

Acting Edition

The Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise: Youth is Not the Only Thing That's Sonic

by Toshiki Okada

Translated by
Aya Ogawa

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|| **SAMUEL FRENCH** ||

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THE SONIC LIFE OF A GIANT TORTOISE was first produced by The Play Company in New York City on May 24, 2014. The performance was directed by Dan Rothenberg, with sets by Mimi Lien, costumes by Jon Carter, lights by Jiyoun Chang, sound by Mikhail Fiksel, and choreography by David Brick. The Production Manager was Ian Guzzone and the Production Stage Manager was E Sara Barnes. The cast was as follows:

ACTOR 1 Dan Kublick
ACTOR 2 Jason Quarles
ACTOR 3 Moses Villarama
ACTRESS 1 Rachel Christopher
ACTRESS 2 Susannah Flood

CHARACTERS

ACTOR 1

ACTOR 2

ACTOR 3

ACTRESS 1

ACTRESS 2

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Text in parentheses indicates a character amending what he or she said previously.

1

ACTOR 1. What I'm about to say is something I've thought about in my head, in fact something I've never revealed to anyone else before. In other words, it is a kind of secret, so no one else besides me, not a single person, knows that I've kept the kind of thing I'm about to say inside my head. I'm going to tell you what kind of secret it is.

I really hope that my way of life improves compared to the way it is now. When I say that I hope it improves, I mean that I want to live more fully than I do now.

Whoah, but that kind of thing is, that I want to live more fully, it's just too, you know, or like, that may be something you think, but to actually say it out loud, even if you are thinking it, it's something you shouldn't articulate, so I keep it a secret.

But to be honest, I have been feeling, especially these days, that perhaps what I said just now, is really not something that I have to keep a secret inside my head at all, and it's actually fine for it to be out in the open, and in fact it's actually better that it is, or like it ought to be out in the open. To keep it unspoken as I have up until now might be, emotionally and psychologically speaking, unhealthy. So if I were to take a stand and say it out loud, clearly and honestly, maybe my current situation will take a turn for the better. I have been having these thoughts, these days especially, a little bit more frequently. There's a battle between saying things like that out loud, like "for people to know that, oh, is that what's on your mind, is, you know, a bit much" and the "but you should stop saying that because it's better to take a stand and tell the truth, just do it" and

recently, the “it’s better to just do it” side has been winning.

That’s why, the secret that I am trying to tell right now, is something that is a secret I’ve kept from everyone up until now, but the time for it to be kept a secret may be coming to an end, because I may be bringing it to an end.

2

ACTRESS 1. The rest of my life, which, let's say I live to the average life expectancy for a Japanese person, and the Japanese have a pretty long life expectancy compared to the rest of the world, they say it's pretty high up there, so that means I have another forty, fifty, sixty years to go, let's say, and even if I do, that time between now and then will be a blink of an eye when it actually goes by... These are the vague thoughts that belong to a certain man. And that man is me.

Right, I think that, according to my suppositions, my life will probably come to an end with incredible speed.

What I'm about to tell you is a story about me. What I'm doing right now actually, despite what it looks like, is having a dream, and by dream, I mean the kind you have while you're sleeping, although there are some dreams you have while you are awake, but that is not the kind of dream I'm having right now.

ACTOR 2. (And when I said dreams you have while you are awake, I wasn't referring to daydreams but normal hopes you have for your real life, like, "oh I wish such and such will happen in the near future," that's what I meant by dreams.)

ACTRESS 1. Right, I am now having a dream. So despite what it looks like, I actually have my eyes closed.

Where I have my eyes closed, or like where I am sleeping now is the apartment I live in. It's now five or six o'clock in the morning. I will wake up in a little while. When my alarm goes off, I will hit the snooze button once or twice, but I will give up the third time it goes off. But right now I am still dreaming.

If I were to describe the kind of dream I am having right now, actually, it would fall into the category of really good dreams. The reason why it is really good is because it is one of those bittersweet dreams. If my dreams were organized on shelves according to genre,

this dream would be kept on the shelf reserved for dreams that cause heartache. I am having that kind of dream right now.

It's a bittersweet dream because in the dream I'm having now, I had a girlfriend. (By the way I have a girlfriend in real life, not just in my dreams.) Right, in the dream I'm having right now, I had a girlfriend, but actually, my girlfriend had actually died, in the past, but because it's a dream, I don't have a clear sense of whether it was a few years ago, a few months ago, or a few days ago. I'm not sure what the cause of her death is, in my dream, but anyway this is the backstory to the dream I'm having now.

My girlfriend has died and is no longer here, and will never return – even though it's just something that's in my dream, I still feel heartache over it. Time after time, or perhaps, sometimes, or perhaps, once in a while, the frequency changes with the situation but, I remember her. And every time I think of her, I experience that bittersweet feeling. In my dream.

If I had to explain what that bittersweet feeling felt like to someone who didn't know what that felt like, although I don't think such a person actually exists, but say for sake of argument I had to explain it to them, I would say that when you experience that feeling, what happens to you physically, for example, is something like this: for example, I would say it feels like something is pushing back up towards my solar plexus from below, and it pushes all the way up towards the base of my nose, and then it very subtly taps into my tear ducts. Or, if I were to think of another way to describe it, it's like this: the sensation you feel in your belly when you're really hungry, I think it would be accurate to say that it's very similar to that sensation, it's like there's a hole in your body, or like a hollow, and around that hollow, I mean the area of your body around that hollow, that whole area feels like it's trying to fill that vacuum. But, and this is obvious of course, there's no way for your

body to do that, so you remain in that state, and you experience this not in your belly, but slightly above, around where your stomach is, and around your chest, that's what that bittersweet feeling feels like in your body. This might have been a confusing analogy but.

I am experiencing this bittersweet sensation in the dream I am having right now, and I think that it feels really good. I may be saying this off-hand without a really deep understanding of what it means to live, but to be able to feel this emotion makes me feel really alive, and I think to have that actual experience just feels really good. In my dream I am thinking, I must live feeling this continual wistfulness from here on out, for the entire rest of my life, for the next forty, fifty, sixty years until I die. And if that is so, I have a feeling, I mean it's just speculation but, I will have lived that lifetime with a strong sense of having really lived. Once I awake, I will have no ability to follow what would have happened to my dreaming self but, I am watching my dream, imagining that my dreaming self will continue to live to the end of his life like this, and thinking how wonderful that is and how envious I am

OK so, everything I've said up to now has been about the dream I'm having now. But from here on, I will be talking not about my dreams, but me in real life. In my real life, as I mentioned earlier, I have a girlfriend. And that girlfriend of mine in my real life, unlike the one in my dream, is not dead, and in reality is alive. Since she is alive, she does all sorts of things. For example, she comes to my apartment. I have in my room, a small table, which was purchased for the purpose of her occasional visits. I also have two chairs. This chair is hers. The other day, she was saying that she wanted to take a trip overseas.

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