



**BUDDHA WINKS**  
**Marleen Chaney**



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## MIND'S EYE

I saw you step up the hillside  
With deliberate gait,  
Followed by a mountain bluebird.  
A mystic blue unequaled  
Even by the valley's sky.

A reassurance of blue  
Sweeping and dipping  
Over sparse brush,  
Rocks and dried earth,  
Disappearing in the mesh  
Of pine tree boughs.

When I looked again  
You had made the top  
And sunk into the downward slope,  
Into the slot of horizon.  
Way up there.

I sat below  
On a chill of pine needles  
Until you appeared again suddenly from behind.  
An unexpected leprechaun grin --  
Your hair and eyebrows a shadowy green,  
Your eyes a soothing green.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1983

As our boat surged toward the harbor  
After a day-long lull of drifting,  
Swaying on the swells of the ocean  
Pursuing salmon with loran and luck,  
Dad would cut the engine to a rumbling hum.

Looking abstractedly through sky-blue eyes  
At the horizon he'd cock his head, listening.  
Could he smell them on the quiet breeze?  
"The sea-birds know where they're feeding," he'd say.  
"Watch the birds." And we'd drift.

Mesmerized, I'd find my rippling reflection  
Peering earnestly into the slate-green water,  
Seeking dark, lurking forms as they glided  
Silently and effortlessly below the boat  
Just beyond my sight.

When our lines were up Dad would hit the throttle.  
Squalling seagulls circled in our wake,  
Falling to feed as we cleaned our catch.  
Speeding toward shore in the midst of the fleet  
The gulls played with us. It was a time of plenty.

#### A MEADOW THROUGH A MIRAGE OF RISING HEAT

A meadow through a mirage of rising heat  
A willow in the near-distance  
green boughs in rustling slow-motion  
(As through a filtered lens on a movie screen  
replayed to a new mood)  
Now--  
A girl ruffling cotton dress is idly walking  
A white cloud puffs in a blue sky  
She glances at the cloud at the tree  
Her eyes lose focus in the ground before her  
Her mind wanders away  
Now--  
An old woman sits by a wooden window frame  
Her hands in the folds of a worn cotton dress  
Her dreams and memories converge  
The day wanders away.

#### FOR MY FRIEND RUBBER KNEES

a lovening of souls  
    my friend  
    you are  
a soft and gentle  
finger skin touch  
    a blurting denial

    you are  
a full bowl of steaming vegetables  
a bottle of biting white wine  
a whistled chanting  
a lonely haunting screech  
    driving the beasts

    you are  
a vortex in reaching  
an adventurous dream. . .  
    you are  
the love and lust of man  
the hesitance of woman

#### OVERHEARD MURMURINGS

This is her last chance at life.  
She wanted to go into psychology.  
Sad today--- sad tomorrow.

She talks about eyes  
And a psychic thing.  
Suffering--- understanding.

#### GARAGE POEM

Though I oughta better go crooning  
Where betides some jasmic tuning.  
Serenditty lunacies rejected--  
Skate through fear protected.  
Idle passers time the meeting  
And the sitting and the thinking,  
Tiny brisk of cat -- eyes! Abandon  
Your reasoned head, Rain?  
The precious heat of flame  
Escapes to flat, walled air.  
I speak God's name.  
Dark beads of twilight's inspiration  
In the rail-car's rattle.  
Revelations of missing particles  
(Buried under neo-lithic clutter,  
Ancient sayings and Cool Jive chatter)  
Replenish every waning moment  
With ambitious reasons  
For sending Christmas cards  
Or summer solstice cards.  
And a small vial of crushed, dried weed  
To light up in celebration.

## QUAIL

This morning, a family of quail  
assails the street in morning fog.  
I laugh at bobbing plumes and frantic feet,  
an earthbound flight of exotic mottle.

Do you remember when we were kids?  
The quail would file up the road  
through fiddlehead ferns and madronas  
to where the stone chimney stood,  
having outlasted the house it once warmed.

One night Mother rousts us out of bed—  
we have to go, she says—  
Dad has a gun. We dress in the dark,  
fumbling in haste, in a huddle we hurry  
into the safety of the shadows.

Under a fir tree's protective skirts,  
we crouch on musty black earth  
swept smooth with scotch broom  
by little girls who played house  
under the promise of daylight.

Finally quieted, Dad sinks  
into his stupor on the front steps,  
tormented head lain on crossed arms;  
Jack's giant fallen from the beanstalk.  
We watch the numbed face, as gingerly,  
we step over back to our beds.

When morning came, we stood  
at the windows of our rooms, looking down  
at that family of quail, fallen into rank.

## ALABASTER BIRD

### *Thanksgiving Day*

This is about a bird  
Cooked in its own grease.  
A glass of brandy  
Served warm. A toast to life.

Yet the snow filters down  
Settling silently  
Silently into itself.  
Compacting its moisture frozen.

What a memory:  
I take the poem from the wall  
to slip into a manila envelope  
And pack in a wooden milk crate.

Sitting at the kitchen table  
I write to the future.  
Following, balancing on wet logs  
Toothpicked over creeks flowing from the sky,  
Switching back again higher.

Snow on the wild sage,  
Cat totters on the sill  
Looking past your granite whiteness  
You alabaster bird.

## The Japanese Garden

Like the lone  
cedar, tall and feathered,  
I'm seeking  
sunlight through evergreens.  
A duck pair  
floats, oblivious, cool,  
for me and  
my phantom companion. You've  
gone under  
the stone temple urn. Respite  
bell of young  
Nathan's bike quickens Buddha's  
laughter. Tom  
calls from bamboo thickets: I'm  
here, Nathan.  
Samurai duck warrior, he  
laps and skirls  
silence with pumping kneecaps,  
spilling. Bark  
path rises to capture him.  
Tom recites  
the voyage he lives today,  
his eyes ask  
reprise of sorrow's contour  
among new shoots.  
You peek, coy, assert your creed  
cut in stone;  
Tom and Nathan walk us on  
to the next  
pond, a duck metropolis.

I say, Tom,  
the city fascinates  
with people I'll  
never see again. You might,  
says he; takes  
my hand. Reciprocal  
kindness proves  
the moment. Two people wind  
away, and when  
I look again, are gone. You  
refute this  
dream behind your stone shrine.  
Buddha winks.

## **The Feminine Mysteries**

It is her hour. She carries  
the box of gathered symbols  
to the oaken table:  
Incense, blood, wine, fire.  
The moon indicates the focus  
of her power. Left to herself,  
she invokes the goddess.  
She frets her white altar-cloth  
with air, earth, water, light.  
The mother image is cradled  
in her hands, dancing widdershins  
over the altar. Antique wooden  
bobbins hold colored candles.  
Oils from her hands enrich  
the wood-grain, animate the hands  
of untold women in pain  
and suffering in the mills.  
She lights the candle wicks  
east, north, west and south,  
invoking, dispelling, healing.

