

Even ice-cold conditions  
can make you thaw

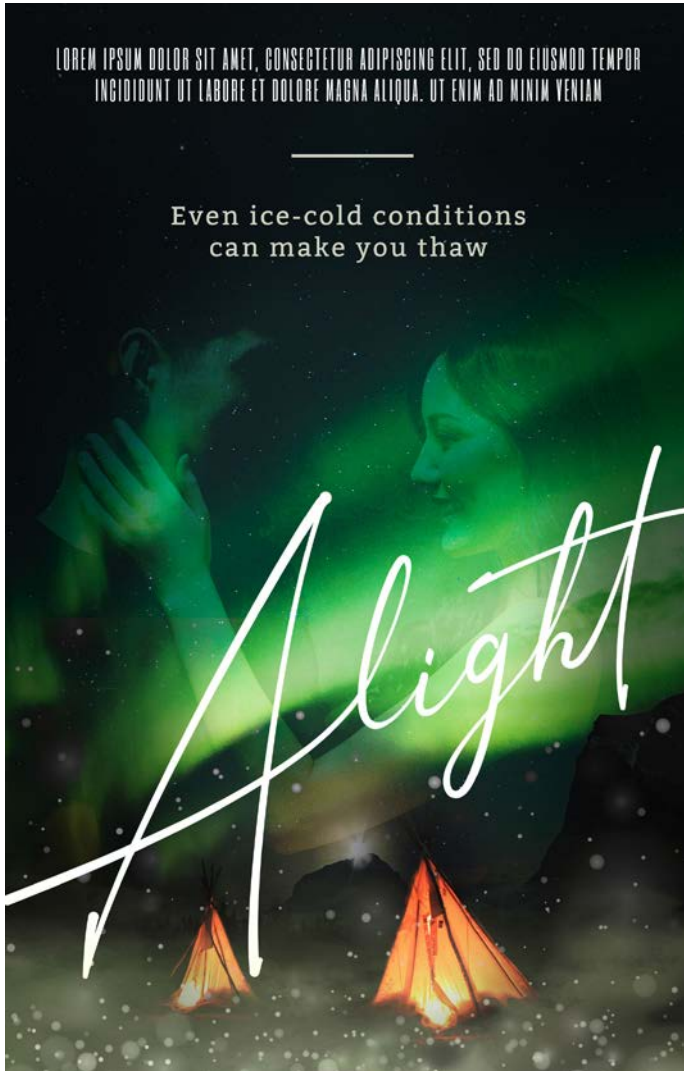
# Flight

Written by:  
S. Kendall & R. Sandeman

# ALIGHT

— *Even ice-cold conditions can make you thaw* —

Created by: JMG Stories | Written by: Rebecca Sandeman & Samuel Kendall



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*Naoki:*

*"It's just... how is this any different to being stuck in our flat staring at the walls? We could be anywhere."*

*Miko:*

*"But we're not, we're both here, waiting for something to happen. For the snow to clear."*

*Naoki*

*"It's not how I pictured it."*

**Genre:** *Romance/Drama*

**Format:** *Feature movie, 1h 30m*

**Target group:** *16 years old and over*

**Potential buyers:** *Netflix, Amazon, HBO, various TV channels*

**Estimate:** *\$ 25-30 mill*

**At Pitch-level Q2 2021**

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## ALIGHT

**J**apanese couple Naoki and Miko attempt to both escape the bustle of Tokyo and address their struggling relationship by impulsively sojourning at the Northern Lights. After a blizzard confines them to their lavvos with two Sámi guides, everything they thought they knew about life and love is called into question.

Tsutsushimi is the Japanese phrase meaning tact, discretion and reserve, a message that in the eyes of many lies at the heart of the sociocultural ethos of Japan. *Alight* is a film that explores what it means to slowly reject Tsutsushimi and the expectations of others and instead embrace your own desires. Similarly, it explores a more Norwegian perspective of this idea in Henrik Ibsen's 'life-lie', as created in his play *The Wild Duck*. *Alight* aims to depict a similar story of two people consumed by their life-lies, who are taken out of their familiar surroundings and in turn realise a newfound sense of self. It is entrenched in the existentialism and romanticism of Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name*, blended with the intimate Saudade of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. It seeks to address the dichotomy between our innate longing and the perceived expectations of the world around us.

Naoki and Miko are a couple in their mid-thirties; they are burnt-out and exhausted, working 12 hour days combined with the encroaching sense of absence in their marriage. Their family and friends continue to pressure them, pushing them into thinking that they should conform to the status quo and have a baby. One night, Miko's friend Yuri casually tells her about a myth that having sex under the Northern Lights always produces beautiful children. Miko then impulsively books a trip to Norway for her and Naoki.

She is adamant the holiday will reinvigorate their marriage, facilitating the peaceful change of scenery they both crave. On arrival in the city of Kirkenes, they are greeted by Sámi guides, brothers Ante and Mikkel, who lead them to

their lavvo tents set in the vast expanse of the wild Norwegian tundra. The physical and mental difference between Tokyo and the tundra becomes a catalyst for change; both Miko and Naoki are a world away from their previous lives, a distance which forces them to consider their relationship and confront its inherent flaws.

There's an immediate spark between Miko and Ante which burns throughout the film. Ante tells his brother 'she's the one'; Naoki doesn't appear to notice. He is instead preoccupied with fighting his own internal struggles and coming to terms with his identity; the three-day blizzard forces him to evaluate if he even sees a future with Miko in it. There are chasms of things left unsaid between them, amplified by the proximity of the lavvo which now acts akin to purgatory or a prison.

Allegiances are irrevocably altered, relationships are formed and the two of them face their individual reasons for their discontent. Miko and Ante grow closer as Naoki falls further into himself, leading to a climactic argument where Miko flees into the expanse of the tundra, almost freezing in the process. In the aftermath Miko and Ante confess their love for each other, with Miko determined to help resolve the situation with Naoki first. Naoki simultaneously breaks down with Mikkel in the neighbouring tent, the wind howling in the distance, as he finally accepts a need for things to change.

By the end of their trip, both Miko and Naoki will have transformed forever beneath the incandescent glow of the Northern Lights. Miko stays in Finnmark with Ante; she says a tearful goodbye to Naoki at the airport, both of them acknowledging they are no longer on the same journey, but instead forking paths leading in opposite directions. They are content with this, and hopeful for their futures, newly absent of the life-lie.

## THE SETTING

*Ningyocho (Nihonbashi, Shitamachi),  
Tokyo, Japan*

The ‘Doll Town’ of inner-city Tokyo, Ningyocho is the birthplace of Kabuki theatre and a quaint, unassuming bastion of Edo-period culture. A small historic town sheltered amidst the vastness of Tokyo, its streets are laden with both ancient shrines and antique-style marionette clocks, their wooden inhabitants performing every hour, on the hour.

As a part of Shitamachi, Ningyocho has retained many of its traditions in the face of the city’s continued modernisation. Original houses stand defiantly alongside the remaining old-style shops of artisan dealers and tradespeople, whilst tourists can be found flocking to sample dolls heads, sweet sake and the most famous oyakodon (chicken and egg bowl) in all of Tokyo.

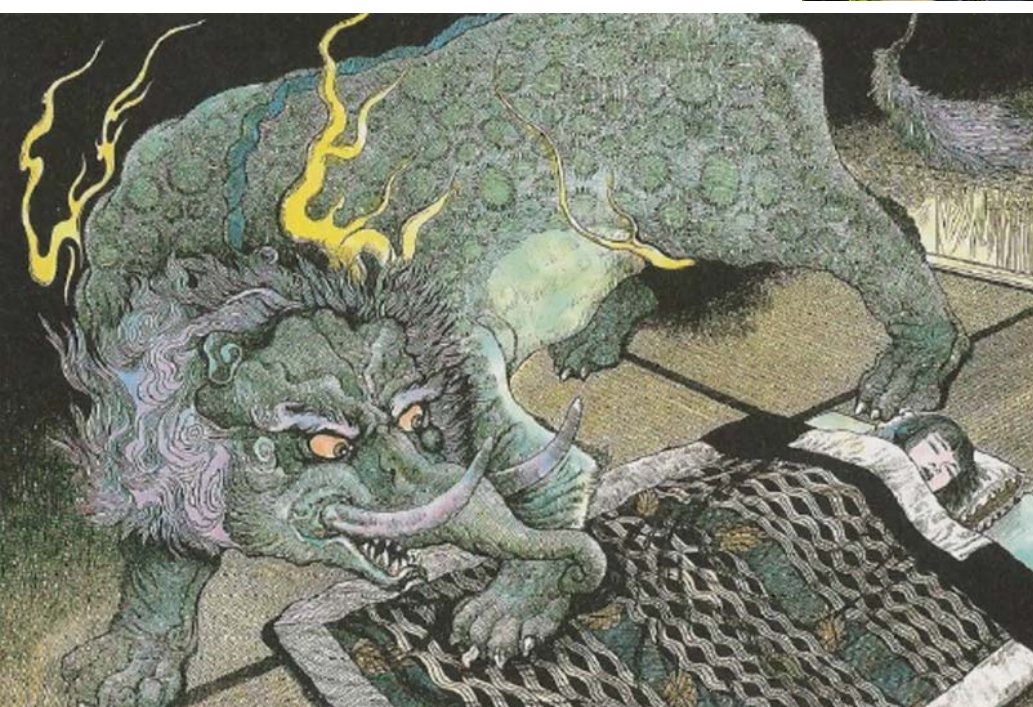
Ningyocho is a place full of character, clinging proudly to its heritage, though it remains encased within the bustle and crowds expected of contemporary Tokyo. A flourishing business district now looms over its streets, overshadowing, though never overtaking, what was once a district full of entertainers. For Miko and Naoki, Ningyocho and Tokyo represent their lifelong home and all the trappings that come with it. Ningyocho can feel a suffocating place, with a sense of bustle and confinement underlying its artistic roots.

*Kirkenes (The Northern Lights),  
Finnmark (Finnmárku), Norway*

One of the northernmost points on the planet, Finnmark is a secluded county peering over the peak of Norway. A land scattered with fjords and outer islands, with the small town of Kirkenes balanced on one of its many eastern peninsulas. Finnmark is home to more Sámi people than anywhere else in the world, though they were victims of Norwegianization attempts throughout the 20th century. Since the 1970s, Sámi’s throughout the area and further afield have begun newfound attempts to embrace their language, background and culture through their own parliament, university and associated institutions.

One such means of sharing their culture co-exists with the vast tundra of Finnmark itself and concerns the otherworldly aurora known as The Northern Lights. A near-mythical wonder caused by magnetosphere disturbances, the lights have come to signify the majesty of Finnmark, with thousands of tourists travelling to the area each year in the hopes of glimpsing the natural phenomenon for themselves. The Lights have earned themselves all sorts of stories, from being caused by the voices of the dead to being a source of aid during childbirth. But Finnmark represents more than just the lights for the Sámi people. The snowy Finnmark plains, full of nomadic outposts and reindeer herds, provides a lifestyle in harmony with the natural world. For tourists like Miko and Naoki, it’s unlike anywhere else on the planet. The expanse of the tundra provides a white blanket of opportunity, the space for reflection and the chance to consider the infinite possibilities of the future.







## THE CHARACTERS

— *Miko* —

Miko is an inquisitive person petrified of running out of things to discover. She naturally gravitates towards new experiences, fresh activities or ways of thinking. In Tokyo, she can feel that aspect of her life slipping away under the pressures of what feels like inevitable motherhood.

She's someone who'll try anything once; trail running, woodblock painting and hang-gliding among many others. She's also someone who'd try many more hobbies, if given the chance; often her job, her marriage and the tiredness felt by her own body combine to limit the desires of her heart. She often finds herself jumping onto the next thing, in search of something as yet unidentified, which also exasperates her husband. Miko is also largely unaware of her many positive or attractive qualities, or too busy to acknowledge them.

She works as a member of a marketing team for Japan's latest cosmetics start-up. As a lead on conceptual design and advertising, the demands of her job might swallow a lesser person's life whole. But Miko is defiant in the face of expectations, and continually strives for something more. The Norwegian tundra provides her with an entirely new perspective on life, one that she hopes to forge into a future where she feels she's meant to be.

— *Naoki* —

Naoki is a creative man, a miniature sculptor at heart, who is secretly aware that he is not living his life in the way he wants to. This falsehood extends to his career, personality, passions, the way he interacts with others around him, and his sexuality. Tokyo pressures, a job in banking and his marriage to Miko have all contributed to him losing a sense of who he truly is; he no longer recognises the person who appears in the mirror. The problem is that Naoki has been tightly wound this way for so long, following the archetypical path he's supposed to, that he's buried any semblance of who he is.

There are wry flashes of the man he wants to be in Japan; his veiled attraction to a male work colleague and the way he meticulously carves his tiny figurines and sculptures, creating himself a small lake of serenity in a steadily rising ocean he's been seasick on for years. It's not until he reaches the blinding whiteness of the Norwegian tundra that he's able to see the absence in his existence. The Northern Lights are a key with which he can unlock the truth he's been denying even himself.

Naoki begins to embrace the freedom that a change of location can bring, gravitating towards Mikkell who is deeply in-tune with the shifting sands of a person's psyche. However, it isn't an altogether painless revolution, as Naoki and Miko's fraying relationship moves from indifference, abrasion, dismay, disbelief, and jealousy to finally acceptance and the feeling of resolution. Naoki undergoes an important period of self-discovery over the three days in the Lavvo tents, emerging from the blizzard with an entirely new outlook, leaving him able to return to Tokyo to live as he's meant to. As he leaves Norway he embarks on a fresh start, embracing his feelings towards his work colleague, Hiroto, and leaving his banking career to open a sculptor's studio.

## — *Ante* —

Ante is someone who is comfortable in his own skin. He is expressive, emotionally intelligent, quick-witted and connected with the landscape in which he resides. On meeting Miko he is immediately floored by her presence and tries to hide it, knowing that she's married. However, the attraction and pull between them is inescapable; Miko becomes an infatuation that he can barely contain.

Ante attended Sámi University and his family expected him to pursue a masters in investigative journalism. Instead he returned to Finnmark to join his brother in opening their own tour company. As a guide with Sámi heritage he feels it's important to broadcast the traditions, ways and folklore of the Sámi community through their Sámi tours. This includes his impressive knowledge of Sámi folklore.

His Grandfather, who is part of the Kirkenes Sámi parliament and a prominent leader of the community, disagrees with Ante's choices. He feels this is commodifying Sámi culture and misrepresenting what it is to be Sámi. This is a conflict at the heart of Ante's character; an annoyance at the perception held towards Sámi people, and a need to stay true to the nature and breadth of his people. He's a considerate man and an accomplished tour guide, who's warmth and quick-thinking shine through the icy winds of the tundra.

## — *Mikkel* —

Mikkel is a respected member of the Sámi community throughout Finnmark and the brother of Ante. Where Ante chose to leave for university, Mikkel stayed and worked various jobs before settling in the tourism industry. Following the return of his brother, Mikkel has struck off to form his own tour company alongside Ante.

Mikkel is a persistent watcher of situations; he's a good reader of people, their wants, needs and hidden agendas. He's also strongly connected to the region and to his concept of home. But ultimately Mikkel is an understanding man, a listener, known for his ability to advise on situations that might've felt insurmountable. He also likes the sound of his own voice. He jumps on any opportunity to philosophise and wax lyrical on how people should reconsider their thinking or change. With Miko and Naoki in particular he gets a bit more than he bargained for.

Mikkel is pragmatic, organised, friendly and assertive. His consideration and attentiveness have served him well as a tour guide, where his efforts work alongside Ante's grand stories and keen planning. Mikkel grows particularly close to Naoki, finding him a troubled man in need of further guidance. He is also initially apprehensive about Miko and Ante's feelings, thinking this could spell the end for their business. Ultimately, he reconciles with the fact that his brother knows what he's doing, and that Miko too will make the decision that's best for both her and Naoki in the future.

