



A Little
Treasury of
HAIKU

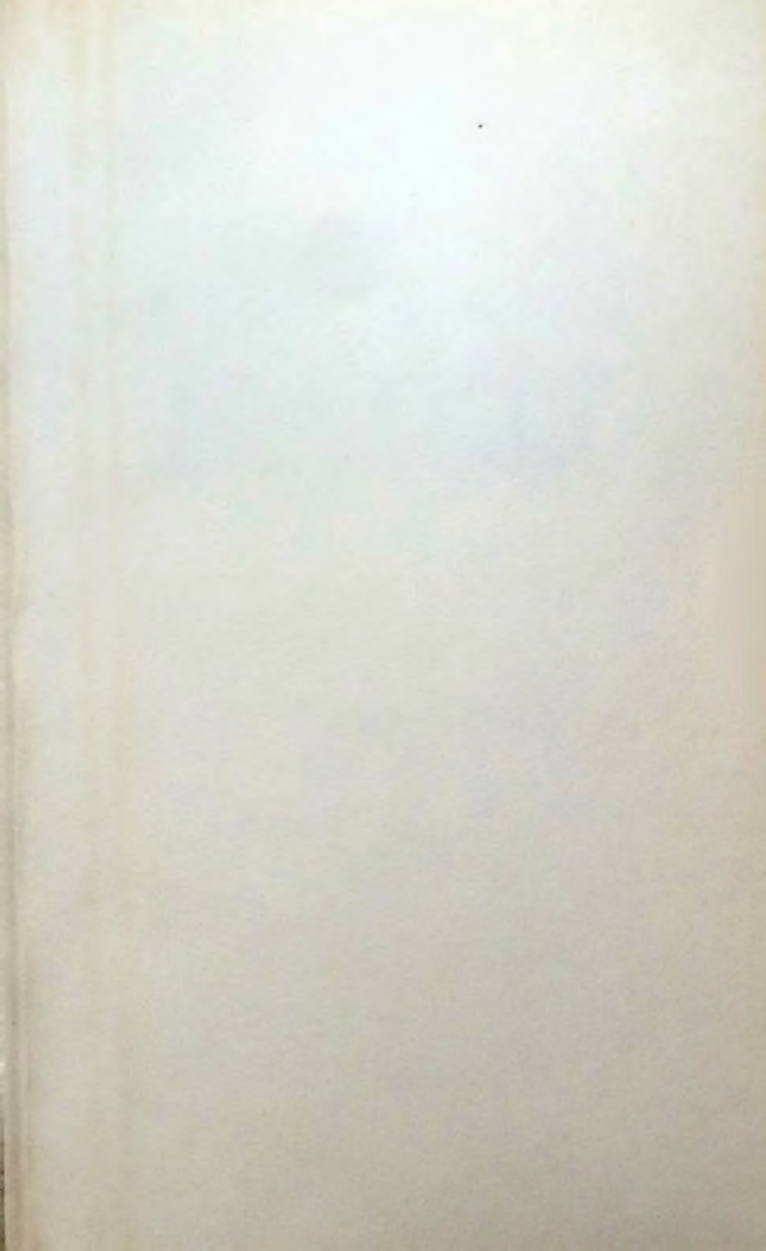
A Little Treasury of HAIKU

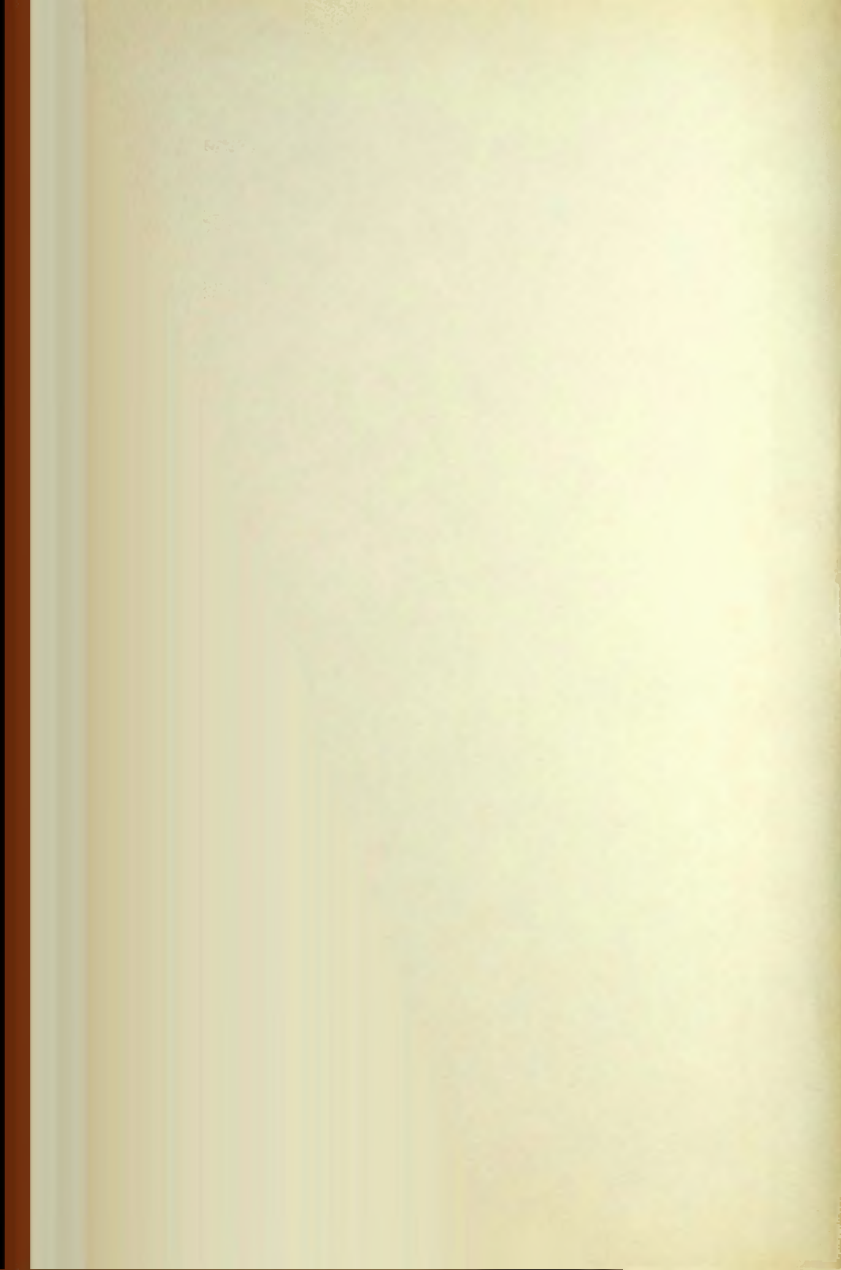
Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki, Soka,
Kikaku, and others

