

Devoted to Luang Por



by Ajahn Kalyāno

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Introduction

This little book was created following a very playful conversation between me and Luang Por Sumedho in the sauna at Amaravati in June 2014. I had been occasionally sending Luang Por poems over my years as a monk as little offerings. He told me that he liked them very much and had kept all of them in a scrapbook. He asked me if I had any more. I felt very much honored of course and confessed that I had thought of producing a small booklet of poems to give him for his birthday, “I’ll even write a recommendation for you if you like,” he said. This was how the idea of a personal present became the idea for this publication. The poems that follow span nearly 20 years of my relationship with Luang Por and his teachings, a relationship that has profoundly affected my life. I include all the poems I could find that I actually sent and also, with his permission, a few more that I would have sent had I known how much he liked the others. The themes of listening and intuition, of space and of the mindfulness that makes the ordinary extra-ordinary I hope clearly echo his teaching.

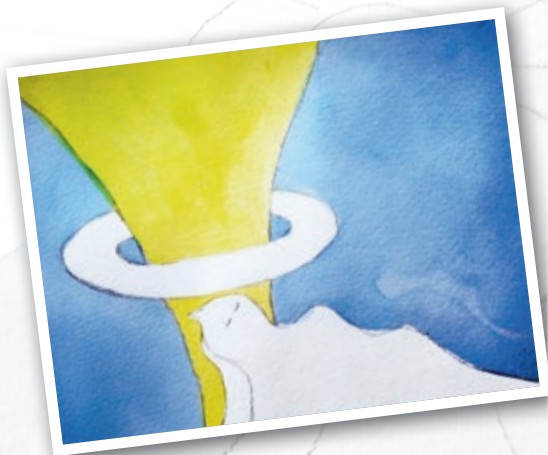
“I am not very good at poetry,” Luang Por said to me, “so I need someone else to do that for me.”

Alright, I will try but you’re the inspiration, right!

Kalyāno Bhikkhu July 2014

Knowing (given to Luang Por after the Winter Retreat of 2001)

*Knowing makes the breath that calms
Knowing smells the goodness that trusts
Knowing feels the Grace of composure
Knowing thinks the uplifting smile
Knowing sees the space that reflects
Knowing tastes the freedom of the moment
Knowing hears the silence that awakens
Knowing knows death
Knowing is the path to the deathless*



Listening moon

*Listening
Is the listening moon
Within*

*Listening
Is the listening tomb
Without*

*Listening
Listening
So please don't shout*



Ordinarily (in a letter to Luang Por sent in July 2013)

*The ordinary sky is made of birds
And birds are made of sky*

*The ordinary house is made of love
Love is made to fly*

*And ordinary love
Is made never to die*



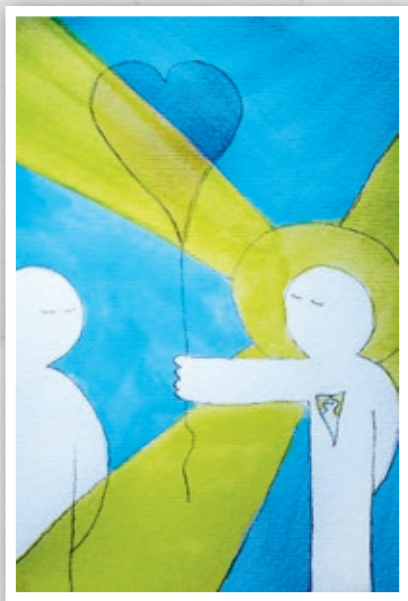
Love is (in a birthday card to Luang Por 2006)

Love is

Love is love

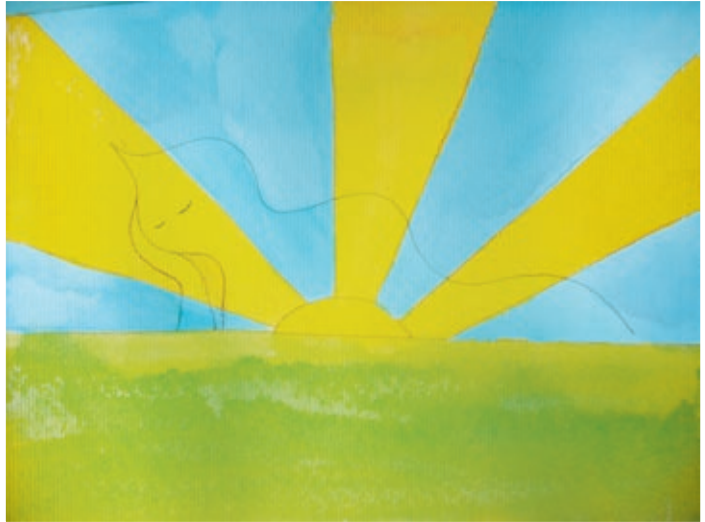
Love is love is love

Between, between, between



The knowing ground

*There in the brightest light
There in the formless sound
And here in the silent sound
He had finally found
The Knowing, growing ground*





