

shokubutsu-zukan  
Arikawa Hiro

植 物 図 鑑

有川浩

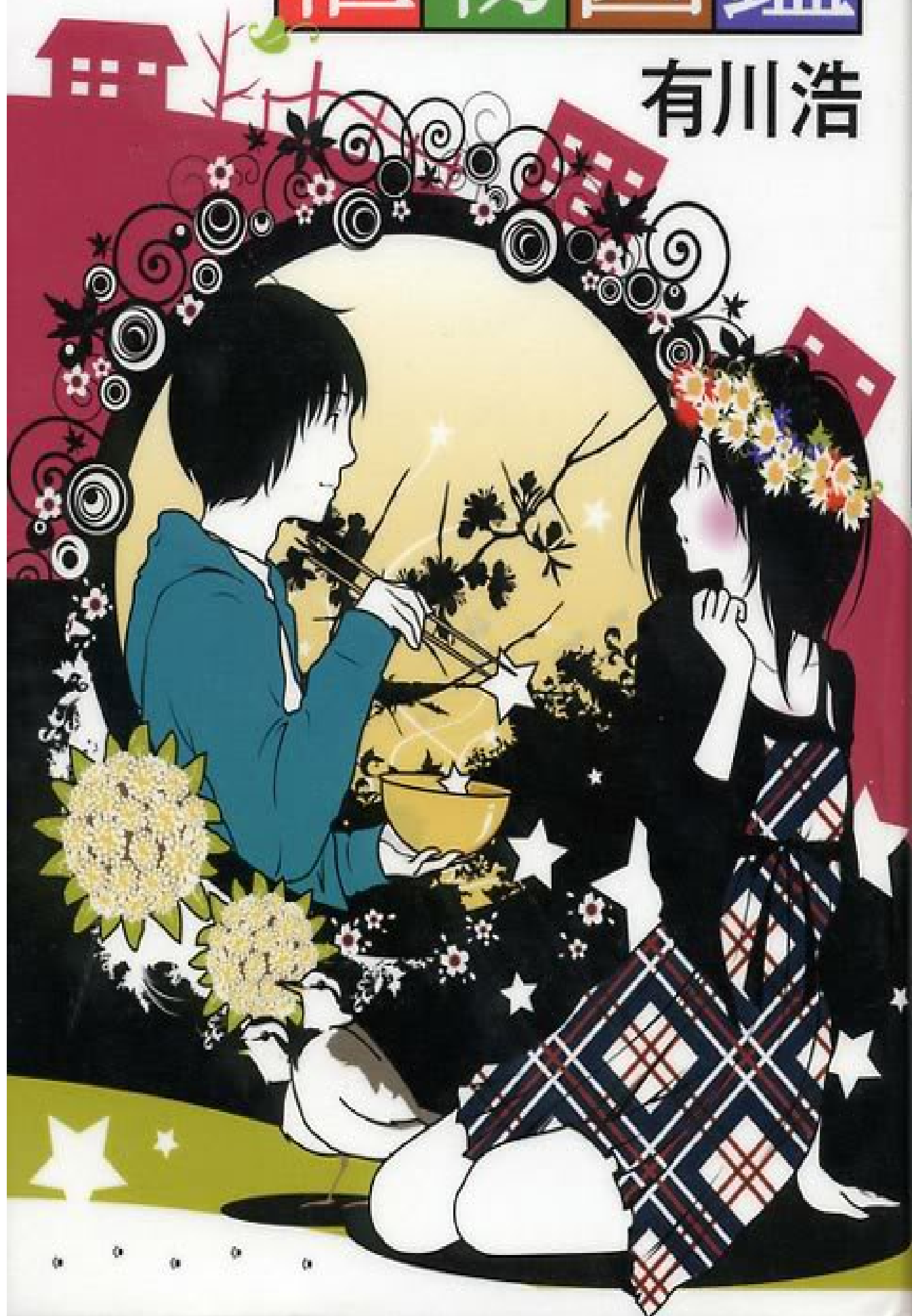




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# 植物図鑑

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# Shokubutsu Zukan - Chapter 01

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# Chapter 1 Paederia scandens var. mairei

## Chapter 1 - Chicken-dung Creeper - Paederia scandens var. mairei[[edit](#)]

\*

On that day, while I was running everywhere with my chief, our dark shadows were casted on the asphalt road; the extreme heat pushing us to the shades under the trees along the pedestrian lane. Some familiar white objects caught our attention. On the fence around the monthly paid parking lot between two buildings were intertwined, copious climbing plants. The white objects we glanced at were small flowers bloomed graciously within the vines. The lily-shaped flowers were laced, rouge-coloured in the centre, delicate and adorable. These small flowers were like bouquets laid everywhere on the pole.

