

Hanako of Tomorrow

By Toru Tamamura

【Cast of characters】

Sayoko

Hanako

Recorded voice

*Live voice is acceptable

* The stage curtain has risen. The flatbed and box horse are in full view.

Sayoko is making large props. (She is singing the theme song of a cartoon.)

Students' voices engaged in club activities can be heard from a distance.

Hanako walks by there. She is on her way home. She walks past Sayoko.

Sayoko: Hey, hey, hey!

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: Don't you want to say something?

Hanako: No, I don't.

Sayoko: Say something hilarious.

Hanako.: Such things can't be done in short order.

Sayoko: Go ahead!

Hanako, I just can't.

Sayoko: Go ahead!

Hanako: No...

Sayoko: Go ahead!

Hanako: Well...You owe Ghibli fans an apology.

* Deadly silence.

A little while later, Sayoko starts making the props again.

Hanako: Hey, don't pretend like it didn't happen.

Sayoko: Well, this is 180 centimeters...

Hanako: Oh, okay. Fine!

* Hanako is going to leave.

Sayoko: Hey, hey, hey!

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: You're still as short-tempered as ever.

Hanako: So what?

Sayoko: It's been a while.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: Doing good?

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: Going home?

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: What are you gonna do when you get home?

Hanako: What do you mean?

Sayoko: You must have too much time at home. What are you gonna do?

Hanako: This and that.

Sayoko: Study? No way.

Hanako: What the hell does that mean?

Sayoko: So, you study?

Hanako: No, I don't.

Sayoko: I knew it.

Hanako: What's that supposed to mean?

Sayoko: You're playing a boring video game anyway.

Hanako: I'm leaving.

Sayoko: Hey, hey, hey!

Hanako: Oh, you're so annoying.

Sayoko: I am just like you.

Hanako: Huh?

Sayoko: I'm probably gonna do the same thing you do.

Hanako:

Sayoko: If you have time, can you give me a hand?

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: You were good with a saw, weren't you?

Hanako: Well...

Sayoko: Something's not going right. I can't cut straight. Hey. Come on, please.

Hanako: If only for a few minutes.

Sayoko: Thank you. Here. Cut it here.

* Hanako puts down her stuff.

Hanako: Where? Here? Okay. So you want me to cut here?

* Hanako cuts.

Sayoko: Oh, that's what I'm talking about. You are so good. The cut is beautiful. You are an expert with a saw.

Hanako: Is there anything else?

Sayoko: Well, can you do this for me, too?

Hanako: Give me that.

Sayoko: She's gullible. So easy (in a low voice)

* Hanako is cutting.

Hanako: What are you gonna do this time?

Sayoko: What?

Hanako: This is for the Security Theater, isn't it?

Sayoko: Yeah, stage settings for the theater.

Hanako: What are you gonna do this year?

Sayoko: You are interested?

Hanako: No, I'm not.

Sayoko: You are.

Hanako: No.

Sayoko: You really like the theater, right?

Hanako: I'm gonna shred your props.

Sayoko: Whoa, wait, wait.

Hanako: What kind of story?

Sayoko: Well, A boy is being bullied. So he is having a tough time and

decides to die, then he goes to the roof of the school building. He meets another boy there, and they work together to stand up to the bullies. And here it is.

* Sayoko hands the script to Hanako.

Hanako: What is this?

Sayoko: Read this.

Hanako: Why me?

Sayoko: You're a good reader. You have talent. You're a genius. I'm jealous. Please, please.

Hanako: ...just for a minute.

* Lighting changes. Music starts.

Hanako: See, there are so many houses and buildings.

They look like little toys from here. But there are a lot of people in there.

People like little toys. They cook, wash, clean, and work.

My Dad worked for one of the companies over there.

It's a construction company, and my old man was a section chief.

One day, the company took on a job to build a new road. It was a big project with billions of dollars at stake.

The company would've made much money if it had gone well. The employees would've received a large salary.

But the road was supposed to go right by a nature reserve.

And it turned out that no matter what they did, the road would be an environmental disaster.

There was ... what d'you call it...an endangered species of bird living in the area.

