

Nanohana

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MOTO HAGIO

Translated by Rachel Thorn
Introduction by Frenchy Lunning

Nanohana

We were very privileged to be given permission to reprint a short story from Moto Hagio's *Nanohana* (2012)¹ for this *Mechademia* book. Moto Hagio is one of the remarkable group of female mangaka called the *nengumi 24*, who are credited with developing the shōjo genre in all its visual and diverse narrative richness. Moto Hagio, who for the past forty-two years has produced one masterpiece after another, had a hit with her first foray into manga with the series *The Poe Clan* (1972–76), which examined the intricacies of human life as seen through the eyes of a vampire boy and earned her the Shogakukan Manga Award in 1976.² She has continued to weave her complex, emotional stories of the human condition—sometimes as science fiction—but always about those characters in states of trauma and/or abuse as social and cultural “outsiders.”

But *Nanohana* responds to a different trauma: the environmental disasters in Japan. Moto explains:

The accident at Chernobyl had been nagging at me for some time. When disaster struck a Japanese nuclear power plant in 2011, I was overcome with despair. But despair does not help us move forward, so I made “Nanohana” as a way of cheering myself up. I want to think together with everyone else about Fukushima and Chernobyl, about the future of the Earth, about the future of humankind, and to keep thinking moving forward.³

In this work, Moto Hagio writes about a young girl, Naho, who is evacuated as her home is ravaged by the 2011 Fukushima disaster. But in the midst of her anxiety, she transcends her dire reality to another time and space: the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, where she encounters surprising parallels to her own life. Mary Knighton suggests that these “2011 disasters of first earthquake and tsunami, followed by the reactor meltdowns and weeks of aftershocks, continue today due to the lingering crisis at Fukushima Daiichi. These events, known as 3.11, compounded the precarity in recessionary Japan—literally displacing the *ibasho* (home, and sense of belonging) of hundreds of thousands in Tohoku—and deepened a quotidian experience of malaise at a crisis constantly in the news, with no end in sight.”⁴

Drawn with Moto’s usual beautiful, delicate, clear line style and sensitivity, Naho’s anxiety, which has propelled her into another world or dimension, becomes a meditation on our global environmental crisis and introduces a potential healing solution that, though perhaps naïve, still gestures dream-like toward a return to a respect for the land and a reexamination of our practices as well as a reconciliation in terms of our future behavior.

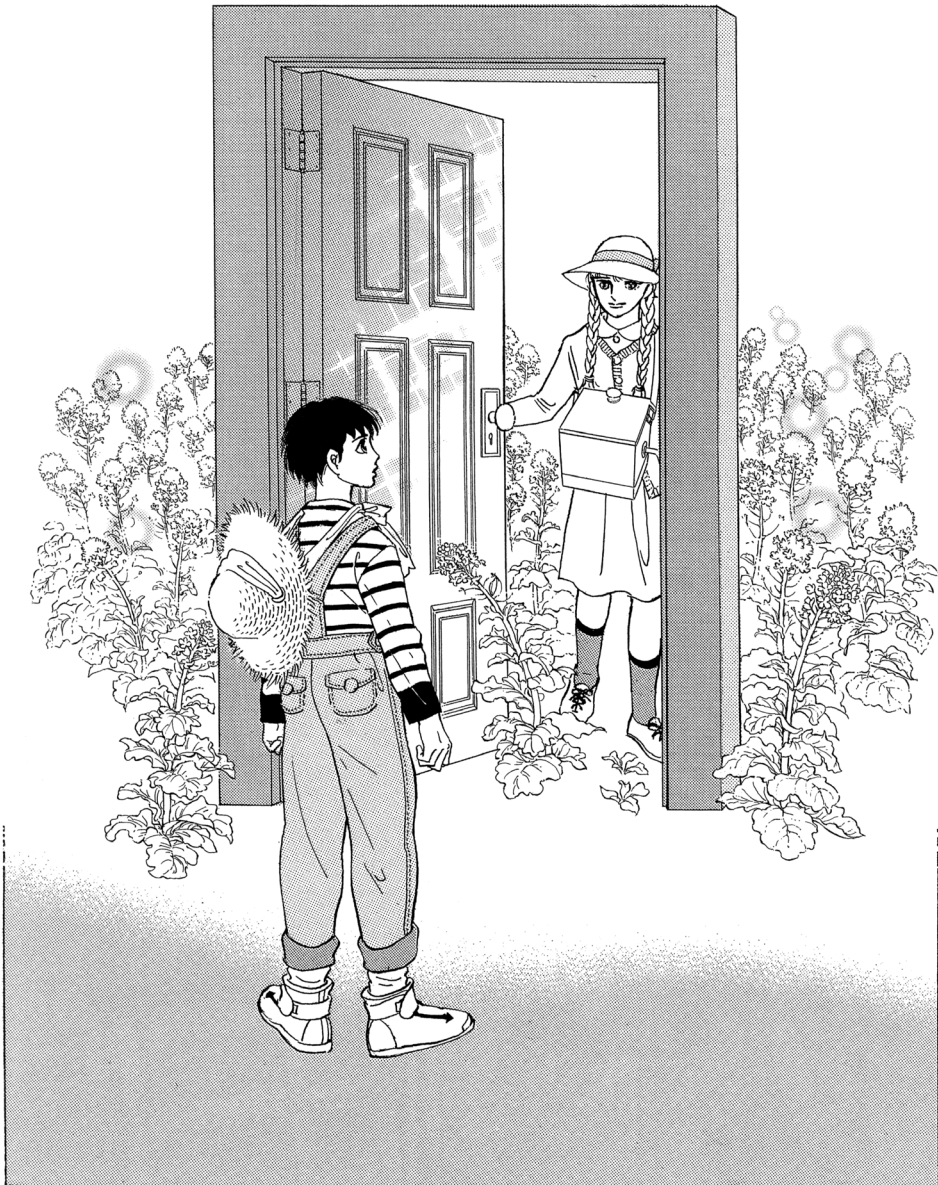
Rachel Thorn, long a friend and translator of Moto’s work, had to respond to the peculiarities of the original Japanese dialogue as written by Moto, in that “many of the characters in this story speak in a northeastern Japanese dialect; some more thickly than others. In order to convey the sense of the difference between these characters’ speech and that of characters speaking ‘standard’ Japanese, I chose to translate that speech into Scottish English. This decision was enthusiastically endorsed by Moto Hagio. To ensure authenticity, I enlisted the help of my generous friend Keaira Finlay, a native speaker of Scottish English.”⁵

Further, the difficult work of flipping and fitting our horizontal-based language into the Japanese vertical-based language balloons, requiring an expertise in the comics style of dialogue in both languages, as well as significant graphic design chops, was achieved by designer Rana Raeuchle, a *Mechademia* regular, who always manages these difficulties with great skill and expediency.

Notes

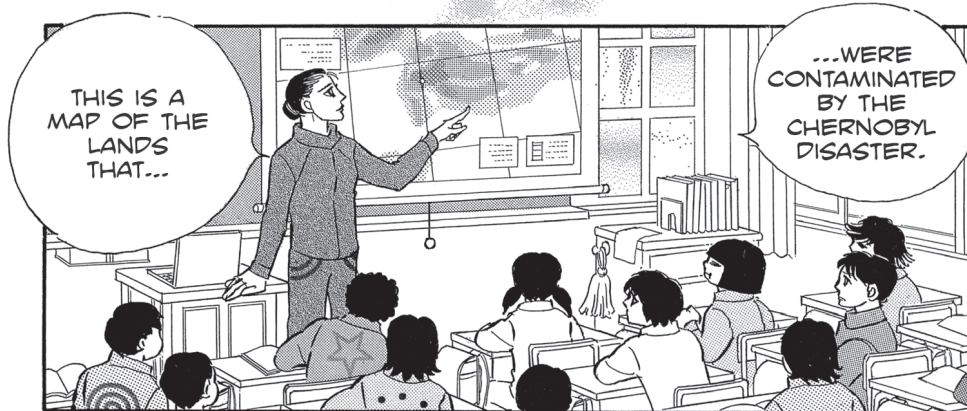
1. Moto Hagio, *Nanohana* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2012).
2. Rachel Thorn. "Shōjo Manga." *Matt-Thorn.com*. Interview. Also published in *Comics Journal*, no. 269 (July/August 2005).
3. Moto Hagio, quoted from an e-mail to Rachel Thorn, July 17, 2014.
4. Mary A. Knighton, "The Sloppy Realities of 3.11 in Shiriagari Kotobuki's Manga しりあがり寿がマンガで描く3.11のぞんざいな現実." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 11, issue 26, no. 1 (June 30, 2014). <http://japanfocus.org/-Mary-Knighton/4140>.
5. Rachel Thorn, e-mail, September 27, 2014.

Nanohana





WHERE...



THIS IS A
MAP OF THE
LANDS
THAT...

...WERE
CONTAMINATED
BY THE
CHERNOBYL
DISASTER.



MS.
SA-
SAKI?

CAN
PEOPLE
LIVE
THERE?



