Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms

by Fumiyo Kouno
Town of Evening Calm
Country of Cherry Blossoms

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*Yōnagī* is the term for a windless calm that settles in during the evening after sea breezes die down and before inland winds begin to blow.
To all the people who love this world—in which lies Japan in which lies the city of Hiroshima.
YES, NOW GIVE THE THREAD A BIT MORE SLACK.

LIKE THIS?

ALL DONE!

IT'S PERFECT!

OHH...

NOW YOU CAN MAKE THE PATTERN A BIT SLimmer FOR YOURSELF, MINAMI.

I JUST ASKED MOTHER WHAT TO DO.

THANKS TO YOU, I SAVED MYSELF SOME MONEY!
Huh?
Right, Uchikoshi?
Too bad, it really suits you.
No... besides, I'm so clumsy.

Well...
Um...
Just say she would look nice in it!
Furuha, you're asking the wrong guy.
I don't really know about that sort of thing.

Yeah, this is no time for a fashion show.
Oh, it's getting late.
Hey, wait!
But...
I'll go wash it.
Thanks!

Sure, go ahead.

Furuha, can I have this bamboo wrapper?

Bye!
THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD, OTOMI-SAN.

WAIT FOR ME, MIDORI!

BUT YOU'RE ALIVE...

COULD'VE KNOWN IT TO BE TRUE.

NOT EVEN THE BUDDHA...
HI, MINAMI.

I'M HOME!

FURUITA FINISHED THAT DRESS. SHE WAS REALLY HAPPY.

Fujimi and
Minami Hirano

Asahi Ishikawa,
Mito City

ST UP, MINAMI. MY, WHAT MANNERS.

MAYBE HE'LL PLAY FOR BASEBALL TEAM. SOMEDAY.

SO HE JOINED THE CARP TEAM AS USUAL.
I'll write back to him!

I have to pay back Aunt Ishikawa for my tuition too...

Just wait, mother...

Oh it's raining.

Well save up and go visit him!

Fshah

Yes...

Have to tend to that roof.

Plip

Plip

Plip
I came by because you didn't come to work. Shouldn't you be in bed?

Hi, Uchikoshi...

Oh...

Well, this happens quite often...

Is she okay?

I see.

My mother wasn't feeling well, so I took her to the hospital.
SHINY?

AND IT'S SHINY INSIDE BECAUSE OF LAST NIGHT'S RAIN.

HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND, MY MOTHER'S SLEEPING IN THERE...

AND DO YOU THINK HASEGAWA WILL GET 100 YEN?

SHE'S SURE THING.

YOU THINK KANEYAMA 'LL STEAL 400 BAGS THIS YEAR?

I'M GOING TO MAKE A PAIR OF ZORI. I DON'T WANT TO WEAR OUT MY SHOES WALKING TO AND FROM WORK.

OH...

SAY, MINAMI, WHY ARE YOU COLLECTING BAMBOO WRAPPERS?
SO THAT'S WHERE YOU GET THIS UNUSUAL VEGETABLE.
YOU HAVE A BROTHER OVER THERE...?

I THINK YOU'LL MAKE A GOOD WIFE.
YES, BUT IT IS TASTY.
YOU COME FROM A FARMING FAMILY, RIGHT? YOU PROBABLY DON'T EAT THINGS LIKE THIS.
NO, THIS IS A LOCAL DELICACY.
WHAT?!

I'M NEVER GETTING MARRIED!
NOW GO AWAY!

SHUT UP!

UMM, YEAH...
NO, THIS IS A VISITOR?

OH, UH... SORRY, SORRY!
There's something not quite right about everyone in this town.
That's what I've come to realize.

The most terrifying thing is how it changed me. I've become the sort of person one ought to wish dead.

All I know is that somebody wanted us dead.

They wanted us to die, but we survived.

Nobody talks about it.

I don't really understand what happened, even to this day.

Oh, dear. This is why I can't let myself stay bedroomed for long.

I soaked for too long and felt faint.

Let's hurry home.

Oh, no! Our radio show has already started!
WHEN.

I still have a lot to do because of that day I was out last week.

Okay, I'll be leaving then.

UOHOSHI?

OH...

...
Um... it's a gift for this girl I like.

Sure.

What perfect timing. I need your advice.

Is that why you always talk to me about the carp?

How ride.

I thought you were only interested in the carp and Kikuzan the wrestler.

Hmm...

What?

How about this?

Hey, look!

No, I'll probably have to work overtime and forget it.

He's going to be wrestling at the stadium here soon. Are you going?

Would you prefer I talk about Kikuzan?

See you tomorrow, bye.

I'll take this, please.

Oh, give me a break!

If she rejects you, then you can cry into it.

A handkerchief?
MINAMI, WAIT UP!

THANK YOU...

OH!

I HAD MY GRANDMOTHER BACK HOME MAKE THESE. I HOPE YOU CAN USE THEM.

AND HERE...

IN RETURN FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY THE OTHER DAY.
OH. GOOD.

THESE ARE GREAT!
VERY COMFORTABLE.

