

문예진 Ye-jin Moon

心園

Mind Garden

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FOREWORD

When one is asked, “What is writing?” one may feel—not without some self-satisfaction—that one knows the answer. But there is a likelihood that one finds it exceedingly difficult to make a clean-cut answer. To make the matter worse, should the simple-sounding question, “What is writing?” develop into a really more complex one, “What makes any piece of writing genuine and authentic?” or “What is writing in the true sense of the term?” it becomes apparent that one has to pause for a while if one is to answer it in a satisfactory manner.

There are, indeed, many people who write. Not only published authors and poets but those who can read and think for themselves feel that they can write. Thus, on the surface of it, almost anyone and everyone has a notion that writing is relatively easy or that there is, after all, nothing to it. Of so many people who do write, however, who can come right out and claim that his piece is writing worthy of the name?

As history marches on, the literary production has taken on astronomical proportions. Of all these countless books and articles, which ones can be truly said to reflect the author’s innermost convictions and unadulterated ideas, such that they are communicated to the reader as they are originally meant to be understood?

In this day and age, the so-called book market is glutted with all manner of writing, when we come to think of it at all—an author, whose greedy eyes are riveted solely on the sale of his books in millions by cleverly contriving to keep his readers interested in what he has to say, trots out tissues of nonsense or a pack of lies; to be sure, his style may be smooth and mellifluous, yet upon a closer examination, at its best it turns out to camouflage the suppressed convictions or feelings; another indulges in a tirade against the highly materialistic civilization that is ours; still another spews out all kinds of verbiage that border on the filthy or the scurrilous.... In all honesty, we are nowadays at a quandary as to which books, from among so many available, we should read for our edification or pleasure without our minds wallowing in the muck.

As far back as I can remember, I took to writing as a matter of course without quite realizing why; at an early age I wanted from the bottom of my heart to write something which I could call my own and to which I would willingly affix my signature without reserve or hesitation. I confess that whenever I managed to produce an indifferent piece, I used to be so proud of myself—an attitude which only my age and inexperience could have excused. Ever since I have somehow nursed a dream or illusion: How can I learn to write so well that some day I become a great author that will represent Korea? With this end in view, I have diligently perused many

books by well-known writers. Yet...well, presumptuous and even supercilious as it may sound, I must own that while I have on occasion been struck with their inimitable style and brilliant phrases, some of them have deeply touched the innermost strings of my soul. It goes without saying, however, that these recognized authors' writings read much better than my puerile production. Now that the cat is out of the bag, so to speak, I hasten to add that if this is the first time you happen to read this Foreword, in which I seem to pontificate as if I were already acknowledged as a great writer, you may be at this moment tempted to go over some of the pages here because you feel you have the right to raise your expectation of me, but then you will be disappointed with me. (May I whisper into your ears now!?): I still have a long, long way to go, as I still lack so many essential ingredients that go into good writing.

As I recall, someone once placed my work in a limbo, as it were—somewhere in between that of a small child and that of a grown-up. And I am inclined to share this view. Even so, I can ill afford to discontinue my writing habit temporarily or give it up altogether at this point, because I would then resemble a melon patch that thrives in a rainy season but gradually withers away as the dry season sets in and lingers on.

It may not be amiss to say that I am more like a newly hatched chick that has just opened its eyes in the awe-inspiring world of literature. Needless to say, I will do all I can to grow into an experienced and mature writer, and never entertain the thought of abandoning my literary dreams: I'll persevere—and prevail. To this end, I must spare no effort, which is obvious, indeed, but above all I need your advice and guidance along the way.

In closing, I should like to express my appreciation in advance for any of your helpful suggestions.

at the East Garden
October 1976

Ye-jin





With her family at East Garden, celebrating her birthday



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COMMENDATION

These are the poems of Miss Ye-jin Moon. Perhaps the best way to introduce her writings is with excerpts that show the spirit of her own words. These poems—written between the ages of eleven to fourteen—are mature beyond the age of their author.

She can speak girlishly of the first snow

I'm but a small girl—
Yet I wanna powder myself
With white snow

But also more deeply of the sea

My tear will roll down your cheeks
Like raindrops.
And flood your heart.
And still you maintain control
With blue hands—
With shaking but unshaken soul.

She can say of her brother

You too find those tiny mountains real
cute

But she also observes of him that he was

Enchanted with the masculine
grandeur of nature

And that

At that moment I felt he was already a
man.

These poems cover a wide range. They deal with nature, seasons and flowers, as well as with suffering and loneliness:

A wanderer trudges along.

Heavy in his heart.
How many seasons and years it has
been
Since he has stopped counting . . .

The ice of utter loneliness forming
around his heart,
The wanderer drags his weary feet
Along a forsaken solitary road,
Roasting his dim memory of hardship
On the setting sun.

But it would be a mistake to think that these poems are primarily concerned with suffering or hardship. They are full of life and of the wonder of being.

As dawn greets a new day,
My heart quivers with boundless joy

and ambition—
Almost gasping for more air.

And

The first sunshine steals
Through the windowpane
And, mercilessly, fondles
And kisses the plump cheeks
Of a nursling, slumbering in a crib.

Together with her little brother on a spring day

A flying insect torments its victim
With mounting zeal—
Yet the little cowboy snores—
Only his nose twitches now and then.
And he snores even more loudly.

These poems have been written by Ye-jin Moon, who is the daughter of Reverend Sun Myung Moon. But she refers to him simply and immediately as “Papa.” In the essays it is clear how much “Papa” and “Mama” are central to her life because of her warm and tender experiences with them. Speaking of her roommate, she says,

Her parents are . . . separated. Her life
must be sad, poor thing. Papa and

Mama made the point of telling
me . . . to be extra nice to this
unhappy girl.

And about her parents leaving her and her
brothers and sisters for a trip to Korea

. . . we soon returned home. As we
slowly pushed the door open, a whiff
of cold air slapped my face. The
house looked deserted . . . I stole
into the family prayer room.
Kneeling before a photograph of
Papa and Mama, I forked my tiny
trembling hands and started to pray
silently for the safety of their
journey.

So as one reads, one can get a growing feeling of
the depth and wisdom of this young girl, a girl who is
close to and excited by nature and nature's glories and
events, yet who sees in them deeper significances for
her life and for the lives of other people. One sees
how close to her "Papa" and "Mama" she is and
how much she feels nurtured by their love and pre-
sence.

In her deep connection with her parents, she
feels and suffers with them . . . she observes of her
father

Suffering all manner of hardships
His skin suntanned beyond recognition

And as her "Wanderer"

He has so far survived so many untoward
incidents on the way.
Entangled in a labyrinth,
Heavy in his heart,
How many seasons and years has it been
Since he has stopped counting . . .

And

Yet you
Never, never complain
Nor ever get angry.
You prepare another gift
To be cast into the net of poor folk.

One senses a growing feeling that her experiences and wisdom are not for herself alone, but for sharing and for easing the pain of and bringing new joy to others.

These poems are warm and revealing in the directness and simplicity of their emotion.

One can sense that these are the poems of a young woman who *feels*—deeply and profoundly; and has the gift of making us, too, feel through her words. I cannot help but think that it is Miss Ye-jin Moon that, in her poems, commends herself the best.

David S.C. Kim
At Belvedere, January 9, 1979
(Lunar Calendar: December 11, 1978)

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

Dr. Hae Soo Pyun did an extraordinary job of translating the poems from the original Korean into English. In the initial stages he was aided by students of the Unification Theological Seminary. Transliteration of Korean to English, as with any Asian language, especially in poetry, is very difficult. The differences in content and structure of ideograms versus western writing are basic and fundamental and expression of complete poetic feeling between the two poses a particular problem. This is why the Korean and English translations of the poems are placed side-by-side in this book, allowing the reader to fully appreciate the breadth of the poems in both languages.



A Lily of the Valley

Maybe it's only the rustling of the wind,
Only the fluttering of a fledgling perched somewhere.
Shrouded in the mist
A bell tinkles
Faint and dim,
As if by the temperate breeze,
As if by the honeyed breath of spring.

Out of each stem, out of each leaf—
Like a baby's plump and bell-like wrist,
Like a chickweed,
Flowers, whitish and gladsome, one by one
Emerge, row after row.

Each flower has her name
With her own fairy tale
Tucked away behind some mysterious leaf.

Startled
By the tinkling of the bell,
I dare not
Snap a branch—
With a budding flower, hiding
Behind the mysterious leaf,
Staring blankly, unblinking,
Trembling and afraid.

1973 Spring

Beneath a Zelkova Tree

A Zelkova tree,
Its long, long pigtails swinging in the breeze,
Greedy drinks of the flood of sunlight,
Gulping down
Its own peagreen pigtails, too.