“Oh!” Noticing them, my chief stopped walking, “Aren’t they beautiful? Is this place where the landowner lives?”

“Right you are, chief.”

Hearing what her familiar chief said, Kouno Sayaka couldn’t help letting out a laugh.

“Those are weeds!”

“Weeds?”

Surprised, the chief widened his eyes.

“But they’re beautiful!”

“Although Emperor Hirohito once said that there are no weeds, as every plant has its own name, yet these aren’t species favoured for gardening,” said Sayaka, continuing unconsciously, “its Chinese name is ‘Chicken-dung Creeper’<sup>[1]</sup>”

“Chicken dung...?”

“Yes. When you rub its stem, it would become as smelly as chicken dung! Although some give this other names by their adorable appearances, such as Saotomekazura (早乙女葛) and Shahana (炙花). Nevertheless, the name that piques the most attention was remembered.”

While Sayaka was saying this information with ease, she suddenly noticed the chief at her side was dazed.

“What’s it?”

“Nothing,” the chief replied with a wry smile, “

“It fazed me to hear that you, a pretty young lady, would say such vulgar words with ease. So this is called chicken-dung creeper, I see...”

“Ah!” the chief then suddenly let out, “does this count as sexual harrassment?”

“I-I’d say no...” Sayaka replied vaguely some words meaning she didn’t care. She was already entering her thirties; she couldn’t even expect someone to think her young and pretty.

The chief let out a sigh, continuing to gaze at those adorable flowers, saying, “Chicken-dung creeper...no, let’s just call it Saotomekazura (早乙女葛) !”

“Why would such an adorable flower be named like this? What a pity.”

Neglecting the chief’s sorrowful remark, Sayaka scolded herself in her heart: *What am I doing? Even when he’s my familiar chief and a person I’m not mindful of, he’s still a guy! How would any girl say chicken dung with such a carefree mood? It’s chicken dung! Even the chief would be fazed! I knew there were other better names, but why...why didn’t I say Shahana (炙花) ? I’d say this name because it’s well-known. I can’t help it! Itsuki, it’s all your fault!*

Sayaka diverted the fault to the man who taught her, little by little, the names of plants.

*Before you break up, tell the man a name of a flower! Flowers bloom every year.*

I heard this was written by the literary giant, Kawabata Yasunari. Is it romantic? Does it express subtle emotions? Of course not. *Sayaka concluded in*

*her heart.*

To put it simply, it was plainly weakness. Girls wouldn't think up such ways, for girls wouldn't want to carve themselves in the past memories of a boy they had broken up with. Girls' love are a type of being rewritten; boys' love are the everlasting type. No matter how a girl wants to stick to her old partner, crying and sobbing for it, once she finds new love, she will place all her effort into it, lowering the sweet memories she had with her old lover to the lowest section of importance.

*It's all your fault. It's because of the soft word you left, that after more than thirty years of your death, there are still innocent girls suffering from this social torture! But...*

Sayaka let out a soft sigh. She couldn't really say they broke up, as that man...suddenly disappeared, nowhere to be seen.

*Besides, is there really a past existing between that man and me?*

"Kouno, it's time to go."

Being said by the chief, Sayaka quickly pulled herself together and said lively, "Right!"

\*

"My name is written as the tree (樹), pronounced as Itsuki." This was all the personal information I heard from him. It was the night before the holidays when I saw him. The winter was coming to a louse, the night still freezing cold.

Managing to catch the last train after the gathering, Sayaka was on her way home, the path clouded by the moonlight. Those congregated old rental buildings with two rooms and one lounge looked old, but the distance between each of them were spacious. It was the Sayaka's personal castle. The landlord, though coarse, were not noisy, which was a favourable note. The rental place was quite close to the station, and there was a small shopping street in front of the station. So it was, generally speaking, fairly convenient.

