

“Shibuya, Shibuya.”

New Love in Tokyo takes place in and around the Shibuya district of Tokyo. Known for its shopping districts and entertainment, the area has a bustling nightlife that is popular with young adults.

Shibuya Station is the third-busiest railway station in Tokyo. The familiar intersection in front of Shibuya Station (Hachiko Exit), which features a four-way stop to allow pedestrians to cross in any direction, can be seen in dozens of films, including 2003's "Lost in Translation."

This exit features the famous statue of [Hachiko the faithful dog](#). Hachiko was a purebred Akita who would trot to the exit each afternoon to greet his master, a college professor, when he arrived home on the train. He continued to do this until the day he died, even though his master had himself died years earlier.

“Mistress!”

During the opening whipping, when the young man yells at Rei, the direct translation of his scream is “My Queen” or “Your Majesty.” We felt that “mistress” was a more understandable translation.

“Do you know the theme song to Hyokkori-hyotan-jima?”

Hyokkori-hyotan-jima was a children's puppet show series that aired from 1964 to 1969, later revived from 1991 to 1996 on the public broadcasting station NHK in Japan.

“It was a 'red alert' day, so it was safe.”

Here, the actual word being used is “hinomaru”. The hinomaru is the red sun on the white background of the Japanese flag.

“It's ¥35,000 for the 70-minute S-course, or ¥25,000 for the 70-minute M-course.”

This simply refers to Sadism and Masochism. We really don't want to know about some of the more complicated combinations that are subsequently mentioned.

“Track 1, train to Shinjuku, Ikebukuro now arriving...”

Shinjuku is another district of Tokyo and is located northeast of Shibuya. Like it's neighbor to the south, Shinjuku features a busy nightlife and contains a variety of department stores, bars and cinemas. The Shinjuku Train Station is the busiest railway station in the world.

Ikebukuro is another busy station a few stops north of Shinjuku.

“You're still here? Aren't you going to exam prep class?”

The term “yobiko” refers to a private exam prep class.

In Japan, entrance into the university and college system is mostly decided by entrance exams (which can be in a variety of forms, such as our SAT test, paper tests, or short essays). The results of the entrance exams are thus extremely important to students, and worst of all, they can be taken only once a year. If you do not score high enough and are denied entry into the university/college of your choice, you would have to wait another year for the chance to take the test again. Transferring between colleges is rare in Japan.

In 1994 and even earlier (1994 being the year this movie was filmed), people still strongly believed that degrees from prestigious colleges, including those rivaling the Ivy League level in the US, was the key to success. Instead of “settling” for a degree from an (in their mind) inferior university, many students would spend another year studying the test material to obtain the score necessary for the school of their choice. Often, students could spend 2-3 years trying again and again to get into their desired college!

“Yobiko” are schools that specialize in preparing these students. These schools do not give any degrees or credits, but they do teach learning skills and strategy on how to pass the entrance exams (much like the SAT

preparatory courses here). In “New Love in Tokyo,” the boyfriend of Ayumi is “sanrou,” which means he was not accepted into his university three years in a row and is now trying for the fourth time. For students desiring to attend a top Japanese medical school, this is not unusual. The man is referred to as a “ronin,” much like the masterless samurai of old, in that he belongs to neither a university nor high school. As a student spends more time in the ronin state, there is more and more pressure to score well on these once-a-year exams. The pressure can often, however, lead to lower scores, despite the extra years spent studying for the specific test. Although Ayumi is dating Ken with the hope that he will one day become a doctor, his chances of succeeding in that profession might not be as high as she wants to admit!

“The official insignia of the chrysanthemum and the trunk of the paulownia prove its merit.”

The chrysanthemum and the paulownia are symbols of the emperor and the insignia would literally mean, “officially approved by the emperor.”

“Six months at a Soapland would cover it.”

Although prostitution is illegal in Japan, certain bath-houses, formerly known as “Toruko” (Turkish Baths), flourished by exploiting a loophole in the law -- they were a “meeting place” for “private agreements” between men and women... nudge, nudge, wink, wink...

However, after a complaint from Turkish Ambassador, the eminently respectable Japanese Turkish Bath Operators Association (a legal trade organization for a technically illegal business!) held a contest to come up with a new name, resulting in the now legendary euphemism of “Soapland”. We wonder what first prize was...

Soaplands are plentiful in Japan, especially in the Shibuya district area where the film takes place.

“Get thee to the bathhouse, go!”

This is a reference to Shakespeare's Hamlet in which Hamlet urges Ophelia to “Get thee to a nunnery.” (A nunnery is Elizabethian slang for a whorehouse, something our high-school english teachers never got around to mentioning!)

“...a hotel employee of a love hotel in Shibuya...”

A love hotel is a Japanese type of hotel where couples can check in for a “rest” or a “stay.” (more nudging, more winking) They are commonly used for prostitution as well as a place where couples can get a little privacy, not to mention spice up their love life. Love hotels often feature elaborate themed rooms.

“...discovered the dead body of a woman in a bath tub, and reported the incident to 110.”

Dialing 110 is the Japanese equivalent of dialing 911 in America.

“Our address is Dogenzaka 301, we'd like a delivery of three orders of spaghetti.”

Dogenzaka is a street in Shibuya, known for its share of strip clubs and bars. It is particularly known for its many “love hotels.”

“Everyone, it's finally the day we battle the Boss character!”

This reference to “boss” relates to battling a boss of a videogame level.