***Extract from “Sadako wants to live” (Karl Bruckner)***

At 6 a.m. on that 6th of August 1945, Yasuka Sasaki, a worker in the military industry, bends over her sleeping son Shigeo. He is lying on his mat on the floor all curled-up. With his left hand, he is covering his face, as if – frightened by a bad dream - he had wanted to protect his head. His right hand stretched out as if in defense. Little Sadako was snoozing, nestled up against his curved back. She must have rolled over from her mat to Shigeo's side in her sleep, because her thin blanket lay on her sleeping mat in a ball as if kicked away by her feet.

The mother watched the sleeping children for a while, then she nudged Shigeo's nose with a fingertip. He wrinkled his nose, as if he wanted to scare away a fly. A second nudge had the same effect. A third one made him blink. A fourth one made him wake up completely. His mother whispered: Don't forget – today you have to go and stand in line for the food rations. If you are at the office before 8 you won't have to wait as long. It's best if you get up right now, otherwise you will be late. Did you hear me? Get up, Shigeo!'

The boy stretched, yawned and moaned: 'Come on, let me sleep for another hour. I promise I won't oversleep.'

'No, no, I'd rather you get up now. Get ready and then wake up Sadako. We don't have anything to eat at home. It would be a disaster if you got to the office too late. Come on – I'm in a hurry. I have to be at the factory at 6:30. So get up!'

She bent down lower, tenderly rubbed her nose against his and then pulled him up by his ear. An encouraging pat on head made him smile. He hissed at his mum playingly and jumped up. When she wanted to leave, he abruptly flung his arms around her. 'Are you sure we don't have any food left?'

She caressed his short-cut hair: 'Nothing my dear. Not a single crumb. Come on, let go of me, I have to get to work.'

When his mum rushed off, Shigeo quickly followed her until he reached the alley. His mum turned around once more and waved. Then her fragile silhouette disappeared behind the corner of a house. Sad, Shigeo leaned against the doorpost. The dark circles around his mother's eyes and her meager face had made him think. She must be sick of hunger. It wasn't until earlier, when he watched her scurry through the streets, that he had realized how skinny she was. Yesterday evening she scraped out everything that was left of the bean stew and fed it to him and Sadako. She herself hadn't eaten anything.

With a sudden resolve, Shigeo pushed himself away from the doorpost and went into the house. Today, he will tell the man in the food office that his mum is sick of hunger. She won't be able to continue working if she doesn't get more food – he will tell the officer. He has to tell him! He can't take what the officer gives him and out of respect say a big thank you for the small amount of food he receives from him*.* He has to talk to him for his mother's sake. The officer can't possibly know what a bad shape Yasuko Sasaki is in. One has to tell him!

Full of energy, Shigeo called: 'Little sister, get up! It's going to be a great day. We will get a lot of food. You will have to help me carry the food.'

Sadako woke up and sleepily looked up at Shigeo. Cheerfully flailing his arms like a winged animal, he called once more: 'Up, up, little sister! Otherwise Chikamatsu, the dragon, will come and bite you.'

Shigeo's funny faces made his sister laugh. She pointed a finger at him. 'You are Chikamatsu – it's you, you, you! 'Then she quickly buried herself into a blanket. Shigeo lunged at Sadako and tickled her. Even their neighbour Mrs. Kumakichi, who was in the alley, could hear the shrill scream she let out. Listening, she pursed her lips and promptly scurried over to the Sasaki's house. Fearing there was a fight going on, she pushed open the door and entered. When she saw the two children wrestling in play, she first looked at them amused but soon afterwards scared them with a fierce hiss. 'Well, you seem to be having a good time,' she said to the surprised kids. ‘You don't have anything to worry about, unlike me. Last night I dreamed of an earth quake. Houses were collapsing, there was fire everywhere. And the worst thing was: The sun had fallen from the sky. I woke up startled and was still screaming when I was already sitting on my sleeping mat.'

