



**WHAT'S LEFT OF ME IS YOURS**  
by **Stephanie Scott**  
**BOOK CLUB KIT**

# The Origins of *WHAT'S LEFT OF ME IS YOURS*

In 2010 I read an article by Richard Lloyd Parry, the Asia editor of *The Times* (London). He was reporting on a murder case in Tokyo where a marriage breakup agent had strangled his lover when she discovered his true profession and threatened to leave him. The agent was arrested at the scene and swiftly confessed, but as he was speaking to police detectives he said “I loved her. I love her still.” And it was this, the humanity of the original story that drew me. The agent claimed that he had felt trapped by all the lies he had told his target over the course of their relationship, but that he had truly come to love her, that he could not live without her. I was just newly married at the time and I wondered if what he had said was true—could you truly love someone and kill them?

Love, in its ideal form, requires selflessness, but there are as many types of love as there are people. I am fascinated by what love means to each of us: the point at which one’s own survival and happiness can hinge on another person. I felt compelled to explore how we love and what we are capable to doing to each other for love, and this is where the novel began.

The story of *What's Left of Me Is Yours* is told through a prism of Japanese history and culture, but the study of love has a more global resonance. It is an exploration of human relationships, which are universal. I wanted to write a novel that people across cultures could empathize with and relate to, looking at how love functions between individuals and within families, at the distinctions between love, protection, possession—the world in microcosm.

—Stephanie Scott

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1.** Before reading the novel, had you heard of the wakaresaseya or “marriage breakup” industry? What do you think are the risks of this industry being allowed to operate? How does this relate to honey trapping in your own culture?
- 2.** From the beginning, photography plays a large role in the novel. How does photography influence Sumiko’s telling of her mother’s story?
- 3.** Sumiko notes early in the novel that the best lies are close to the truth. How does Kai prove this theory as he tells Rina about himself?
- 4.** Sumiko observes that she struggles to imagine her mother as a young person, an individual separate from her motherhood: “When I think of her, it is as my mother, and I cannot picture her any other way.” Have you ever heard a story about a family member and struggled to reconcile this with your own image and experience of him or her?
- 5.** This novel revolves around a murder, but we learn the identity of the alleged murderer relatively early in the story. How does that affect your reading of the events leading up to the crime?
- 6.** Almost every character in the novel struggles to balance multiple roles: parent, lover, child, professional, etc. Who do you think struggles the most?
- 7.** How do physical objects trigger memories and emotions for Sumiko and Yoshi after Rina’s death? Do you have any talismans that remind you of people you’ve lost?

(continued...)

## DISCUSSION GUIDE (continued)

8. How is the Japanese justice system similar to or different from your own? What do you think of Yurie Kagashima's defense of Kai? Is it a fair defense?
9. What do you think Sumiko means when she says that every member of her family, including her, is guilty of her mother's death?
10. How do you think knowing the full truth about her mother's death will affect Sumiko's life after the action of the novel concludes? What do you think will be the significance of her "choice" at the very end? And is it the right one?
11. Is the law a character in its own right?
12. How do the locations in the novel affect and shape the narrative?
13. What do you think of the novel's title? How does it apply to all the characters?
14. What economic and societal constraints are faced by the men and women in the story? Have any of these issues featured in your own life?
15. How does the novel depict the tension between personal desire and the pressure to conform to social norms?
16. *What's Left of Me Is Yours* is a meditation on all the different forms of love. What does love mean to you? Who from the book best exemplifies this definition of love?

# PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

**WAKARESASEYA**—wa-ka-ray-sah-sey-ya

**SUMIKO**—soo-me-koh

**YOSHITAKE**—yo-shi-taa-kay

**SARASHIMA**—sa-ra-shi-ma

**RINA**—ree-na

**OSAMU**—oh-sa-moo

**SATŌ**—sa-toe (long “oh” sound)

**KAITARŌ**—kye-ta-roe (long “oh” sound)

**NAKAMURA**—na-ka-moo-rah

**YURIE**—you-ree-eh

**KAGASHIMA**—ka-ga-shi-mah

**HIDEO**—he-day-oh

**KUROSAWA**—koo-roh-sa-wah

Note: Japanese words are usually pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, for example: *su-shi* = sushi. Here, the exceptions are the given name “Kaitarō” and the surname “Satō” as the final syllable in each name is written with a macron ‘ō’ that denotes a long vowel. This is by no means a comprehensive guide, but I hope it serves as a useful starting point.

# VIEWING LIST

## **Movies/Series**

***Tokyo Story***

***Like Father, Like Son***

***Tokyo Girl***

***Departures***

***Tampopo***

## **Documentaries**

***Invisible Tokyo (series)***

***From the Shadows***

***Jiro Dreams of Sushi***

# BONE-DRY MARTINI WITH JAPANESE WA GIN AND A TWIST OF YUZU

Every martini is personal, so please adjust the measurements to taste. To enjoy the full effects of this one:



Ensure that all your glassware are chilled.

Fill a mixing glass with ice.

Coat the interior of your chilled martini glass with a splash of vermouth, pouring out the excess.

Pour 70 ml of gin over ice in mixing glass.

Stir lightly.

Pour into a chilled martini glass, add a squeeze of yuzu zest and garnish with a twist.



