

70 Sevens

Pathways of the Dragonfly



Tombo

Haiiku Life Works Series

Number 1 70 Seven: Pathways of the Dragonfly
by Tombo

Pathways of the Dragonfly



Tombo

Illustrations by Ewa Yuen Lee

Middlewood Press
Salt Lake City, Utah

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The Haiku Sequence

The haiku sequence is written for the same purpose as the single haiku—to express the haiku moment. Each poem in the sequence thus expresses a single moment, and the entire sequence presents a continuing series of moments.

A sequence can be written by several poets or by one poet alone. The practice of writing sequences is different from the sequential efforts in linked verse (*renga* or *renku*) of adding capping lines of 7-7 to a link of 5-7-5 syllables, or 5-7-5 to a link of 7-7. These linked verses are distinguished by a number of rules, the main one being that any two links—five lines total—can be read as a complete poem of 5-7-5 7-7 or 7-7 5-7-5, no matter where the pair of links are in the verse.

The first haiku in a haiku sequence should contain a season (*ki*) or a season word (*kigo*) to set the mood, for sequences are mood pieces. Unlike *renga*, they also revolve around themes:

Shiki and others of his time wrote haiku sequences composed in groups of ten. Natsume Soseki was among those who composed haiku in sequential form. These verses were often uneven and united only by the *shigeri*. They are not so much a sequence as ten variations on a theme. Or, better still, a kind of passacaglia,* in which the theme is constantly repeated in some part of the ten variations that luxuriate around it. (R. H. Blyth, *Haiku*, Volume 1, Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1964, p. 380.)

Obviously, a haiku sequence cannot be dashed off without some knowledge of the “rules.” Each haiku within a sequence should be able to stand alone as a haiku, without leaning on what has gone before or after, or without depending on the title. One weak haiku can spoil the entire sequence. On

**Passacaglia* is a musical form based on a dance (usually with a continuous ground base).

the other hand, the sequence is also unified by a season and a cohesive theme, whether general or specific, such as a theme of birds or of sparrows, a theme of trees or of willows. Once the mood is selected, it should be sustained.

This duality is one of the strengths of the form. The haiku sequence represents overall what a single haiku represents individually: separateness in unity.

Sunflowers

This summer day—
from the look of sunflowers
—should last forever

By the sunlit fence
Picasso's sunflowers grouped
in clots of yellow

Obscured by clouds—
still sunflowers follow
the sun's passage

Long after sunset
petals of the sunflowers
hold the last light

A single bluejay
ruffled by autumn wind—
worries the sunflower

First autumn rain
sunflower heads lean over
more and more

Ripe sunflowers—
heads toppled over the fence
in autumn rain

Fourth of July

July evening;
the full moon outshines
the sky rocket

The little boy
at the fireworks stand ...
just can't decide

A rocket bursts—
from the amusement park, sounds
of the roller coaster

The sparkler goes out
and with it—the face
of the child

Just a few
distant firecrackers
and a dog barking

Nearby
a string of lady fingers
sputters itself out

Across the river:
the last skyrocket bursts
and spills its stars

Winter Mannequins

I

Holiday season
mannequins wigless and naked
in a store window

Leg warmers
on the mannequin couple
snowflakes falling

Sleet at the window
braless mannequins awaiting
winter lingerie

fashion mannequins
all dressed up in party clothes
and no place to go

fingers just touching
bride and groom mannequins
unrequited love

blonde in spring
brunette in winter
the same mannequin

Streaks of winter dawn:
and still they gaze eye to eye
the mannequin pair

II

In wintry moonlight
the nails of the mannequin
gleam blood-red

pulling the mannequin
limb from limb—
a change of seasons

Mannequin bride—
gazing at the winter moon
smiling wistfully

For the latest fad
the mannequin has new hair
in punk rock colors

Light of a fake moon
gleams in the mannequin's eyes;
winter rain

CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS
Still the mannequins stand there
in their finery

In a cold dawn;
the mannequins are partying
with empty glasses

Twilight deepens
not a light is left
through the night

Silver moon and stars
light the night
forming a path

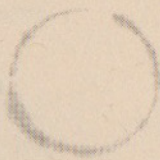
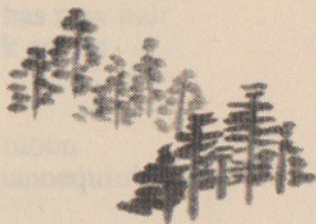


“Play Misty for Me”

First autumn rain
among the distant pine trees
... playing misty

Misty autumn;
not a single cicada
saying anything

Rising moon—
and mist drifts over
forming clouds



Thickening mists;
frogs among the wet leaves
bellies gleaming

Just misty rain
nothing much special
about it

Twilight deepens;
voices of the wood ducks
through marshland mist

Sliver-thin moon;
light rain among the pine trees
still "playing misty"

Black Angus

A meadowlark sings;
motionless in the field
the Black Angus bull

Cows in one pasture
Black Angus bull in another;
afternoon heat

Penned up
outside the cow's corral—
the black bull's stance

Between pasture fence
and distant fishing stream—
the angry black bull

Under full moonlight
the Black Angus cattle—
and their blacker shadows

The corraled cows—
neither they nor the black bull
appear concerned

In deep night shadows
the Black Angus bull—silent
by the pasture fence

Familiar Sayings Haiku

Ancient pond:
frog "jumped over the moon"
Pow!

