

## Sketchbook notes

January 12, 1978

This is the continuation of what I began to write before but discontinued because of the lack of suitability of what I was writing on (the paper that is). I'm now sitting on the Canadian Transcontinental Express,<sup>1</sup> journeying from Vancouver to Montreal, which takes about 5 days. There is a rather sombre Eskimo sitting across from me; sombre is the strongest word I dare use if by some chance he should happen to get his hands on this notebook and read what I've written.



I think the drawing on the first page is a drawing of the sitting room of the flat where I was staying in Vancouver.

The train is now beginning to move again, just two minutes behind time.

The nefarious weed is producing the effects of tiredness and hunger, so I will stop writing to decide which desire is the stronger.

I wish it was summertime (just have to stop writing for a minute so I can take a lifesaver to suck on). Why do I wish it was summertime? Because it's three in the morning.

Such unbounded enthusiasm, never before known to man, on finding that my pen had run out of ink, I carried out the gargantuan task (as I'm now inebriated) of delving into my luggage to find ink to refill my pen.

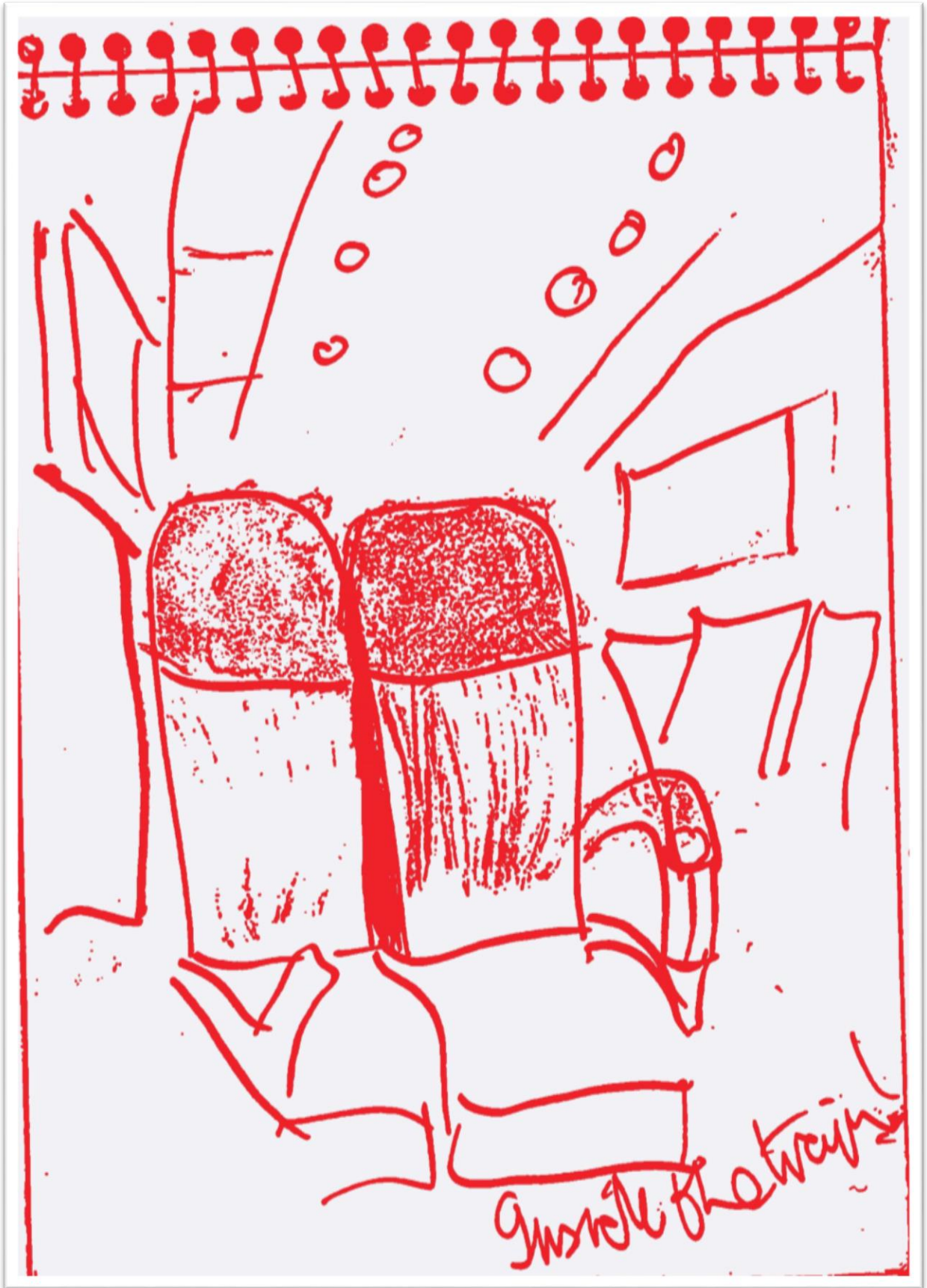
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<sup>1</sup> This is somewhat of a misnomer and the train crawls along like a long snail on wheels, sometimes stopping for hours on end.

My main reason for writing at the moment is that it is 3:30 in the morning and I can't sleep. I've just drunk some Chivas Regal and some Ballantyne's scotch mixed with 7 UP (offered to me by my 'friends' on the train). For the pleasure, or perhaps displeasure, of consuming this aforesaid intoxicant, I had to play a song on my guitar to the enjoyment of my fellow revellers, and the annoyance of my fellow travellers, as they were trying to sleep. "The Ballad of John and Yoko", which I executed fairly well even in my drunken state; but after protests from some 'sleepers', I had to quit singing and return to drinking and talking.

