After the Gentle Poet Kobayashi Issa

By Robert Hass

New Year’s morning—
everything is in blossom!
 I feel about average.

A huge frog and I
staring at each other,
 neither of us moves.

This moth saw brightness
in a woman’s chamber—
 burned to a crisp.

Asked how old he was
the boy in the new kimono
 stretched out all five fingers.

Blossoms at night,
like people
 moved by music

Napped half the day;
no one
 punished me!

Fiftieth birthday:

From now on,
It’s all clear profit,
 every sky.

Don’t worry, spiders,
I keep house
 casually.

These sea slugs,
they just don’t seem
 Japanese.

Hell:

Bright autumn moon;
pond snails crying
 in the saucepan.


Source: Field Guide (1973)