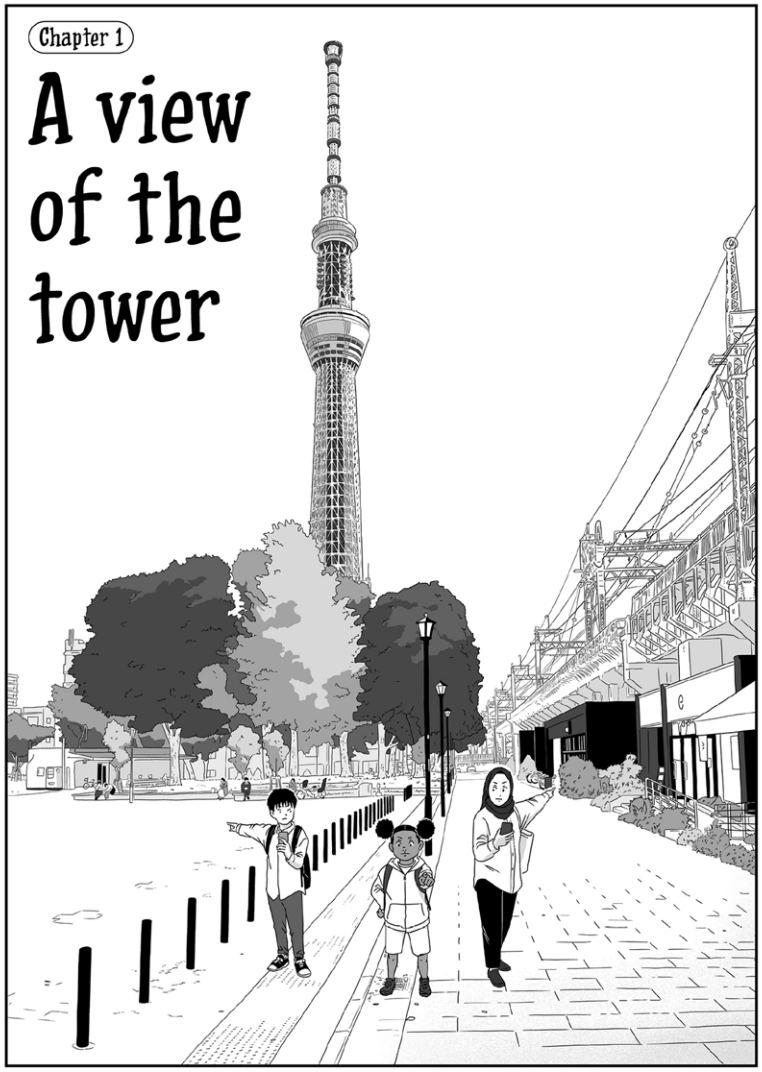


Keita Katsushika

JP: *Higashi Tokyo machimachi*
TWO VIRGINS Co., Ltd. (Print), LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd. (Digital)
ENG: Diverse East Tokyo



Higashi Tokyo machimachi is a very special story. It's a gentle, slice-of-life story set in a side of Tokyo that most tourists don't bother to visit but maybe should if they're looking to discover what "real," everyday life is like in this ever-changing city. It's also very international, both in its characters and blend of visual storytelling influences that evoke Franco-Belgian bande dessinée, Western "indie" comics, and manga. This makes this story uniquely appealing to all kinds of readers, even people who normally aren't "into manga."

-Debora Aoki

Synopsis

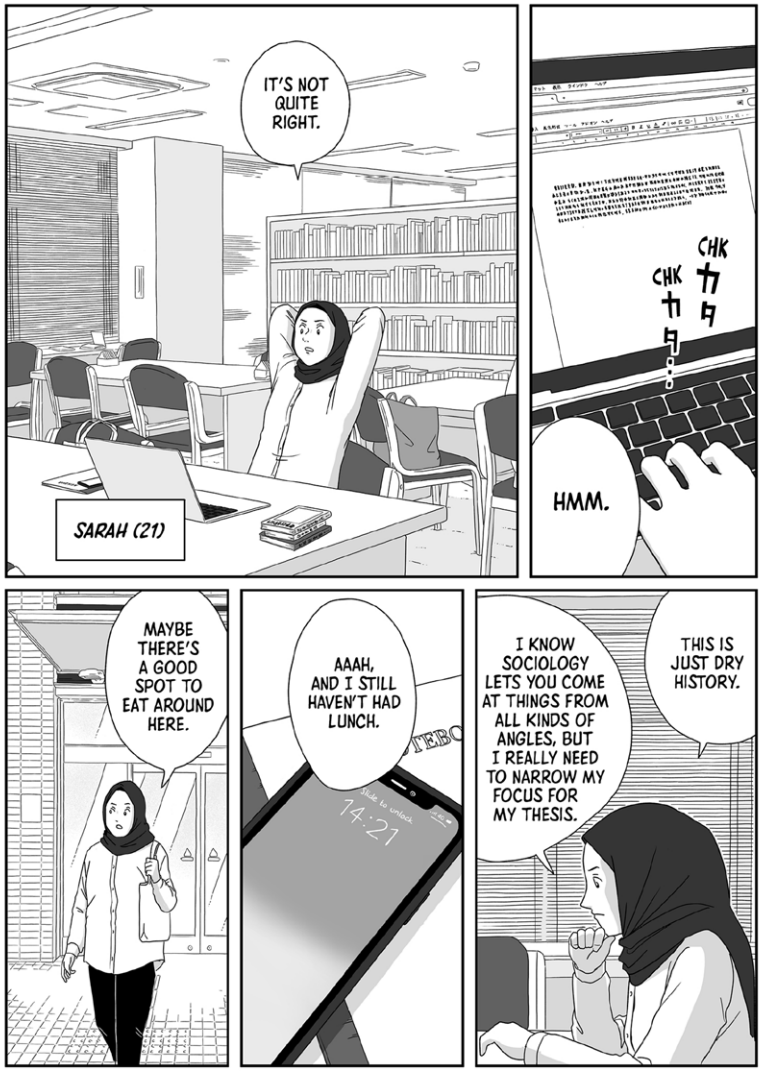
"There's an 'East' in Tokyo."
Sarah, a Muslim university student; Selam, a grade-schooler born to Ethiopian parents; and Haruta, a middle schooler who refuses to go to school—three individuals from diverse backgrounds and ages. Together, they explore East Tokyo, wandering the city and uncovering the hidden charms of their hometown in this local discovery adventure tale!

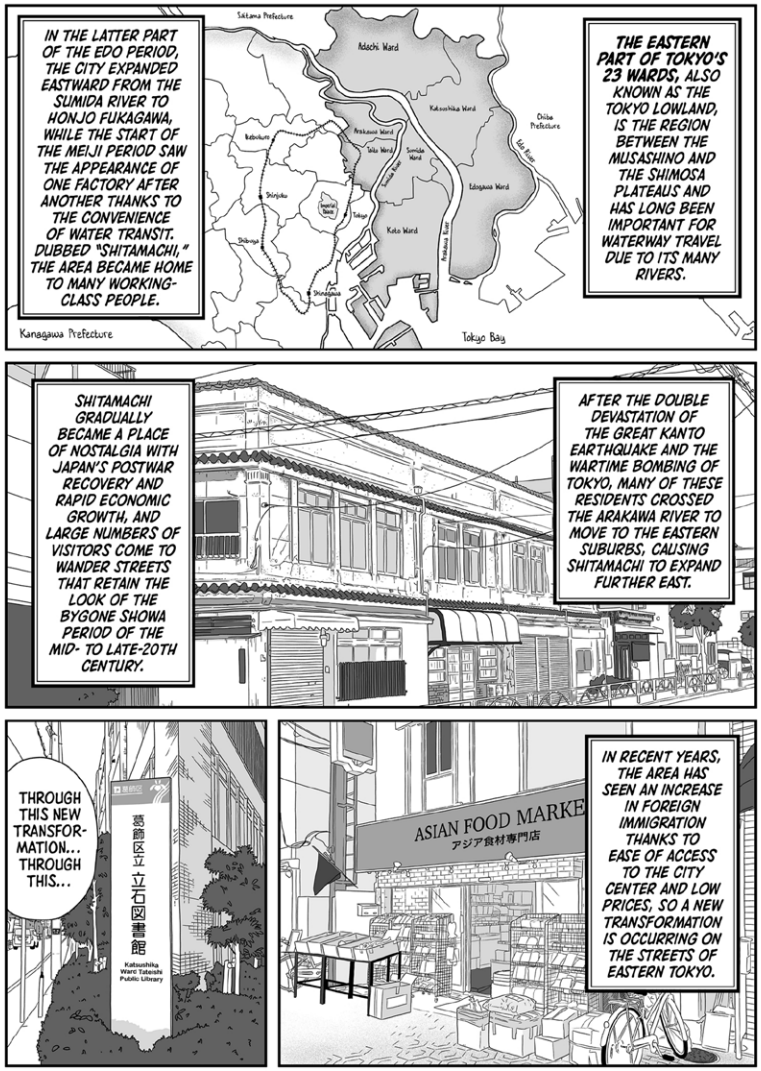
Artist Profile



Keita Katsushika is a manga artist and illustrator from Katsushika Ward in the east of Tokyo. He debuted in 2010 with his manga appearing in independent magazines such as *USCA* and *PON-RAI*. He is also a professional illustrator, and creates artwork featured on the covers of books and magazines. *Higashi Tokyo machimachi* (Diverse East Tokyo) was first serialized on the web comic platform *Michikusa* from 2022 to 2025, but since November 2025 has been serialized on *Torch web*.

