“MR. OKUMURA’S EGGPLANT” IS A STORY ALL ABOUT FOOD. AS SUCH, A NUMBER OF JAPANESE FOODS APPEAR IN IT WHICH THE READER MIGHT WISH TO BE ACQUAINTED WITH. (IF YOU ALREADY ARE, CONGRATULATIONS AND MAY I COME OVER FOR DINNER?) SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT ALL OF THESE.

**EGGPLANT**
Similar to its American counterpart, but long and skinny with a thin skin. They make deep indigo pickles.

**OYAKO DONBURI**
A hot bowl of rice topped with chicken and egg cooked in a savory sauce. The name means “parent and child.”

**TSUKEMONO: PICKLED VEGETABLES**
A traditional part of Japanese cuisine. There are a number of different varieties, including vegetables pickled in salt, vinegar, miso, and rice bran.

**UDON**
Fat noodles made from white flour, usually served in a bowl of hot broth, or sometimes pan-fried with vegetables.

**TONKATSU**
Crispy, deep-fried breaded pork cutlet, served with a special sweet and tangy sauce and heaps of shredded cabbage.

**TORORO**
Grinding raw yamaimo (mountain yam) or nagaimo (long yam) produces this delicious gooey ooze which is often spooned over rice.

**ANPAN: RED BEAN CAKES**
White rolls filled with a sweet paste made from mashed azuki beans and sugar.

**KOROKKE: CROQUETTES**
Of western origin; pudgy patties made primarily from mashed potato, sometimes with meat, seafood, or vegetables, rolled in crispy panko crumbs and deep-fried.

**KABOCHA**
A buttery pumpkin-like squash. Gentle simmering brings out its subtle flavors.
THE STORY IS ALSO INTERSPERSED WITH A CHILDREN'S DRAWING SONG. AS YOU SAY THE RHYME, YOU DRAW THE PICTURE. IT GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS... (DON'T FORGET TO READ RIGHT TO LEFT, AS IN THE MANGA.)

IT'S A DUCKY IN A Bog

IT'S A LEAF

ONCE THERE WAS A STICK

IT'S A FROG

NOW WATCH IT DO A TRICK

AND BROUGHT WITH HIM TO SHARE:
A WEDGE OF FINE GRUYERE,

TO HAVE A SPOT OF TEA
WITH NOT TWO LUMPS
BUT THREE

WHO MET HIS FRIEND THE LOON
ON THE SUNNY SIXTH OF JUNE
(DRAW TWO SIXES)

AND JUST BECAUSE IT'S HANDY,
A BUNCH OF COTTON CANDY.

NOW STAND BACK AND LOOK—
I THINK YOU'LL FIND A COOK!

TWO FLUFFY CAKES LIKE MUM'S,

TWO LONGISH HOT DOG BUNS,
MR. OKUMURA'S EGGPLANT
EXCUSE ME

COULD I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

WHAT DID YOU HAVE FOR LUNCH?

ON THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1988?

BE RIGHT WITH YOU.
I... I DON'T KNOW.
AAGH!

DON'T TURN AROUND! STAY WHERE YOU ARE!

YOU'RE MR. OKUMURA, RIGHT? OKUMURA FUKUO, WHO USED TO WORK FOR ISHIHAMA MOTORS IN KANAGAWA.

WHAT IS IT?

MY APOLOGIES, BUT WOULD YOU MIND COMING AROUND TO SIT IN FRONT OF ME?

COULD I POSSIBLY GET YOU TO LEND ME THAT NEWSPAPER?

HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?

MY MENTOR IS CURRENTLY IN QUITE A PICKLE.

I'M SORRY TO BE SO ABRUPT. MY NAME IS TOKUDA.

I WANT TO HELP, SO I THOUGHT I'D COME TALK TO YOU.
I WON'T TELL ANYONE. WHAT IS IT?

Yeah, OK.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY I'M ASKING.

KANAGAWA... THAT WAS TWENTY ODD YEARS AGO...

ISHIHAMA MOTORS... WE HAD AN EMPLOYEE CAFETERIA.

AND YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT I ATE?

