

## MONSTERS UNDER THE BED

Ojiisan's little granddaughter innocently looked up from the puddles in the front yard. She'd discovered the art of stomping in the small reservoirs of water to be delightful. Her once starched white sundress now spotted with droplets of mud and rainwater, glimmered below her sun-kissed smile stretching wide as the field of multi-colored tulips poking up behind her. Sakura's happiness was radiant as the sun peeking through the cloud filled sky.

How could Ojiisan be upset with her? Earlier that morning Sakura had awoken in tears, trembling from nightmares caused by what she'd overheard of death, anger and war being deliberated on the television. Hunkered underneath the covers through the night, imagining bloodied war-monsters and dragons lying in wait behind the shadows below her bed. Youthful imagination conjuring fear before peaceful sleep could overtake her. Ojiisan's comforting words being needed to quell tensions.

His memory flickered as he watched his little 'chan,' an endearing nickname for little girls with youthful qualities, again stomp, causing tiny explosions of muddied water. He thought of a story passed down through generations since 1945.

As recounted to him, the rain had been torrential for several days. Children had been forced to stay inside, sheltered from the storms when finally, the weather broke and skies became azure blue. The morning sun began to heat the cool damp air and by eight a.m. the kodomos were energetic and allowed outside to play.

Many of the older toddlers were permitted to go to the clinic's swing-sets, while the younger ones removed their sandals and waded into the splashes, their bare feet stomping in the shallow puddles. Shrieks and sounds of laughter abounded as they enjoyed their morning play. The quiet air mixing with joyful echoes as nurses and mothers watched and talked together, happy themselves to be back into the open, dry air.

An almost inaudible sentence quietly rose above the other voices, slowly making its way through the giggles, until it lazily wafted back down finding a mother's ear. Her small child's spoken collection of words fell awkwardly among the other children's sounds, drawing her attention.

The tiny voice asked, "Mama, sora no ano omoshiroi koto wa nanidesu ka?" (Mama, what is that funny thing in the sky?)

The mother looked up and studied the sky with a gasp. Most of the children looked upward as the splashes came to a halt. Dead silence . . . then the children's chattering play quickly resumed. Mothers and nurses shared cautionary stares until the sirens began, hastening them to quickly jump to their feet while scanning the distance back to Dr. Shima's Clinic, hollering to the kids, attempting to quickly gather them back inside safely.

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At 0912, Enola Gay's control was handed over to Col. Thomas Wilson Ferebee, the bombardier, as the aircraft climbed roughly to 31,060 feet. The bombing run sequence had begun.

Col. Paul Warfield Tibbets' mission was coming to fruition after taking off at 0245, now reaching their destination with clear conditions and no opposing forces encountered.

At 8:15 a.m., Hiroshima time, the bomb bay doors opened with a clunk and **Little Boy** fell clear from the hook that had secured him. The 9,700-pound weapon free-fell approximately forty-five seconds as crewmembers each silently counted down, before detonation, less than 2000 feet above the clinic.

Reaching nuclear fission, the chain reaction raised the temperature in a microsecond to several million degrees hotter than the sun's surface, causing instant death to at least 70,000 unsuspecting civilians including men, women, and children along with Hirohito's soldiers.

Enola Gay circled north leaving the tail gunner, Tech. Sgt. George Robert Caron, the first of twelve crewmembers to witness the ominous mushroom cloud rising on the horizon, writhing in dark molten destruction.

There *were* monsters in the midst of the world then. There *are* monsters of one sort or another *still* dreaming of ways to maim and starve, rule and ruin . . . hiding behind shadows in wait . . . even *today*.

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Ojiisan glanced up at his beautiful granddaughter splashing barefoot in the water as he allowed one more thought escape his mind before concealing it away deep. He spoke softly while feeling the warm sun as another tear slipped from its duct, spilling over his eye's edge, "Monsters don't hide *under* beds . . . monsters hide in the *hearts* of men."