

The Sun Book

Hino, 1980–1984

“...[T]he world is reflected in the mind of the poet as in an undistorted mirror, the growth and life of the poet’s mind being identical with that movement of things outside him.”

—R. H. Blyth

Copyright © 2024 by Richard Evanoff

PREFACE

Kono mama: things as they are. There is a way of looking at the world to see what is there, to get at just-what-is before it becomes mixed up with human emotion, to behold things in their uncorrupted purity without classifying them into words. Only if we eliminate the holy can we find the holy in everything. Art fails because it must condense the open spaces of experience into neatly packaged categories the mind can understand. We must free ourselves from representations for the act itself. Art organizes. Direct experience exposes the essential disorganization of things. The key is to replace conception with perception, to dispense with philosophy and replace thinking about the world from a detached point of view with actually living in it. I am not content to be a spectator. I want to be a participant. I spend more time sitting in reflection on the toilet than I do on mountain peaks.

1

Early I go off like a monk
 married only to my lady.

I'll go alone with her
 up the mountain, telling all.

What is left to hide?

What secret is yet unshared
 with her, a perpetual virgin,
 a princess to everything
 I'd wished for then?

And what remains to be done
 that cannot be done
 in ten thousand tomorrows?

2

The path was broad
 but we walked close.
 Very close.

3

We walked a secret walk
uphill to the inari shrine,
eating bitter persimmons en route.

The snow fell hushed through the pines.

We went where there were no footprints
and left no footprints behind us.



4

Come, zigzagging down the mountain
in and out with switchbacks,
on the northside, toward the interior.

Somewhere in this afternoon tunnel of trees
we will find that blanket of moss again.

5

The afternoon is growing older.
 Even the flowers look pale.

I look to the west, impatient,
 eager to grasp the whole horizon
 with my outstretched hands.

There are so few miles behind me
 and so many miles ahead.

Too soon, too soon,
 through meadows, a valley or two—
 the day is still before us
 and autumn's evening far away.

6

I want to take a journey,
 to leave the city for a time
 and wander aimlessly
 through the countryside.

I want to see open spaces,
 to roam empty fields.
 From coastline to mountains
 I explore all possibilities.

In searching the world
 I seek out myself,
 as I already am,
 as I might yet become.

7

“Consciousness is a disease.”
 He thought a long time about that.

8

I want to dance
 on the rays of the sunset,
 fall with rain
 from a thundercloud,
 shout with the voice
 of a savage wind.

9

The sun shines full in your face.
 The wind gently curls your hair.
 Sitting beneath the blossomless tree
 waiting for flowers to bloom,
 in the water I see your reflection
 bend close to where I lay.

10

Shall I follow you
 beside the water
 the trees dip their branches in,
 where thousands of ripples
 splash against the shore?

Shall I follow you
 when the sun overhead
 plays upon the water
 dancing carefree at our side?

Shall I follow you
 wherever this path may lead
 —over bridges,
 through open fields,
 under silent trees—
 to a place where just the two of us
 can sit together alone?

11

The showering blossoms
 splash against your face
 —white on white,
 subtle pink on subtle pink.

Your smiling, gently parted lips
 accept the petals' kisses.
 Your hair, deeper than the night
 is graced with careless garlands.

Your face shines with the glow
 of a waxing spring moon.
 You are a child again, innocent,
 and I an old man looking on.

12

Here is a field—
 a cornfield,
 a sunlit cornfield
 with a yellow path
 on which to walk.

In the evening
 I return to my home
 and light a fire.

When the golden embers
 become ashen and black
 I sit alone in darkness.

13

Along the wayside
 I sit under scantily clad trees
 while birds come and go.

14

A bird with
no wings
singing lullabies.

15

Truth in itself bears no fruit.
It is only the soil in which
a seed can be planted.

16

Follow me down this trail,
hard-packed in the mountains,
above the ravine, evergreens everywhere
swaying like dancers below us.

Come with me down the path
that leads to a secret place,
to the waterfall's pool where
we'll swim and frolic and play.

Sit with me on the riverbanks
where the willows dip their branches
into ripples of water cold and clear
that splash against our dangling feet.

Walk with me over pastures and open fields
down tree-lined gravel roads,
over bridges, crossing silent streams
while the sun overhead plays on the currents.

Run with me through the woods,
naked and free, like children.
Then tumble with me on a bed of moss,
the earth beneath us, the sky above.

17

Your face is lit up
 by a solitary light.
 The radio clears its throat
 then hums again.

On your mattress, alert,
 you spin vision after vision
 of the way things could be
 right now if we let them.

The smoke swirls thick.
 The ashtray is full.
 You lean your elbow on the pillow,
 your feet at the end of the bed.

Breathing, shallow then deep,
 I tap my fingers in offbeat rhythms
 against frost-layered panes,
 waiting for news of what's happened.

Don't keep me in suspense.
 Give me a clue.
 The chair is getting hard.
 The music is fading.

18

Memories sleep in the evergreens.
 Glistening under a winter moon
 sparkling diamonds of ice
 collect on the needles.

Covered in a downy blanket
 the frozen earth waits silently.

Snow whispers insistently
 through the wind-swept trees
 in murmurs only I can hear.

19

Rushing out into the raving night,
I forget to button my coat.

I run half-stumbling down the hill,
down the road past the cemetery.

A total eclipse of the moon.
The stars emit no light.

I cross the bridge,
never thinking of the cold.

A whirlpool spins underneath.
Fanglike rocks bite the swirling foam.

Along the roadside I lie down
beneath a canopy of pine trees.

Leaning back on frozen bark,
I wait. And then I wait some more.

My mind is clear.
No images cloud my vision.

For the first time in my life
I am rested and content.

Snow weighs heavy on the boughs,
like a blanket keeping me warm.

I could have lain there forever
frozen in a dreamless sleep.

But something made me get up
and set me on my feet again.

The road home was uphill and icy.
There is no one who can guide me.

20

Fog dissipates
with the rising sun.

The air's so thin
I can't breathe.

21

The river flows
through eloquent reed plains.
The water laps up
on expansive banks.

I used to go there at night
when the water was black
to listen to the currents
eddy around the rocks.

I would hide myself in the rushes,
wanting to be forgotten,
feeling how hard it is
to be inconspicuous.

22

To walk like a deer
scarcely leaving a trace.

To live unnoticed,
with no one knowing
who you are
or where you have been—

An overturned leaf
or a broken twig
was all he left behind him.

23

If I could choose my own death
 I would run till I fell from exhaustion,
 exhilarated, spent, not thinking a thing,
 collapsing happily on a downy cushion of grass,
 my body melting into the soft brown earth
 in a place that nobody knows.

24

Wherever I am,
 I am never alone.
 The noise of the city
 drifts into the mountains.

Even here there is no silence.

The peaks expose me.
 The valleys have no hiding places.
 The ground is wet.
 Nothing is dry.

The streams have no banks.
 With no place to sit,
 one moves on.

25

I come like a drop of rain,
 sliding, unknown,
 down the mountains
 to the reckless river below.

Then out to the sea
 I slip unseen,
 dissolved in the ocean,
 absorbed by a cloud.

