**Rumi Roulette**

**The Soul**

**On Breath / Breathing**

**Discipline**

**Awakening**

**Purpose**

**Friendship**

**The Soul**

**The Old Woman and the Falcon**

When you give a noble falcon

to a fussy old woman who knows nothing of falconry,

she will clip its wings short, *for its own good*.

Young man, where has your mother been

that your toenails have gotten this long?

Those talons are how the falcon hunts its food.

The old woman fixes him tutmaj, dumpling stew.

He won’t touch it. Too good to eat my tumaj, huh?

She ladles some broth and holds it to his beak.

Her anger builds, and suddenly she pours

the ladle of hot soup over his head.

Tears come from those beautiful falcon eyes.

He remembers his former life, the king’s love-whistle,

the great circling over the ocean,

the distances that condense so quickly to a point.

Falcon tears are food for a true human being,

perfume for Gabriel.

Your soul is the king’s falcon,

who says, *This old woman’s rage*

*does not touch my glory or my discipline.*

**A Voice Through the Door**

Sometimes you hear a voice through the door

calling you, as fish out of water

hear the waves, or a hunting falcon

hears the drum’s *Come back. Come back.*

This turning toward what you deeply love

saves you. Read the book of your life,

which has been given you.

A voice comes to your soul saying,

*Lift your foot. Cross over.*

*Move into the emptiness*

*of question and answer and question.*

**Who Says Words with My Mouth**

All day I think about it, then at night I say it.

Where did I come from, and what am I supposed to be doing?

I have no idea. My soul is from elsewhere,

I am sure of that, and I intend to end up there.

The drunkenness began in some other tavern.

When I get back around to that place, I’ll be completely

sober. Meanwhile, I’m like a bird from another continent,

sitting in this aviary. The day is coming when I fly off,

but who is it now in my ear who hears my voice?

Who says words with my mouth?

Who looks out with my eyes? What is the soul?

I cannot stop asking. If I could taste one sip

of an answer, I could break out of this prison for drunks.

I didn’t come here of my own accord,

and I can’t leave that way.

Whoever brought me here will have to take me home.

This poetry. I never know what I’m going to say.

I don’t plan it. When I’m outside the saying of it,

I get very quiet and rarely speak at all.

Shams Tabriz, if you would show your face

to me again, I could flee the imposition of this life.

**The Sight of a Soul**

One of the marvels of the world

is the sight of a soul sitting in prison

with the key in its hand.

Covered with dust,

with a cleansing waterfall an inch away.

A young man rolls from side to side,

though the bed is comfortable

and a pillow holds his head.

He has a living master, yet he wants more,

and there is more.

If a prisoner had not lived outside,

He would not detest the dungeon.

Desiring knows there is a satisfaction

beyond this. Straying maps the path.

A secret freedom opens

through a crevice you can barely see.

The awareness a wine drinker wants

cannot be tasted in wine, but that failure

brings his deep thirst closer.

**Looking into the Creek**

The way the soul is with the senses

and the mind, is like a creek.

When desire-weeds grow thick,

your intelligence cannot flow,

and soul-creatures stay hidden.

But sometimes a flooding comes

that runs so strong

it clears the clogged stream,

as though with God’s hand.

No longer weeping and frustrated,

your being grows as powerful

as your wantings were before.

Laughing and satisfied,

that masterful current

lets soul-creatures appear.

You look down,

and it’s lucid dreaming.

The gates made of light

swing open. You see in.

**The Source of Joy**

No one knows

what makes the soul wake up so happy.

Maybe a dawn breeze has blown the veil

from the face of God.

A thousand new moons appear.

Roses open laughing.

Hearts become perfect rubies

like those from Badakshan.

The body turns entirely spirit.

Leaves become branches in this wind.

Why is it now so easy to surrender,

even for those already surrendered?

There is no answer to any of this.

No one knows the source of joy.

A poet breathes into a reed flute,

and the tip of every hair makes music.

Shams sails down clods of dirt from the roof,

And we take jobs as doorkeepers for him.

**The Soul’s Friend**

Listen to your essential self, the Friend.

*When you feel longing, be patient,*

*and also prudent, moderate with eating and drinking.*

*Be like a mountain in the wind.*

*Do you notice how little it moves?*

*There are sweet illusions that arrive*

*to lure you sway. Make some excuse to them.*

I have indigestion, or I need to meet my cousin.

*You fish, the baited hook may be fifty*

*or even sixty gold pieces, but is it really worth*

*your freedom in the ocean?*

*When travelling, stay close to your bag.*

*I am the bag that holds what you love.*

*You* can *be separated from me.*

*Live carefully in the joy of this friendship.*

*Don’t think,* But those others love me so.

*Some invitations sound like the fowler’s whistle*

*To the quail, friendly,*

*But not quite how you remember*

*The call of your soul’s Friend.*

**On Breath / Breathing**

**Don’t Let Your Throat Tighten**

Don’t let your throat tighten

with fear. Take sips of breath

all day and night, before death

closes your mouth.