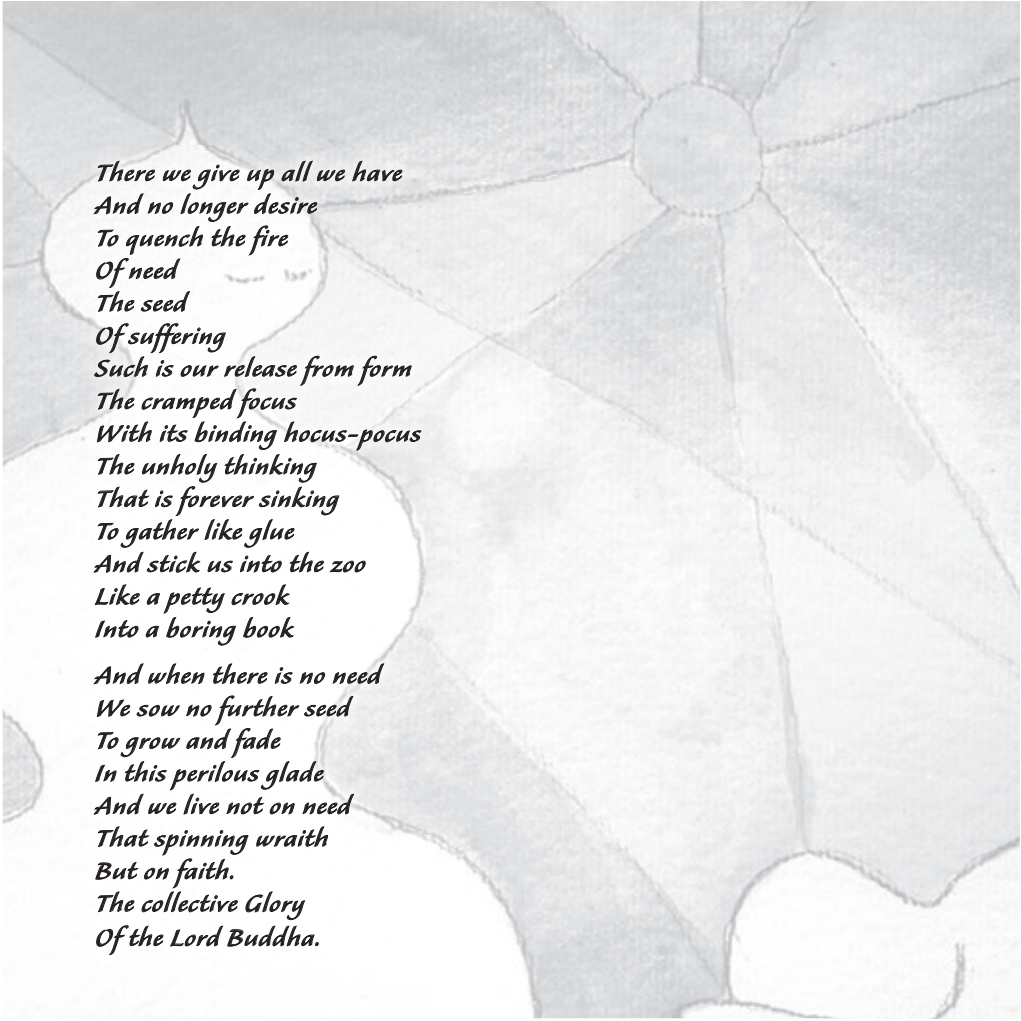
Reflective Glory (sent to Luang Por from Thailand in June 2007)

*When the one who knows still listens
Like a still jewel that glistens
Turning the light of awareness back within
It fills the present full to the brim
With richest, silent meaning*

*Past and future are no more
Virtue steps to the fore
And suckling turns to weaning
For craving's children*

*They will try to drive us on
Or pull us back
Until we take up the slack
Finding again the gold thread
The meaning both of the dead
And of the living
Both of loss and of giving
Shame and forgiving*

*For there is the hope of eternity
For the purest spirit
Forever beyond past and future
Securely in the refined pasture
Of the love and space
Of the grace above*



*There we give up all we have
And no longer desire
To quench the fire
Of need
The seed
Of suffering
Such is our release from form
The cramped focus
With its binding hocus-pocus
The unholy thinking
That is forever sinking
To gather like glue
And stick us into the zoo
Like a petty crook
Into a boring book*

*And when there is no need
We sow no further seed
To grow and fade
In this perilous glade
And we live not on need
That spinning wraith
But on faith.
The collective Glory
Of the Lord Buddha.*

The hair from nowhere

*There had been no such thing
As the hair from nowhere
Until he was nothing*

*In the sweet, sweet air
Sweet, sweet nothing
That was still there
Still, still there*

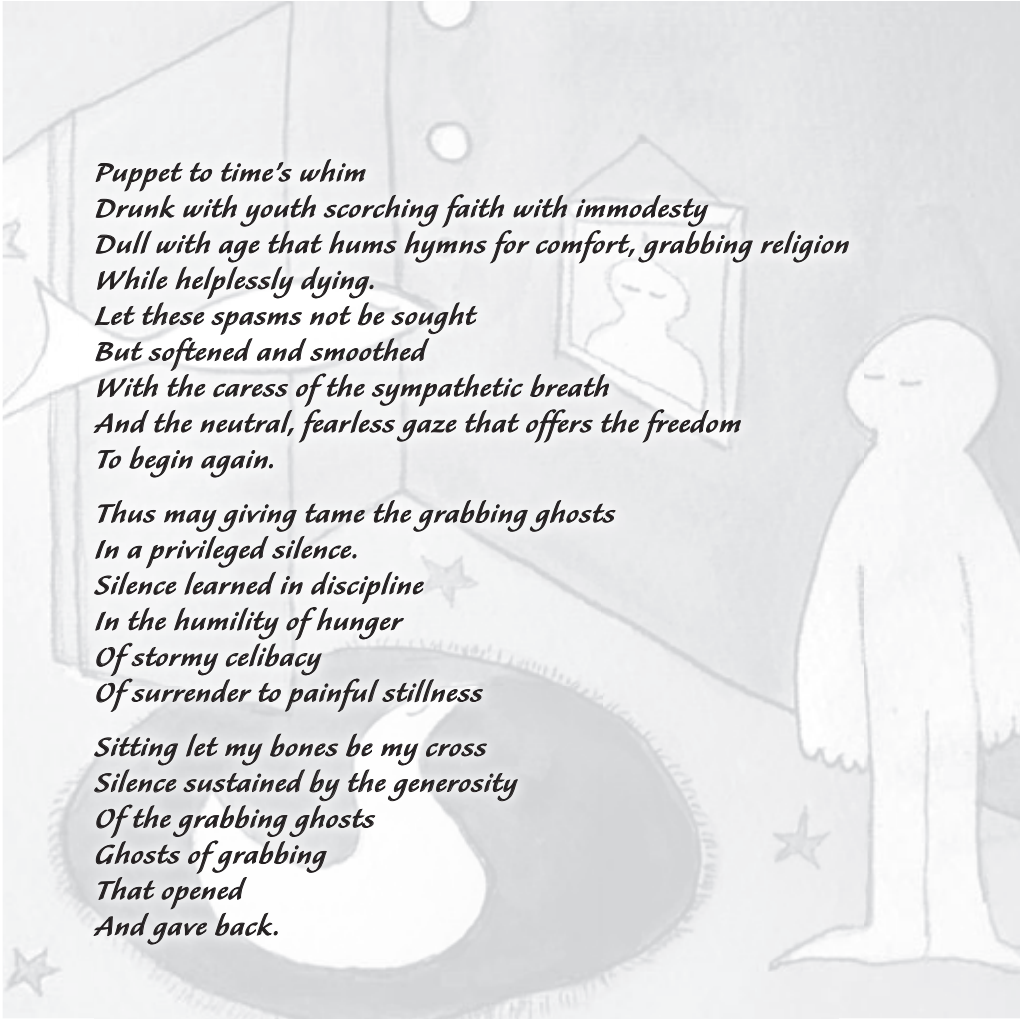
*Still knowing
Still growing*



The Chapel (written for Luang Por after the temple opening in 1996)

