



things

in

ink



By Ken Tanaka

things



in



ink

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The poet's prerogative

Being understood is overrated
In this age where rhyme's outdated
And subtlety is wrong and blatancy is good
And simple things are grossly overstated
It's almost our prerogative to be misunderstood.

When I write of leaves and of the dark and lonely wood
Quite possibly, they'll say my theme is "adolescent mood."
And when I write of dreams I had one day while I was idle
They take it deep to heart. (And no-one is more rude)
Than to suggest I toy with feelings of a suicidal

Today, so much of poetry is lost in translation
And meanings, (what they once were), change amid our inspiration.
But write, still write, for there is always so much more to give
Of your talent and your pen. Forsake the present frustration
Of being misunderstood, for that is our prerogative.

—August 2009

The Wheat Field

I saw them few short weeks ago
They raised their heads, vibrant and proud
But now the harvest time is here
And now the heads of wheat are bowed

They're yellow, now, and very pale.
In summer months they were quite green.
Now heavy with fruit, they yield to gale
They ripple as one. Wind combs between

I liked the fields of wheat before
When they were green and fresh from plow.
But as I gaze the golden floor,
I think.... I think I like them better now.

October 2008



Raining

I'll throw my umbrella into the
lake.

It's raining. Would you tell me why

I should bother trying to stay dry?

It's raining. It's not a mistake.

And then I'll take and toss my boots

Into a tree, then barefoot splash

The puddles as the lightnings flash

And I run skipping over roots.

Soaked to the skin. Why stay in clothes?

I litter those along the bower

And run naked through the shower.

I don't suppose anyone knows

When the rains will end and fun

Be over. But I hope the sun

Stays where it is behind the cloud.

But when it's back, then so it goes

I'll head back home, and not allowed

To be back without boots and clothes,

I'll change back into boots and clothes.

-December 25th 2008



The Wind (and I)

There is no-one on this hill

Except the wind (and I).

I wait here patiently until

The clouds go rolling by.

 Until the clouds sink down below

 The line where the sky ends,

 And all the hues of blue follow

 The clouds to where the rainbow bends.

Until the sky turns red and burns,

Turns black, and then the moon

With ten thousand stars returns

Each with a harp, playing a tune.

 I wish that I could share this thrill,

 This feast for ear and eye,

 With someone. But upon this hill

 Is no-one but the wind (and I)

— December 2008

Tell No One

Tell no one I was here.

I never whispered in thy ear.

Nor touched the rain wet window glass.

I wipe my fingerprints

And quickly disappear.

I leave no hints.

I brush the path

I sweep my trail away

I leave thee not a single note.

And at the foggy pier by boat

Silent and slow I sail away.

I leave no blossom by thy bed

As thou in peace and quiet sleep.

I leave no kiss upon thy head

Nor greeting nor a parting word

I trust that thou my secret keep,

And my unsaid goodbye is heard.

'Tis better no one know

That I was here to wipe thy eyes.

I left an age and some ago.

And told them all of my goodbyes.

But it was only thou, my dear

I could not bear to bid farewell

So I returned to say goodbye, and also tell,

Thee, tell no-one that I was here.



–August 2009

The Bottled Dream

I tossed my dream upon the sea
And said goodbye as it drifted
Away to drown its destiny.

A burden from my heart was lifted
As it floated past eye's scope.
I danced, released from chains and faking,
There appeared a brighter hope
That outshone the pain of forsaking.

Seasons came and went; sand passed
Through the hourglass, and I returned
To the marina where I'd cast
Away my bottled dream. I learned
My dream was yet upon the shore
And, I did not want it anymore.

—April 2008



Listening to Silence

I am listening to silence,
Surrounded by majestic trees
Where nothing stirs and not a breeze
Dare touch me. Where I count no expense
But listen only to the silence

Light filters through the foliage dense
And falls upon a leafy sea.
I hear the silence. It hears me
And peace, it is my recompense
As I unite with silence.

We appreciate quiet in its absence
In a world so full of noise
Amused by honking, beeping toys
I often take my leave. And hence,
I lie here listening to silence.



