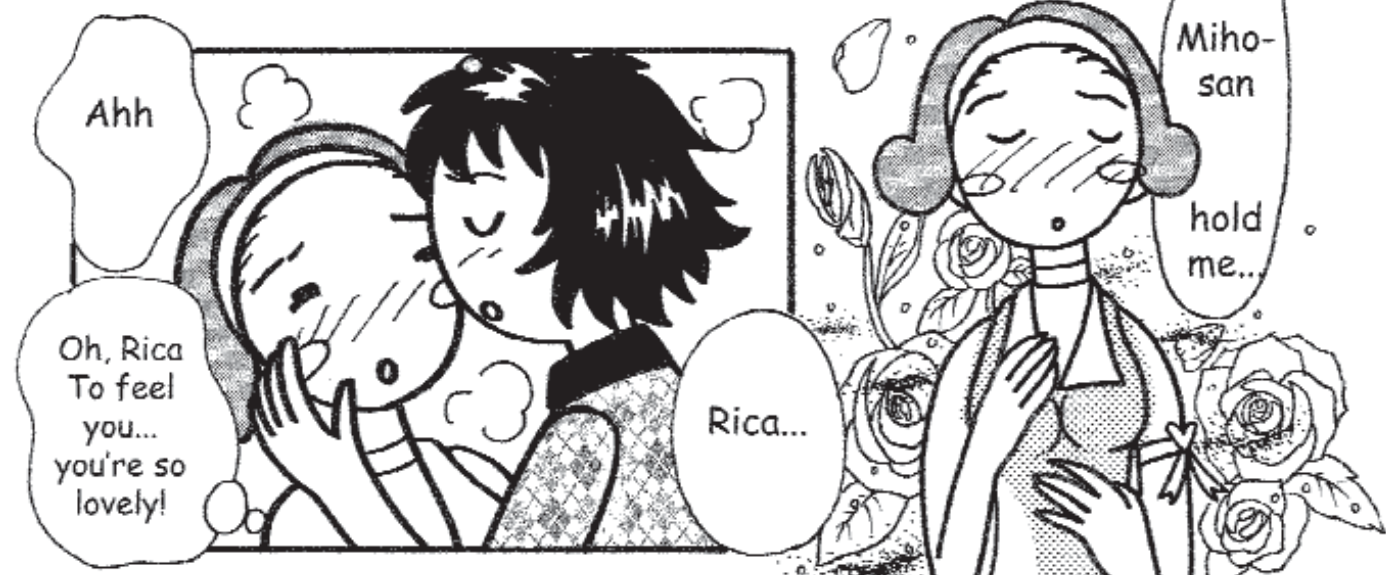
We've never even gone on
a really romantic date...

Up 'til now, every other girl
I dated, I've taken to
a hotel right away...
For some reason,
I haven't dragged
Rica to one yet...

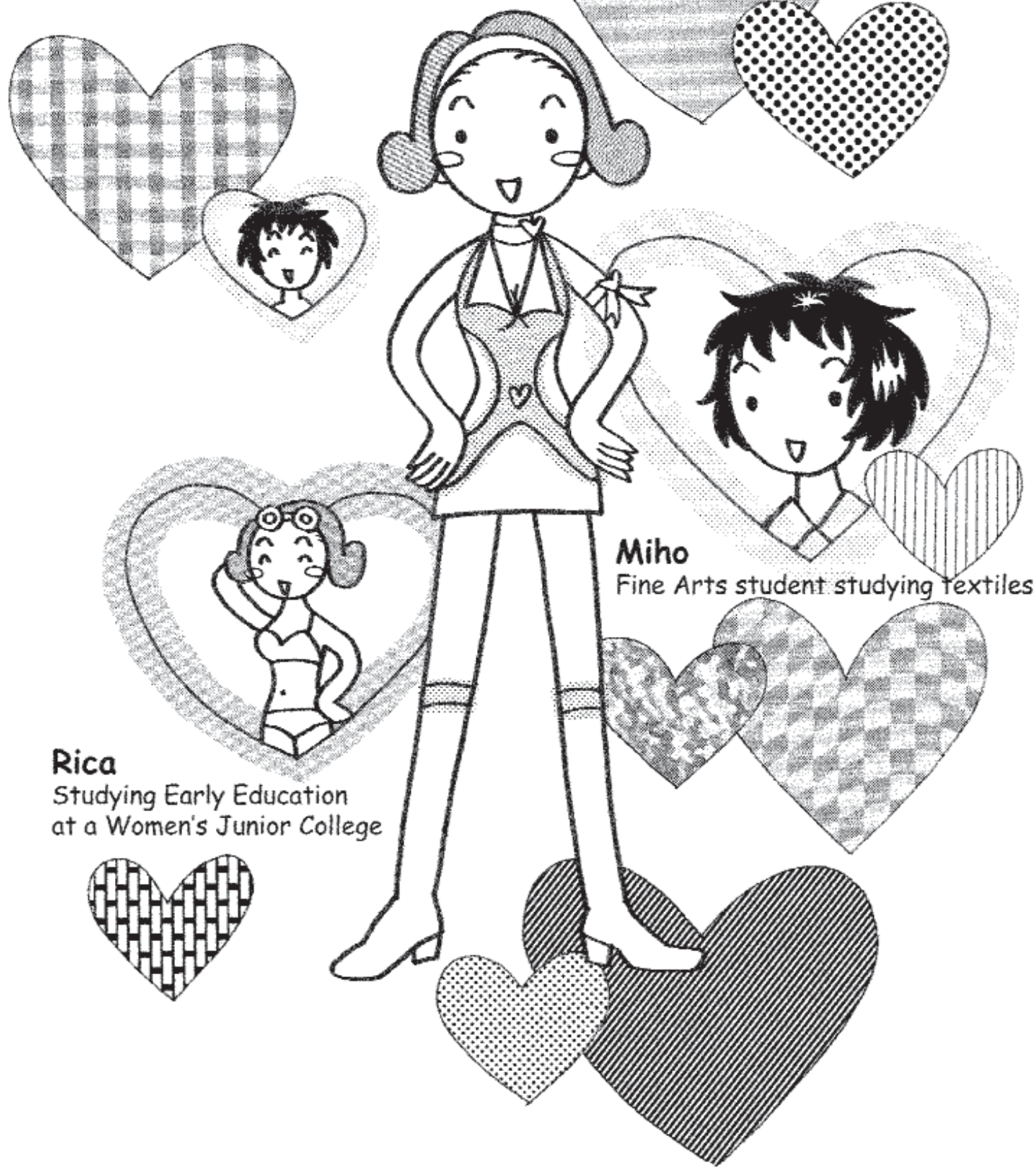


*Dorif is the name of a comedian

*Rakugo is traditional Japanese comedy storytelling



Rica 'tte Kanji!?



Rica

Studying Early Education
at a Women's Junior College

Miho

Fine Arts student studying Textiles

Come in!

Blush

Morn-
ing!

Blush

Blush

You
can
count
on me!

Fine,
no prob~

I have
so much
home-
work...

I don't
want
to say
this,
but...

So, today,
I could
really

use
some
help.

Please draw a
presentation board
explaining to
children how
to brush
their teeth.

I need it
for tomorrow

Really?
Great...
Then
let's get
right
to it

The first
time she's
bought
flowers

Next
day

It
feels
like
my
first
time

Ding
Dong

Last night, you were so moody

Miho-san,
I need
you

there,
there

...but not yet, not yet...

In the end,
Miho-san
helped
Rica
with her
homework
all week-
end long.

Tired...

I'm
enjoying
myself

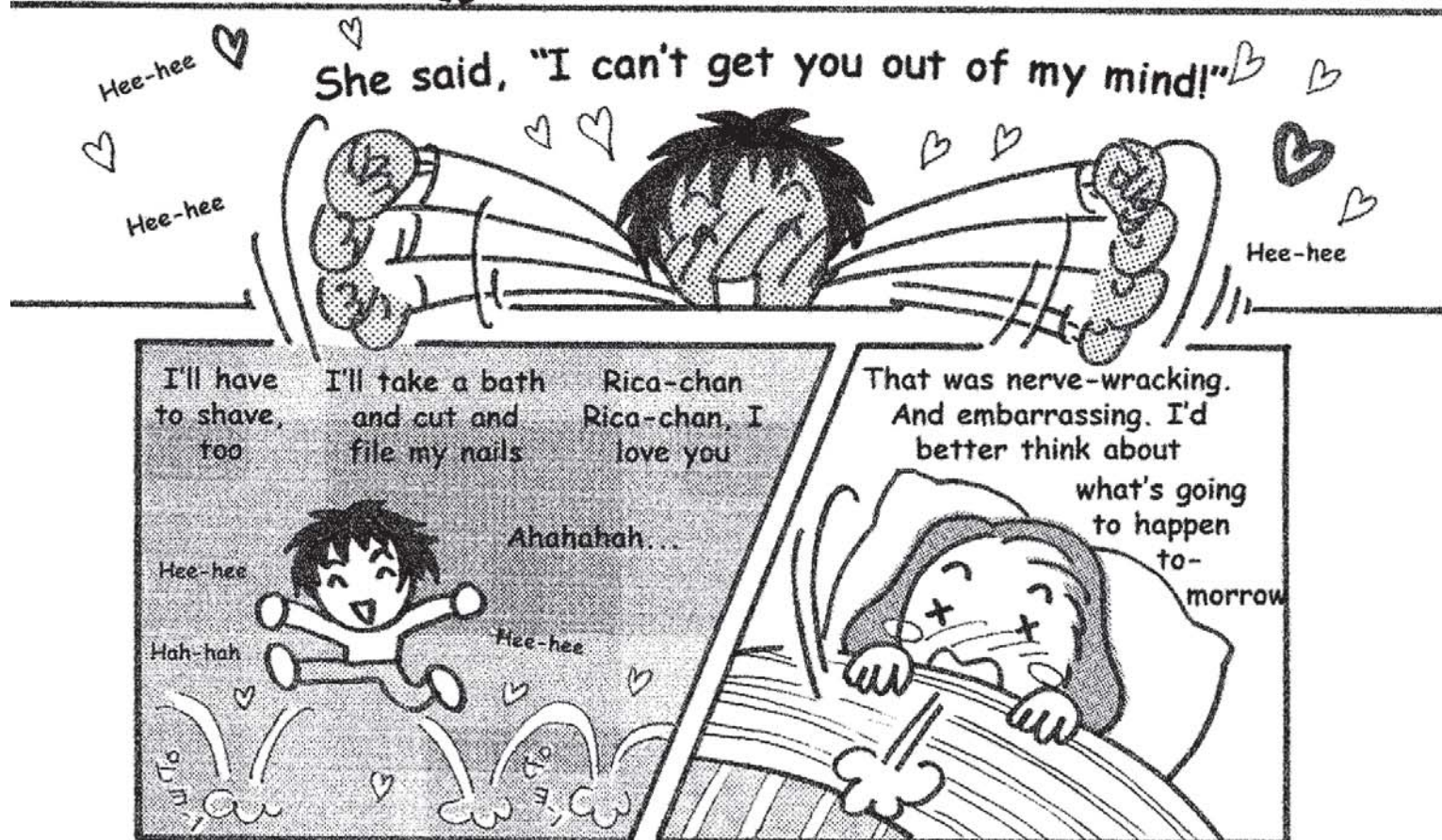
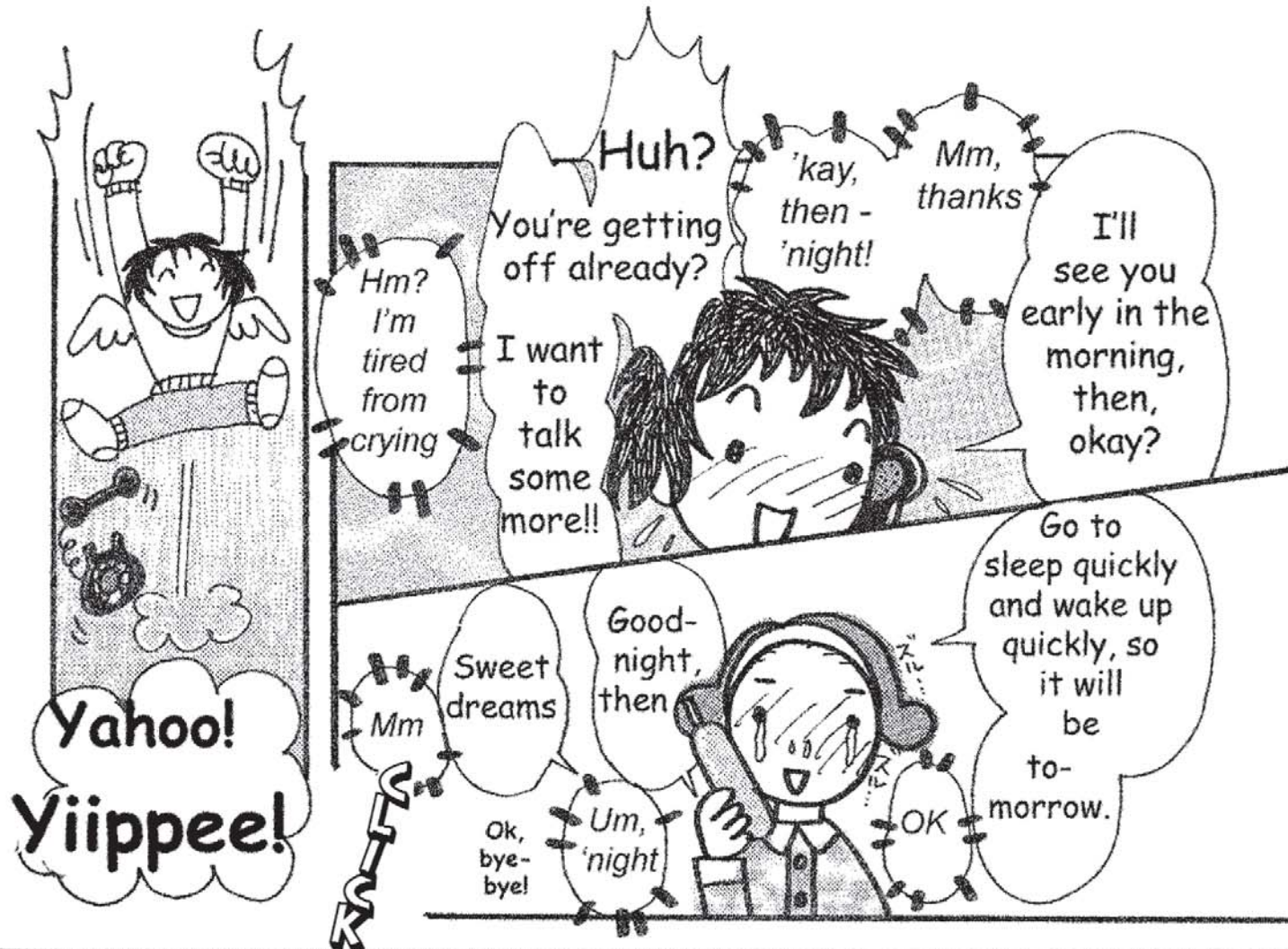
Fine
Fine

Sorry
we can't
relax
today

Actually,
it's too
good - can
you make it
a little
less good?

Is this
all
right?

Miho-san,
that's really
well done!
I'd expect
no less from
a Fine Arts
Student



You don't have to right now - go to bed!

^ Falls asleep quickly

I feel lonely...
I want to see
you...
I feel empty
inside...

I didn't know
how you felt

I'm sorry, Rica

I'm really sorry!

badump...
ドキドキ...

My face looks
awful and
there's
no train
running
right now

Oh,
hurry
"more"

That's
really
forward
♡

BOONAB
I could
use a hug,
though -
and maybe
more...

Uh...
Miho-san...
I...since then,
I can't get
you out
of my head.

What should
I do...?

dumpbadump

badump.. badump.. badump..ba

ドキドキドキ...

Rica...
I love you too!
I really,
really
love you...

NO!

No,
don't!

I miss
you too
I want to
be with you!
Hey, why
don't I come
right over?

badump badumpbadump

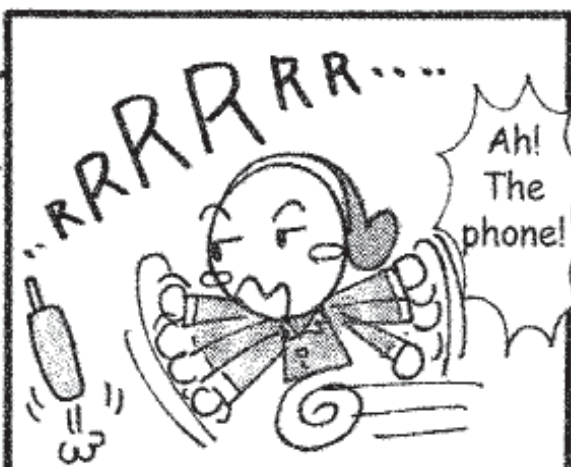
ドキドキドキ...

