

Nature

To the Nile

SON of the old moon-mountains African!
Chief of the Pyramid and Crocodile!
We call thee fruitful, and that very while,
A desert fills our seeing's inward span;
Nurse of swart nations since the world began,
Art thou so fruitful? Or dost thou beguile
Such men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,
Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?
O may dark fancies err! They surely do;
'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste
Of all beyond itself, thou dost bedew
Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste
The pleasant sun-rise, green isles hast thou too,
And to the sea as happily dost haste.

John Keats

A Bird Came Down the Walk

A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad
They looked like frightened beads, I thought;
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

Emily Dickinson

The Eagle (A Fragment)

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

To the Evening Star

THOU fair-hair'd angel of the evening,
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves, and while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And then the lion glares through the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flocks are cover'd with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence!

William Blake

Conflict

War is Kind

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind
Because your lover threw wild hands towards the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone
Do not weep
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment
Little souls who thirst for fight
These men were born to drill and die
The unexplained glory flies above them
Great is the battle god, great and his kingdom

A field where a thousand corpses lie.
Do not weep babe, for war is kind
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches
Raged at his breast, gulped and died.
Do not weep
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment
Eagle with crest of red and gold
These men were born to drill and die
Point for them the virtue of slaughter
Make plain to them the excellence of killing

And a field where a thousand corpses lie.
Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son
Do not weep
War is kind

Stephen Crane

The Terrorist, He's Watching

The bomb in the bar will explode at thirteen twenty.
Now it's just thirteen sixteen.
There's still time for some to go in,
And some to come out.

The terrorist has already crossed the street.
That distance keeps him out of danger,
and what a view- just like the movies:

A woman in a yellow jacket, she's going in.
A man in dark glasses, he's coming out.
Teenagers in jeans, they're talking.
Thirteen seventeen and four seconds.
The short one, he's lucky, he's getting on a scooter,
but the tall one, he's going in.

Thirteen seventeen and forty seconds.
That girl, she's walking along with a green ribbon in her hair.
But then a bus suddenly pulls in front of her.
Thirteen eighteen.
The girl's gone.
Was she that dumb, did she go in or not,
we'll see when they carry them out.
Thirteen nineteen.
Somehow no one's going in.
Another guy, fat, bald, is leaving, though.
Wait a second, looks like he's looking for something in his
pockets and
at thirteen twenty minus ten seconds
he goes back in for his crummy gloves.

Thirteen twenty exactly.
This waiting, it's taking forever.
Any second now.
No, not yet.
Yes, now.
The bomb, it explodes.

Wisława Szymborska

Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree

“Farewell to barn and stack and tree,
Farewell to Severn shore.
Terence, look your last at me,
For I come home no more.

“The sun burns on the half-mown hill, 5
By now the blood is dried;
And Maurice amongst the hay lies still
And my knife is in his side.

“My mother thinks us long away;
'Tis time the field were mown. 10
She had two sons at rising day,
To-night she'll be alone.

“And here's a bloody hand to shake,
And oh, man, here's good-bye;
We'll sweat no more on scythe and rake, 15
My bloody hands and I.

“I wish you strength to bring you pride,
And a love to keep you clean,
And I wish you luck, come Lammastide,
At racing on the green. 20

“Long for me the rick will wait,
And long will wait the fold,
And long will stand the empty plate,
And dinner will be cold.”

A. E. Houseman

Breakfast

He poured coffee
into his cup
he put milk
in his cup of coffee
he put sugar
in his cup of coffee and milk
With his teaspoon
he stirred it
he drank the coffee and milk
and he put down the cup
without speaking to me

He lit
a cigarette
he made rings
with the smoke
he put the ashes
in the ash-tray
without speaking to me
without looking at me

He got up
he put
his hat on his head
he put on
his raincoat
because it was raining
and he went out

in the rain
without a word
without a look.
And I, I put
my head in my hands
and wept.

Jacques Prevert (Translated by Regi Siriwardene)

Society

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time, son, 1
they used to laugh with their hearts
and laugh with their eyes;
but now they only laugh with their teeth,
while their ice-block-cold eyes 5
search behind my shadow.

There was a time indeed
they used to shake hands with their hearts;
but that's gone, son.
Now they shake hands without hearts 10
while their left hands search
my empty pockets.

'Feel at home'. 'Come again',
they say, and when I come
again and feel 15
at home, once, twice,
there will be no thrice-
for then I find doors shut on me.

So I have learnt many things,
I have learned to wear many faces 20
like dresses – homeface,
office face, street face, host face,cock-
tail face, with all their conforming smiles
like a fixed portrait smile.

And I have learned too 25
to laugh with only my teeth
and shake hands without my heart.
I have also learned to say 'Goodbye'
when I mean, 'Goodriddance!'
to say 'Glad to see you,' 30

without being glad; and to say 'It's been
nice talking to you,' after being bored.

But believe me, son,
I want to be what I used to be
when I was like you. I want 35
to unlearn all these muting things.
Most of all, I want to re-learn
how to laugh, for my laugh in the mirror
shows only my teeth like a snake's bare fangs!

So show me, son, 40
how to laugh; show me how
I used to laugh and smile
once upon a time when I was like you.

Gabriel Okara

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown

but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went downtown,
We people on the pavement looked at him;
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
'Good-morning,' and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich - yes, richer than a king ---
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Big Match, 1983

Glimpsing the headlines in the newspapers,
tourists scuttle for cover, cancel their options
on rooms with views of temple and holy mountain.
“Flash point in Paradise.” “Racial pot boils over.”
And even the gone away boy
who had hoped to find lost roots, lost lovers,
lost talent even, out among the palms,
makes timely return giving thanks
that Toronto is quite romantic enough
for his purposes.

Powerless this time to shelter or to share
we strive to be objective, try to trace
the match that lit this sacrificial fire.
the steps by which we reached this ravaged place.
We talk of “Forty Eight” and “Fifty Six”,
of freedom and the treacherous politics
of language; see the first sparks of this hate
fanned into flame in Nineteen Fifty Eight,
yet find no comfort in our neat solution,
no calm abstraction, and no absolution.

The game's in other hands in any case.
These fires ring factory, and hovel,
and Big Match fever, flaring high and fast,
has both sides in its grip and promises
dizzier scores than any at the oval.

In a tall house dim with old books and pictures
calm hands quit the clamouring telephone.
'It's a strange life we're leading here just now,
not a dull moment. No one can complain
of boredom, that's for sure. Up all night keeping watch,
and then as curfew ends and your brave lands
dash out at dawn to start another day
of fun, and games, and general jollity,
I send Padmini and the girls to a neighbor's house.

Who, me? - Oh I'm doing fine. I always was
a drinking man you know and nowadays
I'm stepping up my intake quite a bit,
the general idea being that when those torches
come within fifty feet of this house don't you see
it won't be my books that go up first, but me."

A pause. Then, steady and every bit as clear
as though we are neighbors still as we had been
In Fifty Eight. "Thanks, by the way for ringing.
There's nothing you can do to help us but
it's good to know some lines haven't yet been cut."

Out of the palmyrah fences of Jaffna
bristle a hundred guns.
Shopfronts in the Pettah, landmarks of our childhood
Curl like old photographs in the flames.
Blood on their khaki uniforms, three boys lie dying;
a crowd looks silently the other way.
Near the wheels of his smashed bicycle
at the corner of Duplication Road a child lies dead
and two policemen look the other way
as a stout man, sweating with fear, falls to his knees
beneath a bo-tree in a shower of sticks and stones

flung by his neighbor's hands.
The joys of childhood, friendships of our youth
ravaged by pieties and politics
screaming across our screens her agony
at last exposed, Sri Lanka burns alive.

Yasmine Gooneratne

Life

The Earthern Goblet

O silent goblet red from head to heel,
How did you feel
When you were being twirled
Upon the Potter's wheel
Before the Potter gave you to the world?

'I felt a conscious impulse in my clay
To break away
From the great Potter's hand that burned so warm.

I felt vast
Feeling of sorrow to be cast
Into my present form.

'Before that fatal hour
That saw me captive on the Potter's wheel
And cast into this crimson goblet-sleep,
I used to feel
The fragrant friendship of a little flower
Whose root was in my bosom buried deep.

'The Potter has drawn out the living breath of me
And given me a form which is the death of me.
My past unshapely natural state was best
With just one flower flaming through my breast.'

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

Father and Son

Father

It's not time to make a change,
Just relax, take it easy.
You're still young, that's your fault,
There's so much you have to know.
Find a girl, settle down,
If you want you can marry.
Look at me, I am old, but I'm happy.

I was once like you are now, and I know that it's not easy,
To be calm when you've found something going on.
But take your time, think a lot,
Why, think of everything you've got.
For you will still be here tomorrow, but your dreams may not.

Son

How can I try to explain, cause when I do he turns away again.
It's always been the same, same old story.
From the moment I could talk I was ordered to listen.
Now there's a way and I know that I have to go away.
I know I have to go.

Father

It's not time to make a change,
Just sit down, take it slowly.
You're still young, that's your fault,

There's so much you have to go through.
Find a girl, settle down,
If you want, you can marry.
Look at me, I am old, but I'm happy.

Son

All the times that I've cried, keeping all the things I knew inside,
It's hard, but it's harder to ignore it.
If they were right, I'd agree, but it's them they know, not me,
Now there's a way and I know that I have to go away.
I know I have to go.

Cat Stevens

Fear

I don't want them to turn
my little girl into a swallow.
She would fly far away into the sky
and never fly again to my straw bed,
or she would nest in the eaves 5
where I could not comb her hair.
I don't want them to turn
my little girl into a swallow.

I don't want them to make
my little girl a princess. 10
In tiny golden slippers
how could she play on the meadow?
And when night came, no longer
would she sleep at my side.
I don't want them to make 15
my little girl a princess.

And even less do I want them
one day to make her queen.
They would put her on a throne
where I could not go to see her. 20
And when nighttime came
I could never rock her ...
I don't want them to make
my little girl a queen!

Gabriela Mistral (Translated by Doris Dana)

The Clown's Wife

About my husband, the clown,
what could I say?

On stage, he's a different person.
Up there he's a king on a throne,
but at home you should hear him moan.

The moment he walks through that door
without that red nose and them funny clothes,
he seems to have the world on his shoulder.

I do me best to cheer him up, poor soul.
I juggle with eggs, I turn cartwheels,
I tell jokes, I do me latest card trick,
I even have a borrow of his red nose.

But he doesn't say exactly how he feels,
doesn't say what's bothering him inside.
Just sits there saying almost to himself:

'O life, ah life,
what would I do without this clown of a wife?'

Johnson Agard

Humour

The Camel's Hump

The Camel's hump is an ugly lump
Which well you may see at the Zoo;
But uglier yet is the hump we get
From having too little to do.

Kiddies and grown-ups too-oo-oo,
If we haven't enough to do-oo-oo,
We get the hump-
Cameelious hump-
The hump that is black and blue!

We climb out of bed with a frouzly head,
And a snarly-yarly voice.
We shiver and scowl and we grunt and we
growl
At our bath and our boots and our toys;

And there ought to be a corner for me
(And I know there is one for you)
When we get the hump-
Cameelious hump-
The hump that is black and blue!

The cure for this ill is not to sit still,
Or frowst with a book by the fire;
But to take a large hoe and a shovel also,
And dig till you gently perspire;

And then you will find that the sun and the
wind,
And the Djinn of the Garden too,
Have lifted the hump-
The horrible hump-
The hump that is black and blue!

I get it as well as you-oo-oo-
If I haven't enough to do-oo-oo!
We all get the hump-
Cameelious hump-
Kiddies and grown-ups too!

Rudyard Kipling

Upside-Down

Once there lived an Upside-Down
Who was the talk of all the town.
If he was told to turn to right
He turned to left out of spite.
 If he went sailing in a boat
 No one could make him understand
 Why he seemed to be afloat
 And what had happened to the land.
He read his letters backside-fore,
And wrote his letters backside-fore.
So if a "ton" was to be read
He read it "not," the dunder-head!
 All his life he was afraid
 To cross a bridge. He'd always wade
 (Unless the water was too deep
 Or the embankment was too steep.)
He went into a restaurant;
The waiter said, "What do you want?"
He said, "I'd like a pair of socks
With clocks on them, and in a box."
 The circus came to town one day;
 Of course he went without delay.
 And everyone said Upside-Down
 Was funnier than the circus clown.
Just yesterday the postman brought
A letter to him from his aunt:
"Shall I read it? P'raps I ought,
P'raps I will, p'raps I can't."

He eyed it this way, eyed it that,
Then he stuck it in his hat.
His auntie wrote, "Dearest boy,
All you do is to annoy:
Wearing flannels when it's hot,
Going naked when it's not!
You must behave as others do
If they're to have respect for you!"

