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"DREAMS"

A selection of film episodes
designed to be viewed in one sitting

by Akira Kurosawa

"FLYING"

Clad in the summer uniform of a junior high school boy, I gingerly walk a tightrope stretched between the railing of a skyscraper roof and that of the building across the street. Above, white clouds parade their magical splendor across a deep blue sky, and far below myriads of people and vehicles busily move through the streets of the metropolis. But looking down unnerves me and my legs begin to shake, the tightrope swaying.

I quickly spread my arms to keep my balance.

Then a gust of wind threatens to blow off my cap. I suddenly reach to hold it on, an unwise move since it assures my loss of balance.

I fall.

Plummeting headlong toward the pavement far below, I struggle in the air, swinging my arms, hoping to grasp anything that might stop me. Miraculously my hand seems to have found something, for I stop falling.

It appears that I am floating.

Then I realize that my hand is in somebody else's. It's the hand of a woman, so beautiful and tall, wearing a long white gown that flutters in the wind as she glides with me among the forest of steel and glass. What are those things on her back? Some sort of decoration? No, they are wings, pure white wings.

The wings of an angel!

I suddenly feel great joy: It is not every day that a boy gets to fly with an angel.

We pass hundreds of windows while weaving among towering buildings. Finally I notice a dark spot in the sky ahead. Nearing, I see that it actually is a rectangular hole, and as the angel leads me we zoom into what almost looks like a blackboard.

In the hole we sustain attacks by all sorts of mathematical equations and geometric forms -- triangles and polygons, circles and spheres, lines and arcs.

Outmaneuvering them, we continue through the hole.

The angel escorts me above a mountain. As I peer down, the great massif seems to rotate with the earth. Grass and flowers along its slope wave violently as we zip past.

Then I hear a voice: "Hey, not so fast!"

Looking around, I see no one else. "Who spoke?"

"I did. I'm your shadow."

Below us I descry a dark shadow flitting across the mountainside. It waves at us.

"Hey, where are you going?" yells the shadow.

"I don't know."

"Come back!"

"No. Why should I?"

"Your summer vacation is nearly over."

"Who cares?"

"You have a lot of homework left, especially math."

"Shut up! Quit following me!"

"I can't help it. I'm your shadow."

"It'll be dark soon. I won't need you then."

The shadow halts on the slope.

The angel and I soar into the night sky. Millions of stars seem so close. Mars and Saturn grow bigger and bigger. The whole galaxy appears to be rushing toward us.

"Are we in outer space?" I ask my guide.

She merely smiles.

I turn and see a globe shrinking in the distance.

"Is that the earth?"

The angel just smiles.

Once again I view the earth as it recedes. Abruptly a void of loneliness engulfs me. The farther we go, the more I miss home. "The universe is beautiful," I tell her, trying not to sound unappreciative. "But I'd rather go back to earth."

Still smiling, she releases my hand and flies away.

"Thank you," I call. "Goodbye!"

I plunge through space toward the earth.

I land hard, sprawling on the mountain slope, but

feel no pain. Getting to my feet, I find my shadow beside me. He seems quite annoyed.

"You're a nuisance!" he barks. "What have you done?"

"I really don't know. Let's see, I was walking a tightrope from one building to another and... I fell."

"Yeah. And I fell with you. And I landed hard. But not you. You flew away and left me behind. That's something people can't do to a shadow. You broke the rules and I won't forgive you. We're through!"

"I bet it was a dream. Sure! You can't hold me responsible for whatever happens in a dream."

"A dream? Maybe you should call it a nightmare."

"No. It was a dream. A beautiful dream."

"Suit yourself. Maybe you enjoyed it, but I sure didn't."

Incensed, my shadow storms away.

"Wait!" I yelp, grabbing him by the arm. "Why get so angry?"

So I manage to calm him and we stroll hand in hand on the slope, while dreamlike clouds float past in the deep blue sky.

"RAIN IN THE SUN"

"I'm a lot younger now."

As a boy of five I stand beneath the roofed gate of my house, watching the rain. Despite the precipitation, the sun shines. It fascinates me, so much so that I step from under the roof to gaze at the sky.

"Don't go out," says my mother, who has hurried from the house to the gate. "It's raining while the sun shines. On days like this foxes hold weddings. So don't watch, or something terrible will happen."

Having gathered pickled plums into a basket, she hurries back to the house.

The raindrops spatter the pavement in an eerily bright light. For several moments I remain, somehow reluctant to step under the protection of the roof. As if lured by an unknown source, I then walk away.

Groves of big cedars line the path toward the shrine. The lane is dusky even on sunny days, and the sound of rain becomes softer here. The sunlight sporadically pierces the branches, making oblique stripes against a background of dark trees.

I walk briskly, searching for who knows what, and finally I pause in dryness at the foot of a big tree. I peek from behind the trunk, which is thick enough to

hide me. Then I sit down, and while listening to the lazy, monotonous sound of the rain I fall asleep. My desire to see the "terrible" thing my mother warned me about has waned.

Suddenly, distant flutes and drums!

I jump up and look toward the shrine. Has some sort of ceremony begun? But the sounds, which come from somewhere else, are unlike any I have heard at a shrine ceremony, and feature a rhythm entirely different from the usual kagura dance.

Wary to stay close to the tree, I peer out from behind the trunk in another direction and descry white figures moving through the gloom created by the cedars. I shudder. Is it from cold, or fear? I do not know.

I want to run home, but remain as if hypnotized, focused intently on the moving figures, who emerge from the wood and file onto the path in the rain.

At first the figures are blurred in the rain, but as they near and I look more carefully they reveal themselves as two small men in white kimono and carrying lanterns. They walk in a strange way, their movements synchronized with the rhythm of distant drums and flutes. They seem funny, but in a way have a charm that tends to lure the observer. I gaze in amazement.

Following the two men come a bride and groom in formal wedding attire... a marriage of foxes!

Come to think of it, the men carrying lanterns and the wedding couple have the faces of foxes. So do the relatives following them and the trousseau bearers who make up the rest of the procession. They pass curiously, as if dancing to the strains of flutes and the beat of drums that seemingly come from nowhere.

As they near, the flutes and drums grow louder, and the entire group begins to glow magically in the rain brightened by the sun. I stand mesmerized.

Abruptly I start to shake, experiencing the same sort of chill a malaria victim might suffer. My eyes blur and my senses go numb, as if in a dream.

Still dazed and unable to walk straight, I return home. My mother, arms akimbo, is standing under the roofed gate. Instead of displaying her usual gentleness, she glares at me.

