

## THE LITTLE FAIRYTELLER AND THE WHITE BIRD NARA

Dedicated to my family: Nara.

Somewhere... autumn disrobing, turning off the sun before sleeping...

Somewhere... clouds descending to the crowns of trees, covering them with the sky...

In a Kingdom whose name had not yet been invented, ruled not by kings but by white birds, there appeared one day...

The child was tiny but exquisitely beautiful: his head was round, shaped to perfection with a high smooth brow; his face was lovely and his ears were hardly noticeable, so small were they and rather like whimsical curls on fairy-tale snails.

His small plump hands flapped like a chick's featherless wings and his funny unruly legs flashed heels as tender as a new-born kiss. But most charming of all for Nara was his short wavy lock of dazzling white hair, as fine as silk, which embellished the back of his infant head. She had never yet seen a fairy-teller with silvery grey hair. Its colour resembled her own plumage which brought the child yet closer to her.

### THE VOICE IS MUTE – SO FAR THERE IS NOTHING FOR IT TO TELL...

He looked at Nara with enormous black eyes which sparkled like two fragments of burning coal, but he was utterly silent. His lips unwrinkled in his desire to cry out, to make a squeak of delight which would wash his new plump body in fresh moon-shine, yet they remained delightfully soundless, nearly as soundless as The Queen of Silence.

The baby was mute, as all new-born fairy-tellers are who will gain the right to a voice in the Kingdom only after they've taken the 124,000th step of their lives. By that time they will have learned to respect words and to understand them to such an extent so that they will use them sparingly when they begin to speak and not scatter them meaninglessly. After all, who needs mindless fairy-tales?

Meanwhile, strange semi-transparent shadows bearing star-dust scattered like sugar, were gliding over the crib. Their faces couldn't be seen, because they wore the invisible masks of night in order that no outsider could discover them and frighten them off; so timorous are the clouds of night. When they descended low enough to touch the top of the infant's head, he could feel their gentle wet breath and could

even breathe it in very deeply until some silly little star ended up in his belly. Then he felt ticklish and started to laugh silently.

Everything around him carried the scent of a deep violet-black paint and of something mysteriously unknown. The mysteries of the night, while not crowding over the child, glanced at him from under their dark veils and in their thoughts made a secret wish to meet him as soon as they could. Only Nara, as she bent over his face, held the scent of something sweet and familiar. He stretched his fingers towards the white bird and sank them straight into her soft fluffy down.

“How cute he is... *it's always so much better to fly over a pretty head.*” Nara relaxed at the thought that it was this particular child whom she would one day bring up as the most remarkable fairy-teller in the Kingdom. She was very impatient to begin her song-magic for him. “I’ll start with a lullaby,” she thought. “I heard that people sing such songs to their children so that they have long, sweet dreams. How unexpectedly clever people can be.”

Nara didn’t remember her own lullaby, but maybe in truth she didn’t have one. No songs are sung to the white birds, for they don’t sleep themselves but instead are seen in dreams and when they guard the sacred visions of the young fairy-tellers. Many years had elapsed since these white creatures, devoted to the Law of the Heavens, had begun to circle the skies of the Kingdom. Each of them had its own mission for Him, and all the birds without exception tried not to anger Him.

“I wonder what name they’ll present him with?” Nara thought. It was only several fairy-tale hours ago that she had surreptitiously seen how the Kingdom had put something into a tight pearl shell and then hidden it under the belly of an old blue ocean which lived nearby.

Nara suspected it could be nothing other than the name that had been left for safekeeping in the cockleshell.

Oh! What an exciting moment it was, that day, when they put a glorious, living Name under her little left wing. She could not contain her joy and she spoke the name over and over again so often that the others later remembered and teased her when they met her, saying Nara, Nara, Nara, many times over.

In the Kingdom of The White Birds everyone cherished Names: they were bestowed as rewards, punishments and sometimes even as endearments. Names were waited for impatiently, looked for; names were fought for and that was how names came to be cherished. Every bird knew perfectly well what fate awaited it if it accidentally forgot or lost the name it had been given. Such poor, unfortunate ones would have to leave the fairy places for ever, blown away by the gusts of a ruthless northern wind, known by the name of Hazri. The birds without names, carried away by the wind, lost their memory and when they found themselves in foreign skies, they did not attempt to find their way back... And what for? They were soon forgotten in the kingdom and no waited for them anymore. No one knew what happened to them afterwards. And this story would have remained for everyone an untold fairy-tale...

### THOUGH THERE ARE NO UNTOLD FAIRY-TALES, THERE ARE ONES WHICH ARE UNHEARD...

The baby’s long pointed eyelashes covered his sleepy eyes like a fan. He turned over onto his left side, bent his knees and snuggled peacefully.

“It’s time!” Nara said. And at this very moment something flew with a hiss into the little Fairy teller’s ear. But he didn’t wake up; he only moved his ears a fraction.

“Sleep,” Nara whispered. She lowered her snow-white wings. After she had covered his body with them she started to sing quietly...

THE FIRST SONG OF NARA.  
THE LULLABY

**Lullaby**

*Lullaby* and *lullabo*,  
Your tiny head lies small and low;  
Just like a mother, I will sing  
Sweet and soft till sleep takes wing.

My egg, my offspring, let the whole  
Universe pour in your soul,  
With this lullaby I've begun  
An autumn one, a bed-time one.

Lead it under the fragile bone  
As a guest in your body's home,  
Then unhurriedly will start  
The beating of a baby's heart.

So, with the universe, my son,  
Your instant's breathing has begun;  
Sleep, my sip, in sleep lie curled,  
My sweetest slip of the whole world.

Whilst the world is fallen asleep,  
Under the covers let us keep;

From the heat, the frost, the pricks  
Of the thorn stabs of your kicks,  
And the bruises on the skin  
That can barely hold you in;

From the question marks, from soothing  
Pain-devouring powders, oozing  
Syrups devious and confusing,  
And from all the little bits  
That poison body, soul and wits;

From thoughts that are indifferent, and  
From the stranger's unwanted hand.

I'll be that bird, all white, who flies  
To guard the lashes of your eyes.

*Lullaby* and *lullabo*,  
Your tiny head lies small and low;  
Just like a mother, I will sing  
Sweet and soft till sleep takes wing.

## ONLY WHEN FULLY AWAKE IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEE REAL DREAMS.

The slender arms of the forest took the gloves off their hands: perhaps because they were tired or perhaps not – no one will ever know, apart from the fallen leaves and the branches themselves.

Pushing down on their fingers the gloves tried lift themselves up. They tried to reach the very same tops of the trees from which only a short while ago it was possible to stroke a transparent fleece of sky.

The autumn draught picked up the dry leaves and started to whirl them round in an unruly circle.

“Shhhhhhhhh”, the foliage murmured. “Shhhhhhhhh”, the murmur reached the fairy-tale ears of the baby and he woke up.

The multi-coloured leaves whirled over him in amischievous dance.

“Get up! Get up!” they cried. “Everyone’s been awake for ages and can’t wait for you to start walking. We’ve been dancing the autumn quadrille for ages and with such a din that Nara told us not to rustle so loudly. Getup, get up!” they repeated again and again.

The mute fairy-teller noticed straightaway that the dark hues had been replaced by bright ones. He was no longer sleepy. He sensed how from the tips of his fingernails to the ends of his hair a strange hot tremor had flowed all over his body which gave him more and more strength every minute. His hands and feet began to stretch out in all directions and each tried to jump down somewhere. Something started to beat under his chest and with such force and frequency that it made the fairy-teller sway.

Suddenly the laughing foliage grew silent and lowered itself right by the baby’s feet. The leaves started to weave a colourful double carpet from themselves. “Over here! Over here!” they cried. “This way it won’t hurt. We always spread ourselves under the feet of new-fairy-tellers. It is the last and most proper wish of elderly leaves: to knit rich carpets for you, the young ones, and to be sure that they are soft and safe enough so that you do not hurt your precious heels before it’s time, for fairy-tellers always manage to cover themselves in scratches before they start telling real fairy-tales. You take your first steps as soon as we fall by your cots. Oh, what a beautiful baby... How lucky we are...” the leaves whispered among themselves. *For it is always so much more pleasant to spread yourself under pretty feet...*

“What’s all this noise for?” The fairy-teller recognised Nara’s kindly voice. “I hardly turn away and you’ve made such a mighty mess.” Nara adjusted the little woven rug and stroked a brush through its foliage.

“Thank you, thank you”, the leaves started to rustle again. But they were much quieter now, barely audible... It was their last whispering... The autumn leaves in the fairy-tale kingdom were the most beautiful. They were trusted and very much respected, and before they disappeared for ever into pungent soil they were allowed to weave a magic carpet for each chosen fairy-teller and to give him as a farewell present their last murmur. With each new step on such a carpet, a baby acquires the magic powers and beauty of the leaves that disappear under his feet.

“Nara, Nara, shall we rub his tender heels so that they become a little tougher? This way it’ll be easier for him to walk on the ground, we know that...”

Nara nodded her head.

The leaves rustled under the feet of the baby and began to rub the soles of his feet carefully with the palms of their hands. In a couple of minutes the bare heels of the baby blushed and were covered with dense scales of thick skin. He took one step, then another and he felt how with every fresh step it was more comfortable to walk.

“Done!” the leaves whispered happily and clapped their hands. “The best heels in the world! Beautiful work, gentlemen. Bravo! Nara, what do you say? Maybe it’s too early for us to mix ourselves in with the soil? Haha!” they laughed.

“You can’t go against the Law”, Nara answered them, smiling.

“Really?”

She looked tenderly at the baby. “Listen to my second one...”

## THE SECOND SONG OF NARA AWAKENING

Today it is your autumn;  
Yours is – red and yellow leaves:  
They have swept up all today;  
Away they rake it and yesterday too,  
It is time ... for you.

Lower your foot from the cradle; hush!  
Little by little – no need to rush.

Not all can remember their falling to earth,  
They can’t rise again, they wander from birth  
Over the world, and repent all their worth  
But each thing in its season, for even repentance brings  
The late confession – and its sufferings.

Once you, my friend, are standing on both feet  
Your friends will join you, your enemies will meet  
And march across the world’s deceptive rim;  
Remember, children are born in suffering.

But not for suffering...

Not to be hungry in body and soul,  
Not to let mockery take its toll  
Not for the tearless moans and strife  
And not for a life that means no life.

If you believe and really want it,  
Life can be rooftops, stars and comets  
And on your tongue a favourite taste;  
Your palm in the hand of a trust mate;  
Honey and cakes – and a full plate.

It's the first word that's dangerous, beware!  
If it is beautiful, then you'll be fair:  
You'll have a sweet tooth, if it's sweet and mild,  
And if it's hard, you'll be a tough nut, child:  
It will be painful if you say "It hurts";  
"It's cold" and snow will blanket out your eye;  
"It's boring" and you're lonely till you die.

Such are the frolics of our universe.

**EACH ROAD HAS ITS BEGINNING BUT NONE OF THE ROADS HAS AN END FOR  
WITH EVERY END A ROAD WAITS FOR ITS BEGINNING...**

The joyful fairy-teller stamped his foot, now more daringly, over the friendly leaves. The colourful autumn carpet turned instantly into kindly, crumbly earth.

"What a wonderful rug it was", Nara thought aloud. "Why is it that leaves age so soon? Oh, poor things, their whole life lasts only from spring to autumn – is that an age? Hardly time to blink an eye and then it seems that you are dry. I think it would be better to remain green. Green carpets make a pretty sight too. And what do *you* think about it?" she asked the baby.

But he didn't say anything and only blinked his eyes.

Nara thought she heard a "No".....

"No, you are completely wrong about that," squeaked a thin little voice. "Imagine someone who wanted to hide in the earth when they were green? Eh...? Just think about it... a juicy, healthy leaf, its whole flourishing life ahead of it and instead to find itself under some unknown pair of feet... Even if it's a young pair of feet, would that make it easier? Ti..hi..."

"I don't think so. And all the time to be full with care: to keep warm, to help, to teach, to strengthen. With all this, never a moment to think about oneself. No thanks! It's better to be dry; I mean, it's easier to be dry so that you can say good-bye to the fairy-tale: fewer desires that are not as strong as during the first years of youth. And what desires are left are the more modest ones. Without too many regrets - you could even call it noble! No, my noble friend, allow me to disagree with you. By the way, your ball is completely finished, you can take it now."

It was a silk worm, a little green worm hanging on a beaming branch of a mulberry tree. When it finished its speech of instruction, it pulled on its thin tail and onto the ground fell an unusual ball made of magic silk thread.

The ball was extremely beautiful: it was iridescent and seemed to be utterly alive. It jumped up and down on the spot in a funny way and snorted like an unruly kitten, and then it swelled up like a balloon and spun like a top.

The little fairy-teller bent down to the ground, picked up the restless little ball in his hands, but he couldn't hold on to it and it fell. The ball turned out to be surprisingly heavy. All that was left in his soft palm was the end of a silk thread tangled round his small fingers.

Once the magic ball touched the ground it started to roll away leaving behind it a long sparkling trail.

"Go on," Nara said, "go after it. Make sure though that you don't lose the end you are holding in your hand, you need to have it. You see, in these times it's so easy to get lost. Who knows where the Kingdom will lead you. But with this, you are safe whether you go through fire or water. If only you knew how unsafe it has now become over here, if you wander aimlessly."

In the distance were dense woods. The tops of the tall trees held each other by their shoulders, packed in so tightly that nobody from outside would be stupid enough to try crawling or flying between them. These furry trunks detested all kinds of bother and that's why they avoided unwanted acquaintances. Each of them held on tightly by its roots to its favourite spot in the forest. Their roots were longer and stronger than their branches and each was tangled round the one next to it. That's why when somebody either by chance or deliberately fells one such tree in this wood, the others fall after it at once.

"Yes... the deep roots hold many riddles. Among those are ones that it is better not to know and that is why the forest rogues guard their domain so that it won't be toppled accidentally. And even we white birds can't fly over the unfriendly woods. It's too dark there and it smells of rot."