Alexander Kushner (translated by Margaret Wettin)

The Huntsman

Kagwa hunted the lion,
Through bush and forest went his spear.
One day he found the skull of a man
And said to it, 'How did you come here?'
The skull opened its mouth and said,
'Talking brought me here.'

Kagwa hurried home;
Went to the king's chair and spoke:
'In the forest I found a talking skull.'
The king was silent. Then he said slowly,
'Never since I was born of my mother
Have I seen or heard of a skull which spoke.'

The king called out his guards:
'Two of you now go with him
And find this talking skull;
But if his tale is a lie
And the skull speaks no word,
This Kagwa himself must die'

They rode into the forest;
For days and nights they found nothing.
At last they saw the skull; Kagwa
Said to it, "How did you come here?"
The skull said nothing. Kagwa implored,
But the skull said nothing.

The guards said, 'Kneel down.'
They killed him with sword and spear.
Then the skull opened its mouth;
'Huntsman, how did you come here?'
And the dead man answered,
'Talking brought me here.'

Edward Lowbury

Two's Company

The sad story of a man who didn't believe in ghosts

They said the house was haunted, but
He laughed at them and said, 'Tut, tut!
I've never heard such tittle-tattle
As ghosts that groan and chains that rattle;
And just to prove I'm in the right,
Please leave me here to spend the night.'

They left him just as dusk was falling
With a hunchback moon and screech-owls calling.

But what is that? Outside it seemed
As if chains rattled, someone screamed!

Come, come, it's merely nerves, he's certain
(But just the same, he draws the curtain).
The stroke of twelve - but there's no clock!
He shuts the door and turns the lock
(Of course, he knows that no one's there,
But no harm's done by taking care!);
Someone's outside - the silly joker,
(He may as well pick up the poker!)
That noise again! He checks the doors,
Shutters the windows, makes a pause
To seek the safest place to hide -
(The cupboard's strong - he creeps inside).
'Not that there's anything to fear!'
He tells himself, when at his ear
A voice breathes softly, 'How do you do!
I am a ghost. Pray who are you?'

Raymond Wilson

Short Stories and Non-fiction

The Nightingale and the Rose - Oscar Wilde

“SHE said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses,” cried the young Student, “but in all my garden there is no red rose.”

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

“No red rose in all my garden!” he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. “Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched.”

“Here at last is a true lover,” said the Nightingale. “Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.”

“The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night,” murmured the young student, “and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break.”

“Here, indeed, is the true lover,” said the Nightingale. “What I sing of, he suffers: what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.”

“The musicians will sit in their gallery,” said the young Student, “and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her

feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;" and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose?" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are yellow,” it answered; “as yellow as the hair of the mermaid who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student’s window, and perhaps he will give you what you want.”

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student’s window.

“Give me a red rose,” she cried, “and I will sing you my sweetest song.”

But the Tree shook its head.

“My roses are red,” it answered, “as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year.”

“One red rose is all I want,” cried the Nightingale, “only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?”

“There is a way,” answered the Tree; “but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you.”

“Tell it to me,” said the Nightingale, “I am not afraid.”
“If you want a red rose,” said the Tree, “you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart’s-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine.”

“Death is a great price to pay for a red rose,” cried the Nightingale, “and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?”

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

“Be happy,” cried the Nightingale, “be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart’s-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense.”

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale, who had built her nest in his branches.

“Sing me one last song,” he whispered; “I shall feel very lonely when you are gone.”

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song, the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

“She has form,” he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove – “that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good!” And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river - pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

“Look, look!” cried the Tree, “the rose is finished now;” but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

“Why, what a wonderful piece of luck! he cried; ‘here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name;’” and he leaned down and plucked it. Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

“You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose,” cried the Student. Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you.”

But the girl frowned.

“I am afraid it will not go with my dress,” she answered; ‘and, besides, the Chamberlain’s nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers.”

“Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful,” said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.

“Ungrateful!” said the girl. “I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don’t believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain’s nephew has;” and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

“What a silly thing Love is,” said the Student as he walked away. ‘It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics.’”

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

An extract from ‘Colin Cowdrey Lecture’
– ‘The Lahore Attack’

Kumar Sangakkara

I was fortunate that during my life I never experienced violence in Sri Lanka first hand. They have been so many bomb explosions over the years but I was never in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In Colombo, apart from these occasional bombs, life was relatively normal. People had the luxury of being physically detached from the war. Children went to school, people went to work, I played my cricket.

In other parts of the country, though, people were putting their lives in harm’s way every day either in the defence of their motherland or just trying to survive the geographical circumstances that made them inhabit a war zone.

For them, avoiding bullets, shells, mines and grenades, was imperative for survival. This was an experience that I could not relate to. I had great sympathy and compassion for them, but had no real experience with which I could draw parallels.

That was until we toured Pakistan in 2009. We set-off to play two Tests in Karachi and Lahore. The first Test played on a featherbed, past without great incident.

The second Test was also meandering along with us piling up a big first innings when we departed for the ground on day three. Having been asked to leave early instead of waiting for the Pakistan bus, we were anticipating a day of hard toil for the bowlers.

At the back of the bus the fast bowlers were loud in their complaints. I remember Thilan Thushara being particularly vocal, complaining that his back was near breaking point. He joked that he wished a bomb would go off so we could all leave Lahore and go back home.

Not thirty seconds had passed when we heard what sounded like fire crackers going off. Suddenly a shout came from the front: “Get down they are shooting at the bus.”

The reaction was immediate. Everyone dived for cover and took shelter on the aisle or behind the seats. With very little space, we were all lying on top of each other.

Then the bullets started to hit. It was like rain on a tin roof. The bus was at a standstill, an easy target for the gunmen.

As bullets started bursting through the bus all we could do was stay still and quiet, hoping and praying to avoid death or injury.

Suddenly Mahela, who sits at the back of the bus, shouts saying he thinks he has been hit in the shin. I am lying next to Tilan. He groans in pain as a bullet hits him in the back of his thigh.

As I turn my head to look at him I feel something whizz past my ear and a bullet thuds into the side of the seat, the exact spot where my head had been a few seconds earlier.

I feel something hit my shoulder and it goes numb. I know I had been hit, but I was just relieved and praying I was not going to be hit in the head.

Tharanga Paranavithana, on his debut tour, is also next to me. He stands up, bullets flying all around him, shouting “I have been hit” as he holds his blood-soaked chest. He collapsed onto his seat, apparently unconscious.

I see him and I think: “Oh my God, you were out first ball, run out the next innings and now you have been shot. What a terrible first tour.”

It is strange how clear your thinking is. I did not see my life flash by. There was no insane panic. There was absolute clarity and awareness of what was happening at that moment.

I hear the bus roar into life and start to move. Dilshan is screaming at the driver: “Drive...Drive.” We speed up swerve and are finally inside the safety of the stadium.

There is a rush to get off the bus. Tharanga Paranawithana stands up. He is still bleeding and has a bullet lodged lightly in his sternum, the body of the bus tempering its velocity enough to be stopped by the bone.

Tilan is helped off the bus. In the dressing room there is a mixture of emotions: anger, relief, joy. Players and coaching staff are being examined by paramedics. Tilan and Paranaivithana are taken by ambulance to the hospital.

We all sit in the dressing room and talk. Talked about what happened. Within minutes there is laughter and the jokes have started to flow. We have for the first time been a target of violence. We had survived.

We all realized that what some of our fellow Sri Lankans experienced every day for nearly 30 years. There was a new respect and awe for their courage and selflessness.

It is notable how quickly we got over that attack on us. Although we were physically injured, mentally we held strong.

A few hours after the attack we were airlifted to the Lahore Air Force Base.

Ajantha Mendis, his head swathed in bandages after multiple shrapnel wounds, suggests a game of Poker. Tilan has been brought back, sedated but fully conscious, to be with us and we make jokes at him and he smiles back.

We were shot at, grenades were thrown at us, we were injured and yet we were not cowed.

We were not down and out. “We are Sri Lankan,” we thought to ourselves, “and we are tough and we will get through hardship and we will overcome because our spirit is strong.”

This is what the world saw in our interviews immediately after

the attack: we were calm, collected, and rational. Our emotions held true to our role as unofficial ambassadors.

A week after our arrival in Colombo from Pakistan I was driving about town and was stopped at a checkpoint. A soldier politely inquired as to my health after the attack. I said I was fine and added that what they as soldiers experience every day we only experienced for a few minutes, but managed to grab all the news headlines. That soldier looked me in the eye and replied. "It is OK if I die because it is my job and I am ready for it. But you are a hero and if you were to die it would be a great loss for our country."

I was taken aback. How can this man value his life less than mine? His sincerity was overwhelming. I felt humbled.

This is the passion that cricket and cricketers evoke in Sri Lankans. This is the love that I strive every-day of my career to be worthy of.

The Lumber Room - Saki

THE CHILDREN WERE to be driven, as a special treat, to the sands at Jagborough. Nicholas was not to be of the party; he was in disgrace. Only that morning he had refused to eat his wholesome bread-and-milk on the seemingly frivolous ground that there was a frog in it.

Older and wiser and better people had told him that there could not possibly be a frog in his bread-and-milk and that he was not to talk nonsense; he continued, nevertheless, to talk what seemed the veriest nonsense, and described with much detail the colouration and markings of the alleged frog. The dramatic part of the incident was that there really was a frog in Nicholas's basin of bread-and-milk; he had put it there himself, so he felt entitled to know something about it. The sin of taking a frog from the garden and putting it into a bowl of wholesome bread-and-milk was enlarged on at great length, but the fact that stood out clearest in the whole affair, as it presented itself to the mind of Nicholas, was that the older, wiser, and better people had been proved to be profoundly in error in matters about which they had expressed the utmost assurance.

'You said there couldn't possibly be a frog in my bread-and-milk; there was a frog in my bread-and-milk,' he repeated, with the insistence of a skilled tactician who does not intend to shift from favourable ground.

So his boy-cousin and girl-cousin and his quite uninteresting younger brother were to be taken to Jagborough sands that afternoon and he was to stay at home. His cousins' aunt, who insisted, by an unwarranted stretch of imagination, in styling herself his aunt also, had hastily invented the Jagborough expedition in order to impress on Nicholas the delights that he had justly forfeited by his disgraceful conduct at the breakfast-table. It was her habit, whenever one of the children fell from grace, to improvise something of a festival nature from which the offender would be rigorously debarred; if all the children sinned collectively they were suddenly informed of a circus in a neighbouring town, a circus of unrivalled merit and uncounted elephants, to which, but for their depravity, they would have been taken that very day.

A few decent tears were looked for on the part of Nicholas when the moment for the departure of the expedition arrived. As a matter of fact, however, all the crying was done by his girl-cousin, who scraped her knee rather painfully against the step of the carriage as she was scrambling in.

‘How she did howl,’ said Nicholas cheerfully, as the party drove off without any of the elation of high spirits that should have characterised it.

‘She’ll soon get over that,’ said the soi-disant aunt; ‘it will be a glorious afternoon for racing about over those beautiful sands. How they will enjoy themselves!’

‘Bobby won’t enjoy himself much, and he won’t race much either,’ said Nicholas with a grim chuckle; ‘his boots are hurting him. They’re too tight.’

‘Why didn’t he tell me they were hurting?’ asked the aunt with some asperity.

‘He told you twice, but you weren’t listening. You often don’t listen when we tell you important things.’

‘You are not to go into the gooseberry garden,’ said the aunt, changing the subject.

‘Why not?’ demanded Nicholas.

‘Because you are in disgrace,’ said the aunt loftily.

Nicholas did not admit the flawlessness of the reasoning; he felt perfectly capable of being in disgrace and in a gooseberry garden at the same moment. His face took on an expression of considerable obstinacy. It was clear to his aunt that he was determined to get into the gooseberry garden, ‘only,’ as she remarked to herself, ‘because I have told him he is not to.’

Now the gooseberry garden had two doors by which it might be entered, and once a small person like Nicholas could slip in there he could effectually disappear from view amid the masking growth of artichokes, raspberry canes, and fruit bushes. The aunt had many other things to do that afternoon, but she spent an hour or two in trivial gardening operations among flower beds and shrubberies, whence she could keep a watchful eye on the two doors that led to the forbidden paradise. She was a woman of few ideas, with immense powers of concentration.

