

*(Talita takes off her shoes and places them on her head.)*

One day I will melt them into a hat. My grandma had her gold tooth melted into a ring. I could do the same with my shoes. And I'll have a hat. Maybe a purse.

*(Holds them by the strap, as if they were a purse.)*

Maybe a pair of gloves, like the ones rich ladies wear to church.

**Clara** Keep them how they are.

**Talita** That's true. When I look at them I remember the smell of back home. Walking on the moist grass. The moon shining on my shoes. *(There are tears in her eyes.)*

**Clara** You miss your Grandma?

**Talita** Sometimes.

**Clara** I know my family must go out in the fields everyday looking for me. I can just see them coming home thinking the wild dogs ate me. I miss Mama. When will I see him again?

**Talita** Pretend you're sick. They'll take you to the infirmary to see a doctor, then you can see him.

*(Blackout)*

# ONE THOUSAND CRANES

## BY COLIN THOMAS

The play, *One Thousand Cranes* addresses children's fears and anxieties about nuclear war. *One Thousand Cranes* interweaves the stories of two children living in different nations and at different times, yet whose lives are both profoundly effected by the presence of nuclear weapons. The first story is about Bobby, a twelve-year old Canadian boy, who is obsessed by the possibility of nuclear war in the present day world. The second is the true story of Sadako, a Japanese girl who contracted leukemia nine years after the Hiroshima bombing as a result of the radiation.

When Sadako learned of her illness, she began to fold hundreds of origami paper cranes. According to Japanese legend, a crane will live for one thousand years. By trying to fold one thousand origami cranes, Sadako made a brave attempt to hold on to her life, and to keep her hope of recovery alive.

After Sadako's death, a statue was built in her memory. The statue was of a young girl holding a golden crane, with the inscription "This is our cry. This is our prayer. Peace in the world." Since then, thousands of school children from all over the world have sent origami paper cranes to Sadako's family, in support of world peace.

If you would like to send paper cranes to Hiroshima, the address is:

Yuko Kawamoto  
10 Hiroshima Minami-Ku  
Hosha 2-6-4  
Furumitsu Biru 303  
Hiroshima Orizurunokai  
Hiroshima, Japan

**Scene 1**

**2 Girls**

**Sadako and Yoshiko (both age 12)**

In the following excerpt, Sadako plays with her best friend Yoshiko. At this point in the play, Sadako has been suffering from signs of her illness for four months now, but she is afraid to tell her parents, fearful of alarming them.

"Too many people get sick in Hiroshima," she says, earlier. In this scene Sadako confides to someone for the first time that she has been feeling ill.

### "SKIPPING"

**Sadako** (To the audience) The only person I ever told was my best friend, Yoshiko.

(Sadako walks forward and grabs a skipping rope, turning to call offstage)

Yoshiko-chan! Yoshiko-chan! Come out to play!

(Sadako starts to skip by herself. She completes part of the following traditional verse, which may be sung in Japanese, or in its English adaptation which is presented at the end of the script.)

*Midori no oka no akai yane  
Tongari boshi no tokei dai  
Kane ga narimasu "Kin! Kon! Kan!"  
Mei-mei koyagi mo naitemasu  
Kaze ga soyo-soyo oka no iye  
Ki-i-roi omado wa oira no iye yo.\**

(Suddenly dizzy, Sadako stops and leans over, with her hands on her knees. Yoshiko enters. She stands beside Sadako, looking at the ground.)

**Yoshiko** Hi, Sadako-chan. Looking for something?

**Sadako** Oh, hi, Yoshiko-chan. No.

\* English adaptation of the Japanese Skipping Song: The **First Skipping Song**, which Sadako sings by herself, may be adapted as follows:

*Red-roofed house that I know  
On a grass-green hill.  
Clock tower chiming tells the time of day.  
The bells in the tower go "Kin Kon Kan."  
Wake up little lambs, "Mei, mei, mei."  
(“Mei” is the sound Japanese lambs make.)*



**Yoshiko** So, what are you doing? Watching the grass grow?

**Sadako** Never mind.

(Sadako looks up, grinning, and the two girls immediately go into a game of "Jan Ken Pon" ["Scissors, Rock, Paper"\*\*\*] They play several rounds at an increasing speed till they can't do it any more. They laugh.)

