

I Need A Mountain Spring

I need to find a mountain spring
That man has never seen or touch,
That only deers come to drink
And birds and squirrels can vouch.

To have it bordered by plants
And small pools for peacock fish
To swim and play stunts,
Reflecting its scaly rainbow flash.

And by its side monkey cups abound
Collecting dewy drops of rain
The agile monkey's life line bond
That is part of the mountain terrain.

I need a mountain spring Unspoiled by human hands,
Its pure water, unwashed, unringed
Left to wash only its bottom sands.

I need a mountain refreshed
By the sweet songs of birds calling
For their mates to build their nest
Amidst butterflies fleeting.

I do not need artificial springs
That sound un-operatic
Infiltrate our private space, bring
To our ear, music chaotic.
I do not need a concrete jungle

Where hills and mountains vanished.
 No trees and branches tangle
 But cement, plastic and steel finish.

Give me a mountain spring
 Pure and unsullied to dream
 Before the rising of the sun
 And lay down before the moon beam.

That is my last wish for myself
 And for others who love this earth,
 That come what may, the shelf
 Of life, this earth will continue to have hope and rebirth.

Khoo Soo Hay

Ah Moy, the Bag Woman

She was born out of wedlock,
 Given away with a red packet of twenty four ringgits.
 She was born chubby, but cock-eyed and slightly bow-legged.
 The family which adopted her showered all their love
 And attention, in spite, of her looks and inadequacy.
 They named her, Ah Moy, a very simple common name among the
 poor.

Her adopted parents were childless and poor,
 But there was nothing like a baby
 To provide the love that hearts can give.
 She was brought up on condensed milk and white bread.
 No infant formula, but pure rice broth
 With an egg thrown in.

In her teenage years she had rice
And when it ran out, some cheap instant noodles.

Her father was an odd job man.
Her mother would spend early morning
Scouring the wet market for discarded vegetables.
She attended primary school for six years.
Then she stopped as her parents
Could not afford her further education.
She spent her school free days
Helping her mother in an attap hut
They called home, that the owner
Allowed them to live in.

One day her mother did not come home.
Her father was away working as a labourer in another state.
With other migrants putting up a tall building.
Someone from the market came to tell her
That they found her mother's body
Sprawled on the road side, her head broken.
She died on the spot, knocked down
By a car avoiding a racing motor cyclist.
She could not reach her father
As she did not know where he worked.
Neighbours helped with her mother's funeral.
Her father came back eventually,
Very shocked that his wife had died prematurely.
He now had to seek for jobs close to home,
As he could not let his young daughter live alone.

Then in a few years later,
As Fate would have it, Ah Moy's father,
One day did not return home.
He slipped and fell from the seventieth floor of a condominium.
His contractor employer paid him pittance as compensation.

His working colleagues brought Ah Moy the money.
 It was hardly enough to buy a coffin,
 What more the fee for the cremation.
 When all was done, ashes were thrown into the sea,
 As a memorial niche for the bones
 Were beyond Ah Moy's means.
 Life had to be 're-organized' for her.
 She would strive to survive alone.
 She would have to sleep alone.
 She would have to find a livelihood
 That no one would give her,
 That she alone knew what to do.
 There was no way in which she could even 'sell' herself.
 No pimp would be able to take her in under his charge,

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As she was not born for that profession.
 Not with her physical handicaps.
 There was no maid or coffee shop server work.
 She had to work independently.
 No one wants to be responsible
 As her employer or colleague.
 No one wants to even know her.
 It is as if the world is hers alone,
 And she wondered why was she ever born?
 Perhaps that was the reason she was given away?
 But one day the old owner of the hut
 Came to look her up, told her she had to move out.
 She pleaded with him without stop,
 That where would she go for shelter,
 If the only home she knew in whole life
 Is taken away from her!

The old man went away, but he came back
A week later and repeated his request
That she should vacate or else!
Again Ah Moy stood her ground and pleaded and pleaded.
Then the old man relented but at a price.
He had Ah Moy with his way.
Ah Moy had no choice but to give way grudgingly.
And so the old man kept Ah Moy in the hut.
And Ah Moy went about her business
Of collecting re-cycled items from road-side bins,
And taking them to the Indian second hand re-cycling shop
To be paid a few ringgits for her daily toil.
To walk, to carry, to drag a bag of unwanted left-overs
Along the hot asphalt road, trying
To avoid motor cycles, cars and buses were no joke.
Even the kings of the road,
The trishaws move faster than her.