"Damsel in distress"
one green wing caught fast
in the spider's lair

Poor grasshopper—
last night's freeze took it
"out of this world"

"You can't win them all"
contest beetles released
in a mulberry bush

Art Galleria:
"the blind leading the blind"
hand linked to hand

After April rain
"Somewhere over the rainbow"
a clap of thunder

"The nightingale
tells its fairy tale"
Moon through the window

Carribean Cruise

St. Thomas Island:
tree frogs making "a joyful noise
unto the Lord"

At anchor
watching the red sun set ...
waves lapping the boat

Carribean moonlight:
someone dips an oar, tree frogs
go silent

Carribean moon:
a skim of rain shatters
its reflection

Sudden rain squall;
sailboats turn in the wind
and head shoreward

Lightning storm breaks
above a far distant island;
the boat rocks at anchor

Carribean rain squall;
the small boat circles its anchor
for the third time

The Hawk's Cry

The hawk's cry—
dairy cows wade the creek
homeward bound

The hawk's cry—
distant billowing clouds
begin to shatter

The hawk's cry—
sunset clouds fade to gray
beyond the mesa

The hawk's cry—
suddenly day darkens
to misty dark

The hawk's cry—
from grey clouds comes slanting
a splatter of rain

The hawk's cry—
a steady autumn rain
begins to fall

The hawk's cry—
it cuts through the cold
of autumn rain

“The Dreams of Warriors”

Corregidor's Bay;
heaps of rusting munition cans
and the lapping tide

Impending storm—
old battleship's wreckage
just off Key Largo

Battle of Phillipines;
hundreds of schools of minnows
among ship ruins

Old captain seagull
atop the wrecked rib bones
of a man-o'-war

Reefs at low tide
great barnacle-laden cannon
sprouting coral

Dune sand piling up
by a rusted old derelict
seagrass through it

The sea darkens ...
divers come up from the wreck
with the day's booty

Bridal Kimono

Garden wedding:
on her bridal kimono
the white cherry petals

Blue iris blossoms
pattern her kimono sleeves—
plum petals drifting

Cherry blossoms
match exactly the pattern
of her kimono

Droplets of spring rain
fall among the kimono's
flower-patterned sleeves

Viewing *sakura*
she tucks a sprig in the *obi*
of her kimono

For the viewing—
her kimono, with the *obi*
of cornflower blue

After the wedding—
scent of cherry blossoms
in her kimono folds

Spring Scenes



Mending the gate;
bush warblers chittering
in the plum tree

Along the path
to the onion patch,
primroses!

Walking barefoot—
that one sharp stone
right on the path

The little barn owl
sitting on the pine branch—
he gives a hoot

After a spring gale
untangling the strings
of wind chimes

These new wind chimes
take a bit more breeze
than the old ones

All of a sudden—
rain on the geraniums
still April wet

Whale Voices

Spraying spout
of the surfacing whale—
sunlight through it

Misty night air;
from the whaling boat, sounds
of men's laughter

Harpoon sings out—
the whale slams into the sea
and red foam rises

On a sea of blood—
the harpooned whale floats
shoreward, sluggishly

Beaching the whale—
one eye still reflects
the distant sea

Bones of a beached whale
white on the moonlit sand—
sea wind through them

Among the white bones
of the whale's rib cage—
the drifting sand

Autumn Leaves

Having raked the leaves
into a tidy pile—
striking the match

The fallen leaves;
at the flame's first touch
... crackling

One burning leaf
floats on the air a moment
and blackens

Stirring the bonfire;
the smell of scorched leaves
thickens the breeze

Feeding the bonfire
branches of tent caterpillars
one at a time

A few glowing leaves
fly up from the bonfire
... and float away

Autumn rain—
sputtering in the ashes
of the bonfire

Fireflies

I

Fireflies flit by
speed-of-light takes on
other meanings

tracking fireflies—
we discover leaf shapes
twig shapes

almost seen
in the firefly's glow
a something or other

jogging along
with a firefly or two
stars flickering

burning our plates
in the picnic fire—ah,
dancing fireflies!