THERE'S AN
"EXCLUSION
ZONE" ...
...BUT PEOPLE
STILL LIVE IN CON-
TAMINATED AREAS.



MS.
SA-
SAKI?

IS THAT
WHAT'S
GOING TO
HAPPEN
IN FUKU-
SHIMA,
TOO?



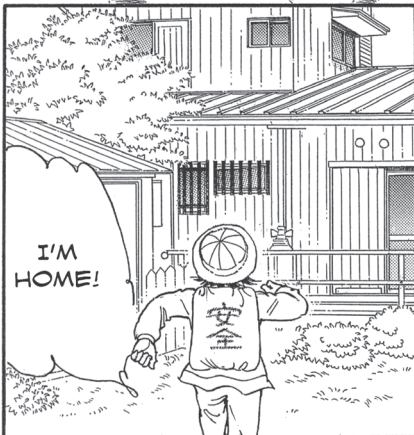
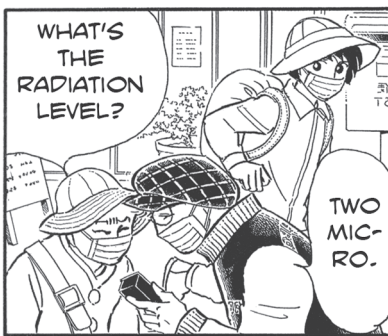
FUKUSHIMA
IS'NA
CHER-
NOBYL.

ONE WAY
TO HELP
PREVENT
ANOTHER
ACCIDENT
LIKE
THIS...

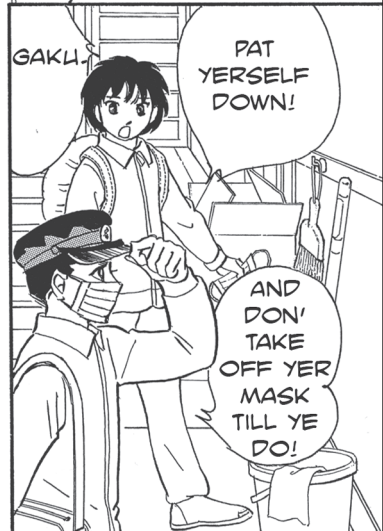


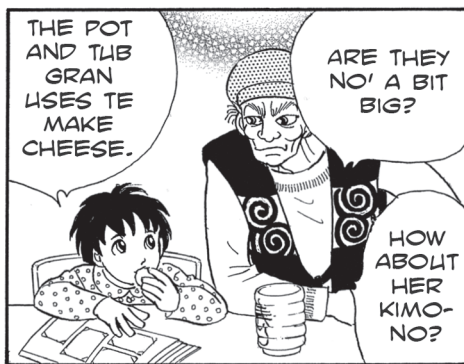
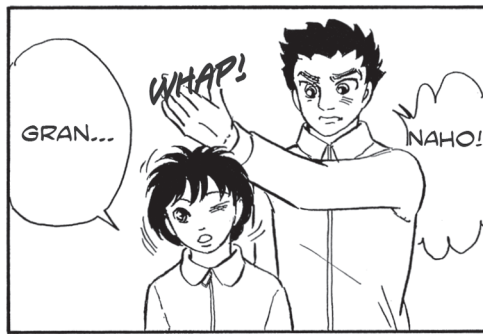
IS
FOR
ALL
OF
US

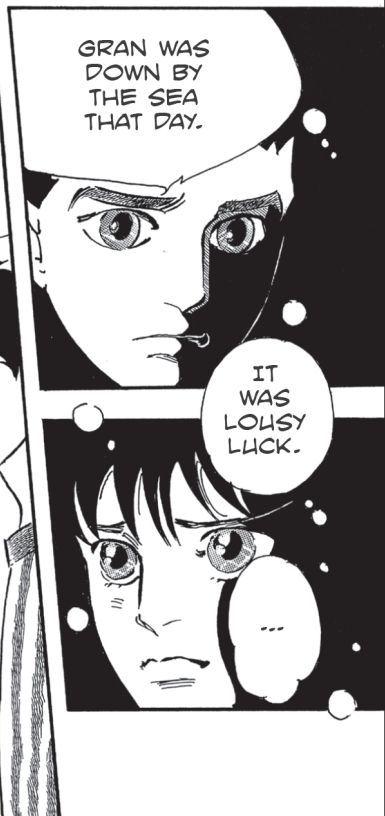
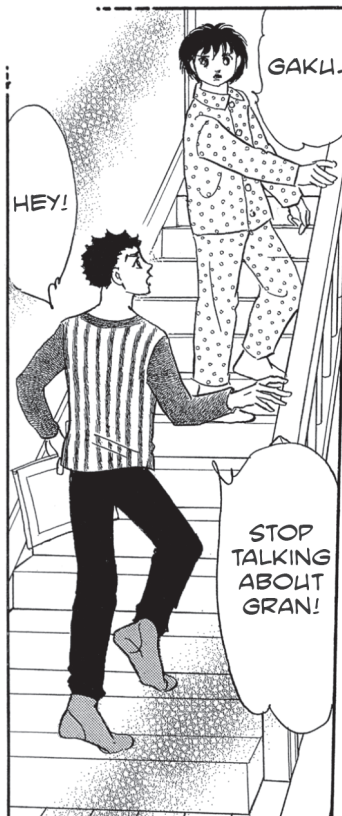
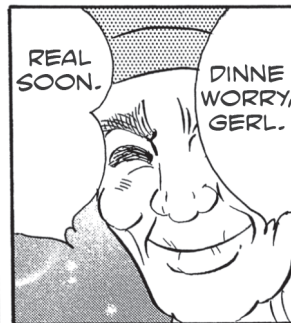
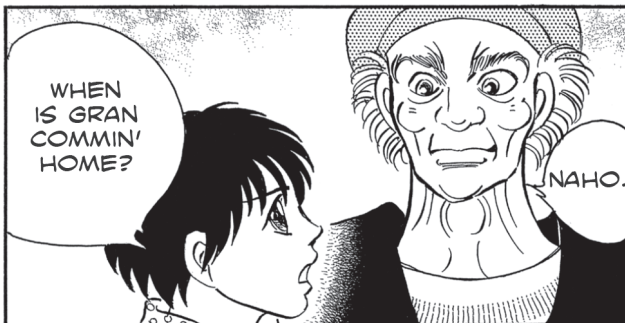
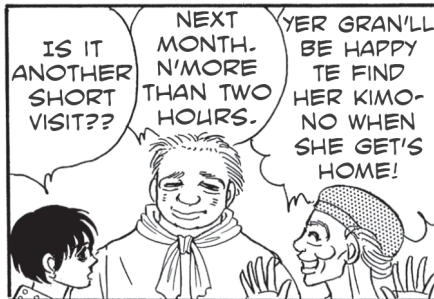
TO
STUDY
AND
LEARN.

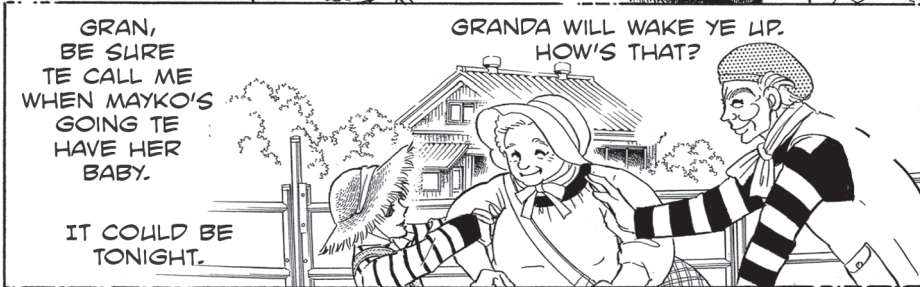
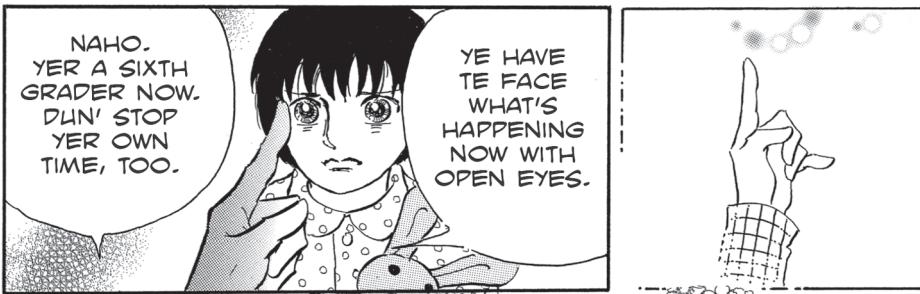
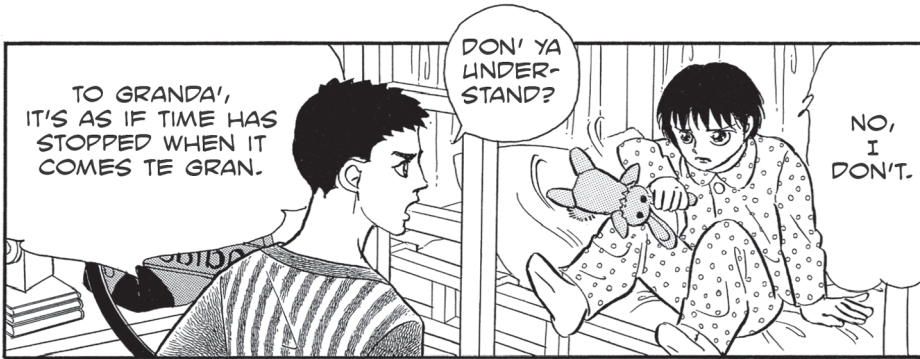


*BACKPACK READS "SAFETY"









NANOHANAS: BRASSICA RAPA; FIELD MUSTARD; ALSO KNOWN AS RAPE.

