

# 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

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## 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:

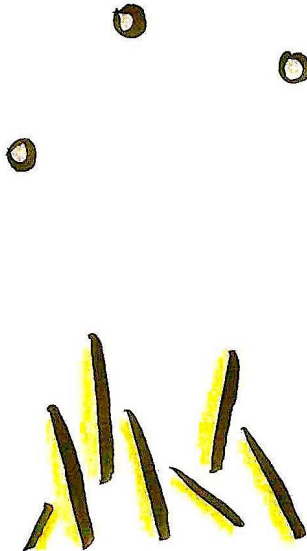
A long time ago I hitched a ride  
on the parachute of a dandelion puff  
as it floated across the sky.

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

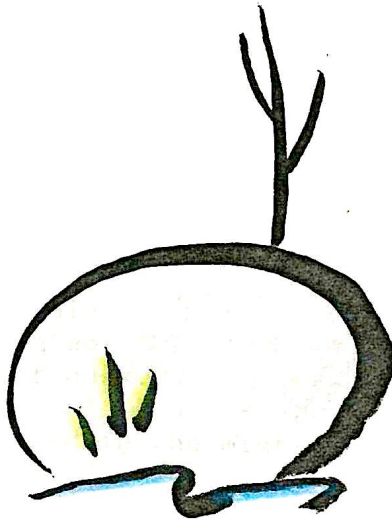
This garden  
has been my world.

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.

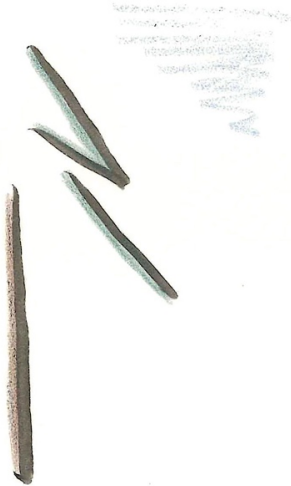
118

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.

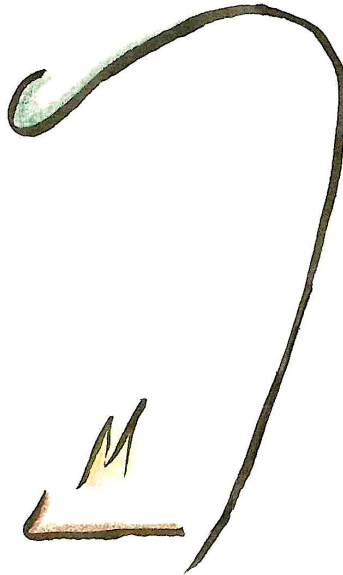
It's not meant  
for our ears to hear.

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

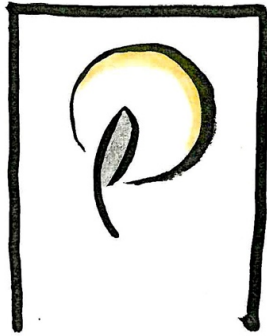
The chair  
you once sat in—  
where has it gone?

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.

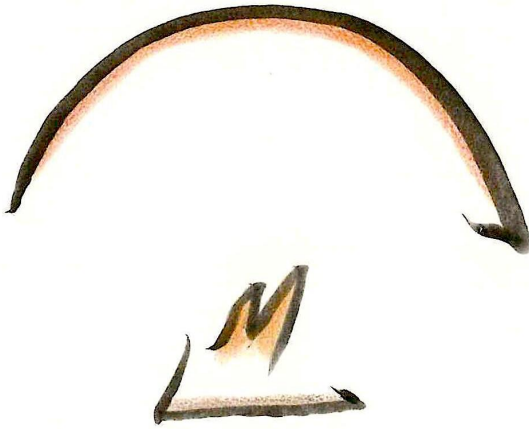
Whenever I see a star  
I will choose it as my own,  
hoping that you will see the same star.

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.

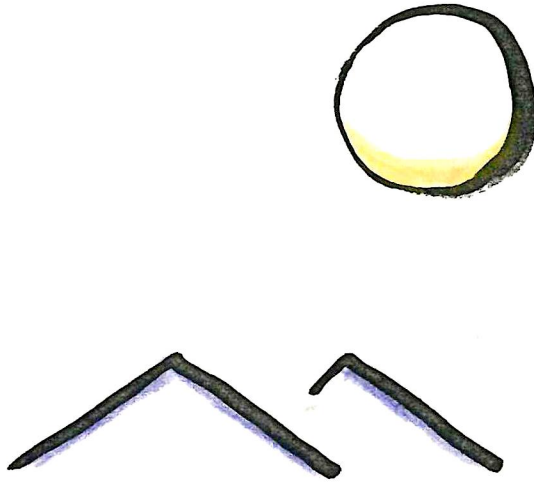
Floating our dreams on paper boats  
in ditches after the rain:  
all for no reason.

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.”