

UMEBOSHI

*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 Nakano, and published by Spokesman Book in James Kirkup's collection, No More Hiroshimas (2004).