

宮沢賢治の『ポラーノの広場』 1～3章の英訳と一考察

ジョージ・ウォレス

Pollanno Square

A Translation of and Reflections on the First Three
Chapters of Kenji Miyazawa's 『ポラーノの広場』

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Written down by Leono Kust, office worker (of the 17th rank)

Translated and adapted by Kenji Miyazawa

I was working at that time in the department of natural history in the town of Morillo.

I was an office worker (of the 18th rank, that is to say, the lowest rank there was), and my salary was equally pitiful. It was my job to collect and maintain the specimens. I had always enjoyed my job and went about my daily tasks most happily. It was just about that time that the municipality of Morillo decided to transform the racetrack into a botanical garden, and so we acquired this beautiful plot of land. All around it there was a vast area which had been planted with acacia trees. There was a small building where they used to sell tickets for the races, and where they used to signal the start of each race. I bought a small record player and about a couple of dozen records (paid for in monthly installments), and carried them all to the site office where I lived on my own, working as a nightwatchman. In the stables I built a partition so I could keep a goat. Each morning I would milk it and then use the milk to dunk my bread in. Then I would slip some documents and some magazines into my black leather briefcase, I would polish my shoes, and I would set off for my office in the town, striding along in the shadows cast by the avenues of poplar trees.

In the transparent wind in that country, Ihatove, even in summer the sky is a blue of the most profound coldness; the town of Morillo is set amongst dazzling forests, and the surrounding countryside quivers in waves of undulating vegetation.

It is onto this stage that now assemble a cast of many characters: Fazello and Rosallo, the shepherd Berger, countless children with red cheeks, Temo the boss, and also B. Gant

Destupago, nicknamed Professor Wild Cat . . . and as I think back, now in this vast stone building, they all come back to me like faded and yet familiar images as if they had escaped from a magic lamp from long ago.

Now I am going to tell you about the events that happened in Ihatove that year, from May till October. I'll split up my notes into short chapters.

Chapter One: The Goat Escapes

It was the last Sunday in May. I was woken by the church bells ringing in the town. The sun was already quite high in the sky and the surrounding countryside was resplendent. I looked at my watch; it was exactly six o'clock. I put on my waistcoat and went to have a look at my goat. All was quiet in the stable: the straw had been pushed down but neither the little horns nor the white coat of the animal were to be seen.

"My general has gone out to enjoy the good weather!"

Half laughing, half muttering, I looked at the horizon, then over towards the signal box and the meadows inside the former racetrack, where the goat was free to wander about. I looked over at the white tower of the church, sticking its face out from the poplar trees on the edge of town. But the goat's white head and back were nowhere to be seen. I had a look around the stable, but she wasn't there either.

'Do goats always come back home like horses and dogs do, never forgetting the way?' I wondered. Troubled by such thoughts, I would have liked to have been able to answer the question. But away from the office, out on the racetrack, I had no wise man to tell me what I wanted to know, nor would any dictionary be of any use. So, I walked around the racetrack, then headed for the pastures from where the farmers had come who had brought me the goat in the first place.

In the fields the wheat and corn were already growing tall, and here and there the land had already been tilled, as if ready to be sown.

Before I knew it, I found myself walking along the road which led to the village to the south-west of Morillo.

In the distance I thought I could make out a large number of peasant women walking towards me, all dressed in black except for white scarves over their heads. On seeing them, I thought about turning back. I had only just got up, and had rushed out to look for my goat in the fields in a simple waistcoat, without washing my face or putting on a hat. But it would have been rude to turn back. I could already clearly see the faces of the women as they walked

towards me. I strode up to them and asked, "You haven't seen a lost goat walking along here, have you, by any chance?"

All the women stood still. They must have been on their way to church because they had Bibles in their hands.

"A goat wouldn't happened to have walked this way, would it? Did you notice anything?"

The women looked at one another. Then one of them replied, "Well, you see, we have come straight along this road . . ."

'That's true — a lost goat wouldn't walk along a road. It's not human, after all,' I thought.

"Thank you for your help."

The women continued along the road. I wanted to turn back but that would have meant passing them once again. 'So, am I to walk on a bit more, aimlessly meandering?' I wondered to myself, slightly embarrassed, smiling at my own predicament. Just at that moment, a young man of twenty-five or six, accompanied by a boy of about seventeen, each with a shovel over their shoulder, came walking towards me. I decided I'd ask them if they'd seen anything.

"You wouldn't have seen a goat around here, would you, by any chance? One that's got lost."

"A goat? No, we haven't. Did it run off while you were holding it?"

"No, it ran off from where I keep it in my stable. Oh well. Thanks anyway."

I said goodbye to them and went on my way. Suddenly, behind me, the boy called out, "Look! Somebody's coming! Isn't that your goat?"

I turned around and looked in the direction he was pointing.

"That looks like Fazello. And that might be a goat . . ."

"That's your goat. I'm sure of it. Fazello doesn't have any goats of his own at the moment. So it must be yours."

It was a goat, there was no doubt about it, but perhaps it wasn't mine. It might have been one they were taking to sell in the town. I walked as far as the signpost on the road. A young chap of about seventeen, with bright red cheeks, wearing a waistcoat but no jacket, walked towards me, laughing. In his hand he held the end of a leather lead tied around the goat's neck. Perhaps it was my goat, after all. I stopped and thought to myself that it might well have been mine, but what was I going to say? The young fellow stopped and asked, "Is this goat yours?"

"It might well be."

"When I went out, I found her all alone, lost."

"It's like with dogs – goats always remember where they have come from."

"Yes, they do. Well, here's your goat back."

"Thank you very much. I came out to look for it without even washing my face."

"Do you live far away?"

"I live at the old racetrack."

"Over there?" Slipping the lead loose from the goat's neck, the youth looked at the avenue of acacia trees which were beginning to turn blue and which simmered and sparkled as if in a mirage, beyond the fields.

"The goat went quite some way, didn't it!"

