Summer Flowers

Translator's Introduction

HARA TAMIKI survived August 6 and devoted much of the remaining six years of his life to recording his experience as a victim. The work for which he is most famous is *Summer Flowers*, a triptych he wrote soon after August 6 and published in its entirety in 1949.

HARA'S FAMILY AND CAREER, 1905–1944

Hara Tamiki was born on November 15, 1905, son of a prosperous businessman.[1] The family factory was located in Kamiyanagi-chō, Hiroshima; the family home was part of the same compound.[2]

Hara's father and mother began their family in 1891, when his mother was seventeen years old. Their firstborn child was a daughter. The second and third children were sons who died in infancy. The fourth child, the sister to whom Hara was especially close, was born in 1897. After her came a son (1899–1987), who although actually the third son became heir to the family business; in *Summer Flowers* Hara calls him "Jun'ichi" and paints a most unflattering picture of him. A third daughter arrived in 1900, and then came a fourth son, the "Seiji"

[1] For biographical data on Hara, see Yamamoto Kenkichi, Chō Kōta, and Sasaki Kiichi, eds., *Hara Tamiki zenshū* (hereafter simply *Zenshū*), 3 vols. (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1978), 3.404–412, and two biographies: Kawanishi Masaaki, *Hitotsu no unmei—Hara Tamiki ron* (One person's fate—Hara Tamiki) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), and Kokai Eiji, *Hara Tamiki—Shijin no shi* (Hara Tamiki—Death of a poet) (Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1978). See also Nakahodo Masanori, *Hara Tamiki nōto* (Notes on Hara Tamiki) (Tokyo: Keisō, 1983). For bibliographical matters, see *Hara Tamiki shiryō mokuroku* (Catalog of Hara Tamiki materials), Nihon kindai bungakkan shozō shiryō mokuroku 10 (Tokyo: Nihon kindai bungakkan, 1983). There is an earlier two-volume collected works: *Hara Tamiki zenshū* (Collected works of Hara Tamiki) (Tokyo: Haga Shoten, 1965).

[2] The chronology in *Zenshū* (3.409) gives Nobori-chō as the address of the family home; another source, dated 1912, gives the neighboring ward, Kamiyanagi-chō, as the location of the Hara weaving factory (Sakakibara Shozo, ed., *Hiroshima-shi chimei sokuin* [Index to place names in the city of Hiroshima] [1912; reprint, Hiroshima: Aki shobō, 1984], appendix, p. 7). John W. Treat writes that Kamiyanagi-chō is now Nobori-chō (Treat, "Atomic Bomb Literature and the Documentary Fallacy," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14.1:37 [Winter 1988]), but the 1912 source indicates that both Kamiyanagi-chō and Nobori-chō were in existence at that time.

The Hara clan before Hiroshima. Hara Tamiki is seated at left, wearing glasses. His sister Yasuko stands at right rear holding an infant. "Jun'ichi" is seated at center; "Takako," the wife of "Jun'ichi," sits immediately to his left. "Seiji" stands just behind Hara Tamiki; the wife of "Seiji" stands at the extreme right. Courtesy Nihon kindai bungakkan

of *Summer Flowers* (1902–1978). Hara Tamiki, born in 1905, was the fifth son and eighth child. A sixth son arrived in 1908. Daughters were born in 1910 and 1912; the second of these is the "Yasuko" of *Summer Flowers*. The twelfth and final child arrived in 1916.

In Japanese families of that class and era, the sequence of birth had considerable significance, establishing not only the rights to succession but also the pecking order. Because he was the senior son, "Jun'ichi" controlled the factory; he hectored "Yasuko"; he and his immediate family ate better than did "Seiji" and the narrator. (Japanese readers of *Summer Flowers* have an easy time keeping all this in mind, for the second element of each of these given names denotes rank in the family. The "ichi" of Jun'ichi means first, the "ji" of Seiji

means second, the "zō" of Shōzō—the name given the author's persona in "Prelude to Annihilation"—means third.)

The wealth of his family was a significant factor throughout Hara's life. It enabled him to get a fine private education. It made it possible for him to experience a profligate period in his twenties and made it unnecessary for him to depend upon salaried work for much of his adult life. The family wealth explains the ability of his oldest brother "Jun'ichi" to experiment with a trial separation from his wife "Takako," and it also explains the presence in their home in 1945 of luxury items such as navel oranges.

Despite the affluence that the Hara family enjoyed, death was a constant presence. The first two sons died before reaching the age of three; the sixth died at age four. Hara was seven when this brother died, twelve when his father died (in 1917), thirteen when his favorite elder sister died (in 1918), nineteen when his eldest sister died (in 1924), thirty-one when his mother died (in 1936). Add to these deaths the death of his beloved wife Sadae in 1944, when Hara was thirty-nine, and it is perhaps not surprising that death occupied so important a part of Hara's consciousness.

Hara's father supplied clothing to the Japanese military, and 1905, the year of Hara's birth, witnessed a remarkable series of Japanese military victories over Russia: the fall of Port Arthur in January, the victory at Mukden in March, the destruction of the Russian Baltic Fleet by Admiral Tōgō in May, all leading to the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth in September. Stirred by these events, the elder Hara gave his newborn son a name to suit: the people (*tami*) rejoice (*ki*).

The external events of Hara's life before the bomb can be related quickly. Hara attended schools in Hiroshima from 1912 through 1923. In 1918 he failed the entrance examination for middle school but passed it the second time around a year later. In 1923 he took a year off and immersed himself in literature. Before he left Hiroshima to pursue higher education in Tokyo, Hara had already read widely and published his own poetry. His reading included the great Russian writers of the nineteenth century—Gogol, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev; the Bible, to which he had been introduced by his

favorite elder sister; Walt Whitman; and of course the pantheon of Japanese writers.

In 1918, the year of his favorite sister's death, Hara first came into contact with the writing of the German lyric poet Rainer Maria Rilke. From that point on, writes Iida Momo,[3] Hara never let Rilke's *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* out of his grasp. In fact, *The Notebooks* and *Summer Flowers* exhibit striking similarities of form and content. Like *The Notebooks*, *Summer Flowers* is a string of loosely-related episodes/sections; Rilke's volume is as little a novel in the accepted sense as is *Summer Flowers*. Like Rilke, Hara was prey to fears and dreams; like Rilke, he was hypersensitive.

Hara started keeping a diary at the age of twelve; that year he and "Seiji" published the first number of their own journal. One of Hara's youthful poems, written a few years later, concerned the large maple tree that stood in the garden of the Hara home; as we shall see, that tree appears in *Summer Flowers*. The poem reads as follows:

> Great maple tree by my window:
> O maple, you alone understand me
> to the bottom of my heart.
> O maple, you alone understand
> my sorrow today.
> O maple, you alone understand
> the loneliness in my breast.
> The joys and sorrows that only
> the maple and I share,
> and more, the grief and desolation
> that cloud the bright moon of my heart;
> My heart—what is it?
> And still stranger:
> My body.
> O maple, do you know what I am?
> Probably not. Nor I, nor anyone else.[4]

[3] Iida Momo, "Kaisetsu" (Commentary), in *Hara Tamiki zenshū*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Haga shoten, 1965), reprinted in *Nihon no gembaku bungaku* (The atomic bomb literature of Japan), 15 vols. (Tokyo: Horupu, 1983), 1.308. There are two two-volume editions of Hara's collected works: *Hara Tamiki sakuhinshū* (Collected works of Hara Tamiki) (Tokyo: Kadogawa shoten, 1953) and *Hara Tamiki zenshū* (Collected works of Hara Tamiki) (Tokyo: Haga shoten, 1965).

[4] "Kaide" ("Maple"), *Zenshū* 1.687.

Not great poetry, perhaps; but a remarkable effort for a boy of fifteen and eloquent testimony to inner turmoil and anguish.

In April 1924, Hara entered the preparatory course of the Literature Faculty of Keiō University, one of Japan's most prestigious private institutions. From 1924 until his graduation in 1932 at the age of 26, Hara was affiliated with Keiō, majoring in English literature and writing a thesis on Wordsworth. During these years he continued to read widely—in particular, Dadaism and Marxism—and to write both poetry and prose.

His last years at Keiō coincided with the worst years of the Depression and also the high point of the proletarian literature movement in Japan. Hara was a member of a group that produced a circular, "The Magazine of the Club of Four or Five"; Kawanishi Masaaki writes that the other members were surprised one time to find, scribbled in Hara's handwriting, "Long live the Communist Party!" and "Workers of the world, unite!"[5] Hara became involved in radical politics and organizing from 1929 until 1931. That activity led to his arrest in Tokyo in 1931 and to his break with political action. One of Hara's biographers describes the process not as a change of heart or apostasy but as an "abandonment" of politics.[6]

On leaving politics, Hara turned to other interests entirely, becoming something of a dandy. He smoked cigarettes that were outlandishly expensive. At considerable cost he bought out the contract of a Yokohama prostitute and lived with her for a month before she ran out on him. Shortly after she left him, Hara attempted suicide.

This phase of Hara's life came to an end with his marriage in 1933 to Nagai Sadae, who at twenty-two was five years younger than he. With her help he led a life happier than any he had known since early childhood. In his early years, he had depended first on his mother and then on his elder sister; now he depended completely on Sadae. Even before his marriage he had displayed introspective, even antisocial tendencies. Entering middle school a year later than his age group, he had kept himself apart and largely silent. He thought of himself as schizoid; his friends offered politer diagnoses. Hypersensitive at the

[5] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 20. [6] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 27.

very least, Hara feared the dark, bright light, and shocks of any kind. In the words of one friend, Hara was "thoroughly incompetent, handicapped, and deformed for life in society."[7]

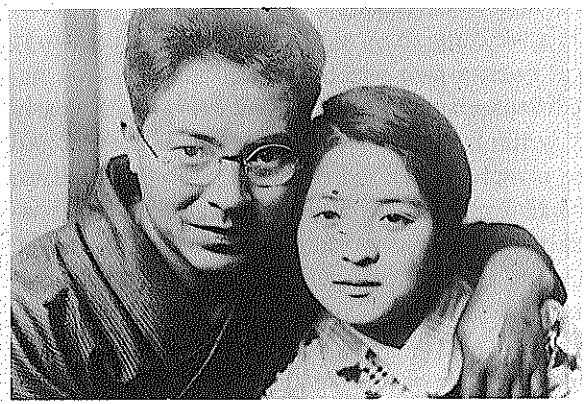
Sadae became his contact with the world. She communicated for him. Hara would throw up at the prospect of going to Tokyo (from their apartment in Chiba, not far distant) or of meeting people. She accompanied him everywhere, even to the doctor's office in the neighborhood. In the words of one biographer, "From that time on, of his own will, he ceased all attempts to communicate with others."[8] It was "thoroughgoing misanthropy."

Wrapped in this cocoon, Hara gave himself over to a life of writing, the only form of communication with which he was comfortable. Staying up late, sleeping late (a habit that in 1945 earned him the sharp criticism of both elder brothers), he wrote and wrote, mainly short pieces and tales of childhood (Japanese critics use the German term *Märchen*). Kokai Eiji[9] argues that these tales place Hara among the top three Japanese writers of childhood. An excerpt from "The Marten" (1936) is indicative of their nature:

Standing on one leg, the apricot tree stretches both arms wide into the blue sky. The tree says to the breeze blowing through its top: "Hmm, pretty ripe."

[7] Yamamoto Kenkichi, "Hara Tamiki," *Mita bungaku* (July 1951), reprinted in *Yamamoto Kenkichi zenshū* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1984) 10.162.

[8] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 33. [9] Kokai, *Hara Tamiki*, p. 106.



Hara Tamiki and his wife Sadae, undated. Courtesy Nihon kindai bungakkan

Enticed by the breeze, a bumblebee comes along. Its two arms still stretched wide, the tree speaks to the bee: "I'll bet the apricot tree in the Kawasaki garden is pretty ripe." The bee says, "I have no idea," and flies off. The tree laughs as if tickled, shaking its two arms: "Ha ha ha! That dumb bee doesn't know the Kawasaki garden!"[10]

Between his marriage in 1933 and his wife's death in 1944 there were only two significant intrusions into Hara's fairy-tale world: not Japan's war in China, not Pearl Harbor, but events that had a direct bearing on him. The first came in 1934, when the Thought Police arrested both Hara and his wife, held them for thirty hours, and then released them. Apparently neighbors had become suspicious of Hara's behavior. It was an age of suspicion, and of course Hara had a prior arrest on his record. This second arrest, Hara would write later, "burned itself onto [my] very soul."[11]

The second intrusion was both more gradual and more earth-shaking. In 1939 Sadae was diagnosed as having pulmonary tuberculosis. From then until her death in September 1944 at the age of 33, she became an invalid. Hara stopped writing his tales, resumed some writing of poetry, and took on work, first teaching English in a middle school, then working for a film company. Sadae's brother has left a moving description of Hara's attendance at his wife's sickbed:

When my sister fell ill and entered the hospital of Chiba Medical College, Hara went to the hospital every other day. No matter what the weather, he never missed a visit. . . . When he set out for the hospital, he seemed utterly happy, as guileless as a grade-school kid heading for the zoo. I don't doubt that he would have gone every day had it been possible; but he had a job, and he worried that daily visits might look a little queer, so he settled on every other day. Having stayed home one day, he would set out lightheartedly the next, as if he had been longing for that day to come. It was a touching sight. . . . He visited her room, but it appears he hardly ever said anything. He would simply sit at his wife's bedside, stare fixedly at her face, and perhaps peel and eat a piece of fruit.[12]

[10] "Ten," *Zenshū* 1.270.

[11] "Kuroshiku utsukushiki natsu" ("A painfully beautiful summer") (1949), *Zenshū* 2.272. Hara is writing of himself in the third person.

[12] Quoted in Kokai, *Hara Tamiki*, pp. 113–115.

In fact, continues the brother-in-law, Hara may have been happier, more at peace with the world, at his wife's bedside than at any other time in his life.

Sadae died in September 1944. Hara had long been incapable of living alone, and in January 1945 he returned to his family home in Hiroshima, moving in with "Jun'ichi." *Summer Flowers* opens with the narrator buying flowers to place on his wife's grave. The festival of the dead—*bon*, August 15—was less than two weeks away, the first *bon* since his wife's death eleven months earlier. Virtually the entire first section of *Summer Flowers* is an amplification of the notes that Hara began to set down less than 36 hours after the bomb fell; but not this opening. Perhaps it is testimony to the continuing influence of his wife. Or perhaps the flowers he places on her grave are also, symbolically, flowers for those who died on August 6.

Death and the Atomic Bomb, 1944–1950

The death and the deaths—the personal, individual death of his beloved Sadae and the impersonal, mass deaths of the residents of Hiroshima—came less than a year apart and brought about a profound transformation in Hara's life and thought. That transformation was not all negative. Both in the psychological and in the literary senses, these two events had their enabling aspects.

Consider first the psychological impact of his wife's death. Hara's almost total dependence on Sadae, his guileless joy even in the grim business of regular visits to a patient slowly dying of tuberculosis, came to an end. Hara's biographer Kawanishi Masaaki has suggested that Sadae's death led to Hara's rebirth.[13] Kawanishi describes Hara's writing before 1944 as the product of an immature self and argues that the death of Sadae began the process whereby Hara broke free of his self-inclosed inner world.

Even so, his vision was still personal and solitary. This feeling comes across in "Far Journey," an essay first published in 1951. "Far Journey" recounts a memory of an earlier year: "The next spring a collection of his works first saw the light of day. Yet even as he held

[13] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, pp. 85–87.

the volume in his hand, he wasn't sure whether to be happy or sad. . . . It had happened just after he had married. His wife had spoken dreamily of death. As he looked at his young wife's face, it had occurred to him that he might soon lose her. If she were to die, he would outlive her by only a year—in order to leave behind a single volume of sad and beautiful poems."[14] A volume of sad and beautiful poems: until August 6, that had been Hara's goal. Had that been his fate, he would not be of such interest. In the words of Kokai Eiji, ". . . had he not experienced the atomic bomb, he probably would not have achieved *historical significance* as a postwar writer."[15]

For all the confessional aspects of Hara's writings on dreams and death, one can glean little about the events of his life from his writing—until August 6. Kokai[16] remarks that Hara's writings underwent no significant changes in the 1930s despite all the turmoil: his one month's cohabitation with the ex-prostitute, his attempted suicide, his subsequent marriage to Sadae. Kawanishi adds: "Hara was a writer who did not sing of the springtime of youth. It was not merely that he did not sing of youth. He consciously refused to sing of youth. It was not the case that he had no youth of which to sing. He had ideal material. Poems, Dadaism, Marxism, love, wine, women, attempted suicide, arrest. He did not lack for material. Self-imposed isolation, disintegration, madness."[17] Elsewhere Kawanishi suggests a direct link between Hara's earlier isolation and the power of his postwar work: "Precisely because he had cut off the avenues leading to society . . . he was able better than anyone else to see the human condition clear-eyed amid the unprecedented experience of the atomic bomb."[18] In "Flowers after the Frost," an essay of 1947, Hara describes the process himself, more simply: "The atomic bomb moved him to what might be called a new compassion for and interest in humankind."[19] As Yamamoto Kenkichi has written, "If marriage taught solitary Hara the world of another person, that grim experience [of the atomic bomb] taught him the world in which everyone is linked by 'grief.' "[20]

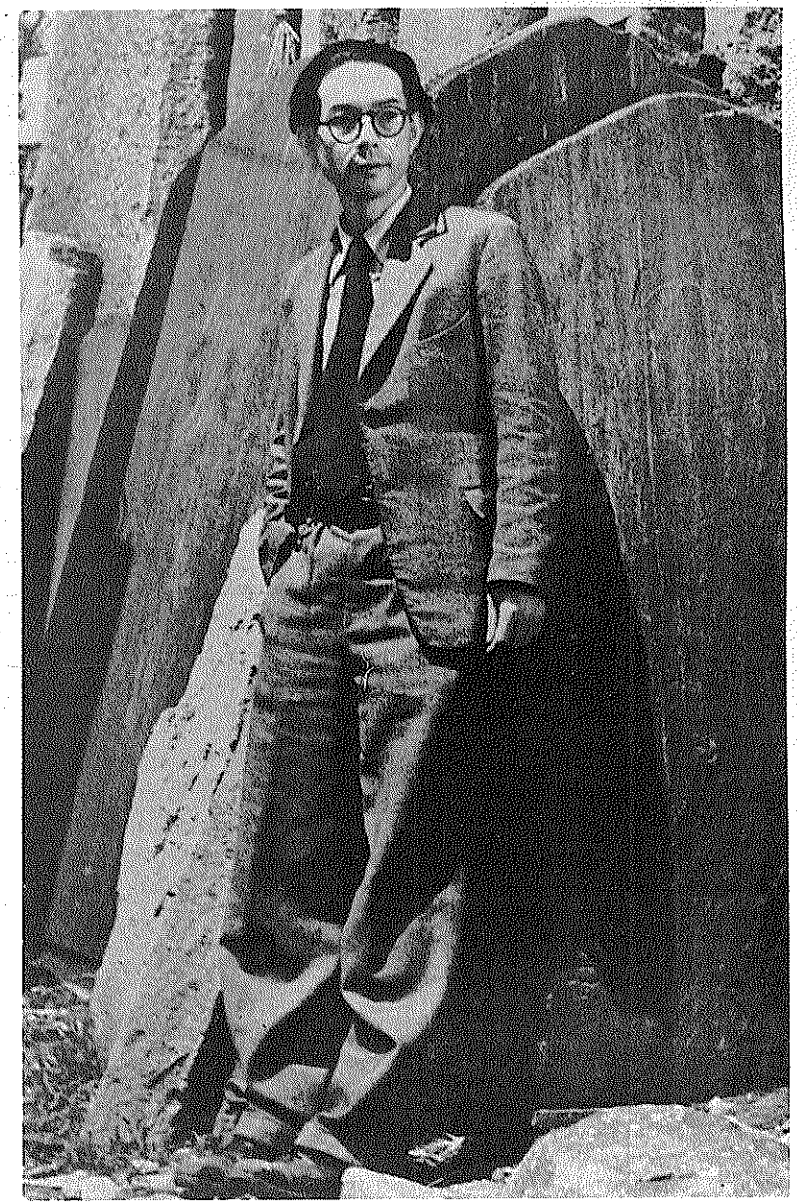
[14] "Haruka na tabi," *Zenshū* 2.298.
[15] Kokai, *Hara Tamiki*, p. 132 (his italics).
[16] Kokai, *Hara Tamiki*, p. 91.
[17] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 58.
[18] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 39.
[19] "Hyōka," *Zenshū* 2.30.
[20] Yamamoto, "Hara Tamiki," p. 163.