## WRITERS VISION

*‘The inside of me is home – it will follow me wherever I go’ – Nils-Aslak Valkeapää*

Alight focuses on two main themes; personal identity and the meaning of home. These two ideas are similarly evoked through the idea of Henrik Ibsen’s ‘life-lie’.

At the core of Alight there lies an attempt to disrupt the conventions of romantic cinema. It’s a heavily dialogue-driven story that works differently to most relationship arcs. Instead of showing two people coming together, Alight aims to show the story of two people splitting apart.

Alight explores two societies and cultures; the busy lifestyle of Tokyo alongside the slower life of Finnmark and the lives of the Sámi people. Contrasting characteristics are used alongside some similarities, showing a comparison of geography, ideas and ways of living. Alight weaves a thread through these two places and the Eddoko (people born and raised in the Edo region on Japan, now

known as Tokyo) and Sámi people, their celebrations, cuisine, traditions and pastimes; mikoshi shrines, bunraku puppetry, sáhkku and yoiks.

This change of environment acts as a catalyst, where as they remove their restraints and change their surroundings, Miko and Naoki gain a new perspective and sense of clarity against the expanse of the Norwegian tundra. Through their time with Mikkel and Ante, a synergy is born; their history and previous expectations fade away as they embrace the possibilities of a future that is theirs, instead of what felt forced upon them.

This all occurs in the microcosm of lavvo tents in a three-day blizzard, where each person’s inner feelings slowly spill out. The intensity of their conversations

build and loyalties change, the tents like slowly heated blown glass edging towards shattering. Alight expresses how an act of separation can be organic and to the benefit of both people. The Northern Lights then serve as a backdrop to the narrative, never fully seen until the climax, adding an otherworldly feeling to the character’s surroundings, though the characters remain the focal point.

It is only through this decision to end things that they are able to move on. It furthers the idea of Ibsen’s ‘life-lie’, where Ibsen considers what happens when people are exposed to their own fallacies and social constructs in his tragicomic play *The Wild Duck*. Alight concentrates on the core decision at play within Ibsen’s narrative; whether or not these characters choose to remove ‘the lie’ from their life. However, Alight’s message is that this separation can be seen as a positive event with a friendly resolution drawn from this realisation and subsequent detachment.

Alight should make the audience feel as if they too are able to shed their social and cultural restraints, to embrace a world of opportunity in keeping with their true selves.

### — Symbolism —

Ibsen’s life-lie is at the heart of Alight’s narrative, but this message is channelled through various symbols and themes that are intrinsically linked to Japanese and Sámi culture. The Japanese side of Alight’s story takes place in Ningyocho, a district of Tokyo synonymous with Japanese theatrical traditions, artisan traders and craftspeople.

This background of theatre costuming and puppetry flows through Alight. Miko’s heritage lies in Noh mask making, whilst these intricate masks and the figures they represent litter the backdrop of Tokyo.



# ALIGHT

They invoke the multiplicities of the self, a struggle at the core of Naoki's own journey of self-discovery. Ningyocho's marionette clock is an equally important symbol, serving not just as a visible indication of the never-ending passage of time, but as a means of furthering the idea of puppetry, of fated existences, of people operating to the design of their life-lie and not what they truly desire.

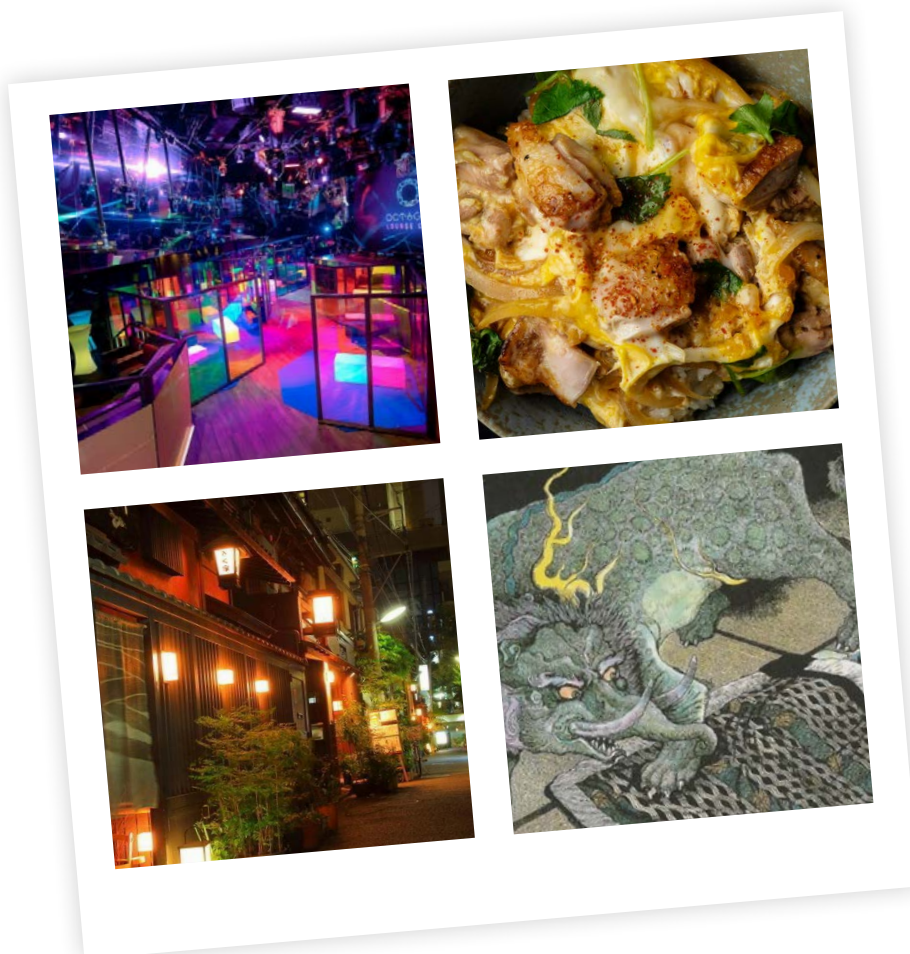
Alight also draws from some examples of Japanese mythology, particularly the Baku, a supernatural dream-eating tapir whose presence in Miko's work life forces her to consider the realities of her life, as a dream or nightmare she may well prefer to wake up from.

In Norway, similar Sámi myths occur across the film, including tales of Stallos and Ante's retelling of the old

Sámi folk tale The Daughter of the Sun. These intend to further the mythic nature of Alight's own narrative, in terms of its connection to folklore traditions in both cultures, serving as a means of unifying the life-lie as a cross-cultural human experience.

The symbol of reindeer and how they pertain to the development of Sámi identity itself is also explored throughout the Finnmark section of the film. These questions seek to highlight the

complexity of identity, in relation to the personal and the societal, which in turn further this idea of the life-lie and the strive to acknowledge or escape it.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a mountain range under a teal aurora borealis sky, reflected in water. The mountains are dark and rugged, with some snow or ice patches. The sky is a deep teal color with bright, glowing green and yellow aurora borealis lights. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the mountains and the sky. The word "Flight" is written in a white, cursive script across the upper half of the image.

# Flight

— *Written By* —

REBECCA SANDEMAN & SAMUEL KENDALL

EXT - INDETERMINATE SNOWY WASTELAND IN A BLIZZARD

MIKO is wading through the deep snow of the tundra, everything around her caked in snow and dense fog. She appears utterly defeated, running madly forwards.

DISTANT VOICE (UNKNOWN HOST)  
Miko! Miko!

The voice continues yelling at MIKO, who doesn't look back.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP  
MIKO's face, streaming with tears.

OVERHEAD SHOT  
MIKO crumples down onto her knees in the snow.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:  
BEGIN TITLES

'The inside of me is home - it will follow me wherever I go'

- Nils-Aslak Valkeapää

White text on black background.

FADE OUT:

END TITLES

FADE IN:  
EXT - FUJI KODOMO-NO-KUNI - STARTING LINE FOR MT FUJI  
ULTRA-TRAIL RUN

NOTE: DIALOGUE IN ALL ENSUING SCENES UNTIL SPECIFIED  
OTHERWISE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

Mt Fuji stands dominant in the distance. A mass of people in running gear are piled behind a starting line and track.

Focus on MIKO, breathing slowly, psyching herself up.

ULTRA-TRAIL RACE ANNOUNCER  
Racers, ready yourselves! The  
ultra-trail is about to begin!

MIKO looks over to the woman next to her, a friend (YUI), and nods at her, slight fear but determination on her face. YUI squeezes her hand and nods back.



MIKO  
No turning back now.

YUI  
(Jokingly)  
Oblivion awaits.

MIKO laughs, then steadies herself with confidence.

ULTRA-TRAIL RACE ANNOUNCER  
Remember to go at your own pace!  
It's an ultra-trail, not a sprint!

Some people laugh, most don't.

ULTRA-TRAIL RACE ANNOUNCER (Cont'd)  
We'll have checkpoints all along  
the route, just stick to the path  
and listen to the attendants!  
Okay, Racers! The Ultra-Trail  
begins in 10, 9...

The crowd chant the countdown along with the announcer.  
NEW SHOT FOR EVERY NUMBER

ULTRA-TRAIL RACE ANNOUNCER (Cont'd)  
8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... Go!

Shot of MIKO. As a horn sounds the starting line lifts.

OVERHEAD SHOT

The entire race-line, weaving like a river. MIKO begins running, keeping pace with YUI.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT - NAOKI'S WORK DESK IN LIVING ROOM

NAOKI is sitting in front of a miniature sculpture of a city, akin to Tokyo. Small figures of people and other creatures litter the scene in various poses.

NAOKI lifts a small block and begins carving it into a figure in a close-up. He concentrates.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE ULTRA-TRAIL - SUN SETTING

YUI is trying to keep up with MIKO. They're in an elevated area, with a huge view of the countryside & Mt Fuji as a backdrop. MIKO passes a water station, grabs a bottle.

YUI  
I... Miko... just keep

MIKO  
Come on!

YUI  
Just go... keep... I'll catch up...

YUI stalls her pace at the water station, slowing to a stop. MIKO turns back, but is ushered forward by YUI. MIKO turns forward, determined, and continues to run.

CUT TO:

INT - NAOKI'S WORK DESK IN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

NAOKI is at his desk, a small figure almost finished. He paints features onto the small male. NAOKI holds the figure up and stares into its eyes, with an unspoken purpose.

CUT TO:

INT - A FOOD TENT ON THE ULTRA-TRAIL - NIGHT

MIKO is sitting inside a food tent, ravenously eating the food as exhausted people encroach around her. An attendant comes over to MIKO and hands her a head torch.

ULTRA-TRAIL ATTENDANT  
If you want to continue. It's dark  
out there.

MIKO takes the head torch and exhaustedly expresses her appreciation. She then purposefully wraps the head torch over her sweaty head and stands up to run again.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S KITCHEN - MORNING

NAOKI wakes up. He prepares a breakfast of steamed rice, miso soup and grilled fish, eating alone. He takes a breath, then glances up at the clock on the wall. NAOKI drops his chopsticks in alarm.

He frantically gets ready, pouring the bowl of rice into his mouth as he fumbles into his shoes. He hesitates at the door, quickly kicks off his shoes, rushes back for the last

grilled fish, taking a rushed bite as he fumbles back into his shoes and dashes out the flat.

CUT TO:

EXT - ON THE ULTRA-TRAIL - MORNING - DENSE FOREST

MIKO runs, sweat dripping through her torch strap. She emerges from the forest to another incredible view. MIKO surveys the scenery as she runs, moving with determination - to get away from, or toward something unexplained.

CUT TO:

EXT - TRAIN PLATFORM

NAOKI speeds through a packed train station, looking up at the huge list of train times. He darts toward the platform.

The train is at the platform, heaving with people and TRAIN OPERATORS helping to quickly push people on board.

NAOKI conforms to the queue of people who are slowly shoving on. He frustratedly looks at his watch. Suddenly, he feels the strong shove of a TRAIN OPERATOR, propelling him forwards. He shouts out in alarm as the TRAIN OPERATOR squeezes him inside the train, squashing NAOKI through an ELDERLY WOMAN.

NAOKI is flustered and despondent, looking back at the TRAIN OPERATOR in annoyance before he checks himself, giving the ELDERLY WOMAN a shy and awkward bow. As the door closes he sighs, glances at his watch, winces.

CUT TO:

EXT - ULTRA-TRAIL - MIDDAY SUN BLARING

MIKO is dragging her body forward. Lake Kawaguchiko is in the distance, the finish, a mass of people, still far off. She grunts and pushes forward on the last stretch.

CUT TO:

EXT - TRAIN PLATFORM

The train pulls into the lake platform. NAOKI shoves his way off and looks both ways. He rushes over to a woman.

NAOKI  
Lake Kawaguchiko?

WOMAN  
Yes that's this stop.



NAOKI  
 (Frustrated)  
 No, the lake, which way!?

WOMAN  
 (Newly understanding)  
 Up that way.

The woman points up a stairway. NAOKI rushes up it.

CUT TO:

EXT - LAKE KAWAGUCHIKO - ULTRA-TRAIL FINISH LINE

NAOKI rushes towards the finish line in the distance, now sweaty and out of breath. As he arrives people are hugging and lying on the floor in pain. He frantically looks around, finding MIKO sitting alone, massaging her leg.

NAOKI  
 Miko!

MIKO'S PERSPECTIVE

MIKO looks over at NAOKI, the only person standing alone, a sea of partners and groups flitting around him.

NAOKI'S PERSPECTIVE

MIKO is now the one seen alone amidst a sea of pairings. She looks annoyed at his lateness, but ultimately relieved.

MIKO  
 (stumbling over to NAOKI)  
 Finally, you came.

MIKO hugs NAOKI, both visibly sweaty and tired, but savouring each other's company as NAOKI apologises.

PAN OUTWARDS AND FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO - MARIONETTE CLOCK

The Ningyocho marionette clock chimes on an hour, the curtains opening as a brief performance begins.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

A compact Japanese flat, small and quaint. NAOKI's belongings all have a clear sense of place; MIKO's appear

more strewn in various areas. The flat itself is dreary, but is spattered with colour and life from NAOKI's sculptures. Several Japanese theatre (Noh) masks hang on a wall beside the door.

MIKO is leaning on the edge of the bathtub, soaking and resting. NAOKI is in the kitchen meticulously preparing lunch for the two of them.

NAOKI

Have you heard from Yui?

MIKO

Not yet but she must've finished by now. Maybe she's not ready to hear my voice yet.

NAOKI

Maybe not.

(Pause)

How much longer will you be in the bath for now?

MIKO

(Agitated)

Naoki I ran for 30 hours.

NAOKI

(Jokingly)

I know...

(Pause)

Was it really 30 though?

MIKO

Yes I counted.

NAOKI

All of them?

MIKO

All of them.

NAOKI

Every hour?

MIKO

They gave me a certificate it literally says. Check the certificate.

NAOKI

(Pretending to look around)

Can't find it sorry.

MIKO

(Sarcastically)

Okay, let's say I ran an hour for every minute you were late.

NAOKI

(Playfully)

That's not accurate really though is it?

MIKO

(Shouting)

It wouldn't be if you hadn't been so late!

NAOKI loudly sighs, though is evidently apologetic.

NAOKI

I know, I'm sorry.

(Pause, MIKO cleans)

I'll be there next time. You're gonna do it again right?

MIKO

I might. I might not.

NAOKI

Oh. A might like the painting?

CUT TO:

INT - PAINTER'S STUDIO, FLASHBACK

Five chairs are set up for trainee painters, with a teacher and a model. MIKO is attempting to paint.

OVER THE SHOULDER

Camera moves behind the students revealing increasingly impressive works of art until MIKO comes into view at the end, a rough piece.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT

MIKO

The teacher wasn't good. Anyway it's too slow and fiddly. You like that sort of thing.

NAOKI



You weren't so bad at it.

MIKO

Then why didn't you hang it up?

NAOKI doesn't answer.

MIKO (Cont'd)

Exactly! Anyway it was boring.

NAOKI

Alright, what about your hang  
gliding?