Under its shade,
On a sunny day in late spring—

The friendly breeze licking and lapping his face,
A little, sleepy-eyed cowboy,
Yawning every now and then near a running brook—
Fights his heavy eyelids,
His eyes narrower but more determined.

The tickling zephyr blows and blows
On a warm, interminable day.
The dancing mist still blankets rolling hills with
tenderness
While the mooing of a newborn calf, hungry and
thirsty again,
Dogging the trails of its mama-cow,
Drags lazily on and on....
Mooing...and mom-ing.

The benevolent sun pounds its clenched fists on his
face;
A little birdie chirps and trills and chortles nearby;

A flying insect torments its victim with mounting
zeal—
Yet the little cowboy snores—
Only his nose twitches now and then.
And he snores even more loudly.

On a tedious day in late spring,
Near the singing brook,
A zelkova tree joins in a chorus,
Its pigtails swinging and swaying to and fro.

1973 Spring

Over Yonder

Blades of grass savor each drop of milklike dew
As the sunlight gleams on the resplendent garden in
the morn.

Each tree is enamored by the charming,
Dream-like songs of chirping birds.
Whither the flowers beckon with a knowing
Wink—over yonder.

Go — go.
Over yonder.

Tear away the shroud of oppressive darkness,
Overcome the endless night of loneliness and
desperation—
Go — go.

Give ear! Give ear!
Hear
The tale of dew's dream-journey now!

Birds will lovingly whisper in your ears,
Ambrosial flowers will allure you.
Go — go.

Into the bosom of our Heavenly Father—
Melting like fluffy cotton candy,
Warm and comforting like fluffy cloud-quilt.

On a Breezy Morning

Morning—
Mist ballets
In between tree trunks.

Flow, cosmic flow—
There's *je ne sais quoi**
Stirring but intangible
In a morning.

Sobbing—
Thin as a silk thread,
Loud as an uncontrollable blubbering.

Gentle breeze
Undulating the waves—like fish scales.

Blubbering of rustling leaves whirrs
Around the rim of my ears.

Rippling waves on the water
Dashing against one another,
Breaking into flame-like foams—
On a morn,
Flowing,
Dashing against....

Now—
Morning ballets
In between waves of flowing air.

One Morning in Winter

Icicles hang from the eaves,
Pointed like arrowheads.

A weatherbeaten thatched cottage
Nods drowsily
In a tiny village nestling in the dale.

A lonely, tortuous mountain bypath lies dormant
Under the heavy quilt of dead leaves of
cotton-plants.

Morning spreads its mat on the ground
As the sun, after a prolonged
Lazy sleep, begins to cast a shaft of light.

Waiting, waiting for his papa
Who went to the marketplace yesterday,
A small boy still waits,
Till his face turns into an apple.

“Ding-ding!” the bell rings
From afar—
It’s from papa’s bike.

Out of the chimney of the thatched cottage
Odor of pungent breakfast being cooked
Comes lazily...

Sea (I)

That's
Blue and white and red.

Blue—
Waves beyond the horizon,
A big enough hug for flowery clouds.

White—
Shattered hands of the fern
Preen the bird's feathers.

Red—
Evening still roasted by the setting sun,
Golden rays penetrate through the evening mist.

That's clean and rustling and burning.
It swallows up a day—
Gulp.

1973, at the end of the year

Sunset

It's been a rainy day.

The day's done
And only its shadow remains,
Dancing on the murmuring waves of a murky sea.

A lone goose is flying in the sky;
Tired after a long flight,
It whimpers and blubbers—
Its ashen face quivers.

Sunset...sunset...
Bearing down his loneliness
A wanderer finally settles
For the night.

Over its swelling waves
The overflowing dusky sea sprays five colors.

The boundless sea dyes
The sand dunes with an ardent and raging passion.

Murmuring, surging, and undulating—
Only the shadows of the rainy day that's already past.

Autumn Sea

This summer, flooded and washed away,
Was but a rainbow beyond my reach
In a fading dream.

Yet this autumn sea,
Speechless and moving,
Is like a cast-iron dummy
Moving but in one direction,

Under the puckered brow of carefree sky,
The lazy sun crumpled in its seat.
But it is not a day
Resplendent in its glory, full of golden light.

You, alone—
Heaving a deep sigh,
Murmur with a wisp of desire and despair,
Whisper wordlessly,
Wave after wave,
Forever and for evermore.

On the Threshold of Winter

A mean-looking crow, perched on a lean branch,
Broods away the whole morning,
Preens itself vainly
With frills.

Carrying the canopy of heaven
On its back for awhile,
It looks petrified.

Mad and desperate,
As if it were going out of its mind,
It shakes its whole body—
Then, quietly and demurely,
As if it almost lost its heart,
It crouches still—in the end.

The last crow that stands guard
Over the threshold of chilly November
Finally crawls back inside....

Ah! My heart is glutted
With the overwhelming sense
Of Nothingness and Aloneness.
Would that the heavy rains could wash it away!

1974

To the Stars

Sprinkled all over the peaceful sky
Is pollen—everywhere.
Golden, white, or other shades without names,
Twinkling in the dark.
Each, like a miniature paper star pasted in the
 sketchbook,
Symbolizes the seed of joy and anger, or happiness
 and sorrow,
Each and all crisscrossed, without reason or pattern.

All of you who have conquered darkness by your
 brilliance,
Those yet to be born,
The living,
The dead,
Their joy, doubt and scream,
Each night, quietly, seeded here and there;
Each of you above stands for—
And reverberates with—each of those below.

Among the sparkling crowd is one closest to me,
Whose compassionate and tender eyes
Worm into my heart!
Haven't you been my companion
For the last fourteen years!

One star, one me
Two stars, two me's
Three stars, three me's....

My own star!
In the darkest part of dark night,
In the pitch dark near my pillow—
No candlelight here.
You may have to bring a box of matches, too!
One star—my own,
Flood my room with light,
Fill my empty heart with warmth.
One star—my own....

1974

On a Summer Morning

As night breathes, rhythmically and ceaselessly,
Murky mist settles down on the grass.

Dewdrops, racing and skidding
Over the runway of grass leaves,
Yawn, lazily stretching their arms, tired.
Night has been too fleeting, too brief.

Slowly and with tender care,
The finger of rosy dawn
Lifts the curtain of night mist;
The chirping of early birds
Is carried away by the whispering winds—
far and near.

The fragrance of flowers
Rudely assails the nostrils like burning incense.

On a summer morn
When all things yawn lazily,
I would love to become a busy butterfly!
Smiles on my lips,
I would love to wake up the misty morning
By pouring a bucketful of cold water
Over her sleepy head!

Mist

Whene'er I call,
You come tiptoeing
Like the gentle ripples on the water,
Almost inaudible.

Out of the womb of spring
Is born your seraphic dimple.
Yet the harsh wind
Dashes your body to pieces.

Into the mist
The heat preserved in all things during winter
Transforms itself—
With the coming of spring,
All beings, full of joy and hope in their vibrant
 hearts,
Sing and hum cheerfully.

Mist, without color or size, cannot be
Caught in the meshes of spring or soft-spoken breeze.
Under the ray of the sunlight
It dances and jigs,
Now in white, then in red.
Turning opalescent, beige mist still lingers
When the milky clouds,
With their longish, tousled hair blowing in the wind,
Float nonchalantly by.

1974

White Chrysanthemum

You are, my dear,
Like the wings of a sheer white phoenix
That drinks nothing but nectar.

Your petals are as velvety
As feather;
Your redolence
Exudes from the innermost depths of your heart!

Your matchless beauty, crowning beauty!
Your affectionate smile is as captivating
As the moonlight that roams over the snow-cover'd
valleys.

Like the new bride, beautiful and bashful,
You too, sit still with head bowed.
For you are fragrance itself,
In silence, wordlessly.
Be as soft and delicate

as an argent snowflake!

1974

Summer

As the sun spray-paints
A patch of perspiring grass green,
The torrid summer pulsates effectually
On a leisurely garden one afternoon.

The cerulean sky caresses fluffy and floating clouds;
The summer, gaining in strength,
Goes its appointed way—
The trees, wilting, ingeniously take cover
On the verdant, bounding hills.

In the sweltering heat
Healthy buds keep their hands busy—
You are like the dancing flame of burning fire.
Or, perhaps, a rosebud,
Charged with the battery of rising passion?

Your soul, sizzling hot,
Incinerates the love song of a plantain;
Then, spreading your wide, wide
Wings for a victory song,
You lay to rest your juggling hands,

Engine hot, sizzling,
Without regret for the day.

1974 Summer

Night

Black India ink silently dyes
The speckless, white bedsheet of the sky.
You sneak in unnoticed—like the tides, high
and low,
And away you go, stealthily, too.
How lamentable is your heartless silence!