Wa Gin is Japanese craft gin from Meiri Sake Brewery. It's made with a selection of seven botanicals, including wood-scented juniper berries, lemon peel, orange peel, and cinnamon. If yuzu is not in season or is unavailable, you may have to make do with a squeeze of lemon or perhaps a slice of ginger.

# SUMIKO'S RED BEAN & VANILLA CREAM MOCHI

Stephanie Scott's variation on Mochi Ice  
Cream by [justonecookbook.com](https://www.justonecookbook.com)

[https://www.justonecookbook.com/  
wprm\\_print/58496](https://www.justonecookbook.com/wprm_print/58496)



**PREP TIME** 1 hr | **COOK TIME** 3 min

**TOTAL TIME** 1 hr 3 min

**SERVING** 12 Pieces

## INGREDIENTS

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup shiratamako (glutinous rice flour/sweet rice flour) (100g)

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup water (180 ml)

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar (55 g)

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup potato starch/cornstarch (100 g)

Ice cream of your choice\*\*

Substitute for shiratamako:

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup Mochiko (glutinous rice flour/sweet rice flour) (115g)

\*\*For Sumiko's "variation" use red bean paste and whipped cream (flavored lightly with vanilla and chilled until solid in the freezer) instead of ice cream. You can form balls of mochi filling out of the red bean paste and cream and chill these until they are very cold, before making the mochi themselves. Maeda Hokkaido Red Bean Paste is my personal preference.

## EQUIPMENT YOU WILL NEED

12 aluminum/silicone cupcake liners

Cookie dough scoop (smaller than an ice cream scooper)

Rolling pin

3.5 inch (9 cm) cookie cutter or a round bowl



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather all the ingredients.
2. Using the cookie scoop, scoop out ice cream into aluminum/silicone cupcake liners. The ice cream will melt quickly so I recommend freezing them immediately for a few hours or until ice cream balls are completely frozen solid. (See note above.)
3. Once the ice cream balls are frozen solid and ready, you can start making mochi. Combine shiratamako and sugar in a medium bowl and whisk all together.
4. Add water and mix well until combined.
5. Microwave method: If you're using a microwave to cook mochi, cover the bowl with some plastic wrap (do not cover too tight). Put the bowl in the microwave and heat it on high heat (1000w) for 1 minute. Take it out and stir with a wet rubber spatula. Cover again and cook for 1 minute. Stir again, cover, and cook for 30 seconds to finish cooking. The color of mochi should change from white to almost translucent.
6. Cover the work surface with parchment paper and dust it generously with potato starch. Then transfer the cooked mochi on top.
7. To prevent from sticking, sprinkle more potato starch on top of the mochi. Once it's cooled down a bit, you can spread the mochi into a thin layer with your hands or with a rolling pin. Make sure to apply potato starch on your hands and the rolling pin. I recommend using a rolling pin because it's easier to evenly spread out.
8. Transfer the mochi with parchment paper onto a large baking sheet. Refrigerate for 15 minutes until the mochi is set.
9. Take out the mochi from the refrigerator and cut out 7-8 circles with the cookie cutter.
10. Dust off the excess potato starch with a pastry brush. If you find some sticky part, cover the area with potato starch first then dust off. Place a plastic wrap on a plate and then mochi wrapper on top, then lay another layer of plastic wrapper down. Repeat for all wrappers. With leftover mochi dough, roll into a ball and then flatten into a thin layer again and cut out into more circle wrappers (I could make about 12 mochi wrappers).

11. Now we're ready to form mochi balls. On the work surface, place one sheet of plastic wrap with a mochi layer on top. Take out one red bean and cream ball from the freezer and put it on top of the mochi wrapper. Pinch the four corners of the mochi layer together to wrap the ball.
12. When mochi gets sticky, put some potato starch on the sticky area and seal the opening. Quickly cover with the plastic wrap and twist to close. Place each mochi ice cream into a cupcake pan to keep the shape. You will need to work on one mochi at a time in order to keep the cream frozen all times. Put mochi back into the freezer for a few hours. When you're ready to serve, keep them outside for a few minutes until mochi soften a little bit.

## NOTES

**Shiratamako and mochiko are two types of** glutinous rice flour (sometimes called sweet rice flour) made of Japanese short grain glutinous rice. Shiratamako is the preferred one for this recipe.

**Sugar:** Do not omit sugar as it helps mochi stay softer.

## TIPS

- DOs:**
- Keep your kitchen cool when you are working with ice cream.
  - Get this **cookie scoop** (portioning scoop) for creating the same portions and nice half-round shaped ice cream for mochi filling.
  - Use generous amount of **potato/cornstarch** on your hands and working surface to prevent sticking.
  - Use a **cookie cutter** (or small bowl) to cut out mochi into a round shape. Round shape (instead of square cut) seals the mochi neatly and avoid excess amount of mochi on the bottom.
  - And here's the secret tip! Wear thin **latex gloves** to insulate warm hands from ice cream and to prevent your hands from sticking to mochi.

- DON'Ts:**
- Do not take short cuts until you are comfortable with making mochi ice cream.
  - Do not expect to make a perfect shape mochi ice cream for the first few trials. Working fast is the most important when dealing with ice cream.