

Ground Zero 1945

A Schoolboy's Story

Introduction to the Testimony of Atomic Bomb Survivor Akihiro Takahashi

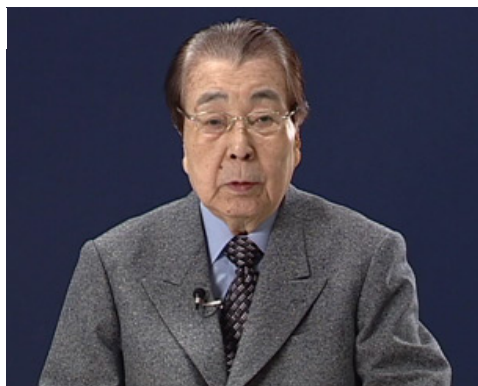
This unit presents the illustrated testimony of Akihiro Takahashi, an A-bomb survivor in Hiroshima, who was born in that city in 1931 and miraculously survived the atomic bombing on August 6, 1945 when he was 14 years old. It took 18 months for Takahashi to regain his health after that terrible event and two years until he was able to return to school. Throughout that time he suffered constant fatigue, a common symptom among A-bomb survivors.

After completing his high-school education he applied for a job in a local advertising company. Although he was told initially that his application was successful, the job offer was withdrawn when the company realized that Takahashi's right arm was partially disabled as a result of the bombing. Eventually, he was offered a temporary job at the Hiroshima City Council, where he later became a full-time worker. There too, however, he often experienced discrimination by fellow workers due to his physical disability.

Takahashi's injuries were extensive. His right hand was taut and stiff from keloid scars caused by heat rays from the bomb, so he could not move his fingers. In 1953, after a skin-graft operation that lasted five hours, he was finally able to hold a pen again and write properly. But he still could not bend his right arm more than 120 degrees, an injury which has remained with him throughout his life. His back too is permanently covered with keloid scars. Takahashi has also suffered various illnesses since his exposure to the bomb, including chronic hepatitis that still plagues him.

Despite his ill health and disabilities, Takahashi has been active in talking at various public gatherings and to school children about his experience of the nuclear holocaust. He was one of a number of A-bomb survivors who spoke about their ordeals at the first Hiroshima Citizens' Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, held on May 15, 1954 and attended by over 1,000 people. In 1965 he went to the Soviet Union, embarking on his first overseas trip as part of his anti-nuclear campaign.

While there he talked in six cities, including Irkutsk, where he addressed 30,000 people in a large sports stadium. In 1983 he spoke at the UN European Headquarters in Geneva, where a special exhibition of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was held. During this trip he visited the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) in Vienna and requested that photos and other materials concerning the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki be placed on permanent display in the IAEA building. Not surprisingly, his request was rejected.



Akihiro Takahashi giving the testimony reproduced in this unit at a conference in Hiroshima in March, 2006

In 1986 Takahashi was invited to China, where he met Chinese victims of atrocities committed by Japanese troops during the Asia Pacific War, such as the Nanjing Massacre and the bombing of Chongqing. These encounters had a significant impact on him. They made him realize Japan's war responsibility vis-a-vis its Asian neighbors and the importance of overcoming hatred among former enemies. In 1988 Takahashi visited Sweden, Italy, and the Vatican and met Pope John Paul II in Rome. In 1990 he attended the International Citizens' Conference organized by IPPNW (International Physicians for

the Prevention of Nuclear War) in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Semipalatinsk, in the northeast of Almaty, was a nuclear test site of the former Soviet Union where 456 nuclear tests were conducted between 1949 and 1989. It is said that more than one-million people were irradiated as a result of these tests. Takahashi met people from Semipalatinsk who were suffering from similar illnesses to those suffered by A-bomb survivors and he formed a friendship and solidarity with them.

Takahashi has traveled to many other countries—including the United States—to inform people about the horror of nuclear attacks, and his testimony has been translated not only into English, but also into French and German. He has also been active in meeting children from all over Japan visiting Hiroshima on school excursions. On these occasions he speaks about the importance of building a peaceful society. In 1991 he was awarded the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Commission) Broadcasting Cultural Award for his contribution to promoting peace messages both in Japan and overseas.

In June, 1980, when Takahashi visited Washington D.C. to speak at the Exhibition of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—held in the Russell Building of the U.S. Senate and organized by the Hiroshima Youth Association—he met Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the B-29 "Enola Gay," from which the atomic bomb, "Little Boy," was dropped. The meeting was arranged by Japanese journalists from Hiroshima. It was the first time a crew member from the "Enola Gay" met an A-bomb survivor face to face.

At the meeting Takahashi said to Tibetts, "I have no intention to express my anger to you, so please feel at ease. For many years I have felt a deep hatred of American war leaders, including President Truman, who made the decision to drop atomic bombs on us, as well as for the Japanese militarists who initiated the war. But one day I realized that this hatred could not be erased by another hatred, and that peace could not be achieved by hatred. I started to think that I must overcome my hatred, although I knew it would require much courage. We, the A-bomb survivors, are appealing to the people of the world, irrespective of nationality and position, never to repeat this mistake with nuclear weapons. This is the spirit of Hiroshima, and I urge you to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons."

Tibetts responded, "I understand your feelings very well. But, if there was another war and I was ordered to drop an atomic bomb, I would obey the order again. This is the logic of war and the logic for soldiers. If war happens, we have no option but to accept orders. We must, therefore, make sure no wars are started ever again." Takahashi did not agree with Tibetts' argument about the logic of war, but he was relieved to hear Tibetts' words "we must make sure no wars are started ever again." The meeting lasted about half an hour, throughout which Tibetts held Takahashi's right hand. (At the beginning of the meeting, Tibetts had noticed the keloid scars on Takahashi's hand and asked if the scar was due to the bombing, to which Takahashi answered, "Yes.")

After the meeting the two men corresponded for a while, but Tibetts stopped replying to Takahashi's letters when controversy arose concerning the exhibition of the "Enola Gay" at the Smithsonian National Air Space Museum in 1995 and Tibetts made public statements staunchly justifying the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 1979 the then mayor of Hiroshima, Takeshi Araki, wanted to appoint an A-bomb survivor to become the director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum (the so-called A-bomb Museum). Takahashi was chosen because of his strong and sincere commitment to promoting the anti-nuclear message and because of his position as a victim of the atomic bombing. Takahashi was director for four years, during which he introduced various new programs to help as many people as possible understand the horrors of the atomic bombing. For example, he initiated a lending service of the museum's collection. This enabled other museums and grass roots peace organizations to borrow displays such as torn clothes worn by A-bomb victims and roof tiles scorched and distorted by heat rays, together with written explanations and photos.

This lending program remains one of the most popular and important services that the museum operates, and has been extended to include overseas exhibitions in the U.S., Korea, Denmark, and many other countries. Another program that Takahashi introduced as director was the tape recording of A-bomb survivors' testimonies, which were then made available for visitors to the museum. This program later developed into an audio visual service, and some of the testimonies are now available with English translation.

During the last few years Takahashi has had to spend a few months each year in the hospital due to his complicated illness, and it has become difficult for him to travel overseas. He is still, however, eager to speak about his experience at any opportunity, in Hiroshima or in other parts of Japan. He is possibly the best-known living witness to the nuclear holocaust.

The pictures illustrating Takahashi's experience were drawn by Mr. Goro Shikoku. Shikoku is a local amateur painter, although many people consider his paintings to be of professional quality. Born in Hiroshima in 1924, he is self-taught, having enjoyed painting since childhood. Before being drafted into the army and sent to Manchuria in 1944, he worked at an army uniform textile factory in Hiroshima. He was captured by the Russian army at the end of the war and sent to Siberia to do hard labor for more than three years. On his return in 1949 he found that many of his friends and relatives—including one of his brothers—had been killed by the atomic bomb. He was also shocked by the physical condition of A-bomb survivors and started painting to convey an anti-nuclear and peace message while working at the city council. During the next fifty years he produced many moving paintings, the "mother and child" theme being his most common. In addition, he produced posters and pamphlets for the anti-nuclear and anti-war campaign, as well as the cover art for books on nuclear issues. In 1999 a limited edition of a two-volume publication of his artwork was published by a group of friends and supporters. He still lives in Hiroshima [as of this writing in 2007], but does not paint any longer.