26

You ask me how I came here:

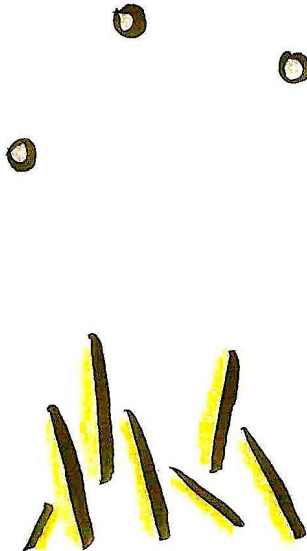
A long time ago I hitched a ride
on the parachute of a dandelion puff
as it floated across the sky.

27

Let me run with you
over prairies,
under stars.

Let our feet
be swift but silent.

Let them carry us
deep to a place
where our footsteps
leave no marks.



28

When paths run out,
when I am lost again
without family or friends,
leave me alone by myself
in these mountains.

The vision must be sought
and found unaided.

Point, but do not lead me.

I will follow the leaves
as they blow away in the wind.

29

After running naked
through the mountains
we built a fire by the silvery water
cascading down over the ledges.

Standing on a rock,
you, the shaman, preached.
The bones of a wolf would rise
to dance for us, you said.

I sat on a log in the dirt and listened.
The leaves on the soaring oaks
guarded an invisible sky.

30

Never in a million lifetimes
could I ever have ended up here,
unless the sun had carried me
across the nameless oceans.

31

There is a place
 deep in the mountains
 where the mountain streams run,
 where the waterfalls flow.

The sunlight spills down
 from the sky in great fountains.

Through the leaves,
 through the trees,
I can hear the wind blow.

With the coming of winter,
 the ground has been cleared.
The rivulets are frozen,
 the boughs covered with snow.

My footsteps are hushed
 by the cold winter air.

In a dream I'm off tramping
 through terrain I don't know.

32

No one can sleep.
 We all look down
 towards fidgety hands.
 Occasional sideways glances
 dart cautiously between us.

33

Pinwheel gods
 spin their prayers
 in the wind.

34

Children chant hymns
 to a sun-gold Buddha,
 perfectly on pitch
 in a lulling minor key.
 Incense fills the air.
 The temple bell is struck.

35

Without the fluttering leaves
 we could not see the wind.

36

I do not worship the sun.
 I do not worship the rain.

I worship cloudy autumn days
 when the cold, crisp air
 scours my nostrils.

Walnuts lay scattered on the ground.
 As a child I gathered them one by one
 like an heiress hoarding diamonds.

Thoughts of winter coming on,
 I wander empty country lanes,
 hands in my pockets,
 the collar of my jacket turned up,
 woolen socks under sturdy leather boots.

My heart skips.
 My mind detonates.
 I think so much I can't think any more.
 But I don't really have to.
 The day is enough.

37

It rains and rains and rains.

I'm just like a child
restless indoors,
pouting that I can't get out.

There is so much to be done,
but my umbrella is broken
and my shoes let in water.

38

Up here the lakes are all frozen.
Pine boughs are bending with snow.

The mountains are white,
the dark nights long.

Sitting by the fire
we chat and grow old,
hearing the wind
howl outside.

39

I am the sun
I am the moon.

The sun sets.
The moon rises.

Night falls.
Stars sing.

I am alone
in the darkness.

40

The Tamagawa's
creeping over its banks.

Everything's growing larger.

I'm small again
like a child.

41

The clouds are bright
with the last slanting rays
of the sun.

The moon is already
over the treetops.

42

The wind
is wild
and restless.

There are
no places
to hide.

43

I am Charlie Chaplin.
You are his little friend.
We waddle the streets together,
I with a cane and derby,
you with a stolen flower.

44

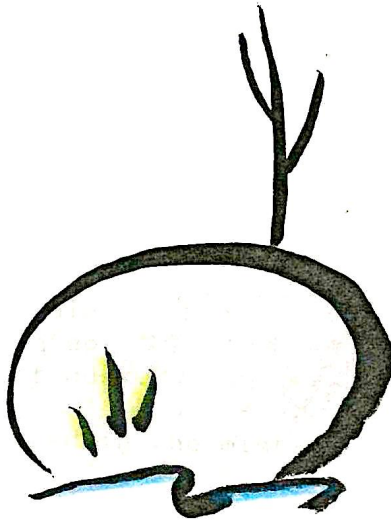
This garden
has been my world.

How many mountains
I've climbed in it,

how many oceans
traversed.

A twig
and I'm lost in blue forests.

Prairies stretch on for miles
in a single tuft of grass.



45

The earth shakes
and all is tenuous,
like a spider's web
in a hurricane
that does not break.

46

What is lost is irretrievable.
 But who would want it back?
 Even now uncertainties
 tumble from the sky like hail.

The wide earth
 absorbs the falling rain.
 I will not cry.
 I will not whimper.

My skin is tough
 even when I am naked,
 even when I am running barefoot
 on pathless mountain ridges.

47

Until now
 the rosy summer dusk
 was always painted
 on some distant horizon
 but never actually lived in.

Night descends.
 The moment is gone.

48

One day
 I woke up crying,
 weeping, heaving,
 shrieking, sighing.

It's all right
 though
 I'm leaving.

49

Mother—
I am lost.

I have strayed
past the unlocked gate,
down forbidden streets.

Everything is unfamiliar.
No one takes me in.
The wind is cold.
The pavement is hard.

But I stand where I am.
I walk when I can.

Do not come looking for me.
If I come back at all
I will find my own way.

50

White snow
on the tops of mountains—
I watch them
not saying a word.

51

We walked
down icy roads,
the wind in our faces,
snow on our backs,
thinking only of
a fireplace,
blankets, and
steaming cups of tea.

52

I have known the horror
of four blank walls,
of a room without windows
painted white.
My shadow plays
in the fluorescent light.

I have known the horror
of seeing so much
my eyes couldn't take it all in.
They are not wide enough.
My life seeps out
at the edges.

I have known the horror
of an empty field at night.
My ears hear only
the unsettling sound
of unseen crickets
singing in the dark.

53

The fog lays heavy
in the valley.

I can't see much
past my nose.

54

Water rains down
from the sky.

Why worry
about tomorrow?

55

My house is clean.
Everything's in order.

The tatami smells
like it's back in the field again.

Outside it's raining.
I hear rain on the roof.

56

I sit alone in a secret glade
on a cushion of silky grass.

Silent in the breezy shade
an easy sky floats past.

Milky mountains of lazy clouds
cast shadows over the meadow.

There is nothing I need to do
no place I need to go.

57

Clouds climb
the mountains
in finger-like wisps.

The mountaintops
float on the clouds
like islands in the sea.

An unseen
rainbow
arcs overhead.

58

The fields are painted
 into the landscape,
 patches of green and
 yellow and brown.

My nose is filled
 with the smell of dirt
 turning to mud
 in the summer rain.

59

The work is the same
 whether you're a peasant
 who walks from village to field each morning,
 toiling till night for your lord,
 shoulder to shoulder with friends and kin
 in the furrows beside you,
 or a pioneer out on your own,
 miles from your nearest neighbor,
 pacing yourself to nothing
 but the beat of your own heart.

60

Forests, hills, and streams
 weave themselves
 into a tapestry.

61

Awaking from a dreamless sleep
 I saw a mountain dancing
 —in the twilight or the dawn?

62

This place has suffered from too many eyes:

roads		trails
candy wrappers	leaves	
bottles	rocks	
souvenir shops	instead of	temples
cameras	seeing	
laughter	reverence	
babble		silence.

63

Springing
 from a secret source
 dark waters
 flow into the river.