Dad reported it to the top.

And, of course, it was squashed.

That's natural. After all, it was billions of dollars.

There wasn't a single person in the company who would side with him.

But Dad was an idiot.

He took the report to the newspaper. He took it to a nature conservation

group. He posted it on the Internet.
It caused a big stir.
The road project was canceled.
The birds were saved somehow.
And my dad got fired from his job.
I think he's an idiot. He's an absolute idiot.
There's so much bullying going on in the school.
And then everybody's graduated from that school.
So it's natural that there are bullies in the company.
So it's only natural that there are bullies in this world.
And that's why I sometimes feel like stomping on all of this.

* Music stops—lighting changes.

Sayoko: And now I'm making a fence for the roof of the school building.

Hanako: Hmm.

Sayoko: Hold that end.

Hanako: Okay.

Sayoko: Well, because they're nine centimeters apart, two times nine is 18 centimeters. Three times nine is 27, uh, four times nine is 36, uh...five times nine is...five times nine is... five times nine...

Hanako: Whoa, whoa.

Sayoko: Five times nine is 72.

Hanako: Why?

Sayoko: 63?

Hanako: 45 centimeters! Five times nine is 45!

Sayoko: I'm not good at math.

Hanako: You're not even close to being bad at math.

Sayoko: 45 centimeters, it is. Six times nine is....six times nine...

Hanako: 54! How'd you get into high school?

Sayoko: It's 54 centimeters, ok. We're a good team, aren't we?

Hanako: In what way?!

Sayoko: I'm going to screw a piece of square wood here. Where's the screwdriver?

Hanako: Hey.

Sayoko: What?

Hanako: How come you're the one making the props?

Sayoko: What do you mean?

Hanako: You are the last person who should make props.

Sayoko: Just a minute.

Hanako: Isn't there anyone else who can do a decent job?

Sayoko: Isn't that a terrible thing to say?

Hanako: A high school student who can't do the multiplication table is not decent. What happened to the first years? Where are the new members?

Sayoko: They're...well, you know, they are...never mind.

Hanako: What are you talking about?

Sayoko: Uh. First-year students are not ready to be in charge of essential props, you know.

Hanako: Then, what about the second years? Some second-year students are more capable than you. How about Aki-chan? Yumi? or Yohchin?

Sayoko: Aki-chan's not available today.

Hanako: She isn't?

Sayoko: She's on a journey.

Hanako: A journey?

Sayoko: Yeah. A journey of self-discovery. Like, "What am I? Let's leave the old me behind and become the new me. Let's become my true self." Aki-chan is on such a journey of the soul.

Hanako: Then, how about Yumi? What happened to Yumi?

Sayoko: Yumi is undergoing training.

Hanako: Training?

Sayoko: She's been going to a karate gym for a long time. She's a karate rank holder. She once crushed the ribs of a man molesting her on the train.

Hanako: I don't remember that.

Sayoko: After watching Ghibli's "Princess Mononoke" on TV, she said she would kill the demon this time and couldn't do it now, so she had to go train herself. She has been training in the mountains since last week.

Hanako: What about Yohchin? The last time I called her, she was at home.

Sayoko: Yes, she was. Yohchin is at home. She is always at home.

Hanako: Then why isn't she coming to school?

Sayoko: Well, you know, uh, she is molting now.

Hanako: Molting!?

Sayoko: They say her family members all shed their skin. Didn't you know that? Then they get larger a little. But after they molt, they must stay inside for a while because their new skin is vulnerable to the sunlight. I went to her house yesterday, and though it was daytime, the curtains were closed, and the place was utterly dark. I don't know what to do. Are you listening?

Hanako: Yeah, I am.

* A brief silence

Sayoko: You know,

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: Can you come back to the club?

Hanako: I can't.

Sayoko: Can you work something out?

Hanako: I can't.

Sayoko: I know you have nothing to do anyway.

Hanako: I can't.

Sayoko: You like performing.

Hanako: You're so persistent.

Sayoko: I'm just trying to say...

Hanako: I'm leaving.

Sayoko: Okay, ok, I'm shutting up now.

