

Love

A young man was in love with a young woman, but did not tell her so. If you had asked him why he did not tell her, he would have said, “For as long as my love does not know of my love, I have hope, and hope is the essence of love”. But the real reason was so that he could write poems.

In his poems he made love to his love, by means of words. The fevered flowering of his senses, the surging longings of his flesh, the dark demand at the core of his Self were turned to words.

When he had written fifty such poems, he sent them to his love. But he did not add his name.

The young woman read the poems. Waves of wind through tall grass, insects

breaking into the hearts of flowers, then moving on, became her skin. Earth stretched and rose in gentle hills. A blind stream sought out the shortest route to the sea, mocking all geometry.

She became a landscape. The young man walked in this landscape. It was a beautiful landscape, so at first he was very happy.

But then he sat down by the stream and wept, hopelessly.

A Tidy Housewife

A fisherman was walking along the beach one early morning when he saw a stranded mermaid. She looked lost and confused. Everything was in its proper place: the black stones on the beach, the neat white houses of the village, the yellow nets hanging out to dry, the long blue shadows cast also like nets, all were in their proper places. But in the wide, cornerless sea, where nothing had its place, the mermaid had never once been so frightened.

The young fisherman pitied the mermaid and fell in love with the confusion in her eyes. He was a man of few words, and he thought to himself: I can be another ocean for her; in me she will find the fathomless ocean in which she can be free. In my own

unmeasurable depths she will swim and be herself, in me.

The mermaid turned to the fisherman and held tightly to him, and he was glad. Thrown up by the ocean, lost and confused, she clung to the first rock she found: it was the fisherman.

They lived together for some time. The mermaid gradually forgot about the sea and, as she did so, she began to resent the rock. She knew that to beat against it with frail fists was useless, so she drove sharp chisels into it with her tongue. She never answered pleasantly. Sometimes she didn't answer at all. She intended that the rock should explode in anger and smash itself. But it wouldn't. The fisherman absorbed all this into the ocean of his love, thinking: I am the sea, the boundless sea, in which she is free to be herself.

And so, many years later, the mermaid became a very tidy housewife. Warm waves of satisfaction lapped gently in the old

fisherman's throat. She would sweep the crumbs from around his chair even before he had finished eating. And she studied all the corners of the house with a pitiless eye, to kill any spider that dared to start to spin a web.

Perfection

The steep slopes of the valley were thickly wooded. A swift stream far below danced with slow clouds among the peaks.

To this place an artist came. He sat. He let the scene erase his thoughts. Then he took a brush and ink, and he drew what he saw.

He took his drawing to the King.

“Perfect!” said the King.

“Perfect!” agreed the Keeper of the Royal Galleries.

“How much?” asked the King.

The artist bowed and smiled, and said “One hundred pieces,” for in his heart he knew that his drawing was not perfect.

“Done!” said the King, after a short pause.

A year later the artist went again to the valley. He sat. He let the scene erase his thoughts. Then he took a brush and ink, and he drew what he saw.

“Perfect!” said the King.

“Perfect!” agreed the Keeper of the Royal Galleries.

“How much?” asked the King.

The artist bowed and smiled, and said “Two hundred pieces,” for in his heart he knew that his drawing was not perfect.

“Done!” said the King, after a short pause.

This happened five more times. Each time, the King and the Keeper of the Royal galleries agreed that the drawing was perfect and each time the artist bowed and smiled and asked one hundred pieces more than he had asked the time before, for in his heart he knew that his drawing was not perfect.

One day, the artist went again to the valley. He sat. He let the scene erase his

thoughts. Then he took a brush and ink, and he drew what he saw. But this time, for the very first time, he did not see the edges of the paper on which he drew.

He took his drawing to the King.

The King looked at the drawing. He looked at the artist. He looked at the drawing again. He said nothing.

The Keeper of the Royal Galleries looked at the drawing. He looked at the artist. He looked at the drawing again. He said nothing.

“How much?” asked the King.

The artist did not bow. He did not smile. “Nothing,” he said.

“Done!” said the King.

Many days passed. Neither the King nor the Keeper of the Royal Galleries spoke of the new drawing. But they could not stop thinking about it, both with the very same thoughts.

‘The new drawing is perfect,’ they thought. ‘In fact, it is so perfect that it makes it perfectly obvious that all the other

drawings were far from perfect. The artist knew this all along. We have paid, hum, 2,800 pieces for *this* drawing! In effect. True, true, it is perfect. But 2,800 pieces is a great amount, a very great amount. It is all very perplexing. It is all very troubling. For days now I have compared it, detail by detail, aspect by aspect, with the other, less than perfect drawings. But I cannot see the difference. Well, what I mean is, I can see that this drawing *is* perfect and that the other drawings are *not* perfect, but still I cannot see in what exactly the difference lies. That is why it is so very perplexing, so very, very troubling, for 2,800 pieces is a very, very great amount.'

After two weeks, the King and the Keeper of the Royal Galleries happened to bump into each other, right in front of the new drawing.

"Not bad," said the King.

"Not bad," agreed the Keeper of the Royal Galleries.

“Cheap at the price,” said the King.

“Cheap at the price,” agreed the Keeper of the Royal Galleries.