64

To be alone
 is our natural state.

A leaf
 from last autumn
 still clings to a twig.

65

When will we hike
 these paths together?

When will the sun
 mingle our shadows
 one with the other?



66

Up here
the birds chirp
slightly off-pitch.

A withered tree
creaks
in the wind.

67

The scattered lights
of Gonohe
twinkle
with the stars.

68

I shouted
 and thought I heard
 the voice of God
 call back to me
 in the echoes.

I was still
 and heard nothing.

Now my prayers
 are wordless.
 The wind answers
 with a teasing
 inaudible message.

69

There are two ways we can walk:
 One is with a particular destination in mind.
 The walking doesn't matter.
 All that counts is getting to wherever it is you're going.
 You could just as easily take a train or a bus.

Another is to walk for the sake of walking.
 Where you are going doesn't matter.
 There is no destination.
 All that counts is the walking.

70

I set my pace to my breathing.
 My breathing I set to the wind.

The wind keeps time
 with each mountain it climbs
 and each valley it passes.

“How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down?”

—Henry David Thoreau

When I went back the following spring,
the trees had all been felled.

The stumps are sliced clean.
Sawdust sprinkles the ground.
Trunks span the restless creek
like abandoned, broken bridges,
the leaves on the branches still green.

I remember when these trees
were still towers
we sat beneath without speaking,
looking up at the stained glass of the sky
through leaves fluttering in the wind.

The night it stormed
we were caught without shelter.
We made our way in the dark
through the corridors of the forest.
The stars were hidden, the moon obscure.
Lightning flashed now and then.

Everything melted that night.
Everything seemed to die.
We had broken away, alone to ourselves,
drenched to the skin and
afraid of what we might become.

You clung to my arm
Rain filled the creek.
Water slipped down off the rocks.
The water still flows.
But the music has stopped.

72

Once we've gotten ourselves in tune
with the earth's own rhythms
and the beat of our own hearts,
we have no need of a guide.

We are left to wander aimlessly,
like leaves the wind scatters
in no particular direction.

How is it that a drop of water
finds its way from the narrow troughs
of a mountain stream
to the vast, wide-open ocean?

73

What I like is the mystery.

I never quite know where I am going
and never know where I'll end up.

If it takes me forever I'll get there.
In the meantime I draw my own maps.

74

These back roads and trails go nowhere.
Forests crest each ridge.
Fields stretch on for miles.

75

If wherever I am is home,
how can I ever be lost?

76

I never get tired of walking.
When my legs give out
I'll crawl if I have to
to keep myself going.

77

It's hard to go
through this world
always being a guest
and never a resident.

78

The waves heave inside me.
Beneath the turbulent surface
lie the tranquil blue depths.

79

Does holiness
dwell
beyond the horizon
or here
in what there is
all around us?

80

The rain has colored
this brown bark black,
the leaves a deeper green.

81

The horizon
calls your name.

The echo inside you
responds.

82

There are times
when you have to breathe hard,
when you want to run homeless and wild.

The forests never break their promises.
The seas do not stop at their shores.

83

All my songs
can be sung in one breath.

They are shorter
than blades of grass in spring,
longer than an unbroken horizon.

84

The fire, the heat,
the trunks of birch trees burning.

Rivers boiling,
fields blazing.

The sky is cloudless.
The sun is hot.

85

A bee
darts
inside
a blossom.

86

It was nothing more
than an empty field.
What else
could be expected?

87

The last petal has fallen.
Writhing about in the wind,
there is no order it belongs to.
The ground cannot hold it.

88

The rivers are black.
The water does not flow.
There are no ripples.

The sun can't see its reflection.
The moon has no water to play in.

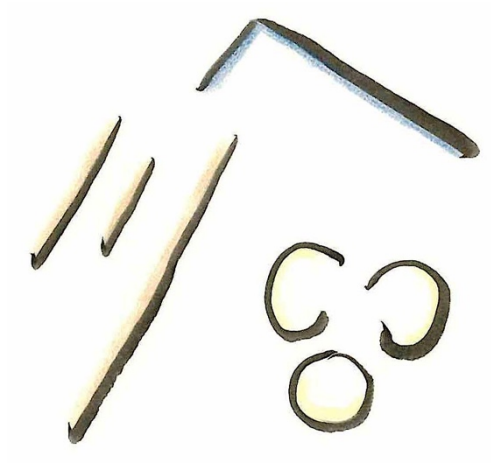
89

On the 28th of August it rained.
My boots are covered with mud.

90

I stand
 in the rain
 beside yellow flowers.

Below this field
 is a blue-tile roof.



91

A voice
 floats on the water
 like a boat
 without oars.

92

We sing all night
 till our throats get scratchy,
 our voices are hoarse,
 not knowing
 when morning will come.

93

What a shame
I should come to my senses.

I'd forgotten myself
in the late-night rain.

The clock reads 2 a.m.
but it must've stopped hours ago.

94

I thought I'd made it home
but this is as far as I got.
It's still a long way off.
I won't take another step.

95

The rites I perform
have never been done before.
I make them up as I go.
In time they will all be forgotten.

96

On the other side of these trees
are more trees.
On the other side of these mountains
are more mountains.

I work up a sweat just sitting here
watching the blue of the forests
melt with the blue of the distant peaks
against a cloudless blue sky.

97

It's the last day of summer.
The water can't be cold.

Fishermen stand in the river.
The water is up to their hips.

98

I ran away,
my pocket
full of matches,
a knife
inside my boot.

It's been
a whole year
since I left.
I don't know when
I'll go back.

99

I am nothing
but a wad of mud,
a statue of clay
come miraculously to life,
given a few brief moments
to stand up and walk,
to look at and ponder
the mud from which
it was fashioned,
the mud
to which it returns.

Out of mud will only come mud.
Mud will come. Mud only.

100

It's too late now
to sow those seeds.
Autumn has come.
Each day is colder.

101

The skins
of the grapes
on the vine
are withered.

Unnoticed
they fall
to the ground.

102

As long as I am alive
I will never be lonely.

The universe itself
resides in the black of my eye.

103

The fields are jeweled
with thousands
of ruby-red tomatoes.

A woman,
her basket already half-full,
stoops to gather them
one by one.

104

Once there was
a warm spring day
together.

Now those mountains
can't be seen.

His voice
cannot be heard.

105

Crossing the street
a tipsy man
singing old songs...

106

I see you
waiting—
waiting
for the rest to come.

107

When I die
throw my ashes
to the wind.

Let them fall again
to the earth.

Don't let them be sealed
in an air-tight jar.

108

I am a child of the dawn.
 I am a son of the morning.

I worship nothing higher
 than the sun when it rises
 over tall mountains, across vast plains,
 heating the ground that I walk on,
 warming the air that I breathe.

Stars careen where they will.
 The planets are free to wander.
 The moon was once my companion
 but now she is harsh and unwelcome.
 One sleepless night I let her go.

I am content on this earth,
 happy to see whatever lies
 on this side of a sky
 I know I can never reach.

109

The sun hurt my eyes
 when the clouds
 blew away.

I look down
 from an unseen sky
 to the still-frozen dirt.

110

The tree is just a tree.
 A leaf is just a leaf.
 The ordinary is extraordinary.
 The extraordinary is ordinary.

111

The scent of the daphne
 lingers
 in the morning sunlight.

112

There's something illicit
 in the daphne's scent,
 like perfume on the neck
 of a beguiling woman.