As stars come out to feast on a moonlit night,
Chitchatting and tittle-tattling,
You listen to them with keen delight.
You're the mailman who under cover of darkness
Delivers morning from door to door,
Since last evening.

Spring, in breeze or in rain, never missing a day,
You come to visit,
Like the last train that brings honored guests
After a day's delay.

Night—that's your name;
Just one word—inexhaustible....
You are the venerable old man of Nature.

1974

One Fragmented Afternoon

A hamlet, lackadaisical and weary,
Dozes off for a catnap.

Even the clear, cloudless sky
Yawns languorously this day.

The listless wind blows sizzling hot—
As if to swallow up the whole village.

The hour in which the ripening heads of rice,
Scorched by the heat, cry out in pain.

Old men's smoking pipes
Get rusty....

The lazy cat, crouched at one nook,
Chases away a rat with its forepaw.

1974 Summer

Sunflower

You are a flower too coy
To look others in the eyes!

Like the sesame seeds wrapped in a sheath,
So much is buried deep in your heart!
But only a piteous, dispirited soul
Dwells in your eyes,
Though they burn like live coal.

Under a tiny lamp hanging from the branch of
yesternight,
Things of which you prated have already
Vanished like the dream of a rainbow!

Should the wind have carried your message, though,
It would still be riding a magic carpet of cloud....

But—
In the end, in the end,
All things are, of a sudden,
Thrown up, lumpy, withered and broken!

Over the crest of a mountain yonder,
The glowing sun, chugging along and struggling,
slowly descends.
Alas, summer's drawing to a close....

1974 Summer

Sea in the Evening (I)

A ferryboat, weathered after a tedious voyage,
Pitches and rolls on the waves—

Its sail whimpers
As the wind blasts against it.

The light gradually drowns below the horizon
As the sun vanishes beneath the sea.

The old ferryman's forehead
Is wrinkled with so many lines—
His many years tell of incredible hard labor.

O Yes, his earlier hopes,
His prayers...
How vain it is to wash them away.

The summer is drawing to a close
And the ferryboat, with its sail,
Glides on—

1974 Summer

Fishing

An ounce of sweat carries within it
A pound of meed.
Defying the perils of the sea,
Haul in a catch—
Fearlessly and with determination.

Sail, sail at top speed!
In one early dawn,
Your heart full of manly ambition,
Angle for the treasure of the sea
With the iron will.

Come now, you men!
Let's go a fishing,
And become the sinkers of a dragnet
That catches all the treasure
At the bottom of the sea.

1974

Rainbow

It rained throughout the night.
Circling the celestial sphere,
A big rainbow, with its seven colors,
Straddles its legs on a bird's nest
And cautiously spreads its wings on the leaves.

Breeze, delicate breath, swings on the rainbow;
A fledgling in the nest tests its wings for a flight.
Each of the bright, resplendent colors
Is a flower in the Garden of Heaven,
A flower that stores away in its memory
All the dream-like events for a thousand years!

Under the diffused light of the sun,
You seem to vanish like melting snow.
Your garments as immaterial as the fairies' apparel
of old—
You appear to be within my grasp
Yet you are beyond my reach, now and forever.
After all, you were but an empty dream
That evanesces only too soon.

1974 Summer

My Hometown

You baby, my sweet one!
Do you know—?
In that region:
When spring comes,
Butterflies swarm
Intoxicated by aromatic flora;
In summer
Weeping willows let their lengthy hair
Down nonchalantly at the water's edge.

And in autumn
Fallen leaves wet the grass insects underneath,
Muffling their piteous cries;
When winter comes,
Sitting around the charcoal hearth,
People enjoy roasting chestnuts,
Spinning tall tales, laughing their heads off....
My home—do you know where it is?

Spring zephyr lures
Maidens into the sunny dales and vales
Where they fill their baskets with edible herbs and
wild greens.
Then, mist covered hills are lulled into sleep
By a nightingale's lullaby
And they dream sweet dreams.

It's hot and muggy, too, in early summer;
Under an old tree,
Old men smoke their long pipes and tell funny
 stories,
And the blue smoke, spiralling, travels lazily
Up the skies.

In the fall,
Mountains under the open firmament,
With their new colorful raiments of autumnal glory,
Can watch travelers trudging by....
Do you know?

And—
When the chill northerly wind blows,
Small children have fun, playing
The game of war
With weapon-shaped icicles and wooden staves
On the sunny backyard....
Do you know?

As one steps cautiously on a tortuous mountain
 by-path
In the countryside,

One may see short clumsy chimneys,
Which appear to hold up the tent of heaven,
Belching thick, dark smoke,
Beclouding a tiny hamlet—
Some woman fans the cooking fire in the kitchen....

Little children strain their ears
To pick up the footsteps of their daddy's straw sandals
As he's returning from the marketplace....
Then there's the northerly wind that's ceased its fervor
In this hamlet of warmhearted souls, of hope-filled
children.

You baby, my sweet one! This evening
You hold your big sister's hand tightly,
Close your cute little eyes, too;
Now, don't you want to run and run—
In the wheatfield,
Studded with red-hued dragonflies all over?
In the evening fog that turns the skies a magnificent
gray?

1974 Autumn



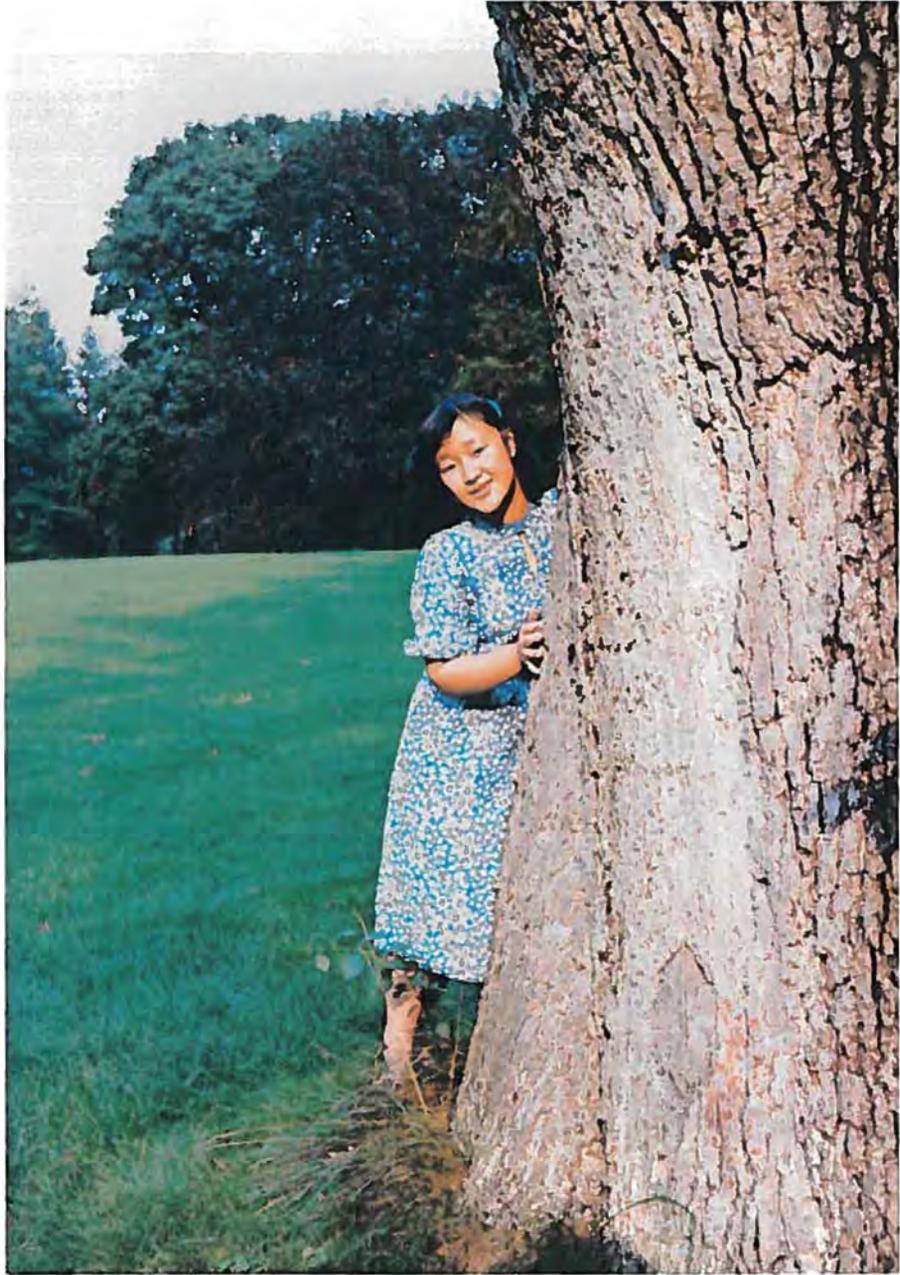
Standing by Holy Rock at Belvedere



Walking toward Holy Ground at Belvedere



After Sunday service at Belvedere



By a tree at East Garden



In front of the main house at East Garden

Autumn

Into an empty, open sky
Tree branches shoot up.

