

# BEAUTIFUL LIFE

## Synopsis by unknown

Okishima Shuji is a skilled hair stylist, taking pride in his work, but finds it difficult to be sociable and glib, and therefore is not too popular with the customers. He comes from a family of doctors, but he himself had failed to enter medical school. He has a rival in colleague Kawamura Satoru who is popular and considered a "charisma" type of hair stylist.

Machida Kyoko has been unable to walk since she was in high school, because of a type of diffuse collagen disease which atrophies the muscles. Although handicapped, she is very capable, with a job at a library, and can manage most things in daily life. However, she has resolved long ago not to form romantic relationships. She is the daughter of an old brewery, which is now run by her older brother Masao. The rest of the cast include Mizuno Miki who plays the heroine's best friend, Ikeuchi Hiroyuki who plays an intern who admires Shuji, and Hara Chiaki who plays Shuji's girlfriend (ex?).

Shooting started on 10th December. Takuya has said in TV Guide that he is looking very much forward to it.

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A high caliber cast, a good script and a little innovative thinking can work wonders in the world of TV entertainment. Japanese heartthrob Takuya Kimura, top actress Takako Tokiwa and a script by hitmaker Eriko Kitagawa did just that for TBS's latest Sunday night drama "Beautiful Life" (Sundays from 9 p.m.), which has emerged as the season's biggest hit drama.

The season opener scored a 31.78 percent rating-the highest a TV drama has scored in its first week on air in a decade.

Kimura, also known as Kimutaku, is the 27-year-old member of the popular male idol group SMAP. He has also starred in Fuji Television Network's TV series "Long Vacation" and "Love Generation," which both marked more than 30 percent in ratings in their first week. His last drama, "Nemureru Mori" (The Sleeping Forest) also proved a hit. "Kimutaku is one of those few Japanese stars with charisma and a strong presence," said the show's producer, Seiichiro Kijima. But it is Kitagawa's simple and believable love story that is drawing in viewers as well.

The romance between an aspiring hairdresser (Kimura) and a librarian who uses a wheelchair (Tokiwa) may not be a common story, but the scriptwriter said she had no intention of creating a social drama that focused too heavily on the life of a physically challenged person. "I wanted to write a love story about two people with different values," she said.

Toru Ota, director of Fuji TV's first production division, who produced many popular dramas in the 1990s, observed: "Beautiful Life proved how strong a love story can be if it takes up the subject close to real. While TV dramas are getting more sophisticated and more difficult to understand lately, its simple story line must have appealed to viewers."

The show posted a 28.4 percent rating for its second episode and, now into its fourth week, is still holding strong.

This is the first time the Sunday evening time frame, usually reserved for family dramas, has featured a romantic drama marketed at young viewers and its strong showing is persuading its creators to plan similar shows.

(2000)

### FEBRUARY:

#### 16-EPIISODE 1:

Episode 1 (16th January, dir. Shono)

One clear winter morning, a young man is gunning down the road on his motorbike. As he approaches a red light, the young woman in a red car waiting for the light to change suddenly sticks out her hand to see if it's raining, and the young man is forced to halt abruptly in order to avoid hitting her. He tries to tick her off, but she ignores him and drives off. However, they end up in the same place, which happens to be a public library. Having parked next to each other the woman asks the man to give her more room so that she can get out of the car. He does so, grumbling, and then notices for the first time that she is handicapped and needs to get her wheelchair out. He is struck by the way she smiles and refers to it as her "second car".

She turns out to be Machida Kyoko, one of the librarians working there. He goes to the lending counter and asks where books on sodium chloride are kept, but she jumps to the conclusion that, as he doesn't seem the bookish type, he must be planning to concoct a bomb, and refuses to tell him where the books are. He comments that her dreadful perm makes her look like she'd been bombed. Her colleague Sachie gives him directions to the right shelf.

The young man, after leaving the library, goes and joins another, younger lad he calls Takumi who is taking instant photos of girls walking around the fashionable Aoyama area. They seem to be looking for a certain type.

At home, Kyoko's brother Masao who runs his parent's liquor shop is being commiserated by a customer for having been turned down yet again in an arranged meeting.

On one slow day at the library, Sachie points out to Kyoko that her perm is really bad. Kyoko knows the perm is awful, but she had had it done by a new boy at the barber shop her brother patronises, and it had been cheap. Miyama Kozo, a volunteer group leader, comes to yet again persuade Kyoko to come to their dance party for the disabled. Kyoko is quite harsh with him, and turns down flatly his suggestion of a visit to the cinema instead. As he leaves crestfallen, Shuji who had crept in whilst she was occupied comes up with a book and mentions in passing that she need not have been so harsh, as Miyama had only been trying to get her to date him. He had noticed that Miyama had been clutching what looked like two tickets to the cinema. Sachie had noticed them too, but Kyoko scoffs at the idea. Shuji dumps in her lap the pile of books he had found which had turned out to be not for lending, and leaves her to deal with them.

That night, Kyoko tells her brother about the strange person at the library who treats her as a complete equal, neither looking askance at her or being overly kind. Masao guesses that this "person" must be a man.

A few days later, Kyoko and Sachie find out that the young man's name is Okishima Shuji. As the book he took out is due to be returned that day, Kyoko secretly looks forward to his coming, but he doesn't turn up, and the following morning they find the book in the nighttime book return box.

One day, Shuji is hard at work in Hot Lip which is a large and fashionable Aoyama hair salon. He is a hair stylist there. Satoru who had started working there at the same time as Shuji did is now their star stylist, and is even now being photographed along with a regular customer who is an actress. As Shuji pronounces the cut he is giving his customer finished, she asks him to make it a bit shorter at the side. He tells her the balance is better the way he has done it, and just tells Takumi who is his assistant to give her a shampoo. The manager calls him, and tells him he has read the project for developing a perming fluid which uses no sodium chloride and therefore will damage the hair less. Yet the reason why he had called Shuji was not in order to discuss the project, but to tell him there had been another complaint from a customer who found it

difficult to tell Shuji how she wanted her hair done as he is not very open to requests. Then he tells Shuji that the magazine *L'amant* wants to do a page on the shop. Shuji is told to come up with a new cut style for the page. Satoru, too, will do one, and the editor of the magazine would choose whichever style is better and feature it.

Shuji sets out with Takumi after work to find someone to be his cut model, but cannot find anyone inspiring. The manager, Satoru, and Ozawa Mayumi who also works at Hot Lip pass by on the way to a bar. Satoru has already got a well-known fashion model he has met before agree to have her hair cut for the occasion. As Shuji declines their invitation for him to join them for drinks on grounds that he had yet to find a model, Mayumi surreptitiously suggest they meet up later, perhaps at her place, but this too he refuses. Takumi who admires Shuji and suspects Satoru of being more calculating than his blithe demeanour implies, is concerned that Shuji shows no interest in socialising with the manager. Shuji is more interested in finding a model with impact, and suddenly thinks of Kyoko.

The following day he appears at the library and asks Kyoko to be his haircut model. On hearing that he is a hair stylist working at Hot Lip of which they have heard, Sachie urges Kyoko to go, letting slip the fact that she had once expressed a wish to have her hair cut there, but had decide against it because the place wasn't barrier-free. On learning what barrier-free means, Shuji announces that he will be "her barrier-free".

On the day of the photo session, Kyoko appears at the shop and is told about the "haircut competition" situation for the first time. She protests but Shuji explains how Satoru is way ahead of him, and tells her this might be his big break. He promises that he will only let them photograph her if she likes the finished hairstyle. As he starts working on her, Kyoko begins to get a little excited about the whole thing. She finds herself transformed by the finished style and agrees to be photographed. The magazine crew suggest they do it outside. Shuji applies professional makeup to her face and she is shot out in the open, with Shuji cracking jokes to get her to relax.

After the crew has left, they stand for a while looking at the beautiful sunset. Shuji remarks that the world seen from an eye-level of 100 centimetres must be quite different, and Kyoko realises no one had ever said anything like that to her before. Shuji offers to treat her to a thank-you dinner and they go off with Shuji pushing her wheelchair at breakneck speed.

However, restaurant after restaurant turns them away because of Kyoko's wheelchair. Shuji, increasingly annoyed, decides to carry her in on his back, and is stunned when Kyoko refuses vehemently. They end up having Chinese noodles at a noodle stall. Kyoko explains that the reason why she had rejected a piggyback so violently had been because she had not wanted Shuji to find out what scrawny legs she had due to disuse. Answering Shuji's question, she tells him the handicap was caused by an illness and that she had not always been disabled.

After the meal, Shuji tries to hail a taxi for her, but none will stop. Whilst they are waiting for the next cab, Kyoko tells Shuji how much she had enjoyed the afternoon. Shuji, too, admits to having forgotten that it was work. Finally a cab stops. Kyoko gets in the cab and thanks Shuji. He suddenly asks her if she thought he had any talent. She reassures him, and suggests at the last moment to meet for a celebration if the editors decide to use her picture. They promise to meet at the noodle stall on the night the magazine is due to come out.

The magazine is published and Kyoko buys it in a convenience store, then rushes out to take a quick look. She is delighted to find her photographs featured on two pages, but is shocked at the write up: "Even on a wheelchair you can get a charisma hair stylist to do your hair". Shuji, seeing the page elsewhere, is also distressed. Kyoko sadly dumps the magazine into a dustbin.

Shuji is washing his hair in Hot Lip which is closed for the day, and Takumi happily tells him how he knew Shuji would make it. Satoru is also there and says bluntly that Shuji must have chosen a wheelchair-bound girl precisely for that end. Takumi is incensed, but Shuji says nothing to defend himself.

At the library Kyoko's colleagues discuss the article, and come to the same conclusion as Satoru. Kyoko agrees with them.

That evening, Sachie leaves the library to go home, and finds Shuji outside the building, waiting for Kyoko. She tells him that Kyoko had been out all afternoon on Moving Library duty and had gone directly home. She demands to know if Shuji had merely used her friend.

Kyoko, preparing dinner for the family, receives a phone call from Shuji. She is cold and brusque, and Shuji apologises for how the magazine had treated the whole thing, but when she asks if it had never once crossed his mind that with a handicapped model he stood a better chance, he admits that he couldn't say no with confidence. Having said that, he adds that the actual end result had made him sick at heart and asks her to come and talk. He is at the noodle stall. She tells him there is no cause for celebration now and hangs up.

The stall owner decides to close for the night as it looks like rain, and lends Shuji a plastic umbrella.

Kyoko in her bedroom notices that it has started raining.

Shuji, having given up waiting and about to go down in to the underground station, suddenly spots a red car stopping and Kyoko getting out. She says she only came because she forgot to tell him that another book on sodium chloride had arrived at the library. He asks if she didn't mind his coming to borrow it, to which she answers "No." Shuji realises that she is unsheltered from the rain and dashes over to offer his umbrella. In the rain, Kyoko's heart is heard to say: "The world was beautiful, Shuji, the world I saw from a hundred centimetres high was beautiful. Meeting you, my life sparkled like it was dusted with stars in its final months..."

When Okishima Shuji (Kimura Takuya) and Machida Kyoko (Tokiwa Takako) met for the first time, their first impressions of one another was not good. In fact, they thought of one another as complete idiots. But nevertheless, life was beautiful.

Okishima Shuji was on his motorcycle on his way to the local library. He would commute on his motorcycle. But while driving forward, he is almost hit by a hand sticking out of a red sportcar. He stops right in time. That hand belonged to Machida Kyoko (Tokiwa Takako), who was talking to her friend on her cellular phone while waiting for the light to turn green. When Shuji looks at her, he calls her an old woman, and indeed, she looked like one with her permed hair. This ticks Kyoko off. The two begin to ignore each other. But in fact, Shuji and Kyoko were both heading to the same library. When the two arrive at the library, Shuji stops his motorcycle right next to Kyoko's car. She tells him in a rude manner to leave a little space for her to get out. But Shuji was aware that there was enough space for the normal human being to get out.

But there was a reason for Kyoko's last statement. Her legs were badly injured, and she was in need of a wheelchair. Kyoko takes her wheelchair out of the back seat, gets on it, and rides right past Shuji to the library. At this, Shuji couldn't hide his shock and was speechless.

Mori Library in Shibuya was where Machida Kyoko worked.

Shuji had come to search for a book on sodium hydroxide, which he wanted to use in creating a new hairstyle. When he goes to the counter to ask Kyoko where the book could be found, Kyoko replies angrily, "We don't have such a book here!" All Shuji could do was smile sarcastically. Just about then, Tamura Sachie (Mizuno Miki), who was Kyoko's good friend and colleague, agrees to show Shuji where the book could be found. Kyoko was a little upset at Sachi, which was what she called her all the time.