113

Singing songs
 about songs
 about songs.

Reciting poems
 about poems
 about poems.

Writing about
 writing about
 writing.

Thinking about
 thinking about
 thinking.

114

A sparrow
 with twigs for legs
 flitting here and there.

115

So much to be done.

I can't sit here
all day doing nothing.

Outside rain puddles
have begun to dry up.

My butt is sore
from just sitting.

116

He wants
more than life

to be lost
in a place

where the fields
are barren

and the mountains
are hollow.

117

Smoke by day,
fire by night,
singing songs
of the open road.

The wind blows me
this way and that.
Dry leaves
scrape along at my feet.

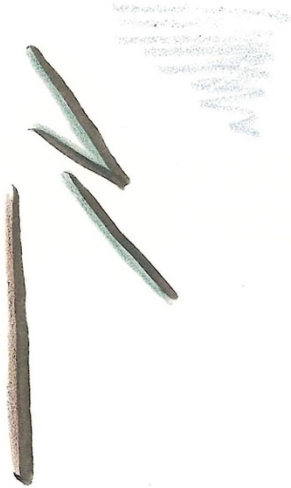
118

The only way I can let you in
on what I've been thinking
is to talk to you face to face.

Even then you will not know
exactly what my words mean.

119

Looking up:
tall pines
open sky.



120

Who will remember?
How much
does it really matter?

121

Don't even try
 to rub out the dirt in your eyes
 any more than
 you'd want to get rid of
 the sunrise in your veins.

122

Why wonder about
 what I have not yet seen
 if I have no wonder
 for what I have already seen?

123

What I like
 is being wrapped
 in this fog,
 going,
 not finding my way.

Does it matter?

I walk:
 one boot
 in front of the other.

124

The stars are still there
 like they've always been.

What is this ripple of water
 to their countless impassive eyes?

125

Autumn leaves
color the ground.

Some stay put
right where they are.

Others the wind blows
to unknown destinations.

126

I am absent
from the miracle.

It's all just a conjurer's
trick after all.

All things spring
from the tip of my finger.

127

Homeward—
smoke from burning leaves
fills my nose.

128

Two boys
shuffle their feet
in the leaves.

An old man
walks beside them.

129

The trees
are leafless again.

We wait
even though
there is nothing
to stop us
from venturing out.

130

The key is
to replace
conception with perception.

Not just
to think about the world
but to actually live in it.

I plunge
from my steppingstone
into the river.

I feel the icy water on my skin
and let it carry me
further downstream.

131

The silver moon
silent
like a bowl
rinsed clean,
pure
as white snow
on an evergreen bough.

132

A cold sun
lightens a cloudless day.

Hoarfrost crystals
spike up in the dirt.

My nostrils are stung
by the icy morning air.

All things shall pass.
One moment is eternity.

133

My words evaporate
as quickly as they are exhaled.

They disappear like vapor
from my mouth
on a cold winter day.

Why should they linger?

They fly away echoless
in the wide-open air.

134

Lying alone
unsettled—

Tonight
there is no blanket.

My knuckles are red
with the cold.

135

Five persimmons
on an old wooden table—
five orange persimmons.

136

The moon rises
with no help from me.
Why should I ask
for its favor?

What is brighter
than the moon within,
my light outshining
the myriad stars?

137

Beneath the ice
of the frozen falls
the water still flows
over rocks.

I dive
into the pool below
without taking off
my clothes.

138

The moon
is frozen
in a puddle
of ice.

139

Hear my confession,
my midnight prayer.

There is no need
to ask for forgiveness.

Who is there
to forgive me?

What is there
to forgive?

What has happened
has happened.

We can put
what we've done behind us.

But the act will follow us
now and forever.

We can only accept
whatever results.

Water once spilt
cannot be returned
to its bucket.

Glass once broken
can never be pieced
back together.

140

Snow on the hillsides,
the stalks of dead weeds—
today is white.
And tomorrow?



141

A blackbird
overhead—
my herald.

142

The wind is cutting.
The stars are bright.

It seems as far away as it:
my home, my past.

143

While others sleep
I take my first step.

Toes already numb
with the journey ahead,
snow turns to mud
beneath my cold boots.

144

I stand on a plain
surrounded by mountains.

Looking this way and that
I take in as much as I can.

Whatever I see is always
bound by a distant horizon.

At what lies beyond
I can only pause and wonder.

New vistas appear
when I climb those mountains.

I can never cross over all perimeters.
The wonder always remains.

145

Beneath this tree
I sit and rest.

I can just barely hear
the voices of children
laughing in the distance.

146

Leaves flutter
and end up
in my garden.

The soil
is black
and fecund.

147

When I sit down to think
I must think.

I cannot let the bird at my window
carry away my thoughts.

But to see the bird,
let nothing else clutter my mind.

Open the window so that
not even clear glass stands between us.

148

πάντα ῥεῖ
(EVERYTHING FLOWS)

When I look at things as they are
I see them in their fluidity.

All things flow like a river,
each indistinguishable drop.

The wood I feed to my fire
is quickly consumed.

The flame is constantly changing.

Smoke rises like incense
disappearing into the void.

149

Restless,
walking
the same road twice.

150

Stretching out my arms
to a sky I cannot embrace

the world
is inexhaustible,

too disparate
to be catalogued,

too vast
to be held in one's hand.

151

I want to make myself
as open-ended as the world.

The wind
can pass through my body.

The rain
can fall unobstructed.

152

The fires
have all
been extinguished.

The lights
have all
been turned out.

There is nothing more
to hold on to,
nothing left to hear.

153

I am born in simplicity,
 accepting things as they are.
 There is no difference
 between light and darkness.

Later I see things
 as I've been told to see them.
 The sun is beyond my grasp.
 It hangs in the morning sky.

When I doubt what I am told,
 I start to find out on my own.
 I reach for the sky
 with empty hands.

When nothing remains,
 all knowledge collapses.
 Light and darkness
 once again are the same.

154

Do not mistake
 the dirt in your eye
 for an unclean world.

155

Look all around you.
 See everything eyes can possibly see.

From this hilltop there's nothing
 to block an open view.

You can almost glimpse
 what's beyond the horizon.

156

What I have seen
 is but
 a grain of sand
 in the desert,
 a drop of rain
 in the ocean,
 one star
 out of the trillions.

157

This blue
 the blue of night
 falling—

 one moon.

158

The moon sighs
 through the window.

The light inside
 is turned out.

How can it be?
 I still love you.

159

Opposite
 the moon—
 moonlight
 on my house.

160

Ripples of moonlight
in the current's
black depths.

161

The weather's
getting colder.

Something inside of
me's coming alive.

I can see my breath
each time I exhale.

162

Cold morning,
sky clear—
I'm awake.

163

Only the cold—
no snow
to play in.

164

The cold
hums a tune
no one hears.

165

The night so dark
there is nothing to see.
I can only feel
the cold air.

166

It's here:
the coldest night of the year.

The clouds are frozen.
The puddles are ice.
The earth has turned to stone.

I'm ready.

167

Winter rain—
flashing red lights.
Streets glisten.

168

Rain turns to snow—
puffs of smoke
from a chimney.

169

Morning snow—
The sun is rising.

170

A fluffy wisp of angelhair
 caught by a puff of air
 flutters down
 on a carpet of pine needles.

Six-pointed stars
 tumble from the sky,
 frosting the ground
 with a silver mantle.