GAKU, YE GO TE ONE
OF THEM FANCY
TOKYO UNIVERSITIES.



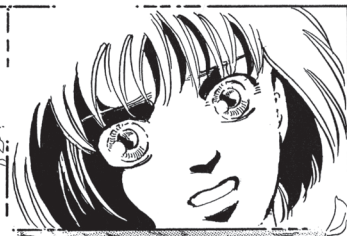
NAHO, YE
FIND A MAN
TE MARRY
INTO THE
FAMILY,
LIKE YER
FATHER
DID.

NAHO'S A BONNIE
ONE. AYE, SHE'LL
HAVE PLENTY
O' SUITORS.



GRAN!
GRAN!

THE
PLUMS HAVE
TURNED
GREEN!

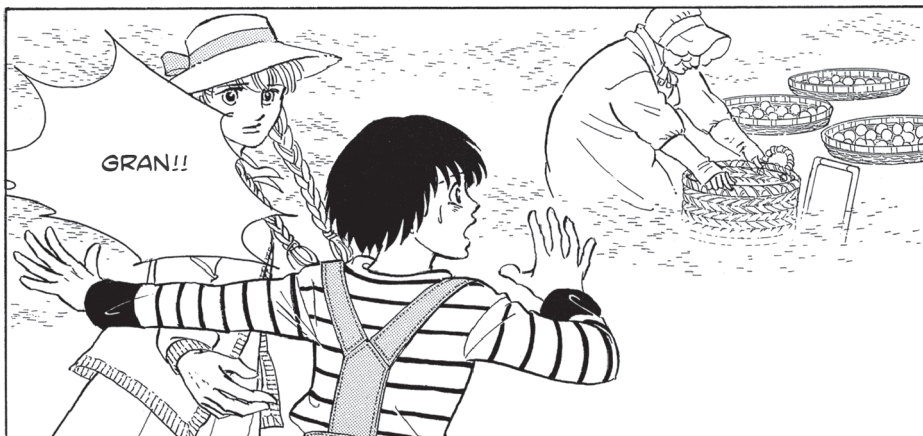
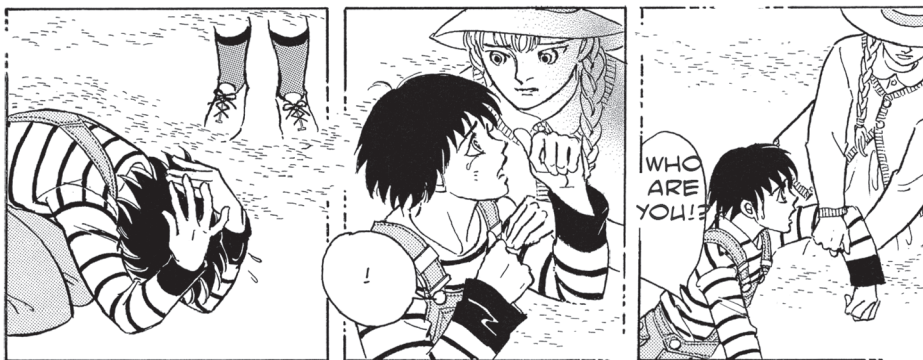
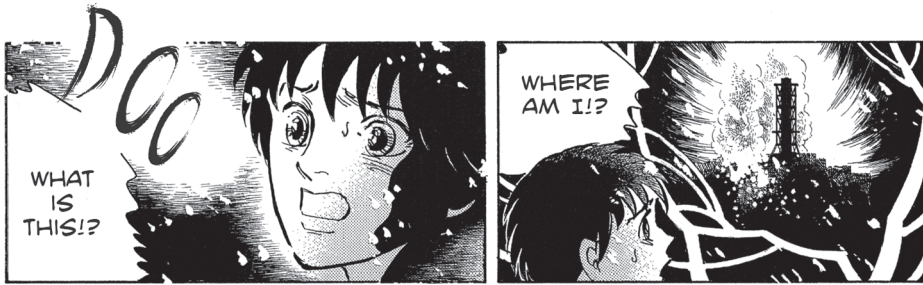


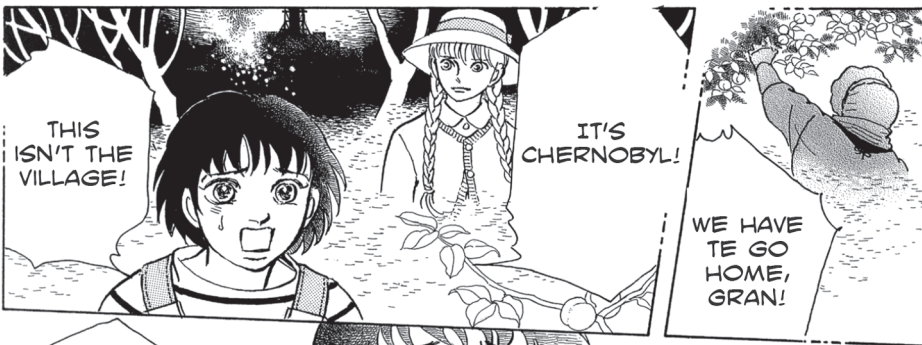
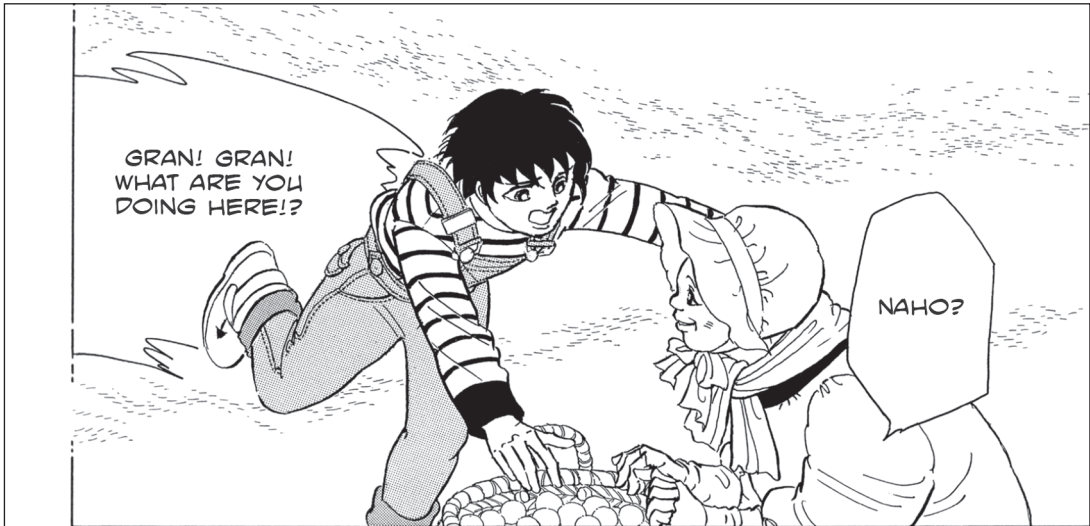
FOOTNOTE: BY THIS THE ARTIST MEANS "AREAS SUBJECTED TO HIGH LEVELS OF RADIATION."
PLEASE VIEW THIS EXPRESSION AS A REFRAIN WITHIN A SOMEWHAT ABSTRACT IMAGE.