"Well, I must be on my way now. Goodbye."

"Wait a moment, I'd like to give you something, but I've got nothing on me."

"No, please don't worry about it. I enjoyed bringing the goat back."

"But that won't do. Would you like this chain?"

I undid the silver chain from my watch, thinking it wasn't something I really needed.

"No, no, I couldn't . . ."

"But it has a compass!"

For a moment the youth went bright red, before regaining his composure.

"No, that's no good. You can't go looking for stuff with a compass . . ." he said vaguely.

"What do you mean, you can't find stuff with a compass?" I asked him, astonished.

"Well . . ." The youth looked troubled as if some hidden feelings had suddenly been uncovered.

"Are you looking for something?"

The youth hesitated for a moment then seemed to make up his mind.

"Pollanno Square."

"Pollanno Square? I have heard that mentioned before somewhere. What is it?"

"There have been rumours about it for years and years, but recently people have really started talking about it."

"Yes, that's right. I remember hearing people talk about it a lot when I was young. It's a place for parties, out in the open fields. And if I remember correctly, people used to say that to get there, you had to count the pink clover."

"Yes, it's an old story but it's been doing the rounds again recently."

"Why is that?"

"If you go out at night into the fields, you'll hear echoes coming from somewhere."

"Why don't you walk towards where the noises are coming from?"

"I've tried to several times with my friends, but never with any luck."

"But if you can hear something, it can't be that far away."

"No, the fields of Ihatove are vast. When the fog comes down, even Milo gets lost out there."

"I see. But there must be maps, surely?"

"Yes, I think there are at least four."

"Well, when you look at these four maps, do they all show the same paths and woods?"

"There might be a few slight discrepancies, but all in all, they give you a good idea of what's there."

"Well, I'll buy you a map and send it to you as a way of saying thank you for your help with my goat."

"Okay," said the youth reddening slightly.

"Your name's Fazello, isn't it? What's your address?"

"I'll find the time to visit you."

"Perhaps you could drop by today, maybe?"

"I've got work today."

"But it's Sunday!"

"For me there are no Sundays."

"Why's that?"

"Because I have to work."

"Do you work for yourself?"

"For my boss. All the others are already at work in the fields, picking up the chaff to take away."

"You are an apprentice to your boss?"

"Yes, I am."

"And what about your parents?"

"I don't have any."

"Do you have any brothers or someone you . . ."

"I've got a sister."

"Where is she?"

"She's working for the boss, of course."

"I see."

"But maybe she'll go to work for Professor Wild Cat."

"What? Who on earth is Professor Wild Cat?"

"It's a nickname. His real name is Destupago."

"Destupago? B. Gant Destupago? The county councillor?"

"That's right."

"But he's terrible. Does he live around here?"

"Yes, you can see his place from my boss's house."

"Oi! You there! What do you think you're doing?" shouted someone from behind the youth. The voice belonged to a sturdy old farmer wearing a red hat. He stood there seething with anger, a whip in his hand.

"There's me thinking you're busy at work, and I find you here chatting! Get to work! Hurry up!"

"Yes, all right. Goodbye."

"Goodbye. After work, I always get home by about five thirty."

"Okay." Fazello set off quickly along the road, carrying a jar of water and a hoe. The farmer turned to me and spoke.

"I don't know who you are, but I'd prefer it if from now on, you didn't disturb him while he's working."

"No, you see, what it was, I had lost my goat and I had set off to look for it when on the way I met this lad who had found it for me. So, I was just thanking him . . ."

"I've heard enough! Goats have got legs and they like walking on them. Now, Fazello, get a move on, you idiot!"

His face crimson with rage, the old farmer cracked his whip.

"Don't you think it cruel to use a whip to make people work?"

The farmer answered me right to my face, "A whip? A whip, you say? This isn't for men, it's to get my horses moving! There are four horses over there. This is what you do!"

The farmer cracked his whip violently, twice, right in front of my face. I felt my blood rising, but it wasn't the time to argue. I looked over towards my goat. Grazing here and there, she had wandered off from where I was. The farmer set off in the direction Fazello had taken. As for me, I walked towards my goat. I grabbed hold of it and turned around. As far as the dark blue horizon in the warm steam that was rising up off the fields, everything mixed and blurred, even the farmer's red hat. A bit further off, in among even thicker clouds, farming machinery glistened with white metallic reflections, while a horse walked along like a black shadow. Perhaps it was Fazello, or perhaps it was someone else, anyway, some young lad was moving his arms about trying to get the horse to walk on. That was all I could see.

Chapter Two: The Light of the Pearlwort Flowers

It was twilight, about ten days later. I had come home from the office and I was trying to undo the buttons on my sleeve when suddenly Fazello appeared at my door. Even before I could show my surprise, he said, "Good evening! Here I am!"

"Thanks again for the other day. I have got the map all ready for you. Have you heard those noises again that you were telling me about?"

"Yes, I have. Last night I heard them particularly loudly. We've made up our minds – tonight we're going to look for them with Milo the shepherd.

"And is everything going okay with your boss now?"

"Well, yes, sort of . . ." Fazello replied evasively.

"Your boss looks like he's pretty strict. What's his name?"

"Temo."

"Temo . . . I've heard that name somewhere before."

"You might well have done. He sells fruit and vegetables to several branches of the local government."

"Is that so? Well, here is that map I promised you." The map I had bought him was lying opened out in the hallway.

"Is it okay if I call Milo?"

"There's someone with you? Yes, if you want!"

"Milo! Come on in! Let's look at this map together."

Whereupon a young man with an honest-looking face walked in from the stables. He looked about three years older than Fazello. He was wearing an old blue leather jacket and was busy arranging his gaiters. He said hello.

"I don't really understand this map. Where is west on it?"

"Well, north is at the top, so put the map the right way round."

Fazello put the map on the ground aligning it so it faced the right way.

"So, here is east, and there, that's west. And at the moment we're just here, by the side of that round shape, which is the racetrack."