Evening breezes;
farm lights through the elms
flicker of fireflies

as if the Milky Way
is falling through the woods
scattered fireflies

II

Night shadows
fireflies with a glow on
come out to play

Following the flight
of the little firefly's
taillight glow

Off and on
among the water weeds
the fireflies' lights

From leaf to leaf
to leaf ... the firefly
lights up the path

Drunk with light
fireflies in and out
of the summer grove

Fireflies

carrying their little glow
into woodsy darkness

In woodsy darkness

flight of a love-lit firefly
now here, now there

Firefly Lights

dark of the moon
alone except for fireflies
and countless stars

summer grove
firefly flits about drunk
with light

little firefly,
I'm alone tonight—and you
light up my life!

between twinkle of stars
and twinkle of fireflies
all this darkness

cool breeze—
the firefly's light
goes out

the loneliness ...
little firefly's light went out
—stayed out

In the summer grove
after the fireflies—
only shadows

Rafting Sauk River

Sauk River sandbar:
deer tracks down to the water
deer tracks going back

The various ways
river water molds itself
over lava rocks

River grasses
blooming clusters of white stars;
Skagit Valley moon

In muggy backwater
bursting cattails drift—
their autumn snow

Evening rain;
raft hung up on rocky shoals
river rushing by

Above Sauk River—
bald eagles are nesting
even in cold rain

Night camp:
across the river—car lights
wind the country road

The Winter Mouse

On a dusty shelf
in the old mountain cabin—
dry mouse tracks

Wintry moon:
grey of the old dog's muzzle
sniffing the mouse trail

Winter mouse—
skittering off into a hole
in the woodpile

On the woodpile
droppings of the winter mouse
frozen solid

Woodpile dwindles—
nest of the winter mouse
exposed to the wind

Winter mice
up in the attic rafters—
patter of little feet

Ho! winter mouse!
you, too, survived it
—the bitter winter

So Summer Passes

Fish blood drying
on the warm river rocks—
blow flies gone mad

A soft west wind
moves among the pasture elms
sunlight flickering

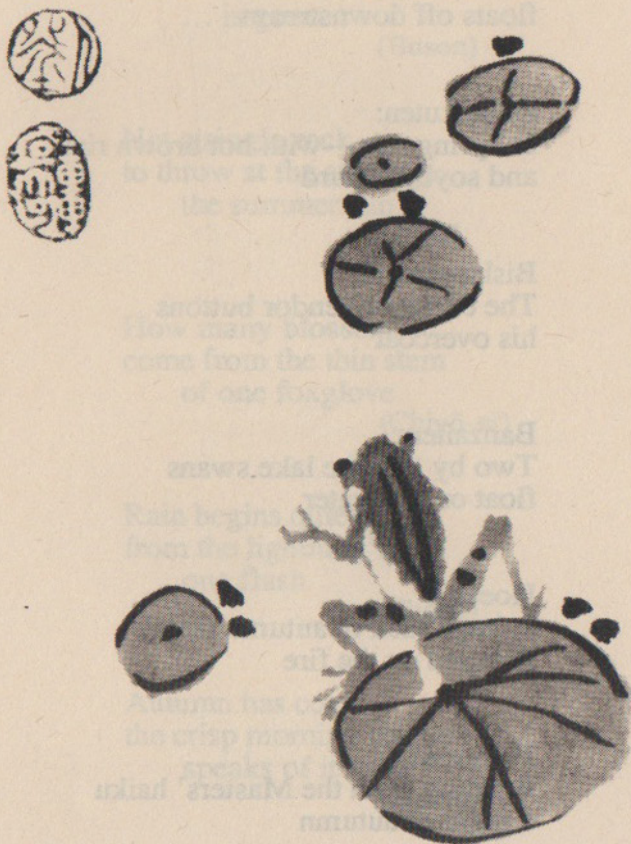
The same bright stars
twinkle in the summer sky
twinkle in the still pond

Falling star—
marshmallow catches fire
over the embers

Sultry night
the cicada finds his love
how quiet it gets

Night camp—
a fish-jump-in sound
in the stillness

Midnight hour:
frogs calling from the bayou
wind in the willows



K.Y. Lau

Seven Lucky Gods of Happiness (*Shichi Fukujin*)

Ebisu:

Hooked on the fishline—the lure
floats off downstream

Daikokuten:

In spring rain—with hot brown rice
and soybean curd

Bishamonten:

The chestnut vendor buttons
his overcoat

Banzaiten:

Two by two the lake swans
float on the water

Hoechi:

A huge sack of autumn leaves
dumped on the fire

Fukurokujū:

Reading from the Masters' haiku
a night of autumn

Jurōjin:

Fixed on Polaris—the small boat
bounces on the waves

After the Style of ...

Sweeping the path:
The snail that never moved
... is gone
(Buson)

Not a single rock
to throw at the starlings:
the summer sun
(Taigi)

How many blossoms
come from the thin stem
of one foxglove
(Chiyō-ni)

Rain begins quietly
from the lightning's
one flash
(Shōha)

Autumn has come—
the crisp morning breeze
speaks of it first
(Bashō)

Yes, winter is here:
 Today the distant hills
 are sprinkled with snow
 (Issa)

This is all there is,
 the trail comes to an end
 among the nettles
 (Bashō)