CUT TO:

EXT - A CLIFF EDGE HIGH ON MT FUJI

MIKO is in hang gliding gear, an instructor counting her down. Her face is a portrait of repressed fear. On 1, MIKO launches herself from the cliff, screaming as she runs and soars off into the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT

MIKO

I was in a bit over my head with  
that one.

NAOKI

(Laughing, sarcastically)  
So you stopped that too?

MIKO

(Agitated)  
At least I start things Naoki.

NAOKI

I start things.

MIKO

Only if they're miniature.  
(Jokingly)  
You're the prince of toytown.

NAOKI

(Hurt)  
You know they're not toys.

MIKO

(Exasperated)  
I know, I'm just tired Naoki. Let  
me bathe, please.

NAOKI

Okay.

(Pause)

Do you want your lunch?

MIKO

Maybe later, just leave it on the table.

MIKO sinks down into her bath. Meanwhile, NAOKI serves up the food he's made and eats it opposite the empty space.

FADE OUT, CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S BEDROOM

MIKO and NAOKI are lying in bed. MIKO is asleep and snoring lightly. NAOKI is lying half-awake, staring at the ceiling. MIKO rolls over, placing an arm unconsciously over him. Silence. NAOKI looks down at the arm. Then, he relaxes, rolls over and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO

MIKO is rushing through the busier metropolitan streets of Ningyocho, carrying a coffee and a melonpan (sweet roll), trying not to spill the coffee as she moves. She fights her way through the crowd, entering a busy building where she queues up to enter the lift.

This echoes NAOKI's earlier train struggle - MIKO impatiently waits before she can enter the lift, squashing in amongst a group of people.

CLOSE-UP OF MIKO AMIDST CROWDED LIFT

As it goes up, MIKO closes her eyes to gain a brief reprieve. Everyone looks distant around her, gazing at watches or phones, waiting powerlessly to get where they're going.

The lift arrives on MIKO's floor and she exits. Company logo emblazoned on the wall. Office desks, people working.

MIKO walks through, greeting colleagues, before entering a large meeting room at the back. MIKO's boss, MIYO, is standing beside a projection showing adverts to a table of people.

MIYO

So good of you to join us Miko.

HARUKI

She's raced her way here!

MIKO sits beside HARUKI who's enjoying his bad joke.

MIYO

Not now Haruki please.

MIKO wolfs down her melonpan with others trying not to look at her. MIYO looks down at her, then continues presenting.

MIYO (Cont'd)

We've just started going through the next campaign, Miko. Ena Machiko has agreed to sign on as a lead model for at least the next three years, so we need to launch her first ad with a bang. We need something big, something that'll really cut through.

MIKO

(Tiredly, effortless response)  
Something bold?

MIYO

Exactly, something vibrant and punchy. Really unforgettable.

HARUKI

(to MIKO)

I suggested going down the ecdysis route.

MIKO

(Tiredly)

The what?

HARUKI

Like skin shedding, metamorphosis. Lizards and dragonflies do it. It's like a transformation through...

MIYO

I already vetoed that.

MIKO

That's surprising, I for one have always wanted cream that'll turn me into a lizard.



HARUKI  
It's metaphorical.

MIYO  
It's shit Haruki. Any other ideas?

AKIRA  
(taking the chance to pipe up)  
Has anyone heard of the  
dream-eating anteater?

MIKO tiredly slumps down slightly in her chair, before slyly jolting herself, taking a sip of coffee. MIYO makes a clear gesture of unknowing, probing AKIRA to continue.

AKIRA (Cont'd)  
So technically it's this sort of  
otherworldly tapir...

HARUKI  
You mean Baku!

AKIRA  
Yes, Baku. So it's one of those  
weird chimera creatures right and  
it eats dreams...

MIKO  
(Groggily)  
Baku-san come eat my dream.

AKIRA  
(Snapping a finger toward Miko)  
Right, so parents used to tell  
kids to pray to it so it'd...

MIYO  
Is this going somewhere?

AKIRA  
Yes! So it'd come devour their  
nightmares and they'd go back to  
sleep, basically so the parents  
wouldn't get disturbed, right?

As they continue brainstorming MIKO is in her own head.

HARUKI  
This sounds famously related to  
skincare.

AKIRA

Wait for it. So, it's on a bridge,  
this scary demon elephant blob  
with really bad skin, and then Ena  
Machiko swoops into frame, real  
dramatic with plenty of skin  
showing and...

MIYO

And defeats the evil monster with  
the power of cosmetics?

MIKO has zoned out completely from the conversation, is  
sipping her coffee and wishing to be elsewhere.

AKIRA

Yes! Defeat the baku and make it  
run off the bridge and then  
there'll be a close up of her face  
and her perfect skin and we can  
flash to the bottle and it'll say...

MIYO

(Interrupting)

Akira I think you're onto  
something here. What do you think  
Miko?

MIKO

(Feigning having heard)

Yes oh wow definitely. Definitely  
a great idea, that should work.  
Skin that feels like a dream.

MIYO

(Repeating)

Skin that feels like a dream...

MIYO mulls over the phrase as MIKO sips more coffee,  
defeated. HARUKI and AKIRA look at her impressed.

SMASH TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT - MEETING ROOM

Ongoing meeting, photos of the model and bad sketches of a  
Baku projected, applause from HARUKI and AKIRA.

INT - STAFF CANTEEN

MIKO queuing for lunch in the staff canteen, eating it alone, then walking back to the office amongst a crowd.

INT - MIKO'S DESK

MIKO is sat at her computer, sipping desperately at coffee.

INT - MEETING ROOM

Finally, MIKO is in a meeting where MIYO congratulates her for her work, which she accepts in a daze.

END MONTAGE

SMASH TO:

INT - RECEPTION AREA

MIKO exits the lift at the end of her work day, leaving the office building amidst a group of other employees.

EXT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO - RAINING

MIKO exits the office into Ningyocho. She breathes a sigh of relief, walking into the busy end-of-day bustle.

MIKO'S PERSPECTIVE THEN OVERHEAD SHOT

MIKO stops for a moment and stares up at her surroundings; the skyscrapers and buildings fence her in, looming over her, the crowd weaving around her as she stands alone.

Shot lingers here before she continues walking, slipping down a side street. She meets up with NAOKI who's been waiting with an umbrella. He greets her with a hug.

NAOKI

Hey.

MIKO

Hey.

NAOKI

Good day?

MIKO

Fine. I wish I hadn't agreed to this though, I'm so tired.

NAOKI

We don't have to go if you don't want to.

MIKO

(Looking at him knowingly)

Come on. We do.

NAOKI looks at MIKO, knowing what she says to be true.

DOLLY SHOT

They pass a mural of distressed Japanese New Wave film posters. Couples walk past them in the opposite direction. A SALESWOMAN tries to sell small cakes shaped like heads (ningyo-yaki). MIKO and NAOKI pass in silence. They both arrive at Tamahide, a famous Oyakodon restaurant.

Outside the restaurant, a billboard displays chalk drawings of a chicken and an egg, as well as text in Japanese and English "World famous Oyakodon, Parent-and-child donburi".

INT - TAMAHIDE/OYAKODON RESTAURANT - TRADITIONAL DECOR

NAOKI and MIKO are greeted by a waiter in a kimono. They're beckoned over by a couple, TADAAKI and REN who greet them by bowing slightly, standing up to shake hands.

REN

You made it! How are you both?

NAOKI

We're well thank you, it's great to see you.

The four of them sit back down as they continue conversing.

MIKO

(In socialising mode)

You both look well, you're practically glowing.

REN

It's those skincare packages you sent over.

MIKO, REN and TADAAKI laugh, NAOKI also chuckles slightly.

MIKO

So how's Tetsuo?

REN

Hard work, Miko. But he's worth it.

TADAAKI

Tough to agree with that when he's  
throwing up on your chest, but on  
the whole yes.

REN nudges TADAAKI, irritated but lovingly, as NAOKI  
laughs. Waiters bring food to the table.

OVERHEAD CLOSE-UP

NAOKI removes the lid of his oyakodon, steam escaping.

REN  
So... not to be that person, but  
were you thinking of having a  
little Tetsuo of your own?

NAOKI looks thrown. MIKO looks uncertain. An awkward  
silence looms over the dinner. NAOKI and MIKO look at each  
other, slightly terrified.

TADAAKI  
Ren! That's so unlike you.

REN  
I'm just making conversation!

MIKO  
No honestly it's fine, really. We  
haven't really thought about it  
much, have we Naoki? We're both  
really busy.

NAOKI  
(Nodding along as he eats)  
Really busy.

MIKO  
I have the brand and Naoki's got  
the bank.

NAOKI  
Oh so much going on at that bank...

The awkward silence returns over proceedings. TADAAKI,  
trying to disguise the situation, raises his ceramic cup  
(choko) of hot sake in a cheers, prompting REN. MIKO and  
NAOKI raise their glasses also. The four of them awkwardly  
cheers and down their glass, wincing slightly. Spurred by  
TADAAKI they continue eating and conversing.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO



All four are tipsy and jovial outside the restaurant.

REN

We should really do this more.

NAOKI

We absolutely should.

TADAAKI

Sorry we can't stay out later,  
Tetsuo, you know...

MIKO

No no problem we understand.

They all wave each other goodbye.

REN

Take care of yourselves. You're  
special people, you know that?

TADAAKI

Oh Ren. She says things like this  
after a few... Okay, let's get you  
home.

TADAAKI helps shoulder REN, as the two give their farewells  
and walk off down the street. MIKO turns to NAOKI.

NAOKI

See, not overly painful.

MIKO and NAOKI walk in the opposite direction home. They  
pass by puppet crafters, mask makers and craftspeople.

MIKO

Got the baby question again.

NAOKI

Not the biggest surprise coming  
from Ren.

MIKO

Maybe there's something to it.

NAOKI

(Surprised)

You want children?

MIKO

(Thinking)

No. Maybe. I don't know. I don't think I know what I want these days.

NAOKI  
I don't think anybody does,  
really, do they?

MIKO  
I dunno, Ren and Tadaaki seem like they do.

NAOKI  
That's just a front, don't be fooled. Everyone does that. One of a million masks.

MIKO  
Now you're sounding like my dad.

NAOKI cringes as the two pass by the marionette clock, which chimes, a performance playing.

NAOKI  
I'm just saying. Don't pay too much mind to who people say they are. People are really a person they don't show.

MIKO  
By that logic, I shouldn't believe a word you say.

NAOKI  
No comment.

MIKO smiles, stroking NAOKI'S arm and holding onto it affectionately as they both arrive at their flat, entering.

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT

They are both evidently relieved to be home. In another moment of tenderness MIKO touches NAOKI'S hand. He holds it, then kisses her lightly on her forehead.

NAOKI  
You should sleep, it'll be another busy weekend soon, what with the festival and all.

MIKO nods, holding for a moment, then kisses NAOKI before retreating to the bedroom. NAOKI pulls out a hidden bottle

of Japanese whisky and sits down at his work desk to survey his sculptures.

FADE OUT, CUT TO:

EXT - KANDA MATSURI FESTIVAL - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO

The weekend-long Kanda Matsuri Shinto Festival commences in Ningyocho. A huge parade. Three Mikoshi shrines go bobbing throughout the crowd to cheers and celebration. NAOKI is some ways away from the centre amongst a crowd, trying to catch sight of MIKO who is under one of the shrines.

MIKO'S PERSPECTIVE

MIKO is carrying one of the Mikoshi shrines through the procession. The main part of the festival is then completed at the Kanda Myoujin shrine. Elsewhere, YUI can be seen watching MIKO as the celebration comes to a close.

CUT TO:

INT - IZAKAYA DURING KANDA MATSURI FESTIVAL

A traditional Izakaya. A large table in the centre with food and drink. NAOKI is uncomfortably sandwiched between his parents, ICHIKO and HIRO, and near his uncle YUUTA.

FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Another great year that's for  
sure... /  
They're moving soon, can you  
believe it? To... /  
Far from me to say what someone  
should be doing with their life  
but he's just... /  
Like they're floating away, like  
balloons!  
(Laugh)  
It's unlike anything I've...

MIKO enters the Izakaya from the bathroom. NAOKI looks over. Before he's able to gesture to her, YUI rushes over to MIKO. MIKO looks over to NAOKI apologetically.

YUI

I'm so glad I could catch you!  
Sorry I never called after the  
run.

MIKO

No don't be sorry it's fine...

YUI

(YUI pours drinks as they sit)  
Let me make it up to you with some  
of this.

(MIKO laughs lightly. Pause)  
Naoki looks like he's having fun.

MIKO  
(Looking over)  
He's not a big fan of large  
gatherings.

YUI  
How is that going?

MIKO  
What?

YUI  
Naoki of course.

MIKO  
In what respect? Someone could  
perceive that as a loaded question.

YUI sips her drink loudly.

YUI  
Would I really load a question  
Miko, what with? I'm like an  
innocent flower. Anyway, you're  
dodging the question.

MIKO  
I'm not dodging anything. Things  
are fine, good.

YUI  
Good good or just good?

MIKO  
What does that even mean?

YUI  
You've been together for years now  
you know what it means.

MIKO  
Things are good Yui. Naoki is  
well, I'm well. What else is there  
to say?

YUI  
Are you both happy?

MIKO  
(Thinking)  
Happiness is a promise best left  
unkept.

YUI  
Well that's no way to live. You're  
not happy?

MIKO  
No, now you're putting words in my  
mouth. Naoki and I are happy in  
the same way that... that a lamp and  
a lightbulb are happy.  
(YUI raises an eyebrow)  
I don't know! But we're good Yui.  
Naoki helps.

YUI  
(Emphasising)  
Riiiiiight.  
(Pause)  
Ren said you met up the other day,  
I bumped into her at the festival.

MIKO  
We did. Took her about five minutes  
to try the baby question.

YUI  
No! That's a record. What did you say?

MIKO  
(Looking at her)  
What do you think I said!?

YUI  
Well, the answer might've changed  
I don't kn...

MIKO  
We're very busy.

YUI  
Speaking of, I heard a really  
funny story the other day from  
Kiyoko. Do you know the Northern  
Lights?



MIKO

Of course, the lights in the sky.  
I've seen photos.

YUI

Apparently some Norwegians think  
Japanese people go there to... you  
know...

(Gestures sexual motion)

Because we think our babies will  
be blessed by the mythical power  
of the lights.

MIKO

Surely not.

YUI

I swear, someone asked her when  
she was in Europe.

MIKO

Do people really believe that?

YUI

Europeans do. I mean, maybe some  
Japanese people do too. It's not  
the craziest thing I've ever  
heard.

(Pause)

But don't you go getting any ideas hey  
(she shoves MIKO playfully)  
Mrs. I'm too busy.

MIKO glares at YUI.

YUI (Cont'd)

You deserve a holiday Miko that's  
all I'm saying. You and Naoki. And  
who knows, there could be some  
magic to it?

MIKO

Don't be ridiculous.

YUI

Someone's on the defensive. Sounds  
like you're interested.

MIKO

I'm not interested!

YUI

Well, that's alright then.

(Pause)

I hear Norway is nice this time of year.

MIKO

It'll literally be freezing, it's always freezing.

YUI

Maybe. I guess we'll never know.

YUI takes a sip, looking at MIKO, gesturing to NAOKI. NAOKI still stuck with his family. NAOKI's eyes catch MIKO's; he slyly gestures a gun to his head, MIKO laughs. MIKO mouths "Sorry. Not long." before turning back to YUI.

FADE OUT, CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT - EVENING

MIKO and NAOKI are slightly drunk and preparing for bed.

NAOKI

Well done on another successful shrine carry.

MIKO

Oh don't please not you too.

NAOKI

(Laughing)

Sorry. Yuuta is as lively as ever.

MIKO

Some things never change. It's over now, at least.

(Pause)

I had a weird talk with Yui though, something about the Northern Lights.

NAOKI

How did you get onto that?

MIKO

No idea. Something about magic and babies... It doesn't matter anyway.

NAOKI

I guess not.

MIKO and NAOKI both get into bed. NAOKI yawns loudly. They lie together in silence.

NAOKI (Cont'd)  
Ready for tomorrow?

