An old woman of ninety remembers the explosion of the A-bomb at Hiroshima

Well, that time … let me see,
I fell over with the cupboard in the living-room.

The house shook and shook and shook and
I crawled out onto the roof.
I did not crawl of my own accord, naturally
I should rather say ‘I was made to do it
By God or Buddha.’

O, what misery.
O, what pain.
I wanted the breath to be taken from my body
And to go to heaven.

It was on the third morning after the explosion
Someone put an umeboshi in my mouth.

‘This old woman is dead,’ they said. ‘What a shame!’
They prayed the Buddhist prayer: ‘Namu-amida, namu-amida.’

‘I am alive. I am alive,’ I told them.
They put a big umeboshi in my mouth.

Umeboshi’s nice and tasty, you know, so
I must express my thanks to the umeboshi, because
I soon got well again.

umeboshi: a pickled Japanese plum, a cheap and common delicacy.

Translated from the Japanese of Ikeda Some by James Kirkup and Michio
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