Yuki Tanaka
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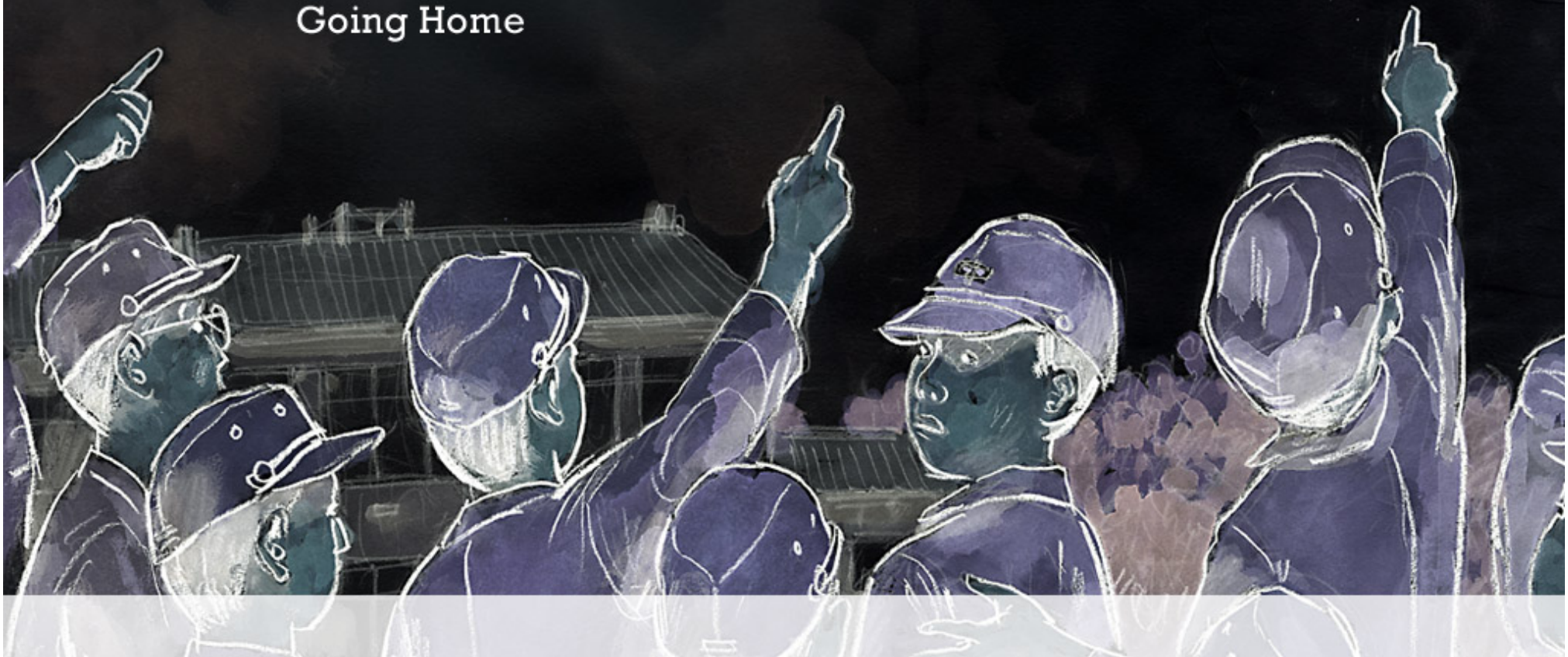
A First-hand Account by Akihiro Takahashi • Illustrated by Goro Shikoku

The Bomb

Hell on Earth

Fire & Black Rain

Going Home



"Go, go soldiers go!" This phrase appeared in a textbook I read as an elementary school child...



日本は15年間にわたり戦争をしてきました。

1931年9月18日、日中戦争の前哨戦と言われる満州事変が始まり、1937年7月7日、遂に日中戦争へとつながっていきました。そして、1941年12月8日、真珠湾奇襲攻撃で始まった太平洋戦争へと戦火はさらに拡大していきました。

日本はとりわけ、中国をはじめとするアジア諸国に対しては侵略戦争を起こしていき、朝鮮半島に対しては36年間にわたって植民地として支配してきました。日本は大きな過ちを犯しました。

「ススメ、ススメ、ヘイタイススメ」というのは、私が小学生の時、習った教科書の一節で、こういう教科書で私たちは戦争中、軍国主義の教育を受けていました。

Chapter One: The Bomb

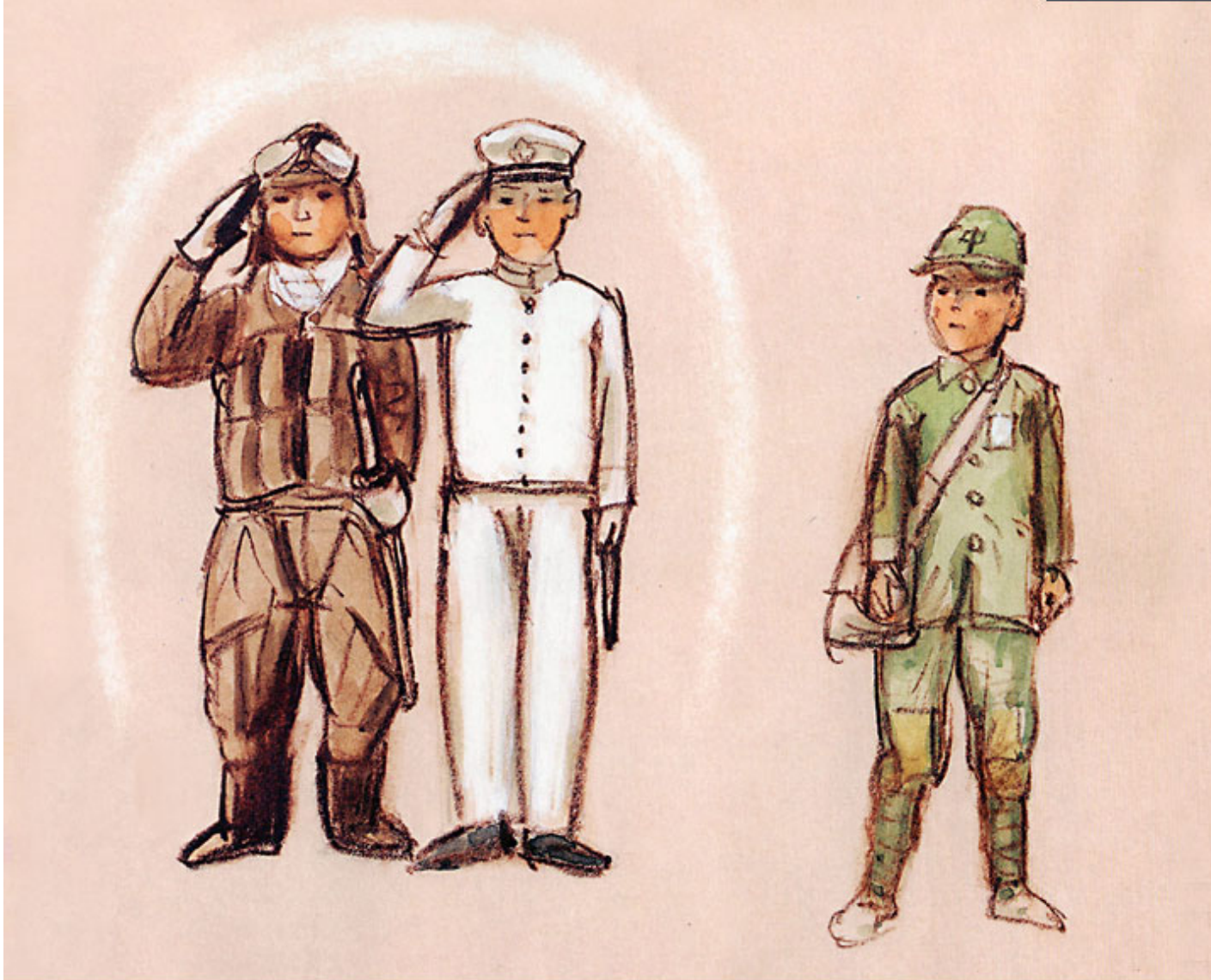
(1) Japan was at war for 15 years. The Manchurian Incident occurred on September 18th, 1931. This incident is considered the preliminary skirmish of the Second Sino-Japanese War as it clearly led to the start of that war on July 7th, 1937. This series of battles expanded to become the Pacific War, which began with Pearl Harbor on December 8th, 1941.

Japan conducted a war of aggression against China and other Asian nations. We colonized the Korean Peninsula for 36 years. Japan made a terrible mistake.

“Go, go soldiers go!” This phrase appeared in a textbook I read as an elementary school child. During the war, we received militaristic education using such textbooks.



On the left is the uniform of an airplane pilot.
They looked very sharp to us at the time...



当時の中学生の男子生徒は、ほとんどが軍人になろうと思っていました。茨城県の霞ヶ浦に海軍少年航空隊がありました。私はその海軍少年航空兵にぜひ志願したいと強く願っていました。

絵の真ん中が夏服の制服です。白い制帽、白い上着、白いズボン、上着のボタンは七つボタン。向かって左側が飛行機に乗る時の制服です。こうしたカッコイイ海軍少年航空兵になって、敵地に入り込んでいき、敵兵を一人でも多く殺してやろう。それが、日本が戦争に勝つためには正しいことだ、必要なことなんだと、当時、私たちは学校教育の中でそう教えられ、それを信じて生きてきました。

しかし、日本は戦争に負けた。軍国主義の誤りも分かった。さらに、アジア諸国の国民の皆さんには、大きな苦しみと悲しみを与えたということも分かりました。ですから、日本の戦争責任は基本的には日本政府にあります。国が戦争を起こしたのですから…。しかし、私がたとえ少年であったとはいえ、戦争中を生きてきた日本人の一人として、日本の戦争に対しては、私自身も深く反省しなければならない。人を殺すことが正しいことだと、そういう教育を受けたとはいえ、そんな考え方を持ったこと自体、間違いであったと強く反省しています。



(2) Most junior high school boys in those days assumed that they would join the military when they grew up. I myself was eager to enlist in the Boy's Naval Air Force headquartered in Kasumigaura in Ibaraki Prefecture.