"Ah, how much I like roads," Nara said. "There are still many left under my wings. And there isn't a single one that would unfold and idle around to no purpose. The main thing is to understand which one is yours by right and then hold on to it and not leave it. It's then that the road will spoil you famously and will have great fun itself. It is not all the same for the road either: whom to lead and where to lead."

"Do you hear me?" she asked the fairy-teller who was running along beside her. He nodded his head.

"Good, then I'll sing for you... I think now is the right time."

### THE THIRD SONG OF NARA THE ROAD

A ball of rarest threads, the colours mixed though fairest,  
From the moment we are born  
It weaves for us with its dim light  
Paths unconscious to our sight.

Off and away it wriggles  
Sad, severe, sometimes in giggles,  
Never welcome at any door  
Yet fixing itself to many more.

To some it dresses wounds  
To some it cups their boils  
For some it paints their rooms  
And veins, like plaits, uncoils.

With this request, not to forget  
That such a thread existed yet.

The ball of threads so rare,  
You'll follow it with sweets  
And all you meet will share  
For there's enough for months of treats.

Your path's a thread, it's thin, it's long;  
I've carried you a long, long time,  
I've told you fairy tales in song  
While I have made my beauty shine.

Follow the unruly thread,  
Over the garrets, along the roads;  
Look at the patterns with a cool head,  
See how they sew mountain and sea  
How they lead to the God of Gods  
Where, face to face, you may take tea.

And if between the rows  
Of buildings with their knobbly bricks  
(As if you're in a dirt-black joke)  
For a split-wicked second, you lose  
Your thread, your throat will choke  
With sobs, your eyes will close  
And earth will then start playing tricks.

Freeze!  
Breathe in;  
What's done, what's doing, what's yet to do,  
Just let your soul envelope you  
Like an old blanket, easy, warm,  
Familiar from your first dawn.

The soul, which whispers on its breath  
An old, old song of life and death  
Will tell behind which ravenous gate  
Your long-lost thread for you may wait.

We've no idea where we will be led  
By the ball of rarest thread  
As its wanderings are uncurled,  
We will walk the whole round world.



My son, you're not the first to hold one end within your hand,  
So you'll not be the last one to unwind this ball of wool;  
Throughout our lives we each have got two legs on which to stand,  
And in this world we've each a thread to follow to the full.

### ONLY A STONE MAY NOT KNOW WHAT A STONE IS

The fairy-teller ran clumsily, awkwardly, after the rolling thread. His head was spinning a little, but it was not an unpleasant feeling and it didn't prevent him admiring the road. Unexpectedly he stumbled over something hard and unpleasant.

"It's so painful!" the little boy thought indignantly and looked under his feet. "What are you?" he asked a grey stone who looked askance at him. "How can you be so rude! I think it's very impolite of you, whoever you are."

"And how polite is it to walk without looking under your feet?" the stone answered brusquely, quite to the surprise of the little boy. "You can easily break your neck and then I'll have to take the rap from Nara – why and how did it happen. Phew! I'm tired of your fairy-tale carelessness. You tell me if it's such a big honour to break the legs of absent minded fairy-tellers so that they'll tell fairy-tales about their cuts and bruises. Maybe I don't like it at all, being blackened in someone's fairy-tale blood. Can't see any particular attraction in it! Although if one thinks about it carefully, if I weren't a stone, then I'd be breaking my own legs. Hardly a pleasant thing and damn painful too, I'm sure. As for you, I think you must be new-born if you don't know how to walk over stones correctly. There, there, don't be sad, you'll learn; there's time enough. Don't be offended, little boy, really I didn't want to hit you; take Daash's word of honour. You see, I forgot to introduce myself .Daash, at your service!

"Phew! If only you knew how many slaps and kicks I'm destined to bear before someone's feet or, for example, pride is strengthened properly. And how many knees will need to be rubbed. And not everyone can stand me.

"But the least pleasant thing is to lie down on heads that are not yet allowed to rise. And lots of them would like rise so much. Oh yes, they would.

"And I am the only one to teach them patience and not to permit them to get out from under me until I receive the necessary order from above. And until then these poor heads are waiting underneath stones. And I am waiting too. Waiting for a long time, but so far there hasn't been a hint. Although recently there was a rumour that it'd soon be time 'to rise'. I wish that time would come soon... Because, you see, it's impossible even to shift position under us lot; there is hardly any free space left!"

The fairy-teller looked around and saw that indeed there were lots of stones scattered along the road. They were big and small, flat and round. "What a sight," he thought. "Is it really true that under every stone there are people waiting? And is it true that it is possible to trip over each of them so unpleasantly?"

He picked up the first Daash that came his way and threw it.

"Ai," came the cry from where the stone had probably fallen. "Ai, ai, ai."

"Little one", Nara said. "It's no good throwing stones. Daashes are rough and they can badly hurt anyone you hit. And then it would be you, my silly one, who'd be responsible for someone else's bruises

and broken bones, and not the stones. If you don't want to hurt yourself, learn how to be more careful and look under your feet.

“But if you wish to help those who come walking after you, clear the stones from the path.”

The fairy-teller picked up the Daash over which he had managed to tumble so badly and put it to one side.

“Good boy”, Nara praised him. “And now listen to my fifth song.”

## THE Fifth SONG OF NARA THE STONES

Pick up this stone – you think it's just a small one?  
You think, therefore, it doesn't terrify, or signify?

The stones, my dear, are stones  
Grey – white – red – black  
Sharp – flat – stones bite back.

Each traveler has his special stone;  
You can lay your head on any one;  
Trip over a stone as tiny as dust  
And either your leg or your back is bust.

You might on a boulder graze your knee  
Or bang your head on a thick stone wall  
But it won't understand, it won't agree,  
There'll be no mercy for you at all.

Each stone is host to a stony sprite  
That guards its revelations tight;  
Inside are secrets of the stone  
Including, perhaps, a skeleton.

Don't belittle their purpose in life,  
Their force, their cruelty, hard as a knife,  
By will they've settled their destiny  
And a way of healing in secrecy;  
So as you stumble your road's great length,  
Your legs, my boy will gather strength.

(metaphor is missing)

Having listened to everything he needed to hear about the ordinary and not so ordinary stones, the little fairy-teller hurried on. Soon he noticed something ahead that drew his all attention.

“And what are these?” the little boy mumbled to himself and stretched out his index finger.  
“It’s....” said Nara with trepidation, “it’s them!”

Out from beneath the earth, the hunched backs and smooth flanks of unknown creatures rose up high into the sky. Nara and the little boy were faced by mighty giants. The giants were so tall that one could see their faces only by climbing onto their shoulders because the giants didn’t know how to bend and look down to their feet.

Nara sat the little boy on her long snow-white neck and they flew up.

“Who could think that there are so many interesting things up here,” the little boy thought. Around them soared fantastical creatures in all shapes and sizes: from the very clumsy to the almost imperceptible, who were united by one thing only – the ability to fly. But the higher the little fairy-teller and Nara flew, the denser the air became and there were fewer and fewer of the mischievous, playful winged creatures there.

“Perhaps it is not easy to hold oneself up so high”, the little boy decided. All of a sudden a strong current of air blew over them. It was so unexpected that goose pimples covered his body and the carefully coiled silver lock on his head was ruffled. And if the little-fairy-teller could have talked, he would surely have cried out something like “Oi” or “Aiiee”. But he just held on even tighter to Nara’s neck, who seemed to like this surprise in the air very much.

“Don’t be afraid”, she said. “These are the transparent Aarfs – waves of air that float in the sky and come down to earth only when it is necessary to make order there. Although not everyone always likes the way they do it...it’s better not to spoil relations with them especially when you are flying. The Aarfs’ mood is unstable; it can change direction at any moment. You wouldn’t even notice! If I am not mistaken, local winds have the most elusive character. But if you make friends with them – then they are simply dears.”

It seemed that the Aarfs liked the way the white bird introduced them to the little boy, and they put their transparent shoulders under Nara’s wings and lifted her even higher. And Nara, leaning on the friendly Aarfs, relaxed so much that she stopped waving her wings altogether and they were just carried across the sky.

Finally they flew to the top of a giant mountain and landed softly on its sharp crown. From the tall summit there was no sight of the earth or its rough stones or its fairy-tale inhabitants. It was not that easy or comfortable to look down from the top and, to be honest, it was even a little frightening.

From that point it was better to look up even higher, where the sky was suspended and there were lots of other things just as interesting.

“Open your pretty eyes wide and look around you”, Nara said. “From here you can see the fairy-tale palaces of our kingdom, if you look hard enough, and you can even hear the court gossip. Many fairy-tales are born in the mountains. From time immemorial, from these peaks magical words would descend and would look for creatures who would be devoted to them. Whoever believed in the word would become a magician himself. He would be able to see the invisible and listen to what others could not hear.

But unfortunately not everybody trusts magical words, although perhaps it is not so easy – to trust them. So these untrusting poor ones are called kaffirs by some, idiots by others, whatever one likes to call them. The hearts of both of these are smaller in size and beat quieter than those of magicians. It must be sad for them to live without believing for they don't see and don't hear the fairy-tale prophesies and sooner or later they stop believing in themselves.

“Oh”. A sigh escaped from the throat of the mighty giant. “Why do you sigh?” the little boy asked silently and put his ear to the mountain's surface.

“It's the moan of the feet of the mountain!” He heard it answer unexpectedly. “We are the immortal Saats and we live inside great mountains. We serve the mountain's feet that are deep, deep inside the earth, so deep that no one except us can go down to that level. We wash them with cool underground waters, we feed them with the most expensive delicacies from the treasures of the earth and we change their slippers. The mountains have a lot of important work to do, they have no time to look after their feet, and they are the ones who support the earth!”

“Where are you? May I look at you?” the little boy asked. He was already used to the fact that the kingdom could read his thoughts and answered every time he wished.

“Fraid not! Nowadays there is so much infection on the earth's surface and we are strictly forbidden to be ill – duty, you see. The mountains serve the earth and we serve them. If it were not for them the planet would have cracked a long time ago. The stone balances of the earth – that's what we call mountains among ourselves... So, sorry kid, nothing personal. Oops, it's time to change the slippers! Well, so long then... it was nice meeting you.” The Saats took their leave.

“Good-bye”, said the mute fairy-teller. He came to Nara and, leaning wearily over her fluffy side, began to listen to the sixth song.

## THE SIXTH SONG OF NARA THE MOUNTAINS

On a far, far distant peak  
There lived a people who believed  
That humans can live only in the mountains  
That down below, live only those whose backs  
Are hunched, because they can not reach the sky  
Because, no matter who you claim to be  
The lower your home, the narrower your eye,  
Dark colours all you see, or none at all, maybe.

Bones – of those who visited like guests the ground with groans,  
Those who missed their footing and fell down,  
Those who now remain under the ground.

There on the far, far distant height  
The sun is always burning white  
The snow is never melting there  
And no one walks  
But flies upon the air  
Beneath those clouds, each is equal

To an eagle.

There, upon those peaks, all changes;  
To the deaf sing mountain ranges  
And the deaf grow tall as teaks  
And they breathe, those mountain peaks.

They're known as the wise souls,  
They know about all; but it's not for all;  
To souls sublime as a mountain peak  
What mountains speak  
Is clear:  
So he who as ever is poised on a precipice  
Needs to remember there's a movement, however slight,  
That can bring him tumbling down from that comfortable height.

When you stand at the summit of the sky  
Remember how you came to climb so high  
Remember those who, at every step you made,  
Believed you, fed you, whispered "Take my aid"  
Remember.

Mountains are precious, agreed:  
Mountains are also - freedom!  
Treat it with caution.  
Freedom's an intricate organ;  
Not enough of it, and you'll suffocate,  
Too much instead?  
The oxygen leaves you dead.

Proclaim yourself a prince or saint  
Until you know it's only a feint  
And it's not you but the mountain peaks  
That make you seem so high and mighty  
To those who are left down below,  
Which means, all too many.

You may seem grand, all-powerful, all-seeing,  
The only one, the once and final being....

While you are standing on a simple chair,  
It's easy charming your sweet neighbour there,  
The girl next door...

On a far, far distant peak  
Which you will grow yourself,  
Pulled up from under you, to the utmost height,  
There among clouds, you'll gain your might.

But on that peak, you'll not deceive yourself,  
Not by your height, or weight, or face,

Nor what you do, nor what the place

You occupy.

## THE PURER THE SNOW THE TASTIER THE WATER FROM MELTED SNOW

The mute fairy-teller and Nara were still sitting on top of the giant mountain and looking at the calm, pure sky when all of a sudden: Achoo! The giant sneezed loudly. At that instant, either because it was startled or was frightened, the sky shuddered over their heads and whimsical white crumbs began topour down.

“Look, now it’s getting cold, ”Nara said, covering the little boy with her wings. “It’s winter! I don’t like frosts. Coldness is not for me but for others who are dressed more warmly than I am.” She imagined herself for a moment in one of those fluffy fur coats which many of the fairy-tale creatures wore during winter.

“And yet, how pretty you are! You - so afraid of the cold, oh how very pretty!” Nara said with admiration.

The fairy-teller stuck his head out from under Nara’s wing and gasped with delight.

“Catch us up, catch us up!” the snow-flakes cried joyfully, while they fell from the grey-white sky. “Come on, catch us up!” they tittered. The little boy stretched out his hand towards them and at first he was very disappointed. As they touched his warm skin the snow-flakes instantly turned to the drops of water. But just a few moments later, when it became much colder, they stopped melting and landed laughing one on top of the other and gathered themselves into fragile snow.

“Look what beautiful skirts we are wearing,” some shrilled flirtatiously. “And look at our lace blouses”, others sang. “And look at our frills and our bows...” they interrupted each other. “Oh how pretty we are, how pretty!”

Indeed they were very cute and it was not difficult to admire them, there were so many of them and none had the same shape or wore the same clothes as the others, with the single exception of course that they all preferred one colour for their garments. All of them were flying towards the earth and none of them would return to the sky. But soon many of them lost their prettiness. Some dissolved, some soiled their snow white garments and became ugly and others didn’t even reach the ground: there were blown far off course by the winter wind.