"You saw it, didn't you?" she snaps. "Something you must never see. The foxes came a few minutes ago. They were very angry about it."

Startled again, I simply look at her in the soft light of the setting sun after the rain.

"I can't have a bad boy like you living in my house," she continues, as if a judge lecturing someone convicted of a crime before pronouncing sentence. "The foxes left this. Take it."

I accept the slender object she pulled from her kimono and thrust toward me: a dagger with a white wood handle and matching case. I unsheathe it -- the blade gleams -- then quickly shove it into the case again.

"They expect you to apologize for spying on them by committing harakiri with that knife. Now, you go to the foxes right now and beg their forgiveness. Return the knife and apologize from the bottom of your heart. Kowtow. Say how truly sorry you are. They won't forgive you easily. You must repeat 'I'm sorry' a hundred times. Leave now! Unless the foxes forgive you, I can't let you live in my house." With that, she starts inside.

"But I don't know where they live," I quickly argue. "The foxes. Where's their den?"

"You'll find it. On a day like this there'll be a rainbow. The foxes' den is under the rainbow." Nothing further. She closes and bolts the door.

For a moment I just stand there, watching the locked gate. Tears well, but I fight them back and start away.

The sun is low and orange, and casts long, cool shadows across fields of red and gold. Still trying not to cry, I glance about, stumped for where to go. But a rainbow arches above distant mountain ridges, so I trot toward it. But the rainbow retreats. Holding the knife to my chest, I begin chasing the elusive rainbow.

"SNOWSTORM"

A four-man team tied together with a rope gingerly descends the sheer face of a ravine in a raging snowstorm. I am the leader, and we have passed many days in the mountains, lost and helpless, clothes torn, faces whiskered, eyes dulled from exhaustion, movements unsure. From afar we seem like mere shadows and from time to time disappear in the howling, mobile white veil.

"It's getting dark," complains one of the men in a husky voice. "Another night of this and--"

"It's only a little past two," I tell him, peering closely at my watch.

"It can't be. Your watch must have stopped."

"No. It's working. It's dark because of the heavy clouds. Come on, let's keep moving."

"Moving? Are we moving in the right direction?"

I read my compass. "Sure. We'll reach the hut in just a little while."

"Enough!" barks the man. "I'm fed up with your pep-talks and lies!"

"Me too!" shouts another.

One of the men sits down in the snow, and the other follows suit.

Bushed, I would love to join them. It's as if my brain were clouding, but I force myself to go on. "On

your feet! Get up and walk!"

They remain immobile in the snow.

"You call yourselves climbers?" I sneer. "One little storm, and the lot of you crap out!"

"A little storm?" gripes a man. "It's been blowing for three days!"

"Damn right!" carps another. "It'll blow all winter."

"Don't be ridiculous!" I toss at them.

"It'll blow until we die. It craves death."

A man prepared to give up his life endangers the whole group. A bizarre, unearthly smile distorts his lips. Startled, I look at the others.

One is absently gazing at nothing.

The other is nodding, about to fall asleep.

"Okay," I concede. "We'll take a rest. Huddle close to keep warm."

But none of the three offers to move.

"Somebody's coming!" rasps the man who was gazing at nil.

"He's right!" exclaims another. "Someone's coming!"

I look in the direction of their gaze but see only the gray abyss and swirling snow. "Nothing's coming. You're seeing spooks." Turning to the men, I find two of them falling asleep and promptly shake them. "Don't sleep! You'll freeze to death!" I shake them harder, one by one. "Wake up! Don't sleep!"

Resistance gone, they yield to the elements and snow quickly covers their cuddled forms.

Helplessly observing, I too become irresistibly sleepy and shake my head to keep awake. "It's dangerous," I remind myself. "If I sleep, I die."

Desperately struggling with fatigue, I begin to experience a falling sensation... falling, falling.... But where? I seem to be part of the swirling snow, drawn into some sort of hole in the ravine.

All at once I stop falling, as if caught by some unseen hand. I feel strangely warm. My eyes open a little, as if half-awake and still pleasantly dreaming.

I find myself in the arms of a strange woman. As though on a soft warm bed, I relax. "This snow is so warm," I comment. "I wonder why."

"Snow is warm," she purrs. "It's fire that's cold."

I get a better look at her. Clad in a pure white bridal hood and kimono, laced with silver threads that glitter like snow reflecting sunlight, she is exquisitely beautiful. She gently lays me on the snow and begins to cover me with shining bedclothes as light as feathers, while humming a delicate, sad melody, that permeates as a lullaby releasing me from pain and enticing me to sleep.

The more she covers me and hums, the sleepier I become. It's as though she were tempting me, luring me into a world of darkness never to return. Alerted

to the peril, I try to resist. I struggle to sit up and ward off drowsiness.

"Don't move, young man," she coos. "Lie still and go to sleep."

She sounds so convincing. I want to take her kind invitation to sleep, especially when I'm so exhausted, but a tiny voice deep down inside tells me otherwise:

"Danger! Don't go to sleep!"

I force my eyes to open and strive to get up.

"Don't move!" She holds me down firmly with both hands. "You need rest. Just go to sleep."

This time I detected an element of evil in her voice: Her intentions are not all good. I attempt to wrench myself from drowsiness and get up.

"Don't move!" she snaps, pushing me down. "Sleep!"

Terrified, I try to push her away. I look again at the woman, her face having changed to that of a hag.

Summoning all my strength, I shove her away and leap to my feet. The witch is standing defiantly in snow, her white kimono and silver hair blowing in the gale, three small mounds of snow behind her. Pointing at them, she guffaws triumphantly and vanishes.

I remain standing in astonishment, blinking at the spot from which she evanescenced.

As if a finale to the storm, an especially strong gust of wind hits the ravine with the report of a cannon...

or was it the mad shriek of the hag?

The wind abates and rays of sunlight herald a clearing sky. The final flakes of snow glitter in the sun and land softly on the three mounds.

I stand there vacantly, looking at the trio of white sepulchers.

The new serenity is disturbed by a distant snowslide.

"PEACH ORCHARD"

The unpainted beams and pillars of the mansion have darkened with age, and the polished plank floor reflects the red, white and gold decorations characterizing the annual Doll Festival.

The doll stage comprises five tiers covered with a scarlet rug, and on them rest figurines representing members of the ancient court: an emperor and empress at the top, three ladies-in-waiting on the next step, five musicians on the third, and two courtiers on the fourth. On the lowest level are diamond-shaped, three-colored rice cakes and other offerings. Behind the representations of the emperor and empress stands a golden folding screen, and beside them are a pair of paper lanterns. And the whole display is lighted by a kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling.