YOU TRYING TO MAKE UP SOME WEIRD ALIBI?

MR. OKUMURA, WHAT DID YOU EAT FOR LUNCH ON THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1968?

BUT THE MENU CHANGED EVERY DAY.

DO YOU REMEMBER THAT DAY'S ENTREE?

I RUN A STORE, ACTUALLY

THEN WHY WOULD I REMEMBER?

OF COURSE NOT.

OF COURSE NOT.

OF COURSE NOT.

NOT AT ALL.
I'M HEADING OUT TOO.

SORRY I WASN'T ABLE TO BE OF ANY HELP.

AND THERE'S NOBODY THERE RIGHT NOW.

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE ME.

YOU KNOW, I CAME FROM VEEERY FAR AWAY.

THAT COMES TO 1,450 YEN.

HERE YOU GO.
ON THE SUNNY 6TH OF JUNE

THE LOON

...WHO MET HIS FRIEND

a wedge of fine gruyère

and brought with him to share

on the sunny 6th of June
DID I SCARE YOU?
DID I SCARK YOU?

OH, LET ME PAY YOU BACK FOR THAT OYAKO DONBURI!!

YOU'RE THAT GIRL FROM LUNCH...

I JUST BROUGHT YOU A LITTLE GIFT.
I HEARD THAT YOUR WIFE WAS OUT OF TOWN, SO I THOUGHT...

NAH, FORGET ABOUT THAT.

...I'D BRING YOU DINNER.
COULD I POSSIBLY BORROW THAT TOWEL?

...SURE?

MORE IMPORTANTLY, DO YOU HAVE A FEW MINUTES TO TALK?

BOY, THESE FEET SURE ARE A NUISANCE.

I GUESS THAT'S WHAT I GET FOR BEING SLOPPY WITH MY RESEARCH.

THANK YOU

...I FIGURED THEY WERE TOENAILS.

I WENT TO THE LIBRARY AND FOUND MYSELF A GOOD ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA. THEN I TOOK THAT TO THE HOSPITAL ...

...AND GOT THEM TO MAKE ME THIS.

THIS ISN'T MY REAL BODY.

I TOTALLY FAILED TO NOTICE THAT YOU CAN REMOVE THEM.
I had to go back for another surgery once I realized.

So I thought...

There's this hole here, right?

Like these. What do you call them? "Glasses"?

But I wasn't too clear on the details.

We did a pretty slipshod job on all the parts you can't see.

That's right. They don't come off!

Are they...

Stuck on?

I should explain. She's a researcher of culinary culture.

But I doubt you remember her. She was rather inconspicuous.

Is your mentor also... like that?
RECENTLY, RUMORS HAVE BEGUN TO CIRCULATE THAT MY MENTOR WAS THE ONE WHO BROKE IT.

ONE DAY, AN OLD, WORN TEACUP WAS FOUND BROKEN AMIDST THE OTHER DISHES ON THE SHELVES.

MY MENTOR WAS STILL JUST A STUDENT AT THE CULINARY RESEARCH INSTITUTE.

IT WAS 25 YEARS AGO.

BUT SHE COLDN'T HAVE DONE IT! SHE WASN'T EVEN AT THE INSTITUTE THAT DAY!

SOMEONE HAPPENED TO FIND THE SAME TYPE OF TEACUP IN MY MENTOR'S HOUSE.

THEY NOTICED RIGHT AWAY BECAUSE THAT TYPE OF CUP IS QUITE RARE.

FAAAAAR AWAY LAND.

STUDYING THE EATING HABITS OF A CERTAIN POPULATION.

IN A FAR
THAT'S RIGHT. ALTHOUGH, TO BE EXACT, SHE WASN'T SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE BUT ON IT.

SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE FROM ME, AT ISHIHAMA MOTORS.

SO YOU'RE SAYING YOUR MENTOR WAS IN THE SAME PLACE AS ME.

IT'S SO CONVENIENT!

MY MENTOR CAN REPORT WHAT YOU HAD FOR LUNCH THAT DAY.

IT WAS MUCH HARDER TO DO ME. SO MUCH MORE MASS.

YOU FIND ON A DINING TABLE.

YEAH ...