“What’s your name?” asked the snow-flake that was hanging on Nara’s long slender feather just by the little boy’s temple. The fairy-teller was silent.

“I don’t know,” he wanted to say, but his voice was still mute and would not obey him and snow-flakes are too scatter-brained to listen to another’s thoughts.

“Why don’t you answer?” the snow-flake snorted. “What a shame, so pretty and yet so impolite. How can you stay silent when a beauty approaches you? Though I think I understand; it is not difficult to lose speech when meeting a real beauty and you simply become short of words... ti-he-he!” she laughed. “Come on, little one, tell me your name or I’ll get bored and will fly to someone who can talk to beautiful snow-flakes. Well? Are you still silent? Oh! You little mute.

“Life goes by so quickly, there is no time to hang around aimlessly, when one needs to fly and fly to one’s heart’s content. It’s high time for me to have some fun at last but I have so much work to do. For soon my snow white curls will start to thin and then who’d like to be covered by my snowy laces? And there is so much more to be done: to purify, to warm up, to dress, to give someone something to drink. If only one were appreciated for all one’s kindness. For I am one of the most amazing wonders of the world! Do you think that when they look at my beauty they’ll realise what it’s made of and how? Will they really care? All I can hear is what they call me: ‘Here’s a blonde!’ *Fi donc!* How stereotypical!

“Yet I have been assembled from no less than 200 ice particles and each one of them retains droplets of the purest water. Wouldn’t one feel miserable after all this? How can the fairy-tale kingdom cope without us? Without us, who would feed the rivers? We make it possible for bears to sleep right throughwinter.”

“And yet – what a pity it is that you don’t need me, you who are so beautiful!”

*it is always so much more pleasant to rest on beautiful shoulders.* May be you’ll change your mind after all, eh?”

“Go, fly away now,” Nara shook her wing a little and the lovely snow flake broke from it and flew away.

“A blonde”, Nara smiled, gazing after the snow-flake as it vanished.

## THE SEVENTH SONG OF NARA SNOW-FLAKES

### SNOWFLAKES

Little white stars fall to the feet of the crowds,  
Little white stars, the crumbs of the clouds,  
Fall from the sky to the round-shouldered ground,  
Healing with cold the earth all around.

The cracks and the holes and the cuts where a saw  
Makes in wood a flaw,  
These they will bandage over and over  
Until the black soot has white for its cover.

The pity is, not every flake knows  
When it’s falling out of a high white cloud,  
That the lower it falls, its colour slows  
To a grey that is almost a shade of mud.

If by chance it comes to lie  
Under the feet of a man in a rush,  
Its feather-white wings will fold and die,  
For that is how snowflakes die – in slush.

There are some that brush like a kiss on lips  
Deep frozen in frost, and some that drift  
Onto hands, and some on hats hitch a lift.

These bodies, which never knew warmth, will melt  
Into water, for they are the hopes love felt,  
Its drops of sweat – in the plainest terms –  
No fashionable clothes, no frills, no perms,

Just naked, melted, simply water



That into fragments of ice will falter  
And end as a lifeless glint, if at all:  
The world cannot show a warmer fall!

Little white stars - they are falling, falling,  
Falling, falling, offering, offering  
To the buildings and people, if just for a while,  
A draught of their whiteness that cleans like a smile;

The pot-holed asphalt in grim rough streets,  
The stinking stripes of concrete pipes,  
Vile walls –all's painted in white, white snow,  
The tenderest paint the world can know.

Adults are grown into children again,  
They are the innocent strangers here  
Where whiteness is normal and perfectly plain.  
No matter it's just for a few short months  
When winter's the goad on the starveling's road  
And whiteness deliciously *a la mode*.

The white flakes are falling ..... falling down.

#### IF ANYONE IS TRYING TO BECOME WISER IT MEENS THAT HE IS ALREADY BEING VISITED BY WISDOM

Minutes turned into hours, hours turned into years – and very quickly too, especially in the fairy-tale kingdom. If you don't value time it can slip away from under your very nose and you'll never be able to catch up with it or to turn it back. It is so easy to be tangled in time if you do not treat it with due respect and don't consider it each time you try and do something. And another thing: time likes to play jokes with you and to play hide and seek. You close your eyes in winter, then you open your eyes: and now it's spring or even summer. If anything like this happens the main thing is not to be afraid but to manage to change your clothes for more comfortable ones. But they say that everything is at a stand-still in the mountains. They say that Time likes mountains and everyone who lives in them. And that's why they hardly ever grow old and can survive many years. Wisdom is kept in the caves in the mountains. A lot of people on earth dream of finding it, but only a few manage to do so; and that is because they don't look for it the right place. Time knows how to keep its secrets.

Only during the one night when the moon is so low in the sky that you want to touch it with your hands and the waters leave the shores of the fairy-tale oceans to take a stroll on land, does our planet loosen its tight shirt and breathe in deeply the fairy-tale cosmic dust. The inhalation lasts for a very short

time, merely a few instants but it is exactly during these moments that the lungs of the planet are filled with the inner-most mysteries of the universe. It is precisely then that the old mountains shudder and open their dark, fire breathing caves where Wisdom hides. The Saats allow into the strong-rooms those who wander the mountains on such a night and those who are looking for time's precious treasure.

Only those most daring and most persistent can enter the caves and master wisdom. They dedicate themselves to secret teachings and become just as profound and mysterious as the caves themselves. They are called sages. Some of them remain in the mountains to guard the treasures. Others descend from the mountains and wander from one kingdom to another passing their wisdom to the others. The wandering sages are called in various ways: some are called Alims and some are called Divaans. Each of them has his own path but all the roads lead from one cave, the one that is open to the inhabitants of the Earth during the night of the full moon, the one and only night on Earth.

"Time for us to go down", Nara said and was going to put the little fairy-teller back on her neck when suddenly she noticed a curious flickering light among the angry snow white rocks. "Let's look inside", she suggested and tugged the little boy after her. Cold stones led into a dark narrow gorge behind the left shoulder of the giant mountain. The deeper they descended the more frightened the fairy-teller became. He was even on the verge of turning back when all of a sudden the gorge, as if made of rubber, stretched out on all sides and turned into a wide candle-lit cave. In the cave on a heavy stone armchair sat an old man with a white beard who was leafing through a book as old as he was or may be even older. In front of him on a stone table burned a huge wax candle. The old man seemed motionless like the stones that surrounded him, but for his lively eyes that scanned the pages and his thin wrinkled fingers that turned them. Apart from the table, the chair and a multitude of books covered with dust and moss there was nothing in the cave.

"Welcome," said the sage, not taking his eyes off his thick book. "It's been a long time since I've been visited. Would you tell me what year, day and hour it is? Old age, you see... Ah well, no fun being old, but what can you do. It's all a trick of time. In the mountains time is so irresponsible, you know. The last time I asked the Saats what time it was, ...but it was so long ago. It was during that very night when I was admitted into this secret place and given the gift of Wisdom.

"I've been sitting here ever since. Can't leave my books, they're so good! How much wisdom is scattered over their yellowing pages. And how many riddles. A whole life is not enough to read all of them. So, my dear friends, would you tell me what year it is?"

"0120 by the fairy-tale count," Nara replied.

"Who could think? I never dreamt to live to such a date. Much obliged, my friends. You've really pleased an old man! Once I decided to find Wisdom to be able to make sure of Sense. Oh, how naïve I was. Just imagine, my friends, that in the very search, the most cunning Sense was hiding. Truth is clever and unpredictable. Each one has his own truth. That's why nobody knows where its delights are hidden. Maybe here, in the dust of my immortal books or maybe not. And yet how wonderful it is that you have called on me! I have been thinking of leaving my dwelling to start wandering the world until I find somebody to whom I could pass my wisdom. But I was so reluctant to leave, for I have got used to this heavy armchair so much. You see, with years you become attached to various things even if they are not very comfortable. They say that old people, just like children, believe in their toys.

"Nara, dear Nara, how clever of you to have brought this beautiful little boy to me. *For it is always so much more pleasant to teach a handsome pupil.*"

The mute fairy-teller was very much surprised that the venerable old man knew the name of his bird. But then he thought that there is nothing that could not be found out in this world and especially so if the Saats themselves had revealed Wisdom to you. The little boy came up to the sage and bowed his head.

"Clever boy", the sage said and patted him on his shoulder. Then he picked up from the table an old comb made of mahogany and started to comb his long, grey hair until it stretched out to its full length

and started to shine like bright silver in the gloomy, barely lit cave. Then the old man brought the comb to the little boy's head and started to comb his young, white locks. With each stroke of the comb the fairy-tale hair became longer and thicker. The little boy felt how something heavy and very interesting was filling up his head. Nobody knew how long this combing took; finally the sage stopped and put away the comb.

"Well, that's it," he said. "You can go now. I am a bit tired. Old age, you know..."

"Don't overload yourself, please," Nara said. "You should spare yourself: there is such a shortage of wisdom in the kingdom these days. And thank you very much on behalf of the fairy-teller, now I am less worried about him. While his lovely white hair warms his head, he'll carry the precious knowledge that your marvellous comb has left in his hair. Maybe we'll meet again!"

"Rather unlikely", the sage sighed with sadness. "Fare well!"

The white bird and the fairy-teller turned back the way they had come. They were leaving for ever this wise cave and the kindly venerable old man, hoary with age, who had nevertheless managed to pass his inner-most knowledge to the fairy-tale little boy.

### THE EIGHTS SONG OF NARA THE SAGE

He learns to think, and thinking, learns to learn,  
Reading himself upon each page  
And thus a reputation does he earn  
Because he doesn't admit it, of a sage.

The closer that an answer lies to us  
The more mysterious; riddles and rebels all;  
The deepest ocean has the furthest wall;  
There's but one trigger to his loaded thought –  
The fact that he might target on a meaning's root.

He knows there is no limit set;  
The food you have for breakfast's never mattered yet.

Not all is fit with which to chew the cud,  
Not everything the mouth devours will feed the blood.

But every day a hair turns grey,  
The hunch is heavier to bear,  
There was a time he planted there  
All that he called 'important' in life's way.

Now he's a sage, he will not judge the sum  
Of what has passed, what is, and what's to come.

The wrinkles kiss his brow  
Like webs of spiders now; in each  
Time's left its stamp, that it may teach  
That to know all, is to keep silence's vow.

I am your mother – and this sage  
The author of your parentage;  
Hear carefully each step he makes  
And you will learn what wisdom takes.

Then words perhaps, and even spheres  
Will open to your wondering ears  
And by the door you'll find, I swear,  
All you could ever look for there.

And when you find your crown among  
The world's great troves profusely flung,  
Then all will see a sage's birth  
In that far corner of the earth.

THERE ARE LOTS OF SCENTS IN THE FLOWER GARDEN; IF YOU WANT TO TRY EACH OF ONE OF THEM YOU ARE EITHER NAÏVE OR MORTALLY LONELY

The snow melted and the ground was covered with fresh green grass. Everywhere spring was waking. Such an unbelievably tasty aroma wafted on the air that one wanted to bite into it. The spring scent woke even the laziest creatures after their long winter hibernation.

All around there was crawling, running, flying! Just a few months ago nobody could have guessed that there were so many different creatures living in the kingdom of the white birds. As the creatures revived, they immediately became brightly and richly coloured and began to display to all concerned their fresh and not so fresh delights, looking for admiration and acceptance of their superiority. All, without exception, tried to attract each other and looked for their like in order to find for themselves the most suitable partner. The lucky ones, having withdrawn from prying eyes, could be seen singing something sweetly to each other. That's how lovely the spring was.

Enchanted and fatigued the mute fairy-teller and Nara reached a curious low fence. The iron elbows and shoulders of the fence were dressed in the luxurious lace of ivy in blossom. Its petals, caressed by the spring light, beckoned the wanderers to admire the rings of its green wreaths. Behind the artfully dressed fence hid the most magnificent garden in the world inhabited by beautiful creatures.

“Beautiful, don't you think so?” the ivy began to talk. “You'll never see such flowers anywhere else apart from the Garden of Eden itself, in the immortal kingdom of the spirits. Oh, yes, I am not joking... I've no business joking with the strangers. That's rather the business of

charming daisies or dandelions. As for me, I am merely guarding these delightful creatures, for the more beautiful the flowers are, the more defence less. And yet there is no other garden in the world that is more beautiful than ours. How much time do you have at your disposal?' the Ivy asked them. 'If you are not in a hurry I could tell you the whole story - well, nearly the whole story. Would you like me to?'

"And why not? Please be so kind as to tell us," Nara replied. "It's been a long time since I wanted to hear it from the source, because, you know, there are lots of rumours around, and a decent bird should not trust them."

The little fairy-teller nodded his head in agreement and came even closer to the ivy's funny curlicues so as not to miss a single word.

"Well then," the ivy began. "Once the fair Meleks were given an order to grow on earth the reflection of the paradise garden, as one of the wonders of the world. The kindly Meleks had been thinking for a long time how to plant flowers and grasses correctly in such an unusual garden and finally they decided. One day, early in the morning they went to the Garden of Eden and having told the Garden about the difficult task facing them, they asked it for help. The Meleks' idea was to do the planting in such a way that the likeness of the Paradise Garden could appear on earth. All Eden had to do was simply to turn its face to the Earth and look attentively at it. Eden was charm itself and responded with great pleasure to the innocent request. And following some sweet angelic talk, the Paradise garden did just that. It looked at the Earth with a glance lit by heaven's wonderful light and its magnificent reflection instantly appeared on the Earth. Luckily the glance fell directly on the Kingdom of the white birds. Ever since, we've been looking after our little paradise and pampering it – with some trepidation!"

"What a beautiful story!" Nara said.

"And that's not all," the ivy added in a self-satisfied way. "Our garden has another secret! It can be entered only by those to whom the Meleks would like to show the delights of the real Eden while they are still on earth. Among the multitude of flowers, the garden grows and cares about only ones which are sought by and dreamt about by Her Majesty Love herself! Not everyone lucky enough to enter the garden manages to find the mighty miracle of Love here; this miracle is revealed only to those who, having looked into the luxurious array of flowers, manage to find the one and only flower, their precious rose.