@ktsksketch @ktsksketch @ktsksketch


IT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT.
SARAH (21)
CHK
CHK
HMM.
MAYBE THERE'S A GOOD SPOT TO EAT AROUND HERE.
AAAH, AND I STILL HAVEN'T HAD LUNCH.
Slide to unlock
14:21
I KNOW SOCIOLOGY LETS YOU COME AT THINGS FROM ALL KINDS OF ANGLES, BUT I REALLY NEED TO NARROW MY FOCUS FOR MY THESIS.
THIS IS JUST DRY HISTORY.

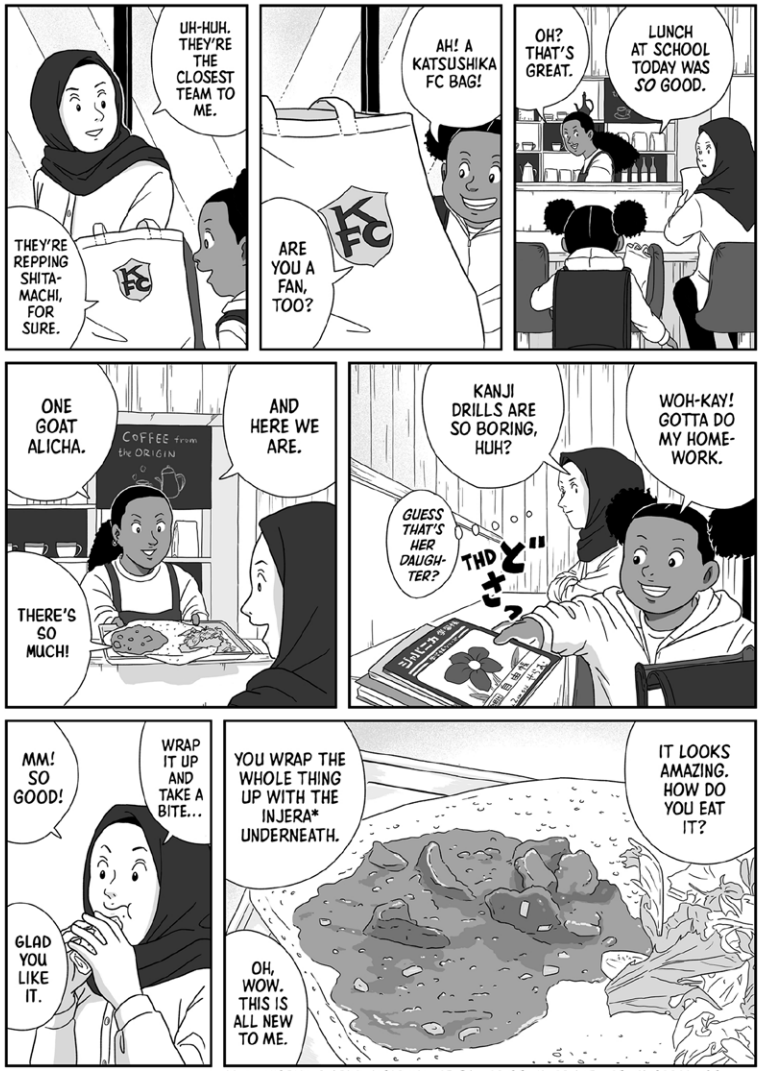

IN THE LATTER PART OF THE EDO PERIOD, THE CITY EXPANDED EASTWARD FROM THE SUMIDA RIVER TO HONJO FUKAGAWA, WHILE THE START OF THE MEIJI PERIOD SAW THE APPEARANCE OF ONE FACTORY AFTER ANOTHER THANKS TO THE CONVENIENCE OF WATER TRANSIT. DUBBED "SHITAMACHI," THE AREA BECAME HOME TO MANY WORKING-CLASS PEOPLE.
Saitama Prefecture
Adachi Ward
Katsushika Ward
Chiba Prefecture
Arakawa Ward
Taito Ward
Sumida Ward
Edogawa Ward
Kita Ward
Bunkyo Ward
Shinjuku
Tokyo
Koto Ward
Shibuya
Shinagawa
Kanagawa Prefecture
Tokyo Bay
THE EASTERN PART OF TOKYO'S 23 WARDS, ALSO KNOWN AS THE TOKYO LOWLAND, IS THE REGION BETWEEN THE MUSASHINO AND THE SHIMOSA PLATEAUS AND HAS LONG BEEN IMPORTANT FOR WATERWAY TRAVEL DUE TO ITS MANY RIVERS.
SHITAMACHI GRADUALLY BECAME A PLACE OF NOSTALGIA WITH JAPAN'S POSTWAR RECOVERY AND RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND LARGE NUMBERS OF VISITORS COME TO WANDER STREETS THAT RETAIN THE LOOK OF THE BYGONE SHOWA PERIOD OF THE MID- TO LATE-20TH CENTURY.
AFTER THE DOUBLE DEVASTATION OF THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE AND THE WARTIME BOMBING OF TOKYO, MANY OF THESE RESIDENTS CROSSED THE ARAKAWA RIVER TO MOVE TO THE EASTERN SUBURBS, CAUSING SHITAMACHI TO EXPAND FURTHER EAST.
THROUGH THIS NEW TRANSFORMATION... THROUGH THIS...
葛飾区立 立石図書館
Katsushika Ward Tateishi Public Library
ASIAN FOOD MARKET
アジア食材専門店
IN RECENT YEARS, THE AREA HAS SEEN AN INCREASE IN FOREIGN IMMIGRATION THANKS TO EASE OF ACCESS TO THE CITY CENTER AND LOW PRICES, SO A NEW TRANSFORMATION IS OCCURRING ON THE STREETS OF EASTERN TOKYO.



