

*Two Wings
The Butterfly*

Haiku Poems In English

by

Gerald Robert Vizenor

Original Ink Paintings

by

Judith Horns Vizenor

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Dedicated To Our Son

Robert Thomas Vizenor

Introduction

The simplicity of the Japanese haiku poem is not learned but unlearned. In a Japanese ink painting it is not the complexity of the detail but the importance of what is not there. Space and motion are not limited. Elaboration, abstraction and inference of deliberate detail is a tendentious limitation of any work of art. In the Japanese poem the unstated is motion and space, outlined by poetic description and subtle action affording the reader the simple awareness of the poem through his own personal experiences, intuition and memory. The poet in the tradition of the Japanese haiku externally creates the mood through the use of seasonal words, verbal suggestions or alliteration, and outlines the experience of the poem leaving the inflorescent internalization, moralization and philosophy to the pleasure of the reader.

Japanese haiku poetry is considered an integral part of the oriental culture and has become a significant influence in world literature. William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound were attracted by haiku and their attention influenced many other writers. Haiku has also become an American bourgeois parlor game of today, which will in a short time no doubt corrupt and capture "American haiku" into an unfashionable obscurity.

The poems in this book were written during the four seasons of two years and selected for this publication. Nearly all of the poems were spontaneously composed or painted from simple experiences and thoughts in connection with natural phenomena and seasonal changes. The greatest source of experience and inspiration comes from the seasons of Spring and Autumn and the transition and motion of life during these seasons. The suggestions and moods of the poems are first gained through the use of associations and seasonal words.

The four ink paintings were done by my wife Judith without knowledge at the time that they would become part of this book. The paintings are in the tradition and discipline of the art of Japanese Ink Painting which she has studied with keen interest for several years.

The paintings, "the four gentlemen" combines with words to please the reader, and demonstrates the influence of simplicity, appreciation and tradition of the Japanese arts. Traditionally, haiku poetry is for the pleasure of the author and his friends.

GRV

March, 1962

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Where poets dream
Flowers following the sun:
Two Wings The Butterfly.

Autumn

The old wren house
On a bare broken bough:
Creaking in the wind.

Soft kitten's paws
Puffed against a tree:
Sharp hidden claws.

November trees

Fine lines of delicate twigs:

The twilight sky.

Quiet Autumn lights

Long blades across the sky:

Moving tears with dew.

In the darkness

Only the scent of Autumn:

Smouldering leaves.

The quick winds
With the red-winged blackbirds:
Bending the reeds.

Cold ruffled pond
Reflecting beneath the trees:
Collecting leaves.

Across the rippled marsh
Let the wind beyond my reach:
Burst the cattails.

Early morning sounds
A woodpecker:
On a hollow tree.

Marigolds and weeds
Along the frosty fence:
Wilting together.

Noisy squirrels
Bare acorns from the leaves:
Floating flakes of snow.

A lone woman
Watching the still dark river:
Where the children play.

Beneath the pines
Cones and maple red leaves:
Pausing on the Way.

First Autumn snow
Softly through the maples:
Blazing leaves.

1870
The first of the year
was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

1871
The second of the year
was a very wet one
and the crops were
very good.

1872
The third of the year
was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor.

Winter

Where birds have been
Snow fills the nests again:
Delicately white.