On her way home, though a bit affected by alcohol, Sayaka hummed a popular song of that time; she hummed it with her nose, as she were unfamiliar with the lyrics. When she was about to arrive at the rental place, she saw it—a large black trash bag dumped on the small bush beside the front door.

*Man! This isn't a trash site! I wonder if that large trash bag is for commercial uses? Could it be illegal littering?* As Sayaka whispered in her heart, she, her brows furrowed, approached the trash bag.

“Wuagh! Ahh...” she shrieked a sound inceremonious to the quiet night in the residential area. She backed off, letting a dismal cry without any resemblance to a young female.

*It looks like a trash bag when looking afar, but...it's a human being!*

A man of her age wearing a backpack, his body curled up, was lying in the bushes.

*Is he...dead?*

For she lived here, she would have to call the police, should there be a lying corpse in front of her house. Though drunk, Sayaka could still make a right decision. Silently, she stretched her hand and poked the man's face with her index finger.

*Wa! It's warm.*

Poked, the man slightly opened his eyes...*Nyahh!*

He was quite a handsome guy.

“Eh...” stumped, Sayaka struggled in her words, and asked, finally, “How are you doing?”

The man blinked his eyes, seemingly tired, “I can't hold it any more...”

“Why are you lying here?”

“Because I'll freeze to death if I lie on the road.”

“Why would you freeze to death if you lie on the road?”

“When humans directly lie on the asphalt or concrete road, their warmth would slowly be drained. Humans couldn't garner enough warmth when they lie

on the ground; there must be a medium in between.”

Indeed, there was some grass in the bush.

“Why would you lie down here anyway?”

“My hunger has rendered me immobile.”

“Your money?”

“Not a penny.”

“Gosh, you’re pitiful.”

Perhaps this man made one unwary, Sayaka had, at some point of time, sat in front of him. Then, the man gently rested his hands, curled into a ball, on Sayaka’s knees.

“Miss, if you don't mind, may you take me to your home?”

This was what the man said, his hands exactly like the hands of a puppy. Looking at the the hands on her knees, Sayaka thought it interesting.

“Take you...to my home? What? Why do you sound like an abandoned dog?” Sayaka laughed a bit recklessly.

The man then said again, “I won’t bite, and I’m well-mannered.”

“Kyaa. You’re funny!” Sayaka couldn’t stop laughing.

In retrospect, for a moment there, probably she did let some bad idea slip into her mind.

If her parents knew what she had done, she would be stared to death, as she let a complete male stranger into her room.

*But he was lying on the road!* Even walking to Sayaka’s room situated on the first floor took him a long time.

“Are you all right? Please don’t fall down!”

Sayaka got a hold of him at a side and dragged him into the area she had designated as the living room. Anyway, she had to cook something for him, yet she didn’t cook usually. It was embarrassing for her to take something edible out now, as she had only, in storage, several cup noodles.

“I’m sorry. I don’t really cook. This is all I have.”

After three minutes, Sayaka took out a cup noodle, and the man clasped his hands in gratitude.

“Anything given to me now will be delicious.”

Didn’t it sound a bit uncomfortable? It was said by someone who had been lying on the road after all , so Sayaka didn’t have the mind to pay much heed to it.

“Do you need to take a bath?”

“Ah! That’ll be great. I’m freezing to numbness.”

“Then you can eat the noodles first. Off I go to bathing.”

Thinking of it now, she reckoned that act too rash. Letting a male stranger into the room and leaving those expensive things around while heading off to bathing...wait, wasn’t bathing being nude?

All she thought after getting drunk was to take a good bath. The minds of young women shouldn’t work this way! How did this happen?

Fortunately, the puppy she picked up was really what he claimed—“I won’t bite; and I’m well-mannered,” so things ended up smoothly.

Having taken a bath, Sayaka saw a large, fit puppy, who was sitting towards her, lowering his head deeply in gratitude.

“Thanks you for your cup noodles.”

Even the soup in the cup noodles were completely devoured: he had to be dead hungry.

“No problem. I’m sad to say I only have cup noodles, and that the water in the bathroom had not yet gone.”