Five girls, wearing kimono of a style prevailing in early twentieth-century Japan, are seated in a circle before the doll stage, playing house with exquisitely lacquered miniature bowls and dishes, which later they will serve to the figurines.

"Here I am a little boy again. And I'm going into that room." Carrying a tray, I open a wooden door, step through it and tender the tray to one of the girls.

"Here, Sis."

My sister takes the tray, red with a sheet of paper on which skewered red-and-white rice balls are piled, and distributes the confections among her friends.

My attention focuses on the doll stage. Evidently when I opened the door a slight wind must have intruded, because the flames of the candles burning in the lanterns flicker, animating the shadows on the figurines' faces and creating the impression they are alive.

"Here," says my sister.

I turn and see her offering me the tray. One serving of rice balls remains and it puzzles me. "I thought there were six of you."

"What?"

"Six. There were six of you here a while ago. So I brought rice balls for six."

"You miscounted. Never mind. You eat it."

"I already had mine. Really, Sis, there were six of you. I'm sure. Did somebody go home?"

"No."

"Then where's the other one?"

"There is no other one. Don't be silly. You can go now and play."

It baffles me. Reluctantly I exit, but before I close the door I glance about in the adjoining room, which is also floored with polished dark wood. The room is unfurnished and decorated only with a white vase of peach

blossoms placed in an alcove. A girl clad in a pink robe and wearing a dark hair ornament is standing beside the main decorative pillar of the vacant room.

"There she is," I tell my sister.

"There's who?"

"I don't know."

My sister steps to the door and looks inside. "I don't see anybody."

"I do. She's right there." I indicate the alcove.

My sister peers into my eyes. "You have a fever."

"No, I don't. Just tell me who she is."

The strange girl soundlessly leaves the room and I hasten to follow.

"Wait!" cries my sister. "Where are you going? Don't go out of the house!"

But her voice seems to have come from very far.

A bamboo wood shades the ground not far from our house, and I trail the mysterious girl as she strides through it. Occasionally she stops and looks back at me enticingly, then resumes walking, each time faster.

I have to hurry to keep her in sight, as she darts among the giant bamboo shoots in the pale light.

The girl is running now toward a distant bright spot, and as I sprint so as not to lose her I begin to hear voices and see objects of various colors moving

in the brilliance.

Suddenly I exit from the bamboo wood into a clearing. I look around in amazement, as it would seem I have come into a different world: Terraced fields line the surrounding slopes, and on the terraces are a large number of individuals dressed like the dolls on the stand and making a great deal of noise. But their faces describe sadness, as if figures of sorrow. Looking well, I find emperors and empresses in pairs, ladies-in-waiting, musicians and courtiers, all wearing highly colorful garments each different from the rest. Noticing me, they quiet themselves and stare at the small intruder below.

My interest is the girl, not them, and I glance here and there to find her. Failing to spot her, I look up and shout, "Have you seen a little girl? I'm sure she came here. Where is she?"

The figures on the terraces wordlessly turn away.

I follow their gaze to a small peach tree bearing a few blossoms standing in a corner of one of the terraces. I briefly contemplate the tree, then look up at the characters on the terraces. "Is she this peach tree?"

"We have something to tell you," booms a male voice.

They are all peering down at me in silence. Who could have spoken?

"Listen, child," declares a woman's voice. "We'll

never visit your house again."

"Why?" I ask, startled and dismayed.

"Your people cut down all the peach trees in this orchard!" roars the man.

Ashamed, I droop.

"The Doll Festival is also called the Peach Festival!" barks another man.

"The Doll Festival is a festival of peach trees!" snaps a woman.

"The dolls are the personification of peach trees!" defines a man sharply.

"The spirits of peach trees... the lives of their blossoms..." laments a woman.

"You ruthlessly cut the peach trees to hold your stupid Peach Festival!" bellows a man. "It's butchery!"

"The trees you cut were weeping!" shrieks a woman.

I begin to sob.

"It's too late to cry!" roars a man.

"Let's not blame this boy," reasons a woman. "He wept when they cut us down. In fact, he pleaded with them not to cut us down."

"He wept only because he thought he wouldn't be able to eat any more peaches!" snarls a man.

"No!" I yelp defensively. "I can get peaches. I can buy them at the store. But how can I buy a blossoming peach orchard?"

The characters on the terraces glare down at me.

"I like it here!" I shout tearfully. "I love this peach orchard when it's in bloom. But when they cut down the trees, I knew I'd never be able to see the beautiful flowers again. It made me so sad. That's why I cried."

I hear chattering, but the figures stand immobile.

"Now we know this boy is good," states a man warmly.

"Yes," seconds a woman. "Let's show him a blossoming peach orchard again."

Abruptly the gay music of a kagura dance begins. The musicians become animated, blowing flutes and beating drums. The courtiers and servants clap their hands while female trios dance, waving their arms and long sleeves. The emperors and empresses begin to dance elegantly, then become flamboyant and fantastic.

I stand there as if spellbound, appreciating the performance which grows increasingly dazzling and gay.

Suddenly a rich peach orchard blooms its splendor.

But it soon fades to a barren tract studded by the stumps of cut peach trees. I find myself alone, gazing forlornly at a little peach tree in a corner of the former orchard. A sad reminder of the land's erstwhile glory, bearing but a miserly ration of almost miserable blossoms, it nevertheless struggles to live.

"CROWS"

Vincent Van Gogh's famous "Bridge at Arles." It depicts a wagon crossing, and women washing clothes beside the river that flows beneath the bridge. The wagon suddenly starts to move, and the hoofbeats of the horse and the wheels of the vehicle rumble on the planks. As for me....

I simply walk into the picture.

An easel on my back and carrying a paint box, I halt beside the women so busily washing.

"Hello," I say. "Can you tell me where Mr. Van Gogh lives?"

"I don't know where he lives," replies one of the women. "But I saw him a little while ago. He crossed the bridge and went that way."

"Thanks." I start for the bridge.

"Hey!" she calls after me. "If you see him, better watch out. They just released him from an insane asylum."

Having heard well, I nevertheless head for the bridge to cross it and look for him.

A while later finds me hiking through Van Gogh's "Landscape of Auvers," which he portrayed far more impressively than any camera could: The houses, fields and trees to me seem just ordinary.

I arrive in a simple meadow partly surrounded by walls, and there I see a man painting it.