Not only was there a new compassion and interest, there was also a sense of mission. In "The Atomic Bomb: Contemporary Notes of a Victim," Hara jotted down this thought: "Miraculously unhurt; must be Heaven's will that I survive and report what happened."[21] In *Summer Flowers* that statement becomes "I thought to myself: I must set these things down in writing." Later still, Hara would write an essay entitled "The Will to Peace." The precise date is uncertain, but from internal evidence it must be after 1948. Hara addresses himself: "You who escaped harm from the thunderclap of the atomic bomb—when you tried to scramble to your feet among so many whose whole bodies were nearly destroyed, when it came to the clamor of the vortex of dead people all around, when you still tried to survive in the face of a long spell of hunger: why was it important to survive? Did something order you to survive? —Answer! Answer! Tell of its meaning!" Hara proceeds to make a statement against nuclear weapons and in favor of peace: "In the back of the mind in which a single human being desires and affirms war, the vague feeling probably rules that even if the other millions of people die violent deaths I alone will survive. Without doubt, such an outcome was possible in past wars. But war henceforth will lead to the wiping out of each and every person of every country, impartially—that fact must be impressed upon people."[22] Or, as Hara writes in *Requiem*, "I kept telling myself again and again—don't live for yourself; live only to lament those who have died."[23]

His political stance comes across most clearly in an essay of 1948, "On War": "Will humankind merely live pitiful lives in the valleys between wars? Can one not sense its meaning unless one's own skin is seared by the murderous rays of an atomic bomb? Will man's opposition to the slaughter of men remain powerless? . . . I don't know. I know only one thing clearly: those faint voices of the countless injured people, fallen in the tragedy of Hiroshima, their voices all appealing to Heaven—I know what they would say."[24]

Hara had moved back to Hiroshima less than four months after

[21] "Gembaku hisaiji no nōto," *Zenshū* 3.340–341.
[22] "Heiwa e no ishi," *Zenshū* 2.599–600.
[23] *Chinkonka* (1949), *Zenshū* 2.107.
[24] "Sensō ni tsuite," *Zenshū* 2.598.



Hara Tamiki, May 16, 1949. Courtesy Nihon kindai bungakkan

Sadae's death. There he was on August 6, 1945, and within four months after the bomb he had completed "Summer Flowers." It was writing unlike anything he had undertaken previously. It was not a fairy tale or a poem, not a dream. It was about death, and he had written often about death; but the differences were more striking than the similarities. Before Sadae's death and before August 6, Hara was a precious, insulated, isolated writer, writing out of childhood memories and dreams and nightmares. After August 6, he produced *Summer Flowers*.[25]

Yet even as he was writing *Summer Flowers*, between 1945 and 1949, his thinking changed. Hara himself described the process of relative disillusionment in "Death, Love, Solitude," an essay of 1949: "It is true that from amid the screams and chaos of death I burned with a prayer for a new human being. That I, a weakling, was able to withstand bitter hunger and destitution—that too was probably due in part to that prayer. But the tempestuous seas of the postwar era beat thunderously upon me and threaten even now to break me in pieces."[26] Hara felt misused by a friend, by his nephew, by a landlord; his faith in a new human being gave way. Evidence of the change can be found in *Summer Flowers*. In "Summer Flowers," the opening section that he finished in 1945, Hara focuses almost exclusively on the magnitude of the tragedy; he tells us almost nothing about relations among the members of the narrator's family. In "From the Ruins," published in 1947, Hara speaks critically of some people, in particular the villagers who did not welcome the refugees from Hiroshima. In "Prelude to Destruction," published in January 1949, Hara is scathingly critical not simply of outsiders but also of the family itself. Though it deals with events that happened before August 6 (and hence predating "Summer Flowers" and "From the Ruins"), "Prelude to Destruction" was written last; by then Hara had moved back to his awareness of

[25] Hara also wrote free verse and *haiku* about Hiroshima; for the latter and one of the former, see Richard H. Minear, "Haiku and Hiroshima: Hara Tamiki," *Modern Haiku* 19.1:11–17 (Winter–Spring 1988). The same free verse poem is found (translator not credited) in Kenzaburo Oe, *Hiroshima Notes*, ed. David L. Swain (Tokyo: YMCA, 1981) and (with a second poem) in John W. Treat, "Early Hiroshima Poetry," *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 20.2:221–225 (November 1986).

[26] "Shi to ai to kōdoku," *Zenshū* 2.550.

humankind's daily inhumanity. In Hara's own words: "For me it seems precisely as if, while we are alive on this earth, each moment is filled to the brim with fathomless horror. And the tragedies that take place daily in people's minds, the unbearable agonies that each individual human being is subjected to—things like these now fester horribly inside me. Is it likely that I can stand up to them, depict them?"[27]

These "unbearable agonies" found voice in another work of 1949, *Requiem*. There Hara writes as follows: "I have absolutely no idea how everyone lives. Humanity is all like glass shattered into smithereens. . . . The world is broken. Humankind! Humankind! Humankind! I can't understand. I can't connect. I tremble. Humankind. Humankind. Humankind. I want to understand. I want to connect. I want to live. Am I the only one trembling? Always inside me there is the sound of something exploding. Always something is chasing me. I am made to tremble, am flogged, am made to flare up, am shut down."[28] The years immediately after Sadae's death and the atomic bomb had been not a cure but a remission, and by 1949 Hara's internal demons were in the ascendant once more.

Death

The two most significant works of Hara's late years are *Requiem* and "Land of My Heart's Desire," published in 1951 shortly after Hara's death. In the former, Hara treats the death of Sadae and the deaths of Hiroshima almost as a single loss and comes to terms with both. The tone is tranquil, elegiac. Early in *Requiem* he composes an imaginary ESSAY ON MAN (the title is capitalized and in English in the original):

> Death: death made me grow up.
> Love: love made me endure.
> Madness: madness made me suffer.
> Passion: passion bewildered me.
> Balance: my goddess is balance.
> Dreams: dreams are my everything.
> The gods: the gods cause me to be silent.
> Bureaucrats: bureaucrats make me melancholy.

[27] "Shi to ai to kōdoku," *Zenshū* 2.550. [28] *Chinkonka*, *Zenshū* 2.122–123.

Flowers: flowers are my sisters.
Tears: tears resuscitate me.
Laughter: I wish I had a splendid laugh.
War: ah, war makes people come to grief.[29]

Toward the end of *Requiem* Hara returns to this list, now transformed into a prayer for the people he sees as he wanders aimlessly through the city: "(That their deaths be mature. That their love endure. That they not be alone. That passion not bewilder, that madness not be too tearing. That they be blessed with balance and dreams. That they not be lost sight of by the gods. That their bureaucrats be kind. That flowers move them to tears. That they often laugh together. That war be exterminated.)"[30]

In "Land of My Heart's Desire," Hara speaks of his own death in terms that are only slightly veiled. For example: "This life no longer offers even a single straw for me to clutch."[31] But the most moving passage of all is the section in which he talks of a grade crossing near his apartment in Tokyo:

This is a crossing I often use; often when the barrier comes down I have to wait. Trains come from the direction of Nishi-Ogikubo or from the direction of Kichijōji. As the trains approach, the tracks here vibrate perceptibly up and down. Then the trains roar past at full throttle. The speed somehow washes me clean of all cares. It may be that I am jealous of those people who can charge through life at full throttle. But the ones who appear to my mind's eye are people who fix their gaze more despondently on these tracks. Men broken by life, who despite their writhing and struggling have already been shoved down into a pit from which there is no escape—it always seems that their shades loiter in the vicinity of these tracks. But as, stopping at this crossing, I sink into this contemplation . . . won't my shade, too, soon loiter along these tracks?[32]

Within days of writing these lines, at 11:31 on the night of March 13, 1951, Hara Tamiki lay down on these rails and was run over.

[29] *Chinkonka*, *Zenshū* 2.110. [30] *Chinkonka*, *Zenshū* 2.142–143.

[31] "Shingan no kuni," *Zenshū* 2.329. For a complete translation, see Richard H. Minear, "Hara Tamiki's 'Land of My Heart's Desire' " (University of Massachusetts Asian Studies Committee Occasional Papers, no. 14, forthcoming); see also "The Land of Heart's Desire," trans. John Bester, in Kenzaburo Oe, ed., *Atomic Aftermath: Short Stories about Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, trans. David Swain (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1984), pp. 55–61.

[32] "Shingan no kuni," *Zenshū* 2.331.

One of Hara's biographers, Kokai Eiji, stresses the political context of Hara's suicide, that Hara was despondent over the Korean War and specifically over President Truman's statement in a November 1950 press conference that the use of atomic bombs was under consideration.[33] In fact, Hara did compose the following poem in response to Truman's declaration (he enclosed it in a last letter to a friend):

Lord, pity the homeless child's Christmas.
The child now homeless will be homeless
tomorrow, too;
and the children who now have homes, they too
will be homeless tomorrow.
Wretched, stupid, we lead ourselves
on to destruction, bodies and souls,
not knowing enough to stop
one step this side of destruction.
Tomorrow, once again, fire will pour down
from the skies;
tomorrow, once again, people will be seared
and die.
The misery will continue, repeat itself,
till countries everywhere, cities everywhere
all meet destruction.
Pity, pity these thoughts of a Christmas night
filled, filled with signs
that the day of destruction is near.[34]

Still, Hara's long-standing fixation on death and the tranquility of his final writings suggest that internal causes had more to do with his suicide than external causes, that the internal dialectic took precedence over the external stimulus of President Truman's nuclear brinksmanship. This is not to say, of course, that Truman's threat had only a minor impact on Hara's thinking. Those who did not experience Hiroshima or Nagasaki can imagine only with great difficulty what President Truman's statement must have meant to Hara: after all, the same man had ordered the bombing of Hiroshima and Naga-

[33] Kokai, *Hara Tamiki*, p. 14.

[34] "Ie naki ko no Kurisumasu" ("The homeless child's Christmas"), *Zenshū* 3.36.

saki. But the Korean War and President Truman's threat were not the only factors in Hara's calculations.[35]

Writing after Hara's death, Hara's friend Yamamoto Kenkichi caught that personal dialectic best. In the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, he writes, Hara's darkest premonitions and allegories became reality. Hara "devoted the next five years exclusively to speaking of its meaning." In the process, he "became merely a voice, losing all sounds apart from it." Consequently, "his death was like the death of a cricket when winter comes and he has sung his last song."[36]

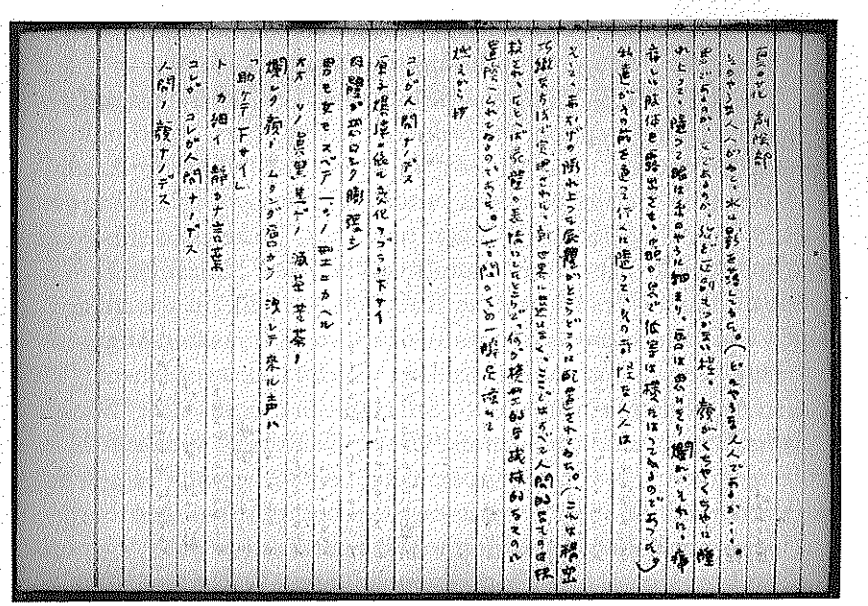
Summer Flowers: The text

The first two sections of *Summer Flowers* appeared separately in *Mita bungaku* (Mita letters), a literary journal associated with Keiō University, located in Mita. "Summer Flowers" appeared in June 1947; "From the Ruins," in November 1947. Hara chose *Mita bungaku* because it did not face pre-publication censorship by the Occupation authorities. (Hara first approached *Kindai bungaku* [Modern letters], which did face such censorship. The journal was instructed not to publish "Summer Flowers." Hara thought briefly of arranging initial publication in English translation in order to present the censors with a fait accompli, but that option did not prove practicable.) "Prelude to Annihilation" appeared in *Kindai bungaku* in January 1949.[37]

[35] In July 1949 Hara wrote of himself as one "who tends sometimes to be so despairing his head swirls, thinking that all is naught." Book review in *Mita bungaku* 31:35 (July 1949).

[36] Yamamoto, "Hara Tamiki," pp. 160–163.

[37] See, for example, Hirano Ken, "Hara Tamiki," *Nihon no gembaku bungaku* 1.319. The Prange Collection at the University of Maryland includes the issues of *Mita bungaku* containing the first two parts of *Summer Flowers*, no. 10 (June 1947) and no. 12 (November 1947). They show clearly that *Mita bungaku* was subject to post-publication censorship during these years. The first issue stamped "Spot Checked" is that of October 1949; the first issue stamped "Processed w/o Examination" is that of March 1949. Further, the Prange Collection copies indicate that the censors took no issue with either "Summer Flowers" or "From the Ruins." Four earlier articles (issues of January 1946 and November 1946) were post-censored and marked disapproved; the penalties, if any, are not clear. *Kindai bungaku*, which for this period had roughly twice the circulation of *Mita bungaku*, faced pre-publication censorship until the end of 1949 brought a virtual end to censorship; Hara's "Prelude to Annihilation"—which mentions the atomic bomb only in its final sentence—appeared in the January 1949 issue. In her study of Occupation censorship of things atomic (*The Atomic Bomb Suppressed: American Censorship in Japan, 1945–1949* [Lund: Liber, 1986], p. 106), Monica Braw comments: "It is sometimes difficult to see in what respect the published articles are different from those suppressed." The inconsistencies in the censors' treatment of Hara and *Mita bungaku* seem to support that assessment.



Three passages Hara deleted from "Summer Flowers" prior to its initial publication (June 1947). The first two excerpts he restored when he published the completed *Summer Flowers* in February 1949; in this volume they appear on pages 52 and 57–58. The third passage, a poem, Hara published later, separately. Courtesy Nihon kindai bungakkan and Hara Tokihiko

The first appearance of the entire work came in February 1949, when Nōraku shorin brought out a single volume under the title *Summer Flowers*. In his "Afterword" to that volume, Hara referred to the work for the first time in print as a triptych.[38] Since 1949 *Summer Flowers* has appeared in many forms: in the various collections of Hara's works, in anthologies, and twice on its own. The latter is the form

[38] Hara Tamiki, *Natsu no hana* (Tokyo: Nōraku shorin, 1949), p. 216; reprinted in *Zenshū* 3.367–368. The Nōraku shorin volume also included three short pieces; Hara wrote that they had "links to the triptych (*sanbusaku*)."

in which it attained its greatest popularity: the Shōbunsha edition of 1970 had gone through ten printings by 1981.

The differences among the various texts are largely insignificant with one major exception: the order of the three parts. Chronological order does not match order of composition. "Prelude to Annihilation" opens in the spring of 1945 and takes the story up to August 4; it ends with the sentence, "There were still more than forty-eight hours to go before the atomic bomb paid its visit." "Summer Flowers" opens on August 4. "From the Ruins" tells of life in the village to which Hara and some of his family fled several days after August 6.

However, that is not the order in which Hara wrote them. "Prelude to Annihilation" came last, a full eighteen months after "Summer Flowers," fourteen months after "From the Ruins." Nor is it Hara's preferred order. In the first appearance of the triptych as a whole, Hara arranged the three parts in order of composition. Moreover, in his "Afterword" he referred to the three parts as "original, continuation, and supplement."[39] That terminology sets "Prelude to Annihilation" in a distinctly subordinate position. ("The Atomic Bomb: Contemporary Notes of a Victim" forms the basis for only two parts of the triptych—"Summer Flowers" and "From the Ruins"; it begins with August 6 and contains no reference to the subject matter of "Prelude to Annihilation.") The Shōbunsha edition, which is the version most Japanese readers know, ignores the order of composition in favor of chronological order; the various collected works all yield to the author's preference.

The order is significant for a number of reasons. Most important, the tone of "Prelude to Annihilation" differs markedly from that of the other two. It marks the emergence of a darkened picture of the human beings who are the central characters of all three parts—the rebirth, writes Kawanishi,[40] of egoism. In it Hara writes of intense friction among the members of the family; the overbearing attitude of "Jun'ichi" toward the junior members of the family is perhaps most

[39] *Sei, zoku, ho*; Hara, *Natsu no hana*, p. 86 (*Zenshū* 3.367).

[40] Kawanishi, *Hitotsu no ummei*, p. 118.

striking. Kawanishi links this development to the larger trend of Hara's growing disillusionment. This translation follows the order Hara himself favored, order of composition rather than chronological order.

In "Summer Flowers" and "From the Ruins" Hara writes in the first person and designates his immediate family by their relation to him—"eldest brother," "second brother," "younger sister," "sister-in-law"—not by name. Indeed, the sole name he uses in "Summer Flowers" is that of his nephew Fumihiko, who appears only in death. In "Summer Flowers" Hara identifies acquaintances by initials ("K.," "N."); in "From the Ruins" he gives them names ("Nishida," "Maki").

In "Prelude to Annihilation" Hara invents names for the immediate family: "Jun'ichi" for the eldest brother, "Seiji" for the second brother, "Yasuko" for the younger sister, "Takako" for the wife of "Jun'ichi." He gives full names to all others who appear, except the schoolteacher, "Miss T.," for whom there is at least a hint that the author has a soft spot. Finally, in the case of the narrator-figure Hara shifts from the first person of "Summer Flowers" and "From the Ruins" to third person, "Shōzō." It is grating in English (as it is not in Japanese) to refer repeatedly to "eldest brother," "second brother," and "younger sister," so in "From the Ruins" this translation uses for the immediate family the names Hara uses only in "Prelude to Annihilation." The designation of the narrator-figure remains unchanged: "I" in the first two parts, "Shōzō" in "Prelude to Annihilation."

This is not the first translation into English of the work of Hara Tamiki. In 1953 George Saito published a nearly complete translation of "Summer Flowers," the first part of *Summer Flowers*.[41] The present translation is the first complete translation of *Summer Flowers* into English (or any other language).

[41] George Saito, trans., "The Summer Flower," *Pacific Spectator* 7.2:202–212 (Spring 1953). That translation has been reprinted several times, most recently in Shoichi Saeki, ed., *The Catch and Other War Stories* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1981) and in expanded form in Oe, ed., *Atomic Aftermath* (the identity of the "editor" who did the expanding is not clear, nor is the expanded text in fact complete).

ONE CRITIC has commented that of all Hara's works, *Summer Flowers* leaves the "faintest impression." He couples that criticism with the comment that Hara's gifts were not well suited to the stark portrayal of reality.[42] Hara's voice is always soft, often muted. Here is the critic Yamamoto Kenkichi: "Amid the frenzied noise of the postwar era, he speaks to us in a faint, soft voice, as if whispering directly, soul to soul; and even though it originates in the single earthshaking experience [of the bomb], his voice is so pure that only those who listen intently can hear it."[43] Some of Hara's works—"Land of My Heart's Desire" comes immediately to mind—positively sing; *Summer Flowers* does not.

But the criticism is wide of the mark insofar as it assumes that literary excellence in its normal acceptation is the crucial criterion in judging accounts of holocaust. Perhaps event overwhelms style. Perhaps event—and the need for witness—forces a rethinking of the category "literary excellence." Hara is not the greatest writer of his generation, but *Summer Flowers* is one of the important books of the twentieth century. Other writers have written with greater style; indeed, Hara himself does in some of his other works. But *Summer Flowers* is the classic account of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

[42] Hirano Ken, "Hara Tamiki," *Nihon no gembaku bungaku* 1.319. See also John W. Treat, "Atomic Bomb Literature and the Documentary Fallacy," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14.1:27–57 (Winter 1988).

[43] Yamamoto, "Hara Tamiki," p. 160.

Summer Flowers

by Hara Tamiki

O loved ones, may you romp and play
like the roe, the fawn,
deep in fragrant mountains.

Summer Flowers

WHEN I WENT OUT and bought flowers, it was with the intention of visiting my wife's grave. In my pocket was a bundle of incense sticks I had taken from the *butsudan*. August 15 would be the first *bon* since my wife's death; but I doubted that this hometown of mine would survive that long unscathed. It happened that the day was a no-electricity day; early that morning I saw no other men walking along carrying flowers. I do not know the proper name of the flowers; but with their small yellow petals, they had a nice country flavor about them, very summer-flower-like.