Nicholas made one or two sorties into the front garden, wriggling his way with obvious stealth of purpose towards one or other of the doors, but never able for a moment to evade the aunt's watchful eye. As a matter of fact, he had no intention of trying to get into the gooseberry garden, but it was extremely convenient for him that his aunt should believe that he had; it was a belief that would keep her on self-imposed sentry-duty for the greater part of the afternoon. Having thoroughly confirmed and fortified her suspicions, Nicholas slipped back into the house and rapidly put into execution a plan of action that had long germinated in his brain. By standing on a chair in the library one could reach a shelf on which reposed a fat, important-looking key. The key was as important as it looked; it was the instrument which kept the mysteries of the lumber-room secure from unauthorized intrusion, which opened a way only for aunts and such-like privileged persons. Nicholas had not much experience of the art of fitting keys into keyholes and turning locks, but for some days past he had practised with the key of the school-room door; he did not believe in trusting too much to luck and accident. The key turned stiffly in the lock, but it turned. The door opened, and Nicholas was in an unknown land, compared with which the gooseberry garden was a stale delight, a mere material pleasure.

Often and often Nicholas had pictured to himself what the lumber-room might be like, that region that was so carefully sealed from youthful eyes and concerning which no questions were ever answered. It came up to his expectations. In the first place it was large and dimly lit, one high window opening on to the forbidden garden being its only source of illumination. In the second place it was a storehouse of unimagined treasures. The aunt-by-assertion was one of

those people who think that things spoil by use and consign them to dust and damp by way of preserving them. Such parts of the house as Nicholas knew best were rather bare and cheerless, but here there were wonderful things for the eye to feast on. First and foremost there was a piece of framed tapestry that was evidently meant to be a fire-screen. To Nicholas it was a living, breathing story; he sat down on a roll of Indian hangings, glowing in wonderful colours beneath a layer of dust, and took in all the details of the tapestry picture. A man, dressed in the hunting costume of some remote period, had just transfixed a stag with an arrow; it could not have been a difficult shot because the stag was only one or two paces away from him; in the thickly growing vegetation that the picture suggested it would not have been difficult to creep up to a feeding stag, and the two spotted dogs that were springing forward to join in the chase had evidently been trained to keep to heel till the arrow was discharged. That part of the picture was simple, if interesting, but did the huntsman see, what Nicholas saw, that four galloping wolves were coming in his direction through the wood? There might be more than four of them hidden behind the trees, and in any case would the man and his dogs be able to cope with the four wolves if they made an attack? The man had only two arrows left in his quiver, and he might miss with one or both of them; all one knew about his skill in shooting was that he could hit a large stag at a ridiculously short range. Nicholas sat for many golden minutes revolving the possibilities of the scene; he was inclined to think that there were more than four wolves and that the man and his dogs were in a tight corner.

But there were other objects of delight and interest claiming his instant attention: here were quaint twisted candlesticks in the shape of snakes, and a teapot fashioned like a china-duck, out of whose open beak the tea was supposed to come. How dull and shapeless the nursery teapot seemed in comparison! And there was a carved sandal-wood box packed tight with aromatic cotton-wool, and between the layers of cotton-wool were little brass figures, hump-necked bulls, and peacocks and goblins, delightful to see and to handle. Less promising in appearance was a large square book with plain black covers; Nicholas peeped into it, and, behold, it was full of coloured pictures of birds. And such birds! In the garden, and in the lanes when he went for a walk, Nicholas came across a few birds, of which the largest were

an occasional magpie or woodpigeon; here were herons and bustards, kites, toucans, tiger-bitterns, brush turkeys, ibises, golden pheasants, a whole portrait gallery of undreamed-of creatures. And as he was admiring the colouring of the mandarin duck and assigning a life-history to it, the voice of his aunt in shrill vociferation of his name came from the gooseberry garden without. She had grown suspicious at his long disappearance, and had leapt to the conclusion that he had climbed over the wall behind the sheltering screen of the lilac bushes; she was now engaged in energetic and rather hopeless search for him among the artichokes and raspberry canes.

‘Nicholas, Nicholas!’ she screamed, ‘you are to come out of this at once. It’s no use trying to hide there; I can see you all the time.’ It was probably the first time for twenty years that any one had smiled in that lumber-room.

Presently the angry repetitions of Nicholas’s name gave way to a shriek, and a cry for somebody to come quickly. Nicholas shut the book, restored it carefully to its place in a corner, and shook some dust from a neighbouring pile of newspapers over it. Then he crept from the room, locked the door, and replaced the key exactly where he had found it. His aunt was still calling his name when he sauntered into the front garden.

‘Who’s calling?’ he asked.

‘Me,’ came the answer from the other side of the wall, ‘didn’t you hear me? I’ve been looking for you in the gooseberry garden, and I’ve slipped into the rain-water tank. Luckily there’s no water in it, but the sides are slippery and I can’t get out. Fetch the little ladder from under the cherry tree-’

‘I was told I wasn’t to go into the gooseberry garden,’ said Nicholas promptly.

‘I told you not to, and now I tell you that you may,’ came the voice from the rain-water tank, rather impatiently.

‘Your voice doesn’t sound like aunt’s,’ objected Nicholas; ‘you may be the Evil One tempting me to be disobedient. Aunt often tells me that the Evil One tempts me and that I always yield. This time I’m not going to yield.’

‘Don’t talk nonsense,’ said the prisoner in the tank; ‘go and fetch the ladder.’

‘Will there be strawberry jam for tea?’ asked Nicholas innocently.

‘Certainly there will be,’ said the aunt, privately resolving that Nicholas should have none of it.

‘Now I know that you are the Evil One and not aunt,’ shouted Nicholas gleefully; ‘when we asked aunt for strawberry jam yesterday she said there wasn’t any. I know there are four jars of it in the store cupboard, because I looked, and of course you know it’s there, but she doesn’t, because she said there wasn’t any. Oh, Devil, you have sold yourself!’

There was an unusual sense of luxury in being able to talk to an aunt as though one was talking to the Evil One, but Nicholas knew, with childish discernment that such luxuries were not to be over-indulged in. He walked noisily away, and it was a kitchenmaid, in search of parsley, who eventually rescued the aunt from the rain-water tank.

Tea that evening was partaken of in a fearsome silence. The tide had been at its highest when the children had arrived at Jagborough Cove, so there had been no sands to play on-a circumstance that the aunt had overlooked in the haste of organizing her punitive expedition. The tightness of Bobby’s boots had had disastrous effect on his temper the whole of the afternoon, and altogether the children could not have been said to have enjoyed themselves. The aunt maintained the frozen muteness of one who has suffered undignified and unmerited detention in a rain-water tank for thirty-five minutes. As for Nicholas, he, too, was silent, in the absorption of one who has much to think about; it was just possible, he considered, that the huntsman would escape with his hounds while the wolves feasted on the stricken stag.

An extract from “Wave” – A Memoir of Life after the Tsunami
Sonali Deraniyagala

It was then she saw the wave. “Oh my God, the sea’s coming in.” That’s what she said. I looked behind me. It didn’t seem that remarkable. Or alarming. It was only the white curl of a big wave.

But you couldn’t usually see breaking waves from our room. You hardly noticed the ocean at all. It was just a glint of blue above that wide spread of sand that sloped sharply down to the water. Now the froth of a wave had scaled up this slope and was nearing the tall conifers that were halfway between our room and the water’s edge, incongruous those trees in this landscape of brittle thorny scrub. This was peculiar. I called out to Steve in the bathroom. “Come out, Steve, I want to show you something odd.” I didn’t want him to miss this. I wanted him to come out quick before all this foam dissolved. “In a minute,” Steve muttered, with no intention of rushing out.

Then there was more white froth. And more. Vik was sitting by the back door reading the first page of *The Hobbit*. I told him to shut that door. It was a glass door with four panels, and he closed each one, then came across the room and stood by me. He didn’t say anything, he didn’t ask me what was going on.

The foam turned into waves. Waves leaping over the ridge where the beach ended. This was not normal. The sea never came this far in. Waves not receding or dissolving. Closer now. Brown and gray. Brown or gray. Waves rushing past the conifers and coming closer to our room. All these waves now, charging, churning. Suddenly furious. Suddenly menacing. “Steve, you’ve got to come out. Now.” Steve ran out of the bathroom, tying his sarong. He looked outside. We didn’t speak.

I grabbed Vik and Malli, and we all ran out the front door. I was ahead of Steve. I held the boys each by the hand. “Give me one of them. Give me one of them,” Steve shouted, reaching out. But I didn’t. That would have slowed us down. We had no time. We had to be fast. I knew that. But I didn’t know what I was fleeing from.

I didn't stop for my parents. I didn't stop to knock on the door of my parents' room, which was next to ours, on the right as we ran out. I didn't shout to warn them. I didn't bang on their door and call them out. As I ran past, for a splintered second, I wondered if I should. But I couldn't stop. It will stall us. We must keep running. I held the boys tight by their hands. We have to get out.

We fled towards the driveway at the front of the hotel. The boys ran as fast as I did. They didn't stumble or fall. They were barefoot, but they didn't slow down because stones or thorns were hurting them. They didn't say a word. Our feet were loud, though. I could hear them, slamming the ground.

Ahead of us a jeep was moving, fast. Now it stopped. A safari jeep with open back and sides and a brown canvas hood. This jeep was waiting for us. We ran up to it. I flung Vikram into the back, and he landed facedown on the green corrugated-metal floor. Steve jumped in and picked him up. We were all inside now. Steve had Vik on his lap, I sat across from them with Mail on mine. A man was driving the jeep. I didn't know who he was.

Now I looked around me and nothing was unusual. No frothing waters here, only the hotel. It was all as it should be. The long rows of rooms with clay-tiled roofs, the terra-cotta floors of the open corridors, the dusty, orange-brown gravel driveway thick with wild cactus on both sides. All there. The waves must have receded, I thought.

I hadn't seen Orlantha run with us, but she must have done. She was in the jeep. Her parents had rushed out of their rooms as we came out of ours, and now her father, Anton, was with us too. Orlantha's mother, Beulah, was hoisting herself into the jeep and the driver revved the engine. The jeep jerked forward and she lost her grip, fell off. The driver didn't see this. I told him to stop, I kept yelling to him that she had fallen out. But he kept going. Beulah lay on the driveway and looked up at us as we pulled away. She half-smiled, in confusion it seemed.

Anton leaned out the back to reach Beulah and drag her up. When he couldn't, he jumped out. They were both lying on the gravel now, but I didn't call out to the driver to wait for them. He was driving very fast. He's right, I thought, we have to keep moving. Soon we will be away from the hotel.

We were leaving my parents behind. I panicked now. If I had screamed at their door as we ran out, they could have run with us. "We didn't get Aachchi and seeya," I yelled to Steve. This made Vikram cry. Steve held on to him, clasping him to his chest. "Aachchi and seeya will be okay, they will come later, they will come," Steve said. Vik stopped crying and snuggled into Steve.

I was thankful for Steve's words, I was reassured. Steve is right. There are no waves now. Ma and Da, they will walk out of their room. We will get out of here first, and they'll join us. I had an image of my father walking out of the hotel, there were puddles everywhere, he had his trousers rolled up. I'll ring Ma on her mobile as soon as I get to a phone, I thought.

We were nearing the end of the hotel driveway. We were about to turn left onto the dirt track that runs by the lagoon. Steve stared at the road ahead of us. He kept banging his heel on the floor of the jeep. Hurry up, get a move on.

The jeep was in water then. Suddenly, all this water inside the jeep. Water sloshing over our knees. Where did this water come from? I didn't see those waves get to us. This water must have burst out from beneath the ground. What is happening? The jeep moved forward slowly. I could hear its engine straining, snarling. We can drive through this water, I thought.

We were tilting from side. The water rising now, filling the jeep. It came up to our chests. Steve and I lifted the boys as high as we could. Steve held Vik, I had Mal. Their faces above the water, the tops of their heads pressing against the jeep's canvas hood, our hands tight under their armpits. The jeep rocked. It was floating, the wheels no longer gripping the ground. We kept steadying ourselves on the seats. No one spoke. No one uttered a sound.

Then I saw Steve's face. I'd never seen him like that before. A sudden look of terror, eyes wide open, mouth agape. He saw something behind me that I couldn't see. I didn't have time to turn around and look.

Because it turned over. The jeep turned over. On my side.

Pain. That was all I could feel. Where am I? Something was crushing my chest. I am trapped under the jeep, I thought, I am being flattened by it. I tried to push it away, I wanted to wriggle out. But it was too heavy, whatever was on me, the pain unrelenting in my chest.

I wasn't stuck under anything. I was moving, I could tell now. My body was curled up, I was spinning fast.

Am I underwater? It didn't feel like water, but it has to be, I thought. I was being dragged along, and my body was whipping backwards and forwards. I couldn't stop myself. When at times my eyes opened, I couldn't see water. Smoky and gray.