"Would you like to try? Why not come in?" the ivy offered. "It's spring now, which means it is the best time of the year for such visits. In spring the flowers are at their most beautiful."

"But of course!" Nara hardly had time to answer, when the fairy-teller had already disappeared behind the creaking gate.

"Wait, I must tell you about her!" Nara called after him.

## THE NINTH SONG OF NARA THE GARDEN

The garden's warm – and there the flowers are warm,  
Warm is the air, a paradise it seems  
Although who knows .....  
But I will sing my dreams.

How every rose will die in silent show  
When it is plucked out by the stem  
And bounded in a vase  
At first it does not feel its prison's bars.

The lovers there are kissing fingers,  
Their shameless gaze on young buds lingers  
To bring them to their masters' throne.

They bring them sometimes to their lips – to breathe  
The flower secrets in, which simple ears cannot receive.

The destiny of every rose is short  
For there are flowers that should not grace a garden  
Where vengeance runs so rude  
There is no pardon, from those more wanly wrought,  
For crimson plenitude,  
And sparkling spirit, and delicious scent  
And unforgiven is its royal bent.

Nor its sharp thorns nor its high grace  
Where every common weed will dream  
Of bending it into its proper place  
Because old nature did not smile on it  
And it was born with a new skulking wit,  
And so its malice sharpens up its powers:

Behold – the Kingdom of the Flowers.

But enter here that garden scene  
And you will find its reigning queen  
And with a spirit's care, propose  
Your tender love unto the rose;  
Tell her how generous was God's mind  
To crown her over all her kind,  
That she alone should reach above  
The rest, to soothe the ugly with her love.

Then bending over the flower's head,  
Leaving the muse intact, instead  
Breathe deep the scented miracle,  
It cures the common cold so well  
And from a fool a wise man makes,  
Defangs a curse and pacifies some snakes.

[Not everyone can know these powers  
But I will show to you the secrets of the flowers.]

By breathing in the foremost scent  
In gardens, as old poets meant  
To say, you'll multiply your worth  
A hundred fold upon this earth.

Admiring beauty that is higher  
And nobler than the common road,

You'll feel as though you'd reached the spire of God's abode.

To love the queen is to become a king  
Though that's not easy, she may not submit,  
She's daring, dangerous, has a willful wit  
But better far on thorns you blood your skin  
Whilst kissing each the angel hid within,  
Than die in the grey boredom of some pale  
And lifeless petals terminally stale.

The day will come, the hour will strike  
When lowered eyelids re-ignite  
In an old man a burning light  
And from the ash of useless names  
There's one he hears that fans the flames,  
Whose cry and laughter rouse his soul  
Again to hear the one, worthiest of all.

To whom, as sacrifice he gave to bless  
His utmost years – to have her sacred Yes.

The withered body then will smile,  
Recalling to itself the while  
That once it seems that there had been  
A time when it still loved that garden's queen,  
Although its love was clumsy and lacked skill.

TO BE ABLE TO ADMIRE FLOWERS IN AN ARRANGMENT, IS THE ART OF GOOD  
TASTE; BUT TO DISCOVER THE JOY OF THE WHOLE BOUQUET IN A SINGLE FLOWER, IS  
THE GENIUS OF LOVE

"I will not pluck you, my white miracle," the little boy babbled.

He bent over a fragile flower and touched its petals with his lips. With every touch the white rose unfolded more and more and became even more charming. She had been waiting for her amorous fairy-teller for such a long time. He had been promised to her by fate at the moment of her precious birth. Ever since, she never stopped looking for him with her eyes, watching the iron gate of the garden silently. Many a flower managed to blossom fully for the ones that had chosen them while she had been proudly blooming in solitude. And many of the flowers could not understand what made her rosy solitude last so long. Among them were the nice sort of neighbours who, not without a flowery tease, predicted for the



rose the fate of lonely flowers that were never to be discovered in the garden. Such flowers had the saddest fate of all behind the magical gate. Never having had the sacred meeting they would wilt unnoticed. With them would also die the miracle that, according to the Meleks' prediction, the flowers kept for their lost wanderers. But the white rose seldom chatted with her neighbours and she didn't like sad stories. She liked just one story, which the kindly Melek had brought to her petals at the time when she had been merely a very young bud. They told her about the prophecy which said that someone who would enter the fairy-tale garden with a pure heart and would find Love there, someone who would carry it throughout his life without betrayal or injury, who would one day be lifted by the Meleks together with his beloved high over the earth and would be admitted into the gates of Eden. The lovers who had been devoted on earth would be allowed, without being separated, to remain forever in the paradise garden and be delighted by its joys.

The mute fairy-teller kissed the flower tenderly; trying not to harm it and not frighten it, for it is so easy to frighten a beautiful rose. The heady aroma of her white face made his eyes close and intoxicated his thoughts.

"You are the most beautiful rose in this garden and you are mine!" his heart whispered. "I will breathe you in until you grow up and blossom in me by my breath. Together we'll listen to Nara's clever songs and every day we'll fall in love with each other once again. I promise! We'll surprise the kingdom with our fairy-tale as soon as I tell them about us. And then, perhaps, they'll never separate us."

The white rose was quivering under the warm breath of the little boy. She eagerly tried to hear what his mute sighs meant, tried to understand her chosen one until, finally, he had taken such a deep breath that the rose was now inside him.

A strange shudder ran through the body of the fairy-teller. He heard how time started to drum on his heart with crazy speed and spread over it a sweet, previously unknown languor. The fairy-teller wanted to scream for happiness! But he didn't scream.

At this very moment Nara, who had been watching him, noticed how a beautiful white flower had blossomed in the bosom of the little boy and the kindly Meleks who had been watching him from above the skies saw it as the usual miracle.

A SOUND BUILDS A LETTER; A LETTER BUILDS A WORD; A WORD BUILDS AN ACTION; AN ACTION BUILDS A CONDITION AND A RESULT.

LOOK AROUND AND LISTEN ATTENTIVELY... IF YOU MANAGE TO HEAR – YOU’LL BELONG.

Spring continued to flirt with the fairy-tale kingdom. Spring was an incorrigible coquette and everyone dreamed of her warm attention. Her lovely dainty feet skipped up and down on the clouds which made them burst into laughter. Unable to contain their tears of mirth, they poured rain onto the earth.

*Oh, how wonderful it is to find yourself soaked face and hands by a spring rain!*

The little boy shuffled in the puddles and listened attentively to the ceaseless sounds of spring: everything chirped, roared with laughter, wept or whispered. It seemed that this chorus would never stop; it was in such good form.

But suddenly the noisy kingdom grew quiet and sounds, that had been unruly, closed their mouths in modesty and began to listen very attentively.

After scarcely a couple of minutes, an enchanting music started to pour into the silence which reigned there. It was the most beautiful sound that the little fairy-teller had ever heard. He started to look around, trying to discover with his eyes what gave birth to such an extraordinary melody, until, at last he noticed a small delicate girl under the broad parasols of burdock leaves near a fairy-tale pond. She was dressed in a wonderful pink dress, decorated with lace and river pearls, every one of which looked like a tiny sparkling piece of ice. She wore charming satin slippers with miniature heels and her long dark curls were tied by a silk ribbon. The girl held in one hand a strange instrument made of wood and she was gliding over it a thin twig that she held with another hand. The movements of this long bow caused the instrument to produce this wonderful sound.

By the edge – let’s say in the month of May -  
Dressed in a dreamy cloud-like dress  
Stood a beautiful fairy – as young as the day  
And just like a human being, I guess.

She lowered her head – o’er a violin  
Which was all in love with her wing-like hands;  
And tucking it gently under her chin  
She gave away its magical sounds.

The sounds were so delightful and heartfelt that the little boy wanted to become the violin - or at least the bow.

Having sensed such sincere attention, the sounds plucked up courage and flew very near the fairy-teller who didn’t dare move. One of them, the one that the little boy liked most of all, became daring and in a split second, having abandoned his brothers and sisters, flew into the boy’s slightly open mouth.

The sound fell so far down his throat that it hit its forehead on his sleeping voice.

The voice, frightened, woke up and started to rise higher and higher, reaching the lips, away from the mad sound... At first it seemed to the little boy that he was out of breath. But very soon he started to breathe with an ease he had never had before. He opened his mouth wide with surprise and:

‘I can hear!’ his mouth shouted unexpectedly, ‘I can hear!!!’

It was such a strong shout that the girl stopped playing her violin.

She turned her face to him and beckoned him with her long bow.

‘Were you listening to my music?’ she asked, embarrassed, when the little boy came closer.

‘Yes, I was!’ he answered joyfully.

‘Then it means that you can hear... How sweet! My name is Alima’, the girl introduced herself. ‘I am delighted to meet you. It’s not often that you meet a stranger who can listen so attentively. Shall we become friends?’ she offered. ‘You are so beautiful... I’ll play the violin for you if you wish, and I hardly ever play a wrong note’

‘Yes, let’s!’ the little boy answered gladly. ‘But, oh! I! I can talk!!’ he cried. ‘I am talking! Ha-ha! How wonderful it is to move your lips and to know that you can be heard!! Hey! Listen to me everybody! I can talk now!!’

The little boy was jumping from joy and all the time shouting something incomprehensible. He stretched his arms wide and tried to spin in such a way that he would spin the whole world in time to his spinning. And for a split second, he really had the feeling that the world span round his fairy-tale head. He closed his eyes and, out of breath with happiness, he fell down laughing on to the soft kindly grass.

‘One can only hope that from now on you’ll keep quiet at least occasionally’, Nara laughed. ‘What a clear ringing voice you have, hard to believe that you are talking for the first time! Well, it does happen after a long silence.’ And she laughed again. ‘Now, stop shouting so loudly, you silly boy. Save your voice for future fairy-tales. You’ll need it. You can be sure of that...’

Then she turned to the little girl. ‘You are indeed talented. Just think! To know sounds so well that you could awaken a fairy-tale voice with them. You are a good, clever girl, that’s what you are!’ Nara flapped her wings.

‘Make sure you do not let your little violin out of your hands. Without them the violin will not sound so beautifully!’

‘Very well’, the girl said, ‘I won’t. And will you stay? I have such a repertoire! And can you imagine, I have never played it to anyone, and one wants to so much...’

‘No, sadly not, my dear sweet girl, I need to sing mine. Although... well, I wouldn’t mind having an expert accompaniment’, and Nara winked at the violin player.

The girl was very pleased, she put the violin tightly under her plump cheek and started to play.

## THE TENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE SOUNDS

It Is of silver, pearl, or gold  
As if a dress were kissed by lace  
And made a sound whose chance might mould  
A living song from muted space

And trick a pause out in a palette’s ground  
So that its tinctures blossom crystal clear  
In whom is worthy its hearing; for a sound,  
Like a draught to open doors, is drawn into the ear

To whisper sweetest nothings, and unfold  
In the soft heart a magic pulse: behind a window case  
Of skin, there is a land wakes up to hold

A sound in every pattern it can trace;

Sounds of enchanting healers of wanderers,  
A planet which is so much like a sonnet  
Telling you of pockets and pick-pockets  
With everything – or nothing in, or on, it.

Each sound is its own sorceress, you see,  
A wizard – or a servant – or a king,  
And one of these will hide behind each string,  
And sound the notes of every doh-re-mi.

Another will be dressing in a voice  
And will be singing, crying, laughing too;  
And some will then be calmed and so rejoice,  
Others infuriated (well, some voices do).

In every sound there hides a 'he', 'she', 'it',  
That without wine intoxicates,  
And bends the hearer's knees down, bit by bit,  
By order of the sound's dictates.

Nothing more restless than a sound,  
In it the sky falls down to the ground  
And the sea floats up to the clouds.

A sound has neither belly, neck or hips,  
It hovers imperceptibly in air,  
Waiting its cherished fairy's offered lips  
To give it body once it's spoken there;

A body comfortable, warm, long awaited,  
Or thin and troubled, maybe fierce and bold;  
Like all in the kingdom, still it would be freighted  
With flesh, as all therein have found their mould.

Open up your ears and listen well  
To rain splashing in puddles, and then tell  
How in these shallow puddles, it is found  
That many there obediently have drowned;

How, when it's still outside, the draughts rage yet,  
And how the cuts and bruises on the skin  
Of nature's form itself still ache and fret  
Her body deep within.

When you reach the very centre,  
When the heart of sound you touch,  
It will touch you back and enter  
You like a formula of addition,  
Adding more and more to much,

Each continuing to hear  
The other's echo in the ear.

A HOUSE IS A BUILDING THAT HAS BEEN STUCK AND BOLTED TOGETHER WITH  
YOUR OWN DEEDS, WEAKNESSES, DESIRES AND A REALITY WHICH MAKES YOU FEEL  
YOU ARE THE MASTER.

The little ball of silk had been unrolling quicker and quicker and yet refused to become smaller. The thread was in a hurry to pick up everything curious on its way and let it run throughout its length and urged Nara and the little boy again and again to follow its endless tail.

Soon they found themselves in a strange place, so unlike anything else they had visited before. On the left and right of the wiggling, well-trodden path there stood peculiar motionless dwellings.

Some looked pleasant enough with beautiful glass skylights for eyes and noisy squeaky doors for fairy-tale mouths. On top of their heads there were funny attics with sticking-out chimneys made of bricks, from which warm, tasty smoke escaped.

When they saw the wanderers, they swung open their hospitable thresholds and smiled the widest smile any kindly house could offer.

Others, blackened from time or solitude, did not notice the travellers; though, most likely, they didn't want to notice them. Their dusty glass windows had cobwebs so tightly woven round them that it made it completely impossible to see anything inside. Boredom had rusted their attics and their chimneys were blocked with dirt and soot and they had no smell at all, although, on second thoughts, they gave off a whiff of cold and damp.

The ball rolled onto one of the delicious houses. Nara and the little boy could do nothing but follow it.