"Where's the distillery?" asked Milo.

"The distillery? It's not on this map. Maybe it'll be on the other one."

I unfolded a second map.

"It's not on there either. When was it built?"

"Last year."

"Well, that explains it. These maps were drawn up a fair while ago now. Where is that factory?"

"At the edge of the Moulado forest."

"Ah, in that case . . . What kind of trees grow there? Are they oaks or silver birch? There are no pines or cypresses."

"Yes, you're right. They are oaks and silver birch growing there. I think that's where the noises are coming from that we have been hearing recently."

"Let's go there then and find out!"

Fazello jumped up onto his feet, holding the map in his hand.

"Can I come with you?"

"Of course you can. I was just going to invite you."

"That's settled then. But just give me a moment."

I got myself ready as quickly as I could. I was sure we wouldn't be able to read the map by the light of the moon, so I grabbed hold of a glass lamp.

"Okay, let's get going!"

I slammed the door shut behind us and ran after Fazello and Milo. The sun had already gone down, and the sky was the colour of an old pond, a deep blue.

It's the time of day when all the trees round these parts, even the acacias, look their bluest.

"When we get to Pollanno Square, what do you think we'll see? What do people say is there?" I asked Fazello, as I walked on behind Milo.

"There's an orchestra playing, there's alcohol to be drunk, there's everything you could wish for. I don't want to drink anything, but I'd love to take as many people as I could there."

"That's what they say, do they? Yes, I remember hearing the same sort of things said when I was a child."

"And they say once you get there, you find you can sing like a bird!"

"Really? That's exactly what they used to say in the old days."

"Yes, I've heard the same things said, too. I don't really want all that much, but I'd really love to be able to sing well."

"And what about you, Milo? Do you feel the same?"

"Yes, I do."

Milo was quiet. As for me, I was convinced that Milo must have been a good singer all his life.

We had already crossed the racetrack and were on the road leading out into the fields. I turned around and saw my tiny home shining yellow.

"When I was small, I always used to go out to play in the fields at about this time of day."

"Really?"

"My mother would tell me to go out to play, but to be careful not to get tricked by the owls."

"Sorry?"

"My mother, she'd tell me to go and play, but to watch out the owls didn't play any tricks on me."

"The owls?"

"Yes, that's right, the owls. You see, once, when I was still really tiny, I went out into the fields to play, and I heard someone saying again and again in the distance, 'Someone's been eaten! Someone's been eaten!' It was an owl! I wasn't much taller than knee-high to a grasshopper, but boy, did I run! I ran so fast, before I knew it, I was in the wood and I had lost my way. Then I started to cry. And now, my mother won't stop going on about it."

"And where is your mother now?" I asked gently, mindful of what I'd heard the other day.

"She's no longer with us," Fazello replied sadly.

"Last time you told me that your sister might go and work for Destupago."

"Yes, but she doesn't want to. The boss is adamant, though."

"Temo?"

"Yes, that's right. You see, he's afraid of Professor Wild Cat."

"Why do people call him Professor Wild Cat?"

"I don't know. Milo, do you know the reason?"

"Yes, I do," Milo replied, turning towards us. "People say he hunts wild cats and sells them abroad."

"Wild cats? Does he sell them to zoos?"

"No, not to zoos . . ."

Milo didn't say another word, as if he knew nothing more about it.

It was now quite dark, and as the sun set over the horizon, everything was bathed in a brilliant blue light as if reflected in the water of an old pond. Even the grass at our feet had turned a deep blue-black.

"Oh, look! The lights of the pearlworts have come on!" cried Fazello.

It was true. In amongst the masses of dark vegetation, here and there, you could just about make out the shapes of white clover, looking like little round lanterns. The air was saturated with the smell of honey.

"When you look at them close up, you'd swear they were spots of concentrated pale blue

light, looking just like little nocturnal butterflies.”

“Yes, you’re right! And there was me thinking there was just the one light.”

“Hey, look! There are numbers written on them!”

We got down onto our knees to have a better look at the flowers. On each one there were signs of writing — they looked like numbers written in brown ink.

“Milo, what number can you see there?”

“1,256, I think. No, maybe it’s 17,508.”

“On this one, it says 3,420 . . . or is it 26?”

“Is it clearly written on yours?”

I don’t know why, but I wasn’t able to read mine so clearly. You could see the lights of the pearlwords everywhere.

“This one says 3,866. If we find one with 5,000 on it, we’ll know we have found Pollanno Square. We can’t be far off.”

“But we can’t hear any of the noises you told me about.”

“We’ll hear them soon enough! Look! Here’s one with the number 2,556 on it!”

“No, don’t count the numbers! There’s no point doing that!” I said.

“Why not?”

Fazello and Milo stood up and looked at me.

“Why not? Well, first off, I don’t think there really are any numbers written on these flowers. It’s just our eyes playing tricks on us. If we hear noises, we’d be better off going straight towards them. In any case, let’s walk on a bit. I have already been this way many times before. We’re still only a bit further north than the spot where the path splits into two. We’ve still got a lot way to go before we get to the forest of Moulado. What do you think, Milo?”

Nodding his head, Milo set off again. Fazello followed on in silence. We walked on without saying a word, across fields streaked with countless stripes like a piece of cloth, towards a pale blue light in the distance. Beyond the fields, up above the intense black of the horizon, the sky had taken on the tint of dull steel; stars twinkled and the air became sweeter by the instant. A moment later, with our shadows falling behind of us, we could see the full moon rising up over the blurred hazy lights of Morillo in the distance. The moon was amazingly flat. It took our breath away. Fazello jumped up raising his hands as if he were saying hello.

Suddenly from the other side of the fields veiled in blue came the sound of peaceful vibrations similar to those made by a cello or a double bass.

“It’s them!”

Fazello hit me on the hand. I stood stock-still, all ears. Soft gentle music resonated like a

murmuring. I was as if struck dumb. I wondered where the noise was coming from. It could have been coming from the south, but then again, it might just as well have been the west or the north, or even from the direction we ourselves had walked. Such were my thoughts as I listened to the sounds which reverberated happily, with some high notes and some low, and which seemed to burst forth from the very depths of the earth.