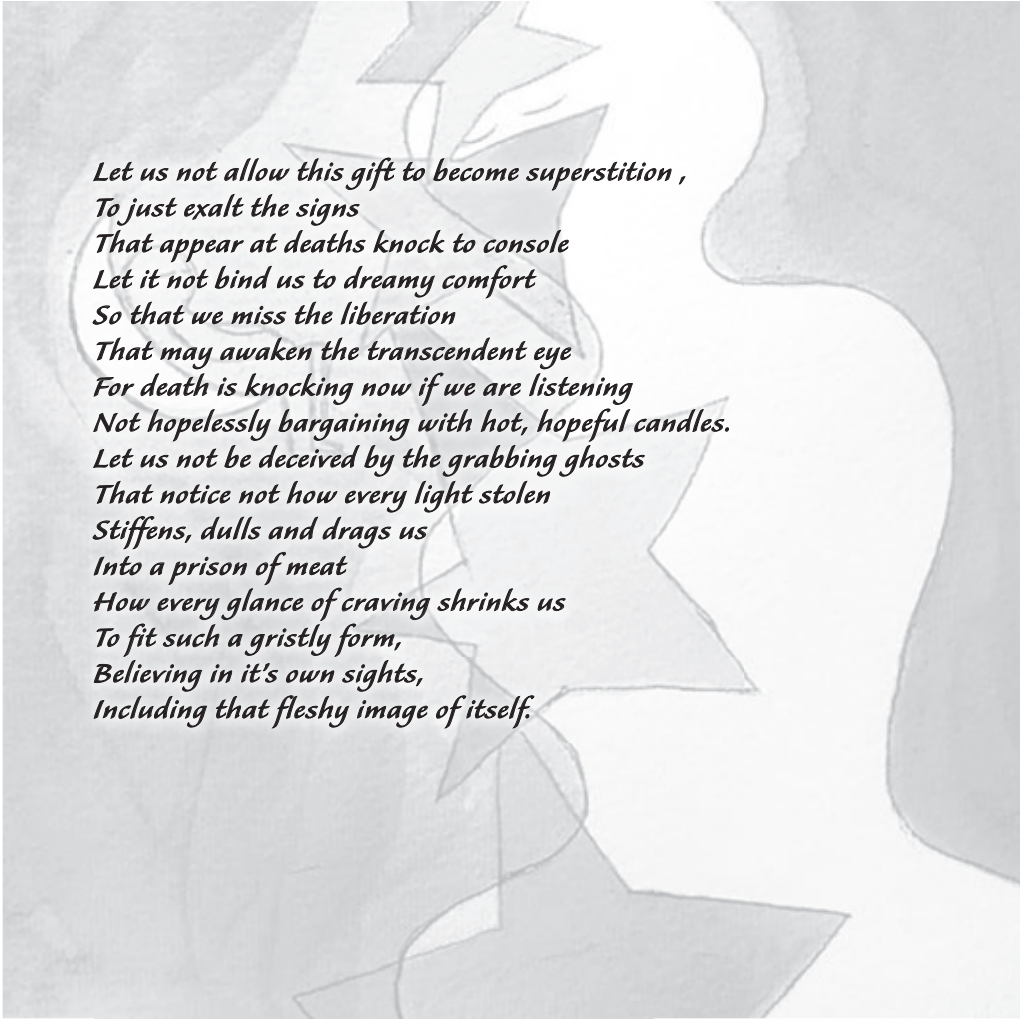
*Closely wrapped in the soft brown robe
The Buddha's beggars' robe of blessed restraint
Aspiring to turn earthly pondering
To spacious blessing bubbles of kind prayer
Over the foam of fleeting forms
Within and without
Aching to offer, not a petition
But a humble vision of harmony.*

*Thus I entered the chapel
Only to be caught again by my desire
My eyes, spasms of grabbing
Electric flesh sucking with its jelly cameras
Forgetting that it could not hold on
To one quantum of the pretty light.*