'Welcome home!' the threshold squeaked. 'Always happy to see guests. Come in, don't be shy!'

Nara had hardly knocked at the inner doors than they opened wide. A family of humans lived in the house. They were all kind and welcoming in the human way. In the country of humans there is nothing unusual in such behaviour.

The senior person in the family was a man with broad shoulders, a bit on the thick side, with long moustaches and a balding head. He was dressed simply in an earthy coloured shirt and wore funny rough trousers that were supported by a thick cord under his round, protruding belly. The man looked from time to time in a knowing and satisfied way at the woman who could be seen bustling around the house. She was remarkably beautiful. It was she who was cooking the mouth-watering food the visitors could smell.

The fairy-teller and Nara were about to look round their host's house, but the woman had already laid the table and gathered around it her rosy cheeked children and her husband.

'Please, dear guests, the table is ready, we offer you whatever we have!'

Soon everybody was seated comfortably on four-legged chairs.

'I am grateful to Fate for having brought to our home such good guests. I am grateful that we have something to give them to eat and to drink. I am also grateful for the good fairy-tale that the new fairy-teller will tell about us one day. Amen', said the hostess. And all the other members of the family repeated 'amen' after her.

A couple of minutes later the clinking plates were filled with fragrant human food.

'It's so delicious!' the little boy said. 'I've never before had anything tastier. Nara, do human beings always cook such delicious food?'

'Only when they want to have a delicious meal,' Nara laughed and affectionately brushed fresh bread crumbs from his cheeks.

'Please tell us what is the name of your good family and would you be able to share with us the recipes of your most delicious. In our kingdom, the food is far more modest. We are birds, you know... We wave our wings and sing to the fairy-tellers – nothing can compare with us at that. But as for cooking

and then eating to one's heart content... You can hardly call us masters at such things... Although that sort of diet has its advantages,' Nara smiled, 'no need to worry about extra weight.'

The man stroked his belly. 'What would I do without mine? It's more fun like this! And my wife likes it too. A man without a belly is like a wallet without money!' the host burst out laughing. 'I strongly recommend it to you too. Much warmer in winter! As for the recipes, my wife will write them down for you. It'll be our present for you birds, otherwise you'll become completely thin. They say that nowadays there is such a trend in the kingdoms – to starve yourself. I wonder who was that 'bag of bones' who came up with such an idea? I bet he was badly hurt in his childhood and so he decided to take revenge on everyone for his injuries. Thank God, we humans still love good food, all right.

'As for our name, we are called Sahibs. Ever since we built this strong house and started to live in it. Yes, it took many years for this beautiful house to be built! Many, many years. At first I was doing the building on my own, then with my wife and finally we nearly completed it with our children although there is still a lot that needs to be painted or repaired. But then – look what a beauty it is', Sahib made a broad gesture with his hands. 'The house became more demanding with the years, it needs so much attention... Just like a human being. The main thing is not to leave it alone for a long time, or it'll grow black like those blind and hungry houses that are without hosts. Have you seen them?' he asked Nara. Nara nodded her head sadly.

'And what about you, little one? Have you started to build your own house or not yet? They say everybody needs a house, even fairy-tellers. Only I'm not sure what you build them from and how. You'll tell me when you find out. And don't forget to invite us for the house warming party once you've built it, will you?' the man asked them. 'We'll come for sure! And we'll bring food with us, what my wife cooks. It won't be the same without food... and without presents! We humans never go empty handed when we are invited.'

'Yes, I'll invite you,' the fairy-teller promised and looked at the bird, dismayed. 'How do you build them', he asked Nara quietly so that nobody could hear.

'Let's go', the white bird said, 'and I'll explain everything to you...'

Nara and little fairy-teller left the abundant table.

'Thank you, Sahib! Thank you, dear hostess. Your house is kindly and you are kind people. Fare well!'

'Wait!' the hostess said and she wrapped in a cloth a large piece of white bread that she had baked before the meal. 'Here, something for the road, and the recipe, as we promised.'

Nara embraced the hostess, thanked her once again and she and the little boy left the house.

'And now, listen!'

## THE ELEVENTHSONG OF NARA

### THE HOUSES

A stone; and on the stone, a twig; its fall  
Shows that a god has made a nest for all.

Fluff and feather, spit and sweat  
Erect a place to hide, a warmth to gain;  
Nor hands nor wings are spared, and yet  
A house is built upon a square of pain.

Fathers, daughters, sons and brides  
Stretch the houses at their sides;  
Higher, stronger, larger, richer;  
Pile the bricks up, quicker, quicker  
To guard the house from dawn to dawn;  
While secrets, under the pillows, mourn.

Warm, slippery, dusty, rare,  
Master and mistress are captured there;  
Just as the good old fables show:  
Out of the earth a house must grow.

Without a threshold of clay and bread  
A human finds no board and bed.

Ages pass before you die:  
Dying, you will then ask, Why?  
All your life for a box and a door;  
After I die, what on earth is it for?  
Now will it warm me, save when I call?  
Time will demolish both house and wall.

Not from straw, from iron and rust,  
Not from timber or cosmic dust,  
Not from compost, not from bones  
Do we build our eternal homes.

Those that will not betray us, will not abandon us  
Those that require neither money nor paint from us  
There in the heart is the only steadfast ground;  
There the only possible temple you may found.

The one that will never be flooded or burnt by flame;  
The one that will stand for itself, forever the same;  
It needs no masses of lands and their border marks,  
This one bears you up and away with the larks.

It will help you conquer your body's mortal flesh;  
Fill you with faith; to your sleep bring hope afresh.

When the stars are over your head, that is your roof;  
When they weave Easter nests for you, that is their proof!  
But above the stars, perhaps, there is somebody who  
Watches with silent care over everyone, too;  
Places the stairs, fixes the rails and doors  
And knows what will be, what is now, and all that was.

My son, be wiser, be more sagacious, I pray!  
Your house is inside you – pay it a visit one day.



TRY TO LOOK AT YOURSELF BEFORE OTHERS LOOK AT YOU –THEN YOU’LL AVOID  
A LOT OF UNPLEASANTNESS

And the fairy-teller closed his eyes. He flew along the dark corridor, slowly, unhurriedly, as if in a dream, not feeling his body. The corridor led the little boy deeper and deeper inside itself, over to where the soul was kept and where nobody else but he could reach, no matter how very much others wanted to do so.

All of a sudden the flying force stopped and the little boy found himself standing in front of a huge, flat piece of glass, from where there looked at him – he, himself.

‘Who are you?’ the little boy asked his reflection.

‘Who are you?’ the reflection answered back.

‘I am a fairy-teller,’ the little boy said, surprised.

‘I am a fairy-teller’, the reflection repeated.

It’s strange. Why does he repeat my every word and why does he hide behind this piece of glass? Could it be I’ve frightened him?’ the little boy thought. ‘May be I flew in to this place too unexpectedly? It’s so dark over here.’

‘Hi, little boy! Come here!’ he called.

‘Come here,’ the reflection cried out. The fairy-teller was just about to come even nearer when he bumped his forehead on the looking glass. The mirror instantly grew dim and hid his reflection. The mirror spread into smooth waves that became larger and larger until they grew into one single giant wave which hit with all its might the mirror’s surface just in front of the face of the little fairy-teller.

The waves broke into a myriad of sparkling droplets. One after another familiar events and faces started to float to the surface before him. He saw the winged Nara, soaring over the top of the mountain giant with that nice little boy on her neck, the one that had been looking at him from the mirror; the stone arm chair with the old sage who was combing his hair; the magic garden and the white rose, the delicious house of the Sahibs, the wooden violin, the Saats from the caves... In other words, all whom he had met once before.

‘But it’s me!’ the little boy was astonished. ‘It’s wonderful! Now I know for sure what my face looks like! ‘Naraaaa!!! Do you see?’ the little boy called her. When suddenly he heard in reply:

‘Don’t strain your little throat. No one will be able to hear you from here, let alone see you, apart from you , not even wonderful Nara! Therefore don’t waste your thin voice in vain. You need it for things other than empty cries, don’t you think so? Oh, how silly you still are...’

The little boy rubbed his eye. IT was talking to him. ‘So it means that you can talk as well? He was surprised.

‘Ha-ha’, the mirror laughed. ‘Can I talk, indeed? Did you hear? – can I talk! I can talk better than many over here, believe me. No fairy-teller like you would be able to think of genuine fairy-tales, unless at least once in a lifetime he had a proper look into me. Only here, on my perfect face, can you see yourself from your side.

‘It’s not for nothing that for millions of years I have been assembled from the bitterest and the happiest tears in the kingdom. The sea’s sand was poured over the min a vast magic cup that was then lowered into the flaming depths of the fire-breathing sun. Tears and sand melted together under the sun rays and turned into a mirror. What ingredients! Just think about it!

‘All fairy-tale mirrors are kept with great care in the royal store rooms where one is allowed to go strictly by appointment only. The entrance into these store rooms, just as is the case with all other store rooms, is encoded in special figures. If you don’t know them, it’ll be hopeless to try to get to the mirrors. Ah well, nothing can be done about it; that’s simply how precious we are. And we are so brittle! To touch our edges with trembling hands means bringing misfortune and that’s why we should be treated with utmost care. Why be condemned to bad luck? For the curse of a broken mirror is terrible! From broken

fragments and sharp insulted cracks the bitter tears, that had been immured, pour out. Not knowing where to hide themselves, they flood the first body that comes their way! That's how they get into the one who broke the mirror; and the life of this unfortunate creature will be filled for many a long year with the tears that were injured by fate.

'Yes, I happened to see how the mirrors weep and I can tell you, my little boy, that it's not the most pleasant sight. But now I'll tell you about the other side of the fate of the mirror. It's much more jolly!

'Oh, how much happiness I can bring to homes, by chasing away evil spirits and unwelcome ghosts. Nowadays there are many of them, floating under inhabited roofs. But none of them can stand me. And that's why they are wary of houses where mirrors are correctly hung. And also, if you hide me, face to the earth under your bed, I'll ward off bad omens and all other devilish creatures from your wonderful dreams. And if you put me under a pillow I'll be able to foretell your fate and do a bit of fortune telling, provided I am allowed from Above. But my main talent revealed itself when the Kingdom allowed us to develop ourselves within fairy-tellers, so that from time to time you would be able to see your true selves. It's a very worthwhile thing. Faces have a habit of changing. It's true you are luckier than people, for you don't get old; although the years you are alive also leave their imprints. That's why there exist both kindly and wicked fairy-tales. But if you look at yourself in the mirror often enough and in the correct way, it is possible to avoid much unpleasantness.

'It is for such exceptional services to the kingdom that I was awarded this lovely name – Aiyana. Haven't you heard it before?' the mirror, slightly hurt, introduced itself.

'I was born a very short while ago, therefore please forgive me, honourable Aiyana, that I didn't manage to hear about you before. Nara recommended me to close my eyes and to find my fairy-tale house and that's how I am here. If only I'd known I'd meet you, I'd have prepared myself properly. Such an honour! May I stroke you?'

'And why not!' Aiyana said and the fairy-teller stroked his smooth and cool reflection.

'You are so beautiful, little boy', Aiyana said. '*It's always far more pleasant to reflect beautiful faces.* I hope to see the same sweet face tomorrow when you look in again!' the mirror said. 'Good luck!'

'Goodbye' the little boy bade the mirror farewell.

He closed his eyes again, gathered his thoughts and once more he was carried back to the fairy-tale kingdom by the dark, narrow corridor.

On his way he heard Nara's voice...

## THE TWELFTH SONG OF NARA

### THE MIRRORS

No finer canvass than this glass,  
On which the years are painted,  
It shows the country, bright as brass,  
Of the damned as well as sainted,

The ugly and the beautiful  
Of mammals, plants and things,

And moods – it shows them to the full.

And everything's reflected there,  
Just shadows pass it by;  
Because these nothings cannot bear  
To see their non-existent air,  
Their fleshless, dead and vacant stare  
That shows they are a lie.

There, simpletons seek miracles,  
A pointless occupation,  
And look for wizards, fairies, fools,  
Freaks of imagination.

Before it, magic bodies strip  
Their garments quite away,  
And let great peals of music rip  
In self-enamoured play.

This glass is called a mirror, it's  
An object of strange fears,  
And he who breaks it all to bits,  
Is cursed three hundred years.

For better luck, it's brought inside  
Through a gate that faces east,  
And has its proper place of pride  
Above the family feast.

The trace, like sweat, of a living soul -  
The mist it's left by breathing -  
Is warmed by the reflected whole  
In the glass screen appearing.

But in this case, when fall asleep  
The stomach, legs and eyes,  
When inch by inch slow death will creep  
Where now the pathway lies,

The mirror will request a shawl  
Of sadness to draw over  
Eyelids of glass, its own and all  
Of men, they shall be covered.

In it, an enchanting mystery  
For anyone who cares;  
How well he eats or sleeps, he'll see  
And how many years he bears.

How multi-faceted,  
Painfully turned,  
Laughably strange;

Look inside you, you may be  
Mighty fluffy, prickly.

Though it's hard, you yet might see  
From the opposite position  
Yourself!

And then what transformation!  
When you do not need the mirror  
To see your own selfany clearer.

“To look, though, doesn't mean to see!”  
Know, son, sometimes the world's remiss,  
So not with itself to disagree,  
Its own reflection it will miss.

Place a mirror in your heart  
So I don't lie to you  
By accident, with words of art  
Describing your face true,

And so you know that you, my boy, will see  
The side of you reflected out to me.

EVEN A BLIND MAN CAN SEE THE REAL SUN IF HIS WISH IS TRULY STRONG  
BUT WHOEVER FEARS BLINDNESS MAY NEVER SEE THE SUN EVEN IF THEIR EYES  
ARE OPEN.

Bright sunlight spluttered into the brown irises of the little boy as soon as he opened his eyes.