Some years later she was free of the old man, who owned the hut.
He gave up on Ah Moy when he could not fight age.
Viagra or tongkat ali were of no help
When his time was up.
And he passed on, to her relief.
And so the bag woman went on her way
Sunrise to sunset she roamed the streets,
For what people had discarded,
She collected, depriving the Council workers their burden.
She even outlived the “Won Tan Noodle seller”, ‘Ah Koid’
Who provided breakfast for her every morning.
Ah Moy the bag woman was a regular icon
In the core UNESCO George Town Heritage area.

Khoo Soo Hay

The Man Who Gave Away His Collectables

There was once a man who screamed at his birth,
In protest of his exit from his mother's womb.
But in giving back to his mother, her original girth
He pleased his father so much for his mother's bloom
That in three months' time she was in the family way.

He grew up struggling with a string of siblings
But in the years, well looked after in his teen,
With much support and his parents' blessing,
He soon achieved adulthood provided by his parents' gene,
That in his progressive years he accomplished much, while still
young.

So successful was he in his business ventures
That very soon he could afford a wife,
Build a house with a swimming pool without debentures;
Avoid all the depressive business cycles to survive.
And live to enjoy a great life in the years to come.

Although he could afford to retire, he was reminded
Of the time, he was told that at his birth he screamed,
Whether in protest, or in delight of being liberated,
To experience for oneself, the vagaries of life's scheme.
For which he was thankful for what God had provided him.

And the time has come for the Almighty to receive him
And call him to stand among His followers.
A shining example of a good man who deserved heaven,
Never too late to decide what to give away among his left-overs,
Of the hobbies he collected throughout his life time of eight decades.

He had to decide who deserves what, when and why.
For his own family, of sons and daughter from his first wife.
Un-announced, of course, but everyone knew that from Shanghai,
The second family also needed to survive.
The very thought of this exercise was giving him headaches.

He often wondered when it came to this,
Why was his life so successful to provide his every need?
That he ended up with untold wealth, health and bliss?
Was it God's unseen hand that helped to intercede
And guide his decisions and actions in his life?

As God's calling was getting nearer,
He had decided to give away his cherished collectibles.
The golden golf clubs and bag would go to Peter.
The golfing partner who always ensured his loss to him was
inevitable,
Knowing the benefits that would accrue to such business relationship.

His vintage Rolex watch he would give to his eldest son,
To remind him of his father's business empire to manage.
And that time lost is money lost and opportunities foregone.
His silver chess set, his second son would appreciate,
He who constantly took a long time to make a decision.

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To his only daughter, Mei Mei, the avid pianist,
He gave her his vintage Petrof Grand Piano of 1928.
The "Penn" fishing reels he gave to his third son, John the pacifist.
And his collection of "Costello" Briar pipes with accessories
appropriate,
He gave to his 'Cartwheel Pub' beer compatriot.

The 'Silvercraft' cruiser, his business and leisure transport to Langkawi,

He would give his political crony of forty years
 For all his mega projects that came to him handy,
 Secured a hundred per cent without open tenders.
 That was how his business empire was made.

His beloved faithful wife, mother of his children
 Having passed on years ago, he had now to contend
 With his second wife in Shanghai hidden,
 Who had given him many years of joy he could not pretend
 That she did not exist in his heart.

He knew he could not leave her alone with his passing.
 For reasons of family enmity and jealousy,
 She would face discrimination and endure undue suffering
 From his own children belonging to his first family.
 It was a very sad decision but necessary to do so.

This being the most precious he held in his later life,
 He had to find someone who could take care of her.
 That someone had to be his good friend, Robert, who qualify,
 As of his own heart, magnanimous, trusting and tender.
 He would make her understand, under the circumstances.

With all these decisions, he was now free from his collectibles.
 No more upkeep to pay for their maintenance
 And insurance premiums against loss and claims irrevocable.
 No more worry or concern or countenance
 Against any who may want to dispute his decisions.
 He could now rest and meet his God in peace.

Khoo Soo Hay

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