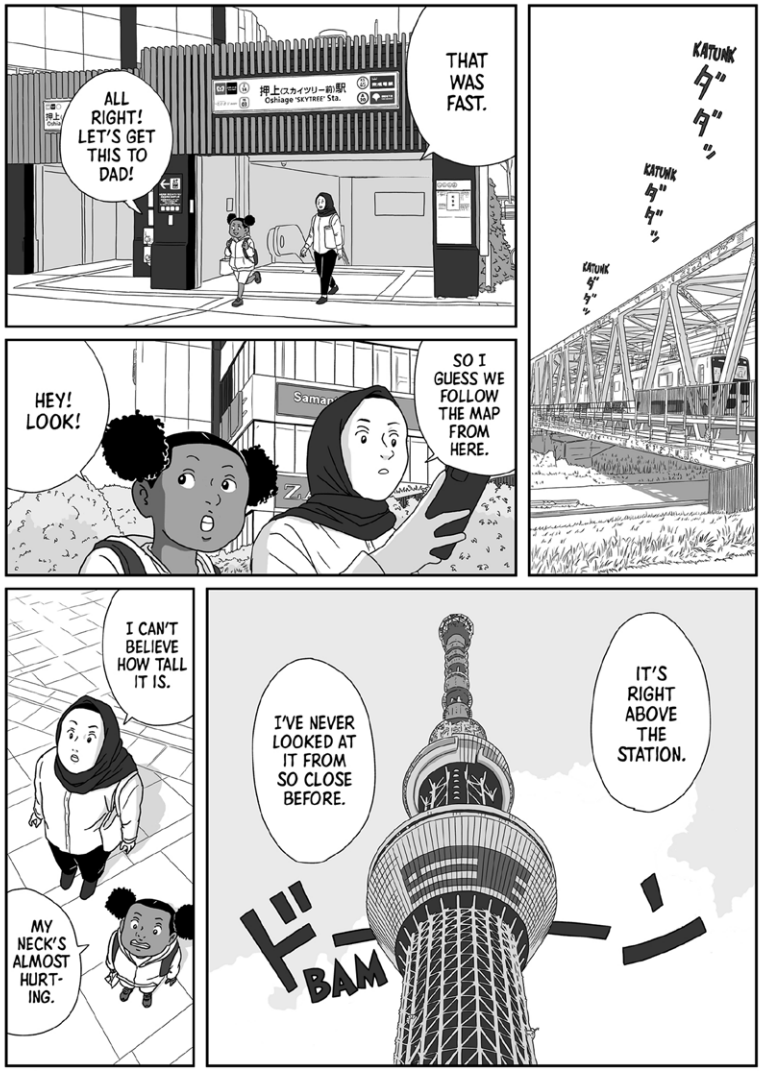


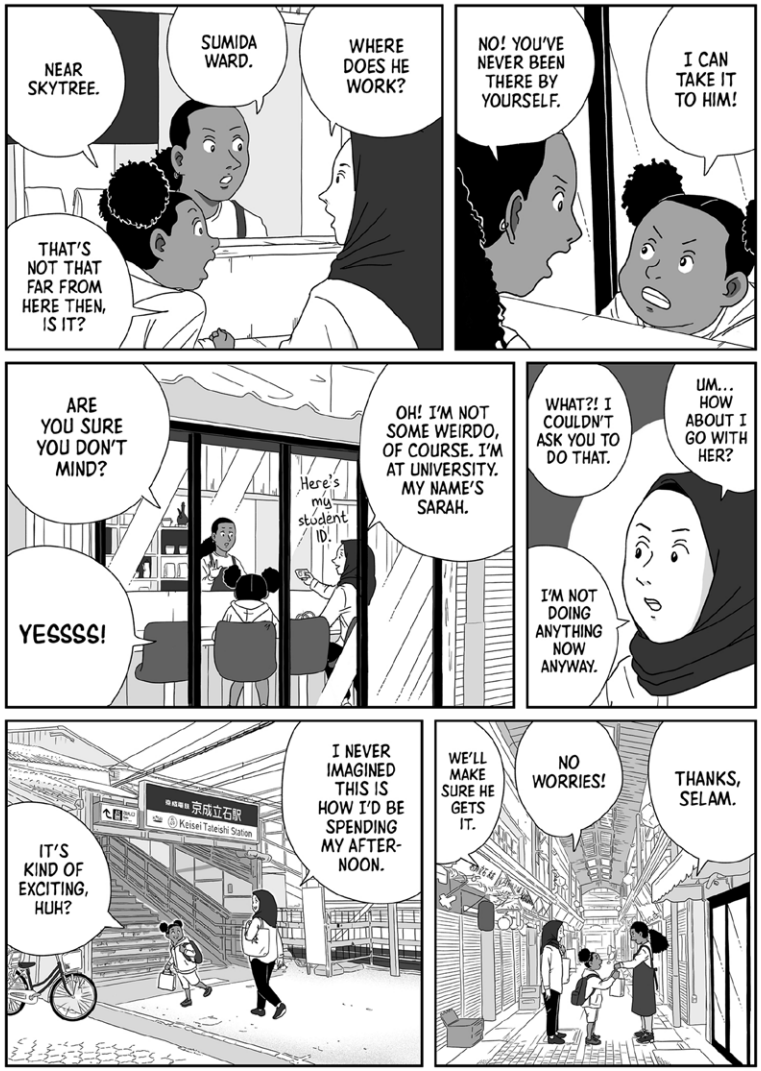
*A TYPICAL ETHIOPIAN NON-SPICY STEWED DISH.



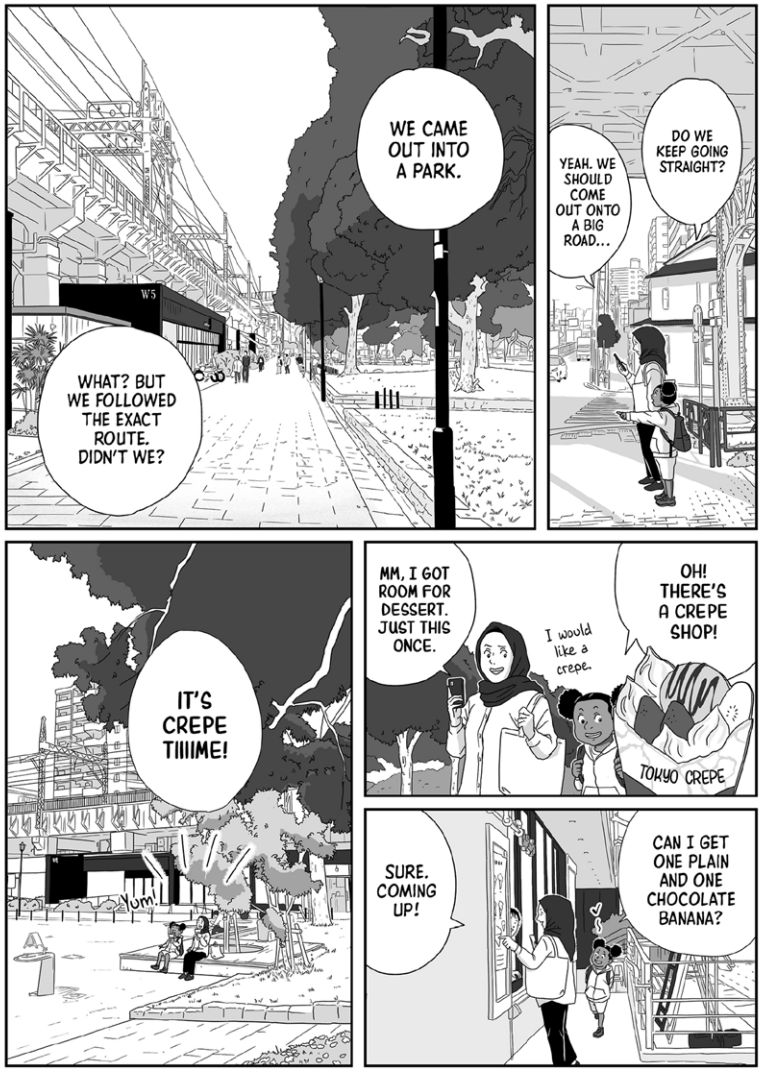


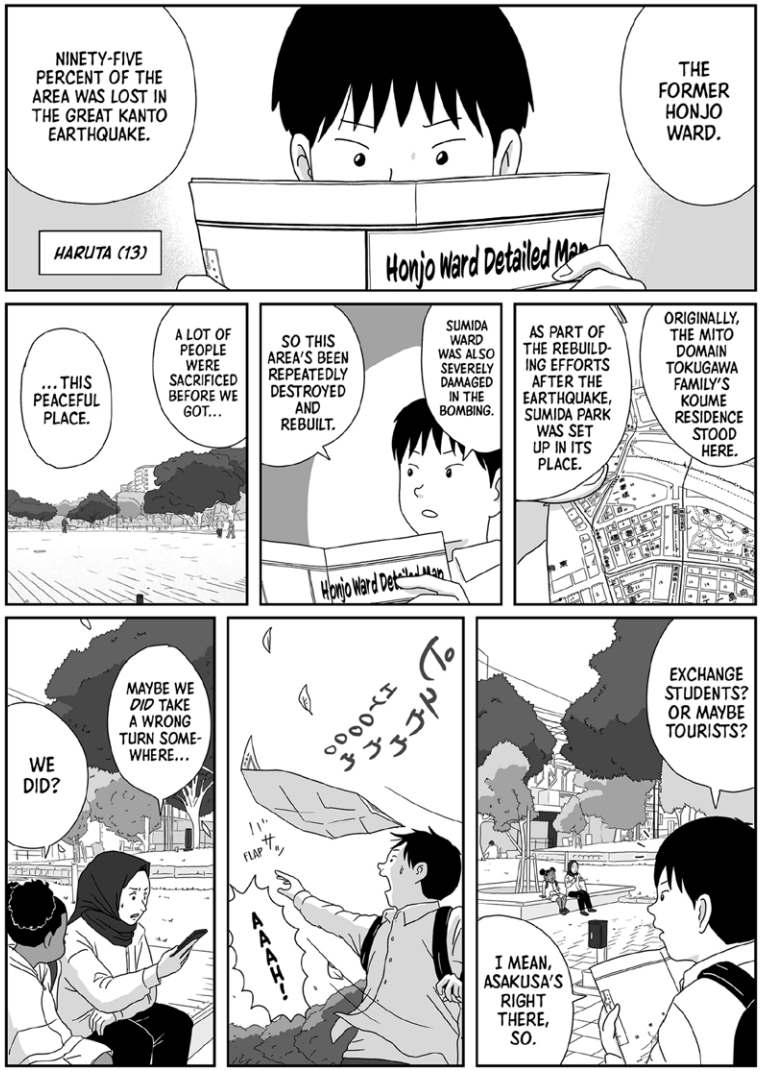
*AN ETHIOPIAN STAPLE. A FERMENTED BATTER OF WATER AND TEFF (A CEREAL OF THE POACEAE FAMILY) FLOUR THAT IS FRIED ON ONE SIDE IN A CREPE SHAPE.


