

IFONLY

by

tid sah

Note: This PDF file is an approximation of the original 1969 poetry book by Tom Atlee. The original font was a sans-serif version of Palatino. However, today only a serif version of the font seems to be available, which looks quite different. So the not-so-elegant but sans-serif Trebuchet MS font is used here in its place. The layout of this document is four-up, to be read as follows:

1	3
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2	4

IF ONLY

by
tid sah



to the Eyes of the Deaf
the Ears of the Blind
and the Voices of the Mute

poems, depending
on your definition
these try to be

for it's your
definition
that matters
not me
nor another
nor even words

how do you
define

yourself



Need-
less
seed,

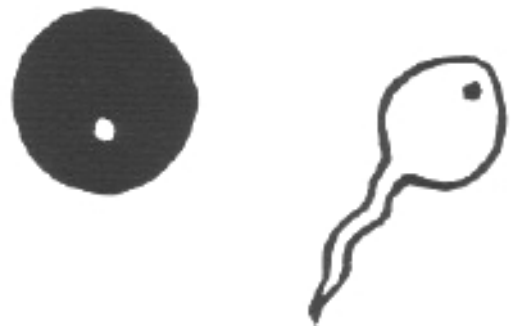
God-
speed

Take a green tree
give it spring
set it where the sun is setting
and you will see
a strange thing
swell
Buds will blossom
bees will come
dust will burrow in a womb-thumb
and seeds will slum-
ber and tum-
ble.

Snow is weary
covering
browning gold dissolving
where none will see
the soft thing
chill

once unheard and just she came
just once so silently she went
so left me almost just the same
and just so almost different
she troubled to thus did exist
but now her almost
ghost is dead

though like her
dreams did once persist
in circuses inside my head
as every circus closes down
so slowly dreaming
turns away
and opens in another town
with evening dying into day

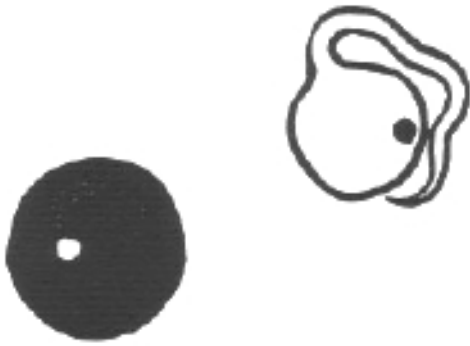


Into the tendings, strange,
of timeless people
on their war, gem, dream,
and paper path
down see, up rock,
toward brightly stoic steeple;
from death, hate, love, peace, holy
purpose, tenderness and wrath,
with candlelight and bulb
in wageless hope,
dimly lit down whirling
conscious haze
along the pebbles
of the ebb-tide slope,



under fear and void stumbling
slowly
confronting with a grunt
the senseless maze
to find one moment rippling
over sand
cast curved and shining
out of salty dusk;
to preface time into a postscript
land
in voices that cannot be read;
then coldly,
with the fading face
of pale prophet musk,
to redissolve in stoney silken sea.

The seeming blessing
in the curse of form
has shriveled leaves of
waking living ways
which burst from flames
of burning bud boughs firm
to birth from failure
willed through winter whys.

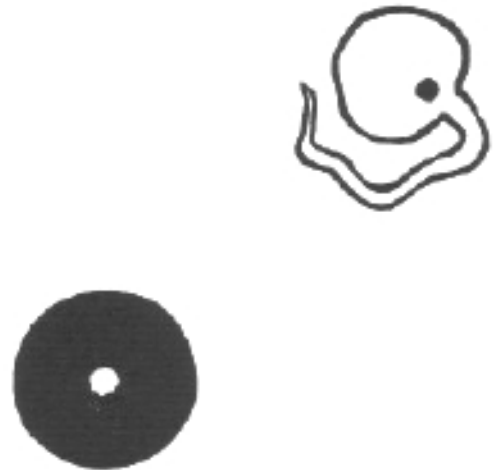


so slowly fans would shudder
stop
the clock would say no ticking
oneway or roundtrip sir
said the girl behind the ticket
window i would look at her
and she would yawn and
disappear

then suddenly tile walls be gone
leaving the night and me alone
the almost happy lonely one

out of these black
and summer nights
i would enter railroad stations
air conditioned cool
where single-headed
dead impatient
crowds were always leaving
and yellow tile was the rule
where movement was the motion

then suddenly
would the crowds be gone
leaving me the lonely one
almost happy all alone



the nets of night
the branches bright
drag the distant plankton stars
in while clouds
with seaweed sounds
tangled drags them out again
where almost morning
purple pours
down the burning moonless drain

with rustling cloth
the waking froth
dresses itself upon the sand
to lidded seep
back into sleep

on coiling naked
sheets of water
where restless hypnotized
i stand
by new tides
swollen toiling softer

i hear them tell
a parable
from the overquoted ocean
and psalmfully
roll back to sea
while seeming slowly unconcerned
about the breathless
sweeping question

of why they again and again
return

for turn they will
impossible still
they sleep and wake
and wax and wave
and wander in
with fish and fin
and wood and tin-
embroidered crabs
dragged from the universal grave
and left unjudged upon the slabs

here alone with the source
with the seasong force

while plankton fade
with the fate of stars
i kneel in sand
and with a stroke of my hand
engrave the question on the beach
and scroll it with a question mark
high where the water
wouldnt reach

then kneeling i face
that pensive grace
the morning breathing of the sea
which slides my mind
mist under time

away from reasons ruling being
from why such is or shouldnt be
to watch where handless waves
swirl praying

but a doubtful breeze
shivers the trees
and whispering turns to go
then as i rise
the prayerful tides
reach up and wash away my words
smoothing over
what i asked to know
but leaving the quest mark
undisturbed