She curved her back and drew her head in between her shoulders. Her eyes terrifyingly wide open, she placed her stretched index finger on her nose and whispered in a hoarse voice: 'If I dream something like this, it will happen.'

She took her finger from her nose and nodded several times to stress the importance of what she had just said.

Because the children were staring at her in awe, she felt she had been taken seriously and continued speaking, stressing each word:

'Everything I dream of has a specific meaning. While sleeping, I live in the spirit world. There you can see the future. Yesss, you can do that there. Just that you don't see things the way they are and don't understand them immediately. You have to read them correctly.'

Shigeo, who had listened to her speech kneeling on his mat, bowed briskly. Hastily he said: 'Venerable Mrs. Kumakichi-san, but you have also had dreams that haven’t come true.'

Firstly, the old woman looked surprisedly down at the cheeky boy, then she bent down and put her hands on her knees. 'What was it that didn't come true, he?'

'Your dream about the pot full of rice, Kumakichi-san. You told me to dig out the pot in your garden. I dug and dug but there was no pot buried in the ground.'

The old woman straightened herself up. Her face twitched. She looked over at the door. 'Yes, well, well, the pot full of rice – yes, that one wasn't in the garden. That's true. I didn't read that dream correctly. There is no other explanation...and I still don't know what 'A pot full of rice is buried in the garden' was supposed to mean.

When Shigeo saw the sad expression on the old woman's face, he felt pity for her. 'Maybe the pot is buried very deep in the ground. Don't you think so too, Kumakichi-san?'

'Yes, it could be,' she murmured. 'Still, I am not going to continue looking for it. The rice would have gone bad long ago.'

Slowly, she walked towards the door and without turning around said: 'But my dream tonight certainly means there will be an earthquake. I will be sitting outside in front of my house during the day. That way I won't be harmed if the house collapses. Kids, I would advise you that you didn't stay at home either.'

'What's that - an earthquake?' Sadako asked after the neighbor had left.

Shigeo thought about how to explain it to his sister. 'An earthquake, that's...' he didn't finish the sentence because he couldn't find the right explanation. When he was six, he once had been woken by the earth trembling. Back then his mum had escaped the house with him. Later, at school, he had heard about terrible catastrophes causing enormous damage in a lot of Japanese cities. But how had that happened? Maybe this is why: 'An earthquake is caused by evil demons. They can be found deep, deep down in the ground. Sometimes they want to get out – and because they can't, they get angry and shake the whole world. Then, everything here on earth trembles. Houses collapse and the sea makes big, big waves that flood big areas of land.'

Sadako thought that was an eerily beautiful, but much too short story. She wanted to hear more. 'What does the sun do?' she asked sucking one of her fingers.

'The sun? It – it doesn’t do anything,' Shigeo replied.

Then he remembered what Mrs. Kumakachi had dreamed of and added: 'Maybe she is shocked because her sister, the earth is trembling and falls from the sky out of shock.'

He noticed that Sadako wanted to ask him something else but he was quicker: 'Don't ask me any more questions, I don't know anything else. Come on, let's get you dressed. We have to go.'

'Don't want to go. Want to eat,' Sadako refused.

'You will have something to eat. But we have to go get it first.'

'Want to eat now!' the little one moaned. She let herself fall down onto the sleeping mat and when Shigeo wanted to pull her up, she clawed her fingers into the blanket, kicking her legs. That made Shigeo angry. He spanked the rebellious girl's bottom and then quickly pulled away the mat underneath her so that Sadako rolled over. She was screaming. Shigeo rolled up the blankets and the sleeping mat and shoved everything into a corner. Then he threatened: 'If you don't let me dress you, I will lock you up and will go and get food without you. You will be alone all day long and will be hungry.'

Sadako fell silent, wiping away the tears from her cheeks with her little fists, sobbing intermittently. She no longer refused when Shigeo slipped on her white woolen stockings and her light kimono made out of the cheapest, colorfully imprinted fabric. When he saw her stand there, her lower lip jutted forward sorrowfully, her head lowered, with tears on her eyelids, he had a sweet thought.