Hey - how are you?
I'm sorry for the other night. Mori-sempai and I got a little rowdy. Do you think Watanabe-san looked upset?



Hi!

Ah -
Miho-san



Ah!
The phone!

That's not necessary.
What are you doing about Mori-san?

So, to make it up to you, we'll go out on a really nice date.
How about this Saturday?

Yeah - yeah, we were talking about the old days, stuff from our lives where we grew up, so it was fun...hahahah

That's okay... you looked like you were having fun.

Huh?



It's an old story that I loved Mori-san, now it's just a sweet memory. She received love letters from a lot of students. It looks like she has someone else now...

Rica -
what are you talking about?

Aren't you two in love?
You looked good together...
And Mori-san is really gorgeous...

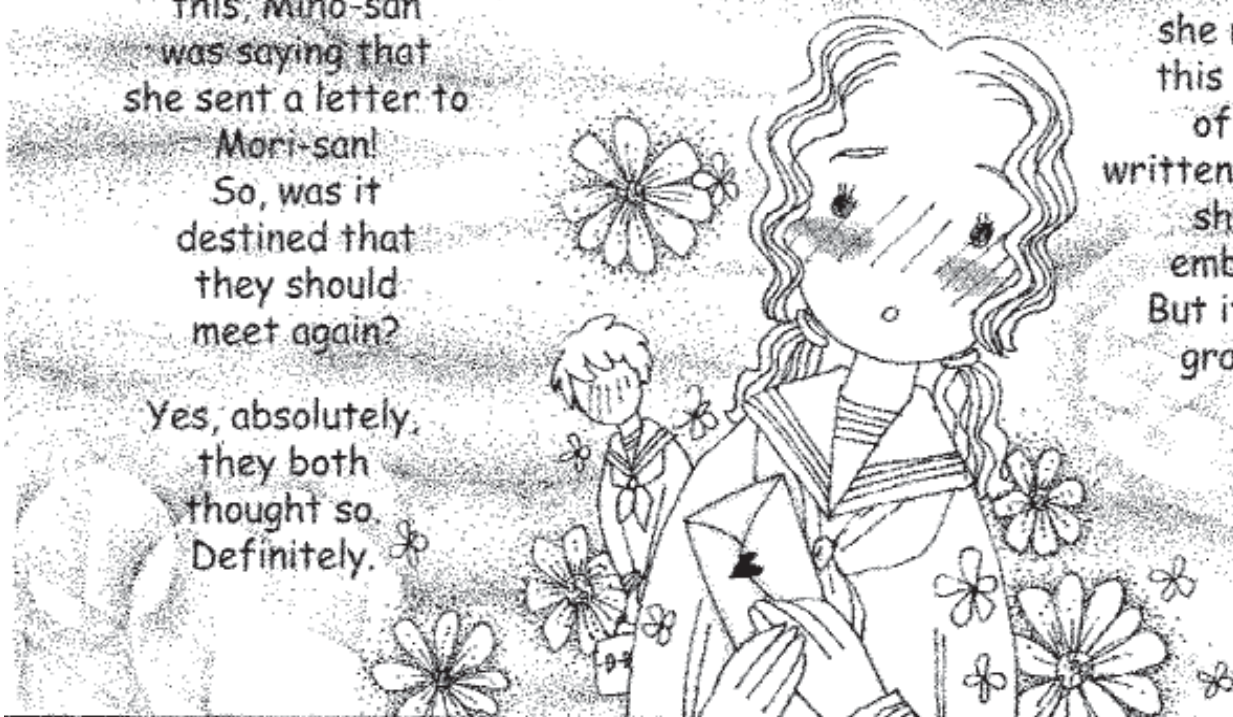


SOB

Wow - just before
this, Miho-san
was saying that
she sent a letter to
Mori-san!
So, was it
destined that
they should
meet again?

Yes, absolutely,
they both
thought so.
Definitely.

As soon as she glanced
at this love letter
she received -
this confession
of feelings
written by her kohai,
she felt so
embarrassed.
But it was after
graduation...

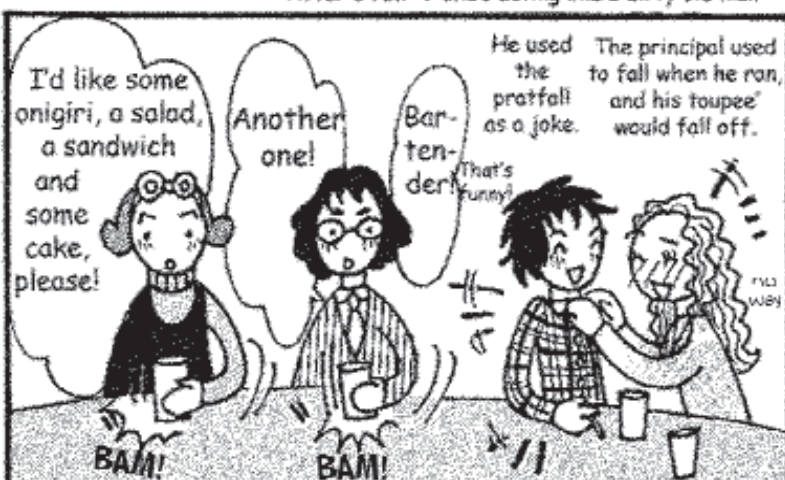


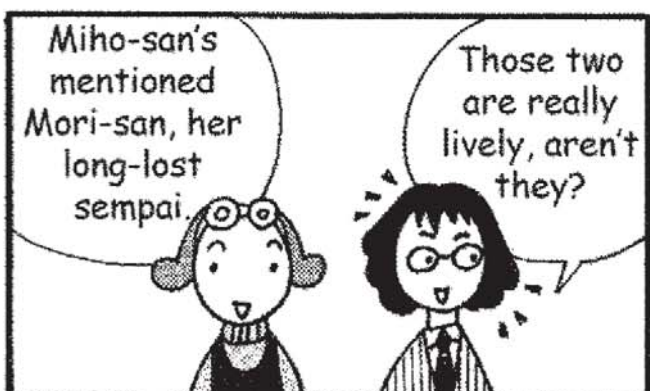
After a few ↑ she's acting like a dirty old man



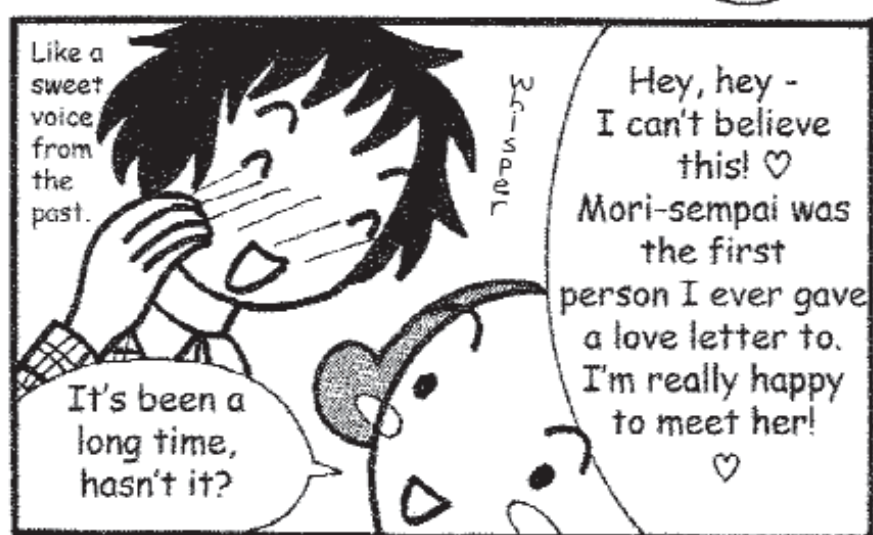
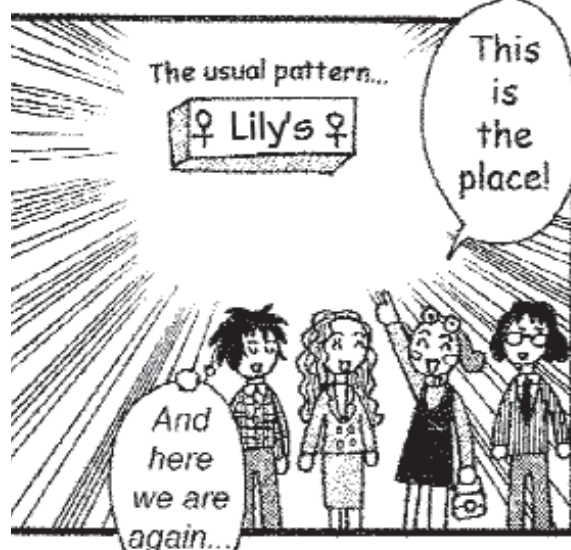
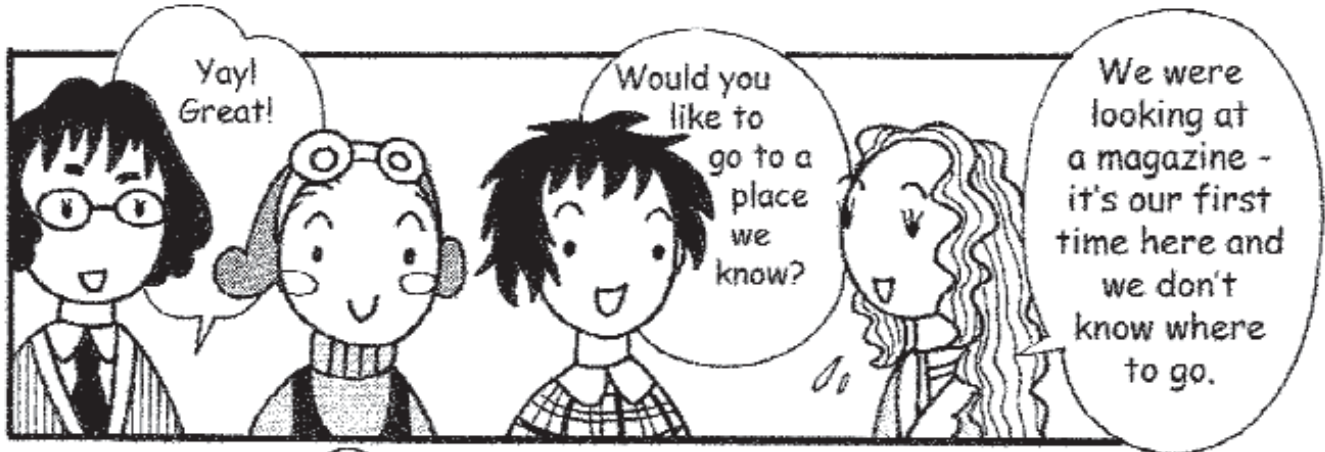
Sheesh.
Miho-san,
you jerk.

I feel bad for
Watanabe-san

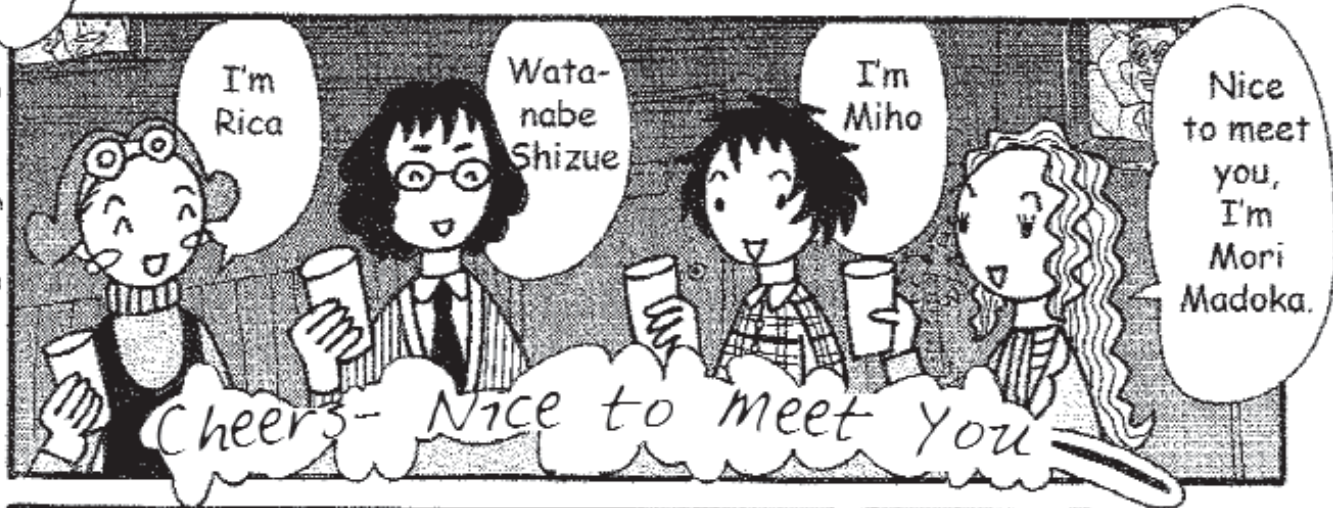




- sempai: Upper-classman at school or senior employee at work.
- kōhai: Under-classman at school or junior employee at work.

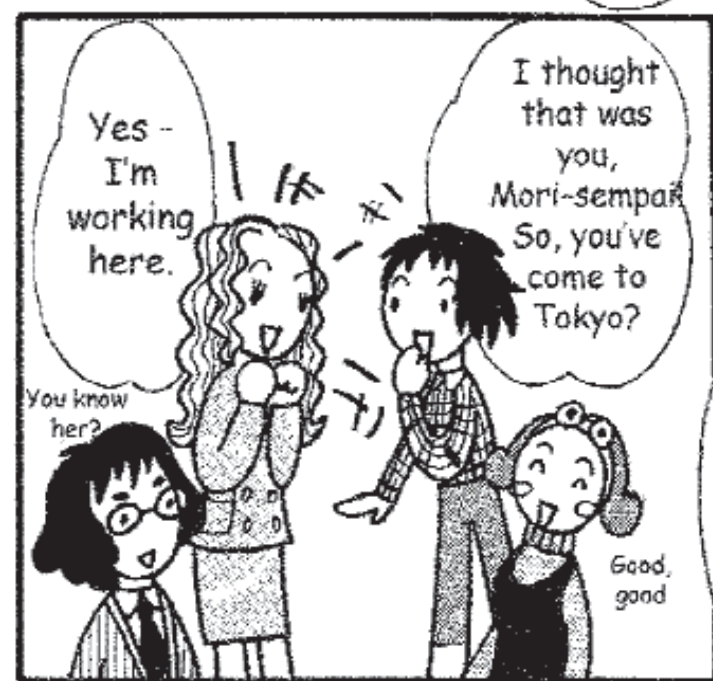
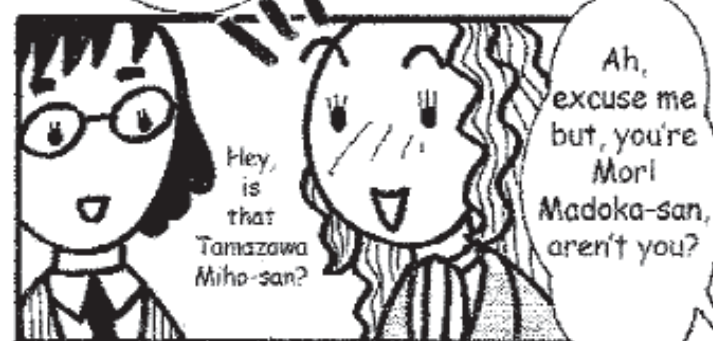
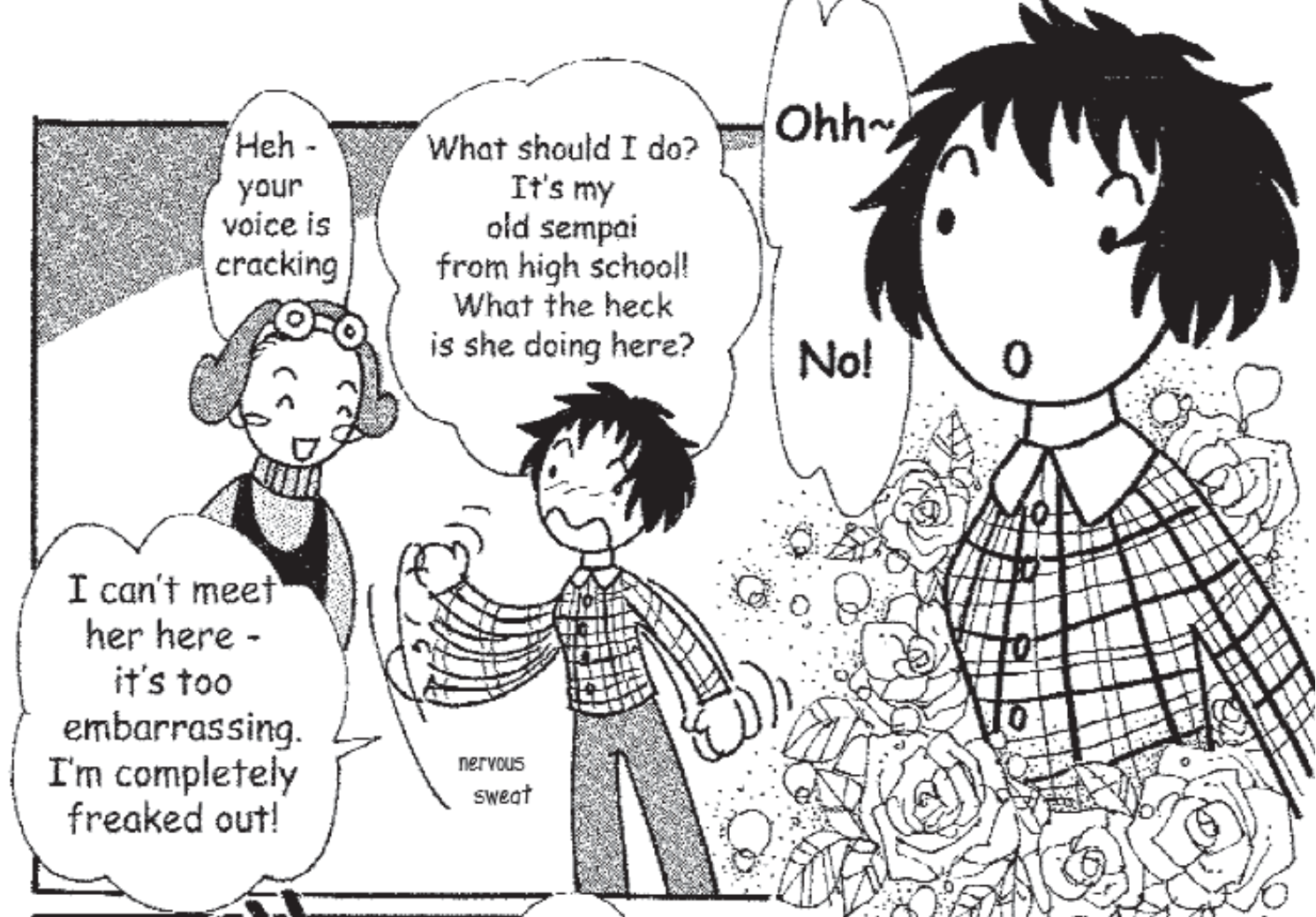