City Dump

Dew-wet morning:
pickup loaded with old tires
at the city dump

The city landfill:
a torn Raggedy Andy hugs
a worn Raggedy Ann

On a pile of trash
red tricycle, front wheel
missing

Pickup truck:
They throw out a high chair
three-legged

Evening shadows
over the landfill—
still the seagulls

Full moon;
even the city dump
gets its share

Morning sun:
Bulldozers level the mounds
of yesterday's trash

Mountain Stream

Shifting little rocks
the pack horses wade upstream;
moss on the willows

Drinking from the stream—
petals of the mountain plum
fall now and again

A little warbler
sings by the clear mountain stream
breeze among green leaves

Two butterflies flit
above the mountain rapids—
the long afternoon

Sunlight flickers ...
minnows in the mountain stream
flow glittering by

Faint in the twilight
flutterings of a white moth
above the stream's mist

Late shadows gather;
the sound of the mountain stream
is a lullaby

Birds of a Feather

Winter's brittle cold;
screech of a night owl
rattles the stars

Wind and hawk
flow in a soundless path ...
the full moon rises

Only its cry
reveals the night bird
beyond the clouds

After sundown:
slow spiral of the hawk
above the bush rabbit

Autumn wind and rain;
the plover repeats itself
crying in the reeds

Gray fishhawk sits
on a gnarled pine top—
tide's changing

Old stuffed owl:
Winter's moon rays glitter
in its glassy eyes

Winter Sketches

I

Twilight snowfall;
still a few withered strawflowers
on withered stems

under first snow
the night is strangely quiet;
some distant voices

The footprinted path
leading to the pasture gate
... filling with snow

Falling steadily...
snow blots out the garden path,
erases the flower beds

Wind ruffles the snow;
a nightbird hurries nestward
across fading skies

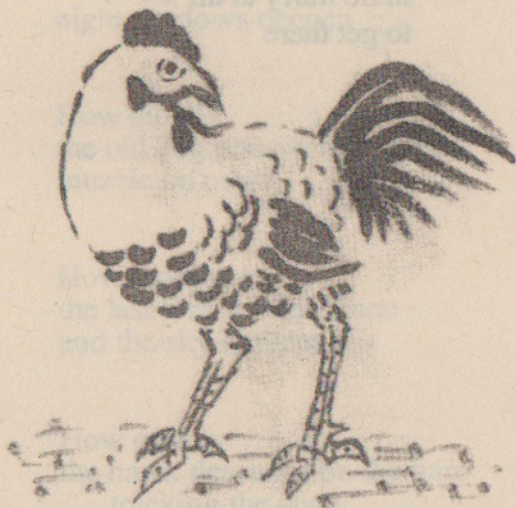
A quiet night?
Listen, cold cracks the pine boughs—
the stars look brittle

Winter wind and rain;
the craggy shore collapses
into the sea

II

Snow on the sand dunes;
someone walking the ebbtide
in evening dusk

Red-dawn winter:
the rooster's hoarse crow
from the barn's depths



Christmas morning;
mare pulling the red cutter
harness bells jingling

Early dusk—
crows fly off through
slow-falling snow

Loneliness:
the wind's way at twilight
with snowflakes

The time it takes—
for snowflakes to whiten
the distant pines

Snowflakes fall ...
in no hurry at all
to get there

How Quietly

How quietly
the finch at the feeder
as dusk deepens

How quietly
the cat stalks the young birds
under the bushes

How quietly
she draws the curtains
against winter darkness

How quietly
the playground becomes empty—
night shadows deepen

How quietly
the old dog rests in moonlight
muzzle on paws

How quietly
the last bird hurries home
and the sky darkens

How quietly
the hawk descends on the hare
tracking the snow

Stormy Weather

Wintry dusk;
two crows roost in the pine,
snow swirling down

Storm at Coos Bay;
waves keep shrugging off
the noisy seabirds

Hailstorm
pounding on the cabin roof—
tea kettle whistling

Sleet-picking night wind—
jelly leaks through a hole
in the bread slice

Snowed in:
winter fly comes to breakfast
along with warm toast

Cold evening winds—
snowflakes fall ... and stick
as they fall

Wintry gales—
snow falls on the two crows
huddled in the pine

Country Roads

Walking his dog
on the old country road;
grey clouds of evening

An old jalopy
barreling down the old farm road
chickens scatter

Chokecherries—ripe
beside the country road,
dust covered

Old farm road;
already the elms are shabby
with autumn

Country road;
first snow is filling up
the wagon ruts

The old farm road—
snow in the wagon ruts swirls
around and around

By the country road
rural mailbox left open
snowdrift inside

Full Moon

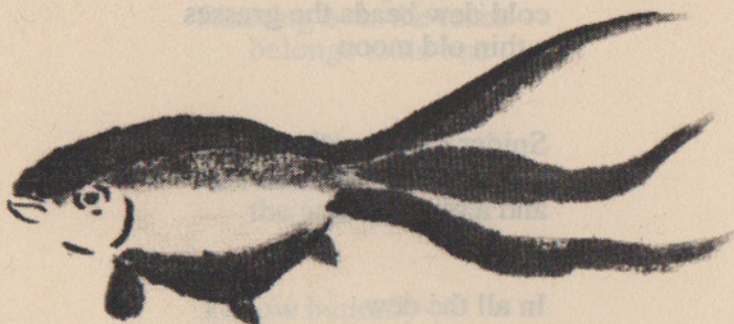
Under a full moon
the smell of pear blossoms
from the orchard

Harvest moon:
Walnuts drop from the tree
roll down the roof

The full moon—
it even brightens up
the town dump

Moon-filled night:
Even the cricket's song
has brightened

Garden pool:
In moonlight, the goldfish
roil the water



Full moon:
reflections on the quiet sea—
on the quiet dunes

Clouds that cross the moon
cross the moon's reflection—
in the autumn pool

Dew

Stepping out barefoot
cold dew beads the grasses
a thin old moon

Spider by the path
all he's caught is evening dew
and a plum petal

In all the dew
on the dew-wet grasses—
flashing rainbows

The fat haws ripen
dusky dew on the rose leaves
under hazy skies

The child's grave—
on a wreath of white roses
drops of morning dew

Full moon:
a grasslark shrilling
in dewy grasses

Moonbeams and dew;
the spider's web becomes
a work of art!

