

## Poetry Series

**TALAL KASSAD**

**- poems -**

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### **TALAL KASSAD (01/01/1985)**

Talal was born in Homs, Syria, the Arab World. He is a student of higher education, most interested in writing English and Arabic poetry. His are for the most part symbolic and ironic poems by which to ridicule people's vanity, insincerity and depraved nature.

## **Love at no Sight**

Hardly a day goes by  
Without a dream or thought.  
I lived where she can never tell-  
I lived inside her heart.

Therein I found so many veins,  
Each could feed an eye.  
I touched a vein and let a tear fall  
With a view to irrigating her sylvan eyes.  
But once her eyes grew so misty,  
A dropp of tear rolled down warmly...  
And then her chest embraced her tears,  
For they were once so near-  
They were once inside her heart.

But we, by love, were never sinners  
Because our love was purified.  
She only loved my eyes which never beheld her own,  
And so I came to love her own,  
By means of which I saw her heart.

TALAL KASSAD

## **Ode to Chastity**

One day I pledged myself to come alive,  
And on the nectar of her rose survive.

She has no eyes, nor has she hair,  
But she's a beauty beyond compare.

As though she were the eye we find  
With shining lids to hurt the blind.

My soul, united with her own, is high  
And never found but shining in the sky,

Therefrom I look, my love, at you  
Wherein the stars are only few.

If said: "you're fair", it's true but why  
Is it that you, with all this, die?

When eyeing her, I feel in love  
And gain more light to shine above.

Whenever felt, this love does shine  
To render all bad thoughts benign.

What love I feel, though felt of old,  
Becomes all people- young and old.

And many though her partners be, in truth,  
So chaste are they that none is found uncouth.

TALAL KASSAD

## **Ode to Nature**

That day I wondered how the sun  
Could neither set at noon  
Nor leave his tiring work undone  
To lie beside the moon.

But much to my dismay,  
My words, I fancied, made him weary,  
But never let him turn his ray  
To cast a shadow on the query

I standing still, a dreamless moment passed  
Without any answer ever heard  
But one that left me all aghast-  
The tacit answer I inferred.

TALAL KASSAD

## The Global Rape

There I was, but there I'll go again.  
Towards an eastern land I make my way,  
Wherefrom arose the sun-like beauty,  
Wherein the sunshine used to be all day.  
But something strange befell the globe.  
The east became no longer east.  
For, though at noon, the sun was hiding  
And hid with it the gleam of hope.  
On such a low if weighty land  
The virgin girl was once abiding,  
The voice of whom resounding  
    "The voice of peace"

By no means was she nonnative,  
Nor was her peace less native in her heart  
Until, by cannons of injustice,  
He tore her simple breast apart.  
He stripped her peaceful clothing  
To wear them in disguise  
    Not before he stained them by his fingers  
    Nor before he wove them into lies.

But so audacious was he  
That with his most unyielding fingers  
He never failed to pluck her eyes  
    Which, when weeping, oozed with peace  
    Which, when laughing, oozed with love

But much to her dismay,  
He left her none but something banned.  
He left the name of terrorism.  
He left the seeds he sowed upon this land-  
The seeds of horrors,  
The seeds of terrors.  
But then as time went by,  
The one-time seeds would leave the womb  
To be revenged upon the father of the crime,  
To be revenged upon a man, so asinine,  
Upon a man whose rape was epoch-making,  
A man who raped the name of Palestine.

TALAL KASSAD

## **The King and the Flea**

### THE CHORUS

A small but cunning flea once vowed  
To make the kingdom shout aloud-  
To kill the king and then his spouse,  
Who pride themselves and oft carouse.  
When setting out to launch the strife  
She tried to kill him ere his wife.  
By less a needle than a dart  
She left him almost sick at heart.  
Repeating fighting day and night,  
She made him muster troops to fight.  
When falling short of fighting her  
He left the flea to win the spur.  
Again the flea began to sting  
To leave the kingdom with no king.  
As though the king began to dance,  
But love and humor had no chance  
He started jumping up with pain.  
Remorseful tears then fell like rain.  
When all the army strove in vain  
The insect drove the king insane.

### THE KING

I awe allegiance to thine grace,  
But let me cure my crimson face.  
If what you need is but the throne,  
Then come but let me stay alone!

### THE CHORUS

She tried his patience once again  
So that he fell and struck his brain.

### THE KING

I wished the damsels came like thee.  
But that was all to fight a flea.

### THE CHORUS

No longer can he catch his breath  
Because his fate was that of death.

THE CHORUS

The flea then wept and sadly said:  
"The prideful hero broke his head"

TALAL KASSAD

## **The Queer Intimacy**

### I. THE FIRST MEETING

#### THE HORSE

Why I love thee why I might  
Take thee one day out of spite  
Is because we look alike.  
So engaging is your sight.  
Be thou bending or upright,  
I will take thee come what might.

#### THE WOMAN

Try to keep thy tongue at bay  
Father told me not to say  
Any that gives myself away

#### THE CHORUS

Off he went, thus weeping, nay  
Seeking fortune night and day.

#### THE HORSE (to himself)

Do inject them with a bribe!  
Then the flesh will be well ripe.

### II. AT SCHOOL

#### THE CHORUS

When they saw him in disguise  
Partly stupid partly wise  
Only one could first surmise  
Such a figure was not wise.