Rica
Early
education
student
at a
Women's
Junior
College



Miho
Has
feelings
for
Rica.
A Fine
Arts
Student







It's not really possible for me to convey to readers why I did something in this spot, and something in that spot.

EF: *You include a chapter that revolves around menstrual cramps. I think it's a very funny chapter. Obviously, "Rica" was first printed in Anise magazine, a magazine for lesbians, who would know what you meant. How does it make you feel that the audience reading Rica now is not all women?*

RT: When I drew that chapter about cramps, I was suffering from them myself, so that had an influence on me. (laugh) It occurred to me that while it's only one week for a woman alone, when it's a lesbian couple, they'd have to deal with each one's respectively, which would be difficult, wouldn't it?

It's definitely not all that common to have a manga story that deals with menstrual cramps. Therefore, this is also a chance to acquaint male readers with just how difficult a thing it is to deal with.

EF: *What is the message that you want to convey to readers through these final chapters of the original collection?*

RT: When I knew that *Anise* was suspending publication, I just wanted to show that the two of them would stick together, and drew a story that had the feeling of a happy future for them. But rather than having them just quickly and simplistically moving in together, I created a situation in which they each had a major obstacle they needed to surmount. But, when readers read it they would be able predict that, by working together, Rica and Miho will be able to conquer those obstacles and be able to continue to live together.

At that time, I had no thoughts of there ever being a chance for a sequel.



EF: *Up to this point, Rica and Miho have been very involved with going out to the bars and parties. But now, in the story, we get a little more of their past lives. Obviously Rica and Miho's relationship has begun to change.*

What were you thinking when you made this shift in the story?



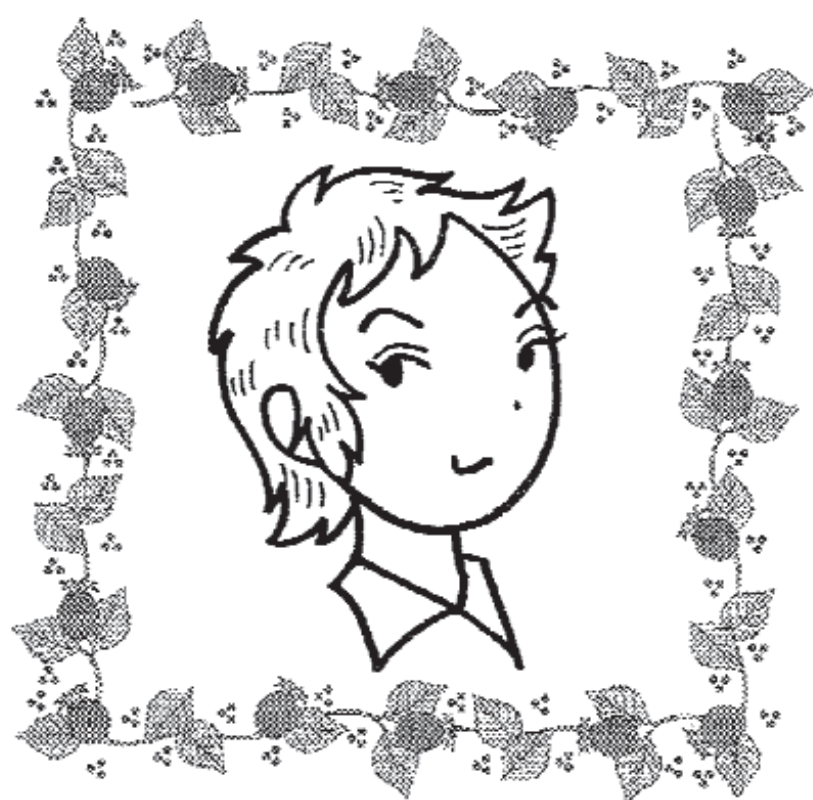
RT: Rica-chan wants to go to bars and mixer events, while Miho wants to avoid them as much as possible, preferring to go to romantic movies to spend time alone together. Mostly because Miho knows that there will be women there who will aim for Rica, and because former girlfriends of hers will be there. (laugh)

EF: *One of the things you like to show with Rica and Miho is that they are two totally different people. Even though they love each other, their work and dreams are different. Communication is important in the last few chapters. Were you trying to teach people how to have a good relationship? Was there any deep meaning to the fact that Rica and Miho are so different?*

RT: Miho-chan is modeled after a real person. She's not really a lazy character, just sort of arrogant in a typical young fine arts student kind of way. The kind of person who talks big, but is really kind of undisciplined.

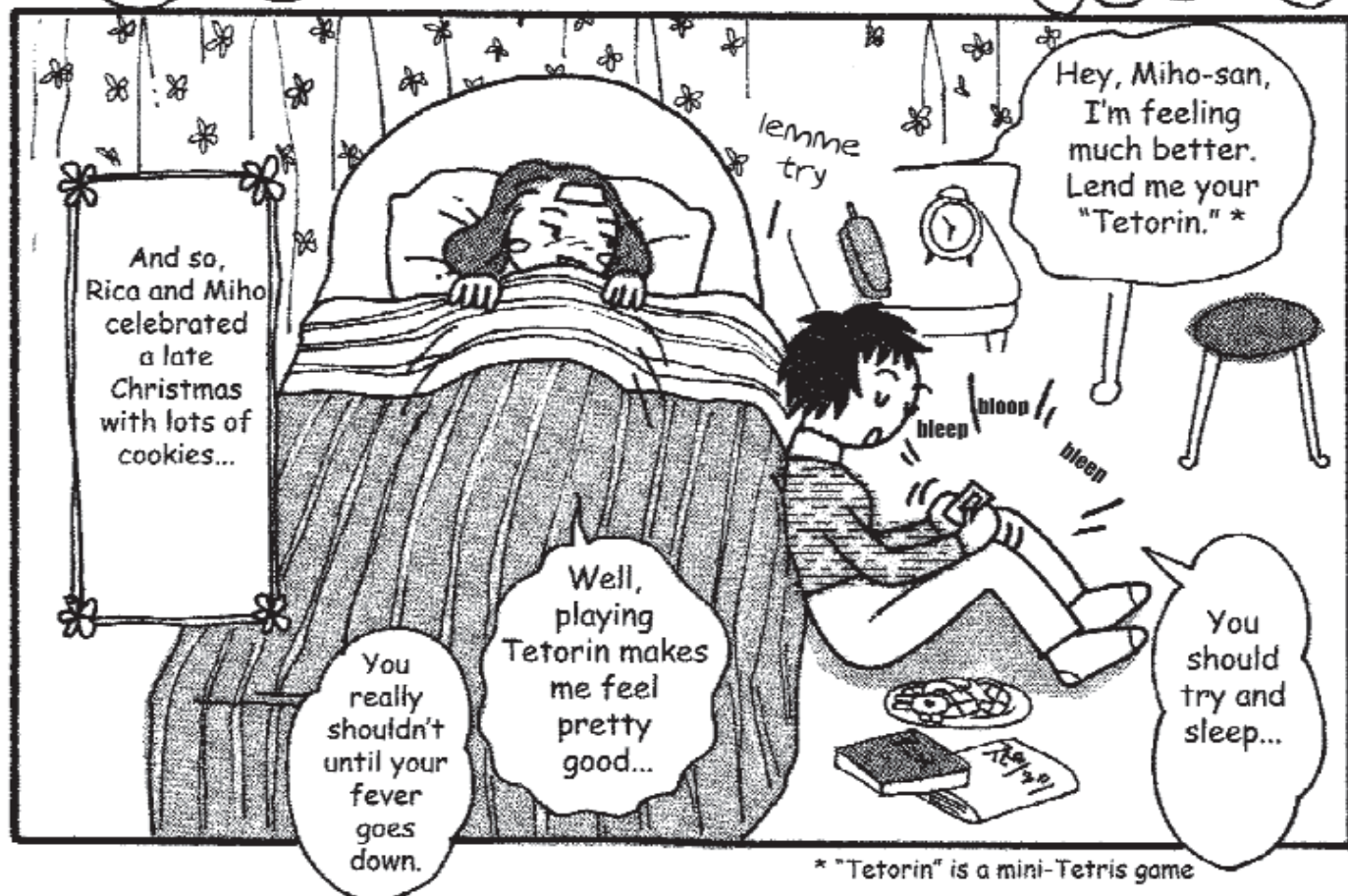
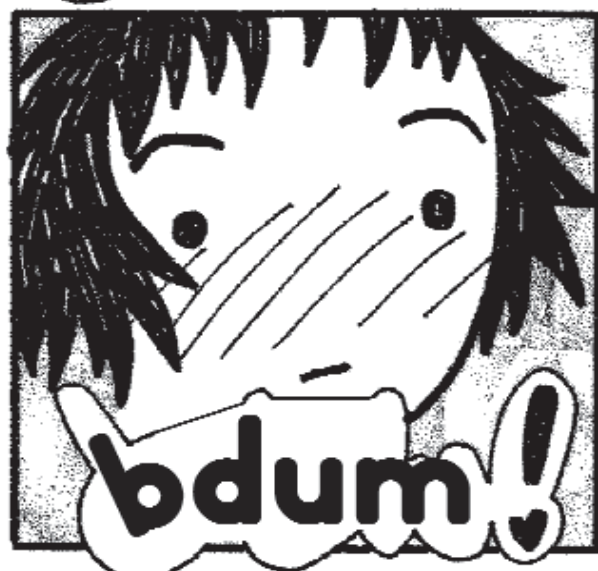
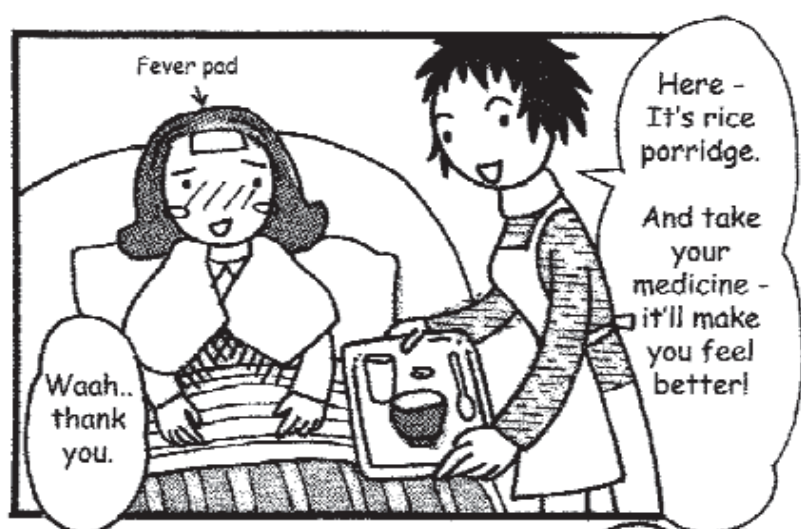
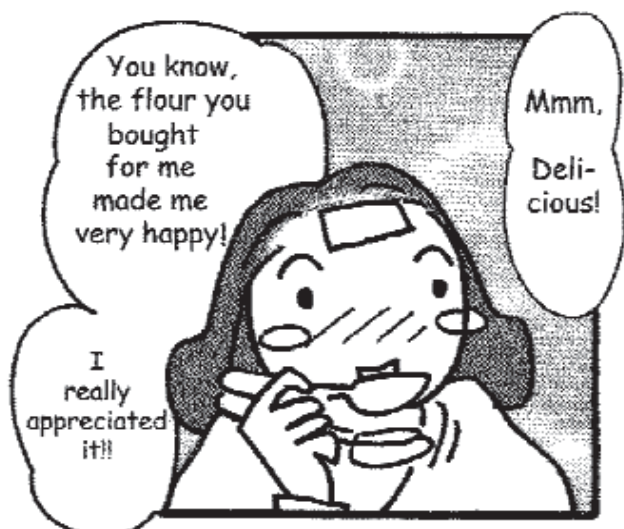
Rica-chan is a bright, unworried character, but she unexpectedly has some trouble making decisions.

The two of them are polar opposites, and for some reason, that just seemed the right way to draw them. That was the way the whole story was. I did something because it seemed the right thing to do.

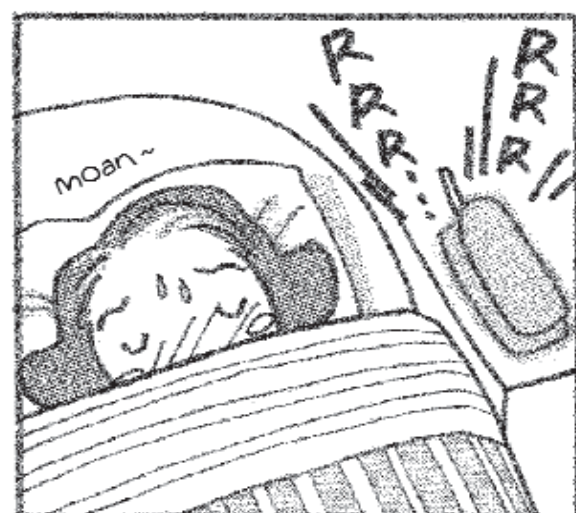
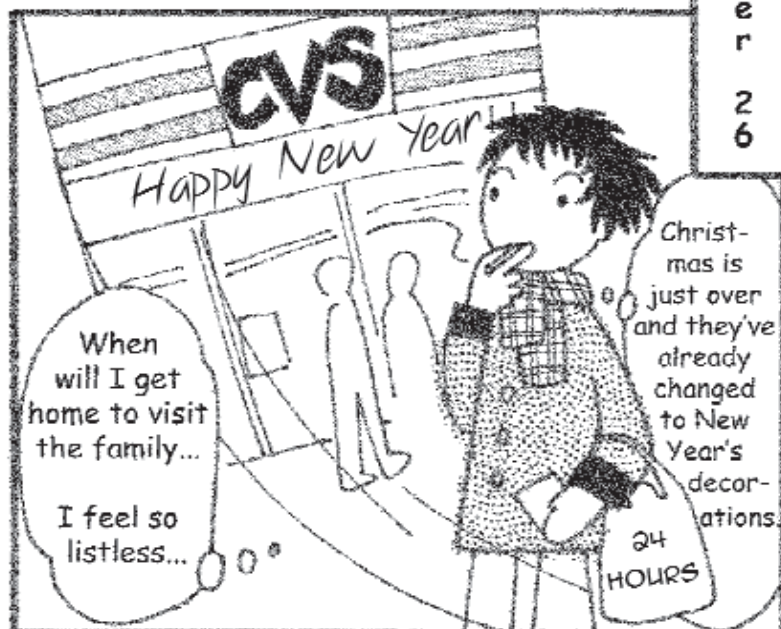