“Then please lend me your bathroom.”

“Do you have pajamas?”

“I only have underwaer. I usually sleep in my casual wear.”

“Oh, then...”

It had been exactly half a year she had broke up with her boyriend. Sayaka took out a trash bag stuffed in the wardrobe for a long time. Inside the trash bag were some male clothes that had already been organised and ready to put in the recycle bin. Albeit, she had always missed the time for recycling (it only comes twice every month after all!) , and so it hadn't been taken care of by now.

“If you don't mind these old clothes, there are some Free Size sports wear or something inside.”

“Mm...that...”

Sayaka didn't put much thought into it; on the other hand, the well-mannered puppy was hesitant.

“Is it all right?”

The drunk feeling left in Sayaka was suddenly dismissed.

“No...problem. No problem! These are clothes left by my ex-boyfriend I had broken up with half a year ago. I washed them, but because they are quite a hassle, I placed them inside the wardrobe for the time being. Then I forgot to throw them away during the recycling period, and half a year passed at the blink of an eye. Please don't mistake me, puppy: I don't think fondly of these stuff any more. Or should I wrap them up with paper to make it appear like second-handed clothes?”

“I'm really grateful.”

Opening the trash bag, the man used the sports wear as his pajamas, checked his own bag afterwards, and took out his underwear as well as a washing bashin along with other washing tools and accessories.

“You can use the shampoo, soap, towels and the sort. If you want to use the washing machine to wash the clothes, though, do it tomorrow. It's a bit late now.”

“Sure. Thanks.”

In retrospect, the third thing I shouldn't have done was letting myself already lying on the bed before he came out from the bathroom...and of course, I feel asleep just like that.

On the following day, when I opened my eyes, I was already sleeping in my blankets, though I didn't remember I had covered the quilt on myself.

“Oh, you're awake? Good morning.”

A familiar man suddenly showed his face from the kitchen. In an instant, the memories in my mind were messed up.

Looking at Sayaka's expression, the man showed a face of panic.

“W-Wait. Please don't shout! I'm here because you agreed so yesterday. If you don't remember, I can explain to you.”

“No, it's all right. I can almost remember it now.”

Lying on the road...may you take me to your home? I won't bite, and I'm well-mannered.

These keywords streamed into her mind like bubbles. With her memories organised, Sayaka lightly laughed from her throat.

Looking at Sayaka, the man noticed she should have remembered.

“Okay, I thought you would accuse me of illegal intrusion and call the police!”

“Puppy, then what were you doing?”

“Let me first wash my face! I just got up, so I borrowed some stuff from you.”

Her nose smelled the fragrance of miso soup.

“Is there...stuff that can be made breakfast in my house?”

“Oh, I was freaked out too! There's nothing in the fridge, much like a single man. Still, there are still some rice and flavouring, and then I used some soon-dead eggs and onions!”

“Onions? There are onions in my house?”

She still remembered about the eggs, as she suddenly wanted to eat rice crowned with eggs around ten days ago. So she paid the supermarket a visit and bought a six-pack egg...but onions...she couldn't remember a thing about buying other ingredients this month.

“This pitiful onion was forgotten by the person living here. Though sprouted

copiously, it's still edible. Right, I threw the forgotten tsukudani<sup>[2]</sup> away."

"I'm sorry..."

Sayaka crawled up in embarrassment, finding she the adjacent room she took as the living room was laid with a sleeping bag.

"Oh, don't you have a sleeping bag? Why did you say you were freezing on the road?"

"I was so tired I haven't even the strength to take it out. Albeit a cup noodle, you gave me something to eat, so I regained enough strength to put the owner of this room under the quilt."

She seemed to have slept in the blankets right till the daytime; she had to thank this well-mannered puppy.

"I'm sorry to have bothered you once again."

She was gradually losing her face.

After Sayaka washed her face, several home dishes were laid on the small table in the living room.

"I took some pans and utensils to use."

"Okay, it's fine. Please serve yourself."

While talking, Sayaka sat on the seat the man invited her to; the man sat on the place nearest to the door. Whose house was this place? Obviously it was her room, yet she felt a bit useless.

"Which bowl and chopsticks do you want?"