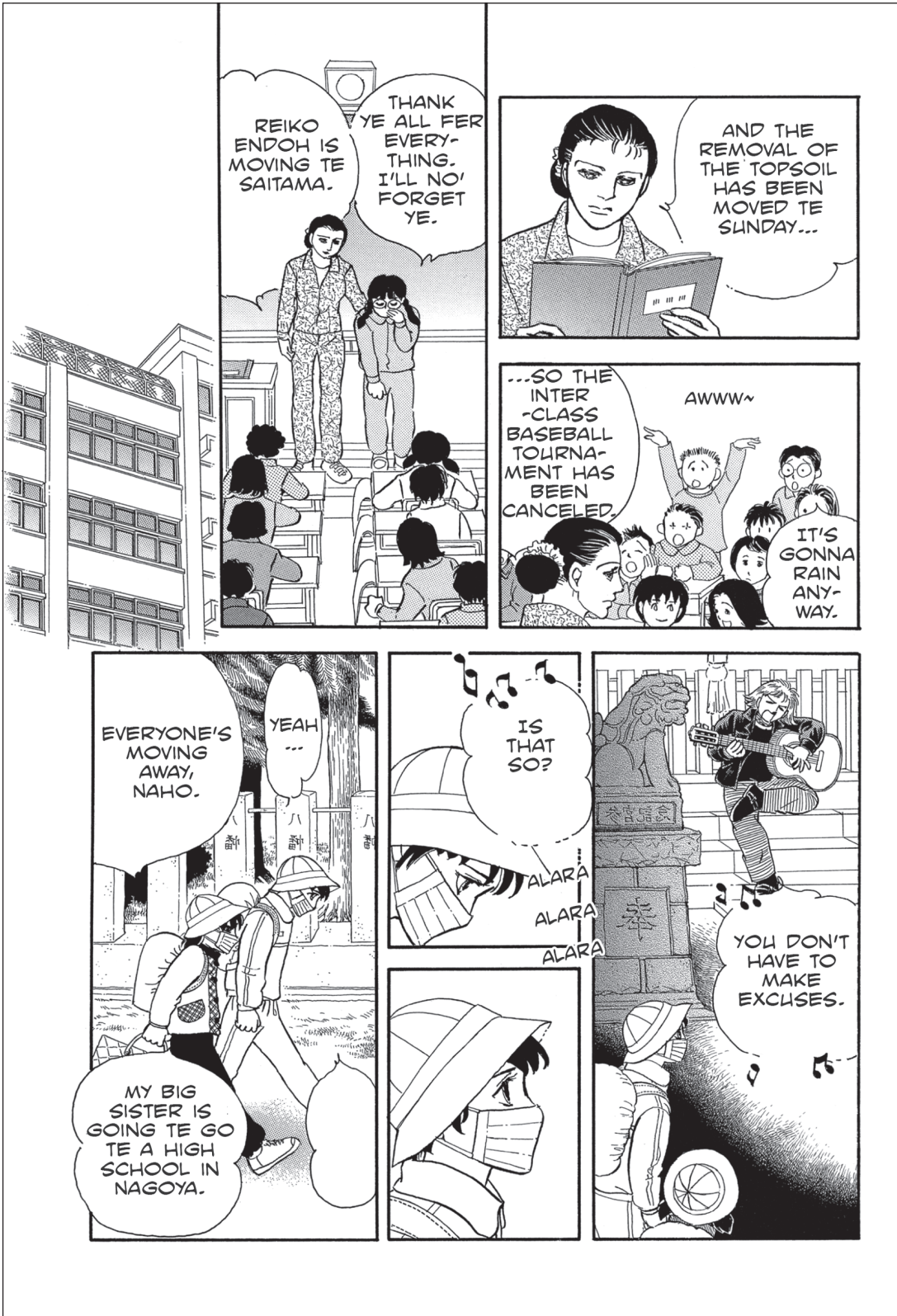


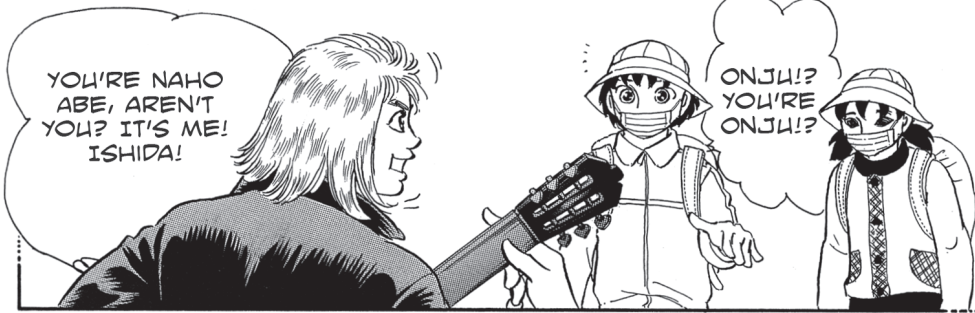
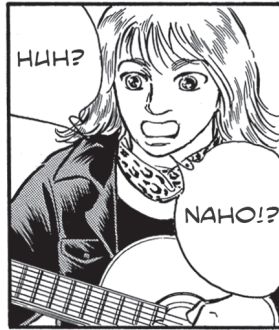
NO ONE CAN
LIVE...

...ON THE LANDS
POLLUTED BY
CHERNOBYL.*

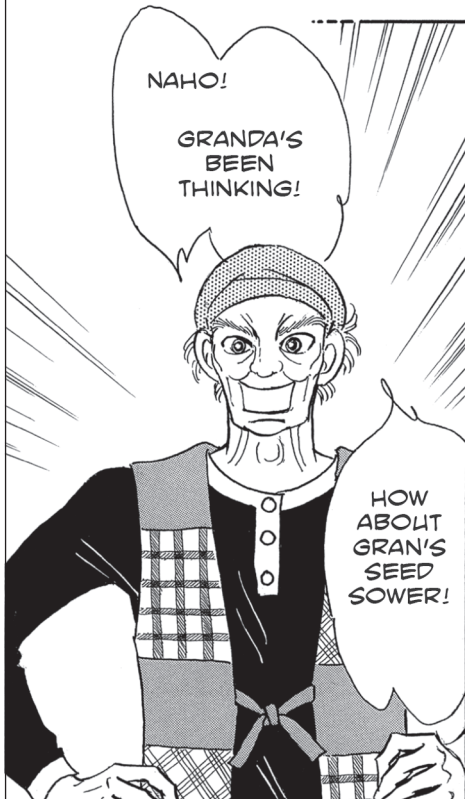
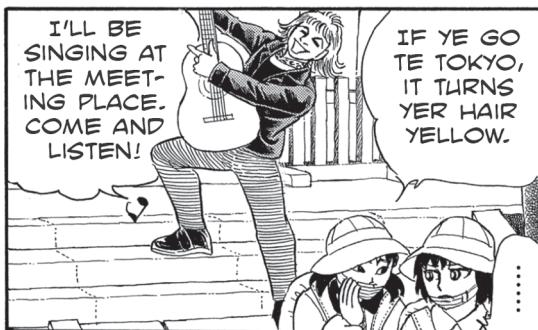
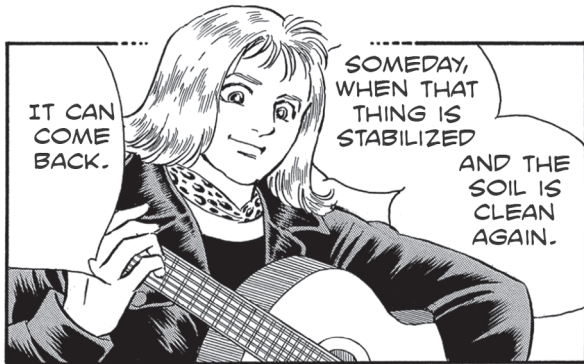


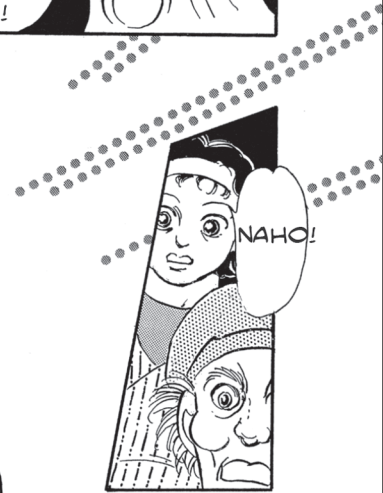
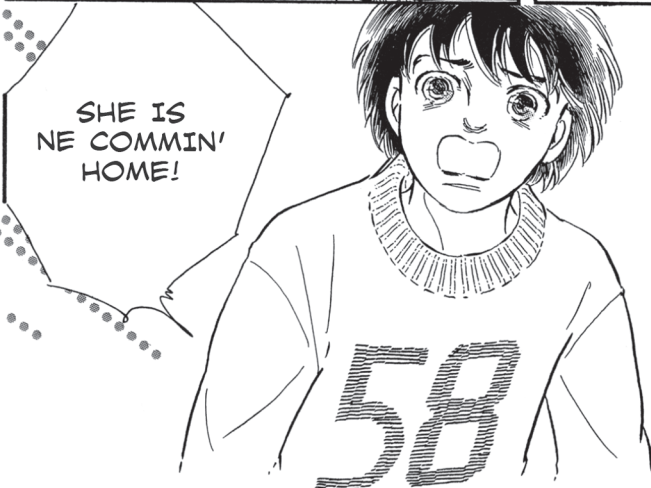
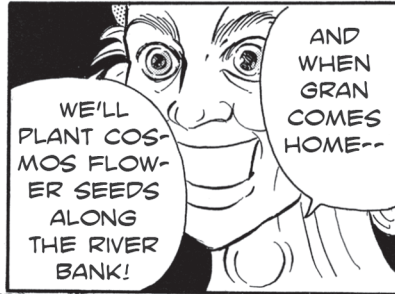