I splashed water on the gravestone standing exposed to the hot sun, divided the flowers into two bunches, and stuck them in the flower holders on either side. Once I had done so, the grave seemed somehow cleansed and purified, and for a moment I gazed at flowers and gravestone. Beneath this stone lay buried not only my wife's ashes, but also Father's and Mother's. After setting a match to the incense I had brought and bowing in silent respect, I took a drink of water at the well nearby. Then I walked home the roundabout way, via Nigitsu Park; that day and the next, the smell of incense clung to my pocket. It was on the third day that the atomic bomb fell.

I OWE MY LIFE to the fact that I was in the privy. The morning of August 6 I got out of bed at about eight o'clock. The air raid warning had sounded twice the previous night, but there had been no air raid; so before daybreak I had taken off all my clothes, changed for the first time in a while into sleepwear of *yukata* and shorts, and gone to sleep. When I got out of bed, I had on only the shorts. Catching sight of me, Sister complained about my having stayed in bed so long; without a word I went into the privy.

How many seconds later it happened I can't say, but all of a sudden there was a blow to my head, and everything went dark. I cried out instinctively and stood up, hand to my head. Things crashed as in a storm, and it was pitch dark; I didn't know what was going on. Grasping the handle and opening the door, I came out onto the ve-

randa. Until that point, I was in agony: amid the hail of sound I had heard my own cry distinctly, but I couldn't see a thing. However, once out on the veranda I quickly saw, materializing in the thin light, a scene of destruction; my feelings too came into focus.

It was like something in the most horrible dream. Right from the start, when I received the blow to my head and things went black, I knew I wasn't dead. Then, thinking what an enormous inconvenience this all was, I tried to work myself up to anger. My cry sounded in my ear like someone else's voice. But as the situation around me, though still hazy, began to resolve itself, I soon felt as if I were standing on a stage that had been set for a tragedy. I had surely seen spectacles like this at the movies. Beyond the dense cloud of dust, there appeared patches of blue, and then the patches grew in number. Light came streaming in where walls had collapsed and from other unlikely directions. As I took a few tentative steps on the floorboards, from which the *tatami* had been sent flying, Sister flew toward me from across the way. "Not hurt? Not hurt? You're all right?" she cried. Then: "Your eye is bleeding; go wash it off right away," and she told me the water was running in the kitchen sink.

Realizing that I was utterly naked, I said, looking back at Sister, "Isn't there something for me to put on?" She produced some underpants from a closet that had survived the destruction. At that point someone rushed in making strange gestures. Face bloody and wearing only a shirt, he was one of the factory workers. He saw me, said over his shoulder, "You're lucky you weren't hurt," and went off busily, muttering, "Phone, phone, I must phone."

Cracks had opened everywhere; screens and *tatami* were scattered all about; bare joists and doorsills were plainly in sight; for some time a strange silence continued. The house seemed on its last legs. As I learned later, most houses in this area collapsed flat; but our second story did not fall, and the floor held firm. Probably because it was so solidly built. My father, a cautious person, had built it forty years ago.

Trampling on the jumble of *tatami* and sliding screens, I looked for something to put on. Right off I found a jacket; but as I was searching here and there for pants, my busy eye was caught by stuff lying scattered, in a mess. The book I had been reading, half-finished

last night, lay on the floor, pages curled up. Fallen from the lintel, a picture frame covered my bed, ominously. My canteen emerged out of the blue, and then I found my cap. My pants did not turn up, so I looked for something to put on my feet.

At that point K. from the office appeared on the veranda of the drawing room. On seeing me, he called in a pathetic voice, "Help! I'm hurt," and slumped to the floor. Blood was oozing from his forehead; tears glistened in his eyes.

I asked him, "Where are you hurt?" He replied, "My knee," pressing it and contorting his pale, wrinkled face. I gave him a piece of cloth that was there and pulled on two pairs of socks, one over the other.

"Look—smoke! Let's get out of here! Take me with you!" K. urged me repeatedly. Though a good deal older than I, K. was normally far more energetic; but even he was a little lost.

Surveying the scene from the veranda, I saw an expanse of rubble, the ruins of collapsed houses; except for the reinforced concrete building still standing in the middle distance, there wasn't even anything by which to get my bearings. The large maple next to the earthen wall—now toppled—of the garden had had its trunk snapped off halfway up, and the upper half of the tree had been thrown atop the outdoor washstand. Stooping over the air raid shelter, K. said, irrationally, "Shall we stick it out here? We've got water . . ."

"No," I said, "let's head for the river," and with a look of incomprehension, he cried, "River? Which way to the river, I wonder?"

As a matter of fact, even if we wished to flee, we still hadn't made any preparations for doing so. Pulling some pajamas out of a closet, I handed them to him and also tore down the veranda's blackout curtains. I picked up some cushions, too. When I turned over the *tatami* scattered on the veranda, my emergency kit came to light. Relieved, I slung it over my shoulder. Small red flames began to appear from the storehouse of the medicine factory next door. It was time to get out. The last to leave, I climbed over the wall alongside the maple tree, snapped off and broken.

That large maple had stood forever in the corner of the garden; when I was young, it had figured in my daydreams. After having been

away a long time, I had returned this spring to live in my old home; I had thought it odd, since returning, that the tree no longer held its old charm. Strangely, this whole city seemed to have lost its gentle naturalness, to have become a collection of cold inorganic matter. Each time I entered the room that looked out onto the garden, there had come floating into my mind, unbidden, the words, "The Fall of the House of Usher."

CLAMBERING over the ruins of the house and around what was in our way, K. and I proceeded at first quite slowly. Soon our feet came to level ground, so we knew that we had come out onto the road. Then we hurried briskly down the center of the road. From the other side of a flattened building came a voice crying, "Mister, please!" We turned, and a girl whose face was bloody came walking toward us; she was crying. Looking absolutely horror-stricken, she followed us for all she was worth, calling, "Help!" We went on a while and met an old woman standing squarely in our way in the road, weeping like a child: "The house is burning! The house is burning!" Smoke was rising here and there among the ruins, but suddenly we came to a place where tongues of flame licked at us fiercely. Running, we got past that spot, and the road became level again; we had come to the foot of Sakae Bridge. Here refugees had gathered in droves. Someone on top of the bridge was being a hero: "Those of you who are up to it—form a bucket brigade!" I took the road in the direction of the bamboo grove at the Izumi Villa and at this point became separated from K.

The bamboo grove had been blown flat, but the press of people fleeing had opened a path. I looked up at the trees; most of them, too, had been snapped off partway up. This historic garden flanking the river: it too was now covered with wounds. Suddenly I noticed the face of a middle-aged woman who was squatting next to the shrubs, her fleshy body slumped over. Wholly devoid of life, her face seemed even as I watched to become infected with something. This was my first encounter with such a face. But thereafter I was to see countless faces more grotesque still.

Where the grove joined the riverbank, I came upon a bunch of schoolgirls. They had fled here from the factory, all lightly injured;

they still trembled from the vividness of the event that had only just taken place before their very eyes, yet they chattered all the more spiritedly. At that point my eldest brother turned up. Wearing only a shirt and carrying a beer bottle in one hand, he seemed at first glance uninjured. On the opposite bank, too, as far as the eye could see, buildings had collapsed, and only telephone poles still stood; the fire was already spreading. When I sat down on the narrow path on the riverbank, I felt, despite everything, that I was now safe. What had hung over our heads for so long, what in time surely had to come, had come. There was nothing left to fear; I myself had survived. Before, I had given myself an even chance of dying; now, the fact that I was alive took my breath away.

I thought to myself: I must set these things down in writing. However, at that time I still had virtually no idea of the true state of things brought about by this air raid.

THE FIRE on the opposite bank had grown in force. The heat was being reflected all the way over to our side, so we repeatedly soaked the cushions in the river, which was at high tide, and covered our heads with them. Meanwhile, someone shouted, "Air raid!" A voice said, "Those wearing white hide under the trees," and people responded by crawling, all of them, into the center of the bamboo grove. On the other side of the grove, too, with the sun pouring down, it looked as if a fire was burning. With bated breath I waited for a while, but it didn't appear that an air raid was coming; so I came out again on the river side of the grove. The fire on the opposite bank had not lessened in force. A hot wind blew over our heads, and, fanned across toward us, black smoke came as far as mid-river. Suddenly the sky overhead seemed to have turned black, and large drops of rain came pouring down, a torrent. The rain dampened the fire a bit in our vicinity, but in a while the sky turned cloudless again. The fire on the opposite bank burned on. Now, on this bank, I saw my eldest brother, Sister, and two or three acquaintances from the neighborhood; we all drew together, and each of us gave his account of the morning's events.

When the bomb fell, my brother was at the table in the office. A brilliant light flashed through the garden, and immediately thereafter

he was sent flying six feet or so; trapped under the building, he struggled for a while. Noticing a gap at last and crawling out, he became aware that over at the factory the schoolgirls were screaming for help. He struggled mightily to get them out. Sister was at the entryway when she saw a brilliant flash and quickly took cover under the stairs, so she was not injured badly. Each of us had been convinced at first that only his own house had been bombed; when we did go outside, we were flabbergasted to see that the same thing had happened everywhere. We were also amazed that while everything aboveground had collapsed, there were no holes that looked like bomb craters. Sister said it had happened soon after the lifting of the preliminary alert. There had been a brilliant flash and a soft hissing, like the sound of magnesium burning, and instantaneously everything had turned upside down . . . just like black magic, she said, trembling.

As the fire on the other bank began to die down, a voice said the trees in this garden had caught fire. A faint smoke began to be visible high in the sky over the bamboo grove behind us. The water in the river was still at full tide and gave no indication of falling. I walked along the stone wall and climbed down to the water's edge. Just at my feet, a large wooden crate came floating past, and onions that had spilled out of the crate were bobbing about. I pulled the box over, grabbed onion after onion out of it, and handed them to people on the bank. On the railway bridge upstream a freight train had derailed, and this box, thrown out, had floated down. While hauling in onions, I heard a voice crying, "Help!" A young girl was floating past in the middle of the river holding on to a piece of wood, her head sometimes above the water, sometimes under it. I picked out a big log and swam out, pushing it ahead of me. I hadn't swum in a long time, but I was able, more easily than I would have thought, to rescue her.

The fire on the opposite bank had slackened for a while but suddenly started raging again. This time dark smoke appeared in the midst of the red flames, and the black mass spread savagely; even as we watched, the temperature of the flames seemed to rise. But even that eerie blaze too gradually burned itself out; when it did, only empty shells of buildings remained to be seen. It was then that I noticed, in the sky downstream above the middle of the river, an absolutely translucent layer of air trembling and moving toward us. A tornado, I thought; at that very moment violent winds were already blowing overhead. The trees and plants all around me trembled; suddenly, I saw many trees above my head sucked up by the wind, just like that, and carried off into the sky. Dancing crazily in the air, the trees fell into the midst of the maelstrom with the force of arrows. I don't remember clearly what color the surrounding air was. But I think we must have been enveloped in the dreadfully gloomy faint green light of the medieval paintings of Buddhist hell.

Once this twister had passed, a kind of twilight obtained, and my second brother, who hadn't appeared until then, unexpectedly came to where we were. His face was streaked with gray; the back of his shirt was torn, too. The marks on his skin looked as if he had gotten sunburned at the beach; later, they developed into real burns that suppurated and required several months of treatment. But at the moment he was still pretty fit. He said he had just returned home on an errand when he spotted a small airplane high in the sky and then saw three strange flashes. He was thrown a good six feet. He rescued his wife and the maid, both of whom had been pinned under and were struggling; he entrusted the two children to the maid and sent them fleeing ahead of him; then he rescued the old man next door, which took longer than he expected.

My sister-in-law was very worried about the children from whom she had become separated, but then the maid called from the other bank. Her arms hurt, she said, and she was no longer able to carry the children; please come quickly.

The trees of the Izumi Villa were burning, a few at a time. We would be in trouble if the fire burned its way here after dark; we wanted to cross to the opposite shore while it was still light. But there was no boat to be seen. My eldest brother and his family decided to cross to the other shore via the bridge; still searching for a boat, my second brother and I went up the river. As we proceeded up the narrow stone path running along the river, I saw for the first time a group of people defying description. The rays of sunlight, already slanting, cast a wan light on the surrounding scene; there were people both on top of the bank and below it, and their shadows fell on the water.

What kind of people? . . . Their faces were so swollen and crumpled that it was impossible to tell which were men and which women; their eyes were narrowed to slits; their lips were festering horribly. Baring their hideously painful arms and legs, they lay on their sides, more dead than alive. As we passed in front of them, these monstrous people called to us in thin soft voices. "Please give me a little water to drink!" or "Please help me!"—every last one appealed to us.

I was stopped by someone calling "Mister!" in a sharp, pitiful voice. In the river just there I saw the naked corpse of a boy, entirely submerged; and on the stone steps less than a yard away crouched two women. Their faces were swollen to about half again normal size, deformed and ugly, leaving only their burned and tangled hair as a sign that they were women. At first sight, rather than pity, I felt my hair stand on end. When these women saw that I had stopped, they pleaded with me: "That blanket over there by the trees is ours; won't you please bring it here?"

Over there by the trees there was indeed something that looked like a blanket. But on top of it lay a badly injured person on the point of death, and there was nothing I could do.

We found a small raft, so we untied the rope and rowed toward the other bank. By the time the raft landed on the sandy beach on the other bank, night had already fallen; but here too, it seemed, many injured were waiting. One soldier who had been crouching at the river's edge pleaded, "Give me some hot water to drink!" so I made him lean on my shoulder as we walked on. In pain, he tottered forward over the sand, and then he muttered as if in utter despair, "I'd be better off dead." I agreed sadly but said nothing. It was as if unbearable resentment against this absurdity bound us together; we needed no words. Partway there I had him wait, and looked up from the base of the stone wall to the emergency stand with its supply of hot water; it had been set up on top of the embankment. At the place on the stand from which steam rose, a large head, burned black, was grasping a teabowl and slowly drinking hot water. The huge grotesque face seemed to me made entirely of black beans. What is more, the hair on its head had been cut off in a straight line just at the ear. (Later, as I saw people with burns, hair cut off in a straight line, I came to realize

that their hair had been burned off right up to the line of their caps.) I got a bowl of water and carried it back to where I had left the soldier. In the river a single soldier, seriously injured, was squatting, drinking his fill of river water.

In the dusk the sky above the Izumi Villa and the fire in our immediate vicinity loomed brilliantly; on the sandy shore some people were even burning bits of wood to cook supper. A woman had been stretched out right beside me for some time, face swollen like a spongy balloon; from her voice pleading for water I recognized her for the first time as the maid from my second brother's house. Carrying the baby, she had been about to set out from the kitchen when the flash caught her, burning her face, chest, and hands. Then, taking with her the eldest daughter and the baby, she had fled just ahead of my brother and his wife; but at the bridge she had become separated from the girl and had reached the riverbank here carrying only the baby. The hand that had been injured when she first tried to shield her face from the flash, she complained, that hand still hurt as badly now as if it were being wrenched off.

The tide was now rising, so we left the riverbed and moved toward the embankment. Night had fallen; crazed voices echoed from this side and that, crying, "Water! Water!" The clamor of those still left behind on the riverbed gradually grew more insistent. On top of the embankment a breeze stirred, and it was a little chilly for sleeping. Immediately across the way was Nigitsu Park; it too was now enclosed in darkness, only the faint outlines of broken tree trunks visible. My brother and his family were lying in a hollow in the ground; I found another hollowed out place and crawled into it. Lying right next to me were three or four injured schoolgirls.

Someone was worried and said, "The trees across the way have caught fire; wouldn't we be better off fleeing?" I emerged from my hollow and looked across. The flames were flashing in the trees two or three hundred yards away, but they didn't seem about to come toward us.

"Is the fire burning our way?" an injured young girl asked me, trembling.

"No," I told her, "we're okay," and she had another question: "What time is it now—not twelve yet?"

The preliminary alert sounded. Somewhere there must have been an undamaged siren, for one reverberated faintly. Downstream there was a glow, vast and hazy: the fire in the city must still be going strong.

The schoolgirls sighed: "Ah, if only morning would come!"

In soft, gentle voices they sang in chorus, "Father! Mother!"

"Is the fire burning our way?" the injured young girl asked me again.

At the riverbed could be heard the dying gasps of someone apparently quite young and strong. Echoing on all sides, his voice carried everywhere. "Water, water, water, please! . . . Oh! . . . Mother! . . . Sister! . . . Mit-chan!": the words poured out as if he were being torn body and soul; interspersed between the words, forced out of him by the pain, were faint groans of "Ooh, ooh!" —Once when I was a child I walked along this embankment to fish from this riverbank. The memory of that entire hot day still remains strangely vivid. On the sand is a large billboard for Lion toothpaste; from time to time, off in the direction of the railway bridge, I hear the roar of trains crossing. It is a scene peaceful as in a dream . . .

WHEN DAWN CAME, last night's voice was stilled. Its bloodcurdling death cry seemed to linger in my ear; yet the light was full, and a morning breeze was blowing. My eldest brother and Sister went around to the charred ruins of our house, and since people said there was an aid station in the East Parade Ground, my second brother and his family set off for there. I too was about to head for the East Parade Ground when the soldier next to me asked to go along. This hefty soldier must have been pretty badly injured; leaning on my shoulder, he went forward on his own legs one hesitant step at a time, just as if carrying something fragile. What is more, ours was a terrible, ominous path: fragments and splinters and corpses, still smoldering. When we got to Tokiwa Bridge, he was tired out and told me to leave him because he couldn't take another step. So I left him there and proceeded alone in the direction of Nigitsu Park. In some places

houses were still there, as they had collapsed, spared by the flames; but the brilliant flash seemed to have left the marks of its claws everywhere. In an open space people had gathered. Water was trickling from a pipe. It was then word reached me that my niece was being cared for at the Tōshōgu disaster station.

I hurried to the precincts of Tōshōgu Shrine. Just as I got there, my niece came face to face with her mother again. Yesterday she had become separated from the maid at the bridge, then afterward had fled in the company of people from somewhere else; when she saw her mother, she burst out crying, as if suddenly she could stand it no longer. Her neck, black from burns, looked painful.

The aid station had been set up at the base of the Tōshōgu *torii*. A police officer asked for home addresses, ages, and so on. But even after the injured were given the slips of paper on which he had written down that information, they had to wait another hour and a half or so in a long line under the hot sun. Still, if you were injured and able to join this line, you were probably among the fortunate. Even now, there was a voice crying frantically, "Soldier! Soldier! Help! Soldier!" It was a girl with burns; she had collapsed at the side of the road and was rolling about. And a man wearing the uniform of the guards had lain down, his head, swollen with burns, atop a stone; just then he opened his pitch-black mouth, pleading brokenly in a weak voice: "Please help me, someone! Oh! Nurse! Doctor!" But no one paid him any attention. Police officers, doctors, nurses: all had come from other cities to help out, and there weren't enough of them.

Accompanying the maid from my second brother's house, I joined the line; by now she was swollen badly and could hardly stay on her feet. Presently her turn came, and she was treated; then we had to make a place where we could rest. Every spot within the shrine precincts was taken up by badly injured people lying about; we saw no tents, no shade. So for a roof we leaned some thin boards against the stone wall and crawled underneath. In this cramped space the six of us spent more than twenty-four hours.

Right beside us, too, a similar shelter had been fashioned, and a fellow was in constant motion atop its mats; he called over to me. He had neither shirt nor undershirt; only one leg of his long pants was

left, and that reduced to a piece about his waist; he had burns on both hands, both feet, and face. He said he had been on the seventh floor of the Chūgoku Building when the bomb fell; he must have had enormous willpower, for despite his severe injuries he had made it this far—pleading with some people to help him, ordering others. Then a young man came wandering over, whole body bloody and wearing the armband of a headquarters cadet. Seeing him, the man next to us reared up and almost roared, from his high horse: "Hey! Hey! Get away! My body's a mess; touch me and you'll get yours! There's plenty of room, so why pick this tiny spot? Quick, take off!" Looking dazed, the bloody young man stood up.

Perhaps ten feet from our shelter there was a cherry tree with only a few leaves, and two schoolgirls had lain down under it. Faces burned black and thin backs exposed to the hot sun, they both groaned for water. Students from the girls' vocational school, they had come to this area to dig potatoes and here had met disaster. Then another woman came, face bloated, wearing cotton work trousers; setting her handbag down, she stretched her legs out, exhausted . . . The sun was already beginning to set. Another night here? I was singularly forlorn at the thought.

BEGINNING just before dawn we heard voices here and there reciting the *nembutsu* over and over. People were dying one after the other. When the morning sun rose high in the sky, the students from the girls' vocational school both breathed their last, too. Having checked their corpses, which lay face down in the ditch, a police officer approached the woman clad in cotton work clothes. She too had collapsed and seemed now to be dead. When the police officer checked her handbag, he found a bank book and a war-bond book. So she had been on a trip when disaster struck.

At about noon, the air raid warning sounded, and we could hear planes. We had become quite inured to the sorrow and grotesque ugliness on all sides; even so, our exhaustion and hunger gradually became severe. Both the eldest son and the youngest son of my second brother had been going to school in the city, so we still didn't know what had happened to them. People died one after the other, and the

corpses simply lay there. With a sense that no help was coming, people walked about restlessly. Yet now, from over toward the parade ground, a bugle sounded, loud and clear.