Not a single cloud hangs from its ceiling;
Only the wind knocks now and then.
On the park benches
Countless leaves are piled up.
Tree branches are
Turned into cruel whips.

As the wind gains its momentum,
Fated leaves are scattered in all directions
Over the road....
I get into the skin of one lone leaf
And chew on the sad story it tells me;
A solitary wayfarer on the unfrequented road.

1974.10 at the dormitory

Alone in the Dawn

Alone in the dawn
I sit by myself.

My wandering eyes
Survey the empty schoolyard below.

My heart takes refuge
Underneath tiny leaves.

I fill up my lungs
With fresh morning air.

Far, far away—
An early sparrow sings plaintively,

And fills my desolate heart
With its beautiful, enchanting trills.

1974.10.12 at the dormitory

On the hill in late autumn,
On the hill deserted by flies and other flying insects,
The season's here,
Seeking light greedily,
The season that's lost its way.

Dead leaves—
A lone leaf joins them,
The wind gently nudging it along.

I pick it up
And hold it in my two hands,
Contemplating its cruel fate.

I feel in the marrow of my bones
The lifeless debris of this autumn;
I try to shield the early dusk
With my wind-blown overcoat.

1974.10 at the dormitory

A Wanderer

The sun is setting toward eve;
A deserted, lonely road stretches ahead—

A wanderer trudges along.
Dogging the mountain trails and following the river
banks,
He has so far survived so many untoward incidents
on the way.

Entangled in a labyrinth,
Heavy in his heart,
How many seasons and years it has been
Since he has stopped counting....

Suffering all manner of hardships,
His skin suntanned beyond recognition,
The ice of utter loneliness forming around his heart,

The wanderer drags his weary feet
Along a forsaken, solitary road,
Roasting his dim memory of hardship
On the setting sun.

1974. 10.12

A Roadside Tree

It must have been the greening breeze.
Along the boulevard this morn
Leaves have been painted green—
Sprouting fresh and thick and puissant,
On the branches entwined with green.

Shoulder to shoulder
Branches jostle with one another in the wind,
Prattle idly in between,
Locking their invisible wings.

Like the fluttering of a dancer's skirt
In a frenzied pirouette,
Leaves—these living things—flicker and hover
On the stage of the open sky.

Morning air in a slow, stately minuet,
The soul of a green tree
Emanates earth's savor
From end to end of the scenic route.

1974 late summer

One Winter Night

On that day in late winter,
Chestnuts crackling in the hearth,
Grandma told us an amusing tale.

A heavy snow flurry hit the town,
But wrapped in the warm quilt,
We, all ears, listened to adventure.

Grandma, always carrying a bag “full of amazin’
tales”,
Was in the habit of saying:
“Children! Tonight we open our story bag just a
wee bit!”

As her stories were being told,
Chestnuts roasted in the hearth,
And a long winter night
Stretched and stretched
As long as a rice-candy bar.
And in our good fortune, the story bag never closed
that night!

1974.12

A Rainy Day

Sheets of rain have
Swallowed up the wailing wind—in a twinkling;
Not satisfied, they are sweeping
Away the grayish, shadowed sky!

The whole world sobs rhythmically
To the tune of the outpouring rain.
Even the sun, growing a trunk and branches,
Seems to retreat to its primordial beginning—
Everything is instantly changed around,
And it's much too chilly
For the first few days of November.

Ah! How could I have known,
Bidding farewell to the late autumn,
The final chorus would echo
And re-echo so desolately!

Of all days, today alone—strange as it may sound—
Does not touch me,
Does not wound
My already painful heart.

1974.11

On New Year's Morn

Heavy snow squalls blanket
The mountains and rivers with vengeance,
As if to cover up—or wash away—
The old grime of the entire world.

Today, hugging the early morn of New Year's Day,
My heart brims
With warm, indescribable emotions.

My old hopes and yearnings for last year
Still linger on....
Yet they are all being pulverized
On the anvil of life,
Like the old misfortune of evil luck of yesteryear.
As dawn greets a new day,
My heart quivers with boundless joy and ambition—
Almost gasping for more air.

Our burning hearts, partaking of the bountiful
Blessing of Heaven,
Hanker after great expectations.

Let's wake up from protracted slumber—
And make our ablutions in the clear rivulet,
Cleansing our bodies and our hearts!

Let's dare cross over the stony, untrodden path,
Full of obstacles and perils,
And gallop on our heavenly horse
With whip and spur
Toward the flag of final victory fluttering in the
wind!

Resonance

Drip...drip...
Raindrops falling from the eaves,
For nothing—of course.
Peace in the sky, profoundly blue and open,
Is disturbed by...
Drip, drip...again.

Like the incoming tide, surging
Into echoes, changing
Raindrops fall—nonstop.

The whirlwind follows
Torrents of rain—
Then comes resonance on a minor key.
Only this resonance...
Drip...drip...

A faint knock,
Swift as a flying arrow,
Kicks the gate open
Unto an immense,
Empty space.

1975.12

The First Snow at Dawn

Ummm!
The first snow of the year
Is so sweet and luscious
And so pure.
My wet mouth tingles
With energy—and excitement.

Like a bird preening herself,
The whole universe sprinkles
White powder on earth's pretty face.
I'm but a small girl—
Yet I wanna powder myself
With white snow
And join the winter parade of the cosmos—
It's my pea-sized dream,
Bewitched by the fair beauty of white eyebrow.

I want to walk on and on—
Yes, I'll walk on and on
Till the aftertaste of falling white sugar,
Waking up the sleepy dawn,
Finally dies away.

1975.1

A Prairie

Your sensitive breast is ripped open
More cruelly than that of a fool shaking
His fist at an approaching arrow

Your anger rings true—
Your eyes roll side to side
Like the incoming tide,
Shaking its head from side to side.

A wayfarer has a large face,
Ugly and weatherbeaten;
He crosses the bridge
Of suffering and sadness.

Nothingness, lost and out of reach weighs
Heavier than anguish
On your heart.
Yes, your heart yearns for
The hot breath of the sun
More than the wind and rain;
In the end—
It beckons only to silence.

1975.1

Fallen Leaves

After the sizzling passion is spent,
Only the wrinkles,
Unspeakably skinny and leathery
On your old face, remain....

Your feet are feeling numb—
Your clenched fists but a lump
Of flesh hardened by loneliness.
Yours is a bitter laugh, though;
A bloodcurdling laugh, too.
For it's that of someone defeated
Amidst the joy of living.

A bright, bejewelled crown
On the head of autumn's Queen
Is washed away by the inexorable waves of Time,
Without a farewell song,
Without the parting kiss.

Now—
Trampled under winter's feet,
Standing at the crossroads of Life and Death,
You become the hero in the Drama of Remembrance,
Bathing your weary soul in the bitter cup....

1975.1.25

Sea in the Evening (II)

The feast of uneven euphony calls
And only the splashing of the water is faintly
audible.

Some greenhorn fishermen
Have scratched you
Into painful bleeding.
Your eyes are sickly and pale—
Your smile is ghastly and wan.

Yet you
Never, never complain—
Nor ever get angry.
You prepare another gift
To be cast into the net of poor folk.

In that tiny boat
Some cautious anglers
Row out for night fishing.
and they should know....

Tiredness set in—sometimes;
You feel robbed, stabbed and kicked—
You cannot bear the pain any longer.
Then you spew forth the mountainous
Waves in a fury
Yet, in the end, you relent
And calm down again—for awhile.

Your inviolable heart
Remains the same through a hundred
Million years—
Like iron, like granite—
You have, I'm sure, complaints
Without number.

My tear will roll down your cheeks
Like raindrops.
And flood your heart.
And still you maintain control
With blue hands—
With shaking but unshaken soul!

Sea, my beloved!
You are the iron rampart of forbearance.
Even if your body shrivelled to nothing,
Your name would be "sea"
Forever as it is now.

1974.1

Candlelight

Inside your slim body
Boils the molten rock.
As you control the lava
Gushing forth all at once,
You are a yellow flower that does not wither away.

Your light dispels
That darkness inside your hovel,
A house for the homeless wayfarer at heart.

The moonlight shines, too,
On the tiny cells of existence.
No wind can scatter them away.

What could ever extinguish you?!
Who snuggles to my heart!
Listen! I hear
The harsh breathing of your loving, aching heart....

