

the theft of the DC Mini will lead to violence. Without warning, Shima starts spouting gibberish. "The confetti will dance around the shrine gates!" Laughing, he charges through a third-floor window.

Luckily, a tree breaks Shima's fall, but he can't wake up. On the psychotherapy machine, Chiba and Tokita see that he's dreaming of a crazy bric-a-brac carnival of dolls, figurines, and household appliances. The carnival marches through a desert, bearing Tokita aloft on a throne. Apparently, his subconscious was implanted with a dream from a psychotherapy patient.

On screen, a doll at Shima's knee starts talking more nonsense. Its face morphs into that of Tokita's assistant Himuro, who helped him create the DC Mini. Chiba and Tokita drive to Himuro's flat, accompanied by another member of the Foundation's staff, the dashing handsome Osanai.

Himuro's flat is cluttered with hundreds of dolls in various states of assembly. Tokita finds his own photo pinned to a toy robot; Osanai spots gay magazines. Chiba finds a hatch down to a door, leading out to an amusement park. She sees the Himuro doll behind a fence and climbs over . . . to find that she's climbing over the railing outside Himuro's tower-block apartment, about twenty stories up! Osanai pulls her to safety.

In Shima's dream, the carnival has reached a forest when Paprika infiltrates the scene. Using her seductive wiles, she cuddles up to Shima's oversized body and sinks into it. Shima swells to the size of a dirigible and pops. He wakes, to be greeted by Chiba.

In a police station, Konakawa



is investigating a homicide. The sprawled man in the crime photo is the one from his dream. Taking a break, Konakawa visits Radio Club, a web address Paprika gave him. A virtual bartender, Jinnai, and a waiter, Kuga, greet him. Konakawa leans forward and is suddenly sitting in the Radio Club with Paprika.

Paprika explains that dreams and the Internet are releases for

repressed minds. The conversation turns to films, which Konakawa says don't interest him (surprising, given the cinephile references in his dreams!). Paprika promptly leads him into an alley, lined by what seem to be fake cinema fronts, as in a movie set. (The setting recalls Ikari's 2-D fantasy world in *Paranoia Agent*.)

Paprika invites Konakawa to



choose a film, but the policeman is intimidated, shouting that he doesn't like movies. The sky darkens and shutters fall over the cinema doors.

Back at the Foundation, two more staff have developed Shima's symptoms and run amok. Inui stops development of the DC Mini. Chiba sees a robot character on the back of Tokita's sweater, one she's seen

*The bric-a-brac dream parade wends its way through the film, accompanied by a delirious Susumu Hirasawa electropop melody. Watch out for tangerine trees and marmalade skies.*

before . . . at the amusement park.

It transpires to be a now-derelict park that Tokita visited as a child, and mentioned to Himuro. Tokita takes Chiba to the real place, where she finds the Himuro doll again. A body falls from the sky, smash-

ing through a window. It's the real Himuro, his face fixed in a wild grin after he apparently jumped from a Ferris wheel. The skin of his head distorts as if tentacles are crawling underneath it: the probes of a DC Mini.

Interviewing Tokita about the incidents, Konakawa meets Chiba and realizes that she's Paprika's alter ego. He chats with Shima, but is unnerved when his friend waxes nostalgic about college days. Later, Konakawa hallucinates and hears a young man's voice. "But what about the rest of it?"

Himuro survived his fall but can't wake up, like Shima before

### Points to Note

- Viewers of the film who tried out the Radio Club website address ([www.radioclub.jp](http://www.radioclub.jp)) were disappointed not to be greeted by the waiters Jinnai and Kuga. Instead, the site explains that visitors need the (sadly fictional) DC Mini installed, directing them to Sony's Japanese-language *Paprika* homepage.
- Many of *Paprika's* movie references are to Hollywood. In the precredits sequence, Paprika and Konakawa dash from a generic *Tarzan* flick into a famous fight from the second James Bond picture, *From Russia with Love*. (The original combatants were Sean Connery and Robert Shaw, fighting on the *Orient Express*.) The characters finish up in the romantic comedy *Roman Holiday*, with Paprika playing Audrey Hepburn's errant Princess. Coincidentally, when *Roman Holiday* was dubbed into Japanese, Hepburn was dubbed by Miyoko Shoji, who voices the aged Chiyoko in *Millennium Actress*. There are nods to Disney's *Pinocchio* (the "Monstro" whale) and Busby Berkley musicals (Japanese businessmen diving in sequence from a building). Himuro's doll-strewn

him. Chiba prepares to enter his dream as Paprika. Osanai is angry that she relies on Tokita for backup, saying that he caused the crisis. Chiba replies that she'll make Tokita take responsibility. True to her word, she has a vicious confrontation with the scientist, goading him about his immaturity.

Before dealing with Himuro, Chiba visits Konakawa's dreams as Paprika. The policeman is perplexed to see both the fugitive and the victim in his dream share his own face.

At the Foundation, Tokita determines to take responsibility after Chiba's taunts. He uses the DC Mini to enter Himuro's dream and finds himself in a robot body, facing the same bric-a-brac carnival we saw in Shima's dream. The dolls proclaim that the "crossing" of two dreams will create many more dreams.

The carnival crosses dreams again, sweeping up Paprika and Konakawa. Paprika is dismayed to see Tokita helplessly following the procession. In the real world, Chiba and Shima race to the lab where Tokita and Himuro are in REM sleep. According to Chiba, their consciousness itself "has been taken away."

Shima monitors events as Paprika enters Himuro's dream. She finds a nude statue of Osanai (to be explained later) and a hollow cocoon in the form of Himuro. She realizes that Himuro's mind has been consumed by the dream, and that she's entered a trap. The culprit reveals himself, a monstrous version of Inui. Paprika screams for Shima to wake Chiba . . .

. . . Which he does. Chiba and Shima head for Inui's mansion, while Chiba theorizes that a col-

lective dream invaded Himuro. She confronts Inui in his greenhouse, accusing him of using the psychotherapy machines to make a gestalt dream. Inui, though, knows that Chiba is Paprika. Even worse, Chiba never really woke up; she's still dreaming!

We glimpse the real Shima in the Foundation lab, vainly trying to wake Chiba.

Paprika is chased through dreams by Osanai, a traitor who's been acting for Inui. Pinned down in a butterfly museum like an exhibit, Paprika taunts Osanai with her knowledge that he had to seduce Himuro to steal the DC Minis.

Elsewhere, Konakawa drowns his sorrows in the Radio Club, telling the patient waiters what he couldn't tell Paprika. Aged seventeen (Konakawa says), he began making an 8mm film about a cop chasing a fugitive. The cop was Konakawa. The fugitive was played by his best friend, whom Konakawa considered to be a step ahead in real life. "I was frustrated at myself for not being frustrated with him."

Lacking confidence (Konakawa continues), he pulled out of the film. Soon after, the friend died from an illness. "I was his partner, I was his counterpart, he was . . . *the other me*," he realizes, making the connection to his dream. Following his dead friend's ghost, Konakawa sees a new film, *Paprika*, advertised at one of the cinemas.

Inside, he sees Paprika menaced by Osanai on the big screen. Pinned down in the museum, Paprika screams and whimpers for Osanai to stop, then grins and calls him a pervert. Osanai's response is to sink his hand into her body (as Paprika sank into Shima earlier). "I love



*High anxiety: after her perceptions are scrambled, Atsuko nearly takes a tumble from Himuro's high-rise apartment.*



*Mirror, mirror: a confrontation between Atsuko and Paprika. Which one of the women is real and which one's the performance? The answer seems to be it's a bit of both.*