* The sound of athletic clubs practicing from afar. Hanako notices that Sayoko is writing something in her notebook, leaving the work to Hanako.

Hanako: What are you doing?

Sayoko: I'm working on the next story.

Hanako: The next story?

Sayoko: For the theater festival.

Hanako: Already?

Sayoko: Yeah.

Hanako: In this situation?

Sayoko: What situation?

Hanako: Now I know why you're so bad at studying.

Sayoko: Would you like to listen to the next story?

Hanako: I don't particularly want to...

Sayoko: Thank you.

Hanako: ...listen to it.

Sayoko: There's a story I heard from my grandma long ago, and I'm thinking of a play based on it. In the beginning, when Grandma was a child, she was still around our age.

Hanako: I'm just trying to say...

Sayoko: The story took place 73 years ago. It begins with the Great Fukui Earthquake.

* The roar of the earthquake. Lighting changes. Hanako is thrown to the floor.

Sayoko: It was 4:13 p.m. on June 28, 1948. The epicenter was about 10 kilometers north-northeast of Fukui City in Fukui Prefecture. The magnitude of the earthquake was 7.1 on the Richter scale. The quake hit Fukui City, still recovering from the air raid of three years ago. And it caused tremendous damage to Fukui. There were 3,769 casualties and more than 22,000 injured.

* Lighting changes. Broadcast the voice on a recording.

Voice of the recording: Matsuki-san's place is hopeless. There was an old woman in that house, but she wouldn't make it because the main roof came down.

I don't think Kinsaku-san's place could survive, either. The storehouse and everything else were all smashed.

Every house around here is in the same situation. I don't know when my house will collapse.

Again.

Have to start all over again.

What's going on in the world?

Sayoko: My grandma's name was Hanako.

* Music starts.

Sayoko: Dad pulled out a mosquito net from inside the collapsed house. It was a square tent-like mosquito net made of fine mesh. People used to hang nets like this in our rooms to protect themselves from mosquito bites. Dad and Hanako hung the net from a tree branch at the shrine. They slept in the mosquito net.

* Hanako lies down. Stars come out.

Hanako: Dad, I'm not feeling too down. It's fun. It's kind of fun. I can see the stars better from here. I'll quit school. I'm gonna stop school and work. In general, I never liked school.

* Music stops. Hanako faces forward.

Hanako: I'll never use English throughout life, and I have no idea why I need to study math. And trigonometric functions, differential, and integral calculus, what the hell are they?

Sayoko: What? I didn't write such a thing...

Hanako: To all adults in the audience, I have a question. Have you used the quadratic function since you graduated from school? What about the conjugation of Japanese Nidan verbs? If you've used them, please raise your hand honestly. Then, please explain clearly and concretely how you used it and how useful it was for you. Go ahead.

Sayoko: No, I didn't write such...

Hanako: In a nutshell, schoolwork keeps teachers from losing their jobs. Don't you think so? What's the point of learning Japanese grammar like personification or Taigendome? "Let's make a good country, Kamakura shogunate government." to remember the numbers? Our school is an agricultural high school, but not even 10% of the students work in

agriculture after graduation. And then why do we have to study agriculture? And why do we even have practical training? Why do we have to plant and harvest rice? Why?

Sayoko: Um, I didn't write such lines.

Hanako: But English teachers, math teachers, and agriculture teachers know all about that. But if teachers mention it, they would lose their jobs, get unemployed, and not be able to pay for the mortgage on their house, their children's education, or the beer for dinner. Teachers collude with each other like, "Guys, let's keep our mouths shut."

Sayoko: Wow, wow, stop it, please. Please, please, please stick to the script.

* Hanako instantly switches roles.

Hanako: I wanna work. And I'll make money. I'm gonna make money and build a house. A much bigger house. Then, Dad, we can live together. I can do anything I want with money!

* Lighting changes.

Sayoko: Grandma quit school for real. She started working. She worked at a sewing factory. She stepped on the sewing machine every day.

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

* Hanako mimes.

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako couldn't make much money. But she never gave up and stepped on the sewing machine.

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako still couldn't make much money. But she never gave up and stepped on the sewing machine.