Shuji is able to find the book he was looking for and hands it to Kyoko so he could borrow it. But Kyoko was still mad. Anyhow, she scans the book through the machine, but then she smiles. She says, "This book cannot be taken out of the library!" Shuji was shocked and says, "Can I photocopy it?" But Shuji then finds out that since students of the nearby Aoyama Gakuin University were preparing for finals, there was a long line at the copy machine. He didn't know what to do. But from behind, Sachi says, "It's OK. You can borrow the book." But Kyoko commenced begging Sachi not to let Shuji borrow it. Eventually, Shuji is able to borrow the book. Kyoko, the whole time, was misunderstanding that Shuji was trying to create a bomb or something.

But she couldn't hide the fact that she was touched that Shuji never mentioned anything about her being on a wheelchair as the reason for his hatred towards her. It was as if to Shuji, Kyoko was just another normal human being with no physical disability whatsoever. Kyoko decides to wait for Shuji when he would come to the library again.

Shuji next heads to Ometesando on his motorcycle. He met up with his junior at Hot Lip, Okabe Takumi (Ikeuchi Hiroyuki). Takumi was looking around searching for the perfect model. When Takumi finds a girl he likes, he says to Shuji, "How about her?" But Shuji replies, "Let's try a little harder..."

Over at a small liquor shop, Machida Masao (Watabe Atsuro), Kyoko's older brother, was about to hand a customer back his change. He says, "Here's your change...3,000,000 yen." He handed the customer back 300 yen. That was his little way of going about the business. It also showed something about his mysterious character. Kyoko says, "Hey...if you continue to say 3,000,000 yen (when you really mean 300 yen), you can never get married!" Masao replies like a child, "Why?" He had his eyes glued to the television set and said, "She's really nice....Matsushima..." Kyoko finishes off the statement by saying "NANAKO!". Masao continues. "I wonder if a woman like her will want to marry me." Quickly, Kyoko replies, "No chance!"

The next day at the library, Kyoko and Sachi were just messing around since there weren't too many customers that day. Sachi says to Kyoko, "Can I say something?....That hairstyle of yours is really strange." But Kyoko didn't get mad or anything. It was like she understood what Sachi was trying to say. She begins to explain to Sachi that at the barber where her older brother, Masao, always went to, a new employee there told Kyoko that he had just learned how to perm hair and wanted to experiment on Kyoko. And she agreed. Just about then, Miyama (Matoba Koji), who worked as a volunteer, invites Kyoko to a dance party, but Kyoko refuses, and Miyama walks off with a sad face. It was apparent that Miyama had a thing for Kyoko.

Just about then, Shuji appears. He was here once again to search for a book on sodium hydroxide. He begins talking with Kyoko about volunteers like Miyama. Shuji was surprised at how much Kyoko was talking and says, "You're like a sand-rat in the spring....let's keep it quiet in the library." He says this and leaves the library.

That night, Kyoko talks about Shuji to Masao. She explains to him that Shuji seemed not to care much about the fact that Kyoko had a physical disability and talked to her like a normal human being. "He's like my life-saver." Masao replies, "That person's a guy, right?....hahaha, you're getting red! How pathetic!"

The next morning at the library, Kyoko decides to use the computer database there to find out more about Shuji. It was apparent that she was becoming more and more interested and absorbed in him.

Now Okishima Shuji was no science freak, which was what Kyoko thought of him as. He was a hair stylist and designer at a hair salon called Hot Lip. His junior, Takumi (Ikeuchi Hiroyuki), had much to learn, but on the other hand, Satoru (Nishikawa Takanori) was constantly being interviewed by magazine reporters, and he seemed to be getting all the spotlight because of his skills and popularity. At least, he took a lot of attention away from Shuji. Compared to Satoru, Shuji was at the bottom. Shuji's boss was expecting more from him, but to this, he seemed a little too ignorant. This was where Shuji had to fix himself. To his customers, it almost seemed too obvious that Shuji didn't take as much effort as they would like him to. And his relationship with his colleagues within Hot Lip wasn't too friendly.

But Shuji was talented and his boss knew that. Shuji explains the project he had been working on, which was a liquid for perming hair without using sodium hydroxide. After hearing this, Shuji's boss gives him a chance to compete with Satoru to represent Hot Lip for a magazine slot, which usually was for Satoru only. The two would have to design a hairstyle for a model. But Shuji had not found a model yet. Satoru, on the other hand, had already grabbed a famous model. Things were not looking good for Shuji. He and Takumi go outside into town to look for a model, but they weren't successful. They couldn't find the perfect model. Shuji was looking for a woman with impact. Then, he recalls Kyoko from the library with the strange permed hair. What inside of Shuji made him suddenly remember Kyoko? That was probably because his meeting with her at the library that day had a big impact on his life. There was no doubt about that.

Anyway, Shuji decides to ask Kyoko to be his model. After hearing his demand, Kyoko didn't know what to say back. Kyoko was afraid that she wouldn't be accepted since she was in a wheelchair. But after Shuji tells her, "I'll become your life-saver", Kyoko was speechless. After this, her image of Shuji inside of her completely changed. She was taken totally aback and began falling for him. But when Shuji informs her that he would be styling her hair for a magazine, Kyoko becomes worried and starts asking him more questions. But Shuji once again calms her down with his words of kindness, and at this, Kyoko was once again speechless. She thought that if it was for Shuji, I could do almost anything. She decides to put her full trust in him.

The day of the battle with Satoru comes, and Kyoko arrives at Hot Lip, where it was to be held. She meets up with Shuji. Kyoko could see a group of people waiting inside the salon, and she asks Shuji who they were. He tells her that they were probably the people from the magazine, or the people who would be taking pictures of her. When Kyoko hears this, she tells Shuji that she wanted to leave. Shuji is able to change Kyoko's mind and says, "I'll cut your hair, and if you don't like it, we won't participate in the photograph session. If you like it though, let's take pictures.

The contest begins, and during the whole session, Kyoko was talking and talking non-stop to Shuji, who was trying to concentrate while cutting Kyoko's hair. He tells her to keep quiet. When Shuji was thinking of what to do next to Kyoko's hair, she says, "I'll leave it to you...because I trust you." After hearing this, Shuji commences to cut Kyoko's hair, and at this, Satoru couldn't hide his concern.

Shuji totally changes Kyoko's image and gets rid of her permed hair. When Shuji finishes with the make-up, Kyoko was even more beautiful than before. Her hair was semi-long straight and matched her beautiful face. She was even surprised at how cute she was and how much she had changed. Then, the photograph session begins. During the whole session, Kyoko couldn't concentrate and was very nervous, but Shuji trusted Kyoko and her beauty. The photographers finish, and all there was now was to wait for the results.

After everything was finished, Shuji and Kyoko were together outside near a bridge. The two stop, and when Shuji begins talking to Kyoko, he kneels down to where he was about the same height as Kyoko. Shuji says, "It must be different seeing life from a wheelchair. It's about a meter high, right?" Kyoko replies, "You're very different. Normally, people who say how hard it must be for me. Or they would root for me." But deep inside, Kyoko was touched since it wasn't something a normal person would ask her. It seemed that everything Shuji said or asked was said with concern to the fact that Kyoko was in a wheelchair. Shuji didn't want to hurt Kyoko's feelings and was worried that he would accidentally say something that would hurt her. At this, Kyoko was very touched.

Shuji decides to take Kyoko out for dinner in return for her cooperating with him as his model. This was the least he could do for her, but for Shuji, it was only natural. He was being himself. Kyoko didn't want to ask too much of Shuji. But things didn't go too easily. All of the restaurants they stopped by wouldn't allow Kyoko to enter in a wheelchair. Shuji begins thinking and then stops. He says, "I have a good idea!" He decides to carry Kyoko on his back and enter the restaurant. But at this, Kyoko refuses. It was too embarrassing. But she was touched at Shuji's thoughtful idea. What made him want to do this much for her? Eventually, they decide to have dinner at a small ramen joint. The two have beer while eating. Kyoko says, "It's not that I didn't want you to carry me on your back. When I'm in a wheelchair, my legs get really itchy, and I didn't want you to find that out....since you made me so beautiful." Shuji nodded as if he understood. After that, the mood wasn't too romantic, but the two were able to speak to each other naturally. At the end, they agree to celebrate at the ramen joint if Shuji was victorious over Satoru.

The day comes when the magazine would be on sale. Kyoko stops by a convenience store before going to work at the library. She finds the magazine and purchases it. Right after exiting the store, she takes a peek at the magazine. She finds a whole page dedicated to her, so Shuji was victorious after all. She was happy for him. But then, the expression on her face changes. The title of the article was "Even me, on a wheelchair, was cut by a charisma hair-stylist". Kyoko throws the magazine in the garbage and heads for work. At around the same time, Shuji was also looking at the magazine. But there wasn't a smile on his face. When he enters Hot Lip, Takumi was clearly happy for Shuji since he won over his rival, Satoru. But Satoru tells Shuji, "Now you get it, right?...Why you won over me. It's because of the wheelchair. You probably had it all calculated from the beginning, since it does have impact. If you really had confidence, you would have cut the hair of a normal girl."

Over at the library, the same topic was being discussed among Kyoko and her colleagues. But Kyoko was having the hardest time bearing the conversation. They were all talking about how Shuji probably used Kyoko, since she was in a wheelchair, for the victory. Shuji was waiting outside the library for Kyoko. After the library closes, Sachi leaves to see Shuji waiting outside. When Shuji asks Sachi where Kyoko was, she informs him that she was working at the moving library\* and would go home after that. Just when Shuji begins walking off, Sachi asks from behind, "Did you cheat on Kyoko?" Shuji couldn't say anything back.

**\*Moving Library** - a sort of small library inside of a van.

Kyoko, on the other hand, was already home. Suddenly, the phone starts ringing. Who could it be? When she answers it, she is surprised to hear Shuji's voice

**Shuji** : "It's me, Shuji. Did you see the magazine? Well, actually, I know that you already saw the magazine."

**Kyoko (in a small voice)** : "Sachi."

**Shuji** : "I found out your phone number from that girl (Sachi)....I'm really sorry. I didn't think that the magazine would introduce you in that manner."

**Kyoko** : "Because I'm not normal, I was posted in the magazine, right?"

**Shuji** : "That could have been the case...I went into town to find the perfect model, but there wasn't anyone that could keep my attention. Then I remembered you and knew that you were the one. You're right, if you asked me if the wheelchair had nothing to do with it, I don't have any confidence to prove you wrong, but I thought it had impact."

**Kyoko** : "That's what I thought."

Did Shuji have interest in wheelchairs? Or was it Kyoko he had an interest in?

Shuji then continues, "I want to see you now." But Kyoko replies, "How can I?" Kyoko was crying, and Shuji didn't know what to say back. Kyoko hangs up the phone in tears. She plops down on her bed and begins thinking. When she looks out the window, she could see that it was raining.

It was already night, and Shuji waited and waited for Kyoko, but she wouldn't come. Shuji decides to give up, when he sees Kyoko on her wheelchair with no umbrella although it was raining hard. He turns around and starts running towards Kyoko. But when he reaches her, Kyoko starts talking like nothing ever happened in the first place. She informs Shuji that the book about sodium hydroxide he was looking for could now be found at the library where she worked. The reason Kyoko chose to take this kind of attitude was because she didn't want to end her relationship with Shuji. Shuji says, "Can I go to burrow it?" Kyoko assents. Shuji takes his umbrella and holds it up over Kyoko.

#### **KYOKO'S NARRATION:**

Hey Shuji! This world was beautiful. This world I saw from 100 centimeters high was beautiful. These last months when I met you, I felt like my life was wrapped in an aura of stars. [END OF NARRATION]

What did this mean? Was Kyoko going to die in a few months? Or did it mean that her life in a wheelchair would end in a few months?

## **JANUARY 23: EPISODE 2**

Episode 2 (23rd January, dir.Shono)

Another fine winter morning. Shuji is going to work on his motorbike. He stops at a drink vendor's van where he is obviously a known customer. The woman in the van calls him "charisma stylist" and teases him a bit. Shuji does not look very pleased.

In the library Kyoko is reacting each time the automatic door opens. Sachie pretends to spot first Shuji, then Miyama to teases her. A good-looking middle-aged woman in a kimono approaches the counter and asks if someone called Okishima Shuji comes there.