"You're Mr. Vincent Van Gogh, aren't you?" I risk after moments of hesitation.

The man looks back at me. Wearing a Basque cap and with his ear bandaged, he is unmistakably Van Gogh as represented in his famous self-portrait.

Filled with respect, I remove my hat.

He says nothing and continues working, his lack of hospitality somewhat grieving me. As if changing his mind, he again looks at me, taking note of my artist's paraphernalia. "Why not paint this scene? It's pretty good, don't you think?"

I glance around at the area, but it seems too simple to make a good study.

"A picturesque scene isn't always the best for painting," he says, as if having read my mind. "If you look carefully, you'll see that nature is beautiful, I don't care where you are. When nature is beautiful, I never think of myself. In my mind there is nothing but nature. Think nature, and nature paints itself. It's like a dream. That's how I work. And..."

I see his eyes, their frenzied look; his voice is as if fire had been translated into sound.

"I wait. Then nature leaps at me, and I eat it. I swallow it whole. And as it digests -- rapidly, mind

you -- a picture appears, fully completed. But it isn't easy to keep it in my mind."

"How do you keep it in mind?"

"I work at it. I slave. I slave like a locomotive climbing a hill!"

His passion is punctuated by the shriek of a train whistle.

For a moment I see his wild portrait, his flashing eyes, and the piston and drive wheels of a locomotive thundering along a pike somewhere.

Returning to myself, I see him packing his gear. He picks up his easel and shoulders his paint box. "Where are you going?" I hastily ask.

"I'm busy. Time's running out. I have so little time left for painting."

"Are you all right? I see you're hurt."

"You mean this?" He touches the bandage on his head. "I was working on a self-portrait yesterday, but somehow I just couldn't get the ear right. So it was easier to cut it off."

His explanation chokes me, I gaze at him almost tearfully.

"The sun compels me to paint," he declares, squinting at the sky. "I can't waste my time!"

I look up, too, but the sun I see is not our sun. Instead I behold Van Gogh's violent rendition of it.

Looking down again, I find myself alone in the walled meadow. I start running to find once again the elusive Van Gogh.

The landscape of Auvers remains the same, but now it has an entirely different appearance: It lies deformed in a riot of brilliant color, as it would in a Van Gogh painting. This is Van Gogh's face of the landscape.

Sprinting through the landscape, I reach a field and slow to a halt. A road bisects the field, and a man who looks like Van Gogh is trudging away in the distance. Getting past the field, he disappears from view, so I dash in pursuit.

Suddenly, with an almost thundrous din, a great flock of crows rise from the field.

I halt, stupefied.

My attention is riveted to Van Gogh's painting of crows flying from a cornfield.

A train whistle screams deafeningly.

"THE TUNNEL"

The black mouth of a tunnel yawns to swallow the dark road I exhaustedly trudge, clad in the dirty uniform of an army captain who has just returned from overseas combat at the end of World War II.

Suddenly a dog appears from the tunnel. A shepherd, it reminds me of an army dog. Fangs bared, drooling, eyes twitching and shining wildly, growling menacingly, it stands poised to leap at me.

A mad dog!

I take a fighting stance, eyeing the animal, but have no weapon or protective shield.

As darkness gathers, the dog and I glare at each other. Tiring of it, I start edging in a circle toward the tunnel, keeping a margin of safety between myself and the dangerous cur.

The dog, growling, keeps me in view.

After a period of sweat-drenched fear and suspense, I manage to skirt the dog and enter the tunnel.

The dog keeps glaring at me, but makes no aggressive movement.

If I run, the dog will surely attack, so I pace with measured strides through the tunnel. Although tempted to look back, I keep my eyes focused on the distant portal of the tunnel so as to avoid doing anything that might

stimulate the thing. Terror remains with me through the gloom, but at last I emerge into the faint light of swiftly gathering dusk.

I pause. Far down the road, which gradually curves as it descends, I descry a light. Before proceeding, I look back at the tunnel. Only silence. Evidently the peril has passed. Relieved, I prepare to continue my journey when I see a soldier wearing a helmet and weighted by full field equipment, including a rifle, softly emerging from the portal.

A chill runs up my spine.

The soldier approaches and halts before me.

"If it isn't Private Noguchi!" I gasp.

"That's right, sir."

"I thought you were dead!"

Noguchi simply gazes at me.

"You were killed, Noguchi. I know you were."

"Captain, will you do me a favor? Will you tell my family I died bravely in action?"

Speechless, I can only gape at him.

"See that light, sir?" He points down the road.

"That's my home."

I look at it.

"I'd like you to come with me, sir. I'd like you to explain to my mom and dad that I'm dead, that I was killed in action."

That said, he starts away.

"What do you mean?" I ask, stopping him. "Didn't your family receive the official report of your death?"

"Sure they did. But they don't believe it. To tell the truth, sir, I don't remember getting killed in action. As I look back on it, I was released from the army. I returned home, I ate a lot of sweet rice cake my mom made for me...."

"So you told me. After you caught the bullet, you passed out. When you came to, I was taking care of you. That's when you told me. It was a dream you'd had while unconscious. It was very vivid, that's why I remember. But an hour later you actually died."

"Really? Then my mom and dad had the same dream as mine. That's why they don't believe I'm dead."

"Maybe. But it's true that you died. I'm sorry for you, but I'll make it very clear: You died. You fought bravely and were killed. You died in my arms."

For a moment Noguchi gazes into my eyes. Then he wordlessly, forlornly returns to the tunnel. At the portal he stops, looks back and comes to attention, presents arms to me, then goes inside. I hear only his footsteps, and even they fade to oblivion. Overcome by grief, I want to cry. But cry I cannot: There has been so much agony, so much death, that no tears remain.

Once again I prepare to leave, but hear footsteps,

not of one man, of many. Louder, louder...

A fully equipped platoon led by a young second lieutenant marches from the tunnel in a column of fours.

"Platoon, halt!" barks the shavetail.

Once more I shudder in amazement.

The officer leaves his men, strides to me and salutes.

"Third Platoon reporting their return, sir!"

Having wept myself dry or not, tears well. "Listen, Lieutenant. Listen carefully. The Third Platoon was killed in action. You were killed to the last man."

The second John stares at me, and I notice his men too silently gazing my way.

"I'm sorry," I sigh. "Out of the entire company I alone survived. I have no words to express my shame. The Third Platoon? Their annihilation is my responsibility. The others too. I'm to blame."

The young man remains at attention, listening.

