

God of War and Other Poems

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When We were Poor

When we were poor in my childhood,
We saw so many goods in a post exchange
In the occupying U.S. army camp and said,
"Oh my, so many things," but we were not jealous.

At that time we were happy
With whatever little things we had
And shared with each other
Even small things.

Now we have abundant wealth and
Are tasting it extravagantly
As any kings and queens of old never did,
While our spirits have become enfeebled in proportion.

The People Who Make Mistakes

The righteous people
Offer some seemingly righteous reasons and
Claim that their side is
Absolutely right.

Sometimes they speak out loud
With their eyes full of anger,
And at other times they attack their enemies
Behind the scenes. They never give in.

- **I** am the one who hates to be
surrounded by the righteous.
I feel tightly squeezed and
Can't breathe freely.

I am the one who often makes mistakes
And I want to live with those imperfect ones,
Admitting to others
That all of us are liable to make mistakes.

My Family

Sometimes one of my family makes
A sudden screech,
"Oh! It's a spider!
Come and get rid of it!"

Then I say, "A spider is also a creation of God.
It is not good to dislike it
And throw it outside."
But no one tries to understand me.

This morning again one of them made a big fuss
About a spider and asked for my help.
I very reluctantly picked it up
And gently placed it outside.

Unfortunately spiders often come into my house
From nowhere.
Once in a while I find one
Small as a rice kernel in a dark corner,

Weaving its net carefully.

I love to lie down on the floor
And secretly watch it at work.
Sometimes a tiny creature is

Caught there,
Shaking the net slightly,
Above which the Heaven spreads,
And in the furthest area I can peek at its edge.

Sankichi

Sankichi, our neighbor, loves mushroom hunting.
Whenever he goes, his bamboo basket is filled half.
"How our backyard forest is gentle. See, it gives us
all kinds of mushrooms," he says in a pleasant mood.

But whenever he tries to eat the first one,
He is filled with anxiety. He whispers in his heart,
"This one may be poisonous. If I ate this,
I might be sick. I might even die."

But after all his chopsticks pick it up
and bring it to his mouth. "Father, please
don't eat a suspicious one! We beg you!" his family implores.
"Oh, don't worry, I am all right. You see, our backyard forest

is an Eden. It never makes poisonous ones." He slowly chews and
swallows it, never showing his scare. And
when he knows he is all right, his body slackens and
and the wave of ecstasy encloses him.

But it was different this morning. "Something wrong
with Sankichi!" Someone shouted and knocked at my door.
"What's the matter with him?!" I rushed into his house

and found him writhing with beads of sweat all over his face,

repeating faintly, "Help! Help!" His wife said he had found a new mushroom, which he was eating in a good mood, saying "Ah, good! It tastes really good!" Then suddenly his body began to tremble and fell on the floor,

"This is poisonous!" He tried hard to vomit it over. But the more he tried, the deeper into his intestines it went down. We rubbed and tapped his back, which didn't work. He was in travail all the while till the ambulance came.

A few days later, I went to see him in hospital. He was haggard in his bed and continually complained, "I was not careful enough. I thought the forest all gentle. I was mistaken. But I will never stop mushroom hunting. Never!"

A Scapegoat

In a corner of the darkening wilderness,
A goat was standing alone despondently.
Its fur was plucked out and numerous
Purple scars spread across his body.

Frightened first with my appearance,
He did not show any sign of moving away.
It must have been a goat recently
Driven out of a nearby village;

The goat who bore
All the guilt of the village people
And had been punished by their god for them,
Thus soothing him and redeeming them.

It was surely a most handsome
and healthy goat,
Who had never known any female,
But now it has become impure and dirty.

The moment our eyes met,
It tried to approach me. "Don't come!
Go away! My traveling
Has no end!" I repeated,

But he wouldn't go away. I hurried,
He trotted after me.
I threw him an angry gaze,
Then he turned his eyes away, but never left.

I have begun to wonder if the village people
And their god have both become happy
Because of this goat, who
Now is so near me that we can touch each other.

At a Station in India

When I tried to eat,
Suddenly
A small, dirty hand
Came in front of me

And I saw the dark face
Of a child
Staring at me
With his sunken eyes.

Embarrassed and even scared,
I put on his palm

A small piece of food and
Quickly shut the window.

The train moved,
But his eyes kept
Gazing at me deeper
The more I pretended not seeing.

This of 20 years ago still
Haunts me, and often
As I sit around the table
I feel his eyes gazing...

Hanna I Met in Israel

Hanna was in Auschwitz
When she was a little girl.
Her parents and her sister were burned to death there.
She told me, "You may not believe me, but

The German soldiers were sweet husbands
And gentle fathers at home.
They played ball with their kids
And took good care of their gardens.