Translated by Peter Beilenson

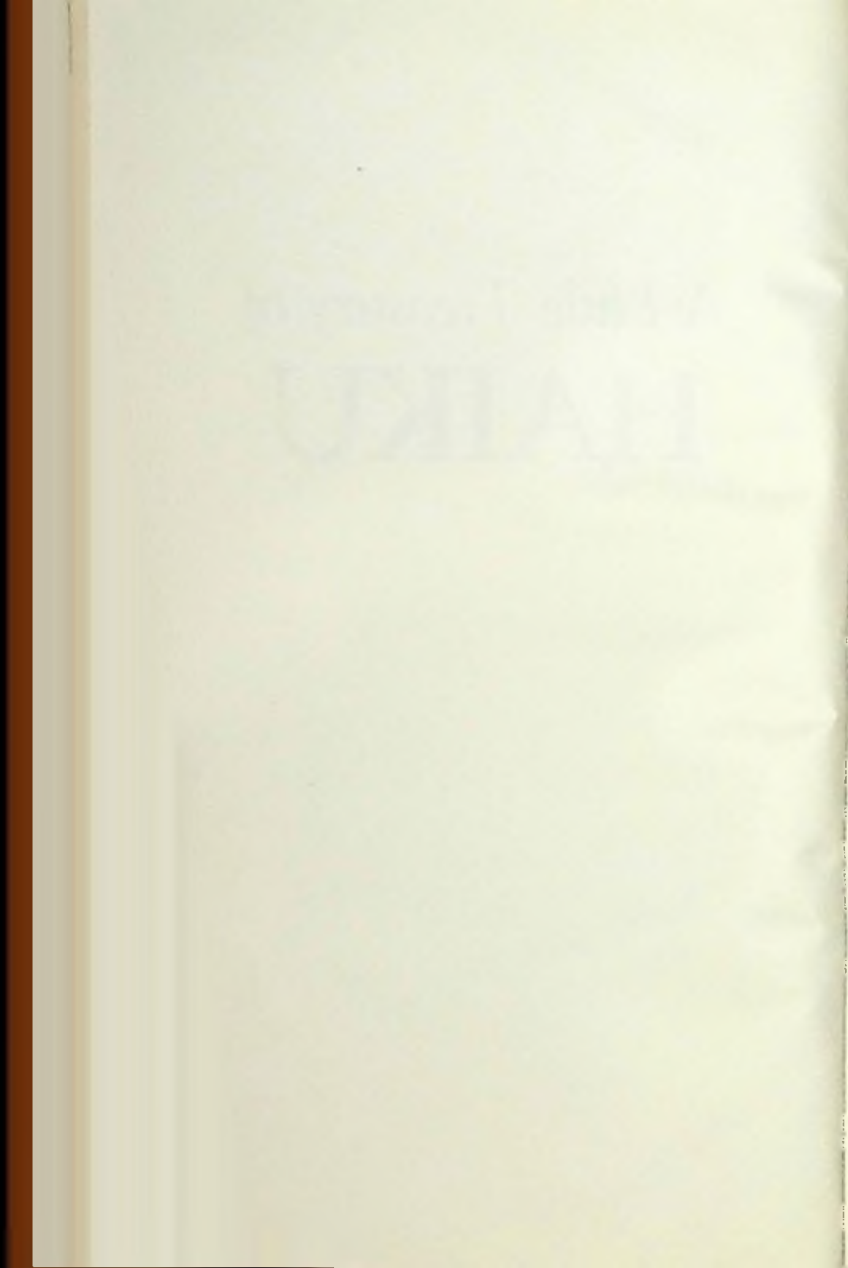
The silence of a white chrysanthemum ... a ballet of butterflies ... the whispering rain of twilight ... the calligraphy of wild geese against the sky ... autumn hills floating on a sea of mist ... the perfect moment crystallized ... a fleeting feeling caught forever. These are haiku, traditional Japanese poems that have been written in the same form for centuries and that today have found a new flowering and response in countries all over the world.

Over four hundred of these beautiful, evocative three-line poems are collected in this volume. Written by the great masters of the art, they may be grave or joyful, humorous or charming, their meaning mysterious or immediately evident, but in some way they all record life's high moments, or take life's ordinary moments and make them luminous, imbuing them with timeless stature. The brevity and simplicity of haiku are deceptive, for





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*Basho, Buson, Issa, Shiki,
Sokan, Kikaku, and others*

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AVENEL BOOKS

New York

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Inquiries should be addressed to:

Peter Pauper Press
135 West 50th Street
New York, N.Y. 10020

This edition is published by Avenel Books,
distributed by Crown Publishers, Inc.,
by arrangement with Peter Pauper Press.

a b c d e f g h
AVENEL 1980 EDITION

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

A little treasury of haiku.

1. Haiku--Translations into English. 2. English
poetry--Translations from Japanese. I. Matsuo,
sho, 1644-1694. II. Beilenson, Peter, 1905-1962.
.782.E3L5 1980 895.6'104'08 80-17715
ISBN: 0-517-320967

A NOTE ON JAPANESE HAIKU

THE *hokku*—or more properly *haiku*—is a tiny verse-form in which Japanese poets have been working for hundreds of years. Originally it was the first part of the *tanka*, a five-line poem, often written by two people as a literary game: one writing three lines, the other, two lines capping them. But the *hokku*, or three-line starting verse, became popular as a separate form. As such it is properly called *haiku*, and retains an incredible popularity among all classes of Japanese.

There are only seventeen syllables in the *haiku*, the first and third lines contain five, the second line seven. There is almost always in it the name of the season, or a key word giving the season by inference. (This is a short-cut, costing the poet only one or two syllables, whereby the reader can immediately comprehend the weather, the foliage, the bird and insect-life—and the emotions traditional to the season: factors which almost always are important in the poem.) But there is also, in a good *haiku*, more than a mere statement of feeling or a picture of nature: there is an implied identity between two seemingly different things.

The greatest of *haiku*-writers, and the poet who crystallized the style, was Basho

(1644-1694). In his later years he was a student of Zen Buddhism, and his later poems, which are his best, express the rapturous awareness in that mystical philosophy of the identity of life in all its forms. With this awareness, Basho immersed himself in even the tiniest things, and with religious fervor and sure craftsmanship converted them into poetry. He was ardently loved by his followers, and by later poets, and his Zen philosophy has thus been perpetuated in later *haiku*. It is, indeed, a key to the completest appreciation of most *haiku*.

Following Basho in time and fame was Buson (1715-1783)—a little more sophisticated and detached than his predecessor, and an equally exquisite craftsman. The third great *haiku* poet was unhappy Issa (1763-1827), a continual butt of fate. He is less poetic but more lovable than Basho and Buson. His tender, witty *haiku* about his dead children, his bitter poverty, his little insect friends, endear him to every reader. Other masters are of course represented here too.

It is usually impossible to translate a *haiku* literally and have it remain a poem, or remain in the proper seventeen-syllable form. There are several reasons for this. *Haiku* are full of quotations and allusions which are recognized by literate Japanese but not by us; and are full of

interior double-meanings almost like James Joyce. And the language is used without connecting-words or tenses or pronouns or indications or singular or plural—almost a telegraphic form. Obviously a translation cannot be at once so illusive and so terse.

In the *texture* of the poems there is a further difficulty: Japanese is highly polysyllabic. The only way to reproduce such a texture in English is to use Latinized words—normally less sympathetic than the Anglo-Saxon. For all these reasons, the following versions make no pretense to be literal or complete, and some variations in the five-seven-five syllable arrangements have been allowed.

Alterations and interior rhymes, which are common in Japanese because every syllable ends with one of the five vowel sounds (sometimes with the addition of the letter “n”) have been freely used; but as in the originals, there are no end-rhymes except some accidental ones.

One final word: the *haiku* is not expected to be always a complete or even a clear statement. The reader is supposed to add to the words his own associations and imagery, and thus to become a co-creator of his own pleasure in the poem. The publishers hope their readers may here co-create such pleasure for themselves!



In these dark waters
Drawn up from my frozen well . . .
Glittering of spring

RINGAI

Standing still at dusk
Listen . . . in far distances
The song of froglings!

BUSON

I dreamed of battles
And was slain . . . oh savage samurai!
Insatiable fleas!

KIKAKU

Year's first cart-load . . .
Cut-out paper flowers deck
The emaciated horse

SHIKI

In silent mid-night
Our old scarecrow topples down . . .
Weird hollow echo

BONCHO



Women planting rice . . .
Ugly every bit about them . . .
But their ancient song

RAIZAN



Wild geese write a line
Flap-flapping across the sky . . .
Comical Dutch script

SOIN

Dead my old fine hopes
And dry my dreaming but still . . .
Iris, blue each spring

SHUSHIKI



In this windy nest
Open your hungry mouth in vain . . .
Issa, stepchild bird

ISSA



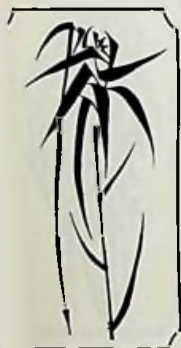
Ballet in the air . . .
Twin butterflies until, twice white
They meet, they mate

BASHO

ON THE DEATH OF HIS CHILD

Dew evaporates
And all our world is dew . . . so dear,
So fresh, so fleeting

ISSA

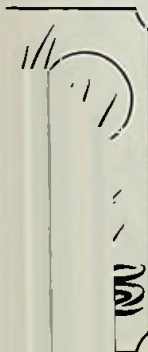


Black cloudbank broken
Scatters in the night . . . now see
Moon-lighted mountains!

