

Near-Haiku, Waka, and Renga

“So—when was it—I, drawn like blown cloud, couldn’t stop dreaming of roaming, roving the coast up and down...possessed by the wanderlust...my former dwelling passed on to someone else....”

—Matsuo Basho

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1

It cannot be found.
The song has always been there
waiting to be sung.

2

Moonlight whispers down—
mere reflections of a sun
among the shadows.

3

Winter shadows fall
—clear ice on a frozen lake—
no ripple nor wave.

4

An unwilling wing
is the cage of a robin
who wills not to fly.

5

Spring petals bloom not
for the seeing eye alone
but with faint fragrance.

6

In the fallen leaves
glows a firefly's beacon
through the evening mist.

7

The wax of a leaf
shines in melted amber hues
painted on the ground.

8

A waterfall's plunge
disturbs the tranquil surface
of the pool below.

9

No sharp clear picture
through eyes blurry from the rain—
nothing in focus.

10

Weary winter fog
seeps inside the warm abode
of an anxious fawn.

11

No vacillations
beneath the turbulent swells
of a cruel ocean.

12

Beneath the gray ice
where water is not frozen—
the river flows on.

13

In spring's morning dew
a happy man sits alone
far from the village.

14

New branches shooting
out of the stump of a tree
cut down last winter.

15

Such a biting breeze—
the sharp edge of a swordfish
cuts the choppy sea.

16

Fresh summer meadow—
hidden among the modest trees
rabbits run naked.

17

Arms so tired last night
reach out to touch the sunrise
and start a new day.

18

A mountain stream sips
crystal clear water flowing
from a secret spring.

19

Pushed north by the wind—
 icicles in a gray beard,
 a nose bitten red.

20

After the spring gale
 a bent reed touches its toes
 by a splintered oak.

21

Grown deaf to warnings
 streams crash over the cliffs and
 fall into the sea.

22

No one hears the songs
 lovebirds sing to each other
 on a warm spring day.

23

A blistering sun—
 my lips are as parched and cracked
 as the arid soil.

24

Out of the mountains
 rivers flow rapidly past
 sluggish wanderers.

25

Spanning the river
the dams of beavers cannot
stop the water's flow.

26

While sipping green tea
rain sprinkles down and mottles
the glassy ocean.

27

Worn down by the years
the rocky cliffs are no match
for the crashing waves.

28

Reaching for a rose
a finger pricked by thorns drips
blood on the petals.

29

What lies above you—
above the gray clouds, beyond
the edge of the sky?

30

That the blossoms are
beyond the grasp of my hand
is why I want them.

31

Still on the palette
the colors of a landscape
yet to be painted.

32

White winter flurries—
snowflakes tumble down like stars
and melt on my nose.

33

A rosy spring sky—
on the distant horizon
graying thunderclouds.

34

Inebriating—
the scent of the violets'
lavender petals.

35

Morning dew glistens
on the emerald blades of
newly planted grass.

36

In the dim moonlight
fallen limbs slither like snakes
through the tall grasses.

37

A laughing sunset
plays with the shadows of a
white-bearded mountain.

38

It is hard to walk
proudly under low branches,
limbs bumping my head.

39

On the tree-lined lane
a blossom falls under my
solitary foot.

40

The wire-strung fenceposts
keep me from kissing the grass
inside this garden.

41

Walking in sunlight
The woods beside me are dark.
I dare not enter.

42

How can the blossoms
be so brilliant when no one
but me can see them?

43

Is this gray tree dead
or merely waiting to bud?
There's no shade today.

44

The day is so bright
that the sun waters my eyes.
I cannot look up.

45

How can such a day
be spent in disappointment?
Are only dreams left?

46

Mangled spiderweb—
wings of a half-eaten moth
flutter in the wind.

47

A frog croaking bass
joins the robin's soprano.
Hush! A spring duet
in a wooded concert hall—
such discordant harmony.

48

Deep in the forest
hidden in a grove of trees
a rustic shrine
visited only by those
who know its well-kept secret.

49

A seagull takes flight
dreaming of unchartered skies
then dives back to earth
to tell the other outcasts:
“Keep working on love.”

50

When shall it happen?
The wolf lies down with the lamb,
the leopard lies down
with the kid, and a little
child shall lead them.

51

Beauty of the void,
glimpses of that beyond self,
color in undefined lines,
light without a source,
impressions of the divine
in a single grain of sand.

WITH JAPANESE TRANSLATIONS

52

露の夜こおろぎ鳴く花畑
tsuyu no yoru kooroggi naku hana batake

On a dewy night
 a cricket chirps loudly in
 the flower garden.

53

静けさの日もれる木々の小川端
shizu kesa no himoreru kigi no ogawa wabata

Quiet afternoon
 —sunlight filters through the trees—
 meandering stream.



54

満つる月冠にした雲の輪を
mitsuru tsuki kanmuri ni shita kumo no wa o

A circle of clouds
 crowns
 the full moon.

55

黄花菊昔日の陽をとらえてか
kibanagiku sekijitsu no hi o toraete ka

A yellow chrysanthemum
 seduces
 the passing sun.

56

浅川の瀧みし流れは月の床
asakawa no sumishi nagare wa tsuki no toko

The Asakawa's
 water stands still—
 the moon's bed.

57

沈丁花匂い消されて雨の中
jinchouge nioi kesarete ame no naka

The scent of the daphne
 is washed away
 in the rain.

58

待つみのや傘の下では雨の音
matsu minoya kasa no shita de wa ame no oto

Waiting
 under an umbrella—
 the sound of rain.

59

土の上雪がまだある梅の花
tsuchi no ue yuki ga mada aru ume no hana

With snow
 still on the ground—
 a plum blossom.

60

長池の水面に浮かぶ紅葉かな
nagaike no minamo ni ukabu momiji kana

Naga Pond—
 floating on the water
 maple leaves?

61

朝まだきかすみ動き手夏近し
 風の道にも香りたなびく
 下り来に足をとらわれ見回わせし

*asa ma daki kasumi ugokite natsu chikasbi
 kaze no michi ni mo kaori tanabiku
 kudari kei ni ashi o toraware mima waseshi*

Early morning
 fog—
 summer is near.

In the air
 a fragrance.

Down the path
 I stumble
 looking.

62

DADA CHANT

ブダブーブー (手を叩く)
 ブーダダブー (手を叩く)
 ブーダダデューバダ
 ブダブーテュー

*buda buu buu (te o tataku)
 buu dada buu (te o tataku)
 buu dada duu bada
 buda buu tuu.*

Buddha boo boo (clap)
 Boo dada boo (clap)
 Boo dada doo bada
 Buddha boo too.

Annotations

“Near” because few of these poems strictly conform to the conventions of Japanese verse; the forms are similar but not the spirit. The epigraph is from Matsuo Basho, *Back Roads to Far Towns*, trans. Cid Corman and Kamaike Susumu (Buffalo: White Wine Press, 2004 [1689]), p. 15. Japanese translations are by Echo Evanoff, with the exception of poem #59, which was co-written by Rihito Kanai (in Japanese) and Richard Evanoff (in English). The renga in #60 was self-written and not a collaborative effort. Poem #61 was translated by Richard Evanoff.

#55: The *Asakawa* (浅川) is a tributary of the Tama River in western Tokyo.

#59: Naga Pond (長池, *Nagaike*) is located in Nagaike Park in western Tokyo.