"I won't try to shift the blame to the cruelty of war and the lack of humanity in military regulations. Nor do I refuse to admit to my stupidity and inability, like so many other leaders. I'm not a coward, at least. Not like them."

Neither for nor against, the lieutenant eyes me.

"Instead of getting killed, I was taken prisoner. And I can tell you it was far from pleasant. Maybe you can see in my face some of what I suffered. Oh, you

can say that what I got was nothing compared to what you men went through. But at least you weren't humiliated. Many were the times I wished I could have died with you. It would've been much easier to take."

Unresponsive, the young officer just stands there.

"I understand your regrets. You died in action. You died in vain. You wasted your lives. But it's over. Why linger in this world? Why wander? You're free to go. The army no longer has any claim on you. Leave. Go in peace. Enjoy your freedom. Please!"

The lieutenant and his troops merely stand there, looking at me. Their silence spooks me.

"Third Platoon!" I bark. "About face!"

They obey.

"Forward march!" I yell, tears in rivulets.

The men stride into the tunnel, their footsteps echoing ominously, gradually fading to silence.

Taps pervades mournfully. I stand for long moments, listening, uncontrollably weeping. I take a deep breath and once more prepare to resume my trek, when...

The mad dog leaps from the tunnel!

Fangs bared, drooling, eyes shining wildly, growling, it stands ready to jump at me.

I glare at the thing. I have survived this long, I can't give it a chance.

"VILLAGE WITH WATERMILLS"

High on an observation deck, I am appreciating the cityscape using one of the coin operated telescopes. As I shift it for views of the various buildings and parks, something odd appears:

A clean brook flows between banks lined with quaint watermills, spaced to avoid mutual interference from any on the opposite side. They stand so regularly that I get an impression of adolescence and love, much as would appear in a painting by Henri Rousseau.

I observe the watermills from an earthen bridge spanning the stream. The banks are picturesque with beautiful flowers.

As I drink in the scene, five or six children amble past behind me. Their clothes suggest they live in the village, but something is strange. Perhaps it is their handsomely embroidered Tirolian type aprons. They greet me politely and I return the courtesy. After crossing the bridge, they pause to pick flowers along the bank and place them on a rock at the base of the bridge.

Fascinated, I casually follow as they walk away.

The road leads to a row of watermills. In front of the first I see an old man handling a farming tool that resembles a folkcraft antique.

"Hello!" I begin cheerily. "What's the name of

this village?"

"It has no name," he rasps. "We call it the village. Outsiders call it the 'Village with Watermills.'"

His attire is curious, too: A long apron hangs from his shoulders to his ankles, like that of a Hebrew, and his noble face and beard are reminiscent of Moses.

A thumping in the mill attracts my attention, and when turning to look I notice it is a cottage. "Do all the villagers live in watermills like this?"

"No. They live in another village."

My gaze finds a kerosene lamp hanging in front of the mill. "Don't you have electricity here?"

"We don't use dangerous things like that. Modern conveniences spoil people. Conveniences are luxuries. And luxuries know no end. People trade safety for conveniences, and that's dangerous."

"What do you use for light?" I ask, indicating the lantern. "That?"

"That. But mainly candles and rape oil."

"It must get pretty dark at night."

"That's the nature of night. It'd be terrible if night were as bright as day. Can you imagine a bright night? We couldn't see the stars. I'd hate that."

"You have paddies, but don't use motorized farm implements for cultivation or harvesting?"

"We don't need them. We have cows and horses."

"What do you use for fuel?"

"Wood mostly. It's wrong to chop down living trees, so we use dead ones. Every year a few trees die, so we use them for firewood. We make charcoal, too. Charcoal lasts longer than wood. So if we make charcoal, we can get as much heat from a few logs as we can from a forest of firewood. Oh, yes, and manure makes good fuel, too."

What else can I say? I watch the senior citizen as he repairs the old tool. Then I remember:

"A while ago I saw some children placing flowers on a rock at the base of the bridge. What did they do that for?"

"Flowers on the rock? Flowers? Well, my father told me once -- he's dead now, of course. A long time ago a sick traveler was found dead there. The villagers took pity and buried him at the spot. Instead of putting up a gravestone, though, they used that rock. And they offered it flowers. It got to be a custom. Not only the children, but all the villagers who pass by place flowers on that rock. And most of them don't even know the reason for it."

His story of kindness moves me. I hear the distant strains of what sounds like an Oriental march. "Is there some sort of festival today?"

"No. It's a funeral."

I gaze at him bewilderedly.

"You look surprised. But a funeral is essentially an occasion worthy of congratulations. A person lives, works hard and is thanked by all. It's a nice thing, wouldn't you say? We don't have any temples or churches or priests here, so the villagers get together and carry the deceased to the cemetery on top of the hill, and they treat it to a lot of music and festivity."

I observe as he methodically works on the tool.

"When young people die it's bad, though. We don't congratulate them. Fortunately, most of the folks here die of old age, thanks to our natural way of living. Today's funeral is for a ninety-nine year old woman, by the way. It's something I've got to attend, so if you'll excuse me... To tell the truth, she was my first love. Would you believe it? She turned me down and married another man."

The veteran at life goes into the mill, and after a few moments emerges wearing a derby and carrying a shiny tuba.

"May I ask how old you are?"

"Me?" says the man. "A hundred and three. It's about time for me to pass over, but honestly it's pretty nice to be alive, wouldn't you say? Life is interesting. Some say living is torture, but anybody who'd say that just doesn't know how to live. I'll say it again: Life is interesting."

As the merry procession nears, its congratulatory members gyrating to the rhythmic tune, the old man saunters to take the lead and play his mirthful tuba.

Behind him come the children, aprons filled with flowers which they scatter as they walk.

Next prance the musicians, men first, playing happy trumpets, trombones, clarinets, saxophones, all wearing derbies; and behind them dance the women, sounding drums and cymbals, piccolos and flutes.

The women wear straw hats with colorful ribbons suspending the brim from its peaked crown, suggesting those of Incan women. And they have wrapped their arms and legs with fancy protectors. While the stripes and designs of their clothes resemble the costumes of Butan.

The coffin, carried on the shoulders of men wearing derbies, is draped with a flashy cloth bearing a floral design, and all in attendance look joyful.

To me the procession seems more like the march of some south sea island chieftain; come to think of it, the music sounds like Ivanov's "Procession of a Chieftain."

Accepting it for what it is, I watch a while, then return to the bridge. I pause at the rock on which the children laid flowers. Several butterflies have gathered, so when I pick a flower I place it on the rock with care, for I don't like to surprise them.