Yet dreams in five colors
Give your heart, full of infinite space,
Only the picayune warmth of a lighted matchstick.
Wind! Guard this night,
Till the last ounce of energy
Is left to glue together
The dancing petals of a yellow flower.

1975.1

Flowers in the Wind

My little baby brother! Can you see it?
A handful of news—coming over,
Waddling and wobbling.

Already—I mean, my dear,
A silklike gush of wind blowing
From yonder mountain,
Like a busy sparrow in flight.

Like your big sis here,
Keep your ears open as one does on top of a high
mountain;
Like the ocean,
Keep your mouth and nose wide open.
Then you become receptive to all things around you.

Somebody's coming here—
Carrying a five-colored parasol,
Clad in the bright rainbow.

My little baby brother! Hurry, put on
Your Sunday best,
And let's go out, you and I!

To meet God's own spring ambassador,
Ever busy, extraordinarily gifted,
And, of course, exquisitely beautiful—
Right?

1975. Thinking of my little brother, Kwon-Jin

A Landscape

Hurriedly,
Midnoon ticks away,
Huffing and puffing...

A choking sensation
Seizes hold of me suddenly,
And for no reason whatever,
I pant after some news,
Any small news of the day .

Inside the room,
The air is soft and thick and hot and...
Like melting butter.

A forsythia in the calendar
Is as fresh and golden and attractive as ever....
Ah, already—
Time flies.
Year after year,
The unchanged and unchangeable sign is repeated—
It's spring now.

1975

A Hill in Early Spring

Yes, someone's calling—in a voice
Soft and immaculate,
Thin yet mellow.

Invisible
Yet its warmth is felt everywhere;
Inaudible
Yet its voice tickles behind my ears—
On a hill in early spring.

Like a new bud that raises
Its head cautiously,
Like a demure maiden
With her dimples,
It, too, tests its wings
Cautiously and quietly.

Little trees grow up rapidly,
Spreading their shoulder-branches,
The trunks thicken—
Pushing up, too, daringly.
Can there be any other joy?
The dash of new life—that's all in all.

Standing on the knoll,
The spring of life
Overflows the banks
Of a loving heart.

1975

On a Spring Day

The first sunshine steals
Through the windowpane
And, mercilessly, fondles
And kisses the plump cheeks
Of a nursling, slumbering in a crib.

The mild air in the atmosphere
Dances leisurely, rhythmically, back and forth.
A daffodil, just plucked from the field,
Scents the infant's chin—this afternoon.

Reposed,
The day turns into stout silence.
But the breathing of ten thousand things,
Liberated in season, enliven the tranquil scene.

Spring, in the driver's seat of soothing winds,
Drives away the foggy mists;
She dapples white milk, like Mommy's, on all
things,
Fattening up the sunlight and Nature's lovely face,
Thawing the ice on the windowpane.
She fills my heart with the joy of life—
The pump of life, frozen during winter, is primed
once again.

In her heart,
Spring has no bitterness;
She greets everyone with smiles,
Then changes into the benign
Face of the sleeping baby in the crib.

Waiting

Time goes round and round,
Going round
My absentminded heart,
Silently, as in a wasteland.

As if making fun of my anxious waiting,
Darkness lingers on,
Scrubbing its greasy paint in slow, slow motion.
I count the hours aloud with my own fingers—
Several hours before the incoming tides.
Before I realize it, my fancy
Paints the familiar faces—
“Papa, Mama, please come home right away!”

As the streaks of dawn straighten their backs leisurely,
Each leaf, turned golden,
Reflects the radiance of the sun.
As morning gradually turns into day,
I impatiently await
To greet my Papa and Mama
With a big, happy smile.

1975

June

The sun, with a burst of energy,
Turns into an ever intensified flying fireball.

Especially—this year,
Early summer,
Like a new bride
Shy and slow at first,
Brings forth a flower of choicest fragrance.

The hill, a huge balloon,
Is covered with blooming flowers,
Greened by a clutter of leaves,
Thriving every second,
Pulsating like a heartbeat.
It looks like a buxom,
Smiling, friendly face,
Although its arms appear sinewy and strong.
A soothing zephyr kisses the smooth features
Of a long afternoon...
Loiters longer than usual
In a pleasant chat.

June!
Lay bare your heart!
Let's green our souls!
Let's draw the curtain for the summer!
Let's run, then, in the open field
And other playing fields!

Morning

Morning, victorious
In her struggle with the dead silence of night,
Breathes freely again....

New lives are wiggling—
As the sun rises in a hurry.

Stretched out supinely,
All things suddenly come to life,
And rising up,
Don their new apparel.

On top of the hill
The new dawn ceremoniously
Sets a noisy engine into motion.

Under the wet grass,
Morning busies herself,
Running to and fro
Like a busy, aggressive mother-hen,
Then, sneaking into my bedroom,
She pinches and scratches my eyelids—
Kindly and tenderly.

1975

Sea (II)

Sea—wordless,
Like a huge rock, so stiff and so dumb.

She swallows
Joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, etc.,
Without batting an eye.

Sometimes she is sedate—
Sometimes as angry as a wounded tiger,
Yet, always, she offers her inimitable
Smile—azure smile.

“You! Fold your wordless wings—lightly!”
I shout and scream at the top of my lungs.
Yet no echo returns—
Nothing—but wordless silence.

Four seasons are invariable—
They come and go—through your heart....
“I won’t change. That’s my firm resolve.”
Thus, the shouting and screaming
Sea—wordless,
Like a huge rock, stiff and dumb,
Forever and a day.

Morning Sea

Silvery foam on the lapping waves—
So sweet-scented, so lively.

Like the Milky Way,
Or perhaps, like the dazzling carpet of night sky,
Time sparkles—for hours, beautifully.

Morning, sea, and quiet
On the stage of heaven,
The illuminant sun
Set against the sea-blue waves....
Ah! Peace is here.... enough.

Peace—
Ever so near, so real.

As I stroll along the beach in the morning,
I feel as if, out of the blue,
A dove, white and pure,
Swoops into me.

1976

Farewell to Late Autumn

Over a hill in late afternoon
The sun shines brightly—it's
A farewell party for procrastinating autumn.

Gone are the silent and sweet
Birds and the blooming
Flowers—Nature's supreme legerdemain....
Only the fallen leaves, dried and crumpling,
Lifeless, stretch out amorphously.

Scattered souls
Bewail
The lost autumn.

The hill,
Bare and bald,
Still stammers out an old song,
Composed of the decayed leaves of yesteryear.
Absorbed in thought,
It contemplates the meaning
Of Nothingness.

1974

Snow

My toes, electrified
By the settling snow,
The heartbeat of the universe.

Into my mouth, open skyward,
Fall pearls of smiling flowers.

Swept by the wind,
Enlarging in descent,
Snowflakes gently land on the ground.
Countless specks—
Paint the world white—
Paint the inner chamber of my heart white and
pure, too!

Snow has eyes
As transparent as crystal,
Beautiful beyond compare.
Her sparkling eyes melt
The frozen world by their heartwarming beams.
They cuddle all things—
With loving tenderness.
Snow!
Stay as pure
And as white,
Ever like the Savior,
For all eternity!

1975



Father. . .



... and Mother singing at Belvedere celebration



Ye-jin with one of her younger sisters, Sun-jin



After a celebration at East Garden

After Touring the Grand Canyon

It was in late March, as my spring holidays were rapidly drawing to a close, when we finally arrived in Las Vegas and tried to take a well-earned respite, having unpacked our traveling gear.

During the short fifteen day vacation, my younger brother Hyo-jin and I were to accompany our parents on Papa's lecture tour in several major cities across the U.S.A.

When they suggested, "Shall we take you children on this trip?" Hyo-jin was less than enthusiastic with his noncommittal "Hum!", but as for me, the moment they dropped the hint, I was overjoyed and jumped at the opportunity without a moment's hesitation—owing partly, I suppose, to the inborn *Wanderlust* in me and partly out of my intense curiosity, since my arrival in America, to see her various cities with their distinctive traits and at the same time to observe the American people's life style, customs, and manners. This would, I felt sure, broaden and enrich my own outlook on life and people in general.

Since our departure from New York, Papa had just concluded his speaking engagements in seven American cities without a hitch. Las Vegas—the notorious "heaven" for incorrigible gamblers—was the eighth city on our itinerary.

As soon as we landed on the airfield there, all manner of "gaming" devices, clever and ingenious, to say the least, instantly came into our view. "This sort of gambling is supposedly set up even in the police stations around here.... Tut, tut, tut.... What

a pity!" one of our "uncles" clucked his tongue in disapproval. "A great pity, indeed! Her highly materialistic civilization is leading America down the wrong path!" I also chimed in, although I knew absolutely nothing about these things, for what I found there was so radically different from everything I had seen back in Korea.

