CHAPTER 13

THE DEATH OF MY LAST COLLEAGUES c.1962–1964

The year in which we had to give up getting off Guam – I think it was 1963 – remained quiet until the summer. I was living my ordinary day-to-day life underground as before, which was monotonous but regular.

Towards the end of the summer, the morning sky looked threatening. As a few typhoons visited this island every year, I was not seriously worried by that, and kept on sleeping in the hole. Gradually, however, the noise of the wind intensified. It seemed that there was not so much rainfall. Simply, the wind blew very violently.

Next morning, I spied from the entrance what had happened outside. All the bamboo leaves had been blown off. Many bamboos were felled like flattened foxtail grasses. Dead bamboo had disappeared. It was a disaster. The area used to be dark even during the daytime under the bamboo foliage. It was then as bright as an open space.

In the meantime, the wind became stronger again. I heard trees and bamboo being broken and torn apart, making a huge, terrible noise. While I was frightened by the powerful storm, the rain began to pour. Within thirty minutes, the stream at the rear of my hole rose. Water flew throughout the bamboo thicket like a large river.

My underground house was, not surprisingly, inundated up to 8 inches (20 cm) above the floor. The floor boards floated on the water. Water leaked also from the ceilings, and ran onto the drying shelves above the hearth. Drops began to fall upon the hearth. I had few trays or buckets to cover the hearth. I therefore used all sorts of
household equipment to defend the hearth from the invading water.

The matter of utmost strategic significance for my life underground at that stage was fire. I ignited as many as three or four cord wicks and hung them from shelves; lighted and hung an emergency palm oil lump to light the room; and with this illumination, I embarked on the cleaning of the lavatory.

I thought that because of the torrents of water running along the stream at that time, I could throw away the sediments of the lavatory without being detected by the enemy. I shovelled the sediments using a bamboo pole with a fragment of a bombshell tied to its end; went, completely naked, out of the hole; and frantically proceeded to throw the rubbish away into the river. Yes, I made my lavatory to be a sort of water closet, but because bamboo roots filled its sink and drainage duct and prevented the flow thereby, I had no choice but to utilize my tribal machete, which I used as a kitchen knife, in order to cut roots and clear the sink and drain. I then placed the roots on a cooking pan to carry and throw them away into the river. Under the circumstances, I had to set aside any worry about the sanitary consequences of this course of action.

I cleaned my ‘water closet’ whenever a typhoon raised the river water. Shichi and Nakahata’s lavatory was a mere tank without any drainage. Therefore, they pulled the excrement out with a large bamboo scoop, and dug holes in the jungle to dispose of it about once a year or so. They had to do so in a manner in which no enemy could realize their presence.

An ordinary typhoon on Guam caused lots of rainfall for a few days. However, this particular typhoon generated unprecedented, extremely powerful winds, sustained over a week. It did not rain so much. After the storm, the entire piece of jungle had been flattened to appear like a huge carpet of fallen leaves.

Foxtail grasses were wiped out from the surface of the earth, big old trees were rooted out, bamboo was torn and broken, and even some underground stems on which a few pieces of bamboo were growing had been gouged out of the earth. All the trees sustained severe damage. It was by far the most violent super-typhoon I had ever experienced.