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: Then, a war broke out in the neighboring country.

* Sound effects of war are played over the sound system. The sound of machine guns: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: Grandma's factory was flooded with orders. Orders poured into factories all over Japan. The whole country's economy started to improve.

* The sound of machine guns and sewing machines overlap.

GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: Hanako made money.

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: She made money, made much money, and earned tons of money.

Hanako: GAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGA

Sayoko: She finally saved up quite a lot of money.

Hanako: Yay!

Sayoko: "This is enough for a down payment on a new house," she thought. Hanako rushed home. But she couldn't make it in time. Hanako's house had burned down in a fire. Her father, who had been drinking and smoking in his sleep, was burnt to death.

* The villager's voices are played on the recording.

Recording: It's not your fault, Hana-chan,

Recording: Yeah, that's right. Not your fault.

Recording: It's because your father drank so much.

Recording: He drank all the money Hana-chan sent him.

Recording: He was broken.

Recording: People can be broken.

Recording: It's not your fault, Hana-chan.

Recording: That's right, it's not your fault.

Hanako: I can do anything with money!

* Lightning changes.

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako's Dad was a professional soldier. Most people were drafted into the military and became soldiers reluctantly, but a career military man was meant to be a soldier from the start. So, professional soldiers seemed to be a bit arrogant during the war. And everyone respected them. People thought soldiers were important because they were protecting the country. But Japan lost the battle. Whose fault is it that we lost? Whose fault is it that we are in such a terrible situation? Who started this war? Everyone couldn't help but blame someone else. Granny Hanako's Dad wasn't able to work anymore. No one hired Dad. There was nowhere for him to go.

* Lightning changes.

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako never returned to her village after that. She also quit the sewing factory. She went to a seaside town where she didn't know anyone. Then she got married.

* Sayoko wears a middle-aged man's mask.

Sayoko: Nice to meet you. I'm your husband.

Hanako: Look...

Sayoko: My job is fishing. My specialty is that I can fillet a fish into three pieces. I'm confident in my health. Let's do our best together!

Hanako: What are we doing together?

Sayoko: Okay, let's make a baby!

Hanako: What?!

Sayoko: Let's make it right away, make it now, and make many babies.

Hanako: Hey,

Sayoko: Fukui Norin High School Drama Club finally breaks the taboo of High School theater! Behold the dazzling mystery of life!

Hanako: Hey, hey, hey.

Sayoko: Don't worry. The audience won't see us if we dim the lights and make it dark.

Hanako: Hey, come on!

* Baby's voice played over the sound system.

Sayoko: Tut!

Hanako: What the hell are you thinking?

Sayoko: You blew a great opportunity.

Hanako: That's why I was asking what you were thinking.

*Sayoko takes off the mask.

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako now had a happy family.

But the next storm was already upon them. As someone once said, "Peace is a period of preparation for war." In 1954, a budget for atomic energy research and development was submitted to the Diet by Yasuhiro Nakasone and several other Diet members. They belonged to the KAISIN Party at the time. The budget at that time was 235 million yen. This was in honor of uranium 235, a substance used in nuclear reactors. What the hell is that? In 1955, the Atomic Energy Basic Law was established. In 1956, the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute was established in Tokai Village, Nakagun, Ibaraki Prefecture, which became Japan's nuclear research center.

* Lighting changes.

At a village meeting.

Sayoko puts on the mask again.

Sayoko: Roads are going to be widened, and bridges are going to be built.

Hanako: The roads will be paved, right?

Sayoko: We gonna have traffic lights, crosswalks, and a pedestrian bridge.

* The couple looks upward.

The couple: A pedestrian bridge...

Sayoko: Many people will come—first, who build nuclear power plants. Then

the people who work there. Some may even come to watch.

Hanako: All those people will buy food. They'll buy things to wear.

Sayoko: Then there'll be more stores. Buildings will be built—a building with an elevator, of course.

* The couple looks upward.

The couple: An elevator...

Sayoko: So I guess we're in favor of this, yeah?

Hanako: I heard the prefectural government is on the same page.