Whilst he had been travelling in his own labyrinth and having a pleasant conversation with his own reflection, hot summer had arrived and was now in full swing. Awash with sun, nature was drunk with heat and abundance. The earth was at peace and heady with the sugary laziness which had caused it to put on a little weight. It seemed to the little boy that everything around him had become more grown up. The fresh grass, not sure of itself just a little while ago, had become coarser and was now sporting a juicy green sun tan. On the tree leaves were now bulging with thickened veins and some thin lines had appeared. They didn't make a noise, as before, but were taciturn and seemed heavier than their branches. The leaves were holding on to each other by their edges, weaving under the sky cool soft shadows in which wallowed the kingdom's inhabitants, fatigued by the sun. The air resembled a freshly baked fruit pie which exhaled from its copious cheeks hot puffs of aromatic smoke.

Nara liked to sunbathe. Sunbaths are much healthier and more pleasant than all other whimsical treatments, like bird's solaria or fairy-tale sun tanning radiators. 'Why doesn't the kingdom ban all those silly things?' she thought. 'Thank God, it's still possible to spoil oneself with the real summer sun.'

Meanwhile, despite all his efforts the little boy couldn't see in the sky this bright burning star. He was eager to know it more closely. From time to time he would raise his dark eyes, hoping to greet the sun, but each time the Sun would blind his eyes so much, that all that was left to do was to shut them tight.

The fairy-teller, disappointed, started to wave his hands distractedly. One of the small sunrays that had been laughing merrily over his head, took pity on him and, having hooked round the long lock of the little boy's hair with his index finger, lifted him up from the ground. They were very high up. And soon the earth started to turn round the fairy-teller, who was suspended on the end of the long sunray.

'Greetings!' the little boy turned his face to the Sun. 'I've been dreaming so much of meeting you. May I look at you?'

'Well', he heard in reply. 'And why not? Look!'

At this very instance the sunray started to turn the little boy around the sun. Grateful, he looked at the star, but the Sun's glance did not burn him as before, but spread over the enraptured irises in which one might see a wonderful desire to look at the sun more and more.

'I praise your courage!' the sunray began to talk to the little boy. 'It's not often that one meets such a dare-devil. Everyone wants to come closer to the star but not everyone dares. The probability of being burnt is too high. Stars – they are so hot', the sunray laughed. 'But you wanted to reach the Sun. It was no idle wish. I noticed you at once. I saw you standing with your eyes bulging, and your huge eyes shone so much! Well, I said to myself, he must be of kin. It doesn't matter that he doesn't look very much like me; all the same he must be of kin if his eyes are sparkling so much. It's like that, little boy. Light is not foolish, it knows which soul to choose to live in. That's why only radiant souls try to reach our Siradj. One like yours, for example.

'And we, the faithful servants of Siradj, we bring this very light to the earth!. And in whomever we 'plant a little sun', no one can extinguish it. To ones like you the amazing mysteries of the universe are revealed on earth. You are allowed to comprehend the sacred sciences and see prophesies. You turn into the true people, fairy-tellers and white birds. You seek your immortality in Love. And as it should be, Love does not escape you.

‘But there is one drawback, so to say. Although, drawback it might be for some, but joy for the others... The sunlight that has made his home in you, always pines for its star and that’s why it is always impatient to come back to Siradj. And that is why you desire so passionately to come closer to the Sun!’

‘It’s not easy to be a star!’ the sunray sighed deeply, ‘especially the brightest one! Do you think everyone is flattered with its superiority? Some spread dirty rumours, others are merely waiting silently for it just to go out. But no one has enough power to change its fate, to move it aside or to cover it with shadow and they all remain waiting for their star moment.’

‘So it means that Siradj can’t walk? Oh, I am sorry, I meant, - to fly?’ the little fairy-teller asked.

‘On the contrary, little boy. Quite the opposite. Siradj follows its sunny destiny. It, just like you, also has its innermost dream. And one day it’ll reach it by flying, for sure. The main thing is not to stray off course. For, if it strays, many foolish things will happen on earth and no one would be able to escape the frightful changes.’

‘Siradj!!!’ the fairy-teller called, screaming. ‘When I return to the earth, I’ll tell those about you, who did not obtain your light and your gifts! Let them hear about your great path, about your burning heart and also that without you there won’t be fairy-tale kingdoms and a kindly earth. Let them remove from their dark faces and their unrealised dreams the poisonous shadows of fear! And let them learn that it is possible to see the Sun provided they stop being afraid and believe in that mighty light.’

‘Well said!’ the little ray praised the little boy and started to spin him with all the might of his sunny soul.

Around them the indefatigable constellations played the game of starry life. Round planets shamelessly turned their magnificent sides to Siradj to get warmer. There was cosmic dust everywhere that had scattered from the precious treasures of the galaxy, from the perished civilisations and from worlds yet to be born.

## THE THIRTEENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE SUN

Did you happen to glance at it, not afraid of the light?  
Do you know that the sun is even more bright  
When everyone hides in the shade,  
When the days are sticky with sweat  
And the nights are shorter yet?

And the sun is the one bright spot  
That the whole wide world has got?

And that wide world battens to feed  
On the gluttonish sun in its greed?

Some who go seeking the sun in a trunk,  
Turn the trunk over and inside out like duvet cover.

Such will perish under the sun,  
Without the sun their lives are done.

Others who know that its heat is too fierce  
That no doctor can cure the flesh that it sears,  
That it is impossibly far away  
And cannot be reached in a year and a day;

Will accuse the sun that it's far too bright  
And then carry on as if all's alright.

As its beauty grows, so the danger glows  
In its features to many of earth's two legg'd creatures.

And there are more who gossip and chatter  
And others who'd save their sight from its blaze  
Who wear on their noses, as on they natter,  
Glasses to ward off its blinding rays.

Dark glasses, it appears,  
Help some people get through their years.

The insects of night  
Have a different desire;  
They are ready to set their wings alight  
On the tongues that stretch from a candle's fire.

And what, to a moth, is the sun, alas?  
Nailed to the ceiling  
It knows but one feeling –  
The pull of the sun in the light-bulb's glass.

“It would be funny, if it weren't so sad.”  
Those who were born for the night, for them no sun's to be had.

## SOMETIMES ALL THAT IS REQUIRED TO APPEAR IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, IS SIMPLY TO FLY AWAY FROM WHERE YOU ARE AND FALL ...

The little boy's silvery lock slid smoothly away from the sunray and the fairy-teller started to fly down.

The sun was left far behind his back and his own planet approached closer and closer. Nothing interfered with his flight back to the earth. All the stellar bodies flew out of his way with much friendliness thus clearing his aerial passage back to his kingdom. While falling, he recognised his old friends: the fearless Aarfs, painting air waves and fluffy, grimacing clouds shaped into various animals in the sky. Seeing him, one such funny cloud blew up in size and now resembled a little boy with a pot belly. It glided smoothly to the little fairy-teller and offered him his belly. The little boy immediately flopped onto it and burst out laughing.

'How delightfully soft you are!' he said from the bottom of his heart while embracing the cloud. 'Beware, I might not let you go.' The cloud darkened with embarrassment and splattered some cold showery rain-drops onto the boy's face.

'Ah, that's how you are!' the boy cried and embraced the cloud even tighter. That very instant a real downpour began to fall on earth. Both of them looked down and saw how the funny rain, as it watered the earth, was performing real miracles: birds, animals and fish splashed in the rivers and lakes that drank in the rain. Faces, snouts, palms of the hands, paws; in other words everything and everybody who were impatient to freshen up, offered themselves to the falling rain drops.

For a long time, they floated like that in the sky, while watering the earth until there was no longer any water left in the cloud. It became so thin and weak that it couldn't hold the fairy-teller any longer and he fell down again.

## IN A GRAIN OF SAND THE DESERT IS REFLECTED

The kingdom of yellow sands blew an intense heat over its endless domain. Arakhas; that was the name of this country of the dehydrated particles of earth and lonely souls. Heat reigned and ruled over everything here. Heat breathed its sultry breath into the gilded face of Arakhas from early morning till the sunset of Siradj and hoped to singe the skin of desert, shrivelled up by its hot fate. One could only guess when exactly this peculiar kingdom had emerged which was now scattered on the earth through an incalculable number of small shiny grains of sand, each of which contained its own vast history unknown to anyone. Arakhas was a hopeless dreamer like all creatures prone to solitude. Sometimes it tried surreptitiously to count its vast domain by naively gathering sand into his hot palms. The sand, not staying long in the hands, would slip through his fingers. The first, the third, the tenth, the hundredth... grains of sand would fall from the hands of Arakhas so quickly that it could only follow the fall of the shifting stream where it was possible to see occasionally the look of unruly time. Oh, if only it could see the entire history of the sandy transformations of millions, zillions of seconds, hours, years ... of his own desert, if only it could see.

They say that you can place lots of miscellaneous things in the vacuum. That is why it is impossible to see so many wonders anywhere else but in the desert itself. For it has so much empty space.

Meanwhile the heat was ruthless to its people. And every inhabitant of Arakhas that hadn't turned into sand yet had to pay the heaviest of tributes in the country – the tribute of water which everyone badly lacked in any case. Many, having paid with the last drop, would perish and those whose spirit was stronger, would leave these areas secretly. So there were times when the heat got bored. It would like now and again to see living things once more bustling around it, to hear their noisy cacophony and to laugh at



their desert habits. Yet its rotten character would not allow it to relax and to become a little bit kinder. It would spend days on end being on guard hoping to find its new victim. Wanderers who would lose their way and stray off the path would become completely helpless in the desert and soon lost their senses. They would wander among red hot sand dunes until their mad thoughts would drive the poor wretches into the maws of quick sands – the hungriest of the sands of Arakhas. And these sands would swallow them up whole from top to toe as though they were delicious kebabs. Although, truth to tell, it is possible to find oneself in the desert even without leaving one's own home. Once you lose your head or jump into the funnel of a bad mood, the support of your soul, its kind protector – Faith- would fly away like a frightened canary. And the hot sand would quickly and surely heap up over the helpless soul and cover it so well that there wouldn't be a trace of it left in the body.

Bu the desert has another side to it - magical and sacred - which is hidden from fools and lazybones. For centuries upon centuries it's opened its magical embrace to the fearless heroes and devoted medjnuns.

To these Arakhas reveals his true mysteries at night and gives them the gift of valuable treasures hidden from idle glances.

After the sunset the heat hides away in wandering orange coloured walls from the souls it has injured. The dunes lock it away from noble sunsets and keep it under lock and key until the moment of sunrise, thus guarding the desert from its hot stupidity. And when the first star appears in the sky, everything dies away peacefully and the most beautiful nights in the universe descend over the kingdom of yellow sands. In the whole of the planet, in no other kingdom would night allow its stars to come, burning brightly, so close to earth than in the desert. That's why, each of them, as it waits for its appointed moment, pours over itself the silvery scent of the moon and covers itself with the sparkling cosmic salt before it can shine above the sacred desert. It is possible to foretell the birth and obscure deaths of the great using the stars. It is possible to make wishes each time a star breaks away from the sky and dives over the edge of the earth while looking for its earthly happiness.

Wise, peaceful caravans, wandering pilgrims dressed in white, brave nomads and tireless travellers always wait impatiently for the sky to be lit with the stars in order to observe their mysterious movements from the ground. They say that once upon a time it was exactly in this place that the last Prophecy was lowered from the skies and two fairy-tale temples were erected to commemorate this event - Anidem and Akkem - where even now the revelations and prayers of the earth are poured in, to gain light and to rest in peace.

Meanwhile the fairy teller's heels had been bitten by the scalding grains of sand and his throat itched unpleasantly. He was very thirsty but there wasn't even a hint of water anywhere. He was surrounded on all sides by velvet carpets of dunes on which it became more and more painful to walk. He was soporific. The stinging sweat slowly trickled down his forehead and glued his long eye lashes together. The little boy's body turned red; it seemed to him that it could catch fire easily if a splinter or a thorn touched it. He continued to walk, fighting with sleep and whispering the name of Nara from time to time. The heat watched how the little, tired fairy-teller persistently refused to give up and continued to look for his lost silk ball. He tried not to lift his head so as not to scorch it and not to stop so as not to fall deep into the sand. 'Could it be that she has forgotten about me,' the little boy thought, 'could it be that she'll never come back again? Nara, Nara', he whispered, when suddenly he heard the aching familiar singing.

## THE FOURTEENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE WELL

Blistering heat brushes like paint  
This desert ground:  
Keep walking child, do not feel faint,  
Don't stop or cool down.

Further and deeper into the smelting  
Furnace of sand;  
Into the temple tenderly melting  
To sugary land.

The holy water will dry in the flask,  
Lips too will dry,  
You will grow harder as tougher the task,  
Like a sponge squeezed dry.

Alien sounds will catch in your throat  
Till blood is drawn,  
Perfect the pain and exquisite its note  
By torture torn.

The earth will lose its uprights and angles  
And blur to a ghost  
And a snake will weave you its coils and tangles  
On tracks half-lost.

Brave the attempt, gather together  
Your patience and will  
Against the parching, throat-choking torture  
That rots till it kills.

And just like your innermost wish which lives  
Still deep inside,  
An inviting well will appear which gives  
Rest at its side.

The well will be deep and lined with stone  
And bow to you much,  
Moisten your eyelashes all sand-blown  
With fresh water's touch.

And from your tongue, drops will float  
Like little dots down your throat.

Each is your saviour, each  
Has a revelation to teach.



And after each drop has completed its flow,  
You, like a flower will begin to grow.

A small man's shoulders will strengthen,  
The muscles lengthen,

The head set higher, the eyes appear,  
After the drops, to have lost their fear.

This strange well is for those who wander  
Unafraid of a path  
That may thread through the world, hither and yonder  
Till they've quenched their thirst with this draught.

There where the end is smiling at us  
Its terrible smile,  
The beginning rests at peace, without fuss  
Like a snail.

In every desert and empty quarter  
Where the bright sun swells,  
You'll be able to find the magic water  
Of the wondrous well.

'It can't be so!' the little fairy-teller exclaimed. 'I must be going mad...'