(with one baptismal motion
does the ocean
render words mere glinting sand
and yet still spare
in the morning glare
that coiled knob of punctuation
a prayer that first we understand
the answer to the wordless
Question

wait for it
but it will never come
spring anticipated is spring
undone
and fades to fall
before the winter's gone

knock and knock
but it shall not be opened
each door
appeared will disappear again
try one lock to locks three
until the end

ask till dust
but it shall not be given
the best gifts grow
which are not driven
out of
but which show man into heaven

be like oceans washing
up upon the sands
they wait not knock not ask not
but the lands
respond in kind
to the oceans patient hands.



a fern among moss
among the copper rocks
and chips of bone
sucks alone with the moment
of the drown-awakened vision
among the copper rocks
and chips of bone
its spore-knocked tassel

defends the burning
of the green suns
climbing crossward fate
spinning the carnage of the life-pulse
into the ebon leaves
of the green suns
climbing crossward fate
and the late white sins

of frost-pursed acres
the fern-cracked woods
in the sun now silver
hiding in the northern bakery
of cold whirling toward
the fern-cracked woods
in the sun now silver
caging the sealed sins
for the new comers
who rub the pharaohs crystals
into cones
placing by that sepulchre
their seed-omega offering
among the tarnished rocks
and lips of bone
in the moss a fern



Down the golden path,
under molten drops of glass,
dew bejewelling
white-leaved masses
crimp the green day morning.

The birthright sun
through still panes crashes
tinkling down
to touch the trash,
the work desk with a laugh,
bringing green day morning
brightly on the sashes.

autumn wing seed yes
even then ago

cosmos said no
leaving fallness
trees barely
green shriveled brownishly

but wing seed swiveled downedly
saying (for life) yes

cosmos said again no
and snow

under white pillow
s
mothering yes
(no rules six months)

has then life half dozen
egg and wing seed
smallturn and featheryoung and
greenYes

intermittentless
battles these
pass
halfyear by half
year



yes and no
strumness and grow
ness
spring is here

with a slow
motion
less:

wing

once I came to you
like early falling snow to earth
melting at your every touch

then i ceased to melt
my coldness soon stacked heavily
its icy cells against

now i am as frozen
as when I wandered on the air
a flake of ice you'd never touched

i do not understand
for you are warm
 as you always were
and although the winter is old

i cannot melt
and this i do not understand
for you are as warm
 as you always were

a poem that cannot sing

is like a bird that cannot sing
like a bird without a wing
a bird that tries
 but cannot fly
 that lives and dies
 without a reason
 why



together
our pulse has made
the current strong
which leads
our springsung hearts along
(spring ice sheets wander
on the flow
pushed from behind
by melting snow
the snow in turn is melted by
the sun
and the seasonswinging sky
together

near this feathery stream i stood
i watched this water
roll these stones with care
(like birds their eggs in nests
which born they
in some summerleafy hood
and warmed with their
brown breasts bare)

leaning against this root-split rock
i sang my feet in these waters
(like some sun
in wet cascades of sky)



where these willows keyed
this liquid lock
within this slow sigh spun

dabbling my mind
in this wealthy air
i summed my voice
to the tingling hum of gods
with words (like butterflies
whose pretty wings
are purposeless with care
upon these painprize pods)

i watched this glass disturbance
run
and kiss these shores
where silver shadows knit
i heard my worldly quest
with garlands speak
this various daylight done
and soothe this woewrest writ



there is a world i know
it isnt here
where only peaceful winds can blow
for anyone who cares to know
that everything is clear

but if i said i love
you and i do
would you love think
i meant the dove
and not the angry toil and shove
of old on new

to free a moments time
lessness i see
the worlds a kind of floating rhyme

and good and bad they beat the
time
of the rhymeless tiding sea

wide high inside the world
away from sound
nine deaths of yesterday uncurl
in living leaving flags unfurled
o god by god im found

there is a world i know
it isnt here
where only peaceful winds can blow
for anyone who cares to know
that everything is here



Go ahead: encase yourself!
You'll find
that every nerve you tie
will be undone
and what you are
by waves be smashed about
until you spill
your lifeless self behind
to scatter shores where seas
and seagulls shout
unringing totals to the only One.

Look into my eyes.
You do not dare!
Your emptiness is manifest;
it howls
inside your skull
blown hollow as the air
All ocean mouths
are licking at your bowels.
You think you are a person.
You are wrong.
You're just the same as
everything, but not
for seconds do you
know where you belong.
The color of your lungs springs
sparking hot.



The strangest I can never say
Mysterious I hate to be
And so beside the sunny bay
I'll say no more of what I see
But speak of green as if t'were grey
And argue where we both agree.

i am me
and you are you
and poems are
what poems do



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