Hence the student asked him why  
Teachers mostly don't reply

Up he jumped as if to fly  
Saying only 'Stop you guy'  
So ashamed was he and shy.

Then the student heaved such sighs.  
Anguished tears blurred his eyes.  
Once again he tried to ask  
Then the teacher did but rise

#### THE TEACHER

Shut your mouth and stop this talk  
Or upon you I will walk

## THE CHORUS

Not until he jumped with force  
Could they know he was a horse.

## III. IN THE STREET

### THE HORSE (to the woman)

Come at peace and stop this fight!  
I have brought you what is bright;  
Gold and silver, money'nd might  
Take them all but show your sight

### THE WOMAN

Come dear come and get your way  
Come and love me twice a day  
I am you and you are I  
Never can I go away.

## TALAL KASSAD

## The Tragic Life of Tragedy

Chorus:

Address yourself to things that show the truth,  
To things that more mislead than guide the youth.  
Inside the campus lay the two despaired  
With such a sight as leaves your hope impaired,  
One made to laugh, the other made to moan,  
But laughter had a better sense than known,  
Because a man at times may laugh to take  
The breath by which by which a cry of pain to make  
And then to send it out again and wail:  
"The college air is too repugnant to inhale"

Tragedy:

I am the one at whom they hurl abuse  
The one who suffered such a passive use,  
The tragic work which makes some readers keep  
Laughing at those who write to make them weep.

Comedy:

I am the comic work, which sometimes may  
Well make the students pass a tragic day

Tragedy:

At times I find it more or less unfair  
To plunge the students into grim despair.  
In every subject they may do their best  
To get a mark surpassing all the rest.  
Since eighty four is what they hope to reach  
But what they get is forty-eight in each.

Tragedy:

They set themselves to teach me all the while.  
Yet failed to know how far they me beguile.  
With all the books they have they like to choose  
The worst to gain and hence the best to lose.  
The spell they cast upon some readers may  
Ensnare their hearts and lead their minds astray.

Comedy:

Suppose I told you I once loved them best!

(Tragedy faints)

I loved them not for that was all in jest.  
Suppose for instance you were told to write  
A comment on what I will soon recite:

"Be Homer's work your study and delight  
Read them by day and meditate at night"

Tragedy:

The one who wrote this sanguine verse is Pope,  
Who left the students crying out for hope.  
If like a goat the so-called god depraves  
Himself then guess how faithful are the slaves!  
The Iliad seems to be replete with names  
Of gods and heroes like the childish games.  
They serve a function if a man should seek  
To name his son as do the Greek.  
As Saussure puts it, if a language dies  
Then death is what this language signifies.

Comedy:

I wonder how you failed your last exam!  
'Tis wise of you that you are never calm.

Tragedy:

But when I failed they found me fit to purge  
The keen emotions by my piteous surge.  
When drawing on the gods and poking fun  
Our father, Homer, left us both at one.  
Yet still a teacher came to marry me.  
How in the world can I on this agree?

Comedy:

I told my teacher when she flapped her hair  
"Your ringlet, darling, has no time to spare"  
I put a candy right beside her coat,  
A candy on the case of which I wrote:  
"Be like the candy, which I love and buy,  
And like the seed which though concealed gets high"

Comedy:

But still I have another thing to say,  
That seems to keenly grieve us all today.

Tragedy:

Is it the thing we talked about before?  
Or something else that wounds us even more?

Comedy:

The thing that left me all the more enraged

May well occasion you to be deranged.  
At first I thought the losing card is yours,  
But what I found is what one most abhors.

Tragedy:

The moment I recall my sordid past  
My heart for sorrows makes a great repast.  
To rid myself of sorrows, first, I need  
To purify my soul of that misdeed.  
For one mistake in my apprentice phase  
I languished in the chains of pain for days.  
Then by reversal I could recognize  
What sort of doom this error underlies.  
I rue the day I gave myself to those  
Who spoiled my life by what their minds impose.

Comedy:

I used to laugh but now I have to weep  
Because our sorrows both went deep.

Tragedy:

I'll make my will to you before I die  
Because the tragic hero seems but I,  
Since neither life nor death I feel I do  
Obtain but something found betwixt the two.  
(She plucks an eye of hers)

Chorus:

She plucked one eye and let its sister weep  
Because no longer could she fall asleep.

Comedy:

The fear invoked by such a pitied soul  
Commenced to grow and overcome us all.  
To vocalize my pain I say in brief  
That none but silence can give voice to grief.  
(She stabs her belly and falls dead)

TALAL KASSAD

## **To His Shameless Mistress: Parody**

Come ye mistress! Use your mind!  
To that Andrew don't be kind!  
Don't resemble those who say:  
When deluded "Never Mind"

So regretful is the news  
That the primrose is to lose  
Glitz and glamour after spring  
When it droops yet finds no dews.

No more glistening will you seem  
When the sun exhales its beam  
On the wondrous roses all  
And so burns your peaceful dream.

On the morrow you will see  
How the worms will feed on thee.  
When you moan your day and say  
"Set me free, my Lord, prithee"

Yonder passions will not last,  
Since the present will be past.  
Seize the day! Don't waste it for  
Days are short and passing fast

Guide yourself! Don't let it loose!  
Lest they hunt you like a goose,  
Lest the wolves should leap on thee  
Shed and drink your blood like juice.

Nothing still I have but praise  
For the music which he plays  
Rhyming verse and singing songs  
Which can leave us much ablaze

TALAL KASSAD