

# THE VANISHING TREE (POEM)

*Posted on February 20, 2010 by Keghart*



Category: [Opinions](#)



By Tatul Sonentz, Watertown MA, 2010

✘ The old woman sits on a white wicker chair  
alone in the backyard of her grandson's house  
in a small New England town where the air  
is crisp and fresh with the smell of the sea...

She sits staring at a lone chestnut tree  
shedding its malodorous flowers on a lawn  
recently mowed by her great-grandson  
whose name was the same as her young  
spouse whose face -- now a haze in her misty  
mind -- no longer haunts her lonely bed...

By Tatul Sonentz, Watertown MA, 2010

✘ The old woman sits on a white wicker chair  
alone in the backyard of her grandson's house  
in a small New England town where the air  
is crisp and fresh with the smell of the sea...

She sits staring at a lone chestnut tree  
shedding its malodorous flowers on a lawn  
recently mowed by her great-grandson  
whose name was the same as her young  
spouse whose face -- now a haze in her misty  
mind -- no longer haunts her lonely bed...

"May you grow old on one pillow,"  
her mother had said on her wedding day --  
"Mek bardzi vra tzeranaq..." heard a long,  
long time ago, long before time stopped  
for them on that early spring day far far away,  
when the sun turned blood red... or was it  
the ground he had stood on that turned  
crimson, as he fell? She can no longer tell...  
though she can clearly see the chestnut tree  
his grandfather had planted in their garden  
as a child -- ignoring his mother's forewarning  
of the foul-smelling flowers of the chestnut tree.  
"I love the smell of chestnuts roasting slowly

on the red hot manghal," the boy had answered,  
digging deeper into the native soil...

All in white, the tree was in full bloom then –  
like a bride -- and she can even now, after eons,  
hear a snippet of an old song sung on her  
wedding day – "Arevid mernem yar jan..."  
may I die for your sun, my love... and with one  
fatal blow of the yataghan, his radiant sun had  
faded into a faint glow of life floating in her womb,  
nourished by her blood, spared – it seemed --  
for a fate that loomed ahead far worse  
than death – a life of the living dead...  
Later, before freedom would hail at another  
springtime in May – as a lone servant  
in her own house -- in the cold crisp winter  
of that crimson year, she was told by her  
savage landlords to cut down some limbs  
off the bare chestnut tree to burn as firewood  
to heat a house built on love, now petrified  
with freezing grief at the sight of the severed  
hands and limbs of its builders and their trees...

"That was the tree of the whole family,"  
murmurs the old woman to no one in sight --  
for under its canopy, they had collected  
the spiny burrs from the ground, recovering  
the chestnuts and preparing them for the roast –  
and the aroma of the sizzling fruit attracted  
all the children and grandchildren, as the family  
gathered as one around that chestnut tree –  
not too long after the stench of its flowers  
had faded from memory....

Startled by the hand of his grandchild  
on her frail shoulder the old woman starts  
sobbing and begging, "Don't cut down  
the chestnut tree, don't cut down the family..."  
startled in his turn the grandson says "Nani jan,  
we have no chestnut tree in our yard..."

that's the pear tree in the neighbor's backyard  
you're looking at... nobody is cutting any..."

Oblivious to her grandson's plea  
the old woman repeats between sobs...  
"Don't cut down the family tree...."