Drama

Twilight of a Crane – Yu Zuwa Junji Kinoshita

CHARACTERS

Tsu..... The name reads Tsu-u.
Yohyo..... The name reads Yohyo-o.
Sodo..... The name reads So-o-do.
Unzu..... The name reads Un-zu.
Children.

(A tumble-down hut in a field covered with snow. The setting sun is illuminating the western sky.

A children's song is heard from a distance:

“Jiyan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....”

The meaning of this song is:

“Let's sew a cushion for grandpa!
Let's sew a cushion for grandma!
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....”

(In the interior of the hut Yohyo is seen taking a nap by the fire-side. The song stops. The children appear running in.)

Children: *(in unison, as if singing)* Tsu- yan, Tsu- yan, let us sing!
Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan let us play ! Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing !

Yohyo: *(awaken)* Hello! what are you doing here?

Children: Tsu-yan, let us play! Let us sing!

Yohyo: Looking for Tsu? No, she isn't here. She went out.

Children: She's gone, really? What ever shall we do? Where'd she go?

Yohyo: How do I know!

Children: Come on, Yohyo. Tell us where she went. When's she coming back? Soon? Yohyo, please.....

Yohyo: Be quiet! You're making too much noise! (*He stands up to his feet.*)

Children: (*scattering*) Yohyo is getting angry! Ha ha ! You're a bit teched! cross.

Yohyo: (*Laughing*) Ha, ha,ha! stay here I'll play with you.

Children: Really? What'll we play?

Yohyo: What'll we play?

Children: "Nen-gara"?

Yohyo: All right, "Nen – gara"

Children: Singing ?

Yohyo: All right, singing.

Children: Snow-ball fights?

Yohyo: Fine, snow-ball fights.

Children: "Kagome – Kagome"?

Yohyo: Yes, "Kagome- Kagome,"

Children: Run sheep run?

Yohyo: All right, run sheep run. Let's go! I'll tag you. Are you ready?

Children: Yes, Run sheep run ,run sheep run.....(*Repeating these words, they run away. Yohyo is also about to follow them, but stops.*)

Yohyo: Oh dear, I almost forgot! Cold soup is no good for my sweet heart ! (*He puts a kettle on the fire as Tsu appears from inner room.*)

Tsu: My darling.....

Yohyo: Hello, my dear, where've you been?

Tsu: Oh, nowhere specially, but.....you, my dear, don't.....

Yohyo: (*giggling*) Nothing! Just going to warm up some soup for you. It's no good unless it's hot!

Tsu: Thank you, my dear, Now I'll make supper for you.

Yohyo: Thank you very much. I'll be back soon. Now we are going to play "Nen-gara"

Tsu: Really?

Yohyo: And snow-ball fights.....and then singing.

Tsu: And "Kagome-Kagome".....then,Run sheep run.....Isn't that the name?

Yohyo: That's right- Run sheep run. Tsu, why don't you come too?

Tsu: I wish I could. But I have to prepare supper!

Yohyo: Forget the supper.Tsu, let's go (*He pulls at her hand.*)

Tsu: No, no I can't.

Yohyo: Stop worrying about the supper.You have got to come. Let's play together!

Tsu: No, I can't, Yohyo. I have got to(*With a smile, she is pulled off by Yohyo*)

(*Pause, A children's song is heard from a distance. Sodo and Unzu appear*)

Sodo: Is that (.....) Is that Yohyo's wife?

Unzu: Yes, (indeed) Yohyo is the luckiest man in the world to get such a nice wife. Since she came here, he never does anything but, sleep by the fire-side all day long. How I envy him!

Sodo: How in the world could a stupid man like him get such a pretty wife?

Unzu: I wish, I knew! From somewhere and unnoticed she appeared like a wind. Since then, that lazy fellow has been coining money without lifting a finger over.

Sodo: Unzu! Are you positive about that story of the precious cloth?

Unzu: Of course, I am. It's true. My goodness, we could sell that cloth at 10 dollars yard in the town!

Sodo: Really? Did you say that that wife of his weaves the stuff?

Unzu: That's right – but there's queer thing – she won't let any one see her in the weaving-room ! Yohyo told me, every time she goes to the weaving room, she says: "Don't look into the room." And Yohyo is so foolishly honest that he never tries to peep. He goes to bed right away, and when he wakes up in the morning, there is the cloth all finished. It's a really wonderful cloth.

Sodo: You called it "Senba- Ori" didn't you?

Unzu: Yes that's what the town-folk call it! They say cloth of that sort cannot be seen unless they go to the "Ten jiku" (Heaven). It's as valuable as that.

Sodo: Unzu, you must be making a pretty good profit in your deals with that cloth.

Unzu: Well-INot too big but not so small either.

Sodo: Curse you, you wretched thief.....But, Unzu, if it is really a "Senba- Ori" it must be worth a lot more than a hundred dollars.

Unzu: Is it ?..... Then Sodo, tell me what on earth is the "Senba- Ori"

Sodo: Well, it's the fanciest cloth you ever did see! made of a thousand feathers plucked from a live hen crane

Unzu: I can't believe it? Well then, Where on earth does she get such feathers?

Sodo: Humph- is this the weaving- room? (*in spite of him self he goes up into house and looks into the adjoining room.*) Yes, it's true- there's a loom.....Oh, heavens!..... (*With suprise and curiosity he goes into the weaving-room*)

Unzu: Sodo, what's the matter with you?

Sodo: (*coming out of the weaving- room with two or three*

pieces of feather in his hand) look! Unzu! This is a crane's feather !! Now I know you're right.

- Unzu:** You see? I never lie.
(Pause. Tsu, Who has been back unnoticed, comes out of the inner room)
- Unzu:** *(Surprized)* Oh, Heavens!
- Sodo:** *(Surprized, too)* God bless me! I-I am sorry to have broken in while you- you were out.....
- Unzu:** Excuse me, Mrs – but I- I am U - Unzu from the village over there. And- I –I am much- much obliged to Yohyo about –about the cloth - and –
- Tsu:**? *(She stands in silence inclining her head on one side like a bird)*
- Sodo:** Then, Mrs.- I've got an idea about the cloth which this low-fellow here told me you've wovenO,sorry! I should have told you who I am. I'm Sodo from the village over there And I'd like to have a little talk with you..... Well, now - I'm afraid I shouldn't ask you thing like this – but if you don't mind,would you tell me if it is a real "Senba Ori" ?
- Tsu:***(She has been looking at them inquiringly with a puzzled look, but suddenly moves away quickly into inner room as if she heard a sound.)*
- Sodo:**?
- Unzu:**?
- Sodo:** Unzu!
- Unzu:** How come..? she didn't seem to understand!
- Sodo:** Yes, she didn't realise what we were saying..... She acted just like a bird.....

Unzu: You're right ! just like a bird !
(*Dusk falls and fire in the hearth flickers.*)

Sodo: (*Looking upon the feathers which he picked up before*)
Didn't you ever hear of the story of a bewitched crane
that married a man?

Unzu: What's that ! what did you say?

Sodo: How I begin to get it ! Here's the point
Yesterday a villager told me that a couple of days
ago when he happened to pass by the lake in mountain
in the evening, he saw a young woman standing on the
beach..... And, can you imagine, while he was spying
on her, she went in to the water and became a crane!

Unzu: Oh, Lord! is that the absolute truth?

Sodo: And, after having swum a bit, she became a woman
again and disappeared!

Unzu: Oh, my God! (*he runs out of the hut.*)

Sodo: You crazy hoot-owl! stop your shouting! (*But he him
self rushes out of the hut unconsciously*)

Unzu: Then, is she.....is his wife the ghost of a crane?

Sodo: Be quite, you shivering coward! only God knows!

Unzu: What shall I do? (*Groaning with hands over his head*)
Oh, God help me! I've cheated Yohyo out of a lot of
profit!

Sodo: Forget it, Unzu! if it's a real "Senba Ori"- Gee we can
sell it at a thousand dollars in Kyoto!

Unzu: A thousand dollars? Did you say a thousand dollars?

Sodo: Yes surely. Besides that, you said that lately Yohyo has
been getting a bit sharper about money, didn't you?

Unzu: Yes, that's right. It's positively true.

Sodo: Well then, if that's so, the best idea is to get him on our
side and get his wife to weave a lot more of the cloth!

Unzu: Yes..... I guess you're right.

Sodo: Look! Here he comes.

Yohyo: *(coming back absent-mindedly, singing)*Jiyan Ni
Kiseru Futo Nuuno, Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo
Nuuno,Chin Kara kan kan, Ton Ton Ton –why, I've
forgotten to boil rice for Tsu.

Sodo: Hello, Yohyo !

Yohyo: Yes.....?

Sodo: Don't you know me?.....I'm Sodo from the village
over there.....AndUh, Unzu- you tell him.

Yohyo: Oh,Unzu, you've been here again talking shop, haven't
you?

Unzu: Yes, right.If you'd turn out that cloth,you could make
as much easy money as you want!

Yohyo: Sorry, there isn't any more cloth!

Sodo: Why?

Yohyo: Tsu told me that's all there is!

Unzu: Don't be silly,Yohyo. You'd make a quick profit!

Yohyo: No,no..... I love Tsu.She is my darling!

Sodo: You do love her, don't you? Well, then why not save
up money for her by selling the cloth?

Yohyo: Yes, that sounds all right..... But every time she
weaves the cloth, she loses weight.

Sodo: What? She loses weight?.....Just a minute, Yohyo!
When and how did she first come to you?

Yohyo: You mean Tsu? Yes I've forgot when it was – but some
night when I was going to bed, she'd dropped in and
said she wanted to become my wife. *(He smiles.)*

Sodo: Is that a fact!.....Yes, I see. Now then, have you –
haven't you ever done something to help a crane?

Yohyo: Crane? You say a crane? Yes, I remember now!
One day when I was working in the field a crane came down with an arrow stuck in its back. So I pulled the arrow out of its back and saved its life.

Sodo: Really?.....Humph.....Unzu, now I got it- don't you see?

Unzu:(*he is shuddering.*)

Sodo: Well, if it's so, if that's true,we can still make a lot of money that's the whole point of this deal anyhow.....
Yohyo, I want to have a little talk about the –that cloth I we –Yohyo ! You tell him the story.

Unzu: Yes,All right-that's a-no, you see,Yohyo, if you take the cloth to Kyoto, you can get-get a thousand

Sodo: You stupid fellow!..... why, Yohyo-it's possible for you to get hundreds of dollars this time! Then, get your wife to weave the fabrics- just once more!

Yohyo: What? Hundreds of dollars? Really! You say hundreds of.....

Sodo: Yes,hundreds of dollars.(*To Unzu*) Isn't that right?

Unzu: Yes, It's right.You can make hundreds of dollars.

Yohyo: Really? Really hundreds of dollars.....?

Sodo: Well, then, you might coax your wife again.....
(*noting Tsu who has been looking at them from inside of the house*)Yohyo, come here! I'll tell you privately the whole story.

(Pulling Yohyo by the sleeve, they exit.)
(Tsu,coming out,looks after them. And expression of embrrassment and trouble is written all over her face. before long,the children come running in.)

Children: (*severally*) Here's Tsu! Let us play now. Why did you run away? Let us sing. "Kagome" - Hide and seek – singing- Ring around the rosy.....(*They surround*

Tsu.)Let us play, let us play!

Tsu: Dear children, it's already dark. I'll see you tomorrow.

Children: No, no, dear-let's play, let's sing!

Tsu: (*absent-mindedly*) Singing.....?

Children: Hide- and -seek?

Tsu: Hide-and-seek?

Children: Ring- around – the rosy.

Tsu: Ring-around-the rosy?

Children: “Kagome-Kagome”

Tsu: “Kagome-Kagome”?

Children: Yes,all right-we'll play “Kagome-Kagome”! (*Forming a ring around Tsu, they move round singing*)

“Kagome,Kagome,
Kago No Naka No Tori wa
Itsu Itsu Deyaru,
Yoake No Ban Ni,
Tsuru, Tsuru, Tsubetta!(They stop)
“Ushiro No Shomen Dahre?
Ushiro No Shomen Dahre?”

*(The meaning of this song:
“ Here we go walking around a bird in the cage,
Walking round and round, round and round,
Until evening, until morning.
Now will you tell us who is behind you,
When the song stops ”)*

Who's standing behind you? Who's standing behind you?..... Say, my dear, why don't you put your hands over your eyes? you crouch down, my dear Tsu!

Tsu (*having stood in deep thought,awaken*) Oh, I am sorry.
Yes (*She crouches down and covers her with her hands.*)

(The children continue to move round singing the same song. The light quickly fades out, leaving Tsu alone in its focus.)

Tsu

(Slowly standing up) Yohyo, my dear- what's happened to you? You are gradually changing. I can't understand why.