MIKO  
No, but I rarely am these days. We should sleep.

NAOKI  
You're right.  
(NAOKI switches out the lamp)  
Goodnight, mikoshi carrier.

MIKO  
(Smirking)  
Goodnight.

CUT TO:  
An hour later, NAOKI is snoring. MIKO is lying awake. NAOKI rolls over and places an arm over MIKO unconsciously. She looks down at it. Then MIKO rolls over, attempts to sleep.

FADE OUT, CUT TO:  
INT - BANK OFFICE - NAOKI'S WORKPLACE - EARLY MORNING

NAOKI is at his desk. He's half asleep, brushing at his eyes, spreadsheets on the computer screen. He spills coffee slightly over his shirt, then curses under his breath.

HIROTO  
Feeling rough?

HIROTO, NAOKI'S colleague, appears at his desk, dressed smartly and with well-styled hair. NAOKI straightens up slightly and attempts to pass off the spilt coffee.

NAOKI  
Festival nights are always late ones.

HIROTO  
(Laughs)  
Don't I know it. But you know what they say about Kanda Matsuri?

NAOKI  
(Tiredly)  
I have absolutely no idea what they say Hiroto.

HIROTO  
It's only as good as the Monday  
after.

HIROTO winks at NAOKI; NAOKI looks horrified.

NAOKI  
Are you out of your mind?

HIROTO  
It has been said Naoki. You're  
coming right?

NAOKI  
Coming where?

HIROTO  
Out! It's the festival.

NAOKI  
It's not really though is it?

HIROTO  
Come onnn! It's nowhere near as  
busy tonight.

NAOKI  
And for good reason, it's a  
Monday! I'm busy.

HIROTO  
(Playfully)  
Liar.

NAOKI  
It's true!

HIROTO  
I'll buy you one drink, just one.

NAOKI  
Hiroto really...

HIROTO  
You'll make my week, please.

NAOKI looks in a curious way at HIROTO.

NAOKI  
Fine.

HIROTO  
Yes!

NAOKI  
One drink.  
(Pause, then smirking)  
And you have to meet Mrs Sato  
for me.

HIROTO  
Ugh, deal. I'll be back at 6.

HIROTO rushes away. NAOKI'S eyes follow him as he leaves, before turning to his computer screen. He sends a text to MIKO that reads "Will be back later tonight. Work drinks."

SMASH TO:

INT - MIKO'S OFFICE

MIKO picks up her phone and reads the message. She rolls her eyes a little, then types back. "Okay. Be good."

SMASH TO:

INT - BANK OFFICE

NAOKI receives her reply and smiles, returns to typing.

CUT TO:

Several hours later, HIROTO and CO-WORKERS arrive at NAOKI'S desk, his tie loosened, wearing new shoes.

NAOKI  
(Shaking his head)  
Where are we going?

NAOKI closes his laptop screen.

HIROTO  
Where do you think?

CO-WORKERS (TOGETHER)  
Shinjuku!

CUT TO:

EXT - STREETS OF SHINJUKU

NAOKI, HIROTO and CO-WORKERS roam the bustling streets of Shinjuku together. They all enter a busy-looking bar.

INT - SHINJUKU BAR

NAOKI, HIROTO and CO-WORKERS drink together at a bar, NAOKI looking at HIROTO after taking a swig. NAOKI is encouraged to have a second drink, which he begrudgingly accepts.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOME

MIKO arrives home alone, slumping her work bag down, collapsing. She pulls her laptop out and switches it on.

CUT TO:

INT - ARCADE

NAOKI, HIROTO and CO-WORKERS are shown drinking and playing games in an arcade. They're crowded around NAOKI, who's sat playing the game, cheering him on as NAOKI concentrates.

NAOKI wins, causing cheering and jumping around. NAOKI jumps up, celebrates, uncharacteristically hugging HIROTO which he returns in the spur of the moment.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOME

MIKO on her laptop, searching through the Northern Lights. She switches to a plane ticket comparison website, and types in Tokyo to Norway.

CUT TO:

INT - SHINJUKU CLUB

The group are now in a rowdier club with lights and a DJ. A CO-WORKER brings a tray of shots over, NAOKI holding his head in his hands before they all down a shot.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOME

MIKO is looking through plane prices and potential dates. She thinks over the idea, filling in their details. MIKO impulsively purchases, then leans back in her chair.

CUT TO:

INT - BAR IN SHINJUKU

Now in a quieter bar, dimly lit, Japanese Jazz playing. Two CO-WORKERS have left the group, leaving HIROTO, NAOKI and a third CO-WORKER who's falling asleep.

HIROTO

Looks like it'll only be two men standing.



NAOKI  
Cheers to that!

NAOKI raises his glass, which HIROTO clinks, taking a sip.

HIROTO  
We should do this again sometime  
you know.

NAOKI  
Why is everyone always saying  
that?

HIROTO  
I mean it!  
(Pause)  
I mean we don't have to if you  
don't want to.

NAOKI  
(Quickly)  
No that's not what I meant, I  
just...

HIROTO  
(Laughs)  
It's fine. You're so on edge.  
We'll do this again, don't worry.

Japanese Jazz music continues in their brief silence.

NAOKI  
You ever kinda think like... Hiroto,  
you know. As if you're not this  
person.

HIROTO  
Oh yeah, all the time.

NAOKI  
Like I'm not really me. But I am  
but, sort of, not the me that most  
people think but this kind of  
different... Like...

HIROTO  
(Interrupting)  
Like you're pretending?

NAOKI

No, well yes but but as if... just  
distant and... always changing...

HIROTO  
(Thinking)  
Like a shapeshifter?

NAOKI  
Sort of. But, like, just...  
different, and kind of lost inside  
that... lost inside of...

NAOKI pauses in thought.

HIROTO  
I know what you mean Naoki. I also  
think we've had a fucking lot to  
drink.

HIROTO laughs, NAOKI joins in a little.

NAOKI  
Yeah, just, you know... The music's  
good.

HIROTO  
And if the music's good, what else  
is there to worry about?

NAOKI smiles. They raise glasses and drink.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOME

MIKO readies herself for bed, falling asleep alone.

CUT TO:

EXT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO

The marionette clock chimes, the marionettes dancing. NAOKI  
and HIROTO say goodnight as HIROTO leaves in the opposite  
direction, helping CO-WORKER home.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOME

NAOKI arrives in the flat later. As he drunkenly stumbles  
inside he accidentally knocks some of the Noh masks off the  
wall, one of which shatters apart on the floor.

Panicking, he checks on MIKO who's still asleep, then picks  
up the masks, looking at one in each hand. He staggers

through to the bathroom, switching on the light which illuminates his image in the mirror. He looks at himself, then assesses the damage on the masks. As he does so, he raises the masks to his face.

The first, covering entirely with no visible marks. The second, a large shatter, covers half his face, his visible eye bulging. He removes the second mask and looks at himself for a long time, his own image reflected in his iris.

CUT TO:

Morning, MIKO woke up early to make breakfast. NAOKI wakes up very hungover, stumbles into the living room and gratefully receives a coffee from MIKO.

MIKO  
Good night?

NAOKI  
(Groggily)  
From what I remember. Was it worth  
it? We'll find out.  
(Pause)  
What's with the breakfast?

MIKO  
Well... truthfully, I wanted to tell  
you something.

NAOKI  
(Concerned)  
What?

MIKO  
It's good news.

NAOKI  
Go on...

MIKO  
Right. Okay... So...  
(Pause, building up courage)  
I've booked us a holiday.

NAOKI  
(Confused and surprised)  
A holiday? Not quite what I was  
expecting. Where to?

MIKO  
To Europe.

NAOKI  
Europe? Miko that's crazy.

MIKO  
I know right.

NAOKI  
When did you do this?

MIKO  
Last night. It's out of the blue,  
I know. But I think we need a  
break.  
(NAOKI looks at her puzzlingly)  
Come on it'll be relaxing. A  
change of scenery. And we can  
spend some time together.

NAOKI  
Whereabouts in Europe?

MIKO  
Norway. It's like a tour package  
to see the Northern Lights.

NAOKI  
Norway? Isn't it freezing there?

MIKO  
Yes, but it'll be romantic. We can  
sleep beneath the lights together.

NAOKI  
Sleep as in in a hotel?

MIKO  
Well for the first night yes, then  
we get to share a tent...

NAOKI  
A tent?

MIKO  
It's called a lavvo tent. It's  
really spacious and...

NAOKI  
We're gonna fly halfway around the  
world to sleep in a tent?

MIKO

Yes! Beneath the Northern Lights.  
It's not just any old tent.

NAOKI  
I mean it is still a tent.

MIKO  
Okay you're definitely getting  
caught up on the whole tent thing...

NAOKI  
Sorry, okay. Just the two of us?

MIKO  
Just us. With the tour guides  
obviously.

NAOKI  
(Disgruntled)  
Doesn't sound like the ideal...

MIKO  
(Brashly interrupting)  
I know you're not big on tour  
guides Naoki but please. This is  
really important to me.

NAOKI  
You could've maybe run it by me  
once before...

MIKO  
It's spontaneous and exciting!

NAOKI  
Again I'm not the biggest fan of  
sponta...

MIKO  
(Shouting)  
Can you try to be just a tiny bit  
excited, for me!?

MIKO looks dejected at NAOKI. He hugs her.

NAOKI  
Sorry, just a hangover.

MIKO  
I thought it'd be good, you know.  
For both of us.

NAOKI  
I know. You know what I'm like. I  
just... I can't wait, really.

NAOKI kisses MIKO on her forehead. MIKO hugs him back  
slightly, before the two separate. Weird pause.

NAOKI (Cont'd)  
When are we going?

MIKO  
At the start of December.

NAOKI  
Prime weather conditions.

MIKO  
(slightly annoyed but amused)  
Naoki.

NAOKI  
Just kidding. I'd better speak to  
Tanaka-san.

MIKO  
You're owed a holiday. Anyway, we  
should get ready.

NAOKI  
Right.  
(NAOKI goes to get ready for work in the  
bedroom, before he turns back to MIKO)  
Miko.

MIKO turns to look at NAOKI.

NAOKI (Cont'd)  
Thank you.

MIKO smiles then, when her smile fades, steadily begins to  
clear up the breakfast things.

CUT TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE

SCENES INTERSPERSED WITH NINGYOCHO MARIONETTE CLOCK CHIMING

INT - CONFERENCE HALL

On a large screen an advert of the baku skincare advert  
finishes, the words 'Skin that feels like a dream'



emblazoned on the screen. The crowd roars with applause, MIKO blushing as MIYO shakes her.

INT - NAOKI'S OFFICE

NAOKI and HIROTO are talking at his office, laughing and joking, until TANAKA-SAN walks by; they act serious.

INT - MEETING ROOM

MIKO is in a meeting discussing the success of the advert, alongside the lead actor. She is going through the motions, as if automatic, playing along absent-mindedly.

INT - NAOKI'S DESK

NAOKI is staring a hole through his monitor.

INT - LARGE SHOPPING MALL

MIKO is shown going into a large shopping mall. A large man dressed in a mascot Baku costume (a scary rendition of the creature like Hokusai's woodblock print) hugs her awkwardly.

EXT - SHINJUKU GYOEN NATIONAL GARDEN - AUTUMN

TRACKING SHOT

In a slower, more pensive situation, MIKO and NAOKI are walking through Ueno Park together during their time off, sequestered amongst the Autumn trees. They are holding hands and laughing with each other.

They come to a small shrine-like seating area, where two young people are sitting, minding their own business. MIKO looks over to them and slyly double takes, slowing her pace. NAOKI doesn't notice, but MIKO's face is one of confused longing, of forcibly reconciling with time.

They pass the two young people and continue walking into the distance as leaves fall from the trees.

INT - BANK MEETING ROOM

NAOKI is meeting with a high-profile couple, talking through their finances in a droll tone.

EXT - NINGYOCHO MARIONETTE CLOCK

The clock chimes for a final time, marionettes dancing.

INT - MIKO'S OFFICE

MIKO, as if hearing the sound of the clock, falls into her seat in relief, then races out of the office.

INT - NAOKI'S OFFICE

Also seeming to hear the clock, NAOKI packs up quickly, says goodbye to HIROTO on his way out of the bank.

EXT - STREETS OF NINGYOCHO

MIKO exits her office in a rush to another heaving crowd, the streets adorned in festive/Christmassy illuminations, her face a picture of joy and anticipation.

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT

Both MIKO and NAOKI arrive home, where their suitcases are already packed. They look excitedly into each other's eyes.

MIKO  
Let's go.

NAOKI nods approvingly, hulking suitcases out of the flat.

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

INT - AIRPLANE - AFTERNOON - AISLE

MIKO and NAOKI are walking down the aisle of the plane. They approach their seats, MIKO looks at the window seat in anticipation even though NAOKI is assigned to it. She smiles at him and he relents.

CUT TO:

MIKO staring out of the window as the plane takes off. Tokyo's skyline is visible, illuminating the night as they depart.

CUT TO:

NAOKI is asleep, MIKO is reading BREASTS AND EGGS by Mieko Kawakami. She is nodding along to the words as if agreeing.

CUT TO:

INT - OSLO AIRPORT

A layover in Oslo. MIKO and NAOKI are lying awkwardly on airport chairs, beside a large erected Christmas tree. Having not booked a hotel, both attempt in vain to get a few hours sleep before the next flight.

Several hours later both of them scramble through the airport towards a second plane. MIKO is elated and full of energy, whilst NAOKI looks drowsy and half-asleep.

CUT TO:

INT - AIRPLANE

NAOKI is reading CONFESSIONS OF A MASK by Yukio Mishima. He looks at MIKO, asleep with her mouth open. NAOKI smiles.

END SUBTITLES

CUT TO:

INT- KIRKENES AIRPORT ARRIVALS - EARLY MORNING

ANTE and MIKKEL are waiting by the arrivals gate, holding up a sign with MIKO and NAOKI's names on. They are visibly bored, indicating they have been there a while.

NOTE: DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN Sámi AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

MIKKEL

So what's your guess,  
'rediscovering themselves' or  
'escaping the monotony of  
existence?'

ANTE

Mikkel, I'm not doing this every  
time we have new customers. You  
can't pigeonhole people like that.

MIKKEL

Sure you can. Okay, my guess is  
(in English)  
'wanderlust'.

ANTE shudders at the sound of the word.

ANTE

As long as they aren't bloggers or  
YouTubers I don't mind.

MIKKEL

We should put a disclaimer on the  
website banning GOPROs.

ANTE laughs and checks his watch.

ANTE

The woman I've been talking to.  
Miko I think? She seems...  
enthusiastic.

MIKKEL  
See, why is she so enthusiastic?  
That's suspicious.

ANTE  
Can't people just be enthusiastic  
to be coming to Kirkenes?

MIKKEL  
No. There's a reason for  
everything.

ANTE  
Sometimes I think you should've  
done the investigative journalism  
degree and not me.

MIKKEL  
(joking)  
What and have you not return as a  
failure in the eyes of Grandad?

ANTE pushes MIKKEL in a gentle brotherly way.

ANTE  
He'll come around eventually.

MIKKEL  
Have you met our Grandad?

MIKO and NAOKI enter arrivals pushing their luggage. NAOKI  
looks exhausted. MIKO looks full of energy.

ANTE and MIKKEL spot them and give them a wave. MIKO and  
NAOKI trudge over in their thick winter gear.

END SUBTITLES

NOTE: DIALOGUE WILL BE SPOKEN IN ENGLISH UNLESS SPECIFIED  
OTHERWISE FOR THE REMAINING DURATION

ANTE  
Welcome to Norway! Did you have a  
good flight?

MIKO and NAOKI look at each other and pause.

MIKO

Er... Yes thank you.

NAOKI

It was a little long.

ANTE

And I see you're dressed for the weather which is good.

MIKO

I'm wearing three sweaters. Naoki said that I was being dramatic.

NAOKI

(to MIKO, in Japanese)

The bag was 4.5kg overweight Miko. It was an extra 10,000 yen.