THINK ABOUT ALL THE LITTLE ITEMS ...

SHE WAS WRITING A REPORT ON WHAT FOODS PEOPLE LIKE TO EAT WITH WHITE RICE. SHE TRIED TO GET AS CLOSE TO HER SUBJECTS AS SHE COULD.

IF IT MATCHES WITH WHAT YOU RECALL,

once

there was

a stick

IT WILL PUT AN END TO ALL OF THESE RUMORS.
Maybe there's somebody who remembers that day really well!

I wonder if there's some record of the old menus...

It's a leaf.

I can't remember anything!

Yeah!

No!

Guess not.

Like, someone who had a kid that day.

All right, all right, I didn't mean it.

If you stand up to the others...

Suppose your mentor actually is guilty?

Isn't there a statute of limitations anyway?

You sell a lot of different things here.
HMM? SO IS THE OTHER SAUCE CONTAINER BEHIND HER SOMEBODY ELSE?

THAT'S SAUCE.

THAT'S HER FABRICATED BODY. THIS IS A SHOT OF HER AT WORK IN THE FIELD.

THIS IS YOUR MENTOR? ALL I SEE IS A BOTTLE OF SOY SAUCE.

SHE'S HAD TO GO TO A HEALTH RETREAT BECAUSE OF ALL THIS MESS.

THIS IS HER. SHE'S 49 THIS YEAR.

SAUCE. YOU KNOW, SAUCE? THE BROWN STUFF YOU PUT ON TONKATSU. CMON, JEEZ.

YEAH, GUESS SO.
KRU

I'M JUST FOUND OUT THAT MY MENTOR RECORDED A VIDEO THAT DAY!

MR. OKUMURA!

SHE WAS USING THE FOOTAGE IN HER STUDIES...

THAT'S GOOD NEWS! NOW YOU HAVE YOUR PROOF—A SHOT OF ME AND HER!

BUT HEY

...BUT NOBODY BELIEVES IT WAS ACTUALLY TAKEN ON JUNE 6TH. HAVE A LOOK.

NO, MY MENTOR WAS THE ONE RECORDING, SO SHE'S NOT IN IT.

NAW

OHO! YOU ALL HAVE ALREADY INVENTED THE LINEAR MOTOR BICYCLE? WAY TO GO, EARTH!

PARDON

I FIGURED YOU GUYS WOULDN'T HAVE VCRS HERE, SO I BROUGHT MY OWN.

JUST NEED TO PLUG IT IN.
I'M... EATING SOMETHING...

DON'T WATCH THE TAPE, WATCH THE TV SCREEN!

EGG... PLANT?

YES! THE EGG-PLANT!
HE REALLY DID, HE PROMISED HE'D GIVE ME ONE IF I PASSED.

MY MY!

I WAS FINE ON THE DIESEL ENGINES PART. THE WELDING WAS REALLY TOUGH. MR. SHIMODA SAID HE'D GIVE ME A MOTORCYCLE IF I PASSED MY LEVEL TWOS TODAY.
UH-HUH!

THAT'S LOVELY.
SHALL I REWIND IT?

THAT'S OKAY

THAT'S THE END.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

IT'S VERY CLOSE UP, SO THERE'S NOT MUCH IN THE SHOT, BUT THERE'S ENOUGH TO TELL THAT IT'S DEFINITELY THE ISHIHAMA MOTORS CAFETERIA.

IT'S FROM A LONG TIME AGO.

YES, YOU WERE 19 YEARS OLD.

THAT WAS THE CAFETERIA ALL RIGHT, BUT IT WASN'T NOON. IT WAS AFTER 1:00, BECAUSE WE HAD THE QUALIFICATION EXAMS THAT DAY.

THERE WAS THAT POSTER COUNTING DOWN THE NUMBER OF DAYS LEFT UNTIL THE BIG FESTIVAL. IF I CALCULATE BACKWARDS FROM THAT, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET A PRETTY GOOD IDEA OF THE DATE.

BUT THAT WASN'T LUNCH.
BY THE TIME I'D FINISHED, THE CAFETERIA WAS CLOSED.