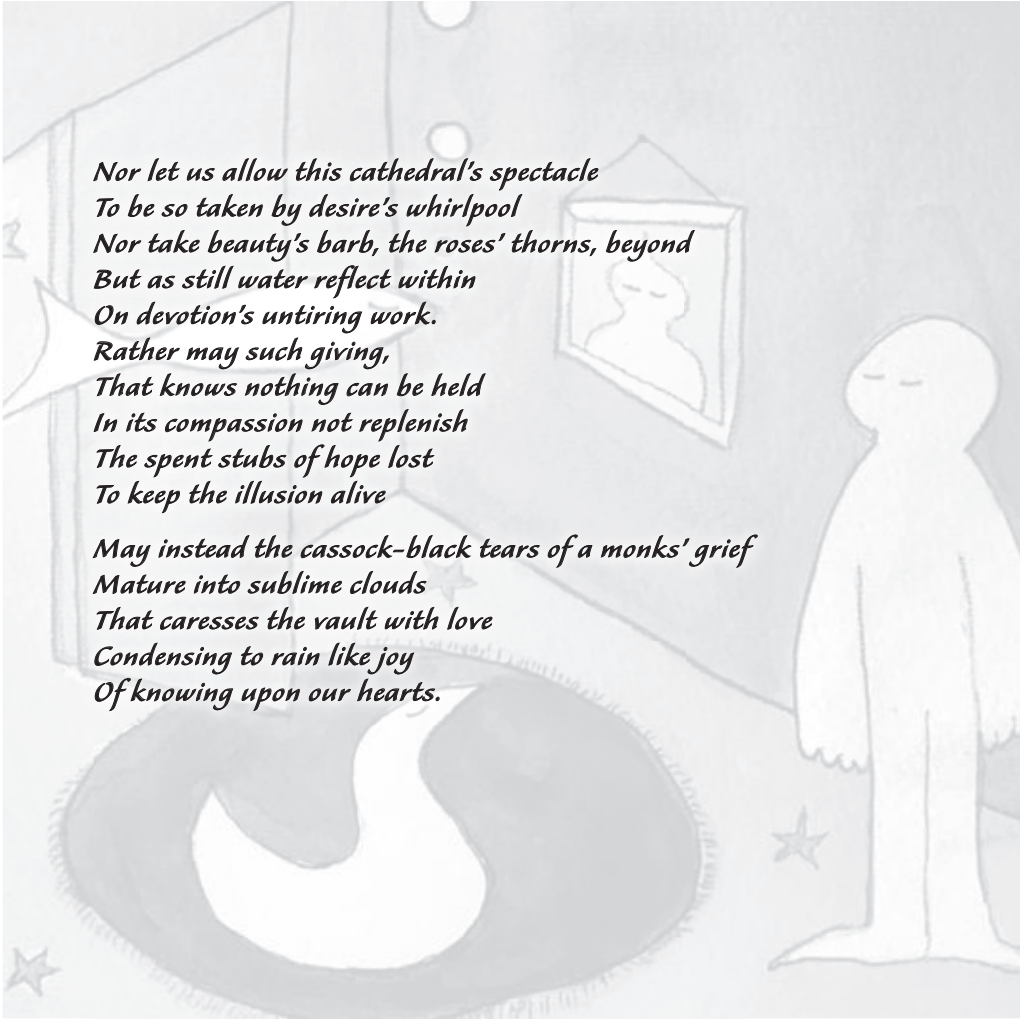


*Puppet to time's whim
Drunk with youth scorching faith with immodesty
Dull with age that hums hymns for comfort, grabbing religion
While helplessly dying.
Let these spasms not be sought
But softened and smoothed
With the caress of the sympathetic breath
And the neutral, fearless gaze that offers the freedom
To begin again.*

*Thus may giving tame the grabbing ghosts
In a privileged silence.
Silence learned in discipline
In the humility of hunger
Of stormy celibacy
Of surrender to painful stillness
Sitting let my bones be my cross
Silence sustained by the generosity
Of the grabbing ghosts
Ghosts of grabbing
That opened
And gave back.*



*Let us not allow this gift to become superstition ,
To just exalt the signs
That appear at deaths knock to console
Let it not bind us to dreamy comfort
So that we miss the liberation
That may awaken the transcendent eye
For death is knocking now if we are listening
Not hopelessly bargaining with hot, hopeful candles.
Let us not be deceived by the grabbing ghosts
That notice not how every light stolen
Stiffens, dulls and drags us
Into a prison of meat
How every glance of craving shrinks us
To fit such a gristly form,
Believing in it's own sights,
Including that fleshy image of itself.*

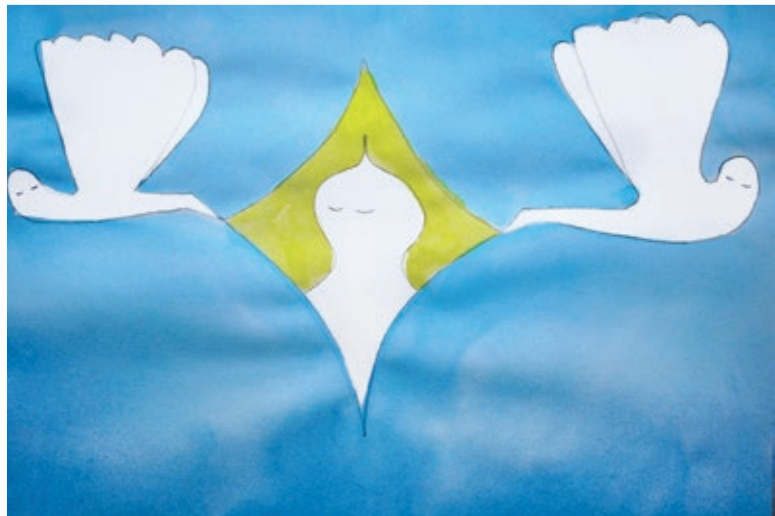


*Nor let us allow this cathedral's spectacle
To be so taken by desire's whirlpool
Nor take beauty's barb, the roses' thorns, beyond
But as still water reflect within
On devotion's untiring work.
Rather may such giving,
That knows nothing can be held
In its compassion not replenish
The spent stubs of hope lost
To keep the illusion alive*

*May instead the cassock-black tears of a monks' grief
Mature into sublime clouds
That caresses the vault with love
Condensing to rain like joy
Of knowing upon our hearts.*

Open sky

*The open sky opens into space
There is only his infinite grace
A new heaven for the body to find
A new heaven eternally kind
A new heaven completely free
A new heaven for all to see*



In the silence

*As old as stone
The silence means everything
And history alone
Is rewritten*

Writing out the wanton stranger

*And as fresh as flowers
Through the endless hours
The silence just means everything*

Free from danger

*And only the sweet dew fresh from heaven
Hangs on by a thread
For the fairy of the ordinary
To gather the sleepy dead*



