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A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words



Little Boy

On August 6, in the one thousand nine hundred and forty fifth year of the Christian calendar, a nuclear bomb nicknamed “Little Boy” was dropped on the city of Hiroshima in the island nation of Japan. Little Boy knew nothing of the world, of the war that had been raging for the past six years, or anything at all of the surrender of the axis powers in the European theater of the war. Little Boy was born and raised in a small lab in Los Alamos in the state of New Mexico in the United States. Little Boy’s father was named Julius Oppenheimer, but Little Boy never really knew any of his mothers. He had a lot of them, always coming and going from the lab. On Little Boy’s first birthday, when he was just turning one month old, his father gave him away to some men who put him alone in a dark room that seemed to move, rattling and shaking (“J. Robert Oppenheimer”). Then the floor opened up beneath Little Boy, and he found himself floating through the sky alone. This is what Little Boy thought as he fell.

Aah, what’s happening? It thought.

I’m so high! Why am I so high up? It’s so cold! I’m falling! Oh, no! What is that I’m falling toward?

And what is that big thing on the edge of the world over there? It looks like the whole world is on fire! That's not good! It's coming for me!

I can see the land, though! It's coming very quickly! I hope I can reach it before that fire on the edge of the world catches me! I don't want to burn! Help me, land! Something's holding me back, though! What is it? I can't twist around to see it! It's holding me awful tight now, isn't it? It should go away! I need to get down from here!

Wait, what is that on the ground? There are a lot of little things moving around on it... are those people? There sure are an awful lot of them, aren't there? And lots of big, metal things in the... well, I guess I'd better start finding names for these things, so I'll call it a harbor! And those big metal things I shall name ships! I wonder if they'll be friends with me! Hello, ships!

And at that moment, something so vastly, hugely, mind-bogglingly improbable happened that the entire world shook because of it: Little Boy turned into a cloud. He was a very impressive cloud, to be sure. He was tall, he was wide, but, curiously enough, he was shaped like a giant mushroom. Little Boy towered into the skies and stretched completely over the ground, suddenly not so "little" anymore.

His senses tingled, and he could suddenly feel within him the energy of two hundred fifty five thousand souls burning in the city below him ("The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki"). As Little Boy raced along the ground, he ran up to each person in the city as fast as he could, eager to meet them and become friends with them. All of the people in the city, though, looked up at him and ran. They, apparently, wanted to play tag, he guessed, so Little Boy played along. He ran after all of them, not wanting to leave anyone out of the games, but something strange happened as he did. They all died when Little Boy touched them.

Little Boy ran for miles around with an enthusiasm that melted roof tiles 600 meters away and granite stone nearly one thousand meters away, trying to find someone who would play with him, but he watched each person he touched melt away before him ("Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombing"). Little Boy felt his enthusiasm start to melt away as they did.

When Little Boy grew tired from all of the running he had just done in the city of Hiroshima, he looked back at the city. His whole playground had flattened, melted, and burned in an enormous circle. After Little Boy was a carousel of nothing, destruction, and death. A high keening sound filled the air as Little Boy's heart broke at the sight, and he faded into the mist.

Little Boy, now not as little a boy as he once was, faded into a mist finer than atoms. He became everything radioactive, and his awareness spread to the entire ruined city of Hiroshima. Little Boy wandered through the ruins with nothing to do, wanting to help but knowing that his touch would bring more death. So he withheld himself and merely watched.

He watched across the countryside that only a few hours ago he had been frolicking in, happy as a lamb, as people he had not tagged "it" continued to die in pools of vomit and blood on the ground. Everyone was covered in terrible burns that looked as though they would never heal. Little Boy cried, then, his spirit broken, and his tears were the "black rain" that fell upon the city that day ("Energy and Radioactivity"). Little Boy cried for two hours while his grief for the city flooded. His tears were sickly things, sticky, demoniacally black, and full of the radioactivity that was Little Boy's essence. His tears swelled the banks of the rivers, lakes, and streams of the small country and traveled far, bringing the sickness of Little Boy's grief.

Little Boy watched as people flooded in from all over the country, calling out for their mothers or their fathers or their sisters or brothers or simply helping people wherever they could to

climb out of the rubble that their lives had become. He watched then, too, as those people succumbed to his spirit as well, wasting away before acute sicknesses. Little Boy saw people lose control of their digestive systems, he saw the very blood flowing in their veins rebel and struggle to break free of its flesh, and he watched helplessly as burns from his fiery debut worsened everything ("Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombing").

Until the end of 1945, Little Boy stayed in the city of Hiroshima, watching everything and wishing. Wishing he hadn't had to grow up so fast. Little Boy, in those five months he spent wandering, saw over one hundred and forty thousand people die, unable to coexist with an environment in which he resided. Little Boy watched with horror as his younger brother was unleashed on the city of Nagasaki, 300 kilometers away on August 9. He watched with apathy as the war ended aboard a ship in the harbor a month later ("Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombing").

That was when Little Boy, who was not little anymore, decided to give up. Everything he touched turned to ash and dust, and everyone he saw wasted away, their own bodies rebelling against them.

He faded away into the hills, wanting so very badly to disappear entirely. The ground of the area, though, had its own ideas, and held fast to his ties to reality, keeping him prisoner in Hiroshima. The people of the city, disfigured and scarred in their minds and bodies, continued to die, less and less of acute diseases and more and more of a disease where their very cells rebelled against them, a disease Little Boy learned was called cancer.

Little Boy wept forevermore.

## Works Cited

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