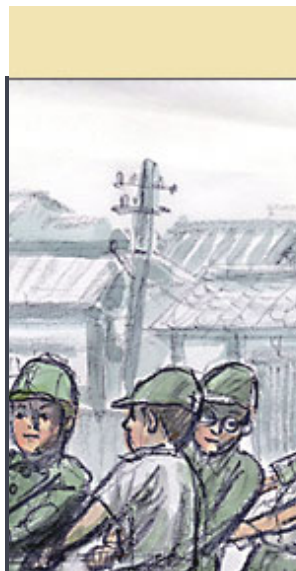
At the center of this slide is the summer uniform of that school consisting of white cap, white jacket with seven buttons, and white trousers. On the left is the uniform of an airplane pilot. They looked very sharp to us at the time. Our school teachers told us that becoming airmen of the Naval Air Force was admirable and marching into the enemy's territory to kill as many enemy soldiers as possible was right and necessary for Japan to win the war—and we believed them.

However, Japan lost the war. That was when we realized how wrong militarism was. We learned that Japan caused our Asian neighbors great suffering and sorrow. I therefore believe that basic responsibility for the war lies with the Japanese government because the Japanese government started the war... at the same time, however, I, myself, deeply repent the war. I am sorry as a Japanese who lived through the war, even though I was only a boy at the time. I was taught that killing people was the right thing to do, and I believed it. Now, despite that training, I think such ideas are totally wrong. I deeply repent my earlier belief.

Rather than studying we performed demolition work, removing the houses of ordinary citizens...



戦争中、当時の中学生、女学生は学校で勉強することよりも、街の中にある一般市民の家を壊す、建物取り壊し作業を動員学徒として国家の命令によってやっていました。アメリカの空襲に備えて家を壊すわけです。どんどん壊して空き地を作り、万一の場合には、その空き地を避難場所にする。その家に住んでいる人たちは自分の家でありながら、仕方なく家を捨てて田舎の親戚や知人を頼って疎開をして行かなければならなかった。国家の命令によって強制的に立ち退かされたのでした。



(3) During the war, junior high school students and girls in girls' schools were mobilized. Rather than studying, we performed demolition work removing the houses of ordinary citizens by order of the government. This demolition work was done to create vacant areas as firebreaks in anticipation of air raids by the United States. In case of emergency, we could escape the fire there. Residents of the demolished houses had no choice but to give up their houses and evacuate to the countryside where relatives or acquaintances lived. They were forcibly evicted by government order.



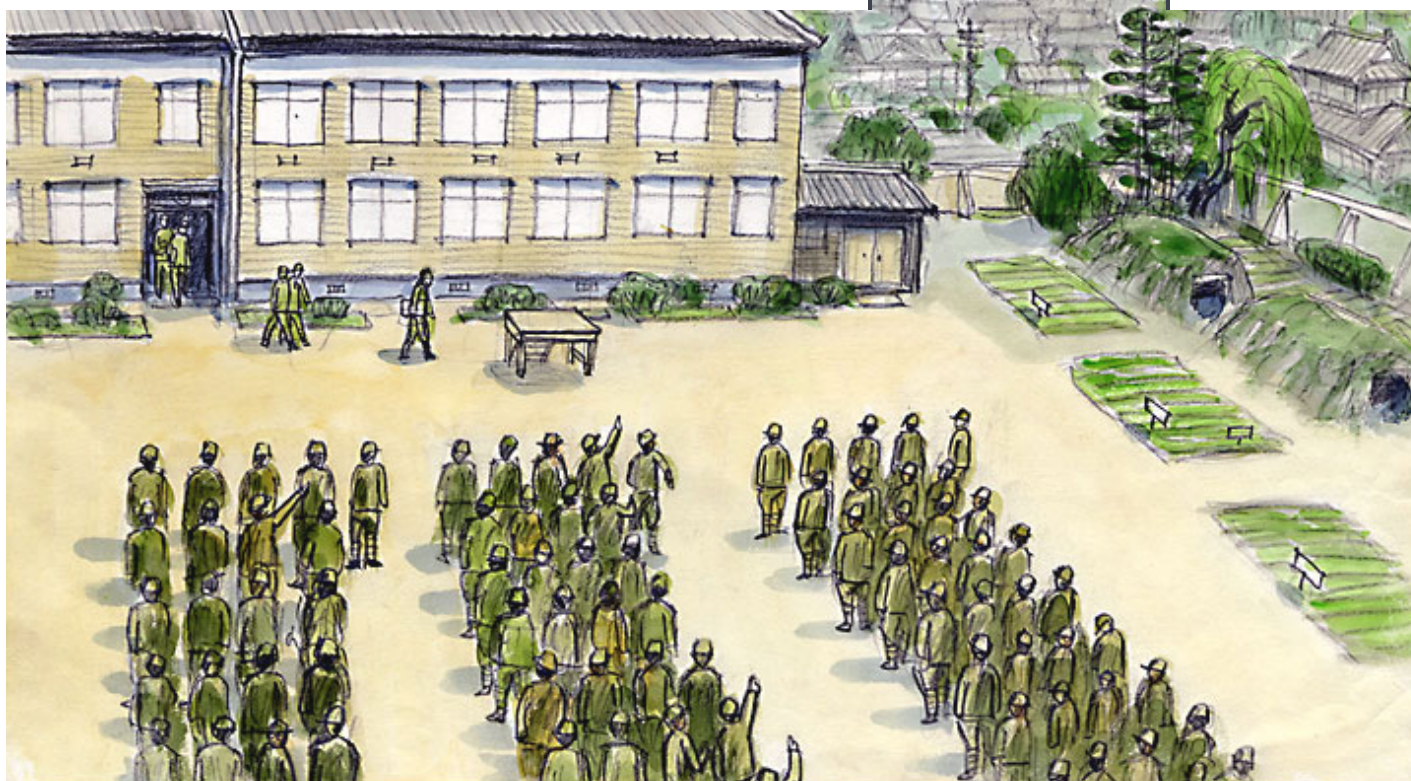
Feeling safe, we went out onto the playground
and waited for morning assembly to begin...



8月6日、原爆が投下される前、すでに警戒警報、空襲警報は解かれていました。私たちは安心して校庭へ出て、朝礼が始まるのを待ちました。校庭には、私のクラス約60名を含めて150名位の生徒がいました。警報が解除されていたにもかかわらず、なぜかアメリカのB-29、1機が上空に飛来、これが原爆を積んでいたのですが、そんなことは夢にも思いませんでした。



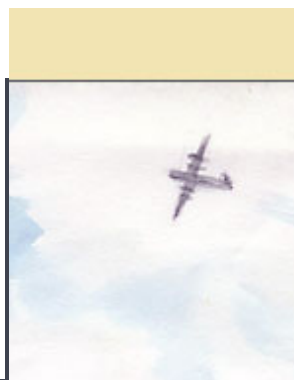
(4) Just before the A-bomb was dropped on August 6th, an air-raid warning and a subsequent caution had been cleared. Feeling safe, we went out onto the playground and waited for morning assembly to begin. There were about 150 students on the playground, including about 60 of my classmates. We then saw a U.S. B-29 bomber approaching, even though the warnings had been already cleared. We never dreamt that this plane was carrying an atomic bomb.



In Hiroshima, the sky was perfectly clear that morning. The B-29 flew just above us...



