

V-III

The wind has dropped, but the magnolia blossoms still  
Fall with a plop onto the dry, spongy earth.

The evening air is pestiferous with ~~gnats~~ (midges)

We walk back to the house taking our time about it  
Because there is nothing for dinner  
Only hot water and a couple of shit-smearred eggs.

There is only one way to complete the puzzle:

By finding a roof-shaped ~~XXXXX~~ piece that is lime-green fading to buff at one <sup>side</sup> ~~edge~~.

I had thought of announcing my engagement to you  
The day of the first full moon of X month.

Though it is only the beginning of March, a few  
Russet and yellow wall flowers are blooming in the border  
Protected by some moss-grown, fragmentary masonry.

Termites are at work in the long central roof-beam.

One morning you appear at breakfast

Dressed, as for a voyage, in your worst suit of clothes.

An over a pot of coffee, or, more accurately, rusted water

Announce your intention of leaving me alone in this cistern-like house.

In your own best interests I think I shall decide not to believe you.

A curious wooden vehicle you have, neither cart nor sled.

The wooden runners swish quite merrily over the oozy grass.

You had thought it only big enough for one but in reality it holds two quite comfortably.

In the distance, academic spires.

We are approaching M, a sub-prefecture of Z province.

(lively)

Here we shall find food, a night's lodging, and, if we are lucky, intelligent conversation.

"Hard-boiled eggs and honey

Have ever been my principal sustenance.

A little water taken at dawn, in the evening some seaweed-broth

~~XXXXXXXX~~ With perhaps some corn-sugar crystals on special feast-days

Are enough for the sage. Cinder-block cushions on a granite couch

~~is~~ too soft for him; ~~he~~ weeps with gentle rage."

The tiresome old man is telling us his life story.

He was born, it seems, long ago, near the frontiers of D district

In the heart of the famous pitch-pine forests there. A lifetime ~~XX~~ among trees

Has made him sallow and listless; his heart is like a fungus

Deep in the heart of some dismal wood.

"At thirty-two I came up to take my examinations at X university.

The ~~U~~ wax factory, it seemed, wanted a new general manager.

I was the sole applicant for the job, but it was refused me.

So I have preferred to finish my life

In the quietude of this floral retreat."