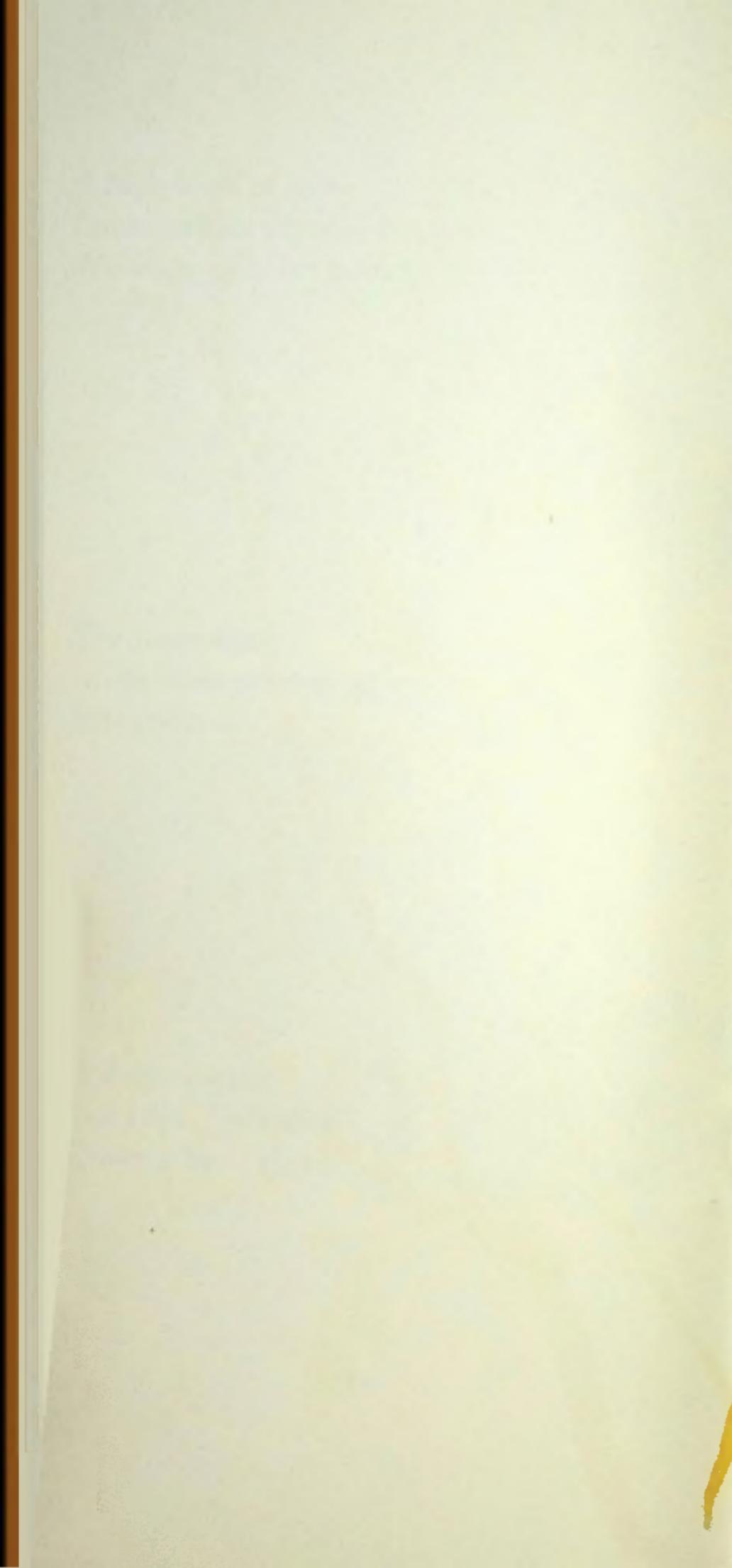
With his little hands
A child searched the colored snow:
Finding the sun at dusk .

A high bank of snow
Consumed six scurring boys:
When the preacher passed.

The stout man
In the noon sun lost an eye:
Made of coal.