ALL RIGHT! LET'S GET THIS TO DAD!
押上(スカイツリー前)駅
Oshiage "SKYTREE" Sta.
THAT WAS FAST.
KATUNK ダダッ
KATUNK ダダッ
KATUNK ダダッ
HEY! LOOK!
SO I GUESS WE FOLLOW THE MAP FROM HERE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW TALL IT IS.
MY NECK'S ALMOST HURT-ING.
I'VE NEVER LOOKED AT IT FROM SO CLOSE BEFORE.
IT'S RIGHT ABOVE THE STATION.
ドーン BAM


NEAR SKYTREE.
SUMIDA WARD.
WHERE DOES HE WORK?
THAT'S NOT THAT FAR FROM HERE THEN, IS IT?
NO! YOU'VE NEVER BEEN THERE BY YOURSELF.
I CAN TAKE IT TO HIM!
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T MIND?
YESSSS!
Here's my student ID.
OH! I'M NOT SOME WEIRDO, OF COURSE. I'M AT UNIVERSITY. MY NAME'S SARAH.
WHAT?! I COULDN'T ASK YOU TO DO THAT.
UM... HOW ABOUT I GO WITH HER?
I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING NOW ANYWAY.
京成立石駅
Keisei Taleishi Station
IT'S KIND OF EXCITING, HUH?
I NEVER IMAGINED THIS IS HOW I'D BE SPENDING MY AFTER-NOON.
WE'LL MAKE SURE HE GETS IT.
NO WORRIES!
THANKS, SELAM.


GO STRAIGHT DOWN THIS ROAD...
THERE SURE ARE A LOT OF TREES.
ONCE WE GET TO THE STATION OVERHEAD BRIDGE, WE'RE THERE.
THERE'S *ANOTHER* STATION HERE? PRETTY CONFUSING.
WE SHOULD BE GOOD IF WE FOLLOW THE TOBU LINE TRACKS.
"SHOULD BE"?
Search
Cafe
Tourist spot
Tokyo Skytree
Tokyo Skytree
EVERYTHING'S SO STYLISH. LIKE IT'S NOT STILL SHITAMACHI.
THEY GOT CAFES, TOO. I CAN'T DRINK COFFEE, THOUGH.
WISE OWL FACTORY
WE'RE OPEN


WE CAME OUT INTO A PARK.
W5
WHAT? BUT WE FOLLOWED THE EXACT ROUTE. DIDN'T WE?
DO WE KEEP GOING STRAIGHT?
YEAH. WE SHOULD COME OUT ONTO A BIG ROAD...
IT'S CREPE TIIIME!
Yum!
MM, I GOT ROOM FOR DESSERT. JUST THIS ONCE.
I would like a crepe.
OH! THERE'S A CREPE SHOP!
TOKYO CREPE
SURE. COMING UP!
CAN I GET ONE PLAIN AND ONE CHOCOLATE BANANA?


NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE AREA WAS LOST IN THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE.
THE FORMER HONJO WARD.
HARUTA (13)
Honjo Ward Detailed Ma
...THIS PEACEFUL PLACE.
A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE SACRIFICED BEFORE WE GOT...
SO THIS AREA'S BEEN REPEATEDLY DESTROYED AND REBUILT.
SUMIDA WARD WAS ALSO SEVERELY DAMAGED IN THE BOMBING.
AS PART OF THE REBUILDING EFFORTS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, SUMIDA PARK WAS SET UP IN ITS PLACE.
ORIGINALLY, THE MITO DOMAIN TOKUGAWA FAMILY'S KOUME RESIDENCE STOOD HERE.
WE DID?
MAYBE WE DID TAKE A WRONG TURN SOMEWHERE...
FLAP
EXCHANGE STUDENTS? OR MAYBE TOURISTS?
I MEAN, ASAKUSA'S RIGHT THERE, SO.

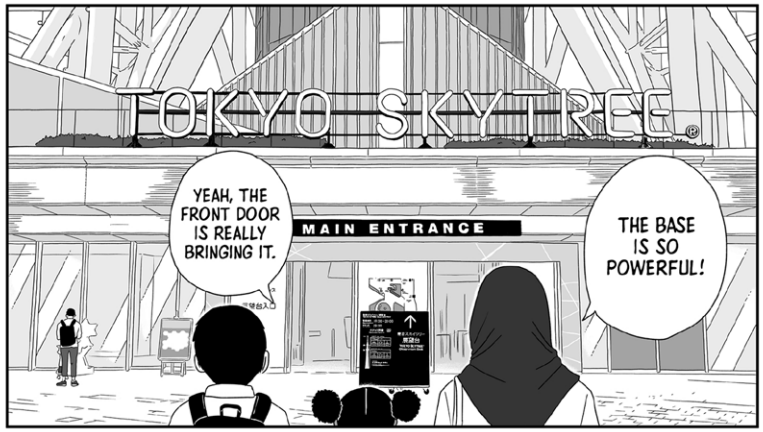

DIRECT HIT!
WHAP
HUH? IT'S A MAP?
THOUGHT THE WORLD WAS ENDING FOR A SEC.
AUGH, SO SCARY...
S-S-S-SORRY!
EEEAH!
RSTLE
RSTLE
AH! HEY?! WHAT THE WHAT?!
I CLEARLY HAVE NO SENSE OF DIRECTION.
FOR REAL? ALL THIS WALKING AND FOR WHAT...
I'M ALMOST IMPRESSED BY HOW WRONG YOU GOT IT.
WHAT? THE OPPOSITE SIDE?!
UMM. YOU'RE ACTUALLY ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF SKYTREE RIGHT NOW.

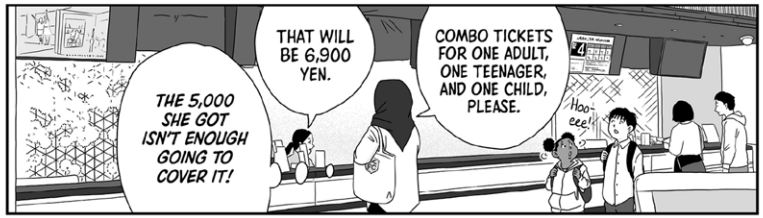

DAD!
I THINK IT'S AROUND HERE?
AH!
SELAM! THANK YOU!
I BROUGHT YOU YOUR THING!
TMP
TMP
TMP
TODAY'S YOUR LAST DAY, RIGHT?
WHAT'S UP?
HEY, DOMINIC? IS NOW OKAY?
WHAT? YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THIS.
SAY HI TO YOUR FAMILY IN UGANDA FOR ME.
A TOKEN OF MY THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP.
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU MADE IT.
I GOT A LITTLE LOST, THOUGH.


WHO WAS IT WHO WANTED A CREPE, HM?
OH NO! WE GOTTA HURRY!
NORMALLY, IT'D BE ABOUT A TEN-MINUTE WALK FROM OSHIAGE.
WHY AM I THEIR GUIDE SUDDENLY ...?
THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR.
BECAUSE WE JUST CAME THIS WAY.


東東京化学
East Tokyo Chemic
BYE! HAVE FUN AT WORK!
THANKS!
BE CARE-FUL!
OH, IT WAS NO PROBLEM.
THANKS, THOUGH.
SORRY FOR MAKING YOU SHOW US THE WAY.
SHE CAME TO EAT AT OUR RESTAURANT, AND THEN SHE HELPED ME BRING MY DAD'S THING.
I'm Selam.
I'm Sarah.
HEH HEH! WE ACTUALLY ONLY MET TODAY.
OH, WOW... OH! I'M HARUTA.
HOW EXACTLY DO YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER?
I HAVE TO ASK, THOUGH.

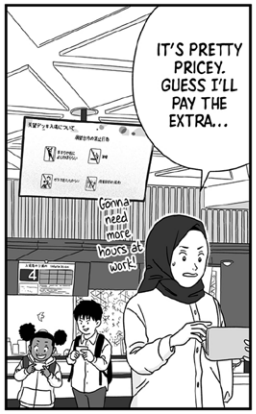

DID YOU THINK WE WERE TOURISTS?
OH, UH. I MEAN, NOT EXACTLY...
YOU TOTALLY DON'T SEEM LIKE YOU ONLY JUST MET.
YEAH, WE'RE LIKE FRIENDS ALREADY, HUH?
Well, you know.
SO!
WE CAME ALL THIS WAY. WANNA GO UP SKYTREE?
YOU SHOULD'VE TOLD US SOONER! I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO THANK HIM. HE SHOULDN'T HAVE.
HE SAID TO MAKE SURE I THANKED YOU BOTH.
And five thousand yen!!
WHAT?!
MY DAD GAVE ME A BIT OF POCKET MONEY BACK THERE.
Heh heh heh!

