

Japan Earthquake Charity Literature

Maki Kashimada

*The Interview*

Translated by Jocelyne Allen

WasedaBungaku 2012

Hollywood actress Patricia Tisseron was staying at a certain famous hotel in Japan, having come to the country on a press tour for a movie. Still only twenty years old, she was famous enough that even the most exclusive hotel in Las Vegas would eagerly comp her a room.

The trip home quickly approaching, and press duties complete for the most part, she was lying around the hotel, wearing a track top she had bought at Uniqlo. She was completely absorbed in a video game when her manager spoke.

Patty, why don't you go out instead of just playing video games?

Nah. I'd rather game.

Come on, let's go wander around. We could meet some Japanese people. It might be fun.

I can wander around in the game.

Wander around in the game?

The manager peered over at the screen.

You wanna play?

Patricia looked over her shoulder at the manager eagerly.

What kind of game is it?

It's this fantasy world, and you wander around, talk to friends online. Sometimes you go off into the woods and fight monsters and stuff. Oh, and you can marry people online.

And you can have kids. And you can get a job. Be a mage or a hero or something.

*And this kid is a Hollywood actress*, the manager thought. Maybe she hadn't wanted to be an actress. But the manager thought that was everyone's dream job.

She went ahead and asked.

What's your job in the game, Patty?

Jester, casino dealer on the side.

*Is jester a job?* the manager wondered. *And don't you stop being a jester the minute you start working as a dealer? What's the definition of a jester?*

You said casinos were boring when we went to Monaco.

The thing is, those were about luck. With the casino in the game, you have to use your head. It's fun. And you don't have to dress up or deal with guys hitting on you.

The manager tried once more to get Patricia out of the hotel.

Hey, Patty. Aren't you hungry? I heard there's a three Michelin star sushi restaurant near here. You want to check it out?

Nah. Do I really need to come all the way to Japan to eat sushi? Just go to GoGo Curry, and get me the curry with the cheese roast cutlet on top.

Do you think they take credit cards?

You don't need to use a card. I have, like, a thousand yen in Japanese money.

You want anything else? Something to drink?

Coke, please. And get some chips. Wasabi flavour and plum flavour. They're so habit-forming. I *am* getting kinda bored of the game, though. Maybe I'll do something else after curry.

Right? A bright look leaped onto the manager's face. Let's go sightseeing.

Go buy some manga. *Naruto*, volumes one to three. My friends'll be jealous if I have comics that close the wrong way.

Don't just hole up in the room here. At least go to the hotel spa. I hear it's really good.

I hate the spa. It's hot, and it doesn't actually feel that good. All those people you see on TV beaming happily, that's just for the camera, you know.

But Patty. You're an actress, you have to be a little more concerned about your appearance.

I guess you're right.

Patty thought it over.

Got it. That cream made of snail mucus. I heard it's good for your skin. I think they sell it at Don Quijote. Go and get

me some.

Patty... Really? Shopping at Don Quijote?

Well, then just go buy the most expensive cream they have in Don Quijote's VIP room. Celebrities from all over the world hang out there, you know.

The manager knew they sold Bvlgari perfume and Louis Vuitton bags at the discount chain. But she had no idea they were set up with a VIP room.

Oh, Patty, the manager suddenly remembered. The talk show you're on is going to start soon. How about we watch it?

Sure. Got nothing else to do anyway.

Patricia saved her game and carefully unplugged the system, then changed the channel to the commercial broadcast program.

Enter Rikako, back in Japan after a childhood abroad, now presenting the morning talk show's Cinema Corner. She turns towards the show's host and begins talking.

Have I got a treat for you today! Uh, we've managed to get an exclusive interview with Patricia Tisseron, star of the new film, *Last Sweet of Las Vegas*. So let's get to it. We've got the tape right here. Roll it!

Rikako, winking, index finger extended. The tape plays on the monitor.

Hi there! Rikako here. Take a look at these: white roses. Patty absolutely loves white roses, so we put this bouquet together for her.

At this point, enter Patricia Tisseron dressed casually, braless under her camisole.

Hi, Patty! Nice to meet you! [In English.]

Hi!

Rikako and Patty shake hands. Rikako holds out the bouquet.

You're giving me white roses? I love white roses! This is wonderful. [Subtitled.] Patty buries her face in the bouquet.

Both sit.

Patty, do you really like roses that much?

Yeah, I do, very much.

They're very sweet?

