

The Song of the Reed

AN ILLUMINATED TEXT



*from the Mathnawi of
Jalaluddin Rumi*

Translation
by
Lynn C. Bauman

Illuminations
by
Alison Hine

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Born in Balkh, a province of old Persia, in 1207, Jalaluddin Rumi fled from the Mongols with his family and eventually settled in Turkey where he became a master teacher, a mystic, and one of the world's greatest poets. His *magnum opus* was the massive tome of mystical poetry called the **Mathnawi** which opens with its tender and exquisite *Song of the Reed*. These opening lines set the stage for the full orchestration of Rumi's poetic and prophetic voice which sounds across the ages, speaking directly to the human condition in our own day.

Rumi's teachings are profound. His images are iconic and powerful, and though the poetry expresses the depths of spiritual meanings from another time in a distant Islamic world, it remains accessible even to modern ears, penetrating deeply to the level of the human heart. The translation I have made is directly from the Persian text and reflects the essential meanings of its original lines. I have, however, taken liberties to create an arrangement of dynamic, poetic equivalency to speak its truths in such a way that the contemporary ear can hear its secrets and ancient harmonies without excessive difficulty.

Coupled with the translation, Alison Hine has created a series of powerful images for contemplative reflection. These are meant to complement the text as iconic illuminations. Both text and image are designed to be engaged through a rhythmic practice of auditory and visual meditation balancing one another. It is hoped that both the poetry and the icons will help to catalyze in each reader and viewer an understanding that sustains and nourishes the human soul in its long journey of return back to the Source.

—L. Bauman
December 17, 2015
Rumi's 742nd "Wedding Day"—or death date in 1273

The Song of the Reed

*Listen, listen to this song
this story of the reed
its cry, its wail
its sounds of separation and lament.*

*Listen to its tale
how it was torn from Source--its reed-born bed
so long ago*

*And how it bled, its heart an open wound
a hole through which the music comes.*

*Each soul who makes this sad sweet song
is also severed from the Source
and weeps in thirst and longing for return.*

*O you who seek the mysteries
this lament of yearning, this reed-flute sound from emptiness
is the path of union and return.*

*For the broken-openness by pain,
unlocks the human breast,
and begins our journey home.*

*And I myself have played this song
to those both blessed and bound
and searched among the multitudes.*

*I've raised my voice, weeping in every kind of crowd
but found mere platitudes
in these forgetful ones.*

*For it is love mingled with our voice
and breathing with our frequent cries that is the hidden secret.*

*But few can hear that breath or know the Source
beneath the sound—
we have no outer ears for that.*

*It is not given to external eyes to see the soul, this mixing in
this spirit flowing out of body
this rising up of body from the Soul.*

*It is love's fire, not human breath,
which makes music through the reed.*

*It is the fiery breath and nothing but the fire
that's flowing in and through
—the same deep passion that ferments wine.*

*This spirit-reed is friend to those separated from the Friend—
there has never been such a poison, such a cure
such a loving intimate.
So let it breathe bewilderment and tear away the veils
so we can see and hear the playing Friend
who sings our song of maddened love
who tells our tale along the bloody path
and speaks our secrets to those who have lost all sense—
its only customer, an awakened ear.*

*So stay inside this emptiness
and listen to love's song
And in these days when grief seems long, filled with pain and care
and endless days without your bread
let whatever is passed
and all the mountainous wantings go without regret.
For now we swim like fish in some vast sea
a watery deep, a sea of grace
where every thirst is met with mercy and the Beloved's Face.
"For You, O Holy One, You remain!"
And though this song is sung for all
to awaken everyone
the green, the unripe ones cannot yet hear or understand
So it is best my words be short
and let the silence speak, or be the song
until the fire can breathe again and fill the sorrowing of the reed.
Farewell!*

*A dynamic translation
arranged by
—Lynn C. Bauman*



*Listen, listen to this song
this story of the reed
its cry, its wail
its sounds of separation and lament*



*Listen to its tale
how it was torn from Source—its reed-born bed
so long ago*



*And how it bled, its heart an open wound
a hole through which the music comes*



*Each soul who makes this sad sweet song
is also severed from the Source
and weeps in thirst and longing for return*



*And I myself have played this song to those both blessed and bound
and searched among the multitudes.
I've raised my voice, weeping in every kind of crowd
but found mere platitudes
in these forgetful ones...*