In fact, you would have said there were not just one or two sounds, but many more indeed. Sometimes they faded away or merged into new sounds. It was impossible to say for sure.

"It's just how people used to say it was in the old days. But I can't understand the first thing about it just yet."

"Around here, all the numbers are about the 2,300 mark," said Fazello as he looked carefully at the lights of the pearlworms which were lit up ever more brightly by the light of the moon.

"You shouldn't be worrying about numbers."

I was crouching down. Just at that moment I noticed a small black bee which was flying from flower to flower gathering nectar.

"Look! A bee! It's just started buzzing! Now the moon has risen, the bees have gone to work. Look around you! There are bees everywhere!"

I thought they would say something, but Milo and Fazello stayed silent as if they didn't agree with me.

"It might have been the bees. Maybe that's why no one knew where the noises were coming from," said Milo after a while.

"I don't think so. No, it wasn't bees that were making the noises I heard. I've known about this story for a long time, and last night I definitely heard the sound of men laughing."

"Men laughing? Were they deep voices?"

"No."

"Oh . . ."

Once again I found myself not really understanding. I stood up and folded my arms.

It was at that very moment . . . Far away over in the northwest, somewhere out in those fields, we could hear the sounds of trombones and double basses. There was no doubt about it this time. I turned towards the direction they were coming from. Then, for a second time, we heard them again, coming from the west. I couldn't help but shiver. It was as if a magician was working his magic over the whole countryside. It was just like in the stories of old: Pollanno Square would now surely suddenly appear miraculously full of life in the middle of these fields so empty in the daytime. I was beginning to feel that my daily job — full of me sticking labels

on samples, and carrying documents to my supervisor — belonged to a totally different world altogether from the one I was now in.

“Yes, there’s definitely something going on.”

“You’re right. But where exactly?”

“It’s difficult to work out where exactly the noises are coming from, but if we’re to believe what tradition tells us, then we should be looking carefully at the numbers on the flowers. What was the number we need to find if we want to get to Pollanno Square?”

“We need to find 5,000.”

“Five thousand? And what number are we up to at the moment?”

“We’re up to 3,000, give or take a few.”

“Okay. Let’s see if the numbers increase or not if we move over to the north or the west.”

At that very moment someone behind us laughed in a loud voice.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! What’s that you say? You lot are looking for Pollanno Square, too, aren’t you?”

“What on earth! Oh! It’s you! It’s the coachman of Professor Wild Cat,” said Milo.

“There you are, the three of you, running about here, there and everywhere, counting the numbers on the flowers! Whatever next! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

With only one good eye and legs all twisted and bent, the old man burst out laughing loudly once more, with his hands buried in his jacket pockets.

“Yes, that’s right — we’re counting just as you say. But does Pollanno Square still exist?” asked Fazello.

“Yes, it exists, but you won’t find it that way, crawling about on your hands and knees counting numbers on flowers.”

“So, what kind of place is it, then?”

“It’s better than you’d ever think . . .”

“In what way?”

“Well, that’s got nothing to do with you lot.”

The old man hiccupped.

“Do you go there a lot?”

“You might say that. It’s a beautiful spot, after all.”

“Have you been drinking tonight?”

“Yes, I’ve drunk some wonderful wine.”

The old man hiccupped once more.

“Do you think we’ll ever get there?”

"No, I don't think you will. Aargh! I'm being attacked by a devil!" The old man squealed as he staggered back, holding a hand to his forehead. We thought he had been hit by a stag beetle flying by. Milo spoke up.

"Granddad! Tell us which way we should go to get to Pollanno Square and we'll sing the devil's song together."

"Don't tempt fate! Keep on looking on your knees!"

The old man stomped off towards the south, in a heated rage, trampling on as many pearlwort flowers as he could.

"Oi! Granddad! Wait up! I'll give your horses some water to drink!" Fazello cried, but the old man had already disappeared. Milo stayed silent a moment, then as if he couldn't hold it in any longer, he declared, "I'm going to sing a song!"

Fazello didn't seem at all keen to join in, but I was convinced Milo was a gifted singer, so I started clapping my hands. Milo undid the top buttons of his shirt and jacket, and took a deep breath.

"The soldier of the wild boar,
The stag beetle does not worry about
The light of the moon
The light of the pearlworts
He flies blind
Banging into the coach driver
Of Professor Wild Cat
Dazed and confused
He picks himself up off the ground
Quickly puts his helmet back on
And flies off at random
Not worrying about
The light of the moon
The light of the pearlworts."

I thought I could hear a high voice calling out. It seemed to be coming from the direction the old man had run off in.

"Fazello! Fazello!"

"It's my sister! I'm coming!" Fazello cried out at the top of his voice.

There was no reply.

"I ought to be going. It's no doubt my boss wondering where I am. We would have been better off trying our luck over there by the forest."

Milo began to talk very quickly.

"It doesn't matter. I'm sure that coach driver can't be trusted. He's like the guy who owns the grocery shop in town. There's something dodgy about him. He's always drunk. But I'm sure he knows where Pollanno Square is. I've seen a strange-looking cart out in the fields several times of late. It's always loaded up with hay. Fazello, when you get home, don't tell anyone what we've been up to. Just play dumb. I'm going to keep looking for Pollanno Square for the next five or six days."

"Okay. I don't know . . ."

Just then we heard the voice again.

"Fazello! Come on! You've got to go into town to run some errands."

"Okay, I'm coming! I'll go straight to my boss's place. Can you find your way home alone to the racetrack?"

Then I saw her. She was a beautiful young girl, standing there in the light of the pearlworms and the moon.

"Sister, this is the man who gave me the map," said Fazello.

The young girl bowed to me in silence, and I returned her greeting.

"Well, cheerio. We ought to be getting a move on."