MIKKEL

We might have some snow whilst you're here in Kirkenes but it's nothing to worry about. Should still be plenty of opportunities to see the lights.

MIKO

Great, we're so excited aren't we Naoki?

NAOKI

Yep.

MIKKEL looks at ANTE with a knowing glance.

ANTE

Let me take your bags, the car is right this way.

ANTE, MIKKEL, MIKO and NAOKI walk out the airport. NAOKI slightly trails behind the rest of them.

CUT TO:

INT- ANTE'S CAR- MOMENTS LATER - THE EXPANSE OF KIRKENES

MIKKEL is driving. ANTE is in the passenger seat, MIKO and NAOKI in the back. NAOKI looks sleepy.

Flashes from the car of the Norweigan landscape, the mesmerising white expanses and a storm on the horizon. Northern Lights can barely be seen, very far away.

MIKO

It's so beautiful.

ANTE looks at MIKO in his passenger mirror, smiles. MIKKEL, realising their interest, begins to turn the car towards the side of the road, slowing it to a stop.

ANTE

Come on, take a closer look.

ANTE quickly exits the car. MIKO and NAOKI tentatively follow him outside and walk towards the edge of the road to join him, where a vast expanse of tundra, mountains and nature unfold before them.

Both MIKO and NAOKI stand dazed, dumbfounded amidst the slow barrel of the wind which batters their hair. Their eyes pan across the whole scene, all its borderless fields and small outposts, trying to take everything in.

LONG SHOT OF SCENERY

CUT TO:

INT - MIKKEL'S CAR - FINNMARK ROAD

A short amount of time has passed since their brief stop. Kirkenes can now be seen in the distance. NAOKI has fallen asleep, finally exhausted by the journey.

CLOSE-UP

MIKO's face reacts in wonder to the landscape as they drive.

MIKKEL

Looks like your husband is already bored of us Miko.

ANTE looks at MIKKEL warning him. MIKO laughs.

ANTE

I think what my brother is trying to say is that your husband is a bit worn out from travelling.

MIKO

I may have not been the best person to fly with. I'm too restless.

MIKKEL honks at a car. He then breaks the ensuing silence.

MIKKEL

How did you two meet?

MIKO  
In a park.

MIKKEL  
Romantic.

MIKO  
Not really. I would see him every week drawing in a sketchbook. One day I went over and asked what he was drawing.

MIKKEL  
Which was?

MIKO  
Lots of tiny skyscrapers. I'd secretly hoped he was drawing me.

ANTE and MIKKEL laugh.

MIKKEL  
That would have been more romantic, I guess?

MIKO  
I think so. It was a long time ago.  
(she smiles to herself)  
After a while he'd start ripping out all the sketches for me to keep. I must still have them somewhere.

MIKO gazes at the scenery some more. ANTE leaves her to ponder in silence for a while before changing the subject.

ANTE  
Okay, we're gonna get you checked in to the hotel for one evening before we depart for the lavvos. And tonight, if you like we can take you both to this bar which serves traditional Sámi food. And there'll be a Sámi band on too.

MIKO  
Incredible, we'd love to.

NAOKI snores a little and moves his head as if dreaming.

CUT TO:

EXT - FINNMARK WILDERNESS

The Northern Lights slowly fading under the approaching storm as the car slowly drives up the road, entering the outskirts of Kirkenes.

CUT TO:

INT- MIKO AND NAOKI'S HOTEL ROOM- EARLY EVENING

MIKO is getting ready for the evening in front of a mirror.  
NAOKI is staring at his phone, scrolling through apps.

NOTE: DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE AND  
SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

MIKO

How do you feel being here?

NAOKI

Oh, yaknow. The scenery is nice -  
picturesque. I wouldn't say I *feel*  
any different.

MIKO

Not even a little?

NAOKI

(thinking)

No, I don't think so.

(thinking again)

It's colder and there's a lot of  
snow.

MIKO

That's not what I meant silly.

(MIKO applies lipstick)

It feels... different, to me. Like  
the air feels fresh. It's so peaceful.

(pause)

Anyway, how do I look?

NAOKI stares at her for a moment.

NAOKI

Beautiful. Like a... hinamatsuri  
doll.

MIKO

(clearly unimpressed)

You're so bad at compliments.



There's a knock at the door. ANTE and MIKKEL are outside.

END SUBTITLES

ANTE (Voice)  
You guys ready?

MIKO and NAOKI, grab their stuff and leave the room.

INT - OUTSIDE THE HOTEL - FINNMARK

MIKO and NAOKI meet ANTE and MIKKEL outside. ANTE is taken aback by MIKO. He tries to speak but can't. MIKKEL realises this and interjects.

MIKKEL  
It's a five minute walk. Hope  
you're hungry, this place serves  
massive portions. A lot of our  
guests complain we don't warn  
them. So here's the warning.

They all start walking away from the hotel.

CUT TO:

INT- Sámi BAR - FIVE MINUTES LATER

The bar is bustling with people, eating and drinking. The band is setting up ready to play.

CUT TO:

Slamming down of pints of beer and four massive plates of food. MIKO, NAOKI, ANTE and MIKKEL are in a booth. ANTE and MIKO are on one side and MIKKEL and NAOKI are on the other.

Focus on MIKKEL and NAOKI.

NAOKI  
You weren't joking about the  
portions.

MIKKEL  
I never joke. It only ever wastes  
time.

The four of them begin plating up their own food.

NAOKI  
(to MIKKEL)  
Do you do this alot?

MIKKEL

What, sit here?

NAOKI  
No, the tours.

MIKKEL  
In eight years I've taken hundreds  
of people to see the lights.  
Erected a lot of lavvos. Started  
thousands of fires.

NAOKI  
(impressed)  
So you're an expert?

MIKKEL  
Yes let's go with that. A master  
of my craft.  
(lowering voice)  
Not like Ante, he's barely an  
apprentice. And you?

NAOKI  
Me?

MIKKEL  
Have you mastered yours?

NAOKI  
Banking? It's not a craft. It's...

MIKKEL  
A necessity?

NAOKI  
Something like that.

MIKKEL  
There will always be a need for  
banks, tour guides... Less so.  
(Pause)  
Let's cheers to that either way.  
To necessities. In Sámi it's  
'Maistte! Jugis!'

NAOKI smiles and raises his glass to MIKKEL.

NAOKI  
(unsure)  
Maistte! Jugis!

MIKKEL

Close enough.

PAN TO:

On the other side of the booth, where MIKO and ANTE are sat eating. There is a short, loaded silence between them.

ANTE  
You look...

MIKO  
Like a doll?

ANTE  
(laughing)  
No definitely not. What a weird  
thing to say.

Luckily NAOKI doesn't appear to hear them over the music.

MIKO  
Thank you. It is weird, that was  
my suspicion too.

ANTE  
I feel I'm missing some context  
here.

MIKO  
You are.

MIKO looks at ANTE, another silence between them.

ANTE  
Anyway just a compliment, that's  
all.

MIKO  
(Smirking)  
And what am I going to do with a  
compliment exactly?

ANTE  
I thought maybe you could put it  
in your bag. Keep it in your  
purse.

MIKO  
Wow, thanks. So are your  
compliments worth anything?

ANTE  
Depends where you're shopping.

MIKO  
Could I pay for a round of drinks  
here for example?

ANTE looks at her and looks at the owner of the bar, RISTIN  
who locks eyes with ANTE and scowls.

ANTE  
No. Ristin is still annoyed with  
me because her daughter and I  
broke up. I wouldn't mention my  
name to her at all actually.  
Unless you want spit in your beer.

MIKO  
Oh dear. How do you know she  
hasn't done so already?

ANTE looks over at Ristin; she raises a glass, drinks.

ANTE  
We don't. That's the chance we  
take for the best guorppa in town.

ANTE takes a large bite of his sausage. He looks over the  
bar and notices his GRANDDAD (JARRE) coming towards them.

ANTE  
I'd just like to apologise now for  
anything my grandfather does or  
says.

JARRE approaches the booth.

CAMERA PULL BACK

Reveals MIKO, ANTE, MIKKEL and NAOKI sat together.

JARRE  
(in Sámi)  
More happy customers?

ANTE  
(in Sámi)  
Our customers are always having a  
good time. Can you not see?

ANTE gestures at the bar, the musicians have started  
playing. Some patrons have gotten up to dance.

JARRE

(in Sámi)  
 They look miserable to me.  
 (JARRE points at NAOKI)  
 Him in particular. Looks deeply  
 sad.

NAOKI  
 (to MIKKEL)  
 What's he saying?

MIKKEL  
 He's saying you have kind eyes.

NAOKI  
 (looks pleased)  
 Oh. Nobody's ever said that to me  
 before.

JARRE  
 (in Sámi)  
 When you want to do something  
 useful with your life Ante, you  
 know where I am.

JARRE nods at NAOKI and MIKO exaggeratedly. He slightly  
 acknowledges MIKKEL and ignores ANTE. He goes to depart.

JARRE  
 (to MIKO and NAOKI in English)  
 I hope you enjoy your trip.

MIKO and NAOKI look appreciatively at JARRE, ANTE less so,  
 MIKKEL amused by the situation. JARRE leaves.

MIKO  
 (to ANTE)  
 I thought your Grandad seemed very nice.

CUT TO:

Intercut of MIKO, ANTE, MIKKEL and NAOKI drinking more,  
 laughing, crowd dancing and the band playing music. MIKKEL  
 and NAOKI get progressively drunker.

NAOKI  
 (to MIKKEL)  
 And I should've told him. I should  
 have told him right then, but I  
 didn't.

MIKKEL  
 That's what they want. The men at  
 the top. Your silence. Your

complicity. Silence isn't quiet,  
silence is loud.

NAOKI bangs his hand on the table as if he agrees with  
MIKKEL. This out of character gesture shocks MIKO.

NAOKI  
You are so right.

MIKKEL shrugs, takes a sip of his beer. MIKO looks at  
NAOKI, weighing up whether to say anything.

MIKO  
(in Japanese)  
Naoki this song is so... let's  
dance.

NAOKI looks at MIKO and then back to MIKKEL.

NAOKI  
(in Japanese)  
Can we not?

MIKO  
(in Japanese)  
Please?

NAOKI  
(apologetically, in Japanese)  
Sorry, you know I don't like  
dancing. Go with Ante.

MIKO looks a bit hurt. NAOIKI returns to talk to MIKKEL.

NAOKI  
Mikkel, tell me what you think  
about 'collaboration'.

MIKKEL puts down his beer and clears his throat.

MIKKEL  
I have a few things to say about  
collaboration...

NAOKI is nodding along, hooked on every word.

Focus moves to MIKO and ANTE.

MIKO  
I've just been ditched for your  
brother.

ANTE  
Don't worry, it's happened to me  
several times.

MIKO  
Will you dance with me?

ANTE looks at MIKO and extends his hand.

ANTE  
Of course.

ANTE leads MIKO by the hand to the makeshift dance floor.  
The musicians start a new song, it's a deep, melodic piece,  
full of emotion.

MIKO  
(whilst dancing)  
So you know everyone here?

ANTE  
Everyone and their whole extended  
families.

MIKO  
It must be nice to be so  
connected.

ANTE  
You wouldn't say that when  
everyone meddles in your affairs.

MIKO  
In Tokyo, your life can feel...

ANTE  
What?

MIKO  
(thinking)  
Like some things don't fit.

They dance more. The band reaches a crescendo. ANTE and  
MIKO are pushed closer together because of the crowd.

PAN BACK TO:  
NAOKI and MIKKEL sat at the booth. They have their heads  
bowed close together, conspiratorially.

MIKKEL  
It's why I spent so much time  
learning English, when I took this

job. So much of life lies in our communication, you know?

(NAOKI nods knowingly)

It's about what you change; you can never undo what's already been done. But the future, the future is a catalyst for a different version of you entirely.

NAOKI

Yes. Totally.

MIKKEL

And... it takes the time it takes. You know?

NAOKI

I do know.

MIKKEL

Take my job for example. I work a few months a year and the rest is mine to do with what I please. I guide people, I show them the lights, they feel as if their life has... purpose. This is the transaction. That is my trade off. An endless cycle of the same journey. It offers me freedom where others have no autonomy.

NAOKI

There's a lot to be said for autonomy.

He looks over at MIKO dancing with ANTE and smiles at her, which she returns. He takes another sip of beer.

MIKKEL

It's never too late to get some.

PAN BACK TO:

ANTE and MIKO, still dancing.

ANTE

So what's your first impressions of... everything?

MIKO

That's a rather broad topic.

ANTE



Okay, Norway. Kirkenes. Mikkell.  
Me.

MIKO stops dancing for a second and thinks.

MIKO  
(humorously)  
I think it's too early to tell.  
Apart from Mikkell. He clearly  
knows too much.

ANTE  
Yes. He's insufferable like that.

ANTE and MIKO stare at each other for a moment.

ANTE  
I really hope you get the most out  
of this trip.

MIKO  
Thank you. I hope so too.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT - INSIDE HOTEL ROOM - LATE MORNING

MIKO sits up in her bed, the sound of NAOKI's drunken snoring ringing in her ear beside her. She gets out of bed and traipses over to the front door, which greets her with the mesmeric terrain of Kirkenes as it opens.

EXT - OUTSIDE HOTEL ROOM - LATE MORNING

MIKO steps outside of the hotel, onto a small heightened platform. She leans against a wooden fenced area at the edge of the platform, deep in thought. The peaceful whistle of the oncoming wind calms her, her eyes fixed fiercely into the distance.

She sighs calmly, trying to balance the weight of everything on her mind. Time passes, then, as people appear outside houses, going about their lives, she watches them for a moment, as if deciphering a puzzle. A particularly strong rush of wind disrupts her focus, forcing MIKO to turn and retreat inside to get dressed.

CUT TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE HOTEL ROOM - EARLY AFTERNOON

ANTE and MIKKEL's car drives up to the hotel, the windscreen wipers battering snow away at a furious speed.

They park up and then knock on the hotel door, which MIKO opens.

ANTE  
Afternoon!

MIKO  
(Visibly pleased to see them)  
Hello, sorry we're just finishing  
packing up. Well, Naoki is.

NAOKI  
(shouting from indoors)  
Almost ready!

MIKO hands her bag over to MIKKEL, who proceeds to heave it into the boot.

ANTE  
No problem at all. Did you make  
the most of your last sleep in a  
bed for a few days?

MIKO  
Lots of snoring...

NAOKI appears from indoors with his bag.

NAOKI  
I don't snore, don't believe her.

ANTE laughs as NAOKI hands his bag over to MIKKEL. MIKO looks slightly embarrassed.

MIKKEL  
Nothing wrong with a bit of  
snoring. I like to think it's a  
person's soul trying to escape.

ANTE laughs again as NAOKI smiles, rolling his eyes.

ANTE  
First there's a brief drive to the  
tundra.

MIKKEL hands a warm coat to MIKO, finding one for NAOKI.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
Try these on, the snow's falling  
much quicker than we'd hoped so  
you'll need the extra layer when  
we reach the snowmobiles.

MIKO  
Will we still see the lights?

ANTE  
I sincerely hope so, but we won't  
know until we're moving.

MIKO and NAOKI nod and make their way towards the car. ANTE  
opens the door for MIKO.

CUT TO:

EXT - EDGE OF KIRKENES - TUNDRA  
After a brief journey the car stalls at the edge of  
Kirkenes, where two snowmobiles are parked. MIKKEL parks  
the car and exits, transferring the luggage to the  
snowmobiles as the others exit. NAOKI sizes up the  
snowmobiles with apprehension.

NAOKI  
Are these safe?

ANTE  
(laughing)  
As long as you hold tight.

NAOKI raises his eyebrow as MIKO moves over to one of the  
snowmobiles fearlessly. ANTE offers her a lift up. NAOKI  
receives an awkward hand from MIKKEL, heaving himself onto  
the second snowmobile apprehensively.

ANTE and MIKKEL then hop on the front of the snowmobiles.  
They rev the engines and speed off into the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT - SNOWY PLAINS OF FINNMARK - BLIZZARD RISING

The four ride on snowmobiles through the snow. ANTE points  
out the lights in the distance to MIKO and NAOKI, who look  
at them in awe, though they're shrouded by the snow.

