

By Alex (Sasha) Rafaeli

HELLO EARTH!

I. Love

I am a man:
a son of people
who search for sunshine,
who search for smiles.

I look for love:
my eyes are thirsty
for eyes
 which sparkle,
for skin
 which trembles
when fingers touch.

I like to hold
in hungry arms
a body, tense and laughing;
to speak to her
with my shouting skin,
and meet in her
talking forests,
dancing rivers,
racing subways and planes,
smoking chimneys of busy factories.

I like to lie on quiet grass
between trees,
which run into the sky—
on my back,
calling the sun
 by its first name,
challenging the stars to appear
in bright daylight,
and to imagine,
that the slums of Chicago or Bucharest
are only a crazy dream
and that all the wars
and the wholesale slaughter
are only a great
 silly
 mystery
 story
with a big publicity campaign!!!!

I like to climb
 the grey rocks of the Pacific
 and look with the birds down to the sea,
 greeting every tired green wave,
 asking about her great journey,
 and then
 wail and die with her
 fading among sand and stones.

Then ,
 with every new wave,
 to be born and reborn,
 laden with joy
 and the will to embrace oceans
 to my narrow chest.

I like to rise
 with fiery birds
 and veil myself
 with pink clouds;
 to look down at earth
 and pity the mankind
 which marches over fields.
 Then, to stop on remote quiet isles
 and listen to their stories
 of countries under the sea.

I like to walk on the highway of stars,
 which is red as lust
 but is called the Milky Way
 and meet there ages
 which have past
 and ages
 which will come,
 and laugh at their jokes
 about OUR strange times.

I like to sit
 on grey and cluttered wharves
 among quiet fishermen,
 who breathe the strong air of sea and fish
 around them,
 tending their small boats
 and wondering about tomorrow's wind.
 Then to push my way to market
 among hundreds of men and women,
 smelling oil and food and dirty washing,
 the odors of busy humanity.

I like to listen
 to boys who shine for a nickel,
 to blaring headlines:
 "Ten killed in crash";
 to voices shouting:
 "Old clothes to sell?
 Old clothes!".
 to placards calling
 "Gouldsteen for judge".
 Listen, listen,
 to the noise of motors, to suffering women,
 to striking workers,
 to unfinished symphonies,
 to people dying under trains
 and under the rain of bombs;
 from pain of loneliness,
 from hate and love and hunger,
 shrieking, crying, shouting,
 their last farewell.

Listen
 to tongues,
 to accents
 to dialects.

Listen
 to birds
 to flowers and waves,
 to war machines of future struggles
 and whining engines of diving planes,
 to the roar of rebellious masses.

I like to listen
 to all this thunder,
 to know I hold
 the body of a woman
 in my searching arms.
 A body full of lust
 and desire,
 of wisdom
 and unspoken teachings,
 of songs unsung
 and music unheard,
 and dance revealing secrets of the soul.
 A body laden with strength
 and might,
 full of goodness
 and tense readiness
 to give itself away.

Away
 to the first who will come,
 the poorest of paupers
 the meanest of men,
 who will discover in her
 the great joy
 of being a man.

II. Challenge

I came to a morgue
 in a dusty building
 and saw there people
 with eyes sadly pale
 and long thin faces.
 The air around
 was a grey poison
 And grey became words
 Leaving the lips.
 But the corpses were fresh,
 their flesh full of colour
 as if Tintoretto had painted them.

On one table lay the body
 of a smiling girl,
 with big black eyes
 and fair wavy hair.

Her slender figure
 looked like a palm,
 but it had a long purple cut.
 Her heart and her stomach
 were on the same table,
 a big red spot blinding the eyes.
 Nobody had remembered
 To put them back in the body.

Her neighbour was an old man
 with a tiny violet beard,
 who had jumped from a bridge
 having lost faith in life.
 Many days he lay in the water
 and became a big balloon,
 like those which fly
 over besieged London,
 only he was green,
 and his mouth firmly shut.

I left the morgue

full of desire for people,
 for people good and bad,
 but laughing
 struggling
 cursing,
 fighting every hardship,
 knocking down every tyrant,
 robbing each other
 and then sharing generously
 the loot with poorer brothers.
 Looking for beauty,
 but not knowing it,
 lacking the name for it,
 but nevertheless searching;
 feeling its attraction as the blind know
 on foggy days
 where the sun is.

Shame on you earth!
 Thou art too quiet,
 Thy mountains too low,
 Thy valleys too narrow.
 I laugh at you Himalaya,
 I boo you High-Sierra.

Earth:
 Thy oceans are too flat,
 Mississippi and Volga too short,
 Thy earthquakes are tame,
 Thy fires are cold,
 Thy rains are feeble,
 Shame on you earth!

Look at me, earth,
 look at the man;
 look at the tornados of my soul,
 at the volcanos of my mind,
 at the storms of my loves,
 at the depth of my devotion,
 at the poison of my treason,
 at the barbarity of my heart,
 at the blindness of my lust,
 at the winds of my desires,
 at the insatiable hunger
 to be one
 with this
 crazy
 topsy-turvy world.

Look at me!

I search for God,
 I search for love,
 I look for eyes
 which mirror the souls
 of people,
 millions like me
 hungry and dirty and crazy.

Look at me!
 I speak
 I shout
 I pray,
 I talk to God
 and to animals.
 I pray, for
 I lack happiness.
 But I am happy
 knowing that I
 fight for it.
 I see colours
 and feel movement,
 I hear sounds,
 millions of sounds,
 I am strong.

Hello, earth!
 Let's be pals!

*Presumably this poem was written in the late '40s after WW2, when
 Daddy was very depressed. I found it after he passed away, and
 only recently felt I should bring it to your attention. I have made
 some small corrections to improve the English and the
 style. Ima Feb. 2005*