But you are moving to the other world where I can never live. You are casting your lot with those malicious, terrible people who shot me with an arrow. You are becoming the same as those whose language I cannot understand. What's happened to you, Yohyo, my Love? What shall I do?

What on earth can I do?.....

Yohyo, you've saved my life. You were once so innocent and kind that you could take the arrow out of my back solely through tender-heartedness-and only out of sympathy for me. I was deeply touched by it.

I was so glad to come to you..... And when I first wove the cloth with my feathers, you were as pleased as a child. Then, in spite of the pain, I wove them again and again. But you- my dear, you exchanged it every time for the thing called "money". But it's all right. I don't mind if you like the "money" so much..... But now you have money enough.

I'd like to live with you in this small house peacefully and quietly without being troubled by any one. My darling, you shouldn't be the same as they. You should be a man of the world I belong to. I wished I might have lived with you forever, setting up our world in the middle of this field, playing with children and working on the farm..... But still, you are going to leave me. You are going farther and farther from me..... What shall I do? Tell me, my dear, what can I do?.....

(The song has stopped unnoticed. The lights come up on the stage, but the children have already gone away.)

Tsu looks away casually, and runs back into the house with fear. Sodo, Unzu and Yohyo come in.)

- Sodo:** You see, Yohyo? If she says she can't weave any more, you've got to threaten to leave her.
- Yohyo:** (*giggling*) Anyhow, that's a wonderful cloth Tsu has woven for me, isn't it?
- Sodo:** Yes, certainly. it's so wonderful that we can sell it for three or four times more than before! You see, it's worth that much more. So tell your wife this.
- Yohyo:** Yes, it's worth three or four times more than before –is that right?
- Sodo:** Yes, it's worth hundreds of dollars.
- Yohyo:** Hundreds of dollars- are you sure?
- Sodo:** Yes, I'm certain of it. Then, you have her weave it right away.(*To Unzu*) Don't you think so, Unzu?
- Unzu:** Yes, indeed, get it woven tonight, right away.
- Yohyo:** All right,..... but Tsu said she couldn't weave any more.
- Sodo:** You poor idiot! If you get a lot of profit from it, your wife'd be pleased, too.
- Unzu:** Right! I bet your wife'd be pleased, too
- Yohyo:** Maybe.....
- Sodo:** Then, too, we'll take you to see Kyoto.Don't you think, Unzu, Kyoto is a splended city?
- Unzu:** Yes, it's a wonderfully gay city!
- Yohyo:** I can imagine how fine it is.
- Sodo:** Can you? Good! You see, you can make a lot of money,and on top of that you can see. Kyoto.Over there we'll take you to many interesting places as I told you. Or- say, Yohyo, don't you want to see Kyoto?

Yohyo: Why not! I could go!

Unzu: You want money, too, don't you?

Yohyo: Yes, I want it.

Sodo: (*noticing Tsu in the house*) Yohyo! Go ahead! If she says no, you tell her you're leaving, do you see?

Yohyo: Yes.....

Sodo: (*pushing Yohyo toward the house*) You're a good fellow, my friend. Best of luck! Unzu, we'd better hide ourselves to see what happens.

(*Sodo and Unzu go out. As soon as they disappear, Tsu leaps to welcome Yohyo*)

Tsu: Oh, my darling, come here now. Dear me! You've soaking wet! I'm afraid you'll catch cold! Come here, and warm yourself. Supper's ready. Thanks to you, the soup is boiling. Won't you eat supper now?

Yohyo: Yes. (*He sits down by the fire-side*)

Tsu: My dear. do start, please.

Yohyo: Yes. (*He eats*)

Tsu: What's the matter with you? Why are you so sad?.... You shouldn't stay outside so late. It's too cold..... You'll not go out anywhere, will you? You'll not talk with strangers anymore, will you?

Yohyo: No.

Tsu: Please, promise me..... My dear, I'll do anything for you. I'll do whatever you want..... Now you have got the "money" you like.....

Yohyo: Yes, I've got money. I've got a lot of money in that sack.

Tsu: Yes, you have. Then, from now on, won't you lead our life quietly as before? Won't you please enjoy a life of peace and happiness with me, together and forever?

Yohyo: Yes, I love you, my dear.

Tsu: My darling, I love you with my whole heart. Then you'll always stay as you are now, will you?

Yohyo: Yes, I love you deeply and dearly. (*Pause*)

Tsu: Won't you have some more?..... Why? What's happened?..... Why aren't you eating, my dear?

Yohyo: Yes..... Aw nothing But, darling.....

Tsu: Yes.....?

Yohyo: You are lucky to have seen Kyoto so many a times. I really envy you.

Tsu: Do you? But I saw it just from the sky- (With a start she changes the topic) Why? Why don't you eat some more?

Yohyo: Yes, ah.....(*Hesitating and timidly*)..... My dear, listen.....

Tsu: Yes.....?

Yohyo: I say.....Oh, for Heaven's sake, I can't say it!.....

Tsu: Why? What's the matter?

Yohyo: Well, dearest.....(*Hesitating and giggling*)..... I just can't say it!.....

Tsu: Why? What's the matter? Why can't you say it?..... Then, shall I guess it?

Yohyo: Yes.

Tsu: Well..... You want buckwheat cakes again, don't you?

Yohyo: No.

Tsu: No?.....Well, then..... You want to hear my song, don't you?

Yohyo: No, it's not right..... of course, I like your song, but not today.

Tsu: That isn't it either?.....well, let me see..... Then, you want to hear from me about Kyoto, don't you?.....Yes, I think I am right!

Yohyo: Yes,you're almost right,but also half wrong? Ha, ha,ha.....(*He laughs.*)

Tsu: What do you mean-half right and half wrong ?..... Please, please, tell me what it is.

Yohyo: Darling,you won't be angry?

Tsu: Why should I get angry with you?.....What is it? Please, please tell me, my darling.

Yohyo: Well..... You see, Honey,I-I want to go Kyoto.

Tsu: Why!

Yohyo: To make a lot of money. So.....I want another piece of that cloth.

Tsu: (*in surprise and embarrassment*) You want some more of that cloth? But ,my darling! For God's sake.....

Yohyo: (*in hurry*) No,no, I don't need any more, dear.

Tsu: (*as if talking to herself*) I promised and you agreed that I wouldn't weave any more..... But you still want more.....

Yohyo: Yes, we agreed to that. I don't want any more. I don't need any more (*As if a child scolded, he is trying to keep back his tears.*)

Tsu: (*Suddenly something occurs to her mind*) Oh, now I see! It's they- it's they who are pulling you away from me.Yes-those two who came to see you this evening- they are trying to convert you to their way of thinking.

Yohyo: Now, Darling.....Don't be angry.....Tsu.....

Tsu:

Yohyo: Tsuu.....my dear.....

Tsu: (*absent-mindedly*) Money.....Money..... Why do they want it so much?

Yohyo: Well.....Because if we have money,we can buy nice things we want.

Tsu: Buy? What's "Buy"? What's nice thing? What do you want beside me? No ,no please, don't want anything but me! I hate money, I hate "buying" too.Please love me,love only me. Love me forever,and let us live together always!

Yohyo: Yes, certainly, I like to live with you- I love you very much.

Tsu: My darling-please, my darling.....(she embraces him).....Please, live with me like this. Don't go away from me!

Yohyo: Why! Who on earth wants to leave you! My dear! My dear Tsu!

Tsu: In your arms.....I recall the days gone by..... Nothing bothered me- I was perfectly at ease in the vast sky, and..... My dream's come again. I am glad, my dear, I am happy- I am happy only if you are always with me, Please,be with me forever.....please, d o n ' t leave me.....please(Pause.Suddenly, she thrusts him away) Yohyo, you are still thinking of Kyoto..... you are still thinking of "money"!

Yohyo: Yes-but, Tsu..... I can't help it.

Tsu: You are.....you are..... I see.....(*With a sudden intensity*) No,no,no, don't go to Kyoto, please! You'll not return again! You won't come back to me!

Yohyo: Don't be a fool,dearest. I'll be back. I know I'll come back.I'll go to Kyoto just to make a lot of profit..... Oh, that's a good idea-we'll go to Kyoto together! (*pause*)

Tsu: Are you so terribly anxious to go to Kyoto?.....Are you so terribly anxious for money?

Yohyo: Yes, you see, Tsu, no one can be indifferent to money.

Tsu: Are you so eager to get money? Are you so eager to go to Kyoto? You are not as fond of me as of money, are you ? You are not as fond of me as of Kyoto, are you?

Yohyo: Tsu.....I-I dislike you putting it that way!

Tsu: Dislike? Did you say “dislike”?

Yohyo: Yes, I dislike you. I don’t like you. I’m not fond of you- you are a cross woman!

Tsu: Yohyo! How could you.....?

Yohyo: Weave the stuff right away! I’ll go to Kyoto! I’ll make big money!

Tsu: Dear, me! please, for God’s sake! Why on earth do you speak like that, my darling?

Yohyo: Weave the cloth. If you say you can’t,I’ll leave you!

Tsu: For the Good Lord’s sake! You said you’d leave me, didn’t you? my dear.....Darling.....How.....how could you say such a thing?

Yohyo: *(He keeps silence stubbornly)*

Tsu: My dear, my dear, please.....*(Shrugging his shoulders)*..... Are you in earnest? You say it in earnest? Please ,my dear.....

Yohyo: Yes, I’ll leave you- unless you weave the cloth.

Tsu: Oh,Heavens!

Yohyo: Weave the cloth! make the stuff! Right away! They say they can sell it at three or four times more than before –it’s worth hundreds of dollars!

Tsu: *(in tremendous astonishment and confusion)*What? What did you say now? “Weave the cloth! Make the stuff!”-following that, what did you say?

Yohyo: It’s worth hundreds of dollars. I said they can sell it for me at three or four times as much!

Tsu: *(She looks mat him inquiringly, inclining her head on one side as if a bird does)*

Yohyo: You see, Tsu?.....This time they can sell it for more than three or four times what it brought before.....

Tsu: (*crying*) I cannot understand! I cannot understand what you are saying! It's just the same as those who came here this evening. I could see your lips moving and hear the sound of voices. But I couldn't understand what you were saying!.....Good gracious! You've also begun to speak their language- the words which I can't understand- the words which belong to the other world I can never join! Oh, Heavens! What shall I do? What shall I do? what should I do, dear Lord?

Yohyo: What's the matter with you, Tsu?

Tsu: "What's the matter with you, Tsu,? " you said that, didn't you ?" What's the matter with you, Tsu?- you said that, didn't you?

Yohyo: (*Astonished, he keeps looking at her face*)

Tsu: Did you? Did you? You said so, didn't you?..... Alas! You are going farther and farther from me.....My Heavens! What shall I do? What can I do ?..... Please, don't –don't entice my husband..... Please..... (*she goes out of the house*).....Please.....For Heavens sake..... Where are you, dear villagers?.....I ask you.....I plead with you.....For Mercy's sake..... Please, Stop pulling my Yohyo away(*she walks up and down on the stage*) Please, for the Good Lord's sake!..... For Mercy's sake..... I ask you-I plead with you! Are you hiding yourselves? Come out, you cowards! Please..... You're silly- you're unfair! Please..... I loathe you! I hate you!.....Come out, you-..... I'm sorry I said I hate you. No, noPlease, dear villagers, for God's sake..... For Mercy's sake-I ask you- I plead with you..... Please, for the Good Lord's sake..... (*Her strength is gone little by little, and at last she sinks down in the snow*)

Yohyo: (*coming out timidly and with fear*) Hey What's the matter with you, Tsu? My dear..... (*He embraces her.*)

Tsu: *(coming to herself)* Oh, my darling.....

Yohyo: It's cold-in the snow..... *(He takes her to the fireside in his arms.)*
(They warm themselves for a while in silence.)

Tsu: You want so much-so much to go to Kyoto?

Yohyo: Yes, that's..... because.....
(Pause.)

Yohyo: They say Kyoto is awfully beautiful.....By this time cherry-blossoms will be in full bloom, won't they?
(Pause.)