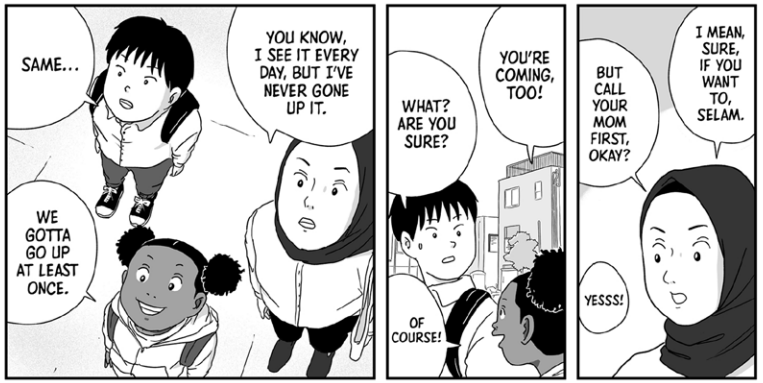

TOKYO SKYTREE
MAIN ENTRANCE
YEAH, THE FRONT DOOR IS REALLY BRINGING IT.
THE BASE IS SO POWERFUL!

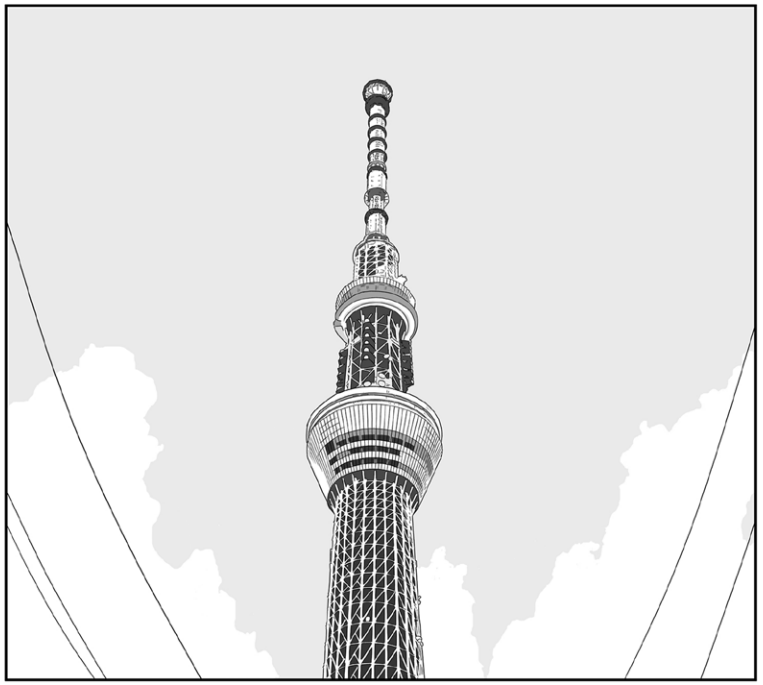

THE 5,000 SHE GOT ISN'T ENOUGH GOING TO COVER IT!
THAT WILL BE 6,900 YEN.
COMBO TICKETS FOR ONE ADULT, ONE TEENAGER, AND ONE CHILD, PLEASE.
Hoo-eee!

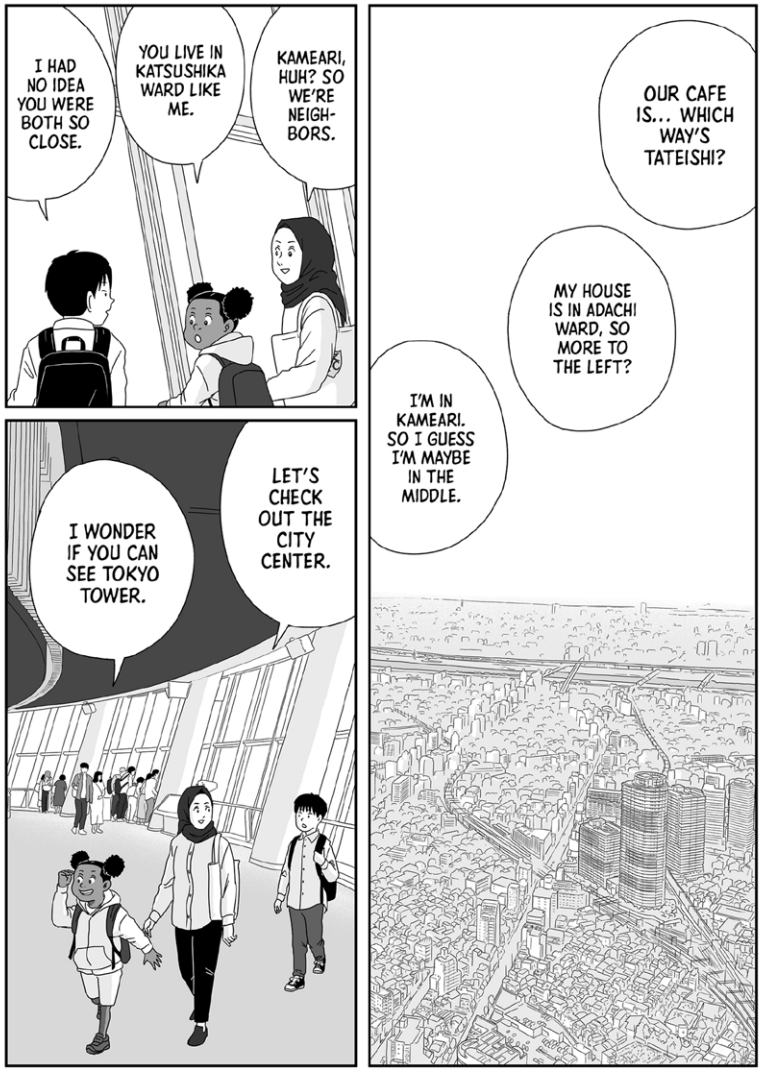

ゴオオオオ VRRRRR
WHEE HEE!


ENTRY!
BEEP ピッ


IT'S PRETTY PRICEY. GUESS I'LL PAY THE EXTRA...
gonna need more hours at work


SAME...
YOU KNOW, I SEE IT EVERY DAY, BUT I'VE NEVER GONE UP IT.
WE GOTTA GO UP AT LEAST ONCE.
WHAT? ARE YOU SURE?
YOU'RE COMING, TOO!
OF COURSE!
BUT CALL YOUR MOM FIRST, OKAY?
I MEAN, SURE, IF YOU WANT TO, SELAM.
YESSS!



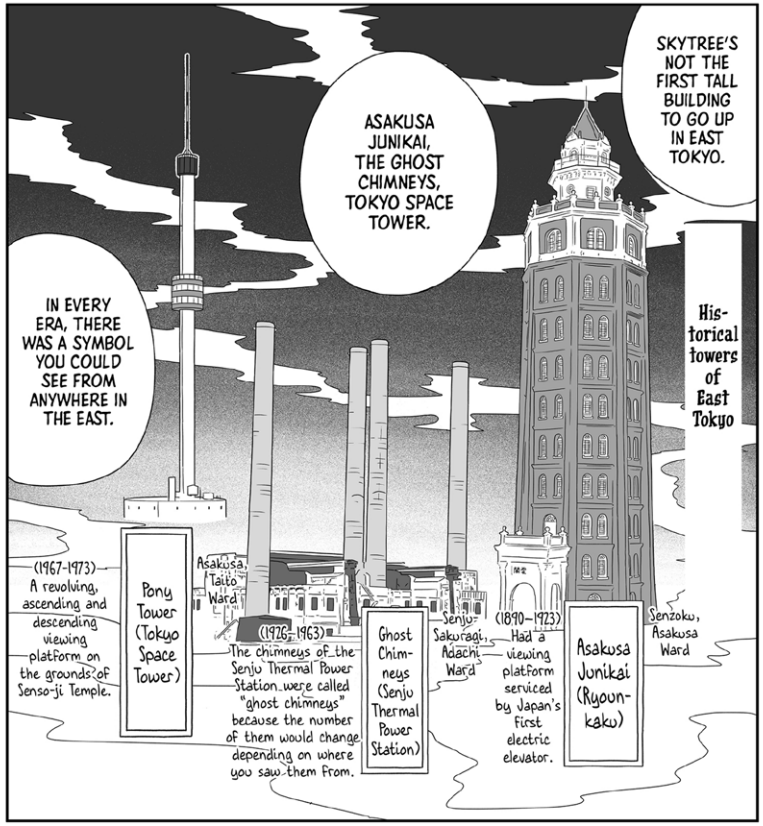

WHOA!
THIS IS SOME PANORAMA!
THE WINDOWS ARE HUGE.
YOU CAN ALMOST PRESS YOUR FACE AGAINST THE GLASS.
We're so high up!

