

Unmarried

Paul GnanaSelvam

I know the warning signs, they
appear as a foretelling,
written on the wall of my dreams
of what it's going to be like,
of what's to come and what
it would render me -
a handicap with unseen crutches
called loneliness.

I understood them, when I was 30
I feel this void, I'm only 40
I'm discarded, I'm not even 50,
and there is this soundless despair that
swims at the base of my throat and
leaves me dysfunctional, though
I'm not even 60.

My heart grieves at weddings,
my skin turns green at infant baptisms,
my knees wobble in the company of women
already owned,
I think
my walks in the park are without vistas
- or I would drown
in the big vast lotus pond,
abandoned
by my own feelings.

But, sobriety triumphs like daylight,
relishing hopes that
I have no reason to be unhappy, to only
understand happiness from
contented love,
marriage and child-bearing.
For my sake -
I labour, eat, sleep and wake
to many sunrise and sunsets.

I have a journey to make, one
forsaken to those threading
this barren path
with or without choice.
Unmarried -
I wish this bitterness would
fade upon a meadow
with fleeting butterflies, for
this bitterness
will linger only as an aftertaste.

Bells in Paradise

Paul GnanaSelvam

The news of bereavement,
stirs me awake, my mind
begins to wander, tussled in a confused wind,
sleep slips off my eyes and
fills my head weary, my heart aching
of sorrow and denial, stirring restlessness
to questions with dead-end answers.

A name echoes,
definite and distant, somewhere
in the vacant memory,
there is a face I remember,
a voice I decipher,
but snatched from time,
I could speak to it only in a whisper,
And hear it answer in a faint rustle,
I pick a whiff of the familiar scent and
Try to catch it, but
could only watch as it spirals past
into a field of decayed chrysanthemums
through a door that I could not enter.

I stand alone in this swirling dust,
I have words, but not comfort,
For the swiftness of death has taken you away,
Like a blinding glint of a sharpened knife,
too quick for me to cry,
to quick to complete my words

too quick to reach out and hold you
I grow weary and limp, I surrender
You to its agile strike.

I babble incongruously,
a prayer I offer,
before the unwavering glow of a candle
for who can stand against time,
against the doom of man?
When the eyes are blinded,
the ears deafened,
the mouth void of laughter,
the nostrils quieted, and
my memories -
neither warm nor cold.
I will remember you, knowing that this
path I would surely take,
then we would meet again -
when the wind disturbs the chiming bells in Paradise.