Fazello began to run.

Rosallo bade us goodbye and ran off into the distance. Without saying a word, Milo turned towards the north and put the palms of his hands against his ears. The thought struck me that what everyone called 'Pollanno Square' was probably much like the place where we were now.

"Milo, you sing very well. You've no need to go looking for Pollanno Square. Your singing is good enough already. I'm heading home. See you again!"

Milo bowed to me very politely. As I walked home across the dazzling meadows, I breathed in the sweet smell of their honey.

Chapter Three: Pollanno Square

It was Tuesday evening, exactly five days later. I had spent the whole day at the office fighting with colleagues over whether we were going to stuff a polar bear or not. I was not in a good mood. In an attempt to perk myself up, I had mixed some tartaric acid with fresh water,

and I was drinking this brew when suddenly from far away came the clear sound of a flute.

"He's come at last!" I murmured instinctively. The melody matched perfectly the one Fazello whistled whenever he was out with the goats in the fields or when he strode quickly across the meadows.

It was Fazello, after all. He was standing at my front door, with his face all flushed. I hadn't yet finished my drink.

"I've cracked it at last! Last night, I put down markers on the path, pointing in the right direction. If we look at the maps, we'll see where we're going. Tonight we'll definitely make it to Pollanno Square. Milo went off today but he promised he'd join us later. I'm going to see if what they say is really true, and if it is, I'll take everyone down there!"

Excited by this discovery my heart was jumping with joy.

"Great stuff! I'm coming, too! What shall we wear? Who else has already gone?"

"Wear whatever you like. Come on, let's leave now! I've no idea who's gone ahead . . ."

I quickly put on a tie and grabbed a brand new summer hat as I walked out the door. We reached the spot where we had said goodbye the other night just as the bluish light of dusk was enveloping the pearlworts. It was no longer possible to make out what was written on their petals. Fazello stood on tiptoe and looked around at the countryside for a moment. Suddenly he set off running. A moment later, he stopped dead in his tracks.

"It's over there. Look!"

I could see a small marker post in the ground, put there no doubt by Fazello. On it there was an arrow pointing to the north-west.

"That's the way we've got to go! There are two posts over there. Can you see them? That's the first sign. Let's get a move on before it gets too late."

Fazello began to run very fast.

All around us the lights on the pearlworts were all coming on. I ran after Fazello as fast as I could.

"Faster! Come on! I don't want to get seen by Professor Wild Cat's coach driver!"

Fazello turned his head to face me as he spoke, maintaining his speed the whole time. But it was proving far from easy to reach the two posts we had seen earlier.

Fazello was running flat out.

I was running as fast as my legs would carry me.

When Fazello finally got to the posts, he stopped for breath. Everything was covered in darkness. We could just about make out the posts, like watermarks in the sky.

Meanwhile the clover seemed to glow like crystal rocks. When we had a better look at

them, as we had noticed the other night, they appeared to us like white butterflies of the night.

Here and there on the highest stalks, red lights lit up while the leaves offered their own green warmth. Fazello jumped nimbly up onto a silver birch and looked for a moment over towards the western fields. Then holding onto the branches, he climbed back down again.

"The next sign is nowhere to be seen, but I'm sure that the square is over to the west, so all we have to do is to walk on using as a marker that cloud there that's a bit lighter than the others. We can't be far off now."

We set off once again. Suddenly we could hear some screeching. It was the sound of stag beetles, the colour of steel, their wings clicking away metallically, as if they were being stretched in the air.

Mixed in with these dry sounds could be heard the harmonies of real musical instruments, with the hubbub of human voices drifting in and out from time to time.

A bit later Fazello grabbed hold of my arm and pointed over towards the west. I searched the horizon as best I could, rubbing my eyes so much I almost lost my balance. Just over a half dozen trees were visible, but you couldn't tell what kind they were. They seemed to emit a light, which made the sky about them somehow more luminous.

"Is that you, Fazello?" A voice said behind us.

"Yes, it's us. Shall we go?"

"Yes, let's be on our way. It's livening up already, and I'm sure Professor Wild Cat is there."

"Professor Wild Cat?"

Fazello almost jumped out of his skin.

"Don't worry about it. Let's go. Anyone who can find Pollanno Square has a right to be there."

"Okay, then! Let's be on our way!" Fazello cried.

We continued walking, using the pearlwort lights to guide us. I didn't know exactly why but Fazello and Milo seemed somewhat preoccupied, not saying a word. As for me, I felt rejuvenated.

Were those tales from the old days really true? Or were we going to find something totally different there, after all? And what was Professor Wild Cat doing in such a place? I was desperate to get there as quickly as I could, and find out the answers to these questions. It occurred to me that I still had more than half of my monthly salary left, so I could easily pay for Fazello and Milo's drinks if necessary.

"Come on, you two, and follow me! I'm not afraid of that Professor Wild Cat!" I quickened

my pace and took the lead. The humming of the stag beetles' wings became more and more insistent. You could see the beetles sitting on the branches of the trees. Underneath the trees appeared flashes of white shirts and black shadows as people came and went. Somebody could be seen lifting his hand up as he spoke.

We were now almost there. I felt that at last we had finally reached Pollanno Square.

The trees we had seen earlier we could now tell were good sturdy oaks. From their branches hung all manner of garlands. Their leaves rustled and sparkled in the night. Above them all kinds of butterflies and emeralds fluttered in the air.

In the summer sky, the Milky Way stretched out like a white nebulous explosion over the horizon which lay shrouded in darkness towards the south. With the smell of the pearlworts, the perfume of various fruits and the laughter of people enjoying themselves, the atmosphere was slowly warming up, and everyone was beginning to dance. An orchestra of a half-dozen people launched into a full-bloodied waltz. Once the dance was over, everyone returned to their seats to have a drink. As they finished the last of their wine, they shouted into the night air. Some of them called out, "Long live Destupago!" I can't be sure, but that's what it sounded like.

"That's Professor Wild Cat!"

