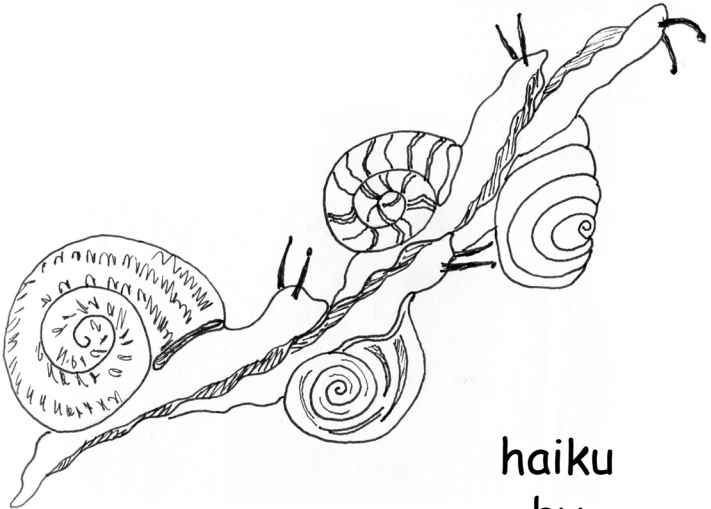


snail my friend



haiku
by
Issa & Nika

snail my friend is a collection of haiku
by the beloved Japanese poet Issa
(1762-1826) and the North American
poet Nika (1946-)

Nika's haiku were written in direct
response to those of Issa or as a
response to similar life experiences.

snail my friend
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Cover art by Nika

snail my friend

haiku

by

Issa & Nika

road beckoning
I snatch up
my fan

Issa

come with me
to view the mountains
old hat

Nika

all by itself
without any help . . .
blossoming mountain

Issa

all on its own
the ancient apple
blooms again

Nika

at my gate
wildly it grows . . .
spring pine

Issa

the garden gate
held shut . . .
morning glories

Nika

bamboo shoot
springing up
just anywhere

Issa

bindweed
is there no end
to your wantonness

Nika

under my house
an inchworm
measuring the joists

Issa

inchworm
not quite reaching
the leaf beyond

Nika

first firefly
why turn away
it's Issa

Issa

stay by
little sparrow
it's Nika who feeds you

Nika

out of the darkness
back into the darkness -
affairs of the cat

Issa

neighbour's cat
only the moon
knows her secrets

Nika

hey boatman
no pissing on the moon
in the waves

Issa

after the rain
boys
pissing in puddles

Nika

naked
on a naked horse
through the pouring rain

Issa

ah, the joy
of walking naked
summer rain

Nika

wild geese murmuring
are they spreading
rumours about me

Issa

mister housefly
do you share my secrets
with your friends

Nika

one human being
one fly
in a large room

Issa

darkness
everywhere
one mosquito

Nika

from the nostril
of the great Buddha comes
a swallow

Issa

the great Buddha too
suffers the indiscretions
of pigeons

Nika

snail, finding
the path
to my foot

Issa

snail my friend
all this way to my door
just as I am leaving

Nika

frog and I
eyeball
to eyeball

Issa

driftwood knot staring back

Nika

the temple blossoms
without struggle
fall

Issa

evening breeze
poppy petals fall
one by one

Nika

each time I swat
a fly, I squint
at the mountain

Issa

Buddhist monk
hesitates . . . then steps
on the wasp

Nika

crescent moon
bent to the shape
of the cold

Issa

gibbous moon
fat
with summer heat

Nika

commit no nuisance
you sparrows
on our old bedding

Issa

mind your manners
sparrows
I've just washed these quilts

Nika

migrating servants
never really saw Edo . . .
umbrella-hats wave farewell

Issa

Banff tourists
never really see Mt. Rundle . . .
in and out of souvenir shops

Nika

from the end
of the forest ranger's broom . . .
spring departs

Issa

from the end
of the gardener's rake . . .
autumn leaves

Nika

for me all alone
his sober face . . .
a frog

Issa

in her absence
his forlorn look . . .
the dog

Nika

swarms of mosquitoes
but without them
it's a little lonely

Issa

this winter day
without mosquitoes or flies
a little lonely

Nika

don't worry spiders
I keep house
casually

Issa

above my bed
a spider on patrol
for flies

Nika

moss blossoms bloom
in a little crack . . .
stone Jizo

Issa

the stone Buddha
encrusted with lichen
still smiling

Nika

eating my rice
in solitude . . .
autumn wind

Issa

evening rain -
below folded hands
a bowl of rice and beans

Nika

when I die
guard my grave
katydid!

Issa

oh worms!
enjoy this withered flesh
when I am gone

Nika

Nika is the pen name of Dr. Jim Force, a retired educator who lives in Victoria, BC with his wife, Colleen and their two Cairn Terriers.

Acknowledgements

Nika's haiku first appeared in the following publications:

ah, the joy – Modern Haiku
Buddhist monk - Albatross
come with me - Tidepool
darkness – Frogs Singing
driftwood knot – Black Before the Sun
evening rain – Blithe Spirit
inchworm – Blithe Spirit
mind your manners - Haiku Quarterly
neighbour' cat – Haiku Canada Anthology
oh worms – Haiku Canada Anthology
snail my friend - Frogpond
the great Buddha too – Woodpecker
this winter day – One Breath

Issa Translators

Steven Addiss with Fumiko
& Ailira Yamamoto: swarms
of mosquitoes, wild geese
murmuring & out of the
darkness.

Robert Hass: naked, don't
worry spiders, one human
being, under my house &
crescent moon.

David Lanoue: for me all
alone, from the end,
migrating servants, all by
itself, moss blossoms bloom,
at my gate, the temple
blossoms, hey boatman,
eating my rice & when I die.

Lucien Stryk: each time I
swat, bamboo shoot, road
beckoning, snail finding, frog
and I & first firefly.



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