Butterflies

White butterfly
fluttering over the fence—
belongs to no one

Moving the wings
of the dead butterfly—
the autumn wind

Yellow butterfly—
its shadow never seems
to catch up to it

Fluttering off
over the high board fence—
butterfly's journey

Just touching it—
wing dust of the butterfly
lifts off

White butterfly—
how lightly it rests on a barb
of fence wire

Autumn breeze—
white butterfly, too, goes
in that direction

New Year's Day

New Year's visit:
paler than winter mists
the aging uncle

New Year's day:
starlings wheeze and chatter
in a distant pine

New Year's Day:
a cold rain drips down from
the scarecrow's nose

New Year's Day:
spent all afternoon
whistling "Dixie"

New Year's Day:
the child that moved away
comes back to visit

New Year's Day:
take a walk in the park
and a cold rain starts

New Year's Day:
the park swans huddle closer
to the reedy shore

Wind Chimes

thunder
wind chimes
jittery

sea breezes
little ditties
from the wind chimes

dark moon
something the wind chimes
just said

moonless night
only wind chimes
for company

ting-ting
of the wind chimes
first panda bear

winter winds
cold tones
of the wind chimes

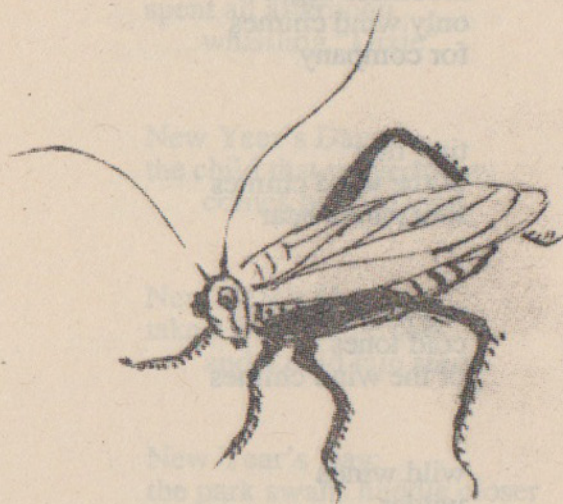
wild winds
wilder
wind chimes

Cicada Voices

One cicada's voice
filling up the meadow
and beyond

Field of cicadas
tuning up for a night's
love under the stars

Cicada's cries—
pushing beyond the edges
of the stubble field



Moon behind a cloud—
muffling the cicada
and its plaint

Under the stars—
performance of cicadas
with love in bloom

Cicada crying—
all for the love
of a lady

Love in bloom:
tonight the cicada's song
is rapture-filled

Winter Scenes

I

Winter's red sunrise;
sticking up in the tide flats
ribs of an old dory

Above the cold waves—
constellation of the Crab
crawling through the clouds

The pier in fog—
and beyond, faint outlines
of sails and riggings

Northeasterly gales:
the shouting from the boat
is blown away

Up through the dunes
black shadows of footprints
in drifting snow

Into the emptiness
of the winter marshlands—
a seabird's mewing

One all-white seagull
soars above the ebbing tide;
wintry sunset

II

Midwinter;
depths of the river are grey
as the leaden skies

Cold twilight stars;
the mare hitched to the sleigh
jingles the harness bells

Winter terns—
offshore, where the sea deepens
beyond the sandbar

Winter dusk—
over the desolate moor
a single hawk rises

Mountain evening;
snow keeps drifting down
drifting down drifting

From a distant farm
all night the barking dog—
the wintry wind

The old year ends;
galaxies of stars glisten
on the moonlit snow

Barnyard Chickens

Barnyard puddles;
the wet rooster hunches
on a high spot

March rainshowers;
barn hens too bedraggled
to even cluck

Downpour of hail;
the first clutch of eggs
hatches a chick

Sunshine all day;
the clutch of eggs broken
the chicks all gone

Gusts of April rain;
the little chicks run peeping
back to the hen

A glimpse of sun;
the hen clucks her chicks
out into the yard

Steaming puddles;
activity in the chicken yard
on the increase

Spring Robins

First spring robin
busy feathering its nest
in the apple tree

The early robin
listening through spring snow
for that early worm

Sundown:
the robin listens for a moment
... settles on the nest

So April begins:
rain robin on the fence
calling for rain

Beak full of twigs—
a nesting robin moves in
under the leaves

Robin sits preening
at the top of the plum tree—
in sunset's last rays

Beside the nest
the robin's whole aspect
is one of listening

Robin Nests

Sunrays glint
through the apple blossoms—
find the robin's nest

Stormy winds—
still firm in the branches
the robin's nest

Back to the nest
robin with a beak of worms
all squirming

Fledglings call
again the robin on the bough
beak filled

Sundown:
robin listens for a moment
settles on the nest

Full moon:
all is quiet on the nest
hidden among leaves

Hard rain and hail;
the robin sits tight
on the hidden nest

This Heat!