Ponderous flakes bend
 the winterland boughs,
 releasing their fragrant scents
 into my ice-caked nostrils.

The wind stacks the pinecones
 and shuffles them freely.
 Snow is swept into drifts
 and sculpted into ivory statues.

Crunching through the trees
 my footprints are soon covered over.
 No one knows where I've been.
 No one knows where I'm going.

171

Snowflakes falling—
 a teardrop melts
 back into the earth.

172

Sunlight
 on the newly fallen snow
 blinds my eyes.

173

Snow falls.
 The fields are filled
 with an immaculate white.

My eyes
 are as empty
 as the starless night.

174

On a cold wintry day
 the first snow of the year
 tumbled
 like the tears of angels
 gently to the earth.

We built two fine snowmen
 in a field of ice
 then watched them slowly
 melt away.

175

The fields are growing snow now.
 The plum trees are sprouting ice.

The trails are deserted.
 My eyes have not grown dimmer.

176

A flower
 in winter
 consumes me.

177

The lakes are all frozen.
 Pine boughs are bending with snow.

The mountains are white,
 the dark nights long.

Sitting by the fire
 we chat and grow old,
 hearing the wind
 howl outside.

178

My futon is warm,
 enveloping me
 like waves of the sea.

179

My purity vanishes
 like snow
 on a well-traveled street.

180

Sooty snow.

181

A fox sits serenely
 in a dilapidated mountain shrine.
 It is I who have been abandoned.

182

New Year's Day—
 A hilltop shrine
 where alone with the kami
 I clap my hands twice.

183

Will the mists evaporate?
 Will the ice melt away?
 Will the paths be muddy
 and water cover the ground?

184

The contours
 of the unrhythmical earth
 are not what I feel.

They are what I am.

I dig my feet in the dirt.
 I soil my hands on the ground.

Everything is forgotten.

185

I pass between two dreams.
 One is fading, the other waking.

Some praise the one and reject the other.

I can't tell the difference
 so I live in both.

186

I am the fire that burns
 but is not consumed,
 the rivers that flow
 but are never emptied,
 the waves that surge
 but are never exhausted,
 the barriers built
 that are always broken,
 the wind that is breathed
 yet cannot be grasped.

187

Wake up to greet
 whatever passes now.
 No past save in memories.
 No future save in fantasies.
 No present save in ecstasies.
 That which is done is done.
 Whatever shall be shall be.
 I am therefore I am.
 Whatever is, is.
 Whatever is not, is not.

188

I sit alone
 listening to
 silent stars.

189

Seeing isn't a matter
of getting things into perspective.

It's letting things be
what they are.

My thoughts about the world
are shattered
in my actual experience of it.

190

The riverbed
is almost dry.

My power
is slipping away.

191

The same rain falling on me
falls on everyone.

The same sun shining on me
shines on everyone.

192

How long will I carry
these thoughts with me
like so much useless baggage?

One star
and they all disappear.

193

We don't need a reason
to be dancing tonight.

The music barely reaches
the street.

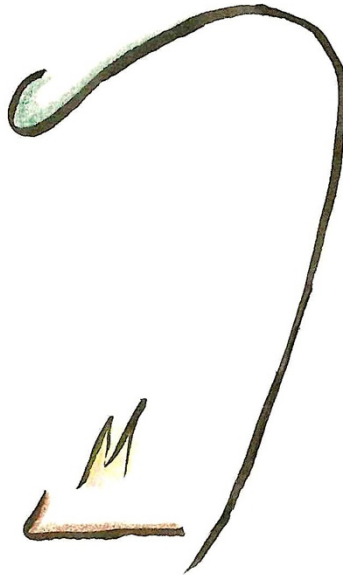
It's not meant
for our ears to hear.

194

Today I am alive.

Whatever passes
will never return.

Trees soar
over an open fire.



195

A fire burns
inside of me.

I have captured the sun
in my soul.

The light within me
illuminates the world.

196

I have built this house myself
with my own two calloused hands.

I am my own foreman.
There is no other.

The corners do not fit.
The roof leaks now and then.

Every season no matter the weather
I raze it to the ground.

Beam by beam, nail by nail,
I take it all apart.

After that I rebuild it again.
I rebuild it again and again.

197

Life passes into death.
Death passes into life.

The sun rises out of darkness.
The sun returns to darkness.

198

The universe
 destroys itself
 each day,
 then
 re-creates itself
 all over again.

199

Out of this rubble
 a flower will bloom.
 Out of the ashes
 a phoenix emerges.

200

Plum blossoms
 red but still folded—
 a never-to-be love
 almost forgotten...

201

Mud puddles left from the rain.
 Fields go on without hills.

The sky is a watercolor
 of hues I have never seen before.

The sides of a road
 converge on an invisible vanishing point.

Beside the road is a house
 no one lives in anymore.

202

I watch the blossom unfold
 petal by delicate petal.

How may we pluck
 what can never be grasped?

203

I walk the valleys
 and hide in damp caves.

The womb has become
 a sepulcher.

204

Rivers flow
 into the desert.
 Grass grows
 out of the sand.

The wind blows life
 back into
 these dry broken bones.

205

Dreaming on a distant star—
 this is the way things are
 but this is how things could be.

Fog covers the misty marsh—
 this is how things could be
 but this is the way things are.

206

Hazy mountains,
one in front of the other.

Without taking a step
I reach out for their peaks.

Clouds hang low
in the summer sky.

207

What do you do
when you can't remember?

I hear crickets in the garden.
I see clouds in the night.

208

Water wash off
the colors I swim in
on a warm spring day.

209

Let it in deep.
Embrace.

Outside
flowers wait to bloom
still faceless.

I die
to be reborn.

210

When I have become
 like this tree
 —asymmetrical,
 branches shooting here and there—
 why reach for a sky
 I sway in already?

211

We see the same lightning.
 We hear the same thunder.
 We taste the same rain.
 We smell the same air.
 We touch the same earth.

212

With outstretched arms
 I reach for the sky.

 I grasp at the wind.
 It escapes through my fingers.

213

Our bed
 was a meadow
 of violets.

 The first time.

 Sunset—
 the shadow of tree limbs
 on your back.

214

Look at this rock,
 at this stone,
 at this pebble.

Here is a flower
 blooming like the sun.

The trees are growing crazy.

The dirt smells alive
 from the rain.

This is the world,
 the holy—
 what else?

215

Last night
 I made love
 with the moon.

It was all
 out-of-doors,
 no secrets.

A mosquito
 hums
 in my ear.

216

A fly buzzes overhead.
 Windows rattle
 in the later morning wind.
 The priest babbles on.

217

The moon died tonight.
 It simply fell out of the sky.

Stars are splattered across the night.
 New constellations appear.

Clouds fly through the dark.
 A feverish wind cuts the air.

Grasses bend in the gale.
 Crickets make up new songs.

The trees have all grown wild.
 Their branches are twisted and gnarled.

Unimaginable dreams are dreamt.
 Another world unfolds.

I reach from earth to heaven.
 My hands are old and withered.

Layer by layer it has all been stripped.
 Everything believed in disappears.

The rooftops of house and factories
 look like patches on worn-out jeans.

The sinking earth trembles.
 My feet are unsteady.

The horizon is a medieval blue.
 A leaf blows away in the wind.

218

The river—
 a stick
 floating past.

219

Blossoms
falling on concrete.

