俵万智
TAWARA MACHI
JAPAN (1962–)

LANGUAGE: JAPANESE

TANKA (UNTITLED)

誰からも
dare kara mo

忘れ去られた
wasure sarareta

ような夜
yoo na yoru

隣の部屋に
tonari no heya ni

鳴りベルやまず
nari beru yamazu

Tawara Machi is a contemporary Japanese writer, translator, and poet. She is credited with revitalizing the tanka for modern Japanese audiences. At age twenty-six, Tawara took Japan by storm with the publication of her first work: a book of tanka entitled Sarada kinenbi, or Salad Anniversary, in English. She became an overnight celebrity. Readers inspired by Tawara’s poems have sent her tens of thousands of letters and more than 200,000 tanka, over a thousand of which she has compiled and published. The oldest contributor is a ninety-one-year-old man, the youngest an eleven-year-old girl.

The tanka, like the haiku, is a form of classical Japanese poetry. Each tanka has two parts. The first three lines of the poem are five, seven, and five syllables, respectively, and make up the upper part of the poem. The lower part consists of two more lines, each with seven syllables.

(A rōmaji version has been included below the Japanese characters.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>RŌMAJI</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SYNONYMS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ベル</td>
<td>beru (n.)</td>
<td>object with ringing sound</td>
<td>bell, chime, ringer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>誰からも</td>
<td>dare kara mo (prep. + n.)</td>
<td>being beside or close to somebody or something else</td>
<td>by everyone, by anyone, everyone, anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>部屋</td>
<td>heya (n.)</td>
<td>space; part of a building</td>
<td>room, chamber, apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鳴り</td>
<td>nari (adj.)</td>
<td>continuing sound of a bell</td>
<td>ringing, chiming, humming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>に</td>
<td>ni (prep.)</td>
<td>indicates general position or location in order to be precise about the exact physical location</td>
<td>at, on, by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>の</td>
<td>no (poss.)</td>
<td>indicates connection with or ownership of, or indicates ownership by use of an apostrophe—i.e., neighbor’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>隣</td>
<td>tonari (n.)</td>
<td>somebody or something nearby</td>
<td>neighbor, neighboring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>忘れ去られた</td>
<td>wasure sarareta (v. + past part.)</td>
<td>not remember; leave something behind</td>
<td>forgotten, the forgotten, has forgotten, has not remembered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やまず</td>
<td>yamazu (v.)</td>
<td>does not end</td>
<td>doesn’t stop, doesn’t cease, doesn’t quit, doesn’t end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ような</td>
<td>yoo na (prep.)</td>
<td>when two things or two people are similar or share some of the same features, qualities, or characteristics</td>
<td>like, such as, such</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>夜</td>
<td>yoru (n.)</td>
<td>daily period of darkness</td>
<td>night, evening, hours of darkness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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DEFENDING YOUR TRANSLATION—FINDING THE MEANING

Group Member Names: ____________________________ Date: ________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

Note three phrases or words that were challenging or interesting to translate, and explain why.

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

How did this poem make you feel?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What do you think the poet is trying to communicate in this poem?

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

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Begin by seeking volunteers to read the poem aloud to the whole class. Several readings are fine. When possible, have a native speaker of the language read the poem. Hearing the poem is the first step in literary translation. A big part of translation is to have a sense of the piece, which begins with listening. Examine all the parts of the poem page and read the biography of the poet together.

Then break into groups of four—with mixed levels of language expertise, if possible. It is helpful—but not necessary—if one member of the group is a dominant English speaker and at least one is bilingual. NOTE: If a person in the class is a native speaker of the language of the poem, he/she should hold back on telling what the words are in English until the Make It Flow step in the translation process.

1. Become acquainted with the poem.
   - Each member of the group reads the poem silently to him/herself.
   - Anyone who is willing can read the poem aloud. If possible, start with someone who speaks the language of the poem.
   - Search for cognates—words that look and sound the same as the English word. Use the cognates as clues to figuring out what the poem means.
   - Once the poem has been read aloud several times, and the group has found all the cognates, make a prediction about the content of the poem.

2. Translate the poem—phrase by phrase.
   - The group of four breaks into pairs. Balance the spoken language strengths of the group members when possible.
   - The person least fluent in the language of the poem begins by guessing at all possible words. This can be done using the Translator’s Glossary, if desired.
   - If there is a person with knowledge of the language in the pair, this is the time to add her/his input.
   - Remember, sometimes when you translate a poem from one language to another, you need to add small words like the, it, etc. Be on the lookout for where those words might be needed.

3. Make it flow.
   - Once the phrase-by-phrase translation is complete, meet with the rest of your group.
   - Share the translations.
   - Make changes or adjustments based on what you learned from each other.

4. Defend your translation—find the meaning.
   - As a group, discuss possible interpretations of the poem.
   - Talk about words or phrases that were particularly difficult to translate, and why.
   - Discuss which words were most interesting, and why.
   - In the whole-class discussion be prepared to:
     (a) Discuss and support your group’s interpretation of the poem.
     (b) Talk about what was interesting or difficult to translate.
     (c) Share possibilities about what the poem might mean.