Hot Lip is having its monthly early morning meeting. Shuji is drinking a cup of coffee. The assistants who have been promoted to stylists are announced. Takumi dashes in late, and is disappointed to hear that he was not amongst those promoted. Then Ozawa Mayumi is announced to have been promoted to top stylist. The meeting is over. Takumi buttonholes Tsuchiya the manager and asks why Shuji was not promoted. The manager does not think Shuji's getting magazine exposure worth rating, as it was probably not due to the haircut alone. Even so, Tsuchiya draws Shuji aside and tells him to come up with a new hairstyle in time for the top stylist promotion test at the end of the month.

Kyoko is in the library canteen, trying to buy a food ticket from the vending machine. There is a trolley preventing her from reaching the top button. As she is about to settle for a different item, Shuji appears, moves away the trolley and pushes the button for her, then once more for himself. They are both having Chinese noodles, but Kyoko will not let Shuji carry her bowl for her. She refuses to ask Shuji to do anything for her, and goes so far as to ask people at another table to pass the pepper. Sachie arrives. Shuji complains that Kyoko is being nasty, and Sachie tells him it must be because he had not come for a while. After the meal, Shuji starts sketching hair designs on pieces of paper. Kyoko comments that she rather likes one of them, calling it "airy". Then she remembers and tells him there had been a woman looking for him a few days ago.

Another day in Hot Lip, Mayumi sees the manager walk off to the staff room and follows him quickly. Satoru is showing a customer out. One of the assistants is taking a call at the till. It seems to be from some magazine. Satoru tells her not to accept unless its for one full colour page, but the girl tells him it's not for him but for Shuji. Satoru takes the receiver from the girl, shoos her away, and tells the magazine editor that Shuji is taking some days off work and that they don't know when he will be back.

After the shop has closed for the night and everyone has left, Shuji is sharpening his scissors on a whetstone. Mayumi is sitting behind him making remarks about Kyoko. As Shuji gets annoyed, she changes tack and urges him to be more friendly with the manager. She is sleeping with Tsuchiya. Shuji, not interested in Mayumi's affairs, asks her what she thinks of the new designs he has come up with. She chooses the same one as Shuji had thought best, then says that all the sketches look like someone called "Satsuki". Shuji changes the topic abruptly by

pointing out that the staff room is not the best place for having affairs. She says he must think that's how she got to be top stylist. She hugs him from behind but he firmly pushes her hands away.

The same night, Sachie is visiting Kyoko's house. Masao comes in with beer and crisps but Kyoko tells him to go away as they have girlie talk to do. He comes back to remind his sister to take her medicine.

As Sachie is leaving, the whole family comes out to see her off, and Kyoko's mother gives her steamed sweet potatoes in a bag to eat on her way.

Kyoko goes with Sachie to the station. Sachie enquires after Kyoko's illness and is assured that there is no change: a visit to the hospital once a month for tests, and taking medicine after every meal, but otherwise fine. They stop at a small park to eat the potatoes. Sachie comments that Kyoko and Shuji is well suited to each other, but Kyoko asks her to stop teasing her about this, as she has long decided not to have a romantic relationship with anyone. Sachie argues that she is proud of having a friend like Kyoko who is pretty and fun, and it angers her to hear Kyoko being so self-conscious in such matters.

The following morning, Kyoko thinks back on what Sachie said as she drives to work, and feels her family must be thinking the same thing. Since her disablement, perhaps she has become cowered like a bird with a broken wing.

As she is entering data into the library computer, Miyama appears and asks her to join him for lunch outside. He has designed a can holder that can be attached to the wheelchair. She apologises for what she said the last time he had come, but Miyama confesses his love, asking her to go steady with him. Kyoko demurs and says there must be nice, normal girls for him to go out with. Miyama tells her that if she is not saying that to make him feel better, but because she really thinks that way, it is not a good thing. He presses again for an answer, but Kyoko turns him down apologetically. He asks her to go, as the lunch break is over, but then asks if it is all right for him to keep coming to the library, as he has not finished reading *The Count of Monte Christo* yet.

Back inside the library, Kyoko is teased by Shuji, who had arrived in the parking lot just as Miyama was saying his parting words. She tells Shuji he should stop making fun of people's sincere feelings, which criticism Shuji accepts surprisingly meekly. As he walks away he is stopped by the middle-aged woman who had come before. They go off to the canteen and Kyoko and Sachie are left to speculate on the relationship between them. A young man approaches the counter with a plastic case full of hair design sketches. He has found it lying around.

In the canteen Shuji is offering coffee, then tea to his mother. Kyoko arrives at the canteen entrance with Shuji's case and overhears their conversation. Shuji's mother had been unable to find him either at his flat or work, but had been told that he might be at the library. She brings out a copy of the magazine *L'amant*. Shuji smiles a little for the first time, and starts happily "I meant to let you know, but it's not much of an article--" when she interrupts and tells him not to have these write-ups as tone never knows who might see them. His father has not been told of the article. In fact, he still doesn't even know what Shuji is doing. How could she tell him that the eldest son of Okishima Hospital didn't even go to university but had become a hair stylist? Having said that, she gets up to leave. Shuji stops her and shouts, "Is that all you can say, after such a long time?" She leaves without answering. Shuji, noticing Kyoko trying to make herself invisible, grabs his things and stalks out. Kyoko is left still holding his case.

The same night, Kyoko and Sachie have been drinking together. They decide to go for a bite, and Kyoko takes her friend to the noodle stall. As they start eating, Shuji arrives. They notice one another, but Shuji sits himself right at the stall, avoiding them. Sachie gobbles up her noodles, and leaves Kyoko to cope on her own. Kyoko and Shuji both doggedly go on eating, back turned towards each other, without uttering a word. Kyoko finishes first and leaves.

As she is wheeling herself along, suddenly Shuji comes from behind and starts pushing her. She protests but Shuji is adamant, and as they go along, she asks him to stop at a shop window. She has always admired the pair of bright red shoes on display there, but has lacked the nerve to go into a shoeshop. After a while, he suggests stopping for a rest. In a park, he explains about the scene earlier that day. He had not seen his mother for three years. His family runs a hospital, but he "being dumb", had failed the entrance exam for medical school three years running. Kyoko tries to comfort him by saying medical schools were difficult, but is told that Shuji's younger brother had succeeded at first try. Shuji had decided in his fourth year that he would never make it, and had switched to beautician's school, thinking, "I might not have the brains or flair for curing people, but I might have a flair for making them beautiful." However, his family had not felt that way. He asks if Kyoko has a dream. Kyoko asks if he is trying to be nasty, then apologises for taking it like that. She explains how she had once dated someone who was not handicapped, and had felt that each obstacle they encountered must be tiring him out. As they start moving again, she suddenly comes up with a dream -- to walk alongside someone she loves.

Shuji arrives home to find Mayumi waiting for him. He points out that they'd already split, but eventually they go inside together.

The next morning Sachie urges Kyoko to take the case with the sketches to Shuji, as he might be looking for them. Kyoko goes alone in her lunch break to Hot Lip. It's their day off, but Satoru is there cutting a friend's hair. Kyoko asks him to give the case to Shuji. Satoru, noticing that it contains designs, hurriedly photographs them in secret and runs to return them to Kyoko, suggesting she take it around to Shuji's flat as it is quite close.

Kyoko consults Sachie by phone, buys some food for Shuji and drives down to his block of flats. As she was about to get on to her wheelchair, Shuji comes out of the building with Mayumi to get something to eat. As they notice each other, the bag of food falls from Kyoko's hand and everything spills out on to the ground, making a mess...

## JANUARY 30: EPISODE 3

Episode 3 (30th January, dir. Doi)

(continued from the last episode's final scene) Shuji, seeing that Kyoko has dropped things, comes over to pick it up for her. Kyoko pretends she has only come to return the sketches, but when asked, admits to having brought the food for him. Shuji insists on eating together what was left, but as Mayumi calls to him from behind, Kyoko grabs the stuff, apologises for bothering him and drives off.

In the car she thinks this is why she likes cars: when driving she is just like anyone else, and doesn't have to feel at a disadvantage because of someone else having lovely legs.

Miyama comes to the library to borrow the fourth volume of *The Count of Monte Christo*. Kyoko finds it difficult to talk to him, and Sachie, seeing him walk sadly away, tells her she ought to say something -- like recommend another book. Then suddenly Miyama comes back, and leaves a flyer advertising a fortnight's tour of the American West Coast. The volunteer group is organising it, and he asks Kyoko to consider participating. Sachie is impressed by his courage in not giving up, and Kyoko feels she would never be able to be like that if she were rejected.

In Hot Lip's staff room, Shuji is showing Takumi the best design he has come up with and explaining how to do it. Takumi's job is to put in the curlers, but he suggests the wrong ones and is ticked off. Then Takumi notices the name of the cut scrawled in the corner: "Airy Shaggy". Shuji tries to snatch back the sketch, saying it was just an idea, when Mayumi comes to get him in agitation.

In the shop Satoru is doing a cut for a magazine. Asked if there is a name for it, he answers "Not sure, but for instance, "Airy Shaggy". Shuji stares at the hairstyle. Takumi pulls Satoru into a corner and points out that he is using Shuji's design, but Satoru brazens it out. The manager Tsuchiya comes over to see what the problem is and, seeing the sketch, realises what has happened, but tells Takumi to pipe down as there are customers. As Shuji calls Takumi to work, without saying a word to Satoru, Mayumi stalks off angrily.

Mayumi arrives at the library and finds Kyoko. She demands to know if Kyoko had shown the sketches to anyone before returning it. As Kyoko puzzledly admits to having handed it to Satoru first, Mayumi tells her about Shuji's design being stolen, and that it is all Kyoko's fault.

That night, Kyoko and Sachie come to Shuji's place in Kyoko's car. Sachie goes to look him up. Kyoko cannot help remembering what happened the last time she was there. Sachie comes back and indicates that he is not back yet.

Hot Lip is empty except for Shuji, who has stayed after hours to look through various magazines. He is about to try out something on a wigged doll, but Sachie appears and attracts his attention. Kyoko is with her. When she apologises about her carelessness with the sketches, he waves it away, saying that it is not as if it were a great work of art. He starts tidying so that Sachie can sit. On being asked if he'd been studying, he answers that he was looking at the mags in the shop, as he has no time to go around noting hairstyles in the streets or browsing in bookshops. The girls decide that they must be taking up his time. But then Shuji cracks a joke about Kyoko's not bringing food this time, which drives her to confess that she had thought it better not to come alone in case his girlfriend misunderstood and became upset. Shuji says Mayumi is just a friend, at which Kyoko says "You let a friend stay overnight." Sachie tries to check her but she leaves in a hurry.

Outside, Sachie maintains a distance from Kyoko who is hurrying along in her wheelchair, but still points out that she shouldn't have said things about how his way of life. She senses Kyoko on the verge of bursting into tears, and though Kyoko denies it, presses her handkerchief into her friend's hand.

The next morning, Mayumi arrives at the hair salon to find the floor littered with magazines and Shuji fast asleep on the sofa. As she touches his face he wakes up with a start and, refusing her offer of coffee, goes out to clear his head.

On an overhead walkway he leans on the railing with a cup of coffee from a nearby cafe. A red car stops at a traffic light below him.

Kyoko is in the driver's seat. She notices Shuji on the walkway. As she watches unnoticed, Shuji gives a huge yawn which makes her smile.

The light changes, and the car behind her honks.

Kyoko and Sachie are in a bookshop picking up various fashion magazines. It is their day off.

Next they are out on a busy street corner, taking snapshots of girls passing-by.

As they are walking down a street, they pass the shoe shop. Sachie notices that the window display has been redone. The pair of red pumps that used to be there are gone. Kyoko pretends she had never noticed them. She finds it somehow awkward to admit to Sachie that she had wanted them.

In Kyoko's room they are busy filing the photographs they have taken and dubbing video tapes. Masao comes in to tell Kyoko about his next arranged meeting. He is terribly pleased with the prospective bride's photograph. The meeting is to be in a hotel lounge the following day. After he leaves the room, Sachie asks Kyoko to find out which hotel.

Hot Lip has closed for the night. The last of the staff leaves, and Shuji is left, trying out a haircut on a wig doll. It doesn't work. Mayumi, whom he had thought had left, brings him a hot drink and offers to be his cut model. Shuji declines. She asks if it has got to be "that girl", but he refuses to be drawn into a discussion. Mayumi's cellphone rings. It is obvious from her conversation that the call is from Tsuchiya, who is asking her to join him in a hotel room. She looks to see if Shuji is listening, but he has walked out into the hall.