This heat!
chickens go around the barn
to a shady spot

This heat!
the spider sits in its web
... motionless

This heat!
chirp of one loud cricket
adds to it

This heat!
morning glories as they unfold
wilt



This heat!
an ant carries a dead beetle
over the steps

This heat!
old hound dog slobbers
in his sleep

This heat!
not a hint of a rain cloud
not a hint of breeze

Indian Lands
(Land allotment act,
February 8, 1887)

"Mother Earth is our mother—
how can she be sold?"
Old Indian saying

Indian Badlands:
not even fallen grasses
among withered weeds

A "fragile land"
overgrazed by cattle
no fallen grasses

Pine Ridge Reservation:
around old bombing craters
weeds, trying to grow

Red Cloud Reservation:
where even weeds won't grow
the sun goes down

No fallen grasses
no buffalo roaming—
only tumbleweeds

Old Navajo
herds his sheep homeward
snow flurries

I ride my pony
across the barren lands
dust follows my trail

"Land before we came—land
after we are gone, that is our
belief."

Old Indian saying

Hopi Lands

I am Hopi—
I press my hand on this earth
my mother

Hopi dirt farmer;
happiness of the corn plants
is his happiness

Hopi desert lands;
the old man pats his cornstalks
like a fond father

Dry leaves rustling—
old Hopi sings a rain chant
under a hot sun

August smoke dance
greasewood fires send up
smoke signals

Hopi Indian
driving the old buckboard;
red mesa sunset

Aribi—
lost white brother of the Hopi;
canyon shadows

The Old Mare

Drizzling rain:
The old mare stands still
on worn-down hooves

Midafternoon—
the old mare eases
a rheumatic leg

The old mare
moves toward the pasture gate—
avoiding puddles

Evening clouds;
a breeze stirs scraggled wisps
of the mare's tail

Farmer with feed;
the old mare limps slowly
toward the barn

At the barn door;
the mare shakes a tattered mane
—snorts once

Nightfall:
The old mare enters the darkness
of the old barn

The Winter Barn Rat

Cold in the barn;
just the glint of the rat's tail
—sliding away

Dust from the rafters
rat droppings here and there
among the feed sacks

One ragged hole
gnawed in the grain bag—
wheat dribbling out

In the cow barn
stand real still—the rat
comes out again

Got that barn rat
lined up in the gun sight—
decide not to

The old barn rat
looks back with glinty eyes
... vanishes

Same old barn rat
this morning—I see
the barn cat's got him

Spring Rain

Spring downpour:
a crow flapping over
soaking wet

Early twilight
spring rain falls quietly
on the roses

Empty country road;
only deepening spring dusk
and cold rain falling

A night of spring:
among the wisteria vines
raindrops glisten

Falling asleep
to the soft whispering
of spring rain

Midnight hour;
the sound of recent rain
dripping from the eaves

Love letter
carried off by the mailman;
soft spring rain

Scarecrow Dreams

Yes, spring is here!
even the old scarecrow
gets spruced up

New scarecrow
gets a quick shower
and a windy blow-dry

Even scarecrow
feels like jigging—
spring breezes

Only a scarecrow,
but bogeyman of the field
to the young crows

Scarecrow's
look of loneliness
in dusky twilight

Around the scarecrow
a white moth glimmering
misty nightfall

Harvesting the field;
only the scarecrow busy
doing nothing

Green Caterpillars

Green caterpillars
crawling on the cabbage heads—
clouds forming

Green caterpillar
comes to the end of the twig—
where to next?

Green caterpillar
in the sudden downpour
clings to the twig

Green caterpillars
all over the broccoli—
the stocks blooming

Green caterpillar
in the beak of the robin—
dew-wet grasses

Green caterpillars
climbing the cherry tree—
the stillness of leaves

Green caterpillar
sunning on a cherry branch;
the fruit ripening

Mount Saint Helens
(Saturday, May 17, 1980)



Clear spring dawn:
the mountain's pure peak
smudged by ash fall

Another tremor—
clouds of black vapor rise
from St. Helens' core

The mountain rumbles
smoke from her hidden fires
joins passing clouds

More eruptions!
the black fumes boil up
and float eastward

Rain clouds gather—
plumes of volcanic dust drift
over St. Helens

The mountain rests
foothills deep in haze
summit lost in smoke

Beyond the river
St. Helens settles into clouds
evening darkens

Old Plow Horse

In the eyes
of the old plow horse—green
of spring pastures

A soft “cluck,”
and the old plow horse
plods forward

“Gee ... haw ... giddap!”
the old plow horse moves as one
with the farmer’s voice

“Whoa ... whoa, boy!”
the plow horse stops patiently
at the field’s end

Stopped in the field,
the old plow horse nips grass
half-heartedly

The old plow horse
turned out to pasture—
drizzling rain

How quietly
the old horse stands there
cold rain beating down

Winter Skies

First cold dawn;
sharing the same knit sweater
we watch the moon set

Wintry skies;
the eagle's talons clutch
the rabbit's back

Wispy white moon—
a little winter mist rises
off to the west

December twilight;
distant hills disappear
in gathering fog

Winter's cold sunset;
the deeps of the Columbia
darken

New Year's Day—
so many white flakes fall out
of such a gray sky!

