

Sungazing: Hiroshima Keeps Telling

Audio transcript (Audio Link: <https://vimeo.com/150208650>)

August/06/1945 Hiroshima Keeps Telling

By Takeshi Ito

“Lament for Kikuko”

Voiced by Daniel Stratis

I was at the head of a line of students when it happened.

The wide sky over us was the bluest of blues.
There were no clouds.
The day, the sixth of August, was about to begin.

We take down the closest houses to the street so there's more space for the people to run away if there's an air raid,
I needed to be careful not to step on the nails scattered across the ground, like my teacher had warned.
I wondered what kind of people used to live here, in this two-story house.
Maybe there was a father in this house, enlisted and gone away to the army just like my own father, leaving only a grandmother, a mother, and children.
Just like my brothers and me.

All of these thoughts came to my mind, and then vanished.
I thought I heard something really loud in the sky.
I listened carefully, and I thought it might have been the sound of an exploding bomb.
Could it be an enemy airplane?
If so, there would have been a preliminary alert, or an air raid siren blaring out across the town.

I looked up towards the sky.
Wafting along in the sky, there was the silence before the burning heat of high summer.
If it was a B29, I would see the vapor trail of a monstrous American bird flying high above me.
I searched the sky for an airplane while a sound began to grow with intensity.

Suddenly, everything in the world became pure red.
Heaven and sky collapsed on top of me.
I'm getting smaller.
Melting.
Then, sucked into the depths of the earth.

“What? What happened? No! Am I dying?”
“Help me, Help me. Mother, mother.”

It happened in a short moment.
I was blown off the hill and into the river.
My two eyes, the ones my father would always remark on for their beauty, were popped from my sockets like the eyes of a frog.
My tongue was overflowed from my lips.
My bobbed hair caught fire and burned away like a dead leaf.
My face, my hands, my legs. my body burned black to the bones, floating along the waters of the Motoyasu river.

It was like the world had reset itself to the very beginning of creation.
There were no boundaries between the land and the water.
The darkness spread, and there was no more sound in the world.

Then the darkness began to fade away, and a dim white stonewall appeared out of the shadows.
The riverbanks were burning now, harshly, looking like the flames in a blast furnace.
Sparks of fire rained down upon the Motayasu, and its waters began to boil.
The wind stoked the roaring fires, covering the entire river in its rage.
The flames lashed at the air like a long red tongue.
They burned a bright blue deep within their core.
The Motayasu raged now, waves billowing up and smashing along either side of the riverbanks.
My body was sucked beneath the surface into a whirlpool, and then it floated back up just as quickly, rocking left and right like a leaf caught in the currents.

The tide of the sea tugged me through the blazing city of Hiroshima, and I flowed from the river into the great expanse of water.
I was among thousands and thousands of the dead.
A man with no neck.
A baby with its hand torn away.
A woman with a leg like charcoal.
Dogs, and cats, and horses.
Even the fish floated here, their white stomachs turned up towards the sky.
Each and every one of them, swollen and distortedly and ugly.

Soon, it was the end of this aimless wandering without destination.
The hands and legs were ripped off, and the head followed.
The body slowly sunk and rested on the sandy bottom of the sea.

The sparkling warmth of the Sun, and the sound of the wind on the sea; these are things that exist far away from me now.
The dark and cold sea, here on this bed of seaweed, that's where I'm sleeping now.

Being at the bottom of the sea has made me think.
This is War.
This is True War.
It suddenly kills a child who has committed no crime.
Mother...
Tell the children of my brothers.
Please tell them in place of this mouthless soul.