"ASURA"

The statue of Asura, a god with three faces and six arms, stands in a large glass case on display at the Kofuku Temple Museum of National Treasures. As I gaze intently at it, Asura's eyebrows, which have been knit with sadness, twitch.

I jerk with surprise.

Next, Asura's six arms begin to move.

Frightened, I hide behind another case, which houses a representation of the god Shagara, and warily peek out.

Asura leaves the case, passing through the glass.

"Wait, Asura! Don't get violent. Behave!"

It must have been Shagara that spoke. Startled, I look up and see that his stance and posture have changed.

Asura does not reply, and instead strides out of the exhibition hall.

Shagara's red face becomes even redder with fury.

I follow Asura out of the building, where dusk seems to have come suddenly. His hair ornament and gold bracelets gleam, as if recently having been restored.

I trail Asura to the Sarusawa Pond near the temple. As he stops, I stop, too. Then I notice about ten persons have gathered. They look at Asura and whisper in awe.

"Why did Asura leave the museum?" asks a man, filled

with wonder.

"Maybe a world war is going to break out," replies another. "Asura is prince of the realm of fury and fight."

"You're wrong," says a third. "Asura originally was a god of war, but not now, not the one who was in the museum. Tempered by Buddha's deep affection, aware of the suffering of men, Asura helps save men now. Look at his frowning face. He's worried about us suffering men."

"Quiet!" snaps yet another man. "Asura is talking to himself."

"Not to himself. He has six arms and three faces. The three faces are talking to one another."

Although their voices are too far to hear well, the three faces indeed appear to be talking to each other, while the six arms reach for the sky and move as if flying kites.

In Nara, one of Japan's ancient capitals, a huge wooden building houses a great statue of Buddha. The dark sky above the vast tile roof radiates eerie lights, and a powerful wind arises. From the vortex of a tornado dark spots come swirling like dead leaves.

Meanwhile, beside the Pond of Sarusawa, the people and I look up at the ominous sky.

Back in Nara, the dark spots in the whirlwind suddenly grow bigger and take on the form of many-tiered pagodas, temple gates, gold pavilions, lecture halls and priests' living quarters. Their swirling like dry leaves creates a terrifying sight.

The horror, which also grips Sarusawa Pond, causes us to gasp and shudder. We huddle together for mutual protection, and some start praying.

"Amitaba!" a man calls to Buddha.

"It's coming from Kyoto! A tornado hit Kyoto!"

"Kyoto must have been destroyed!"

"They're all temple things. I don't see any houses or shops. The tornado must have leveled such light things."

"It's the work of Asura! Asura did it!"

We look at Asura, now extending his hands skyward.

In Kyoto, whose sky is thick with flying debris, terror-crazed people fill the plaza of Todaiji Temple. They scream and many fall to all fours and beg mercy.

While in Nara, Asura raises his sextet of hands and bends their fingers in various ways, sending his magical power to the north, toward Kyoto.

Above the house of the great statue of Buddha,

all manner of temple structures fly past, driven by the fantastic whirlpool of radiant clouds, heading north toward Kyoto.

At Sarusawa Pond the people remain huddled together.

"Asura did it!" cries a man, overjoyed at the victory. "Look at his hands! He's clasping them, like Buddha does when he works a miracle."

"What does it mean? So many temples and gates and things were blown into the sky. They came from Kyoto. Now they're going back."

"Punishment! It's Buddha's punishment! The priests are so selfish and arrogant that Buddha can no longer be patient. He made Asura punish them. Now that they've lost their temples, the greedy priests will reconsider what they've done."

"Indeed! The priests have been having plenty of trouble with the government. They refuse to open their temples to the public. They demand that their claims be accepted. They even built barricades to keep the people out. The wretches! They deserve punishment!"

"First of all, even if they live in temples, it doesn't mean the temples belong to them. They sure didn't build them."

"Absolutely! The temples were built ages ago. No one person can lay claim to them. They're treasures of

Japan -- no -- of the world."

"Yes! They should be appreciated by the world... free of charge!"

"Of course! Stupid priests! They deserve hell! Let them fight with the officials there!"

"Quiet!"

Asura moves and starts our way. Simultaneously we pray to the great god.

Asura wordlessly passes and I follow unobserved.

I trail Asura as he walks majestically along a Nara road, his three faces exchanging conversation. I manage to hear the voices, and they sound like those of little boys.

"You're too violent," complains the first face.

"I'd rather call it Buddha's mercy," states another.

"Anyway, they need a lesson from time to time," says the third face.

"If they were smart enough to learn a lesson," responds the first face, "they wouldn't need one from the start."

The second face thinks momentarily. "We can't just wait for their enlightenment."

"Enlightenment? What's your definition of that?"

"Priests get everything free."

"They sure do."

"A priest minus a temple is a nobody. And a nobody gets nothing."

They laugh.

"Hey, we'd better go home."

"Home? So soon? Now that we're out, let's take time to view the moon."

Asura strolls up Wakakusa Hill, which is little more than a mound, near Nara. Still following, I stop and watch him go.

An amazingly large moon shines above the hill, and pampas ears glitter in gold. But then, the moon seems gold, too.

It's like a beautiful picture painted in gold.

I appreciate it.

"MT. FUJI IN RED"

Myriads of people, toting or packing their belongings, leading children by the hand, hurry along a broad highway. Like wartime refugees fleeing from some dire peril, they wordlessly move in a common direction. Behind their dark forms shines an ominous red glow. Occasionally one looks back, terrified at something distant.

Far behind the seemingly endless flow of humanity towers Mt. Fuji against a scarlet sky, the great red disk almost touching it resembling a fireball.

I stand alone among them, watching the mountain silhouetted against the sky, puzzled as to why the people are fleeing from such a magnificent sunset.

"Look!" I shout at the crowd. "It's a beautiful sunset. Why run?"

One of the refugees takes time to speak to me. He points in the direction they are heading and confides in a strange tone, "West is that way."

"Nonsense!" I retort. "Can't you see the setting sun at your back?"

"That's the moon." He resumes his flight.

Startled, I gaze toward Mt. Fuji. The man was right. The crimson fireball has risen slightly higher.

The red darkens and finally as the moon continues to ascend in the horrifying sky it changes to purple.

As I watch, aghast, a middle-aged woman with a baby strapped to her back and leading a tot by the hand stops in front of me.

"What are you standing here for?" she asks. "The power plant is burning. Haven't you heard? It's burning! The nuclear power plant!"

The news rocks me.

