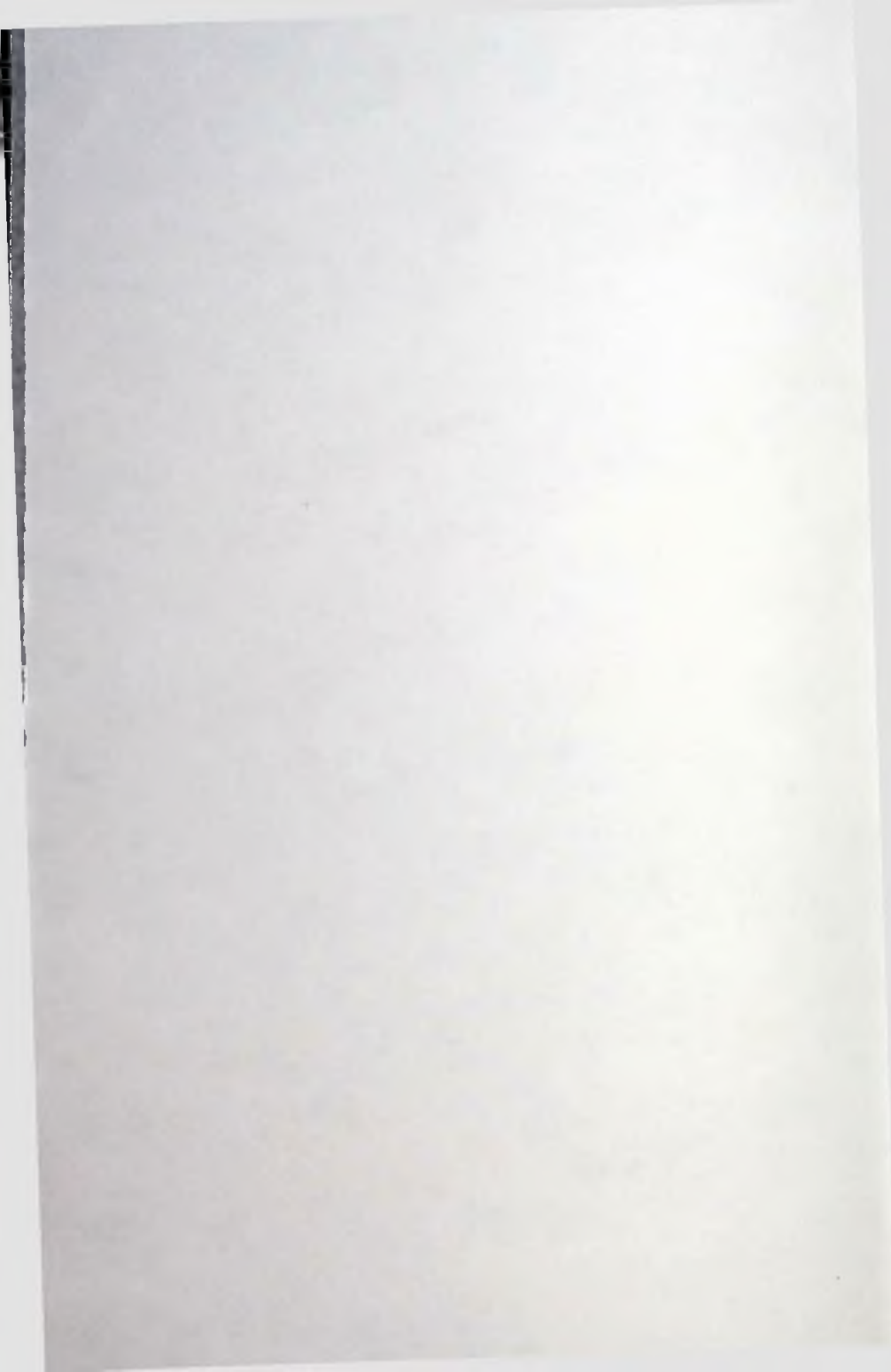
A minimalist line drawing of three tulips. The tulips are depicted with simple outlines for their petals and long, slender stems. One tulip is positioned at the top left, another at the top right, and a third at the bottom left. The stems of the tulips are long and thin, with some crossing each other. The drawing is done in a simple, sketchy style.

