



**If only these legs could walk one more time:
Collection of tanka poems dedicated to my
husband**

MITSUKO KODAIRA

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Spring storm blew away sakura flowers, not leaving a single one (March 14th, 2013)

One day I started to call my husband “Grandpa”. After he passed away in 2008, every time I go to vinyl houses he left, a crow comes. I call him “Kanta”. Today is unusual – he came right to the vinyl house entrance...

My husband used to call vinyl houses his “second homeland”. Over 30 years, no matter snow or rain, he came here every day in the morning to do his job, first for melon, then for flower growing.

In 2001, my husband’s health suddenly went bad, so we had to go through three hospitals before we finally got accepted to the fourth, big one. Since that time, we were staying in the hospital and had home treatment, and stayed in the hospital again and again, fighting with the disease together with a number of doctors.

Without even being able to say anything, without being able to move, we spent seven years miserably fighting with this disease. It was also so hard to take a proper care of him. First we were told this disease can be treated at home, going to hospital if needed, so me and my daughter decided to take care by ourselves at home. Of course nurses and home care volunteers helped us a lot... Once in a month they changed his inhaler, and when something went wrong we went to the hospital bringing a heavy inhaler and equipment with us. In twelve months, on the tenth year we opened our orchid shop, we finally were told the disease name. It was a heavy disease called “ALS” (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). About 10,000 people in Japan suffer from this disease, and recently it is more common for people in their fifties.

This disease is hard to handle both for the patient and for his family. My husband went down with ALS when he was 65, and still they didn’t find a proper cure for it, as well as a new medicines – everyone passes away in the end. Grandpa couldn’t say a word, he couldn’t even make a sound... He probably had a lot to say, shouting it all out inside his heart.

After getting a relief of his seven years lasting pain, did he turn to a crow to come to his beloved “second motherland” and check how things go? What does he do when I’m not there? Does he live on a tree in the mountains?

Every time I come to vinyl houses he comes and sits on electricity cables, and when I call “Kanta” he looks around. It sounds weird but it’s a true story. He eats rice crackers my husband loved so much and some other food I bring to him and flies away. He always comes when I’m in the greenhouse, looking inside through the glass windows. Sometimes he knocks the glass with his beak. He even came on the day it was snowing – I was so surprised to see him on such a day. I can’t read bird’s feelings, but he might worry about me...

I came to age when it became hard to handle all the field job alone by myself, so I had to reduce the amount of flowers we grew together with my husband. Grandpa, you would forgive me, would you? But still I can’t help coming to the vinyl houses.

On cold days, I can warm myself, but Kanta stays on the electricity cables all the time. What are you thinking about? Are you my husband’s reincarnation? Are you taking a revenge for seven years you couldn’t speak and move, floating high in the sky, taking care of me watching me from the sky all the time? You are so smart to do this.


Kanta came again. Knocks the glass.

Do you want something?

Five years have passed after grandpa passed away. I never went to a hospital before I turned fifty – I always

had strong health. Everybody is surprised, asking me – “Are you going again?!” But I can’t sleep when the storm comes or when it rains heavily outside, having flashbacks of myself and my husband working together from early morning till late at night for fifty years. It was hard work sometimes, but now it’s only good memories.

Hard times come one day. Great East Japan Earthquake is one of them. Recently I heard a story of a father who died in snow hugging his child, trying to save him. I

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