

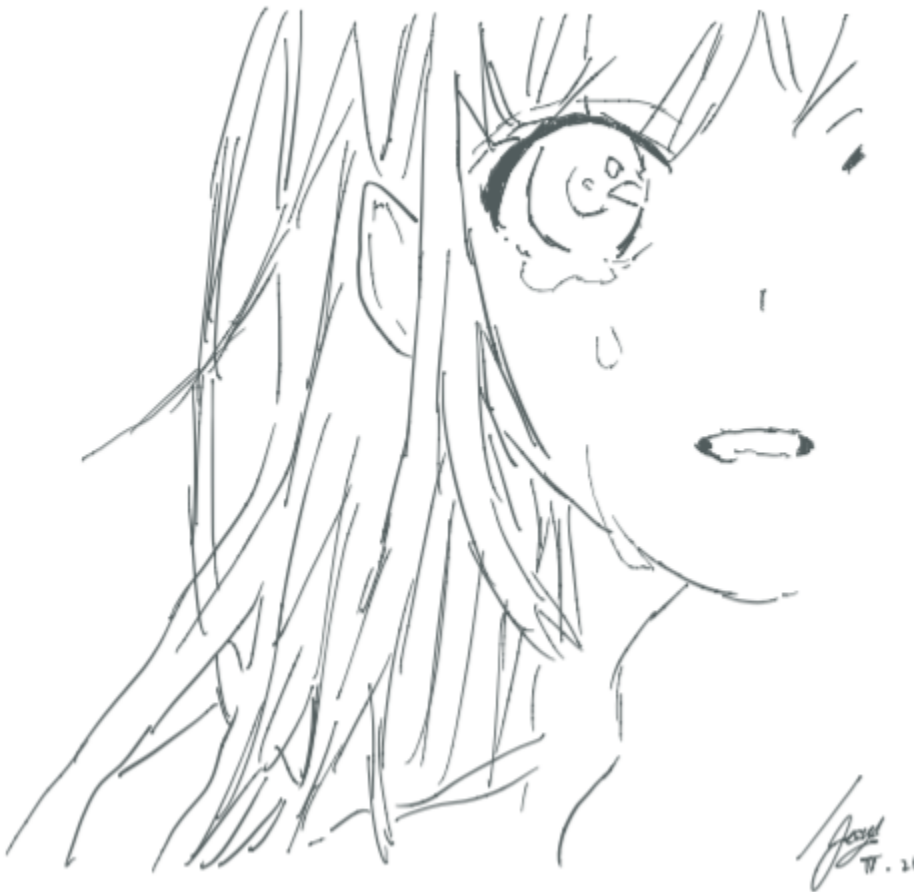
“Come back safely,” he said. “Always remember that we’re waiting for your return.”

This was the last sentence that my father said to me...

ever.

I often dream about the afternoon when I left home. It was a rainy day with a gloomy sky. Every drop of rain felt like a thousand pounds pressing onto my shoulders.

My mother and sister were both crying their eyes out during that afternoon, weeping and complaining about how badly they disagree on my rejoining the army. It wasn't a surprise though.



However, I remember seeing my father drop his tears as well. That was the first and only time I've ever seen him drop a tear. When I was about to leave, he said: "Come back safely. Always remember that we're waiting for your return."

I didn't show much of my feelings, since I knew that my tears would only make things worse, so I pretended not to be emotional. How foolish I was. My biggest regret to this day was not giving my family members a proper hug that afternoon.



I consider myself pretty lucky compared to other fellow soldiers. I didn't experience much of a live and death situation throughout the war. Due to the fact that I was a medical student in college, I was assigned to a medical unit in the army. I don't need to train much during the days, and I basically stay at the back line to do some immediate treatments for the injured during battles.

Early 1945, I met a patriotic air force soldier named Kazuma. He was a career soldier back then, specifically a member of the Japanese air force in the 1930s. Around the 1940s, he was already a captain of a team in the air force.

There's one day he walked in just to have a conversation, which is unusual for a busy soldier. He told me that several departments under the army are establishing teams called the "Kamikaze." I was in absolute shock when I understood the purpose of the teams and the mission carried out by the soldiers within.



I asked Kazuma: “So you agree with this plan? This entire idea of the suicide missions?”

He sighed and replied: “It doesn’t matter whether I agree with it or not. It only matters if we can win battles as efficiently as possible. This is what we all want, isn’t it? To end the war as fast as possible?”

“Wait, are you a member... of this mission?” I asked.

He didn’t answer my question directly. After a long period of silence, he said: “To be honest with you, Taketomo(the first name of Mr. Endo), I’m tired... really, really exhausted, and I miss my family a lot. I haven’t seen them since 1932. At least this mission would bring me back home.”



He stood up, dried the tears on his face, and walked towards the door. “Anyways, I’m just here to say goodbye. It’s really nice to meet you, Taketomo.”

“Don’t be silly! I believe there are other options. You know you have other choices, right?” I tried to calm him down.

“Do I?” He turned and looked at me with a gentle smile. I could dimly see a tear in his eye...

That was the last day I saw him in the army.

A few hours after the dropping of the bomb in Hiroshima, I, along with some other corpsman, were sent to Hiroshima for a rescue mission. Ironically, despite calling it a rescue mission, my team and I weren’t able to rescue most of the people we encountered.

We were in full anti-radiation garments and were asked to search around two or three kilometers away from the hypocenter. Around three kilometers away from the hypocenter, I saw a woman sitting on the ground. Multiple parts of her body were burnt and it is clear that we’re too late to give her a proper treatment, so all I did was to give her an anesthesia needle.

Along the way, we saw a few people begging for water. However, none of the members in my team provided any, since we weren’t supposed to have direct contact with the injured there. Moreover, they were dying anyways. Now that I think about it, if a few drops of water were the last thing I could’ve done for them, I would have done so.

As we advanced closer to the hypocenter, we saw more and more burnt bodies which most of them are “incomplete.” It was disheartening to imagine what kind of suffering they had gone through.

Later that year, in the fall of 1945, I was sent (back) to Nagasaki, where I used to call it “home.” The government had already released the news of surrendering, which was a huge relief for every soldier and people in Japan. However, despite it wasn’t “news” for anyone about the bombings, I was still extremely frustrated to see the battered hometown. Do I hate the Americans? No, not at all, yet I don’t think anyone should blame the enemy for their own loss during war. However, I do hate war itself. I hate the fact that millions of people need to suffer for things that don’t really matter. Later that year, I decided to move to Taiwan, as far away as I can from the devastated hometown and my memories.