They were polite to each other.
They were pious Christians
Who went to church faithfully
With their families on Sundays.

Martin Luther says in one of his papers
That it is all right for Christians to kill
Other people, if commanded by their government, and
that good Christians can be good soldiers.

I saw such Christians every day in Auschwitz!
As long as German Christians stick to that theology,
I'm terrified..." Her trembling voice soon faded away
And she fell into unfathomable silence.

Hanna's Story

Of course we prayed.
We had been taught that
God would surely come to help us
If we earnestly pray.

Torah says that God will
Protect us. So, everyday,
Day and night we prayed together
And asked him to save us.

But He did not come at all.
We vainly watched the smoke going up
From the chimneys. Meanwhile
Mother fell ill and was carried away.

Her enfeebled deep eyes
Watched us from the stretcher.
Soon after, sister became unable to
Stand and was carried away.

My hair began to fall out and
Dizziness often attacked me.
Finally I was freed by the advancing
Russian army which destroyed the Germans.

Doesn't God exist? If He does,

He should have come to rescue us.
If God exists, why didn't He come?
Does God exist now?

I do not understand.
I repeat this question over and over.
But God remains silent.
He never answers me.

A Military Nurse

In room 17 of a hospital in North Ward of Sapporo
An old woman patient begins to shout,
"Look! A head lying down here!"
Her eyes are wide open, her fingers trembling.

"A head there! A head beside my feet, too!
Heads lying all over! All
Staring at me! Help! I'm scared!" Though she can't
Stand alone, she struggles hard to flee.

She is Shioyama Kiyono, 84 years old, who was a
Military nurse for the Japanese army invading China.
She was right in the middle of the Nanjing Massacre.
After the war, she repatriated to Sapporo, but she never

Mentioned what she had seen in China, not even to her family,
Probably because she had been ordered not to.
But now attacked by senility, those memories,
Hidden forcibly beneath her consciousness, have begun to fly out.

"Are you going to shoot his brains out, sir!?"
"Blood scattered all over my white uniform!"
"Are you going to cut his head off, sir!?" "Look! The intestines

Are oozing out!" "A sea of blood is all over!" "Please! Please

Stop it!" Her face twists and her eyes,
Gazing at emptiness, are bloodshot.
The dark cries fly out from her throat
In big convulsions and small, attacking her alternately.

Held by her family and nurse, she is consoled.
With her back gently rubbed, she gains a little calmness.
Given a shot, she goes off into an ephemeral peace,
But even in this sleep

The figures of those murdered, and the figures of those
Japanese soldiers murdering appear again.
Is there anyone who can free her from these memories?
Anyone who can give her peace?

I can hear the laughter of these scholars and politicians
Who claim over wine that there was no such thing as a massacre,
But here is a woman who continues to suffer the
Nightmares even now when the new millenium has started.

President and Prime Minister

Did Hitler and his men
Become gods in Germany?
Were they enshrined in churches
Or temples to be worshipped?

In Japan even war criminals
Become gods or buddhas after their deaths.
Tohjyo became either one of them or both
And has been enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine.

In Germany does the President go
To the grave of Hitler to worship him?
In Japan the Prime minister goes to Yasukuni to worship
Tohjyo who became either a god or a buddha or both.

In Germany does the President give thanks to Hitler and
His men, saying that the present prosperity is owing to their deeds?
In Japan the Prime Minister gives thanks in his prayers for the deeds of
Tohjyo and his men who, they say, made the present prosperity.

In Germany does the President give a deep bow to the images of Hitler and his men
And ask them to protect the peace of his country?
In Japan the Prime Minister offers money and bows deeply,
Asking Tohjyo and his men to protect their Japan and its big enterprises.

What an American Missionary Told Me

In my native town of Missouri,
Fathers give guns
To their sons at a certain age.
I got it when I was thirteen.

It is easy to handle it.
We gathered together after the church worship
And had a nice time competing
Shooting. It makes us feel good.

If our country is attacked by enemies,
It is God's will to defend it by weapons, isn't it?
If you don't kill them, they kill you.
And shooting makes us feel good.

Actually what we should do is to
Attack them before they attack us.

This is the best defense!
And shooting makes us feel good.

Teachings of the Bible?
Don't kill?
Love your enemies? Oh, I know, I know,
But they don't apply to the real world.

This is the position of our church.
I hate small churches like yours
Which stick to these teachings of Jesus
And never fight.

If all the people in the world are pacifists like you,
There will be no problems.
But on the contrary most people are evil
And their countries can be our enemies at any time.

America

What happened to America?
That people's America of
Freedom and tolerance that
Whitman once sang about in ecstasy?