BASHO

Seek on high bare trails
Sky-reflecting violets . . .
Mountain-top jewels

BASHO



For a lovely bowl
Let us arrange these flowers . . .
Since there is no rice

BASHO

Now that eyes of hawks
In dusky night are darkened . . .
Chirping of the quails

BASHO



My two plum trees are
So gracious . . . see, they flower
One now, one later

BUSON



One fallen flower
Returning to the branch? . . . oh no!
A white butterfly

MORITAKE

Cloudbank curling low?
Ah! the mountain Yoshino . . .
Cherry cumulus!

RYOTA



Fie! this fickle world!
Three days, neglected cherry-branch . . .
And you are bare

RYOTA



Hanging the lantern
On that full white blooming bough . . .
Exquisite your care!

SHIKI

April's air stirs in
Willow-leaves . . . a butterfly
Floats and balances

BASHO

In the sea-surf edge
Mingling with bright small shells . . .
Bush-clover petals

BASHO

THE RIVER
Gathering May rains
In cold streamlets for the sea . . .
Murmuring Mogami

BASHO

Gate made all of twigs
Green grass for hinges . . .
Back . . . this snail

ISSA

Wind-blown, rained on . . .
Bent barley-grass you make me
Narrow path indeed
JOSO



Arise from sleep, old cat,
And with great yawns and
stretchings . . . amble out for love
ISSA



White cloud of mist
Above white cherry-blossoms . . .
Dawn-shining mountains
BASHO

Hi! my little hut
Is newly-thatched I see
Blue morning-glories
ISSA



In the city fields
Contemplating cherry-trees . . .
Strangers are like friends
ISSA



See, see, see! oh see!
Oh what to say? ah Yoshino . . .
Mountain-all-abloom!

TEISHITSU

Green shadow-dances . . .
See our young banana-tree
Pattering the screen

SHIKI

Don't touch my plumtree!
Said my friend and saying so . . .
Broke the branch for me

TAIGI

Twilight whippoorwill . . .
Whistle on, sweet deepener
Of dark loneliness

BASHO

Reciting scriptures . . .
Strange the wondrous blue I find
In morning-glories

KYOROKU

Many solemn nights
Blond moon, we stand and marvel . . .
Sleeping our noons away
TEITOKU



Mountain-rose petals
Falling, falling, falling now . . .
Waterfall music
BASHO

Amorous cat, alas
You too must yowl with your love . . .
Or even worse, without!
YAHA



The laden wagon runs
Bumblng and creaking down the road . . .
Three peonies tremble
BUSON



Ah me! I am one
Who spends his little breakfast
Morning-glory gazing
BASHO

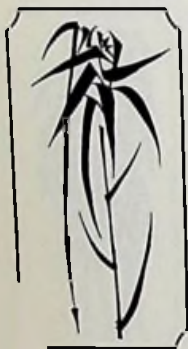


My good father raged
When I snapped the peony . . .
Precious memory!

TAIRO

By that fallen house
The pear-tree stands full-blooming . . .
An ancient battle-site

SHIKI



In the open shop
Paperweights on picture books . . .
Young springtime breeze

KITO

Dim the grey cow comes
Mooing mooing and mooing
Out of the morning mist

ISSA



Take the round flat moon
Snap this twig for handle . . .
What a pretty fan!

SOKAN

Seas are wild tonight . . .
Stretching over Sado Island
Silent clouds of stars

BASHO



Why so scrawny, cat?
Starving for fat fish or mice . . .
Or backyard love?

BASHO



Dewdrop, let me cleanse
In your brief sweet waters . . .
These dark hands of life

BASHO

Lightning flash, crash . . .
Waiting in the bamboo grove
See three dew-drops fall

BUSON



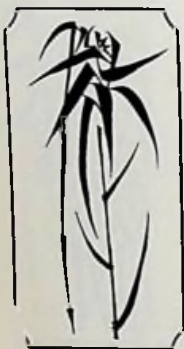
Ashes my burnt hut . . .
But wonderful the cherry
Blooming on my hill

HOKUSHI



Life? butterfly
On a swaying grass that's all . . .
But exquisite!

SOIN



What a peony . . .
Demanding to be measured
By my little fan!

ISSA



Under cherry-trees
Soup, the salad, fish and all . . .
Seasoned with petals

BASHO

Now from cherry-trees . . .
Millions of maidens flying
Fierce war-lord storm

SADAIYE

Moon so bright for love!
Come closer, quilt . . . enfold
My passionate cold!

SAMPU



Too curious flower
Watching us pass, met death . . .
Our hungry donkey

BASHO



Cloud of cherry-bloom . . .
Tolling twilight bell . . . Temple
Ueno? Asakura?

BASHO

Must springtime fade?
Then cry all birds . . . and fishes'
Cold pale eyes pour tears

BASHO



A nursemaid scarecrow . . .
Frightening the wind and sun
From playing baby

ISSA



ON HER DEAD SON
In what windy land
Wanders now my little dear
Dragonfly hunter?

CHIYO-NI

A saddening world:
Flowers whose sweet blooms must fall . . .
As we too, alas . . .

ISSA



Describe plum-blossoms?
Better than my verses . . . white
Wordless butterflies

REIKAN

Lend me water please?
Some fresh young morning-glory,
Careless . . . took my well

CHIYO-NI



A YOUNG SISTER
Pitiful . . . on my
Outstretched palm at dusk dies
The little firefly

KYORAI

You stupid scarecrow!
Under your very stick-feet
Birds are stealing beans!

YAYU



Afternoon shower . . .
Walking and talking in the street:
Umbrella and raincoat!

BUSON



In the farther field
A scarecrow kept me company . . .
Walking as I walked

SANIN

Pretty butterflies . . .
Be careful of pine-needle points
In this gusty wind!

SHUSEN



Ah, unrequited love!
Now elevate your chin and keen
Tom-cat, to the moon!

KYORAI



Hi! kids mimicking
Cormorants . . . you are more like
Real cormorants than they!

ISSA



Buzzing the bee trades
Peony for peony
With the butterfly

TAIGI



Such utter silence!
Even the crickets' singing . . .
Muffled by hot rocks

BASHO

Far across low mist
Intermittently the lake
Lifts a snow-white sail

GAKOKU

A white swan swimming . . .
Parting with her unmoved breast
Cherry-petaled pond

ROKA

For a cool evening
I hired the old temple porch . . .
Penny in the dish

SHIKI



Quite a hundred gourds
Sprouting from the fertile soul . . .
Of a single vine

CHIYO-NI



Swallow in the dusk . . .
Spare my little buzzing friends
Among the flowers

BASHO

Old dark sleepy pool . . .
Quick unexpected frog
Goes plop! Watersplash!

BASHO



My shadowy path
I've swept all day and now . . . oh no!
Camellia-shower!

YAHA

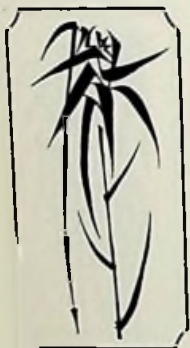


Hard the beggar's bed . . .
But sociable and busy
With insect-talking

CHIYO-NI

Come come! Come out!
From bogs old frogs command the dark
And look . . . the stars!

KIKAKU

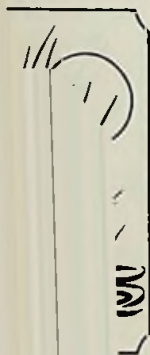


Over the mountain
Bright the full white moon now smiles . . .
On the flower-thief

ISSA

Starting to call you:
Come watch these butterflies . . .
Oh! I'm all alone

TAIGI



Good friend grasshopper
Will you play the caretaker
For my little grave?

ISSA

A lost child crying
Stumbling over the dark fields . . .
Catching fireflies

RYUSUI



The snake departed
But the little eyes that glared . . .
Dew, shining in the grass

KYOSHI



Ah! Brave dragon-fly . . .
Taking for your perch this swatter
Consecrate to death

KOHOYO

I raised my knife to it:
Then walked empty-handed on . . .
Proud rose of Sharon

SAMPU



Giddy grasshopper
Take care . . . do not leap and crush
These pearls of dewdrop

ISSA



Darting dragon-fly . . .
Pull off its shiny wings and look . . .
Bright red pepper-pod

KIKAKU

REPLY:

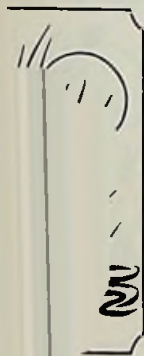
Bright red pepper-pod . . .
It needs but shiny winds and look . . .
Darting dragon-fly!

