4 A SECRET NO LONGER

For several weeks it seemed that the prayers and good luck symbols had done their work well. Sadako felt strong and healthy as she ran longer and faster.

But all that ended one crisp, cold winter day in February. Sadako was running in the school yard. Suddenly everything seemed to whirl around her and she sank to the ground. One of the teachers rushed over to help.

"I ... I guess I'm just tired," Sadako said in a weak voice. When she tried to stand up, her legs went wobbly and she fell down again. The teacher sent Mitsue home to tell Mr. Sasaki.

He left his barbershop and took Sadako to the Red Cross Hospital. As they entered the building Sadako felt a pang of fear. Part of this hospital was especially for those with the atom bomb sickness.

In a few minutes Sadako was in an examining room where a nurse x-rayed her chest and took some of her blood. Dr. Numata tapped her back and asked a lot of questions. Three other doctors came in to look at Sadako. One of them shook his head and gently stroked her hair.

By now the rest of Sadako's family was at the hospital. Her parents were in the doctor's office. Sadako could hear the murmur of their voices. Once her mother cried, "Leukemia! But that's impossible!" At the sound of that frightening word Sadako put her hands over her ears.

She didn't want to hear anymore. Of course she didn't have leukemia. Why, the atom bomb hadn't even scratched her.

Nurse Yasunaga took Sadako to one of the hospital rooms and gave her a kind of cotton kimono to wear. Sadako had just climbed into bed when her family came in.

Mrs. Sasaki put her arms around Sadako. "You must stay here for a little while," she said, trying to sound cheerful. "But I'll come every evening."

"And we'll visit you after school," Masahiro promised.

Mitsue and Eiji nodded, their eyes wide and scared.

"Do I really have the atom bomb disease?" Sadako asked her father.

There was a troubled look in Mr. Sasaki's eyes, but he only said, "The doctors want to make some tests --- that's all." He paused. Then he added, "They might keep you here for a few weeks."

A few weeks! To Sadako it sounded like years. She would miss graduation into junior high school. And even worse, she would not be part of the racing team. Sadako swallowed hard and tried not to cry.

Mrs. Sasaki fussed over Sadako. She plumped the pillows and smoothed the bedspread.

Mr. Sasaki cleared his throat. "Is ... is there anything you want?" he asked.

Sadako shook her head. All she really wanted was to go home. But when? A cold lump of fear grew in her stomach. She had heard that many people who went into this hospital never came out.

Later Nurse Yasunaga sent the others away so that Sadako could rest. When she was alone, Sadako buried her face in the pillow and cried for a long time. She had never before felt so lonely and miserable.

Comprehension Check 4

本文の内容に合うものには○を、合わないものには×をつけなさい．

1. In February Sadako was running in the school yard, she sank to the ground. ( )

2. The teacher took Sadako to the Red Cross Hospital. ( )

3. Four doctors came into the examining room to look at Sadako. ( )

4. One of the doctors told Sadako that she had leukemia. ( )