OOPS ...

DON'T WANT TO GET THEM DIRTY. I'LL USE THEM AS A MODEL TO MAKE ANOTHER PAIR.

TAKING THEM OFF?

YOU'RE NOT GIVING IT BACK?

THAT'S OKAY.

I'M SORRY.
THE HANDKERCHIEF, YOU'RE KEEPING IT?

THANK YOU.

YES...
I'M SORRY...
That's not for you.

A voice told me—you don't belong there in that world.

My classmates were stuck under a fence. I told them I would get help, but I never made it back.

At an emergency shelter, I came upon a group of people sitting in silence. Round and swollen, they didn't look human.

My mother was among them.

AND MIDORI?

WHAT ABOUT KASUMI?

WHERE'S YOUR FATHER?

MINAMI... MINAMI.

I need water! Help me, please!... August Sixth.

I don't know how many people I left to die that day.
That bridge—I came to it on the eighth. I couldn’t find my father nor my little sister Midori. The stench was driving me mad. Kasumi and I threw rubble at the horde of floating corpses in the river.

August Seventh, I found my sister Kasumi.

It no longer bothered me to walk over the dead. Sometimes I stepped on them. Burnt flesh would peel and I would slip.

The ground was so hot my shoes melted and got stuck.

Calmly, I picked out a woman whose body had not rotted away and stole her wooden geta. I had become a different person.

A little bird with charred wings hopped along the ground. I noticed burns on my left arm, a barrette seared into my hair.

We just kept doing it.
I'm home.

Mother never saw what happened that day.

Her face swelled up and she couldn't open her eyes for a month.

I'm going to sleep.

If only I could forget it all.

I remember everything —

everything about my beloved city,

everything about all those people...

Whenever I think I'm happy, whenever I see beauty...

And I get pulled back to the day I lost it all.

That voice calls out to me, "You don't belong here in this world."
My younger brother Asahi had been sent to our aunt’s house in the country where he would be safe. When we went back for him five years later, we barely knew him anymore. He told us in my aunt’s local dialect that he didn’t want to go back to Hiroshima. And because my aunt and uncle so desired, they adopted him.

Father was at work when the bomb hit. We found out that he died the next day.

And Midori never did come back to us.

A week after that day, I brought my mother back home. Our house was half destroyed, and we slept in the entryway.

If only I could forget that all this had happened.
Good morning...

I'm sorry, it won't happen again.

Umm...

Please tell me that it's okay for me to be here in this world.

Please...

Maybe then I won't think about my sisters and the others and feel guilty about having met you.

Let me talk about what happened ten years ago.

Maybe then, I can make sense of why I'm still here. Why I survived.
My grandmother always wants to do something for the people here. That's why she wove those zori sandals for you.

I had an aunt here who died because of the bomb.

I thought that might be it.

I'm so relieved, all my muscles have gone limp.

...Nanami...

Oh...

...Thank you for surviving.

The muscles in my body stayed limp after that.
Uchikoshi started talking to me with more familiarity.

THAT'S WHAT I TRIED TO TELL YOU.

YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT THIS SORT OF THING, ARE YOU?

WHAT'S MAY BE SO.

YOU'RE JUST FATIGUED.

I couldn't go to work the next day.

YOU GET SOME REST NOW.

THANKS FOR VISITING.

TODAY MIGHT BE OUR LAST DAY TOGETHER.

LET'S GO HOME. JUST THE TWO OF US.

WE'LL CHERISH THESE MEMORIES.

PROMISES MADE ON A STREET LINED WITH TREES.

LET'S TAKE THE LONG WAY HOME TONIGHT.

It was the first time I heard him sing.

By morning, I could no longer stand.
In the evening, the doctor gave me a vitamin shot.

And by afternoon I could no longer keep food down.

Does that mean Ichikoshi will be bald too?

Your visitor reminded me of your father as a young man.

Mother made porridge for breakfast.

My sister Kasumi became bedridden two months after that day.

Yes. Live a long life...

A long life...

Late at night, I coughed up dark blood.

Her body covered in purple splotches, she would suddenly start hitting and yelling at us. That's how she was as she passed away.

...Mother and I stopped talking about Kasumi.
GET BETTER SOON, MINAMI.
WE'LL ALL GO TO MIYAJIMA AGAIN.
HANG IN THERE.

From the next day on I had many visitors.

Now I understand what my sister really meant. She wanted a long life for herself.

And then I wasn't able to see anymore.

I brought flowers.

WHO WAS THAT?
MOTHER...

I didn't want to get any blood on that dress we made together.

MINAMI, IT'S ME FURUTA.

YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE HERE TO VISIT YOU.

I tried to avoid touching Furuta.

Someone came and held my hand in silence.

I knew whose hand it was.

Pain...
It's been ten years. I wonder if the people who dropped the bomb are pleased with themselves. "Yes, God, another one!"

I think I'm losing my hand. I'll try tonight. I don't have the strength to raise my head. I'll try tomorrow.

It takes all the help in the world. I have to hold onto the handpan.