Shuji, checking the following day's appointment list by the till, hears some voices outside the salon's front door. He sees Kyoko go past, and Takumi, who has just left to go home, running after her.

Out on the pavement, Takumi is trying to get Kyoko to come and see Shuji in person despite her protestations that she just wanted him to take in the stuff she has brought. Shuji comes out to them, hears Takumi's explanation, and simply wheels her in, disregarding Mayumi's dark looks. Kyoko hands over a file titled "Hairstyles We Fancy". Inside are magazine clippings and photographs of the hairstyles she and Sachie had collected together. Mayumi scoffs at it, pointing out that one only needed to look at beauty mags for all the latest styles. Kyoko retorts that those were not really the styles they fancied. She has also brought a video cassette full of various hairstyles sported by actresses in films, some of them quite old. Shuji expresses interest, at which Mayumi loses her temper. She says a lay person like Kyoko could hardly be able to tell what style was good, and turns on Kyoko, blaming her of using her disability to lure men. Shuji slaps her, saying it was better than using one's body to get work. Mayumi dashes out and Takumi goes after her. Kyoko urges Shuji to go, too, as Mayumi's feelings must be hurt, whereupon Shuji asks if **her** feelings weren't. Eventually he is persuaded to go.

In a nearby small park, he finds Takumi cooling Mayumi's cheek with a damp towel.

In the salon, Kyoko is picking up the file and the cassette, meaning to take them home. Takumi comes back, and asks her to leave them as Shuji wants to take a look. Kyoko demurs, but Takumi insists that Shuji is not just saying it to be nice, and that he too is interested in styles in old films. Kyoko finally smiles.

In the park, Shuji is telling Mayumi that they ought not just let things slide. After all, Mayumi is going out with the manager. No more staying at his place, and things like that. Mayumi asks if he is keen on Kyoko, and is told that it is not like that. She is relieved and seems resigned.

Late that night, Shuji is in his flat, looking through both the file and the video. Something on the screen grabs his attention. Replaying it, he finds a pencil and paper and starts making sketches.

The next day, in a big hotel lounge, Masao in a suit is waiting with the go-between for the other party to turn up. As the girl arrives in a pink formal kimono, Masao's hope rises. Sachie, hiding behind a pillar, notes how cute the girl looks.

The library is about to close, and Kyoko and Sachie are tidying up. Kyoko is astounded to hear that Sachie had been snooping in the hotel during lunch break. Sachie is in despair over how sweet and feminine the girl had looked. Kyoko, realising for the first time that Sachie is in love with Masao, promises to help her. Sachie does not want her to. By this time they have left the building, chatting the whole time. Suddenly Sachie senses a presence, and turns around to find Shuji who has been trying to attract their attention. He has come to thank the girls for the file and video. He has now got a new design. He suggests celebrating with noodles. Sachie sees them off happily.

The noodle stall is doing a roaring trade, and the man turns them away with apologies.

They set off for somewhere else in Kyoko's car. Shuji is relaxed enough to turn up the car stereo volume without asking.

They arrive in a cosy bar where Shuji knows the manager. They are given a table and Shuji announces that this night they mustn't squabble over anything because he is in a very happy mood. After some time Shuji is so drunk that he starts breaking off in the middle of sentences and eventually falls asleep.

When they finally get out of the bar, they find that Kyoko's car has been towed away. Shuji hails a cab. After putting the wheelchair away in the boot, he gets in next to Kyoko and insists on seeing her home.

In the cab, Kyoko's need to go to the bathroom gets desperate. She tells Shuji, but ordinary public conveniences are not roomy enough for her to manoeuvre in. Shuji tells the driver to go back the way they'd come.

The cab stops outside Shuji's block of flats.

Shuji dashes into his flat and shoves things in the entrance hall aside to make room. After checking the bathroom in a hurry, he picks Kyoko up in his arms and carries her straight into the bathroom. Whilst waiting for her to be through, he keeps trying to talk to her, and is asked to go away. After a while Kyoko washes her hands and unlocks the bathroom door. It is immediately opened from outside by an agitated Shuji, who picks her up, dumps her on the floor outside the bathroom, asks her to wait there, and locks himself in the bathroom. Kyoko hears him being sick.

Eventually he comes out and claims that he didn't have the strength to carry her back down just yet. She is puzzled at his making coffee when he has just been sick, but Shuji says it is what he always does. Kyoko wonders if he had only pretended to be sick in order to ease her embarrassment over having to borrow the loo, but he flatly denies it. As they exchange banter, she makes a passing reference to her "grave illness". Shuji asks about it, but is told that she does not want to discuss it for fear of it gobbling her up. Without pursuing the issue, Shuji prepares coffee for both of them.

In the meantime, Kyoko attempts to move some of the magazines and things scattered on the floor around her. In doing so she finds a shobox containing the red shoes she had admired. Shuji had bought them but had not had the opportunity to give them to her. On being asked why he was being nice to her, he admits that she got under his skin and kisses her. They embrace outside the loo door in a very awkward position.

## **FEBRUARY 6: EPISODE 4**

Episode 4 (6th February, dir.Doi)

After the tender scene in his flat, Shuji tries to find a cab to take Kyoko home. Kyoko has the box containing the red shoes on her lap. She shivers in the cold night air, and Shuji insists on lending her a jacket.

As Kyoko remembers their kiss, Shuji dashes back into his flat and rifles his closet for a jacket that would look sweet on her.

He returns to her side and helps her on with the jacket. To her comment that it was like a scene in a romantic foreign film, he replies that he hasn't seen many of those. They manage to catch a cab, and Shuji sees her off, oddly feeling abandoned after a being elated, as if he would never see her again.

One day, before the salon opens for the day, all the staff are gathered to watch Shuji demonstrate his new design on a model. He is being timed, and finishes the cut just as the seconds run out. Tsuchiya asks the opinion of the two top stylists, Satoru and Mayumi. Mayumi approves of it and so does Tsuchiya. Satoru, too, grudgingly admits that it is good, and Shuji gets his promotion.

He goes over to the library to tell Kyoko, and is stunned to find that she is away, on a fortnight tour of the American west coast and Grand Canyon.

Kyoko's brother and father are reading the picture postcards she has sent from America, when there is a call from the go-between to tell them that the young woman she introduced to Masao wants to proceed with a view to marriage.

On another day, Shuji is hard at work. The receptionist taking bookings has to turn away customers asking for him, as he is fully booked for the week. He sees a customer out, and lingers looking around at the passers-by.

Masao, working outside the liquor shop, finds himself noticing a red car passing by. Upstairs, in Kyoko's room, the pair of red shoes are sitting neatly on an occasional table.

Shuji goes to the library again and asks Sachie if Kyoko is really coming back. Sachie suggests that Kyoko might have gone off without telling him in order to arouse his interest, and finds out that they are already past that stage.

Finally Kyoko is back, and the day after she has returned from abroad, Sachie visits her at home. Sachie has dressed up in a kimono to compete with Masao's prospective bride. She notices that Kyoko has brought back a "dreamcatcher", obviously to give Shuji. Masao compliments Sachie on her kimono, but then dashes off to get ready for a date with the other girl.

Kyoko goes to collect Shuji's jacket from the dry cleaners. Back in her room she puts it neatly in a pretty tote bag along with the dreamcatcher. She drives to the salon, but spies Mayumi seeing a customer out, and changes her mind about returning the jacket there and then.

Inside the shop, Shuji finishes styling one customer's hair, but has to move on immediately to start on another.

Over lunch in the library canteen, Sachie asks Kyoko why she had not told Shuji about going away on the tour. Kyoko answers that she had thought it would be better to distance herself a little, as he might not be as interested as she was in their relationship. She stops Sachie who is about to scold her, and asks her to come to a pot dinner the next day at her place.

The following day, Sachie, arriving early, overhears Masao berating the go-between. His prospective bride has rejected the match on learning that Masao had a disabled sister. Masao is upset not at the match having fallen through but that it had been implied that Kyoko was a burden. He comes out of the shop in anger and sees Sachie. He tells her that Kyoko is still not back from the hospital, and Sachie goes off to kill time somewhere. Masao goes after her.

In a nearby park, he asks Sachie not to tell Kyoko what she has overheard. Sachie weeps in chagrin, saying she would not dream of telling her, and that she understood Masao far better than he knew.

Later that day, back home, Masao tries to figure out what Sachie must have meant by "understanding him". Kyoko takes a call from the go-between, who inadvertently lets her know what has happened.

Stunned, Kyoko goes to her room and slowly takes the jacket out of the bag she had chosen for it. The dreamcatcher falls out, too.

The following day, in the salon, Shuji is worn out with the endless flow of customers. He enters the staff room for a drink of water, and is given a parcel that has arrived by door-to-door delivery. Inside is the jacket and a note saying "I was obliged".

Miyama comes to the library to give Kyoko photographs of the tour he has neatly filed for her. Shuji turns up and tries to get Kyoko to talk with him. Kyoko refuses, giving Miyama's visit as an excuse, but Miyama, who has other business to attend to, suggests she go with Shuji, adding smugly how enjoyable the tour had been for both of them.

In the library canteen, Shuji tells Kyoko about his promotion. Nonplussed by her cool response, he asks her why she'd sent the jacket instead of returning it when they next saw each other. As she responds indifferently, he demands to know why she is acting as if she didn't know him. "I don't know you" she says, upon which Shuji nearly stalks out. Kyoko goes after him but can only say things like it not being such a big deal becoming a top stylist, and that what happened a fortnight ago meant nothing really. Shuji walks out, upset to hear such words from her. Sachie is outside the library, talking to Masao on her cellphone. He has phoned to tell her that Kyoko had found out about his prospective marriage falling through because of her. Sachie sees Shuji leave and accosts him. She explains what has happened and asks him to try and understand Kyoko's feelings, but Shuji points out that he has feelings, too. Sachie then tells him about Kyoko's getting the dreamcatcher for him.

That night Shuji sits up in his flat leafing through the file Kyoko had made for him.

Kyoko, in her bed, pulls the coverlet over her head, and turns off the light, knocking down the dreamcatcher to the floor.

The next morning, Shuji opens the blind. It is a bright, sunny day.

Kyoko is clearing the table after the family has had breakfast. The phone rings and it is Shuji. He is at a baseball ground near her local station,



with a van he has rented to take her out for a drive. She promises to be there in ten minutes.

Having got ready, and picking up the dreamcatcher to take to him, she wonders about wearing the red shoes, but decides against it.

Out on the street, she finds that her usual route is blocked by roadworks. She is forced to take a roundabout route, and on a lonely back street, trying to avoid a lorry, gets her chair wheel caught in a gutter. She attempts to free the wheel to no avail. The street is deserted.

Shuji starts getting worried and goes to look for her in the unfamiliar neighbourhood. After some false attempts, Kyoko manages to attract the attention of several high school girls.

Shuji finally gives up and gets inside the van. As he is starting the car, he spots Kyoko weaving through throngs of children leaving the baseball ground. She lies that she had got late dolling herself up for the date, but Shuji feels her cheek and remarks that it is too cold for that. She tells him what had really happened, and he suggests they swap cellphone numbers for such emergencies.

## **FEBRUARY 13: EPISODE 5**

Episode 5(13th February, dir.Shono)

In a coffee shop, Shuji and Kyoko are looking at photographs taken on Kyoko's trip to the West Coast. There are also some taken when Kyoko and Sachie went around snapping hairstyles. Shuji guesses which were taken by Kyoko from the angles used, and praises her on composition. Kyoko is developing an interest in photography. Shuji notices the time and rushes off. The salon is closed that day but he has to cut a model for a photo session.

Shuji, stopping at a red light, suddenly realises he has left Kyoko stranded with her wheelchair out of reach. He wheels the motorbike around and hares back to the coffee shop, but finds that the waiters had already helped her out.

Back at home, Masao is all agitated to hear that Sachie is coming. Sachie arrives, but Masao goes off saying that he has some shopping to do. From their attitudes Kyoko finally realises that something has happened between them.

Shuji is cutting the model's hair in a photo studio. The editor of the magazine the shot is meant for comments on the exposure Shuji has been getting lately, and jokes to Takumi about wanting to show Shuji himself in the mag.

In her room Kyoko hears Sachie and Masao's current situation. She confides to Sachie how she wishes now that she hadn't given Shuji her cellphone number, as he never rings anyway.

Meanwhile, Masao is killing time in a pachinko [Japanese pinball] parlour.