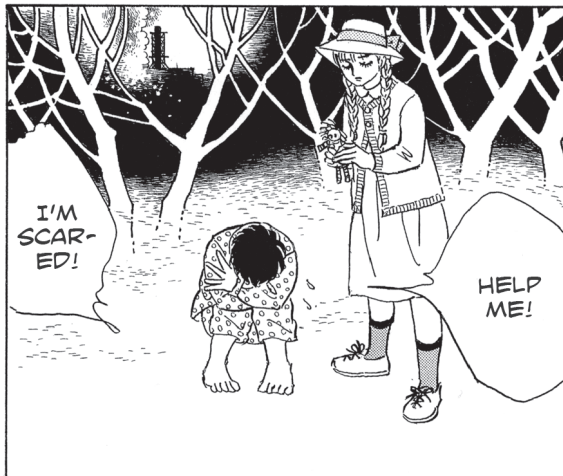
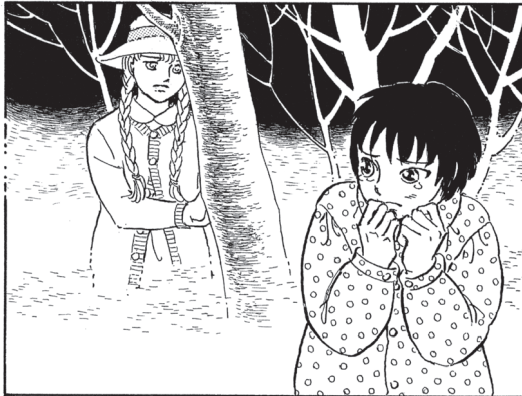
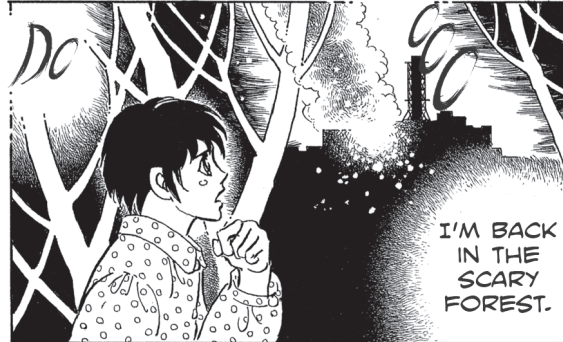
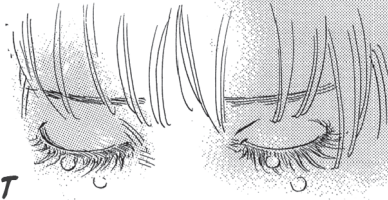


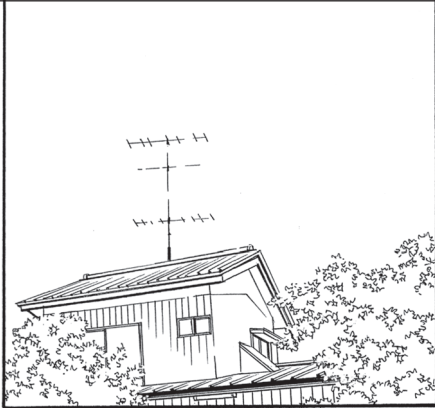
*"GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES" IS A REFERENCE TO AN "APOLOGY TOUR" BY TEPCO UTILITY OFFICIALS FOLLOWING THE FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR DISASTER IN WHICH TOP EXECUTIVES REPEATEDLY GOT DOWN ON THEIR HANDS AND KNEES TO APOLOGIZE TO VICTIMS IN ONE OF THE MOST EXTREME FASHIONS PRESCRIBED BY JAPANESE TRADITION.





PIT PAT
PIT PAT



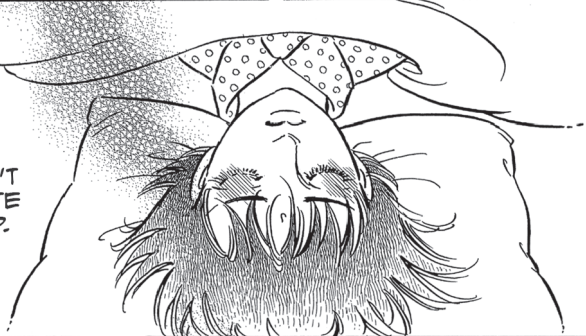


STAY IN BED NOW, NAHO.



BUT...

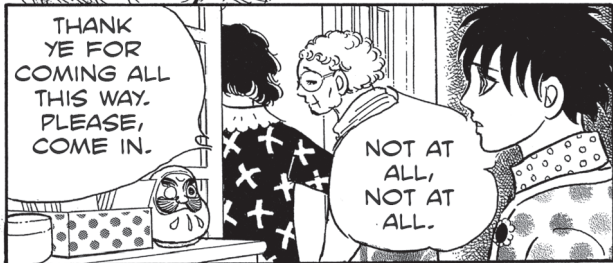
I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP.



I HAVE SCARY DREAMS...

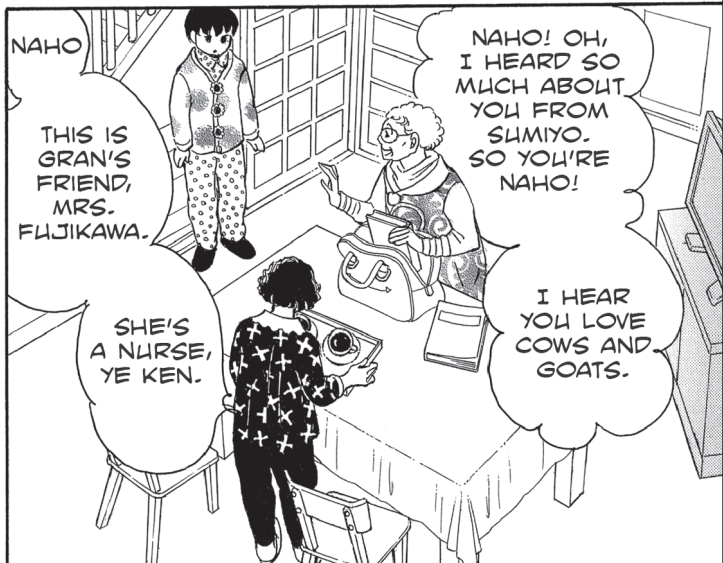


GOOD AFTERNOON.



THANK YOU FOR COMING ALL THIS WAY. PLEASE, COME IN.

NOT AT ALL, NOT AT ALL.



NAHO

THIS IS GRAN'S FRIEND, MRS. FUJIKAWA.

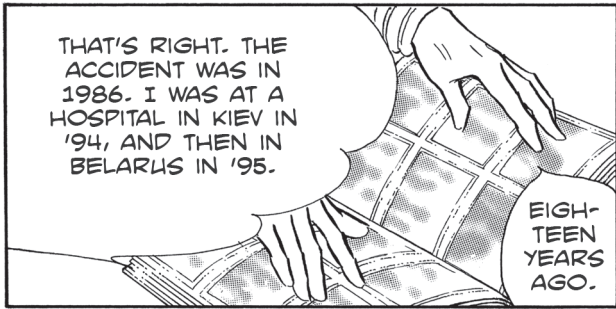
NAHO! OH, I HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU FROM SUMIYO. SO YOU'RE NAHO!

SHE'S A NURSE, YE KEN.

I HEAR YOU LOVE COWS AND GOATS.

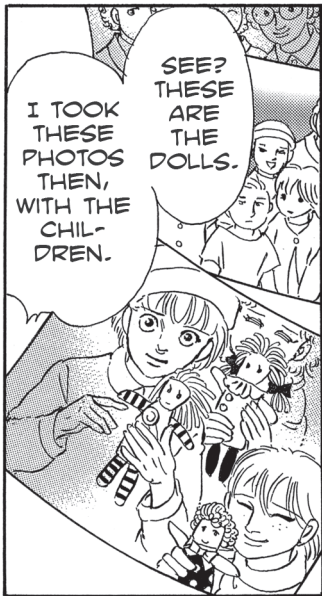


UKRAINE?
YE MEAN...
CHERNOBYL?



THAT'S RIGHT. THE
ACCIDENT WAS IN
1986. I WAS AT A
HOSPITAL IN KIEV IN
'94, AND THEN IN
BELARUS IN '95.

EIGH-
TEEN
YEARS
AGO.



I TOOK
THESE
PHOTOS
THEN,
WITH THE
CHILDREN.

SEE?
THESE
ARE
THE
DOLLS.



I
USED
TE
HAVE
ONE.

YEARS
AGO...

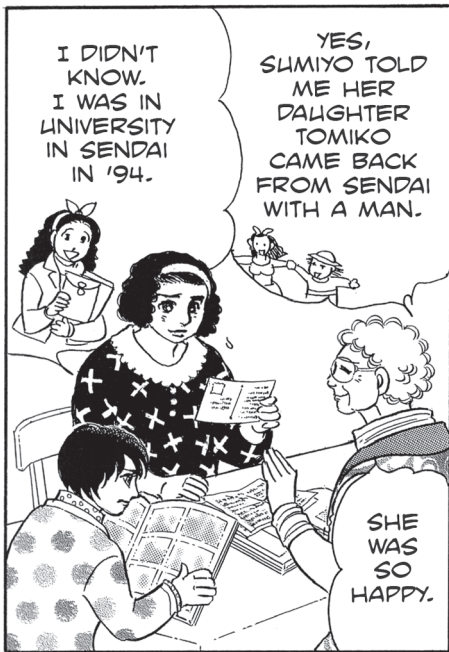


THE CHILDREN
GAVE ME LETTERS
THANKING HER.