ANTE  
Are you okay back there?

MIKO holds onto her hat with one hand, ANTE with the other.

MIKO  
All good thanks.  
(Pause)  
Is it always this snowy?

ANTE  
(Laughing)

No, this is stronger than usual.  
Hopefully it slows down, Mikkell  
did say we were due a blizzard.

MIKO  
A blizzard?

ANTE  
Don't worry it'll be fine, we're  
used to them up here.

CUT TO:  
On the other snowmobile, MIKKEL turns back to NAOKI.

MIKKEL  
We're about halfway now.

NAOKI looks ill. MIKKEL laughs. Shot lingers on scenery.

CUT TO:  
MIKO and ANTE's snowmobile, leading the group.

ANTE  
Keep your eyes peeled for stallos.

MIKO  
What now?

ANTE  
Giants. They live in the wastes  
and eat people who get too close.

MIKO  
I'll bear that in mind.

ANTE  
They're easily tricked, in case  
you do stumble into one.

MIKO  
Wait are they real?

ANTE  
(Laughs)  
As real as anything is if you  
believe it.

The blizzard rages on faster, eventually clouding the  
scenic backdrop of Finnmark. ANTE and MIKKEL look around  
concerned. The lights then fully disappear from the sky.

EXT - LAVVO CAMPSITE - FINNMARK

ANTE arrives at the site first where two tents are visible through the snow, with a third a short distance behind them. ANTE slows the engine with MIKKEL close behind.

ANTE  
Head inside quick.

ANTE grabs a blanket from the back of the snowmobile and tosses it to MIKO. The sound of the wind consumes them.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
And keep this on.

ANTE stomps through the snow to MIKKEL who looks concerned. NAOKI jumps off the snowmobile, attempts to help, but struggles to move in the snow.

ANTE  
(in Sámi)  
It shouldn't be this bad should  
it!?

MIKKEL is hastily taking luggage off of the snowmobile.

MIKKEL  
(in Sámi)  
No. Get them inside, we can work  
it out.

ANTE nods. NAOKI, understanding the situation, heads into the tent with MIKO and ANTE.

INT - LAVVO TENT

MIKKEL sporadically enters in and out with luggage. MIKO and NAOKI are stressed out, ANTE is keeping composed.

ANTE  
Okay, this isn't exactly part of  
the plan...

NAOKI looks at him frustrated, which ANTE clocks.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
What I mean is that blizzards up  
here are totally normal. This  
one's just a bit more... pronounced  
than we'd hoped.

NAOKI  
Pronounced?

ANTE

We'd planned to arrive before this  
but it came early.

MIKO

How long will it last?

MIKKEL

(entering with a bag)

Not long, a few hours at most if  
we're lucky.

MIKKEL exits to get more belongings.

NAOKI

And what about if we're unlucky?

ANTE

A day or two, give or take.

MIKO

Full days!?

ANTE

It shouldn't come to that, don't  
worry.

(Pause)

I'll be right back.

ANTE shuffles out of the tent to help MIKKEL. NAOKI stares  
at MIKO in annoyance, MIKO stares back in alarm.

DIALOGUE IN THIS SECTION OF THE SCENE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE  
AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

NAOKI

Days?

MIKO

He said it won't come to that.

NAOKI

No, he said it might come to that.  
There's a very big difference.

MIKO

Must you always catastrophize?  
You're so pessimistic sometimes.

NAOKI

I'm being realistic.

MIKO

You're not, you're finding the worst in things.

NAOKI

Miko we're trapped in a tent in a blizzard in the middle of nowhere.

MIKO

It's dramatic though, isn't it?

NAOKI

Is it? Is it really?

MIKO

Think of all the people we can tell when it's over.

NAOKI

(Exasperated, sarcastically)

Yes, I bet Uncle Yunta will delight in hearing all about it.

(mimicking the conversation)

I remember Yunta, this one time in Norway, Miko and I got stuck in a blizzard and nearly froze to death.

MIKO

(After a pause)

It isn't ideal is it?

NAOKI

No Miko, I wouldn't say it is.

ANTE clambers back into the tent with a pile of wood. MIKO and NAOKI try to appear a little less exasperated.

END SUBTITLES

ANTE

How're you two holding up?

MIKO

Fine thanks.

NAOKI

Cold thanks.

ANTE

Great! I'll get this fire burning.

ANTE proceeds to sort out lighting a fire in the lavvo. As he does, MIKKEL enters the tent with another bag.

MIKKEL

That's everything inside. I'm afraid there's not a lot we can do for now until the snow clears.

MIKO

No lights tonight then?

MIKKEL

I doubt even the owls can see them through that I'm afraid.

MIKO looks disappointed. The sound of the blizzard can be heard roaring in the background.

ANTE

Don't worry, as exceptional tour guides we've prepared for this possibility.

ANTE pulls out a pouch full of reindeer meat and a pot which he places over the fire, tossing the meat inside.

MIKO

Oh wow, is that reindeer meat?

ANTE

It most certainly is. And...

ANTE pulls out bottles of beer from another bag to his side. NAOKI recoils slightly.

NAOKI

I don't know if I can stomach that.

ANTE

Don't worry there's water in here too.

ANTE tosses NAOKI a bottle of water, which he catches before expressing appreciation.

ANTE

We're sorry this hasn't been the start you were expecting.

ANTE pulls out a bag of Gáhkko bread, rips open one and fills it with meat. MIKO looks at him with noticeable awe.

MIKKEL

Have you ever played Sáhkku Naoki?



MIKKEL gestures to a box. He opens it to reveal a game board with wooden sculptures. NAOKI shakes his head and looks on excitedly.

MIKKEL  
Come, it's a little like draughts,  
fairly easy to explain.

MIKKEL begins setting up the board. He explains the rules to NAOKI quietly in the background. ANTE hands MIKO a stuffed Gáhkko.

ANTE  
And for you Miko.

MIKO  
(taking the food)  
Thank you.

MIKO takes a huge and unashamed bite out of the food.

MIKO (Cont'd)  
It's sort of like... really lean? A  
bit chewy. Not what I expected.

ANTE  
You like it?

MIKO  
I love it.

ANTE smiles, preparing a second for NAOKI.

ANTE  
I'm glad. You know we also make  
pancakes from reindeer blood?

MIKO  
Blood pancakes?

ANTE  
Yep, they're called Slåbbå, very  
popular as a breakfast treat. We  
tend not to make them for tourists  
though, I think they're a bit too  
adventurous for most people.

MIKO  
I'd love to try a slab of Slåbbå  
some time.

ANTE  
And that is why you're a good  
tourist Miko.

ANTE passes the reindeer meat filled bread over to NAOKI.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
And this one's for you Naoki.

NAOKI  
(taking the food)  
Thank you.

NAOKI returns concentration to the game, taking a bite and  
showing ANTE a thumbs up, who is pleased with the response.

MIKO  
(to ANTE)  
Do you have reindeer of your own?

ANTE  
No. We used to... I'd rather not  
talk about it.  
(Awkward Pause, ANTE abruptly  
changing topic)  
Our grandad does hold a position  
in the Sámi parliament nowadays  
though, so there's that.

MIKO  
Sounds like he's important. Both  
my grandfather and father made Noh  
masks, which isn't nearly as  
impressive.

ANTE  
I think there's plenty of overlap  
between mask making and politics.

NAOKI  
(Loudly)  
How did you do that!?

MIKKEL has slyly defeated NAOKI at the game.

MIKKEL  
(Tapping his head)  
Several moves ahead.

NAOKI  
No that's ridiculous, we have to  
play again.

MIKKEL

(Laughing)

Tomorrow I'll give you another  
shot at greatness, but not now.

ANTE

You should've gone easier on him  
Mikkel it's his first try.

MIKKEL

The best way to learn is through  
failure, Ante.

NAOKI

He's right, I don't need any pity.

MIKO

(Inspecting the board)

It looks like you did pretty well  
for a first game, Naoki.

NAOKI

(Feeling accomplished)

Thanks. It was a lucky roll.

MIKKEL

Perhaps.

(Pause)

Why don't we go through some  
stories, Ante? Around the fire,  
like the good old days.

ANTE

Ehhh I'm not sure...

MIKO

That'd be great Ante. Besides,  
what else is there to do?

NAOKI

Miko's got a very good point.

ANTE

Alright fine, we can go around.  
Mikkel can start.

MIKKEL

But you're so much better than I  
am.

ANTE

(Disgruntled)  
Fine, fine. What kind of story?

MIKKEL  
An uplifting one.

ANTE  
So not the one about the kepper?

NAOKI  
The kepper?

ANTE  
They're resurrected babies who  
commit parenticide on their  
parents. The best story involves a  
pair of scissors.

MIKO  
Erm, yeah, no thanks.

NAOKI  
I'd quite like to hear...

MIKO  
(Interrupting)  
Yeah no thank you moving on. What  
else do you have?

MIKKEL  
Oh Ante has hundreds of stories,  
he went to university. He's  
practically a scholar.

ANTE  
(Disgruntled)  
Okay I have one story. It's called  
"The Sun's Daughter", an old Sámi  
story from Jämtland.

MIKO  
Sounds better than the undead baby  
one already.

ANTE  
Perfect. So. Once there was a  
young Sámi man who'd been walking  
through the dense forest one dark  
and blistery night. As he weaved  
his way through the trees he  
stumbled into a clearing where a  
whole herd of moose were traipsing

through the snow. He turned, observing, to see a young woman watching over the tame moose herd, her hair ablaze, her skin glowing with a vivid light. He realised then that she was Bejjen neide..

NAOKI  
Bejjen who?

MIKKEL  
Bejjen neide. It means she's the daughter of the sun.

MIKO  
Like Amaterasu!

ANTE  
Sure, why not? Right, Bejjen neide, the daughter of the sun. He approached her slowly, and managed to kidnap her, forcing the moose herd to follow along with them.

(Pause)  
But Bejjen neide wasn't phased, she is the daughter of the sun after all. So she followed him willingly to his tent, a tent not unlike ours, though slightly larger; he had a kitchen and a few other rooms.

NAOKI  
Why don't we have a kitchen?

MIKKEL  
We don't exactly prepare to stay for extended periods.

NAOKI  
A fair point.

ANTE  
As they entered the tent, Bejjen neide spoke to the man. In a dominant voice she told him he was lucky to have found her, and that, should he keep her and her moose herd for three nights, everything would be his.

MIKO

Everything?

ANTE

Everything. But to receive the reward he'd have to keep the smoke hole covered, and the kitchen's back entrance covered too.

(Pause)

So, the man hastily covered both openings and Bejjen Neide sat down within the tent, the moose staying with her, though obviously outside - the tent wasn't that big. The Sámi man slept soundly the first night, then less soundly the second. But, when it came to the third day, the troubles of covering the smoke hole began to take hold.

NAOKI

Surely he'd have suffocated?

ANTE

Entirely possible. This is why he started to wonder - would it really matter so much if he removed the cover? The tent was so smoky, surely flipping the lid off the hole later in the evening wouldn't matter? So, he made his decision, clambered up and tugged the cover off of the smoke hole.

(Pause)

The second he did so the sky and the stars blared through the opening and Bejjen neide looked up in gratification. "Now I see my mother's and father's eyes", she said, her eyes meeting with the moon, the stars, the hidden sun. Before the Sámi man could do anything Bejjen neide disappeared into the air through the smoke hole, into the great expanse of the skies.

(Pause)

The man tried desperately to grab her, stretching his arms, trying to pull her down, but her ethereal being had already gone. He ran outside, bursting open the tent

door, to find the tame moose herd gone, only their hoof prints in the snow remaining. Had he kept her there just one more night, in that enclosed tent, he would have had the world in his palm; none who knew him would suffer.

(Pause)

Many weeks later, the Sámi man stumbled through the snow towards the woods, and out the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of flaming hair, of glowing flesh. Bejjen neide looked at the Sámi man and smiled, their worlds farther apart than the man could ever have fathomed. She waved at him, the moose herd grunting their moose noises, and he smiled; for all that he had, and all that he lost.

(Pause)

And that's the end.

MIKO, NAOKI and MIKKEL clap loudly.

NAOKI

To be fair that was pretty good.

MIKO

It was fantastic!

ANTE

(Embarrassed)

Come on, it's not all that.

NAOKI

Did you write it yourself?

ANTE

No I merely... I embezzled it. It's an old Sámi story, one of many.

MIKO

What happened to Bejjen neide?

MIKKEL

Nobody knows.

ANTE

I like to think whatever happened to her is whatever she wanted to

happen. She's the daughter of the sun after all.

NAOKI

He was foolish to remove the cover. Clearly part of the message is to suffer for long enough to reap the rewards.

MIKO

Maybe. Or that it's wrong for someone to try and contain someone when their destiny lies elsewhere.

MIKKEL

There's a lot to think about in those old stories. How do they say it? They've survived the lone and level snows of time for a reason.

MIKO

I'm almost grateful for the blizzard now!

ANTE

It's my pleasure, really.  
(Pause. Locks eyes with MIKO)  
I guess the two of us had better get out of your hair now.

ANTE clears up the stove and cooking items.

MIKKEL

He's right, best to get lots of rest and we can go hiking beneath the lights tomorrow.

MIKKEL pats NAOKI on the back. ANTE shuffles to the exit.

ANTE

Well, goodnight then both of you.  
(He looks at MIKO)

MIKO

Goodnight Ante.

MIKO smiles, which ANTE returns before he backs out of the tent, MIKKEL waving as he follows.

MIKO

See it isn't so bad, they made the best of it.



NAOKI

They did, maybe I overreacted earlier. I just hope everything sorts itself out tomorrow.

MIKO

I think it will. And if it doesn't, we can keep trying to make the best of it, okay?

NAOKI

I'll see what I can do.

MIKO

Well let's hope it doesn't come to that then.

NAOKI

(laughing)

It's weird; you're always the one wanting things to be perfect. But now they aren't you're coping better than I am.

MIKO

I don't always.

NAOKI

No, but. You know what I mean. You plan stuff.

MIKO

(Playfully but purposefully)

Only because you don't.

NAOKI

Guilty as charged.

(Pause)

Not always though.

MIKO

No, I guess you're right.

NAOKI moves over to MIKO and rubs her arm affectionately.

NAOKI

We'll see the lights tomorrow.

MIKO looks into NAOKI'S eyes, both choosing to believe it.

CUT TO:

INT- ANTE and MIKKEL's LAVVO

ANTE is pacing up and down, clearly agitated and uneasy.

DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN Sámi AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

ANTE (in Sámi)  
I need to tell you something.

MIKKEL looks at him in amusement.

MIKKEL  
I already know what you're going to say.

ANTE  
(disbelief)  
No you don't. You have no idea what I'm going to say.

MIKKEL sits down on the floor, smirks and folds his arms.

MIKKEL  
Go on then. Enlighten me.

ANTE  
Well. Okay. So. Here's the thing.  
I...

MIKKEL looks at him bemused.

MIKKEL  
I...

ANTE  
I think I'm in love with Miko.

MIKKEL  
Yeah, I already knew that.

ANTE looks incredulously at MIKKEL.

ANTE  
How can you possibly know that?

MIKKEL  
Oh come on, it's obvious. You're my brother. I know everything about you. How you take your coffee. The smell of your sweat when you're stressed. Bit like a

fox's musk, sorry. And I know when you are falling in love with someone.

ANTE

Do you think they know?

MIKKEL

Perhaps they suspect something.  
But I wouldn't worry.

ANTE

You wouldn't worry!? They're married!

MIKKEL

Yes, that's true. Which is why you need to calm down.

ANTE

Calm down? You're so frustrating sometimes.

MIKKEL

It has been said.

ANTE puts his head in his hands. The fabric of the tent is ricocheted around by the wind.

ANTE

(Frustrated outburst)

She's just... argh!

(Pause)

She's in my head, all this time. I feel like I could throw up. Is this what love does to people?

MIKKEL

From what I've heard.