**Sadako** Let's skip.

**Yoshiko** Skip?

**Sadako** Yeah, skip. You know, with a rope?

**Yoshiko** I don't know, Sadako-chan. I just finished my lunch.

**Sadako** Lunch? You're always eating, Yoshiko-chan.

**Yoshiko** Only because I chew my food very slowly.

**Sadako** Right.

**Yoshiko** Just let me digest.

**Sadako** Okay. (Sadako sits) How long?

(Sadako and Yoshiko touch)

**Yoshiko** You're sweating. Are you all right? You've been looking a little pale lately.

**Sadako** I'm fine.

**Yoshiko** Sadako-chan, do you still get dizzy after you run?

### JAN KEN POI

"Jan Ken Pon," or "Jan Ken Poi," as it would be known to girls in Hiroshima, is familiar in the West as "Scissors, Rock, Paper." The chant on the first round is "Jan ken poi." If there's a tie, the chant on subsequent rounds is "Aiko de hoi."

- Sadako** Never. Well, sometimes. Hardly ever, really. It's been four months since field day and I hardly ever get dizzy when I run any more.
- Yoshiko** I think you should tell your parents.
- Sadako** No. I don't want to scare them. They get so nervous about everything.
- Yoshiko** But maybe there's something...
- Sadako** Unh unh. Besides, I know I'm getting better.
- Yoshiko** How?
- Sadako** I know I've got good luck.
- Yoshiko** What do you mean?
- Sadako** Well, they say it's good luck of you see a spider.
- Yoshiko** Yes?
- Sadako** Well, I see a spider...right on your neck!  
(*Yoshiko screams*)
- Yoshiko** Where? (*Sadako laughs*) Sadako! That's not funny! I practically had a heart attack!
- Sadako** (*Still laughing*) I know. I couldn't help it. You were getting so serious.
- Yoshiko** Well, it is serious, Sadako.
- Sadako** Let's skip it.
- Yoshiko** What?
- Sadako** Let's skip.
- Yoshiko** I don't know, Sadako-chan. I'm still digesting



- Sadako** Okay. You sit. I'll skip.
- Yoshiko** Okay. Why don't you do Onami Konami?
- Sadako** All right.
- Sadako begins skipping as she and Yoshiko sing. [Please see English version translated below.\*\*\*] Halfway through, Sadako starts to skip pepper.)*
- Yoshiko & Sadako** *Sora ni saezuru tori no ko-e  
Mine yori otsuru taki no oto  
Onami konami tou-tou to  
Hibiki taesenu umi no oto.  
Kikaya hito-bito omoshiroki  
Kono ten-nen no ongaku o  
Shirabe jizai ni hiki tamau  
Kami no onte no toutoshi ya.*
- Yoshiko** No, no. That's not right. You start to spin after you say it.
- Sadako** No you don't.
- Yoshiko** Yes you do.
- Sadako** Okay, Yoshiko-chan, you show me.
- Yoshiko** What?
- Sadako** You do it.

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Onami Konami, the second song, which the girls sing together, may be simplified and adapted as follows:  
*Big wave, small wave,  
 spin on the windy days,  
 spin right around,  
 spin right around.*

**Yoshiko** Okay. You jump in, okay?

**Sadako** Okay.

*(Yoshiko begins the verse. Sadako joins in. They skip together.)*

**Sadako & Yoshiko** Sora ni saezuru tori no ko-e... *(They trip.)*

**Sadako** How's your digestion?

**Yoshiko** My what?

**Sadako** *(Poking Yoshiko)* Your tummy.

**Yoshiko** *(Giggling)* You jump in again, okay?

**Sadako** Okay.

**Yoshiko** Okay.

*(They skip together again.)*

**Sadako & Yoshiko** Sora ni saezuru tori no ko-e...

*(At the end of the verse, they start to skip pepper together. They are both laughing. Suddenly, Sadako stops skipping and stands with her hands on her knees, her feet placed wide apart.)*