Sayoko: I heard a lot of grant is coming in.

* The couple looks upward.

The couple: A grant...

Hanako: But...

Sayoko: What?

Hanako: Why are we getting a grant?

Sayoko: Why? That's, that's, you know, that's "Thank-you money."

Hanako: "Thank-you money"?

Sayoko: Oh, yeah. "You've done well for your country. Thank you for your hard work. Here is the thank-you money.

Hanako: No, no, no. That's not what I meant.

Sayoko: What? Do you still have something else?

Hanako: They say there's always a catch to every good thing. Are you sure we can trust that thing?

Sayoko: You're suspicious, you know that?

Hanako: There. It sounds like a good idea, but wouldn't it make your job impossible? I feel that this nuclear power plant is not what it seems.

Sayoko: Hey, look here.

Hanako: Because "Thank-you money" means something you do is very hard to do, isn't it? Thank you for picking up trash, thank you for weeding the rice paddies, thank you for taking care of the cows. If that's the case, what

will we be thanked for?

Sayoko: A pedestrian bridge.

Hanako: Ugh.

Sayoko: An elevator.

Hanako: Ugh.

Sayoko: A grant

Hanako: Ugh!

Sayoko: So, we'll call it a yes, okay?

Hanako: Ugh!

Sayoko: Okay?

Hanako: But! Are you sure it's not dangerous, that thing?

Sayoko: That's enough!

* Lightening changes.

Music.

Hanako: In 1970, Tsuruga Nuclear Power Station Unit 1 started operation in Fukui Prefecture. In the same year, Mihama Nuclear Power Station Unit 1 began operation in Fukui Prefecture. In 1972, Mihama Nuclear Power Station Unit 2 started operation in Fukui Prefecture. In 1974, Takahama Nuclear Power Station Unit 1 started operation in Fukui Prefecture. In 1975, Takahama Nuclear Power Station Unit 2 began operation in Fukui Prefecture. In 1976, Mihama Nuclear Power Station Unit 3 started operation in Fukui Prefecture. In 1979, Ooi Nuclear Power Station Unit 1 started operation in Fukui Prefecture.

Sayoko: That's a bit too Ooi; There are too many nuclear power plants in Fukui Prefecture.

Hanako: Not funny.

Sayoko: Then, what about this?

"Even if you count the number of people killed in car accidents yearly, it doesn't mean we should stop driving cars. After all, cars are convenient.

People tend to talk about nuclear power only in terms of risks. But we live in a society where there are different types of risks. The odds of being stabbed by a pervert are higher than that of a nuclear accident. (hahaha)”

Hanako: Who said that?

Sayoko: Here’s another one.

“People who criticize nuclear power often say, "What happens if an earthquake hits and the reactor breaks down?“ But you know, nuclear power plants must be more careful than other facilities to ensure they are safe during a quake. So if an earthquake happens, it may be safest to escape to a nuclear power plant. (hahaha)”

Hanako: Who said that?

Sayoko: He is a very famous comedian, along with Tamori and Sanma. He's not an expert, just a comedian, so I think taking him seriously is stupid. But no matter how much of a comedian you are, there are certain things you shouldn't say as an adult. There are some things you have to take responsibility for. You can even make mistakes. I understand that. But if you make a mistake, you should at least say, “I made a mistake.” and “I’m sorry” Even children say sorry. Well, Takeshi Kitano is an adult.

Hanako: Now that's what you call a "slip of the tongue"?

Sayoko: Yes, I just made a slip of the tongue. I am sorry. (hahaha)
There's also stuff like this.

“Well, nuclear power plants are coming to our town. Then, we get money from the power source siting laws, but in addition, each region has its requests for off-the-book money and cooperation money for regional development. We ask JAPC Genden, PNC Donen, and Hokuriku Electric Power Company to repair the shrine for 300 million yen. So, a junior college would be built, a high school would be built, and a sports park would be built with 5 billion yen. That's much money called windfall profits to build a

town. But instead, there might be the katawa; the children with disabilities born in 100 years, or all the children born in 50 years might be the katawa. ; the children with disabilities. I don't know, but it would be better to go ahead with the nuclear power plant at this stage.”