After dinner, Sachie takes her leave. Kyoko suggests that Masao should walk her to the station. During the walk, Masao takes the plunge and asks Sachie if by any chance she was keen on him. Sachie admits to it, and as Masao seems tongue-tied, tries to brush it off as of no consequence. Masao gives her a bottle of perfume he has won at pachinko. Not the type to wear scent, Sachie asks if she could touch him instead and if he would hug her, which he does.

Another day, as the library is closing, Kyoko receives a phone call from Shuji. He cancels their date for that evening because of an urgent magazine job. Kyoko starts talking about her attempt to buy a camera, but Shuji is too busy to listen.

Back in the salon, Shuji and Takumi compliment a pleased customer on her new hairstyle.

One morning, in the salon, Shuji is appalled to see 40 customers booked in for him to cut in a day. Mayumi says the manager is allotting him 15 minutes per customer. The morning meeting starts. The manager announces that they will be hiring the whole of a disco, Playa, for a haircut show. Everyone is excited except Shuji.

In the same coffee shop as before, Kyoko is waiting for Shuji. They mean to go to a film, and she has marked out one in an entertainment magazine. Takumi comes and tells her that Shuji had sent him to keep her company whilst he is delayed. An actress has asked particularly for Shuji. An hour and a half goes by and finally Shuji dashes in. He invites Takumi to have supper together with them, but Takumi points out that it is not a good idea after having kept Kyoko waiting so long.

In the cinema, Shuji is fast asleep. Kyoko covers him with her coat.

When the film is over, Shuji efficiently gets the wheelchair ready and carries Kyoko into it. As they leave the building and start going down the street together, passers-by look at them. Kyoko tries to say something but thinks better of it.

They are at a family diner in the suburbs. They had meant to go to an Italian place, but the hour has gotten too late. Kyoko tells him she had noticed people looking at them in the street, but Shuji puts no importance on it. As Shuji comments that it is a pity about the diner, Kyoko says that it is okay because it is her fault anyway. He gives her a look. He brings up the subject of the film, and she points out that he had slept through it. She adds hurriedly that she had meant it as a joke, but the conversation drags.

They come out of the restaurant and find that it is raining. A waitress lends them an umbrella. Shuji takes it and goes to get the car, muttering "Oh, bother" as he goes. Kyoko hears it and thinks that if she had been normal, they could have run under the one umbrella to the car, joking, and everything that had gone wrong that evening would have been righted.

As they get into the car, Shuji's cellphone rings. It is the actress calling to say that her new director was very pleased with the style. Kyoko remarks that they inhabit such different worlds, Shuji being in the limelight whilst she is a mere librarian. Shuji points out that librarianship is not an easy qualification to get (he had looked it up since he started dating Kyoko), and asks if she wasn't actually looking down on hair stylists, to have chosen the kind of intellectual film that puts him to sleep. The situation gets from bad to worse.

At a red light, she mentions his having said "Bother" earlier, to which he says he had meant the rain, and is he not even allowed to say things like that? She says he could be nicer to her. He points out that she thinks she is special in some way and that he had thought she disliked being treated with velvet gloves. In frustration and annoyance, he gets out of the car at the lights and stalks off to a tube station.

A few days later, Miyama comes to the library saying he has brought someone for Kyoko to meet. It turns out to be Kosugi Tetsuya, a former classmate of hers when she was at the school for the handicapped. He is also wheelchair-bound. She hears that he is now working as an architect, and that his office is in nearby Aoyama. Miyama comments that there is a certain reassurance about being with old friends, and Kyoko adds that their both being in wheelchairs might have something to do with it, too.

Shuji arrives at the library. As he parks his motorbike and takes out a magazine from inside his jacket, he spots from afar Kyoko and Tetsuya happily chatting.

Sachie gives Kyoko the magazine Shuji has left with her. Kyoko is put out that he had not waited around to give it to her in person, and remarks that he must have wanted to show off the fact that his name appeared in magazines. Sachie chides her, suggesting that he had probably only wanted her to see the kind of work he was doing. The magazine, along with the hairstyles carries a small photograph of Shuji himself.

In the salon, Satoru is doing some fancy work and bumps into Shuji working next to him. Neither says a word to each other.

After hours that day, a meeting concerning the haircut show is being held in the staff room. Shuji is against it, protesting that their job is to cut hair, not to make a big show of it. The manager Tsuchiya says it is to promote Hot Lip's image and get more custom, so that they can open a second branch. Shuji asks how they can be expected to cope with more customers when they are already only able to give a customer 15 minutes. "By giving them only 10," Tsuchiya answers. They have a show of hands, and everyone except Shuji votes for having the big event.

As they all file out and only Shuji and Mayumi is left, Mayumi points out that the young assistants are thrilled about the show, and that as a top

stylist Shuji should think about them more.

He leaves the salon in irritation and arrives back at his flat. He checks the cellphone for messages but there is none.

Kyoko is looking at the magazine in her room. She thinks about ringing Shuji but decides not to.

One morning, Kyoko is driving to work and spots Takumi handing out flyers. The flyers are for the haircut show and Takumi tells her she must come, as Shuji should be fabulous on the stage.

In the disco, the lighting effects are being readied. Satoru takes active part in the procedures, but Shuji sits glumly in a corner.

At the library, Kyoko does not know whether to go or not. She and Shuji have not spoken since that film date. Sachie sees it as an opportunity for them to patch up things, and offers to cancel her date with Masao in order to come with Kyoko.

They arrive at the disco with a large bouquet of flowers but decide that it might not be that kind of event. Sachie gets Takumi and some of the staff to carry Kyoko down the steep disco steps, and a space on the landing is cleared for them. The show is half over. Shuji and Satoru are standing at the side of the stage as the models weave up and down the catwalk. Takumi approaches Shuji and tells him that Kyoko has come. In surprise, he looks up and finds her but can only manage a wry expression.

Mayumi as compere asks for a big hand for the two men, and as the models leave the stage Shuji, too, is about to go, but Satoru steps forward and announces that there is a special attraction: he and Shuji will each cut the hair of someone in the audience. He also suggests that they choose each other's model. Shuji says "Who says?" speaking for the first time in public that day. As Satoru taunts him, he agrees sullenly to go along with it. Sachie, not knowing the circumstances, wonders if Shuji is feigning reluctance just to make the show more interesting. Kyoko begins to feel uncomfortable and tells Sachie she wants to leave. But then Shuji chooses a young woman in the audience for Satoru to cut, and Satoru, looking around for a model for Shuji, points at Kyoko just as she and Sachie are getting ready to go.

## **FEBRUARY 20: EPISODE 6**

Episode 6 (20th February, dir.Shono)

(continued from the last episode's final scene) Satoru calls on Kyoko to be Shuji's model. Shuji protests but Satoru gets the staff to carry her wheelchair on to the stage. As the audience applauds, Kyoko gets uncomfortable and asks to be let down again. Satoru tries to stop her, and there is a tussle. The wheelchair is accidentally pushed towards the edge of the stage, and Shuji stops it from falling just in time, but falls off himself. As the staff rush to his help, Kyoko finds herself unable to do a thing in his aid.

The following day(?), Shuji is in his flat with his left arm in a sling. Mayumi is looking after him, and mentions that the Hot Lip staff will drop by now and then to help him manage. She looks at some of the design sketches lying around, and says again that the faces look like "Satsuki", adding that "Satsuki" is far better suited to him than Kyoko.

Kyoko, on her day off, tries to look through Hot Lip's window for a glimpse of Shuji. Mayumi, seeing out a customer, spots her and tells her that Shuji is on sick leave, having hurt a tendon in his arm. She points out that things have been going wrong for Shuji ever since he met Kyoko, and advises her to find someone better suited to her.

Meanwhile, Shuji is visiting the library, looking for Kyoko. His arm is still in a sling. As he leaves, Miyama comes, hears about the accident, and dashes after Shuji.

In the library canteen, as they are collecting coffee from the counter, Miyama tells Shuji that Kyoko must have been hurt far worse, having been exposed to the attention of so many people. Shuji admits that, as he has to sometimes forego sugar in his coffee now, due to one arm being out of use, Kyoko must have had to give up a lot of things, too, although he had not realised it. He has started thinking that he may not be really right for Kyoko.

That evening, Sachie and Masao are about to have a meal in an elegant French restaurant. Masao is appalled at the wine prices.

At home, Kyoko is hanging around in the kitchen, hoping Shuji would ring.

Masao, still in the restaurant, asks Sachie to consider him as a future marriage partner, and Sachie happily accepts.

As Kyoko is turning in, her mother brings the packet of medicine she had left in the kitchen. There has been no phone call from Shuji.

One day Satoru visits her in the library. He apologises for the disco incident. On being asked why he had done it in the first place, he admits that a part of him had wanted to see Shuji flustered, but that he had also wanted to see Shuji cut Kyoko's hair again -- as it had been great to watch the first time.

That evening Shuji drops by at the salon. His arm is still bandaged but no longer in a sling. Satoru is there cleaning up alone as punishment for having ruined the live event. The manager spots Shuji there and commands him to wipe the mirrors. Left alone, Satoru tells Shuji how he had always been jealous of his talents, a fact which comes as a surprise to Shuji. Satoru predicts that Shuji will quit Hot Lip eventually, as the area is now thick with head-hunters. Shuji's talent and ability have not gone unmarked by rival salons.

The next morning Shuji arrives at the salon on his motorbike. As he parks the bike and flexes his healed hand, a woman rings him on his cellphone and asks for a word.

That evening Shuji has an interview with the woman in the coffee shop he and Kyoko often used. The woman called Hirasawa is secretary to the proprietor of Antaeus, a big hair salon. They are opening a fourth branch, and want Shuji to be the manager. Shuji is stunned to have three million yen in cash handed over to him on spot. His salary will be tripled as well. Suddenly, he spots Kyoko coming in with Tetsuya. She notices, too. Shuji pretends to look at Hirasawa's hairstyle, and surreptitiously returns the cash.

Kyoko, on her way back from the bathroom, finds Shuji blocking her way. He points out how hard he had had to look for a barrier-free, fashionable coffee shop until he had found this one, and complains about her not ringing, when he had got hurt for her sake. She tells him to get back to his date. He denies that Hirasawa is his date, but Kyoko tells him Tetsuya is hers.

Shuji tells Hirasawa he will contact her sometime, and leaves the coffee shop alone.

Kyoko visits Tetsuya's office. He is to leave for Germany in a month's time to study more about designing for the disabled. He asks Kyoko to come with him as his wife.

The next day, during lunch break at the library, Kyoko explains to Sachie how much easier life is in Germany for a handicapped person. Sachie asks her if she loves Tetsuya more than Shuji. Of course Kyoko doesn't, but she insists how much easier it is for her with Tetsuya, as they understand each other's situation so well. Sachie gets angry, and tells her that understanding another person has nothing to do with handicaps, and that if that was the way Kyoko felt, she might as well live the rest of her life secluded in the safe circle of fellow disabled people.

Watching Sachie helping a library user, Kyoko thinks to herself that although Sachie is a good friend and genuinely concerned for her, she does not know there are times when Kyoko feels hesitant even towards her. Kyoko remembers how she had not been able to do anything for Shuji when he got hurt.

Shuji comes home from work and notices the answerphone message lamp flashing. Thinking that it is from Kyoko he happily plays it back, but the first message is from a cemetery trying to sell him a grave plot. The second is a totally unexpected call from Satsuki, who hasn't rung in years. She says she has something to consult him about, and that she will ring again.