The people were equal there,
Blacks, Indians, women, the poor and babes,
Whitman once sang about them in ecstasy.
What happened to that cheerful America?

That democratic America
Which the immigrants blended into and
Worked together to build...
What happened to that generous America I once adored?

Perhaps it never existed? Was it
A mere semblance and the reality was
Extermination of native people,
Slavery, shooting, plundering of land,

Destruction of forests in the name of reclamation,
Discrimination, prejudice, haughtiness, deceit and invasion?
Is it the white men's society by the whites and for the whites?
What is reflected upon my perplexed eyes

Are the figures of youth whom
Whitman might have admired in his poems,
Now rushing like hunting dogs toward the enemies
At Bush's one simple whistle.

Martha

My father was a soldier. He was a sergeant when he quit the army. He is now a high school teacher in Florida. It's my father who wanted me to have the experience of a soldier. When I was a child, he often encouraged me to join the navy in my youth. He said that I could travel the whole world free and besides could find a nice husband.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared...Is someone knocking on the door?

So, when I finished high school, I applied for the navy and became a marine. Soon I was sent to a small island in the Pacific. For the first couple of weeks, everything was new and exciting. It was fun. During the Pacific War, the Japanese war ships were destroyed almost completely near this island, I hear. It took me only 2 hours to walk from one side to the other side. There were about 2000 marines there. There were no native people. There was only the base there.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared... Is someone knocking on the door?

What did I do there? There was nothing to do. I got up at five thirty in the morning. Breakfast was

at six thirty. Then I worked. I cleaned the floor and toilet. I cleaned the boat, too. Cleaning all day!
And everyday! Training? Boys were shooting sometimes. We females were cleaning almost all
the time, though only occasionally we ran, crawled, and shot pistols. I did not like to use pistol.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me... I am scared...Is someone knocking on the door?

Boring ! This describes the very life of this island. There was a ratio of fifteen boys to one girl.
Our pleasures were sex, alcohol, drugs, and rock'n'roll. One girl could sleep with as many boys as
she wanted. She could sleep with different boys every night. Of course, girls sometimes become
pregnant. Girls thought it an honor to be pregnant and to have a baby. It was often difficult to tell
who was the father. So, they became unmarried mothers. If the girl was fortunate, she could marry.
But normally they soon divorced. Me? I was never pregnant, although I slept with many boys.
About forty or fifty. You know, I was in the navy base for four years. If I did not have sex with
them, I would have died of boredom in this place.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared...Is someone knocking on the door?

I became an alcoholic there. Once I started drinking, I could not stop. If I didn't drink, my whole
body began trembling without ceasing. Everybody there was like me. Either an alcoholic or a drug
addict... Most of the marines were farm boys. They had been jobless. So they applied for the navy.
Some of them were attracted by the slogan, "Let us become marines and see the world free!" Coun-
try boys are good natured, but they are rough like pigs. They make awful sounds, snivel, and splash
soup when they eat. City boys are bad boys. They are ill-natured. They always shout angrily and
curse others.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared...Is someone knocking on the door?

We never read books. We were changed into unthinking animals. There were some who wanted to
learn skills. They hoped to find jobs after they quit the navy. But they seldom learned skills be-
cause what they were supposed to do was to train to become killers. They could quit the navy, but
they would return there again. They could not get along well outside the base. They are made into
such people. Since boys could not satisfy their sexual desires there, they wanted to visit other coun-
tries on U.S. ships. When they went to the Philippines for example, they quickly found girls and
slept with them. They wanted to marry them. Any women were O.K. with them.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared...Is someone knocking on the door?

It was all boring there. So, when there is news that a war may break out somewhere, they are excited and shout with joy. You know, there was a time when the US almost started to attack Iran. At that time they drank, sang, and danced all night, shouting "Let's go there right now and fight!" I could not do that. I could not continue to be there. I quit the navy and came to Japan. I was hoping to find a good job here. But I could not...Chaplain? Oh, yes, there was a chaplain there. His face was always red. He smelled of alcohol always. I went to him for counseling, but he said that his worry was much bigger than mine and that he wanted me to hear it. My church is a Southern Baptist church. All the pastors I went to for counseling in the States told me that the navy was a wonderful place and blessed me.

Sir, is it safe here? Someone is chasing me...I am scared... Is someone knocking on the door?

God of War

God of war, sometimes visible and invisible,
Showed up after his work of Terrorism,
Stood on the platform with his baton,

And started conducting.
Then the U.S. high tech vultures rushed to Afghan
And started unsparing bombardment.

His seeds bore splendid fruit again!
Joy danced on his face.
This god, who has been worshipped

In the mosques
Under the mask of Allah
And in the church

Under the mask of Christ,
Has been ceaselessly whispering to them

"Make wars."

