

GORO TAKANO

**DEATH AND THE WIFE
THE HOUSE OF AN ANGLER FISH**

DEATH AND THE WIFE

Sunday morning Britain's departure from EU still captivates the public
When hurrying into the sickroom and facing an almost inaudible voice –
"Take a deep breath, first of all"
Nodding and trying to be calmer, hearing the next order –
"Lift up both my knees slowly"
Getting the cold swollen ones to bend gently
Hearing a beastlike groan rumbling out of the bedridden tender throat
And its echo adding — *"No more talk about cancer, please"*
Answering *"Of course not"* and patting the cheeks
When the next order solicits feebly – *"Now I want an éclair"*
For the discolored teeth the sweet is one of the things long forbidden to chew
Coming back to the sickroom with the shopping and
Watching it devoured like carrion consumed by a hungry animal in the jungle
But only two morsels of the sweet end up gone
Being asked to eat the rest abandoned at the bedside
Cramming it into the already full belly

Finding the pocketbook version of *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull* at the bedside
Whispering – *"I didn't know you were reading this"*
A broken answer after a short interval – *"Even this size is too heavy for me to lift"*
"Then I will read it for you" – no reply comes back
Except a series of vomit-like dry coughs
Apparently for discharging the water from the lungs for dear life
Then the next order – *"Don't go, stay with me"*
The lonesome voice is reminiscent of a sky-blue dress selected
The previous night with a good weep as the one worn for the coffin
Answering *"Of course"* and getting close to the supine face
Receiving a couple of light slaps on one of the cheeks
Along with a jest-like word – *"You look hopelessly pathetic today"*
An instinctive reply — *"I will not marry anyone else"*
A frowned response – *"That's not my business anymore"*

Far beyond this town
Dinosaurs still infest
And this country is still
Ruled by samurais
No nuclear weapons are dropped yet
There is still a long way to go
Until the eradication of cancer

The soundless-thunder-like airwave fills the sickroom
Evening sunlight comes through the window and is subtly reflected
Over the pink pajama sprawling listlessly on the bed
The sunlight severely compels a mix of things around the bed –
A teacup, a straw, an old pair of chopsticks, a small spoon, a disposable toothbrush
A pack of nursing care diapers and a pile of towels –
To make a final decision whether it is time for them
To transfer from the ordinary into the extraordinary
A soliloquy – “Everything is tangled up with its history”
A slow response – “*I have no more interest in the past*”
An instant reply – “You don’t want to meet anyone else?”
A careless response – “*No – lucky you*”
The faint smile is accompanied by another series of heavy coughs
“How does your selected one look today?”
“*You remind me of the main character of Kenzaburo Oe’s A Personal Matter*”
“What kind of story is it?”
“*No more time to explain it*”

The gaunt face asks – “*How do I look today?*”
“You hold me in awe, nothing but awe”
Hiding its tears, the skinny face begs – “*I want you to kill me*”
Rooted to the spot – staring at the gradual change of the wistful look
The sunken face mumbles – “*I cannot wait to see what’s waiting for me
After my passing – what a thrill*”
A broad smile appears – almost impossible to keep back tears
Casting a quick glance over the outside landscape slowly turning red
To find a playful seagull disregarding its flock
And repeating again and again upspins and nose-dives alone

Calling the bird “Jon” wordlessly – a reply comes slowly
From the bed – *“Did you call me?”*

The wall directly opposite the pillow is feebly pointed to
Pinned there is a photo of evergreens whose young leaves
Start to change their color deciduously due to the sunset
Their heavenliness invokes the sandman

Far beyond this town
All dinosaurs have already perished
And the samurai nation
Has already collapsed
Countless nuclear weapons
And weapons of mass destruction
Have already been used
The extinction of cancer
Must be close at hand

The next order – *“Raise the room temperature slightly – the remote is behind you”*
Aroused from the sudden sleepiness by this thin voice
A look of reproach is in front – *“Cannot you do me such a small favor?
Forgot why I asked you to stay here? — pull yourself together”*
A silly joke – *“Will you kindly live a little longer if I raise the temperature now?”*
An almost inaudible reply – *“You’re fortunately invited here
Not to miss my last moment – so pull yourself together”*
A soliloquy with a half astonished look – *“I could not imagine at all
We could become a husband and wife like this”*
A deliberate reply – *“I’m much obliged to this disease for its kindness”*
Saying to the closed eyes in an undertone on a whim –
“Hey Jon” – the sickroom phone rings
Wondering what is spreading in the opposite world of the receiver
Wondering whether it is light or darkness or the nation fluctuating
Between hope and despair concerning the word *“DEPARTURE”*
Hearing a nurse’s voice while neglecting the ringing –
“Here is your wife’s dinner” – the tightly shut eyelids on the bed
Open slowly like the eyes of a maverick bird fading into the void

The mouth smiles and says – *“I will not go as you want me to yet”*
The eroticism of a woman in extreme fright is floating on the lips

Again from beyond this town
The roars of dinosaurs pierce the darkness
Echoing with them are the loud laughs of samurais
Killing one another in ecstasy
In a remote no-nuclear battlefield
Both ears are tightly covered with both hands
While a washed-up sky-blue dress is flitting around
In the sky without any wearer in it

THE HOUSE OF AN ANGLER FISH

Note: A water harp cave (“sui-kin-kutsu” in Japanese) is a traditional Japanese-garden accessory featuring a metal pot buried upside-down somewhere in a garden: whenever water drips through a hole at the top of the buried pot onto a small pool of water inside of the entire device, bell (or lyre)-like splashing sounds are created – you can enjoy the echoes of those sounds by, for instance, using a bamboo tube in the similar way a doctor hears your heartbeat with a stethoscope.

A time-honored garden gone dry

A water harp cave covered entirely with fallen leaves

A white-haired man stepping quietly alone out of his seemingly unmanned residence toward the buried lyre with a dipper full of water in his hand

Numerous wall clocks solemnly ticking everywhere in the venerable house

Every dial showing a different hour than the others

Water falling slowly from the dipper into the bottom of the metallic pot

The tip of a bamboo tube put gently on the upside of the hidden harp

The old man’s ear put gently on the other end of the tube

The illusion of an angler fish wriggling abruptly on the seabed

High-tone drops of water whispering to the tube: “A great number of creatures died because of you – even we almost died – yet, thanks to it, grace was miraculously brought later to our moribund lives”

The gradual disappearance of the high-tone drops while they confess in prayer: “Your old vice now looks like the creator of peace”

Low-tone drops of water whispering to the tube: “We don’t want to hear such rhetorical trickery – even we almost died – we can hardly sublime our wrath enough to affirm this status quo”

The gradual disappearance of the low-tone drops while they announce: “Your old evil now seems like the root of all sophistries”

Momentary tranquility

The white-haired man struggling to recover his former hearing

A female drop of water enticing him into going for a voyage with her to rediscover all the discarded songs of borderlands

Every singer-losing melody blending with one another and clinging to the tip of the bamboo tube

A male drop of water declaring against such a foolhardy itinerary

A voice echoing around the tip of the tube: “First, fear your own fading”

The retreat of the old man into his residence after throwing down the tube in the middle of the garden

A melody played by one of the wall clocks

Another one following it

Another one following them

The mating of angler fishes where a small male clings desperately to a giant female and eventually assimilates into her body

A small light turned on in the recesses of the quiet residence after the old man is sucked into it

The unexpected start of a night shower

The restart of the clamor of drops of water

No one to hear their reverberation in the pitch-dark cave