



Poems
to an
Old Monk
Lily Brown



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To the reader—

I am in long retreat
at Tara Mandala in the
cabin, Luminous Peak.
These poems came to
me in letters from Lily,
my caregiver. In retreat
we stick to the basics:
wood, water, poetry.
I love Lily's poems.

Jampa Dorje

In the grocery store
a list sets me free!
I don't debate about
three tomatoes
or only two.
It says on the list:
3 tomatoes.

The cart I choose
has smooth wheels.
As I move through
the aisles
everything is in its place;
the food inside the boxes.

Today I wondered:
If I had a child
what would I buy her
from the store?
A flower to care for.
And a peach.
By the African violets,
a woman shows me
two bouquets
and asks me
which she should buy
for her son to give
to the girl
he is asking to prom.

She tells me
her son is a wrestler,
so I choose the one
with more reds
and more depth.
I choose a light pink
African violet for myself,
then go look
at the peaches.
I am, after all,
my own first child.

I visit my happiness
like it is some old
wretched
aunt
who pulls tears from
my eyes
like pearls
and drops them
into the garbage.

Sorrow is simply
a flying apparatus, if
you can bear the heights
and don't
weigh too much.

This is useful
information to have
if you are like me
and think you
aren't suffering
enough.

Wednesday a.m.
Pagosa Baking Co.

If anyone would care
to notice, they would
see that I am not busy
with anything at all
and have in fact been
perched here
on the edge of my seat
waiting for any type of
invitation.

I am announcing here
your last chance.

In just a moment,
I will get
up and live my
own damn life.

Today,
were I the wind,
I would only
know of my existence
by the oak leaves
shivering in my armpits.

I am a collapsing house
terrified
relieved
each moment
my final ache.

An old monk came down
from his cave
in the mountains
(the modern cave has
a gas stove & insulation)
to tell me to write
better poetry.

The trouble with old monks
who wander down
from their caves is:
you get the feeling you
ought to listen to them.

Again when I stop
to look for the exactness
of my life
there is only this
quiet thirst
lapping at the shores
of every boundry.