

Tahirih (1816 - 1852)

by Terre Ouwehand

written for Jaine Toth*

1984

Soon, they will come for me. And I shall meet my Beloved...

I shall be taken to a garden, I shall wear a silken scarf around my neck...

No, good woman, do not distress yourself, the hour approaches for which I have been preparing all my life. You and your husband's house have served me well, but there is nothing more for you to do. What comes to pass tonight is what must be. My breath must be taken so that the words that lived upon that breath shall live forever.

They shall be surprised, shall they not? That such a little breath, so small, held in here, shall leave this body and grow colossal, spreading into all the lands of the world! They shall be much amazed that such a breath came from one so small, lying at the bottom of a well beneath the dirt and straw, stone and clay.

It is a sad streak in humankind that requires such deeds to open their minds, their hearts, their eyes...From those who grow old happily, content, full of many years, of many thoughts and wisdoms, full of God's gifts, few will learn, so few will seek them, so few will listen.

Even their own progeny are quick to be about the world, to join the swirling

* See more about this script at bahai-library.com/ouwehand_tahirih_monologue

dance of this life, and they leave the wise ones in their youthful dust. No, the old ones sleep with their quiet truths...

Those who are crucified, stoned, burned, beaten, have the breath wrenched out of them—they teach. They are heard. Their tragedies widen the eyes of the people and unstop their ears. The world is a bazaar — the strollers are moved by spectacle. So it was that I appeared before the assembly unveiled—to move them—to move their blood, their brains, their souls!—

I am the blast of the trumpet! I am the call of the bugle! Gone are the days of dread and subjugation for any of God's creatures. The day is come when new laws will be revealed upon the earth, for the earth is one nation and humankind one citizen.

The new order is begun. The fetters of the past are burst asunder!
And this veil of ignorance and fear shall cloud our eyes no more.

Arise, my friends, embrace, and take the hands of your sisters, for you will enter paradise together.

When I was but a girl in my father's house where secretly he taught me to read and write and to know the holy books, one day I overheard him say, "Would that she had been a boy, for he would have shed illumination upon my house and would have succeeded me in the mosque..." And I knew at that moment I would be the first to follow the new teachings and to give my life for the freedom of my sisters,

For you...

They can kill me, but they cannot stop emancipation of women! When the Letters of the Living are read, a woman, a poet and a teacher, a daughter,

shall be among them.

It is late. The hour has come. And has the knocking at the gate.
Do not weep for me, good woman, did not the disciples of Christ do it, did not Muhammad's?

I am dressed in white silk. I am a bride. Soon I shall be with my Beloved.

Take this key, I have left you a few things as remembrance of my stay in your house. Whenever you open this chest and behold what it contains, remember me and rejoice in my gladness...

You have been very kind. Kinder to me than any, and I would not have you grieve. When the Solace of the Eyes can be looked upon no longer, keep her in your mind's eye and look at her with your heart.

(Terre Ouewehand, 1984)