Which one do you want? Which one should I use? In reply to these questions, Sayaka only nodded in silence. The man didn't mistake Sayaka's bowl and chopsticks, and placed in front of the man was the bowl and chopstick Sayaka bought for the love of their patterns.

"How did you know those were mine?"

"Because they're placed in an easily accesible place in the kitchen, though I don't know which one should I use."

Yeah, this man was quite attentive.

“You can use those. We don’t separate soup bowls from rice bowls.”

“Thanks. Then, let’s eat?”

The man clasped his hands lightly in front of the food. Sayaka did as well.

She hadn’t clasped her hands in gratitude in front of food for a long time...this food that one person thoroughly prepared...compared to the supermarket food she ate alone...she couldn’t help clasping her hands in gratitude.

In the food were egg rolls with onions, miso soup with onions, and also eggs...these were food the man dugged out and transformed from the ingredients in her house. Stil...

“It’s delicious.”

The small sip of miso soup in her mouth simmered slowly into her body, forcing the idea that however the effort fast food restaurants paid, the food would only bring out a fast food taste. The onions in the egg roll was only fried simply with pepper, yet this simple smell stayed in the tip of her tongue.

“Is the taste all right? Is it too pale?”

“No. It’s delicious.”

So delicious it drained her tears...really, tears flowed.

“Eh? You...” freaked out, the man put down his chopsticks, “what’s the matter?”

“It tastes like my mother’s breakfast.”

“Kyaa. It isn’t *that* good!”

“No, I mean food made by others are really delicious.”

It was only rice cooked in a timer electric pot and some eggs, along with a few sips of miso soup, she couldn’t believe it could be so delicious.

“Thank you.”

“No. I should be the one to thank you for taking me to your home from the road and even allowing me to mess around in your kitchen.”

Then, the two of them continued eating their breakfast quietly.

Where was this puppy, who had been lying outside with a backpack, going to head now?

Use the washing machine tomorrow! Though with that said, he didn't use it.

In the subsequent moments, he stayed at the sink for a long time. When he came out, he had already changed from the borrowed sports wear to his own clothes. His clothes were different from yesterday, probably because he put away those dirty clothes! He folded the sports wear tidily in squares, maybe feeling that it wouldn't be nice to return clothes unwashed.

Crossing her legs on the bed, Sayaka looked at him packing his sleeping bag.

"Hey!"

"Ah?"

"Do you have any place you can go?"

"No."

"Then do you plan to walk until you collapse again?"

"Yeah. My luck was poor before, and I didn't have any job. But I think I wouldn't be so helpless now."

"Let me tell you," ...though Sayaka didn't know what she was going to say, "if you don't a place to go, do you want to stay here?"

The man blinked his eyes potently and turned his head to Sayaka. Sayaka averted her eyes to avoid meeting them with his. Nevertheless, she evaded his eyes but not his voice.

"Do-Do you know you're a girl? It's quite bold for a girl to suggest such at thing."

"I know!"

Sayaka turned her head way more to the side.

"I had to be very rational when I placed you under the quilt!"

"Oh, thank you for that, " but, that was because... "I don't like to and am unapt to do home chores. I waste money hastily for my three meals. If you're willing to stay here and help me deal with them, it can be said as the benefits of

living together!”

“Just because of this? This is too impetuous! In any case, I’m still a man!”

“Didn’t you tell me to take you here?” Sayaka began her unreasonable mourn, “it’s worrying to take you home! And you can just go away. When I begin to think that we’ll therefore never meet each other, I’ll certainly feel sorrowful! Besides, you’ve blackmailed my stomach!”

Using only the soon-dying eggs and the copiously sprouted onions to render someone craving to eat those food again was completely against the rules!

Unable to talk back, the man smiled gently, “what about the payment?”

“The managing rights of residence and living fees.”

“Does residence include quilts?”

“I have guest quilts. You can use them.”

“Understood.”

He then spreaded the folded sleeping bag open anew.

“Can I dry my sleeping bag? I want it to dry off in the wind while I’m not using it before folding it.”

“You don’t have to ask for my permission: you can freely use anything in my house.”

It was already your room anyway—Sayaka deliberately pretended to be cool, but her quick words couldn’t hide her embarrassment. The man walked to the eaves with a smile.