Snow
on a spring
afternoon.

A woman
carrying the sun
in her purse

walks past
not looking up.

220

Who sculpted you
larger than life,
larger than the life
you pointed to
with a long
three-knuckled finger?

221

That moment
sitting with you,
drinking in
unspoken words.

222

If I kiss you
silently.

223

“Let there be spaces in your togetherness.”

—Khalil Gibran

We make love
to each other
unclinging.

Together / apart.
Together / apart.

How could you
hold me inside?

How could I
penetrate you?

224

Getting up at 6 a.m.
to scramble eggs
and put on coffee.

She gave me
a fragile flower.

There was nothing
I could give her
in return.

225

So close, yet
so far away—
I can only kick at the dust.

226

Where the grass
is soft
like a blanket
I will go with you.

227

When the night
is bright
with diamond stars,
I will touch
your raven hair.

228

When the morning
is still gray
before sunrise,
I will awaken you
with my kisses.

229

The chair
you once sat in—
where has it gone?

230

The gentle touch of parting lips,
a wisp of hair to dry the tears—
there is nothing more to say.

231

Framed
 in the open doorway—
 the sun
 behind your head,
 sunlight
 gold on your skin.



232

The whisper
 of your voice.

The sound
 of the wind
 warm in my ear.

233

A moment,
 nothing said.

Lips parted,
 eyes staring
 straight to my heart.

234

Spring frost—
barefoot on the sidewalk,
toes curled.

235

The sky is clearing—
on the grass
drops of water.

236

The trees
have all
fallen down.

The rocks
are strewn
at random.

Grass
grows
out of sand.

Waters merge—
the sound
of two rivers.

237

Wiping dust
from my face
with dust
on my fingers.

238

Eyes to the ground—
 suddenly the whole earth
 is beneath my feet.

239

Primary colors:

Red leaves.
 Blue sky.
 Yellow sun.

240

After the rain
 the clouds open up
 to a violet dusk.

Houses are bathed in the mist.

The river reflects
 the last rays
 of the sun.

241

It's impossible to talk about silence.
 What can you say?
 Writing is the finger that points.
 What we see we consume.
 What we think we digest.
 What we write we excrete.
 (Writing is a load of crap!)
 It's hard to talk with your mouth full.

242

The suddenness
of a bell
fading into silence.

243

The setting sun
finally dies—
evening dirge.

244

Old woman /
young—
head on her shoulder.

245

Rain
dripping
from the trees.

Unrehearsed syncopation.

The pine-scented
air.

246

This cloud
is a pillar
holding up the sky.

247

Dogs bark,
the swoosh of a broom.

Smoke
from burning leaves
fills my nose.

248

Beside the river
an old man
barefoot
on the rocks.

249

After the bath
a fresh
set of clothes.

250

It's still raining.
A breeze splashes
rain in my face.

251

Meeting the same
gray-haired woman
on the path
coming back.

252

The open window.
Rain
on my face.

253

We made love
with the sunset.

Our shadows
danced on the wall.

Exhausted,
the room growing darker.

254

The streetlamp outside.
Light
sparkling
through the glass.

The moon
behind clouds.
A heartbeat.

255

The inari shrine
is derelict and forgotten.

No bell
to summon
the gods.

256

Hear the rustle
of the leaves.
See the sun
through the trees.

A patch of blue sky.
A blue flower.

257

The bath—
steam escapes
through the open window.

258

After the night rain
looking for a lost star.

259

Night mist
moving
across the mountains.

260

Hearing the rain
I remember
your kiss,
your embrace.

261

Feeling the thrust
of the waves,
letting them carry me
in
and then out.

262

Stalks of grass.
Wind.
No one looking.

263

Waiting for you—
the touch
of your fingers
in my hair.

264

The river in summer—
its power spent,
its bed almost dry.

265

Give me this moment.
I can ask for no other.

To have seen this one sunset
is enough.

266

The lights hang low.
Yukata flash.
Children dance with their mothers.
Old men clap their hands.

267

Summer sun—
the heat
beating
inside me.

268

Waiting for
the evening breeze
to cool me.

269

Hold no grudges.
The snake is innocent.
Do not kill it.

270

Deep within
each man
is a woman.

She smiles on us
with two faces.

271

You are
not apart,
but a part of me,
as I
am a part of you.

272

Dripping
with sweat,
muscles strain,
bodies glisten.

273

Morning waking.
Day working.
Evening together.
Night apart.

274

Billows of clouds
from smokestacks
fill the morning air.

275

A bird never longs
to plant its claws on the soil,
to remain in one single place,
to grow old in the land of its birth.

276

Some day I will fly away.
 Tomorrow is already behind me.
 Yesterday has not yet come.

277

The last leaves of autumn fall from the trees,
 leaving only withered branches.

I, too, have withered and grown old.

The frost came heavy last night.
 I saw it on the stubbles of corn
 in the fields this morning.
 Perhaps I will never see
 new ears of corn again.

A hard winter is coming they say.

The leaves of my life blanket the ground
 to be trampled on by people I do not know.

I have nothing to save but my memories,
 nothing to do except rake the leaves
 before they are scattered away by the wind.

278

Windswept trees,
 leaves color the ground.

Some blow away,
 leaving only empty spaces.

The naked branch,
 a gray sky.

279

I have loved you
as the sun warms the earth.

Even when you turned away
like a cold bitter night
overcoming the dusk
I sought my reflection
in your clear silver moon.

Wherever I am I will seek you.
However wide the oceans between us
I will reach with arms fully extended
for the opposite shore.

Whenever I see a star
I will choose it as my own,
hoping that you will see the same star.

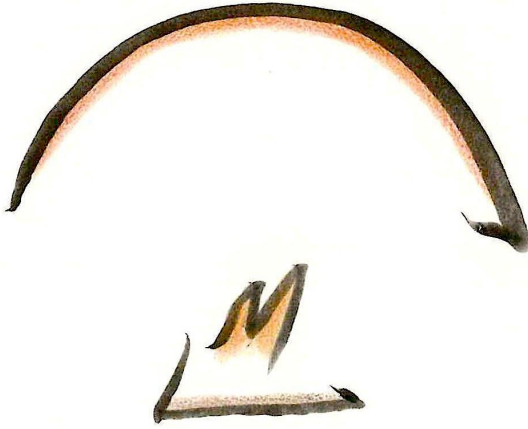
Whatever has passed I will gladly undo
if it brings me to where I belong.

Everything I have seen,
all that I have accomplished
I would give up in an instant
to regain
that one
lost moment
once shared.

280

Time
just to kick up leaves,
and throw stones,

to sail paper boats
on a soon-to-be-dried-up
puddle.



281

Warming my hands
 in the sunset—
 no place to go home to.

282

Only
 the moon
 hung in the sky
 out of context.

Only the moon.

283

Horizons, horizons!
 Everywhere bound by horizons!

I reach out for them,
 arms extended.

284

Wind
whines
through the sagging door.

The flame
of a candle
flickers.

285

Sunlight
on the water,
a dirt path beside.

286

An invitation
at the open door,
an arrow
pointing the way.

287

The thief returns
to ask for goods
he has already stolen.

288

A gust of cold wind—
faces of homeless children
inch nearer the fire.

289

This day
is a reflection
purer
than the moon's.

290

I celebrate
the moment,
never weeping
when it passes.

291

The limbs of trees
always swaying,
the leaves
keep blowing away.