Just a few steps away from him, in the middle of the desert, over hills in blossom, venerable palms waived their wide fans and sweet persimmons ripened. Cooling draughts floated from one tree to another, freshening the tender shadows beneath with their breath. Swarms of dancing midges circled over the cheerful earth. Shaggy-legged bees gathered healing honey; dragonflies chased importunate gnats; flying ants again and again shed their light wings as they flew. Everywhere songbirds sang and there was peace and serenity. Nara sat, leaning her left side against the edge of the stone well and smiled broadly. When he saw her the little boy forgot his suffocating tiredness and his burnt heels and started to run towards her with all the strength he could muster. The heat, upset at having had lost its prey so easily, ceased to watch him and turned away. Just a few desert moments later he was embracing the neck of his dear Nara and kissing her white soft feathers. Tears of joy immediately began to flow; they unglued his burnt eye lashes and washed the prickling grains of sand off his face.

'I never doubted', Nara said, 'that you'd be found. For you are the special one! Those like you do not give up. Glory to our kingdom! Forgive me, my little one, that I didn't appear earlier, I had no such command. And without it, as you can understand, it was not possible. I was ordered to wait for you at the oasis; but I was allowed to pray silently for your health and speediest return. What a repulsive wretch this heat is! How much I wanted to punish it. My poor little one, are you still in pain?'

'Not much', the fairy-teller said, looking at his burns.

'A test of determination', Nara said. 'Sooner or later everyone has to take it. Although no one knows when it is going to happen and what one will have to endure. For great heroes there are great trials. That's the law. Whether it is good or bad is not for us to judge. The law is its own judge. And besides

there is a reason for everything and the reasons, as a rule, are perfect, make no mistake about it. For example, do you know which of you all has the most beautiful eyes?’

‘No.’ the little boy said, ‘I don’t.’

‘The ones whose eyes have tears: tears of joy and tears to bring joy. Doesn’t matter if you cry through the pain, for the pain itself can be a fairy-tale pain. You see, you are crying now. It means that everything is back in order.’

The little boy clung tighter to Nara as if he was afraid to lose her again. And she continued to tell him how she had witnessed all his amazing adventures and improbable acquaintances and how truly she had been proud of him.

‘For how long had I been wandering, alone, without you?’ the little boy asked.

‘You silly one, is it possible to track time in our life? A minute may last for years and several years may fly in an instant. One shouldn’t track time, time itself will track us. It is always nearby. And that is why everything in the fairy-tale kingdom happens at the exact hour, appointed for each and everyone. And now it’s time to quench your thirst. Drink, little boy, drink!’

The old well bent its unprepossessing side even lower to the earth and offered its throat. The little boy bent down and touched the living water with his lips. With every drop the water healed his open sores and cured his scratches. The water poured new force into him until he had quenched his thirst and finally become strong again.

He lifted his refreshed face up from water. And at that very moment the well disappeared and with it both the beautiful oasis and the sultry desert.

### IF YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY GLANCES IT MEANS THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FOR THEM TO LOOK AT...

It’s funny how in an instant you can find yourself where you haven’t been the instant before. So today may easily turn into tomorrow, and tomorrow – into yesterday or into something else. So does it mean that what your feet or paws were standing on may not be where you thought it might be? Therefore everything that’s unpredictable can be predicted just a little bit if you begin to believe in it.

Arakhas disappeared and together with it the beautiful oasis. Nara and the little boy continued to stand on the cooled sand until it started to twirl under them in an improbable whirlpool and turned into something hard and cool.

‘Where are we?’ the little boy asked.

‘Strange, but I don’t know!’ Nara said while looking around. ‘I don’t know this place. Something tells me that it is an ordinary copper cauldron but of quite extraordinary size... How tasteless! What do these grey surroundings mean? I wonder who dwells in such misery. It’s hard to believe how some people lack the feeling of the usual fairy-tale comforts. *Fi donc,*’ Nara snorted.

Indeed there was no one around to be seen.

‘And how uncomfortable it is. I hate it when it is slippery underfoot; you can fall down all too easily. Heeeeyyy! Is there anyone over there? Don’t waste my precious time, who or whatever you are, please, I know that you exist. Emptiness exists only where there are many empty inhabitants.’

‘Ai’, the little boy cried. ‘What is it?’

‘Ah, there are they are!’ Nara had guessed right. Out of nowhere they were surrounded by living disorderly glances. They were twirling around the little boy and the bird with their multi-coloured irises bulging.

‘Whom do you belong to?’ the little boy asked. ‘What do you want? And why are you here. Can’t you see that we are not very happy about this. You might bump into us and we’ll fall down. It’s not proper. No one has seen so many importunate glances. Maybe you are short sighted and that’s why you are staring in such an obvious way? That’s enough now. Stop it!’ the little boy screamed.

The glances, surprised, hung in the air while they continued scrutinizing him.

‘How beautiful you are!’ One of them, frozen in the air right by the little boy’s nose, started to speak unexpectedly. *It is always so much more pleasant to meet a beautiful gaze.* Don’t be afraid. Glances love cauldrons. They always surround those who get into them. And now it’s you two. We’ll get no rest until we scrutinise you in detail. Oh well, everybody has his own weakness. The important thing is not to pay attention to everybody, so that you don’t catch the eyes of the Nazaars that are scurrying around everywhere. There are more and more of them over here every day, as well as other parasites.’ And the kindly glance turned around, frightened.

‘Nazaars?’ the little boy repeated.

‘Yes, them indeed. Not the nicest neighbours, I can tell you. Nazaars are afraid of the light. It shows up too easily their harmful habits and that makes them turn black. Nazaars believe in magicians and sorcerers and serve them and also all other dark invisible ones, like evil and harmful spirits. Their spells can ruin any creature who does not know how to defend himself against these scoundrels. What they like most of all is to bring harm and envy. They do not know how to forgive and to give presents. Their talent is to knock you off your feet and to poison your thoughts. They take revenge for their cursed fate which is so dark that you can’t see a thing there. We, the Nuurs are different. Just look at me! You see how much kindly light a Nuur radiates!

‘When you meet us you can become considerably kinder and more pleasant. You can see all objects in a brighter and clearer light. In each of us there had once been a servant of the Great Siradj! So we are serving the light with all our might for as long as we can see. Unfortunately sometimes they try to make us turn down our light or to slander us, but these are the tricks of the same Nazaars. They find it so uncomfortable to fly among us.

The little fairy-teller was so lost in admiration of the kindly Nuur that he didn’t notice that he’d broken away from the empty bottom and begun slowly to drift upwards.

When they found themselves by the very edge of the cauldron Nara picked up the little boy and they started to fly.

‘Thank you, Nuur!’ the fairy-teller thanked the glance. ‘Look after yourself.’

‘Who could thing that there are so many glances in the world’, he thought.

Nuur winked jovially at them for the last time and evaporated into the air.

‘Oh yes,’ Nara said, ‘too many’.

## THE FIFTEENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE LOOKS

The shell-like earth is breathing and it seems to me  
That the shell itself is as blind as blind can be,  
Rivers, woods, cities, the land and the sea  
Laugh out loud, and when they are injured they cry  
Not seeing what's under or over but just what's nearby.

This planet is round so it's possible to put  
One foot in front of the other and walk a long time  
Till you get back, but if you can't see, it's hard for a foot  
To step down with grace, you'll stumble- and that's a shame.

People and wizards have eyes to look around  
Even bugs themselves are born with at least one pair;  
But not in all eyes is a reflection to be found,  
Life has a shape not all at once can share.

Suppose we counted up the looks, one day,  
The ones nearby that watch you on your way,  
There would above be fewer stars  
Fewer feathers in my pillow,  
Gossip in the hollow ears.

Looks that are cosy,  
Pocketed, posey,  
And the dim looks,  
Tattered, shredded, grim looks,

Looks that are salty,  
Looks like the ocean,  
Looks that are sad,  
Full of sorrowful emotion,

With little sparks, that's how looks smile  
And you'll be happy for a while  
To shine through their pupils at strange skies,  
And have crickets for your eyes.

Don't look at them all, they'll lead you a merry dance  
If you try you could prick yourself by chance.

Let one catch you by your eyes,  
And you by your pupils recognize,  
Who without prompting sees you right  
Even when you pass by night.

Who by your eyes will know you well

Who'll hear and tell the whole Fairy Tale,

If you with such exchange a look,  
Stay close and do not spoil your luck.

“Greetings.” say, “I am delighted  
To meet my look, so long awaited!”

It will be easy; lower your eyes  
You'll need no prompting, to your surprise,

And then you can put them to bed and fast sleeping  
Now that the looks have been given a good peeping.



## ANY DREAM THAT COMES TRUE PROVES THE WORTH OF THE PRECISE THOUGHT BEHIND IT

They flew for a long time over the round earth which the fairy-teller could see more clearly and closer than before. Then he stepped for the first time on its rich autumn-scented leaves. The earth that such a short time ago breathed fire beneath his weak heels and frightened him with its secrets, now greeted him as he looked up high into the sky. The earth surveyed him from bottom to top and smiled with satisfaction. Here was no longer a helpless mute baby clinging to Nara's breast but a stouter, stronger little boy who looked wisely at the earth from the height of a bird's flight with his more grown up eyes.

He sat tight on the white bird's strong back and looking intently ahead, trying to see where the kingdom would bring him this time. Nights were replaced by days and days by nights. Time played a chasing game with itself and paid no attention to the bird which did its best not to be behind it; the bird flew beside it without rest or sleep and only from time to time would she twist her beautiful neck round to look at the little boy.

So all three of them circled the sky, until time struck its silver bell and dissolved in space.

'Hold on tight!' Nara cried to the little boy and flew downward stretching her whole body towards the earth.

Underneath them the blue ocean, unhappy with the bad weather, stormed with all its might. It waved its long heavy sleeves in different directions, whipping into water everything that was in the way of its arms. The ocean did all it could to pick at the hem of the tempest's unruly cape which was suspended above it and spoilt its mood so much. But all was in vain and the tempest laughed loudly at the ocean's helplessness.

The bird flew towards the mad element, dodging the salty white splashes deftly, and ignoring the water's ferocious screams. Another instant and both of them would have been swallowed by the enraged abyss when suddenly in the middle of the ocean there stood before them a motionless dark block which resembled a giant mountain.

Once again Nara adjusted the wave of her wide wings and they landed softly on the slippery shoulders of the aged rock.

## BY CONQUERING THOUGHTS YOU CONQUER FATE

'Glory to the fairy-tale kingdom! Here you are at last, my friends!' the rock greeted them. 'I can't imagine what got into the old fellow today. It refuses to calm down. It continues to make noise like a disobedient child. Yet it is old, its nerves are giving in, its heart is no longer good. The doctors prescribed it more sleep and rest a long time ago. Yet it continues to roar and wave its fists. Oh, the ocean. It is just the same as it used to be millions of years ago; it simply lost some weight with time and turned greyer, but just as naughty in everything else.

'Anyway, enough about it, it'll yell for a bit longer and then calm down. I've been waiting for you for a long time. The kingdom of white birds gave me a very strict order not to receive guests until I meet you, my dear ones. It doesn't wish outsiders to talk about our secret before the little one learns about it.

'They say you are a clever little boy. Are you tired?'

'Not at all,' the little boy answered, 'but to be honest when you see what's going on down below it's better to stay higher up. It's calmer over there, though. By the way, do you have a name?'

'Of course!' said the rock, contentedly. 'I do, and what a name it is! I was awarded it the very same day a very unusual coffer was buried underneath me. I myself have never seen it but rumours have reached me that all fairy-tales have sprung from it.

‘They say that something is kept at the bottom of the coffer that can turn anyone who possesses it into the most powerful creature on the planet. But if the treasure is misused then this person will turn into someone just plain unlucky. As for the user instructions they are kept in the memory of the universe itself and are transferred once every hundred years to the one who would be able to understand them and use them to the benefit of the kingdom.

‘See what responsibility it is. So I stand here, not leaving it, and for so long that I have lost count of my years – no, centuries. I do not know my own age, it’s really improper. If only you knew how many of those who wished to dig out my secret I’ve seen in my time. There were so many of them.

‘But as wise people say it is not always “what you want is what you can do”.

‘The curious ones looking for secrets that are not for them are always left only with secrets.

‘Oh, I’ve deviated again. Gaya, my name is Gaya! Pleased to meet you.’

‘Gaya, you look prettier since I last saw you’, Nara laughed. ‘Just a *little* more drenched...’

‘Try not to be when the ocean is around,’ Gaya smiled and looked flirtatiously at the old ocean, which was now much calmer. ‘I am tired, Nara... Tired of being alone all the time. No one to lean on, no one to cuddle. As soon as someone shows interest I start doubting: what if it’s not for my sake but for the secret. When you have a real treasure under your feet it is not easy to trust anyone who comes your way. The more valuable your treasures are, the more difficult it is for you to arrange your personal life. That’s why I’ve been waiting so long to meet you so that I could open my heart at last. It is with you that my long-awaited freedom will begin! Who knows maybe I am still “passible”. I might even contemplate marriage. What good is it to be alone all the time’, Gaya kept on repeating and once again gave a peculiar glance at the ocean from under its rocky eyelashes.

‘And why not,’ Nara gave the rock her support. ‘Let us open the secret and then, who knows, maybe you’ll become lucky as well. Although we are thoroughly soaked and I wouldn’t like to... at such a great moment... I’d rather sing and meanwhile we’ll get dry. Come closer little boy, sit down and listen. The more you know about your future acquaintance the more useful it’ll be to you...’

## THE SIXTEENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE THOUGHT

Under a heap of heavy rocks, far away and buried deep,  
Under the sweetest-smelling earth  
A very strange casket is asleep.

There’s a secret the casket bears – it has slept three thousand years.  
One day it fell from a distant star,  
Though people doubt that such things are,  
But from one it came, and landed as air.

It was the first of the messengers  
And worked its miracles for all,  
Arranging everything into a whole  
And speaking about the beginning of things.

All those who heard it, refused to share

Its secret, and strictly held their tongues  
They locked it up so neither a servant  
Nor prophets knew its secret words -  
Only the birds.

So only those who'll possess the heights  
Of heaven, its voice – its breath – its eyes,  
Would know what the casket hid inside;  
Gods – Fairy Tellers – and the birds.