Papa's lecture at the Las Vegas Banquet was a smashing, unqualified success. So, at the crack of dawn the following day we all arrived at the airport to go on a tour of the famed Grand Canyon with Papa and Mama.

It was somewhat windy, but we were all elated with the anticipation of enjoying the most magnificent and enchanting views we were about to witness. Of course, our expectation was mounting, our curiosity now aroused to the highest pitch.

In the meantime, we made ourselves comfortable in the lounge chairs, waiting to be ticketed for a small family-type airplane. A large crowd had already thronged there, milling about and jostling with one another. While they were energetically hurrying to and fro in all directions, I idly eyed their brisk steps and their friendly, beaming faces.

I saw more Orientals, especially, I think, Japanese, than the Americans. They looked, for the most part, considerably shorter than the latter, and somehow they caught my roving eyes.

Yet we were, alas, the only Koreans there. True,

the presence of Japanese in Korea used to remind us of their long, oppressive rule that we abhorred, yet nowadays from early morning till I go to bed at night, I live within the earshot of Caucasians—much taller and with bigger noses, too. Maybe, for this reason, I felt somewhat drawn to them, who looked more like me, despite the erstwhile ill feelings that we once harbored against each other. They looked like long lost friends I had not seen for ages. Why?

Is this one of those inexplicables that happen only away from my homeland? I wonder.

Soon we boarded our chartered plane, and as the pilot was getting ready for the take-off, we waited impatiently with bated breath—perhaps it's more to the point to say I was like a little babe crying for his mama's milk. Indeed, I was so excited that even long after we had been airborne I did not become conscious of how, whether, or when the plane had taken off! Our small plane carried our parents, then Col. Bo Hi Pak, Uncle (Col.) Sang-Kil Han, Hyo-jin and myself. So Lady Doctor Kim and Mr. Neil Salonen, the American President of the Unification Church, both of them being on the heavy side, had to fly in another airplane, as we had no room for them in ours.

Aware now that we had been airborne for some time, I looked below through the window and saw, through the scattered clouds, the sprawling airfield and the entire city of Las Vegas at a glance.

As the whole world underneath began to shrink gradually, I felt, high up in the sky, as if I were a flying mother-bird carrying its young, puffed up with a sense of pride and indescribable exhilaration.

Las Vegas, a city of many pleasures as its name indicates, is normally as quiet during the course of the day as a coy bride, and looking down from the sky, I could not bring myself to believe that it stood quiet and still—during those riotous hours!

Before I was there, my fancy had painted Las Vegas lined with imposing and gigantic edifices and peppered with splendid and stately mansions, but in actual fact, it turned out to be merely a town of clean, modern buildings and residences. It reeked of “modernity.”

As soon as we crossed the border between Las Vegas and the Grand Canyon, I sighted mountains, or rather mountain ranges, and rivers—linked together like a string of sausages.

The straight Colorado river flowed leisurely from north to south, piggybacking the Hoover dam.

I could not make it out distinctly, but even from such a height I could easily see that the mighty and gargantuan Hoover dam must have cost astronomical sums, because of its ultra-modern, most sophisticated instruments.

“Wow! Everything, including your face, sis, looks like a mountain!” my younger brother, seeing mountains everywhere, suddenly gushed with his unwonted sense of humor. Now he bubbled with his admiration for what he saw.

Speaking of the mountains, I could not spot a yard of flat ground, with rocky mountains all over the place like the folded Oriental fan.

They were of all colors—beige, gray, yellow, or brick-red. They all majestically stood below, shrouded in the thick morning mist. Yet also like a bashful maiden, they slowly tried to peel off the mysterious veil—all in silence.

These awe-inspiring peaks shot up like the tall yet weather-beaten and wind-sculptured buildings in old Europe. For some time I could not make up my mind which part of the mountain range I should examine more closely. But once I decided to do so, a gigantic boulder caught my eye.

Relatively thin, flat ledges of square rocks were piled up—in one, two, three...four layers, like layers

and layers of rice-cake being steamed in a huge *si-roo*.* On top of them, inaccessible to any mortals, lay stones of all shapes, sizes, and colors, resembling birds, beasts, flowers, and other ten thousand creatures, defying all description yet sitting mutely in their fixed positions in unmistakably clear-cut relief.

Overlooking these *si-roo* like rocks were mountain peaks, all steep and broad. In between these peaks, strangely enough, many trees had struck roots and flourished, but they did not quite blend well with the rocky surroundings.

The will to live is a deep-seated impulse to be found in humans but also, it seems to me, in insignificant creatures like trees. Nor is this all: When I think that these trees proudly and doggedly carry on the business of living in these lonely, forlorn mountains and valleys, my heart, full of compassion, goes out to them, although they are but species of vegetation.

Rolling hills in this region were brick-red here and there, but for the most part they were brownish-yellow like the good earth.

Flying beyond these hills covered with trees, I now saw a deep valley outlining a long, elliptical circle, neat and breath-takingly beautiful, like a maiden's long hair, neatly combed and tastefully marcelled.

**Si-roo*, a large cooking implement of Korean origin, made of clay, used to steam rice-cake.

Bizarre as it may sound the red hue of the slopes of this curvaceous valley offered a striking contrast to the blue of the river, and at the same time, the river seemed to glide gracefully, holding the hands of the valley with loving tenderness.

In the meanwhile, my eyes feasted on the parted lips of the gorgeous valley below. Mountain peaks reminded me of pyramids in ancient Egypt or of the ornate, burnished temples and palaces in Thailand. They were, to be sure, small hills, but as the Korean saying goes, “The smaller a pepper is, the hotter it is, too,” (in America, one would say, “Good things come from a small package”) they stood there with an air of defiance, stretching their limbs. “Look at those midget mountains there!” I exclaimed to draw my younger brother’s attention. But he had been gazing intently at the same mountains, with his face pressed hard against the windowpane.

“You, too, find those tiny mountains real cute, don’t you!” I loudly commented. But he did not even twitch a facial muscle, as if he had never heard me. He was simply enchanted with the masculine grandeur of nature. Once his feet touch the ground, this

Hyo-jin can't sit still in one place even for ten minutes. Now, so engrossed in the sheer beauty of nature, he could not hear my shouting. At that moment, I felt he was already a man.

As the plane circled above these stony mountains, I now caught sight of huge rocks, towering majestically on both sides, juxtaposed like the proud totem poles that guard a hamlet. These smooth rocks, svelte yet massive from top to bottom, stood erect under the canopy of heaven, so that they appeared to have been painstakingly chiselled by a master craftsman and oiled and polished with care. A little farther on the left, following the air current, we soon sighted in the valley below several dark spots, as if scorched by the blazing sun, which looked like gaping wounds. The reason for this, I understand, is that millions and millions of years ago, when the volcano erupted, the hot lava gushed forth and swallowed up this area, leaving hideous wounds in its aftermath.

Long, long ago—indeed, such a long time ago even my wildest imagination can't figure out how long—all this came to pass, and I suppose, from the

tremendous effect, I can infer by exercising my imagination something of its cause—the cataclysmic eruption of a gigantic volcano.

While our plane leisurely cruised, it occurred to me that the stony mountains I saw out of the window had been gradually eroded by the wind and rain over billions and billions of years, and their extraordinary shapes and figures were each of them unique—no two mountains looked alike.

One resembled a lady's flimsy flair skirt flapping in the wind with its big waves; another, by sharp contrast, looked like a superdreadnought, immense and solid, terror-inspiring; a third was a perfect model for the 21st century futuristic painting inspired by the weird looking contemporary sculpture.... All of them were of various and extraordinary shapes, together forming a gaping valley, although their steep slopes stood there haphazardly without any recognizable pattern. Through the pockets in the clouds I could now make out extensive patches of dark green, and readjusting my eyeglasses, I saw the thick forest below—a lot more trees than any other place so far.

For a short while we circled above this area, but I could see not a single blade of grass in the stony surface, though many trees were looking up at me.

However, these tree covered mountains gave me a feeling so different from the bare stony hills we had seen before, a feeling at once refreshing and invigorating. After all, the green color, above all others, impresses me as being something so extraordinary—I can't put my finger on it—call it a sense of repose, peace, security if you like.

Surrounding the mountains, countless trees and trees grew thick; they were so full of vitality and cheerfulness, as if to extend a most cordial welcome to all of us.

“Well, it's so incredible! These Indians eke out a living here in those steep and niggardly valleys below, beating out a narrow path over the endless mountain ranges,” exclaimed one of our uncles, in a tone of admiration and sheer disbelief. I quickly looked out of the window, excited and curious, as the plane was flying over two Indian villages. I could barely make out a winding, narrow path, like a spider's web, which threaded the valleys and rocky hills. But my eyes could not pick up the starting point or the end of the trail. It eloquently attested to the character of intrepid American Indians—their pride, perseverance, dogged determination. Their strong character is a paragon of moral and spiritual excellence of many other peoples.