Suffering from burns, the nieces cried bitterly, and the maid pleaded frequently for water. Just when we had had about all we could endure of their complaints, my eldest brother returned. Yesterday he had gone off in the direction of Hatsukaichi, to which his wife had been evacuated; today he had come back with a horse-drawn goods cart he had arranged to hire in the village of Yahata. So we climbed onto the cart and left.

LOADED with my brother's household and Sister and me, the cart left Tōshōgu and went in the direction of Nigitsu. It happened as the cart set off from Hakushima toward the entrance of the Izumi Villa. In an open area over toward the West Parade Ground my brother happened to spot a corpse clothed in familiar yellow shorts. He got off the cart and went over. My sister-in-law and then I also left the cart and converged on the spot. In addition to the familiar shorts, the corpse wore an unmistakable belt. The body was that of my nephew Fumihiko. He had no jacket; there was a fist-sized swelling on his chest, and fluid was flowing from it. His face had turned pitch-black, and in it a white tooth or two could barely be seen. Though his arms were flung out, the fingers of both hands were tightly clenched, the nails biting into the palms. Next to him was the corpse of a junior high school student and farther off, the corpse of a young girl, both rigid just as they had died. My second brother pulled off Fumihiko's fingernails, took his belt too as a memento, attached a name tag, and left. It was an encounter beyond tears.

THE WAGON then went toward Kokutaiji and, crossing Sumiyoshi Bridge, toward Koi, so I was able to get a look at virtually all the ruins. In the expanse of silvery emptiness stretching out under the glaring hot sun, there were roads, there were rivers, there were bridges. And corpses, flesh swollen and raw, lay here and there. This was without doubt a new hell, brought to pass by precision craftsmanship. Here everything human had been obliterated—for example,

the expressions on the faces of the corpses had been replaced by something model-like, automaton-like. The limbs had a sort of bewitching rhythm, as if rigor mortis had frozen them even as they thrashed about in agony. With the electric wires, jumbled and fallen, and the countless splinters and fragments, one sensed a spastic design amid the nothingness. But seeing the streetcars, overturned and burned apparently in an instant, and the horses with enormous swollen bellies lying on their sides, one might have thought one was in the world of surrealistic paintings. Even the tall camphor trees of Kokutaiji had been torn up, roots and all; the gravestones too had been scattered. The Asano Library, of which only the outer shell remained, had become a morgue. The road still gave off smoke here and there and was filled with the stench of death. Each time we crossed a river, we marveled that the bridge hadn't fallen. Somehow I can capture my impressions of this area better in capital letters. So here I set down the following stanza:

BROKEN PIECES, GLITTERING,
AND GRAY-WHITE CINDERS,
A VAST PANORAMA—
THE STRANGE RHYTHM OF HUMAN CORPSES BURNED RED.
„WAS ALL THIS REAL? COULD IT BE REAL?
THE UNIVERSE HENCEFORTH, STRIPPED IN A FLASH OF EVERYTHING.
THE WHEELS OF OVERTURNED STREETCARS,
THE BELLIES OF THE HORSES, DISTENDED,
THE SMELL OF ELECTRIC WIRES, SMOLDERING AND SIZZLING

The wagon proceeded along the road through the endless destruction. Even when we got to the suburbs, there were rows of collapsed houses; when we passed Kusatsu, things finally were green, liberated from the color of calamity. The sight of a swarm of dragonflies flying lightly and swiftly above green fields engraved itself on my eyes. Then came the long and monotonous road to Yahata. By the time we got to Yahata, night had already fallen. Next day began our wretched life in that place. The injured made little progress toward recovery, and even those who had been healthy gradually grew weak from lack of adequate food. The arm burns of the maid suppurated horribly, flies swarmed, and finally her arms became infested

with maggots. No matter how we treated them, the maggots came back, again and again. After more than a month, she died.

ON THE FOURTH or fifth day after we came here, my middle school nephew turned up; he had been among the missing. On the morning of the sixth, he had gone to school in order to help clear firebreaks; the flash came just as he was in the classroom. Instantly he had thrown himself under a desk, and then the ceiling had collapsed, burying him; but he had found a hole and crawled out. Not more than four or five of the schoolchildren were able to crawl out and flee; the others had all been killed in the initial blast. With four or five others, he had fled to Hijiyama, vomiting up white fluid on the way. Then he had gone by train to the home of a friend who had fled with him, and they had taken him in. However, a week or so after he came home to us here, he too saw his hair fall out, and within a few days he became completely bald. At that time many of the victims of the bomb subscribed to the theory that if your hair fell out and your nose started to bleed, you were done for. On the twelfth or thirteenth day after his hair fell out, my nephew finally began having nosebleeds. That night the doctor declared him to be in critical condition. However, he did hold his own, his condition still critical.

ON HIS WAY by train, for the first time, to a factory evacuated into the countryside, N. felt the bomb's shock at the precise moment the train entered a tunnel. On emerging from the tunnel, he looked toward Hiroshima and saw three parachutes floating gently down. Then the train arrived at the next station, and he was astonished that the station's windows were badly splintered. By the time he got to his destination, detailed reports had already come in. Turning around on the spot, he boarded a train bound for Hiroshima. The trains he passed that came from Hiroshima were all filled with grotesquely injured people. He waited impatiently for the fire in the city to die out, then walked along at a rapid pace on asphalt that was still hot. He went first to the girls' school where his wife taught. In the ashes of the classroom, he found the bones of schoolchildren; in the ashes of the principal's office, he found a skeleton that appeared to be the principal's.

But he found no skeleton that could have been his wife's. In great haste he went in the direction of their house. That was near Ujina, where houses had merely been knocked flat; they had been spared the fire. But he found no trace of his wife there either. So now, one by one, he checked the corpses lying on the road between his house and the school. Because most of the corpses were lying face down, he had to pull them into a sitting position in order to examine the faces; every last face was grossly disfigured, but none belonged to his wife. In the end, he went looking almost mindlessly, even in places in the opposite direction. In a cistern there were ten or more corpses piled one atop the other. On a ladder leaning on the riverbank, there were three corpses; rigor mortis had frozen them with their hands on the ladder. In a line waiting for the bus, corpses were standing just as they had been; they had died with their fingernails sticking into the shoulder of the person ahead of them in line. He also saw a large group of corpses—an entire unit of the labor corps mobilized from the countryside to clear firebreaks had been annihilated. Those scenes still did not equal the West Parade Ground. That was a mountain of dead soldiers. Yet nowhere did he find his wife's corpse.

Visiting in turn every aid station, N. examined the faces of the severely injured. Each face was the very picture of suffering, but none belonged to his wife. Then, having spent three days and three nights examining corpses and burn victims to the point of utter revulsion, N. started all over again, going once more to the charred ruins of the girls' school at which his wife had taught.

From the Ruins

WHEN WE FIRST moved to the village of Yahata, I still had lots of energy; I loaded the injured onto the cart and went with them to the hospital, walked here and there to pick up what was being handed out, and kept in touch with Jun'ichi in Hatsukaichi. The house was the outbuilding to a farmhouse in Yahata; Seiji had rented it. From our initial place of refuge Yasuko and I ended up moving in with his family. The flies from the cowbarn came swarming boldly into the rooms. They stuck tight to the burned neck of my young niece and did not budge. Throwing down her chopsticks, she screamed frantically. To ward them off, we spread mosquito netting even during the day. Face and back burned, Seiji was stretched out inside the netting, a gloomy expression on his face. The main house was separated from us by a garden, and on the veranda we could see a man with cruelly swollen face—we had already seen so many such faces that we had grown weary of them; in the back, a bed had been laid out for someone apparently even more seriously injured. In the evening we heard a weird delirious voice from over there. He'll die any time now, I thought. Soon thereafter we heard a voice already intoning the *nembutsu*. It was the husband of the family's eldest daughter who had died; he had been in Hiroshima when the bomb fell, then walked all the way back. After taking to bed, they say, he scratched involuntarily at his burns and in short order developed fever on the brain.

No matter when we went, the clinic was crowded with the injured. It took a whole hour to treat a middle-aged woman, carried in by three others—her entire body lacerated by splinters of glass; so we had to wait until afternoon. Some of the people we met no matter when we went: the injured old man brought by handcart, the junior high school student with burns on face and hands—he had been at the East Parade Ground when the bomb fell—and others. When they changed my young niece's bandages, she screamed as if possessed: "Ouch! Ouch! Give me some candy!" With a bittersweet smile, the doctor said, "You say, 'Give me some candy!' but I haven't got any."

The room adjoining the examination room was full, too—appar-

ently, with injured relatives of the doctor who had been brought there; their dying moans were unearthly. While I was transporting the injured, the air raid alarm frequently went off; I even heard planes flying overhead. That day, too, our turn didn't come and didn't come, so I decided to return home for a while and rest; I left the cart just where it stood at the hospital entrance. When Yasuko, who was in the kitchen, saw that I had returned, she said, looking puzzled: "A little while ago they began playing the national anthem; I wonder why."

Brought up short, I went straight to the radio in the main house. I couldn't hear the voice of the newscaster distinctly, but the words "cessation of hostilities" were unmistakable. Shocked so deeply I couldn't sit still, I went outside again and set off for the hospital. At the entrance to the hospital, Seiji was still waiting, a vacant look on his face. On seeing him, I said: "What a pity! The war's over, but . . ." If only the war had ended a little sooner—these words became a common refrain thereafter. Seiji lost his youngest son; the belongings he had got ready with the intent of evacuating here all went up in flames, too.

IN THE EVENING I followed a path amid green rice paddies and descended to the embankment along the Yahata. It was a small shallow stream, the water was clear, and a black dragonfly was resting its wings on a rock. I submerged myself in the water, shirt and all, and heaved a great sigh. Turning my head, I could see the low mountain range quietly changing color in the twilight; the distant peaks sparkled brightly as they caught the slanting rays of sunlight. It was a scene too beautiful to be real. No longer was there fear of air raid; now the broad sky wore an air of deep tranquility. I felt almost like a new person, someone born with that atomic thunderclap. All the same, what of the people who died desperate deaths that day on the riverbed near Nigitsu and on the riverbank by the Izumi Villa?—I enjoy this tranquil view, but what has become of those charred ruins? The newspaper reports that for 75 years the center of the city will be uninhabitable; people say that there are ten thousand corpses still unidentified, that every night the spirits of the dead wander among the ruins. The fish in the river, too: a few days after the bomb, dead fish floated to the

surface, and the people who ate them, it is said, soon died. Even people about us who seemed fine at the time died thereafter of blood poisoning, and I was haunted by a stubborn and incomprehensible unease.

WE LIVED EVERY DAY in dire need of food. No one in this town extended a helping hand to the victims. Day after day we had to live on a bit of rice gruel; increasingly exhausted, I became absurdly sleepy after eating. When I looked out from the second floor, I saw rice paddies stretching all the way to the foot of the low mountain range. Tall green rice plants quivered under the hot sun. Was this rice the fruit of the land? Or was it there in order to make people hungry? Sky, mountains, green fields: in the eyes of hungry people they might as well not have been there.

At night scattered lights appeared in the fields between here and the foot of the mountains. It had been some time since we had seen lights, and the sight was a cheering one, making me feel almost as if I were on a journey. Completely worn out when she finished cleaning up after a meal, Yasuko would come climbing up to the second floor. As if still not wakened from the nightmare of that day, shaking like a leaf, she kept recalling that instant in great detail. Shortly before the bomb fell, she had been about to go to the storehouse to get the luggage ready; had she been in the storehouse, she probably would not have survived. I too had survived only by chance. The young man on the second floor next door had been killed instantly, and he was only the width of a single fence from where I was.—Even now Yasuko trembled when she remembered so vividly a neighborhood child she had seen pinned under. It was a child in her own child's class who had taken part in the mass evacuation to the countryside; but the child had been simply unable to get used to life there, so it had been sent home to its parents. Whenever Yasuko had seen the child playing in the street, she had wanted to call her own child home, if only for a short while. When the flames appeared, she saw this child, pinned under a rafter, lifting its head and appealing to her, "Help!" But try as she could, she wasn't strong enough to help.

Many stories of this kind were making the rounds. When the

bomb fell, Jun'ichi was pinned under but squirmed out, stood up, and recognized the face of the old woman of the house across the way, also pinned under. Though his first impulse was to rush to her aid, he could not turn a deaf ear to the voices of the schoolgirls screaming over at the factory.

His wife's relatives were worse off yet. The Maki home had been a tranquil nest facing the river in Ōtemachi; after coming back to Hiroshima this spring, I too had gone there once to pay my respects. Ōtemachi was virtually the epicenter of the atomic bomb. Maki's wife had called for help from the kitchen; yet even with her voice in his ear, Maki had no choice but to rush right out of the house. When their eldest daughter gave birth at the place to which she had fled, she took a sudden turn for the worse, suppurated from the needlemarks left by the blood transfusion, and finally died. And as for the Nagarekawa branch of the family, the husband was away at the front and didn't know what had happened to his wife and children.

I had lived in Hiroshima less than half a year, so I didn't know many people; but Seiji's wife and Yasuko were forever gleaning news from somewhere about some neighbor's fate and rejoicing or grieving accordingly.

At the factory three of the schoolgirls had died. The second floor, it appeared, had collapsed on top of them; only their skeletons remained, heads touching as if examining a photograph or something. From a very few clues, it was established who they were. But the fate of Miss T., the teacher, was not known. That morning she hadn't shown up yet at the factory. She lived at a temple in Saiku-machi; whether at home or en route, she had probably been killed.

In my mind's eye I could still see her, neat and composed. Once, needing some paperwork from her, I went to her place; looking a bit flustered, she scribbled something in a hasty hand and gave it to me. I had taught the schoolgirls English on the second floor of the factory during their lunch hour; gradually the air raid alerts had become more frequent. One time no alert sounded even as the radio was reporting that planes could be heard and seen in the skies over Hiroshima. "What should we do?" I asked her. "I'll let you know if it looks dangerous; please go on with the lesson until then," she said. But the

situation was alarming: American planes circling over Hiroshima in broad daylight. One day I finished class, came down from the second floor, and Miss T. was sitting in a corner of the factory all by herself. From a cardboard box beside her there arose frequent peeps. I looked in, and it was full of wriggling chicks. I asked, "Where did you get them?" and she said with a smile, "One of the schoolgirls brought them in."

The schoolgirls sometimes brought in flowers. They were either set in water on the desk in the office or placed on Miss T.'s table. When, leaving the factory, the girls streamed out the front door and lined up in the street, Miss T. always supervised them in an inconspicuous way, from a spot a little off to the side. In her hand was a bunch of flowers, and there was something noble about her small, tastefully dressed figure. Supposing disaster had struck while she was on the way to school, her face, too, had probably been transformed into a gruesome sight, like the faces of all the other injured.

I often went to the East Asian Travel Office to arrange bus passes for the schoolgirls and the factory workers. The bureau had already moved twice since this spring because its buildings had been razed. The site to which it moved the second time was right in the center of the destruction. There had been a young woman there who knew me by sight; she had a dark complexion and spoke with a lisp, but she seemed intelligent. She too had probably not survived. There was an old man over 70 who often came to the office about his military disability pay. My brother in Hatsukaichi said he saw this old man afterwards, apparently in good health.

EVERY NOW AND THEN normal human voices terrified me. When someone over at the barn let out a sudden cry, that cry immediately called to mind the wailing voices of those dying on the riverbed. There must be only the tiniest of differences between voices that rend one's heart and voices making madcap jokes. I became conscious of something abnormal in the corner of my left eye. Four or five days after moving here, when walking the roads in broad daylight, I sensed an insect or something floating and gleaming in the corner of my left eye. I thought it might be refracted light; but sometimes even when I

was walking in the shade, something glittered in my eye. And even after dark, even at night, at odd times something bright flickered. Was it because I had seen so many flames? Or because of the blow to the head I had taken? I was in the privy that morning when the bomb fell, so I didn't see the flash everyone else saw; darkness suddenly descended, and something hit me on the head. There was some bleeding from above my left eyelid, but the injury was so slight it left virtually no scar. Is the trauma of that morning still reverberating in my nerves? —but it was a matter of only a few seconds, hardly enough to call a trauma.

A SEVERE and excruciating case of diarrhea hit me. The sky had looked threatening since dusk, and the storm struck that night. The lights were off on the second floor; lying there I could hear the wind howling over the rice paddies, loud and clear. The house might be blown away, so Seiji and his family and Yasuko, who were downstairs, fled to the main house. I was alone on the second floor, in bed, listening drowsily to the sound of the wind. Before the house collapsed, I thought, the rain shutters would fly off and the tiles scatter. The extraordinary experience of the bomb had made everyone jumpy. Occasionally, when the wind died down completely, the croaking of frogs reached my ear. But then the wind at once resumed its onslaught, with a vengeance. In bed I too considered what to do if worst came to worst. What to take with me in flight? The satchel right beside me, and that was about it. Each time I went downstairs to the privy, I looked at the sky, and the pitch-black of the sky didn't seem about to grow lighter. There was a crunch, the sound of something cracking. Gritty sand came falling from overhead.

Next morning the wind died out completely, but my diarrhea wouldn't stop. I was weak in the knees and tottered when I walked. My nephew, the junior high schooler, had survived the bomb miraculously despite having been out clearing firebreaks; thereafter all his hair had fallen out, and his health had gradually failed. Then small pink dots had begun to appear on his limbs. On examining my body that morning, I too found pink dots, albeit very few of them. To be on the safe side, I went to the hospital to be examined; the injured

overflowed out into the garden. One woman there had moved from Onomichi to Hiroshima and was at Ōtemachi when the bomb fell. Her hair hadn't fallen out, but that morning she had begun to spit up blood. She was apparently pregnant, and her weary face wore an unfathomable disquiet and signs that death was approaching.

THE FAMILY of my elder sister in Funairi Kawaguchi-chō had survived: that report came from my brother in Hatsukaichi. Her husband had been confined to his sickbed since spring, and everyone figured the family could not have survived. But although the house was damaged, the fire had spared it. Her son was now suffering greatly from dysentery, so they asked that Yasuko come and help. Yasuko wasn't any too well herself; but deciding to go see him anyway, she set out. Next day she came back from Hiroshima and told me how, much to her surprise, she had bumped into Nishida on the streetcar.

Nishida had been employed at the factory for the last twenty years. That morning he had not yet reported for work, so we figured he had been en route when the flash came and was surely done for. In the streetcar Yasuko saw a man whose face was burned black and swollen all out of shape. All the passengers were staring at him; but almost as if nothing were the matter, he was asking the conductor something. Yasuko thought his voice sounded really quite like Nishida's, so she approached him; he recognized her and greeted her in a loud voice. That was his first excursion into the outside world from the place where he was being treated. . . . It was more than a month later when I saw Nishida, and by then the burns on his face had already scabbed over. He said he and his bicycle had both been sent flying, and that even after he had been carried to the treatment center, he had had a very rough time. Almost all the injured around him died, and maggots bred in his ear: "The maggots were always trying to get into the ear canal; it was unbearable." He spoke with his head tilted to the side, as if being tickled.

ONCE SEPTEMBER CAME, there was rain and more rain. My nephew's hair had fallen out, and he had lost heart; now he suddenly took a turn for the worse. He was bleeding from the nose, and from his throat too

came a stream of blood clots. The crisis would likely come tonight, they said. So from Hatsukaichi my brother's family joined us at the bedside. My nephew had the smooth pale face and wholly bald head of a monk, and he had been dressed in a silk garment with small stripes. Stretched out dead tired, he looked like a weird *bunraku* puppet. The cotton plug in his nostril was soaked with blood; the basin was colored bright red from his vomit. His father tried fervently to keep his spirits up, saying in a low voice: "Come on! You can make it!" Oblivious of his own burns, which had not yet healed, he was completely absorbed in nursing the boy. Miraculously, when the anxious night gave way to day, my nephew had held his ground.

A classmate had fled to safety with my nephew; word came from his parents that the boy had died. The energetic old man from the insurance company, too, whom my brother had seen in Hatsukaichi, began to bleed from the gums and soon died. He had been within 200 meters of me when the bomb fell.

My stubborn diarrhea gradually subsided, but there was nothing I could do to halt the weakening of my body. My hair, too, got conspicuously thinner. Autumn deepened: the low mountains close by were enveloped completely in white mist; the rice in the paddies rustled ripely in the breeze.

Dozing, I had a rambling dream. Watching the light of the evening lamps as it spilled onto the surface of the rice paddies soaked in rain, I thought repeatedly of my wife's deathbed. The first anniversary of her death was approaching; I got the feeling that I was still in that familiar house we had rented in Chiba, shut in with her by the rain. I almost never thought of the Hiroshima house, which had been reduced to ashes. But in early morning dreams I often saw the house just after the bomb fell. I saw various treasures of mine, strewn about, to be sure. Books, paper, desk had all been turned to ash; but in my inmost heart I felt a sense of elation. I wanted to try writing about it with every ounce of power that was in me.