DISTRIBUTORS, WELDING, DIESEL. IF YOU PASSED, YOU GOT A RAISE.

WE TOOK A WRITTEN EXAM FOUR TIMES A YEAR.

SO I WENT AND GOT A BOX LUNCH AND BROUGHT IT TO EAT THERE.

THOSE PEOPLE BEHIND ME WERE THE TAKAHASHIS, WHO RAN THE CAFETERIA. THEY WERE EXCITED ABOUT THE WORLD EXPO.

THEY LOVED DOING THE COUNTDOWN. SO IT WAS DEFINITELY ON THE RIGHT DAY.

JUNE 6TH, 1968.

IT'S A DUCKY.

THAT POSTER'S RIGHT.

YOUR MENTOR IS INNOCENT.
THANK YOU SO MUCH. MY MENTOR WILL BE GLAD WHEN I BRING HER THE NEWS.

THE WORLD EXPO OPENED ON MARCH 15TH, 1970. THE VIDEO WAS DEFINITELY FROM JUNE 6TH.

OH! WELL NOW!

WANT TO HAVE A GOING-AWAY PARTY?

OH YEAH? GOOD GOOD.
HA HA! YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.

FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE!

I GOT SOME PICKLED EGGPLANT AT THE GROCERY STORE, HEH.

SHE LEFT ALL SORTS OF STUFF FOR ME IN THE FRIDGE.

MY SON'S STARTING COLLEGE THIS YEAR, SO HE'S OFF APARTMENT HUNTING WITH HIS MOM.

IT'S THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THAT EGGPLANT.

YES, WE EAT. OUR SENSE OF TASTE IS QUITE DIFFERENT, THOUGH.

DO YOU EAT LIKE THIS WHERE YOU'RE FROM?

HOW COULD YOU HAVE EXPECTED ME TO REMEMBER THAT?

SLUUURP

I'VE NEVER TRIED IT.

WHAT DOES BEER TASTE LIKE?
I see! It's cold.

A big round one.

Ooh.

It's kabocha squash.

No, no. Mr. Okumura, it's fine.

Next!

The eggplant!

It's better hot.

Oh, want me to zap it?


Beats me!
FIRST

I'M NOT EVEN GONNA BOTHER TO PEEL THIS ONE.

MY WIFE HATES THESE, SO SHE NEVER SERVES THEM.

I KEEP HOPING SHE'LL CHANGE HER MIND, BUT NO DICE.

NOW THE EGG PLANT.
EVEN AFTER 25 YEARS, I COULD NEVER EVER FORGET THIS FLAVOR!

I THINK I'LL TRY THIS CROQUETTE NEXT!

NO NO, THAT'S NOT A CROQUETTE!
MR. OKUMURA, THAT EGG-PLANT IS POISONOUS.

DIDN'T I EXPLAIN THIS? I'M AN EARTHENWARE TEAPOT.

BUT YOU JUST ATE SOME!

AT THIS RATE, I'LL BE A TRASH CAN, NOT A TEAPOT.

MR. OKUMURA!

AHH, FRIED FOODS ARE SO HARD TO WASH OUT!
I'm taking this!

SQUEEEEERP
REALLY? YOU DON'T THINK IT LOOKS STRANGE?

NOOO! THAT FABRICATION REALLY SUITS YOU!

YOU LOOK FANTASTIC!

OH MY!

YOU'RE CALLING SO EARLY, I THOUGHT SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

NO WAY. YOUR MOM MIGHT SAY YES, BUT I SAY NO.

JUST GO WITH THE FIRST ONE!

YEAH, THAT'S PLENTY BIG ENOUGH FOR ONE PERSON!
OKAY, GONNA GO.
OKAY, BYE.

UH-HUH.
YES, I'M EATING.

DAY AFTER TOMORROW?
WHEN'D YOU SAY YOU'RE COMING BACK?

TNK
I thought I could at least cook you a new one.

I'm terribly sorry for washing away your wife's kabocha yesterday.

It turns out they're exceedingly tough.

Wishing not to inconvenience your wife with a half-cut squash, I came looking for a bigger knife.

One day, we harvested a new type of eggplant.

Oh, bravo!

