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Some things endure with time and relationships with family and friends are the very best of those things. I want to thank my daughter Julie for her help on this book, Diana, Milly, Jim and a host of others who have helped me get to know - The Land of the Morning Calm. cew

POEMS FROM KOREA - THE LAND OF THE MORNING CALM Vol II



COURTNEY WEBB



PAPER HEART

I take out the paper,
red, pink and silver.

I lay out the best, small scissors and
freshest glue.

I carefully fold the colored paper
into two neat halves and slowly cut
the paper heart.

And then another and another.

With the glue,

I place them together, delicately.

I create the perfect, beautiful
paper heart.

I hold this to you and you take it
and tear out a small hole
in the middle.

You hand it back to me
and smile - sweetly.

I am left with a tear in the middle
of my beautiful, beautiful, heart.



THEY DON'T TAKE THE TRAIN

They are old,

they are young,

they are middle.

They dress in all grey colors;

neither black nor white,

just faded shades of

everything.

They sit in the train station

and watch TV or sleep;

they don't take the train.

The trains come and go

on every hour and the half.

The people dump out in gabbling gobs then,

get sucked back in through

clanging metal doors.

The men sit and stare;

happy couples run and grab each other,

then say teary farewells.

Teens, in groups, walk arm in arm,

chattering parakeets.

The men sit with stony expressions.

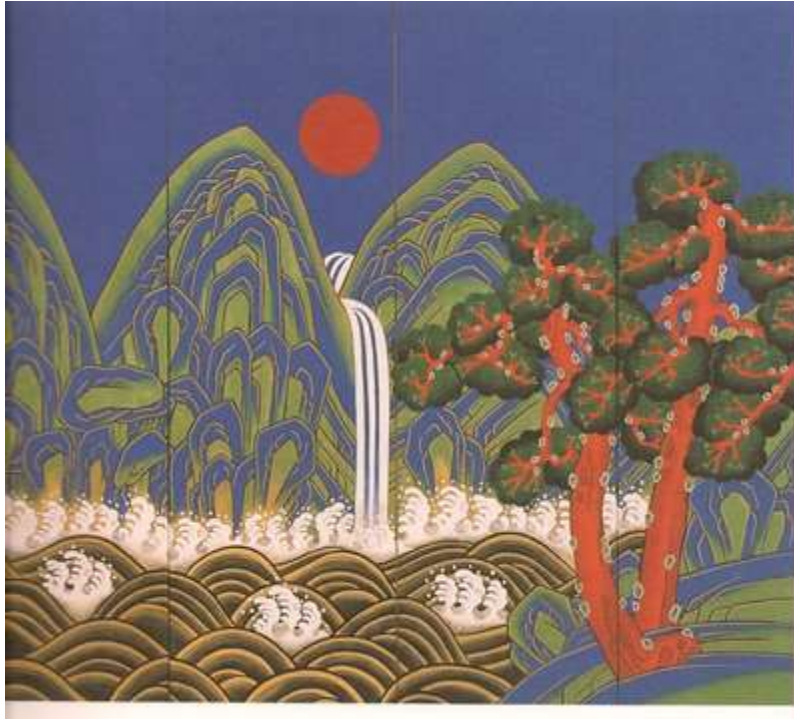
People drink coffee and eat ice cream.

The stores open and close,

the people go home.

The men sit;

they don't take the train.



ACID RAIN

Your love is like acid rain,
and me with no umbrella.
It pours down and rips the
flesh from my bones.
It seeps inside my marrow
and destroys me.
I am on my knees
before it.
Did I say?
I love the rain.



Dreams

The stained glass
picture that is my dream,
shatters to thin, gossamer
shards as I as reach
up from sleep
grabbing at them, trying
to keep the picture in tack.
Too late, they dissolve,
sugar candy in my hands
and slip back into that shadow world
that is the nether
regions of my mind.
Bubbling just below the surface,
just out of reach
the images entice me,
tantalizingly close.
I turn to look and they
wash away,
chalk pictures in the rain.



Jade

Green, dark, deep, mysterious, timeless.

Oriental, distant, unreachable, unknown.

Depths that I cannot plumb,

no matter how hard I try.

I can wear it but,

never own it.

THE DATE



She laughs

a little too hard.

She tries a little

too much.

She is supposed to be out

enjoying this thing.

But she can't stop thinking

of him and how much she

wishes he were here,

instead of this guy,

who makes her laugh

a little too hard.

Spider Webs

I walked up the stairs
and felt the clingy fingers grab my arm.
I suppressed a shudder and
pulled off the thin invisible fingers
of webs on my arm.

Like faded dreams of mother gone again,
brother come back.
Things from the past that won't go away.
They tug at my mind and whisper in
my ear.

They refuse to be put away - forever.
I dust and dust to keep it all clean, and yet,
at night, those spiders,
they come back again.



DRAGON

The animal creaks and groans loudly,
it clangs and rattles incessantly.
The metal scales beat and pound
on each other.