BASHO



Tiny sentences
Brushing soft on my shutters . . .
Bush-clover voices

SESSHU



Mirror-pond of stars . . .
Suddenly a summer shower
Dimples the water

SORA

Sadness at twilight . . .
Villain! I have let my hand
Cut that peony

BUSON

In dim dusk and scent
A witness now half hidden . . .
Evenfall orchid
BUSON



Now be a good boy
Take good care of our house . . .
Cricket my child
ISSA



Wake! The sky is light!
Let us to the road again . . .
Companion butterfly!
BASHO

Stillness . . . then the bat
Flying among the willows
Black against green sky
KIKAKU



Now my loneliness
Following the fireworks . . .
Look! A falling star!
SHIKI



Stupid hot melons . . .
Rolling like fat idiots
Out from leafy shade!

KYORA

For morning-glories
I can foresee grave danger . . .
Single-stick practice

CHORA



Can't it get away
From the sticky pine-branches . . .
Cicada singing?

GIJOENS

Silent the old town . . .
The scent of flowers floating . . .
And evening bell

BASHO



Vendor of bright fans
Carrying his pack of breeze . . .
Suffocating heat!

SHIKI

Voices of two bells
That speak from twilight temples . . .
Ah! cool dialogue
BUSON



Deep in dark forest
A woodcutter's dull axe talking . . .
And a woodcutter
BUSON



Camellia-petal
Fell in silent dawn . . . spilling
A water-jewel
BASHO

In the twilight rain
These brilliant-hued hibiscus . . .
A lovely sunset
BASHO



Friend, that open mouth
Reveals your whole interior . . .
Silly hollow frog!
ANON.



Butterfly asleep
Folded soft on temple bell . . .
Then bronze gong rang!

BUSON

Good evening breeze!
Crooked and meandering
Your homeward journey

ISSA



See the morning breeze
Ruffling his so silky hair . . .
Cool caterpillar

BUSON

Oh lucky beggar! . . .
Bright heaven and cool earth
Your summer outfit

KIKAKU



The turnip farmer rose
And with a fresh-pulled turnip . . .
Pointed to my road

ISSA

FLOWER IN THE STREAM

Thus too my lovely life
Must end, another flower . . .
To fall and float away

ONITSURA



I am going out . . .
Be good and play together
My cricket children

ISSA



Not a voice or stir . . .
Darkness lies on fields and streets
Sad: the moon has set

IMOZENI

Lady butterfly
Perfumes her wings by floating
Over the orchid

BASHO



If strangers threaten
Turn into fat green bullfrogs . . .
Pond-cooling melons

ISSA

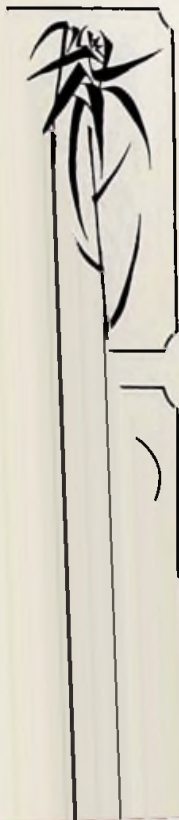


Yellow evening sun . . .
Long shadow of the scarecrow
Reaches to the road

SHOHA

A camellia
Dropped down into still waters
Of a deep dark well

BUSON



For the emperor
Himself he will not lift his hat . . .
A stiff-backed scarecrow

DANSUI

In the holy dusk
Nightingales begin their psalm . . .
Good! the dinner-gong!

BUSON

Live in simple faith . . .
Just as this trusting cherry
Flowers, fades, and falls

ISSA

Night is bright with stars . . .
Silly woman, whimpering:
Shall I light the lamp?

ETSUJIN



Black desolate moor . . .
I bow before the Buddha
Lighted in thunder

KAKEI

Dirty bath-water
Where can I pour you? . . . insects
Singing in the grass

ONITSURA



Wee bitter cricket
Crying all this sunny day . . .
Or is he laughing?

OEMARU

A short summer night . . .
But in this solemn darkness
One peony bloomed

BUSON





Long the summer day . . .
Patterns on the ocean sand . . .

Our idle footprints

SHIKI



Angry I strode home . . .
But stooping in my garden
Calm old willow-tree

RYOTA



Oh do not swat them . . .
Unhappy flies forever
Wringing their thin hands

ISSA

See . . . the heavy leaf
On the silent windless day . . .
Falls of its own will

BONCHO

Rash tom-cat lover . . .
Careless even of that rice
Stuck in your whiskers

TAIGI

Moon so bright for love!
Oh, hear the farmer by that light . . .
Flailing his lovely rice!

ETSUJIN



Now the swinging bridge
Is quieted with creepers . . .
Like our tendrilled life

BASHO



Dancing in my silks
Money tossed itself away . . .
Pretty, this paper dress!

SONO-JO

The sea darkening . . .
Oh voices of the wild ducks
Crying, whirling, white

BASHO



White moth, flutter off:
Fly back into my breast now
Quickly, my own soul!

WAFU



Nine times arising
To see the moon . . . whose solemn pace
Marks only midnight yet

BASHO



Watching, I wonder
What poet could put down his quill . . .
A pluperfect moon!

ONITSURA



Pebbles shining clear,
And clear six silent fishes . . .
Deep autumn water

BUSON

A bright autumn moon . . .
In the shadow of each grass
An insect chirping

BUSON

You turn and suddenly
There in purpling autumn sky . . .
White Fujiami!

ONITSURA



Here, where a thousand
Captains swore grand conquest . . . tall
Grass their monument

BASHO



Yellow autumn moon . . .
Unimpressed the scarecrow stands
Simply looking bored

ISSA

White chrysanthemum . . .
Before that perfect flower
Scissors hesitate

BUSON



Cruel autumn wind
Cutting to the very bones . . .
Of my poor scarecrow

ISSA



Now in late autumn
Look, on my old rubbish-heap . . .
Blue morning-glory

TAIGI



A single cricket
Chirps, chirps, chirps, and is still . . . m-
Candle sinks and dies

ANON.



Two ancient pine-trees . . .
A pair of gnarled and sturdy hands
With ten green fingers

RYOTO

I must turn over . . .
Beware of local earthquakes
Bedfellow cricket!

ISSA

Oh! I ate them all
And oh! What a stomach-ache . . .
Green stolen apples
SHIKI



Now in sad autumn
As I take my darkening path . . .
A solitary bird
BASHO



At our last parting
Bending between boat and shore . . .
That weeping willow
SHIKI

At Furue in rain
Gray water and gray sand . . .
Picture without lines
BUSON



Oh sorry tom-cat
Bigger blacker knights of love
Have knocked you out!
SHIKO



The old fisherman
Unalterably intent . . .
Cold evening rain

BUSON



While I turned my head
That traveler I'd just passed . . .
Melted into mist

SHIKI



Visiting the graves . . .
Trotting on to show the way . . .
Old family dog

ISSA

Will we meet again
Here at your flowering grave . . .
Two white butterflies?

BASHO

So enviable . . .
Maple-leaves most glorious
Contemplating death

SHIKO

Shocking . . . the red of
Lacquered fingernails against
A white chrysanthemum

CHIYO-NI



Dry cheerful cricket
Chirping, keeps the autumn gay . . .
Contemtuuous of frost

BASHO



Deepen, drop, and die
Many-hued chrysanthemums . . .
One black earth for all

RYUSUI

Before boiled chestnuts
Cross-legged lad is squatting . . .
Carved wooden Buddha

ISSA



Defeated in the fray
By bigger battlers for love . . .
Tom-cat seeks a mouse

SHIKO



Asking their road . . .
Seven yellow bamboo hats
All turned together

ANON.



Torches! Come and see
The burglar I have captured . . .
Oh! My eldest son!

SOKAN



Autumn mosquitoes
Buzz me, bite me . . . see, I am
Long prepared for death

SHIKI

Nice: wild persimmons . . .
And notice how the mother
Eats the bitter parts

ISSA

Gray marsh, black cloud . . .
Flapping away in autumn rain
Last old slow heron

ANON.

First white snow of fall
Just enough to bend the leaves
Of faded daffodils

BASHO



What a gorgeous one
That fat sleek huge old chestnut
I could not get at . . .

