

SNOW BONES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

HAIKU

Ash (TELS, 1988)

TRANSLATION

Saito Sanki, *The Kobe Hotel* (Weatherhill, 1993)

SNOW BONES

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SNOW BONES: remnants of snow after a thaw; patches of snow seen stretching along ridges, in ruts, or in furrows, etc., after a partial thaw.

for my parents

three voices:
countryside

first voice

Waking from a nap

an old man
in the mirror

Still poor
still unmarried

I wash my face

An insect cage

a cricket's feeler
protruding

A musty hut

going out, I turn the key
in the tiny lock

Clean shaven

walking through
the deserted village

Barbed wire fence

smell
of rampant grass

Off the path
even further

my butterfly net

A parasol

or so it seems
up there on the brink

Through the tunnel

echo
of each footstep

Sweltering sky

the deserted school's
silent loudspeaker

The cicadas are shrieking

I can't see
any of them

Shimmering
in heat haze

I walk on

A swarm of mosquitoes

passing through it
evening sunlight

Fireflies flitting

not enough
to call a swarm

second voice

This house, quiet

I keep
a single goldfish

Barefoot

across the tatami floor
across the wooden floor

In a shoe
I was about to put on
an ant crawling

Opening my parasol
the sound
deep in my ears

Through the tunnel

my parasol
closed

From here on

the path
straight to the edge

On the cliff now

down there
a butterfly net

Perspiring slightly

myself
silence

Moving backwards
a few steps

I leave the edge behind

Nothing to do

my footsteps beneath
the sweltering sky

Water drips
from a crack in rock

one drop on my palm

Lotus pads

on each one
air

Cicadas shrieking

the thatched house
grows still older

Returning

my face
in the mirror

Sunset glow

the pendulum
motionless

Moonlight

folded into
a paper crane

In this house
where my sister is the wife

a firefly cage

Pregnant
my sister squats

holding a sparkler

third voice

Verdurous night

me
in this large chair

Lust

made flesh
would be a toad

My wife conceived
that full moon night

or so it seems

Sleeping
my head pointed north

a sunflower in my dream

Awaking

forlorn
I put away the futon

Morning chill

my voice
from within

This house, quiet

a peach
begins to decay

My anger restrained

a red rose in the vase
one petal falls

An empty plate

smashing it
autumn clearer

My thoughts tangled

I cross
the threshold

A molting rooster

reflected
in the roadside mirror

My shadow approaches
a praying mantis

covering its shadow

Through a flower field
comes a man

with one arm

Balmy autumn

a sundial
at the deserted school

A forked road

both left and right
autumn evening

A misty night

I exist
as footsteps