It clanks back and forth, back and forth,
swaying through the night as it
roars mercilessly across the
countryside, its tail whipping to
and fro.

I sit safe and snug inside the belly
of the beast, watching as the
lights flick by at alarming speed.
I'm not afraid,
the beast will protect me.
As we scream into the station
it vomits out its passengers and is
still for the moment, panting.

Then like a shriek,
the little man in the
tight black suit and black hat
blows his whistle and waves.
Reluctantly, the beast moves again,
building up speed, lurching,
howls back into the night.



5,000 Won

She spotted the 5,000 Won bill on the floor and picked it up.

She looked at it once and put it in her pocket. She felt a little guilty. Hadn't the preacher just given a talk to them about donations of 'found money,' meaning giving more to the church when unexpected windfalls came along?

She decided he was right and she would donate the money to some worthy cause; when she found one. She was at the mega-crowded train station waiting to catch the express. She got a coffee and sandwich and ate three sandwich sections. She was about to throw the rest into a large trash can when she noticed the bum picking through the trash and eating out of what was clearly a found Burger King bag. She handed the bum her bag with the remaining sandwich and then, deciding not to wait, reached into her pocket, grabbed the 5,000 Won bill, handed it to him and ran for the train.

Song stared at the money in shock. Mostly people would hand him change and maybe a 1,000 Won note, but 5,000W. Never! He was dumbfounded by his good fortune. He slowly finished the remaining sandwich the crazy tourist had given him and stared at the money; chewing slowly.

His first thought was about how much Soju this could buy him; enough for the rest of the week. He got outside the station and headed for his favorite liquor store; the one where his friends hung out.

He was about to spend the whole amount and share with his buddies out back, but something stopped him; something nagging at the back of his mind. He picked out two bottles of Soju; one for today and one for tomorrow and carefully handed the five bill to the clerk. The clerk gave him a suspicious look for having such a large bill.

"Someone gave it to me," Song defended himself.

The clerk shrugged with a "Yeah, sure," kind of look. Song placed the bottles in his backpack and wrapped them with his extra shirt so they wouldn't break and headed out.

Song arrived at his mother's tiny house and knocked on the door. There was a pause and some shuffling inside and the door opened, and a tiny Korean woman stood there staring at him, unsmiling.

They exchanged a few words and he finally told her that he had something for her then handed her the 3,000 Won. Still unsmiling she took the money and looked down at it; not inviting him in. He looked like he wanted to say something but after a moment he just bowed to her, turned and left.

Mrs. Kim stood at the door a long while gripping the money in one fist and staring at the spot where her son had been. At last, shaking her head, she closed the door and considered the 3,000W. She decided it couldn't be as a result of theft because there wasn't enough.

Finally, she shuffled back to her tiny kitchen, grabbed her purse and stuffed the money into her little coin purse, got her metal basket and called to Chimchi, her miniature white poodle.

Chimchi and Mrs. Kim made their way down to the local market where she could get a very small order of rice, some leeks and a tiny section of chicken. She got her purchases into her basket and made her way home to make her favorite chicken and rice 'guk' or soup.

Several hours later, the bubbling concoction was filling the tiny abode with its aroma and Mrs. Kim got out two clean bowls, one for her and one for Chimchi. She carefully ladled the guk into the two bowls and set them down. Both she and Chimchi ate furiously for awhile until the bowls were completely clean. Mrs. Kim leaned back with a contented burp and rubbed her stomach.

She got up and ambled into the living room section of the house and turned on her tiny TV and began watching one of her favorite Korean soap operas. However, something kept nagging at the back of her mind, bothering her, when she finally remembered what it was.

Calling Chimchi; she got another bowl and ladled some still hot soup into it and covered it with an ancient piece of tinfoil and placed it on a serving tray. The tray was one of the few niceties still remaining from her 40 year marriage to Song's father.

Holding the tray, she went down the steps daintily, careful not to spill anything and she and Chimchi walked next door.

Mrs. Kim knocked on the front door out of politeness. When there was no answer, she worked her way back to the side door she knew would be open. The house was dark and cold. Mrs. Kim knew that the resident, Min-Su, her friend, could not afford to pay the bill.

She walked to the bedroom and found Min-Su in bed asleep. While only about 45 years old, Min-Su looked much older; the disease that wracked her body was taking its toll on her face.

Mrs. Kim sat down on the bed and gently shook her friend.

Min-Su started awake and stared at her friend for a moment then smiled with recognition.

"My friend," she said softly.

"I have brought you something Min," replied Mrs. Kim

Min started to protest weakly but Mrs. Kim shushed her softly.

"You have to eat," she replied and started to spoon soup into Min's mouth.

Min ate and when she had all she could take in; she collapsed backwards into her pillow, her eyes closed.

Mrs. Kim patted her on the arm and whispered "I'll come back tomorrow, be well." Min's eyes didn't open and Mrs. Kim let herself out of the house.

As she and Chimchi were making their way home she thought to herself "I guess that good-for-nothing son of mine is good for something once in a while!"

Chimchi barked once and followed her home.

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