I coughed something up. It's not just blood. I'm spitting up my insides.
I feel wind.

This isn't fair.

The evening calm, the yûnagi—has faced?

I thought I was one of the survivors.

This story isn't over yet.

No matter how many times the yûnagi fades, this story won't ever end.
Country of Cherry Blossoms
Sakura no Kuni Part 1

Girl sitting in a tree surrounded by cherry blossoms.
GOEMON! MIKI YOSHI SEE YOU TOMORROW.

WHAT?!

LET'S SEE... YOUR LAST NAME'S ISHIKAWA.

Na ma mi

YES. AND YOU, NANAME? TOG GOING HOME?

YEAH. THAT'S A GOOD ONE!
Our class got an assignment to write about "our dreams for the future."

We'll see about that!

Your new classmates call you Goemon, right?

Hean... Goemon?

Just don't dooole in my books again, Nanami.

I guess there are benefits of us being in different classes.

If I forget a textbook, I can borrow it from you.

Yeah? Then maybe they'll assign it in our class, too.

I'm home.

How was school, Goemon.
Social Studies
Events
Grandma is at the hospital with my brother.
Dad is at work.
I have baseball practice.

I'm going now.
Please don't let them call me Goemon.

Get ready, shortstop.
Okay!
Next!
Hurry up!
Smack

Plonk

OH, SORRY.

OKAY!

NOW, RIGHT FIELD!

GOOD!

ANY OF YOU FOURTH GRADERS WANT TO TAKE NANAMITS PLACE AS SHORTSTOP?

ME!

YOUR NOSE IS BLEEDING, GO SIT AND REST.

PAY ATTENTION.

READY?

COACH ...

C'MON, RUN!
KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BALL!!

WHAT?!

CAN I BORROW 200 YEN?

TOKO.
WANT TO COME?

hm?

I'M OFF THEN!

OH, JUST A LITTLE EXCURSION, MY DEAR.

SURE... WHAT FOR?

LOOK, NANAMI!

WOW. YOU'LL LOOK GREAT IN IT.

YES.

ARE THOSE THEIR SCHOOL UNIFORMS?

REALLY?

THAT'S THE SCHOOL MY MOM WENT TO.

WHEN I'M IN SIXTH GRADE I'LL TAKE THE ENTRANCE EXAM FOR THEIR MIDDLE SCHOOL.
ARE YOU SURE IT'S THIS WAY?

THAT'S A LOT OF PRESSURE.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL GET IN, BUT IF I DON'T, MY MOM WILL BE SO DISAPPOINTED.

GRANDMA'S SCARY ENOUGH.

GOOD THING I DON'T HAVE A MOM.

THE ENTRANCE IS AROUND THE CORNER. CHECK IN WITH THE RECEPTIONIST.

ER... WE'RE HERE TO VISIT A PATIENT.

SHE THOUGHT I WAS A BOY!

SHAAH...

NAGICI ISHIKAWA

SABUROU TANU

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YEAH?

THAT NURSE WAS PRETTY!
Hey, she.

Oh, hello.

She had to take some tests and then she was going home.

Then I'm safe! Look, Toko from next door is here, too.

It's my favorite piece.

Here.

Hi...

Nagio?

Where's Grandma?
SURE THING.

READY, TOKO?

NOW WATCH THIS!

YES. I'VE MEMORIZED IT.

YOU SURE?

WOW!
HERE'S SOME FOR YOUR FRIEND, TOO.

SPECIAL DELIVERY! THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS FROM SCHOOL!

YAY!!

NANAM...

UH, SIE...

TADA!!

RIP RIP

BONK
ME?

AND HOW ARE YOU FEELING, NANA?

DO YOU WANT NAGIO'S ASTHMA TO GET WORSE?

I'VE TOLD YOU NOT TO COME TO THE HOSPITAL.

YEAH ...
OH, GRANDMOTHER ...
I FEEL ALL DIZZY.

YOU HAD A BLOODY NOSE, RIGHT?

JUST KIDDING. SORRY.

GRANDMA?

YEAH, BUT...
Hi there, Eko.

WELCOME HOME, DAD!

WHew! BUSY, BUSY!

DAD...?
I'm sorry, Toko, you got in trouble, didn't you?

No, I look tired...

Maybe it's a new strategy.

Dad didn't say a word about it.

Huh?!

Hey, goe!

What?!

Coach says you have to do ten laps around the school for missing practice.

The one on your dreams for the future?

Hey, goe!

Because I was up late rewriting my essay.

The game's on, you can finish that later.

Oh.

Okay!

Same difference!

Aren't you happy he didn't call you goneon?

So?

What will you write about, Nanami?

Somehow I never got around to hearing about Toko's dreams. He just had too much on his mind. But I didn't realize that until much later.

It wasn't that Dad had chosen not to scold me.

Dreams for the Future
By autumn, Nagio had to commute regularly to the hospital, so we moved to a place close by.

Grandma's test results from that day weren't good. She died that summer.

By winter I'd long since given up trying.