Fazello pointed to a strongly built man wearing a yellow striped shirt and a red leather waistcoat. He was sitting alone at a table, drinking one glass of wine after another.

A handful of guests threw confetti and streamers into the air. They fell to earth glittering like snow or pearlwort flowers.

We stood there just before the square, motionless. At that precise moment Destupago got up, holding a glass in his hand.

"Hey, waiter! Why won't you serve me any more wine?"

A waiter dressed in white hurried over to him.

"Yes, of course! I'm sorry! I didn't see you there sitting down."

"Whether I'm sitting or standing has nothing to do with it. I'm your lord and master, aren't I? Well, I'll forgive you! Everyone's having a party. Cheers!"

And with that, everyone emptied their glasses.

I didn't feel at all comfortable and wanted to go home, but after all the things I had said earlier, I felt I couldn't. I hesitated. I decided to see how things went. I walked into the light with my two friends, and took off my hat. All at once everyone fell silent. All eyes were on us, looking at us with suspicion and distrust. Then their gazes turned to Destupago.

With his head tilted to one side, it looked like he was thinking. It looked like he thought

he had seen me somewhere before, but couldn't quite remember where. Just then a man wearing a summer frock-coat walked up to him and whispered something in his ear. Destupago looked at us sulkily, and then made a sign of resigned acquiescence.

At that moment Temo arrived. He was also wearing a frock-coat. He brought us three glasses. Without a word, he first offered me one, then one to Fazello and one to Milo. As he offered a glass to Fazello, he gave him a look of real hatred, with his lips pressed firmly shut. Fazello stepped back as if he had been struck. The waiter came to fill our glasses. The alcohol that everyone had been drinking had come out of a large bottle with no label on it. I spoke out.

"No, thanks, we don't drink alcohol. We'd prefer some sparkling mineral water."

"We don't have any," the waiter replied.

"In that case, just give us some plain water."

For some unknown reason the guests all stayed silent, staring at us intently. I began to feel embarrassed.

"Mr. Destupago does not give water to his guests," said Temo.

"I've crossed fields counting the lights of the pearlwort flowers to come here to Pollanno Square, I'm thirsty and I want a glass of water to drink!"

I spoke my mind as I didn't see I had any other option.

"The lights of the pearlwort flowers indeed! Whatever next! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Temo burst out laughing. Destupago began to laugh, too. Then everyone else joined in.

"I'm very sorry, but Pollanno Square belongs to Mr. Destupago," Temo said calmly. Just then, Professor Wild Cat spoke up.

"Come on! If the man wants some water, give him some! But to come here to Pollanno Square and drink only water . . . that's being a bit of a killjoy, don't you think?"

"Yes indeed," Temo said making a bow. Then in a low voice he turned to Fazello and said,

"Fazello, what do you think you're doing here? Go on, get lost! Scram! When I catch up with you later, I'll give you such a hiding, you won't be able to stand up!"

Fazello looked stunned.

"Who is this child?" asked Destupago.

"He's Rosallo's brother," Temo replied with a bow. Destupago turned away without answering. Then the orchestra struck up a tune that sounded vaguely like folk music. People started dancing once more, forming a circle. But Destupago suddenly shouted out, "No! Not that one! That's not the one I want to hear! I want *The Cat's Whiskers*!"

The cellist spoke up.

"But we don't have the music for that one!"

Completely drunk, Destupago screamed out, "Play! Damn it! I'm telling you to play!"

The orchestra did as it was told, without changing the score.

The guests could only go back to their dancing. Destupago decided it was time he would join in. But he didn't care a jot about the others, moving about as if his only aim was to bang into as many dancers as he could.

Shocked by his behaviour, the guests all stopped dancing, one by one, and formed a circle around him. Destupago now began to dance alone, but it was a grotesque sight to behold. He threw himself at the guests as if wanting to crush them, and made provocative gestures as if wanting to start a fight. In the end, everyone walked off, yelling out their displeasure. The gentleman in the summer coat rubbed his hands together looking very worried. He did his best to speak some sense into Destupago, but Destupago paid him no attention and then even started to threaten him. All the while the orchestra had continued to play on, but now the musicians finally stopped, deeming Destupago to have gone too far. Destupago collapsed into a chair, exhausted by his efforts.

"Give me a drink!" He called out, and gulped down two glasses of wine in quick succession.

Two youngsters, probably friends of Milo, appeared out of the crowd and asked him, "Milo, since you've come all this way, why don't you sing us a song? We've been singing and dancing for quite some while now, and we could do with a rest."

"No, I couldn't possibly . . ." Milo replied trying to get out of it, but it was obvious it'd been his intention to sing from the moment he'd arrived. The orchestra made it clear they would happily play for him if he were ready to sing. His cheeks reddened, his eyes glistened and his breathing became more rapid. On the spur of the moment, I cried out to him, "Go on! Give us a song!"

Suddenly as if he had finally made up his mind, Milo cleared his throat and clambered up onto an empty box under one of the oak trees.

"So, what is it we're going to play?" the cellist asked.

"The song *Flow Gently*, please!"

"*Flow Gently*? I'm not sure we've got the music for that one. It's quite an old song, isn't it?"

The musicians looked at one another and laughed. For a moment they spoke amongst themselves.

"Listen. There's only one of us who actually knows the song, and that's the clarinetist. If you want, why don't you come in on the second beat? We'll accompany you on clarinet,

tambourine and the gong!"

Everyone began to clap their hands. Even Temo with his head slightly to one side was clearly happy to listen. The orchestra began to play and Milo started to sing:

"At about six o'clock this morning
As I was crossing the Waloutolawala Pass
A halo rose up from a chestnut tree
As the morning mist cleared.
Sitting on a rock at the summit
As I broke my breakfast bread
Suddenly the chestnut tree trembled
And two electric squirrels came tumbling down.
Quickly, ever so quickly
I . . ."

"No! That's not it at all! You've got it all wrong!" cried out Professor Wild Cat.