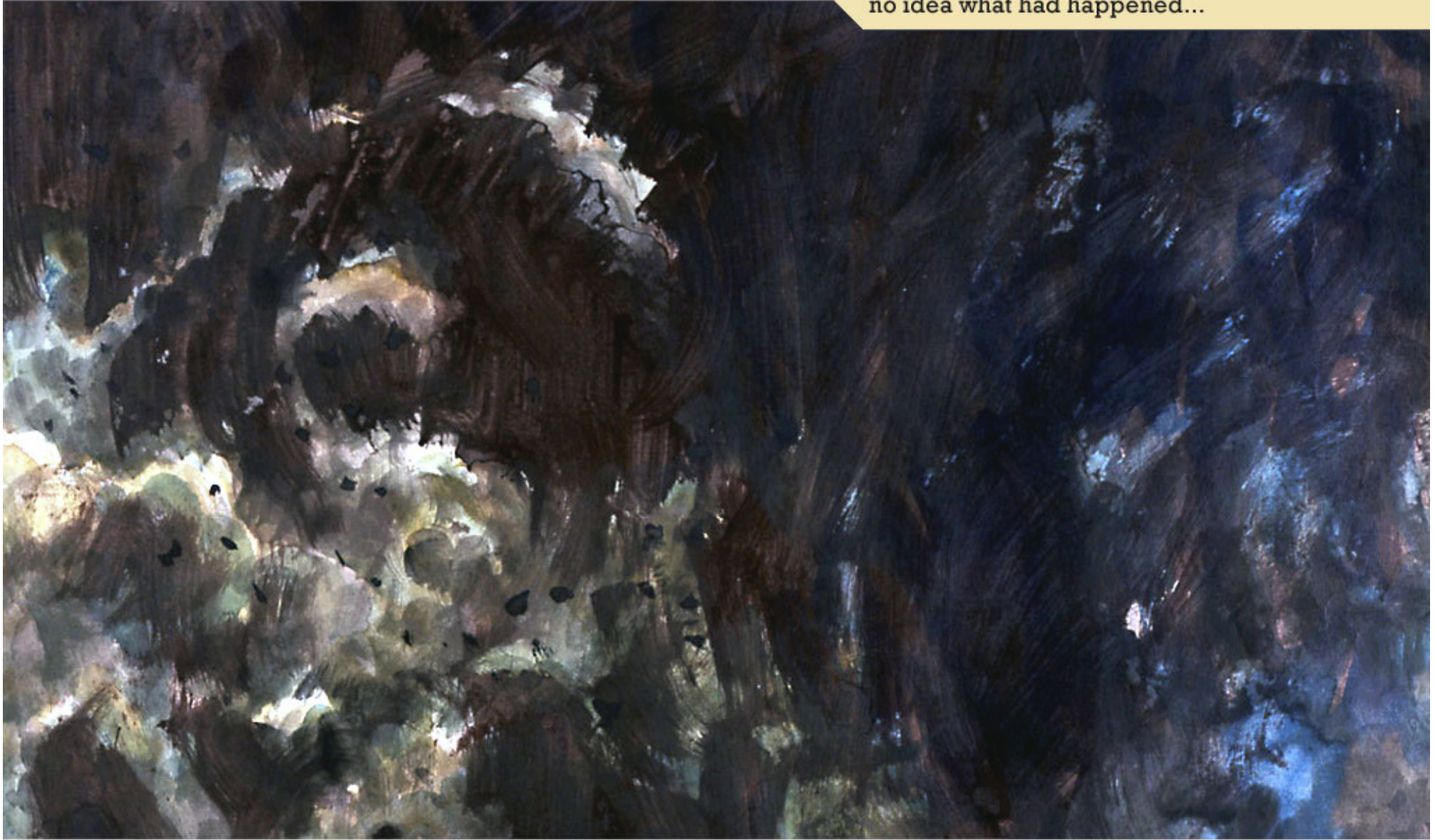
広島朝の空は快晴でした。きれいな飛行機雲をはきながら、B-29は、私たちの上空にさしかかってきました。私たちは安心していましたが、空を仰いで指さしながら、その飛行機を眺めていました。職員室から先生が出て来られた。クラスの級長が「集まれ！整列！」と号令をかけた、その時でした。



(5) In Hiroshima, the sky was perfectly clear that morning. The B-29 flew just above us leaving a beautiful vapor trail. Believing we were safe, we looked up at the flying plane, pointing to it in the sky. Then our teacher came out of the staff room and our class president called out, 'Fall in! Attention!' That was the instant the tragedy happened.



Unable to see an inch ahead of me, I had
no idea what had happened...



大音響と共にあたりが一瞬、真っ暗闇。目の前すら見えない。何が起こったのかと思いました。このとき、ピカッと光っているわけですが、私はその熱線は、なぜか記憶にありません。いきなり、グワーンと爆風が襲ってきました。熱線を記憶している人の話によれば、青光りが四方に走っていったということでした。

(6) I heard an incredible noise as complete darkness covered my eyes. Unable to see an inch ahead of me, I had no idea what had happened. Some say there was a flash but I do not remember it. From what I have heard, it was a pale blue light bursting out in all directions, followed by a powerful booming blast.



We were blown away...



私たちはひとたまりもなく、爆風で吹き飛ばされていました。

(7) We were blown away unable to put up the least resistance.



I recovered consciousness when the smoke
that had covered the playground lifted...



しばらくたって、校庭一帯の煙が消えて、明るくなって気がつきました。私はいつのまにか10m位後ろ側に吹き飛ばされ、校庭の地面にたたきつけられていました。爆風によるものです。

Chapter Two: Hell on Earth

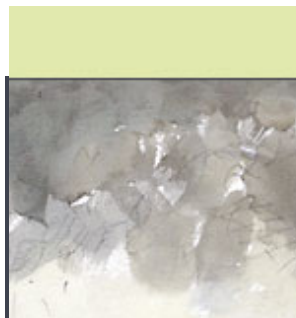
(8) After a while, I recovered consciousness when the smoke that had covered the playground lifted and it became light again. I had been blown about 10 meters from where I had been before the explosion, and had fallen hard on the ground. The blast had thrown me that far.



Every house and building that had once stood around the school had collapsed...



150名位の生徒も、前後へ左右へと吹き飛ばされ、校庭のあちこちに倒れていました。校舎は、当時、木造ですからぺっしょんこ。学校の周りにあった民家などは全部爆風でつぶされていました。



(9) I then found that 150 other students had been blown in all directions and lay scattered around the playground. The wooden schoolhouse was flattened to the ground. Every house and building that had once stood around the school had collapsed because of the blast.



"Oh no, Hiroshima has disappeared," I
thought. Then I looked at my own body...



遠くを眺めても家が無い。わずかの建物を残して一切が無くなっていました。「広島が無くなった!」、一瞬そう思いました。気がついて自分の体を見た。着ていた中学生の制服は熱線でボロボロに焼けちぎられていました。上空でピカッと光った瞬間、制服に自然に着火してボロボロに焼けちぎられていたのです。そして私の体は、頭の後ろから背中、両手、両足、体の皮が爆風でめくれています。めくれたあとの体の肉は、熱線で焼けただれて赤身がむき出しになっていました。私の周りで倒れていた生徒も、大なり小なり私と同じような被害を受けていました。一瞬、恐怖が襲ってきました。



(10) I gazed into the distance but saw no houses—all had disappeared except for a few concrete buildings. “Oh no, Hiroshima has disappeared,” I thought. Then I looked at my own body. My school uniform had been burned and torn to tatters. At the moment of the A-bomb flash in the sky, my uniform had spontaneously caught fire and burned to tatters. The blast peeled the skin right off the back of my head and down to my back, arms, hands, and legs. I could see my own red flesh exposed between tatters of skin burned by the heat ray. Recognizing that my state must be similar to the many other students lying around me, I was seized momentarily by panic.



"Flee to a river in case of an air raid." This is what I remembered being told...



「もし、空襲を受けたら川へ逃げなさい」、いつもの避難訓練を思い出し、いち早く校庭から出て川へ向かいました。

(11) "Flee to a river in case of an air raid." This is what I remembered being told during evacuation drills by the teacher. I promptly left the playground to flee to the river.



I turned around and saw my friend, Tatsuya Yamamoto. He was calling me...



逃げる途中で後ろのほうから私の名前を呼ぶ声がした。「おーい、高橋、高橋、待ってくれー、待ってくれー」、後ろを振り向きますと、同じ町から一緒に、毎日通学していた同じクラスの山本達也君という友達が私を呼んでいました。

(12) On my way to the river I heard somebody calling my name from behind. 'Hey, Takahashi, Takahashi, wait for me, wait for me.' I turned around and saw my friend, Tatsuya Yamamoto. He was calling me. We were in the same class, and I used to go to school with him every day.



He was crying, "Mom, help me, help." He just kept crying. I told him, "Stop crying..."



彼は泣いてばかりいました。「お母さん、お母さん、助けて、助けて!」、私はそういう彼を、「もう泣くな!泣いても始まらない!泣くよりは、早くここを立ち退かないと大変なことが起こるかもしれないぞ。早く逃げるんだ!」と言って、時には叱り、時には励まして、彼を引っ張って逃げていきました。私たちは戦争中、戦闘帽という帽子をかぶっていました。帽子をかぶっていたところの髪は残っています。帽子からはみ出たところの髪が、熱線でちりぢりに焼けちぎられてハゲになっているわけです。もちろん帽子は爆風で吹き飛ばされていました。



(13) He was crying, "Mom, help me, help." He just kept crying. I told him, "Stop crying. Crying is no use. Get moving instead or we could be in terrible trouble. We have to get out of here now." I scolded him sometimes and encouraged him at other times. I stayed with him and pulled him along.

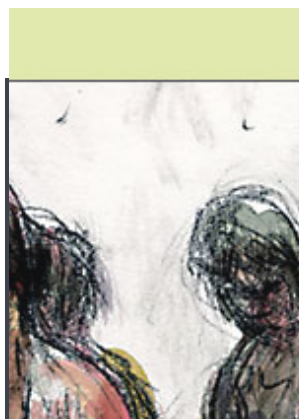
During the war we wore what we called a "combat cap." Where the cap covered it, we still had some hair, but the heat ray burnt away the hair that was not covered by the cap. The exposed spots were bald. The cap was, of course, blown off.