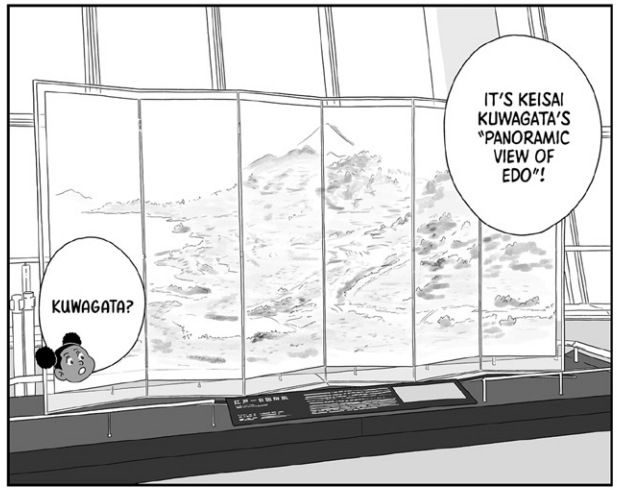
OUR CAFE IS... WHICH WAY'S TATEISHI?
MY HOUSE IS IN ADACHI WARD, SO MORE TO THE LEFT?
I'M IN KAMEARI. SO I GUESS I'M MAYBE IN THE MIDDLE.

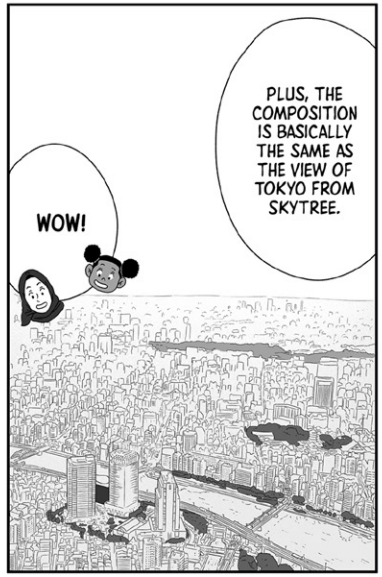
LET'S CHECK OUT THE CITY CENTER.
I WONDER IF YOU CAN SEE TOKYO TOWER.

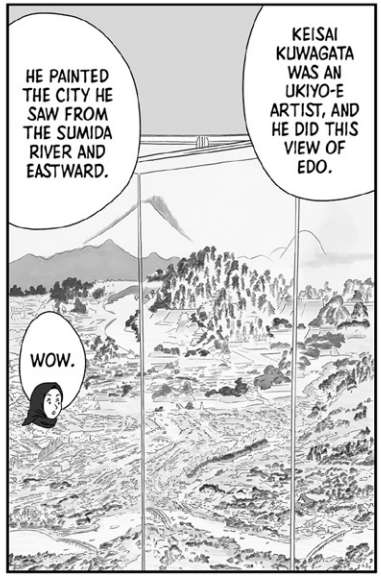
KAMEARI, HUH? SO WE'RE NEIGH-BORS.
YOU LIVE IN KATSUSHIKA WARD LIKE ME.
I HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE BOTH SO CLOSE.

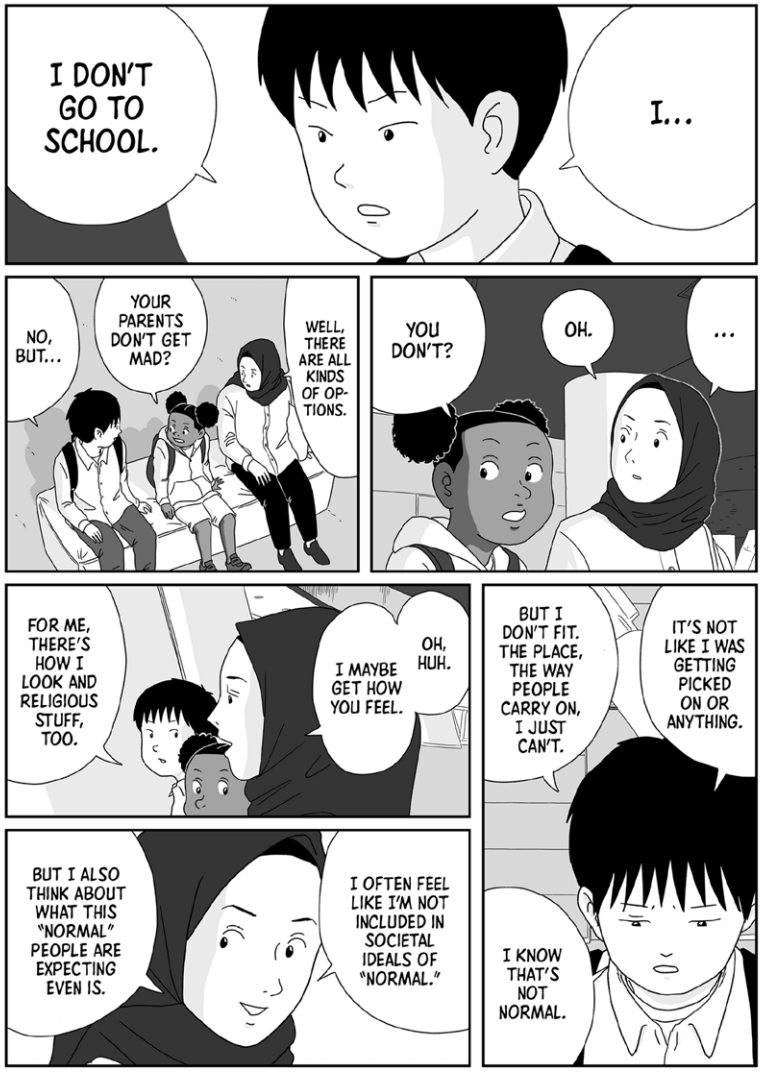

I'M TOO USED TO MODERN MAPS OF TOKYO, THOUGH. I CAN'T TELL WHAT'S WHERE.
THIS PAINTING WAS SO INFLUENTIAL THAT IT GOT MORE PEOPLE MAKING MAPS FROM THE CENTER OF EDO TO THE EAST.
IN A SENSE, IT WAS MAYBE INEVITABLE THAT IT GOT BUILT HERE.