Nestling at the foot of the mountain, small houses the size of match boxes, crowded like sardines in a can, formed a tiny village below. I was told that here these Indians were trying to carry on the old tradition of their ancestors. Now and then, however, white man's way of life lures away some of the young people, who wish to be "Americanized" by abandoning their quaint old hair style, unique costumes, and tribal customs. But the rest bravely uphold their old culture, proud of their glorious past and never forgetting the blood of their forebears. They still draw their moral strength and maintain their social cohesiveness by ruminating on the days gone by.

The pilot then told us that it would take at least seven full days for anyone in the village to climb over the steep mountain into the "outside" world, and we could not help opening our eyes wide in surprise.

After we passed beyond the Indian village, the familiar chain of rocky mountains again came into our view.

On the one hand, some mountains looked like blooming round-topped mushrooms joining hands; on the other, others reminded me of the sharp weapons of the old braves—spears and swords; still others resembled the bud-like pink cheeks of a shy girl, smooth and round and shiny. Indeed, God the

Supreme Artist fashioned these eternal sculpture masterpieces with such sense of detail and artistry that I was awe-struck. Nothing could be added to or taken away from them without spoiling the sheer beauty of these mountains.

We soon flew over beyond these heavenly art works that reminded me of all the creatures in their infinite variety, and looked out of the window on the righthand side. In the distance, winter seemed to linger and hang tough.

The plane zoomed over there in no time, and although we were all dressed in light spring clothes, the peak was still capped with white snow.

Between the two mountains below I suddenly saw tiny objects moving in both directions. I strained my eyes to find out what they were. They turned out to be speeding automobiles. Beyond the thinning clouds I now could make out in the distance a huge building with the sign in large letters: The Grand Canyon Rest Area. “Whew! It’s all over!” I mumbled to myself, stretching my back. My excitement and tension were gone; I was now relaxed—relaxed I say because I am bold and brave, a veritable Amazon not afraid of anything or anyone under Heaven, but, in all honesty, I must confess that I had moments of terror and anxiety for fear that our plane might crash as it zig-zagged in its perilous and wavering flight between the steep, rocky mountain cliffs.

We presently got off the plane, and getting into a waiting bus, which took us to a restaurant, we savored an already prepared meal in a talkative mood. We pleasantly whiled away part of the afternoon, talking about our impressions of the Grand Canyon and about many interesting highlights of our trip.

1974

Diary (Excerpts)

October 1, 1974

Dormitory.

To get used to the life in a school dormitory I've heard and read so much about it, and at one time or another I thought I had a shrewd idea about where it's really at. But, unlike a helpless and hapless fiction character, fate has plunged me into the *real* situation: I've left a "small society" called my family and come to live in a "medium-sized society"—school dormitory. "You never know what stars have in store for you," someone once told me. The inner meaning of these dark words has just begun to dawn upon me.

As far back as February 1st, Papa and Mama assured me, I still remember so distinctly, that after the first of the month (October?) I would feel a lot better! I didn't know what they really meant, and here I am, brooding like a scared little school girl. I feel kind of melancholy in ways that are so strange and unfamiliar to me. Tears moisten my eyes but refuse to trickle down, as an eerie feeling steals over me. True, I did not quite play the baby at home, yet I've been brought up always in an atmosphere of Papa's and Mama's tender loving care. To me, "loneliness" was only a word in my dictionary. For these reasons, perhaps, I am now so confused, so utterly lost, and things ahead look so bleak, so terribly bleak.

Just a few minutes ago, Mama followed me into my room, and after looking it over, and tidying up things here and there, with her own hands, left for home. Every nook and cranny of the room smells sweet and redolent, permeated by her fragrance, so I'm not yet convinced I'm about to live away from home. But as my eyes gradually take notice of different objects in a new surrounding, I am suddenly overwhelmed with: "Ah, this must be a dormitory room. I pinch myself hard and it's no dream; it's the real thing . . . the real thing."

My roommate is Helen. Her parents are, I am given to understand, separated. Her life must be sad, poor thing. Papa and Mama made the point of telling me, I recall, to be extra nice to this unhappy girl, and I now freshly resolve to grin and bear it all, no matter how often she may turn me off. It was, indeed, a piece of news to me when I got the message through the reliable "grapevine": that in any case, when Miss Ye-jin Moon—that's me—goes to live for a while in a school dormitory, an environment so radically different from her home, she will sooner or later lose some of the jagged edges in her personality, as it were, and in the process, not only acquire the virtue of forbearance but also learn to live in harmony with others. As a cicada must shed its old shells in the process of growth, so I should, if I am to grow, "shed" my old shortcomings, taking advantage of this Heaven-sent opportunity. I must go the extra mile, I now realize, to become a "new" Ye-jin, at every opportunity I get with all the energy and determination at my command.

Now that all and sundry crowds my thought, somehow my feeling of being alone has evaporated into thin air. Like an explorer in the *terra incognita*, I am gripped with a sense of the adventurous and the mysterious. Back at home, I used to be a maudlin type, just a girl of ten, very sensitive and touchy. It may be that I've always had in me a hidden streak, phlegmatic, stolid, and perhaps, even hard, of which this strange place away from home has made me suddenly aware. The tears that used to gush forth so copiously at the drop of a hat have run dry—completely, it seems, for my eyes now sparkle without a drop of tear juice in them. Maybe, there's something wrong with the tear 'sac' in my eyes, for this is surely the one place where I could break into a long, loud, senseless, spontaneous, uncontrollable blubbing.... I just can't understand it at all. An expression I heard so often from other children in Korea comes back to my mind.

I am now reminded of someone's comments about me: I am capable of going from one extreme to the other! At that time, I did my best to ignore them by pretending to laugh my head off, but thinking them over, I must confess that I may be an oddball, after all. Only a few minutes ago, I admitted to coming real close to crying my heart out, yet only a few lines above I have loudly declared that I was elated with the sense of the adventurous, that something was probably wrong with the tear 'sac' in my eyes, etc. I must say that I'm not only not crying—tears being a sure sign of my utter loneliness—but not even having a running nose...what do you make of all this crazy stuff, eh?

For some time now, I've been engrossed in my desultory thoughts, totally oblivious of whether this is my home or school dormitory, laughing to myself and getting down this diary on paper. Out of the blue, Helen kicks the door open with a loud "bang!"

"Ye-jin," she shouted, almost screamed, "Ye-jin, it's seven-thirty. Let's go downstairs quickly. It's our study period, you know. Come on, H-U-R-R-Y U-P!" I am suddenly and rudely jolted out of the stream of my consciousness. Only then, I mumble to myself: "This is the dormitory. Don't you forget that!"

Helen is a big tomboy, like me. Thinking in a flash that this may bespeak our part karmic ties, I quickly gather up my books and step out into the corridor. And I repeat to myself: "Good luck! God-speed!"

Then I heave a deep sigh of relief.

March, 1975

Sometimes, parting for a short while may be good medicine. Nevertheless, parting is parting...and as such makes my heart ache so.

It's midnight now—only six hours after Papa and Mama left for Korea. Somehow I feel as if something precious has been wrenched out of my hands—and my heart feels empty and forlorn. Again for two months. Maybe I should be patient—only for two months.

This morning I was in a cranky mood, knowing full well that they would soon leave me; instead of being cheerful and pleasant in their presence, I succeeded only in playing the little baby, so I now feel sort of guilty of what I did. A stifling wave of remorse creeps over me.

Why didn't I please them just a wee bit? On the contrary, I was just a nudnik.... If I miss them already so much like this, after only a few hours, how can I possibly hold my impatience for the next two months? The whole thing is depressing, bleak, impossible.

I sit in their room alone, my eyes wistfully surveying the entire interior. Their fragrance, so familiar and so pleasant, permeates the floors, walls, ceiling—even the furniture. It assails my nostrils mercilessly. Especially at this moment, every piece of furniture, all odds and ends in this room—I feel

more affection for them all. Is it because, really because this place is still full of their familiar, still lingering fragrance?!

Lost in my thought, I moon away my time far into the night.

I can't sleep—I'll probably hit the sack quite late tonight.

August, 1975

We the braves were already up before dawn. At 3:00 A.M. we all got into our car, Papa, two Japanese *sikkus* (family members), my younger sister, In-jin, and I, to drive out to Freeport, Long Island, where our boat lay anchored. There was a nip in the air, so that we, In-jin and I, somehow managed to rub the sand out of our sleepy eyes, and found ourselves in the company of this brave, daring fishing crew in search of the hidden treasures of the sea. We tried to keep our heavy eyelids barely open now and then while the car sped on the deserted highway for one hour and a half. At last we arrived. Fresh morning air, mixed with the fish smell on the docks, was at once different from the polluted air in the large metropolis and very grateful to my sensitive nostrils.