ISSA



None broke the silence . . .
Nor visitor nor host . . . nor
White chrysanthemum

RYOTA

If you were silent
Flight of herons on dark sky . . .
Oh! Autumn snowflakes!

SOKAN



Chilling autumn rain . . .
The moon, too bright for showers,
Slips from their fingers

TOKUKU



Rainy-month, dripping
On and on as I lie abed . . .
Ah, old man's memories!

BUSON



November sunrise . . .
Uncertain, the cold storks stand . . .
Bare sticks in water

KAKEI



Slanting lines of rain . . .
On the dusty samisen
A mouse is trotting

BUSON

Oh former renter
I know it all, all . . . down to
The very cold you felt

ISSA

Gray moor, unmarred
By any path . . . a single branch . . .
A bird . . . November

ANON.



Lonely umbrella
Passing the house at twilight . . .
First snow falling soft

YAHA



Carven gods long gone . . .
Dead leaves alone foregather
On the temple porch

BASHO

Five or six of us
Remain, huddled together . . .
Bent old willow-trees

KYORAI



Plume of pampas grass
Trembling in every wind . . .
Hush, my lonely heart

ISSA



Tea-water, tired
Waiting while we watched the snow . . .
Froze itself a hat

SOKAN



Cold first winter rain . . .
Poor monkey, you too could use
A little woven cape

BASHO



Winter rain deepens
Lichened letters on the grave . . .
And my old sadness

ROKA

Cold winter shower . . .
See all the people running
Across seta bridge!

JOSO

Old weary willows . . .
I thought how long the road would be
When you went away

BUSON

No oil to read by . . .
I am off to bed but ah! . . .
My moonlit pillow

BASHO



Descending seaward
Far-off mountain waterfall . . .
Winter nights are still

KYOKUSUI



All heaven and earth
Flowered white obliterate . . .
Snow . . . unceasing snow

HASHIN

Considerate dogs . . .
Stepping off into the snow
As I walk the path

ISSA



But when I halted
On the windy street at twilight . . .
Snow struck against me

KITO

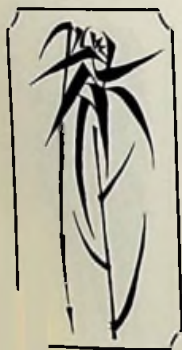


Call him back! Ah no,
He's blown from sight already . . .
Fish-peddler in the snow

ANON.

Crossing it alone
In cold moonlight . . . the brittle bridge
Echoes my footsteps

TAIGI



Such a little child
To send to be a priestling
Icy poverty

SHIKI

Windy winter rain . . .
My silly big umbrella
Tries walking backward

SHISEI-JO



Buddha on the hill . . .
From your holy nose indeed
Hangs an icicle

ISSA

This snowy morning
That black crow I hate so much . . .

But he's beautiful!

BASHO



Look at the candle!
What a hungry wind it is . . .
Hunting in the snow!

SEIRA



If there were fragrance
These heavy snow-flakes settling . . .
Lilies on the rocks

BASHO

Ah! I intended
Never never to grow old . . .
Listen: New Year's bell!

JOKUN

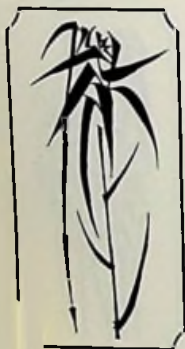


Snow-swallowed valley:
Only the winding river . . .
Black fluent brush-stroke

BONCHO



Roaring winter storm
Rushing to its utter end . . .
Ever-sounding sea
GONSUI



Eleven brave knights
Canter through the whirling snow . . .
Not one bends his neck
SHIKI



Going snow-viewing
One by one the walkers vanish . . .
Whitely falling veils
KATSURI

"Yes, come in!" I cried . . .
But at the windy snow-hung gate
Knocking still went on
KYORAI

See: surviving suns
Visit the ancestral grave . . .
Bearded, with bent canes
BASHO

THE ORPHAN SPEAKS:
The year-end party . . .

I am even envious
Of scolded children

ISSA

I gave the greetings
Of the bright New Year . . . as though
I held a plum-branch

SHIKI

On jolly New Year's Day
My last year's bills drop in
To pay their compliments

ANON.

DEATH-SONG:
Leaf alone, fluttering
Alas, leaf alone, fluttering . . .
Floating down the wind

ANON.

DEATH-SONG:
I have known lovers . . .
Cherry-bloom . . . the nightingale . . .
I will sleep content

ANON.





DEATH-SONG:

Fever-felled half-way,
My dreams arose to march again . . .
Into a hollow land

BASHO

DEATH-SONG:

Three loveliest things:
Moonlight . . . cherry-bloom . . . now I go
Seeking silent snow

RIPPO



Such a fine first dream . . .
But they laughed at me . . . they said
I had made it up

TAKUCHI

Even my plain wife . . .
Exquisite as visitors
On New Year's morning

ISO



New year gift-giving . . .
Ah, baby at her bare breast
Reaching tiny hands

ISSA

First wind of the year . . .
The oil-lamp in the washroom
Shudders and is still

OEMARU



Felicitations!
Still . . . I guess this year too
Will prove only so-so

ISSA



First dream of the year . . .
I kept it a dark secret . . .
Smiling to myself

SHO-U

Sun-melted snow . . .
With my stick I guide this great
Dangerous river

ISSA



From my tiny roof
Smooth . . . soft . . . still-white snow
Melts in melody

ISSA



Icicles and water
Old differences dissolved . . .
Drip down together

TEISHITSU



Old snow is melting . . .
Now the huts unfreezing too
Free all the children

ISSA



A childless housewife . . .
How tenderly she touches
Little dolls for sale

RANSETSU

Now wild geese return . . .
What draws them crying crying
All the long dark night?

ROKA

Pouring floods of rain . . .
Won't Mount Fuji wash away
To a muddy lake?

BUSON

Clear-colored stones
Are vibrating in the brook-bed . . .

Or the water is

SOSEKI



In my new clothing
I feel so different I must
Look like someone else

BASHO

Oh you bawdy breeze . . .
Thatcher bending on the roof
I see the bottom!

ISSA



Immobile Fuji . . .
Alone unblanketed by
Millions of new leaves

BUSON



Spring morning marvel . . .
Lovely namesless little hill
On a sea of mist

BASHO



Passing the doll shop
I picked up the littlest one . . .

Suddenly I smiled

BAISHITSU



There in the water
Color of the water moves . . .
Translucent fishes

RAIZAN



Hazy ponded moon
And pale night sky are broken . . .
Bungling black frog

BUSON

Silver-soft riverside . . .
Dim splash of far-thrown net . . .
Fishing for the moon?

TAIGI

Paper-weights protect
Gay picture-books in the shop . . .
Inquisitive breeze

KITO

Ah-ah-ah-choo! That
Spring catarrh! . . . now I've lost sight
Of my first skylark

YAYU



An April shower . . .
See that thirsty mouse lapping
River Sumida

ISSA



Rainfall in April . . .
Tears from out weeping willow . . .
Petals from our plum

SHOHA

Ah little warbler . . .
Thanks-droppings on my porch
Because I love you?

BASHO



Under my tree-roof
Slanting lines of April rain
Separate to drops

BASHO



Farmer, raise your head . . .
Direct this stranger who will smile
And disappear

BUSON



Good morning, sparrow . . .
Writing on my clean veranda
With your dewy feet

SHIKI



Beach fishermen go
Bobbing out . . . Beach poppies stay
Bending with sea-breeze

KYORAI

Even the ocean
Rising and falling all day . . .
Sighing green like trees

BUSON

I could not see him
That fluttering fly-off bird . . .
But the plum-petals . . .

SHIKI

Gliding river boat . . .
Rising skylarks . . . rippling sounds
To our right and left

RANKO



Bird-droppings pattern
The purples and the yellows of
My iris petals

Shining on the sea . . .
Dazzling sunlight shaking over
Hills of cherry-bloom

BUSON



Over the low hedge
Honest plum distributes petals
Half inside . . . half out

CHORA

Riverbank plum-tree . . .
Do your reflected blossoms
Really flow away?