One day Shuji arrives at an amusement park with his hairstyling kit. He looks around but there are only strangers around. Then Kyoko arrives,

wheeled by a park attendant. She thanks him and starts waiting for Sachie to appear. Shuji realises they have been tricked by Sachie and Takumi into meeting. They sit around drinking coffee and talking very little. They decide to try a couple of rides, but sit away from each other, both of them obstinately silent. They look at the popular "scream-inducing" rides, but Shuji dislikes them and Kyoko cannot go on them. After some more coffee, Kyoko suddenly decides she wants to go on a swing type ride. She insists that it is all right as she has ridden it before. They get on. As the swings start spinning faster, and raised higher above the ground, Shuji notices something is wrong with Kyoko. As she cries out that she is frightened, he shouts desperately to the attendant to stop the machine. In the park's first aid clinic, the doctor tells them it was just a dizzy spell, but that Kyoko should never have gone on the ride in the first place. Left to rest a little by themselves, Kyoko admits that the only time she had ridden it had been before she became disabled. She suggests that Shuji must be fed up with her, and Shuji realises she had done it on purpose to end the relationship. He tells her how much it hurts him to see her trying to hurt herself that way. "I'd love to let you go on those rides, to let you walk and run, if that's what you want, but there's nothing I can do about it! I can't do a thing!" he laments, and finds himself on the verge of tears. He supposes that it must be relief after really having been frightened by Kyoko's deathly pallor on the ride. Kyoko apologises and hugs him. Once Shuji's spirits are restored, they go back into the park and enjoy themselves in small ways. Shuji has told Kyoko that from now on they will try and work out together ways to do things. Kyoko knows it was since she had met Shuji that the desire to run -- so that she could run to him -- had come back again, but decides not to tell him. The thought was like a precious jewel in her heart. They leave the park in the dusk, beneath heart shaped tree illuminations. Shuji takes Kyoko back to his flat and starts preparing stew for both of them. The milk in the fridge is off, and he asks her to keep an eye on the pot whilst he dashes off to get some more. Just then the phone rings. Shuji does not bother to pick it up as the answering machine is switched on. It turns out to be Satsuki, calling to say her business is already resolved so not to worry. Kyoko questions her relationship to Shuji, and he explains that she was a classmate of his back in cram school days when they were both studying to get into medical school. Satsuki had passed her exams and had walked out of Shuji's life. Leaving the flat, Shuji reflects that his reply had not been strictly truthful. He had been madly in love with Satsuki at the time, and had not returned her recent call for fear of looking upon a landscape that was now completely lost to him. Having purchased milk and a few other things, Shuji comes out of the shop. Outside, someone is talking to the shopkeeper. Recognising the voice he turns around, and at the same time Satsuki recognises him, too.

#### **EPISODE 7:**

Episode 7 (27th February, dir. Doi)

(continued from the last episode's final scene) Satsuki tells Shuji she had phoned only because she had been passing that way. He walks her to the bus stop, and they talk whilst waiting for the bus to come. She tells him she is now married. She had become qualified but had quit her job at the hospital when she got married. She now works in an art gallery. He gives her his business card, and she gives him her current phone number. He asks her what she had wanted to talk to him about on the phone, and she tells him it had been about a cram school reunion. The bus arrives, and Satsuki leaves.

Back at the flat, Kyoko and Shuji dine on stew and wine, but Kyoko notices that his thoughts seem to be miles away. To cover up for his being distracted, Shuji offers more drinks.

The next morning he wakes up on the floor and finds Kyoko asleep on the bed.

At Kyoko's house, Masao is checking out the garage for Kyoko's car.

Driving home with Shuji beside her, Kyoko complains about how dumb it is to have to apologise for staying out all night when nothing had actually happened. She suddenly decides it is not on to take Shuji to her folk's house out of the blue. As he gets off, she says there was something she had always wanted to do, and pulls him back in for a kiss. As she drives off, Shuji wonders where the hell he is.

Kyoko gets home, and lies to her family that she had fallen asleep whilst nursing Sachie who had come down with a fever. The men believe her, but her mother who had taken a phone call from Sachie the previous day tells her to bring Shuji to meet them.

One day, Takumi's promotion test is under way in Hot Lip. Asked what he thought, Shuji points out that the balance is bad, and that some of the cuts are sloppy, but, to his surprise, Tsuchiya promotes Takumi to stylist anyhow.

On their next date, Shuji visits Kyoko's house. Everyone is nervous and Masao looks positively glum. The parents try to make small talk and be understanding. Masao starts to ask him about the future and is checked by the parents.

After the interview, they go off to see a film. Kyoko apologises about the interview but Shuji is silent.

Back at Kyoko's house, the parents tell Masao not to say things like that, when Kyoko is happy and enjoying a delayed adolescence. Masao cannot see why the family can't be good enough for her.

After the film, Shuji takes Kyoko back to his flat. Kyoko apologises for not having worn the red shoes yet. He tells her there is always next time, and draws her wheelchair to her and kisses her. She tells him that, physically, embracing is the most she can manage with him. He is not concerned. Whilst hugging each other, she asks him what kind of expression he is wearing. She has realised that they are so close yet unable to see each other. Shuji tells her not to say such things.

One day in the salon, Shuji is being interviewed by a magazine. He notices one of his regular clients about to have her hair done by Takumi. She had asked for Shuji but had been told that he was fully booked. Shuji finishes the interview then and there, and tells Takumi to go and get his kit for him.

He later complains to Mayumi about being made to waste time on interviews. She tells him the shop needs him and Satoru to promote Hot Lip. Shuji suspects that Takumi had been promoted only because they needed someone to take on some of his and Satoru's workload. According to Satoru, Tsuchiya intends to open three more branches whilst the going is good, and to appoint Shuji, Satoru and Mayumi as managers. Shuji is surprised that Satoru knows all this. Takumi comes to tell Shuji that he is wanted on the phone. It turns out to be Hirasawa the head-hunter. He tells her that he wants time to think.

Shuji gets home and finds Satsuki's phone number in his pocket. Worn out with care, he is struck by a sudden nostalgia and dials the number. Satsuki, alone at home, takes the call. He points out that she must have meant to talk about something else previously, as his flat was a long way out, and no one had ever heard of a cram school holding a reunion. Just then Satsuki's husband comes home and she hangs up in a hurry. The following day, Shuji is checking a perm job Takumi is giving a customer, when Satsuki comes to have her hair cut. As his schedule is full that day, she leaves. Mayumi explains to an intrigued Takumi and Satoru that Satsuki had been Shuji's girlfriend once.

Shuji dashes out to catch Satsuki, and tells her to come the following day.

The next day, Kyoko comes in her car to the usual coffee shop to meet Tetsuya.

Shuji is waiting for Satsuki to turn up -- the shop is closed that day -- and sees Takumi come in to practice the cuts Shuji has criticised. Satsuki arrives. Shuji introduces her to Takumi and finds that Takumi knows the gallery where she works.

In the coffee shop, Kyoko tells Tetsuya she cannot marry him as there is someone else. Tetsuya, having heard about Shuji from Miyama, asks

if they are considering marriage. Kyoko tells him that love and marriage are two separate matters and that, at the moment, she is enjoying being in love.

Satsuki is pleased with the new hairstyle Shuji has given her. He refuses payment, mentioning the many times in the past when he had tried to cut her hair and had made a hash of it. As she is about to leave, he suggests giving her a lift.

Kyoko's car pulls up outside Hot Lip on the far side of the road. Seeing that it is closed, she is just about to ring Shuji's cellphone when she sees him come out and honks. Not noticing, he hands a crash helmet to Satsuki waiting by his motorbike, and they go off, with Satsuki riding pillion. She suggests going a bit far.

At the seaside, Shuji watches Satsuki frolicking with a couple of local children. She buys him coffee, and he comments on how healthy she looks, telling her that he is now going out with a girl who cannot walk. Satsuki in turn confesses that she had really contacted him to borrow courage. Her husband is seriously involved with another woman, and she is contemplating divorce, but is worried that she might not be able to pick up where she left off as a doctor. She feels cast off alone in a wide ocean. Shuji, too, admits that he is feeling as if a lot of different waves are rushing in to swallow him.

Kyoko, alone in her room, pictures to herself the scene she has witnessed outside the salon.

That night, in a drinking house, Sachie tells Masao not to keep Kyoko cooped up. Masao argues back that it is different for her family, and that Sachie doesn't understand. He feels it is his duty to keep Kyoko from being hurt. In the heat of the argument, Sachie accuses him of being a male chauvinist pig.

It has started raining, and Shuji, having brought Satsuki back to town, buys a plastic umbrella for her. They part with words of encouragement, telling themselves they are never going to see each other again.

The following day, in the staff room Shuji tells Tsuchiya how Takumi's premature promotion cannot be good for the lad. The manager gets annoyed and tells him that he can go if he is dissatisfied.

Masao comes to Hot Lip in his working clothes. He asks if he could see Shuji.

As night falls, Shuji gets to the coffee shop where Masao is waiting for him. His cellphone rings, but he switches it off.

Kyoko, who had been making the call from home, contemplates the red shoes.

Masao asks if Shuji is considering marriage. When he admits that he hadn't been, yet, Masao seems relieved. Shuji states that it is not as if he isn't serious about Kyoko. It is just that things are a bit unsettled at work. Masao points out that living with a handicapped person means that his whole life would have to be fitted in around her, and that it would not be possible for someone who wanted to get on with career.

Shuji, in deep thought, returns to the salon to get his coat. Takumi reproaches him for criticising the promotion, and suggests that Shuji is jealous and worried that he would be overtaken. As Takumi starts making references to Hirasawa, whose call he had taken and whom he has guessed is a head-hunter, Shuji leaves the salon in anger.

As he steps out on to the street, his cellphone rings. It is Kyoko. She suspects Shuji of having been with a woman when she rang earlier, and when he denies it, she mentions having seen him give a woman a ride the previous day. He tells her it was only a customer needing a lift. Kyoko complains that he needn't have let her ride behind him, as it was something Kyoko herself wanted to do and couldn't. Shuji apologises brusquely and hangs up, having told her he would ring back when he reached home.

Kyoko stares at her cellphone.

Shuji arrives wearily at his block of flats. Satsuki calls to him from behind. She says she has come to return the umbrella, but as it is a cheap plastic one, he asks for the real reason. She tells him that she has shown her husband divorce papers, whereupon he had struck her and thrown her out of the house. She has nowhere to go. Shuji hugs her to him.

Kyoko opens her window.

Shuji and Satsuki stare at each other, as the rain starts falling.

#### **EPISODE 8:**

Episode 8 (5th March, dir. Doi)

The next morning, Kyoko and Masao are washing their faces in the bathroom. The telephone rings and Kyoko hurries to the living room, but it is not from Shuji.

Around the same time, Satsuki is leaving Shuji's flat where she has spent the night. He advises her to discuss things properly with her husband. He has slept on the sofa.

Kyoko comes to Hot Lip. Takumi arrives for work and tells her Shuji wouldn't be coming yet. She tells him Shuji hadn't phoned the night before, and expresses her concern about the woman she saw being given a lift. Takumi lets slip the fact that he knows the woman. Kyoko pleads him to tell her who she is.

Shuji drops in to the usual coffee shop before going to the salon. Hirasawa is waiting there, but he tells her he has no intention of quitting Hot Lip, as he treasures the clients who come there for him. She hints at upsets at Hot Lip in the near future.

Kyoko and Sachie arrive at the gallery where Satsuki works. Sachie feels they should not be snoop, but Kyoko insists she only wants to have a peek at the woman. Sachie gives in and dashes off to get some coffee. As Kyoko is peering in, Satsuki notices, and comes out, guessing that Kyoko must be Shuji's current girlfriend. Kyoko denies it, but in her haste to get away, she backs off the kerb. The wheelchair falls over. Sachie and Satsuki both rush to help.

Masao arrives in agitation at the hospital to which Kyoko has been taken. Sachie tells him she is being X-rayed. Masao notices Satsuki who has accompanied them.

Shuji, working in the salon, receives a phone call from Satsuki informing him of Kyoko's accident. Luckily it was only a minor bruising. He wonders why Kyoko had gone to the gallery at all. Satsuki suggests that she must have been bothered by Satsuki's presence.

Shuji goes to the hospital. He finds Masao settling the bill, and asks to see Kyoko but Masao flatly refuses. Shuji follows him to the car park and spots Kyoko's car, driven by Sachie, about to leave. Kyoko is in the passenger seat. He stops the car and tries to talk to her, but Kyoko will not meet his eye. She tells a distressed Sachie to start the car.

Back in the salon's staff room, Takumi and Satoru are looking at the week's work load. Takumi has very few bookings. Shuji bursts in and pulls Takumi into the storeroom. He reproaches Takumi for telling Kyoko where Satsuki worked. Takumi argues that it is Shuji's fault for hurting her feelings in the first place.

That night, back home in his flat, Shuji rings Kyoko's cellphone, but cannot reach her.

Kyoko is sitting morosely in her room, when Masao comes in and suggests that, as she cannot drive or work for a while, she go to her aunt's place in the countryside for a change of scene.

Several days later, Sachie discusses the accident with Miyama who has come to the library. She is worried about Kyoko who seems to have closed up towards people. Miyama explains how an accident like that can shake the confidence disabled people managed to build up. Sachie wonders if she has ever understood how deep her friend's trauma ran. Miyama reassures her.

At Kyoko's house, her mother takes a call from Shuji, but Masao takes the receiver from her, and tells Shuji that Kyoko does not wish to talk to him. As Masao hangs up, Miyama comes to visit. He is shown to Kyoko's room, where he tells her that the reason she was so hurt about Shuji was because she loved him through her own choice. He praises her for having got over another hurdle, but Kyoko tells him how she feels like disappearing from Shuji's life when she thinks about his future. Masao, having brought tea, hears this outside the door.