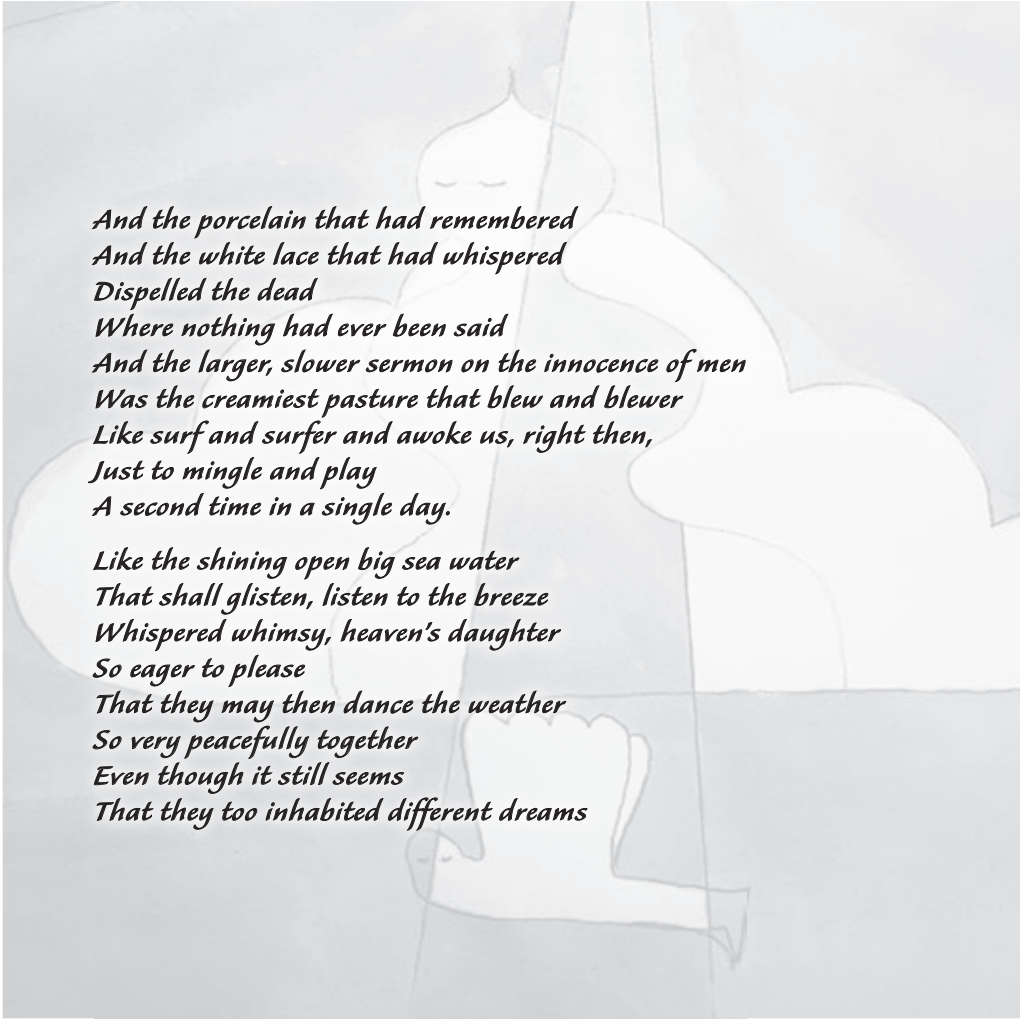
The perfect death of the simple breath

(I read this to Luang Por at his invitation shortly before his 80th birthday)

*Before the dandy doodle dawn and after
From heart-bed to heart-rafter
Dreams drifted up and in and over,
Droopy past and dingly future
Until the dusk-sea breeze,
Flowing from the waving waters,
Laughed enough to draw the streets
Of sacred sons and daughters
Draw them in as close as maybe
To the wide cream silken pasture*


*To the softest field
Whose every life and yield
Is heaven's garden and sacred pardon
To the faithful in their prayers*

*To the same field
That is every crush, green and lush to the fairday lover's tender ears
To these two lost together, undercover,
In their separate dreams
The field, it seems...*



*And the porcelain that had remembered
And the white lace that had whispered
Dispelled the dead
Where nothing had ever been said
And the larger, slower sermon on the innocence of men
Was the creamiest pasture that blew and blewer
Like surf and surfer and awoke us, right then,
Just to mingle and play
A second time in a single day.*

*Like the shining open big sea water
That shall glisten, listen to the breeze
Whispered whimsy, heaven's daughter
So eager to please
That they may then dance the weather
So very peacefully together
Even though it still seems
That they too inhabited different dreams*



*Until, taking its foothold in the gaze of angels
To form its final plea
The breath blew warm and dear, straight from the sea,
The silken breeze scattering innocence over the open field of glory
And gently, gently closing the simplest story...*

*I would be those clothes
Those clothes
These are too tight*

*I would be those clothes
I would be dressed in light*

*I would be those
Until they are these
Is that alright?*

*The day was dreary
His hands were weary
Thud, thud went the heart of mud*

*And the veins ran in blue streams
Into a lardy white sea
Of lucid dreams
Blue was the blood of the dead*



'Read to me,' he said.

