

## Social Studies

by Felix Jung

Mr. Crumley pulls the shades and tells us stories: the war ended with a bang and a whimper. Both bombs were given names as though this would make them feel more like people. Fat Man and Little Boy, a pair of tourists from the States, father and son.

He raises his hand, palm to face, and says *There are five rivers near Hiroshima*, his fingers spread. *We hit the middle*. And for a moment he is frozen in a smirk, a lone middle finger pointing at the clouds. We laugh in howls, clutching our stomachs, covering our mouths.

There are other stories. Blindness. Thermal burns. People disappearing in a flash, leaving shadows on the roads. What makes us shudder are the ones who live: naked children with blisters and sores, backs stripped of skin, muscles opened to a world composed of dust.

We watch an ancient film that day, soundless slow motion. A cloud grows on a stalk, the top folding into itself, into the sky. Someone says *mushroom*, but I see the start of a spine, a white column of vertebrae. Two gray lobes, separate hemispheres. That part of us that remembers.



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