He took their mother's best dress out of the cloth trunk, took the silk gloss sash that went with it and put it around Sadoko's hips. She looked down at her body and skeptically watched him wrap the much too broad and long sash around her, unroll it, fold it and adjust it again. When Shigeo stepped back, examined his work and, delighted with it, applauded himself, Sadako knew that this sash made her more beautiful. She forgot about her anger and hunger, complacently lifted her arms out wide and spinned in a circle in front of her brother.

He called out: 'How pretty you are! You look like a big doll! I will say to the officer from the food office: Venerable officer, this is my little sister Sadako. She has put on this new sash for you to delight your eyes. Please do something for her, too, and give her a bigger portion of food.'

Being admired by her brother made Sadako feel proud. Now it was her who urged him: 'Want to go, come! Away!' Hurriedly he put their mother's dress back into the trunk and then instructed the little girl: 'As soon as we are in the streets, you have to keep yourself close to me, so that the neighbors won't see you very well. Otherwise they will tell mum that you were wearing the sash of her most beautiful dress.'

At the same time, “Enola Gay”, the four-engine bomber, was flying towards the Japanese Island of Shikoku

25,000 feet above the ground. It was flying above the intersection at 29 degree north latitude and 136 longitude. Its motors and instruments were functioning excellently. The radio connection with the airbase Tinian left nothing to be desired either. The crew couldn't have wished for better aviation weather. Ground visibility was uniquely good. No cloud, not even light haze blurred the airspace.

Co-pilot Captain Parsons was humming a children's song. The melody had come to him suddenly. He hadn't been looking for it in his memory and wasn't even aware that he was humming it. Colonel Tibbets, whose throat microphone was connected to that of the co-pilot, heard the humming. Promptly he turned around to him. 'I know this song, Captain. My mother used to sing it to me when I was a little boy. I even remember the lyrics:

Over the hill jumps my pony, as fast as the wind runs my pony, if the reins did not hold it back, it would be as fast as lightning crack…’

Parsons' view slid over the instruments. He didn't answer. The colonel asked through the microphone: 'Well? What do you think of my excellent memory?'

'It's amazing.'

'Is that all you have to say about it? Did you still remember the lyrics?'

'I can’t say for sure.'

'Why not?'

Parsons' left arm jerked up. His voice suggested nervous impatience. 'Because I don't want to think about it, Colonel. I was humming the song for distraction.'

'I see. You don't want to think of our bomb.'

'Correct, Colonel.'

'But I want to talk about it, Captain. It makes me feel better because I have been thinking about the bomb since we took off.'

'Then it's about time you stopped thinking these kind of thoughts, Colonel. Otherwise it's going to turn out bad for you, because...' He stopped and after a short pause said: 'Please excuse my improper talk, Colonel. I am not supposed to give you any advice.'

'Please, you may. Go on!' Tibbets demanded hastily. 'I want to hear your voice. I have to know, there is someone sitting next to me, who has the same kind of thoughts as me.' You have flown a lot of missions, like me. You have seen a lot –right? But this time you got scared. You don't know what will happen when the bomb hits its target...'

Parsons pulled at the belt over his chest. 'Please Colonel, talk about something else! You could order me to send a radio message to Tinian. For example, I could report again that everything is fine here. Or should I...'

'Talk to me, Captain! - No. You are right. There is no point. We shouldn't talk about it. Keep humming, Captain – the children's song, ok? I will sing along. Come on! - Over the hill jumps my pony, as fast as the wind is my pony…’

The sound-locators of a Japanese surveillance station located at the coast of the Island of Shikoku recorded engine noises of an airplane coming from the south direction. The surveillance station issued an advance warning to the command post in Hiroshima.

