Project book volume 2
"Now Down" — Hiroshima

1. EXPLOSION: SEQUENCE AND SIMULTANEITY

Greenwich Time	*11:16 P. M.*	August 5	1945
New York Time	*6:16 P. M.*	August 5	1945
Chicago Time	*5:16 P. M.*	August 5	1945
San Francisco Time	*3:16 P. M.*	August 5	1945
Pearl Harbor Time	*1:16 P. M.*	August 5	1945
Tinian Island Time	*9:16 A.M.*	August 6	1945
Hiroshima Time	*8:16 A.M.*	August 6	1945

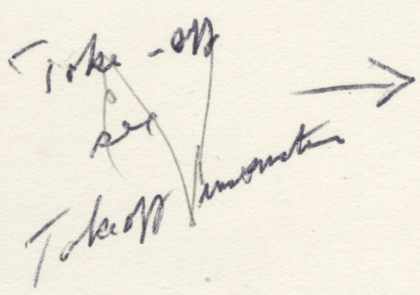
2. GOODBYE TO TINIAN

Now that all the "unauthorized items" are cleared from the bomber, including
The optimistic irrelevance of six packs
Of condoms, and three pairs of
Pink silk panties. Now that
The closed briefing session of midnight
Is over, with no information from Colonel Tibbets, commander, on the
Secret, obsessive question of every crewman—What
Is the cargo? From Tibbets only

That it is "very powerful." Now that
The crew, at the end of the briefing,
Have taken what comfort they can from the prayer
Of their handsome chaplain, a man's man of
Rich baritone—"Almighty Father,
Who wilt hear the prayer of them that love Thee,
We pray Thee to be with those
Who brave the heights
Of Thy heaven . . ."

And now that around the bomber the klieg lights
Murdering darkness, the flashbulbs, the barking
Of cameramen, the anonymous faces preparing to be famous,
The nag of reporters, the handshakes, the jokes,
The manly embraces,
The scrape of city shoes on the tarmac,
The news
From weather scouts out that clouds hovering over
The doomed world will, at dawn,
Probably clear. And,

Now down to brass tacks, Lewis,
The flawless co-pilot,
Addresses the crew, ". . . just don't
Screw it up. Let's do this really great!"



3. TAKE-OFF: TINIAN ISLAND

Colonel Tibbets, co-pilot beside him,
Lays hand to controls of the plane, which he
Has named for his mother, Enola Gay.

Pocketed secretly in Tibbets' survival vest,

Under the pale green coverall, is the
Metal container of twelve containers of cyanide,
These for distribution to command if facing capture.

Though a heavy-calibre side arm would serve.

The tow jeep strains at the leash. Wheels,
Under the weight of 150,000 pounds,
Overweight 15,000, crunch
Off the apron, bound for the runway. Position taken.

"This is Dimples Eighty-two to
North Tinian Tower. Ready for
Takeoff instructions."

So that is her name now. At least in code. Dimples.

"Tower to Dimples Eighty-two. Clear
To taxi. Take off Runway A, for Able."

At 2:45 A.M., August 6, Tinian Time,
Tibbets to Lewis:
"Let's go!"

All throttles full down,
She roars down the runway, flicking past
Avenues of fire trucks, ambulances, overload
The last gamble, and runway
Now spilling furiously toward
The black sea-embrace.

Who would not have trusted the glittering record of Tibbets?

But even Lewis cries out. Grabs at controls. Tibbets,
Gaze fixed, hears nothing. Time
Seems to die. But
Iron hands, iron nerves tighten at last, and
The control is drawn authoritatively back. The carriage
Rises to show
The air-slick belly where death sleeps.

This at cliff-verge.

Below, white, skeletal hands of foam
Grope up. Strain up.

Are empty.

4. MYSTIC NAME

Some 600 miles north-northwest to Iwo Jima, where,
In case of defect developing in the *Enola Gay*,
Tibbets will land, transfer cargo to
The waiting standby plane,
And take over. If not necessary,
No landing, but he will rendezvous
With weather planes and two B-29's
To fly with him as observers.

At 3 A.M., well short of Iwo Jima, code lingo
To Tinian Tower: "Judge going to work"—
Innocently to announce the arming
Of the cargo. The cargo,
Inert as a sawed off tree trunk ten feet long,
Twenty-eight inches in diameter, two and a half tons in weight, lies
In its dark covert.