WHEN I GAVE
THEM TO SUMIYO,
SHE CRIED.

18 YEARS AGO...

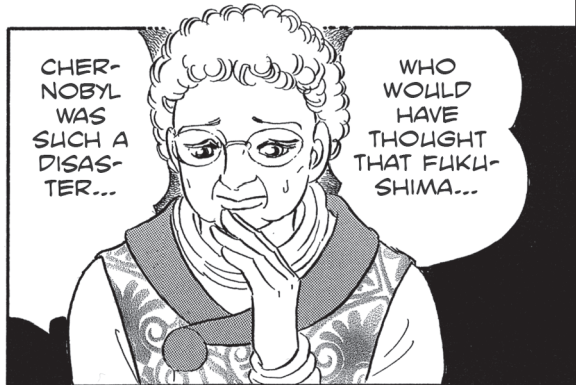
"THE
POOR
BAIRNS,"
SHE
SAID.



I DIDN'T KNOW. I WAS IN UNIVERSITY IN SENDAI IN 194.

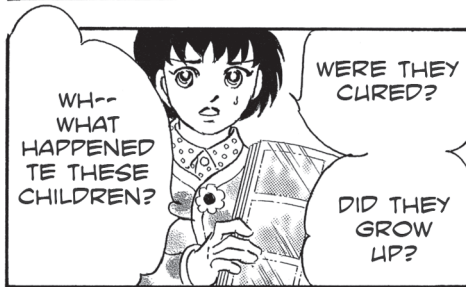
YES, SUMIYO TOLD ME HER DAUGHTER TOMIKO CAME BACK FROM SENDAI WITH A MAN.

SHE WAS SO HAPPY.



CHERNOBYL WAS SUCH A DISASTER...

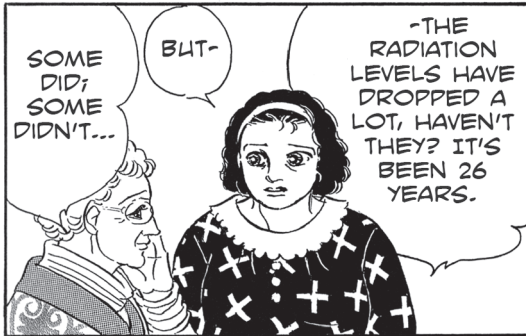
WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT FUKUSHIMA...



WH-- WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE CHILDREN?

WERE THEY CURED?

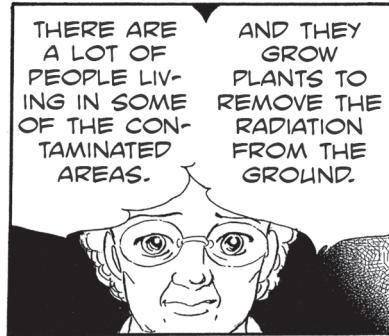
DID THEY GROW UP?



SOME DID; SOME DIDN'T...

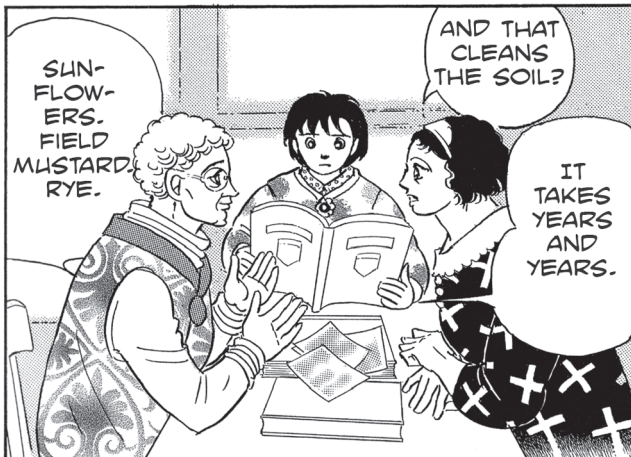
BUT-

-THE RADIATION LEVELS HAVE DROPPED A LOT, HAVEN'T THEY? IT'S BEEN 26 YEARS.



THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE LIVING IN SOME OF THE CONTAMINATED AREAS.

AND THEY GROW PLANTS TO REMOVE THE RADIATION FROM THE GROUND.



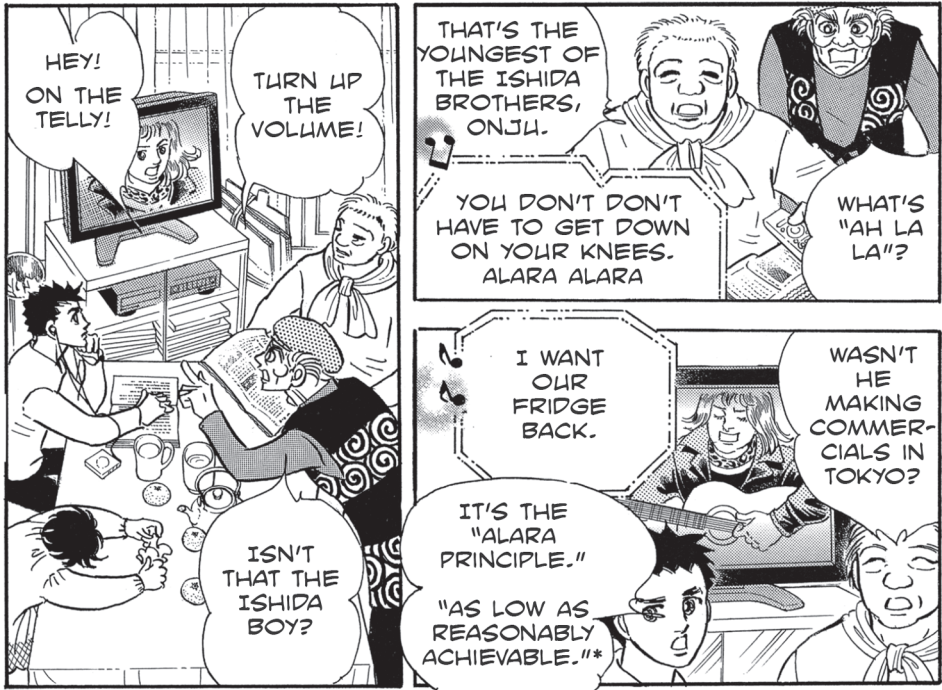
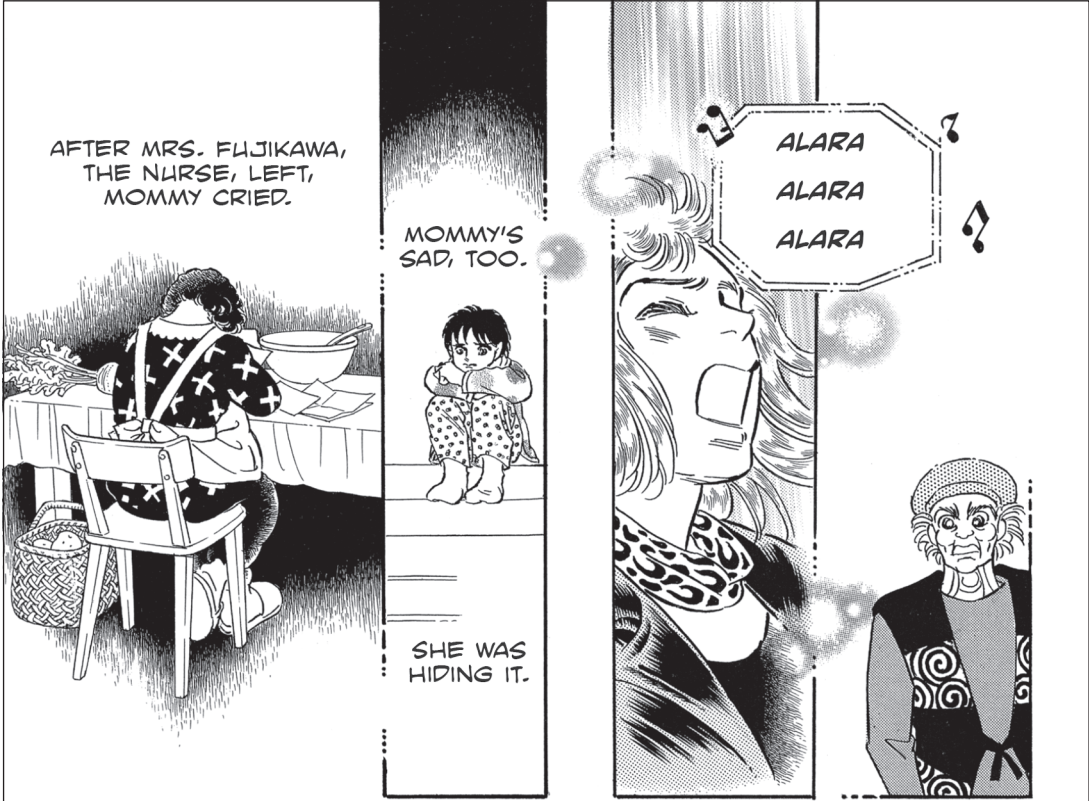
SUN-FLOWERS. FIELD MUSTARD RYE.