WHITE TULIPS &

Ronald Baatz



for Norb Blei
kindred spirit



Leafless birches-
what the ribs of clouds
must look like

Getting close to home-
to keep a tooth from aching
I tiptoe through the snow

Sunny cold wind
blowing at the house-
I come up from the dark basement

For one sly moment
snow passing by the window
horizontally

When the vultures spot me
they all fly to the top of
the same leafless tree

Circus of squirrels-
my toothless comb
on the windowsill

Yawning nude in the window
suddenly I see the
school bus go by

My beer-
lovely the way she dips
her pinky in its head

Dead moth-
only a breeze
moving its wings

Human souls
fishing in
cold shadows

Crows
in their black robes
enjoy a good laugh

In the rain
chained to a tree-
used snow tires for sale

Early spring morning
slowly bringing to light how
darkness had twisted the earth

Petals from white tulips
fall into their own shadows
when I salt my food

Separating the remaining petals
I inhale the dark
wound inside

Edges of petals
turning a burnt sepia-
hours flame up then die

My lecture on lightning bugs
puts her
to sleep

In the yard
worms waking up
early

Through the trees I can see
the light of a window
that isn't my home

In love's bitterly confusing passage
the heart turns like
an old soft pear

Walk this way-
let the birds enjoy
their berries

A good fish sandwich
eaten down by the river
turns my life around

Like a monkey
I peel an orange
by the dark fireplace

An insect
with so many legs
I had to kill it

Such horrifying dreams-
I turn the pillow over
hoping for better

Before sleep she speaks of
her love for her two cats-
tailless I drink wine

Even writing a poem
as short as this one
is a rotten lonely business

Flooded with green tea
pissing all morning long
pants zipper worn thin

Reading the newspaper
on a Sunday morning in bed
toes pointed towards heaven

In old age
I'll give up the pen
take up the watercolors

Knowing that I am drunk
with passion for you
bees buzz right on by

As though eager to cut itself
on the thin sharp moon-
mint growing wild

Irises too old
for anything more
than drizzle

Cold mist on
beautiful red
lipless tomatoes

In the middle of the night
my mouth wakes up
wordless and dry

Ah!
today haiku come easy
as picking them off a small fruit tree

Bearded man alone-
pouring sugar into
blackness

Stains of red in the snow-
Christmas cactus petals
shaken from a mop

Day after day
sentences written
by naked fingers

Outside the tavern
I walk the dark windy road
looking for her car

A gladiola
pink as a watermelon
naïve as the dawn

And so I sang
like rain
caged

Overlooked dung-
before my birth
rumors of my death

Dead leaves-
more unique
than living ones

Sun
setting in hell
for refueling

Bells and drums-
old age makes a monkey
out of you

Edges of
clouds on fire-
wonderful and pure

Over the starving body
of a sleepless lover-
the hypnotic moon

Using a stick in soft dirt
I write the last sentence
at Mt T

My lover smiles
despite plagues of
flies, poets and boils

At the park
kids laughing at
the shape of my pants

Sparrow pecking
at the shadow
of a swing

Sunset flaring-
a woman's face has
twenty different ages

Her lips
soft as
ant dirt

Everywhere I look
drawings of black ants
in my haiku notebook

Picking the
last of the mint leaves
I pick a spider web also

Pen
leaving
black trail

Fingers shaking
she crams her lover's poems
into a hurricane box

Coming out of the bathroom
my unbuckled belt sounds
like the bell on a goat

Red plastic chopsticks
left in the kitchen sink
until morning

Damned insomnia!
I get up and drink more wine
eat fish from a cloudy jar

Looking at the stars
I begin to understand
growth in the soil

Drops of rain
that roll off mushrooms
don't go far

Wondrous many stars
in a black stomach
of mystery

Blouse of yellow silk-
the buttons she leaves unbuttoned
yellow also

I wake to spring rain
creating thin rivers in
the earth's callous skin

A cold wind comes to the house
after feeding crows
thoughts of death

Horny all night long
so when dawn's light comes
I crave its untouched pinkness

After making love
she drives slowly into town
caressing the wheel

Awful
smell of dead stars-
this sensitive nose of mine

Between us
and the grave-
birds bathing

Burying my dog
at the edge of dark woods-
a crow limps nearby

I balance a pen
across my dry lips
before falling off to sleep

A storyline follows home
every little
dusty sparrow

The crows, they turn blacker
when I dump ashes
on the compost pile

Like eating a praying mantis-
this string bean's
so delicate

And so we got drunk
and we squeezed our heads
like melons

Fool around
with the arrangement too much
and petals start falling off

A lone woman
rows across the lake-
sharp knife in her pocket

The curves of your body
in the curves of mine-
when we are old and blind

Going down the drain
a tooth from my comb
like a canoe over the falls

The robin
puts its head down in the wind
and runs a few feet

Stiff
and wormless-
the old hunchback robin

While drinking to my wife's beauty
her little feet
worry me silly

A thousand nosy porches-
the moon's
lower jaw

Walking the chilly dawn road-
a box of stick matches
rattling in my pocket

Where men recently fished through ice
now the sparkling waves
of spring

Gray sunlight
in thin branches-
despair has no wings

These poems-
with enough of them
you can start a small fire

All is emptiness
except where snow is piled
in a bird's nest

On the patio
snow melts at the
eager feet of chickadees

Shadows of branches
like dark roads on
winter's snowy map

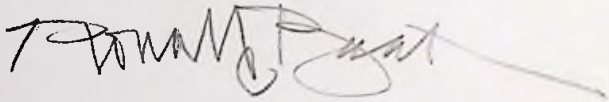


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White Tulips
was originally published
in a very limited edition
by Leonard Seastone at
Tideline Press
in 2003

some of
these poems
appeared in:

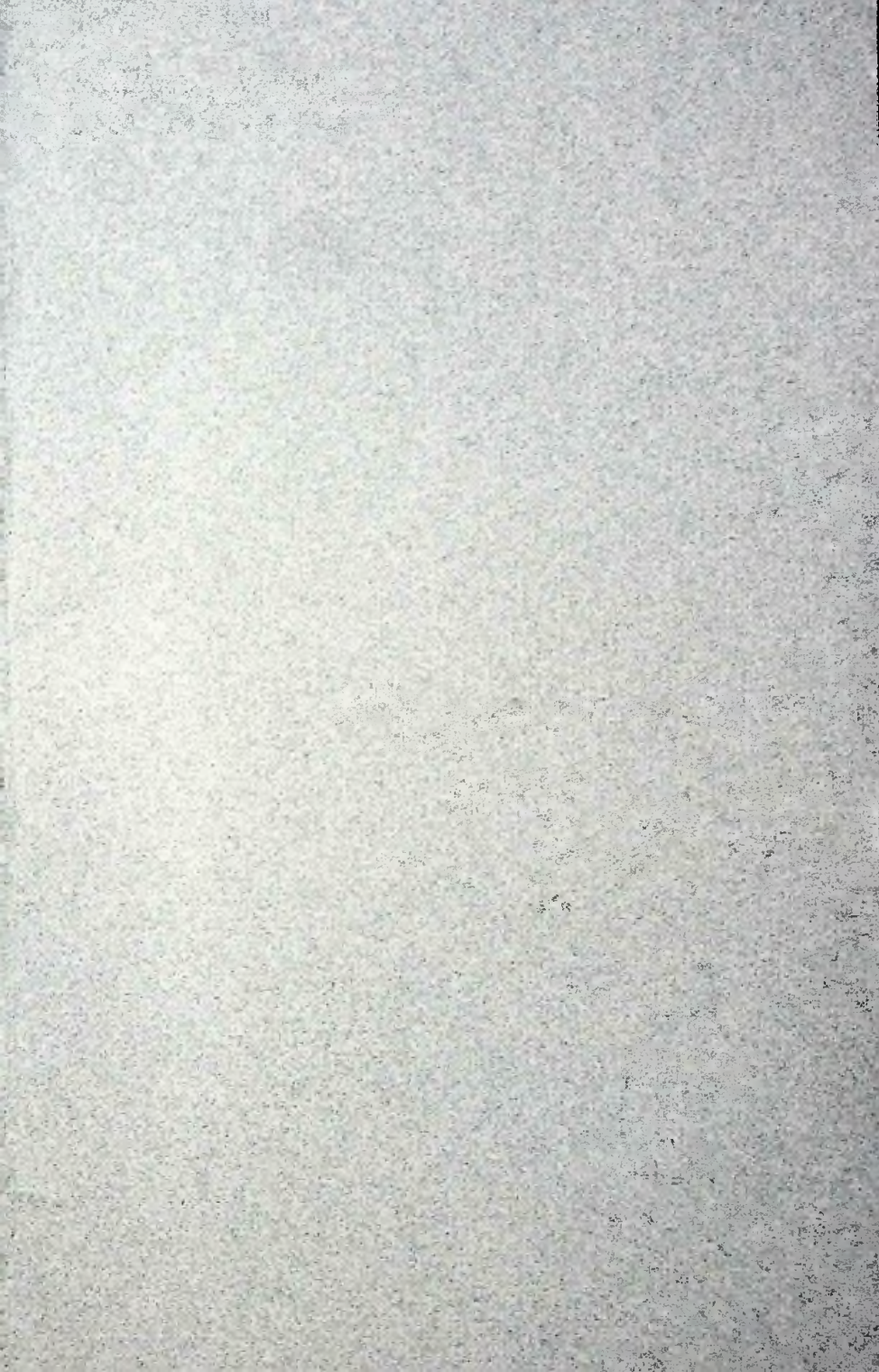
BASHO'S ROAD
CULTURAL WEEKLY
DURABLE GOODS
FROGPOND
HARBINGER ASYLUM
ISSA'S UNTIDY HUT

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ronald Baatz', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ronald Baatz

2014

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