After you eat it, a long time passes, and then suddenly--

From our research gardens.
AND THEN

...IT TURNS TO POISON.

THEY'D BE SUITABLE FOR SOME FUTURE AGING SOCIETY, RIGHT? SO WE WANTED TO DO AN EXPERIMENT.

THE "TIMERS" RANGE FROM 50 YEARS TO 300.

THE MORE WE STUDIED IT, THE LONGER THE WAITING TIME GREW. THE "TIMER."

I NEED SOME BATTERIES, BUT WHICH ONES LAST LONGER?

MR. OKUMURA

YOU HAVE A CUSTOMER.
MR. OKUMURA

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DOING THIS?!

OF OLD AGE, SO WE TRIED SLIGHTLY QUICKER ONES.

BUT THOSE PEOPLE EVENTUALLY DIED.

WE STARTED BY HAVING PEOPLE EAT THE 300-YEAR TYPE.

WE MOVED DOWN TO 200-YEAR EGGPLANTS, THEN 100-YEAR ONES, BUT IT WAS STILL TOO LONG, SO WE DECIDED TO SWITCH TO THE QUICKER ONES.

THE 30-YEAR ONES.

BUT BUT BUT! WE NEVER HAD ANY SUCCESS. WE TRIED TO GET THE YOUNGEST TEST SUBJECTS POSSIBLE, BUT THEY ALL UP AND DIED TOO SOON.

WE DON'T NEED A TIMER.

THIS ONE'S GOT A TIMER.

IT'S BETTER TO HAVE A TIMER.

BETTER TO HAVE A TIMER, HUH?
WE CHOSE YOUNG TEST SUBJECTS. PEOPLE LIKE...

YOUR 19-YEAR-OLD SELF!

I'LL REPEAT THE MOST IMPORTANT BIT, MR. OKUMURA.

THUD

MY MENTOR FAILED TO FEED IT TO YOU.

YOU HAVEN'T YET INJECTED THE POISON.

...THAT I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR.

DON'T PANIC. THERE'S ONE THING...
BUT YOU BROUGHT A BOX LUNCH INSTEAD.

SHE INTENDED TO PUT THE POISON EGGPLANT ON YOUR PLATE.

THAT DAY, SHE WAS WAITING FOR YOU ON THE LUNCH TABLE.

...OH.

IT ONLY OCCURRED TO ME WHEN I HEARD WHAT YOU SAID.

I REALIZED WHEN WE WATCHED THE VIDEO TWO DAYS AGO.
Lunchtime came, and the Ishihama Motors employees started pouring in. But you were nowhere to be found.

She was waiting on standby on top of your table, just a bit before noon.

It's hard to say this, but my mentor has been lying about that day for a long time.

Inside the box, she could just see the purple skin of an eggplant.

Then you appeared, carrying a small square box.

She started to worry when the lunch hour ended. The Takahashis closed up shop and took off their aprons.

She didn't say anything to you?

And she presented that material to the institute as experimental data.

On the spur of the moment, she began filming.
...I picked the five-year eggplant.

I wondered if I couldn't do something to fix my mentor's mistake. 30 minus 25 is five, so...

So this time I borrowed a video from the resource room myself.

Cleaning house?

mm-hm.

What about me?

What?

She just passed away. I got a telegram last night.

Everyone will find out.

I figure we'll just pretend we don't know anything.

But I'm not gonna die when I hit 49.

Maybe so.
SO I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE EGGPLANT IN YOUR LUNCH THAT DAY...

I THINK SHE DIED HAPPY.

IT WAS AFTER WE CLEARED HER NAME ABOUT THE TEACUP.

IT'S JUST, I BET THAT WHEN YOU TURN 49, SOMEONE'S GOING TO COME AND ASK IF YOU REALLY ATE THE EGGPLANT.

YOU DON'T, DO YOU.

...DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT IT TASTED LIKE?

"I DID, IN FACT! I CAN ALMOST TASTE THEM NOW!"

IF YOU TRIED HARD, YOU COULD REMEMBER THEM?

DON'T YOU THINK.