“Wow. It’s small, but it’s a coutyard!”

As situated on the first floor, it was fenced for safety, only the area connected to the next roo wasn’t fenced. Also, to ensure escape whenever something happens, the pathway of each house’s balcony was only blocked with planks.

“It isn’t good at all. It feels like being trapped in a cage! And a lot of weeds would grow in an instant.”

“But this is just the right height for dring quilts.”

“Yes, if only I’ve grown as tall as you...”

At this moment, Sayaka discovered she didn’t know his name.

“Hey, what’s your name?”

The man hung his sleeping bag on the clothes rack, turned his head, his back facing the light, and smiled to Sayaka.

“My name is written as the tree (樹), pronounced as Itsuki.”

“Is that your name or surname?”

“My name.”

“What’s your full name?”

“I hate my surname, so I don’t want to talk about it, okay?”

Sayaka looked at the smile the man tried to pull out, worried forcing him to tell would only make him run away.

“I’m Sayaka, Kouno Sayaka. Nice to meet you.”

She didn’t quite know how to call him.

“Itsuki...”

Simply saying his name would excite her chest.

“So thank you in advance, Miss Sayaka.”

Was he a well-mannered puppy that made him sorry to call her directly by her name? Sayaka didn’t like that. She didn’t want him to add Miss in front of her name.

“Um...Sayaka?”

The two of them then knelt down on the floor discussing their agreement.

“Now both of us live in the room. IF I give you ten thousand yen, how much can you do?”

“Suppose there’s still rice in the house, we can probably hold for more than ten days...three days a meal...and a lunchbox you can take with you for work...”

“Really? That’s incredible.”

“Sayaka, what’s your monthly net income?”

“My rent, along with my electric bills, gas bills, is automatically paid through the bank. The actual money left is around two hundred twenty thousand yen.”

“Woah. You earn quite a lot.”

“This place has actually been renewed. Although it doesn’t look like much, it’s almost twenty years old! So the rent is cheap. So even though the rooms are suitable for newly weds, almost all of them coming in are singles.”

“So this house, though called a building, has separate residential flats much like a typical apartment.”

“Right. It’s in fact a congregated residential flat.”

They only knew their names, so how could they trust in each other so much? The two of them continued joyfully discussing their plan.

“Okay, if thirty thousand yen is taken as food fees, and another one thousand for miscellaneous expenses. how does this sound?”

“Okay, no problem. Don’t be too wasteful, though.”

“You can ask me if you want more. Also, you need pocket money to buy stuff, right?”

“If I can stay here and use this place as my contact address, I’ll start working quickly. There isn’t much of affairs in a two-person house. If you can lend me ten thousand yen for the time being, then I’ll be overflowing with gratitude. Right, do you have a bicycle?”

“No, I don’t.”

“It’ll be better if you can buy a bicycle, so our zone of activity will be larger, and it’ll be easier to find a job.”

“I understand. So let’s go buy it tonight!” And we have to buy your commodities. You need some clothes to change into, don’t you?”

“Okay, but let’s leave it after I find a job...”

“Your bag can’t contain much. My old clothes are all home clothes. Since I’ve allowed your stay, this should be basic expenses!”

Therefore, the two of them left home. They didn't go to the shopping street but to the suburban-sized supermarket in front of the station, buying a female bicycle for ten thousand yen there. They also bought some clothes for Itsuki there. Forcefully dragging Itsuki, Sayaka bought three socks and various T-shirts. They added up to four to five items, along with a spring outerwear. Itsuki stood strong that his underwear and socks could be bought at a hundred yen shop, so unable to go against his will on this, Sayaka bought the hundred-yen-priced counterparts in this shop. Still, it was quite embarrassing to buy these things with him, so Sayaka gave him so money, and he only spent one thousand yen at last, sales taxes included.

"You'll also need a place to place your clothes, "Sayaka already found it difficult to stuff her clothes into the wardrobe and drawer whenever she changed her clothes, "I'd say buy a handy clothes-hanger."

"No need. Not only does it occupy space, but it's also a waste of money."

Itsuki seemed worried their expenses would grow to a considerable amount.

"Can I punch holes in your room?"