**Morning Wind**

The morning wind spreads its fresh smell.

We must get up to take that in,

that wind that lets us live.

Breathe, before it’s gone.

**Discipline**

**The Sunrise Ruby**

In the early morning hour,

just before dawn, lover and beloved wake

and take a drink of water.

She asks, Do you love me or yourself more?

Really, tell the absolute truth.

He says, There is nothing left of me.

I am like a ruby held up to the sunrise.

Is it still a stone, or a world

made of redness? It has no resistance

to sunlight. The ruby and the sunrise are one.

Be courageous and discipline yourself.

Work. Keep digging your well.

Don’t think about getting off from work.

Submit to a daily practice.

Your loyalty to that is a ring on the door.

Keep knocking, and the joy inside

Will eventually open a window

And look out to see who’s there.

**Dervishes**

You have heard of the ocean of nonexistence.

Try continually to give yourself to that ocean.

Every workshop has its foundations

set on that emptiness.

The master of all masters works with nothing.

The more such nothing comes into your work,

the more the presence will be there.

Dervishes gamble everything.

They lose and win the other,

the emptiness which animates this.

We have talked so much.

Remember what we have not said.

And keep working. Laziness and disdain

are not devotions. Your effort

will bring a result.

As dawn lightens, blow out the candle.

Dawn is in your eyes now.

**Awakening**

**Buoyancy**

I saw you and became empty.

This emptiness, more beautiful than existence,

it obliterates existence, and yet when it comes,

existence thrives and creates more existence.

To praise is to praise

how one surrenders to the emptiness.

To praise the sun is to praise your own eyes.

Praise, the ocean. What we say, a little ship.

So the sea-journey goes on, and who knows where?

Just to be held by the ocean is the best luck

we could have. It is a total waking-up.

Why should we grieve that we have been sleeping?

It does not matter how long we’ve been unconscious.

We are groggy, but let the guilt go.

Feel the motions of tenderness

around you, the buoyancy.

**Flood Residue**

The taste of today is not that of yesterday.

A pot boils over.

A watchman calls down the ladder,

Did you hear the commotion last night

from the seventh level?

Saturn turns to Venus and tells her

to play the strings more gently.

Taurus milk runs red. Leo slinks from the sky.

Strange signs, because of a word

that comes from the soul

to help us escape from speaking and concepts.

I answer the nightwatchman,

You will have to assign meanings

for these ominous events.

I have been set free from the hunt,

the catching and the being caught,

to rest in these dregs

of flood residue, pure and empty.

**Morning Water and a Poet**

We learn this from a drunken king

who wakes up hungover and sick,

asking for two things, a morning drink of water,

And *Let it be brought by a poet.*

There is a tradition that the wine

of nonexistence makes us God-drunk.

Intoxicated that way, we are purified.

There is a kind of poet

whose poetry pours that wine,

and there is another poet who makes us want

the red wine and the white.

The two poets may even have the same name.

Look inside form. Read with your soul

this *Masnavi.* Let it bring you

morning water and a poet.

**Quietness** (take out from class version?)

Inside this new love, die.

Your way begins on the other side.

Become the sky.

Take an axe to the prison wall.

Escape.

Walk out like someone suddenly born into color.

Do it now.

You are covered with thick cloud.

Slide out the side. Die,

and be quiet. Quietness is the surest sign

that you have died.

Your old life was a frantic running

from silence.

The speechless full moon

comes out now.

**The Old Poet’s Waking**

The old man’s heart woke,

no longer in love with treble and bass,

without weeping or laughter.

In the true bewilderment of soul

he went out beyond any seeking, beyond words

and telling, drowned in the beauty,

drowned beyond deliverance.

Waves cover the old man.

Nothing more can be said of him.

He has shaken out his robe,

and there’s nothing to it anymore.

There is a chase where a falcon

Dives into the forest

and does not come back up.

Every moment, the sunlight

is totally empty and totally full.

**The King Inside**

There are people with their eyes open

whose hearts are shut. What do they see? Matter.

But someone whose love is alert,

even if the eyes go to sleep,

he or she will be waking up thousands of others.

If you are not one of those light-filled lovers,

restrain your desire-body’s intensity.

Put limits on how much you eat

and how long you lie down.

But if you are awake here in the chest,

sleep long and soundly.

Your spirit will be out roaming and working,

even on the seventh level.

Muhammed says, I close my eyes and rest in sleep,

but my love never needs to rest.

The guard at the gate drowses.

The king stays awake. You have a king inside

who listens for what delights the soul.

That king’s wakefulness

Cannot be described in a poem.

**Purpose**

**The One Thing You Must Do**

There is one thing in this world which you must never forget to do.

If you forget everything else and not this, there is nothing to worry

about, but if you remember everything else and forget this, then you

will have done nothing in your life.

It is as if a king has sent you to some country to do a task, and you

perform a hundred other services, but not the one he sent you to do.

So human beings come to this world to do *particular* work. That

work is the purpose and each is specific to the person. If you don’t

do it, it’s as though a knife of the finest tempering were nailed into a

wall to hang things on. For a penny an iron nail could be bought to

serve for that.