ANTE

What am I going to do?

MIKKEL

What you're going to do is remain professional. We can't have you running off with our customers, let alone married ones. We'll get a bad reputation.

ANTE

But, Mikkell. It's...

MIKKEL  
I'm serious Ante. I'm going to  
bed.

MIKKEL continues getting ready for bed. ANTE sits, deep in  
his thoughts and looks towards MIKO's tent.

END SUBTITLES

CUT TO:

EXT - LAVVO CAMPSITE - BLIZZARD RAGING

The blizzard continues rampaging through the night.

CUT TO:

INT- ANTE and MIKKEL'S TENT- EARLY MORNING

ANTE wakes up. He goes outside to find the blizzard still  
strong, worse than before. He sighs, returning to his tent.

CUT TO:

INT- MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT- A FEW MOMENTS LATER

MIKO and NAOKI are sleeping facing away from each other.  
MIKO has her eyes open as ANTE enters their tent.

ANTE  
Miko? Naoki? Are you awake?

NAOKI stirs, waking slowly as MIKO turns to ANTE.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
I have bad news. The blizzard is  
still here. I think it's going to  
be another day or so.

NAOKI  
Which means we still can't see the  
lights?

ANTE  
Unfortunately not. I'm sorry.

NAOKI  
(in Japanese to MIKO)  
This is a disaster.

ANTE senses MIKO and NAOKI need some time alone.

ANTE

I'm just going to get some more wood for the fire. I'm sorry again, really.

MIKO  
It's okay Ante. You can't control the weather.

ANTE locks eyes with MIKO and smiles. ANTE leaves. MIKO and NAOKI lie in silence, penned in by the sound of the wind.

DIALOGUE IN THIS SECTION OF THE SCENE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

NAOKI  
This is such a waste of time.

MIKO  
We need to try and make the best of it.

NAOKI  
What if I don't want to?

MIKO  
Well, I'd say you are being stubborn and childish.

NAOKI  
We're thousands of miles away from home. In a tent. For what reason?

MIKO  
I thought... never mind.

NAOKI  
That's the problem Miko. You're always trying to fix things.

MIKO catches herself and looks really upset.

MIKO  
At least I'm trying.

NAOKI feels guilty. He reaches to MIKO to stroke her arm.

NAOKI  
It's just... how is this any different to being stuck in our flat staring at the walls? We could be anywhere.

MIKO

But we're not, we're both here  
waiting for something to happen.  
For the snow to clear.

NAOKI

It's not how I pictured it.

(Pause)

I'm sorry Miko. Let's try and have  
a bit of space today. This tent  
feels...

MIKO

Claustrophobic.

NAOKI

Yeah.

(Pause. Then, determined)

I'll go beat Mikkell at that game.

MIKO rolls her eyes, gets out of bed. NAOKI exits the tent.

END SUBTITLES

CUT TO:

INT- ANTE AND MIKKEL'S TENT

NAOKI enters with a determined look. ANTE and MIKKEL look  
at him as if he has some grievance, potentially with ANTE.

NAOKI

We need to talk.

ANTE

What, me?

ANTE and MIKKEL both look terrified that he'll kick off.

NAOKI

No, no. Mikkell we have unfinished  
business. I want a rematch.

ANTE and MIKKEL breathe a sly sigh of relief. NAOKI goes to  
sit down where the game is, resetting the pieces.

NAOKI

I'm ready whenever you are.

MIKKEL's eyes flash, excited with the challenge. MIKKEL  
rubs his hands together and goes to sit next to NAOKI.

MIKKEL

I went easy on you yesterday.

MIKKEL looks at the board and moves his first piece.

ANTE

Perhaps I should go and keep Miko company? As she's on her own.

NAOKI doesn't look up, concentrating on his move.

NAOKI

Yeah, she might like that.

MIKKEL looks up at ANTE with menace.

MIKKEL

Maybe we should give her some space Ante? Perhaps she wants to be alone.

ANTE

What kind of a tour guide would I be if I didn't at least ask?

MIKKEL looks at ANTE with daggers.

NAOKI

(to MIKKEL)

Mikkel, it's your turn.

MIKKEL

Ah, it is.

ANTE leaves. MIKKEL watches him go, inwardly sighs. MIKKEL makes a devastating move to NAOKI who reacts with disdain.

CUT TO:

INT- MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT- A FEW MOMENTS LATER

ANTE enters the tent and MIKO turns around. She looks deep in thought, slightly distressed. ANTE realises this.

ANTE

Sorry to disturb.

(Pause)

Do you want me to go?

MIKO

No. Stay, it's okay.

ANTE sits down and warms himself by the fire. MIKO walks around and sits down near him as the blizzard roars.

CUT TO:

INT- ANTE AND MIKKEL'S TENT- TWO HOURS LATER

MIKKEL and NAOKI have played several games of Sáhkku. NAOKI has lost every time.

MIKKEL

It's not your day my friend.

NAOKI

I don't understand how I can lose every single time.

MIKKEL

Discipline. You need more of that.

NAOKI

I'll show you discipline.

NAOKI searches through some of the luggage, returning quickly with a small bag of his sculpting equipment. NAOKI pulls out a ball of moist clay and gestures to MIKKEL.

NAOKI moulds and carves out tiny Sámi figures with total concentration as MIKKEL watches him in wonder.

MIKKEL

These are incredible.

NAOKI starts to teach MIKKEL how to mould and make figures.

CUT TO:

INT- MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT- SAME PERIOD OF TIME

MIKO and ANTE are watching the flickering fire and drinking mugs of coffee warmed up by the stove. The wind screeches in the background.

MIKO

I actually feel quite peaceful.  
Storm aside.

ANTE

This is where I do all my  
thinking. On the tundra.

MIKO

I don't really have a place to  
think in Tokyo. Not in the same  
way; it's too loud, even in the  
parks. But it's so open here.



ANTE

They say you can't hide any secrets here.

MIKO

What about burying them in the snow?

ANTE

(chuckling)

The reindeer will still manage to find them.

MIKO

I wouldn't want a reindeer running off with all my secrets.

(pause)

You mentioned yesterday about...

ANTE

Yeah. Reindeers are a tricky topic for me. It's complicated, but... To the outside world, people always picture us with reindeer. As if they're the only thing that the Sámi people care about.

(pause)

Yes, they've been important in our history for hundreds of years. They're... part of us.

(pause)

But the reindeer aren't all there is.

MIKO

(Thinking)

It's like people coming to Tokyo and thinking all we do is eat sushi and watch anime.

ANTE

Right. Obviously they're important, but...

(Pause)

When people come here calling it *Lapland* and spend all their time riding in a sleigh. It frustrates me sometimes. It's all such... it's surface bullshit. There's no depth to it. It's not real.

(Pause)

There's just so much more. This  
kind of connection with nature.  
And obviously Mikkel.

(Pause)

It will always be home to me.

(Brief Pause)

I guess home is a confusing thing.

MIKO thinks for a few moments, unmoored by the concept.

MIKO

I guess I've never known any  
different. I've always accepted it  
for what it is.

ANTE

I think that's fairly normal.  
There are people who never really  
escape, even for a moment.

MIKO

Some people might not want to.

ANTE

True. I'd call that a  
psychological condition.

MIKO

(laughing)

You can't say that.

ANTE

I know, sorry.

(pause)

I'd like to see more, I think. Go  
elsewhere, live a little.

MIKO

Maybe you can come to Japan with  
me sometime.

ANTE

I'd like that very much.

There's a brief silence of unspoken lust between the two of  
them, which MIKO averts.

MIKO

Someday.

(Pause)

There's always something dragging  
me back. Back home, that is.

ANTE

(After a long pause)

There's a couple of noaidi left here in Finnmark. They're like shamans... healers, who communicate between our world and the spirit world. Could you hold out your arm?

MIKO curiously passes her arm over to ANTE, who rolls her sleeve up and begins to trace her veins. MIKO looks deeply at ANTE as he focuses, a noticeable attraction and tension between them.

ANTE (Cont'd)

One of them told me once that, since our blood pumps outwardly through all the capillaries, that it's in our nature to always travel away from something.

(pause)

That we're all running away from our hearts, and that it's this act which keeps us going.

(ANTE drops MIKO's arm)

It's always stuck with me. As if... instead of there being a boulder you're pushing uphill, it's chasing you back down the mountain.

MIKO

(pause)

And that's what home is?

ANTE

(laughing)

Perhaps.

(pause)

We can feel a sense of duty to things or places.

MIKO

And people.

ANTE and MIKO pause and look at each other. The fire flickers around the walls of the tent, exaggerating the shadows. There's an unspoken longing between the two of them that neither feel brave enough to acknowledge.

Suddenly, MIKKEL bursts into the tent holding a figurine.

MIKKEL  
Not interrupting anything am I?

ANTE and MIKO both jump defensively.

ANTE  
No, not at all!

MIKKEL  
Look at this figurine that Naoki  
helped me make!

MIKKEL holds the small figurine up, impressed with it. ANTE looks on, pretending to be impressive, as MIKO tries not to show her previous affection.

CUT TO:

INT- MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT- LATE AT NIGHT

MIKO and NAOKI are getting ready for bed. There seems to be a lot on MIKO's mind but she isn't saying anything. NAOKI is absentmindedly going about his business. The sound of the blizzard is louder than before, screeching through the holes in the tent door.

DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE AND SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH

NAOKI  
I can't believe I didn't win once.  
Mikkel must've rigged it.

MIKO  
Mmm.

NAOKI  
I almost got him in one match, but  
he clawed his way back.

MIKO  
Yeah.

NAOKI finally realises something is wrong.

NAOKI  
Is something the matter?

MIKO  
No. Yes. Maybe.  
(Pause)

I was thinking we need to talk  
about earlier.

NAOKI  
What's there to talk about?

MIKO  
We didn't really solve anything.  
(Pause)  
I don't know how much longer we  
can leave things.

NAOKI  
Let's talk in the morning.

MIKO thinks for a few moments.

MIKO  
Why don't we...

NAOKI  
We...?

MIKO  
(insinuating)  
You know...

NAOKI  
What now? Really? It's freezing.

MIKO  
Oh come on.

NAOKI  
(Thinks)  
I'm tired Miko.

MIKO takes off her pyjamas and tries to entice NAOKI. NAOKI  
is clearly resistant to MIKO'S advances and shrugs her off.

MIKO  
We're in a tent, all alone,  
there's snow falling.

NAOKI  
Miko, cut it out.

MIKO  
What?

NAOKI

I'm not in the mood. Please Miko.  
I'm sorry.

MIKO stops trying to get NAOKI to have sex with her. She slowly puts on her pyjamas, feeling a bit humiliated.

MIKO  
You're never in the mood.

NAOKI  
That's not strictly...

MIKO  
I can't remember the last time  
you... It makes me feel like you're  
not attracted to me.

NAOKI  
I am.  
(changes tone)  
I am.

MIKO  
Sometimes when you're asleep and I  
touch your arm. I swear you  
flinch.

MIKO turns around in bed and angrily stares at the walls of the tent. NAOKI tries to comfort her.

NAOKI  
Miko, please. Just not tonight,  
that's all.  
(Pause)  
I'm sorry.

MIKO won't respond. NAOKI realises this then turns away, closing his eyes. A moment later MIKO does the same.

INT - LAVVO TENT - MORNING OF THE THIRD DAY

The blizzard roars louder than ever before. After waking, NAOKI goes to the entrance and pokes his head outside.

NAOKI'S PERSPECTIVE

The blizzard is still raging, the fabric of the tent threatening to cave in, the sound enveloping everything. NAOKI shuffles back in.

NAOKI  
For fucks sake!

MIKO  
(waking up, sleepily)  
What?

NAOKI  
The blizzard, it's still going.

MIKO stumbles over to check also, looking dismayed.

NAOKI  
Another day in paradise then.

MIKO  
(Sombrely)  
Naoki?

NAOKI  
Yes?

MIKO  
About last night...

NAOKI  
I know, I'm sorry okay, really I  
am. It's just... the situation...

MIKO  
It isn't just that Naoki.

NAOKI  
What do you mean?

MIKO  
What do you think I mean? Look at  
us.

NAOKI  
What's there to...

MIKO  
(Interrupting)  
No. I mean look at us.  
(Pause)  
We can't just leave it Naoki. I'm  
fed up with not addressing our  
issues.

NAOKI  
Okay. Fine. I get it, that's fair  
enough. What's wrong?

MIKO

It's not... it isn't right, Naoki.  
The way we are.

NAOKI

What's wrong with it?

MIKO

There's just something missing  
Naoki. Can't you see that?

NAOKI

Alright.

(Pause)

You really want to talk about it?

MIKO nods solemnly. NAOKI thinks about his words carefully  
as the wind howls and moans.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

I just think. Sometimes I find...  
your eternal searching for  
something else is exhausting.

(Pause)

Look where we are Miko. This was  
your idea and now we're stuck in a  
raging blizzard...

MIKO

(Offended, interrupting)

Because I'm trying to make things  
better!

NAOKI

And I'm not?

MIKO

That's not what I said. I said...

NAOKI

(Raising voice)

How would this have ever seriously  
made things better?

(Pause)

Have you ever considered that  
sometimes you are the problem?

MIKO

(Angered, also raising voice)

Excuse me?

NAOKI



You'll never be satisfied with anything, Miko. You'll never feel whole because you're just looking, all the time, looking for...

MIKO  
How dare you.

NAOKI  
What? Is this solving things?  
Hearing the truth?

MIKO  
You want the truth?

NAOKI  
Please, I'd really love to hear it.

MIKO  
(composing herself)  
You're in a job you hate,  
pretending to be a person you  
actually despise, a person you're  
not really like at all. But you're  
too scared to do anything about  
it. And it drags me down with you.

NAOKI  
Pretending? What do you mean by  
that?

MIKO  
You know exactly what I mean.

NAOKI looks at MIKO, hurt radiating from his face. MIKO turns away from him and stares at the walls which are buffeted by the ongoing blizzard.

NAOKI  
No Miko I don't think I do, please  
enlighten me!

MIKO  
Just shut up Naoki! This isn't  
helping at...

NAOKI  
(interrupting)  
Me shut up!? You wanted the truth.  
In a tent in a fucking wasteland

you wanted the truth and now  
you're backing out of it like...

MIKO

I'm not the one who backs out of  
things you, you pathetic man!

NAOKI recoils.

MIKO (Cont'd)

I'm always the one, always doing  
everything and for what? For you  
to whine and moan and tell me how  
everything's so very bad and a  
mess like I don't already know.

NAOKI

There's an emptiness inside you  
Miko.

MIKO

You take that back.

NAOKI

No, it's true. You'll hide it with  
anything you can get your hands on  
and you know what happens?

(Slight pause)

You get bored, you realise it  
wasn't what you thought it was and  
it snaps and it breaks and that  
perfect little shell you built is  
gone and there's only the  
emptiness left...

MIKO

Stop it Naoki you evil... you...

NAOKI

And it keeps going and going  
further inside you because you're  
never going to realise what it is  
you truly want...

MIKO

I wanted you! The way I thought you  
were!

NAOKI

Did you!? Did you really!? Did I!?  
Have you asked yourself that  
question at all in like ten yea...

MIKO  
I hate you Naoki!

NAOKI  
Oh so now its hate is it? Very  
brave!  
(Pause)  
There's just nothing there anymore  
Miko, between either of us.  
(Pause)  
You think I haven't seen the way  
you look at Ante?

MIKO  
What're you talking about!?

NAOKI  
You know what I'm talking about,  
right in front of me! And I'm the  
one who doesn't care, who doesn't  
try!?

MIKO  
(through tears)  
I don't know why we're still doing  
this.

NAOKI  
(Also beginning to cry)  
And you know what? Neither do I  
Miko! You don't want this, I  
don't...

MIKO  
Go on, say it.

NAOKI  
Miko...

MIKO  
I don't want this! There, now you  
say it! Go on!

NAOKI  
Miko just stop being so...

MIKO  
Say it you coward!

NAOKI

I've never wanted this, okay!? Not the way you're making it, the way you've twisted it. I'm just trying to...