One morning the rain lifted, and a cloudless blue sky spread out over the low mountains. To the eyes of one long beset by the extended rainy spell, that blue sky seemed too good to be true. Indeed, the break in the weather lasted barely a day; next morning the grim rain

clouds returned. From the home of my late wife came word that her brother had died; though sent special delivery, the message had taken ten days to get here. He had been commuting to Hiroshima by train; we had heard that on the sixth he had escaped without a scratch and that afterwards too he had been energetic and active. Coming on top of that report, this word of his death stunned me.

There must still be some harmful substance in Hiroshima; even people who set out from the countryside healthy, they say, come back unsteady. Utterly exhausted from nursing both husband and son, my sister in Funairi Kawaguchi-chō had taken to her bed, too; so once more they asked Yasuko to help out. It happened the day after Yasuko left for Hiroshima. Beginning that morning, the radio warned of a typhoon; at dusk the winds grew more and more violent. The wind brought heavy rains, and in the pitch-black night it howled with rage. As I lay drowsing on the second floor, there came from below the sound of rain shutters being opened noisily and, out in the paddy, people talking. There was a sound like that of rushing water. The embankment had collapsed. Before long Seiji and his family roused me so we could all seek refuge in the main house. My nephew still could not walk, so Seiji picked him up, bedding and all, and carried him along the dark corridor to the big house. There everyone was up, looking anxious. Nothing like the collapse of the embankment of the river had happened, it seemed, for ages.

"This is what happens when you lose a war," lamented the farmer's wife. The wind shook the front door of the big house violently. A thick log had been braced against it.

Next morning the storm had gone on its way, and it was as if nothing had happened. The rice stalks were all bent in the direction the typhoon had gone; thick red clouds drifted at the edge of the mountains. . . . It was two or three days later that we heard that the railroad had become impassable and that nearly all the bridges of Hiroshima had been swept away.

THE FIRST anniversary of my wife's death was approaching, so I had had it in mind to go to Hongō. The temple in Hiroshima where her ashes were buried had burned down completely; but in the place of

her birth lived her mother, who had nursed her until the end. Still, rail service was said to be suspended, and the extent of the damage was not clear. In an attempt to find out more about how things stood, I went to Hatsukaichi Station. The newspaper had been pasted on the wall of the station; it carried reports of the damage. As of now, it appeared the trains were running between Ōtake and Aki-Nakano; how soon the entire route would be open was not known, but October 10 was the estimated date for the reopening of the line between Aki-Nakano and Hachihommatsu. So even going simply by that, the trains wouldn't be running for two weeks. The newspaper also contained figures on the flood damage within Hiroshima Prefecture; a two-week interruption of rail service was absolutely unprecedented.

I was lucky enough to buy a ticket to Hiroshima, so on the spur of the moment I decided to go to Hiroshima Station. This would be my first visit since that day. All was well as far as Itsukaichi. But little by little, beginning already when the train entered Koi Station, traces of destruction became evident outside the window. The pine trees on the hillsides had been mowed down and tossed about; they too bespoke the horror of that moment. Still lying where they had been hurled in that instant, roofs and fences stretched on, a continuous black; here and there empty concrete shells and rust-red girders lay jumbled together. As for Yokogawa Station, only the platforms were left. The train moved on into an area in which the destruction was even more severe. Those passengers who were traveling past for the first time could only stare in astonishment; as for me, I could still feel the glowing embers of that day. The train crossed the iron bridge, and Tokiwa Bridge came into sight. Behind the burned riverbank, giant trees, burned black, clawed the sky, and endless piles of cinders undulated like serpents. On that day of the bomb, on this riverbed, there had been a demonstration of human suffering beyond words; but now the water of the river was flowing quiet and clear. What is more, having taken a new lease on life, people were now trooping across the bridge whose railing had been blown off. Once past Nigitsu Park, we could see the East Parade Ground, burned out; a bit higher up, the stone steps of Tōshōgu Shrine glittered like a fragment of a grisly nightmare. I had camped out in those precincts, mixed in among the

injured, so many of whom had died one after the other. The black black memory of those days seemed still to be engraved vividly on those stone steps.

I got off at Hiroshima Station and joined the line for the bus to Ujina. If I went from Ujina to Onomichi by ship, I could go then from Onomichi to Hongō by train; but without going to Ujina, I couldn't tell whether the ship was operating. The bus left at two-hour intervals; the line of people waiting for the bus stretched several blocks. The hot sun shone overhead, and in the shadeless square the line did not move. If I went now to Ujina and back, I would not be in time to make the train home. I gave up and left the line.

Intending to have a look at the ruins of the house, I crossed Enkō Bridge and proceeded directly along the road toward Nobori-chō. The destruction to left and right still called to mind some of my feelings as I fled on the day of the bomb. When I came to Kyōbashi, the burned-out embankment stretched as far as the eye could see; distances were far more compressed than they had been. Come to think of it, I had noticed some time before that the mountains were clearly visible beyond the endless heaps of ruins. No matter how far one went, there were the same ashes; but in some places, strangely enough, there were piles of countless glass bottles, and in others only steel helmets had been blown into one spot.

In a daze, I stood before the ruins of the house and thought of how I had fled that day. The rocks of the garden and the pond were still there, in fine shape; but with the charred trees it was impossible to tell what kind of tree they had been. The tiles of the kitchen sink were still there, unbroken. The faucet had been blown away; even now a broken stream of water issued from the pipe. That day, right after the calamity, I had used this water to wash the blood off my face. Even though from time to time people came and went along the road on which I was now standing, for a while I was possessed by the scene. Then I went back again in the direction of the station, and from somewhere or other a stray dog appeared. Its eyes wore a singular expression, as if it were frightened; now ahead of me, now behind, it kept me company.

I had an hour before the train left, and the western sun burned

down on the exposed plaza. The station building, of which only the shell remained, was a black cavern and looked about to collapse even now; a wire had been strung up, with signs: "Danger! Keep out!" The canvas roof of the ticket counter was anchored by a pile of stones. Men and women in ragged clothes squatted here and there, and about every last one of them flies were buzzing unpleasantly. Given the recent heavy rain, there should have been fewer flies; but they were still rampant. However, with both legs stretched out on the ground and munching something black, the men seemed utterly heedless of the flies and talked as if of third persons: "Walked twenty kilometers yesterday"; "Wonder where to camp out tonight." As I watched, an old woman with a vacant look on her face approached and asked in a comical tone, "Isn't the train leaving yet? Where do they punch the tickets?" Before I could tell her, she said, "Ah, is that so?" thanked me, and went off. Something was undoubtedly wrong with her, too. An old man in *geta*, feet badly swollen, said something listlessly to his companion, another old man.

IN THE TRAIN on the way back that day, I overheard someone say that a trial run on the Kure line would begin the next day; so on the next day but one I set off again for Hatsukaichi, intending to take the Kure line to Hongō. However, they had taken down the train schedule, so I took the streetcar to Koi. Having got that far, I figured I might as well go to Ujina; but the trolley bridge had collapsed, so from that point on the connection was via ferry, and I heard that there was nearly an hour's wait for the next one. So deciding to go once again to Hiroshima Station, I sat down on a bench at Koi Station.

All sorts of people were thrown together in that narrow space. One person said he had come that morning by ship from Onomichi; someone else said he had walked here after getting off a boat at Yanaizu. People asked each other about their own destinations, saying all the while that the situation wasn't clear because reports varied, so how could they know unless they went there themselves? Among them were five or six demobilized soldiers carrying large bundles; the pop-eyed one opened his bag and pressed a package of white rice packed in a sock on the merchant woman beside him.

"It's because I'm so sorry for her, that's why. She's off to collect her soldier's ashes; I can't just leave her like this," he muttered to himself. Then a man came up and said, "How about selling me some?" "Impossible! We've come back from Korea, see, and we still have to get to Tokyo. On the way we'll have to walk forty kilometers, eighty." Saying this, the pop-eyed fellow produced a wool blanket and muttered, "Want to buy this off me?"

On reaching Hiroshima Station, I learned that the report was false: trains on the Kure line were not running. I was at a loss what to do, but then it occurred to me to visit my sister's house in Funairi Kawaguchi-chō. From Hatchōbori to Dobashi a streetcar was running on a single set of tracks. From Dobashi in the direction of Eba, my way lay through ruins. I saw a single streetcar sitting there that had not burned, but I saw nothing resembling a house. Presently a farm field came into view and, beyond it, a single compound spared by the flames. It appeared that the fire had burned right up to the field, that my sister's house had been saved at the last moment. Still, the fence was twisted, the roof torn, and the main entrance a mess. Coming around from the back gate, I got to the veranda. My sister, my nephew, and Yasuko were all sick in bed, pillows lined up in a row underneath mosquito netting. Even Yasuko, who had come to help out, had fallen ill here; two or three days ago she had taken to bed. When my sister realized I was there, she called out from inside the netting: "Let me have a look at you! Come over here and show me your face! I heard you too were ill."

The talk turned to the events of the day of the bomb. That day my sister luckily had not even been injured. But my nephew had a slight injury, so they had set off for Eba to get it treated. But that hadn't helped at all. Each time he saw a badly burned person along the way, my nephew had felt worse; since then he had been in poor spirits. The night of the bomb the flames had burned right up to where they were; my sister had sat shuddering in the air raid trench—they could not move my sick brother-in-law. Then, too, the typhoon of several days ago had been fierce here. The broken roof, she said, had seemed again about to fly off, rain had leaked in, and the wind had come blowing in through every crack, relentlessly; they had

thought they were done for. Even now, looking up, I could see large cracks in the roof, exposed as it was because the ceiling had caved in. In this neighborhood the water still was not running, the electricity was off, and night and day it was unsafe.

I went to the next room to say hello to my brother-in-law; a small mosquito net was spread in one corner of a room whose walls were cracked and pillars bent, and he was lying there. He had a fever or something, which gave his red and swollen face a vacant look; when I spoke, he only panted, "It's rough! Rough!"

Having rested two or three hours at my sister's house, I went back to Hiroshima Station and returned in the evening to Hatsukaichi, going to Jun'ichi's house. To my surprise Yasuko's son Shirō had turned up. The place to which he had been evacuated had also been cut off by the flooding of several days ago; it had taken him three whole days, accompanied by his teacher, to get back here. From heel to knee he had countless marks where fleas had got him, but he looked in pretty good shape. Deciding to take him along with me to Yahata the next day, I stayed that night at Jun'ichi's. But somehow I couldn't sleep. The spectacle of the ashes, in all its detail, and the sight of dazed people came back to life in my sleepless head. I remembered the breeze that all of a sudden had blown in through the bus windows as I rode from Hatchōbori to the station; it had carried a strange smell. Beyond a doubt, it was the stench of death. Beginning at dawn I heard the sound of rain. Next day in the rain I returned to Yahata, taking along my nephew. Barefoot, he trudged along after me.

My sister-in-law grieved for her dead son every day, constantly. That was what it was, her muttering as she worked in the small damp kitchen. And their belongings, too, would not have gone up in flames had they been sent off a bit sooner: this had become virtually her stock refrain. Seiji listened to her in silence; but sometimes, unable to contain himself, he was gruff with her. Trembling with hunger, Yasuko's son caught locusts and such and ate them. Two of Seiji's sons had left with the evacuation of the schoolchildren; since the trains weren't running, they still hadn't returned. The long spell of bad weather finally

lifted, and fine fall weather arrived, clear and dry. The rice ears trembled, and the big drums for the village festival reverberated. In total absorption, the people of the village carried the festival palanquin along the embankment. Stomachs empty, we stared after them in a daze. One morning word came that my brother-in-law in Funairi Kawaguchi-chō had died.

Seiji and I exchanged glances and got ready to set out for the funeral ceremonies. The two of us walked at a brisk pace along the river to the streetcar stop, four kilometers or more away. So he had died, after all. We could not but feel his death deeply.

What appeared to my mind's eye first was something that happened when I visited his office after coming back to Hiroshima this spring. He was wearing an old overcoat and clinging to a *hibachi* that was burning green wood; his voice trembled as he said, "I'm cold, I'm cold." He had become frail both in speech and in bearing; he had aged appreciably. Soon after that he took to his bed. The doctor's examination revealed that his lungs had been damaged; but that was something people who had known him before simply couldn't believe. There was suddenly more white in his hair; one day when I went to see him, he raised his head and talked of various things. He foresaw already that defeat was approaching, and he gave vent to his indignation: the people, he said softly, had been fooled by the military. I had never expected to hear such words from him. Once, about the time the China Incident began, he had got drunk and had given me a very hard time. He had served a long stint as an army engineer; people like me probably went against his grain. I knew many things about the life he led after marrying my sister. I could write volumes about him.

When we reached Koi, we transferred to streetcar. The streetcars were running as far as Temma-chō; from there one made connections by walking across a temporary bridge to the other side. Even this temporary bridge, it appeared, had been open only in the last day or so. People walked cautiously over the planks—the bridge was three feet wide, and only one person at a time could cross. (It was a long time before the railway bridge was restored, and one had to go by foot, so

for some time the black market flourished in this sector.) We arrived at my sister's house before noon.

Four or five relatives had gathered in the guest room with its fallen ceiling and cracked walls. Looking at all of us, my sister said through her tears, "He wanted the children to have everything there was to eat, so he wouldn't take a lunch to work; instead, he would walk to a porridge shop and make do with that." The body lay in the next room, a white cloth covering the face. In death his face called to mind the charcoal in a *hibachi* after the fire has gone out.

When it got late, even the streetcars stopped running, so we had to complete the cremation in daylight. Neighborhood people transported the corpse and made the preparations. Presently we all left my sister's house and walked to a field four or five blocks past her house. Not in a coffin but simply wrapped in sheets, my brother-in-law's body had been carried to an open area at the edge of the field. Many corpses had been cremated here since the atomic bomb; scraps of wood from demolished buildings had been piled up for fuel. We all made a circle, with my brother-in-law's body in the center, a priest dressed in standard civilian attire read the sutra, and someone set fire to the straw. My brother-in-law's son, ten years old, burst out crying. Quietly, sadly, the wood caught fire. The early evening sky, threatening rain, was already getting darker moment by moment. We said our goodbyes there, then hurried back.

Coming out onto the embankment along the river, Seiji and I hurried down the road to the temporary bridge at Temma-chō. At our feet, the river had become completely dark, and there wasn't a single light to be seen in the ruins that stretched out along the other side. The dark, chill path continued on and on. We could feel the stench of death in the air, wafted out of nowhere. We had heard quite a while ago that in this area there were countless corpses under the rubble and still not disposed of, that it had become a breeding ground for maggots. Even now the pitch-black ruins seemed darkly threatening. Then faintly I heard the crying of a baby. My ears weren't playing tricks; as we walked, the voice gradually grew more distinct. It was a vigorous, sad voice, but how innocent! Were people already

living there, and babies crying? An indescribable emotion wrenched at my heart.

MR. MAKI had returned from Shanghai, recently demobilized; but on returning, he found his house, wife, and children all gone. That was why he stayed with my sister in Hatsukaichi and sometimes set off for Hiroshima. Today, more than four months have passed since the atomic bomb. If a missing person hasn't turned up yet, one really has to resign oneself to his death. Still, Mr. Maki made the rounds of the likely places, beginning with his wife's birthplace; but at each and every stop he heard only condolences. He went twice to the ashes of the Nagarekawa house. Here and there victims told him their personal accounts.

In fact, in Hiroshima even now someone, somewhere was forever telling and retelling the events of August 6. There was the story of the man who, in searching for his wife, lifted up the corpses of several hundred women in order to examine their faces; not a single one still had a wristwatch on. There was the story about the woman who died in front of the radio station in Nagarekawa, doubled over as if to prevent the flames from reaching her baby. And, a change of topic, there was the story about a certain island in the Inland Sea: on that day all the males in the village had been mobilized for labor service clearing firebreaks, so all the women in the village had become widows; later, they had gone to the village chief's house to demand an apology. Mr. Maki liked listening to such stories on the streetcar, in corners of stations, and it soon became a kind of habit of his to go again and again to Hiroshima. Of course, he also went as well to the black markets at Koi Station and in front of Hiroshima Station. But more than a practical matter, it became a consolation of sorts to wander among the ashes. Before, you had to climb a rather tall building to see all the way to the Chūgoku range; now, no matter where you walked, the range was visible, and even the island mountains of the Inland Sea appeared right before your eyes. The mountains seemed to look down at the people of the ashes, asking what in the world had happened. And rash people were already beginning, impetuously, to erect crude shacks among the ruins. This city had prospered as a mil-

itary city; Mr. Maki tried to imagine the form it might take from now on, as it came back to life. A peaceful city encircled by luxuriant green trees: the vision floated hazily before his mind's eye. As he walked, thinking vaguely of one thing and another, Mr. Maki was often greeted by people he didn't recognize. Long ago he had hung out his shingle as a doctor, so he thought they might be patients who remembered him. Still, it was strange.

He first noticed it, in fact, when walking the muddy road leading from Koi to Temma Bridge. Rain had just begun to fall; from the opposite direction came a man, apparently a beggar, wrapped in tattered clothing and carrying on his head a broken piece of rusty red sheet metal. Holding the piece of metal over his head in place of an umbrella, he stuck his face unexpectedly out from behind the edge, his glittering eyes looked hard and inquiringly at Mr. Maki's face, and he appeared on the point of introducing himself. But then disappointment quickly showed in his eyes, and he hid his face behind the sheet metal.

When Mr. Maki was riding on crowded streetcars, too, someone on the other side of the car would frequently nod to him. When in an unguarded moment he nodded back, the person would say something like "My heavens! Mr. Yamada, isn't it?"—a case of mistaken identity. When he told this story to others, he learned that he was not the only one to have strangers greet him. Indeed, in Hiroshima even now someone was always trying to find someone.

Prelude to Annihilation

A POWDERY SNOW had been falling since morning. The traveler had spent the night in the city, and enticed by the powdery snow he went walking toward the river. Honkawa Bridge was very close to the place he had stayed. The name itself—Honkawa Bridge: it too he recalled from the distant past. It seemed still to hold memories of his middle school days long ago. The powdery snow sharpened his eyesight, already keen. Coming to a stop at about the middle of the bridge and looking toward the shore, he noticed an antiquated billboard advertising "Honkawa Dumplings." All at once he seemed to sink into that marvelously peaceful landscape of long ago. But then a shudder welled up inside him, beyond his control. In that tranquil moment mantled in powdery snow, there had flashed into his mind a vision of a most gruesome end of the world. . . . He set all this down in a letter and sent it to a friend who lived here. Then he left the city and traveled to distant parts. . . .

THE RECIPIENT of that letter was looking out his second-floor window, daydreaming. Immediately under his gaze was the small earthen storehouse next door; near the roof, one patch of white had peeled away, exposing coarse red mud—the sight made him lonely, for only things like that one tiny patch still looked the way he remembered them looking long ago. . . . His current residence in the city was a matter of the recent past; he had been away for a long time, and now it all seemed to be a world to which he had no ties. What had happened to them, the mountains and rivers that had nourished his boyhood dreams? Letting his feet take him where they would, he walked, gazing at the scenes this place of his birth offered. Crowned with late spring snow, the Chūgoku range and the rivers that flowed at its feet made only a faint impression because of the hubbub in the city, awkward in its wartime role of armed camp. People he came upon in the streets treated him brusquely. Yet even in the midst of the high tension, one still found pockets of the old languor—a weird world. . . .

He found himself pondering the shudder his friend had experi-

enced and written about in the letter. A hellish cataclysm beyond imagining—moreover, one that would arise in an instant. Should that happen, wouldn't he perish along with this city? Or had he returned in order to see with his own eyes the final hour of this city of his birth? His fate was a fifty-fifty proposition. Perhaps, somehow, this city would survive unharmed, unscathed? —such selfish, fatuous thoughts also flitted through his head.

HIS HANDSOME black woolen jacket tied at the hips with a black sash, his cleanly shaven chin shining, feet apart, Seiji stood with a busy air in the doorway of Shōzo's room. "Hey—off your duff!" The gentleness of Seiji's glance belied the harshness of his words. Squatting beside the desk on which Shōzō was writing a letter, he riffled through the pictures in Winckelmann's *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Art*, a copy of which was lying there. Shōzō put down his pen and watched his elder brother silently. As a young man, this elder brother of his had once had a passion for art history—might it not hold attraction for him even now? . . . But Seiji immediately shut the book with a bang.

To Shōzō, that sound was a continuation of the "Hey—off your duff!" of a moment ago. More than a month had passed since he had found his way back to his eldest brother's house, but he still had no job, and he continued simply to stay up late and sleep late.