Remember the deep root of your being, the presence of your lord.

Give your life to the one who already owns your breath and your

moments. If you don’t, you will be like the one who takes a precious

dagger and hammers it into his kitchen wall for a peg to hold his dip-

per gourd. You will be wasting valuable keenness and foolishly ignor-

ing your dignity and your purpose.

**A Pilgrimage to a Person**

When you are not with close friends,

you are not in the presence.

It is sad to leave people you travel with.

How much moreso those who remind you of God.

Hurry back to the ones protecting you.

On every trip, have only one objective,

to meet those who are friends

inside the presence.

If you stay home, keep the same purpose,

to meet the innermost presence

as it lives in people.

Be a pilgrim to the kaaba inside a human being,

and Mecca will rise into view on its own.

**Love’s Confusing Joy**

If you want what visible reality

can give, you are an employee.

If you want the unseen world,

you are not living with your truth.

Both wishes are foolish,

but you’ll be forgiven for forgetting

that what you really want is

love’s confusing joy.

**The Seed Market**

Can you find another market like this?

Where, with your one rose

you can buy hundreds of rose gardens?

Where, for one seed you get a whole wilderness?

For one weak breath, the divine wind?

You have been fearful of being absorbed

in the ground, or drawn up by the air.

Now your waterbead lets go

and drops into the ocean, where it came from.

This giving up is not a repenting.

It is a deep honoring of yourself.

When the ocean comes to you as a lover,

marry, at once, quickly for God’s sake.

Don’t postpone it. Existence has no better gift.

No amount of searching will find this.

A perfect falcon, for no reason,

has landed on your shoulder, and become yours.

**The Well**

We seem to be sitting still,

but we are actually moving,

and the fantasies of phenomena

are sliding through us,

like ideas through curtains.

They go to the well of deep love

inside each of us.

They fill their jars there

and they leave.

There is a source they come from,

and a fountain inside here.

Be generous and grateful.

Confess when you’re not.

We cannot know

what the divine intelligence has in mind.

Who am I,

standing in the midst of this

thought-traffic?

**Response to Your Question**

Why ask about behavior

when you are soul-essence

and a way of seeing into presence?

Plus you are with us. How could you worry?

You may as well free a few words

from your vocabulary: *why* and *how* and *impossible*.

Open the mouth-cage and let those fly away.

We were all born by accident,

but still this wandering caravan

will make camp in perfection.

Forget the nonsense categories

of *there* and *here*.

Race and nation and religion.

Starting point and destination.

You are soul and you are love,

not a sprite or an angel or a human being.

You are a Godman-womanGod-manGod-Godwoman.

No more questions now

as to what it is we are doing here.**The Worm’s Waking**

This is how a human being can change.

There is a worm

addicted to eating grape leaves.

Suddenly, he wakes up,

call it grace, whatever, something

wakes him, and he is no longer a worm.

He is the entire vineyard,

and the orchard too, the fruit, the trunks,

a growing wisdom and joy

that does not need to devour.

**Friendship**

**Escaping to the Forest**

Some souls have gotten free of their bodies.

Do you see them? Open your eyes for those

who escape to meet with other escapees,

whose hearts associate in a way they have

of leaving their false selves

to live in a truer self.

I don’t mind if my companions

wander away for a while.

They will come back like a smiling drunk.

Thirsty ones die of their thirst.

A nightingale sometimes

flies from a garden

to sing in the forest.

**Talking Through the Door (1)**

You said, Who’s at the door?

I said, Your slave.

You said, What do you want?

To see you and bow.

We walked through the door. I claimed

A great love and that I had given up

What the world gives to be in that love.

You said, Such claims require a witness.

I said, This longing, these tears.

You said, Discredited witnesses.

I said, Surely not.

You said, Who did you come with?

This majestic imagination you gave me.

Why did you come?

The musk of your wine was in the air.

What is your intention?

Friendship.

**When I am With You**

When I am with you, we stay up all night.

When you are not here, I can’t go to sleep.

Praise God for these two insomnias.

And the difference between them.

**My Worst Habit**

My worst habit is I get so tired of winter

I become a torture to those I’m with.

If you are not here, nothing grows.

I lack clarity. My words

tangle and knot up.

How to cure bad water? Send it back to the river.

How to cure bad habits? Send me back to you.

When water gets caught in habitual whirlpools,

dig a way out through the bottom

to the ocean. There is a secret medicine

given only to those who hurt so hard

they can’t hope.

The hopers would feel slighted if they knew.

Look as long as you can at the friend you love,

no matter whether that friend is moving away from you

or coming back toward you.

**The Waterwheel**

Stay together, friends.

Don’t scatter and sleep.

Our friendship is made

of being awake.

The waterwheel accepts water

and turns and gives it away,

weeping.

The way it stays in the garden,

whereas another roundness

rolls through a dry riverbed looking

for what it thinks it wants.

Stay here, quivering with each moment

like a drop of mercury.