It is
So quiet, so gentle as it rocks
In its dark cradle, in namelessness. But some
Name it "The Beast," and some,
With what irony, "Little Boy." Meanwhile,
It sleeps, with its secret name
And nature.

Like the dumb length of tree trunk, but literally
A great rifle barrel packed with uranium,
Two sections, forward one large, to rear one small, the two
Divided by a "tamper" of neutron-resistant alloy.
All harmless until, backed by vulgar explosive, the small will
Crash through to
The large mass
To wake it from its timeless drowse. And that
Will be that. Whatever
That may be.

5. WHEN?

When can that be known? Only after
The delicate and scrupulous fingers of "Judge"
Have done their work. After:

1. Plugs, identified by the color green,
   Are installed in waiting sockets
2. Rear plate is removed
3. Armor plate is removed
4. Breech wrench frees breech plug
5. Breech plug is placed on rubber mat
6. Explosive charge is inserted,
   Four units, red ends to breech
7. Breech plug is re-inserted, tightened home

Already preferred by Tibbets.

What added satisfaction it would have been to know that
At 7:31 A.M. Japanese Time, the All Clear
~~Signal~~ sounds over Hiroshima.

7. SELF AND NON-SELF

Tibbets looks down, sees
The slow, gray coiling of clouds, which are,
Beyond words, the image
Of sleep just as consciousness goes. He looks up, sees
Stars still glaring white down into
All the purity of emptiness. For an instant,
He shuts his eyes.

Shut your own
Eyes, and in timelessness you are
Alone with yourself. You are
Not certain of identity.
Has that non-self lived forever?

Tibbets jerks his eyes open. There
Is the world.

8. DAWN

Full dawn comes. Movement begins
In the city below. People
May even copulate. Pray. Eat. The sun
Offers its circular flame, incomparable,
Worship-worthy.

9. THE APPROACH

Speed 200 miles per hour, altitude
31,060 feet, directly toward the
Target control point of Aioi Bridge. On time. On
Calculation. Polaroid glasses
(Against brilliance of expected explosion)
Ordered on. Color
Of the world changes. It
Changes like a dream.

10. WHAT *THAT* IS

What clouds remain part now, magically,
And there visible, sprawling supine, unfended, the city.
The city opens itself, ~~offers itself,~~
As in breathless expectancy.

Crossed hairs of bombsight approach
Aioi Bridge, as specified, on time,
For the target. Ferebee, bombardier, presses
Forehead devoutly to the cushion of bombsight.
Says, "I've got it."

The bomb is activated,
Self-controlled for the six-mile earthward
Plunge, and at that instant the plane,
Purged of its burden, leaps upward,
As though in joy, and the bomb
Will reach the calculated optimum of distance
Above ground, 1,890
Feet, the altitude determined
By the bomb's own delicate brain.

There,
The apocalyptic blaze of
New dawn

Bursts.

Temperature at heart of fireball:
50,000,000 degrees centigrade.

Hiroshima Time: 8:16 A.M., August 6, 1945.

11. LIKE LEAD

Of that brilliance beyond brilliance, Tibbets
Was later to report: "A taste like lead."

12. MANIC ATMOSPHERE

Now, after the brilliance,
Suddenly, blindly, the plane
Heaves, is tossed
Like a dry leaf in
The massive and manic convulsion of
Atmosphere, which, compressed, from
Earth, miles down,

Bounces.

The plane recovers.

Again, then, the heave, the tossing.

With recovery.

13. TRIUMPHAL BEAUTY

Now, far behind, from the center of
The immense, purple-streaked, dark mushroom that, there, towers
To obscure whatever lies below,
A plume, positive but delicate as a dream,
Of pure whiteness, unmoved by breath of any wind,
Mounts.

Above the dark mushroom,
It grows high—high, higher—
In its own triumphal beauty.

14. HOME

Later, home. Tinian is man's only home—
The brotherly hug, the bear-embrace, the glory, and
"We made it!"

15. SLEEP

The music, then solemn
Silence of the pinning of the medal,
The mutual salute. At last,
The gorging of the gorgeous feast
To the point of vomit, the slosh
Of expensive alcohol
In bellies expensively swollen.

15. SLEEP

Some men, no doubt, will, before sleep, consider
One thought: I am alone. But some,
In the mercy of God, or booze, do not
Long stare at the dark ceiling.