

= IC in a Sunflower =

IC in a Sunflower ( Japanese : ????????? , Hepburn : Sh?sekikairo no Himawari ) is a science fiction josei ( targeted towards women ) manga written and illustrated by Mitsukazu Mihara . It is a collection of seven , unrelated short stories which appeared in the Japanese manga magazine Feel Young from 1994 to 1997 . The stories were then collected into a bound volume in Japan by Shodensha on October 18 , 1997 . Tokyopop licensed IC in a Sunflower for an English @-@ language release in North America , and published it on January 2 , 2007 . IC in a Sunflower was positively received by English @-@ language critics and readers . Reviewers identified various themes and literary elements in the collection , and generally enjoyed the short stories and art .

The seven short stories consist of Mihara 's 1994 debut " Keep Those Condoms Away From Our Kids " ( ????????? , " Gomu no Iranai Kodomo @-@ tachi " ) , set in a future in which an AIDS vaccine destroyed the desire for sex ; " The Iron Maiden " ( ??????? ) , which focuses on a young woman haunted by her childhood sexual abuse ; " The Sunflower Quality Of An Integrated Circuit " ( ????????? ) , which deals with the events surrounding a couple and their robotic housekeeper ; " The Other Side Of The Rose Wire " ( ????????? ) , which centers on a boy in love with a girl caring for her elderly father ; " Fish Out Of Water " ( ??? ) , which revolves around a captured mermaid ; " Mister Mineral " ( ??? ) , which features a disturbed college student ; and " Alive " ( ????????? ) , which is set in a future where human cloning is practiced .

= = Plot = =

IC in a Sunflower consists of seven short stories , a format that Mitsukazu Mihara frequently uses for her narrative . The stories are unrelated to each other , each featuring a different protagonist . The stories of IC in a Sunflower sometimes incorporate a twist ending .

" Keep Those Condoms Away From Our Kids " ( ????????? , " Gomu no Iranai Kodomo @-@ tachi " ) revolves around a future in which teenagers do not have a desire for sex , as a result of an AIDS vaccine . The story focuses on Irori , who is taught about sex in school and encouraged by his parents , but ultimately neither understands nor has a desire for sex .

" The Iron Maiden " ( ??????? ) focuses on a woman who struggles to create a happy life for herself despite the childhood sexual abuse done to her by her older brother . In her backstory , her parents refused to believe her as a child about her brother 's abuse towards her , and upset , she bites her doll and develops a compulsive habit of biting . Later , as an adult , she settles down with a husband and child , but after discovering her battered doll which triggers memories of her unhappy childhood , she bites her child .

" The Sunflower Quality Of An Integrated Circuit " ( ????????? ) centers on Vanilla , an android who keeps house for an old man married to a younger , unfaithful woman . The man treats Vanilla well , seeing her as a daughter , and the two have tea in the garden ; his wife , in contrast , abuses her and allows her lover to do the same . After the old man reveals his plans for divorce , his wife murders him and orders Vanilla to bury the remains . Vanilla obeys , although she recognizes that the remains were of the old man . The story ends with Vanilla in the garden , keeping her promise to the man by having tea when the sunflowers bloom .

In " The Other Side Of The Rose Wire " ( ????????? ) , a boy falls in love from afar with a girl taking care of her elderly father . After she fails to appear with her father one day , he finds her dressed in mourning clothes with a smile on her face and burning the basket she kept with her .

" Fish Out Of Water " ( ??? ) focuses on a captured mermaid and her refusal to speak . Her captor attempts to pull her out of the bathtub where she had been living , and she remembers that she was a girl whose mother had tried to drown her and herself in a lake years ago . Her mother died , but she survived and imagined herself as a mermaid . She then wakes up from her delusion , finding herself in a hospital instead of a bathtub , and can begin to recover .

" Mister Mineral " ( ??? ) revolves around a college student , who collects rocks and is tormented by his memories of dissecting a frog . After learning that his girlfriend is pregnant , he becomes upset and tosses her into a busy highway .

Set in a future where human cloning is practiced , " Alive " ( ????????? ) focuses on Tou , a clone sent to live in an orphanage of humans as part of an assignment . There , he meets a cheerful girl named Riika and after some time , she is taken to be killed for her organs . It is then revealed that Tou only thought he was a clone .