THEY MIGHT MAKE YOU EAT SOME RIGHT THEN. SO WHY NOT SAY,

IF YOU TELL THEM HONESTLY THAT YOU DIDN'T.
41

HOW WAS THE TEST?

THAT DOES IT! I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS ALL DAY!

NOTHING. JUST THINKING THAT YOUR MEMORY SEEMS FINE...

I PASSED, WHY?

I'M NEVER EATING EGGPLANT AGAIN.

OH, COULD THIS BE OKUMURA'S SPECIAL FLAVOR?

GIVE ME A FRICKING BREAK! I'VE TOLD YOU OVER AND OVER THAT I JUST DON'T KNOW!

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY EGGPLANTS I'VE EATEN IN MY LIFE?
BEFORE YOU GOT MARRIED

YOU AND YOUR WIFE LIKED TO PLAY BADMINTON.

ha ha ha

AND THEN ONE DAY

HYA!
"WHAT DID YOU EAT FOR LUNCH ON THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1968?"

MR. OKUMURA

WHEN YOUR SON HAD A BICYCLE ACCIDENT AND HAD TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL

IF SHE'D ASKED YOU THAT THEN, YOU WOULD HAVE SAID, "EGGPLANT."

"WHAT DID YOU EAT FOR LUNCH ON THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH, 1968?"

YOU'RE THE BOY'S FATHER?

YES

YES?
THEY DIDN'T ASK, SO YOU DIDN'T ANSWER, BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE DONE SO THEN IF YOU'D REMEMBERED.

IF THEY'D ASKED THEN, YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ANSWER.

YOU WOULD HAVE ANSWERED, "EGGPLANT."

BECAUSE THEY ARE ALL WHAT HAPPENED

AND HOW ALL OF THEM ARE CONNECTED TO JUNE 6TH.

AND THOSE TIMES WHEN YOU WERE SO MISERABLE THAT YOU DIDN'T EVEN FEEL LIKE EATING.

THINK ABOUT THE TIMES WHEN YOU WERE HAVING SO MUCH FUN THAT YOU FORGOT ALL ABOUT FOOD

AFTER YOU ATE THAT EGGPLANT THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER.
MR. OKUMURA

KLIK

WHAT'TAYA KNOW, TURNS OUT THEY COPY TO TAPE JUST FINE.

I PUT IN A TAPE ON A WHIM, AND...

NOODLES ARE ALL RIGHT, BUT THEY'RE KIND OF FRAGILE.

JUST DANDY!

THIS DEVICE IS VERY USEFUL.

MM-HMM.
FOR ALIEN INVADERS, YOU GUYS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE VERY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.

WAH.

I KNOW.

WHAT A SHAME! IF ONLY WE COULD SEE IT.

WHAT IS IT?

SORRY, I LIKE TO EAT WITH BAD MANNERS.

YOU CAN'T SEE THE CRUCIAL MOMENT WHERE YOU BITE THE EGGPLANT. THE BOX IS IN THE WAY.

YEAH.

SHOULD I SAY THANK YOU OR SOMETHING?

THE SOY SAUCE BOTTLE THAT WAS SITTING ON THE TABLE.

OH! IT'S YOUR MENTOR!

THE REFLECTION ON THE LID...
HERE IN THE BACKGROUND.

YOU NOTICE SOMETHING STRANGE.

HUUH, WHEN YOU STOP IT ON THIS FRAME.

HA HA

THERE WAS A SCHOOL NEXT DOOR.

OH YEAH.

THIS KID PEERING IN.

MAYBE THE LITTLE GUY WAS HUNGRY, EH?
HE MIGHT BE THE ONLY WITNESS!

THE TAKAHASHIS ARE NO LONGER WITH US, BUT WE'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE...

"DID YOU SEE THAT EGGPLANT ON JUNE 6TH?"

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO, GO ASK HIM?! SHOW HIM THE NOODLES?

LISTEN ... WITH SOMEONE WHO WAS IN GRADE SCHOOL AT THE TIME.

YOU'D BE SURPRISED. SOMETIMES BystANDERS ARE MORE HELPFUL.

IT'S OKAY, HE'S JUST FORGOTTEN IT.