AND THAT CLEANS THE SOIL?

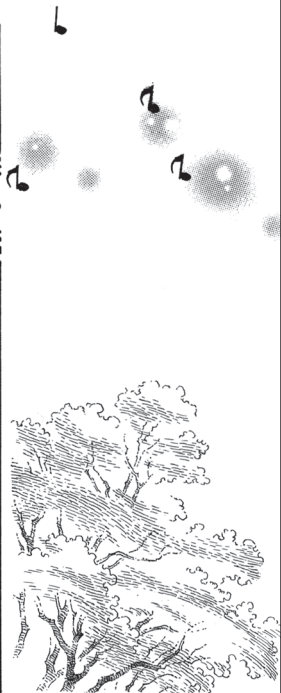
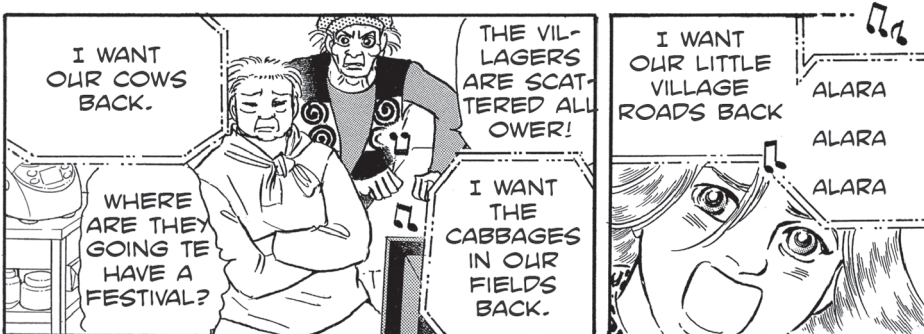
IT TAKES YEARS AND YEARS.

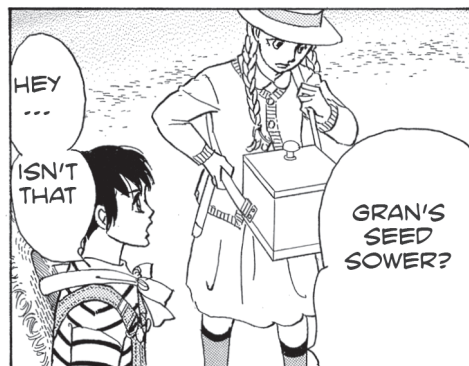
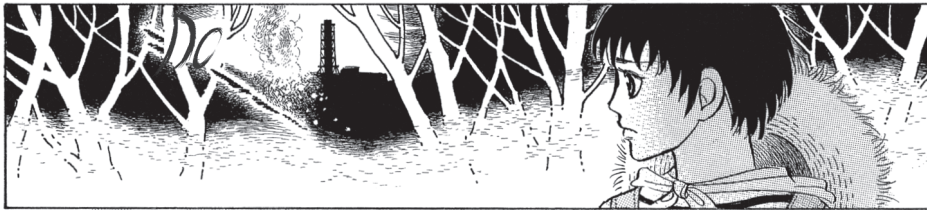
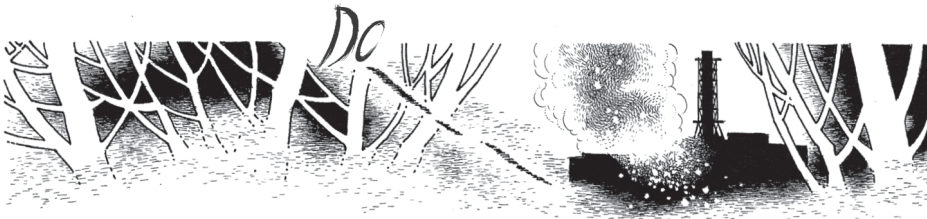


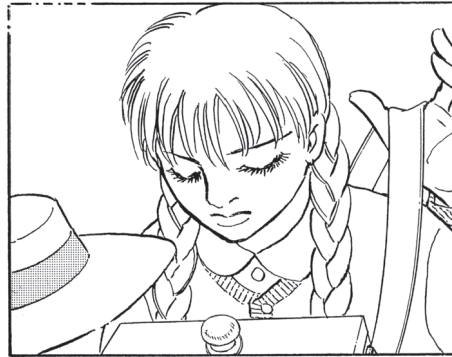
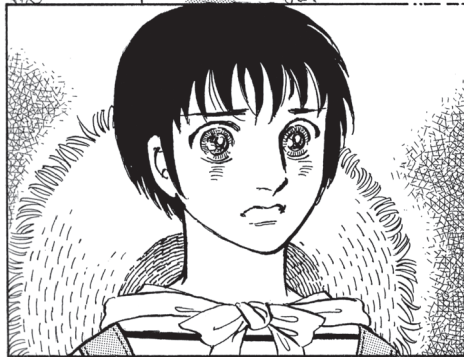
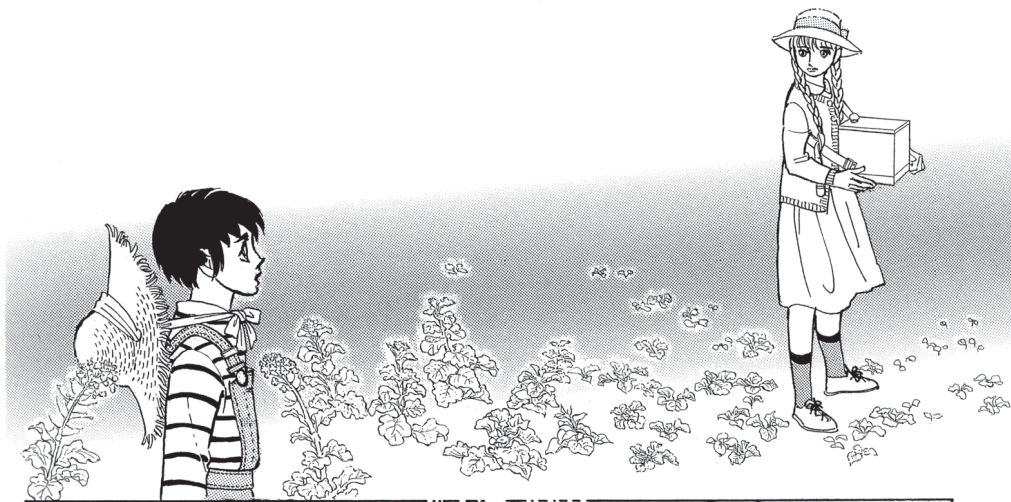
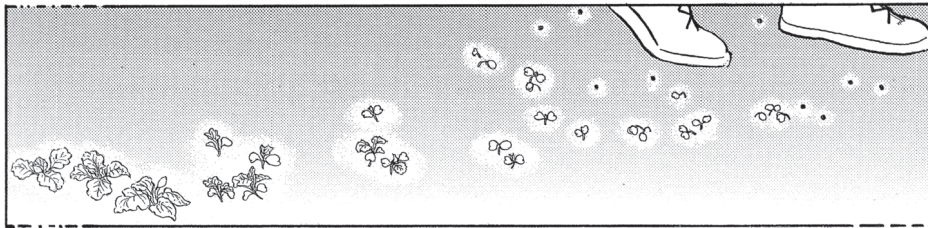
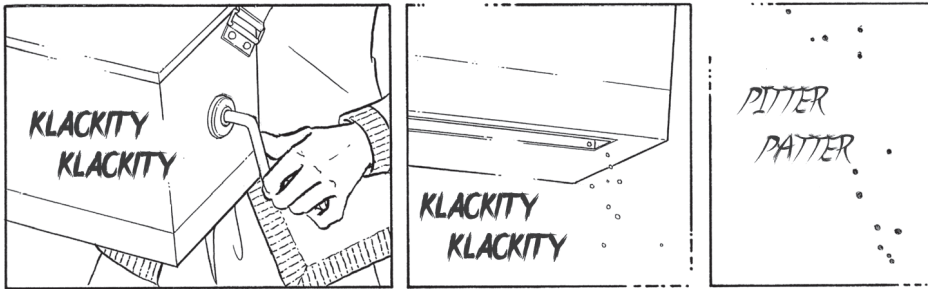
FIELD MUSTARD. NANO-HANA.