"What?" Milo said, utterly amazed.

"There can't have been electric squirrels this morning in the Waloutolawala Pass! They must have been weasels! Think a bit more carefully about what you're doing!"

"Well, pardon me for singing!"

Milo got down from the box in a fit of pique. Professor Wild Cat stood up.

"Next up, it's me who's going to sing. Orchestra! Play *In the Good Summer Time!*"

The musicians had clearly played the song many times before and launched into it. Quite unexpectedly, Professor Wild Cat began to sing in tune:

"In the evening when the flowers are in bloom
In Pollanno Square
It's the summer festival
In Pollanno Square
It's the summer festival
But no wine for them
Only water
For those who have finally made it to
Pollanno Square

Now it's already morning
In Pollanno Square
And it's finally getting light."

Fazello listened in silence as if he was about to burst out crying. As soon as the song was over, he climbed up onto the makeshift stage before I had time to stop him.

"Now it's my turn! Play the same song once more!"

The orchestra took up their instruments and began to play. Professor Wild Cat emptied two big glasses of wine and exclaimed, "My! This is turning into quite something!"

Fazello started to sing with all his might.

"The night when the scent of the pearlwort flowers
Hangs heavy in the air
In Pollanno Square
It's the summer festival
In Pollanno Square
It's the summer festival
The bad Wild Cat
Drinking alcohol
Wearing a yellow shirt
When he arrives
In Pollanno Square
The rain begins to fall
In Pollanno Square
Yes, the rain begins to fall."

Destupago jumped up, quivering with anger.

"What utter cheek! This calls for a duel!"

Without thinking, I stood up and put myself between Fazello and Destupago to protect the boy.

"You say the first thing that comes into your head! And you're the one who's shown yourself to be coarse and rude! You can't fight a duel with a young boy! I'll stand in for him and fight you instead!"

"What's it to do with you? Don't stick your nose in where it doesn't belong! Go on, get lost!"

The boy was rude to me! I'm an elected member of the county council! And I'm challenging him to a duel!"

"No, it was you who were rude first, and it's me who is challenging you to a duel! I've been keeping my eye on you, and you act as if all the fields around here belonged to you. You're nothing but a boastful bag of hot air! So, choose! What's it to be: pistols or swords?"

Destupago plugged down another glass of wine.

'Fazello will be all right. This guy is a real weed,' I thought, smiling to myself.

Suddenly Destupago began to shout in a deep voice.

"Silence! You don't even know the rules of duelling!"

"Listen to you! You can't even string two words together unless you've had a drink. Coward that you are, you're only prepared to fight children. Hey, Fazello! Have a go at him! He's nothing but a worm. I'll be watching out for you. Go on, give him a good thrashing!"

"Okay, let's fight. But I want someone to be my second!"

The man in the summer coat jumped forward.

"Listen, you can't fight a child. It's just not done. Tonight's an important night, isn't it?"

Professor Wild Cat hit him out the way.

"Leave me alone! I know about these things. I don't need you to tell me. So shut up! All I need is somebody to second for me. Temo!"

"I'm very sorry, you'll have to excuse me. But don't worry, I'll give the boy a good thrashing later!"

"To hell with you! What about you, Clono? Will you do it for me?"

Someone looking a bit like a farmer called out from the crowd:

"No, I can't."

"You coward! What about you, Poscho? Come forward!"

"No, it's impossible."

Destupago grew angrier and angrier.

"Right! Okay, we'll just have to do without! Get ready!"

"Get ready yourself!" I said as I helped Fazello take off his jacket.

"Bring whatever you want! Swords or cannons!"

"No, you choose!"

'Where on earth are they going to find all these weapons?' I wondered to myself.

"Waiter! Bring us two swords!"

The waiter replied as if he had been expecting this moment all along.

"I am sorry to inform you that there are no swords here in the fields tonight. Would

knives do?"

Destupago seem relieved to hear this.

"All right then! Bring them here!"

Only his voice seemed to have any energy.

"Most certainly!"

The waiter went and got two table knives which he held out respectfully to Destupago.

'This is a total farce!' I thought to myself.

However Destupago examined the cutting edges of the two blades most carefully.

"Take whichever one you want!" he said to Fazello offering him the pick of the two knives.

The young man immediately threw one of them at Destupago's feet. Destupago picked it up.

I stepped between them.

"Okay? We are going to stick to the proper rules of duelling. There'll be no hand-to-hand combat. Are you ready? One, two, three, go!"

There was no point in worrying. Destupago did his best to hold his knife as if it were a cutlass, stepping back as he tried to hit Fazello on his chest. For his part, Fazello held his like a dagger, and tried to hit Destupago on his wrist. They parried at each other three times before suddenly Destupago dropped his knife, grabbing hold of his right hand with his left.

"Aargh! I've been hit! Has anyone got any iodine? Is there any oxygenated water? Aargh! I'm wounded! I've been hit!" And with that, he collapsed in a chair.

I began to laugh.

"You know a lot about medicines, don't you! Can somebody give us some water?"

Milo brought over a watering can full of water and poured it all over Destupago. Soaking wet from head to toe, he got up and in a brave attempt to hide his discomfort shouted, "Well, I'll be off then. Have a nice time!"

And with that he ran off at top speed over the fields. Temo, in his summer coat, followed on close behind, accompanied by four or five others. When they had all left, the guests began to relax again once more.

"Hey, Fazello, good on you! You coped really well! And who is this?"

"He's the man who lives over by the racetrack."

"What has been going on here tonight?" I asked.

"These were Wild Cat's preparations for next year's elections. He was hoping he'd be able to get everyone drunk here at Pollanno Square for free!"

"Since the spring he's been inviting all sorts of people here to get them drunk."

"But this wine . . ."

"Don't talk like that! Go on! Have a drink with us!"

"No, we won't. We're not drinking!"

"Don't be so uptight! Let yourself go a bit!"

I was beginning to have had enough.

"Fazello, are you coming? Let's go home!"