"I know we can never get away from it," she mourns. "But we've got to keep running until the radioactivity finally gets us."

A moment later she is swept away by the tide of humanity.

Terror grips me. Like a drifting leaf swallowed by a torrent I join the lost refugees. Once again I see the woman with the baby and tot as she pauses to look at me. Her face, etched in purple, displays a pained and hopeless smile.

"It's the end," she laments.

With that, the two children begin bawling and she sinks to her knees among the ceaseless flow of mankind.

I look back in haste. The moon has darkened almost to ultraviolet. As if eclipsed, it hangs as a foreboding murky disk with a corona of undulating red, yellow and purple. Explosions occur behind Mt. Fuji, and the series of blasts come nearer and nearer to the mountain.

Mt. Fuji slowly changes color, as if being heated.

Queasy with terror, I help the woman to her feet, take her baby in one arm and grab the woman's hand. As we start away, the child led by the woman trips and falls, screaming hysterically. I quickly help up the tot and take a moment to once more look back.

Mt. Fuji is erupting -- or is it melting? -- with rivers of lava gushing down its slopes.

Taking the woman and two children, I panic and run.

We come to a stop at the brink of a towering seaside precipice. Far below angry waves break against jagged rocks. From where I stand I make a curtate reconnaissance: There seems to be no way down. Besides, even if we could make the descent, the sea stretches to the horizon and I see no boats.

"This is the end of the road," grieves the woman.

"What happened to them?" I puzzle, looking around.

"There were so many people. What happened to them? Where did they disappear to?"

"They disappeared beneath the sea," replies a male voice.

Startled, I turn and focus on the refugee who told me the direction of west. For a moment we regard each other somberly, then I lean over the cliff and look down. Footwear, hats and bundles that had belonged to the doomed refugees and washed by the churning waves... they linger

as grim testimony to their fate.

The morbid reality having sunk in, I shift my gaze offshore and make out a school of dark fish or something swimming away.

"They're porpoises," states the man gravely. "Even they want to escape."

"I envy porpoises," says the woman. "They can swim to safety."

"They can swim," drones the man. "But not to safety. The radioactivity will get them too, sooner or later. It's just a matter of time." He looks back and casually announces, "Here it comes."

I look, too.

Thick clouds in assorted ghastly hues lay heavily above the undulating ridge extending from the cliff, and they inch threateningly closer.

"Inhale any of that, and you die," dirges the man. "The red ones are full of plutonium 239. It's the most lethal of all. A millionth of a gram will produce cancer in an animal. Yellow is cesium 137. Purple is strontium 90. Just so you'll know."

Listening, gaping, I grow squeamish.

"Man is hopelessly stupid," he continues. "They developed a way to color radioactive materials, claiming they're dangerous because they're invisible. What's the difference? To die knowing or not knowing what caused

it. They end up corpses just the same. Who cares? Well, goodbye."

The man strides to the edge of the cliff, prepared to jump. I quickly grab him from behind.

"Wait!" I cry. "Radioactivity can't kill instantly. Why hurry?"

"Instant death is better than slow death."

"Adults have lived many years," sobs the woman, hugging her children. "They can well choose whether to die quickly or slowly. But what about children?"

"Waiting to die from radioactive poisoning within a few more days is not living," comments the man grimly.

Stumped for a reply, I look back.

The multicolored radioactive clouds silently, relentlessly descend toward the precipice. I gasp at the ugly sight, then turn away:

The man, the woman and her children have vanished.

I dart to the brink of doom and look down at the enraged sea.

Detestably, a red fog engulfs me.

I close my eyes, summon courage and leap.

"CRYING DEVILS"

"Doomsday has descended upon the earth," I mutter to myself, sauntering through a barren and bleak tract of nothingness. "But somehow I have survived. And here I am, wandering, searching for another human being. I find the solitude unbearable."

Not a living soul, not a blade of grass or a single tree interrupts this absolute desolation. The leaden sky hangs oppressively over a wasteland in which I appear to be the lone organic substance.

Trudging through nowhere, I eventually find a forest, or rather the remains of one. The trees are all dead, many uprooted and lying in piles, like huge nondescript skeletons. Farther on I reach a vast slope with a pair of naked mounds. The ground is scorched and carpeted with large grains of red sand and here and there burned rocks. And the clouds reach almost to my head, dimming parts of the mounds.

I come to a halt and glance around. I feel tiny and powerless. Loneliness, remorse and fear beset me all at once, and it spurs me on, drives me to walk faster toward... nothing.

Hurrying along, I hear only the crunching of my own footsteps. This continues until...

I detect the sound of someone else's footsteps too.

I halt and look around: No one. I listen: The sound of somebody else's footsteps has disappeared.

My imagination, I suppose, stimulated by loneliness.

I resume walking.

Again, I hear someone else walking, too. I listen well, there is no mistake. Abruptly I stop and quickly face about, prepared for a possible confrontation. This time the footsteps continue, and I discern a blurred figure approaching through mist. Nearing, he becomes clearer: A man clad in rags, with long, snarled hair and a beard, like a beggar... or a stone-age man.

Whatever he may be, the man accounts for the only other human being I have encountered. Brightening, I hasten to greet him.

Seeing me, he braces himself as if under attack by a wild animal. "Are you human?" he growls.

Startled, I stop short and nod.

He looks me up and down, as if evaluating, seemingly reluctant to accept my reply as fact.

"Who are you?" I venture.

He glares at me. Then his face gnarls with pain and he crouches.

"What's wrong?" I ask. "Something the matter with you? Are you sick?"

I move closer, but he jumps back like a beast and glares at me again. After a few moments he relaxes and

runs a filthy hand through his matted hair, revealing a horn on his head.

Shocked, I jump back. "Are you a devil?"

The man's face contorts again. "Maybe. But I used to be a human being."

Any devil naturally looks frightening. But when this one speaks, the bestial glitter of his eyes softens. He must have been a talkative fellow as a human being. But right now his expressions shift between human gentility and devilish cruelty.

"Long ago, when I was a human being, this desolation was a beautiful pasture. Every year from early spring to late autumn flowers bloomed everywhere."

I watch as he speaks. His eyes, filled with memories, search hopelessly for what will never again be. His world, my world... it's gone.

"Men destroyed nature with their stupidity," mourns the lost mortal. "Grass, trees, flowers, shrubs, every crop, even weeds... birds, beasts, fish... they totaled everything! Humans were only one species on this earth. But men were so arrogant and selfish that they destroyed their own planet!"

I observe as he sits down disgustedly and stares at nothingness.