Compared with Shōzō, this second brother lived each day in a disciplined way, tensely. Even after the factory closed, the lights in the office were sometimes on late into the night. One time Shōzō happened to come down the alley and look in at the office; there was Seiji, sitting alone at the desk, writing away. Putting his seal on the monthly wage packets to be handed to the factory workers, readying the documents to be sent to the mobilization office: his contentment in handling such bureaucratic chores could be read even in his characteristic handwriting. Various announcements were stuck to the office walls in neat letters, as well-formed as if they had been set in type. . . . As Shōzō looked admiringly at those signs, Seiji swung his swivel chair toward the coal stove that still hadn't gone out; saying, "How about a cigarette?" he produced a crumpled pack of cigarettes from a desk

drawer, then turned on the radio that was sitting on the shelf. The radio warned of crisis at Iwojima. They couldn't avoid talking about the prospects of the war. Seiji merely mentioned his doubts; Shōzō uttered words that clearly showed his despair. . . . At night, when the alarm sounded, Seiji would generally come hurrying to the office. Less than five minutes after the alarm, the front bell rings stridently. Sleepy-faced, Shōzō opens the shutters from the inside, and outside are two young girls. They are workers at the factory who are on guard duty. One of them calls to Shōzō: "Good evening!" Shōzō immediately feels touched, that he too should look sharp. He gropes his way through the darkness of the office and turns on the radio and its dial light; about then, a fidgety Seiji shows up, wearing a heavy cotton air raid hood. "Anyone there?" Seiji calls in the direction of the light and sits down in a chair; but he immediately stands up again and goes to take a look around the factory. The morning after the alert, too, Seiji comes to work on his bicycle, bright and early. And it is he who comes to the second floor rear, where Shōzō is sleeping late, to admonish him, "Are you going to sleep all day?"

Now, too, Shōzō read the usual admonition in Seiji's busy air; putting *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Art* back in its place, Seiji suddenly asked, "Where's Jun'ichi gone?"

"He got a phone call this morning; he's probably gone to Takasu."

A slight smile in his eyes, Seiji lay down with a sigh and muttered softly, "Again? What a pain!" He seemed to be waiting to hear Shōzō blab about the doings of their eldest brother, Jun'ichi. But Shōzō hadn't really figured out the recent trouble between Jun'ichi and his wife, and Jun'ichi never said anything more about it than he had to.

SINCE THE DAY Shōzō had come back to his eldest brother's house, he had sensed something amiss in its atmosphere. It was not the black cloth covering the lights and the blackout curtains hanging everywhere, nor was it merely the manner in which they had failed to welcome this younger brother whose wife had died and who in this time of general hardship had had no choice but to find his way here. No, something beyond bearing lurked in the house. Harsh shadows were

sometimes etched on Jun'ichi's face, and he sensed in his sister-in-law Takako's face some anguish, rankling obscurely. Even his two middle schooler nephews, who had been mobilized to work at Mitsubishi, were strangely quiet, their faces gloomy. . . .

One day sister-in-law Takako disappeared from the house. Then began Jun'ichi's harried solo departures, and the management of the house was entrusted to their younger sister, a young widow living in the neighborhood. Even late at night this sister, Yasuko by name, came to Shōzō's room on the second floor and chattered on and on about all sorts of things. Shōzō learned that this wasn't the first time his sister-in-law had disappeared, that twice already the care of the house had been entrusted to Yasuko. This woman in her thirties, sister-in-law to Takako, described for him the atmosphere of the house, a description that was filled with conjecture and distortion. For that very reason, parts of it stuck firmly in his mind. . . .

In the family room out back, hung with blackout curtains, a *kotatsu* with its attached quilt of luxurious damask glowed red, lit by the light of the stand—there he occasionally spotted Jun'ichi, apparently in very low spirits. The sight told Shōzō something extremely sad. But the next morning Jun'ichi would get into his work clothes and speedily begin packing for the evacuation. His face would hold nothing but arrogance and menace. . . . From time to time, long-distance calls would come, and Jun'ichi would set off with a busy air. In Takasu, it seemed, there was a mediator—but Shōzō knew no more than that. . . .

Yasuko attributed these changes in their sister-in-law over the last few years to her having been spoiled by the luxuries the war had brought—luxuries compared to all the troubles the war had imposed on Yasuko herself—and she talked apprehensively as if this latest perplexing disappearance might well be a physiological phenomenon brought on by menopause. . . . Occasionally, as she was chattering on, Seiji came and listened silently. Then, interrupting: "In short, she has no mind to work. But she could show a little consideration for the factory workers." Yasuko nods assent: "She's a lady of leisure, all the way." But when Shōzō comes out with "Still, I wonder if the untruths of this war aren't destroying all our souls," Seiji replies with a smile:

"No, it's not that complicated. She's just angry because all her luxuries are finally at an end."

More than a week after Takako flounced out of the house, she returned as if nothing had happened. But apparently something was still unresolved, and after four or five days she disappeared again. Jun'ichi's pursuit began all over. Head high, he declared: "This time she'll be away a good while." He also made snide remarks about his younger brothers: "Shilly shally, and everyone will make fun of you. You're past the age of forty, and you still don't know how to deal with people?" . . . In both his elder brothers Shōzō had detected characteristics that he shared, a fact that sometimes gave him an unpleasant feeling. Yasuko, who was acting as supervisor of the Mori Works, pointed out the ineptness in their behavior toward people at large. That ineptness was part of Shōzō's makeup, too. . . . But how his brothers had changed during the long time he had been away! Still, was it likely that Shōzō himself had not changed at all? . . . No. Exposed to the dangers threatening every day, every last one of them was changing and would continue to change; of that there could be no doubt. He would watch it with his own eyes to the very end. . . . These thoughts came floating of their own accord into Shōzō's head.

"IT'S HERE!" Seiji produced a slip of paper and passed it to Shōzō. It was the notice calling Shōzō up into the reserves. Shōzō stared at the paper and read it again, to the very last punctuation mark.

"May?" he murmured. Shōzō was no longer so frightened as he had been last year when he was mobilized for training in the militia. Still, seeing the anguished expression on Shōzō's face, Seiji said, "What's the problem? Nowadays they don't send you overseas any more; no big deal." His nonchalant words masked his real concern. . . . May—two months from now; Shōzō asked himself, would the war last that long?

Shōzō often walked aimlessly about the city. Taking Yasuko's son Kan'ichi with him, he went to the Izumi Villa; it had been a long time since his last visit. In the old days, when he was a child, he too had often been taken there; now, as then, the trees and the water lay hushed in the warm rays of the early spring sun. The thought imme-

diately flashed into his mind: an ideal place to flee to. . . . From late forenoon on, the movie theaters were full, and the lunchrooms in the entertainment quarter were always crowded. Shōzō walked on, taking byroads he still remembered; but nowhere could he find any of the things that had engraved themselves on his child's mind, any of the things for which he yearned. A unit of soldiers led by a noncommissioned officer appeared suddenly from a cross street, singing a sad and heroic song. Wearing white headbands, a unit of the schoolgirl labor corps came marching in step like soldiers and also passed him. . . .

Standing on a bridge and looking upstream, Shōzō could see many hills whose names he did not know; from the direction of the Inland Sea at the other edge of the city, the island hills peeked out from behind tall buildings. Shōzō almost felt like calling out to all these hills surrounding the city. . . . One evening two young women passing the corner caught his eye. They piqued his curiosity: with their healthy bodies and full permanents, were they perhaps tomorrow's new type? Shōzō followed them and tried to overhear what they were saying. "We'll be okay, see, as long as we've got potatoes." The voice was horrible: dull and worn out.

IT HAD BEEN ARRANGED that some sixty schoolgirls would come to work at the garment factory in the Mori Works. Seiji toiled like a beaver on preparations for the reception for them; as the day neared, even Shōzō, who until now had been loafing around, showed up at the office of his own accord and was put to work. Wearing new work clothes and shuffling his *geta* noisily, Shōzō carried chairs from the storehouse; there was something ungainly in his manner, as if he were resisting unaccustomed labor. . . . Chairs had been moved, curtains had been hung, the program written by Seiji had been posted: the hall stood ready. The ceremony was supposed to begin at 9. But the air raid alarm had sounded early that morning, so the schedule got all fouled up.

"Planes over Okayama, Bingo, Matsuyama . . .": moment by moment the radio reported the attacks of carrier-based aircraft. About the time Shōzō finished getting ready, the antiaircraft guns roared out. It was the first antiaircraft fire heard in the city; leaden, the sky seemed

to reflect the somewhat heightened tension. But no planes were to be seen, and once they downgraded the alarm to an alert for the time being, people became merely fidgety. . . . When Shōzō entered the office, he bumped into Ueda, who was wearing a metal helmet.

"They've finally come. My, oh me," said Ueda, who commuted to work from the country. Even now, Ueda's stout body and the face through which his candid spirit shone somehow evoked in Shōzō a sense of reassurance. Then Seiji appeared, wearing a jacket. He tried to smile gallantly, but his eyes were bright with excitement. . . . It happened when Ueda and Seiji had gone out front and Shōzō was sitting alone in a chair. For a while, he was daydreaming, thinking of nothing at all; suddenly, there was a whistling noise from the direction of the roof and then a crash. Thinking something was falling right on his head, Shōzō looked quickly toward the window. For a moment the second floor eaves across the way and the top of the pine in the garden engraved themselves onto his retina with an extraordinary intensity. The noise did not come again. Soon people came crowding back from out front. With a twisted smile on his face, Miura said: "Ah, what a shock! Scared the pants off me." . . . When the alert was lifted, people in great numbers began to pass by along the street. Amid the bustle, one could even sense a mood, somehow, of jauntiness. Someone brought in a piece of shrapnel; he said he had picked it up right over there.

Next day, wearing white headbands, the class of schoolgirls streamed in, led by their principal and the teacher in charge, and were taken immediately to the hall. When the factory workers too had all been seated, Shōzō and Miura sat down together at the very back. Shōzō listened in a perfunctory manner to the address of the man from the mobilization section of the prefectural government and to the words of instruction from the principal. Then Jun'ichi took the rostrum, a fine figure in his civilian uniform. Shōzō perked up and listened carefully to each word and phrase of his speech. Jun'ichi must have had experience in this kind of ceremony; his voice and demeanor were both crisp. But there were also moments when he seemed to stumble somewhat on a word—rather, on the contradiction between what he was saying and what he really felt. While Shōzō was observ-

ing him closely, Jun'ichi looked straight at him. Jun'ichi's eyes shone strangely, as if flinging some sort of challenge. . . . The schoolgirls sang a song; then, from that day on, they streamed cheerfully into the factory. They appeared early each morning; in the evening, lined up in precise order, they were led off by their teacher. They brought something fresh to the works and added a little charm. Their sweetness, too, struck Shōzō.

Shōzō was counting buttons in a corner of the office. The buttons were scattered on the tabletop, and he was supposed to sort them into piles of one hundred. Jun'ichi was meeting with some visitors but kept a close eye on him; as Shōzō continued languidly and clumsily, his fingers not accustomed to the task, Jun'ichi called out, as if finally fed up: "That's no way to count! It isn't a game, you know!" Katayama had kept on scribbling a letter, but now he set his pen down and came over. "Ah, that? Try it this way." With a kindly air, Katayama showed him how. Younger than he and full of vigor, this Katayama was frighteningly smart and always two jumps ahead of Shōzō.

ON THE NINTH DAY after the carrier-based planes appeared over the city, the air raid alarm sounded again. The planes flew in over Bungo Strait but turned away at Sada Point and streamed toward Kyushu. This time the city escaped unscathed, but now people and city both experienced a sudden loss of confidence. As military units were dispatched to raze building after building, the evacuation continued day and night.

In the early afternoon, after everyone else had left the office, Shōzō sat alone, immersed in the Iwanami paperback edition of *The Discovery of Zero*. There was something that strangely moved him in the story of the French officer, a prisoner of the Russian army at the time of the Napoleonic wars, who in his mortification lost himself in the study of mathematics. . . . Then Seiji came bustling back. From the expression on his face it was clear that he was worked up about something.

"Jun'ichi still isn't back?"

"Apparently not," answered Shōzō, with an abstracted air. As before, Jun'ichi often was off somewhere; how the trouble between

him and Takako had gone recently, no third party could judge. "We can't just sit here!" burst out Seiji, anger in his voice. "Go out and take a look. They've gone and razed both Takeya-chō road and the neighborhood of Hirataya-chō. The Army Clothing Depot is about to be evacuated!"

"Come to that, has it? That shows Hiroshima's about three months behind Tokyo." Shōzō muttered this comment offhandedly; but Seiji stared unblinkingly at him, the expression on his face sterner still: "You have to think, don't you, that Hiroshima is lucky to be that far behind." . . .

With its many children, Seiji's house had recently been thrown into confusion by one thing after another. Clothes to be sent off were spread out in every single room; moreover, two of the children were part of the group evacuation and were to leave soon, so getting them ready was a big deal all by itself. Mitsuko did not have a deft hand, and she worked at a snail's pace; occasionally she wasted time in idle chatter. When Seiji came back from being out, he was always irritated, and he took it out on his wife. But when supper was over, he usually withdrew into the back room and pedaled away at the sewing machine. He was sewing up a rucksack. However, there were already two rucksacks in the house, so a third didn't seem all that urgent a matter. But Seiji was absorbed in the excitement of making it. Muttering "Damn! Damn!" he plied his needle. "I'll be switched if I can't do a better job than a rucksack maker." In fact, the rucksack he made was better than what a poor rucksack maker would have turned out. . . .

Thus Seiji continued to divert himself in Seiji-like ways; but today, on reporting at the Army Clothing Depot and being ordered to evacuate the factory, he had felt the ground suddenly give way beneath him. Then, on his way back, he approached Takeya-chō. For forty years he had been accustomed to the sight of these small streets; now, overnight, they looked like a mouth that has lost all its teeth, and soldiers were plying their axes pell-mell. Except for two or three years in his twenties when he had gone away to school, Seiji had virtually never been away from this city of his birth; he had borne patiently with the tasks given him and had seen his status gradually be-

come secure—for him it was quite unbearable to see all this happening. . . . What in the world was to become of everything? It was not something someone like Shōzō would understand. He had to see Jun'ichi as quickly as possible and inform him about the evacuation of the factory. He felt a need to have a brotherly talk with Jun'ichi about a whole series of things. But Jun'ichi was Jun'ichi, wrapped up in the matter of Takako; it didn't look as if he would be a source of strength now.

Seiji stripped off his leggings and sat for a while, a blank look on his face. While he was sitting there, Ueda and Miura returned, and the office filled with talk of the razing of buildings. Ueda admired the speed with which the soldiers worked: "They're really rough! They saw away at the pillars, tie a rope, and heave away on it; then it's wholesale destruction—roof tiles and everything are one big mess."

"A pity about the papermaker, Nagata! Even if you only saw it from the outside, his house looked solidly built; the old man was crying like a baby as he moved his hands over the pillar of the *tokonoma*." Miura spoke as if he had just come from watching it. Smiling once again, Seiji too joined in the conversation. And at that point Jun'ichi too returned, a somber expression on his face.

WHEN APRIL CAME to the city, fresh young leaves gradually began to appear; the wind fanned the earth and sand of the mud walls, and the air became very gritty. The constant coming and going of horses and carts continued, and people's lives now stood exposed, naked.

Looking out the office window, Seiji smiled and said, "You wouldn't believe what they're taking!" There came a stuffed pheasant, trembling, on a large cart. As if struck by life's vicissitudes, Jun'ichi muttered: "Rough, isn't it! They say things are really bad in China; but aren't we just as bad off?" As the eldest brother, he was very careful to avoid criticism of the war; but when Iwojima fell, he let slip, "Drawing and quartering would be too good for Tōjō and his ilk." Still, when Seiji urged haste with the evacuation of the factory, Jun'ichi was not particularly approving: "It's a fine mess when the Clothing Depot is the first to cut and run."

Shōzō, too, wrapped on his leggings and went out more often.

The bank, the prefectural offices, the city hall, the travel agency, the mobilization bureau—simple errands, all of them, and on the way back he strolled the streets. . . . The streets of Horikawa-chō had been opened way out; they had left only the storehouses behind each house, and traces of destruction could be seen, glittering, way off into the distance: it was like an impressionist painting. In spite of himself, Shōzō almost conceded it a certain charm. One day countless white sea gulls were moving about in the middle of that impressionist painting: schoolgirls on a labor detail. They had alighted atop the brightly gleaming rubble; white blouses bathed in the bright rays of the sun, each had opened her lunchbox. . . . When he went to the secondhand bookstores, too, panic and disorder were evident; there was an enormous turnover of merchandise. "Don't you have any books on astrology?" Shōzō could still hear the voice of the young man who made this inquiry. . . .

One no-electricity day he visited the grave of his wife and afterward walked over to Nigitsu Park. Before, people had thronged here to see the flowers and to have picnics; thinking of those crowds, he looked into the hushed shade and saw an old woman and a young girl who had quietly spread out a box lunch. The peach trees were in full bloom, and the willow leaves were glistening. Still, for Shōzō the feeling of the season somehow simply wasn't there. Something had slipped out of place; things were dreadfully out of joint. . . . He wrote these thoughts in a letter to a friend who had been evacuated to Iwate Prefecture. He often received letters from this friend. "Stay well. Take care of yourself." Reading between these lines, short as they were, Shōzō got the feeling that his friend was praying with all his heart that the war end soon. But, Shōzō thought, will I still be alive when that new day dawns? . . .

KATAYAMA received his induction notice. Undaunted, joking as usual, he set about briskly winding up his affairs.

"Had your physical?" Shōzō asked him.

Katayama smiled: "That was supposed to take place this year . . . now this! No matter: it's a colossal war, one in a thousand years; so they're taking everyone."

On account of illness, old man Mitsui had not shown up for a long time. With a worried air, he had been watching the two of them from the corner of the office. Now he approached Katayama quietly and spoke as if giving advice to a son: "Once you're in the army, make yourself callous! Don't let things get to you!" . . .

Old Mitsui had been an employee ever since Shōzō's father's time. Once as a child Shōzō had fallen ill at school, and this man, Shōzō remembered, had come to get him. Shōzō had been pale, and Mitsui had cheered him up, patting him on the shoulder as he vomited over by the river. Would Mitsui with his shriveled face, practically expressionless, still remember that trivial incident of long ago? Shōzō sometimes felt like asking the old man what he thought of a time like the present. But the old man, always sitting in the corner of the office, seemed somehow hard and unapproachable. . . .

Once the Army Paymaster Section sent for rings to attach to blackout curtains. Ueda quickly produced boxes of rings from the storehouse and set them out on the office table; the soldier from the Paymaster Section asked, "How many to a box?" Ueda answered nonchalantly, "A thousand." Over in the corner the old man had been watching closely and suddenly put in his oar: "A thousand? Not likely." Ueda looked at the old man, unbelieving: "Of course it's a thousand. That's what it's always been."

"No. You're wrong." The old man stood up and brought over a scales. He weighed 100 rings and then placed a box of rings on the scales. When he divided the weight of the whole by the weight of 100, 700 it was.

THE SEND-OFF PARTY for Katayama was held at the Mori Works. People Shōzō didn't know appeared in the office, bringing stuff from who knows where. It dawned gradually on Shōzō that various groups Jun'ichi belonged to were bartering goods. . . . By that time the long dissension between Takako and Jun'ichi had finally lost its edge and was approaching a surprising resolution.

As if being evacuated, Takako would go to a house off in Itsukaichi, and the domestic affairs of the Mori house would be entrusted to Yasuko, whose son had just been evacuated with the schoolchildren

and who was now alone. Once this decision had been reached, Takako returned ostentatiously, and she did the packing for the move. But Jun'ichi became even more absorbed in the packing than Takako. He bound things up neatly with rope; he prepared covers and casings. In between, he returned to the office and worked the check-writing machine or met guests. At night he drank alone, though Yasuko sat with him. Jun'ichi had got the *sake* by hook or by crook, and he was in a good mood. . . .

Then one morning B-29s swept through the sky over the city. Looking out the windows or scrambling onto the roof, the schoolgirls in the garment factory at the Mori Works all were fascinated by the contrails of the planes, still to be seen in the sky. One by one, the girls sighed in admiration: "Beautiful, aren't they!" "Wow! They go so fast." This was the first time that B-29s—indeed, that contrails—had appeared over the city. . . . Last year Shōzō had become used to the sight in Tokyo, but these were the first contrails he had seen in a good while.

Next day carts came and transported Takako's things to Itsukaichi. With a laugh, Takako said, "I'm sending off my trousseau a second time!" Then she bade good-bye to the people of the neighborhood and left. But four or five days later Takako came back again for a formal neighborhood send-off. It was a no-electricity day, and from morning on the rice-cake mortar stood ready in the kitchen; Jun'ichi and Yasuko worked on the preparations for making rice cakes. As they did so, the women of the neighborhood association poured into the kitchen. . . . By then Shōzō, too, had had to listen until he was bored stiff as Yasuko talked about the affairs of these neighbors. Who was in cahoots with whom, which families were at loggerheads, how they were all circumventing the rationing and making do. The women who came to the kitchen all looked like wily old birds; they seemed to have vital energies that someone like Shōzō could not equal and an instinct for dealing innocently in lies. . . . Various colleagues came to Jun'ichi with suggestions for the banquet—"Better drink while we still can!"—and the kitchen of the Mori house was a bustling place. At such times the neighborhood women come and pitch in.