292

I climbed a hill
no one had ever
climbed before
and sat motionless
under the moon.

293

A slight chill,
a slight hunger,
enough to keep me moving.

294

A woman with roses,
a man with a sword—
one foot in front of the other
not turning my head.

295

Racing pell-mell
to the edge of a ledge,
catching myself
before falling over.

296

I sit in a dark wood
beneath an amber sky
pleading to be left alone
with no one beside me.

297

Breathing
in the wind
blowing
over barren fields.

298

Sitting content
beneath this old tree,
not caring now
what's beyond the horizon.

299

Smelly old socks
 make good kindling
 to build a fire
 and warm my toes.

300

Vision fades.
 The elements vanish.

I listen in vain
 for a silence I cannot hear.

301

She:
 back sunk to the floor,
 hips high
 legs spread—
 one caressing hand.

302

You stand at one end of the room,
 I at the other.

The room is large.
 There are miles between us.

We are looking straight into each other's eyes,
 but still can't see each other.

Who will avert their eyes first?
 When will we stop looking at each other?

303

Waiting

for your eyes to soften,
for your lips to part.

Waiting

to discover the elemental force
that drives us together.

Torn clothes

cast to the ground,
reveal what is left
when all but our deepest selves
have been stripped away.

I confront the clay of your body,

prepared for the seed,
vast and receptive.

The wind is violent

as we shout our ecstasies.
Water falls from the sky.
Rain pounds the earth.

The fire burns

till everything
has been reduced to embers,
the passion spent.

Yet these are the eyes

that cannot see,
the lips that cannot be parted.

Waiting

for golden leaves,
for the deep blue sky,
for fields too wide
to be embraced.

304

The night is
 falling, plunging
 into depths
 no one can fathom,
 This is the last time.

One arm
 cradles my head,
 shielding the world
 from my eyes.

Seasons change.
 Winter is almost here.
 All passions come
 to a passionate end.

The sun sets.
 Frost appears.
 My breath is warm
 in your woven,
 swirling hair.

305

Sometimes the words just pile up
 like a wall between us.

The bridge
 is what keeps us apart.

Blank white pages,
 songs never sung.

Listen to the silence
 of this one shared moment.

Never was there any space between us,
 never a gap to be spanned.

306

There are moments
we cannot hold on to:

The brushing of hair
across your shoulder.

The kiss your cry
of ecstasy separates.

The tight embrace
that cannot be sustained.

The squeezing of hands
that in parting
must wave goodbye.

307

The door closed
between
my eyes and yours
and the line
between
them was cut.

Shouting,
“Don’t turn back!”
—nothing
could stop them
from straying
back over
my shoulder.

308

Drowning.

309

Walking the empty streets
 footsteps are muffled.

Light from a streetlamp
 filters through the frosty air.

310

The dark, almost black, greens
 of pine boughs,
 the straw-browns of dead weeds
 sticking up through the snow,
 the brown patches of decomposed leaves
 where snow has not yet covered the ground,
 the gray of the tree trunks
 only a shade darker than the clouds.

The pure white of the snow
 spread out on the ground
 like the unfinished canvas of a master.

The crunching of boots
 on the ice-crusting dirt,
 the songs of birds, not singing,
 just flying in and out of the trees.
 the barely perceptible music of snowflakes
 falling through the tree limbs
 sprinkling the pine needles with sugary sounds,
 the landscapes empty but not barren.

311

The light melts.
 I scoop up
 darkness
 in my two cold hands.

312

Snow,
 melting as it falls—
 I'm as empty
 as the vault of heaven,
 as supple as the earth
 receiving its moisture.

313

Long night,
 the next morning's snow.

Tracks darting
 this way and that.

314

Snowflakes
 dance in the sky,
 then fall melting
 to the earth.

315

The coat
 hangs
 on a nail
 above the fire
 still wet.

White snow
 falls
 out of
 a black night.

316

Snow falls.
 The barren, empty fields
 are filled
 with a virgin white.

Frozen plains
 stretch on endlessly.

Stars drop out of the sky
 until there aren't any left.

317

A white paper cup
 drinks in stars
 as they fall from the sky.

318

In this small boat
 he sits, floating,
 unattached.

319

I wish nothing more than to be
 a shooting star
 falling from the sky,
 a sunbeam
 fading on the grass,
 a drop of dew
 evaporating in the sun,
 a speck of dust
 blown about by the wind.

320

Crescent moon
and a star.

Pine trees
reaching skyward.



321

What's one to make
of all this coming and going?

It's time for an about-face:
to return to places once traveled,
to do what has already been done,
to remember what has already past,
to go back and build bridges
between the here and the there,
the then and the now.

I am not what I am
but what I am constantly becoming.

322

All good men
 have been tramps,
 sleeping out
 in the open,
 having visions
 under stars,
 finding a way
 to places
 no one has ever
 been to before.

323

Blossoms splashed
 across the sky,
 carried upward by the wind
 to blue clouds.

324

Old books
 and suddenly everything is new,
 not even time
 to blow off the dust.

325

I am here
 and you are there.

Why don't you write to me?

Send me the news
 even if nothing has happened.

326

Let the rain
be
my music.

327

Cool water—
bathing
in a clear blue stream,
washing away
what mud?

328

A slight shiver,
the dim autumn light—
all things flowing
back into each other.

329

The voice trails off
in a din of silence.
The blank page remains
forever white.

330

Journeying through
the patchwork earth—
collecting fragments,
rearranging the pieces.

331

“The men in the city are my teachers.
 There is nothing to be learned
 from the trees or the countryside
 for they do not speak.”

Yet it is only here in this silence
 that a man stands alone,
 confronting himself,
 far away from all others,
 from the city’s distractions,
 with nothing to hold on to,
 nothing to do,
 and nothing to achieve.

332

The breeze
 across
 our naked bodies.

333

The reverent prayer
 of stooping over
 to pluck a wildflower.

334

Out of a thousand
 empty dreams
 come empty
 vacant thoughts.
 At night the stars
 are unseen.

335

Idealism is the goal
we walk towards.
Realism is the fact
we never reach it.

336

The summer afternoon is now.
The sky is falling apart.
I will not close the door.
The wind cannot be tamed.

Out of its sheath
a double-edge knife
cuts the sultry air.

337

Climbing these mountains—
nothing to look for,
nothing to find.

338

Eyes open,
eyes closed
—to see what?

339

There is always more.
I want to find out.

340

Drawn in by your power
I cannot move.

Water flows
 unswervingly,
 crashing down
 on the rocks below.

Your source is inexhaustible.

Scooping up
 foam in my hands,
I drink
 and offer my devotion.

341

Everything needed is here:
 a broken cup,
 a chair with no legs.

342

The sagging wooden door
 does not quite fit
 its doorjambs.

343

Hands pressed together
 in prayers no one hears.
Incense spirals skyward
 with no one to receive it.

344

There is nothing.
 Nothing at all.
 It is empty and hollow
 and will never be filled.

Nothing can satiate this hunger.
 Nothing can quench this thirst.

At dusk there are places where
 the rays of the sun cannot reach,
 where light from the pale moon
 and her consort of stars
 cannot penetrate.

345

The doors were locked shut.
 I could not get in.
 So on I went,
 keeping my secret.

At the top of a ridge
 with a gorge on each side
 there was no way to go
 but forward.

Careening through
 those dazzling heights
 I knew for the first time
 I was really alive.