Yohyo: The streets are crowded with celebrities riding on ox-carriages, aren't they?..... You used to tell me that before.
(Pause)

Yohyo: Oh dear! I've become sleepy. *(He lies down.)*
(Pause. Tsu lays a blanket on him and keeps looking down at his sleeping face.
Abruptly, she jumps to her feet and goes to a corner of the room to take a sack. Opening the sack, she pours gold coins into the palm of her hand. The coins overflow to fall on the floor.She stares at the coins motionlessly.
The light quickly fades out, leaving the figure of Tsu and gold alone in its focus)

Tsu: This is it..... This is it-everything comes from this stuff..... Money Money..... I wove that cloth only to show you its beauty..... I was so glad to see you appreciate it joyfully.....for your pleasure - for the sake of your joy-I have woven it at the sacrifice of my weight..... But, now, there is no other means left to keep you in my arms than-weaving another piece of that cloth and having you make money..... Other wise, you'll not stay with me any more, will you?..... But..... Yes, that's all right- if you are so

fond of money-saving up money, and-you are so anxious to go to Kyoto, and further if I can keep you in my arms by doing so-I will weave one more piece of cloth for you..... Will you forgive me with it?-that's the last one Because, if I go beyond it, I'm afraid I may not live any longer..... Pardon me, my darling.....But you may go to Kyoto to sell it-and, please, come back with the money gained!Please come back to me! You must come back! Please, swear to me to come back,my darling!And thereafter, we may live together forever, forever..... please, my love, promise me! Swear to me!

(The lights come up.)

Tsu: *(Shaking up Yohyo)* My dear.....My darling..... please.....

Yohyo: *(half-asleep)* Yah-aw.....blah,blah.....

Tsu: My dear-My Love.....I'll weave another stuff for you,is that all right?

Yohyo: Yes, aw.....What did you say?

Tsu: I say I'll weave that cloth for you again.

Yohyo: What? You say you weave.....? Is it true? Is it true, dearest?

Tsu: Yes, it's true. I will-only once more.

Yohyo: My dear! You're fooling me, aren't you?

Tsu: No. It's true. I'll weave it once more. Then you may go to Kyoto with it.

Yohyo: Really? May I take it to Kyoto? Can I? Are you sure?

Tsu: Yes. And-getting your precious money, you have to come back right away, you see? And then, after that , you and I

Yohyo: Really? You say you'll weave the cloth again for me? You say I can go to Kyoto?Oh, wonderful! How nice it is!..... Yes, I know I'll come back with a lot of profit-certainly, I'll earn a lot of money.Tsu, I'm happy.I'll.....

Tsu: *(having looked at Yohyo in the seventh heaven of his delight).....Well, now,here is the promise as usual – you mustn't watch me at all, you see?*

Yohyo: Yes,certainly. I'll never peep at you.....Oh, thank God! You'll weave it for me!.....

Tsu: Please, Yohyo, never,never, never look at me. Please, swear before the gods..... If you should watch me,it'd be the end of our relationship, you see?

Yohyo: Yes, I see. I'll never look through. Yes- I'll go to Kyoto- I'm going to sell it four, five times more than before!

Tsu: Please, swear never to look.You see, Yohyo? Please never break this pledge by any means.....*(She enters into the weaving-room)*
(The sound of a loom begins to be heard. Sodo rushes out of his hiding place followed by Unzu.)

Sodo: Fine! Look, Unzu. She's begun to weave.

Unzu: Yes.....But,having watched her from over there, I've begun to feel sorry for his wife.

Sodo: Stop, you foolish bastard!We're in the big business of money-making; what the hell will the pity and sympathy do! *(Rushing up into the house,he tries to look through the weaving-room.)*

Yohyo: Holy Moses! You can't look into the room! Hey! You cannot.....

Unzu: Sodo, He says you can't look into that room.....

Sodo: Quiet stupid fool! Unless we see the weaving itself, who the hell can be sure whether it's a real "Senba-Ori" of the crane's feathers!

Yohyo: No,no,no- please! You cannot! Tsu will be angry Sodo, please.....!

Unzu: Sodo.....

Sodo: Let me go! Let me see! You stupid nit-wit! (*At last he peeps into the weaving-room, and surprised*)
Oh, Heavens!

Unzu: What's the matter?

Sodo: Look, Unzu! A crane- there's a crane-a crane's weaving on the loom.

Unzu: What? A crane?..... (*He also peeps into the room, and surprised.*) Oh, heavens! That's not the wife but a crane! The crane is pacing to and fro on the loom with her feathers in mouth.....How extraordinary!.....

Sodo: Unzu! Now we've got it! All right!

Unzu: Yes.....

Yohyo: I say, what's happened? What's the matter?

Sodo: Nothing! There's no one in the room but your beloved one..... Say, Unzu, now we can get that stuff tomorrow morning-well, let's go and wait at home.

Unzu: Aw, Yes.....

Yohyo: I say, what did you say?.....What's there-in that room?.....Isn't Tsu in there?

Unzu: (*being marched off by Sodo*)Yes, there's a crane! A real crane is weaving on the loom! (*Pulled by Sodo, he exits.*)

Yohyo: What? A crane? -in this room?....I want to see- I could see!.....But - no, no, no, I can't. Tsu'll get angry But- I wonder what's the crane doing? What's it doing?I want to seecan't I see, Tsu? Tsu! can't I see? Yes, I want to see.....I'll take a quick look?- Is that all right? No, no, no, I can'tTsu said never to look in But.....Darling, why don't you answer me?... Tsu, my dear.... what's happened? What's the matter with you? Tsu..... Darling She doesn't answer.....I want to seeI want to see..... I'll take a short look, may I, Tsu?.....(*At last, he peeps through a crevice in the door to the next room.*) Oh, Heavens! There's only a crane!..... There's not a shadow of my darling! What's the matter?.....What's happened?..... my dear, Tsu!.....No, she isn't there..... Heavens! What shall I do? She is not.....She is not.....She is not.....

Good God!..... *(He tries to open the door, but the door does not open.)* Tsu! My dear!.....Darling.....Where've you gone?.....My dear!Darling.....*(He goes out aimlessly, looking for Tsu in vain. The sound of the loom alone continues.)*

FADE OUT

(During the darkness a poem is read, doubling the continued sound of the loom. The meaning of the poem is as follows:

Yohyo, Yohyo, where are you going?
Looking for your Tsu in vain.
In the midst of the dark, snow-blanketed field?

When the morning lights come up in the East,
You are still crying,
And your voice is hoarse.
Soon, it becomes noon,
But you are still crying;-
“My dear, my dear Tsu”.
Before long the dusk falls today,
And the evening glow again begins to burn
In the Western sky, as usual.....

The lights come up on the stage,tinged with the sunset glowing in the West.

The sound of the loom continues from the previous scene, Sodo and Unzu are looking after Yohyo who has been taken in their arms from the field where he was lying)

Unzu: Yohyo! Keep up your nerve!

Sodo: That's right. You're so stupid to lie down in the snow.....
Why did you go to such a far corner of the field?

Unzu: If we hadn't found you, you'd have been frozen to death by now.

Yohyo: My dear, my dear Tsu.....

Unzu: Oh,have you come to yourself?

Sodo: Yohyo! Take courage!

Yohyo: My dear, my dear Tsu..... *(Pause)*

Sodo: Well..... I wonder how long will she last weaving the cloth!

Unzu: Yes.....Usually she's through in a night. But this time it takes all day long

Sodo: Yes.....Well,I'll look in again. *(He is going to the door to the next room)*
(The sound of the loom suddenly stops)

Unzu: Oh, it's stopped!

Sodo: She's coming!
(They go out in a hurry to hide themselves in some nearby place. Tsu appears carrying two sheets of cloth. She seems to have become awfully thin)

Tsu: *(shaking up Yohyo)* My dear..... My darling.....

Yohyo: My dear.....My dear Tsu.....

Tsu: My dear.....My darling.....

Yohyo: Dear.....Dear Tsu.....*(He has come back to himself at last)*Oh ,my dear Tsu!*(He clings to her, crying)* Tsu, my dear, where have you been?You weren't here, I've..... I've.....

Tsu: Excuse me,my darling, I am sorry to have kept you waiting. But.....Look, these sheets of cloth! I've just finished them. They're wonderful, aren't they?

Yohyo: Really! Oh, you've finished them! Thank you! Thank you, darling!

Tsu: *(She stares motionlessly at Yohyo who is in joy)*

Yohyo: Goodness! It's really wonderful! It's awfully beautiful! Thanks a lot, my dear! Oh, it's a pair, isn't it?

Tsu: Yes, it's a pair. That's why I've taken so long. my dear.....
You may go to Kyoto with it now.

Yohyo: Yes, Certainly I'll go to Kyoto. Tsu, you will go with me,
will you?

Tsu: *(She is weeping)*

Yohyo: Darling, we shall go together to look around the sights of
Kyoto in blossom time, won't we?

Tsu: -My darling..... You saw me while weaving after all.....

Yohyo: Now, I'd like to go to Kyoto as soon as possible! My dear,
these stuffs are pretty well finished- don't you think so?

Tsu: After all I had asked youAfter all you had
promised faithfully.....Why-why did you look in at
me? Why did you do it, my darling?

Yohyo: Well! What are you weeping for, darling?

Tsu: I wished I could have lived with you forever, forever.....
But.....Please, my darling. I beg you to keep one of these
-this one-keep it with you as a treasure.....Because I
have woven it with my whole heart.....

Yohyo: Yes, this is really wonderfully done!

Tsu: *(Taking hold of his shoulders)* Please keep it with
you..... Please treasure it always!

Yohyo: *(like a child)* Yes, I'll treasure it- of course I will! I'll
always obey you by all means. Then, dear Tsu, you'll
come with me to Kyoto, won't you?

Tsu: No, my darling, I can't..... *(She stands up to her
feet with a sad smile. She seems to have become white
suddenly.)* I've grown thin because of thisI've
used up all the feathers I can possibly spare..... Now I
have just enough left to fly..... *(She smiles sadly)*

Yohyo: *(sensing something unhappy)* My dear-dear Tsu.....*(He
holds on to her- but in vain. His arms have just grasped
the air)*

Tsu: My darling, Yohyo..... Good luck!..... Please, live long- forever.....

Yohyo:(*The children's song is heard from a distance*
"Jiyan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Bayan Ni Kiseru Futo Nuuno
Chin Kara Kan Kara
Ton Ton Ton.....")

Tsu: Alas! I have to say good bye to my children, too..... How many times I used to play with them, singing that old song.....My darling, Yohyo, please never, never forget me! I'll never forget you, eitherThese few days-it's only a short time- I've been really happy-wrapped up in your love, and singing and playing with the children.....I'll never, never forget these happy days- wherever I go – and forever.....

Yohyo: Tsu-darling.....Where are you going?

Tsu: Please, never put me out of your mind , my darling..... And –please,keep the one piece of cloth with you as a treasure?

Yohyo: I say-my darling.....

Tsu: Good-bye, My Love.....Good luck.....

Yohyo: Wait, Darling! just a minute! I'll go! I'll go with you!

Tsu: No, no you cannot. I can no longer take the shape of woman. I have to go back again to the old sky by myself.....Good-bye, my darling.....Good luck..... Good bye.....Adieu, my Love.....(*she disappears.*)

Yohyo: My dear-dearest.....Tsu.....where are you going? Tsu! Darling!.....Tsu.....(*Crying he goes out of the house*)

(*Sodo and Unzu rush out of their hiding place to hold him back.*)

Unzu: (*out of breath, to Sodo*) Say!.....

Sodo: (*out of breath,too*) Yes, she's gone!.....
(*Yohyo looks dazed in Unzu's arms. The Children appear running in.*)

Children: *(in unison, as if singing)* Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing.
Tsu-yan, Tsu-yan, let us sing.....*(A deep, long pause)*

Children: Are you not in, Tsu-yan?.....We'er sorry!.....*(To Yohyo)*Yohyo,where'd she gone? When's she coming back?

Yohyo: *(toward the interior of the house, timidly and fearfully)*
I say.....Tsu.....darling.....Here are children.....They want you to sing the song as usual.....
Tsu.....Darling.....
(A deep and long pause)
One of the children.*(pointing up at the sky)*Look! a crane!
A crane's flying!

Sodo: Oh! The crane!.....

Unzu: Goodness!.....

Children: Yes, a crane! There's a crane! A crane's flying! *(They run away following the shadow of the crane)*

Unzu: Yohyo! Look, the crane!

Sodo: It's flying crookedly! *(Pause)*

Sodo: *(half to himself)* Well, now, it's very nice to have got two pieces of the cloth-God bless us!*(He tries to take the stuffs off from Yohyo's hands, but unconsciously Yohyo does not let them loose.)*

Unzu: *(Following the crane with his eyes while holding Yohyo in his arms).*Look! It's flying away! It's becoming small!

Yohyo: Tsu!.....Tsu!.....My dear!.....*(He takes a few stambling steps as if to follow in the direction of the crane, and halts, grasping the stuffs tightly)*
(Sodo also turns his eyes in that direction, and all eyes are riveted on a distant point in the sky. The children's song begins faintly in the distance.)

CURTAIN

The Bear - Anton Chekhov

Translated by Julius West.

CHARACTERS

ELENA IVANOVNA POPOVA, a landowning little widow, with dimples on her cheeks

GRIGORY STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, a middle-aged landowner

LUKA, Popova's aged footman

[A drawing-room in POPOVA'S house.]