*... it is not given to external eyes to see the soul, this mixing in
this spirit flowing out of body
this rising up of body from the Soul*



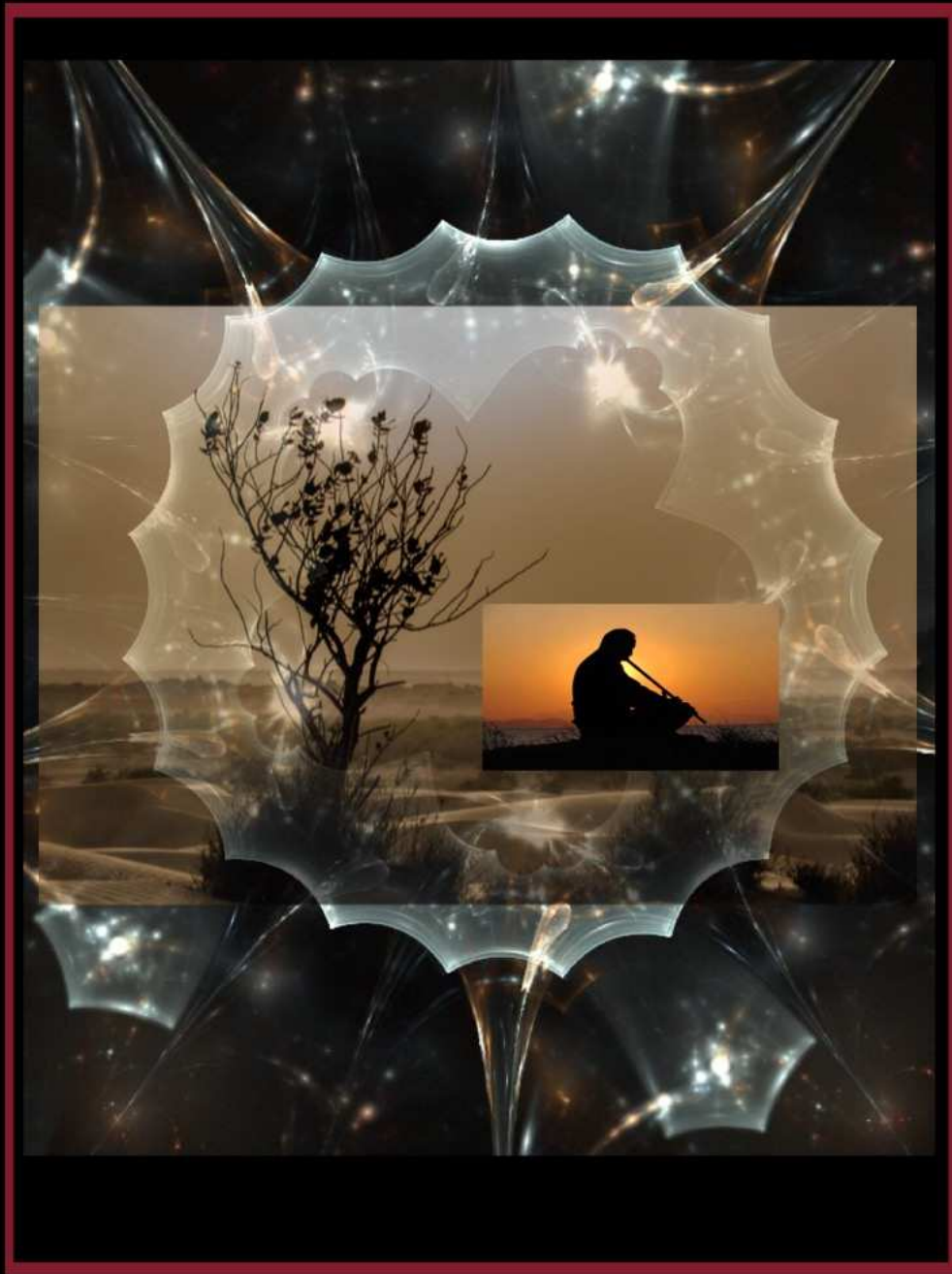
*For it is love mingled with our voice
and breathing with our frequent cries that is the hidden secret
but few can hear that breath or know the Source
beneath the sound—
we have no outer ears for that*



*It is love's fire, not human breath
which makes music through the reed.
It is the fiery breath and nothing but the fire
that's flowing in and through*