I'm Nanami Ishikawa and I moved here from Yagano.

I'm quite fond of baseball. It's a pleasure to meet you all.

My dream, the one I couldn't talk about, was to become a well-behaved girl like Toko.

You want some more?!

Stupid! Ugly! Goemon!
They have a man on first.

That was a slider.

The third pitch is a ball.

He hits it!

And it's a fastball inside.

That's Eto's second hit of the day.

Again?! I always lose!

Oh no!

Down the third base line, and that will be a double.

Hiroshima is changing pitchers.

Oh!

I will.

Nagio, make sure to wash them good.

Dad, you think the Carp will be the next to go because of all that talk of changing the league system?

I'm glad Eto's doing well, but...
She's a nurse now.

I saw her the other day.

...were they in here?

She ended up not going to that junior college.

I thought her school only had a literature department.

What ever.

Hey, remember your friend Toko Tone?

Nagio...take a look at this.

Whatever? I wasn't good friends?!

Cut for a walk. That's all he told me.

He came back dirty and sunburnt.

Last week while you were away on call, he didn't come home for two days.

You're cut so much you might not have noticed, but Dad's been acting strange recently.

It's five times more than last month.
HEH... I GUESS I CAN COUNT ON MY BROTHER THE HATCHLING DOCTOR! ALL MY SUPPORT IS PAYING OFF!

HE DID JUST RETIRE... MAYBE I SHOULD GET HIM CHECKED OUT AT OUR HOSPITAL...

ALL KIDDING ASIDE, HE MIGHT BE STARTING TO LOSE IT.

HA HA! THAT'S A GOOD ONE!!

YOU THINK HE FOUND HIMSELF A LADY FRIEND?!

HATCHLING??! I'M NOT EVEN A PLEDGELING?!

OH, NO! WE LOST THE LEAD!

NOW WHAT WAS I DOING?

......

I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

DAD, I CUT UP A PEACH.

REMEMBER A DRAGON??

LH...

FAMILY ISSUES TO DEAL WITH.

I'LL PASS.

NANAMI WANT TO GO TO ROPPONGI HILLS TOMORROW?

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?
I FELT LIKE TAKING A WALK ANYWAY.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, DAD.

WHAT?

IF YOU WANT PEACHES, I'LL JUST POP OUT AND GET SOME.

SORRY. OH, MAYBE I DID!

FINE... SEE YA...

I'LL GO CHECK ON HIM.

NAGO, DAD WENT FOR A WALK AGAIN.

SLAM!
WHAT'S UP WITH HIM? HE'S EVEN SLOOMIER THAN USUAL.

AGH! GET OFF ME!!

NANAMI?!

ODD PLACE TO TAKE A WALK.
THAT'S HIM RIGHT THERE, ISN'T IT?

UM, WELL, I'M KIND OF TAILING MY DAD.

IT IS YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HUH? TOKO?!

CH... THANKS.

HE BOUGHT A KIZUO TICKET.

HANG ON A SEC.

SO UH, I'VE GOT TO GO...

NO, I JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE TODAY.

DO YOU COME TO THAT AREA OFTEN, TOKO?

RIGHT!

WHAT AN ODD WAY TO RUN INTO EACH OTHER.

YOU'D BETTER HURRY OR YOU'LL MISS THE TRAIN!
NANAMI... THANKS AGAIN. THIS IS YOUR STOP, ISN'T IT?

...MIND IF I TAG ALONG?

...NEXT STOP, ARAYA KUSHI-MAE.

...LUM... OF COURSE NOT.

...GUESS I'LL GO HOME. I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY ON ME.
LUCKY THERE WERE SEATS LEFT.

HERE'S YOUR TICKET.

YOU HAVE TOMORROW OFF, DON'T YOU?

EXCUSE ME!

BUT ...

WHAT ?!

I'LL LEND YOU SOME.

THANKS ...

I'VE GOT ANOTHER.

KEEP IT ON.

WHew. MADE IT.
OH. NAGO?
I HOPE A CERTAIN INTERN ISN'T MAKING THINGS TOO HARD FOR YOU.
THAT'S RIGHT! YOU'RE A NURSE.
NO. THEY'LL JUST THINK I'M ON NIGHT SHIFT.
S-shouldn't you let your family know where you are?
TOKO?

EACHONE'S FOND OF HIM. THEY CALL HIM GOEMON.

I THINK HE LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE YOU!
NO WAY!!

HA HA ...
HIM TOO? MAKES SENSE. HE'S NOT VERY GOOD-LOOKING.

LET'S SLEEP, I DON'T WANT HIM TO NOTICE ME.

IT'S REALLY BEEN A LONG TIME, HASN'T IT?

THAT'S WHY I RECOGNIZED YOU RIGHT AWAY EVEN AFTER 17 YEARS.

SURE.
YES.

I wish I hadn't run into her.
...they gave off the sunny fragrance of our old neighborhood with its streets lined with sakura trees.

Grandma, are you in pain?

Oh... a friend of Midori's? Who... are you? Did you take your medicine?

I'm sorry, Midori hasn't come home yet.