Now so showily waved he his baton
Both camps responded in ecstatic unison,
"Kill them! Kill them!"

As he conducted more, their hatred
Increased more. His kingdom had been
The battle-field, but now it is the whole globe.

Even when he stopped conducting and disappeared,
He never failed to sow his seeds again.
It is this God who entices us,

"Go to war! Kill them!
I will install you
In my Yasukuni shrine as gods,

As I did before." And our prime minister,
Half-rising, is almost ready
To follow him, like a patient infected with high fever.

Questions to Sharon and His Party

Did your God really blow His trumpet
In your ears, repeating
"Eliminate all Palestinians!" ?
Aren't these enemies also the descendants of
Abraham, and therefore your own flesh and blood?

Since the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70,
You Jews had been wandering
Fugitives of the earth for about
1900 years, persecuted, barely surviving

And finally returning to your homeland,

But now you have turned into persecutors.

What did you learn in Auschwitz?

Is it that God would not intervene

Even though you observed the Law?

That what is really dependable is the weapon?

That the way to survive is to become persecutors?

Aren't you still obsessed with the trauma of Auchwitz?

Isn't it why you persecute your rivals?

Is it God of Abraham who tells you

To hate your neighbors?

Wasn't Abraham chosen by God

To serve your neighbor nations?

Wasn't serving them the only way

To obey Him?

Was there any other way?

Didn't Moses teach you to love

Aliens residing with you in your land as yourself?

Don't you have one drop of love

For your neighbors?

Where did the serving spirit of the Jews go?

Can't you trust God's fair judgment?

Can't you think of leaving yourselves to God?

Doesn't your Bible teach you how blessed

Peacemakers are?

Isn't it the God of darkness whom you worship?

He spreads enmity across the world,

And enjoys watching

You hate and

kill each other.

Is there any evidence against it ?

To Live Happily

We trap God,
Hang Him
In the stained glass,
Entrance Him
By organ music
And chorus.

We bind Him
By ritual,
Tickle Him
By prayers
And train Him
To become our pet.

And we freely
Make Him
Take off
Our guilt
Of exploiting
Too much,

Of having
Too much,
Of wasting
Too much,
Of living
Too comfortably.

Once the desert God,

Jealous
And wild;
Now an amulet
On a charm
Bracelet.

Jeremiah

He wants to keep his mouth shut,
But somehow placed
Upon his tongue are words,
Which quickly start to burn.
He tries hard to spit them out in a hurry,
But the tongue cramps
And the voices fly out as arrows of fire,
Attacking the people nearby,
Scooping out what they want to hide.

The people first frown, but soon
Their faces twitch.
They shut their ears and try to shake it off.
But the voices enter through
Every pore of their bodies.
They finally explode,
Grab Jeremiah, knock him down, and hold his mouth.

Today as usual, fleeing from their pursuit,
he hides himself in the darkness,
groaning,
"Cursed be the day of my birth!"
"Mother, why did you bear me?"
"God, why do I have to do all these things?
Leave me alone, please!
I even do not know how to speak!"

But even while he is thus appealing,
The words are put in his mouth without his knowing,
Which quickly burn and are ready
To fly out! He tries hard to keep his mouth tightly
Shut but it starts writhing.
Jeremiah will be in danger.
His life will be sought after even by his government.

Can We ?

Can we entertain a stranger?
Maybe we can entertain the
Legendary magi coming all the way
From the east on their camels.

But can we entertain the stranger
Who is wandering around our neighborhood?
Can we give him a bath, good food, and
Put him in a warm bed?

He may be a robber.
He may be a murderer.
He may be suffering from a contagious,
Fatal disease.

We may try to peep at him
Through the curtain
To see why
He is standing there.

And if we sense the slightest move
Of his approaching, we may become all tense,
Lock up all the doors and windows in a hurry,

And report him to the police.

But I sometimes wonder if our faith is
Only for our personal peace.
Shouldn't it teach us to
Invite and entertain him?

If so,
What should I do?
I can't entertain a stranger,
Even if he may be Jesus Christ.

Jesus Did Not Come Down

The soldiers clothed him in a
Faded purple uniform,
Mocked him, "Hail, King of the Jews,"
And spat upon him.
He did not turn away, but silently endured.

The soldiers put on him
A crown of thorns,
Mocked him, "Hail, King of the Jews,"
And spat upon him.
He did not turn away, but silently endured.

The soldiers knelt down
In mock homage to him,
Then stood up, laughing out.
Finally they nailed him on the cross.
He did not turn away, but silently endured.

The soldiers, the crucified robbers, and the spectators
Looked at crucified Jesus and

Reviled him, "Come down from the cross

That we may see and believe."

He did not come down.