Year's end:
sparse riffled clouds edged
pink with sunset

Year of the Tiger

After a night out
Old Tom lies all morning
in windowsill sun

On this last morning
of the Year of the Tiger—
cat sharpens his claws

A robin scolding
from high in the apple tree;
Old Tom's not impressed

Under the feeder
Old Tom makes one more pass
at the sparrows

After a long roll
in the catnip patch—Old Tom's
higher than a kite!

The new catnip
has Old Tom "turned on"—
he's even stepping high!

Year of the Tiger:
pouring a bit more milk
in the cat's dish

Ubiquitous Billboards

Back country road:
one or two Burma Shave signs
among the nettles

First wind of autumn—
smile of the billboard girl
peels down the sign

Girl on the billboard—
that golden Las Vegas tan
fades in autumn rain

Street lights come on—
stare of the billboard girl
through evening haze

Light snowfall ...
billboard girl still sunburns
on a white sand beach

The billboard girl—
BLACK VELVET gown whitening
with winter sleet

Two men on a plank;
all that's left of the billboard girl
floats off in the wind

Cattle Calls

Along the farm lane
cows meander slowly home;
afternoon shadows

The farmer's son
wanders behind the cattle—
willow stick in hand

Cows plodding the lane;
with hoe over his shoulder
the farmer watches

A cooling breeze;
the last heifer lags along,
nipping sweet-grass

Evening darkens;
heifers one by one go in
through the old barn door

From the milkhouse
the rattle of milking pails;
one cow, bawling

First evening star;
shadows around the old barn
deepen the mooing

Matsushima, 1982

Old haiku stone
with Bashō's calligraphy—
"Dreams of Warriors"

quiet rainfall—
and a late cricket crying
where Bashō dreamed

In sea wind and rain
even Bashō's haiku stone—
yes, even this

Lichen is blooming
on Bashō's old haiku stone—
dry grasses falling

This small twig of pine—
picked up at the very place
where Bashō stood



Bashō's haiku stone;
lichen is taking the words
season by season

The "Dreams of Warriors"
and these old haiku stones
lichen covered

Snowflakes

New Year's dawn:
snowbirds back at the feeder
after a snow shower

Twilight snowfall;
a few frozen apples still
cling to the boughs

High in the pine tree
a great owl settles on a limb
the snowfall thickens

By the pasture fence—
snow piles up in a high drift
over the haystack

A flock of starlings
black against the winter sky;
the snow is drifting

January first;
by late afternoon, snow falls
on top of old snow

Deep in the valley—
lights of a farmhouse glimmer
through swirling snow

Hand Shadows

Full lamp light;
grotesque hand shadows
moving on the wall

Cut from newsprint—
a string of paper dolls
shadow dancing

Shadow pictures;
the rabbit's left ear
flops over

Hand shadows form
a whole zoo of animals—
the ingenuity!

Double hand shadows;
on the wall the wolf's jaws
snap soundlessly

Only on the wall—
the hand-shadow wolf catches
the shadow rabbit

The hand shadows;
some of the shapes develop
into ogres

Windfalls

Not a single leaf
left on the apple tree—yet
withered apples cling

A few windfalls
rot under the trees—leaves
lacy with worm holes

First snow—
still some gnarled apples hang
in the high branches

Frosty morning;
even frozen windfalls look good
to the robins

It's just an old windfall
but the robin
keeps coming back to it

Winter-white orchard;
what windfalls the robins leave
—the starlings get

One old windfall
so tough even the starlings
leave it alone

Country Fair

Country fair morning;
beribboned horses one by one
to the judges' stand

Blue ribbon awards;
on the hides of the horses
hot sun rays glitter

Pride of the herd;
the bull with a blue ribbon
gets led away too

The Brahma bull
bucks off another cowboy;
snorts dust ...

Heat in the stalls;
somewhere deep in the stable
a cow bawls and bawls

Breaking wild ponies;
a wall-eyed pinto erupts
from the chute—bucking!

Country fair evening:
Wild carrousel horses prance
around and around

Field Mice

A small field mouse
in and out the corn stubble;
mist on the fields

Field mice
roam the stubbled corn field
without a sound

One field mouse
runs up and down a dry cornstalk
rattling leaves

Among the corn rows
now and then a tail appears—
field mice burrowing

With a kernel of corn—
the field mouse runs down a row
and into a hole

Field mouse family
scarcely stirs the stubble;
the harvest moon!