346

The river is black.
 No sound, no ripple
 this cold moonless night.

347

A single leaf
 lies on the lawn
 I've just raked.

I walk over
 to pick it up,
 but then stop.

I leave the leaf
 just where it is.

After raking them all
 yet another
 leaf falls
 to the ground.

348

Swaying limbs.
 Blue.

349

We breathe
 the same air
 but sing
 different songs.

350

Asleep on the roadsides—
 the journey's end.
Where was I going?
 The stream trickles on.

351

Ants climbing
 up and down the tree
 not knowing
 where they're going.

352

After the harvest
 when the wheat
 has been ground into flour,
 baked into bread and eaten,
 a handful of grain
 is offered back to the soil,
 sprinkled as a sacrifice
 to the mother who feeds us.

Standing in the wide-open fields,
 feet planted firmly in the dirt,
 rain falls down from the sky,
 hands are raised upwards.

353

One tear
 in the eye
 of a cherubim.

354

These fields cannot be traversed.
 The golden leaves cannot be smelled.
 The sun cannot be tasted.
 The blue sky cannot be embraced.

355

Stars fell from the sky.
The earth trembled.

A supernatural wind
pierced the air.

Suddenly everything
I'd ever believed in
disappeared.

Standing alone,
all that remains
is the roaring silence.

356

To be one
with God,
you must
kill him.

357

My heart
is the ocean.
The tide flows in.
The tide flows out.

358

My cup
is too full
for you
to fill it.

359

The gently rolling hills
stretch on before me.

My breath is steamy
from running on a winter day.

My body is trim.
My muscles are taut.

I hear the drumming of my heart.
I feel the fire in my veins.

360

Summer has passed.
The trees are all bare.
Hoarfrost reflects
the cold clear light.
All that remains
is the remembrance
of night-fires blazing
and the parting.

361

The sun is dying,
its light disappearing.
Night is falling,
swallowing us
in its shadows.

The horror, the horror
of a starless sky,
the torment pouring
from inside me,
this black night of the soul.

362

Everything has turned to rust.
 The last ember is extinguished.
 Only death will find us saying,
 “Linger a while, thou art so fair.”

363

What did I look like
 before I was born?
 What will my face be
 after I die?

364

Is this the union I cry for:
 To be an unborn soul
 that never dies?

365

Air thins into a vacuum.
 The universe has no center,
 no boundary to transgress,
 nothing to escape from,
 nothing to return to.

366

Flowers of evil,
 flowers of emptiness:
 How to see flowers as flowers—
 a tulip blooming in my garden.

367

Every dream has vanished
 Every illusion has been cast away.

The colors have all turned somber
 under the swirls of a winter sky.

The air I breathe is icy and pure,
 the ground I walk is frozen.

Deep down there's a strange contentment
 just being alive.

368

Melting snow
 swells the rivers.
 Clouds evaporate
 in the morning sun.

Trees transfigured,
 flowers flaming,
 grass growing green.

The earth is soft,
 leaving footprints.

369

Why look for
 what has been
 with me
 all along?

To be here
 alone with myself
 is enough.

370

The flame flickers
on a candle
without light.

371

Dancers whirl
until they disappear.

Fire fills the chest.

Smoke rises
in clouds
above them.

Who will be last?

372

Tossing a ball back and forth:
all for no reason.

Kicking up dust with our feet,
watching the wind catch the dust:
all for no reason.

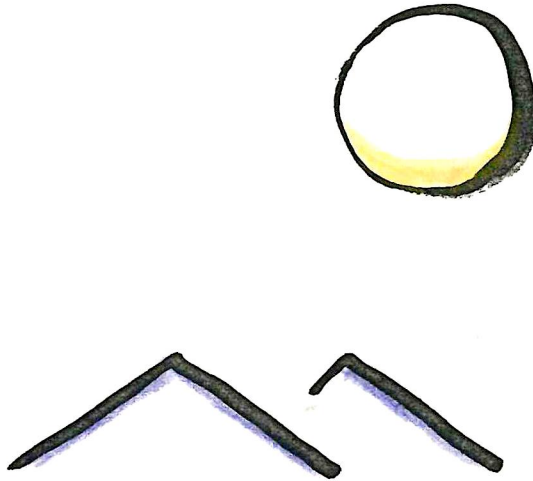
Floating our dreams on paper boats
in ditches after the rain:
all for no reason.

Splashing water all over each other,
dancing under the stars at night:
all for no reason.

Forgetting that tomorrow too is
all for no reason.

373

The moon
over
mountains.



374

Catching stars
as they fall
from the sky.

Here I am.

Damned
if I can tell you
why.

374

The last meal
before parting,
the last cup
of saké.
375

Waving goodbye
We will never taste them—
those green persimmons.

Annotations

“Sun Book” in Japanese is 日本. The epigraph is from R. H. Blyth, *Haiku*, Vol. 1: *Eastern Culture* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press and South San Francisco: Heian International, 1981), p. 69. While many of the poems are minimalist, none were intentionally written as haiku.

Preface: The concept of *kono mama* (このまま, “just like that”) is derived from D. T. Suzuki, *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (London: Unwin, 1979 [1957]), Chap. 7.

#3: An *inari* shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to *Inari Ōkami* (稲荷大神), a god associated with foxes.

#40: The *Tamagawa* (多摩川) is a river that runs from the relatively wild Okutama region of western Tokyo to the Tokyo Bay.

#55: *Tatami* (畳) is a mat floor made of rice straw.

#67: *Gonobe-machi* (五戸町) is a village located in Aomori Prefecture in the northern part of the main island of Japan.

#71: The epigraph is from Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* in *Walden and Other Writings*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 174.

#148: πάντα ρεῖ (*panta rhei*, “everything flows”) is a phrase in Greek ascribed to Heraclitus by Plato in *Cratylus* in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Vol. 7 of *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), 401d, p. 94.

#178: A Japanese-style *futon* (布団) consists of both a lower folding mattress and an upper cover.

#182: *Kami* (神) is the Japanese word for “god” or “spirit” that, according to the Shinto religion, exists in all things.

#223: The epigraph is from Kahlil Gibran, “On Marriage” in *The Prophet* (London: William Heinemann, 1980 [1926]), p. 16.

#255: For *inari* shrine see the annotation for poem #3 above.

#266: *Yukata* (浴衣) is a light, casual kimono frequently worn at summer festivals.

#331: The first four lines are adapted from Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus* in *The Dialogues of Plato* (*op. cit.*), 230d, p. 117.

#352: This poem was inspired by the following quote, for which I am no longer able to locate the original source: “The primitive man, unconscious of the effect of his deeds and unable to

develop a coherent theory of the meaning of events, notices that if he does not return a portion of the seed to the soil as a sacrifice, the earth will not reward him with another year's harvest. The earth becomes the mother of all life, the womb from which everything springs. She is impregnated by the seed and by water from the rain. At the harvest feast man eats freely, but he is restrained from eating all; a portion must always be returned. His ethic is one of selflessness and giving. Winter follows the autumn harvest and the seed lying dormant—buried under the earth—appears dead. Then with the coming of spring the miracle occurs and life issues forth. It is interesting to look at such events in their purest simplicity. (And before they are assigned Proper Names or become the subjects of scholarly reflection.) Centuries pass and the rituals, ideas, and dogmas which develop out of them seem to hang like castles in mid-air, obscuring the original intuitions to the point where they can no longer be understood.”