Oh, sweet. Crossing her legs, Patty nods. Last sweet.

Yes, let's talk about the film. What about the movie do you think is sweet?

Ummm... I think "sweet" means a lot of different things. Sweet-tasting, or cute, or whatever. But I think when people feel that sweetness, it's there with some pain or some sadness

or something, and they overcome that, and then they can really feel the sweetness. That's what I learned through this film.

Uh-huh, Rikako nods. Was it a lot of work to prepare for the role?

Um, yeah, the character I play, Judy, she's pretty awkward, but she lives a very serious life, and she's persistent. She doesn't slack off when it comes to love, either. She works hard to make that love succeed. If it was me, I'd probably just start looking for a man I didn't have to work so hard for. A ha ha ha! [Laughs]

She's the total opposite of you?

She is. But as an actress, you get to live so many different ways. Even as someone like Judy. That's what makes it interesting.

What was your impression when you read the script?

Ummm. At first, I felt like it was a just simple love story, but I quickly realized that it wasn't. I think this film is not only talking about love, but also about Judy's growth, Judy's family. From that perspective, I'd love for a lot of different people to see it. And I felt like she was like the person I was not that long ago. I felt like making this film succeed would lead to some serious growth of my own. I was definitely interested in

playing the character.

What kind of person is director David Lezorno?

He's very stoic, he's a man who doesn't compromise when it comes to his work. In the film, there's this really difficult scene where I was hurt, but I had to keep smiling, and he shot me smiling like that over and over again. But he's not just tough with other people, he's also really tough on himself. He was developing the story for months before we started shooting, and he said that there were times he went crazy thinking about it. So we all ended up feeling like we wanted to support all this effort he was putting into it, by completely becoming our roles for him, by going crazy ourselves.

And what was your impression of your co-star, Kiel Dimitriev?

Um, right. Kiel's a very charming person. When I was learning my lines, he'd do stuff like spray me with a water gun, tell me to hurry up and play with him. And he's a very thoughtful guy too. He made doughnuts for the whole crew, entertained us, things like that. That was a very sweet surprise.

And in real life? Do the two of you have a *sweet* relationship?

Ah, ha ha ha, it'd be more romantic if I answered yes, huh? But the shoot was so long, I ended up being really close with



everyone.

Incidentally, I think you yourself are very sweet, Patty. What's your beauty secret?

Well, I guess it would be that I don't force myself to diet. I love sugar. So like, I make this special cappuccino. I put fresh cream, and some chocolate, and then some crunchy cookies in my coffee; it ends up looking like a parfait. If I don't have it, I just can't get going. Also, taking long soaks in the tub. It's good for you to eat a lot and then sweat a lot. But I think that beauty's also a mental thing. Just being yourself, just crying, laughing, whatever, without holding back. I think that's important too. I also often go to power spots.

Have you been to Japan's Meiji Jingu Shrine?

Not yet. But I'd definitely like to go if it's a power spot.

What do you think of Japan?

This is my third time in Japan, but I always think it's such a wonderful place. It's really full of life, but so safe, and the Japanese people are always very kind to me.

Do you like Japanese food?

I love it. Sushi, tempura... and... tonkatsu cutlets.

Tonkatsu cutlets?

Yes, tonkatsu.

Patty, you like tonkatsu?

Uh-huh. The thing is, I like tempura, but I also like meat, so I was thinking it would be great if there was meat tempura. And when I said that to the director, he took me to a Japanese tonkatsu place, and told me it was the closest I'd get to meat tempura. Going around the world like this for work, you see some countries where they don't eat pork because of religion, but I just feel like tonkatsu is so delicious.

Before I let you go, I wanted to give you this little souvenir of Japan. It's a kind of treat children often get...

Rikako brings out the treat. Patty says, Oh! Then puts her hand out and eats it in a single mouthful.

Mm hmm, Patty nods slowly.

So, Patty? Do you like it?

Yes, Patty lifts her thumb. It tastes kind of familiar. I feel like we had this sort of treat in my country too... A ha ha ha! I wonder what it was.

Do you have anything you'd like to say before we go?

*Last Sweet of Los Angeles.* It might seem like the kind of thing that has happened to everyone, but it's a film dedicated to a special time in life. I hope you'll check it out.

Patty, turning toward the camera and waving. Video end.

And that was Patty. What did you think, Nishimoto?

Rikako, directing her words to the host.