Everyone was fleeing, but dragging their bare feet... It looked like a procession of ghosts.



沢山の被爆者が行列をなして逃げていました。みんな両手を前にぶらーんとぶら下げています。ぼろぎれのように皮がめくれて、指先からぶら下がっています。衣服もボロボロ、裸同然の人もいます。皮がめくれて赤身がむき出しになっている。みんな裸足、足を引きずりながら、ふらつきながら逃げる。まるで幽霊の行列でした。



(14) A great number of bombed people were fleeing in long lines. They all held their arms out in front of them, their shredded skin dangling from their fingertips. Their clothes were all tattered. Some were almost naked—their skin had peeled off and red flesh was exposed. Everyone was fleeing, but dragging their bare feet, staggering along. It looked like a procession of ghosts.



This boy was covered with broken glass pieces from the waist up...

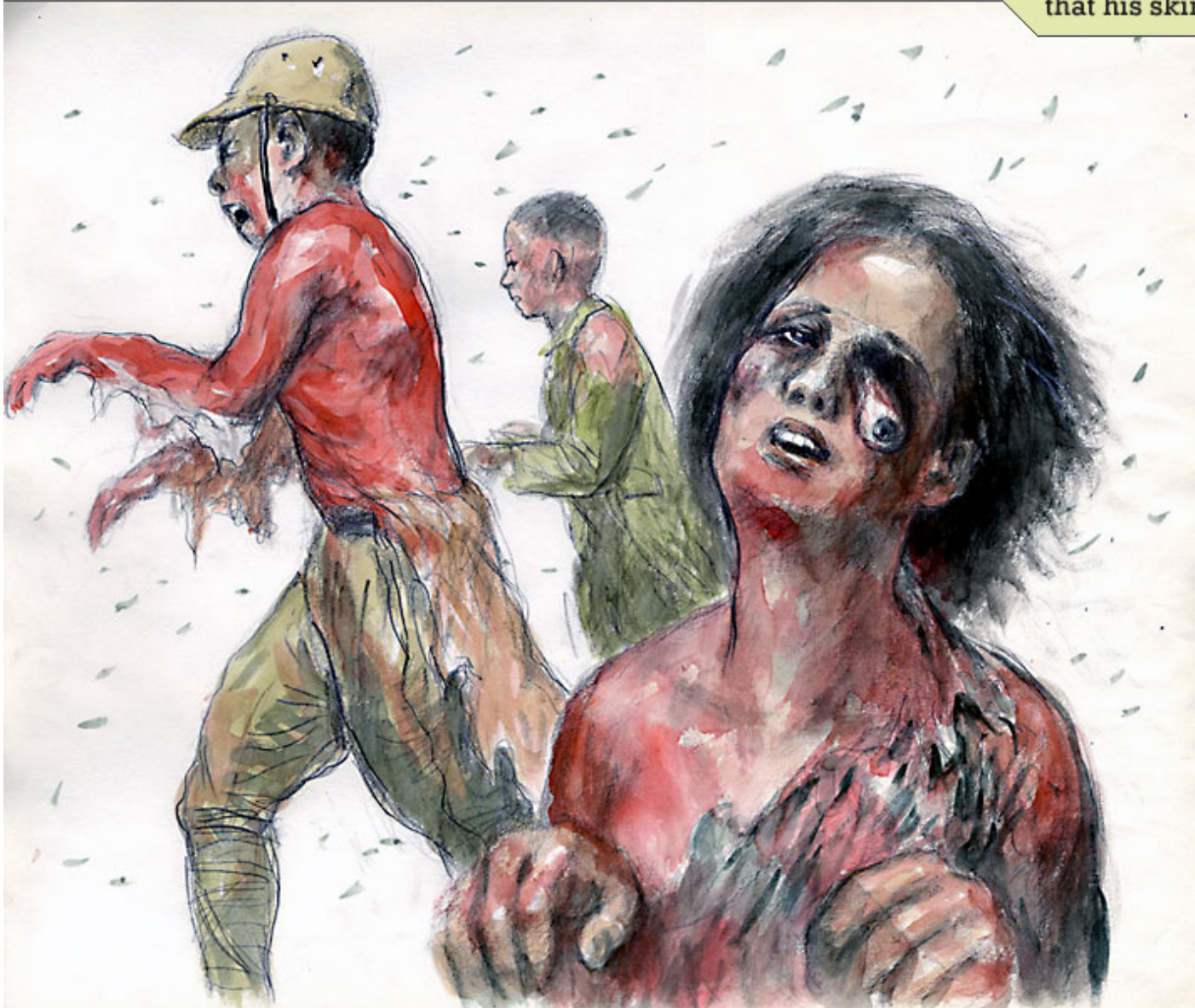


その行列の中に、大変ひどい被害を受けた人が
沢山いました。この男の人の上半身はガラスだ
らけ。これは、例えば窓ガラスが、爆風で粉々
に壊されるわけです。そして粉々になったガラ
スの破片が爆風で飛び散ってきて、人間の体に
食い込むという被害です。私の体にも数か所、
腰や両手にガラスの破片がささっていました。

(15) Many in the procession had been hideously
injured. This boy was covered with broken glass
pieces from the waist up—these glass pieces
were probably window glass shattered into
fragments and scattered by the blast. I could see
a few such glass fragments in my own body in
several places, including my waist and both arms.



The man on the left had been so badly burned that his skin was peeling from his entire back...



片方の目の玉が飛び出し、全身血だらけの女性
がいました。これは爆風による被害です。向
かって左側の男性の上半身は赤身、上半身の皮
がくるっとめくれて赤身がむき出しになって焼
け爛れていました。



(16) One woman was covered in blood with one of
her eyeballs hanging out. This had been caused by
the blast. The man on the left had been so badly
burned above the waist that his skin was peeling
from his entire back exposing burned red flesh.



There were many dead bodies. Among them I
saw a hideously damaged woman's body...



死体が幾つかころがっていました。その中には、内臓が破裂して地面に出ているという大変悲惨な女性の死体もありました。これも爆風による被害です。



(17) There were many dead bodies. Among them I saw a hideously damaged woman's body. Her ruptured internal organs were pouring out onto the ground. This had also been caused by the blast.



The baby was shrieking. He was still alive. But we were just boys. We couldn't do anything...



母親と思われる女の人のそばに赤ん坊が転がっていました。二人とも全身の皮がほとんど剥がされて赤身をむき出しにして、焼けただれていました。赤ん坊は、「ギャーギャー、ギャーギャー」と泣きわめく。まだ命があるということです。しかし、子供の私たちにはどうすることもできませんでした。



(18) I also saw a baby lying beside a woman who was apparently the baby's mother. Both were seriously burned. Most of their skin had peeled down to red flesh. The baby was shrieking. He was still alive. But we were just boys. We couldn't do anything for the baby.



The entire scene was horrible. Words can never describe such horrible sights.



馬が全身の皮を剥がされて、赤身をむき出しにして首を水槽の中に突っ込んで死んでいました。本当にむごたらしい状況です。言葉だけでは、とても言い表わせない惨憺たる光景でした。

(19) A horse lay dead with its neck in a trough and its skin peeled from most of its body, exposing red flesh. The entire scene was horrible. Words can never describe such horrible sights.



It was impossible to walk normally. We
desperately climbed over the wreckage...



そういうむごたらしい状況を目の前にしながら、私たちは一生懸命川に向かって逃げて行きました。しかし、大きな道路から川岸に通じる小路という小路は、全部ふさがれてしまっている。爆風で壊された家屋の残骸が小路のうえに覆い被さっているわけです。ですから、小路を歩いて川岸へ出ることはできない。無我夢中で家屋の残骸の上を四つん這いになってやっとの思いで川岸へ出ました。

Chapter Three: Fire & Black Rain

(20) With such dreadful sights in front of us, we ran for our lives towards the river. The wreckage of houses destroyed by the blast blocked every alley from the main street to the riverbank. It was impossible to walk normally. We desperately climbed over the wreckage of the houses—crawling on all fours—and finally reached the riverside.



Fire suddenly broke out in the wreckage of the houses we had just crossed...