= = Style and themes = =

In *IC in a Sunflower* and all her works , Mihara uses character designs incorporating Lolita fashion ? a clothing style influenced by the Rococo style and the Victorian and Edwardian eras . She explained that that particular style conveys the duality of her characters : " It 's about showing the delicate balance of ' delicate , yet strong , ' or ' selfish and wild , yet lustful . ' " Mihara has been involved with the shaping of the Gothic Lolita style ? a subset of the Lolita fashion which incorporates dark colors ? through her artwork ; she illustrated the first eight covers of the fashion magazine @-@ book *Gothic & Lolita Bible* and later returned to illustrating the covers with the twenty @-@ seventh volume in fall 2007 .

Reviewers have identified multiple themes and literary elements in the manga . According to Mania Entertainment 's Nadia Oxford , Mihara uses minimal dialogue and narrative , instead conveying emotion through the behavior of the characters . IGN 's A.E. Sparrow stated that the theme of the stories was the meaning of humanity , while Oxford wrote that the manga contains " themes of dystopian society and the fragile nature of the human mind . " Sparrow thought that mental instability figures prominently in the stories . According to him , " *Keep Those Condoms Away From Our Kids* " deals with " the nature of sex , " while Oxford believed that the story raises the question of the declining birth rate of Japan and other developed countries . Jason Thompson , author of *Manga : The Complete Guide* , considered " *The Sunflower Quality of an Integrated Circuit* " to have elements from film noir . By featuring a mute mermaid in " *Fish Out Of Water* " , Mihara makes an implicit reference to the fairytale " *The Little Mermaid* " , according to Oxford . The treatment of the elderly , children , or the unborn is the focus of some of the stories , according to Sparrow . Sparrow and Dan Grendall of *Ain 't It Cool News* speculated that " *Alive* " focuses on the meaning of living .

= = Release = =

Written and illustrated by Mitsukazu Mihara , the seven short stories of *IC in a Sunflower* appeared in the Japanese manga magazine *Feel Young* from 1994 to 1997 ; Mihara made her debut as a manga artist with " *Keep Those Condoms Away From Our Kids* " in 1994 , which won a contest in *Feel Young* . The short stories were published by Shodensha in a bound volume , ( ISBN 4396761716 ) , in Japan on October 18 , 1997 . For her stories , she generally draws inspiration from real @-@ life problems in society or unhappy times in her own life .

Tokyopop licensed *IC in a Sunflower* for an English @-@ language release in North America and the United Kingdom , along with four of her other works : *The Embalmer* , *Beautiful People* , *Haunted House* and *R.I.P. : Requiem in Phonybrian* . Beni Axia Conrad translated *IC in a Sunflower* from Japanese , and Nathan Johnson adapted it for an English @-@ language audience . Tokyopop published it on January 2 , 2007 ( ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 59816 @-@ 769 @-@ 6 ) . However , Tokyopop 's North American branch stopped publishing on May 31 , 2011 .

= = Reception and legacy = =

*IC in a Sunflower* was positively received by English @-@ language reviewers and readers . The manga ranked eighth on About.com 's 2007 Reader Poll for the best new josei manga , manga targeted towards women . Douresseaux praised the collection as " easily some of [ Mihara 's ] best work made available in English . " Sparrow highly recommended the manga , describing it as " a darker counterpart to *Beautiful People* . " The art was a frequent source of praise among reviewers , although Grendall wrote that some of the older stories had art not on the same level of refinement as her later work *Doll* . Mihara 's storytelling also went over well with critics ; Oxford commended

Mihara 's ability to create unrelated short stories , something not commonly seen in manga . Rating the manga two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half out of four stars , Thompson enjoyed some of the stories , but felt that the occasionally predictable endings or " ideas " that the story failed to expand upon hurt the manga . Upon learning that her illustrations and stories in general had been positively received in the West , Mihara was surprised and pleased " that people are overcoming the cultural barrier and just getting the message ! "

Appearing as a serial in Feel Young from 1998 to 2002 , Mihara 's science @-@ fiction josei manga Doll examines the relationships between the eponymous androids and their human owners in the future . The narrative primarily consists of unrelated short stories , but also develops an overall plot involving Ichiro , a man who illegally remodels the androids , and his revenge against the corporation which creates them . The character Vanilla from " The Sunflower Quality Of An Integrated Circuit " appears in Doll as one of the nine prototypes . Discovered by Ichiro and his Doll companion , she acts as if she suffers from psychological trauma , which she overcomes by recovering her memories of having to bury her master .