Oh, well, that was quite a surprise, Patty liking tonkatsu. But I bet if she walked into a tonkatsu restaurant, everyone there would get a real shock, huh?

Rikako, laughing briefly and then suddenly serious.

Here we have a wonderful present from Patty. We're giving away this signed flat cap, which she wore the entire time she was shooting the film, to one lucky person. Hurry up and get your name in!

Host Nishimoto gets serious.

Up next, the celebrity book bestseller ranking.

Patricia turned the TV off.

These Japanese talk shows are interesting, huh?

The moment the words were out of Patty's mouth, there was a knock on the door. The manager went to answer it.

Patty. It's from Kiel.

A present of white roses and a Prada bag had arrived from her co-star, Kiel Dimitriev.

He wants to go out with you this weekend. You two start seeing each other, and we'll have a super couple on our hands, hey?

No way. I hate that guy.

Why? He's handsome, he's nice.

I hate people who like to party. I hate parties.

Parties are nice sometimes.

I don't have anything to wear.

I can get you something to wear.

A track top's more comfortable. And anyway, I have a thing that day.

What thing do you have that's so important you have to turn down a date with Kiel?

I have a duel in the game.

The manager sighed.

Oh, Patricia said, as if she had just remembered something.

Right. I haven't done print club yet. We came all the way to Japan, we have to do the photo booth pics.

We did them in Taiwan. We even went in the sailor suit school uniforms.

Well, they had print club, so we had to go and take some. I want to do Evangelion print club.

Honestly, you're like a Japanese otaku.

All young people are otaku now. Aaaah, will I ever get an offer for a super hero film?

Before long, Patricia was tweeting about how crazy fanfic with Roy/Ed fooling around made her.

## The Interview

## Maki KASHIMADA

Maki Kashimada was born in Tokyo in 1976, and graduated from Shirayuri College. In 1998, her first novel, *Nihiki* ("Two"), received the Bungei Prize, an award received by many well-known authors in Japan. *Rokusendo no Ai* ("6,000 Degrees of Love"), a novel based in Nagasaki, the second city to have the atomic bomb dropped on it, won The Mishima Yukio Prize in 2005. Masahiko SHIMADA, one of Japan's leading post-modern literary figures, refers to Kashimada as "a writer earnestly working towards the issues of expressing the inexpressible. She blends the ever-changing consciousness of the present and past into the perspective of the present. This literary style, like the tide of the river, was the method widely used by Marguerite DURAS."



## Jocelyne Allen

Jocelyne Allen is a Japanese translator based in Toronto, Canada, after a decade in Japan. During her time in the Land of the Rising Sun, she worked as a magazine columnist, interpreted for foreign correspondents and toured with a Japanese drum group. Her most recent translations include Shigeru Mizuki's *Onward Towards Our Noble Deaths!* and Oji Suzuki's *A Single Match*. She is also the author of the novel *You and the Pirates*.

*Waseda Bungaku's* charity project:

*Japan Earthquake Charity Literature*

The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011 claimed the lives of more than 15,000 people, displaced many more times that number from their homes, schools and workplaces, and triggered a nuclear accident whose effects are sure to last for decades. These unprecedented events have forced people in Japan to think and act in new ways. We recognize our responsibility to mourn the dead and do what we can to help the people whose lives have been turned upside down. We realize that we are victims ourselves – both of the short to mid-term damage from the earthquake and the long-term damage from the nuclear accident. We cannot escape the fact that we are somehow responsible for the effects that the contamination from the nuclear accident will have on current and future generations both at home and abroad.

In towns where street lights and neon signs have been dimmed and where air-conditioning and the number of trains running have been reduced, everyone – regardless of whether they were directly affected or not – has been thinking about what they can do as well as what it means to use nuclear energy. Writers are no exception. Jean-Paul Sartre once famously asked what literature can do for starving children. Each one of us began to ask ourselves similar questions: What can we write or not write? What can and should we be doing other than writing? What is it that we really have to offer? The damage wrought by the disaster and the reconstruction process that followed on the one hand, and the accident at the nuclear power plant on the other, each raised issues that had to be thought about quite separately.

In responding to the first, we searched for words to mourn the dead and encourage survivors who were trying to get back on their feet. Some tried to write pieces that would bring solace to these survivors, while others composed requiems, just as Shoyo Tsubouchi, one of the founders of Modern Japanese literature, did in 1923 following the Great Kanto Earthquake. It is often said that “authors always arrive



last". Some made a conscious decision not to write, choosing instead to write about these events as history one day. There were those who questioned the value of writing fiction, while others did not hesitate to write when asked to do so. Some considered it their duty as a writer not to be moved by it all and chose to go on as always with daily life.