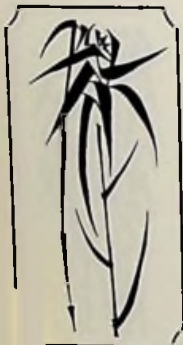
BUSON





Blue evening sea . . .
From spring islands near and far
New lights are shining

SHIKI



The old messenger
Proffering his plum-branch first . . .
Only then the letter

KIKAKU



Midnight full of stars . . .
Dim cherry-petals floating on
Rice-paddy waters

BUSON

Over my shoulder . . .
My friends who followed me were lost
In clouds of blossom

CHORA

The seashore temple . . .
Incoming rollers flow in time
To the holy flute

BUSON

Low-tide morning . . .
The willow's skirts are trailed
In stinking mud

BASHO



Here comes Mr. Horse . . .
Quick, quick, out of the roadway
Happy Sparrowlet

ISSA



Moonlight stillness
Lights the petals falling . . . falling . . .
On the silenced lute

SHIKI

Green . . . green . . . green . . .
Willow-leaf threads are sliding
River-running-water

ONITSURA



Cherry-petal days . . .
Birds with two legs glitter now
Horses gleam with four

ONITSURA



Heat-wavelets rising . . .
Plum-petals drifting wavering
Down on burning rocks
SHIKI



Come now, play with me . . .
Fatherless motherless dear
Little sparrow-child
ISSA



No bold rain-cloud for
A hundred miles around . . . dares
Brave the peonies
BUSON

In the clear fording
Pale feet of the silent girl . . .
Clouding May waters
BUSON

Opening thin arms . . .
A pink peony big as this!
Said my bitty girl
ISSA

Ultra-pink peony . . .
Silver siamese soft-cat . . .
Gold-dust butterfly . . .

BUSON

Energetic ant . . .
Silhouetted on the still
Snowflake-peony

BUSON

In the yard plum-trees
Blossom . . . in the brothel
Girls are buying obis

BUSON

That white peony . . .
Lover of the moon trembling
Now at twilight

GYODAI

Facing the candle
The peony also burning . . .
Motionless as death

KYOROKU





The first firefly . . .
But he got away and I . . .

Air in my fingers

ISSA



Listen, all you fleas . . .
You can come on pilgrimage, o k . . .
But then, off you git!

ISSA



But if I held it . . .
Could I touch the lightness of this
Flutter-butterfly?

BUSON

Hanging sadly down
Amid the merry-makers . . .
Green weeping willow

ROKA SHONIN

Out of my way please
And let me plant my bamboos . . .
Old brother toad

CHORA

For that brief moment
When the firefly went out . . . ○
The lonely darkness
HOKUSHI



Now this old poet
Emerges from the purple depths
Of the convolvulus
CHORA



Pinions pulsating . . .
Your mind traveling afar
Butterfly dreamer?
CHIYO-NI

Moon-in-the-water . . .
Broken-again . . . broken-again . . .
Still a solid seal
CHOSU

Now having taken
Warmed water . . . the vase welcomes
My Camellia
ONITSURA





Fallen now to earth
After dancing journeyings . . .
Kite that lost its soul
KUBONTA



Keeping company
With us, pigeons and sparrows . . .
Low-tide-lookers all
ISSA



With my new clothing
Alas . . . spring has been buried
In that wooden chest
SAIKAKU

Hands upon the ground
Old aristocratic frog
Recites his poem
SOKAN

As I picked it up
To cage it . . . the firefly
Lit my finger-tips

TAIGI



Fleeing the hunter
The firefly took cover . . .
The evening moon

RYOTA



Softly folded fawn
Shivers, shaking off the butterfly . . .
And sleeps again

ISSA

The heavy wagon
Shook all the roadside . . . waking
A single butterfly

SHOHA



In the golden room
Frightened quick calligraphy . . .
Escaping swallow

BUSON



He wades the river
Carrying the girl and see . . .
Carrying the moon
SHIKI



For deliciousness
Try fording this rivulet . . .
Sandals in one hand
BUSON



Elegant singer
Would you further favor us
With a dance . . . o frog?
ISSA

Before the sacred
Mountain shrine of Kamiji . . .
My head bent itself
ISSA

Rainy afternoon . . .
Little daughter you will never
Teach that cat to dance
ISSA

On the low-tide beach
Everything we stoop to pick . . .
Moves in our fingers
CHIYO-NI



Flower-petal fell . . .
Then the rooster crowed, and see . . .
Another petal
BAISHITSU



Dark the well at dawn . . .
Rising with the first bucket . . .
Camellia-blossom
KAKEI

Now take this flea:
He simply cannot jump . . . and
I love him for it
ISSA



The floating heron
Pecks at it till it shatters . . .
Full-moon-on-water
ZUIRYU



For a companion
On my walking trip . . . perhaps
A little butterfly

SHIKI



Ah good Buddhist frog . . .
Rising to a clearer light
By non-attachment

JOSO



Bats come out at dusk . . .
Woman over the way . . . why
Do you stare at me?

BUSON

Overhanging pine . . .
Adding its mite of needles
To the waterfall

BASHO

Squads of frogs jumped in
When they heard the plunk-plash
Of a single frog

WAKYU

Little silver fish
Pointing upstream moving downstream
In clear quick water
SOSEKI



Look . . . the palace . . .
You can glimpse it through that hole
In the mosquito-fog
ISSA



Congratulations
Issa! . . . you have survived to feed
This year's mosquitoes
ISSA

In your summer-room . . .
Garden and mountain going too
As we slowly walk
BASHO



Just beyond the smoke
Of our smudge this evening . . .
Mosquito-music
SHIRAO



Do I hear voices
From far lands above the clouds?
O . . . silly skylarks

KYOROKU

Shortest summer night . . .
In early morning lamps still
Burning on the bay

SHIKI



Moon-in-the-water
Turned a white somersault . . . yes
And went floating off

RYOTA

Even fly-swatting
By these border guards . . . O how
Vicious and correct

TAIGI



Quick-pattering rain . . .
Chance and vanity dictate
Gay impromptu hats

OTSUYU

You hear that fat frog
In the seat of honor, singing
Bass? . . . that's the boss

ISSA



Windy-web spider
What is your silent speaking . . .
Your unsung song?

BASHO



And each morning
Right above this little roof . . .
My private skylark

JOSO

Don't waste precious time
Now, tagging along with me . . .
Brother butterfly

ISSA



Experimenting . . .
I hung the moon on various
Branches of the pine

HOKUSHI



Swat softly softly
At the sick-room flies . . . because
I seek for sleep
SHIKI



The devoted clerk . . .
Not to waste a jot of breeze
Naps on a ledger pillow
ISSA



On his garden path
This sparrow scatters pebbles . . .
Man forgotten
SHOHA

River Mogami
Winding from northern mountains
Washes warm summer
SHIKI

Summer-night insects
Falling burnt and dead . . . upon
My poem's paper
SHIKI

You are just too late
To help me with the lamp . . . my moth
Light-extinguisher

ISSA



Again coolness comes . . .
Silver undersides of leaves
Evening-breeze blown

SHIKI



After that illness
My long gazing at roses
Wearied the eyelids

SHIKI

The night was hot . . .
Stripped to the waist the snail
Enjoyed the moonlight

ISSA



My summer illness . . .
But at last my life was spared
At the very bones

SHIKI

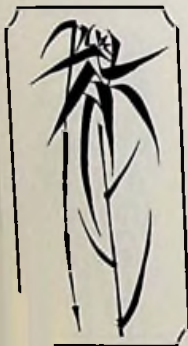


Careful, champion flea
And look before you leap . . .
Here's River Sumida

ISSA

Coming from the bath . . .
Cool on her breasts the warm breeze
Of the veranda

SHIKI



Fui! A sour plum . . .
Thin eyebrows pinched together
On the lovely face

BUSON



Holy noon duet:
Basso-snoring priest . . . devout
Contralto-cuckoo

SHIKI

Farther in the grove
The lantern walks . . . nearer nearer
Sings the nightingale

SHIKI

With the new clothes
Remember . . . the crow stays black
And the heron white

CHORA



I scooped up the moon
In my water bucket . . . and
Spilled it on the grass

RYUHO



Must you come to vex
My sick eyes that still can move . . .
Bed-criss-crossing fly?

SHIKI

Coolness on the bridge . . .
Moon, you and I alone
Unresigned to sleep

KIKUSHA-NI



In the endless rain
Is it turning sunward still . . .
Trusting hollyhock?