"Do it to your heart's content! It's a twenty-year-old old house anyway.'

"Then let's find a tool shop! Is there one nearby?"

So the two of them put the stuff they bought into a basket, and Sayaka became the first luggage of the new bicycle. With a bit of embarrassment, Sayaka sat on the back seat, and cautiously threw her hands around Itsuki's waist. Itsuki rode off on the bicycle. The distinctive slow speed of the bicycle was a feeling she hadn't experienced for a long time. The passing structures and buildings on the side of the street had a peculiar freshness.

Itsuki then bought a clothes-hanger to be installed with screws. Together with the screwdriver, it costed less than three thousand yen.

"This can let me install it on places that won't become a bother. And I can put this under it."

Another item Itsuki chose was a lided cloths basket. This also costed three thousand since it was a special-priced item. The total was around five thousand dollars.

“You’re quite thoughtful.”

“Of course. I can’t let you go on spending all kinds of expenses...”

On their way home, they put the basket on the back seat, with Sayaka giving it a hold. The two of them then walked home.

The only lamentable thing was that they couldn’t walk side by side.

Back home, they decided unanimously the corner of the bedroom was the space for Itsuki to place his clothes.

“I might come in while you’re sleeping. Is that fine?”

“That’s fine! We’d have to live together anyway. I can’t possibly stop you from coming in to grab something,” Sayaka said solemnly, having no idea of how Itsuki thought. Perhaps knowing it was useless to speak more, he started to install the clothes-hanger on the lintel of the door. Two screws took less than ten minutes. Following that, he took the clothes he bought and his old stuff and stuffed them into the convenient bag. Sayaka, on the other hand, gave him some extra cloth hangers.

“Do you need to wash those dirty clothes?”

“Right! I have to wash those clothes,” suddenly thinking of something, Itsuki turned to Sayaka, “washing clothes is also the job of a manager, but how much should I be responsible for?”

Sayaka immediately understood he was referring to the underwear and the socks.

“So just wash outerwear and my socks! I’ll wash my own clothes with another small basket. You don’t have to wash them.”

He wouldn’t see it if she placed it in her pockets.

“What about the time to take away the clothes?”

This was another problem.

“Umm..I’ll dry the clothes in my room at night. You can dry them again in the day and take them altogether. Then you can put in my room along with their cloth hangers.”

Later, this subtle rule became very loose. Be it underwear or socks, Sayaka were not a bit perturbed to let Itsuki do the washing. So much for that little rejection she had at first.

Then, the phonbook function in her home phone had its first usage, as it registered Sayaka's phone number.

"I've applied for the indication of the caller ID, so..."

Sayaka phoned her telephone number with her mobile phone. Then, on the LED display of the phone, it showed the name of "Sayaka" as well as her number.

"Don't answer any calls save my phone number! Also, you can register with this phone number at your workplace."

"I understand. Thanks."

Saying he need to wash his clothes, Itsuki left for the sink, but suddenly made an "Ahh!" sound.

"What's it now?"

"I forgot to buy ingredients..."

"It's okay. Let's buy it at the supermarket at lunch!"

"No! It's a waste to leave cooked rice uneaten. If we do it ourselves, we only need a few hundred yen, but it would cost at least a thousand at the supermarket. If you're going to let me manage living fees, I can't accept this corrupted eating style!"

Ah, he planned to say. Sayaka couldn't help but raise the corner of her mouth when she thought of this.

"Then after you started the washing machine, let's go to the shopping street at the front of the station?"

Therefore, the two of them rode on the bicycle again, heading to the shopping street. Including a ten-kilo-pack rice, Itsuki bought an amount of ingredients Sayaka had never bought since she started living alone.

Swaying side by side, she felt the weather had turned cold. Someday...

"Ayahh..."

On a bright morning, Sayaka, just woken up, opened the curtains and heaved a sigh. Ever since she had lived with this man, her holidays that she had normally spent sleeping started now with her waking up automatically at breakfast time or lunchtime. (Of course she was woken up by the scent of the food he cooked.) Under the fresh and cool sunlight that only showed before noon, the courtyard, left untouched since she usually arrived home late and surmised it clean because she didn't see it, was long occupied by weeds.

"It's this season already. We must weed the garden."