**Yoshiko** What's the matter, Sadako-chan?

**Sadako** Nothing... *(Sadako collapses. Yoshiko runs to her.)*

**Yoshiko** Sadako-chan!

**Sadako** *(Trying to get up)* It...it's nothing. *(She collapses again.)*

**Yoshiko** Sadako-chan, are you teasing me?

**Sadako** *(Weakly)* No.

**Yoshiko** Mrs. Sasaki! Mrs. Sasaki!



*(Yoshiko runs off. A siren wails. The transition into the next scene is a cut of motion... In contrast, the hospital is very still and quiet.)*

## Scene 2

*(In this next scene, Sadako is in the hospital and Yoshiko comes to visit her. She brings with her a very special gift.)*

### "CRANES"

*(Sadako enters and addresses the audience)*

**Sadako** In the next few days, the doctors did their tests. When no one was looking, I read the results.

*(Yoshiko enters the playing area. She is carrying a furoshiki, which is a gift-wrapped gift. She calls from outside the door.)*

**Yoshiko** Sadako-chan! Sadako-chan! Are you awake? It's me, Yoshiko. Hi. *(Yoshiko looks in, then enters Sadako's room. As they do whenever they see one another, the two girls play a quick game of Jan Ken Poi.)* They don't usually allow kids to visit on Thursdays, so I lied at the desk. I told them I was twenty-one. How are you feeling?

**Sadako** Fine. They're just doing a few tests.

**Yoshiko** I know. Mr. Nomura says you'll be back to school again in no time. You know what we did on Sunday? We all went to Mr. Nomura's house again. Clam-digging. And he boiled sweet potatoes for us to eat. You should have seen Tomiko. She ate four. I was disgusted.

**Sadako** How many did you eat?

**Yoshiko** Five. Small ones.

**Sadako** Yoshiko-chan, you're my best friend, right? Well you've got to tell me the truth. They did the tests

- already. I read the results.
- Yoshiko** Sadako!
- Sadako** I know I wasn't supposed to, but no one would tell me anything. But there must be some mistake. The tests say I have leukemia from the bomb. That can't be true—?
- Yoshiko** Sadako-chan...I....I can't....
- Sadako** It's all right. You don't have to say anything, Yoshiko-chan. I know I'll be all right. I don't feel like I'm going to die.
- Yoshiko** Oh, Sadako-chan, of course you're not. Mr. Nomura says people don't always die from leukemia...oh.
- Sadako** So it is true. *(Sadako turns her face away from Yoshiko.)*
- Yoshiko** Oh, Sadako...Sadako-chan, Mr. Nomura says... Mr. Nomura says if anybody can get better from leukemia, you can.
- Sadako** Is that true? Did Mr. Nomura really say that?
- Yoshiko** Of course it's true. Didn't they tell you?
- Sadako** They didn't tell me anything.
- Yoshiko** Well, he's our teacher. He ought to know, right? Right? Sadako-chan, what you need is hope. *(Yoshiko unwraps the furoshiki and reveals a bag of origami cranes made out of foil. There are also several pieces of unfolded origami paper.)*
- Sadako** What's that?
- Yoshiko** A paper crane. He's going to help you get better.



- Don't you know the legend of the paper crane?
- Sadako** I can't remember.
- Yoshiko** Well, cranes are supposed to live for a thousand years, right?
- Sadako** Yes.
- Yoshiko** Well, the legend says that even if you're very sick, if you fold one thousand paper cranes, the gods will make you better. They'll give you a long life, just like a crane.
- Sadako** Oh, Yoshiko-chan, let me see it.
- (Yoshiko gives the crane to Sadako.)*
- Sadako** *(Speaking to the audience)* It was like holding a living bird in my hands. I could almost feel warm feathers and heartbeat. And I could feel my own heartbeat, right down to my toes.
- Thank you, Yoshiko-chan.
- (Sadako and Yoshiko touch hands. Yoshiko exits. Sadako begins folding her first crane.)*