Without waiting for an answer, I set off over the fields. Fazello joined me at once. The others stayed there to chat some more and to have fun. The orchestra began to play another song. We could also hear the voice of someone who was making a speech. We hurried along, guided by the lights of the pearlworts, making our way towards the town of Morillo where we could just about make out some dimly glowing lights. Just then the twenty-day-old blue moon rose up quietly over a bank of black clouds. We turned around and looked back. The oak trees looked quite small already, and the Milky Way had moved around to the west. The red stars of the Scorpio constellation were now way down in the south.

Soon we reached the place where the three of us had said goodbye the other night.

"Are you going back to Temo's place?" I asked.

This thought had suddenly crossed my mind.

"Well, yes, I suppose I will. My sister's there," Fazello replied weakly. He sounded ineffably sad.

"But if you go there, you'll get punished!"

"But if I don't go back, it'll be my sister who gets the beating instead."

Fazello began to cry.

"Do you want me to come with you?"

"No," Fazello replied, crying all the while.

"You can come home with me, if you like."

"No, I won't."

"So what are you going to do?"

Fazello stayed silent for a moment, then all of a sudden he regained his spirits and said, "No, it'll be okay. Temo won't punish me too much."

As was my civil servant's wont, I began to think about the work I had to do the following day at the office. And as Fazello was sure things would be okay, I was happy to settle with that.

"So, you're sure you'll be okay? If there's anything you need, you'll let me know, won't you?"

"Yes, of course. I might drop by later to ask you about my sister."

"That's great."

“Okay, well, goodbye then!”

Fazello walked off towards the south, his long black shadow stretching out over the pearlwort flowers. I turned around to watch him go then set off for home myself. When I arrived, the mixture I had made up earlier was still sitting there on my table. The electric light made the glass sparkle, and the hands of my alarm clock by my bed pointed to two o'clock.

Notes on the story

This tale was mostly written in 1927, with the final chapter being completed in 1931. There have been a number of theories put forward as to where the name of Pollanno comes from, but there is no clear evidence to confirm any of them as being any more likely than the others. What is clear, though, to anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Kenji Miyazawa's short stories is that he often gave foreign-sounding names to the places and the characters he wrote about. In 『銀河鉄道の夜』 (*Ginga Tetsudo no Yoru*), we read of Giovanni and Campanella, while elsewhere in other tales we meet characters with such non-Japanese names as Gadolf and Gorsch. Here in *Pollanno Square*, the narrator is called Leono Kust, while the other main characters have equally foreign (to Japanese ears) sounding names: Fazello, Rosallo, Milo, Temo and Destupago.

Likewise in the names he gave to the places in his stories, we see this tendency being repeated: Morillo, Ihatovo, Moulado, and, of course, Pollanno. By giving his characters and places such non-Japanese sounding names, perhaps Kenji wanted the readers to assume that his stories were not to be taken as being limited to any one locale. Instead of writing about his hometown of Hanamaki, and the nearby Morioka, with Mount Iwate looming up in the background, he gives us Morillo and Moulado. Kenji would appear to want his story to have a universal appeal to readers from all countries.

The themes that run through Pollanno Square are the same ones we meet elsewhere in Kenji's tales: perhaps the most obvious one is the existence of a parallel universe where everyday normality is suspended. Flowers have numbers written on them. Alcohol is free. Racetracks are turned into botanical gardens. Civil servants argue about whether or not to stuff a polar bear. Duels are fought with table knives.

Another theme is the abuse of positions of power. Here we have the county councillor attempting to gain reelection by getting his electorate drunk at someone else's expense. In

addition we see how the cruel farmer makes his young employees work even on Sundays, and how quick he is to resort to violence to ensure his will is carried out. When Leono tries to intervene on Fazello's behalf, he gets the farmer's whip cracked inches from his face, not once but twice.

Leono Kust is himself a typical Kenjian narrator. He is obviously a good egg, with a heart of gold, but at the same time he is somewhat a figure of fun, someone who feels ill at ease with himself and with his fellow human beings, living a loner's existence, on the periphery. He lacks confidence and seems resigned to his drab existence sticking labels on samples from dawn to dusk, day after day. Even when he stumbles upon the amazing nocturnal parallel world that exists over the fields at Pollanno Square, Leono feels unable to throw himself into it with selfless abandon. He steadfastly refuses offers of wine, and would leave at once if only he hadn't said earlier how keen he was to go there to his young friends. He feels duty-bound to stay a while, in spite of himself. And in spite of his love of music, which saw him buy a record player and twenty records, Leono seems strangely unmoved by the music that is played by the orchestra. His diffidence perhaps prevents him from stepping forth to sing a song, but it does seem strange at how little he is affected by the music he hears at Pollanno Square.

As in other tales, such as 『ガドルフの百合』 (*Gadorufu no Yuri*) and 『かしわばやしの夜』 (*Kashiwabayashi no Yoru*), the dull everyday world of the daytime is contrasted with the dreamlike and mesmerizing world of the after-dark. While days are filled with work and other drudgery, nights are a time for adventure and mystery. The story starts one morning with Leono searching for his goat, an episode that can be best described as pedestrian, but quickly moves on to the search for a rural Shangri-La, where people actually enjoy themselves, letting their hair down, drinking and singing the night away under the stars. The daytime world is one of work and other constricting tedious toil where humans do mean menial tasks that cannot even begin to satisfy their spiritual needs. It is only at night once the usual roles have been put to one side that people can begin to spread their wings. As they strive to find what it is they are looking for, they are guided by the helping hands of Mother Nature. Here it is the pearlwort flowers, their white petals acting as lights to show Leono and his friends the way to Pollanno Square. They also use the clouds as guides, while even further up in the night sky, the movements of the Milky Way are noted. Once they have reached their destination, Leono, Fazello and Milo see big sturdy oak trees, a reminder of the oaks we read of in another nocturnal tale 『かしわばやしの夜』 (*Kashiwabayashi no Yoru*).

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