DREAMING, Shōzō saw himself violently thrown about in a storm and felt himself falling. Just then came a thump, and the windowpanes reverberated. Soon a cry from right close by reached his ear: "Smoke! Smoke!" On wobbly legs he edged up to the second-floor window and saw, far off in the western sky, black smoke boiling up. Straightening his clothes, he went downstairs, but by that time the planes had already flown off. . . . Seiji had a worried look on his face. He scolded Shōzō: "This is no time to be sleeping late!" Shōzō hadn't even been aware the alarm had sounded that morning, but no sooner had the radio reported one plane heading for Hamada (on the Japan Sea coast, a port in Shimane Prefecture) than it happened: a string of bombs came raining down on Kamiya-cho. This happened at the end of April.

MAY CAME, and preliminary drills for the muster were held every evening in the auditorium of the local elementary school. Shōzō hadn't known they were going on; but he finally became aware of that fact on the fourth, before the drill. From that day on, like everyone else, he finished supper early and set out for the auditorium. By this time the school was already being used as a barracks. Standing on the bare floor of the dimly lit auditorium was a motley group, some relatively old and some really very young. A young drill instructor with ruddy cheeks stood as if at attention; his high boots gleamed, the calves quivering like rubber.

Calm at first, the drill instructor asked Shōzō: "You're the only one who didn't notice everyone was coming here to drill?" Shōzō whispered an excuse.

"Speak up!" the drill instructor thundered suddenly in a startling voice.

Shōzō quickly realized that here everyone shouted. He waggled his head and, desperate, strained his voice to its limit. When he returned home, tired out, the shouting still eddied inside him. . . . The drill instructor rounded up the young people and drilled them one by one for the muster. In response to his questions, they answered in high spirits, and the drill proceeded smoothly. When it came the turn of a

young man with something of a limp, the drill instructor looked down at him from the dais: "Occupation: photographer?"

"That is so, sir," the young man answered, his head dipping obsequiously.

"Cut that out. 'Yes' will do. I've kept things nice and simple so far, but answers like that spoil everything," said the drill instructor with a tight smile. It was this pronouncement that suddenly enlightened Shōzō: the man was drunk!

Returning home, Shōzō poured out to Yasuko: "It's the height of absurdity. The Japanese military is drunk on form."

IT WAS A DARK MORNING, with rain threatening at any moment. Shōzō was standing in formation on the playground of the elementary school. They had been at it since 5, nothing but instructions and formations, repeated over and over; it seemed they would never move out. That morning the drill instructor had told a young man his attitude was disgraceful, then slapped him on the cheek; he looked as if he still was very much of a mind to find fault. At just that point a middle-aged man appeared, very grimy, and started to mumble an excuse.

"What!" Everyone there could hear the drill instructor's voice and nothing else. "You haven't made it to even one of these drills, yet you show up this morning? —you've got some nerve!" The drill instructor stared him in the face and shouted: "Strip!" The man tentatively started undoing buttons. The drill instructor soon went wild: "This is how you strip!" Hauling the man to the front, he spun him around and ripped the shirt off his back. There in the sunlight, made weaker by the green haze that enveloped the scene, stood exposed the man's ugly back, covered all over with pimples.

"This body needed absolute bed rest, eh?" The drill instructor paused a second in anticipation.

"Dummy!" Even as he spoke, his fist lashed out. At just that moment the siren in the schoolyard began to moan out the preliminary alert. That loud noise, so mournful, added a yet more gruesome note to the scene. When in due time the siren stopped, the drill instructor declared to one and all, as if largely satisfied with what he had

achieved, "I'm going to report this fellow to the military police," and then for the first time he ordered them to move out. . . . As the formation neared the West Parade Ground, drops of rain began to fall. The harsh sound of marching feet followed the moat along. On the other side of the moat stood II Corps of the Western Command, but Shōzō's eye was caught by the azaleas blooming in profusion, blood-red against the dusky green of the embankment.

APART FROM A BAG or two sent to the site to which her son's school had been evacuated and a trunk entrusted to a friend in the country, most of Yasuko's belongings were stored in the storehouse at Jun'ichi's. Her personal effects and her work things had been put in the six-mat room that held the sewing machine. She liked to work away amid half-finished jobs spread out all over; she simply did not notice the mess. The weather tended toward the wet, and the light faded early; as soon as the sun set, mice came rustling out and hid behind the cartons. Jun'ichi liked things neat and sometimes scolded her, and then and only then Yasuko went through the motions of cleaning up; but the room immediately became even messier than before. Yasuko often grumbled to Seiji that what with the business, the cooking, and the cleaning, it was impossible to keep this large house the way Jun'ichi wanted it kept. . . . Since renting the house in Itsukaichi, Jun'ichi kept thinking of one thing after another to be sent there; virtually every day he devoted himself to packing. But it was his habit, after scattering things about, to put everything neatly back in its place. The rucksack Jun'ichi had prepared to take with him in flight was packed with food and fastened to a rope hanging down from the porch ceiling. That was to protect it from the mice. . . . Jun'ichi had Nishizaki tie up the luggage, and then the two of them carried it to a corner of the factory; thereupon Jun'ichi went to the office, put on his reading glasses, read two or three documents, then up and headed for the bathroom and set about giving the tiles a good scrubbing. . . .

Body and soul, Jun'ichi was spinning like a top these days. He had sent Takako off, but the ward council refused to approve the evacuation of those who had important roles in the air raid procedures and

thus did not certify her change of residence. So Jun'ichi had to carry food, too, to Takako. He was able to wangle a commuter's ticket to Itsukaichi; further, in order to keep a supply of rice on hand, he arranged for a steady influx from the black market. . . . By the time Jun'ichi finished cleaning the bath, he had already made his plans for tomorrow's packing. Now he dried his hands and feet, slipped into *geta*, and went to take a look at the storehouse. Yasuko's belongings were piled in confusion just beside the entrance—boxes from which something had been taken and the top left off; boxes with the top on and clothes spilling out. That was the way they always were. But still they caught his eye. For a time Jun'ichi eyed them stonily; then, remembering why he had come, he muttered to himself that they could use more water buckets here.

Already in her late thirties, Yasuko was no longer so cheerful as she had been in her schoolgirl days; her serenity had disappeared along the way. In its place now was a certain impudence. Her sickly husband had died, and she had taken her young child and moved to a place near Jun'ichi. Since then her life had been difficult. Moreover, during that time she also had spent a full year learning dressmaking. During the time she was unable to make ends meet, she had received rough treatment at the hands of her mother-in-law and the neighborhood group and her sister-in-law and her elder brothers. She had gradually come to understand quite a bit about life. What interested her most of all these days was other people; speculating about people's feelings and criticizing them had become virtually an addiction. And then she beguiled the time in her own fashion by twisting people around her little finger—better, by having entertaining chats with people and giving and receiving small favors. She was extremely fond of a newly married and guileless husband and wife in the neighborhood whom she had come to know six months ago, so on nights Jun'ichi was away, off to Itsukaichi, Yasuko would have these two in and prepare bean-jam pancakes. With the blackout in force and the specter of death looming nightly, such evenings were happy times for her; she was like a child playing house. . . .

Ever since the domestic affairs of the main house had been placed in Yasuko's keeping, her middle school nephews too had grown fond

of her and often addressed her as if she were their elder sister. Of the two, the younger one had gone to Itsukaichi with his mother; the elder middle schooler, who had already started to smoke and perhaps was drawn by the nightlife of the city, stayed in Hiroshima. In the evening, when he came home from the Mitsubishi factory, he immediately looked in at the kitchen. Yasuko always prepared something different to please him—steamed bread, doughnuts, and the like. After eating his fill at supper, he would lumber off into the dark streets; when he returned, he would climb right into the bath and relax. At his ease in the bath, he would sing in a loud voice—exactly like a factory hand. His face was still that of a child, but his body had become that of an adult. Yasuko always tittered as she listened to him sing. . . . When she fixed bean-paste dumplings and set them out for Jun'ichi to eat after his evening drink, Jun'ichi would praise her extravagantly. Wearing an open-throated shirt and feeling young again, Jun'ichi sometimes joked good-naturedly: "Put on weight, haven't you? Hey, you're getting fatter by the day!" Actually, Yasuko's stomach did protrude, and her face soon shone with the luster of someone in her twenties. Still, her sister-in-law did come back about once a week from Itsukaichi. Wearing loud cotton bloomers and trailing perfume in her wake, Takako never said as much but apparently came to keep an eye on Yasuko. When at such times the air raid alarm sounded, Takako would immediately frown; when it lifted, she would depart in haste: "I'll be stuck here if the alarm sounds again, so I'm off now." . . .

Second brother Seiji usually turned up at about the time Yasuko began preparing supper. Sometimes, with a happy air, he would pull out a postcard, saying it had come from his children, who had been evacuated. But sometimes Seiji would complain, "I'm feeling shaky," or "I'm dizzy." With all animation gone from his face, his fretfulness was all the more prominent. When Yasuko offered him a rice ball, he would devour it silently and with relish. Then, seeing how caught up in the evacuation everyone was, he would laugh mockingly and say something like "While you're at it, why not take the stone lanterns and the shrubs, too?"

Yasuko had been worried about a chest and a vanity that had simply been left lying in the storehouse. She had even got Jun'ichi to say, "It'd be a good idea to make a crate for this vanity"; if he would only give Nishizaki the word, the problem would be solved. But, occupied with his own evacuation, Jun'ichi looked as if he had already forgotten about it. Yasuko was very reluctant to ask Nishizaki directly. Nishizaki obeyed any order of Takako's unconditionally, but he seemed somehow to hold back when it came to Yasuko. . . . That morning Yasuko watched closely from the office as Jun'ichi carried a claw hammer to the storehouse and saw from his face that he had calmed down; so she figured now was as good a time as any and quickly broached the subject of the vanity.

"Vanity?" Jun'ichi muttered, unmoved.

"Uh-huh. I'd really like to get it out of here, even if nothing else goes." Yasuko stared straight at him, as if appealing to him. His gaze slid off to the side.

"That . . . rubbish? I really don't care what happens to it," said Jun'ichi, then wheeled around and left. At first Yasuko felt as if she had had the wind knocked out of her. Then her resentment rose in waves, and she was no longer able to concentrate. Rubbish it might be, but it was the many times she had moved that had turned it into rubbish. It was something she kept for remembrance; her mother, now dead, had given it to her at the time of her wedding. Where his own things were involved, Jun'ichi was attached to every last broom; couldn't he understand someone else's heartache? . . . There floated up again before her mind's eye the terrible look on Jun'ichi's face that one evening.

It had been about the time arrangements were being made to send Takako off to Itsukaichi. Jun'ichi wanted to move Yasuko here to take Takako's place and entrust everything to her; but Yasuko would not be persuaded. In part, her refusal was a covert rebuke of her spoiled sister-in-law, but she was also worried about her child, who had been evacuated to Kake; she thought she would rather go there as a governess. Placating her, coaxing her, Takako and Jun'ichi hemmed Yasuko in, and the night wore on.

Drawing himself up, Jun'ichi asked, "Is there really no way you'll agree to come?"

Yasuko repeated, "No. Hiroshima is a dangerous place; I'd rather go to Kake. . . ."

Suddenly Jun'ichi grabbed the skin of a navel orange lying beside the *hibachi* and flung it with a smack against the far wall. His fury flooded out, a deluge. As if mediating, Takako got a word in—"Well, well, please think it over again during the night"—and during the night Yasuko finally did acquiesce. . . . For a little while next morning Yasuko walked around the house aimlessly, as if dizzy; soon, almost in spite of herself, she climbed the stairs and came to Shōzō's room. So early in the morning, Shōzō was alone in his room, mending his socks. Without pausing for breath, she told him all about how Jun'ichi had acted, and then her tears overflowed for the first time. Afterwards, she did seem to become a bit calmer. Shōzō merely listened in gloomy silence.

AFTER ROLL CALL, Shōzō's mind tended to go blank; he himself was powerless to prevent it. At that time he didn't have much to do, and he hardly ever even put in an appearance at the office. When he did appear, it was to read the newspaper. Germany had already surrendered unconditionally, and now people in Japan were advocating a fight to the finish on the main islands; phrases such as "digging in" began to appear. Reading between the lines of the editorials, Shōzō tried to sniff out some sense of the truth. But for two days and maybe even three he hadn't been able to read the paper. Up until now he could expect to find it on Jun'ichi's desk; now, for some reason, it wasn't there.

Shōzō felt forever driven, yet it was impossible not to let up. He spent a lot of time aimlessly pacing the large house, as if he didn't know what to do with himself. . . . At noon, the schoolgirls came to the kitchen to fetch tea. At that time they were liberated from work, and their lively voices could be heard at the alley of the factory, separated from the kitchen only by a black wooden wall. Shōzō would sit down on the veranda of the cafeteria on this side of the wall, his troubled gaze dropping to the small pond at his feet; over at the factory, the girls' physical exercises were beginning, and you could hear the bright voice of the class leader: "One, two! One, two!" It was strange,

but only the gentle, bouncy voices of the girls seemed able to offer Shōzō consolation. . . . When three o'clock came around, as if it had just occurred to him to do so, he would return to his own room on the second floor and mend his socks. Then the girls would appear, standing and working at a lively pace, on the floor above the office, over there across the garden, and the sound of the electric sewing machines too reached across to him. While he felt with his fingertip for the eye of the needle, the thought would flicker through Shōzō's mind: "When I pull these on and head for the hills, it will mean . . ."

From then on he was often to be seen evenings in the streets, walking dejectedly. In one quarter after another the houses had been razed, so in unexpected places open areas had been cleared and crude shelters crouched. Turning from a street that was far broader than necessary—the streetcar hardly ever ran here any more—he came out onto the embankment along the river. Green fig leaves flourished, thick and heavy, by crumbling dirt walls. Dusk had gathered but would not give way to night; a heavy dampness filled the air. Shōzō felt as if he were walking in a place completely strange to him. . . . But passing the embankment, he came out at the end of Kyōbashi and then walked again along the embankment along the river. When he got to the door of Seiji's house, first his niece called to him—she had been playing at the edge of the street—and then his nephew the first grader came flying. The boy tugged at Shōzō's hand, and his small hard nails bit into Shōzō's wrist.

About that time Shōzō began to want a carryall to take with him in flight. Each time the alarm sounded, he took a *furoshiki* with him; but his elder brothers had fine rucksacks, and Yasuko had a satchel that hung from her shoulder. Yasuko agreed to sew one up for him any time he found the cloth. When Shōzō broached the subject to Jun'ichi, Jun'ichi mumbled, "Cloth for a satchel?" Shōzō couldn't tell from Jun'ichi's look whether there was any cloth. Shōzō waited, thinking Jun'ichi might produce some one day, but there were no signs that he would; so Shōzō pressed Jun'ichi again. Smiling meanly, Jun'ichi said, "You don't need one! You want something to take with you when you flee? Take one of those rucksacks hanging over there!" No matter how Shōzō explained that he wanted a satchel just for im-

portant documents and personal effects, Jun'ichi paid no heed. . . . Shōzō heaved a deep sigh. He simply could not grasp Jun'ichi's thinking. Yasuko explained to him how to manipulate Jun'ichi: "Try sulking. I give him a hard time by crying." She had even succeeded in getting Jun'ichi to send the vanity off to safety. But prolonged haggling was more than Shōzō could manage. . . . He went to Seiji's house and mentioned the matter of the satchel. Seiji produced the kind of cloth perfect for a satchel and said, "This ought to be enough. It's worth a bag of rice on the barter circuit; what can you offer?" Seiji knew full well that Shōzō had nothing to offer. With the cloth in hand, Shōzō asked Yasuko to make the satchel. She too had a spiteful remark: "Why is it you think always and only of fleeing?"

THE CITY had not come under air attack since the bombing of April 30. So the evacuation went by fits and starts, and the public mood, too, alternated constantly between tension and languor. The alarm sounded virtually every night, but the planes always dropped mines in the harbor, so even at the Mori Works they discontinued the watch. But the sense of being embattled, of having to fight a last-ditch battle, on the main islands, had gradually intensified.

One day in the office Seiji said to Shōzō: "Field Marshal Hata has come to Hiroshima! The headquarters for Fortress Japan is at the East Parade Ground. Looks like Hiroshima will be the site of the last stand!" Seiji had his doubts; but compared with Shōzō, he seemed almost eager for the decisive battle. . . . "Field Marshal Hata, eh?" drawled Ueda. "All he does every day is sit on his fat duff at headquarters." . . . In the evening, the radio in the office reported that five hundred B-29s had raided the Tokyo-Yokohama area. Listening with a frown, old Mitsui suddenly said in astonishment, "Gee—five hundred!" Everyone snickered. . . .

One day the city's factory owners were summoned to the second floor of East Police Headquarters to receive some instructions. Shōzō went in place of Jun'ichi. This was the first time that Shōzō had attended this sort of affair; looking bored, he let his thoughts wander. When he came to, the speaker had changed, and a police officer with a splendid physique was beginning his talk. Shōzō began to pay a little

attention to the man. Both in stature and in face, he was the very model of a police officer. His voice, too, was clear and direct: "Well, let me say a few words now about the air raid training exercises. . . ." Shōzō lent an ear even as he marveled: cities throughout the land are exposed to shot and shell, and here we talk of exercises?

"As you know, at the present time refugees are flooding into Hiroshima from all over—Tokyo, Nagoya, the Osaka-Kobe area. What is it that these refugees talk about to our townspeople? They grumble: 'My goodness, the air raids were terrifying, terrifying. The only thing to do is to get out as quick as you can.' But after all, these people are the losers in the air raids; they are pitiful, ignorant. We who are fully self-reliant must never listen to them. To be sure, the fighting is fierce, and the air assault is getting worse. But no matter how dangerous it becomes, there is nothing to be the least bit afraid of as long as we take resolute measures against it."

Saying this, he swiveled around in the direction of the blackboard and began his actual presentation with diagrams. . . . He showed not the slightest uneasiness; listening to him talk, one might have thought that air raids were simple and clear-cut affairs, that human life too was subject to simple and clear-cut physical processes: that and no more. A curious fellow, thought Shōzō. But in Japan today jolly robots of that sort are not in short supply.

JUN'ICHI never set off for Itsukaichi empty-handed, but always stuffed into his rucksack small items destined for there; he usually set out after supper, alone and happy. But one time he took Shōzō along: "If an emergency arose and you didn't know how to get there, we'd be stuck; so come with me now." Given a small package to carry, Shōzō headed with Jun'ichi for the streetcar stop. The car for Koi didn't come and didn't come; Shōzō stood looking toward the far end of the broad thoroughfare. Beyond the buildings, the crouching form of Gosasō Mountain was clearly visible.

Charged with the humidity of a summer's evening, Gosasō was now full of life. The other mountains connected to it usually looked as if they were snoozing; but today they too were absolutely filled with vitality. Clouds drifted lazily through the clear sky. The moun-

tains looked as if at any moment they might shake and tremble, call out. It was a strange spectacle. Shōzō imagined a large composition with this city at its center. . . . Even after the streetcar crossed several clear rivers and got to the suburbs, Shōzō's eyes devoured the scenery outside the window. The tracks ran through an area that used to be thronged with beach-goers; even now the breeze blowing in through the window brought with it the smell of happy memories. But the look of the Chūgoku range, which had frightened Shōzō even before they boarded the streetcar, still had not lost its vigor. Against the darkening sky the mountains displayed an ever more brilliant green; the islands of the Inland Sea too stood out in bold relief. The waves, the calm blue waves, seemed at any moment about to rage, stirred up by the fiercest of storms.

THE MAP OF JAPAN, so familiar, popped into Shōzō's head. On the edge of the Pacific Ocean, infinitely broad, the Japanese archipelago appears first as small dots. A formation of B-29s that has taken off from bases in the Marianas threads its way through the clouds, like so many shooting stars. The Japanese archipelago draws much nearer. Over Hachijōjima, the formation splits in two; one part heads straight for Mt. Fuji, the other follows Kumano Sea toward Kii Channel. One plane from that formation gradually detaches itself, crosses Murōto Cape, and heads rapidly for Tosa Bay. . . . A mountain range comes into view, massed and rising over green plains like a foaming wave; once the plane crosses these peaks, the Inland Sea appears, calm as a mirror. The plane inspects the islands scattered atop this mirror and wheels silently over Hiroshima Bay. In the too-strong rays of the noonday sun, the Chūgoku range and the city facing the bay are both a hazy light purple. . . . Soon the contours of Ujina Harbor appear clearly; now all of Hiroshima City is visible. Flowing between the mountains, the Ōta River divides as it enters the city, and then the divisions divide again; the city spreads out over the delta. The city engulfs the low hills in the immediate background, and two squares—the two parade grounds—shine large and white. But recently, all over this city divided by rivers, bare white spots have appeared where firebreaks have been cleared. Can these defenses against firebombs be impregnable? . . . Binoculars reveal bridges. Even now groups of human beings the size of ants are moving about busily. Soldiers, without a doubt. Soldiers: recently, it seems, they have taken over the entire city. It goes without saying that the figures on the parade grounds, moving about like ants, are soldiers; but even those figures scattered about among the tiny buildings appear to be soldiers. . . . Perhaps the siren has sounded. Many carts are moving through the streets. A toy train is moving at a snail's pace through green paddies on the outskirts of the city. . . . Farewell, tranquil city! The B-29 banks and flies majestically off.