YOU'LL RECALL THAT I'D FORGOTTEN TOO.

NORMAL PEOPLE DON'T REMEMBER THINGS LIKE THAT.

MMM, THAT LOOKS GOOD.

AFTER ALL, YOU YOURSELF AREN'T CAPABLE OF WITNESSING THE CRUCIAL MOMENT.

BUT HE WAS WATCHING. MAYBE HE WAS EVEN THINKING ABOUT IT.
TOLD YOU.

HE SAYS HE DOESN'T REMEMBER A THING.

WHAT! YOU DO HAVE A VCR!

IT WAS RIGHT AFTER LUNCH BREAK, SO HE MUST NOT HAVE BEEN HUNGRY.

BUT YOU WEREN'T THINKING ABOUT ANYTHING OTHER THAN YOUR MOTORCYCLE.

THIS IS AN ELECTROMAGNETIC HOTPLATE.

HM?
THE CRUCIAL MOMENT!

THE UDON!

NOW WE ADD

FOR OTHER POTENTIAL WITNESSES. HUNGRY ONES!

NOW WE CAN SEARCH...

THE ONE BEFORE THE ONE BEFORE YOU.

WHOOPS, WRONG ONE. THAT'S SOMEONE WHO TRIED THE EGGPLANT BEFORE YOU.

IT... IT LOOKED LIKE HE HAD A TOPKNOT...

GAH!

WHO IS THIS POOR SAP?!
Tey're playing with a ball. Souiish

Sure does. Souiish.

Looks like his name is Sakuda. Souiish.

No, he's focused on the game. He's watching the ball.

Oho! This one looks hungry!

There's someone on a bicycle behind him.

There's the teacher.

Rats, wonder if there's anybody else?

Oh, I know that guy!
SEE?

SEE THAT GATE? THERE'S A MAILBOX RIGHT NEARBY.

DOES IT SAY "SHIMODA"?

HEY, YOU SEE THAT TRUCK NEXT TO HER?

OH LOOK, THERE'S SOMEONE THERE! SHE MADE IT JUST IN TIME FOR THE PICK-UP.

THAT'S THE LIMIT.

AGH!
IT'S ONLY THREE SECONDS OF FILM, BUT WE MIGHT SEE SOMETHING.

OR HOW ABOUT WE TRY MAKING IT PLAY?

SURE, WE CAN DO THAT.

CAN WE WATCH IT AGAIN? I WANT TO SEE IF I CAN SEE SHIMODA.

BEHIND THE TREE...

UH-HUH

KLIK!

YEAH

SURE, WE CAN DO THAT.

ALL RIGHT, HERE WE GO!
I'LL REWIND THREE SECONDS.

DID YOU EVER GET YOUR MOTORCYCLE?

REALLY? I DIDN'T SEE! I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WAS HIM!

THE WOMAN AT THE MAILBOX MOVED A LITTLE TOO.

THAT'S HIM ALL RIGHT! THAT'S SHI-MODA!

'OF COURSE!

OKAY, HERE WE GO AGAIN.

CONGRATS ON PASSING YOUR LEVEL TWO EXAMS.

SEE, HER HANDS GO LIKE THIS.

GEEZ, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE I LAST SAW HIM?
NOW LET'S WATCH THE POSTMAN.

OKAY, THE TEACHER.

IMAI!

OH NO!

IT TALKED!

STOP THAT!
WHAT'S WRONG?

THAT KID ON THE SIDELINES MUST BE IMAI! WHAT DID HE DO?

DID YOU HEAR THAT?!

MUST BE A PAIN.

I GOT THAT CORN OIL ON MY GLASSES AND NOW IT'S HARD TO SEE.

YOU'RE TELLING ME.

HM?

MR. OKUMURA?

OH, HE'S PULLING UP THE GRASS. THAT'S WHY.

SNAP
THE TEACHER YELLED AT IMAI, RIGHT?

I'M GOING TO GO INVESTIGATE SOMETHING.

IT MIGHT BE JUST THE PROOF WE NEED.

THE POSTMAN WAS LOOKING AT THE TEACHER ...

WHAT WERE YOU LOOKING AT?

