

**Lyrics of Six Songs on Japanese Verse**

*I. The Spring Mountains*

I crossed the spring mountains –  
Spring of the catalpa bow –  
And the track could not be cleared  
So many flowers had fallen.  
~ Ki Tsurayuki (868 – 946)

*II. After the Kiss / The Pond*

*After the Kiss*  
'Are you asleep?'  
'No,' you say.

Flowers in May  
Flowering at noon

In the lakeside grass  
Under the sun,  
'I could close my eyes  
And die here,' you say.  
~ Miki Rofū (1889-1964)

*The Pond*

'Go home,' I said  
Tonight I don't want you, so  
Go home,' I said  
Sniffling and sobbing  
You went off  
I have no place to go back to

Your path as you went weeping from my heart  
I traced again and again  
Your tear stains

Spread across my body  
To become a pond  
And that pond engulfed my heart  
That night I went to sleep.  
~Shiraishi Kazuko (b. 1931)

*III. What a Delight It Is*

What a delight it is  
When on the bamboo matting  
In my grass-thatched hut,  
All on my own,  
I make myself at ease.

What a delight it is  
When, borrowing  
Rare writings from a friend,  
I open out  
The first sheet.

What a delight it is  
When, skimming through the pages  
Of a book, I discover  
A man written of there  
Who is just like me.

What a delight it is  
When everyone admits  
It's a very difficult book,  
And I understand it  
With no trouble at all.

What a delight it is  
When I blow away the ash,

To watch the crimson  
Of the glowing fire  
And hear the water boil.

What a delight it is  
When a guest you cannot stand  
Arrives, then says to you  
'I'm afraid I can't stay long,'  
And soon goes home

What a delight it is  
When I find a good brush,  
Steep it hard in water,  
Lick it on my tongue  
And give it my first try.

What a delight it is  
When, spreading paper,  
I take my brush  
And find my hand  
Better than I thought.

What a delight it is  
When, after a hundred days  
Of racking my brains,  
That verse that wouldn't come  
Suddenly turns out well.

What a delight it is  
When, of a morning,  
I get up and go out  
To find in full bloom a flower  
That yesterday was not there.  
~ Tachibana Akemi (1812 – 1868)

IV. <i>Like the Pearl of Dew</i>
Like the pearl of dew On the grass in my garden In the evening shadows, I shall be no more. ~ Lady Kasa (mid-late eight century)
A thousand years you said, you said, As our hearts melted. I look at the hand you held, And the ache is hard to bear. ~ Lady Heguri (mid-late eight century)
V. <i>Like the Leaves</i>
I loved her like the leaves, The lush leaves of spring That weighed the branches of the willows Standing on the jutting bank Where we two walked together While she was of this world My life was built on her; But man cannot flout The laws of this world. To the wide fields where the heat haze shimmers, Hidden in a white cloud – White as white mulberry-rope – She soared like the morning bird Hidden from our world like the setting sun. The child she left as token Whimpers, begs for food: but always Finding nothing that I might give, Like birds that gather rice-heads in their beaks,

I pick him up and clasp him in my arms. By the pillows where we lay, My wife and I, as one, The daylight I pass lonely till the dusk, The black night I lie sighing till the dawn. I grieve, yet know no remedy: I pine, yet have no way to meet her. The one I love, men say, Is in the hills of Hagai, So I labour my way there, Smashing rock-roots in my path, Yet get no joy from it. For, as I knew her in this world, I find not the dimmest trace. ~ Kakinomoto Hitomaro (late seventh, early eight centuries)
VI. <i>Rather Than Cry</i>
It was in a dream – What year, what day I do not remember – That I met her. She'll be dead and gone by now.  Heavy larding of oil on her black hair, White as the fur of a rabbit dying in torment Her thick power, Blood-coloured lipstick daubed on her mouth,  Among a crowd of girls she sang filthy songs One after another, to a sprightly <i>samisen</i> . Putting down, as if it were water, Stiff that took the skin off your tongue. By her side, young sprouts

Of twenty, not drinking.  'Why sing like this?' I asked, In my dream. And she replied, With a drunken, flushed laugh, 'Rather than cry...' ~ Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912)
<i>Epilogue: The Autumn Moon</i>
The autumn moon We saw last year Shines again: but she Who was with me then The years separate forever. ~ Kakinomoto Hitomaro (late seventh, early eight centuries)

Source: Bownas, G., & Thwaite, A. (2009). *The Penguin Book of Japanese Verse* (revised edition). London, England: Penguin Group.