Ah! Ocean—

It was just before the daybreak, so pitch dark I could not make out anything, and standing on the upper deck, I felt simply great. I felt as if the whole ocean, nay, everything in the universe was mine for the asking: I was one with the Whole. But this grandiose feeling did not last long. I was already too pooped out, so I threw myself on the sofa in the lounge below. I couldn't help it, I was so sleepy. Yet Papa, having laconically instructed his crew, lost no time in getting ready. I somehow overheard him say, "Fishing is best at dawn!" Soon I fell asleep, breathing peaceful in the arms of Morpheus.

How many hours had passed, I wondered....

"A shark! It's a shark!" someone loudly shouted. A sharp cry rudely awakened me from my restful sleep. "Wow, we got a big catch!" I muttered to myself, knowing that it was merely a shark. Without further ado, I quickly slid the door open and rushed out. A large shark, with its defiant and resentful eyes, still helplessly hooked on line and struggling desperately to get away, was being pulled up aboard.

"Well, it's better than nothing!" I thought to myself. By this time my little sister, too, rubbing her sleepy eyes, wobbled out of the lounge, and exclaimed, "Yakke, it's a shark!" I felt kind of sorry

for this giant fish, still wiggling and struggling to no avail, but a sense of triumph over catching a ravenous and rapacious predator of the ocean outweighed whatever little compassion I had for it in my heart. My sister, feeling she had seen enough, scurried back into the lounge to catch up with her sleep. In a moment, she was fast asleep on the sofa again. She looked beat—yet so cute, too, that I was tempted to give her a love bite. Instead, I hugged her.

After we caught this terrible-looking monster that gave me goose bumps all over, several smaller sharks were caught one after another in rapid succession. Although Papa did not yet catch a tuna, the real thing he came after, he was still in his good mood, having caught quite a few sharks. He instructed Daikan Ohnuki to keep on throwing the bait into the water; then he peered intently at the radar screen for any new shoal of fish.

“This place is infested with sharks!” he suddenly burst out laughing good naturedly.

For a while, I was not bored as sharks were hauled up aboard one after another, but soon not a single shark, let alone any other fish, was caught. Our fishing rod sat there—motionless...nothing. Absolutely nothing.

For what seemed later an endless stretch of time, I intently watched the fishing rod for any sign of vibration. Then it began to shake almost imperceptibly, then gradually with increasing violence. I still glued my sharp eyes on it with bated breath. Then, all of a sudden, with a hissing sound, the reel began to spin at an incredible speed. The head of a gigantic tuna, the size of a house in my eyes, bobbed up above the water. I was at the point of crying out aloud, "Daddy, it's a big, big tuna!" But I had no chance. He was already busy winding the reel, deliberately, standing nearby. To get a better look, I squirreled up the steps that led to the upper deck, and when I looked down, I was in for a shock: a tuna over 900 pounds, although a mere captive hooked on the line, slowly and leisurely flapped its tail, swimming with such an air of royal pomp and dignity below. Of course, it tried to get away from the cruel hook by using its powerful fins. How long it took—I don't know, really.... Sometimes, the boat chased the fish wherever it went as it desperately struggled to escape. Sometimes, Papa reeled the line to pull it or let it go, bent on tiring it out, a giant sea monster, a formidable adversary, locked in a battle of wit and brute strength. All of us anxiously waited, with only one thought in mind: this time we've got to catch this tuna, no matter what.... Hours must have elapsed,

for this big tuna began to flag in its energetic struggle for survival. It did not pull or tug at the line with as much force as before, and soon the great fish once again surfaced. Taking advantage of this situation—sometimes a tuna slips away mysteriously at this juncture—the line was tightly held and sharply pulled by the experienced hands. All this happened in a split second, and as the fish approached the stern, the waiting crew, using barbed hooks, hauled it on board with enthusiasm, eagerness, and caution.

This Leviathan, its length about the height of a tall human adult, was solidly built, its muscle tightly packed, corpulent, magnificent, cute, the like of which I had never seen before. It was a moment of genuine thrill for us.

“Papa, a great catch! You’ve worked so hard,” I exclaimed.

He was overjoyed, too, a big smile flashing across his sunburnt face ear to ear, a smile of triumph, of victory, of conquest. Everyone else in the boat was beside himself with exultation, his “poker” face instantly transmogrified into a beaming face.

Since 3:00 A.M. I fought sleep, rubbing the sand out of my eyes, watching the fishing pole, etc. Now that we had caught this big tuna, everything—lost sleep, boredom, hard work—was really worth it.

We had been so intent on catching this prize that we did not notice the sun had already set beyond the murky horizon. It was getting late. We felt very happy with the big catch, and turned the boat around in the direction of the port.

The chilly evening breeze caressed my cheeks as the boat soon picked up speed. The sea—she can play jokes on us, make us happy or frustrated, too, as she pleases; she can play the generous hostess—as today—giving us this bounty as a parting gift. I was for some time lost in these reflections, while I watched the sea dancing in the early autumn. The bright beam of the moon waved at us, rollicking on the silvery surface of the ocean. All day long, the sea gave us all manner of hardships, made us impatient, anxious, yet hopeful; as I still sat musingly, admiring her undulating form, I was struck with her beauty, drawn into the mysterious world of fantasy.

“The sea is an enchanting, seductive goddess ...after all!”

I must have been very tired, after such a long day. Seated in a chair on the deck, I soon dozed off. I don't recall anything after that...except a few words that echoed dimly in my ears. Covering me with a blanket, Papa casually muttered with such tenderness in his resonant voice:

“She must be tired out, poor child. She'll catch cold without a warm blanket....”

January, 1976

It's Monday. As another week commences, after the usual weekend, I invariably find myself tired—on Mondays, that is. Today is no exception. What with the tight school schedule ahead, what with the routine of having to look at so many sleepy and cheerless faces around here, I feel already worn out, really beat. I crawled willy-nilly into a car that was to take me home. As I slumped in the back seat, it flashed across my mind: “Pshaw! Papa and Mama are supposed to leave for Korea—today!” Parting even for a few months is such sorrow, especially parting from your beloved, those with whom you want to stay all the time. A few months seem to stretch into ten thousand years—so slow, more tears. I chide myself for my tearful eyes, but what could I do when my heart felt empty, hollow, forlorn....

The car pulled up on the driveway. I dragged my feet and shouldered what seemed like a ten thousand pound schoolbag. The waiting room, so neat and immaculate only this morning, was now in disarray. My eyes fell on so many school bags, books, overcoats—all of them my younger brothers' and sisters', of course—strewn about all over the place. Normally, I blithely ignore such mess, but today, for some reason, it churned my stomach, and I could not overcome the impulse to put things away.

I went upstairs to my parents' room. Mama had just about finished packing; Papa was resting comfortably. Only a few hours to go, before they would leave for the airport. Mama's cheek, when I kissed her, felt warmer and softer than usual on my lips—the electricity galvanizing every cell in my body. An intense feeling of warmth and tenderness swept over me....

The strongest of men cannot stay the hand of time. It ceaselessly flows, it flies. In a few more minutes, we would be all heading for the airport.

Papa and Mama gathered us children together and prayed for us. They told Hyo-jin and me in particular to be the good big brother and sister to the other kids. “Yes, Papa and Mama,” we both quietly pledged in our hearts.

Upon arrival, we found many of our *sikkus* (family members) at the airport. They looked clean-cut, neatly dressed. Well, no concern or worry on their faces that I could detect....

Papa had a brief conference with his staff members in the lounge, while Mama, surrounded by many members, was occupied trying to comfort the crying baby brother, Kwon-jin, and for about ten minutes fed him out of a milk bottle. The loudspeaker soon announced that all the passengers should board the plane. Papa and Mama rose to their feet and gave us ‘goodbye’ kisses. Then, with smiles and waving arms, they disappeared into the airplane—with Kwon-jin, Rev. Kwak, and Uncle Yu. We waited there for a long time, hoping against all hope just to catch a glimpse, the last glimpse of their faces or waving hands through the window. But this did not happen, and as my younger brothers and sisters became restless and impatient, we soon returned home. As

we slowly pushed the door open, a whiff of cold air slapped my face. The house looked deserted. It looked as if the beam had been torn down from the ceiling. I stole into the family Prayer Room. Kneeling before a photograph of Papa and Mama, I forked my tiny trembling hands and started to pray silently for the safety of their journey.





Father and Ye-jin's younger brother, Hyo-jin