Grandma, it's me, Nanami.

Her clothes... her hair...

Granda... Where were you? And you...?

How did you survive?
YOU NEVER CAME ON FIELD TRIP FROM SCHOOL?

WHAT?

THIS IS MY FIRST TIME IN HIROSHIMA. IT'S ONLY MORNING BUT IT'S ALREADY SWELTERING.

I HAVE NO IDEA.

WHO'S THAT?
CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE READY.
HERE'S MY NUMBER!

RIGHT. GOOD IDEA!

THAT STREETCAR WILL TAKE ME THERE, RIGHT?

SINCE I'M HERE, MAYBE I'LL GO VISIT THE PEACE PARK.

WHEN...
DEAR TOKO,
YOUR PARENTS CAME BY TODAY AND TOLD ME NOT TO SEE YOU ANYMORE.

TOKO TONE
-Nagio Ishikawa
I AM COMPLETELY HEALTHY NOW.

MY SISTER IS NOW AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN HEALTHY.

GOODBYE,

NAGO TISHIKAWA

AS FOR MY ASTHMA, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER IT WAS CAUSED BY THE ENVIRONMENT OR WHETHER IT WAS SOMETHING I WAS BORN WITH.

THAT'S WHY I UNDERSTAND. I HAVE NO RIGHT TO CAUSE YOUR PARENTS GRIEF OR MAKE YOU BETRAY THEM.

THEY LOVED ME, JUST AS YOUR PARENTS LOVE YOU.

EVERYTHING I AM I OWE TO MY GRANDMOTHER, FATHER, AND SISTER.

THAT'S WHY TOKO INSISTED ON COMING...

My asthma... I was born with something I have been healed...
ASHAJI, YOU'RE ALREADY HERE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, MOTHER.

MR. HRANO.

EXCUSE ME, DO YOU KNOW WHERE FLUJNI HRANO LIVES?

THANK YOU.
YES.
YOU SHOWED HIM THE WAY, KYOKA?

UH...
WELCOME.
I'M KYOKA OTA.

MY NAME'S ASAJI ISHAKAWA. I'LL BE LIVING HERE FOR A WHILE. NICE TO MEET YOU.

THE ENTRANCE CEREMONY IS TOMORROW.

WHEN DO YOU START AT THE UNIVERSITY?

YES, THAT WAS A FINE GREETING.
WAS THAT OKAY?
Here, Kyoka. Some dried plum treats.

Why thank you.

There, got it!

Okay!

Peel off the bamboo first!

They're from Mito. Share them with Motoharu.

Yes, she comes once in a while to help me out.

A neighborhood kid?

Thank you very much.

Think he'd like a baseball glove?

So she has an older brother.

Now it's just her and her brother. He just graduated from junior high.

As you can see, she's just a wee bit slow. I worry about her because her father passed away the other day.
HA HA HA...

Asah, will you teach my brother baseball so he can join the carp?

You're good, Kyoka.

Any cloth will do?

Just like this?

That's right.

I'll be back soon.

My daughter was all thumbs.

Yes...

You have a good apprentice mother.

Know the girl who used to live here? She was my sister.

Because that's who she is, even though our last names are different.

Yeah, but...

Why do you call her mother?

Oh, really?

Like someone on TV.

You sound like you're not from here.
I had to stay late for social studies yesterday. Today was for math.

EVEN COLLEGE STUDENTS GET HOME EARLIER.

WOW. I CAN FEEL THE BUMPS.

TEACHER BEAT ME WITH THE BAMBOO POLE SO MUCH, I'M TALLER NOW.

THAT'S WHY I'M SO SLOW.

WHEN I WAS A BABY... I GOT CAUGHT IN THE FLASH.

PEOPLE ARE TOO QUICK TO BLAME THINGS ON THE BOMB.
I COULD TUTOR YOU PERHAPS.
CARE TO SHOW ME YOUR TEXTBOOK?

I'LL HELP YA.
ER...LET'S SEE THAT BOOK.

THE WAY YOU TALK, YOU MAKE THEM SOUND LIKE SOME FANCY SO-MANCY FRUIT.

HEY, BE SERIOUS.

YOU THINK KYOKO'S MAD?

OH.

SHE CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOUR FANCY EASTERN ACCENT.

SILLY.

HAHA...
THEY MAKE HER STUDY SO MUCH AT SCHOOL AND NOW YOU WANT HER TO STUDY MORE.

HANAKO HAS THREE ORANGES AND ONE APPLE.

TARO BOUGHT THREE APPLES.

MEE HEE
FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH THEY COST. THEN TELL ME IF THEY'RE SO FANCY!

GOTCHA!

Over here.

Toko!

The area becomes: Figure 6.6 and the S zero set in an unbounded domain. Determine the area...

Hmm...

Awe... are you asleep?

Listening to you makes me feel like I'm in Tokyo.
YOU WERE THERE FOR A WHILE.

SO WHAT DO YOU DO?

LOOK. A PEACH.

WENT TO THE PEACE MUSEUM.