Hanako: Who said that?

Sayoko: Mayor of Tsuruga. He was invited to speak at the local chamber of commerce and industry when the construction of a nuclear power plant was discussed in Shiga in Ishikawa Prefecture. Soon after, it leaked to the press, and he received public criticism, and in the next election, he was...

Hanako: He was not elected.

Sayoko: That's the scariest part of this story. He didn't lose the election.

Hanako: No way!

Sayoko: He was not eliminated. He was re-elected and remained mayor after this.

Hanako: Seriously? What were the adults doing? How gutless can they be?

Sayoko: You can say that, but you didn't know it happened. You didn't know that it happened until now.

Hanako: That's true, but...

Sayoko: We forget quickly. We forget wars, earthquakes, and nuclear power plants. We are that kind of creature.

Hanako: Natural disasters come when you least expect them.

Sayoko: March 11, 2011. It came again.

* Earthquake-sound.

Lighting changes. In a dark room. Sayoko is watching TV with a beer can in hand. She can't take her eyes off the TV for a long time. A while later, Hanako comes into the room.

Hanako: You shouldn't drink beer.

Sayoko: It's OK.

Hanako: It's not OK.

Sayoko: It is all right.

Hanako: Oh, gee.

* For a while.

Hanako: That's terrible.

Sayoko: How long have we been together?

Hanako: What? Why all of a sudden?

Sayoko: How long?

Hanako: Exactly 50 years. We married in 1961-the same year that Mr. Tamamura of Fukui Norin High School was born.

Sayoko: Who is that?

Hanako: So, what's going on?

Sayoko: Our children are all grown up, each with their own families and children, making a decent living.

Hanako: That's true.

Sayoko: I'll be 80 next year. Eighty years have passed. I wonder what my 80 years were...

Hanako: What's wrong with you?

Sayoko: I mean, I was a fisherman, but I quit. I quit and started working at the nuclear power plant. That's how I've been living.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: That's why we were able to send our children to college and get them out of this village, and that's why they were able to get wives. They rarely come back to the village anymore, however. If I had been a poor fisherman, what would have become of the children now?

Hanako: I can do anything with money!

Sayoko: What?

Hanako: Never mind. So what's going on?

Sayoko: I wasn't wrong, and I don't think I was wrong at all for a second. What do they know? Those demonstrating with placards against nuclear power plants? What do they know? Those happily using electricity in the city and only campaigning against nuclear power plants? What do those, who only say pretty words, understand?

Hanako: Hey, dear.

Sayoko: Nothing has changed. Even now, that feeling hasn't changed. Everyone's in favor of it. The village people, the mayor, and even the county's top officials were all for it. If that's the case, it's only natural to agree. It's for everyone's good. It's for everyone's happiness. What's wrong with that? But I don't know why. I don't know why I feel like stomping on all of this.

* For a while.

Hanako: You're not wrong.

Sayoko: Huh?

Hanako: You're not wrong.

Sayoko: What?

Hanako: We all just wanted to be happy. What's wrong with that?

* Hanako takes Sayoko's beer and gulps down.

Sayoko: Whoa, whoa, whoa.

Hanako: What's wrong with that?

* Hanako turns her face down. Sayoko closes her notebook.

Lighting changes.

Sayoko: Hey.

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: I still want you to come back to the club.

Hanako: I can't.

Sayoko: Can't you do something about that?

Hanako: I can't.

Sayoko: Because you have to study?

Hanako: My folks are strict.

Sayoko: But...

Hanako: The last time I took a mock exam, I placed very low. And then, they were like,

"It's because you're in the school club," "What's the point of doing theater if you're not going to be an actor in the future?"

Sayoko: We're in the same situation.

Hanako: Huh?

Sayoko: Sorry. I have to apologize to you. Aki-chan isn't on a journey, Yumi isn't training for karate, and Yo-chin isn't shedding her skin. I've been tricking you.

Hanako: Don't worry. I was not tricked at all.

Sayoko: I just got a text on LINE, and everybody has left the club.

Hanako: What?!

