

Tan and the black panther with blue eyes

Tan and I did a bit of the road together; not a very large avenue, just one of those secluded and grassy lanes leading to the secret garden where two friends can sit, watch the stone grow and halt, for a while, the impatience of the void.

I am now seated in such a garden, with Tan in front of me, not Tan really, more than Tan possibly, simply a hanging scroll of his on the wall: the black panther with blue eyes. I know for sure that Tan's ink is powerful enough not to let him retreat from the scroll; he is in there, and the panther is growing, like the stone.

It rains on the Eastern Mountains, but the panther's eyes are so big, so blue that no drop can cry on me.

The panther is lying on the branch of a black tree. Just next to the scroll, there is the simple stem of an azalea in a glazed black vase, everlasting flower on the everlasting tree.

What else do you expect from a painting? A friend and a flower. Never believe the scholars when they promise something else: they are just painting themselves with the ink of despair .

In another life, I met a painter who had so much genius that he would never find a brush good enough to make a bridge to the canvas. He had so much beauty in his hand that he could never find a model peaceful enough to be sketched without drowning in the river of his tears.

Tan, I also know for sure, has been more lucky: he found the brush of gift and the peace which makes the painting, not the ink, flow into the silence of intelligence.

This is why sometimes, at dusk, the panther leaves the tree and comes to gently rub her head on my knees. She tells me stories from the Forest where all trees are black and where she met Tan, wandering in the cup of his dreams.

In the middle of the Forest, there is a City where men of the outer lands teach the way that makes the gardener last. The panther took Tan there, so many times, she told me, that he became one of them.

I will not ask her to take me there. If I do so, she will softly withdraw and go back to the black tree where she guards the Door of the Land.

One day, after many visits to the hidden garden of friendship, she will take me, even without my asking. Behind the black tree, Tan will be waiting for me. Together, we will go to the City, we will meet the men of the outer lands. I will learn and become a gardener who knows the way.

Please do listen to me: painting is dangerous; once you fall into it, the panther might eat you and few brushes can save you.
Tan is one of them.

Follow him, he will give you the flower and the lotus and take your hand, and you will cross the mirror into the blue eyes, and the rain on the Eastern Mountains will not cry on you.

In the Forest, you will learn the mathematics of enjoyment. The panther will leave the tree and gently rub her head on your knees.

Yes, Tan and I did a bit of the road together. Not many kilometers but so winding that it seemed quite a trip. We walked on the road; what else to do? I did not notice, at the time, but I am pretty sure now, that the panther was behind us. I am also quite certain that we passed in the neighbourhood of the City. Now, I meet him quite often on the roads of the Ink, which are not always the roads of life. You will meet him also; then, say hello for me.

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