One day Shuji comes to Kyoko's house. Masao tells him she is away, but he does not believe him and insists on seeing her. Kyoko's mother suggests he be shown inside so that he can accept she is not there. He sees her room, and notices the red shoes she has left out on the table. Masao, realising that Shuji had given it to her, reproaches him for making such a gift to someone who could not walk, and forces him to take it back.

In the alley to the side of the liquor shop, Shuji sits on his motorbike, at a loss what to do. He starts putting the red shoes into his rucksack. Kyoko's mother comes out of the shop to look for him, and asks if he could spare some time.

In a coffee shop some way away, she writes down the address of Kyoko's aunt. She asks him to go and see her, if he is really sure he cannot give her up. She then asks how much Shuji knows about Kyoko's illness, and hears that he knows only that she has to have regular medication and check-ups, and that she can lead a normal life as long as she does not exert herself too much. The mother tells him that, although that in itself is true, as her illness is that of immunity deficiency there is a constant possibility that her condition may worsen and lead to death. The odds that this will happen are 13 to 43. Kyoko knows about this, too. The whole family is hanging on to the hope that it will not happen. The mother feels she should not force Shuji to share the same fear, but she also feels Kyoko wants really to see him again.

Night has fallen. Shuji walks along the dark road, the red shoes dangling from his hands, thinking about the odds he has just heard.

He reaches home on his motorbike. As he is about to go in, Satsuki calls to him. She has discussed things with her husband and they have agreed to divorce. Her former mentor has found a place for her in an Osaka hospital. She asks if she and Shuji cannot start over again together. He regrets that he cannot, and they embrace. Watching Satsuki walk away, Shuji pulls out from his pocket the address Kyoko's mother has given him.

The next morning, in a house in a fishing village, Kyoko is sitting by the yard, helping look after her cousin's baby. Shuji arrives on his motorbike outside the yard and spots her. He watches Kyoko cradling the baby for a while. Her cousin comes and takes the baby away, and she notices Shuji on the other side of the hedge.

They talk on the wharf. Kyoko tells him she has come away because she felt she could not face him after being caught snooping on Satsuki like that. She suggests that Satsuki is far better suited to Shuji. He admits his feelings had wavered a bit on meeting her after all this time, but then asserts that he loves Kyoko. No one else would do for him. He asks her to contact him when she returns to town, as he is in no position to take her away from her aunt's by force. Thus saying, he leaves on his bike again.

At night in Aoyama, Takumi tries to find a haircut model. The girls are interested in Hot Lip, but not in having their hair cut by him. A woman approaches the disgruntled lad. It is Hirasawa of Antaeus. She takes him to a coffee shop, and offers him a bigger salary. As Antaeus has no stars like Shuji and Satoru, he can be the top there. But he must give them a copy of Hot Lip's client list in return.

In the salon's staff room after hours, Tsuchiya shows Shuji the plans for the new branch. Mayumi announces visitors and Tsuchiya goes out to talk with them. Shuji finds out from Mayumi that they are the people financing the new branch, and finds them vaguely unsettling.

The same evening, Kyoko is back home showing off her healed arm. Going to her own room she notices the shoes are missing. Masao comes in and apologises about returning them without her permission, but Kyoko reassures him, saying that she had meant to return them anyway. She had merely been having a dream.

Shuji arrives back at his flat, when his attention is drawn by a car honking. It is Kyoko. She cooks the dried fish she has brought for him from her aunt's, and after dining with him, informs him that she is happy to end their relationship there, as for a short while he has made her life sparkle. Shuji tells her he is not a Christmas tree decoration. He wants to be a part of her life -- of their life together. He has thought a lot, like how they probably would not be able to have children, how on aeroplanes he would have to wake up to carry her every time she needed to go to the bathroom. He has pondered everything, from the little to the big, and has made up his mind. After a series of "Even ifs", Kyoko asks him "Even if I'm going to die?" Shuji looks her in the eye, smiles and nods.

Later they go out to see the street illumination, Kyoko holding on to Shuji's hand with both hands, being gently pulled alongside him, and wearing the red shoes for the first -- and last time

#### **EPISODE 9:**

Episode 9 (5th March, dir. Shono)

On a clear day Shuji and Kyoko go for a drive in Kyoko's car.

Masao and Sachie are also going for a drive, but in the liquor shop's delivery van.

Shuji and Kyoko arrive at a lake where they can get a stunning view of Mt Fuji. Shuji gives Kyoko the key to his flat, and asks her to come whenever she wants to.

That evening, back at home, Kyoko finds Masao writing out a time line of his life with Sachie. He swears her to secrecy.

He brings Kyoko a glass of water for her to take her medicine with, and asks if her dosage has increased. Kyoko answers that the dosage has always been adjusted from time to time.

One evening, Masao and Sachie are at the cinema. They see an advert for a diamond engagement ring. Later, as Sachie gets out of the van outside her block of flats, he suggests buying her a ring. Sachie tries to get him to see that the ring should come **after** he has made her some advances. He finally gets the point and spends the night with her.

Several days later, Kyoko and Sachie are having lunch in the library canteen. Kyoko shows off the key to Shuji's flat. Sachie shows off the ring on her finger.

At home, Masao takes a call from the hospital. The doctor wishes to speak to him.

On her next day off, Kyoko comes to Shuji's flat whilst he is out. Hot Lip is closed but Shuji has to do the models' hair at a fashion show.

Meanwhile, someone approaches Hot Lip's front entrance and lets himself in with a key. It is Takumi. He rummages in the staff room and finds the key to a cabinet containing the client list. Just as he returns the cabinet key, Satoru arrives back from the fashion show. Takumi hides the list behind his back and tries to slip out, but runs into Shuji who has also returned. Satoru notices the list Takumi is clutching.

In Shuji's flat, Kyoko is putting together a stew for lunch.

Takumi confesses how he had been approached by Antaeus. Shuji tells him to quit the shop there and then. Takumi knows that without the list no salon would want him. Satoru intercedes, saying that Takumi hadn't actually handed over the list; he might have reconsidered and put it back. Shuji, angry and disappointed, says how he used to stay up all hours coaching him, seeing great promise in Takumi, to which Takumi retorts that he had never once asked him for such favours. Satoru tells Takumi to go home. After Takumi has left, Satoru asks Shuji to try and see a weak person's point of view. Shuji stalks out, unable to understand.

Takumi tries to speak to him outside the salon, but Shuji brushes him off and gets on his motorbike.

Kyoko, having laid the table, contentedly waits for Shuji's return.

Arriving outside his block of flats, Shuji notices Kyoko's car. As he tries the door handle and finds it open, a happy smile spreads over his face. He bustles about in the flat, until Kyoko asks if something has happened, as he is unusually talkative.

Around the same time Masao is in the hospital waiting room, nervously waiting to be called.

Shuji and Kyoko wash up after eating. Having heard Shuji's story, Kyoko tells him she can see what Satoru was trying to say. Shuji's clear-cut integrity and strength is sometimes too bright and dazzling for the weaker people around him.

At the hospital, Masao is told the doctor can see him now.

Kyoko asks Shuji what kind of hair stylist he wants to be. He answers that he prefers a small shop where he can see to everything himself.

Kyoko suggests someplace like a tiny seaside town, and the kind of shop where the door has a bell over it that rings when it is opened. The kind of place a little girl could come for her first hair salon experience, clutching a magazine clipping. Shuji starts sketching out the shops interior, casually mentioning that it will be Kyoko's job to choose the books in the waiting area, and to greet the customers with a smile. Kyoko is moved to find that she is a part of his future plans.

At the hospital Masao is told by the doctor that they wish to run further tests with a fibroscope. Kyoko has developed a tumour and they need to find out whether it is benign or not.

Returning home Masao tells his parents. The mother suggests asking Shuji to break it to Kyoko, but Masao insists on telling her himself.

Unaware of all this, Shuji and Kyoko are laughing over a video of *Austin Powers* in Shuji's flat.

The following night, Kyoko is happily turning over the key to Shuji's flat which Sachie has painted for her. Masao comes in and tells her about the need for some more tests. Kyoko realises its implications, and reassures her brother that she had known it would come sometime. Masao stresses that nothing is certain yet. She acknowledges that, and asks Masao to leave as she would like to go to bed now.

In Hot Lip, Shuji is getting ready to go home. He passes Takumi in the doorway but will not speak to him.

Kyoko sits up in her bed, staring at the key, then slowly reaches for her car key.

Masao, dealing with an urgent order from a customer, suddenly notices that Kyoko's car is not there. Her room is empty, too.

Shuji, just walking into his flat, receives an agitated call from Masao, asking if Kyoko has rung.

As he dashes out again and gets on his motorbike, Takumi, summoned by him, comes running. Shuji asks him to stay there in case Kyoko comes, whilst he goes to look for her. He apologises for dragging Takumi out, and admits that there had been no one else he could ask. Takumi thanks him for calling him in, and urges him to go.

As Shuji speeds through the night streets and gets on the highway, Kyoko's car is driving into the countryside. Shuji recalls how Kyoko had been struck by the beauty of the lake and Mt Fuji. Kyoko narrowly avoids a lorry coming from the other direction and determinedly goes on.

Arriving at the lake in the dark, she at last starts weeping. She gets out of the car and wheels slowly to the water's edge.

Shuji rides into the woods surrounding the lake. The motorbike hits a bump in the ground and he is thrown off, but quickly gets up and starts shouting for Kyoko.

Just as the wheelchair's front tyres touch the water, Kyoko hears Shuji calling in the distance. She calls out his name in reply, and Shuji runs through the woods in search of her.

Finally spotting her, he approaches gently, asking what the hell she thought she was doing. Then quickly pulling the wheelchair up to higher ground, he hugs her tightly, telling her that she was not to think of dying alone. If she really wanted to die, he would die with her. Kyoko's limbs, numb from shock and cold quickens in his embrace, and she feels she is alive again.

As Shuji carries her back to the car through the woods, she appreciates how good life is, and how much she is loved. And wonders if she is loving Shuji properly.

## EPISODE 10:

Episode 10 (12th March, dir. Doi)

Shuji is working on a customer's hair, but his mind keeps slipping back to the incident in the woods. In a moment of distraction he nicks the customer's ear. Satoru and Takumi cover for him.

At the hospital Kyoko and her doctor arrange to run the tests on Thursday week.

That evening, in a drinking house, Sachie tells Masao she is pregnant. He is stunned, then asks her if they could put the wedding off for a while.

The next day, in the library canteen, Sachie asks Kyoko what she thinks of Masao's attitude. Kyoko, hearing about the baby for the first time, is thinks it is wonderful. She reassures Sachie that Masao only meant he was preoccupied with Kyoko's condition.

A day or so later, Shuji and Kyoko go up in the big wheel at an amusement park. They tease each other about kissing in the secluded cubicle, but just as they are about to take the plunge, the voice from the loudspeaker interrupts them.

After a meal in the usual coffee house, Shuji asks Kyoko when the tests are due. She tells him there is no need for him to come, and promises to telephone. When asked what she wants to do next, Kyoko answers that she wants to go shopping.

Returning to his flat, Shuji finds Takumi waiting for him.

Kyoko, reaching home, gives Masao a parcel. Inside are a pair of baby gloves she has bought this afternoon. Masao, who had not told anyone about the baby, is agitated. Kyoko says that she thought she needed to hurry if she wanted to give the baby things.

Shuji makes coffee for Takumi. Takumi is worried about Kyoko's condition which is obviously troubling Shuji. He tells Shuji of his decision to ask to be demoted again to assistant.

That night Shuji finds it hard to get to sleep. He keeps remembering the scene in the woods. He looks at the dreamcatcher hanging from his reading lamp and asks it to keep the nightmares away.

Kyoko opens her window and looks at the beautiful moon. Her cellphone rings. It is Shuji. She tells him to look at the sky. He tells her he phoned because he missed her, and she reassures him, saying that she was always with him. They talk late into the night about nothing in particular.

The next morning Shuji comes to work and finds a removal van outside the salon. Workmen are evaluating and moving the fittings. The salon staff are standing around, watching in silence. One of the men who are directing the workmen knocks down someone's scissors pouch. Shuji flies at him in rage and is dragged off by Satoru. In the staff room he is told that this has all come of Tsuchiya trying to expand the business in a hurry. The manager is nowhere to be seen. The salon is almost stripped to its bare bones now.

