

A Gravepost

Sankichi Toge

You all stand huddled together,
Like a children's hustle-jostle on a winter day,
Squeezed and pushed into a corner of the town.
Now
You are just one small gravepost
Nobody will notice.

"In memory of Seibi Primary School War Victims."

Enclosed on a base of burnt bricks



Nagasaki (October 1945)
Pupils of the Shiroyama Elementary School were reduced to bleached bones.

A piece of wood less than three feet high stands,
A bamboo flower tube leans now cracked and flowerless.

Behind "A. B. Advertising Company"
"C. D. Scooter Commercial Enterprises"
And a colossal hoarding saying
"Hiroshima Peace Metropolitan Construction Company,"
The backs of these lined up plated buildings, painted green,
At the corner of the alley
Leading through to MacArthur Trophy Tennis Courts,

Piles of discarded tiles and cement waste,
The fallen school gate half-buried
Where muddy water gathers on a rainy day,
Dilapidated municipal dwellings – shanties
Where the ceaseless wailing of babies is heard,

Here you stand,
A decaying wooden post
Without hands,
Without feet,
With no one to coax
Or pester for things,
Without words, without voices,
You stand.

No matter how much you call
No matter how much you cry
Your Daddies and Mummies
Will never come.
Wrenching off your clinging hands perhaps
The adults left, fleeing from you
As you were pressed under a heavy heap of rubble
In hot scorching wind
Stuck in a dark choking space.
(What terrible mischief had you done....?)
Your soft hands,
Your young necks,
How easily they were crushed
And squeezed of blood,
Ground under stones, steel and old timber.

In the shadow of Mt. Hiji
A line of friends, their eyes like burnt buns,
Crouching down not knowing what to do,
At the clatter of the running soldiers' side-arms,
Cried, "Soldier, help me!"
But nobody acknowledged them,
By the darkening water-tank,
Even when they pointed west saying,
"Take me with you!"
Nobody took their hands.

Then like the others they got into the water-tank,
Covering their faces with fig leaves,
And died,
All of them,
Without understanding.

You cannot smell the apples,
You cannot taste the lollipops,
You have gone to a far off place.

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