DID YOU EAT? I BOUGHT SOME RICE BALLS.

GLAD YOU FOUND ME.

AGH!

BLEEUGH

KOFF KOFF

"-TOKO, ARE YOU OKAY?!!

......

......
...NA...
...MI...

YOU'RE HOME, NA...

MOM...?

OH.
TAKE IT OFF... I'LL WASH IT.

AGH....!

I'LL DO IT.

I'M SO SORRY, NANAMI.
I'm a failure as a nurse.

When I thought how it could just as easily have been my family and friends...

You can wear that.

Your reaction is probably the decent one.

Don't worry.

You come to this kind of hotel often?

Let's see...

Once in a while.
WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE A BATH HERE.

AND THE BATH IS RIGHT IN THE ROOM.

OH!

I DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW THAT.

NAH. I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.

YOU SHOULD HAVE NAPPED, TOO, NANAMI.

WE LOST SIGHT OF YOUR DAD.

I'M SORRY.

I FEEL EVEN LESS LIKE TALKING ABOUT NASO.

YOU HAVE NICE LONG LEGS, YOU AND YOUR BROTHER BOTH.

I'M SO ENVIOUS.

...IN HIROSHIMA.

WE'VE GOT AN UNCLE HERE...

HE WAS ON A BUS GOING TOWARD MYAJIMA. I BET HE'S STOPPING BY UNCLE MOTOHRU'S BEFORE HEADING HOME.

DON'T WORRY. I HAVE AN IDEA WHERE HE WENT.
MY BROTHER GOT MARRIED SO I THOUGHT IT'S TIME I MOVED OUT.

FUTABA

SEAMSTRESS WANTED!
ROOM PROVIDED.
-FUTABA

KYOKA, WHY DON'T YOU MOVE IN WITH US?

OH...

PLUS, YOU CAN USE THE SEWING MACHINE.

YOU'D BE A HELP TO MOTHER, TOO.

AFTER HAVING BEEN AWAY FROM MOTHER FOR SO LONG, IT WAS A LITTLE AwKWARD FOR ME WHEN I CAME BACK. IT HELPEd THAT YOU WERE OVER SO OFTEN.

I'M GRATEFUL TO YOU, YOU KNOW.
YOU INTEND TO MARRY A HIBAKUSHI VICTIM?

I'M NOT REALLY SURE.

OH, WHY CAN'T I DIE?

AND HOW WOULD I EXPLAIN THIS TO YOUR ISHIKAWA PARENTS?

WHY DO YOU THINK WE SENT YOU AWAY TO BE RAISED BY OTHERS?

I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANY MORE PEOPLE I KNOW DIE FROM THE BOMB.
HE WAS ON A DIFFERENT BUS.

BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE, SO I TAGGED ALONG WITH YOU.

I WAS ON MY WAY TO SEE A CERTAIN PERSON.

NANAMI! YESTERDAY, I...

WE DIDN'T HAVE TO DISGUISE OURSELVES!
I'm glad I did, though.

Next time I'll bring my parents.

I guess you are.

You asleep?

Toko...?

And when my grandma died at age 80, no one blamed it on the bomb.

No one ever explicitly said that my mom died at 33 because of the atomic bomb.

Yet people stubbornly believe that both Nagio and I could die at any time because of the bomb.

In the same way...
...I was stubborn in wanting to forget everything that happened to me back in our old neighborhood.

Hello? It's me.
NANAMI, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WALK ME ALL THE WAY HOME.

YOU KEEP SAYING THAT.

WAS THIS NEIGHBORHOOD ALWAYS THIS SMALL?

OH.

OW.

SIS...
WHAT?! NAGIO, PAY HER BACK FOR ME.

I'LL BE GOING NOW.

WHY DID YOU CALL ME OUT HERE SO EARLY IN THE MORNING?

FOUND A PINE-CONE.

WHERE DID YOU SPEND THE NIGHT?

...THEN NEVER WENT HOME.

YOU QUIT YOUR JOB...

AND WHY WITH HER?

WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?

IDIOT!

I SWEAR...
I SEE.

THIS PLACE LOOKS SMALLER BECAUSE ALL THE SAKURA TREES HAVE GROWN BIGGER.

HEY! HER SWEATER!

I CAN RETURN IT THE NEXT TIME I SEE HER.
YOU'RE WATCHING, AREN'T YOU?

Toko Tone
-Nagio Ishikawa

MOM...
I see...

I'm taking mother with me.

What?

You're being transferred?

Yes, to Tokyo.

And uh... I'd also like to take a wife.

And even mother's been saying that as long as we're going to be worried anyway, we might as well all be together.

...I'm almost 34 and all.

...I mean...

I think I'll just go with whoever I lay my eyes on in the next three seconds!

So!

Nobody came by, huh?
I was just teasing.

Asahi...

Oh, Kyoka. You really are slow, aren't you?

It's okay, and you're so thoughtful.

Sorry.

You can be so proper.

Being with you, even I sometimes feel like someone on TV.

Perhaps I'd heard these stories from my mother.