HASHO



Hot slow afternoon . . .
Suddenly the hand has stopped . . .
Slow-falling fan

TAIGI



In summer moonlight
They go visiting the graves . . .
Savoring the cool

ISSA



A near nightingale . . .
But my head just couldn't fit
Through the lattices

YAHA

A summer shower . . .
Along all the street, servants
Slapping shut shutters

SHIKI

Rainfall and thunder
Beating on boards and blossoms . . .

Indiscriminate

SAMPO



Rain-obliterated . . .
The river, some roofs,
A bridge without a shore

BASHO



In lantern-light
My yellow chrysanthemums
Lost all their color

BUSON

Morning-misted street . . .
With white ink an artist brushes
A dream of people

BUSON



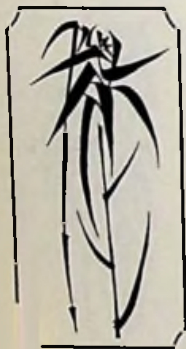
At Nara Temple . . .
Fresh-scented chrysanthemums
And ancient images

BASHO



An old tree was felled . . .
Echoing, dark echoing
Thunder in the Hills

MEISETSU



THE GREAT FIRE OF KANDA
Heat-waves to heaven . . .
Rising from the ruined hearts of
Three thousand homes

SHIKI



Chanting at the altar
Of the inner sanctuary . . .
A cricket priest

ISSA

Sad twilight cricket . . .
Yes, I have wasted once again
Those daylight hours

RIKEI

A sudden shower . . .
Terrified, loud idiot ducks
High-tailing home

KIKAKU

My melons that you
Stole last year . . . this year I place
Upon your grave, my son

OEMARU



On these rainy days
That old poet Ryokan
Wallows in self-pity

RYOKAN



Pitiful . . . fearful . . .
These poor scarecrows look like men
In autumn moonlight

SHIKI

We stand still to hear
Tinkle of far temple bell . . .
Willow-leaves falling

BASHO



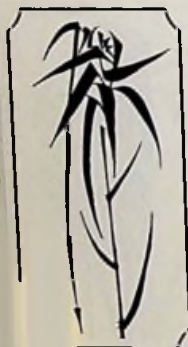
The evening breezes . . .
Water lapping lightly on
The heron's leg-sticks

BUSON



The wet kingfisher
Shakes his feathers in the late
Reflected sunlight

TORI



In unending rain
The house-pent boy is fretting
With his brand-new kite

SHOHA



The calling bell
Travels the curling mist-ways . . .
Autumn morning

BASHO

Nightlong in the cold
That monkey sits conjecturing
How to catch the moon

SHIKI

Dark unending night . . .
Once, outside the paper screen,
A lantern passing

SHIKI

They have gone . . . but
They lit the garden lantern
Of their little house

SHIKI



On one riverbank
Sunbeams slanting down . . . but on
The other . . . raindrops

BUSON



Supper in autumn . . .
Flat light through an open door
From a setting sun

CHORA

September sunshine . . .
The hovering dragonfly's
Shimmering shadow

KARO



Do I dare depend
Upon you for firm friendship
Dear morning-glory?

BASHO

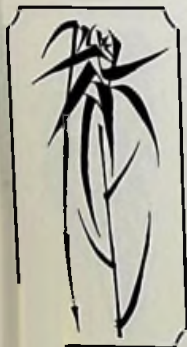


A windblown grass . . .
Hovering mid-air in vain
An autumn dragonfly

BASHO

Now the old scarecrow
Looks just like other people . . .
Drenching autumn rain

SEIBI



Here is the dark tree
Denuded now of leafage . . .
But a million stars

SHIKI

Up from my illness
I went to the chrysanthemums . . .
How cold they smelled!

OTSUJI



Waking in the night
Laddered my autumn coughing
To insect voices

JOSO

Jagged candle-flame . . .
The very shape of autumn sifts
Through the shutters
RAIZAN



Urging on my horse
Into mist-blanketed water . . .
River-gurgle sounds
TAIGI



White chrysanthemums
Making all else about them
Reflected riches
CHORA

Peacefulness . . . today
Fujiana stands above us
Mist-invisible
BASHO



Smack-ack . . . smack-ack . . .
Men driving fish-net stakes
In white-fog morning
BUSON



White autumn moon . . .
Black-branch shadow-patterns
Printed on the mats
KIKAKU



Exquisite the dewy
Bramble . . . to every thorn
A single droplet
BUSON



In this solid mist
What are those people shouting
Between boat and hill?
KITO

Nights are getting cold . . .
Not a single insect now
Attacks the candle
SHIKI

His hat blown off . . .
How pitiless the pelting
Storm on the scarecrow

HAGI-JO



In my own village
I think there are more scarecrows left
Than other people

CHASEI

Swallows flying south . . .
My house too of sticks and paper
Only a stopping-place

KYORAI



After moon-viewing
My companionable shadow
Walked along with me

SODO



After the windstorm
Foraging for firewood . . .
Three fierce old women

BUSON



Roadside barley-stalks
Torn by our clutching fingers . . .
As we smiled farewell

BASHO

Suddenly chill fall . . .
Why should that ragged fortune-teller
Look so surprised?

BUSON



All the world is cold . . .
My fishing-line is trembling
In the autumn wind

BUSON

Autumn breezes shake
The scarlet flowers my poor child
Could not wait to pick

ISSA



Seeking in my hut
For unlocked midnight treasures . . .
A cricket burglar

ISSA

Little orphan girl . . .
Eating a lonely dinner
In winter twilight
SHOHAKU



In the wintry moon
Gales raging down the river
Hone the rock-edges
CHORA



The new-laid garden . . .
Rocks settling in harmony
In soft winter rain
SHADO

When I raised my head . . .
There was my rigid body
Lying bitter cold
SEIBI



Over wintry fields
Bold sparrow companies fly
Scarecrow to scarecrow
SAZANAMI



Bath-tub firewood . . .
Thanks for this final service
Faithful old scarecrow
JOSO



My very bone-ends
Made contact with the icy quilts
Of deep December
BUSON



Poor thin crescent
Shivering and twisted high . . .
In the bitter dark
ISSA

So lonely . . . lovely . . .
The exquisite pure-white fan
Of the girl I lost
BUSON

In winter moonlight
A clear look at my old hut . . .
Dilapidated
ISSA

Black calligraphy
Of geese . . . pale printed foothills . . .
For a seal, full moon

BUSON



In my dark winter
Lying ill . . . at last I ask
How fares my neighbor?

BASHO

The old dog lies intent
Listening . . . does he overhear
The burrowing moles?

ISSA



A thousand roof-tops
A thousand market-voices . . .
Winter-morning mist

BUSON

First snow last night . . .
There across the morning bay
Sudden mountain-white

SHIKI





When the waterpot
Burst that silent night with cold . . .
My eyes split open
BASHO

Winter having touched
These fields . . . the very tomtits
Perch on the scarecrow
KIKAKU



Cold winter rainfall . . .
Mingling all their gleaming horns
Oxen at the fence
RANKO

See the red berries . . .
Fallen like little footprints
On the garden snow
SHIKI



Winter-evening snow . . .
The uncompleted bridge is all
An arch of whiteness
BASHO

Moonlit snowfields . . .
Here the bloodied samurai
Cast their noble lives
KIKAKU



Midnight wanderer
Walking through the snowy street . . .
Echoing dog-bark
SHIKI



As to icicles
I often wonder why they grow
Some long . . . some short
ONITSURA

In winter moonlight
Fish-net stakes cast their shifting
Uneven shadows
SHIRAO



Colder far than snow . . .
Winter moonlight echoing on
My whitened hair
JOSO



So close . . . so vast . . .
Rattling winter hailstones on
My umbrella-hat

BASHO

Long-walking lantern
Disappeared into some house . . .
Desolate white hills

SHIKI



Solitary crow . . .
Companioning my progress
Over snowy fields

SENNA

Staring delighted
Even at walking horses
In new morning snow

BASHO



Blinding wild snow
Blows, whirls and drifts about me . . .
In this world alone

CHORA

Winter moonlight casts
Cold tree-shadows long and still . . .

