

## Two Poems in the Voice of Siddhattha Gotama as He Wanders the Forest

### ONE SIGHT

Yasodhara, if you came  
to me now, I'd say I saw death

in the lattice of sunshades,  
death in a sky of soft cottons,

even in the healing gauze of mist  
upon the water and the rushes.

I'd say there's death too  
in weather fine as your shawl,

in curtains hung by soft hands  
and death in the half-wound turban

of my own smile. Yasodhara,  
there's no refuge in the retinue

of leaves attending me; and none  
in the swallows stitching wide.

None in the retreat of deer  
to the shadows and none

in the owl's voice  
low and clear as breath

blown across an earthenware sky.  
None in the arbors and cool

stones. I remember your belly  
round with our child. O, Yasodhara -

each night I dream all of us  
are lying bloated in the lotus pool.

## THE KITE

Today I watched a boy fly his kite.  
It didn't crackle in the wind - but  
gave out a barely perceptible hum.

At a certain height, I'd swear I heard  
it sing. He could make it climb in  
any wind; could crank those angles up,

make it veer with the precision of  
an insect targetting a sting; then he'd  
let it roil in rapturous finesse, a tiny

bird in mid-air courtship. When  
lightning cracked across the cliff -  
(like quick pale flicks of yak-hair

fly-whisks) - he stayed steady. For  
so long he kept his arms up, as if he  
knew he'd hoist that kite enough.

I asked if it was made of special silk,  
if he'd used some particular string -  
and what he'd heard while holding it.

He looked at me from a distance,  
then asked about my alms bowl,  
my robes, and about that for which

a monk lives. It was then I saw  
I could tell him nothing in the cohort  
wind - that didn't sound as if illusory.

*Judith Beveridge*