

Chopsticks Are Resting

My wife and I sit together in a booth
at the bright and clean Chinese restaurant.
It is the slow hour now.

Several pairs of chopsticks are waiting
for the customers at the table.
Like troops of soldiers lined up to be inspected

they are set out in an orderly way.
A well-educated dieter,
I've never hailed them.

Yet they seem to call to me..."
Hey Fatty," I hear them say.
I am anxious to be given a good name as a faithful servant.

Even though these chopsticks have much work to do
they have no grievance against the owner.
They always act in unison. Not separately.

They do not discriminate
by sex or race.
They form a perfectly equitable society of companions.

It is natural that there are keen competitions among men.
But imagine the gains made
while cooperating with each other.

Prior to their work,
the chopsticks are resting
for awhile together.

A Paper Boat Sails

I launch a folded paper boat on the stream
where a brook is murmuring down through waterweeds.

A boat I made simply, with a red mast
and the outer bottom colored sky blue.

I launch the boat into gentle waves,
but after awhile it is shaken by a breeze

and shaded by a drift of clouds.
Sometimes small fish tease the boat dangerously,

and once a ruby dragonfly landed on the top of the mast
its wings spread out, humming a barely audible song.

So the lonely night comes on.
A myriad of stars rise in the sky

and the waves lull
the makeshift boat to safety.

Old Cabinet

A rusty filing cabinet stands in the corner of my office.
The painting worn off, discolored.
The door is loosened, the doorknob twisted.
I have used it for more than twenty years, even as a young businessman.

When she first came to my office this model was new,
smart, and very smooth
each time I opened the door.
I was the only man to open her.

Nobody knew
the combination, but me.
I trusted the cabinet with all kinds
of valuable documents.

Every day I opened and closed it repeatedly.
Sometimes I slept in the office
all night with it.
I took my food and coffee with the cabinet nearby.

With my expanding business
other filing cabinets came into the office.
They were more colorful, fashionable
with modern functions and safety devices.

These new features—
so convenient and useful.
The battered cabinet became a place
merely for storing old documents.

Years later I forgot the combination.

I tried many times to open the drawers, to no avail.

It felt like rock. The door stayed firmly closed.

Until it was forced opened by a locksmith.

Wishing A Secluded Life

Sometimes I wish to live in seclusion:
In a deep valley where there is no telephone,
no television, no computer.
No incoming news ... only the sounds
of sparrows and mountain streams.

Sometimes while sitting on a tree branch or a boulder,
dipping my feet in a stream,
I quietly recall past days.
Yet surveying all I have toiled to achieve
everything seems meaningless.

Once I followed after rainbows,
chased after the wind.
But I don't want to struggle to exist anymore.
I hope to fully enjoy a life of seclusion
with nature as my neighbor.

If I miss my friends in the valley,
I will go down to the post office and send a letter;
then return to my nest in a leisurely way—
where I will sing together with unidentified birds
and play a game of hide-and-seek with the fawns in the forest.

My Mind

My mind is a gentle wave in the lake,
Wavered by the breeze,
Shaded by a drift of the cloud

Some people throw a stone,
Cast a net,
Sing a song

Thus and so
Lonely night comes down there,
Numberless stars rise on the lake,
Natural forest lulls the wave to sleep,

By any chance
The day of beautiful swan comes there,
I will give a most cordial welcome to her, and
Conceive a happy dream every day