My warm one moving

SHIKI



In that cold darkness
My horse stumbled suddenly
Just outside the house

BUSON

Look at that stray cat
Sleeping . . . snug under the eaves
In the whistling snow

TAIGI



In my new-year heart
I feel no fury . . . even at
These trampers of snow

YAYU



Coffin and mourners
Passed me walking down the street . . .
Midnight at New Year's

SHIKI



To celebrate New Year's
We feast newly-opened eyes on
Snowy Fujiama
SOKAN

Poet nightingale . . .
Will I hear your later verses
In the vale of death?
ANON.

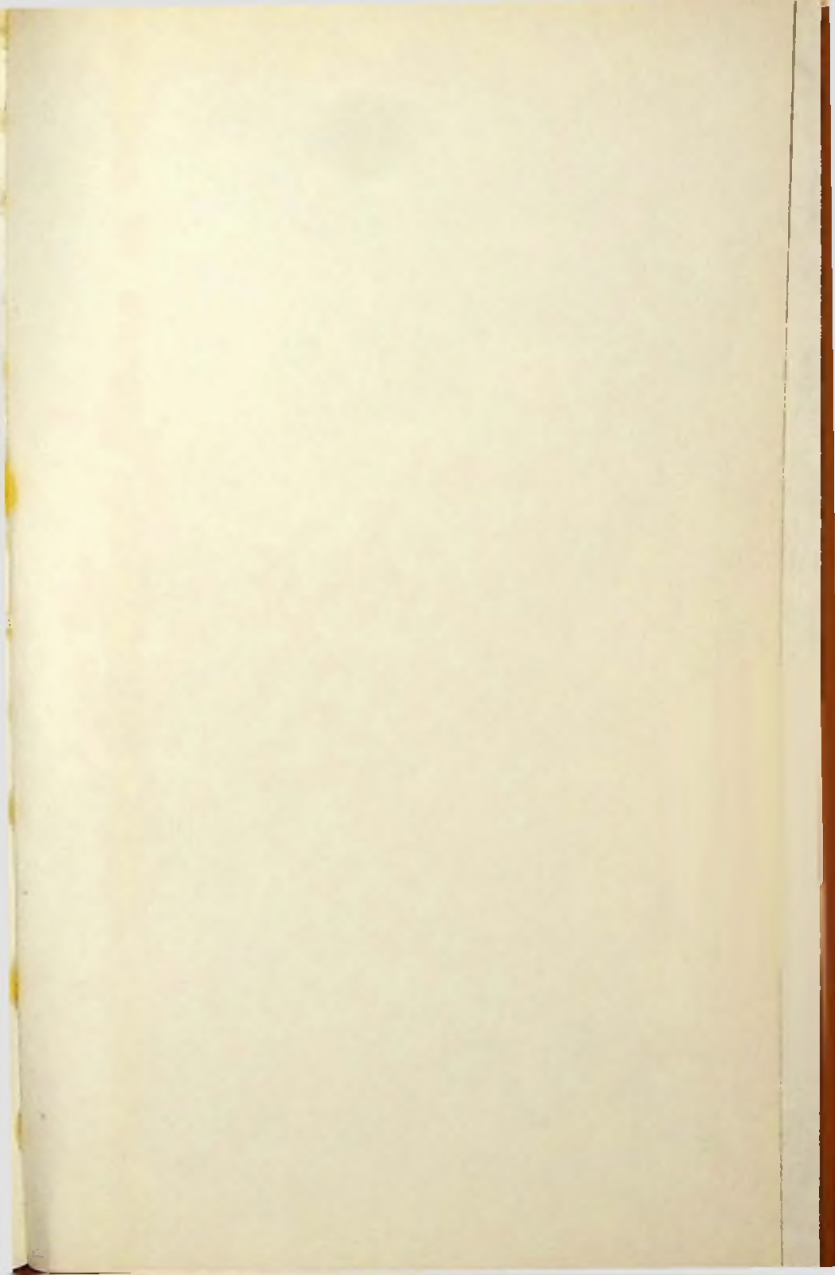


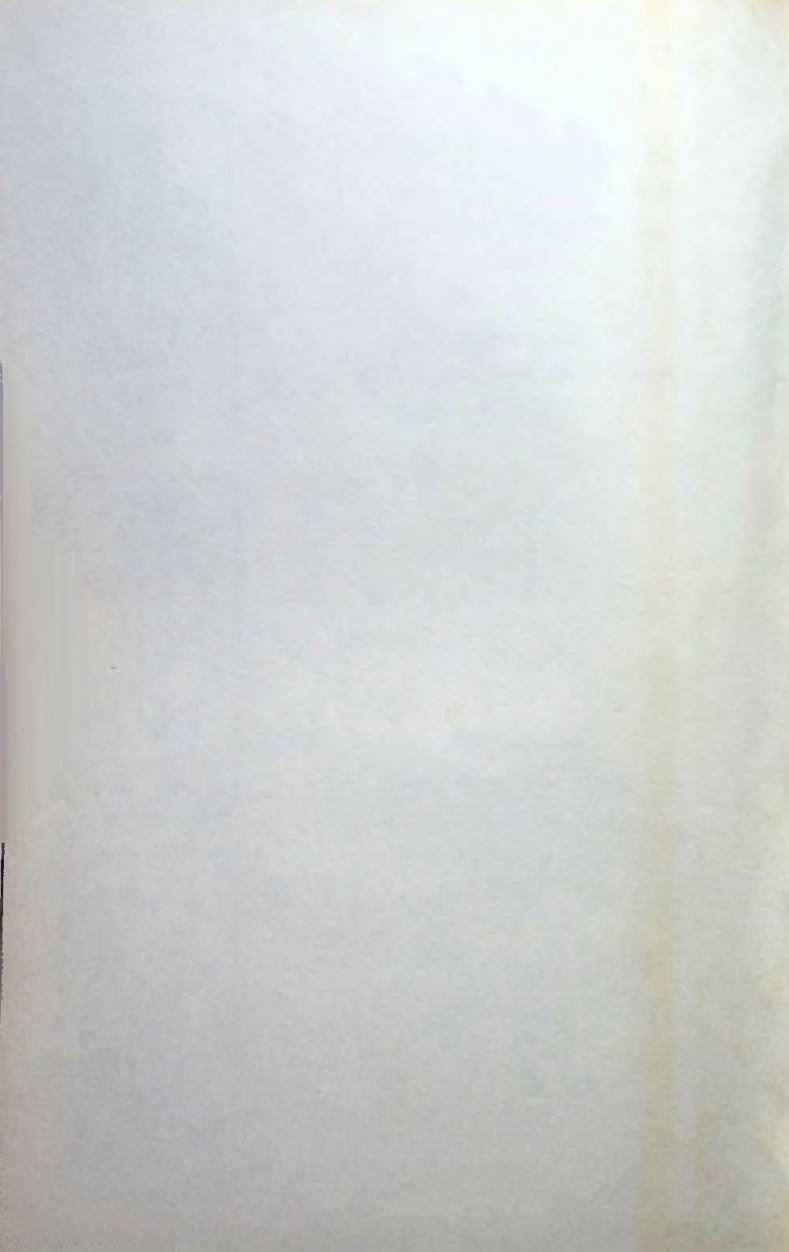
DEATH-SONG:
Suddenly you light
And as suddenly go dark . . .
Fellow-firefly
CHINE-JO



DEATH-SONG:
Full-moon and flowers
Solacing my forty-nine
Foolish years of song
ISSA

DEATH-SONG:
If they ask for me
Say: he had some business
In another world
SOKAN





each of them is richly suggestive of meaning on many levels. Yet even the most subtle and complex strike a universal chord, a chord that finds personal resonances in each of us.

The universality of haiku is not an accidental thing, for the early developers of this seventeen-syllable form searched for keys that would be common to all men. One common theme they discovered was the sense of the passing seasons, and so, nearly all haiku have a seasonal reference that helps to set the mood of the poem. And this power to suggest mood and call up the emotions of the reader is what makes haiku the essence of poetry.

Often, by juxtaposition of one image unexpectedly against another, haiku reveal an essential aspect of reality or provide a new way of seeing old knowledge. But such insights are presented in only one or two clear-cut pictures, in which the outlines or essentials are caught. Thus, haiku can become the starting point for trains of thought and feeling that take each reader to his own destination.

It is this ability to be many things to many people that makes haiku so compelling. Three lines of gentle eloquence speak to each of us, and in their brevity lies their strength. Perhaps, then, the secret of haiku is that they never place words between the truth and ourselves.

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