You even gave me three seconds to hide if I wanted.

...I was there, watching them.

From before I was born...

Somehow, I remember these scenes.
I looked down at these two and decided to be born to them. I'm sure of it.
AH...

EVERYONE'S SO QUICK TO ASSUME YOU'RE LOSING IT.

EXCUSE ME?

BEING OLD IS SUCH A BOTHER.

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT!!

AND NOT BECAUSE I'M SENILE!!

IF I TOLD YOU, YOU'D PESTER ME TO BUY YOU THIS AND THAT. I'D NEVER REMEMBER IT ALL.

SILLY.

DID YOU THINK YOU'D SPARE NAGO AND ME FROM WORRYING?

BLT DAD, WHY SNEAK OFF TO HIROSHIMA WITHOUT SAYING A WORD?
She reminds me a little of mom, I think.

Does she?

Oh, the girl who lived next door to our old home.

I was with Toko Tone.

Nagio and Toko might get married.

Dad...

Well...

So... Nanami...

I'm the one who should be crying! It's 'cuz I look like you!!

You're twenty-eight and you never go out on dates.

It's not Nagio but you I'm worried about.
I visited people who knew her and asked them to share their memories of her with me.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of my longest surviving sister.

You know. You remind me of her, Nanami.

If you want, I could introduce you to some people in my singles group.

What?!

I keep learning about things I'd rather not know!

My big sister would be sad if you don't find happiness.

END
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Explanation by author

p. 8: The World Conference Against A & H Bombs was one of the major events that took place in Japan in 1955. The first conference was held on August 6th in Hiroshima.

p. 9: Otome-san was a cheerful song sung by Hachiro Kasuga which was popular in 1984. Kasuga's autobiography was in my father's personal library. In it, Kasuga describes an episode about his wife during their poverty-stricken days, and this gave me the idea for Minami to walk to work barefoot.

p. 9-71: Town of Evening Calm (Yūzagi no Maori) is set in Hiroshima in 1956. Minami lives in an enclave called Aki Dōri (which is different from the present-day Aoki Dōri). Related to as the "atomic slum," many of the people who lived there lost their houses and land to the atomic bomb and the reconstruction that came later. The existence of this enclave came to an end in 1977 and is currently a greenbelt as depicted on page 70.

p. 13: Kaneyama and Hasagawa are both professional baseball players who play for the Hiroshima Carp. In the August of 1955, pitcher Ryutaro Hasagawa achieved his 100th career win, and in September 1955 Jiro Kaneyama stole his 400th base. Neither Minami nor Usuk Koichi are particularly baseball fans, but back then, as they are to this day, all the people of Hiroshima were fans of their beloved Carp. However, in those days, baseball wasn't on TV or radio as it is now. Most people just read about the results of the game in the newspaper on the following day. With fans of the time being as passionate as they were, they must have had great imaginations.

p. 15: Marilyn Monroe and her husband at the time, Joe DiMaggio, visited Japan in 1954. DiMaggio even visited the Carp to give them some tips.

p. 16: [trans. note: In pane 9, Minami exclaims "Oh no! Our radio show has already started!" in the original Japanese, Minami's exclamation specifically refers to the radio show Keio Game (Pop Song Game). The translation of Kouno's original exclamation which references Keio Game follows.] The full name of Keio Game was Meishoku Keiou Game (Brightly Colored Pop Song Game). It was a popular radio show that was broadcast on Friday nights.

p. 18: The popular pro wrestler Rikidozan had a match at Hiroshima's Kene Sogo Ground Stadium on August 1955. Other wrestlers on the card included Azumafuji, Kokichi Endo, Ootaka, Curtis, and Orton.

p. 21: The concrete bridge railings for Heiwa Ohashi (Peace Bridge) and the Nishi Heiwa Ohashi (West Peace Bridge) were designed by Japanese American artist Isamu Naguchi in 1951. The two bridges are located in the southern part of the Peace Park. The railing for Heiwa Ohashi is entitled Aru (to live). It was formerly called Tsukuru (to build or create). The railing on the Nishi Heiwa Ohashi is Shiru (to die). Its former title was Yaku (to pass). At the time, people thought they were too fancy and they weren't very well received.

p. 22: The bridge depicted here is Shin Onashi which was the predecessor to Nishi Heiwa Ohashi. It was actually a lot bigger than how it is drawn here.

p. 27: In doing research for this manga and looking at photos, I discovered that the Genbaku Dome (the Atomic Bomb Dome) has crumbled and become smaller than it was right after the bomb dropped. Some people wanted it to be destroyed to move past the misery of that day, but in 1966 it was decided that the stucture would be preserved to serve as a reminder of future generations of the horrors of nuclear weapons. During Minami's time it was still just the ruins of a building, but I included it as a tribute to the bravery of the Ilakusha who decided to preserve it as a symbol.

p. 30: Tsuki Ga Totomo Aoi Koro (Because the Moon is So Bright) was a popular song during May of 1955, sung by Touzoku Sugawara. Lichiko's lines are from the first verse, and Minami's are from the third.