MIKO

Trying to what!? There's nothing to try to do, it's gone Naoki, it's all...

NAOKI

And who's fault is that!? Who's f...

MIKO, in tears, storms out of the tent.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

Miko! Don't! Oh god Miko!

CUT TO:

EXT - TUNDRA IN BLIZZARD

MIKO is running through the snow in her pyjamas. NAOKI rushes out the tent after her.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

Miko! Miko!

MIKKEL and ANTE emerge from their tent. Seeing NAOKI running through the snow they sprint towards him.

MIKKEL

Naoki what's...

NAOKI

Miko! She's...

NAOKI falls over in the snow, twisting his ankle.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

Miko!

MIKO is now no longer visible. MIKKEL rushes to NAOKI and helps him up, carrying him using his shoulder.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

Miko! Get Miko, please!

MIKKEL nods to ANTE who starts running through the snow after MIKO. MIKKEL helps carry NAOKI back to the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT - FINNMARK WILDERNESS - BLIZZARD

MIKO is running aimlessly through the snow, crying.

ANTE  
(Faintly in the distance)  
Miko! Miko!

MIKO continues to run until she can't any longer, collapsing to her knees. She bundles up into a ball, sobbing. After some time, ANTE can be seen in the distance. He rushes towards MIKO and brushes her hair from her face, trying to see what condition she's in.

ANTE  
Miko...

ANTE wraps MIKO in his coat, then lifts her up and begins traipsing back to the tents as quickly as he can manage.

CUT TO:

INT - LAVVO TENT - FINNMARK

Inside MIKO and NAOKI'S tent, MIKKEL has dragged NAOKI inside. NAOKI is shaking with emotion and cold.

MIKKEL  
What happened!?

NAOKI  
We... we had a fight and... Miko she...

MIKKEL  
A fight? Naoki... Don't worry, Ante will catch up to her, she'll be okay.

NAOKI  
I should've caught up to her. I should've... I shouldn't have...

MIKKEL  
It's okay Naoki you didn't...

NAOKI  
I couldn't even help her! She needed me and I couldn't even...

NAOKI begins crying again, MIKKEL tries to console him.

NAOKI (Cont'd)  
Miko... Is she?

MIKKEL

She'll be okay Naoki, I promise.  
Ante is the fastest person in the  
snow I've ever seen.

NAOKI

It's just... I think it's done,  
Mikkel. I think I ruined...

MIKKEL

Ruined what?

NAOKI

All of it. All of it. It's all...  
(pause)  
Have you ever... it's like your life  
is just falling away from you,  
drifting away and everything you  
thought you had is just this wreck  
of a...

MIKKEL

Hey, come on. Of course, I know  
it's...

(Pause. He comforts NAOKI)

The way I see it, Naoki... It's real  
hard. Life, love. No matter where  
you are, who you're with.  
Sometimes it's the hardest thing  
there is.

(pause)

It's always worth it, I know that.  
But the shape of it differs,  
person to person. You can care and  
love someone in so many different  
ways...

NAOKI

I don't know if I've ever... if I've  
ever loved anyone in my way...

(Pause)

Where is Miko, is she okay?

MIKKEL

I can check for you but stay by  
the fire, your body is recovering.

MIKKEL steps toward the lavvo door.

CUT TO:

EXT - FINNMARK BLIZZARD NEAR CAMPSITE

ANTE is carrying MIKO towards the tents. MIKKEL quickly rushes up to them both.

MIKKEL

Get her inside, she needs warmth.

ANTE nods, carrying MIKO into the smaller tent. MIKKEL returns to NAOKI. ANTE stokes the fire and places MIKO as close to the fire. She looks up at him.

MIKO

Ante... thank you I...

ANTE

Thank me later, don't waste your energy. Get close to the fire.

ANTE considers the implications, then lies down close to MIKO to share his body warmth with her.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S LAVVO TENT

MIKKEL returns to NAOKI, who jumps up.

NAOKI

Is she?

MIKKEL

She'll be alright Naoki.

(NAOKI looks relieved)

You can maybe go see her soon, but not yet, she needs to recover. We don't want either of you to catch hypothermia.

NAOKI

No.

(Pause)

Mikkel, about...

MIKKEL

What you said?

NAOKI

Yeah...

MIKKEL

You see a lot of people come and go as a tour guide, Naoki. People with different problems, at different points in their lives.

(Pause)

I've seen so many people swallowed whole by their own inactivity.

(Pause)

We all have a path, deep within us, that's ours alone to tread. Denying that path is... it is directionless, Naoki. It leads only to ruin.

NAOKI stares at MIKKEL knowingly in his despair.

CUT TO:

INT - ANTE AND MIKKEL'S TENT

MIKO appears to have warmed up, moving in ANTE'S arms.

ANTE

Good, movement is good. Keep stretching your fingers if you can, get the blood flowing.

(Pause)

I can't believe you ran out into a blizzard in your pyjamas.

MIKO

(Smiling)

I didn't exactly plan it...

ANTE

No, I would hope not.

MIKO

It's such a mess, Ante...

(Pause)

I care for Naoki, more than anyone I've ever met. I know that. But, in knowing that...

(Pause)

I know that something isn't right.

ANTE

With him?

MIKO

No, well, maybe. But with us. He's still the same man I met but then so many ways he's not. And I'm not the same person either.

(Pause)

Is that wrong?



ANTE

Wrong in what sense?

MIKO

To just submit to that? Let that be the end of it? I just feel as if... as if half my life has glided by me and I've been sleepwalking through it.

(Pause)

It's like I've never been where I should be. And it's not Naoki's fault or mine I just couldn't... I didn't see it until now.

MIKO rests her head down exhaustedly. ANTE shuffles over to put more firewood onto the fire to keep her warm.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT

NAOKI

It just doesn't make sense to me that there's this one path, this one way.

(Pause)

Inside of me I'm... I'm endless, you know. Does that sound arrogant?

MIKKEL

(smiling)

A little, when you put it like that. But I see what you're saying.

NAOKI

Right? But then how can there be so much of me with no single piece that's truly...

MIKKEL

Do you know who you are?

NAOKI

Of course I don't, nobody does. Anyone who says they do is lying to themselves.

(Pause)

I can never hope to latch onto enough of me to call it... well, to call it me. I never have...

MIKKEL

Perhaps that's part of the problem, Naoki. You've never worked on yourself.

NAOKI

What's there to work on?

(Pause)

Maybe I... I just feel like I see things differently, you know?

MIKKEL

I think the hardest part of living collectively is how we shape ourselves.

(Pause)

You have to ask yourself who you really are, Naoki. And when you know, as much as anyone can, you have to ask whether that person is entwined with Miko?

NAOKI

In some ways, always. But in other ways...

CUT TO:

INT - ANTE AND MIKKEL'S TENT

MIKO appears slightly more animate.

ANTE

There are sacrifices to every relationship I guess.

MIKO

So then is it wrong of me to not want to sacrifice all that I am?

(Pause)

There's so much left undone, and I know he feels the same way. Like we've never had the chance to live for... for ourselves.

ANTE

(thinking)

I think you definitely need to talk about that. But if you're both not feeling seen, then something needs to be done.

MIKO

Maybe you're right.  
(laughing a little)  
It's so awful. Like I planned for  
us to come here to fix things, and  
here I am tearing it apart.

ANTE  
You can't attack yourself like  
that, it isn't one person's doing.

MIKO  
No. It's hard not to see it like  
that, though.

MIKO rests her head down again, shaking her hands.

MIKO (Cont'd)  
But I don't think this would've  
happened anywhere else, you know?

ANTE  
It's a mystical place, out here.  
I've seen it do strange things to  
people.  
(Pause)  
The lights have an aura, even if  
we haven't seen them.

MIKO  
I'm not convinced that's the  
reason, though.

MIKO looks up into ANTE'S eyes, who returns the look. The  
fire crackles between them, lighting amidst their eyes.  
They linger on this until ANTE finally speaks.

ANTE  
I may have... It isn't the time... I  
think, maybe...  
(pause, blurting out)  
I've been falling in love with  
you.

MIKO  
(blushing slightly)  
I'd be lying if I said I didn't  
feel something of the same.

ANTE  
(relieved but newly confused)  
That's... so what do we do?

Suddenly, MIKO moves her head up towards ANTE and kisses him on the mouth. ANTE'S eyes widen in shock, settling to return the kiss passionately.

ANTE realises that MIKO needs to keep warm, which then makes him feel bad - MIKO almost simultaneously begins to retract, realising she has yet to talk to NAOKI.

ANTE (Cont'd)  
(spluttering a little)  
Miko that's...

MIKO  
Yeah.

MIKO and ANTE spend a few moments contemplating. ANTE is still holding MIKO to keep her body warmed up.

MIKO  
(embarrassed)  
I'm sorry. That wasn't fair.  
(Pause)  
I had to check that it was right.  
That I'm making the right  
decision...

ANTE  
And are you?

MIKO looks up at ANTE'S eyes once again.

MIKO  
I think so.  
(Pause)  
But I have to talk to Naoki.

ANTE nods. MIKKEL enters as MIKO is getting up to go and see NAOKI. She thanks MIKKEL with a hug as she exits. MIKKEL moves towards ANTE, patting him on the shoulder.

MIKKEL  
You did good.

ANTE  
Thank you. You too.

MIKKEL nods, hugging his brother, who returns the gesture.

CUT TO:

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S TENT

DIALOGUE IN THIS SCENE IS SPOKEN IN JAPANESE AND SUBTITLED  
IN ENGLISH

MIKO enters the tent slowly, looking at NAOKI. NAOKI looks  
relieved. She moves over to him and hugs him, crying.

MIKO  
I'm sorry Naoki, I shouldn't have...

NAOKI  
Hey, no. I'm sorry.

NAOKI returns the hug. Then, MIKO sits down beside him.

MIKO  
I was wrong to get so aggressive  
earlier.

NAOKI  
So was I.

MIKO  
I don't hate you.

NAOKI  
And I've never not wanted you. You  
know?

MIKO  
(MIKO nods. Pause)  
I think coming here was the right  
thing to do. My mind feels...  
clearer.

NAOKI  
I agree, I'm sorry I've not been  
particularly helpful.  
(Pause)  
I think I've been working through  
a lot lately. Or avoiding working  
through a lot...

MIKO  
It's okay, I have too.  
(Pause)  
I've been thinking about what we  
should do.  
(Pause)  
It's hard but I think... maybe we  
should be...

NAOKI

Apart, for a while?

MIKO

(slightly relieved)

Yeah. But not forever. Well,  
maybe. But not like forever apart  
you know, just forever...

NAOKI

You're being confusing again.

MIKO

(smiles)

I mean I don't want you out of my  
life, Naoki, not completely. I  
just don't think what we have now  
is working, for either of us.

NAOKI

You're right.

(he swallows audibly)

I think it would be better if I go  
back to Tokyo alone.

MIKO nods, sombrely.

NAOKI (Cont'd)

But you should stay here.

MIKO

Oh god Naoki I can't...

NAOKI

You can, Miko. You can do anything  
that you want to do, I promise  
you.

MIKO

But I don't...

NAOKI

I've seen the way you are here. I  
haven't seen you so... so alive in  
so long.

MIKO

Yeah...

NAOKI

Please, Miko.

MIKO

I should stay.

NAOKI  
You should.

MIKO and NAOKI accept the truth for a moment in silence.

MIKO  
But it's not... it's not just him,  
or just one thing or another or...  
It's... I'm doing this for me. For  
us.

(Pause)  
We can still keep in touch, it's  
just...

NAOKI  
Of course we can.

NAOKI walks over to MIKO and hugs her, defeated. MIKO  
returns the hold. The two hug each other close for a long  
time, a weight off of their shoulders.

END SUBTITLES

MIKKEL  
(From outside of the tent)  
Miko! Naoki! Come see this!

MIKO and NAOKI raise their heads, then both exit. As they  
do so, the sound of a Sámi yoik begins.

CUT TO:

EXT - LAVVO CAMPSITE - FINNMARK TUNDRA

MIKO and NAOKI realise the blizzard has stopped. The full  
majesty of the Northern Lights are on display, glistening  
over their heads. Both raise their heads in awe.

ANTE  
It's the brightest I've ever seen  
them...

The four of them stand in a line, looking up at the  
unbelievable sight. NAOKI smiles at MIKKEL, who beams back.  
MIKO looks at ANTE, who returns her gaze, full of purpose.  
They all gaze up a final time at the unforgettable wonder.

FADE OUT, CUT TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT - KIRKENES AIRPORT

NAOKI shakes hands with ANTE, hugs MIKKEL, then hugs MIKO who kisses him affectionately on the cheek. He turns and walks away from the three of them who wave him off. MIKO looks scared and somewhat broken, but is holding it together as best she can. NAOKI also looks scared, but determined as he walks away from the group.

INT - FINNMARK BAR

MIKO and ANTE are dating in the Sámi bar. The date is going well, with MIKO laughing at ANTE.

EXT - COSMETICS ADVERTISEMENT - A DENSELY POPULATED JAPANESE CITY

A new commercial plays for Miko's old skincare company, showing a war between a swarm of baku and models.

INT - MIKO AND NAOKI'S FLAT

NAOKI is seen typing an email to MIKO, which appears in voiceover in the ensuing scenes.

INT - NAOKI'S BANK

VOICEOVER (NAOKI)

Dear Miko. So, I finally did it...  
I finally handed in my notice at  
the bank. Tanaka-san was... let's say not  
best pleased.

NAOKI hands in his notice at the bank, to the dismay of the manager. He passes a bad meeting and HIROTO on his way out, who he makes a phone gesture towards with his hand.

INT - MIKKEL AND ANTE'S GRANDFATHER'S HOME

MIKO has dinner with MIKKEL, ANTE, JARRE and ANTE'S family. MIKO is served two Slåbbå by ANTE, which she receives gratefully.

EXT - OUTSIDE A SMALL STUDIO IN TOKYO

VOICEOVER (NAOKI, Cont'd)

And I've picked up the keys to my  
own studio. The estate agent gave  
me a very good price after I said  
I'd make them a miniature of her  
and her family.



NAOKI is passed keys to a studio space by an ESTATE AGENT who appears very pleased at the transaction.

INT - NAOKI'S NEW STUDIO - LATER

NAOKI is sitting at his old work desk in his new studio, surrounded by sculptures.

VOICEOVER (NAOKI, Cont'd)  
I'm actually working on something  
for the three of you.

He puts the finishing touches to a small female figure of MIKO, which he admires affectionately.

VOICEOVER (NAOKI, Cont'd)  
I just can't get Mikkel's nose quite  
right yet.

He places this small figure within a small diorama of Finnmark, alongside figures of ANTE and MIKKEL which has a strange-looking nose.

VOICEOVER (NAOKI, Cont'd)  
I've been seeing a lot more of  
Hiroto lately. It's... going well.  
We'll see how it goes. Either way,  
he's much tidier than you.

A knock at the door. NAOKI is broken from his loving look and answers. HIROTO is in the doorway. HIROTO then kisses NAOKI, who first appears surprised, then returns the kiss. They separate, NAOKI looking overwhelmed but very pleased, HIROTO slightly embarrassed. NAOKI offers that he come in.

EXT - LAVVO TENT CAMPSITE - FINNMARK

VOICEOVER (NAOKI, Cont'd)  
I think of you often, Miko. I hope  
you've gotten used to the cold.  
All my love, Naoki.

MIKO and ANTE are finishing erecting a single lavvo tent at the same campsite. As ANTE puts the finishing touches, MIKO is reading through NAOKI's email on her phone, smiling lovingly.

ANTE walks over to her to signal the tent is done, brushing sweat from his brow. The two hold hands admiring the lavvo beneath the Northern Lights, which continue vividly glowing. Beneath the lights, they kiss passionately. Then, MIKO and ANTE make their way towards the lavvo tent.

CAMERA PANS UP TOWARDS LIGHTS

The shot lingers on the Northern Lights for a moment.

FADE TO BLACK

END OF MONTAGE

ROLL CREDITS

END OF FEATURE

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