川岸へ出た途端、家屋の残骸から一斉に火の手が上がりました。どんどんどんどん燃え広がる。長い火柱が大きな音を立てて、ちょうど火山が噴火するような勢いで天に向かって吹き上げる。大変怖かったことを、今でもよく覚えています。その時は、幸い一歩早く火災の外側に出ることができました。大変運がよかったと思っています。この火災は、爆風で壊された家屋の残骸に、上空で光った瞬間の熱線で自然に火がつき、家の中にあっただえろ朝支度の何んらかの火が、一緒になって火災を引き起こしたということです。これを高熱火災と言います。家屋の残骸の下敷きになって助け出せない人たちが沢山いました。一人や二人の力ではどうすることもできない。そのうちに火が回ってくる。下敷きになった人たちを見捨てて逃げざるを得なかった。そういう家族が沢山います。爆心地から2 km 以内の、木造家屋を含めて燃える物はすべて燃え尽きていきました。



(21) As soon as we reached the riverside, fire suddenly broke out in the wreckage of the houses we had just crossed. The fire was spreading rapidly and a tall column of flame rose to the sky with a loud sound and blast—like a volcano erupting. Even now, I can clearly remember how frightened I was. We were very fortunate to escape that fire. The fire was caused by the wreckage of houses destroyed by the bomb blast spontaneously catching fire due to the heat rays that flashed for a second in the sky. Fires for cooking breakfast escaped and combined with this fire. That fire was what is called a “super high-temperature fire.” Many were trapped beneath destroyed houses with no hope of help reaching them. One or two people could do nothing to save them. The spreading fire quickly reached them, and many survivors had no choice but to flee leaving beloved, living family members beneath the rubble to perish in the fire. Within two kilometers from the hypocenter, the fire burned everything combustible including all wooden houses.



We saw a small bridge that had miraculously remained intact after the blast...



這い出た川岸になぜか不思議と、小さな木の橋が爆風で壊されないで残っていました。この橋が私たちの命を救ってくれました。

(22) Crawling down to the riverside, we saw a small bridge that had miraculously remained intact after the blast. That bridge saved our lives.



I crossed the bridge and suddenly realized that
my friend Yamamoto was no longer with me...



橋を渡って向う岸へ行きました。その時、友達の山本君はなぜかはぐれていなくなっていました。あとで、私が元気になって、彼の母親に聞きました。彼はいったん見知らぬ人に自宅までつれて帰ってもらったそうです。しかし1か月半後の9月16日に、急性放射能症状にかかって亡くなったそうです。私はこの時、一人で橋を渡って向う岸へ行きました。



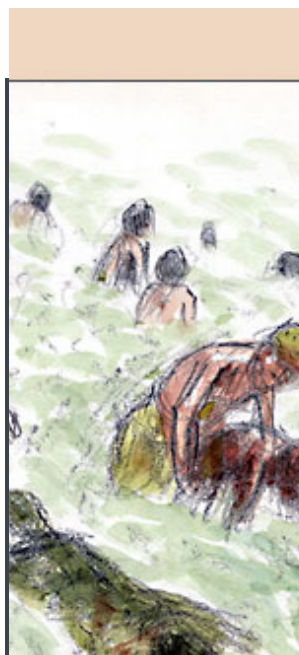
(23) I crossed the bridge to the other side and suddenly realized that my friend Yamamoto was no longer with me. Later, after I recovered, I heard from his mother that he had been taken to his home by a kind stranger, but died six weeks later on September 16 from acute radiation poisoning. I crossed the bridge and got to the other side alone.



My body was getting unbearably hot so I entered the river and soaked in the water...



向う岸は3km以上離れていましたから、幸い火災は起きていなかったわけです。「ああ、自分は助かったなあ！」と思いました。その時、気が緩んで初めて涙が出て止まりませんでした。同時に、強く体の熱さを感じました。熱くて熱くてたまらない。たまりかねて、川の水の中につかりました。冷たい川の水は、燃えるように熱い私の体にとっては、本当に気持ちがよく、宝のようでした。しかし、川の中にも死体などが浮かんで、まるで生き地獄のような状態でした。私と同じように体をつけている人だが沢山いました。その人たちの多くが川の水を飲み、そのまま流されて死んでいきました。



(24) The opposite bank was three kilometers from the hypocenter. Luckily there was no fire over there. "I made it," I thought to myself. Then I let go. Tears welled up in my eyes for the first time and I couldn't hold them back. At the same time, I felt that my body was getting hot—unbearably hot—so I entered the river and soaked in the water. The cold water felt so good on my burning hot body. It was like a treasure. In reality, however, floating dead bodies filled the river. It looked like hell on earth. Thousands of people were soaking their bodies like I was. Many drank river water, then were carried away to their deaths.



Suddenly, large black drops of rain began falling. This was what we called "black rain."



川から上がって、山の竹やぶを利用して作られた仮の救護所へ行って、簡単な治療を受けて休んでいました。沢山の被爆者が行列をなして、治療の順番を待っていました。そこへ、まっ黒い大粒の雨が降ってきました。これがいわゆる「黒い雨」です。

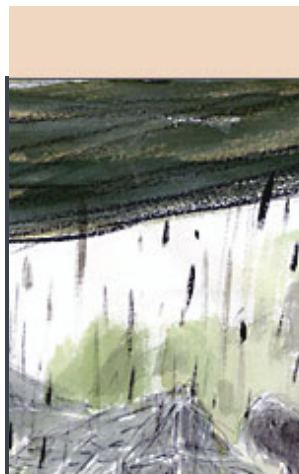
(25) Soon, I came out of the river and went to a makeshift relief station made of bamboo brought down from the mountains. I received simple treatment and rested. A number of bombed victims were waiting in line for treatment. Suddenly, large black drops of rain began falling. This was what we called "black rain."



I gazed at the rain and wondered if black rain
had ever fallen before on this Earth.



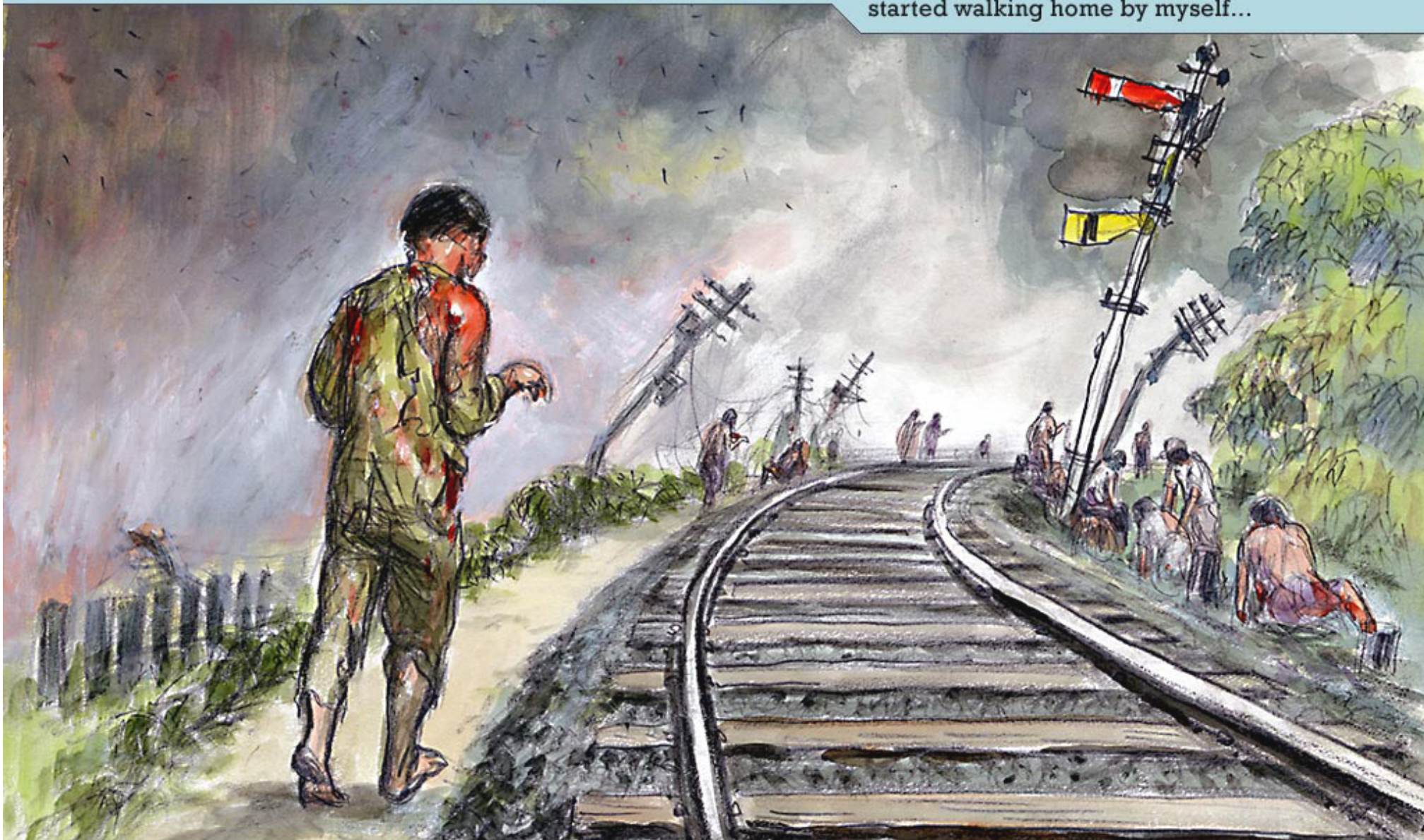
「黒い雨」というのは、爆風で砂埃が天に舞い上がり、その砂埃が雨の中に含まれて黒くなります。同時に、雨の中には放射線が含まれています。ですから、その雨を直接体に浴びると放射線の影響が出てきた人もいます。私はテントの中にいましたから、幸いにもこの雨を体に浴びずにすみしました。しかし、初めて見る黒い雨。「この世に果たして黒い雨なんてあるんだろうか？」と不思議な気持ちでしばらく雨を眺めていました。



(26) Black rain was formed when the dust sent to the sky by the blast mixed with rain. This black rain contained radiation. Some who were directly exposed to that rain later suffered from radiation sickness. Luckily, I was in a tent so I was not exposed to the rain. Looking at the first black rain I had seen in my life, it all felt so strange. I gazed at the rain and wondered if black rain had ever fallen before on this Earth.



