

Spring 1980

The Summer Moon translated by Etsuko Terasaki

Matsuo Basho

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THE SUMMER MOON

Throughout the town:
smells of things
and the summer moon.

Bonchō

“It’s hot! So hot!”
Voices from the open gates.

Bashō

With the second weeding
not yet done,
already the ripening grain.

Kyorai

Scraping ashes
from a broiled dried fish.

Bonchō

Hereabouts, a silver coin is
unknown.
What a bother!

Bashō

The sword he carries
is long indeed.

Kyorai

Startled by a frog
leaping from the thicket.
Ah! The shadows of dusk.

Boncho

Off picking butterbur,
a lantern goes out.

Bashō

On the threshold
of the priesthood,
like a flower barely budding.

Kyorai

Nanao in the Noto winter:
life is less than easy.

Bonchō

Gnawing fish
to the bone: He is
so old in years.

Bashō

He lets his lady's lover in,
using the side door key.

Kyorai

Leaning against the screen,
they pushed it over:
the chambermaids.

Bonchō

A bamboo-slatted bath floor.
How forlorn it seems!

Bashō

Fennel seeds
all blown away.
The evening windstorm.

Kyorai

Looking chilly — the lone priest,
perhaps returning to the temple.

Bonchō

A monkey showman
and his monkey-man's life.
The autumn moon.

Bashō

Figuring up the land tax:
a quart and a half per year.

Kyorai

Five or six pieces
of raw brushwood,
stretching across the puddle.

Bonchō

Fine white socks,
soiled by the muddy path.

Bashō

The pace
of his master's steed
makes the sword-bearer run.

Kyorai

An apprentice,
spilling the water he bears.

Bonchō

Doors and paper-paneled screens
covered in matting:
the estate for sale.

Bashō

Ah, the pepper pods.
When did they turn red?

Kyorai

A night
of almost furtive sandal making
in the moonlight.

Bonchō

Waking to brush off
the fleas; early autumn.

Bashō

Empty as ever,
the mouse box-trap
fallen to the floor.

Kyorai

The warped lid
won't fit the old coffer.

Bonchō

A short time spent in the hut.
Give it up;
move on.

Bashō

Worth the lifetime; news of
my poem in the Imperial Collection.

Kyorai

Like trying out different
sizes and styles:
attempts at love.

Bonchō

At the end of the Floating World,
each of us like Komachi.

Bashō

What's it that's wrong?
Even while eating the gruel
your eyes fill with tears.

Kyorai

The master's not at home:
spacious wooden floors.

Bonchō

Let the spring lice
crawl in your palm,
in the shade of flowers.

Bashō

Unmoving mists.
Such a drowsy day!

Kyorai

translated by
Etsuko Terasaki