Out of a small hole
a field mouse sticks its nose
—eyes glittering

Stallions

Sultry night;
the stallion paws at the dust
in the old corral

The black stallion
alone in the corral whinnies
to distant mares

At the corral gate;
fenced-in stallion has the mares
all jittery

Corral smells—
the stallion paces the fence
corner to corner

Heat lightning;
the black stallion snorts
and is still again

A huddle of mares
revealed by the lightning;
the stallion rears up

Thunder rumbles;
the black stallion shakes his mane
... wild-eyed

Seascapes

Along the shoreline—
in all the cottage windows
the sun is setting

Fading sunset;
light lingering on the dunes
and the wave crests

The night sea recedes...
leaving traces of white foam
along the shoreline

Moonless night;
little glints of silver fish
in the rolling waves

Sitting on the dunes,
watching a beach fire flicker
toward the stars

Dark of the moon;
phosphorescence glittering
in the wave froth

Squall lines forming;
off shore—the sea rises
buckles breaks

Blackbirds

Country lane;
to each cattail pond
its red-winged blackbird

Haze on the fields:
Flocks of blackbirds rising
from the corn stubble

Dusk: The blackbirds
fly over the reeds — calling
to each other

Red-winged blackbird
and its gray-clad mate—
wild roses in bloom

Cattail swamp:
red-winged blackbird whistles
shattering stillness

Winter twilight:
A coven of blackbirds
silently flies west

Snow on the stubble
and flocks of blackbirds gleaning
in a wintry wind

Farm Country

Abandoned so long—
fireweed up through flooring
of the old farm porch

Junkers in the yard;
and blackbirds fighting
over something

On a trash heap—
one-legged high chair
and that one—broken

Hood missing—
old farm truck's innards
open to the rain

In the debris
of the wrecked combine—
a rat's nest

Tumbled-down cow shed—
wild rose vines grow in
through broken panes

Country graveyard:
pools of sudden rain shining
on sunken graves

On a *Sabi* Theme:
For Gary

I

and this morning too
the grave on the hillside
under winter rain

(1970)

Waking at midnight
only the moonlight ...
and some geese calling

(1971)



A hot summer wind—
 shadows of the windmill blades
flow over the grass
(1972)

Year of the Ox;
 on this first day, too,
the same old sadness
(1973)

Year of the Tiger:
 Wild grass growing tall
around the markers
(1974)

Wandering about
 in the old cemetery—
the loneliness here
(1975)

Outside the church
 waiting with the mourners—
a song sparrow
(1976)

II

A bumblebee
 worrying the rose wreath
beside the new grave
(1977)

By a headstone,
withered and turning brown—
some field daisies
(1978)

Afternoon heat:
on the cemetery lawn
sprinklers sputtering
(1979)

So frail, the green moss—
obliterating the names
carved in cold marble
(1980)

The weeping willow
shadowing the graves—
whispers now and then
(1981)

Spring grasses
already turning green
on a new grave
(1982)

Under a full moon
tops of the grave markers
edged with gold
(1983)

The World of Dew: For Gary

*the world of dew
is a world of dew
and yet ... and yet ...*
Issa

only morning dew
but a whole world revolves
in every drop!

weight of a bee,
and a drop of dew slips
from the bean tendril

dew on the wild roses
dew on the shabby nettles
still, simply dew

dewy windfall—
the wet bee clings to it
all the way down

morning dew dripping
from the wisteria vine—
robin on its nest

gathering flowers
for Memorial Day graves—
how cold the dew!

same old moon
same old dew—same old grass
same old sadness

All Hallow' s Eve

A dried corncob
on a string in the outhouse
webbed to the wall

Hanging a lantern
on a hook by the outhouse;
Hallowe'en dusk

Night noises;
a full moon shining
over the outhouse

Hallowe'en midnight:
The sound of the outhouse
tumbling over

Bats flit around
the town church steeple;
a full harvest moon

Another outhouse
falls with a thud—running feet
—laughter

The neighbor's one cow
moos from the dark belfry
of the old town church

Bees

September woods;
the sound of a bumblebee
among the foxgloves

Is it one bumblebee
making two sounds—or two
bees in the foxglove?

That one honeybee
deep in the foxglove blossom
—quit buzzing

The quiet woods
are quieter still—
when the bee stops

The honeybee
stays so long in the foxglove;
a cloud over the sun

The bee's buzzing—
muffled in the deep throat
of the foxglove

The honeybee
backs out of the foxglove
... flies away

For over thirteen years, the haiku magazine *Dragonfly* has published the unique *Sevens* feature, a set of seven haiku on a single theme, by Tombo. *70 Sevens: Pathways of the Dragonfly* has drawn all of Tombo's published and many of her never-before-published sets together into a single volume. *70 Sevens* is a sweeping work of poetry by an extremely influential and masterful haiku poet. From the first haiku in the book

This summer day—
from the look of sunflowers
—should last forever

Tombo's world of bees, warblers, horses, haiku stones, seasons, volcanoes, Independence Days, Indian lands, and scarecrows breathtakingly re-opens visions of our own past and future experiences. *70 Sevens* is beautifully illustrated by Kwai Yuen Lau.

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