"When they destroyed nature, they lost their source of food," he continues, obviously enraged at the thought.

"Starvation started them eating each other. The weak were eaten first. The strong, smart, tricky ones -- in short, the type who usually succeed in the world -- once again survived. I don't know why, but the ones who ate human meat grew funny horns like this."

With that, he bursts out laughing.

A chill runs up my spine.

"Not only that, the ones with horns can't die... even if they want to. But recently, there's not much to prey on. So now it's become a case of devils preying on devils. They can die that way... the losers. Devils who eat other devils grow more horns. The ones who have three or four horns were big shots as humans. They used to be politicians, tycoons, underworld bosses... and they're still notorious in the world of devils."

I watch as he assumes a pensive mood.

"In a way, they're to be pitied," he goes on. "To have to live with three or four horns on your head... it's testimony to their ugly existence. As for me, I have only one horn. So I'll get eaten before long, and that'll end me. My agony will end. Still, I hate to fall prey, so I run like this by myself. Being alone gives me plenty of time to think. I don't have anything to eat, so I'm too hungry to sleep at night. When human, I was a dairy farmer. I dumped tons of milk in the river and smashed onions, potatoes and cabbages with a bull-

dozer, because a surplus of food products forced the prices down. The memories torture me."

As he stops talking, I peer at him. Tears stream down his cheeks.

Somewhere distant, howls like those of wolves echo across the desolation. The devil looks up and wipes away his tears with a grimy hand.

"Hear that?" he asks. "The big shots cry at night. Their horns ache like cancer. They think death is easier than pain. They try to die, but can't. So they moan and howl. It's all they can do."

The howls of agony grow in number and intensity until they seem to tremble the very ground.

"I'll show you how devils cry," he says, getting to his feet and starting away.

Automatically I follow him.

Everything is monotonously dusky. Is it day or night? I cannot tell.

The man leads me to a place that resembles the crater of a volcano. There he halts at the brim and peers down. I follow his gaze, and behold at the bottom of the caldron a vast pool of blood. Gathered around the pool are hundreds of two-, three- and four-horned devils, raising hands high as if in some sort of bizarre prayer, moaning or crying loudly. The ogreish wailing resounds among the surrounding walls and cliffs as the

most horrifying dirge to mankind imaginable.

The devil beside me suddenly crouches, holding his head. "My horn is starting to hurt. Go home!"

"Home? I have no home."

He glares at me fiercely. "Do you want to get eaten alive?"

I panic and dash, slipping and stumbling, down the mountain. The wailing gradually fading, I run, run, run, blindly, exhaustedly, gripped by terror, knowing not where to go because nowhere exists.

"A WONDERFUL DREAM"

In a pleasant hotel room I quietly eat my breakfast. I'm not sure which country I'm in. My luggage bears many stickers of foreign hotels, so I guess I'm not in Japan. I eat the egg and reach for the toast, but before I can continue I hear cannon reports and the roaring of jets. Startled, I hasten to the window and look out.

A formation of jet fighters shriek overhead, and behind them come a squadron of bombers. Their roar shakes the windows.

Next I hear excited footsteps and shouts in the hall outside my room. The door bangs open, and bellhops and maids shout at me in their language, then leave as abruptly as they entered.

I run into the hall. "Has war begun?" I demand.

The hall is clogged with men and women guests and hotel personnel. All are excited and shouting, and mingled with the din of aircraft and cannon it produces so much noise that I fail to understand a word.

I return to my room and switch on TV, only to get telecast views of what I saw out the window.

Switching channels gives me pictures of troops marching and missiles being paraded.

A newscaster appears. "Wonderful!" he exclaims in English.

More views of military might.

"Marvelous!" he happily asserts.

Wonderful? Marvelous? What is?

Once more I change channels. This time I get a Soviet newscaster.

"Magnificent!" he rejoices.

Irritation mounting, I try other channels.

British, French, German, Italian, Chinese, Indian newscasters, one after another, and they all congratulate whatever has happened in their native tongue and with uncontrollable excitement. All the roaring of guns and the flights of jets indicate war has broken out. Since when is war to be condoned?

Finally I get a Japanese newscaster.

"Banzai!" he cheers.

Even him? One of my own people? I feel like punch him on the nose. I am about to pick another channel when his next words hook me:

"At long last the world has gained eternal peace. A few hours ago, representatives of all nations assembled together and unanimously signed the global peace treaty."

Duly impressed, I sit back and prepare to listen.

"Some may argue that a treaty is nothing but a sheet of paper," the newscaster proceeds, "and that there has never been a treaty in the history of man that wasn't broken. Hitler said that to sign a treaty is to break

it. But, ladies and gentlemen, the treaty that has just been signed is entirely different from any we have ever known. Facing a crisis of nuclear annihilation, mankind has decided that survival is of the utmost importance. All nations are carrying out the actions defined by the treaty. The First Article states, 'All provisions of this treaty shall be executed immediately.' They mean it. It's a real treaty, the greatest we'll ever have, because it guarantees us life.

"Look at the sky! See the fighters and bombers? They're not on a mission of death. It's a mission, all right. A mission to oblivion. They'll land at designated places, and there they'll be destroyed. It's part of the treaty's 'farewell to arms' provision. And in the bargain, all nuclear weapons will be dispatched to a dead planet in outer space, never to return.

"Don't let the cannonfire alarm you. They're congratulatory salvos. All nations are saluting this joyous occasion. Let's go into the streets, everyone! Let's join the global rally to congratulate mankind on its victory!"

Outside the hotel in a great plaza I join a growing throng of people as they converge from all directions, hopping, dancing, waving flags, rejoicing.

After the guns cease fire, a brass band strikes up

a lively, happy march, and the people begin to circle in the square, arm in arm, keeping step to the rhythm.

I stand rather timidly in a corner -- after all, I'm a stranger here. But someone sees me and, smiling broadly, pulls me into the dance.

As I wheel with them I notice the great variety of costumes; it would seem that all nations are represented today. Members of armed forces from around the world, too. Generals and privates, admirals and seamen, they toss their weapons on the growing mountain of arms that the treaty has rendered obsolete.

Confetti streams from windows, and banners wave, and to climax the pageant a giant dirigible drifts overhead, and pretty girls in its gondola scatter fragrant blossoms of peace on the merry throng.

The music builds as does the joy of the people, and it would seem to have no bounds.

"Everybody!" cries the newscaster. "You in the audience too! Join the rally! Clap your hands! Isn't peace worth celebrating?"

THE END