Mending Wings

The skies are grand, but I must land
Here on this isle for repose.
I pray that you will understand
As He already does, and knows.
I flew awhile with you, friend
But my wings are torn, and they must mend

For too long I had drawn upon
The strength in wings that I possessed
And now that my flying strength is gone,
I have the chance here in this nest
To find strength in the other things
That He gave me other than wings.

I do not hope that you would rest
With me. There is still too much sky
You have not seen, and it is best
We part awhile, you and I.
I have for a season descended,
I will return when these have mended.

—December 2008

Fallen Leaves

Autumn's trees in splendid dyes
Line these streets, in neat spaced plots
Upon the branch leaves feast our eyes.
But on the floor, they are forgot,
Stepped on, run on, trodden, crushed,
Most anything at all but found.
Praised on the branch, but in our rush
We overlook those on the ground.

.
It won't be very long before
The trees shed all and they are naked.
When leaves are gathered on the floor
And into tidy piles raked.
Then, with nothing to behold
Upon the skeletons of trees,
Perhaps we'll search for hidden gold
Amid raked piles if we please.
And then I hope we'll find and keep
The fallen leaves in autumn sleep.

—December 2008





Flying

On rainy days, on dreary days
I close my tired weary eyes
And dream of sunshine's warming rays
And fall upward into the skies

I who have no wings, can soar
In skies above, cast in a spell
Above the drenching ceaseless pour
Of rain, gladder than words can tell.

But when from dreams I am awoken
I, who was in cloudbursts drowned,
The spell remains cast and unbroken
I can yet fly, both feet on ground.

—July 2009

It's Music

It's music.

I hear it.

A sound of earth and spirit.

The perfect notes

Become a song that floats

In silence

There in heaven's sound

I, in life of music drowned,

am reborn into a universe

I did not dare to dream of.

Floating at first

I sink and am wholly immersed

In colors below and above

In hues of earth and spirit

It's music

I hear it.

—February 2009

A glowing street lamp stands in the center of the page, its light casting a warm glow. The background is a soft, blue twilight sky. The lamp is the central focus, with its light illuminating the scene.

The Old Man and the Street light

I could not see him very clearly.

In night mist his form was shrouded.

And as he walked past me he nearly

Squeezed by as though the path was crowded.

But there was only he and I.

He saw not me. He walked on by.

And stopping ahead some paces

Of me before a lone street light;

Looking up, his shadowed face, his

demeanor, dark, just like that night,

Changed to a smile as he gazed

The flames outshine the moon's rays.

—January 2009

Sleeping in Snow

The moon is brighter when night skies
Are dark and starless, black as coal
The snow is whiter when the wood
Is undisturbed and on this knoll
Rest only this one pair of eyes
Behind this warm and velvet hood.

I leave my footprints in the snow.
I print them leaving the main trail
Towards the knoll where I will stay
Tonight overlooking the vale
And river and the dale below
And sleep and reflect on today

I have with me a little lamp
That can be seen to passers by
They think perhaps I am a gnome
And they will ask each other why
Of all places I would make camp
In snow. Do I not have a home?

I do. But once in awhile
I walk on air. I take chances.
I do things though I do not know
I'll live through ice and fire dances.
Living is what makes life worthwhile.
Once in awhile I sleep in snow.

December 18, 2008


The background of the page is a painting of a city street at night. The scene is dominated by a large, arched stone bridge that spans across the frame. The bridge is illuminated with warm, golden lights, and its reflection is visible in the water below. The street is dark, with a few small, glowing lights scattered across it. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet solitude and atmospheric perspective. The painting style is characteristic of the 19th-century English school, with visible brushstrokes and a focus on light and color.

Silent City

Around me walls are cold as stone
The town's no place for being alone
Dark city lights surround me here.
Echoes ring out and disappear.
Into places I had not known
The echoes leave, and reappear.

Crossing the river bridge I hear
A splashing sound, not far, not near.
I see light moving on the tints
Of moonbeams on the subtle glints.
On river waves that so appear
As frothy white as light as hints

Across the bridge I stop in break
Thinking on which new path to take.
I walked the night there solitaire
I plod those dark city streets bare.
Tomorrow when the people wake
I will be someplace else somewhere



Only (this)

I don't know why,
but this moment (now)
is perfect. I
must keep it. How
should I preserve it?