Sachie and Masao are at a shrine. Sachie buys an amulet for speedy recovery from illness for Kyoko. Masao tells her he does mean to marry her eventually, and that the baby is welcome. He then hands her the amulet for easy delivery he has bought for her.

A few days later, Takumi visits the empty salon. Shuji is there putting address stickers on postcards notifying clients of Hot Lip's closing down.

Everyone else is busy looking for a new place to work. As Takumi wonders if Cinderella might have felt like this when her coach turned back into a pumpkin, Shuji smiles and says that Takumi should be able to create the kind of styles Shuji never could. On asked what he meant to do, he answers that at the moment he is more than likely to nick someone's ear again.

Masao and his mother are getting ready for a sukiyaki dinner at home. Shuji comes calling without warning. Masao is brusque, but his mother reminds him of how Shuji had saved Kyoko in the woods. Masao grudgingly offers Shuji tea. Shuji has come to ask for his blessing. Masao says that Kyoko might not make it, to which Shuji answers that this is why he wants to be with her. Kyoko and her father come home from shopping. Kyoko is delighted to see Shuji, and the parents ask him to stay for the meal. Even at the table Masao refuses to join in the conversation, and turns on the television. He feigns interest in a nature programme, but finds that Shuji knows more about it...

After the meal, Kyoko asks Masao to drive Shuji to the station. In the van Masao asks Shuji if he thought he could date Kyoko since she was going to die anyway, and he could always find someone new afterwards. He apologises as soon as he says it, and Shuji replies that he would have hit Masao if Masao hadn't been driving. Masao asks for a cigarette and they stop on a bridge to smoke. Masao recalls how Kyoko as a small child had been very happy to be given a puppy. Her happy smile on seeing Shuji earlier had reminded him of the incident. None of the family could make her smile like that. As Masao breaks down and weeps, Shuji feels his heart being wrenched to think of Kyoko tumbling around with the puppy, yet he resolves not to cry. He needed to be tougher.

It is Thursday and Shuji arrives at Kyoko's hospital. Masao is in the waiting room. Kyoko comes out of the consulting room, and tells them she has heard the results without waiting for them. The tumour has been found to be malignant. She is to move in to one of the hospital rooms immediately. As Masao goes to talk with the doctor, Kyoko goes out into the garden with Shuji. Shuji takes off his jacket to put around her, but she knocks it to the ground and reproaches him for ever having appeared in front of her. She wishes she had never met him, as it makes death even harder to take. Shuji brushes the leaves off his jacket and puts it around her anyhow, and tells her that he was glad to have met her, and that he believed people had the power to be happy in whatever kind of life they led. As he hugs her, Kyoko asks if he is crying. Shuji denies it but she tells him she can hear his heart weeping. Masao watches the two of them from afar.

That night, in the hospital bed Kyoko is unable to sleep. She opens a notebook and starts writing her thoughts, addressing it to S.

Shuji, in his flat, is adding colour to the pencil sketch of the little hair salon he and Kyoko had discussed.

As she writes how much she wants to see more of Shuji and be loved by him, a thought comes to her and, getting dressed, she sneaks out of the hospital and catches a cab.

Shuji has brought out his scissors and is studying them when the doorbell rings. There is no one to be seen. Then Kyoko appears from where she was hiding and clings to Shuji. He phones the hospital, pretending to be a member of the family, and gets permission for her to stay out for the night. Kyoko then asks him a favour: she wants him to make love to her. Shuji hesitates but K assures him that she will be all right. He picks her up, carries her to his bed, and starts kissing her first gently, then passionately.

## EPISODE 11: [FINALE]

Episode 11 (12th March, dir. Shono)

The morning after, Shuji and Kyoko are having breakfast together. Kyoko asks Shuji when she could see him next, and he answers "Tomorrow." He tells her that in a couple of days his paid leave is to start. He has not told her about Hot Lip's going bankrupt.

Back in the hospital Kyoko asks her mother if she managed to get the lip gloss she had asked for.

In the empty salon, Takumi and Satoru are about to leave. Satoru asks Shuji what he means to do about work, and is told that he has nothing in mind.

Kyoko practices applying the lip gloss and asks her mother if she has congratulated Sachie on her baby. The mother tells her Masao is managing fine. That night Kyoko cannot sleep because of excitement.

The following day, Kyoko is trying out a hair slide when Shuji arrives. Her mother goes out to do the washing, leaving them alone. They admit to how much they'd missed each other. Kyoko says she wants to consult Shuji about something. A day or so later, Shuji is proposing a party to celebrate Sachie and Masao's pending marriage and the baby. Sachie demurs on account of Kyoko's illness, but Shuji tells her that Kyoko would feel worse if she heard that. For once, Masao agrees.

On the day of the party Shuji and Masao decorate the living room in Kyoko's house. Kyoko gives Sachie a bouquet of flowers and propose a toast.

That night, Masao carries bedding upstairs so that Sachie could stay the night. Kyoko's mother and Sachie urge Shuji to stay, too. He accepts the invitation, to Kyoko's delight.

Whilst taking a bath, Shuji notices on the bathroom wall a picture of a puppy depicted in tiles. Kyoko's mother puts out a pair of Masao's pyjamas for him to wear when he gets out.

He goes to the living room dressed in the pyjamas and finds the mother folding the laundry. She tells him the whole family's growth had somehow halted when Kyoko was first taken ill, and thanks him for not abandoning her.

Bedding for Shuji has been laid out next to Kyoko's bed. Kyoko tells Shuji that through her illness she has received a lot of good things but that Shuji is the A No.1 amongst them.

The next day Shuji reaches home and is surprised to see Satoru waiting for him in his car outside the flats. He is concerned about Shuji losing his touch, and asks him to join the salon he now works for. Shuji tells him to leave him alone and just go. Satoru leaves behind a magazine carrying his latest design, but after he has left Shuji throws it at the door.

In the hospital room, Masao is showing Kyoko brochures of overseas tours. He even suggests taking Shuji along, but all Kyoko wants is to go in her car to the library, eat in the canteen, and then have dinner at home, as this was what her life had been. Masao tells her to leave it to him.

Several days later Shuji is carrying bedding into a small detached house. Masao has rented it so that Shuji and Kyoko could live together. Miyama is there to help adjust the difference in floor levels, and Sachie bustles about making tea.

They are all trying to keep themselves busy doing something for Kyoko.

Soon after that, Kyoko is out on the street taking photographs of passers-by and her own car. She takes one of Shuji, too. Told not to hold back on her feelings, she asks him to kiss her there and then. He glances around hurriedly and gives her a quick peck.

Brought to the little house Kyoko is surprised and delighted to hear that they would be living together there from now on.

Masao arrives with a puppy, to be called John after the original pup they had given away. The next day, whilst Shuji is out shopping and Kyoko is trying to take a photograph of the puppy, Satoru turns up. He has seen Shuji's new address taped to his flat's door. Meanwhile Shuji is peeking into the now closed and abandoned Hot Lip. Takumi spots him. He is now working as an assistant in a nearby salon. He tries to offer Shuji encouragement. Back home, Shuji is building a kennel for the puppy, Kyoko makes him a cup of coffee, then mentions Satoru's visit. She now knows all about Shuji being out of a job. Satoru has brought a brief of a show for a fashion designer's spring collection, wanting Shuji to join him in it as hair stylist. The designer is one that Shuji has always admired, but when Kyoko says she wants to see him working, he says he cannot think now about hairstyles and things. That night Shuji comes out of the bath and finds Kyoko still awake. She is frightened of the night, but she says she means to live through it, and adds that she wants Shuji to live as well, or they will both be losers. Hearing her wish to see his work in the fashion show, he agrees to do it, on condition that she make an effort, too. From the next day they start sharing the household chores, Kyoko doing what she could whilst Shuji is out working on the collection project, and going out to walk the dog together on his days off. Time passed peacefully for a while, but one day, Kyoko's mother who has been helping with the heavier cleaning finds Kyoko collapsed in the yard. Shuji, working on the spring collection is notified immediately and rushes to the hospital. Kyoko tells him it's only a matter of some more drips, and Shuji allows the lie to pass, going up to the hospital roof to smoke. One day, Sachie is visiting Kyoko in the hospital room. She finds a pair of baby socks in the chest of drawers. Kyoko asks her to brighten up her family home with the baby, and touches Sachie's belly, speaking to the unborn child. Sachie bursts out crying. That night Kyoko is placing the photographs she has taken in a small album. After the shots taken on the big wheel and those of the puppy, there are only blank pages. Shuji arrives, having been told off by the nurse as usual for running in the corridor. He later lies down in the attendant's bed placed next to hers. As Kyoko reaches out to him, he joins her on her bed. Kyoko tells him about Sachie and the baby, and asks what to do with her desire to live. Shuji says he will live for both of them, or die with her as he once promised. Hearing this, Kyoko tells him she wanted him to live. Later that night, Shuji goes again on to the roof and lights a cigarette, biting back his tears. The day of the spring collection dawns fine and clear. Shuji dashes in for a quick look before going. Kyoko is to come to the show later. He heads for the venue on his motorbike. At the venue, Satoru and Mayumi who is also helping suggest they put flowers to mark the area reserved for Kyoko. At the hospital Kyoko is applying makeup to her face. Masao goes to look for Sachie who is late, and comes back with her to find Kyoko unconscious in her wheelchair. Regaining consciousness, she begs her brother to take her to the show, as it is her and Shuji's last dream together. Shuji is arranging a model's hair backstage. Kyoko arrives in the reserved area with Masao and Sachie. As Shuji watches the models from the wings, Takumi (also assisting) tells him one of the models has just gone on still with hairclips in her hair. Shuji walks out onto the stage with as little a fuss as possible, and removes the hairclips. He notices Kyoko in the audience and they smile at each other. Takumi apologises backstage. In the meanwhile, Kyoko collapses onto her brother's shoulder. As the show ends and the designer beckons Shuji out, to be also presented with a bouquet, he notices that the reserved area is empty. Takumi slips up to him and tells him about Kyoko. Shuji runs back stage and down the staircase, and is just in time to get on the ambulance taking Kyoko to the hospital. In the ambulance, he calls to Kyoko who opens her eyes, smiles, and tries to say something. Shuji takes the oxygen mask off her and manages to hear her say "The collection was great." She apologises to him for everything and thanks him before closing her eyes forever. Outside the hospital ICU Sachie sobs into Masao's arms. Kyoko's wheelchair is left unwanted in her hospital room. The next day, preparations are being made in Kyoko's home for the funeral. As Masao and the father make arrangements with the undertaker, and Sachie and the mother prepare refreshments for mourners, Shuji, who has stayed by Kyoko's bedside, looks in and asks if he could make up Kyoko's face for her. Takumi brings his makeup kit to the room where she is laid out. Shuji first applies foundation, then lipstick to her face. Takumi, unable to contain himself, leaves the room. Kyoko's mother comes in with the red shoes. She intends to put them in the coffin so Kyoko could walk in them in heaven. She is called out, and Shuji, left alone with Kyoko, applies blusher to her cheeks and combs her hair. He suggests a little more pearl dust and gloss on her lips, the way she used to like it, but when his hand touches her cold forehead the tears he has kept back for so long start falling, as he talks to her, urging her to say something since he is making her pretty. At the crematorium, under a beautiful sunny winter sky, family and friends wait around, Shuji standing away from the others. The mourners pick up her bones one by one and place them in the urn. Afterwards, outside the crematorium, Takumi takes his leave and Masao comes up to Shuji. He thanks Shuji for having made Kyoko happy. Shuji asks if he could keep the puppy. As he rides away on his motorbike, he thinks that if there is such a thing as the world of the dead, it might be in the heart. And he asks Kyoko in his mind if he had loved her properly. Underneath a wood deck by the beach, a much older version of the puppy lies peacefully. A little girl walks up the steps to the deck and peeks inside a small hair salon. It seems empty. As she goes in, the cowbell over the door rings. She sits down in one of the chairs before a mirror. There are photographs of a puppy and a red car around the mirror. A dreamcatcher hangs by the large window. Through the window Shuji's figure is seen to appear on the deck, having just returned from surfing. Hosing himself down, he notices the girl and hurries off to get changed. Coming back into the salon, he is told that this is the girl's first time in a hair salon. He looks at the magazine clipping she has brought and starts to cut her hair. On being asked where the place in the photographs is, he answers "In the heart". When he finishes, she is happy with her new hairstyle and goes off. Shuji looks out towards the sea. The dog hears him whistle and goes to him, as Kyoko's voice overlaps the scene, telling Shuji how beautiful the world had been since she had met him.