DON'T WORRY! I'M NOT GOING TO GO ASK THEM.

WAS LOOKING TOWARD THE POSTMAN.

STOP THAT!

SHE WAS PROBABLY THINKING, "OH GOOD, I JUST MADE IT IN TIME FOR THE PICK-UP!"

SHE SAW HIM COMING ON HIS BICYCLE.

HE TURNED HIS HEAD LIKE THIS AND SAID,

BUT, WELL, PEOPLE DO THINGS LIKE THAT, RIGHT?

I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHY.

...AS HE RODE BY.

AND THE LADY AT THE MAIL-BOX...
THE CRUCIAL MOMENT

IF I CAN FIND THAT ALL SIX OF THOSE PEOPLE WERE THERE

I'VE LEARNED THAT YOU LOT ALL HAVE TERRIBLE MEMORIES. INSTEAD...

THEN SURELY THAT MEANS YOU WERE THERE WITH YOUR EGGPLANT AS WELL.

LOOKING AT EACH OTHER AND THINKING THEIR SEPARATE THOUGHTS

SLAM

HEY!
GRACIOUS, ARE YOU HURT?

OH THANK GOODNESS, YOUR GLASSES ARE ALL RIGHT.

OH MY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, DEAR?

IS THAT THE GIRL FROM THE GROCERY STORE?

THAT WAS QUITE A SPILL YOU TOOK!

...DO YAAAAAA!

A LIIIIITLE DAB'LL...
TA-DA!
MORE IMPORTANTLY!
IT'S FINE.
THEY'LL FIX ME UP AS
SOON AS I GET HOME
ANYWAY.
YOUR EYES!
JUST A BIT.
PANG

DID YOU GET HURT?

OH! SURE.
CAN YOU READ?

I'VE FINISHED MY INVESTIGATION.
SHALL I READ YOU THE REPORT?

HE CAME TO JOIN ME EARLY
BECAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT.

OH, AND I'D LIKE TO MEET MY
HUSBAND.

I HAVE IT MEMORIZED.
MAY I COME IN?

....

HOSPITALITY!
THANKS FOR YOUR...

IT'S AN HONOR...

THIS WAY, WE FIGURED, WE COULD
WALK SIDE-BY-SIDE
WITHOUT BEING CONSPICUOUS.
Presuming that the nearby dodgeball game was about to end, he was thinking, "Geez, I'm bored."

The boy standing outside the window is Sakuda, a 4th-grader at Ogawa Elementary School.

The person scolding him is Mr. Hamada, in charge of Class B. He was thinking, "Imai better not be pulling up the grass."

On the sidelines is Imai. Judging from the bandage on his left hand, he was sitting out because of a jammed finger and thinking, "Sakuda throws too hard."
THE WOMAN AT THE MAILBOX IS YUKIKO. SHE WORKS AT "CLUB PAPA."

TWO WEEKS LATER, HE WENT TO THE DEPARTMENT STORE AND PURCHASED ONE PAIR OF WHITE SPORT SLACKS, SIZE MEDIUM.

THE POSTMAN IS MR. CHIBA. HE WAS THINKING, "THOSE WHITE TROUSERS MR. HAMADA HAS ON ARE SNAZZY!"

THE MAN IN THE TRUCK IS MR. SHI-MODA,

AND THAT

THE MANAGER OF THE SHIMODA PLANT. HE WAS THINKING, "CHECK MIRRORS, WATCH FOR PEDESTRIANS."

CONCLUDES MY REPORT.

once there was a stick

THE ADDRESS CONFIRMS THAT IT WAS A LOVE LETTER. SHE WAS THINKING, "HERE'S TO A BEAUTIFUL TOMORROW."
it's a frog

it's a leaf

BAM!

now watch it do a trick

HEY!

who met his friend the loon

it's a ducky in a bog
to have a spot of tea

but three with hot two lumps

and brought with him to share

and two longish hot dog buns

two little cakes like Mum’s

a wedge of fine gruyère
and just because it's handy

a bunch of cotton candy

but now
stand back and look

now stand back and look...
I think you'll find a cook.

beep

beep

beep

beep

beep

beep

beep

beep

beep