p. 34: It might not have been completely clear in the manga, but it is not unusual for symptoms of radiation sickness to appear years after exposure. Minami's sickness is a result of her exposure to the bomb ten years ago. Also, the express train from Milito to Hiroshima would have arrived in the morning, so Minami's aunt and brother do not arrive in the evening when the train would be ending. But Minami can't see, so perhaps she believes that it is evening.

p. 37: Country of Cherry Blossoms (Sakura no Kun) Part I is set in 1987 in Tokyo's Nakano District. In the background is the water tank that people called "Mizu no Tou" (Meter Tower). It was built; in the early Showa period (1926-1989). [trans. note: The sign for the Nakano District's Mizu no Tou Park appears on page 89 panel 4.]

p. 39: This futileridge is called Katayanagi Bridge. It crosses over the sakura tree-line Nakano Road.

p. 54: Professional Baseball—Country of Cherry Blossoms (Sakura no Kun) Part II is set in the summer of 2004. There was sudden talk of a move to a one league system, and everyone was quite concerned. By the way, the Hiroshima Carp have not done well these past few years.

p. 66: If you look at headstones in Hiroshima, you'll notice many marked with the date August 6th, 1945. It is sad to see that carve next to those are several more names of people who died within a few months of that date.
Map of Central Hiroshima

*Sites listed in parentheses did not exist in 1955.

- Site of Puruji's house
- Site of Mirami's house
- Site of the Hirosa family home
- Site of the Atomic Bomb Dome
- Site of the Peace Memorial Park
- Site of the Peace Bridge
- Site of the A-bomb Dome (this area was ground zero)
- Site of the Hiroshima Municipal Stadium
- Site of the Ekman Hiro's house
- Site of the Hiroshima Castle
- Site of the Kashi Sogo Ground Stadium
- Site of the Oga River
- Site of the Hiroshima Bay

The Hiroshima family home used to be approximately in this area.
Afterword

"Why don't you do a story about Hiroshima?" asked my editor. That was last summer. I had just handed him an installment of my manga that was being serialized, and he broached the subject while we were chatting about going home for the holidays. Great! I thought to myself. I can use as much of the Hiroshima dialect as I want! I was excited for a moment until I realized that my editor was talking about the Hiroshima. I felt reluctant because when I was a student, there were a number of times when I nearly fainted— at the Peace Memorial Museum and when seeing footage of the bomb. It caused quite a commotion and ever since, I've tried to avoid anything related to the bomb.

I think I decided to go ahead and do this project because this whole time, somewhere deep inside, I've been feeling that it is unnatural and irresponsible to remain disconnected from this issue—or rather, that it is unnatural and irresponsible for me to consciously try to avoid this issue. Although I was born and raised in Hiroshima, I am neither a hibakusha survivor of the atomic bomb, nor am I a second generation hibakusha. I don't have any relatives who can talk about their experience. For me, the atomic bomb is a tragedy that occurred in the distant past. At the same time, it was a circumstance that existed in the background of "other people's households." I always thought all I needed to know about the bomb was that it was a terrifying thing that happened once upon a time, and a subject best avoided. After living in Tokyo for a while, however, I came to realize that people outside of Hiroshima and Nagasaki didn't really know all that much about the ravages of the atomic bomb. Unlike me, they weren't avoiding the subject—they never had the opportunity to learn about it even if they wanted to. Japan is the only country in the world to be hit by the bomb. (Or one of the few countries, if you include depleted uranium ammunition.) And I realized the guilt I feel for enjoying peace is far stronger than the unnatural tendency I had as a person from Hiroshima to
Fumiyo Kouno

Fumiyo Kouno was born in 1968 in Hiroshima, Japan. She started drawing manga in junior high school. After leaving the Faculty of Science at Hiroshima University, Kouno moved to Tokyo and worked as an assistant for manga artists such as Katsuyuki Toda, Aki Morino, and Fumiko Tanigawa. She published her first manga, *Machikado Hana Dayori*, in a commercial magazine in 1995. Kouno graduated with a Humanities degree from the Faculty of Liberal Arts at the University of the Air in 2001. She has since been earning her bread and butter with manga and illustration work.
What impact did World War II and the dropping of the atomic bomb have on the common people of Japan? Through the eyes of an average woman living in 1955, Japanese artist Fumiyo Kouno answers these questions. This award-winning manga appears in an English translation for the first time. Fumiyo Kouno's light, free style of drawing evokes a tender reflection of this difficult period in Hiroshima's postwar past. As the characters continue with everyday life, the shadow of the war and the atomic bombing linger ghostlike in the background.

A widely embraced best seller in Japan, Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms is the winner of several prestigious awards including Grand Prize at the 8th Japan Media Arts Festival (2004), New Life Award at the 9th Osamu Tezuka Cultural Prizes (2005). Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms is made up of interconnected short stories, the first is a love story entitled Town of Evening Calm; followed by the two-part story Country of Cherry Blossoms.

"Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossoms is a profoundly moral work and, even better, a singularly humane one." — Comic World News

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