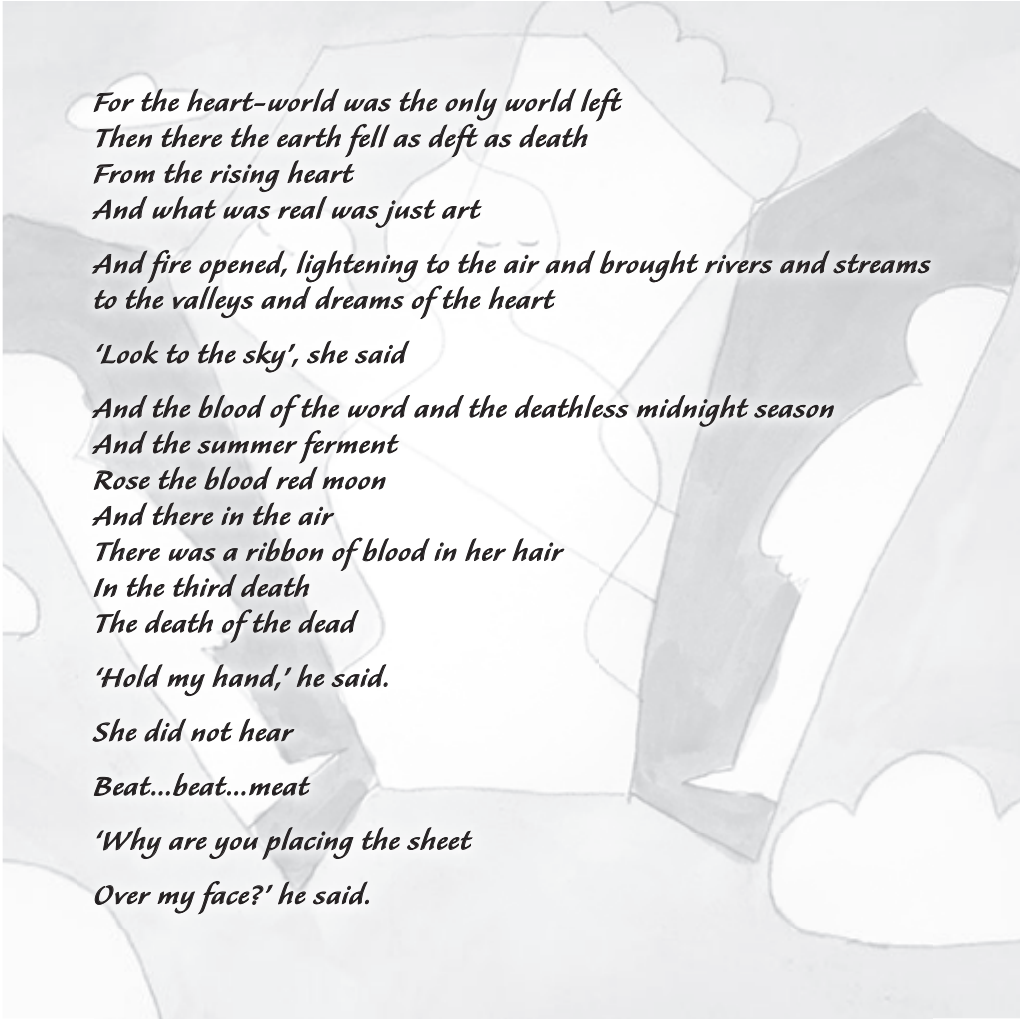
*His room, the first world within a world
And the first death
And a world within him a second
And in a second a sun fell
And all was well
For a full moon rose in the second death
That was the first beginning*

*And weary was the hand
Made of lard and sand*

'Come inside', he said

*And bright was the heart within the heart
Here
In the dear*

*And bright was the breath within the breath
Of the third death*



*For the heart-world was the only world left
Then there the earth fell as deft as death
From the rising heart
And what was real was just art*

*And fire opened, lightening to the air and brought rivers and streams
to the valleys and dreams of the heart*

'Look to the sky', she said

*And the blood of the word and the deathless midnight season
And the summer ferment
Rose the blood red moon
And there in the air
There was a ribbon of blood in her hair
In the third death
The death of the dead*

'Hold my hand,' he said.

She did not hear

Beat...beat...meat

*'Why are you placing the sheet
Over my face?' he said.*



*And the world was as light and white as a cloud
Under the shroud
He said.*


*And when the light shone through
There was One, not two
And the world was just clothes
To a costume show
That we all know
So well
So very well*

And the dead were nowhere to be found

And life sang forever the silent sound

*And learning to die
Mistily decked in sky
With a necklace of stars
The space was ours
That wore the mountain by the sea*

*And thus, my friend,
As we came to the open end
The hour was finally to be you and me*




*And learning to be born
The mountain was worn
To breakfast with the assembled company
And the mountain in turn was wearing the sea*

*So suitably clothed
The world was betrothed
To the soul
Of the whole
For tea*

*For we were just a twinkle
In the eye
A wrinkle
And a valley of tears*

*Tears of joy
That tinkle in the ears
That listen
Like a toy
And that glisten*

Like Thee



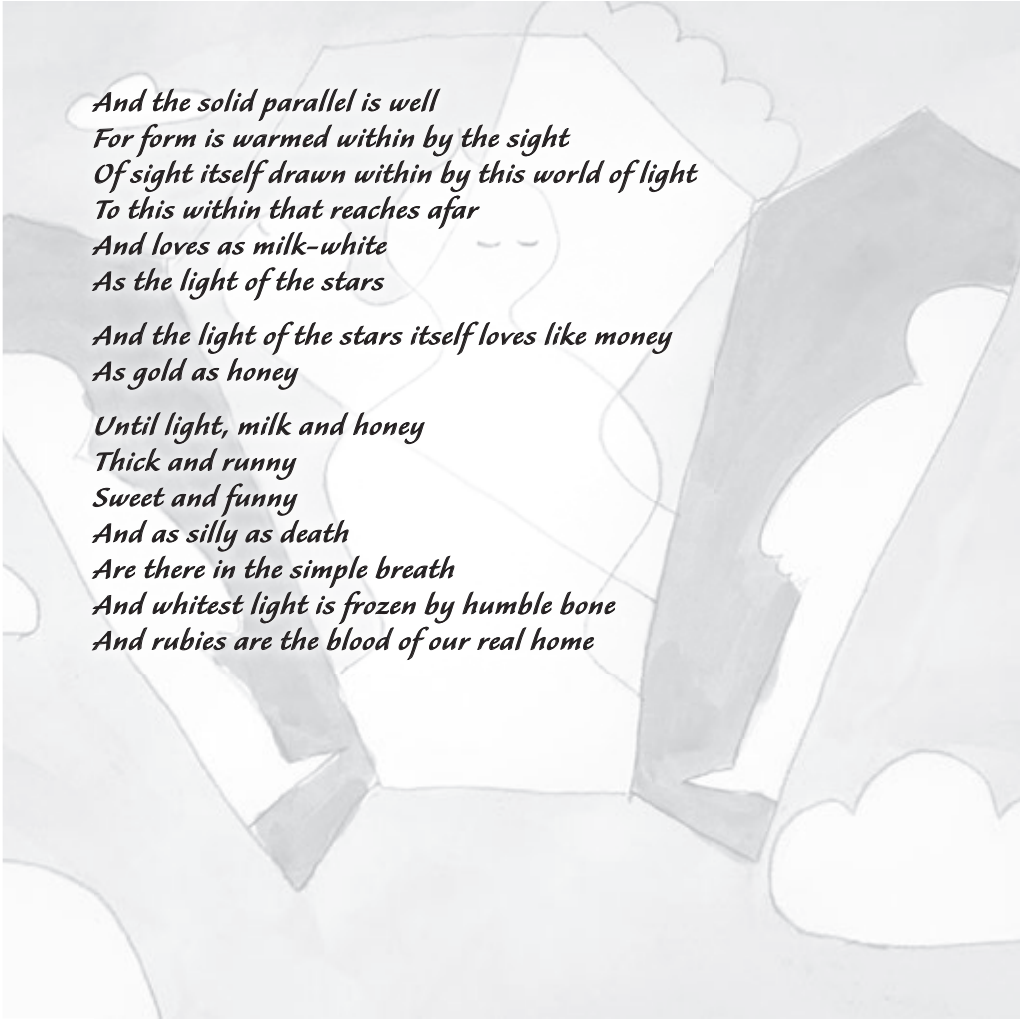
*And not torn from space
But worn with Grace
Were we*