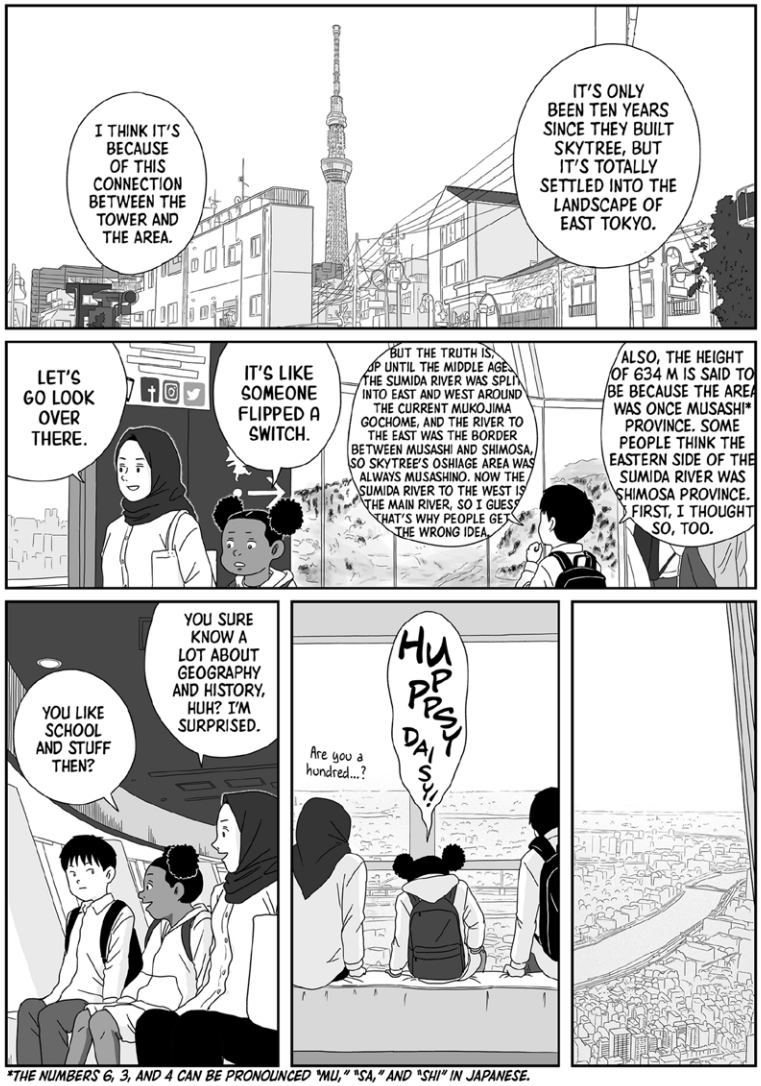

IN EVERY ERA, THERE WAS A SYMBOL YOU COULD SEE FROM ANYWHERE IN THE EAST.
ASAKUSA JUNIKAI, THE GHOST CHIMNEYS, TOKYO SPACE TOWER.
SKYTREE'S NOT THE FIRST TALL BUILDING TO GO UP IN EAST TOKYO.
Historical towers of East Tokyo
(1967–1973) A revolving, ascending and descending viewing platform on the grounds of Senso-ji Temple.
Pony Tower (Tokyo Space Tower)
Asakusa, Taito Ward
(1926–1963) The chimneys of the Senju Thermal Power Station were called "ghost chimneys" because the number of them would change depending on where you saw them from.
Ghost Chimneys (Senju Thermal Power Station)
Senju-Sakuragi, Adachi Ward
(1890–1923) Had a viewing platform serviced by Japan's first electric elevator.
Asakusa Junikai (Ryounkaku)
Senzoku, Asakusa Ward


KUWAGATA?
IT'S KEISAI KUWAGATA'S "PANORAMIC VIEW OF EDO"!
OH! HANG ON A SEC.
WHAT?


WOW!
PLUS, THE COMPOSITION IS BASICALLY THE SAME AS THE VIEW OF TOKYO FROM SKYTREE.


HE PAINTED THE CITY HE SAW FROM THE SUMIDA RIVER AND EASTWARD.
KEISAI KUWAGATA WAS AN UKIYO-E ARTIST, AND HE DID THIS VIEW OF EDO.
WOW.

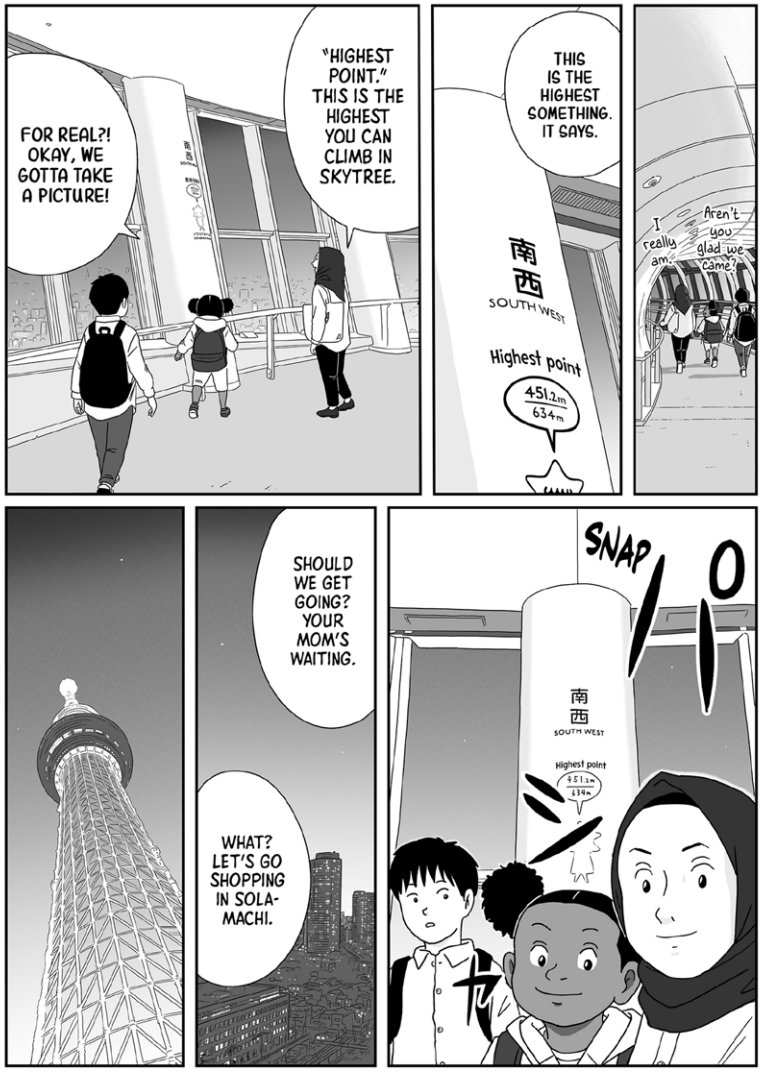


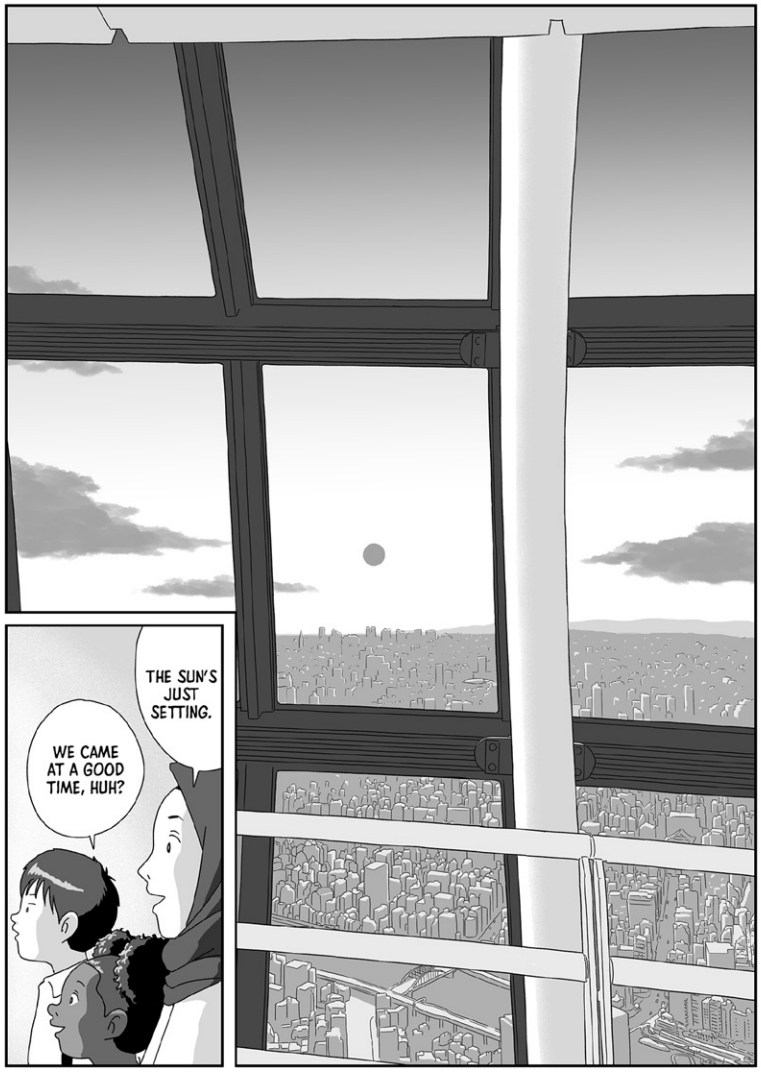


*THE NUMBERS 6, 3, AND 4 CAN BE PRONOUNCED "MU," "SA," AND "SHI" IN JAPANESE.


WE'RE EVEN HIGHER UP NOW!
IT'S LIKE A SPACESHIP!
AH!
LIKE CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN.
THE VIEW CHANGES AS YOU WALK UP YOURSELF.


AND MY FAMILY, WE RUN A CAFE IN TATEISHI. BOTH MY MOM AND MY DAD CAME FROM ETHIOPIA.
OF COURSE! MY PARENTS ARE INDONESIAN AND JAPANESE. I'M MUSLIM, AND MY HOMETOWN'S ADACHI WARD.
IS IT OKAY IF I ASK ABOUT THE TWO OF YOU?
UM. THAT MADE ME THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE.
YOU THINK ABOUT "NORMAL"...
NORMAL, HUH?
I THINK THAT'S MAYBE DIFFERENT?
PEOPLE WHO GO TO SCHOOL, PEOPLE WHO DON'T, PEOPLE WHO LIKE NATTO KIMCHI, PEOPLE WHO DON'T.
EXACTLY.
THAT'S... NOT SURPRISING, ACTUALLY. THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE HERE AND ALL.
SO YOU'RE SHITAMACHI KIDS.
ゴーン
VRRRRR
TROT
TROT
すたた
OKAY! BREAK'S OVER. WE'RE GOING TO THE TEMBO GALLERIA!
ALREADY? AAH, YOUTH.