A subtle thought intrudes me
“Do I deserve it?”
And for a blink the (now) eludes me
And a fragment has been lost.

And what remains is what was left
after my doubt took all it cost
out of my (then). This damned theft
gouged more than half out of our bliss.

Perhaps it's not all it could be.
Having been rendered only (this)
But it still holds real beautifully
and will remain in our hearts, deep.

Besides.
We've other moments to keep.

—December 2009



I Alone

We walk across the narrow path,
We leave our footprints in the snow
I hear the frozen blades of grass
Snapping under heavy shadow.

I hear a song from flowing brook
But I alone. The others wait
Not long enough, and do not listen.

I tell the others "Stop and look"
Where I see a snowflake glisten
But I alone. Only too late
The others look, but do not see.

Then in wild ocean-breezes blown
I feel a kiss...not just for me,
Thrown from the waves, inside the mist,
It touches them, but they don't feel it
Because they don't know just how real it
is.

And I alone am kissed.

—July 2009

Walking Through Pine Needles

The path, illuminated by
the shadow of the moonless sky,
was hedged about with very fine,
tall, sturdy, handsome trees of pine.

Their leaves were strewn about the ground
By air and sunlight, crisply browned.
The solitary noise around
Was me treading across the leaves.
Shoes on leaves. A crackling sound.

A silent owl in the eaves
of pine seemed fine without the moon.
I walked in darkness on a road
With fragrant leaves of pine trees strewn.

Now I remember that it snowed
that dark and lonely moonless night.
And the ground with needles browned
Was turned a carpet glowing white.
My path was brightened by the sound
Of fire from the leaves fast breaking,
in the wind through branches shaking.

-January 2009

Sunrises and Sunsets

The moon is queen of the night skies
But she fades slowly as the light
Of day spreads subtly, in slow break.
Yet these are rarely in our sight.
Behind closed eyelids sleeping eyes
Miss out on dawn before we wake.

The sun floats on a sea called sky
And high above most of the day.
He reigns as king, but starts to sink
With afternoon in the display
Of splendid red, pink, yellow dye
And then he drowns in heaven's ink.

Some of us take the time to pause
And gaze, although we cannot tell
The change from one frame to the next.
But just as well under its spell
I watch the sun setting because
It is a poem without text.

At last the moon silent returns
And reigns until the morning's dawn
The sun waits patiently behind
The black night sky, seemingly gone.
But it still burns, and so it turns
Sunrise is sunset in rewind.

—December 2008

Apparitions

I have touched you in the air;
In blackest night I've seen your face.
You caught my stare in my despair
searching your eyes for saving grace.

I have felt you in the rain;
By silent waters heard your voice;
I've seen white snow in scarlet stained
By blood you shed by your own choice.

I have not felt you long, nor heard
of you more than a moment's song.
My visions were in dark glass blurred.
And I'm too scared I could be wrong

Just hold me. Touch me once again.
Wipe my tears and move me.
I won't speak; your touch will explain
all and show me you love me.



A close-up photograph of a hand with a pink ring on the ring finger, reaching out over a blue body of water. The hand is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame. The water is a deep blue color with some ripples. In the lower right, a silver heart-shaped ornament is visible, hanging from a thin line. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a boat's hull or a piece of fabric.

Keep me

Though the miles company part,
And you from me are far removed,
Keep me somewhere in your heart,
Forgetting not that you are loved.
Forget the mountains and the seas
Dividing us; I'll do the same.
Trust the Force that destines destinies
And in His course, and in his time
When time and space no longer rhyme
I'll hear your voice calling my name.

— 2008

Two Raindrops

A raindrop fell from dreary sky
Downward hurled with curious haste
Into my world, and by and by
It landed in my mouth: a taste,
So bitter for a thing so small.
'Twas joined just moments after
by twin with flavor not at all
Alike his kin; t'was sweet with laughter.
Putting the sun back to her course.
And there I sat, and there I mused,
Was the first drop treated with more force?
Or was the second less abused?
Into the same world born was I
As any friend having two feet.
As those drops were born from the same sky:
Tears are like rain, being bitter or sweet.

—April 2008

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