

Never Such Innocence 2020-2021

Gedicht von Catalina Taylor aus Frankreich

## Hibakusha

The word shackles her ankles, crawling up  
the keloid scars and rough patches of skin  
to scrawl itself over her face. Hibakusha.

Roaring out of the past, a white flash and  
mushroom cloud of fire swells over the  
horizon. She remembers walking over

the bodies melting into the debris,  
blackened shadows on the concrete  
howling a desperate plea for water.

Three days later, they found her father's  
buckle among his bones. She buried him  
alone, her mother turned to ash in the sky.

Now, clutching her fiancé's hand,  
she feels a family slip away once more.  
His parents remember the bomb  
and shy away from her Devil's blood,  
shaking their heads and pressing  
images of children with stumps for arms

into their son's brain. Hibakusha. She  
reaches up a hand to trace his cheekbone  
in reassurance, but he has turned cold.

So, unlocking their fingers, she drops the ring  
into his palm, tiptoes to kiss his cheek, and  
turns towards a future as dust-clouded as the  
past:

Hibakusha. A nickname she will never  
outgrow.

*Inspiration for the poem: I decided to focus on the American atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 after reading articles surrounding the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VJ day. While researching the events and reading survivor testimonies, I was shocked not only by the immediate devastation wrought on the cities and their inhabitants, but also by the lasting physical and psychological effects on survivors. This poem combines elements of several true stories and addresses the stigma surrounding a 'Hibakusha', or atomic bomb survivor. I was struck by the injustice that after watching people die in ghastly ways, losing homes and family members, and themselves suffering from radiation poisoning, the victims of the nuclear weapon attacks were feared, shunned, and - very often - silenced.*