Sayoko: They all had the same reason. They said they were going to study for their future. There is no time for the theater.

Hanako: Well...

Sayoko: So, will you keep company with me for a little while?

Hanako: Well...

Sayoko: Just a little more.

* Buzzing of cicadas.

Sayoko: On June 23, 2021, the No. 3 reactor at the Mihama Nuclear Power Plant of the Kansai Electric Power Company, which has been in operation for more than 40 years, restarted its function, becoming the first nuclear power plant in Japan to resume after 40 years of work following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant 10 years ago.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: In principle, nuclear power plants were limited by law to a 40-year operation period. But, as an exception, they can be extended to a maximum

of 60 years if they pass the government's examination.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: It's like a used car that can still be used if repaired.

Hanako: You know so much.

Sayoko: It's not hard to find this stuff on a smartphone. Don't make light of high school girls.

Hanako: Sure thing.

Sayoko: If it is a car, then accidents might as well happen. But we're talking about a nuclear power plant.

Hanako: Yes.

Sayoko: Even after something like that happened.

Hanako: Yeah.

* Buzzing of cicadas. Sayoko opens her notebook.

Sayoko: Now, the story jumps to 100,000 years in the future!

Hanako: What?

Sayoko: Grandma Hanako is reincarnated on Earth 100,000 years later!

Hanako: What are you saying?

Sayoko: The story finally goes into science fiction!

* The opening song of Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind.

Hanako: Hey, hey.

Sayoko: The industrial civilization that emerged on the western fringes of the Eurasian continent spread to the entire world within a few hundred years, forming a vast industrial society. Giant industrial civilization has robbed the earth of its wealth and polluted the atmosphere. The Industrial culture, which transforms life forms at will, peaked after 1,000 years and then sharply declined. During the war known as the "Seven Days of Fire," Cities collapsed, emitting toxic substances. Complex and sophisticated technological systems were lost, and the most land surface became barren. Since then, industrial civilization has not been rebuilt, and humanity has lived through a long twilight period.

* Sayoko brings a stone monument and plays the role of a villager.

Sayoko: (Acting as "Mitoji" in "Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind") Oh, princess, you are here.

Hanako: What's this setting?

Sayoko: Princess, we can't allow you to walk around so freely. There is much trouble these days.

Hanako: So, what am I supposed to do? For the record, I can't talk to Ohmu, and I can't fly on a Mōwe.

Sayoko: Who's talking about giant sowbugs or single-seater lightweight flying devices? I'm talking about a mysterious pandemic.

Hanako: Pandemic?

Sayoko: I'm talking about that horrible plague spreading in our country and taking lives one after another.

Hanako: Plague?

Sayoko: So, we are off on our adventure!

Hanako: No, no, no, no, no. Come on.

Sayoko: (Acting as "Master Hee" in "Princess Mononoke") "No one can change their destiny. But we can decide whether to wait or to go ourselves. If you go to that land and look at things with unclouded eyes, you may find a way to break the curse."

Hanako: I told you to stop ripping off.

Sayoko: (Acting as "Pazoo" in "Laputa: Castle in the Sky") "Let's go, auntie! That's the way my dad went! And he made it back!"

Hanako: Shut up! I'm not your auntie.

Sayoko: (Acting as "Princess Clarice" in "Lupin the Third: Cagliostro's Castle") "Please take me with you. I'm not a thief yet, but I'll learn."

Hanako: Stop talking! Are you a would-be criminal?

Sayoko: Princess, we've reached our destination.

Hanako: Wow, what a fast-paced story.

* The stone monument has a big sign that says, "It's dangerous here."

Hanako: "It's dangerous here."

Sayoko: Oh, impressive, Princess. You have read and understood the complex ancient script no one has decoded.

Hanako: Well, but it's in HIRAGANA.

Sayoko: In 100,000 years, nobody will be left who uses HIRAGANA. For example, not all pictographs engraved on the Egyptian pyramids have been decoded. They are only a few thousand years old at most. I wonder how many people in Japan can read the Tale of Genji in its original text, which we learn during our classical literature class. It's only a thousand years old. It is predicted that all languages currently in use will be indecipherable.