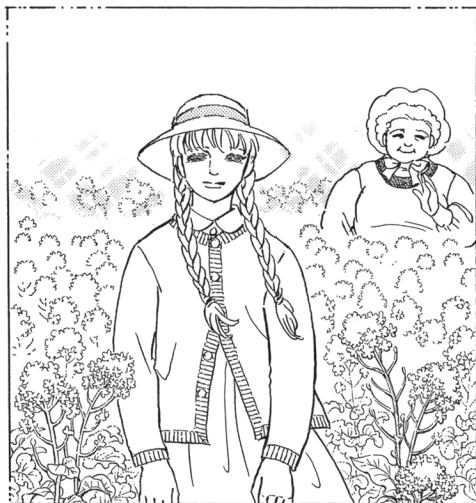
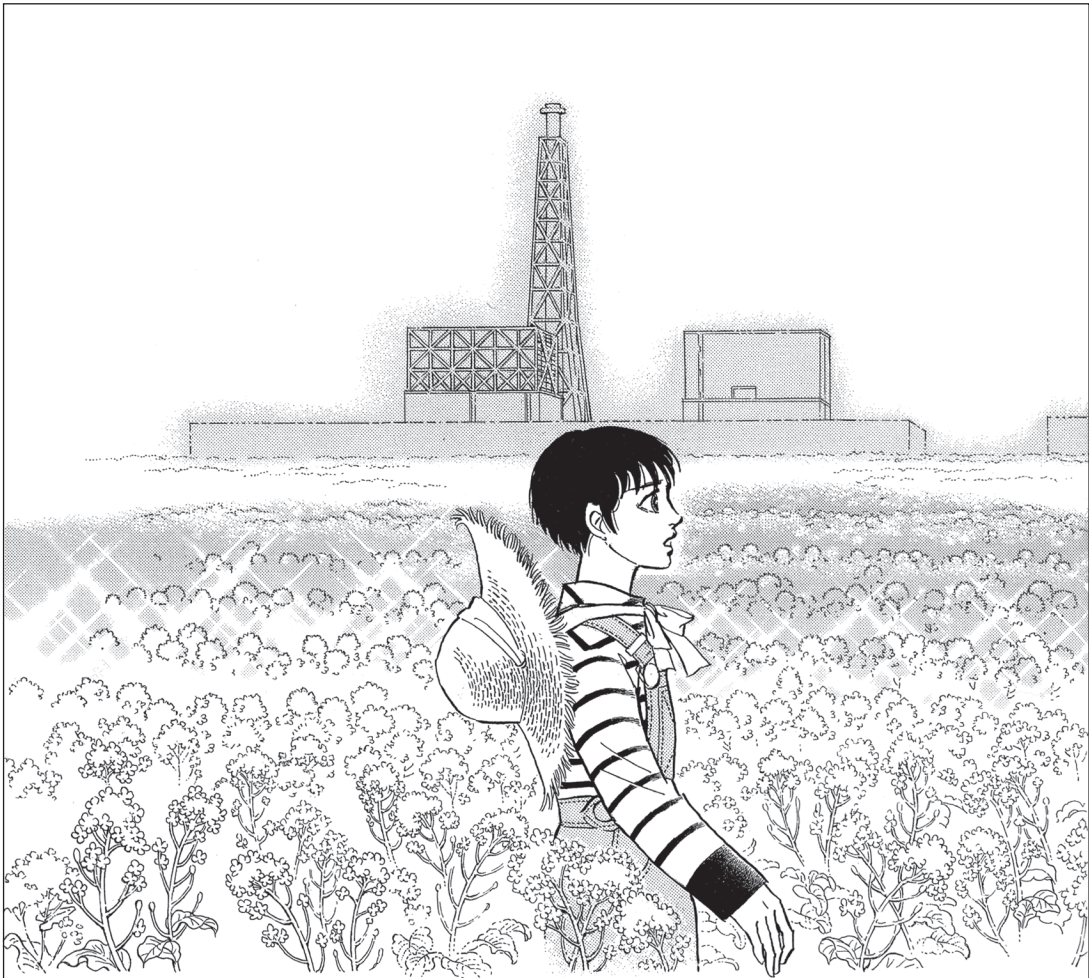


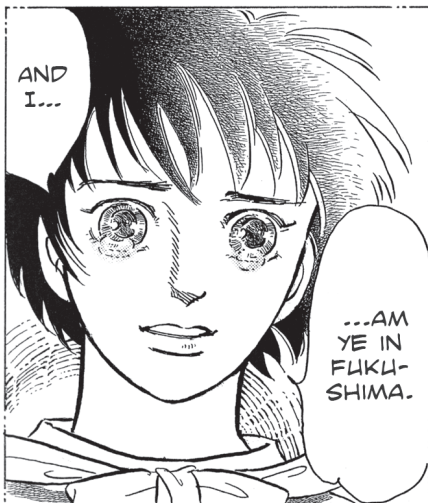
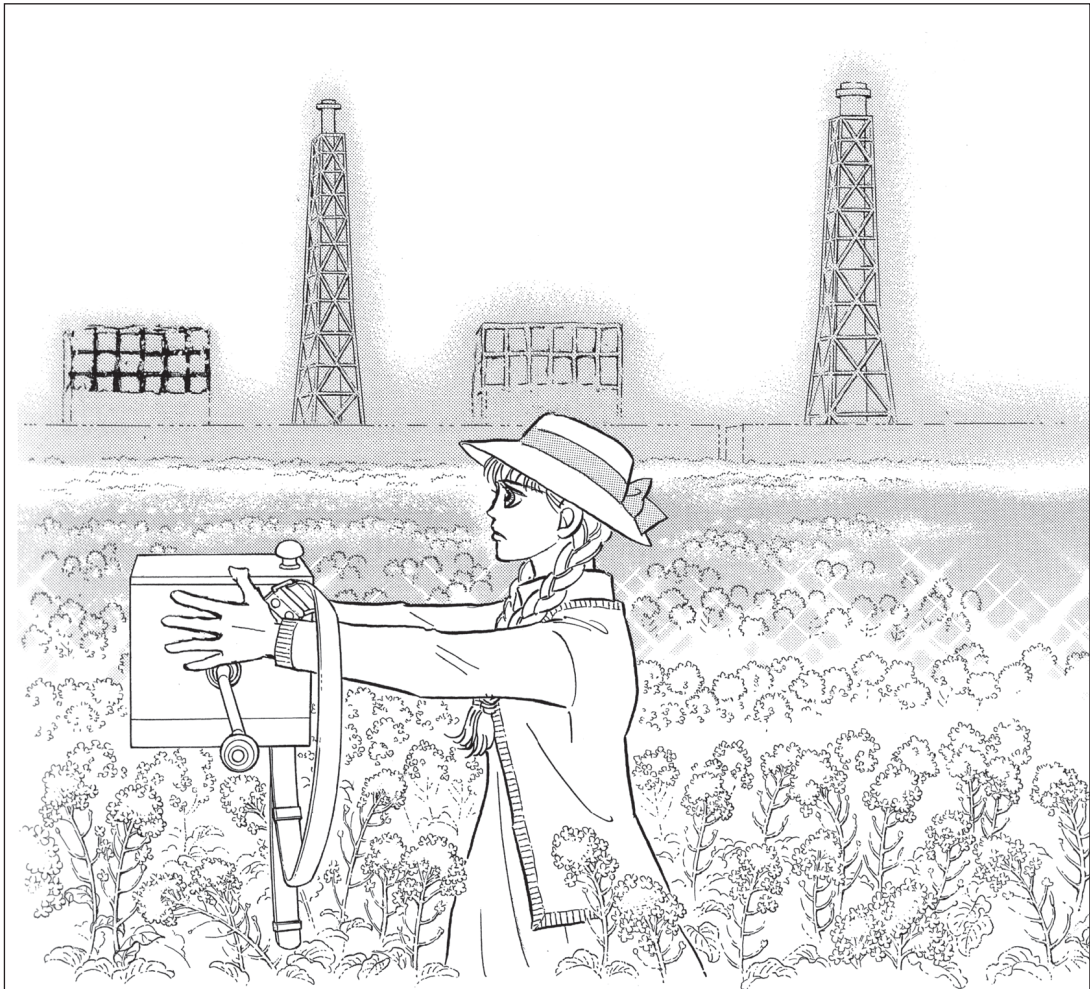
* A CONCEPT USED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON RADIATION PROTECTION (ICRP) IN ASSESSING RISKS AND LEVELS OF EXPOSURE TO RADIATION. THE PHRASING USED IN THE ICRP'S 1950 RECOMMENDATIONS WAS "TO THE LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL."



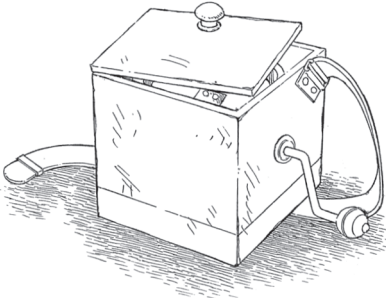








HUH!?
YE REALLY
BROUGHT
THAT THING
HOME?



IT WAS IN TH' BARN. DINNA FUSS YERSELF.

AH WASHED IT.

GRAN'S SEED SOWER.

BUT WE DON'T HAVE ANY FIELDS.

I'LL USE IT.

NAHO.

WHEN WE MOVE BACK, WE'LL RAISE COWS AND GOATS. AND MAKE CHEESE. AND I'LL PLANT LOTS OF NANO HANA

RIGHT?

GRANDA?

Nanohana end.