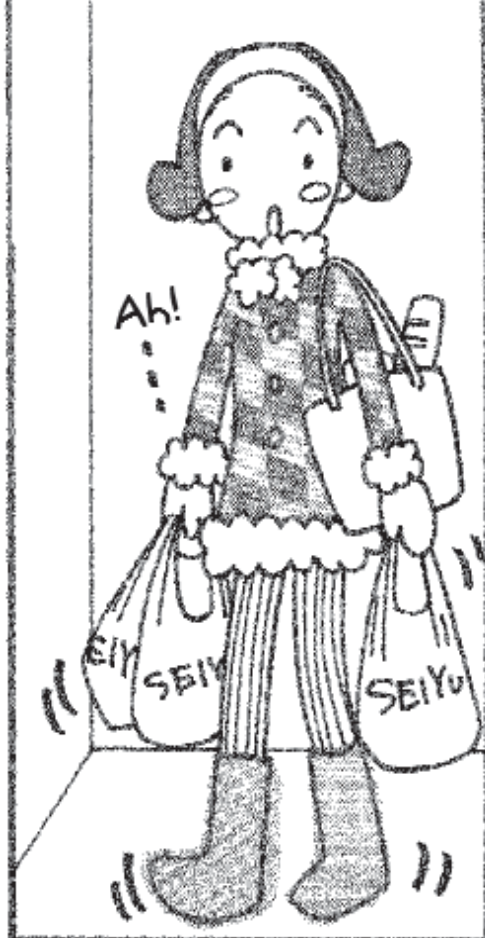
MICHI RU



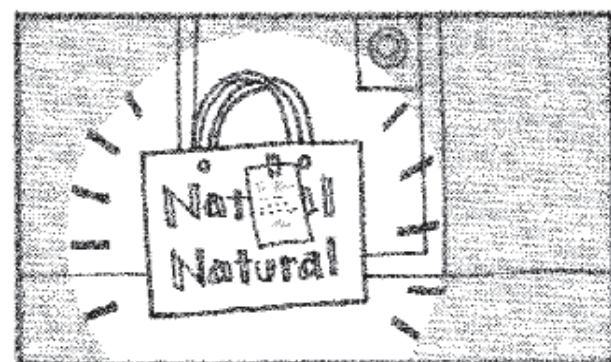
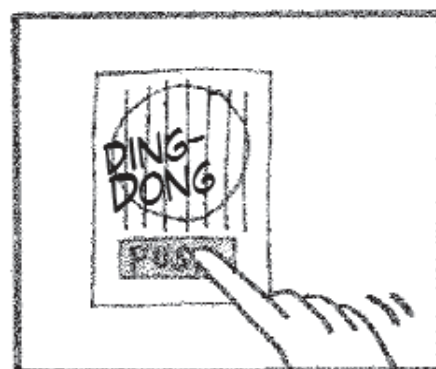
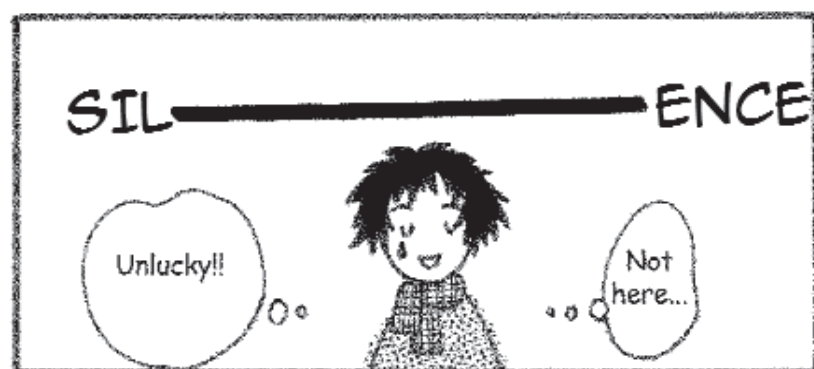
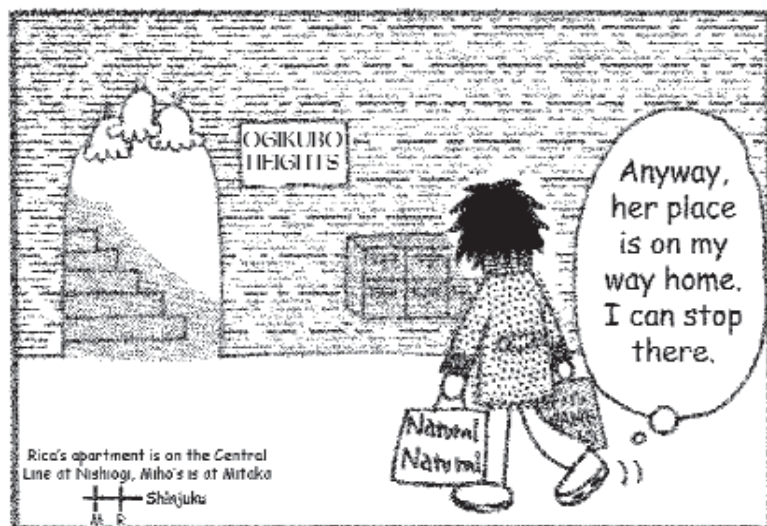
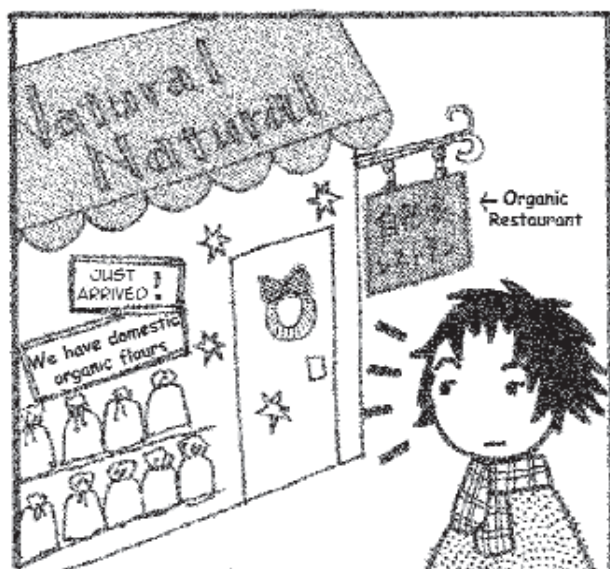


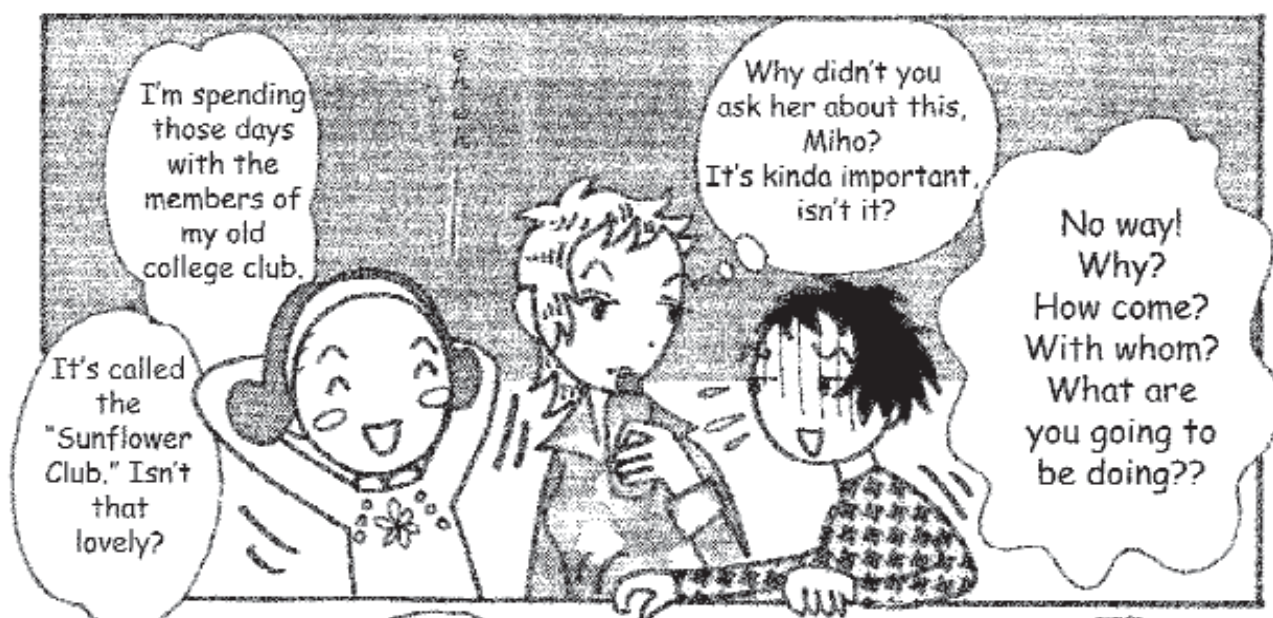


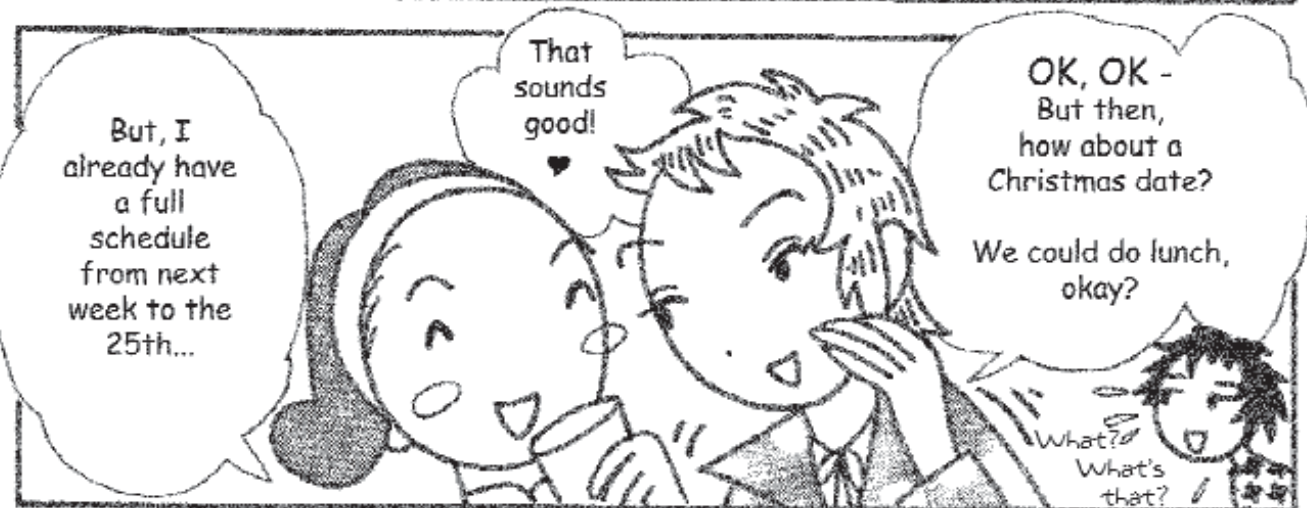
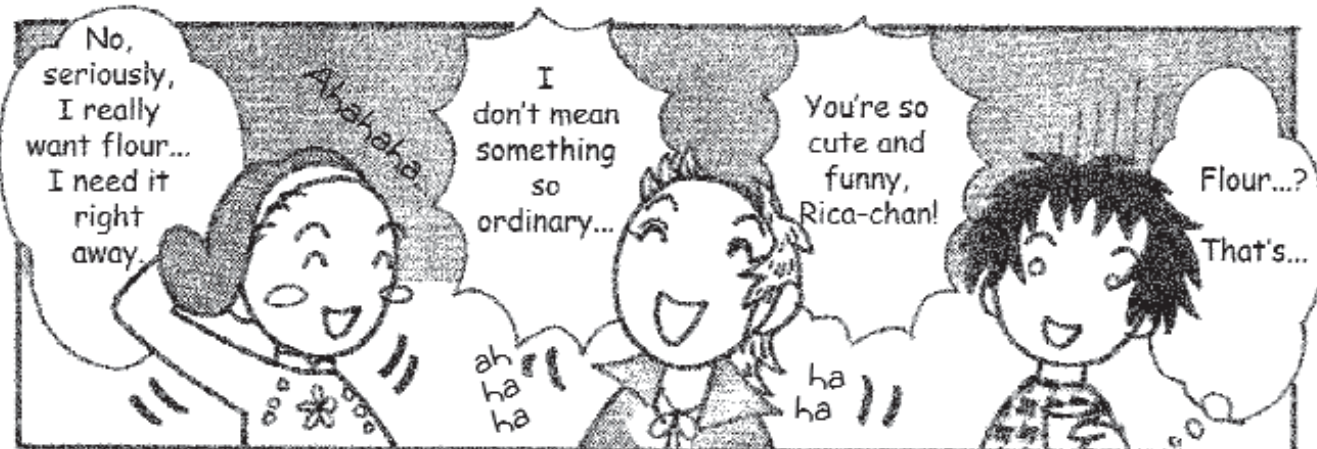
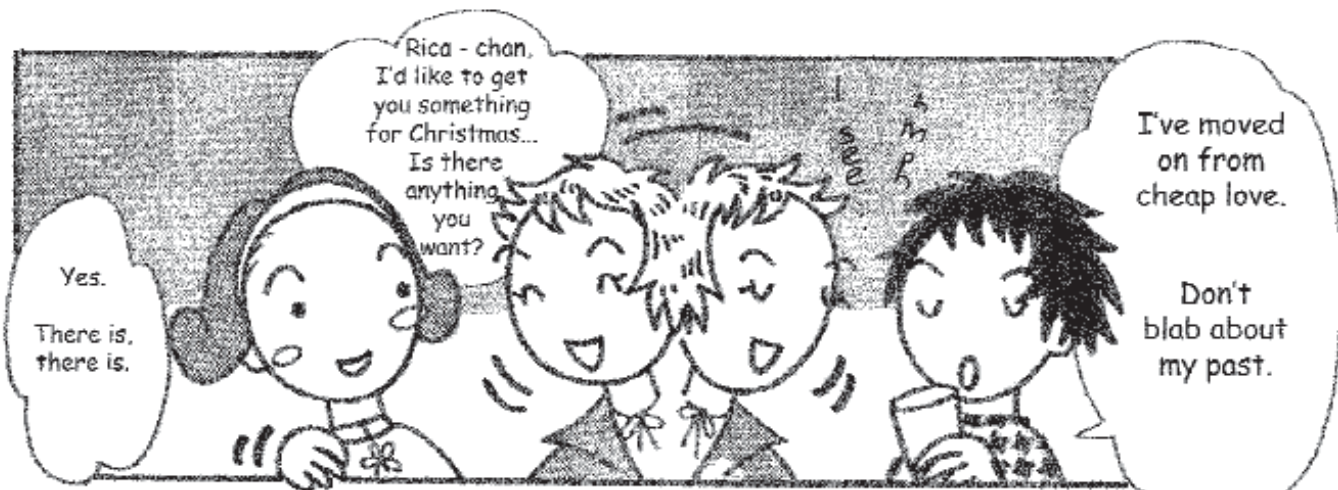




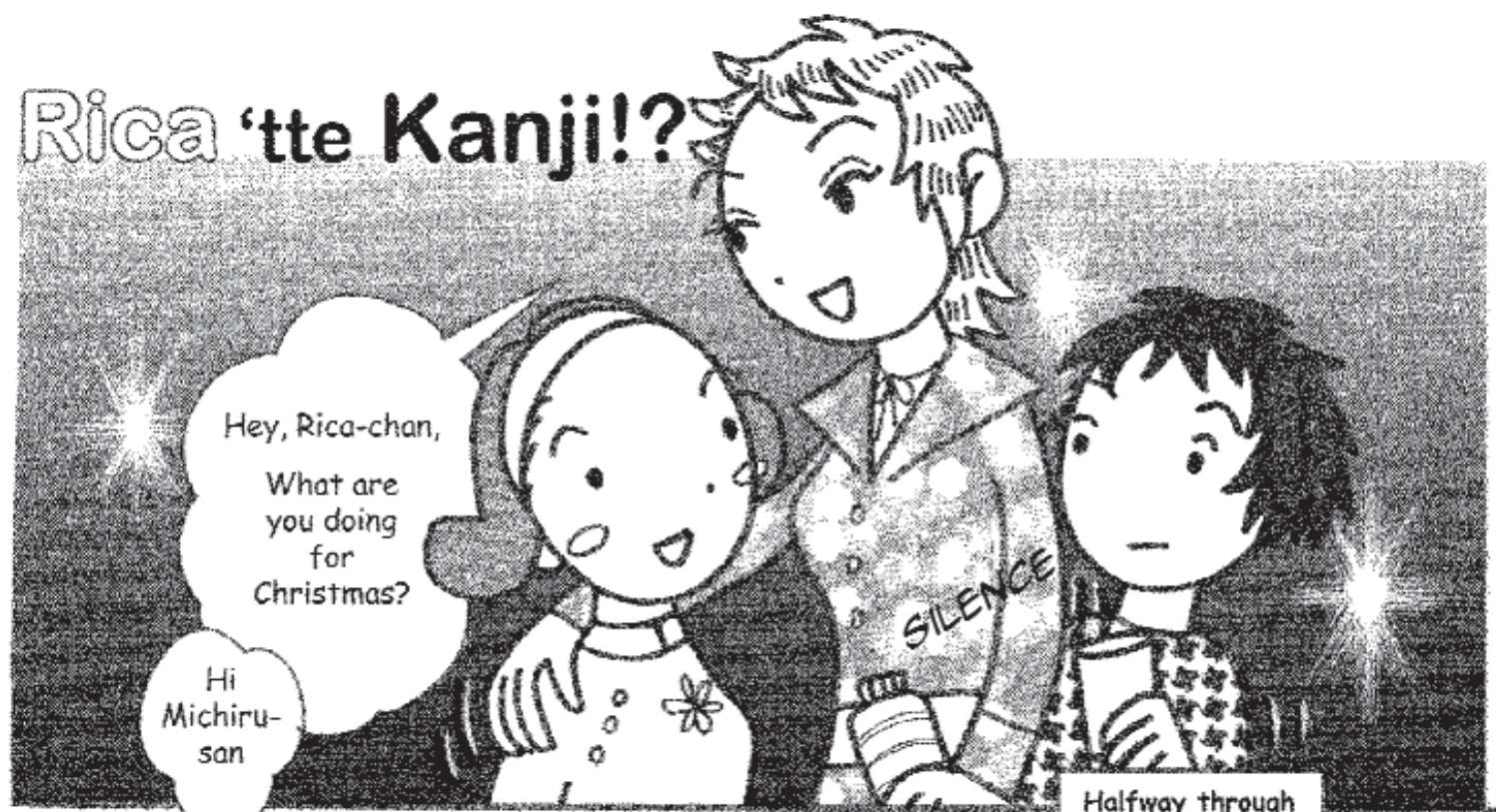
Back of a
video game
console







Rica 'tte Kanji!?