I waited until it stopped raining and
started walking home by myself...



雨がやむのを待って、一人で自宅に向かって歩き始めました。しかし、学校から自宅まで6km以上という長い道のりを、大火傷を負った一人の少年が、果たして自力で歩いて帰ることができるかな？という不安を抱きながら歩き始めたわけです。

Chapter Four: Going Home

(27) I waited until it stopped raining and started walking home by myself. I was worried, however, wondering whether I could walk the more than six kilometers to my house after suffering such severe burns.



After walking for a while, I heard
somebody calling my name again...



しばらく行くと、また私の名前を呼ぶ声がする。「おい、高橋、高橋、一緒に家まで連れて帰ってくれえ」、うめき声をあげて助けを求める声がした。道端のほうを見ますと、これも同じ町から一緒に毎日通学していた、同じクラスの八田はった徳次郎君という友達がうずくまっていました。彼の体をよく見ますと、なぜか両足の裏側の皮がめくれて赤身がむき出しになって焼けただれていました。歩けるはずがありません。「どのようにしてここまで来たのか？」と聞きました。見知らぬ人の自転車に乗せてもらって、この場所へ置いていかれたそうです。しばらくたって私が通りかかった。同じ町から通う同じクラスの友達です。歩けない友達をどのようにして助けようかと思い悩みました。私はそういう友達を見捨てて、一人だけが自宅に帰る気にはとともなりません。なんとか助けてやろうと思った。しかし、助ける方法が見当たらない。不幸中の幸いとでも言いましょうか、彼の体は、足の裏側以外はあまり切り傷も火傷もひどくありません。私は考えに考えて、彼を助ける方法をやっと二つ思いつきました。



(28) After walking for a while, I heard somebody calling my name again. "Takahashi, Takahashi, take me home with you." It was a moaning request for help. I looked in the direction of the moan and found a classmate, Tokujiro Hatta, crouching by the roadside. We were from the same town and went to the same school together everyday. I looked at his body. The skin had peeled off the soles of both his feet and I could see the burned red flesh inside. It was impossible for Hatta to walk. I said, "How did you get here?" He said that a kind stranger had carried him on a bicycle and left him there.

I was worried about whether I could find a way to help him. He was my classmate from the same town, so I did not want to go home myself and leave him behind. I wanted to help him some way or another but couldn't find a way of to do it. In the midst of misfortune, he was fortunate to have no severe gashes or burns except for the soles of his feet. I finally thought of two ideas to help him.



This way his feet did not touch the ground.



その一つは、彼の両手と両足の膝を使って、犬や猫のように四つん這いにさせました。そうすれば足の裏が地面につかずに済みます。

(29) One was for him to crawl on his hands and knees like a cat or dog. This way his feet did not touch the ground.



We traveled very slowly towards home
much slower than a snail's pace...



もう一つは、彼の両足のかかとで立たせ、私が彼の体を支えてやって前に進んでゆく。この二つの方法を繰り返しながら、ゆっくりゆっくり、牛の歩みよりもっと遅く、私たちは助け合って自宅に向かいました。こんな方法がよく思い浮かんだと、今では我ながら感心しています。

(30) The other idea was for him to walk on the backs of his heels with me supporting him from behind. By traveling in these two ways alternatively, we traveled very slowly towards home much slower than a snail's pace. It now comes as a surprise that I could think of such ideas.



I happened to turn around, and there were my
granduncle and grandaunt approaching...

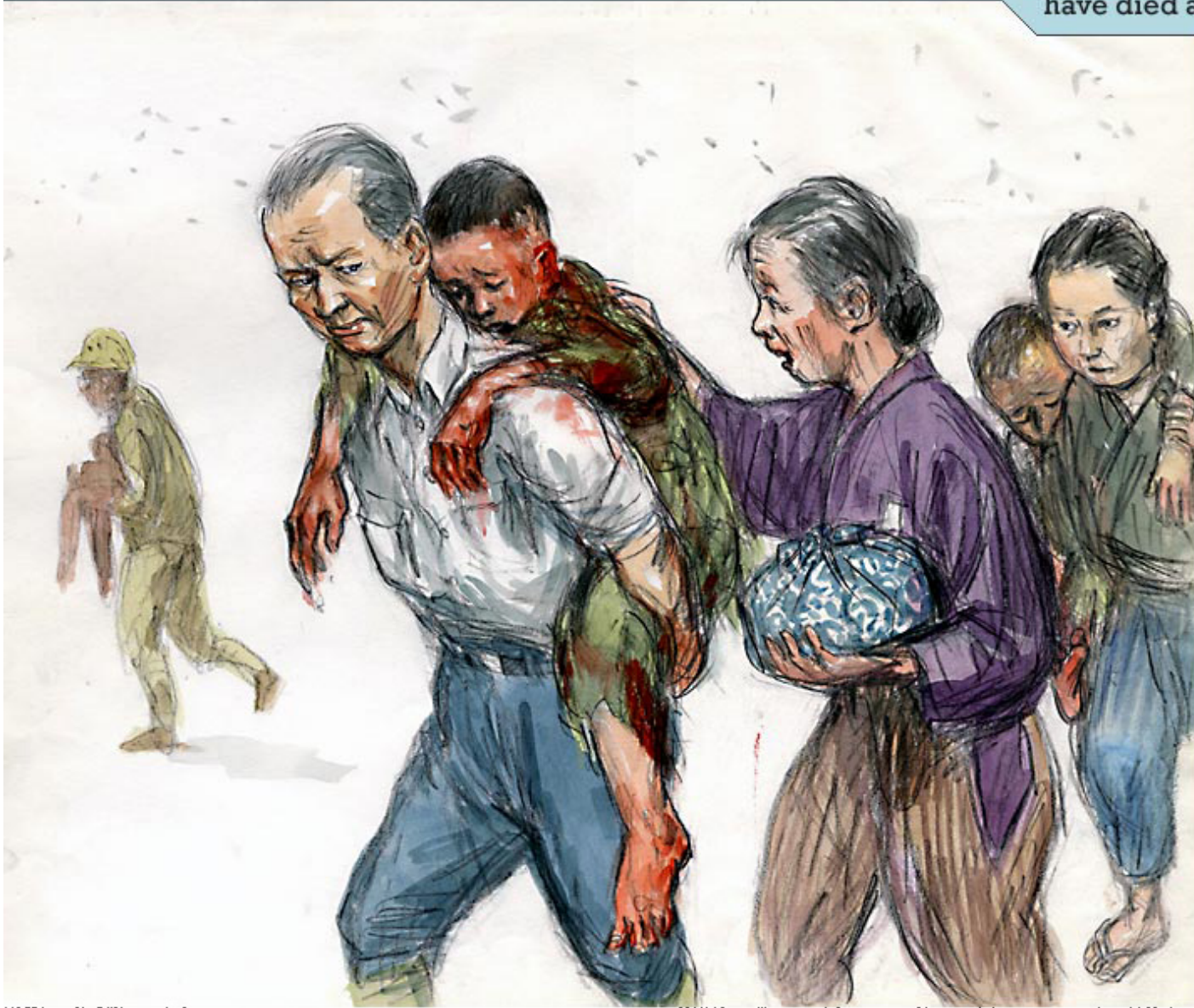


普通の歩き方ではありませんからすぐ疲れます。道端で休んでいました。なにげなく私は後ろを見ました。すると、大叔父夫婦がこちらに向かってくるではありませんか。本当に嬉しかった。声をふりしぼって大叔父夫婦を呼び止めた。大叔父夫婦もびっくりしていました。まさかこんなところで私たちに会うとは思わなかったでしょう。田舎の親戚の法事から自宅に帰る途中の、大叔父夫婦に偶然にばったりと出会ったのでした。本当に運がよかったと思っています。

(31) Walking in that unique way exhausted us, so we rested by the roadside. I happened to turn around, and there were my granduncle and grandaunt approaching. I was overjoyed to see them and called out at the top of my voice. They were very surprised. They never expected to find me in such a place. They were on their way home from the country where they had been attending a memorial service for their relatives. We were extremely lucky they happened to come by.



Without their help, I'm sure we would
have died along the way...