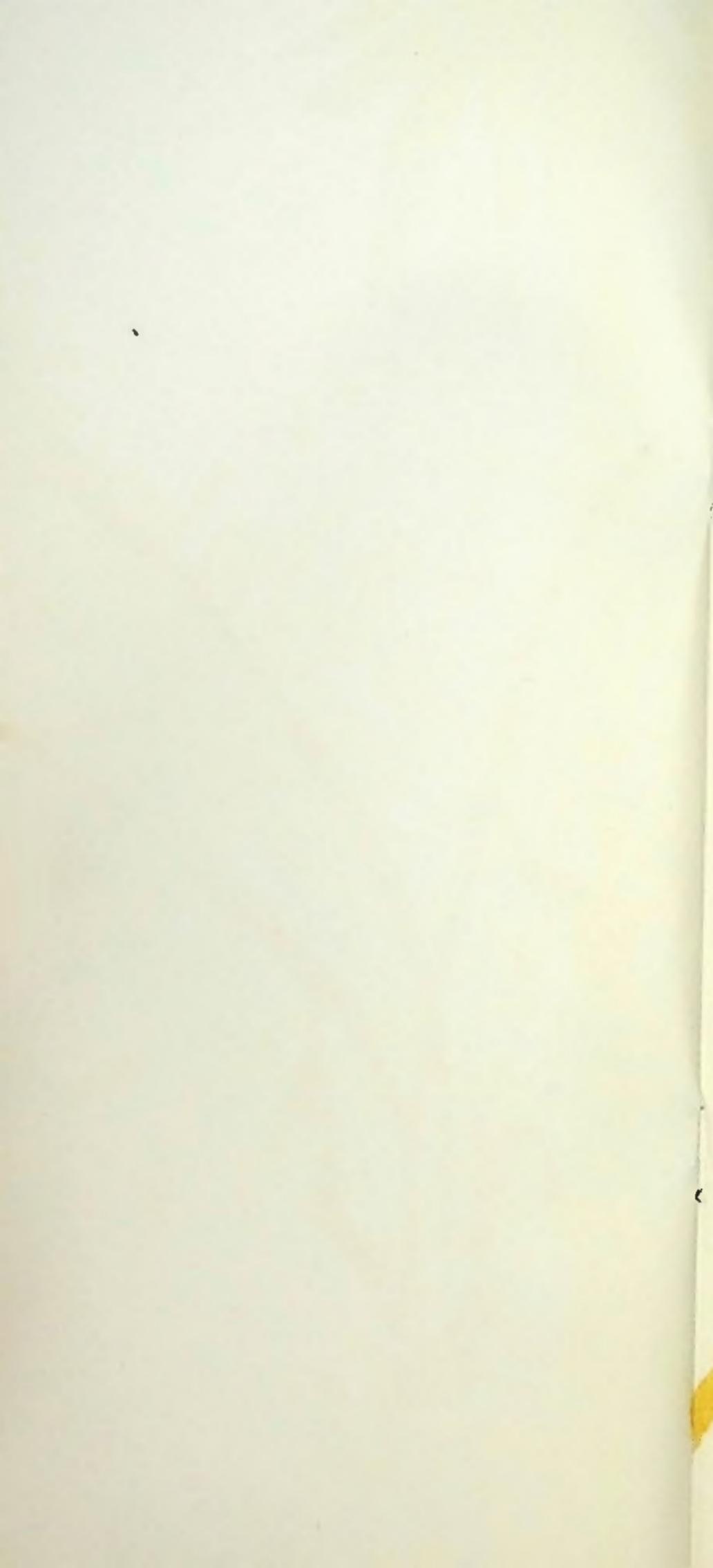
A drop of water
Fell from a tall icicle.
Down a boy's cheek.













A willow bough
Leans low along the shore:
Frozen in the ice.

Barren Winter trees
Across the low full moon:
Entangles a bough.

The fallen tree
Leaves a shadow and a stump:
Crouching in the snow.

A little boy
Moved his arms in the snow:
Leaving an angel.

The noisy sparrows
Fluttering over the bird bath:
Brushing off the snow.

Along the river
Following a path in the snow:
Marked by a cane.

Through quiet woods
Single paths the same way alone:
Marked in the new snow.

Secret creek
Opening in the snowy ice:
The sound of Spring.

Spring will tell
What falls in the dark marsh:
Seeds or snow?

1870

1871

1872

1873

1874

1875

1876

1877

1878

Spring

One early morning
The old red water wheel:
Began to squeak.

Rain falling softly
Filling little blossoms:
Where the bees have been.

Early evening walk
A stranger passing in the rain:
Bare feet splashing .

Spring rains
Blossoming on the dark earth:
Beneath the apple tree.

Fool for a coin
Lost his walking-stick stuck to gum:
Through a sewer grate.

Yards are covered
With dandelions and gardeners:
Casting them away.

Wind through the lilacs
Leaves a redolent breeze:
At my desk writing.

Suffering of birth
Soft flowers in wind and rain:
This painful beauty.

Ice begins to flow
Silver fish and ribs of sand:
Passing in the sun.

Mounds of foam
Beneath the waterfall:
Silently float.

With an icicle
Till his hands were numb with cold:
Duelling!

An elderly squirrel
Fluffed with the spirit of Spring:
Fell from a tree.

Rough grey ice
Turns to crystal near the shore:
Smooth where pebbles well.

The rows of straw
That covered the tender seedlings:
Sheltered the mice.

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Summer

All along the shore
Golden bars of setting sun:
Lean across the lake.

On the green water
Under the trees silently:
Floating leaves.

Large umbrellas
Following the little streams:
Floating paper-boats.

Long after the clouds
Petals fell from slender stems:
Clinging to the rain.

After the heavy rains
So many skies tonight:
Reflecting the moon.

The nails leave lines
On the old morning glory fence:
Dripping dew.

In the garden
Kittens poke at everything:
Even the honeybees.

In the shadows
Butterfly from place to place:
Tips a bleeding heart.

Through the clover
A yellow and white butterfly:
One being chaste!

In the pasture land
Both the poet and the cow:
Swishing flies away.

Morning raspberries
Veiled at night with spider webs:
Sunning beads of dew.

The starlight rain
Nearby, was a firefly:
Passing through the leaves.

All along the path
Puffs of cottonwood seeds:
Pausing in the moonlight.

In the dark grass
Their gentle hands alight:
A firefly!

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