Hey, Rica-chan,
What are
you doing
for
Christmas?

Hi
Michiru-
san

SILENCE

Halfway through
December.
"Love Hunters"
come out of
the woodwork
in Nichōme.

There are "love
robber" wars
every night...
in order to
get a lover
to spend
Christmas Eve
and night with...



Everyone
can be
popular
at this
time of
year.

Hey, Miho -
How come you're
so quiet, these days?

Don't
butt in
between us,
Michiru.



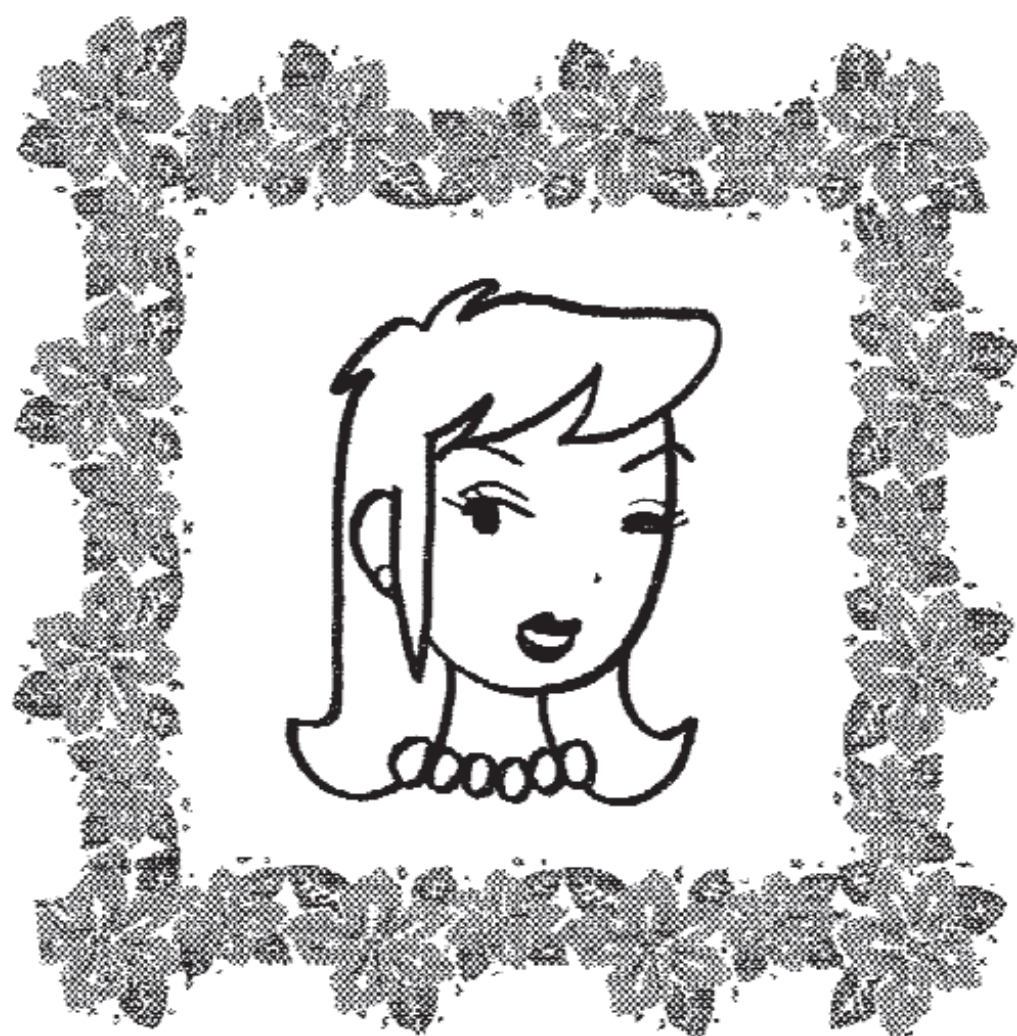
Hey - hey - I'll be going
on a dinner cruise with Yoko
on the 23rd, seeing a live show
with Kiyomi-chan on the 24th
and taking Rina to Disneyland
on the 25th.
So many lovely dishes...
heheheh

Last Christmas,
we had a lot of fun,
competing to get
the girls.

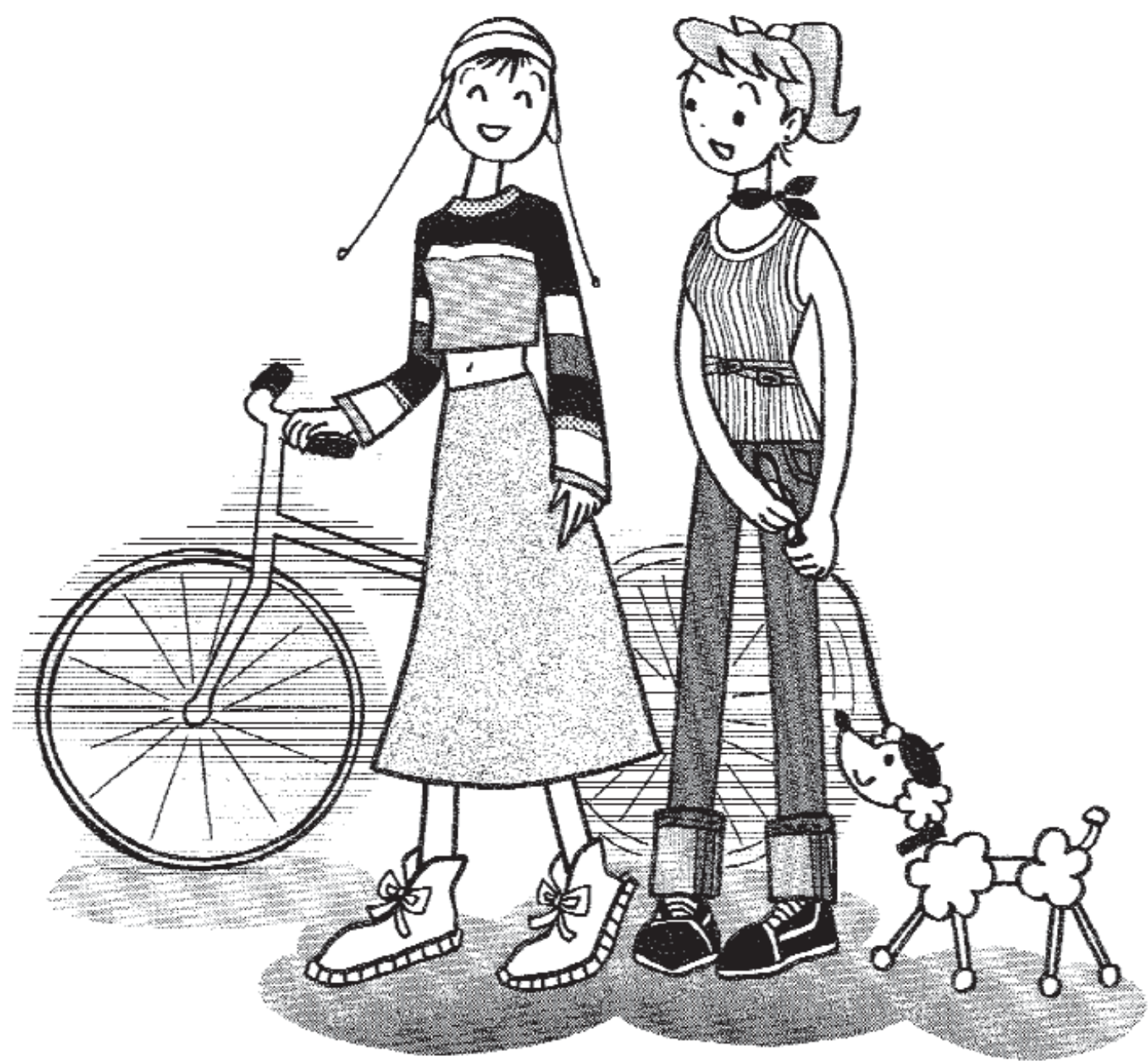
Are you falling
in love for real,
you playgirl, you?

Christmas in Japan
is spent with your
lover - New Year's
with your family

↑ Actually, the person who doesn't say anything is the most dangerous! (laugh)



KAORU



I haven't perfected my "female" body yet, so I'm a little concerned about going in.



Don't look so miserable!

TEARS WELLING UP



You mean, you're rejecting me?

wha



hh



You're... you're a MAN!

Ehhh~

That's a surprise!

Dressed for a 80s disco night at a club

Would you like to join us?



We haven't seen you around, recently, have we?

You're a lesbian? You're not very smart, are you?

Oh my god - it's not Kaoru-chan is it?



You didn't realize? I just thought you were a fag hag.

Hey, Miho! What are you doing here in disguise??

Michiru →



And so, Rica suffers her first heartbreak since coming to Tokyo... Miho, however, is much relieved.

To be continued?

You've done nothing to boast about... you're a cheap beauty...

Everybody knows that you go through a bottle of foundation a week.



Shut up, Miss Tons of Makeup.



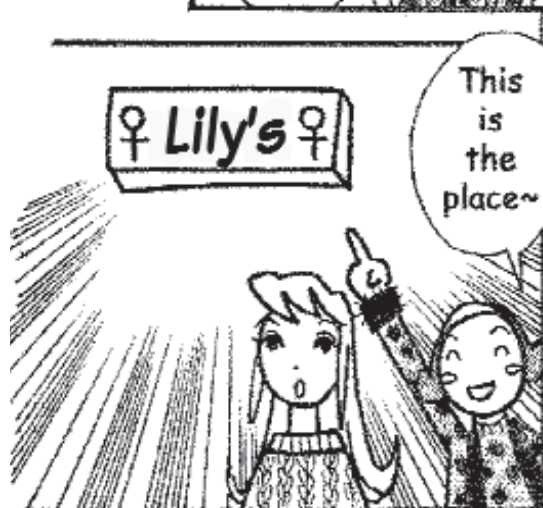
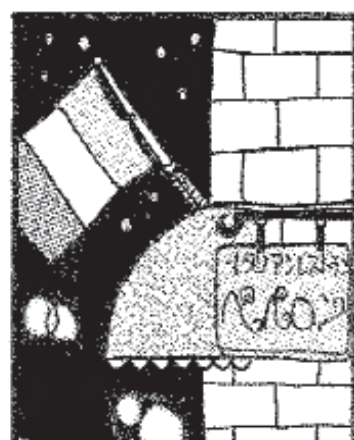
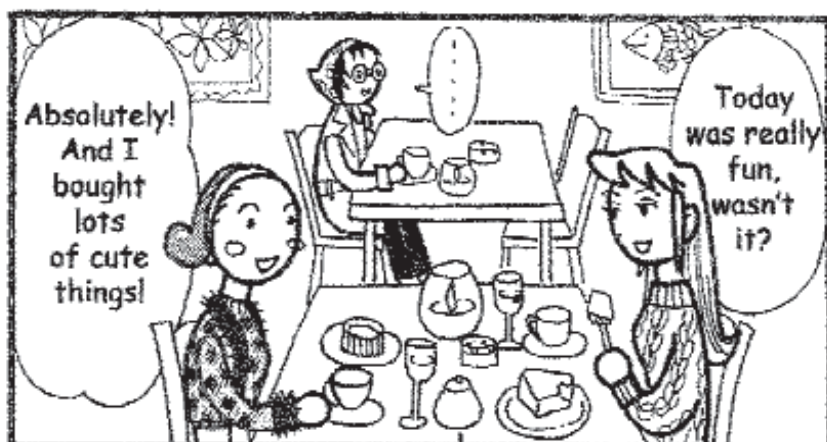
No way. I don't want to be seen with monsters like you.

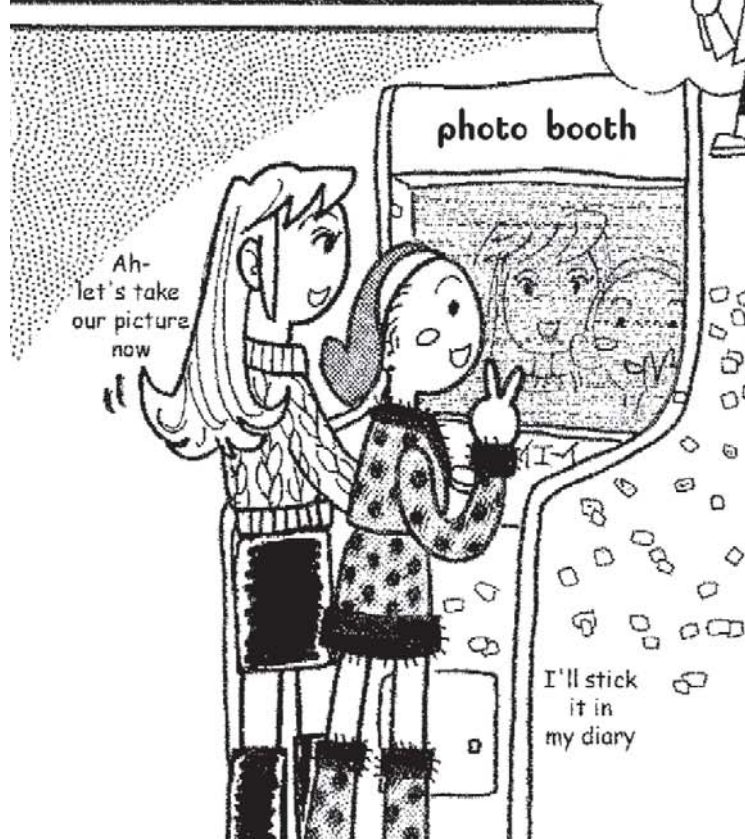


Um... that's...



Rica







Text on Screen:
Love Love Ceremony

Saturday,
5:00 PM

In front
of
Studio
Alta

What a
chaotic
place
she
chose
to wait!
It's
always
noisy.

Heh, but
it works
for me.

STUDIO ALTA

Hey!

Look at that couple
over there -
That boy's
really cute.

Ah,
Kaoru-
chan.
Let's...

Ah, sorry,
Rica-chan, I
couldn't find
you, it's terribly
busy. Too many
people here.

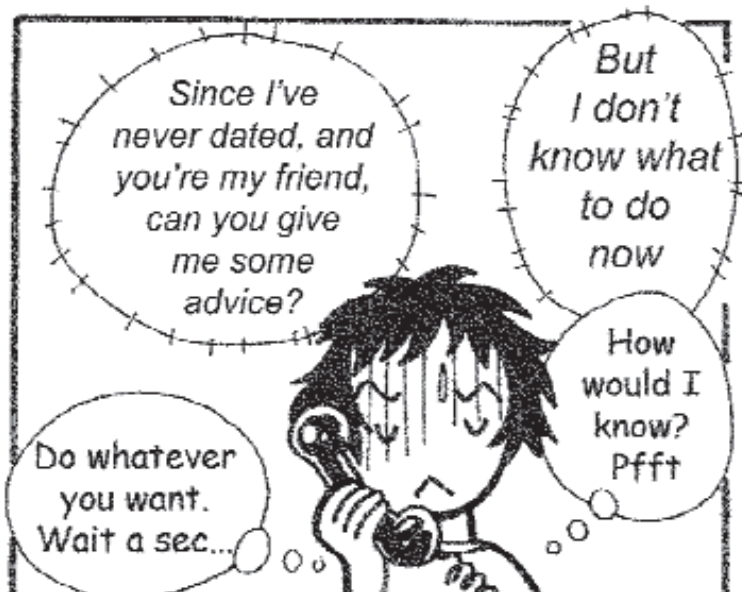
Her makeup
is totally
out of style.

