

Rick Masters

"Man Shall Follow"

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Hello old friend. It's been some years
Since I have have journeyed here, to your shore.
I sought you out, this last Autumn,
For I feared I'd never see you anymore.
In thirty years, the world has changed,
Though not the way we planned.
I find myself confronting
Your ravaged shores again.
And it took me months to travel from
The pale eastern lands
Just to reach you, Red Pacific,
And to walk your barren sands.
They've given us just five more months
'Til the food is gone, back home.
I cut my share and came to you.
By Spring, we'll leave you all alone.
That blazing sun is so damned hot
And I'm so soul-dead tired,
I think I'll have to sit and rest
My weary bones a while.
You know that I've lost everything
That I've ever loved. It's true.
But what I've lost is nothing,
When I see what we've done to you.
For nothing lives. Nothing flies
Beneath this hellish light.
I can't believe we let it come to this
Without a fight.
When Earth was new and I was young,
A time so far removed from now,
The swollen skies released their seeds and thunder,
Spitting garish light that froze the swaying of the trees.
A raindrop splattered on my lips.
It skittered, wet, across them
And thrilled my tongue in cold delight.
One night, when the Earth was new and I was young...
Oh! A time so far removed from now.
Then in a rush of cautious doubt,
I sought my pa to ask him if
The crystal droplets from the sky
Could harm my body or my mind?

He chuckled softly, shook his head.
He told me, "Son, the purest drops
Of liquid you shall ever taste
Will be the ones from angry skies."
What have we done to change his words?
The raindrops, all around us, fell.
What could I tell my boys when they,
Through parched and burning lips inquired
Why falling rain, so wet and moist,
Must not be touched by human tongue
Nor granted playground on Man's skin
Regardless what his thirst requires?
How could I tell them once that I
Had tried to stop the rape of skies
But somehow failed along the line
And they were doomed to sit and watch
As misty drops kissed blades of grass
Which slowly yellowed, bent and died?
These tattered rags held to the end.
I thought they'd never make it
When that storm of acid rain rolled by
And thunder split the lightning sky.
"Doom!" rang the hills, the echo clear,
Resounding through the skags so drear,
Atremble upon that sterile plain,
All frozen in majestic pain,
All shorn of their eternal need
For acid rain had killed the seed.
I sought what shelter they could give.
The storm passed on. It let me live...
The buckles on my boots are jammed
With mud from walking overland.
The yellow suds that edge the shore
Carress my fingers, cool and warm.
My clothing falls in sogging heaps
And far out on the ocean's rim
A lonely tower gapes and mocks
As spray explodes against its skin.
The wind, your froth, the breaker's din
Assault my form, yet ease my dread.
The droplets slither on my skin
And Trickle down my barren head.
For hair has gone like children's poems
And chirps of birds and Autumn leaves
No life to live, no faith to feed.
For faith has fled with budding Spring
And Nature's love and Autumn leaves
These burning eyes that melt the beach
And mourn again for turquoise skies
And fields of hay and aqua waves
Farewell to all and turns to rust

As all that lived returns to the dust.
Life-maker, life-taker,
The story once was written,
Of Evil, we tasted.
You banished us from Eden.
Now, we're sorry. I'm so sorry!
How can we beg your pardon?
We were unworthy shepherds.
We killed the garden.
I raise my arms in hopeless rage.
I curse the cities of the dead.
I wade into the ancient sea
For the last whale's song had said
"Man shall follow me..."
And so we did.
And so we did.

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