

Persimmon Light

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Persimmon Light

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Christmas Day, 2016, we strolled along the ridge connecting Kita Kamakura Station with downtown Kamakura. Along the way, we stopped at an outdoor restaurant for clam chowder and sausages. At the table next to ours was sitting a single flower.

Just a flower. No people. No plates, no bowls, no coffee cups.

It looked a bit like a dahlia—or maybe a chrysanthemum—but for sure it was a vivid, energetic lavender-pink (*Pink!* my companion said), and had, I thought a certain lotus-like quality to it—it didn’t burn but stayed ablaze.

We hadn’t ordered so much food (we were sharing a single bowl of chowder and a single order of sausages), but compared to the flower’s table, ours seemed jammed pack.

So I couldn’t help myself. I turned to the flower and said, “You’re a light eater, aren’t you?”

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Yes, it’s a terrible joke—but it’s a joke, a line, that I can’t get out of my head.

Most of us, in so many ways, could benefit from becoming *light* eaters. And there is so much we can learn from the flowers in the fields and the trees in the forests.

And just what do they know? Well, they’ve learned to get the bulk of their sustaining energy directly from the sun — something our scientists are trying to mimic, though in a much more humble way. Yes, the trees and flowers take essential minerals from the soil, but the vast bulk of their intake is water and light. We, on the other hand, tend to consume—eating, playing, working—bigger chunks of solid *things*, *heavier* things, and we surely have to wonder how long these big, heavy chunks of things, at our current rate of consumption, can sustain seven billion of us.

So one small piece of advice: From time to time, think a bit about the “light” eaters. They help us a lot, and they help to keep things in balance. They *will* keep things in balance, if we let them.

*

Winter, especially, is good for contemplating light. As I go for walks beneath the trees or out about town, I feel, maybe imagine, at least three different types of light. One I call New Year’s Light. This is the light that warms you to the bone, that makes you ask yourself, “Wow, is it really January?” Maybe this light cannot be experienced everywhere, but it certainly can be here in Shizuoka.

And then there is what I call December Light. This is, to me, a somewhat melancholic light. You can feel the cool all around. Just before twilight, you feel the temperature dropping. You wish your gloves were doing a little better job. You *know* it’s going to be a cold night, but just then, you are happy to be there beneath the maple tree, the tree that has kept its leaves longer than any maple tree anywhere else in town. You are happy to see the December sun slice into the yellow and red, setting it ablaze. This light, you know all so well, is one you can only hold your palms up to for a few more minutes.

And then there is something I call Persimmon Light. This light is warming, certainly, at least a little bit, but that is not its main appeal. Persimmon Light is something I feel must stay in the sky. There’s something spiritual and mystical about it, something that seems to connect me, here on Earth, with something far out in the universe. I’ve never actually seen a persimmon tree, leafless, full of fruit, atop a mountain, but I can imagine pretty clearly the feeling I would have if I hiked up a snowy trail, beneath the bare-branched hardwoods and the shimmering evergreens—here and there, the sun lighting up the bamboo grass—and came out into the open air, the sky azure, and there a single persimmon tree, its dark, spidery branches seemingly etched into the sky, hundreds of translucent-skinned, orange fruit glowing.

Oh, man.

So I’m happy to have this opportunity to say thank you to the light.

Light, thank you.

You sustain me—and give me joy—all the year round.

Ah, and now I’m imagining the lovely *komorebi* (more or less, sunlight filtered

through green leaves, the lighter green the better) that is to be had (for free!) this spring on the trail up Yambushi. I can see myself bathing in it.

Hearty Hikers, get ready!

Komorebi

Do you still believe . . . there are places you can go?
Can you still conceive . . . of faces you'd like to know?

Oh, do you remember?

Oh, do you remember?

Her hair . . . shining in candlelight,
Your love . . . burning deep into the night.
And oh, do you still tremble?

Do you still imagine . . . mountains deep and blue?
Do you still have passions . . . fountains that well in you?

Oh, do you remember?

Oh, do you remember?

Snow so soft . . . you walked another mile,
Hopes aloft . . . his talk, his smile.
And, oh, do you still tremble?

Will you still slip your feet . . . in streams of biting cold?
Do you still try to free . . . your dreams from strangleholds?

Oh, do you remember?

Oh, do you remember?

Sunlight . . . kissing leaves so new,
Your hand . . . holding all that's true.
And oh, do you still tremble?

Do you still believe . . . there are places you can go?
Can you still conceive . . . of faces you'd like to know?

Oh, do you remember?

Oh, do you remember?

Your eyes . . . gazing on rosy sea,
Your heart . . . craving such energy.

And oh, do you still tremble?

And oh, do you still tremble?

And oh, do you still tremble?

December Light

She . . . said to me
We . . . don't need to be
And I . . . could only sit
And cry.

She . . . said to me
I . . . am going to leave
And I . . . could only sit
And cry.

Lean into December light—
Feel the warmth before the night.
Lean into December light—
Watch the ravens taking flight.

She . . . left me there
I . . . knew not where
And I . . . could only close
My eyes.

I looked within
My heart . . . so paper thin
And I . . . could only see
All awry.

Lean into December light—
Feel the warmth before the night.
Lean into December light—
Watch the ravens taking flight.

Grey

Mist fills the grey
Grey fills the cloud
Cloud fills the sky
Sky fills my eyes
Eyes fill our mind
Mind fills with dreams
Dreams make our world
World all so grey.

Grey is our play
On a day like today
Grey is just grey
As we go on our way.

I saw a girl
Turn a cartwheel twirl
Leaping through the grey
Laughing at the day
She calls out to me
Up soars my heart
But then she fades away
And all I feel is grey.

Grey is our play
On a day like today
Grey is just grey
As we go on our way.

Mist fills the grey
Grey fills the cloud
Cloud fills the sky
Sky fills my eyes
Eyes fill our mind
Mind fills with dreams
Dreams make our world
World all so grey.

Persimmon Light

You led the way
Through the sunlit day
For me.
Through the powdered snow
Bamboo grass aglow
Beneath the trees.
The truth was in your hand,
I heard no stern command,
I felt so pleased.

We climbed up through the glare,
Gleaned through crisp, clean air
Persimmon light.
All discord fell mute
As we gazed up at the fruit
Shining bright.
What comes next I am not sure.
But we dreamed of the azure
That night.

Can you conceive
Why I believe
Persimmon light?
Yeah, can you conceive
Why I believe
Persimmon light?
Yeah, can you conceive
Why I believe
Persimmon light?