



January, 2010

Volume 10, No. 1

POETRY

The Last Leaf

By Hannah Cooke-Ariel

To life
 Or death
 Now do you cling;
 Why this life in limbo?
 Harken now, warbler sing
 To share with you
 This bent bough.

To cling to life,
 To prolong death,
 The truth lies in the sun
 Whose fateful light has darkened
 To a fiery red
 Each and every one.

Now lying in a bed so vibrant
 Indeed so full of life
 Around this leaf
 So earthen;
 From where do you obtain life?

These leaves once settled
 In a calming green
 Brought serenity at length;
 Yet now, their souls have been set free
 Gaining unsurpassed strength.

Their last moments
 On this earth
 Like variegated life,
 Bring color from another world
 Releasing all our strife.

So now, dear leaf, so delicate
 The last leaf of the season,
 Do give death
 Unto this death:
 Be of faith,
 Free of reason.

This breath of life
 Is ours to keep
 Through the loving
 Works of His hands
 And in the end
 We'll finally see,
 the beginning—
 His master plan.

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You Can Never Speak Up Too Often For the Love of All Things

By Paul R. Fleischman, MD

Sweet Pond, Guiford, Vermont, May 31, 1999 – Memorial Day

From his book, *You Can Never Speak Up Too Often For the Love of All Things*, Onalaska, WA:

Pariyatti 2004

You can never speak up too often for the love of all things.

For every living thing or natural place on earth, there is someone

who wants to kill or destroy it;

Therefore, you can never speak up too often for the love of all things.

These families of geese that I watch as I sit beside the pond,

Two pairs, four adults, with their clutches of downy goslings

who are carefully sheltered between the

tall-necked, attendant goose and gander,

There is a hunter who yearns to kill them,

Who feels entitled to his killing of them,

Who would be outraged if you implied he had no right to

gun them down in season.

This pond, set like an opal in the precious ring of earth,

windsparkling among shaded forests of hemlock and pine,

There is someone waiting to race his motorboat across it,

knifing the soft skin of its silence,

leaking oil into its pearl waters;

develop it, build beaches,

bring in crowds with boomboxes surging across

macadamized parking lots;

Therefore, *you* can never speak up too often for the love of all things.

All beings spring up from the same womb of life.

Sunlight strikes the earth, plants catch it, and as they hold light

in their secret birthing place,

The embryo of life unfolds in their leaves and seeds.

This green gift of light becomes the food that feeds
the worlds of birds and beasts and men.
All beings share the same joy that flows in the company of other lives.
All beings share the same tremor in the face of death.
Therefore, you can never speak up too often with the love of all things.

The silence found throughout the world in evening ponds,
unbroken forests, mountain-enfolded ravines,
hilltops at dusk,
Is not an absence of noise, but a presence.
In the company of silence, people hear more clearly the passage of eternity,
rustling between the lattice of the cells of their own mind,
like wind through a screen.
In the calm of silence – as if its arms were folded, and a presence were waiting,
watching, patiently devoid of impulse or haste –
People hear the common tongue of love, the universal language
of mortal things, soft, like a baby's voice,
passing from person to person, pulsing from
trees and grass and animals, connecting
existence with existence.
Through the universal silent sound of mortal *joy*, individual
life becomes bonded, tolerable, and touched.
Aware of this,
You can never speak up too often with the love of all things.

In the heart of every hunter, silence breaker, mass murderer, taker
of life big or small
Is static.
Due to this static, they cannot hear the voices of all things babbling,
crying, speaking from the heart;
Due to this static, some people cannot hear the way that tall grass stems
sing lullabies to their neighboring grass; or
the ways that birds, anxious, fretful, diligent,
chase after their new-flown fledglings with

morsels of food, or with admonitions of danger.

Those who are bedeviled by the static give it names that please them.

They befriend and flatter the static; calling it god, praising it as

a folkway or as an heirloom.

They say the power of the static in their minds exempts them from the laws of love.

The deer hunter feels enthroned above the animals - he has forgotten,

lost touch with, cannot feel the way the

doe turns to nuzzle along in haste the fawn,

heart-beating, eager to spur it on towards

safety.

The terrorist, ethnic cleanser, nationalist, religionist, invoke the names

and ideas of old books and imposing buildings.

They are deaf to the inaudible, dumb to the unspoken common tongue.

Listening to static and lost to love they kill the Jews of Europe, the Tutsis

of East Africa, the intelligentsia of Cambodia, the

elephants of the Congo, the orangutans of Borneo, the

Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic whales.

Killing is indiscriminate and everywhere, the excuse changes, the reason

changes, the alleged necessity changes.

Therefore, you can never speak up too often for the love of all things.

Here is a pond on a summer afternoon, its water iridescent green

and blue beneath the long bright solar rays,

And here is a young man and young woman dipping into the water,

merging their bodies with the body of the pond.

From long ago they ran from hunters; as deer they ran from men with

painted faces and burning torches in the

Pleistocene night;

As rabbits they ran from dripping dogs;

For generations, their ancestors were Jewish runners, homeless here and

there across the landmass of Europe, chased by

people with a dozen different pedigrees.

As Africans they came in chains.

As trees, they were cut down at their feet, and fell on their faces.

Today, the pond skin shimmers in ecstasy of love as the breeze draws
its fingers across the water's surface.

The young man and the young woman dip into the pond's original and
fathomless watery womb.

And their child, who years later comes to the pond, dives in
all sweat and muscle, bull-necked from
mowing in the field,

His jeans and hair are jumbled with hay stems of daisies and wild pinks.

For each and every presence, place, person, animal, plant, on this earth,
there is someone who wants to kill or destroy them,

And there is also a great and universal love inside them, a love and
joy entwined, like a young man after a day's
work diving into a summer pond,

Like water, green, blue, dear, murky, impenetrably old primal element
of life, catching him, bathing him, whispering to
him unbeknownst to him himself, the secret and
universal words:

You can never speak up too often for the Love of all things.

Paul R. Fleischman, MD is a psychiatrist, life-long practitioner of Vipassana meditation, and author of *Cultivating Inner Peace; The Buddha Taught Nonviolence, Not Pacifism; Karma and Chaos; The Healing Spirit; and Spiritual Aspects of Psychiatric Practice*. Dr. Fleischman lives in Amherst, MA.



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