[POPOVA is in deep mourning and has her eyes fixed on a photograph. LUKA is haranguing her.]

LUKA.

It isn't right, madam.... You're just destroying yourself. The maid and the cook have gone off fruit picking, every living being is rejoicing, even the cat understands how to enjoy herself and walks about in the yard, catching midges; only you sit in this room all day, as if this was a convent, and don't take any pleasure. Yes, really! I reckon it's a whole year that you haven't left the house!

POPOVA.

I shall never go out.... Why should I? My life is already at an end. He is in his grave, and I have buried myself between four walls.... We are both dead.

LUKA.

Well, there you are! Nicolai Mihailovitch is dead, well, it's the will of God, and may his soul rest in peace.... You've mourned him--and quite right. But you can't go on weeping and wearing and mourning for ever. My old woman died too, when her time came. Well? I grieved over her, I wept for a month, and that's enough for her, but if I've got to weep for a whole age, well, the old woman isn't worth it.

[Sighs]

You've forgotten all your neighbours. You don't go anywhere, and you see nobody. We live, so to speak, like spiders, and never see the light. The mice have eaten my livery. It isn't as if there were no good people around, for the district's full of them. There's a regiment quartered at Riblov, and the officers are such beauties--you can never gaze your fill

at them. And, every Friday, there's a ball at the camp, and every day the soldier's band plays.... Eh, my lady! You're young and beautiful, with roses in your cheek--if you only took a little pleasure. Beauty won't last long, you know. In ten years' time you'll want to be a pea-hen yourself among the officers, but they won't look at you, it will be too late.

POPOVA.

[With determination]

I must ask you never to talk to me about it! You know that when Nicolai Mihailovitch died, life lost all its meaning for me. I vowed never to the end of my days to cease to wear mourning, or to see the light.... You hear? Let his ghost see how well I love him.... Yes, I know it's no secret to you that he was often unfair to me, cruel, and... and even unfaithful, but I shall be true till death, and show him how I can love. There, beyond the grave, he will see me as I was before his death....

LUKA.

Instead of talking like that you ought to go and have a walk in the garden, or else order Toby or Giant to be harnessed, and then drive out to see some of the neighbours.

POPOVA.

Oh!

[Weeps.]

LUKA.

Madam! Dear madam! What is it? Bless you!

POPOVA.

He was so fond of Toby! He always used to ride on him to the Korchagins and Vlasovs. How well he could ride! What grace there was in his figure when he pulled at the reins with all his strength! Do you remember? Toby, Toby! Tell them to give him an extra feed of oats.

LUKA.

Yes, madam.

[A bell rings noisily.]

POPOVA.

[Shaking]

Who's that? Tell them that I receive nobody.

LUKA.

Yes, madam.

[Exit.]

POPOVA.

[Looks at the photograph]

You will see, Nicolas, how I can love and forgive.... My love will die out with me, only when this poor heart will cease to beat.

[Laughs through her tears]

And aren't you ashamed? I am a good and virtuous little wife. I've locked myself in, and will be true to you till the grave, and you... aren't you ashamed, you bad child? You deceived me, had rows with me, left me alone for weeks on end....

[LUKA enters in consternation.]

LUKA.

Madam, somebody is asking for you. He wants to see you....

POPOVA.

But didn't you tell him that since the death of my husband I've stopped receiving?

LUKA.

I did, but he wouldn't even listen; says that it's a very pressing affair.

POPOVA.

I do not re-ceive!

LUKA.

I told him so, but the... the devil... curses and pushes himself right in.... He's in the dining-room now.

POPOVA.

[Annoyed]

Very well, ask him in.... What manners!

[Exit LUKA]

How these people annoy me! What does he want of me? Why should he disturb my peace?

[Sighs]

No, I see that I shall have to go into a convent after all.

[Thoughtfully]
Yes, into a convent....

[Enter LUKA with SMIRNOV.]

SMIRNOV.

[To LUKA]

You fool, you're too fond of talking.... Ass!

[Sees POPOVA and speaks with respect]

Madam, I have the honour to present myself, I am Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner and retired lieutenant of artillery! I am compelled to disturb you on a very pressing affair.

POPOVA.

[Not giving him her hand]

What do you want?

SMIRNOV.

Your late husband, with whom I had the honour of being acquainted, died in my debt for one thousand two hundred roubles, on two bills of exchange. As I've got to pay the interest on a mortgage to-morrow, I've come to ask you, madam, to pay me the money to-day.

POPOVA.

One thousand two hundred....And what was my husband in debt to you for?

SMIRNOV.

He used to buy oats from me.

POPOVA.

[Sighing, to LUKA]

So don't you forget, Luka, to give Toby an extra feed of oats.

[Exit LUKA]

If Nicolai Mihailovitch died in debt to you, then I shall certainly pay you, but you must excuse me to-day, as I haven't any spare cash. The day after to-morrow my steward will be back from town, and I'll give him instructions to settle your account, but at the moment I cannot do as you wish.... Moreover, it's exactly seven months to-day since the death of my husband, and I'm in a state of mind which absolutely prevents me from giving money matters my attention.

SMIRNOV.

And I'm in a state of mind which, if I don't pay the interest due to-morrow, will force me to make a graceful exit from this life feet first. They'll take my estate!

POPOVA.

You'll have your money the day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV.

I don't want the money the day after tomorrow, I want it to-day.

POPOVA.

You must excuse me, I can't pay you.

SMIRNOV.

And I can't wait till after to-morrow.

POPOVA.

Well, what can I do, if I haven't the money now!

SMIRNOV.

You mean to say, you can't pay me?

POPOVA.

I can't.

SMIRNOV.

Hm! Is that the last word you've got to say?

POPOVA.

Yes, the last word.

SMIRNOV.

The last word? Absolutely your last?

POPOVA.

Absolutely.

SMIRNOV.

Thank you so much. I'll make a note of it.

[Shrugs his shoulders]

And then people want me to keep calm! I meet a man on the road, and he asks me "Why are you always so angry, Grigory Stepanovitch?" But

how on earth am I not to get angry? I want the money desperately. I rode out yesterday, early in the morning, and called on all my debtors, and not a single one of them paid up! I was just about dead-beat after it all, slept, goodness knows where, in some inn, kept by a Jew, with a vodka-barrel by my head. At last I get here, seventy versts from home, and hope to get something, and I am received by you with a “state of mind”! How shouldn’t I get angry.

POPOVA.

I thought I distinctly said my steward will pay you when he returns from town.

SMIRNOV.

I didn’t come to your steward, but to you! What the devil, excuse my saying so, have I to do with your steward!

POPOVA.

Excuse me, sir, I am not accustomed to listen to such expressions or to such a tone of voice. I want to hear no more.

[Makes a rapid exit.]

SMIRNOV.

Well, there! “A state of mind.”... “Husband died seven months ago!” Must I pay the interest, or mustn’t I? I ask you: Must I pay, or must I not? Suppose your husband is dead, and you’ve got a state of mind, and nonsense of that sort.... And your steward’s gone away somewhere, devil take him, what do you want me to do? Do you think I can fly away from my creditors in a balloon, or what? Or do you expect me to go and run my head into a brick wall? I go to Grusdev and he isn’t at home, Yaroshevitch has hidden himself, I had a violent row with Kuritsin and nearly threw him out of the window, Mazugo has something the matter with his bowels, and this woman has “a state of mind.” Not one of the swine wants to pay me! Just because I’m too gentle with them, because I’m a rag, just weak wax in their hands! I’m much too gentle with them! Well, just you wait! You’ll find out what I’m like! I shan’t let you play about with me, confound it! I shall jolly well stay here until she pays! Brr!... How angry I am to-day, how angry I am! All my inside is quivering with anger, and I can’t even breathe.... Foo, my word, I even feel sick!

[Yells]
Waiter!

[Enter LUKA.]

LUKA.
What is it?

SMIRNOV.
Get me some kvass or water!

[Exit LUKA]

What a way to reason! A man is in desperate need of his money, and she won't pay it because, you see, she is not disposed to attend to money matters!... That's real silly feminine logic. That's why I never did like, and don't like now, to have to talk to women. I'd rather sit on a barrel of gunpowder than talk to a woman. Brr!... I feel quite chilly--and it's all on account of that little bit of fluff! I can't even see one of these poetic creatures from a distance without breaking out into a cold sweat out of sheer anger. I can't look at them.

[Enter LUKA with water.]

LUKA.
Madam is ill and will see nobody.

SMIRNOV.
Get out!

[Exit LUKA]

Ill and will see nobody! No, it's all right, you don't see me.... I'm going to stay and will sit here till you give me the money. You can be ill for a week, if you like, and I'll stay here for a week.... If you're ill for a year--I'll stay for a year. I'm going to get my own, my dear! You don't get at me with your widow's weeds and your dimpled cheeks! I know those dimples!

[Shouts through the window]

Simeon, take them out! We aren't going away at once! I'm staying here! Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats! You fool, you've let the near horse's leg get tied up in the reins again!

[Teasingly]

"Never mind...." I'll give it you. "Never mind."

[Goes away from the window]

Oh, it's bad.... The heat's frightful, nobody pays up. I slept badly, and on top of everything else here's a bit of fluff in mourning with "a state of mind."... My head's aching.... Shall I have some vodka, what? Yes, I think I will.

[Yells]

Waiter!

[Enter LUKA.]

LUKA.

What is it?

SMIRNOV.

A glass of vodka!

[Exit LUKA]

Ouf!

[Sits and inspects himself]

I must say I look well! Dust all over, boots dirty, unwashed, unkempt, straw on my waistcoat.... The dear lady may well have taken me for a brigand.

[Yawns]

It's rather impolite to come into a drawing-room in this state, but it can't be helped.... I am not here as a visitor, but as a creditor, and there's no dress specially prescribed for creditors....

[Enter LUKA with the vodka.]

LUKA.

You allow yourself to go very far, sir....

SMIRNOV

[Angrily]

What?

LUKA.

I... er... nothing... I really...

SMIRNOV.

Whom are you talking to? Shut up!

LUKA.

[Aside]

The devil's come to stay.... Bad luck that brought him....

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

Oh, how angry I am! So angry that I think I could grind the whole world to dust.... I even feel sick....

[Yells]

Waiter!

[Enter POPOVA.]

POPOVA.

[Her eyes downcast]

Sir, in my solitude I have grown unaccustomed to the masculine voice, and I can't stand shouting. I must ask you not to disturb my peace.

SMIRNOV.

Pay me the money, and I'll go.

POPOVA.

I told you perfectly plainly; I haven't any money to spare; wait until the day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV.

And I told you perfectly plainly I don't want the money the day after to-morrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day, I'll have to hang myself to-morrow.

POPOVA.

But what can I do if I haven't got the money? You're so strange!

SMIRNOV.

Then you won't pay me now? Eh?

POPOVA.

I can't.

SMIRNOV.

In that case I stay here and shall wait until I get it. [Sits down] You're going to pay me the day after to-morrow? Very well! I'll stay here until the day after to-morrow. I'll sit here all the time.... [Jumps up] I ask

you: Have I got to pay the interest to-morrow, or haven't I? Or do you think I'm doing this for a joke?

POPOVA.

Please don't shout! This isn't a stable!

SMIRNOV.

I wasn't asking you about a stable, but whether I'd got my interest to pay to-morrow or not?

POPOVA.

You don't know how to behave before women!

SMIRNOV.

No, I do know how to behave before women!

POPOVA.

No, you don't! You're a rude, ill-bred man! Decent people don't talk to a woman like that!

SMIRNOV.

What a business! How do you want me to talk to you? In French, or what?

[Loses his temper and lisps]

Madame, je vous prie.... How happy I am that you don't pay me.... Ah, pardon. I have disturbed you! Such lovely weather to-day! And how well you look in mourning!

[Bows.]

POPOVA.

That's silly and rude.

SMIRNOV.

[Teasing her]

Silly and rude! I don't know how to behave before women! Madam, in my time I've seen more women than you've seen sparrows! Three times I've fought duels on account of women. I've refused twelve women, and nine have refused me! Yes! There was a time when I played the fool, scented myself, used honeyed words, wore jewellery, made beautiful bows. I used to love, to suffer, to sigh at the moon, to get sour, to thaw, to freeze.... I used to love passionately, madly,

every blessed way, devil take me; I used to chatter like a magpie about emancipation, and wasted half my wealth on tender feelings, but now--you must excuse me! You won't get round me like that now! I've had enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, ruby lips, dimpled cheeks, the moon, whispers, timid breathing--I wouldn't give a brass farthing for the lot, madam! Present company always excepted, all women, great or little, are insincere, crooked, backbiters, envious, liars to the marrow of their bones, vain, trivial, merciless, unreasonable, and, as far as this is concerned

[taps his forehead]

excuse my outspokenness, a sparrow can give ten points to any philosopher in petticoats you like to name! You look at one of these poetic creatures: all muslin, an ethereal demi-goddess, you have a million transports of joy, and you look into her soul--and see a common crocodile!