ABOUT THE TIME the battle for Okinawa came to a close, there were major air raids on the city of Okayama in the prefecture next door; then, after midnight on the night of June 30, the city of Kure went up in flames. Over and over that night the sound of squadrons of planes crossing the sky above Hiroshima assailed the ears of the residents; even Seiji turned up at the Mori Works, eyes huge and glittering beneath his air raid hood. No one was at the factory or in the office, but three people—Yasuko, Shōzō, and the middle school nephew—were crouching in the entryway of the house. The thought occurred instantly to Seiji: only the three of them to stand watch over this vast compound? Then the fire bell rang out front, and a voice could be heard shouting, "Take shelter!" The four of them quickly took shelter in the trench in the garden. Densely clouded, the sky did not look as if it would lighten up soon; again and again they heard airplanes. The all clear finally sounded as they began to be able to make out shapes. . . .

Calm was restored to the city; but Jun'ichi, very agitated, strode through its streets at a great pace. At Itsukaichi he hadn't had a moment's sleep; all night long he had watched the fires burning brightly across the bay. Muttering to himself—mustn't be caught off guard; the fires are already right at our doorstep—he hurried home as quickly as possible. The streetcar did not come promptly that morning either, and the passengers all had vacant expressions on their faces. By the time Jun'ichi got to the office, the sun was already high in the sky; here too everyone he met had a vacant, sleepy expression on his face.

As soon as he saw Seiji, Jun'ichi announced: "This is no time for idling! Quick, get going with the evacuation of the factory!" The dismantling of the sewing machines, the petition to the prefectural office asking for horse-drawn carts, the evacuation of the remaining household effects—there was still a huge pile of urgent matters for Jun'ichi to deal with. However, he had to consult with Seiji, and Seiji kept slipping in his doubts about details; he did not throw himself into it wholeheartedly. Jun'ichi burned with the thought of how he would like to crack the whip.

ON THE NEXT DAY but one, the rumor spread like wildfire that it was Hiroshima's turn for a major air raid. That evening, after Ueda had relayed the warning he had received from the office for food rations, Jun'ichi pressed Yasuko to have an early supper, then looked at Shōzō and Yasuko and said, "I'm off now; please take care of things."

Shōzō stated emphatically: "If the alarm sounds, I'm not sticking around . . ." and Jun'ichi nodded: "If it looks hopeless, put the sewing machine in the well."

Brave thoughts welled up inside Shōzō: "How about sealing the doors of the storehouse? Shouldn't we do that now while we've still got the chance?" He went to stand in front of the storehouse. Some time ago red clay had been plastered on; but sealing the doors of the storehouse—that was something that had never been done in his father's day. Raising the ladder, Shōzō pushed sticky red clay into the cracks around the white-paneled doors. By the time he finished, Jun'ichi had already disappeared. Shōzō took it into his head to go to Seiji's. He found Mitsuko stuffing things into sacks in great haste. When Shōzō said, "Tonight's supposed to be a bad one . . ." Mitsuko replied slowly, "Yeah, it's supposed to be a secret; but our neighbor Mr. Kojima heard about it this evening at the government office where he works."

The normal preparations were completed, and Shōzō had just crawled into the mosquito net in the six-mat room on the ground floor—by this time Shōzō had begun sleeping on the ground floor. The radio reported a preliminary alert along the coast of Tosa. Inside the mosquito net Shōzō pricked up his ears. Kōchi Prefecture and

Ehime Prefecture went on preliminary alert; then the alerts changed to alarms. Shōzō crawled out of the net and wrapped on his gaiters. Throwing canteen over one shoulder and carryall over the other, crossing the straps over his chest, he added a belt around his chest to keep them in place. By the time he had searched out his shoes at the entryway and finally pulled on his gloves, the siren sounded the preliminary alert. He rushed outside and hurried toward Seiji's house. In the dark, the asphalt seemed to fight the hard soles of his shoes. For all his hurry, Shōzō was conscious of how taut his legs were, how well they were functioning. The gate of Seiji's house stood open. He knocked at the entryway door as loudly as he could, but there was no response. They must have left already. Shōzō burst out onto the road on the embankment and hurried toward Sakae Bridge. As he neared the bridge, the siren roared the air raid alarm.

Frantically crossing the bridge, he went round the dike by Nigitsu Park and soon came to the embankment leading in the direction of Ushita. Now at last Shōzō became aware of the throngs of people in his immediate vicinity, jostling each other as they streamed along. Young, old, male, female—city folk of all sorts, they wore looks of desperate determination. A baby carriage carrying an old woman and a bicycle-drawn trailer piled high with bowls and pots went past, fighting their way through the crowds. A man sailing out in metal helmet, an army dog pulling his bicycle; an old man clinging to a cane and limping . . . A truck came. A horse passed. Dark and narrow, the street was now as thronged with people as on the day of a festival. . . . Shōzō sat down on a log beside a cistern underneath some trees. An old woman passing by asked him, "Do you think we're safe here?"

Turning the spigot of his canteen, Shōzō replied, "I think so—the river's right there; no houses nearby . . ." The sky over the city of Hiroshima had become much lighter; it made one think that any time now flames would appear. If the entire city goes up in flames, what will become of me? Even as he had this thought, Shōzō took an interest in the fate of these refugees so close at hand. The scene of the refugees at the beginning of *Hermann und Dorothea* came to mind. But this sight was even more terribly desolate than that scene. . . . Presently the air raid alarm was lifted, then the alert too. Leaving, people

streamed away down the road along the embankment. Shōzō too retraced his steps down that road. It was more crowded than it was when he came. Shouting something, litter-bearers and their litters came one after another: nurses carrying the sick.

HANDBILLS dropped from the sky announced that an air raid was imminent, and with the setting of the sun the terrified residents began to flee en masse. The alert had not sounded yet, but the upper reaches of the river, the open spaces in the suburbs, the lower parts of the hills filled with people; in grassy spots, they set out what they had brought with them: mosquito netting, bedding, even cooking utensils. The trains on the Miyajima line, congested all day, became yet more of a struggle in the evening. But even though flight was instinctive, the authorities immediately instituted strict regulations against it. The refusal to approve the evacuation of personnel deemed essential for the air raid defenses had been in effect here for some time; now, in an attempt to check up on such people, they stuck a list of names and ages on each door. At night soldiers with bayonets and police stood guard at the approaches to bridges and at crossroads. They tried to intimidate the fainthearted residents and make them defend this city to the death; but like cornered mice, the people outsmarted them, sneaking past behind their backs. At night Shōzō tried checking the houses along the course of his flight; it certainly appeared that more houses were empty than not.

From that night of July 3 until the night of August 5—the last night people fled—Shōzō, too, took flight immediately if things looked bad. . . . When the preliminary alert sounded along the coast of Tosa, he would begin to get ready. When the air raid alarm sounded in Kōchi Prefecture and Ehime Prefecture, it would be less than ten minutes before the preliminary alert sounded in Hiroshima Prefecture and Yamaguchi Prefecture. He would wrap his gaiters on in the dark, immediately; sometimes he would be delayed a bit by some small thing—towel, shoehorn, or the like. But by the time the siren sounded for the preliminary alert, he would always be in the entryway with his shoes on. Yasuko would get dressed at her own pace but would reach the entryway at about the same time. One after the other, the two

would go out the gate. . . . Having turned a certain corner and gone only ten steps, Shōzō would think, here it comes! Sure enough, from the dark on all sides the awful air raid siren would scream out at him. What a hideous sound, rising and falling! Like the cry of a wounded beast, wasn't it? How would later historians describe it?—such were the thoughts that ran through his head; and then memories . . . Long ago, he had only to hear at a distance the flute of the lion dancers as they came down the street to go absolutely pale and flee. The purity of his terror then, and his terror now: now the terror had somehow become routine. —Such thoughts would pop into Shōzō's head for a few seconds; then, panting for breath, he would climb the stone steps leading to the embankment. Sometimes when he raced up to the gate of Seiji's house, the whole family would have finished getting ready; sometimes they would have made no preparations at all. Either just before Shōzō showed up or right on his heels, Yasuko would come running at her own pace. . . . His little niece holds out her hood to Shōzō: "Please tie these strings." After tying the strings tight, he swings his niece up onto his back and goes out the gate a step ahead of the rest. Getting across Sakae Bridge, he heaves a sigh; his pace eases a bit, too. Crossing the railroad tracks and coming out onto the Nigitsu embankment, Shōzō sets his niece down on a clump of grass. The water of the river gleams white, and the large cedar throws a black shadow on the road. Will this small child remember this scene? There suddenly pops into Shōzō's sweat-soaked head *The Life of a Woman*, which begins with the child heroine fleeing night after night. . . . Soon Seiji's whole family comes along. His sister-in-law is carrying the baby on her back; the maid has something in her arms. Yasuko is out front, holding the hand of her small nephew and setting a brisk pace. (Once when fleeing alone she was caught by the police and scolded severely, so since then she "borrows" her nephew.) Seiji and the middle school nephew bring up the rear. They listen to radios from houses nearby and, if the situation calls for it, go farther up the river. As they make their way rapidly up the long bank, there are fewer houses, and the surfaces of paddies and the lower slopes of the hills come faintly into view. All over there resounds the croaking of frogs. There is no break in the stream of people fleeing quietly

through the dark night. Soon the night grows lighter; sometimes too a heavy fog envelops the entire return road.

Sometimes Shōzō flees all by himself. Occasionally in the last month he has been dragged out to the drills of the military reservists; but although at first over twenty people attend, the number gradually decreases, and now no more than four or five show up. "Sometime in August they're going to call up a whole lot of people," says the head of the unit. Shōzō is made to stand in the dark schoolyard and listen to the talk of a reserve ensign, while far off in the sky over Ujina searchlights move back and forth; soon he becomes restless. The drill over, he returns home, and just at that moment the siren blows. But by the time the air raid alarm sounds in its wake, Shōzō has completed his preparations. As if continuing the feverish pace of the drill, he rushes out into the dark streets. Listening to the lively clatter of feet, he pretends to be hurrying home. Safely past the checkpoint at the bridge, he comes at last to the embankment above Nigitsu. . . . Here Shōzō stops for the first time and sits down in the grass. Just downstream is the rail bridge; with the tide out, the white sand seems to float up mistily. It is a scene Shōzō remembers well, having often walked here since his boyhood; the starry sky over his head makes him imagine what a battle in the open would be like. That vision of Nature in all its beauty that one of the characters in *War and Peace* beheld, and that tranquility of mind: will they come to me too as I die? From the branches of the cedar just above the grassy spot where Shōzō is crouching comes an unsettling cry. Dear me . . . an owl? —Shōzō has an uncanny feeling. Should the war come to the final battle for the main islands, and should Hiroshima become the site of the last stand, could he fight resolutely, at the cost of his life? . . . What a delusion, crazier than crazy—that the last stand will be in Hiroshima! Suppose he were to write an epic about it; it would undoubtedly turn out stunted and unrelievedly grim. . . . Shōzō feels as if the bird he cannot see above his head is fluttering its wings right beside him.

Even after the alert is lifted and they all return to Seiji's house, Shōzō sometimes stays there in the entry and listens for a while to the radio. Occasionally they have to flee again, so his nephews and his niece all keep their shoes on. However, while the grown-ups are absorbed in listening to the radio, the nephew, who has been chattering away until just a moment ago, stretches out on the stone in the entryway and quickly is sound asleep, snoring away. Wholly accustomed to this uncertain and unsettled life, the child is snoring just like a trooper. (Shōzō watches him with no special concern, never dreaming that the child will soon die a trooper's death. Still in first grade, the nephew was unable to take part in the group evacuation, so he was still going off and on to elementary school. As luck would have it, August 6 was one of the days he went to school, and that morning, near the West Parade Ground, this child met a tragic end.)

. . . If it becomes clear, after they wait a while, that all is well, Yasuko goes home first, and then Shōzō too leaves Seiji's. By the time he gets back to the main house, his two layers of clothes are drenched with sweat, and he wants to strip both shirt and socks right off. Having rinsed off with cold water in the bathroom, he sits down on the kitchen chair; only then does Shōzō feel himself again. —Tonight's chapter may be ended; but tomorrow's . . . ? Tomorrow night, too, the planes will surely come in from Tosa. Then all the things he has got ready—gaiters, carryall, shoes—will leap out of the dark, and the road down which to flee will be there at his feet. . . . (Afterward, when he thought back to this time, Shōzō realized he had been in pretty good health but still wondered how he could have dashed about so quickly. It must be that everyone's life holds surprises.)

THE EVACUATION of the Mori Works went forward at a snail's pace. Even after the sewing machines had been dismantled, it was still a while before the factory's turn with the horse carts came. The morning the carts appeared everyone was busy with the moving, and Jun'ichi became especially animated. At one point the floor mats of the living room were all carried off in one cart. Stripped of its *tatami*, with only bare floorboards showing, the room seemed huge; plop in the middle of it, the sofa had been left on its side. One got the feeling that this house was nearing its end. Shōzō stood for a while on the veranda and gazed at the white flower in the corner of the garden. The plant had begun to bloom at about the time the rainy season set in, a second flower blooming as the first wilted; now a six-petaled flower

stood, quiet and alone. When he asked Seiji what it was called, Seiji replied, cape jasmine. It was a flower he had known since childhood; now, standing silent and alone, it spoke so hauntingly of times past. . . .

Shōzō received a letter from a friend in Tokyo: "I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY AIR RAIDS WE HAVE EXPERIENCED ALREADY. EVEN NOW THE COAST IS BRIGHT WITH FIRES. EACH TIME THE ALERT SOUNDS, I TAKE MY MANUSCRIPT AND HIDE IN THE SHELTER. NOWADAYS I AM STUDYING HIGHER MATHEMATICS. MATH IS BEAUTIFUL. JAPAN'S WRITERS AND ARTISTS ARE NO GOOD BECAUSE THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS." Shōzō hadn't heard from him for some time. There had been no recent word from his friend in Iwate Prefecture. Kamaishi had come under naval bombardment, so that area couldn't be safe any longer, either.

One morning Shōzō was in the office when Ōtani turned up; he worked in a company nearby. A relative of Takako's, he had been dropping in often since the trouble between Jun'ichi and Takako, so he was no longer a stranger to Shōzō. With his thin legs encased in black gaiters, lanky trunk, and long, thin face, he gave the impression of being fragile; but his drive seemed to compensate for it. Ōtani strode up to Jun'ichi's desk and spoke with great good cheer: "What is it with Hiroshima? Last night again they seemed headed right our way, but then they veered off toward Ube. The enemy knows what's what, don't they?—that there are important factories in Ube. By comparison, Hiroshima's only got soldiers. As far as industry is concerned, nothing to speak of, you know. Recently I've begun to think: we're surely safe here; we'll be spared." (On the morning of August 6, Ōtani disappeared on his way to work.)

. . . Ōtani was not the only one who began to think that Hiroshima might be spared. At one time the nighttime exodus had flourished, but now the numbers of those fleeing gradually fell off. At this juncture there were several air raids involving small airplanes; but the large formations that cut through the sky over Hiroshima in daylight didn't drop their bombs here. What is more, the antiaircraft guns at the West Parade Ground even shot down a middle-sized plane. In the streetcar a resident asked a military officer, "Hiroshima will hold

them off, won't it?" The officer nodded silently. . . . "Ah," said Yasuko to Shōzō, "it was exciting! I'd never seen an air battle like that!" Sitting in a room with no *tatami*, Shōzō was immersed in Gide's *Si le grain ne meurt*. The beautiful portrayal of youth and the ego developing amid the burning heat of Africa impressed itself indelibly on his mind.

SEIJI DIDN'T THINK the whole city would be spared, but he always prayed that his own house facing the river not go up in flames. He dreamed of the day his two children, evacuated to Miyoshi, might return in safety to this house and all of them together could fish and go boating on the river again. But when would that day come? — When he took it all too much to heart, he became utterly lost.

Ever since they began fleeing every night, Yasuko had become ever so anxious: "If even just the small children could be sent off . . ." About that time Seiji's wife Mitsuko also alluded to evacuation: "Please do something quickly." Seiji didn't like it at all and responded, "You find a place!" He simply couldn't imagine how he himself could go on living in this house if he sent his wife and children off—he wasn't like Jun'ichi, for whom things somehow went smoothly. If it were a matter of wanting to rent a house somewhere in the country to ship just their belongings to—he had already talked that over with his wife. But Seiji himself hadn't a prayer of finding such a house in the country. By this time, instead of insinuating this or that about Jun'ichi's actions, Seiji kept his thoughts to himself, his face set and resentful.

But it became impossible for Jun'ichi simply to ignore the problem of Seiji's family. Eventually, with Jun'ichi's help, they were able to rent a house in the country. But the horse-drawn cart to transport their belongings was not available immediately. Now that a house in the country had been found, Seiji heaved a sigh and lost himself in the packing. Then from the teacher at the evacuation site in Miyoshi came the announcement of a visiting day for parents. If he was going to visit Miyoshi, Seiji wanted to take with him all the children's winter things, and what with packing for the evacuation and preparing things to take to the boys, the house was once again a pretty mess. In addition, Seiji had an odd quirk: he couldn't rest until each item he was

taking to the children had on it, in neat and tidy brushwork, the name of the child.

By the time he had cleaned this up and messed that up, evening had come and Seiji's mood had changed, so he took his fishing pole and went out to the riverbank just in front of the house. There wasn't much to catch these days, but Seiji was most at peace when his line was in. . . . As if startled by the din the river was making, Seiji came to himself. It was as if for a few moments, his gaze fixed on the river, he had been dreaming. He seemed to have been recalling drowsily the scene of the flood in the Old Testament, which he had read long ago. Then Mitsuko appeared from the direction of the house on top of the bank, shouting to him. Fishing pole in hand, Seiji climbed the stone steps; abruptly, his wife said, "The house!"

Not comprehending, Seiji responded, "What?"

"A bit ago Ōkawa came and told us. We have three days to move out; then they raze the house!"

Seiji groaned: "You agreed?"

"That's not the point. If we don't do something, we're done for! Last time we saw Ōkawa he showed us a sketch and explained that our house didn't fall into this phase of the plans; but now all of a sudden he says the regulations call for a break every twenty meters."

"That bastard conned us?"

Mitsuko began to grow impatient: "Mortifying, isn't it. If we don't do something, we're done for!"

"You go settle it," Seiji declared, feigning indifference; but it was no time for indecision. "Let's go talk with Jun'ichi," and soon the two of them went to the main house. But that evening, too, Jun'ichi had already set out for Itsukaichi. They tried calling long-distance, but for some reason no phone calls were getting through that night. Mitsuko clutched Yasuko and railed on and on once more about what Ōkawa had done. Now, as he listened to her, Seiji felt absolutely desperate, oppressed by the thought of how his house would appear three days from now, razed.

In his youth Seiji had been a Christian, and when he opened his mouth, this was the prayer that popped out: "Please, Lord. If it's going to happen, let all of Hiroshima go up in smoke in the next three days."

Next morning Seiji's wife went to the office to see Jun'ichi and complained and complained about the evacuation; since the razing of buildings was apparently City Councilman Tazaki's brainchild, she asked Jun'ichi please to make some kind of approach to Tazaki.

Jun'ichi listened with a long-suffering air; soon, phoning Itsukaichi, he told Takako to come at once. Then, looking at Seiji, he grumbled, "Spineless, eh? They say, 'Your house is to be razed,' and you say, 'Yes, I see,' and do as they say? Houses that burn in an air raid are covered by insurance; houses that get torn down aren't."

In due time Takako appeared. After getting a general sense of the situation, she set off in good humor: "Well, I'm off to Mr. Tazaki's." She was back within the hour, her face beaming: "Mr. Tazaki promised me the razing of buildings in that area will stop." Thus was solved, easily, the vexed question of Seiji's house. And just then the preliminary alert was lifted.

"Well, it'll be a bother if the alarm sounds again, so I'm off now." Takako set off in a hurry.

Presently the two chicks in the chicken coop at the side of the storehouse peeped, each on its own. They were young, and their voices still hadn't matured, so their peeping sometimes amused Jun'ichi and the others; but now no one was listening. The hot rays of the sun filled the tranquil sky over the crape myrtle. . . . There were still more than forty hours to go before the atomic bomb paid its visit.