Listen, don't say a thing, my child  
Life, once again, on you has smiled.

The work you must do, will simplify;  
Each of your wishes will spring to life;  
Disease will turn from you, and strife;  
And all your toils and fears will fly  
When you meet the secret that you're to live by.

Away from the over-excitement of fools  
In the depths of its world, the casket conceals  
Neither gold, nor garments, nor sparkling jewels  
From human souls.

What it hides is higher than spheres, deeper than oceans  
Which Nirvana bows before in its devotions,  
Horizons stretch to it where they begin;  
And what is dream, what real weaves magically therein;  
Stronger than steel, lighter than dust, is it  
And has in its power every mortal wit;  
Some from their choice, some from their very birth  
This cerebral adventure have been worth.

Thought! – that's the name of the secret!

I can see that you're surprised,  
There is hurt within your eyes.  
All in the Kingdom know about it  
Where's the magic, then, in that?

My dear, they don't know what they're at;  
The thought that we so little prize  
May change us utterly,  
That crazy thought, haphazardly,  
Can bring us into paradise.

A brief thought has a lengthy tail  
Watch your thought and guard its trail.

Cruel thoughts bring bad luck and disgrace,  
A neighbour slaps you in the face,

Or you're bent into a hook abhorrent,  
Or your house is flooded by a torrent.

They'll turn your fate quite upside down  
And for ages you will wonder  
Why on earth you should be drowned  
In bitter tears by these unlucky blunders.

Not knowing you were once the instrument  
Of your own proper punishment,  
When on your fate one straying thought cast doubt,  
That time you put your clothes on inside out.

A thought's a step to living peace of mind  
It sends its orders to the universe  
When and to whom to pamper, and some find  
Riches, and others – nothing is their curse.

To be left with a cracked jug, no more!  
Thoughts open every door.

Everything bends to the simple, the chance thought;  
That's the secret – and it's worth more than any Kingdom's grace  
The one who owns this secret will find his rightful place;

The real science is: to wish and to know;  
You'll give yourself a blessing if you learn this  
And to the whole wide world, your gift will show  
The riches of a secret that is priceless.

## ONLY ONE THING IS STRONGER THAN A THOUGHT – THOUGHT ITSELF.

The fairy-teller sat on Gaya's strong hands with his eyes closed. In front of him stood the open coffer, which had removed a heavy cap from its head. It was empty.

'Would you like me to make you more grown up?' a wonder-thought circled in the little boy's head. 'Or perhaps you'd like me to dress you in the most expensive, the most beautiful clothes that have ever existed in your kingdom? And another thing... I can also make you stronger than the Aarfs and wiser than the Alims! Would you like me to show you the thoughts of others, to make you the almighty? Or I can teach you the most difficult thing – to think! Anything that you wish for properly, my Master, anywhere where you'd like to send me! I obey only you, which means I obey the one in whose head I am strongest. At different times on the different continents of earth there appeared great heads full of great thoughts. And among them there were those who knew about my magic power and who could control it for their own benefit and the benefit of the universe. Legends and tales are told about them. Songs and poems have been dedicated to them. People call their children after them. Their thoughts travel from one kingdom to another, causing amazement and admiration among living creatures. But there were others who, having felt my power, poisoned their brain with deceit as if it was a delicious wine and gave themselves up to greedy and terrible desires. Their thoughts become like wicked djinns that always bustle in heads just waiting for someone's evil wishes. But the masters of the djinns- thoughts - will always come to a bad end, for with all their sorcerer's might they can't foresee the punishment that the all-knowing universe will send them for their evil deeds.

'How beautiful you are, my fairy-teller,' the Thought said. *'It is always far more pleasant to grant beautiful wishes.* Oh, how lucky I am this time,' it said, delighted. 'I only ask you not to open your eyes until you think so strongly of the desire that you'll hear in me the beating of its heart. Then I'll resemble your dream, acquire its precious habits and will recognise its signs in myself. Your wish will grow close and familiar to me and I'll do my best to find it in this world and bring it to you. The stronger the wish the nearer the time you meet it.

'It will happen at the appointed day and hour, not a minute before, not a minute after... There is a time for everything!'

The Blue Ocean was snuffling peacefully at the foot of Gaya. She, blushing with tenderness and embarrassment, looked at it tenderly from under her downcast eyelashes. They were happy.

The only reminders of the recent storm were the damp traces that the ruby coloured sunset was wiping away neatly with its silky velvet kerchief. Broken by the elements, scattered over the water, wooden planks gathered back into the goodhearted fishermen's boats. And pieces of linen, torn by the tempest, were sown back into the sails of beautiful ships.

All of a sudden thousands of white birds appeared in the sky; they waved their huge, white wings majestically from under which millions, trillions of white fluffy pieces, just like sugar, fell to the ground. The white fluff descended slowly, unhurriedly as if afraid to disturb the peaceful rest of one of the most wonderful evenings in the kingdom. It covered the sleeping ocean, the objects and creatures floating on it, it covered love-sick Gaya and Nara; it covered the lowered eyelids of the fairy-teller and the empty coffer beside which, unnoticed by anyone, the little boy's magical ball had unwound the end of its thread.

Everything in the kingdom returned to its favourite places, turning the recent muddle into comfortable order. And those who wished very much to move away or to be found in a different fairy-tale moved joyfully and reappeared in their innermost dreams which the kind-hearted Thought had heard about that evening.

'I'd like... to tell the most beautiful fairy-tales! I'd like... I'd like very much for the kingdom to present me with a name which is unique, which no other creature, living or dead, has had before in any earlier tale. I desire it so much!!!' the little fairy-teller made his wish.

Wrapped up by this generous thought, covered by the soft fluff, he fell snugly asleep.

‘Sleep,’ Nara whispered into his ear ‘Sleep’. She leisurely gathered her snow-white wings behind her slender, flexible back and knelt down on her knees in front of the little sleeping boy. Suddenly something hit her very hard in the heart. The blow was so rough and unpleasant that the sudden pain caused crystal tears to flow for the first time from the eyes of the white bird.

‘Oh,’ a moan escaped from Nara’s white lips, ‘oh, how painful!’

The little fairy-teller lay before her exactly as when she first sang her lullaby to him.

‘It’s time,’ Nara thought and she silently bowed her head. At that very instant warm white feathers started to drop from her fair body and fall peacefully onto the ground. She watched sadly how the luxurious plumage slowly blew away from her skin leaving it completely naked. Nara wrapped herself tighter with her wings but they only weakly enveloped her trembling flesh.

‘My little one, how small you are still’, she said quietly, looking at the little boy who didn’t suspect a thing. ‘I couldn’t have imagined that it would be so painful - to sing you my last song. I knew, I knew that one day we’d be forced to part... How dear you are to me...’ And Nara burst into tears again.

‘You can’t hear me anymore, but I want, I want so much you to remember, my little fairy-teller, that there was never in the whole world a creature more devoted to you than Nara. When I was sent down from the skies and I inhaled your mute, warm breath for the first time, I realised that I wouldn’t like to sing my songs to anyone else on earth but only to you, my little one.’

‘Mine... mine!’ the bird cried out, lifting her weakened head to the sky.

...Mine... high in the sky the echo repeated in the kingdom’s palaces. Over there where the white birds always return when they have completed their long, wise songs. From the airy windows they watch silently their fairy-tellers and listen to their far away dreams.

‘Promise me you will look after yourself as if I were still there to care about you. And remember that every scratch on your body, be it even the thinnest, will moan like a deep wound in me. Therefore try not to scratch yourself... I love you... do you hear me?’ Nara said in a low voice, covering him with her familiar body.

She bowed over his body and put her lips to his ears so that he could hear the last, the very last song of Nara...

## THE SEVENTEENTH SONG OF NARA

### THE LAST ONE

*Lullaby and lullabo,*  
Your tiny head lies small and low;  
Just like a mother, I will sing  
Sweet and soft till sleep takes wing.

My egg, my offspring, let the whole  
Universe pour in your soul,  
With this last lullaby I’ve begun  
The autumn one, the bed-time one.

Lead it under the fragile bone  
As a guest in your body’s home;

Sleep, my blood, in sleep lie curled,  
My sweetest slip of the whole world.

There will come to say goodbye  
Under the lashes that shade your eye;

Frosts that pierce you with their chill,  
Heels with thorns that prick you ill,  
And the bruises you have worn  
On your skin and bravely borne;

Answers asking questions, soothing  
Pain-devouring powders, oozing  
Syrups devious and confusing,  
And the tasty little bits  
That poison body, soul and wits;

Arms of strangers, gathering in  
Love that's careless and a sin;

Deserts, seas and mountain tops,  
The chat within that never stops;

Valedictions and reflections,  
Houses, pathways, faces too,  
All will come to drink to you;

Sip by sip, they'll each imbibe  
Every lesson you have learned  
While you wandered far and wide.

And the beauty that enchants,  
And the magic that it grants,  
Dressed in all a heart desires,  
Come to you in love's own fires.

As before, she'll touch your lip,  
Dressed in rose from top to tip,  
And her rosy breath will keep  
All your memories in sleep.

*Lullabo and lullaby,*  
This fairy tale has tired your eye,  
And I have told you all I know,  
*Lullaby and lullabo.*

All the things that once the sky  
Was playing with when, as a bird,  
I learned to circle it on high.

Every truth has its creator,  
Each has a truth to call his own,  
Every precious crown is greater  
For the head it crowns alone.

Now it's time for you at last  
Over some young head to sing,  
Sleep, and when your sleep is passed,  
Rise as a bird up on the wing.

*Lullaby and lullabo.*

Your tiny head lies small and low;  
On the ground, not on a bed,  
Now I lay your sleeping head.

### GREAT DREAMS CAN BE SEEN IN A SMALL CRIB

Somewhere... autumn disrobing, turning off the sun before sleeping...

Somewhere... clouds descending to the crowns of trees, covering them with the sky...

In a Kingdom whose name had not yet been invented, ruled not by kings but by white birds, there with his legs bent, snoring ever so sweetly the new fairy-teller slept.

'How can you sleep for such a long time?' a voice was heard from skies.

'Well done, Bird Nara', the Voice continued. 'How many dreams have you sung to him, my Angel?'

'Seventeen', Nara replied.

'That's right. Well done. Dreams are such delicate things, they require a very special technique. You managed. I am happy with you! And now leave him alone. He'll wake up soon. No, no, wait, there is something else that must be done!'

'Bring in the Name!' the Voice ordered the kingdom. The kingdom froze instantly and bowed its head timidly. Only the old ocean, having had some air breathed deeply into its lungs, moved its sides in a peculiar way. The ocean started to roll from one wet side to the other until the blue edges slowly broke away from the shores and the ocean began gradually, unhurriedly to rise into the sky.

Several moments later there floated over the earth amazing fish and creatures instead of the usual clouds; the decks and masts of drowned ships rocked in a melancholy fashion in the ocean, lost treasures sparkled with their riches. The airy Aarfs turned into rapid ocean currents and as before, hurried off in various directions, but now it was above everyone's heads. By looking above it was possible to see how the ocean cups quiver, how iridescent the coral reefs are, how the ocean's butterflies and birds wave their flippers and how the large-eyed snakes and blind-worms crawl over the water.

The Ocean had lifted up to the sky all its riches, all of them apart from one single pearl shell that was left lying on the empty ocean bed. It was this very shell in which for the entire seventeen fairy-tale instants the precious name had been growing.



Nobody had seen it ever since the moment when the thin silvery grey hair of the newly born baby was planted into the shell so that with time it would weave itself into the true name.

Four fiery dazzling creatures somehow resembling lightning balls, descended from the all-seeing sky to the wonderful shell. All four of them picked up its sharp wavy edges and lifted it in unison from the sea bed.

‘It’s heavy’, one of the four creatures said.

‘Not at all, on the contrary, it’s so light!’ the second one said.

‘It smells of water,’ the third whispered quietly.

‘No, it smells of clouds’, the fourth one intervened.

At last the old ocean exhaled the air that had kept it afloat and landed softly back on its usual bed.

Knock, knock, the four creatures knocked on the hard cover of the shell. Knock, knock.

A strange crackling noise was heard from the shell and it opened up.

Bright light blinded the kingdom.

‘Oh, how beautiful it is!, the kingdom gasped. ‘How charming! How pretty!’ was heard from everywhere. The kingdom could not have enough of it. ‘We have never had one like that before.’

It was exactly like the little boy to whom it belonged. ‘Oh, you can’t grow a better one... can’t grow, can’t grow...’ everyone around repeated.

Indeed the name looked delightful and it sounded in a particularly perfect way. It was possible to admire it eternally, so beautiful it was.

‘Wonderful!’ the Voice could be heard. ‘It is ready now. Let’s not delay. Begin!’ it ordered.

Nara bent herself over the sleeping little boy for the last time and whispered something into his ear. He didn’t stir but opened his red plump red lips slightly. Then the four creatures took the fresh name out of the shell and brought it close to little boy’s slightly open lips. Each of the creatures breathed in turn on the name and then they put it carefully onto the little boy’s warm pink tongue. Nara again whispered something into his ear and the little boy swallowed it while smacking his lips slightly. At this very instant, Time finally managed to get out of the kingdom of dreams back to the little boy’s long, thick eye lashes and struck the little bell again!

The fairy-teller opened his eyes.

Early morning washed the sleepy moist sky with sunset. The gilded clouds gathered it into their luxurious frames as if they were in an expensive painting.

The roar of the ocean broke and the cries of the freedom-loving seagulls were heard in the distance.

Everything was bathed in precious, inimitable life which is the most beautiful and priceless thing in the whole world.

The little boy rubbed his disobedient eyes and looked around him.

It seemed to him that he had already seen it all somewhere but he couldn’t remember where exactly.

He turned clumsily from his side to his belly and tried to get up. Something cracked under his untrained heels - dry autumn leaves that had been scattered everywhere by untidy Autumn.

The boy looked curiously under his feet and it seemed to him that they were not just leaves but someone’s beautiful feathers, either left behind or lost.

THE END