It was (and continues to be) terribly difficult to find the words to offer those who have been directly affected by the disaster. Faced with the continuing effects of the nuclear accident, some shed tears thinking of the people in Fukushima they had grown up with; others joined demonstrations calling for the government and the electricity company to be held responsible for their mismanagement; still others began to rethink the way they had lived, dependent on electricity supplied by nuclear power; and some even called for the need to reevaluate the modern era that had "progressed" in that direction.

Such reactions naturally extended beyond the borders of Japan. We all imagined, lamented, and felt anger at the thought of the many devastating disasters that have shaken our world, the accidents that all kinds of technologies have

caused, and similar events that are sure to happen again in the future, as if they were happening to our neighbors, our friends, and to ourselves. We think of Hemingway rushing to Madrid with rifle in hand to report on the Spanish Civil War as we head to Fukushima armed not with rifles, but buckets and shovels.

But for those of us who make a living by writing, it is clear that the biggest contribution we can make is through doing what we do. (Standing in front of a mound of rubble and debris with shovels, we are far less useful than local high school students.) Although they have used different methods and approaches, all the authors who participated in this project chose to try to do something for the areas and people affected through their writing. They all struggled in different ways as they wrote these short pieces that have been made available in English through the efforts of a number of translators.

This program aims to give serious thought to the disaster and accident, then bring these words that were born, directly or indirectly, through this thought process, to people across the world. We hope that after reading these texts you will

choose to make a donation to the Red Cross in Japan or in your country or to another charity.

We hope that these pieces, written for ourselves as much as for anyone else, will reach people around the world, and eventually, in some small way, also serve to help the people in northern Japan who are now working hard to rebuild their lives.

Makoto ICHIKAWA (literary critic / director of The WASEDA bungaku)

September 11, 2011

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This story was written primarily for use in *Waseda Bungaku*'s charity project for the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 and for distribution via the *Waseda Bungaku* website in PDF form. An e-book publication of this story will also be made available in Japan. All proceeds from sales will be donated to the families of victims and survivors in areas affected by the disaster.

PDF files of all the stories in this collection will be available to download from the website until March 2012. Sending these PDFs to third parties via e-mail, and posting the URLs to third-party sites, is permitted. (though *Waseda Bungaku* will take no responsibility for the content of such third-party sites). However, reproduction, in whole or in part, of the data on these PDFs in any printed media by any unauthorized third parties is strictly prohibited. Data alteration is likewise strictly prohibited. We hope that after reading these texts you will choose to make a donation to the Red Cross in Japan (details below) or in your country or to another charity supporting disaster relief. In case of data transfer, we suggest you send

us notification beforehand.

### **Donation Bank Account 1**

Name of Bank: Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation

Name of Branch: Ginza

Account No.: 8047670 (Ordinary Account)

SWIFT Code: SMBC JP JT

Branch Number: 026

Address of Bank: Ginza Joint Building 6-10-15 Ginza Chuo-ku  
Tokyo JAPAN

Payee Name: The Japanese Red Cross Society

Payee Address: 1-1-3 Shiba-Daimon Minato-ku, Tokyo JAPAN

### **Donation Bank Account 2**

Name of Bank: The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Ltd.

Name of Branch: Tokyo Government and Public Institutions  
Business Office

Account No.:0028706(Ordinary Account)

SWIFT Code: BOTKJPJT

Branch Number: 300

Address of Bank: 3-6-3 Kajicho Kanda Chiyoda-ku Tokyo JA-  
PAN

Payee Name: The Japanese Red Cross Society

Payee Address: 1-1-3 Shiba-Daimon Minato-ku, Tokyo JAPAN

### **Donation Bank Account 3**

Name of Bank: Mizuho Bank, LTD

Name of Branch: Shinbashi Chuo Branch

Account No.: 2188729 (Ordinary Account)

SWIFT Code: MHBK JP JT

Branch Number: 051

Address of Bank: 4-6-15 Shinbashi Minato-ku Tokyo JAPAN

Payee Name: The Japanese Red Cross Society

Payee Address: 1-1-3 Shiba-Daimon Minato-ku, Tokyo JAPAN

**(All bank accounts above are open until March 31, 2012.)**

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(\*English translations will be made available):

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