Hanako: Who are you explaining to?

Sayoko: So, Princess, what does it say here?

* At the back of the stone monument. A little more detail is written on it.

Hanako: "We have buried the radioactive waste from the nuclear power plants here. I am genuinely sorry that we have to leave such a negative legacy to you all in the future. Our science and technology have finally failed to detoxify the radioactive waste. I do hope you continue to manage it carefully for the following period. The approximate duration of the safety level is as follows.

Radioactive cesium	300 years
Plutonium.	240,000 years
Iodine-129	160 million years.

* Silence.

Hanako: Hey, wasn't there an earthquake around here recently?

Sayoko: Oh, yes, there was an earthquake. The country is prone to earthquakes. Houses and castles collapsed, and there were cracks in the ground everywhere. How did you know about it, Princess?

Hanako: The earthquake damaged the storage container underground, probably. So, the radioactive waste inside leaked out.

* Hanako feels dizzy and collapses. Sayoko follows her and slumps down.

Sayoko: Princess, how can we get this pandemic under control?

Hanako: There's no way.

Sayoko: Oh, no.

Hanako: There is nothing you can do about radioactive materials once they are created. You bury them, hide them, and forget about them. But forgetting doesn't make them go away.

Sayoko: Princess, my body is...

Hanako: I'm sorry. There's nothing I can do.

Sayoko: Oh, I wanted a boyfriend for once! I wanted to meet up with him, and then he would be late, and I'd be waiting for him for two hours, and I'd look at him like nothing happened at all, and then I'd say, "I just got here too!"

Hanako: Hey...

Sayoko: I also wanted him to stand me up against the wall in the middle of the stairs leading to the roof of the school building. He would pin me against the wall. Oh, I wanted him to say, "Go out with me"!

Hanako: Oh, you should drop dead right now!

Sayoko: Please don't forget about us in the future. Please don't forget about the future that is dying like this, everyone in the past, please don't forget about us in the future...

* Music. Lighting changes. Stars begin to appear.

Sayoko: Oh, this isn't working!

* Lighting changes. Music stops.

Hanako: It can't end like this!

Sayoko: Not with a play like this!

Hanako: Nobody cares about the future!

Sayoko: I don't feel it in my heart!

Hanako: Hey. No one is living considering the future, right? We use electricity and gasoline as much as we want. You also use a lot of plastic products. You also drink juice in plastic bottles and litter them all over. You

don't care about it, right?

Sayoko: Even this theater festival gets some money from nuclear power plants. We can put on plays thanks to nuclear power plants. This is ridiculous!

Hanako: The point is, how much electricity is used for lighting, sound, and air conditioning? How much CO2 is being produced?

Sayoko: The drama clubs use much paper, right? We print scripts and so on. How do we make that paper? I wonder how many forests we've destroyed.

Hanako: We're not thinking about anything. We've never thought about anything. We never thought about how much trouble Hanakos of tomorrow would have in the future. Oh, making this play won't do anything. It won't change anything! No one cares about the future. Everyone is too busy with the present. They're too busy with themselves. They're too busy hurting each other.

Sayoko: NO!

Hanako: NO!

Sayoko: Aaaaah!

Hanako: Aaaaah!

* The two girls run around, screaming and destroying stage sets. They get exhausted and throw themselves on the floor.

Hanako: I'm quitting the drama club, I swear.

Sayoko: Yeah.

Hanako: I am not doing plays anymore.

Sayoko: Yeah.

Hanako: I'm gonna study. I'm gonna study hard and become great. That's the way I'm gonna change this world.

Sayoko: I'm staying in the drama club, I swear.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: I'm gonna write a play.

Hanako: Yeah.

Sayoko: I'm gonna write a play. I'm gonna write many plays. That's the way I'm gonna change this world.

Hanako: That's impossible, of course. Silly.

Sayoko: Of course, you can't do that. Silly.

Hanako: The winner will be decided...

Sayoko: in 100,000 years.

Hanako and Sayoko: Oh yeah.

* Hanako starts walking. Sayoko unfolds her notebook and starts writing.

The curtain comes down—the end.