

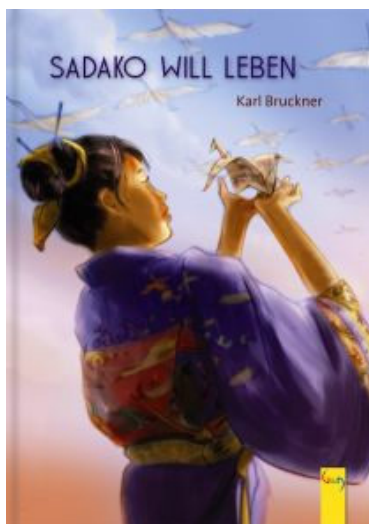
## Sadako wants to live

### Book and author:

Karl Bruckner, one of the internationally most successful Austrian youth book authors, has written one of the most touching and powerful texts about the fate of Sadako Sasaki, the Japanese girl that survived the atomic bombing over Hiroshima but that about ten years later eventually became its victim after the onset of radiation induced leukemia.

The fate of Sadako Sasaki is real and stirred worldwide concern. Sadako has become a symbol of a worldwide peace movement. A statue has been built in her memory in Hiroshima. It shows the girl standing on a symbolic bomb, letting a crane fly.

*Sadako wants to live* was first published in 1961 and was Bruckners biggest international success. There have been several editions, the last one to date being published by the G&G Publishing House in 2011. It has been translated into seven languages so far (Italian, Croatian, Spanish, Korean, Danish, Chinese and Yugoslav) and has received several awards, among others the "Austrian State Prize for children's and youth literature", and has been included in the roll of honor of the "Hans-Christian-Andersen literary prize".



### Content:

Karl Bruckner starts his story a few days prior to the atomic bombing over Hiroshima on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1945. He describes these days firstly from the viewpoint of the citizens and takes the family Sasaki as an example: the mother works in a war factory, the father is based as a soldier somewhere outside the city, the two kids – the boy Shigeo and his younger sister Sadako – have to get along by themselves during the day. Life in Hiroshima at this time is characterized by deprivations and hunger because of the war. The war has changed the people, divides them into doubters, obedient ones and war enthusiasts. A lot of children are being brought out of the city by train at this point as an airstrike on Hiroshima is anticipated. Shigeo and Sadako do not have this privilege.

Karl Bruckner also describes these days from the point of view of the Japanese Army and above all from the point of view of a few American soldiers who conduct reconnaissance flights over the city. A lot of soldiers already doubt their sanity because of all the horror they have already experienced during the war.

Also the historical and political background from Pearl Harbour until the atomic bombing over Hiroshima is being illuminated and the observations and the confusion of the unsuspecting soldiers in the days prior to the bombing are being portrayed.

Slow motion-like Karl Bruckner describes the minutes prior to the bombing and the minutes of horror after the bombing. In a depressing way the reader experiences those moments from the point of view of several people in the city and from the point of view of the unbelieving pilots of the plane out of which the bomb had been dropped.

Miraculously the whole family Sasaki survives the horror of the bombing. Bruckner resumes his story about 9 months after the catastrophe. He describes the miserable life of the survivors; children that search for saleable metal pieces between the debris, thieves and black marketers, wounds that won't heal, full hospitals, poverty and homelessness. But also the hope of the people when the cherry trees in front of the city town hall are in blossom again in April of the following year or when mister Sasaki for the first time after the catastrophe dares to think about resuming his work as a barber.

Two years after the bomb mister Sasaki has opened his own barber shop with the help of a business partner and has built a little wooden house for his family. There are memorial events on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August.

The book ends with a glimpse on the year 1955 – 10 years after the catastrophe. The family Sasaki is well, both kids have grown up seemingly healthy. Sadako – 14 years old by this time – participates with great success at a memorial bicycle race. But after the race she gets very ill. At first her family believes she has just overexerted herself at the race. But Sadako doesn't recover. With horror the doctors detect the onset of radiation induced leukemia 10 years after the bomb. In the hospital Sadako begins to hopefully fold 1000 cranes out of gold paper. According to a Japanese legend the gods will fulfill everyone a wish that folds 1000 paper cranes –Sadako would then be healthy again. In the end even the American doctors want to believe in this miracle, but after the 990<sup>th</sup> crane Sadako loses the fight against the disease.