At the same time, Shigeo and Sadako were waiting in line at the end of a long queue in front of the food administration office. The first ones in the row had waited for hours till they had been dealt with. Shigeo and Sadako had lined up only an hour ago. The little one scurried on the spot in childish restlessness. Cramped between so many strangers, she felt locked up in a cage. The grown-ups blocked her view of the street. All she saw were clothes and feet and - when she looked up - the heads of the grown-ups. It had become unbearably hot, she suffered from hunger and thirst, too; but because she was intimidated by the strangers she didn't dare to complain.

Resigned, Shigeo was standing next to her. A while ago, he had pushed his way out of the crowd that was standing in line because the people were suffocating them. Subsequently they had kicked him and the little one out of the line and only after pleading were they allowed to get back into the line. Shigeo heard people say that they didn't think they would be dealt with before noon. So he would have to wait for another couple of hours with Sadako.

He checked on her worriedly: would she be able to hold out for that long? He was amazed that she was enduring this horrible confinement so patiently without complaining. She held her head bent backwards, her face facing the sky. Her feverishly reddened cheeks and her heavy breathing worried him. If he took her home, he would spare her a lot of trouble. She can't possibly hold out here for another couple of hours. If he leaves, however, he will be the last in line. She leaned against him, clung on to him. Sadako felt heavy. Was she that tired that she couldn't stand any longer?

Shigeo bent down. As it was bad manners to talk loudly in front of strange grown-ups, he whispered: 'Do you want to go home, Sadako?'

She looked up at him tiredly with hazy eyes and didn't answer. Obviously she was too exhausted to speak. He had to get her away from here! Maybe the people behind him would allow him to return to where he was standing now, when he came back?

He turned around as far as the narrow space allowed him. Two elderly women looked at him angrily.

'My little sister can't stand any longer...' Shigeo began but was immediately interrupted by one of the women.

'Carry her if she can't stand any longer.'

The other one said harshly: 'Why do you take the child with you, if you know you will have to wait here for hours?'

'I want to take her home but would it be ok if I came back to my spot here later when I come back?'

'You don’t seem to know what you want,' the woman next to him nagged.

‘First you step out of the line, then you push back in and now you even want to go for a walk. I don't care, go where ever you want but I won't allow you back in front of me. I don't want to be bothered constantly. I have enough other things to worry about.

Immediately afterwards, the line started to move. They were moving forward by jerks – one step, then two, then half a step. Because everybody was expecting another jerk forward, they were standing pressed against each other, so that nobody was able to move for minutes.

Wedged in between the crowd, Shigeo heard his sister moan fearfully. It seemed she didn't have enough air to breath anymore. He felt for her head and found it above his knees. Either they had pushed her down or she had let herself drop down; in any case, she wasn't strong enough to get up by herself. If he didn't help her, they would squash her like a frog.

With the strength of fear, he arched his back and pushed his head against the person in front of him and thus managed to make room for himself by pushing away the people behind him that were pressing forward. They cursed and threatened to beat him up; fiercely determined, he continued to fight until he managed to take a grip on Sadako's arm and drag her out of the row. Wretchedly, she was gulping for air. Her face had turned bluish. And the worst thing was – there was a tear as big as a hand in the beautiful silk sash of their mother's best dress. Apparently some inconsiderate pushing person had stepped on the end of the sash and hadn't lifted his foot when Shigeo had dragged the little one behind him. Sadako wasn't worried about the terrible tear. She held out her arms and whined: 'I want to get away from here. Carry me away!'

The man in the row was still ranting and another man even threatened Shigeo with his fist. Scared, Shigeo looked around for the angry man, withdrew going backwards, putting distance between him and the angry man, who would probably want to beat him up. Only when he was sure that the man had no intention to follow him, did he turn around and trot away.