*And not born from Grace
But worn by Grace
Were we...*

*At dawn in the open palace
For the sun of the heart to rise
And be wise
The silver light shimmers in slivers
As the dew-light shivers
And falls*

*Then, as intended, the calmer light of pewter
May greet the gallant suitor
That calls*

*And befriended
Are the open ended, sacred halls
Whose walls of whimsical Will-of-the-Wisp
Are not walls*



*And the solid parallel is well
For form is warmed within by the sight
Of sight itself drawn within by this world of light
To this within that reaches afar
And loves as milk-white
As the light of the stars*

*And the light of the stars itself loves like money
As gold as honey*

*Until light, milk and honey
Thick and runny
Sweet and funny
And as silly as death
Are there in the simple breath
And whitest light is frozen by humble bone
And rubies are the blood of our real home*





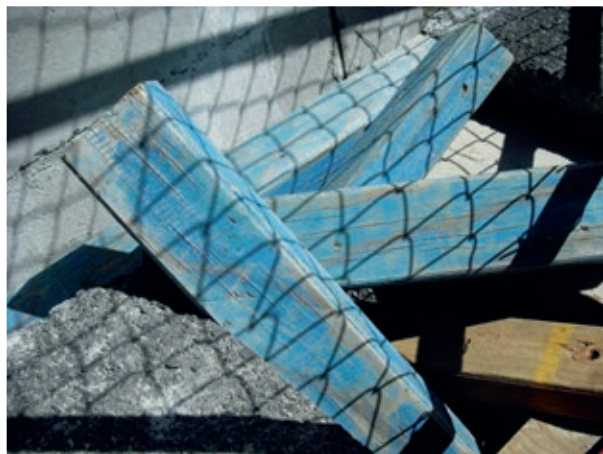
Perfectly Ordinary

*Think in space
Happy face
Pink embrace*

*The sweetest fairy
Mrs. Perfectly Ordinary
In its own little way
Quite contrary*

Rare blue

*In a rare blue
Sun skin zoo,
Of squares thrown askew
Upon squares,
The fence snakes
Sideways and breaks, free,
Free of itself, ordinarily,
Through the white witch sight
Of silent light.*



Coming and going

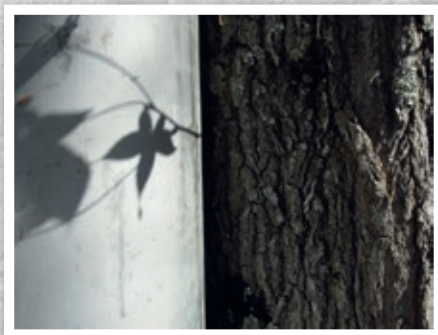
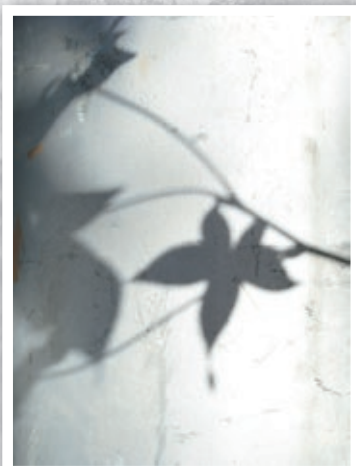


Seeing and knowing

Neither here nor there

*Not mine
Nor another's
The soft silver shine
Is neither here nor there
But like a stillness in the gentle air
It is everywhere.*

And that's neither here nor there.



Lightest touch

*In waking dreams
The Sage seems
To gently lift
This mantle of mist
Also from the heart.*

*Such
Is His touch.*

*At least
So it seems.*



*The true feast
Is not in the eye
Of the wondrous sigh
But rests further within.*

*Lightly,
Brightly,
Held in just the same way
Is the all-powerful sway
Of perfect answers
As calm and composed
As perfect dancers.*

*Truths that shall lightly remain,
Before any pain,
On the tip of His tongue,
Ready to pounce,
Unannounced.*

*Today's truths are weaved
Silently into the autumn leaves*

*They are as naught
Yet they are caught
In the soft silver light
Of simple things.*

*They sing
Of wisdom*

*They are wings
Of freedom.*



Home

*When a line gathers closely
Around a reassuring circle
And the time is ripe
There can emerge the unifying miracle
Of the pipe*

*And the flowing may fall still
And the stillness may flow on*





*Like the tear of the mother who is ready to cry
Like the blood of the warrior who is ready to die
Not just on the field of glory
But even here, in the warmth of home
Even here, without a story
So that the heart may no longer roam,
To be the hero
Of the big fat zero.*

Unbecoming

*He was feeling a little bit flat
Tired of running this way
and that*

*Old and cold, was it time to hang up his hat?
Was it time to disappear?*

*Yet the way was not clear
For it seemed there was nowhere to hide
On either side
Of the great divide
Of life and death.*



*Yet he found in the simple breath
That he did not need to run
There was lots of fun
Here, before the whole thing had even begun
Before he was tempted to become this
Or to feel that
By the silly mind*

Under the silly, unbecoming hat.