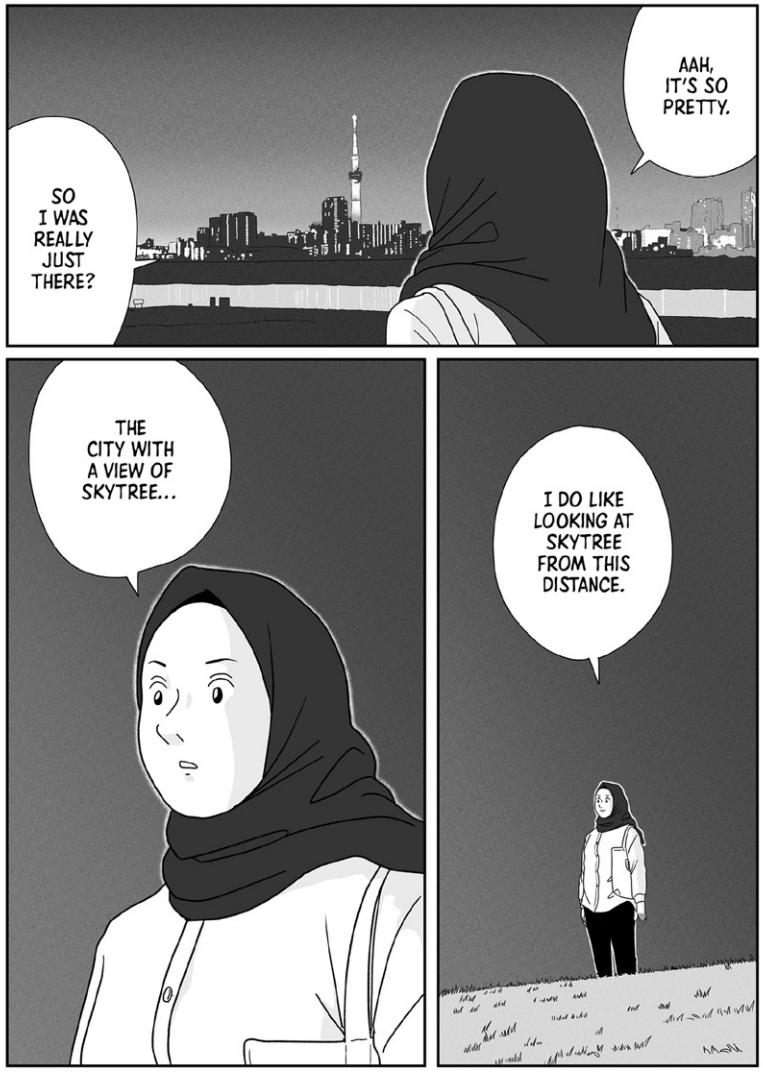

"HIGHEST POINT." THIS IS THE HIGHEST YOU CAN CLIMB IN SKYTREE.
FOR REAL?! OKAY, WE GOTTA TAKE A PICTURE!
THIS IS THE HIGHEST SOMETHING. IT SAYS.
南西
SOUTH WEST
Highest point
451.2m
634m
I really am.
Aren't you glad we came?
SHOULD WE GET GOING? YOUR MOM'S WAITING.
WHAT? LET'S GO SHOPPING IN SOLA-MACHI.
SNAP
南西
SOUTH WEST
Highest point
451.2m
634m


THE SUN'S JUST SETTING.
WE CAME AT A GOOD TIME, HUH?


YOU REALLY SAVED OUR BACON! THANKS.
THANKS FOR SHOWING US THE WAY TODAY.
NO, THANK *YOU* FOR SKY-TREE.
WHAT A GREAT DAY.
SUPER FUN!
IT WAS NOT. I LEARNED A LOT.
HA HA HA!
YEAH! THE WORST!
DID I TALK TOO MUCH, THOUGH? WAS IT BAD?
HEY, SO LIKE...
I'M IN KAMEARI, SO I GET THE TOBU LINE TO KITASENJU AND THEN THE JOBAN LINE.
OKAY, WE'RE HEADING BACK TO TATEISHI ON THE KEISEI LINE.
押上(スカイツリー
Oshiage *SKYTREE
THANKS.
ONE FOR EACH OF YOU!
CAVE ETHIOPIA
THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO!
RIGHT. MAYBE WE COULD GIVE HIM THE CAFE INFO?
ISN'T IT KINDA SAD TO SAY GOODBYE HERE AFTER WE ONLY JUST MET?
I DON'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS. MAYBE I'LL COME WITH MY PARENTS.
I'LL COME AGAIN WITH FRIENDS FROM UNIVERSITY.
TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT OUR CAFE, TOO, 'KAY?
I WILL! I'LL COME HANG OUT.
STOP BY THE CAFE ANYTIME!
OKAY. WE'LL SEE YOU AGAIN THEN!


TS 10 こすげ
小菅 Kosuge
東武スカイツリーライン
TOBU SKYTREE Line
TS 11 ごたんの
Gotanno
(東京都足立区)
きたせんじゅ
Kita-senju
I THOUGHT I KNEW THIS TOWN, BUT THERE WAS SO MUCH THAT WAS NEW TO ME.
IT WAS KIND OF LIKE A BIT OF FIELD WORK.
WHAT A LONG DAY.


KATUNK
ダダッ
KATUNK
ダダッ
snrrr
Tateishi Nakamise
雑貨
KATUNK
ダダッ
KATUNK
ダダッ
KATUNK
ダダッ


AAH, IT'S SO PRETTY.
SO I WAS REALLY JUST THERE?
THE CITY WITH A VIEW OF SKYTREE...
I DO LIKE LOOKING AT SKYTREE FROM THIS DISTANCE.


I WONDER IF IT'LL SEEM SMALL FROM HERE.
I'M GONNA TAKE A LOOK AT SKYTREE FROM THAT HILL.
...BEFORE SKYTREE, OR THAT AFRICAN PEOPLE ARE WORKING IN FACTORIES IN SUMIDA WARD.
I NEVER KNEW BEFORE TODAY THAT THERE USED TO BE ALL THOSE TALL BUILDINGS...
BUT JUST BECAUSE I WAS BORN AND RAISED HERE DOESN'T MEAN I ACTUALLY KNOW IT.
I WAS THINKING ABOUT MAKING EAST TOKYO THE SUBJECT OF MY THESIS.

TITLE DETAILS

Title	*Higashi Tokyo machimachi*
English title (provisional)	Diverse East Tokyo
Author & Artist	Keita Katsushika
Publication date	Jul. 12, 2023
Publisher	TWO VIRGINS Co., Ltd. (Print), LEED PUBLISHING Co., Ltd. (Digital)
ISBN	978-4-910352-67-1 (Print)
Price (JP)	1,210 yen (incl. tax)
Size/Format	210 mm x 148 mm
Extent	160 pp.
Volumes	1 (continuing)
Publication platform	*Torch web* (online: https://to-ti.in/)
Translation	None

Critical Acclaim

"Until now, I would think of cities as constantly changing, as places that left behind the people's nostalgic emotions. But perhaps that view was only shaped by media-curated impressions of cities. Reading this work, I felt a deep sense of how landscapes, history, and the lives of people combine to create a city, and it made me love Tokyo even more." (*Asahi Shimbun*)

"This work is not simply a guidebook introducing urban neighborhoods. Through the varied backgrounds and lives of the protagonists, as well as the people they meet, it sheds light on the struggles and discomforts of living in Japan." (*Hon no Zasshi*)

"The reality of Tokyo, where the more 'downtown' the neighborhood, the more multicultural it becomes." (*Toyo Keizai*)

"A city stroll lit with rediscovery, enriched by the perspectives of others." (*anan* / Magazine House)

Comparable Titles

Clyde Fans (graphic novel by Seth, Drawn & Quarterly)
Roaming (graphic novel by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki, Drawn & Quarterly)
You and a Bike and a Road (graphic novel by Eleanor Davis, Fantagraphics)
Is Kichijoji the Only Place to Live? (manga by Makihirochi, KODANSHA)
Tales of the City (graphic novel by Armisted Maupin, Isabelle Bauthian, and Sandrine Revel, Ablaze)
Guyabano Holiday (manga by panpanya, DENPA Books)
Yotsuba&! (manga by Azuma Kiyohiko, Yen Press)