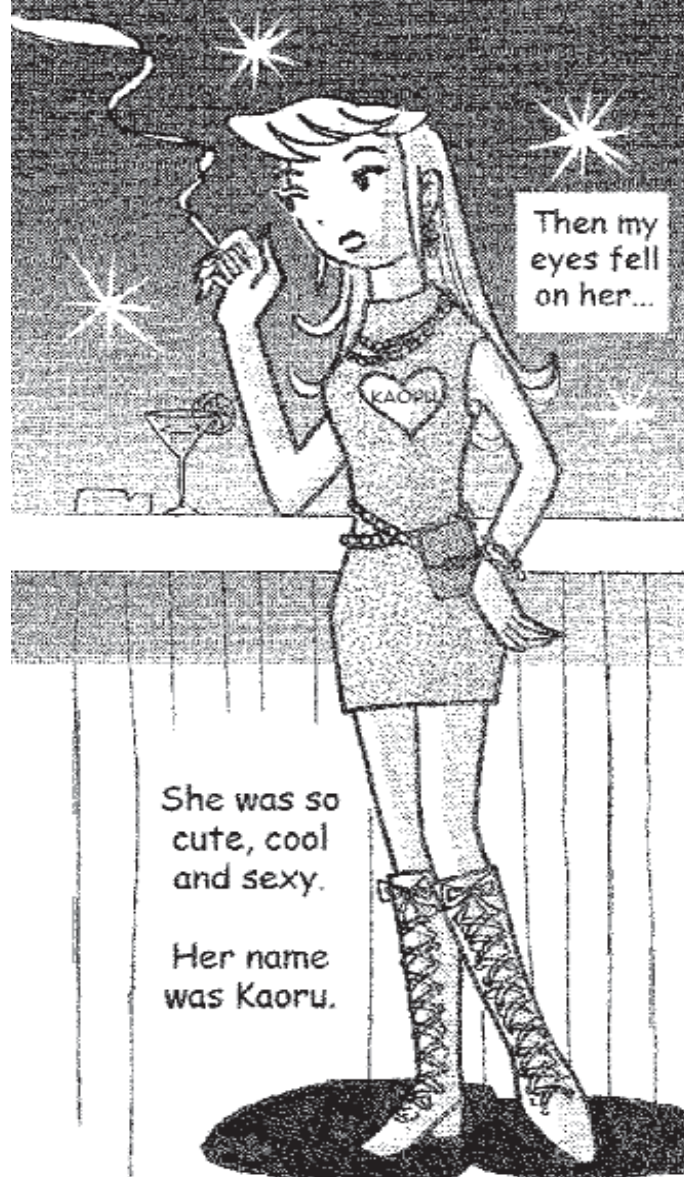
And she's
a bad
dresser.

Well, yeah...
I think
the girl is
nice, too...

I knew it,
she's
straight...

Note: Studio Alta's large multimedia screen is a very popular meeting place in Shinjuku, so it's always crowded.





Then my
eyes fell
on her...

She was so
cute, cool
and sexy.

Her name
was Kaoru.

You know, there's a lot of parties for singles
at my college. I usually don't go but...

Some friends finally got me to go to one...



Ahah...
great...

You're on
our invitation
list!

Rica -
You're not
escaping
tonight!

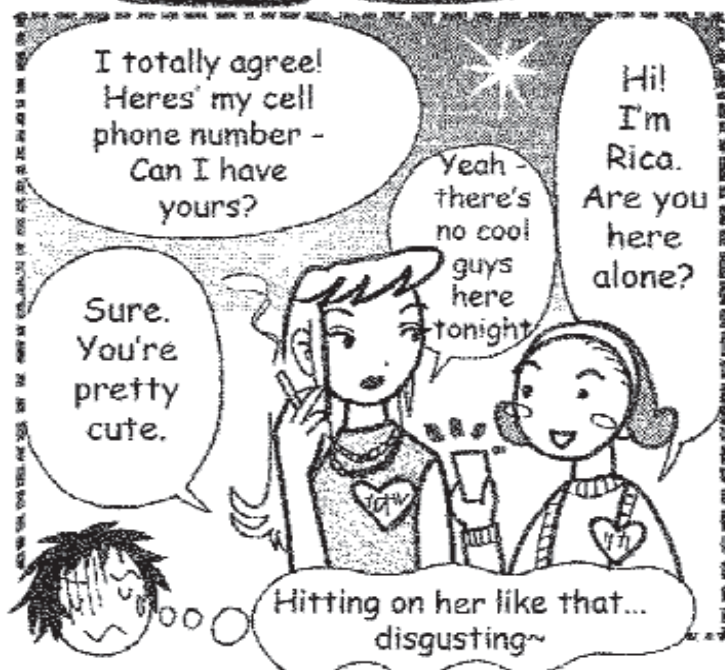


Are you
interested
in a love
fortune?

Hi there
beautiful ladies,
let my friend
see your hands,
he can read
palms.

Don't
just keep
eating - you'll
miss your
chance!

Ahah
hah...



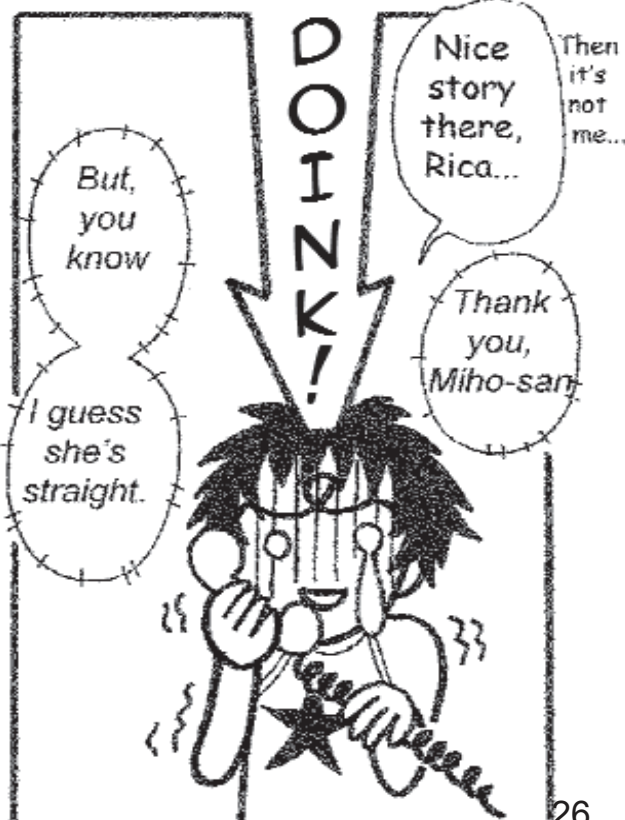
I totally agree!
Heres' my cell
phone number -
Can I have
yours?

Sure.
You're
pretty
cute.

Yeah -
there's
no cool
guys
here
tonight

Hi!
I'm
Rica.
Are you
here
alone?

Hitting on her like that...
disgusting~



But,
you
know

I guess
she's
straight.

Nice
story
there,
Rica...

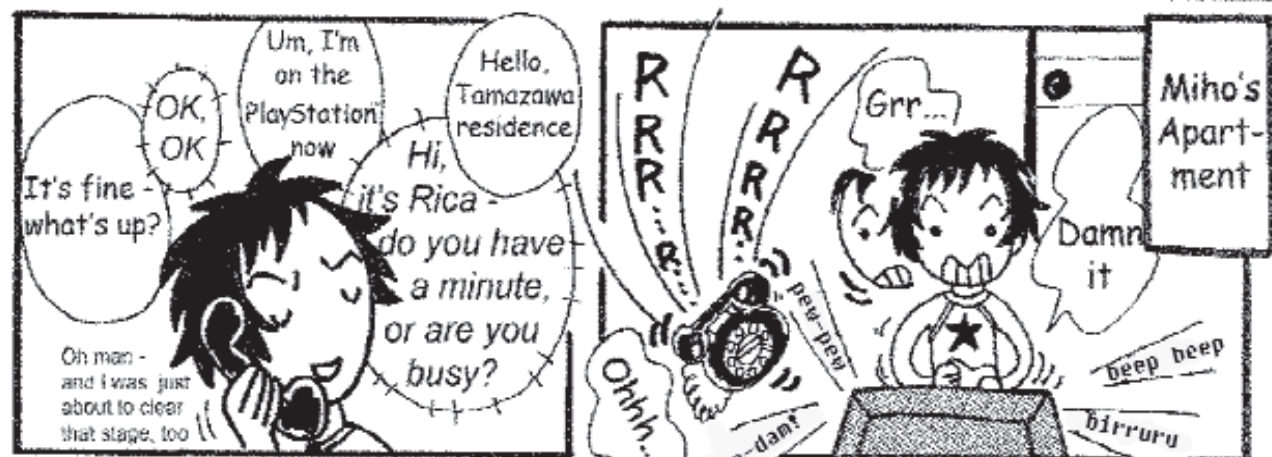
Thank
you,
Miho-san

Then
it's
not
me...

Rica 'tte Kanji!?

Rica
Just started
Junior College

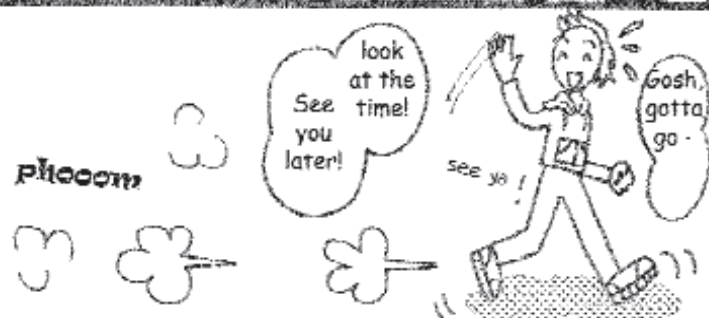
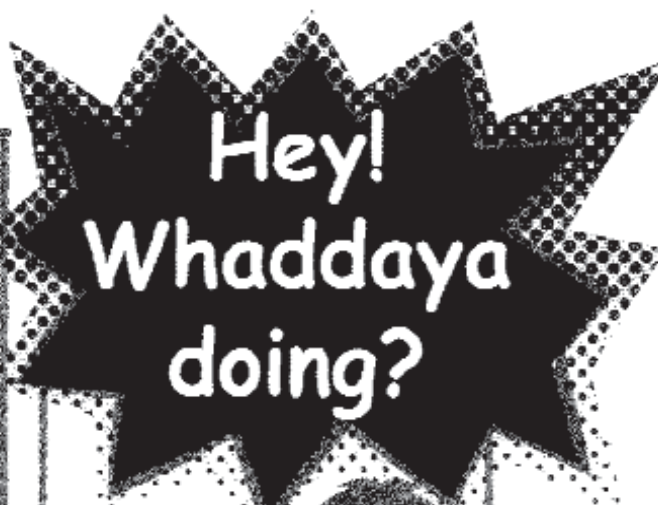
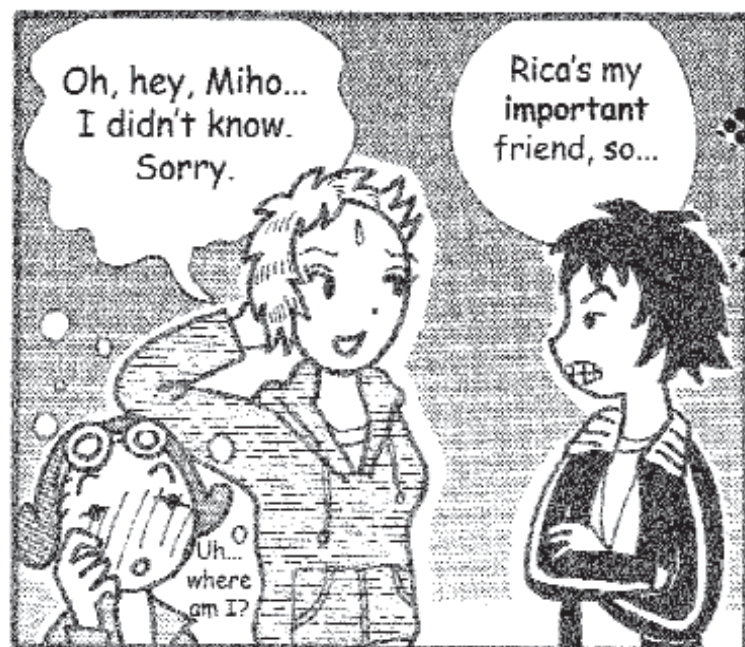
Miho
Rica's Nichōme
friend - she's
starting to have
feelings for Rica
Art School Student

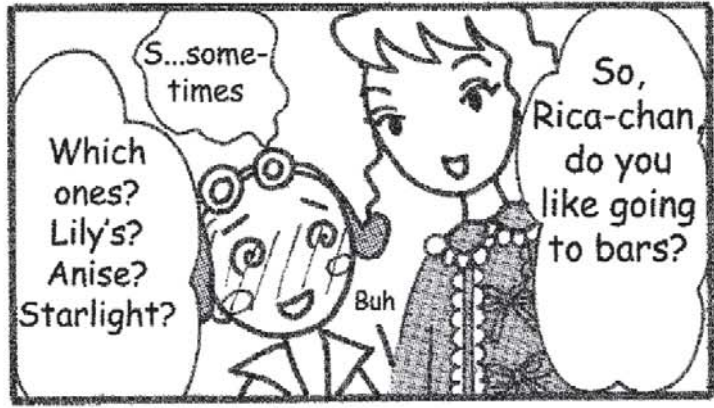




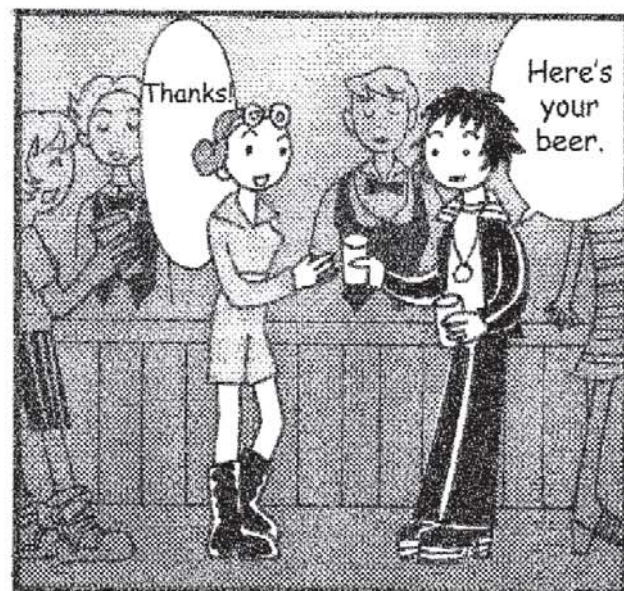
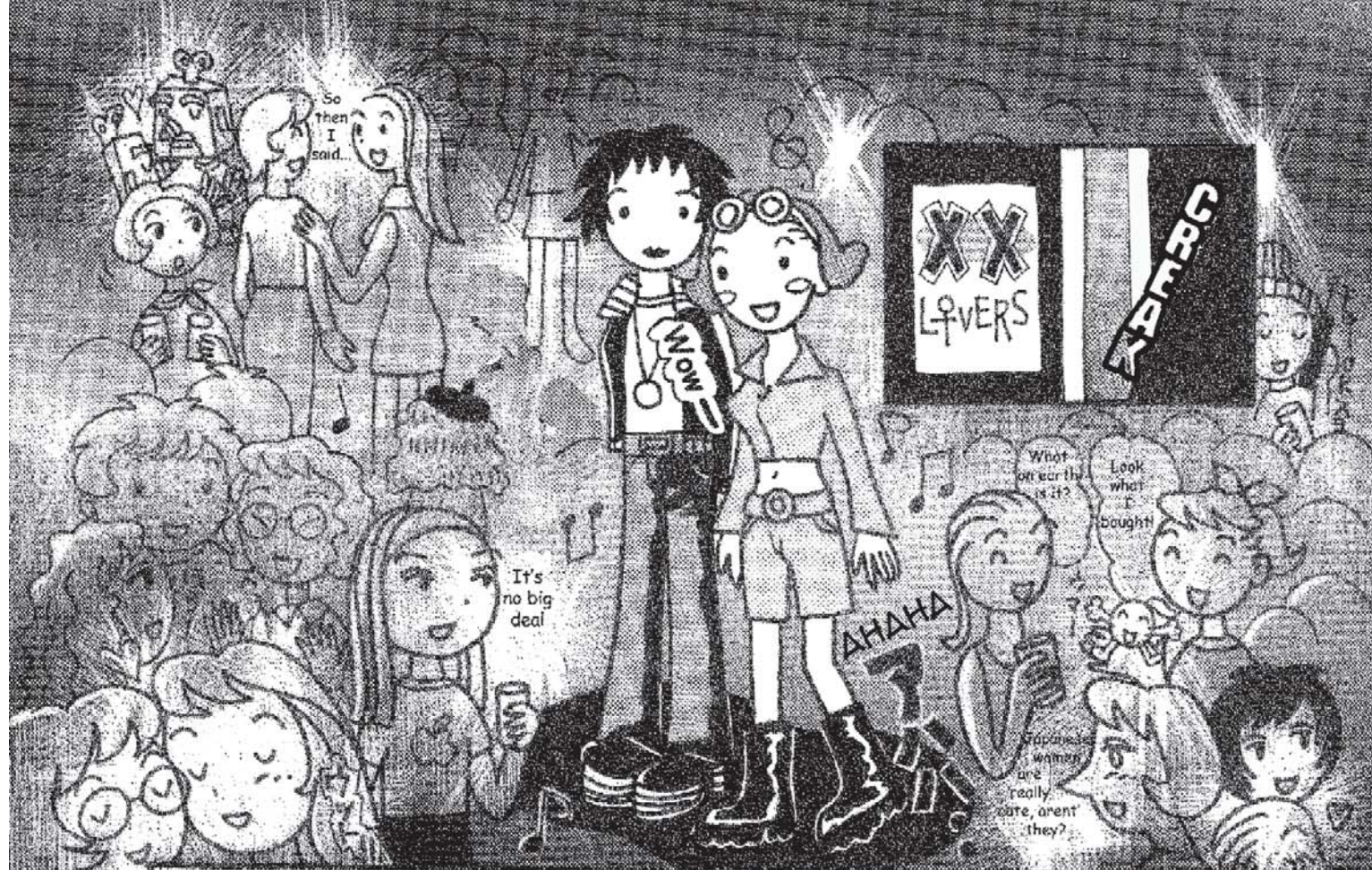
MIHO

