

Hiroshima Stories

This excerpt is from the story of Mr. Tanimoto, a Japanese-Christian reverend (minister).

At the school, he was much surprised to see glass all over the floor and 50 or 60 injured people already waiting to be treated. He reflected that, although the all-clear had sounded and he heard no planes, several bombs must have been dropped.

Mr. Tanimoto ran along Koi Highway. He was the only person making his way into the city. He met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had on their kimonos. Many, although injured themselves, supported relatives who were worse off. Almost all had their heads bowed, looked straight ahead, were silent, and showed no expression whatever. . . .

. . . . Mr. Tanimoto saw, as he approached the center, that all the houses had been crushed and many were afire. Here the trees were bare and their trunks were charred. He tried at several points to penetrate the ruins, but the flames always stopped him. Under many houses, people screamed for help, but no one helped. . . .

. . . . As a Christian he was filled with compassion for those who were trapped, and as a Japanese he was overwhelmed by the shame of being unhurt, and he prayed as he ran, "God help them and take them out of the fire."

A "Sheet of Sun" at Hiroshima, Voices of Freedom, p. 268-269.

Sato Kiyoko, a third-grader wrote:

"What was more frightening than anything was the sight, in the moonlight, of the skeleton of a burned-out streetcar with its load of fire-blackened passengers. One corpse was still clinging to a strap. I could see the trails of silvery phosphorous weaving all about, for all the world-like spirits of the dead in my storybooks."

The Atomic Bomb. Voices from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ed. by Koko and Mark Selden.

In both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 50% of all those located within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the hypocenter died on the day of the explosion, and 80 to 100% of those exposed at this distance eventually died from wounds or radiation inflicted by the bomb. Within five months, the atomic bomb claimed the lives of 140,000 of Hiroshima's 350,000 people and 70,000 of the 270,000 people of Nagasaki.

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