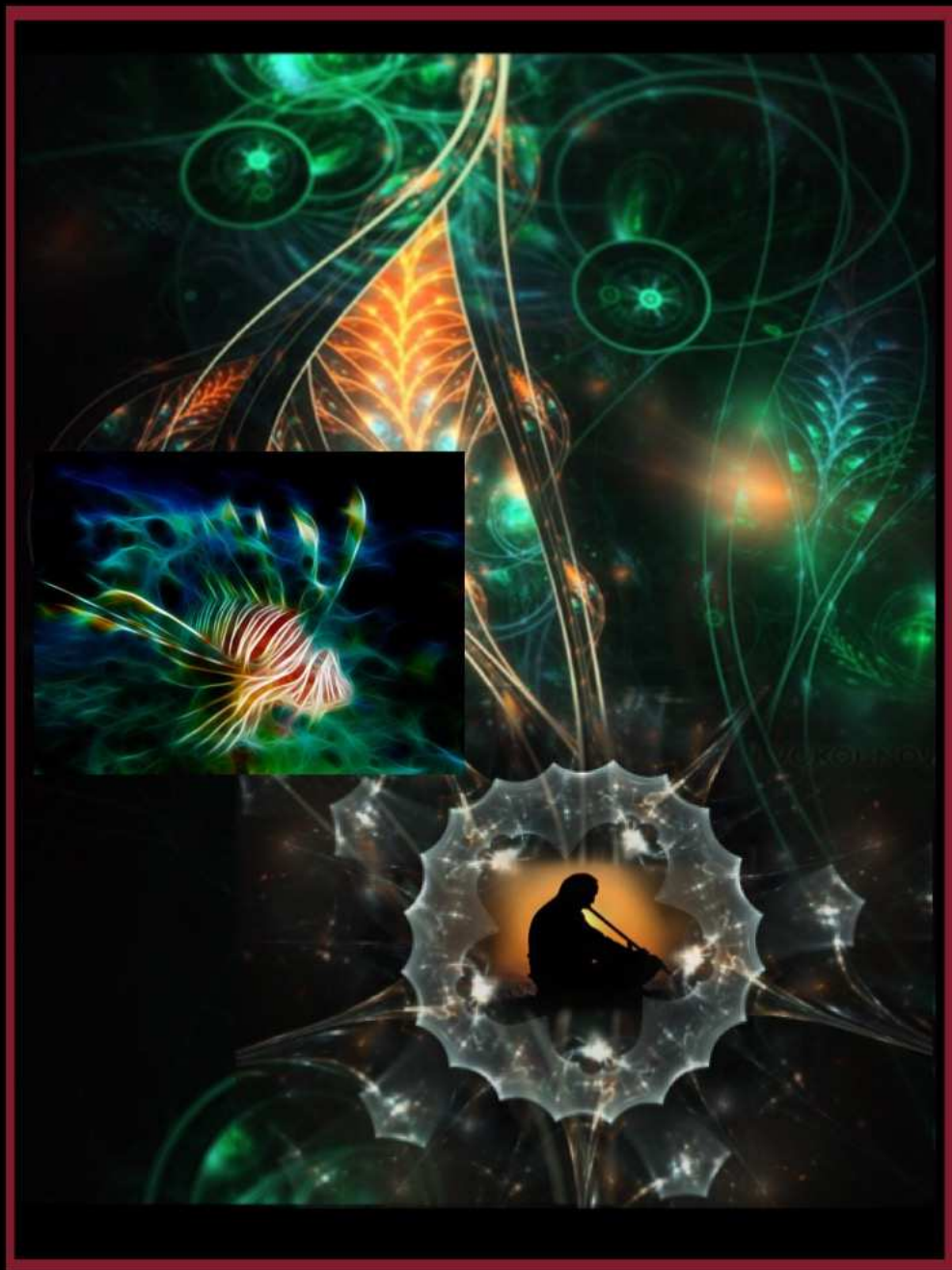
*—the same deep passion
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*This spirit-reed is friend to those separated from the Friend—
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*So let it breathe bewilderment and tear away the veils
so we can see and hear the playing Friend
who sings our song of maddened love
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*For now we swim like fish in some vast sea
a watery deep, a sea of grace
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*So stay inside this emptiness
and listen to love's song
and in these days when grief seems long, filled with pain and care
and endless days without your bread
let whatever is passed
and all the mountainous wantings go without regret*



“You, O Holy One, You Remain!”