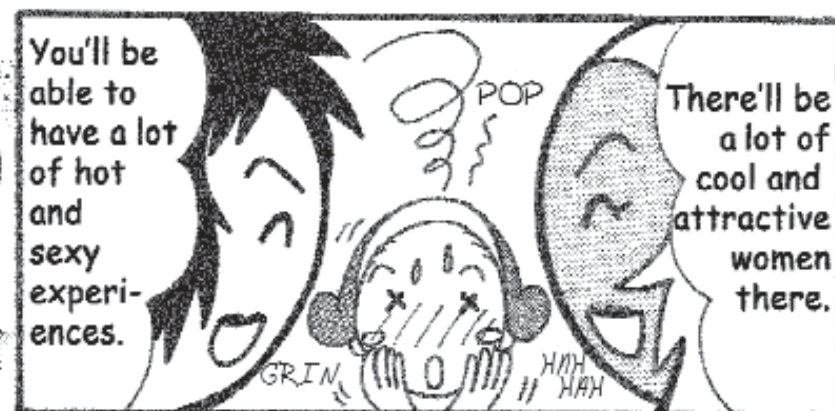
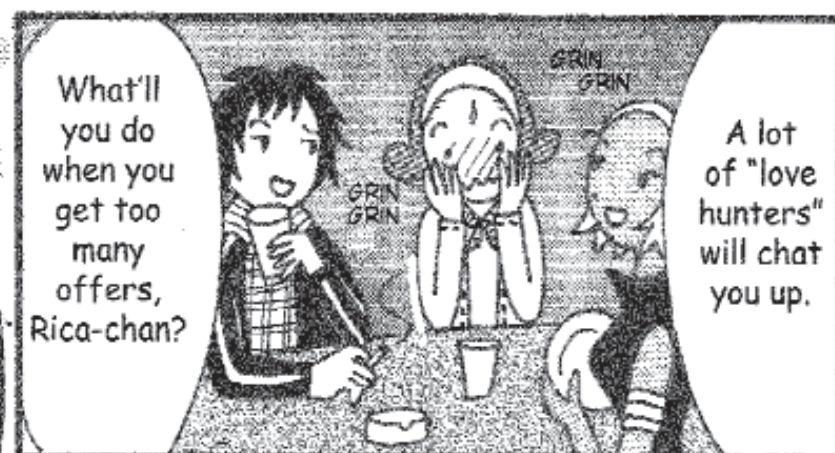
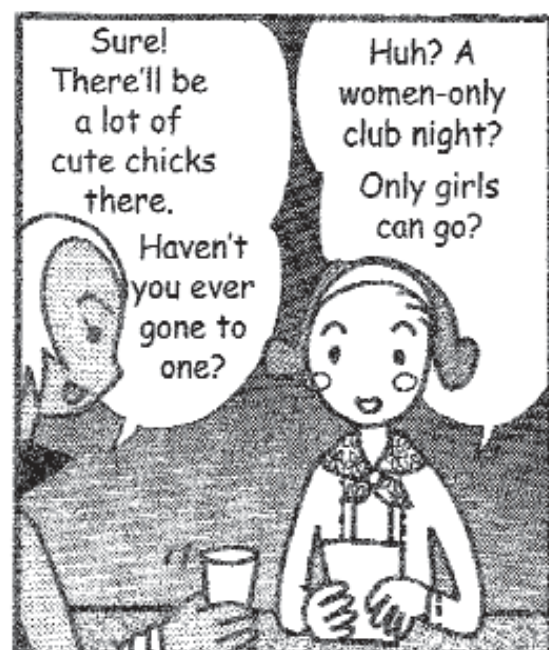












Rica 'tte Kanji!?

This past spring, I became a student at a women's college here in Tokyo.

Hi, my name is Rica.

I'm new in Nichōme.

Nichōme is the gay and lesbian area of Tokyo.

Rica's first friend in Nichōme, she's really cool.

Miho-chan.

N...nothing special!!

night with Miho-san?

Ah, welcome, Rica-chan!

How was your

Nichōme Bar
"Lily's"

Hi...

I picked up this flyer on the way here today...

NEW OPEN!
**
LOVERS
at
Club Anzora

Ah, Miho-san...

Good evening

You always have good timing, don't you?

Now now, Mariko-neesan, no more teasing the new girl.

EF: *Were you writing for other lesbians, who might be frightened of a lesbian bar, because of what they heard from the media?*

RT: Back in my teens, magazines and TV would make a lesbian bar seem like a place where special people went, they had the image of a forbidden garden. It actually made them seem more interesting, not less.

I thought, "If I can go to a place like that, I can get my certification of specialness" but I was scared, too. Of course, the reality was that it wasn't like that. Obviously (laugh).

For all intents and purposes, a lesbian bar was a place where average single women that didn't want to be hit on by men went. So they looked on a lesbian bar as a kind of women-only paradise. There were a lot of straight women in lesbian bars.

EF: *Do you miss anything about the pre-Internet bar days? If so, what do you miss most?*

RT: No, definitely not.

I think being able to communicate with so many people over the Internet is great. While I think going to a bar can be a fun experience, now it's not necessary to *have* to go to a bar. Now you can communicate with people, get support, even create opportunities to do things with friends, groups, even lovers, through texts. I think this is much healthier and more wholesome.

EF: I agree that the Internet has opened up a whole new world for lesbians, young and old, to communicate!



EF: *The next few chapters cover lesbian bar culture in Japan. What were the things you most wanted to express in these chapters?*



RT: I wanted to show that a lesbian bar was a fun place, something like that. What if the price of drinks was too high, what would happen if the people were scary, what if I couldn't get in because I didn't have an introduction. When you don't know any of these things, a place like a lesbian bar can be frightening. But the truth is, the people in the bar were really kind and fun, and I was able to communicate openly with a lot of other customers.

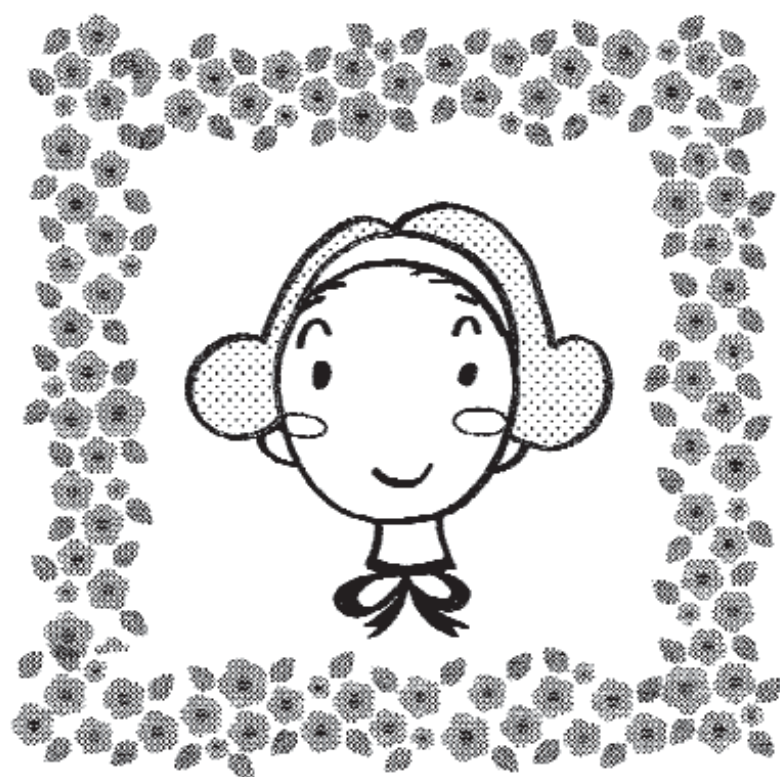
These were the kind of things that straight people didn't say, but those of us here did, that the bar was this kind of place.

EF: *So you were focused on the fact that the bars gave you a community and a place to get information?*

RT: Yes. In those days there was no Internet so to get news of places to meet and the like, there was only Ni-choume and a few nonprofit organizations (NPOs.)

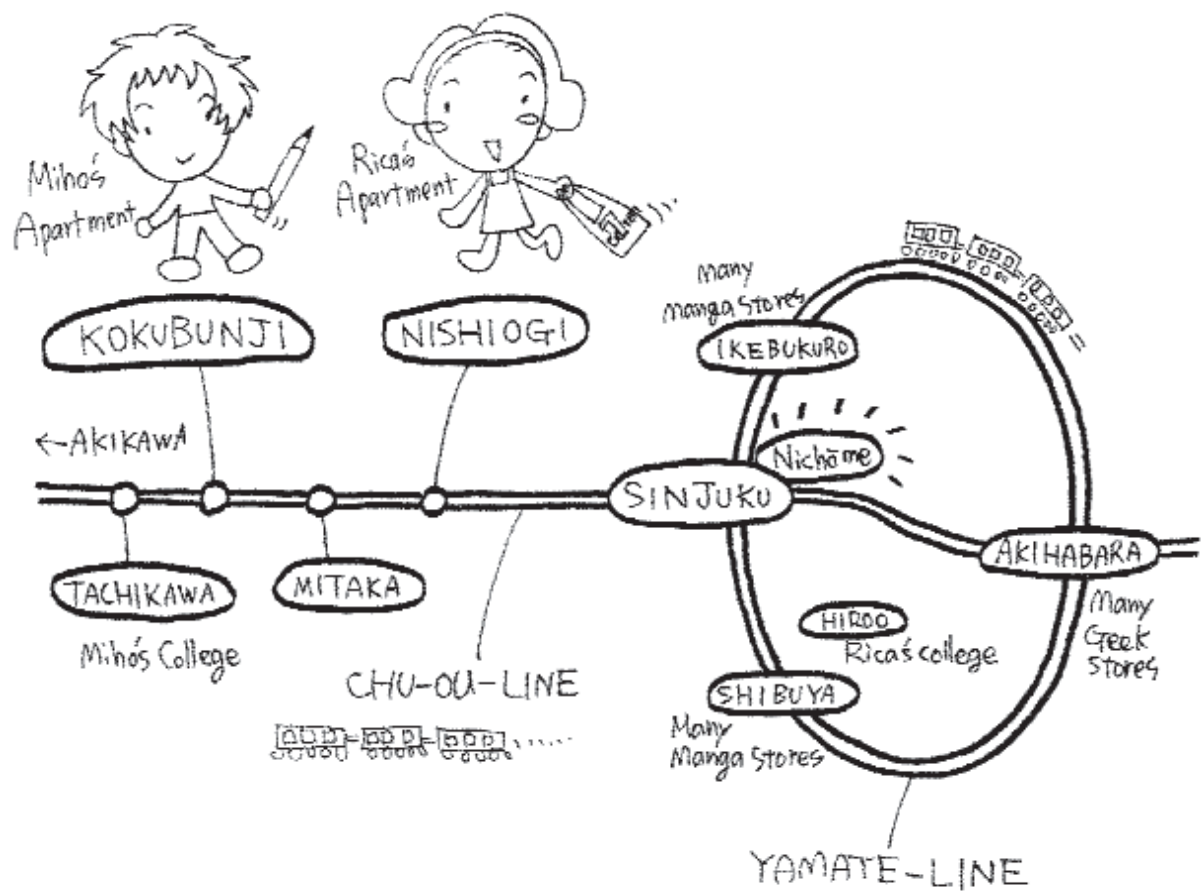
Before *Anise* magazine, *Monthy Gekko* and magazines like that came out, there wasn't any place for women to exchange letters, and exchanging letters through the mail took time. Going to a bar was a way we could meet with people like ourselves and have direct discussions.

In Japan then, it was possible for a teen to drink, the threshold was much lower. So it was just a typical behavior for a Japanese person.



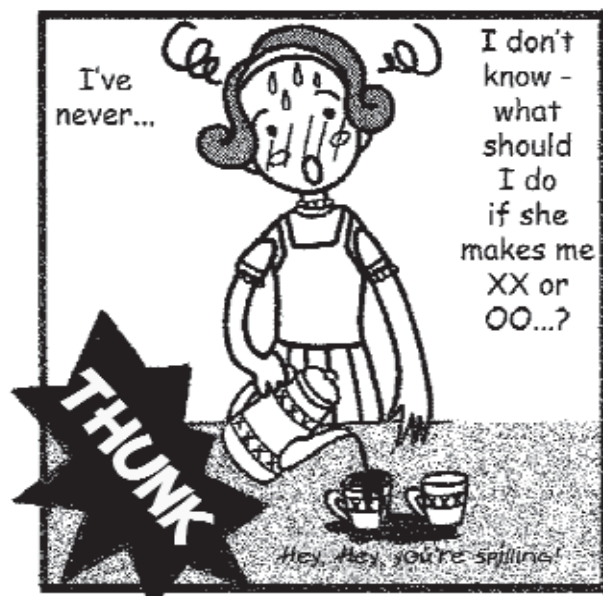
RICA

Tokyo Train Map





"Ojamashimasu" is what you say when you enter someone else's home





You have to catch the last train, don't you?

Why do I have to hurry?



Come on, Miho-san, hurry up!

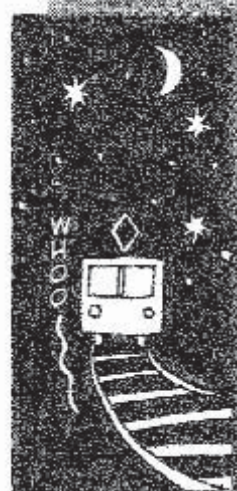
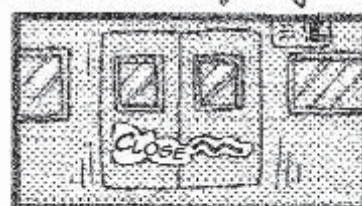
Run faster!

Trains stop running about 1 AM from Shinjuku



I live near Kokubunji Station, so my last train is already gone.

This train only goes as far as the Mitaka Station



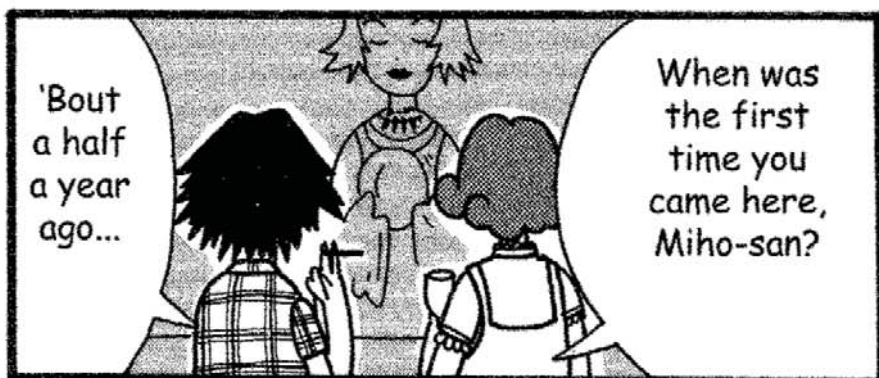
I was planning on staying in Shinjuku drinking until morning...

