

## **James Keelaghan**

### **"Kiri's Piano"**

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Of all of Kiri Ito's joys, the thing she loved the best  
Was to play her prized piano when the sun had gone to  
rest  
I used to hear the notes drift down along the silent  
water  
As Kiri played the notes and scales for her dear sons  
and daughters  
Now me I played piano though not as good as Kiri  
She went in for that long haired stuff but my she played  
it pretty  
The old piano had a tone would set my heart to aching  
It always sounded sweetest though when it was Kiri  
playing  
In December when the seventh fleet was turned to  
smoke and ashes  
The order came to confiscate their fishing boats and  
caches  
And Kiri's husband forced to go and work in labour  
camps  
And Kiri left alone to fend and hold the fort as best she  
can  
But the music did not drift as often from up the cove at  
Kiri's house  
And when it did it sounded haunted played with worry  
played with doubt  
For Kiri knew that soon she too would be compelled to  
leave  
And the old upright would stay behind and Kiri she  
would grieve  
I loaded Kiri on the bus with stoic internees  
The crime that they were guilty of was that they were  
not like me  
And if I was ashamed I didn't know it at the time  
They were flotsam on the wave of war they were no  
friends of mine  
I went up to Kiri's house to tag all their belongings  
And set them out for auctioneers who'd claim them in  
the morning  
One piece that I thought I'd keep and hold back for  
myself  
Was that haunting ivory upright that Kiri played so well  
But Kiri had not left it there for me to take as plunder

She'd rolled it down onto the dock and on into the harbor  
That old upright in strangers' hands was a thought she couldn't bear  
So she consigned it to the sea to settle the affair  
So many years have come and gone since Kiri's relocation  
I look back now upon that time with shame and resignation  
For Kiri knew what I did not that if we must be free  
Then sometimes we must sacrifice to gain our dignity  
Yes Kiri knew what I did not that if we must be free  
Then sometimes we must sacrifice to gain our dignity

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