

RANDALL JARRELL

A CAMP IN THE PRUSSIAN FOREST<sup>1</sup>

I walk beside the prisoners to the road.  
Load on puffed load,  
Their corpses, stacked like sodden wood,  
Lie barred or galled with blood

By the charred warehouse. No one comes today  
In the old way  
To knock the fillings from their teeth;  
The dark, coned, common wreath

Is plaited for their grave—a kind of grief.  
The living leaf  
Clings to the planted profitable  
Pine if it is able;

The boughs sigh, mile on green, calm, breathing mile,  
From this dead file  
The planners ruled for them. . . . One year  
They sent a million here:

Here men were drunk like water, burnt like wood.  
The fat of good  
And evil, the breast's star of hope  
Were rendered into soap.

I paint the star I sawed from yellow pine—  
And plant the sign  
In soil that does not yet refuse  
Its usual Jews

Their first asylum. But the white, dwarfed star—  
The dead white star—  
Hides nothing, pays for nothing; smoke  
Fouls it, a yellow joke,

<sup>1</sup> This poem first appeared in the *Nation*, New York.

The needles of the wreath are chalked with ash,  
 A filmy trash  
 Litters the black woods with the death  
 Of men; and one last breath

Curls from the monstrous chimney . . . I laugh aloud  
 Again and again;  
 The star laughs from its rotting shroud  
 Of flesh. O Star of men!

## THE RISING SUN

The card-house over the fault  
 Was spilt in a dream; your mother's terraces  
 Of hair fell home to hide  
 The wooden pillow, the sleek dazzled head  
 That bobbed there, a five-coloured cloud.  
 Above black pines, the last cloud-girdled peak  
 Was brushed on the starlight like a cone of rice.  
 The clear flame wavered in the brazier;  
 The floor, cold under the quilt,  
 Pressed its cramped ground into your dream.  
 The great carp, a kite, swam up to you  
 Along his line; but you were riding there,  
 A sun in air, the pure sky gazing down  
 From its six-cornered roof upon the world.  
 The kettle gave its hissing laugh, you bowed,  
 The characters of moonlight were your name  
 Across the bare, old order of the room,  
 And you awoke. In your rice-marshed, sea-margined plain  
 The flakes, like petals, blew from peak to peak;  
 The petals blew from peak to peak, like snow.

Dwarfed and potted cherry, warped  
 With the sea-wind, frost with moonlight: child,  
 The hunting ghosts throng here for love  
 Where water falls, a steady wish;  
 The *ronin* stalk by, girded with two swords—  
 These kill, these kill, and have not died;

## HORIZON

You raise, as you have raised, the wooden sword—  
The great two-handed sword; and your fat breast  
Glow, trembling, in the patched  
And patchwork armour of your school.  
On this stage even a wall is silk  
And quakes according to a will; heads roll  
From the gutted, kneeling sons by rule.

So man is pressed into obedience  
Till even the eldest, unaccounting wish  
Of his bull's heart, is safe by rote  
From his tormentors—who are honourable  
In their way, which is your way, child.

The brushed ink of clerks, the abacus  
That tells another's fortune, life by life;  
The rice-ball garnished with a shred of flesh  
Or plum, or blossom, and thus named—  
Are these the commerce of the warrior  
Who bowed in blue, a child of four,  
To the fathers and their father, Strife?

But War delivers all things—men from men  
Into the hope of death: Deliverer,  
Who whirled the child's grey ashes from the West  
Into the shrine beside the rocks: O Way  
That led the twitching body to the flame,  
Bring to this temple of the blind, burnt dead  
The mourning who awaken from your dream  
Before a lacquered box, and take the last  
Dry puff of smoke, in memory  
Of this weak ghost.

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NOEL F. BUSCH

## OCCUPATION OF JAPAN

THE occupation of Japan was touched off by the most highly publicized explosion in history, in August of 1945; but while the world has since heard plenty about the atom bomb, it has heard comparatively little about Japan. In an era providing as much to worry about as the present one there are obvious reasons for this omission. Nonetheless, whatever has kept the subject, except for fragmentary or perfunctory mention, off the world's front pages, seems regrettable. For the occupation is not only important but also lively, strange and highly entertaining.

The basic factor in the strangeness of the occupation of Japan lies, naturally, in the character of the Japanese themselves. Since the Japanese character is explicable, in terms of history and environment, it can be argued that it is not intrinsically mysterious at all. Nonetheless, the manifestations of this character, to people who have had neither the obligation nor the opportunity to make such a study, are definitely surprising; and even more astounding than the Japanese impudence in starting the war, and their savagery in conducting it, have been their reactions following it.

To define the Japanese attitude toward defeat requires first of all, at least, a superficial understanding of that tedious cliché, 'face'. In itself there is nothing very mysterious about 'face'; it merely means self-esteem, or, more precisely, a confidence that the character which the world sees in one conforms more or less to the character that one wishes to display. However, where the oriental idea of self-esteem differs from the occidental is in the nature of the justification which the individual demands for this condition which is indispensable to both.

For most Europeans, for example, loss of the war to Japan might have resulted in a considerable loss of personal and individual face. For the Japanese, losing the war entailed no such loss. He was spared any sense of personal guilt on this score by the simple fact that the Emperor proclaimed the surrender. To the Japanese, one of the fundamentals upon which face depends consists exactly in obedience to this dignitary. Hence, the minute the surrender was announced, it became just as important