私は大叔父の背中におんぶされ、八田君は大叔母の背中におんぶされ、それぞれの自宅にやっと帰ることができました。もしこのとき大叔父夫婦に助けられなかったら、おそらく二人とも途中で倒れて死んでいたに違いない。このように、みなさまの前でお話をする私はなかったかもしれません。

(32) My granduncle carried me on his back, my grandaunt carried my friend Hatta, and that is how we were finally able to get home. Without their help, I'm sure we would have died along the way and I would have had no chance to talk to you as I am now.



I finally reached home on a stretcher...



途中で祖父が担架というものを運んできました。この担架に乗せられて自宅に帰ることができました。

(33) My friend and I finally reached home on a stretcher that my grandfather brought.



After I got home, my mother cut off
my clothes with scissors...



自宅に帰ると母親が、衣服をはさみで切り取ってくれた。赤身が出ている両手、両足を通して衣服を脱がせば、衣服が赤身にすれて痛いですから、はさみで衣服を切り取り引き裂いて、真新しい浴衣に着替えさせてくれました。友達の八田君は、被爆の2日後、8月8日に、急性放射能症状にかかって亡くなったそうです。



(34) After I got home, my mother cut off my clothes with scissors to undress me without the pain I would have experienced if my clothes had brushed against my hands and legs where red flesh was exposed. She dressed me in a new *yukata*, a light cotton kimono. I later heard that my friend Hatta had died from acute radiation poisoning on August 8th—two days after the bombing.



With the city virtually destroyed, we had no doctors, nurses, medicines, or food...



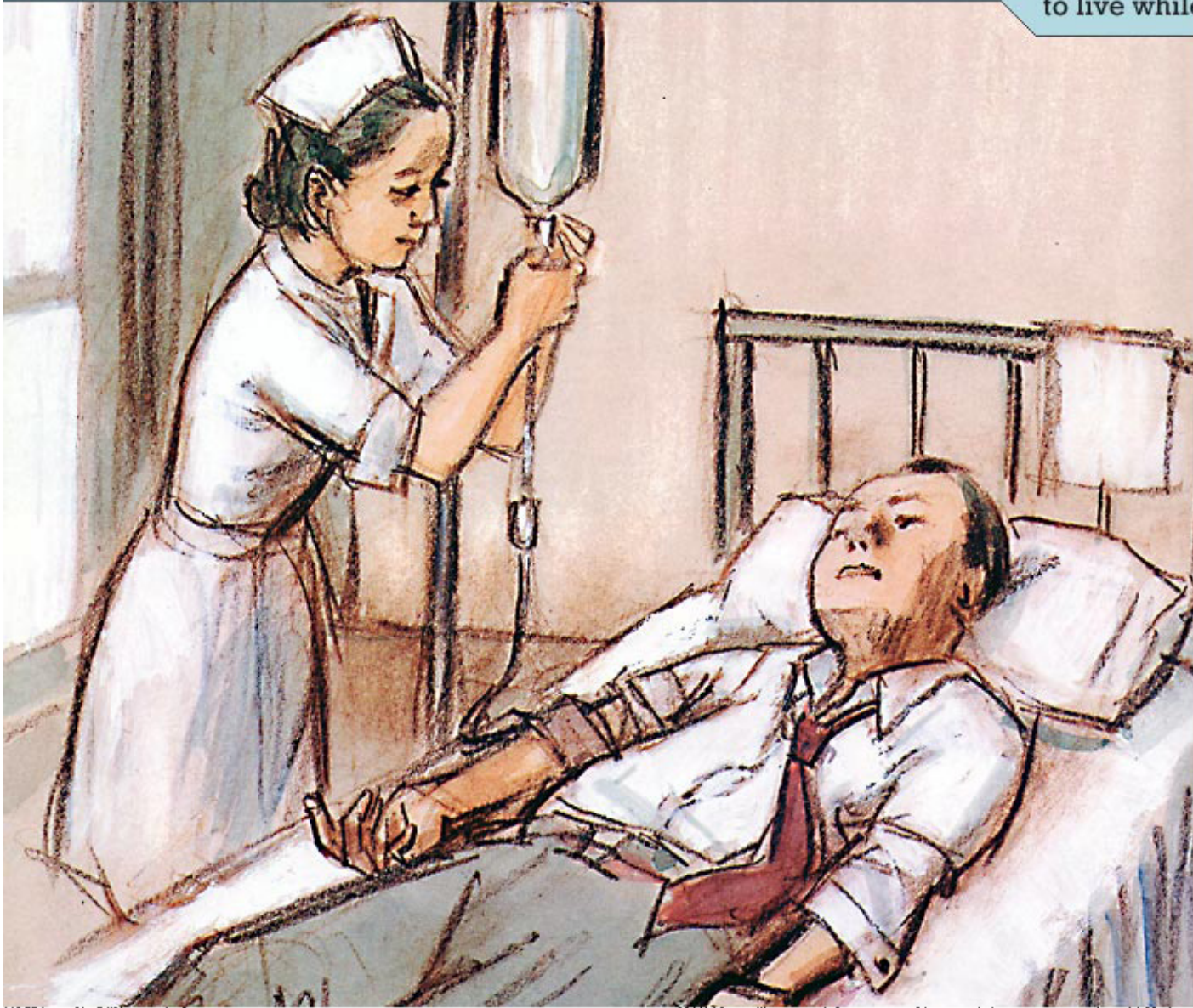
それから1年半、私は火傷の治療を受けました。幸いにも知り合いの医者が朝晩2回、自宅まで往診に来てくれて、火傷の治療をしてくれました。しかし、その医者は耳鼻科でした。普通であれば耳鼻科の医者が、火傷の治療はしません。当然、外科ないしは皮膚科でしょう。しかし、そんな贅沢は言っておれない。原爆が投下される前、広島市内におよそ300人の医者、およそ1800人の看護婦がいたと推計されていますが、そのうち70数%が亡くなったのです。ですから被爆時には医者がいない、看護婦がいない、薬品がない、食料がない。市街地がほとんど全滅に近い状態の中で、たとえ専門は耳鼻科であっても相手は医者です。その医者とながつく人に、私は治療を受けることができました。多くの被爆者は、医者に診てもらうことはできませんでした。治療などありえなかったのです。私は本当に幸せであったと思っています。何とか生き残りました。しかし、この時の治療は難儀でした。火傷の部分に薬をぬったガーゼを貼ります。あくる日に医者がきてガーゼをはがすのですが、夏ですからカチカチに乾いています。はがす時の痛さと言ったら、並大抵のものではありませんでした。血膿みがふき出してきました。「痛い！痛い！もうやめてくれ！」と泣き叫んだことを今でもよく覚えています。はがしたガーゼの血膿みを祖父が小川で洗い流し、煮沸消毒して乾かして、またあくる日の治療で使うのです。戦後の日本は物資が乏しいので、そうした



(35) For one and a half years I received treatment for my burns. Fortunately, one of our acquaintances was a doctor and he visited my house twice a day—morning and evening. This doctor, however, was an “ENT” doctor—ear, nose, and throat. Such doctors did not normally treat burns—that would be a surgeon or dermatologist. However, we couldn't ask for more because, with the city virtually destroyed, we had no doctors, nurses, medicines, or food available to us. It is estimated that about 300 doctors and 1,800 nurses were in Hiroshima City before the atomic bombing. More than 70 percent were killed by the bombing. I was very lucky to receive treatment from a doctor, regardless of his specialty, because a great number of victims never got any treatment. In this way, I managed to survive—I was extremely fortunate.

However, treatment was a painful ordeal. The burns were covered with gauze bandages smeared with medicine. Each day, the doctor came to remove the bandages. Since the summer heat completely dried the gauze, it stuck to the wound. I couldn't stand the extreme pain I felt when it was pulled off. Blood and pus spouted from the affected area. I clearly remember wailing, “Ow! Ow! It hurts! Stop!” My grandfather washed the blood and pus from the gauze just removed, sterilized it in boiling water, dried it, and used it the next day. No better treatment was available in postwar Japan due to the scarcity of goods.

I sometimes wonder why I have to continue
to live while suffering this much...



生き残ったとは言え、1971年に被爆の影響と思われる慢性肝炎にかかりました。すでに14回入退院を繰り返しながら、現在も1週間に3、4回注射をして生活しています。その他の病気も沢山あります。私に全く縁のない医者は、産婦人科と小児科と精神科位で、あとの病院には全部通院しているという有様です。日々不安でなりません。今私は生きることの厳しさ、生きることの苦しさを痛感しています。時として「こんなに苦しみながら、なおこの世に生き続けなければならないのか」と絶望的になることもあります。その都度「せっかく生き残ったのだから！」と思い直しては今日まで生きてきました。

(36) Although I have survived, since 1971 I have suffered from chronic hepatitis thought to have been caused by radiation. I have been hospitalized 14 times, and currently I receive injections three or four times a week. I suffer from many diseases. I now receive every kind of treatment except those related to obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics, and psychiatry. Every day I'm anxious and painfully aware of my difficulties and the pains involved with living. In despair, I sometimes wonder why I have to continue to live while suffering this much. Whenever I yield to despair, however, I encourage myself by saying that I managed to survive the bombing so I should continue to live. This is how I have lived thus far.