[He grips the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks]

But the most disgusting thing of all is that this crocodile for some reason or other imagines that its chef d'oeuvre, its privilege and monopoly, is its tender feelings. Why, confound it, hang me on that nail feet upwards, if you like, but have you met a woman who can love anybody except a lapdog? When she's in love, can she do anything but snivel and slobber? While a man is suffering and making sacrifices all her love expresses itself in her playing about with her scarf, and trying to hook him more firmly by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, you know from yourself what is the nature of woman. Tell me truthfully, have you ever seen a woman who was sincere, faithful, and constant? You haven't! Only freaks and old women are faithful and constant! You'll meet a cat with a horn or a white woodcock sooner than a constant woman!

POPOVA.

Then, according to you, who is faithful and constant in love? Is it the man?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, the man!

POPOVA.

The man!

[Laughs bitterly]

Men are faithful and constant in love! What an idea!

[With heat]

What right have you to talk like that? Men are faithful and constant! Since we are talking about it, I'll tell you that of all the men I knew and know, the best was my late husband.... I loved him passionately with all my being, as only a young and imaginative woman can love, I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life, my fortune, I breathed in him, I worshipped him as if I were a heathen, and... and what then? This best of men shamelessly deceived me at every step! After his death I found in his desk a whole drawerful of love-letters, and when he was alive--it's an awful thing to remember!--he used to leave me alone for weeks at a time, and make love to other women and betray me before my very eyes; he wasted my money, and made fun of my feelings.... And, in spite of all that, I loved him and was true to him. And not only that, but, now that he is dead, I am still true and constant to his memory. I have shut myself for ever within these four walls, and will wear these weeds to the very end....

SMIRNOV.

[Laughs contemptuously]

Weeds!... I don't understand what you take me for. As if I don't know why you wear that black domino and bury yourself between four walls! I should say I did! It's so mysterious, so poetic! When some junker [Note: So in the original.] or some tame poet goes past your windows he'll think: "There lives the mysterious Tamara who, for the love of her husband, buried herself between four walls." We know these games!

POPOVA.

[Exploding]

What? How dare you say all that to me?

SMIRNOV.

You may have buried yourself alive, but you haven't forgotten to powder your face!

POPOVA.

How dare you speak to me like that?

SMIRNOV.

Please don't shout, I'm not your steward! You must allow me to call things by their real names. I'm not a woman, and I'm used to saying what I think straight out! Don't you shout, either!

POPOVA.

I'm not shouting, it's you! Please leave me alone!

SMIRNOV.

Pay me my money and I'll go.

POPOVA.

I shan't give you any money!

SMIRNOV.

Oh, no, you will.

POPOVA.

I shan't give you a farthing, just to spite you. You leave me alone!

SMIRNOV.

I have not the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiance, so please don't make scenes.

[Sits]

I don't like it.

POPOVA.

[Choking with rage]

So you sit down?

SMIRNOV.

I do.

POPOVA.

I ask you to go away!

SMIRNOV.

Give me my money....

[Aside]

Oh, how angry I am! How angry I am!

POPOVA.

I don't want to talk to impudent scoundrels! Get out of this!

[Pause]

Aren't you going? No?

SMIRNOV.

No.

POPOVA.

No?

SMIRNOV.

No!

POPOVA.

Very well then!

[Rings, enter LUKA]

Luka, show this gentleman out!

LUKA.

[Approaches SMIRNOV]

Would you mind going out, sir, as you're asked to! You needn't...

SMIRNOV.

[Jumps up]

Shut up! Who are you talking to? I'll chop you into pieces!

LUKA.

[Clutches at his heart]

Little fathers!... What people!...

[Falls into a chair]

Oh, I'm ill, I'm ill! I can't breathe!

POPOVA.

Where's Dasha? Dasha!

[Shouts]

Dasha! Pelageya! Dasha!

[Rings.]

LUKA.

Oh! They've all gone out to pick fruit.... There's nobody at home! I'm ill! Water!

POPOVA.

Get out of this, now.

SMIRNOV.

Can't you be more polite?

POPOVA.

[Clenches her fists and stamps her foot]

You're a boor! A coarse bear! A Bourbon! A monster!

SMIRNOV.

What? What did you say?

POPOVA.

I said you are a bear, a monster!

SMIRNOV.

[Approaching her]

May I ask what right you have to insult me?

POPOVA.

And suppose I am insulting you? Do you think I'm afraid of you?

SMIRNOV.

And do you think that just because you're a poetic creature you can insult me with impunity? Eh? We'll fight it out!

LUKA.

Little fathers!... What people!... Water!

SMIRNOV.

Pistols!

POPOVA.

Do you think I'm afraid of you just because you have large fists and a bull's throat? Eh? You Bourbon!

SMIRNOV.

We'll fight it out! I'm not going to be insulted by anybody, and I don't care if you are a woman, one of the "softer sex," indeed!

POPOVA.

[Trying to interrupt him]

Bear! Bear! Bear!

SMIRNOV.

It's about time we got rid of the prejudice that only men need pay for

their insults. Devil take it, if you want equality of rights you can have it. We're going to fight it out!

POPOVA.

With pistols? Very well!

SMIRNOV.

This very minute.

POPOVA.

This very minute! My husband had some pistols.... I'll bring them here.

[Is going, but turns back]

What pleasure it will give me to put a bullet into your thick head! Devil take you!

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

I'll bring her down like a chicken! I'm not a little boy or a sentimental puppy; I don't care about this "softer sex."

LUKA.

Gracious little fathers!...

[Kneels]

Have pity on a poor old man, and go away from here! You've frightened her to death, and now you want to shoot her!

SMIRNOV.

[Not hearing him]

If she fights, well that's equality of rights, emancipation, and all that! Here the sexes are equal! I'll shoot her on principle! But what a woman!

[Parodying her]

"Devil take you! I'll put a bullet into your thick head." Eh? How she reddened, how her cheeks shone!... She accepted my challenge! My word, it's the first time in my life that I've seen....

LUKA.

Go away, sir, and I'll always pray to God for you!

SMIRNOV.

She is a woman! That's the sort I can understand! A real woman! Not

a sour-faced jellybag, but fire, gunpowder, a rocket! I'm even sorry to have to kill her!

LUKA.

[Weeps]

Dear... dear sir, do go away!

SMIRNOV.

I absolutely like her! Absolutely! Even though her cheeks are dimpled, I like her! I'm almost ready to let the debt go... and I'm not angry any longer.... Wonderful woman!

[Enter POPOVA with pistols.]

POPOVA.

Here are the pistols.... But before we fight you must show me how to fire. I've never held a pistol in my hands before.

LUKA.

Oh, Lord, have mercy and save her.... I'll go and find the coachman and the gardener.... Why has this infliction come on us....

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV.

[Examining the pistols]

You see, there are several sorts of pistols.... There are Mortimer pistols, specially made for duels, they fire a percussion-cap. These are Smith and Wesson revolvers, triple action, with extractors.... These are excellent pistols. They can't cost less than ninety roubles the pair.... You must hold the revolver like this....

[Aside]

Her eyes, her eyes! What an inspiring woman!

POPOVA.

Like this?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, like this.... Then you cock the trigger, and take aim like this.... Put your head back a little! Hold your arm out properly.... Like that.... Then you press this thing with your finger--and that's all. The great thing is to keep cool and aim steadily.... Try not to jerk your arm.

POPOVA.

Very well.... It's inconvenient to shoot in a room, let's go into the garden.

SMIRNOV.

Come along then. But I warn you, I'm going to fire in the air.

POPOVA.

That's the last straw! Why?

SMIRNOV.

Because... because... it's my affair.

POPOVA.

Are you afraid? Yes? Ah! No, sir, you don't get out of it! You come with me! I shan't have any peace until I've made a hole in your forehead... that forehead which I hate so much! Are you afraid?

SMIRNOV.

Yes, I am afraid.

POPOVA.

You lie! Why won't you fight?

SMIRNOV.

Because... because you... because I like you.

POPOVA.

[Laughs]

He likes me! He dares to say that he likes me!

[Points to the door]

That's the way.

SMIRNOV.

[Loads the revolver in silence, takes his cap and goes to the door. There he stops for half a minute, while they look at each other in silence, then he hesitatingly approaches POPOVA]

Listen.... Are you still angry? I'm devilishly annoyed, too... but, do you understand... how can I express myself?... The fact is, you see, it's like this, so to speak....

[Shouts]

Well, is it my fault that I like you?

[He snatches at the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks]
Devil take it, how I'm smashing up your furniture! I like you! Do you understand? I... I almost love you!

POPOVA.

Get away from me--I hate you!

SMIRNOV.

God, what a woman! I've never in my life seen one like her! I'm lost!
Done for! Fallen into a mousetrap, like a mouse!

POPOVA.

Stand back, or I'll fire!

SMIRNOV.

Fire, then! You can't understand what happiness it would be to die before those beautiful eyes, to be shot by a revolver held in that little, velvet hand.... I'm out of my senses! Think, and make up your mind at once, because if I go out we shall never see each other again! Decide now.... I am a landowner, of respectable character, have an income of ten thousand a year. I can put a bullet through a coin tossed into the air as it comes down.... I own some fine horses.... Will you be my wife?

POPOVA.

[Indignantly shakes her revolver]

Let's fight! Let's go out!

SMIRNOV.

I'm mad.... I understand nothing.

[Yells]

Waiter, water!

POPOVA.

[Yells]

Let's go out and fight!

SMIRNOV.

I'm off my head, I'm in love like a boy, like a fool!

[Snatches her hand, she screams with pain]

I love you!

[Kneels]

I love you as I've never loved before! I've refused twelve women, nine have refused me, but I never loved one of them as I love you.... I'm weak, I'm wax, I've melted.... I'm on my knees like a fool, offering you my hand.... Shame, shame! I haven't been in love for five years, I'd taken a vow, and now all of a sudden I'm in love, like a fish out of water! I offer you my hand. Yes or no? You don't want me? Very well!

[Gets up and quickly goes to the door.]

POPOVA.

Stop.

SMIRNOV.

[Stops]

Well?

POPOVA.

Nothing, go away.... No, stop.... No, go away, go away! I hate you! Or no.... Don't go away! Oh, if you knew how angry I am, how angry I am!

[Throws her revolver on the table]

My fingers have swollen because of all this....

[Tears her handkerchief in temper]

What are you waiting for? Get out!

SMIRNOV.

Good-bye.

POPOVA.

Yes, yes, go away!...

[Yells]

Where are you going? Stop.... No, go away. Oh, how angry I am! Don't come near me, don't come near me!

SMIRNOV.

[Approaching her]

How angry I am with myself! I'm in love like a student, I've been on my knees....

[Rudely]

I love you! What do I want to fall in love with you for? To-morrow I've got to pay the interest, and begin mowing, and here you....

[Puts his arms around her]

I shall never forgive myself for this....

POPOVA.

Get away from me! Take your hands away! I hate you! Let's go and fight!

[A prolonged kiss. Enter LUKA with an axe, the GARDENER with a rake, the COACHMAN with a pitchfork, and WORKMEN with poles.]

LUKA.

[Catches sight of the pair kissing]

Little fathers!

[Pause.]

POPOVA.

[Lowering her eyes]

Luka, tell them in the stables that Toby isn't to have any oats at all to-day.

[Curtain.]

[The end]

Anton Chekhov's play: Bear

Annexure:

Proposed Term-wise Breakdown of the Syllabus

Grade	Term	Scheme of Work	Periods
10	01	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Eagle * To the Evening Star * Farewell to Barn and Stack and Tree <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Lumber Room * The Lahore Attack 	35
	02	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Big Match- 1983 * The Terrorist, He's Watching * The Clown's Wife * The Huntsman <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Nightingale and the Rose <p><u>Novel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * One out of three to be selected 	35
	03	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To the Nile * A Bird Came Down the Walk * Breakfast * Once Upon a Time <p><u>Prose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * An extract from 'Wave' <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Bear 	35

11	01	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * I know Why the Caged Bird Sings * War is Kind * Richard Cory * The Camel's Hump <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Twilight of a Crane 	35
	02	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Earthen Goblet * Father and Son * Upside-Down <p><u>Drama</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The Twilight of a Crane <p><u>Novel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Selected Novel Continued 	35
	03	<p><u>Poetry</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fear * Two's Company <p><u>Novel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Selected Novel Continued <p>Selected novel continued</p>	35