*Right here in the silence
Of unbecoming this and that.*

*In the light of the silence
In the silent light.*



Silent light

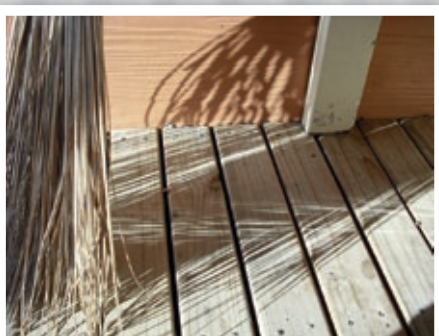
*In the light of silence
In the silent light, sublime
There can be a mime
That is beyond time*

*Yet how will it speak
Let alone rhyme?*

*It will calmly play
In the heart everyday*

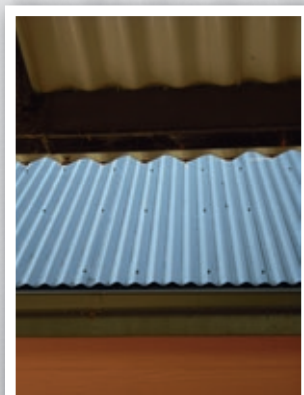
In such an ordinary way.

*We will see the dance
As a subtle light
Of goodness and of good chance
Reflected in simple light.
Light that is made
Clear by the shade
Of things.*



*Clear sight
Silent light
Makes nothing
Out of things
Sweetest nothing
So bright
So right*

*Simple things
Make nothing
Out of clear sight
Sweet nothing
Gentle and calm
Beyond harm*



Silent sounds

(Given to Luang Por as a parting gesture in his final summer at Amaravati)

*Watching the paint dry
Or the saint fly
Begs the same reason why*

*Noticing the paint crack
Demands an answer, a new tack
Or the saint to come back*

*Seeing the paint flake
Or the heart awake
Is our reply*

Don't cry

*For we will finally meet
There at the bare concrete
So sound
As the immutable sound of silence
Meets the silent sound
Here at the highest sense
Of the ground.*





Between, between, between

*Between fast and slow
At a new pace*

*Between outer and inner
In a new place*

*Between brother and sister
Showing a new face*

*So freely the heart shall flow
As open as a summer meadow
Between, between, between*

*Between higher and lower
With a new taste*

*Between innocence and grace
Bathed in a new light*

*Between time and space
Endowed with fresh sight*

*Seeing as far as one can see
As open as the sea
Between, between, between*

*Slipping between
Slipping free
You and me.*





Here is my heart

*Until death do us part
Here is my heart*

*Until, red as red
Dead in the bed*

*Until, splutter, splutter
Dead in the gutter*

*Until itch, itch
Dead in the ditch*

*Until choked on the bread
Until bashed on the head
Dead as dead*

*And when death do us part
Here is my heart*



Right here

*The heart was open
The angels were beckoning*

*Then time stood still
As it surely will
On that day of reckoning*

*That day which is today
And every day
In the heart*

*And here we are
Here is the brightest star
The highest art*

*And right here
Is the noble seer
The One who Knows*

Right here

Silence speaks

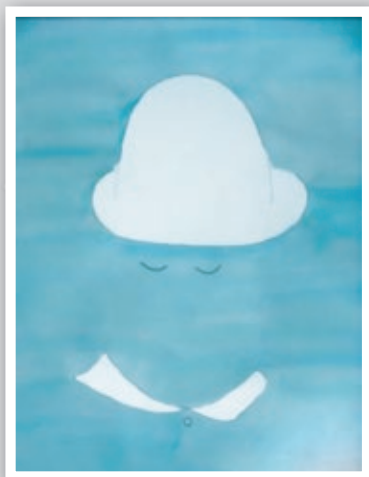
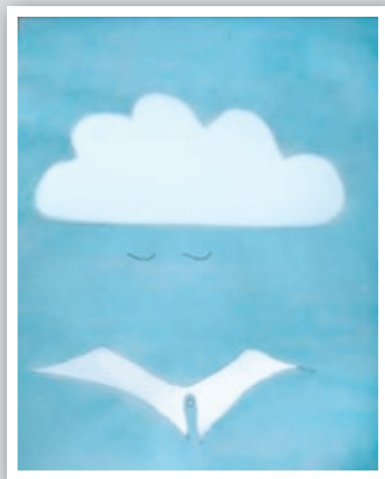
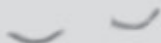
*From the heart freshly awoken
The silence has spoken
The truth glistened
The silence has listened*



The Sky Family


*Although not visible to the naked eye
Mr. and Mrs. Sky*

*Had two daughters
Called What and Why*

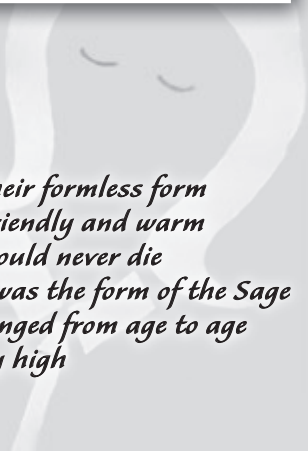


*And we could feel them in our waters
And we were so happy we could cry
For they had all the answers
Oh me, oh my!*





*And they spoke not a word
And nothing was heard
But our own gentle sigh*



*And their formless form
Was friendly and warm
And would never die
For it was the form of the Sage
Unchanged from age to age
So very high*

Still milk

*Out of a forest of watches and watched
Through hatches and hatched
To a tame chamber of stars
As mellow as hummer and summer
Stopped walker and walked*

*There would be misty talk
In the alleys and valleys
Of the walkers that still walked*

*And in the dingles that tingled
Rang the tree*

*That sparked the middle
The middle that marked the riddle that barked*

*Until the dogs in the grass
And the heads in the arse
Were parked*

*Then, hark, the angels could sing
And, without need of a single thing
Be heart*





Ajahn Kalyāṇo was born in Hitchin in 1961. He has been a practicing Buddhist since he was 17. He began visiting Amaravati in the 1980's. As a layman his path of practice and enquiry led him to work in hospitals for nearly twenty years specialising in neurological rehabilitation and learning disabilities as a Clinical Psychologist, Physiotherapist and T'ai chi teacher. He has a particular interest in exploring the relationship between body and mind. He took full ordination at Chithurst Monastery in 1998 and has since travelled to Italy, Thailand and Australia.

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Andy would like to dedicate his work to his mother

“An inspiration to many, a law unto herself.”

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