When did you start making my decisions for me? Changing my schedule just like that



I have a great idea! You can stay at my place!

Really - you don't have to hesitate - it'll be fine.





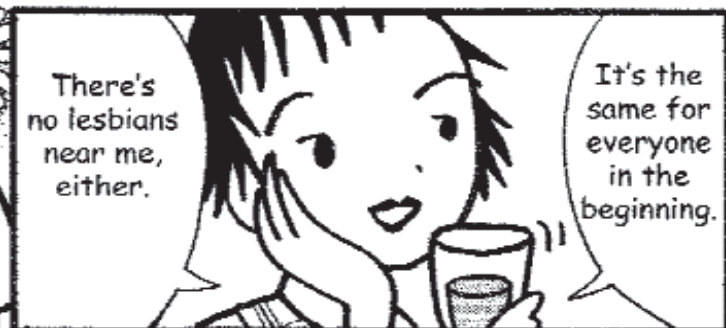
Uh...
sure.

Then,
let's be
friends,
Miho-san!

GRAB



I grew up
out in the country.
So, I've never met
an actual lesbian -
this is the first
time I can talk
to someone
openly.

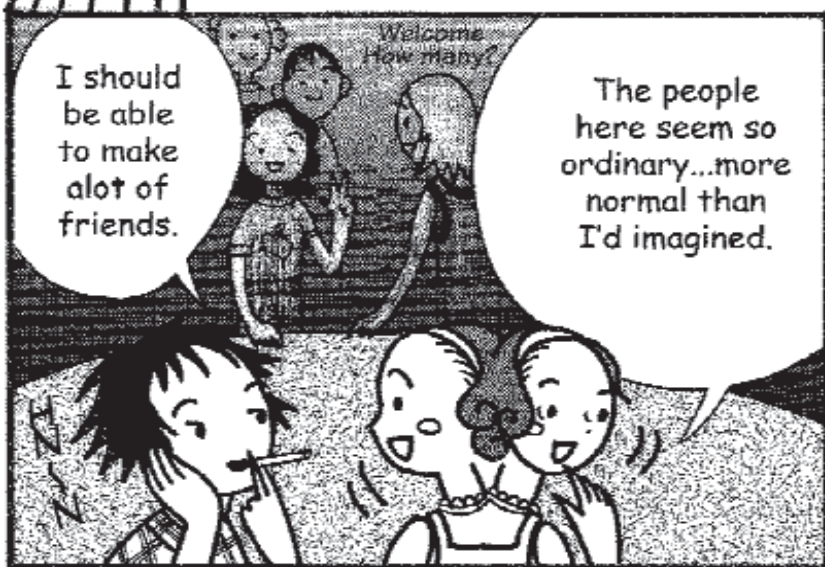


There's
no lesbians
near me,
either.

It's the
same for
everyone
in the
beginning.



Yes, but there aren't
too many I'd want
to go out with.



I should
be able
to make
alot of
friends.

The people
here seem so
ordinary...more
normal than
I'd imagined.

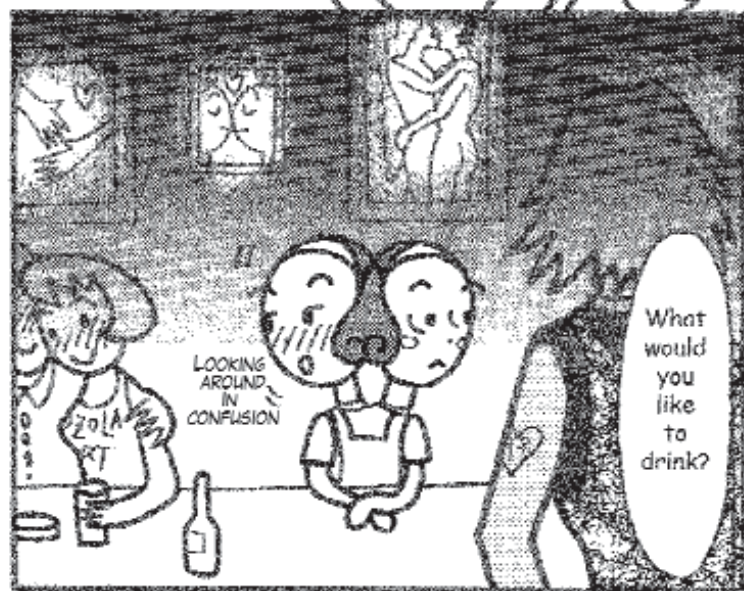
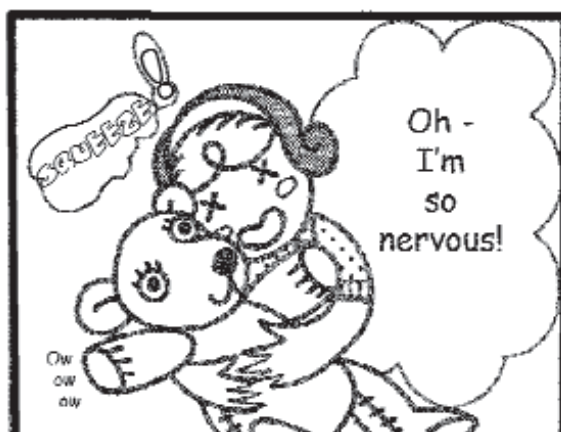


You
really don't
have a
girl-
friend?

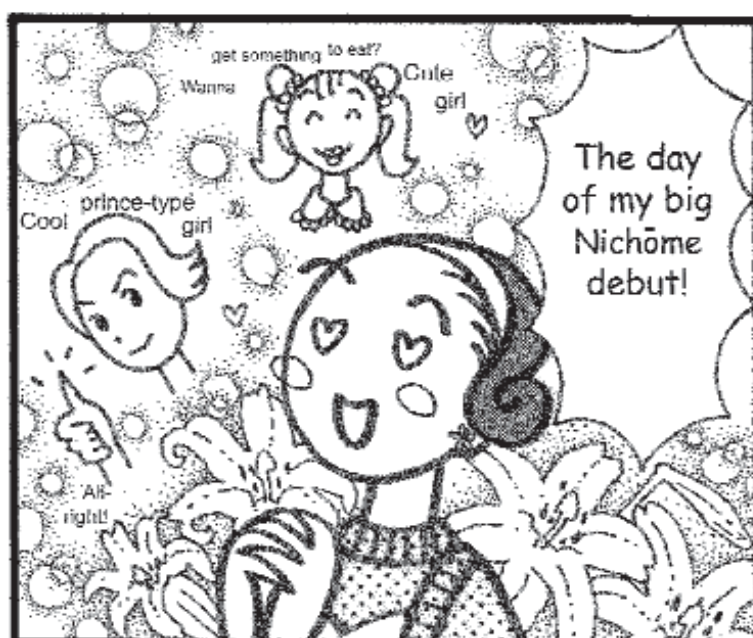
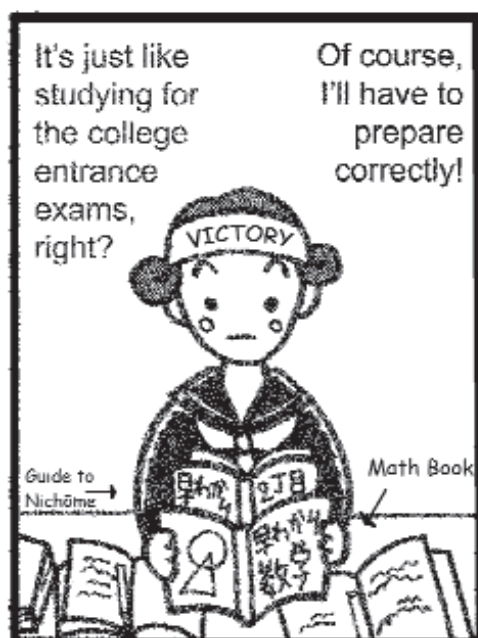
Whaaat??
You're kidding - really?
I figured you were
popular, you look
so cool!

I don't
know what
to say to
that...

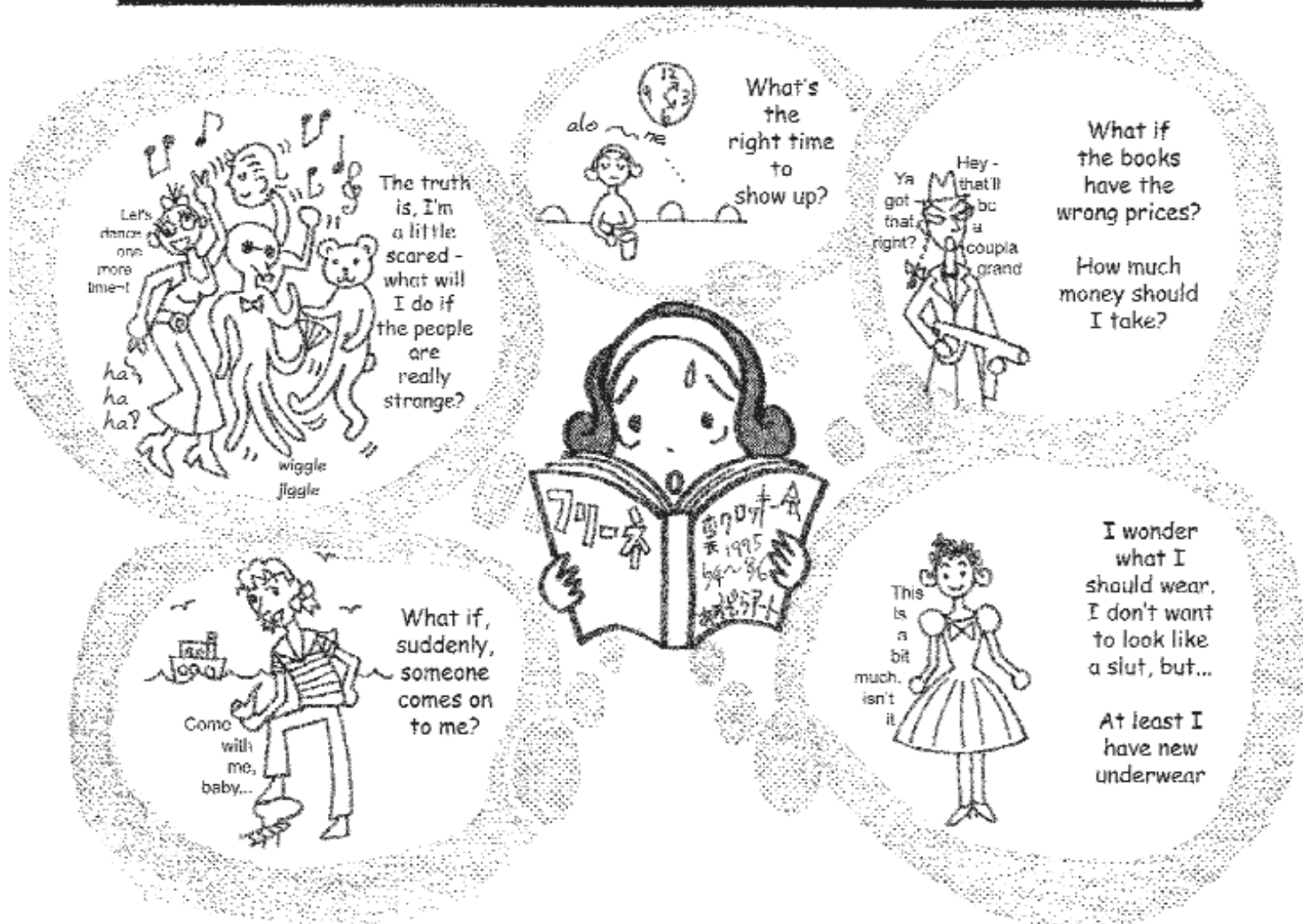
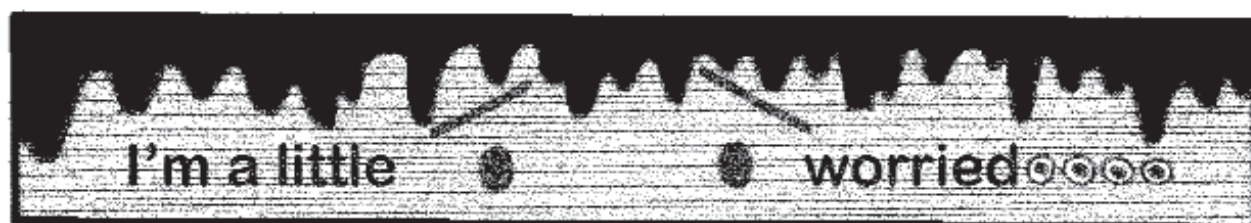




In the end, Rica put on her normal clothes



← Conventional flower imagery



Magazine Cover: *Phryne*, a Japanese lesbian magazine, from the mid-1990s

by Rica Takashima

Rica 'tte Kanji!?

This spring,
I'm entering
Tokyo Women's
Junior College
as a student.



Hello,
my name is
Takashima
Rica -
nice to
meet you



Now
is my
favorite
time to
do and see
my favorite
things -
that's obvious.

Of course, since I'm
going to Tokyo
by myself, it's a
good excuse to
go to Nichōme*
to make some friends.



At home, books
with women
having sex
made me
a little
nervous,
but I want
to see.

This book says
that area's
a little...
disturbing

this
day
has
come.

And,
at last,

*Shinjuku Nichōme is the gay and lesbian area of Tokyo

Magazine Cover: "MonthlyTakarajima," a Japanese magazine that famously did a LGBT issue

continue to work together. Ai-chan worked a bar on Shinjuku San-choume (next to Ni-choume), and would come with me to Ni-choume events and clubs, and her drawings about us doing whatever or talking about whatever in Ni-choume felt very spontaneous.

EF: *What are some thoughts you have about the first edition of Rica in English?*

RT: From the start, all the events that led up to the publishing of *Rica 'tte Kanji!?* in English, from the fateful moment when Erica and I met, right through the production of the book in English, seemed very smooth and natural; my reaction was that it was the right thing to do.

EF: I met you in 1992, when you came to our very first Yuricon event in New York City. It was the first time I had ever been in a lesbian bar and you picked me up! (Just kidding.) You told me you were a manga artist and when I first read *Rica*, I knew I wanted to publish it. It wasn't the same old coming out story, and it wasn't a love story...it was a story about a young lesbian's life. I knew instantly that was exactly the kind of story I wanted to publish.

I had never published anything before, so I made a lot of mistakes. I had no idea people hated Comic Sans MS! It looked "good enough" for me, so that's why the first half of this book is in Comic Sans MS. Man, have I been scourged for that choice! (I left it in, because it's part of this book's history.) We were originally publishing *doujinshi**, so the printing was small and lower print quality. So, some of the early chapters look grainy, too, now that we're reprinting them.

But when I look at the book now, I'm still very pleased with it. Of course, the story is timeless.... Rica's art has changed over time, too, but those first chapters have such a light-heartedness...they still make me smile.

I'm so pleased to be able to bring this retrospective of your work in to existence. The world needs more stories about lesbian lives and loves.

**Doujinshi*: Small press or self-published Japanese comics

Free Talk



Hello, Erica Friedman and Rica Takashima here. We have been working together since 2003 on *Rica 'tte Kanji!?*, and we thought it would make a nice feature to let you in to our thoughts and decisions over the years, so you can understand some of our feelings as we created this book. Also, *Rica 'tte Kanji!?* was begun 15 years ago now (oh my god, that long ago?) and many things have changed since then. We'll be talking before some of the chapters, but let's start with the basics!

EF: *What were you thinking when you started to draw Rica 'tte Kanji!??*



RT: In 1994, when I began drawing the first chapters of this series, I was 28 years old. My friend Mami-chan, an editor, had suggested it. "Want to try drawing a manga?" She had just started up a lesbian magazine and needed writers.

I realized I liked women around high school, but my romantic interest in girls around me had begun earlier, during middle school. I looked for information about that but, in those days, there wasn't any real information available. Every once in a while there was a gay magazine, which I would stand in a gay bookstore and read obsessively, but not buy.

There were hardly any lesbian-themed novels or manga, maybe a little fantasy or science fiction, but the endings were always grim, everyone died. However, I did enjoy looking at photos of female models in men's magazines.

When I was little, my friends had taken up drawing manga as a hobby, and I thought I could do that. About that time, Ai-chan, a friend, expressed feelings of love towards her manager at work and she drew a comic about it. Somehow, they were able to

ALC Publishing

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Translation: Erin Subramanian
Erica Friedman

Editors: Hoffman and Chapman Publishing Services

Production Editor/Coloring: Takami Koka

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Production Intern: Diana Hsu

Publisher: Erica Friedman

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All characters in this work are portrayed as over 18, and are fictional in any case, duh.

Tokyo Love

Rica 'tte Kanji!?