Shigeo had never before experienced so much hatred within the course of one hour. He was furious at the grown-ups, who he thought had abused and threatened him without any reason. No apology, no pleading had helped with these people. They were so greedy for food that they didn't even show any consideration towards a little girl. Just as these people, Sadako, too, was very hungry. And these reckless people forced him to carry the little one all the way home. Uff! That's going to be troublesome. Just by thinking about it, he could already feel his legs getting weaker: the long street along the arm of the river, then over the bridge at the main street and then past the big warehouse-

No! How stupid. He won't take the route over the hot asphalt road through the city center but the one past the university over the small bridge through the Hijuyama-park. True, it is a longer route but he will rest in the park and cool his feet in the pond. In an hour he can be back at the food administration office if he runs all the way back. Even if he is the last one in line they can't send him away. Today is food rationing day. They have to give him some food.

More confident and in a better mood than before, Shigeo trotted along with the load on his back into a different direction. He left the university behind him, crossed the bridge that span one of the six arms of the Otha-river, and 15 minutes later he spotted the trees of Hijiyama park. When he heard a silent buzz, he stopped and looked for a plane in the blue sky. Because he couldn't see any, he continued to walk. He entered the park heading towards a small pond. Shigeo looked around. There were no other people taking a walk, not even a police officer could be seen on the twisty paths in the park. The opportunity to take a bath in the pond was unusually favorable. When he put down Sadako, he noticed that she had fallen asleep. He lay her down into the grass into the shadow of a willow and disposed of his shirt that was soaked by sweat. As he was about to take off his trousers, he looked up into the sky a second time. The sound of roaring engines had become louder. Again he couldn't spot the aircraft. It seemed to be flying very high.

Shigeo struggled out of his trousers, ran to the pond and jumped into the water.

The surveillance station at the coast had informed the command post at the old castle of Hiroshima in time about the approaching four-engine enemy-bomber. The command post didn't issue an air raid warning. The work in the armament factories shouldn't be interrupted. 25,000 feet above the ground, Colonel Tibbets, the commander of the B-29 “Enola Gay”, headed for the city center of Hiroshima. In the cargo hold, Major Ferebee activated the mechanism that opened the bomb bay door.

Ferebee took aim at the target.

The bomb dropped.

With a hellishly ear-splitting howl, the monstrosity darted to the ground.

The crew of the “Enola Gay” quickly pulled black protective glasses in front of their oxygen masks as they had been ordered. None of the aviators knew what purpose they served. No one knew what was going to happen within the next few minutes. They were just obeying a strict order.

And they were all waiting, with their bodies turned numb.

They were listening and thought they heard the ear-splitting sound of the darting bomb. But it wasn't the howling sound of the bomb; it was the rushing of the bloodstreams that their agitatedly pulsating hearts were driving through their veins. With petrified faces they were gazelessly staring into space, stupefied and paralyzed by the vague idea of the upcoming, unparalleled catastrophe.

The watch on Colonel Tibbet's wrist wasn't disrupted by the hard beat of his pulse. The tiny gearwheels were turning. And with every turn, one second after the next passed and became a thing of the past. The hands stood at 8 o'clock, 14 minutes and 35 seconds.

An ingeniously constructed device opened up a parachute attached to the bomb.

The bomb on the parachute floated to the earth.

The hands on the watch showed 8 o'clock, 14 minutes and 50 seconds.

The bomb was 2000 above the ground.

After it had dropped another 300 feet at 8 o'clock, 15 minutes, devices thought up by scientists initiated an ignition inside the bomb: neutrons split the nuclei of the atoms in the heavy metal uranium 235. And this fission was repeated in an unbelievably fast chain reaction.

Within a millionth of a second, a new sun flared up in glaringly white light.

A hundred times brighter than the sun in the sky.

And that fireball radiated millions of degrees of heat towards the city of Hiroshima.

Within that same second, 86,100 people burned to death.

Within that second, 72,000 people were severely injured.

Within that second, 6,820 houses were reduced to powder and in the form of dust particles were fired into the sky several thousand feet high by the suction of the airless space.

Within that second, another 3,750 buildings collapsed and the debris began to burn.

Within that second, fatal neutron and gamma rays bombarded the point of explosion in a radius of 5,000 feet.

*Within that second, god's image had made the first attempt to destroy itself with the help of science.*

The attempt had been successful.