"Oh, so you care? I quite like these weeds growing in the courtyard."

"But it won't look good! If the courtyard isn't managed well, others will throw in trash through the fence."

So the two of them went out to the courtyard after lunch. Sayaka did her anti-solar measures from head to toe: ultraviolet light was a thing that shouldn't be ignored throughout the year.

"Ah! Where did these weeds come from? Had someone spore seeds here in midnight?"

"There aren't any plants called weeds, as every plant has its own name...I heard this was what Emperor Hirohito said."

"Then do you know the names of these plants?"

"Yes. I should know a lot more than you, though there are a lot of lotus-shaped bushes here, so it's hard to tell them apart."

Lotus-shaped? I heard it in science lessons in primary school. It was the shape plants flatly stuck onto the ground to prevent the sunlight from getting in in winter, as they don't grow, not even branches, during the winter.

"Ah! What a bother. This guy is growing so quickly."

Sayaka glared at a growing creeper crawling on the fence.

"Itsuki, please pluck it away! Now!"

"He. You mean this?"

"Yes. I hate this the most! It tangles on the fence and hard to pluck when it's

little. Also, when you pluck it out, your hands smell very bad immediately!”

“Of course; it’s called the chicken-dung creeper.”

“Chicken-dung creeper?”

Surprised, Sayaka raised her voice up high. Itsuki only nodded seriously in response.

“Does chicken-dung creepers really smell that bad? You have to keep on plucking it off once it starts growing.”

“Yes. Looking at you, I suspect you haven’t seen its other face, have you?”

“Geez. It’s other face?”

“When this plant is a creeper, it’s really a nuisance. But once the flowering season arrives, its beauty will stun those around them. Do you want to let one of them stay for observation?”

A stunning second face? Sayaka was captivated by these luring words. This man really knows how to render her thirsty by saying whatnot.

“Then, let’s leave that one farthest from our room!”

Soon after, Itsuki found a job. When their pace of lives settled, summer flew around for a visit. At that time, the relationship between the two were changing.

“Come out! This is the long-awaited other face!”

In one summer holiday, Itsuki brought Sayaka to the courtyard. Sayaka was still wearing her pajamas, rubbing her eyes, letting Itsuki bring her to the chicken-dung creeper they had left living. All in an instant, all the sleepiness were drained from her!

“Woah! It’s delightful.”

Her continued praise was owed to the grudge she still held against the bad smell she beared when she plucked them every year. The heart of the flower spreaded an elegant rouge colour; the bell-shaped little flowers were laced with lily-shaped circles, blooming wherever the vines would lead them.

“It’s still that smelly, though with its adorable flowers, sometimes, I’ll think that this should be one of the greatest weeds. Some say it’s adorable, while

others think it's pitiful for it to be called the chicken-dung creeper, hence giving it other names, like Saotomekazura (早乙女葛) and Shahana (炙花). They should be named according to the adorable characteristics of the flower!"

She could completely understand why it was named Saotomekazura (早乙女葛), as it was a name to suit the flower's delicate and lovable appearance, but...

"What's the meaning of Shahana (炙花)?"

"Sha (炙) is the Sha (炙) for fiery red. Look."

Itsuki picked a flower and placed it backwards on Sayaka's back.

"If you look it this way, doesn't the red in the middle look like fire? It should be named according to its appearance."

"But why was the final name left chicken-dung creeper?"

"This name is the most memorable and distinctive, one of those famous examples. If you had heard chicken-dung creeper, even if you would hear Saotomekazura (早乙女葛) and Shahana (炙花), you would forget the latter two, won't you?"

"Indeed."

This was a past event between the two about chicken-dung creepers.

\*

Now on the fence farthest from the room was still a chicken-dung creeper. Was this a representation of fondness? What was I anticipating? How could I be fond of a plant named chicken-dung creeper that has no relation to romance whatsoever! Remaining a distance of half a step from her chief, Sayaka continued walking along the asphalt road in the scorching summer heat.

(Chicken-dung Creeper)

## Translation Notes[[edit](#)]

1. [↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paederia\\_foetida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paederia_foetida)
2. [↑](#) preserved small fish, shellfish, konbu, *etc.* boiled down in soy sauce and sugar