Because I had to fill up my pen, I forgot to explain why I wish it was summertime, which I mentioned above. Because, the early morning light of summertime would enable me to enjoy the view - the snow and the pines, instead of having to write this tedious epistle. I could also be making some sketches of the view; but I feel my 'night-time habits' will make it impossible for me to become a successful artist, as I rarely see the daylight (which seems to be important to most artists, but not all).

This train really is the essence of boredom - rolling along slowly into the night - the oppression of the air-blasted heat, and the sickly smell of warm sweat. It has just occurred to me that today is Friday the Thirteenth, not that that means anything.

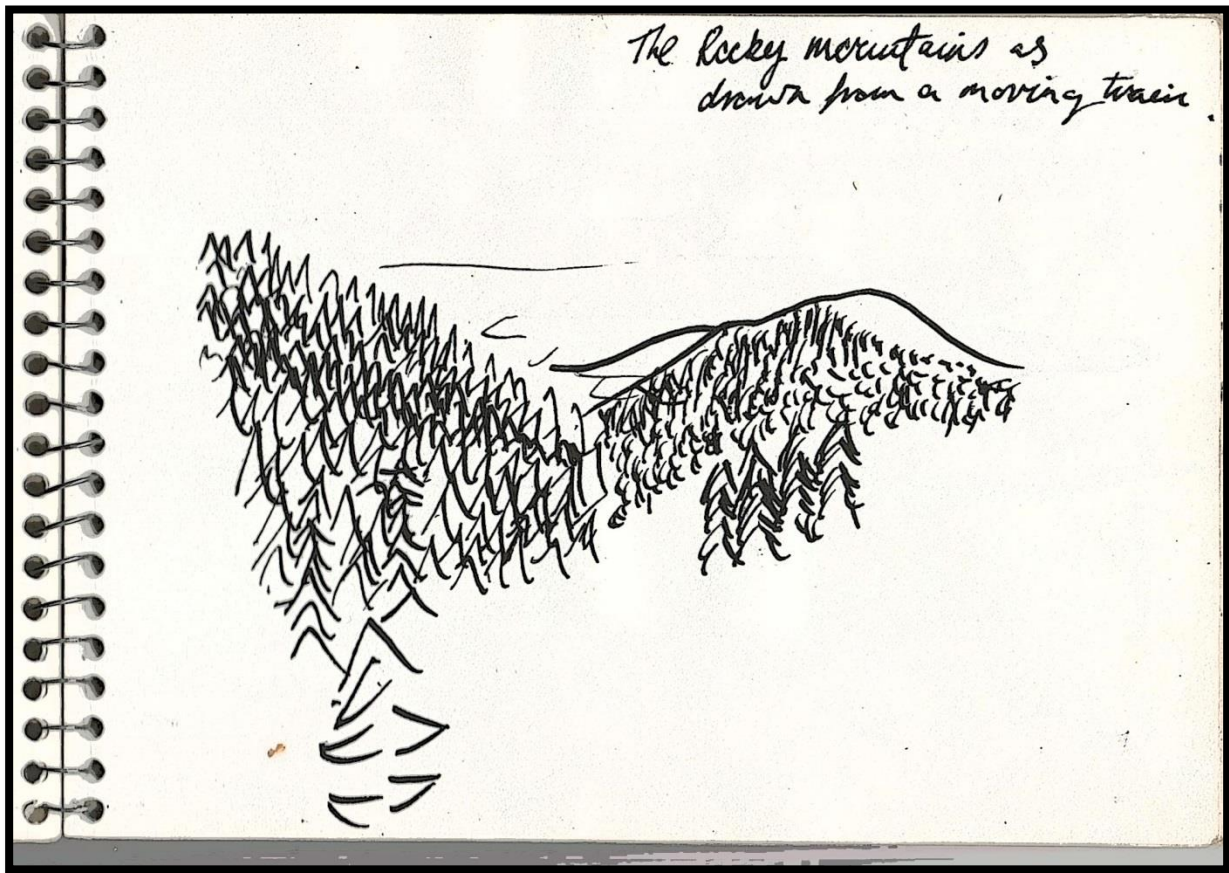


*Date: 13 January 1978*

It is now eleven in the morning, and I have just finished a breakfast of muffins and coffee, and although some of my train companions have started in on the beer, I feel it is only fair to my body to wait till after lunchtime. The one guy who was drinking beer complimented me and my guitar playing which reinforces my idea that with a few well-chosen songs + confidence one requires little or no skill (I should say musical skill) to become a balladeer. The art is an ability to please both the audience and yourself at the same time.

I have just attempted to draw a sketch of what I can see outside the window, but it is really difficult as the scene keeps changing all the time as the train rolls along.

Well, it is now only 12.10 pm, but boredom is leading me towards the bar and some chitter-chatter with my friends.



*Date: 14th of January 1978*

It now seems like an eternity since I began this boring journey which has been full of boring petty details which are perhaps too tedious to record, and by recording, jog my memory of the banality of it all. The short of it being that myself, together with three traveling companions, have been thrown off the train, after only one-day's journey, and I'm now stuck in some god forsaken place called Edmonton, and here we have spent 22 hours, and I'm still waiting for the next train to arrive. When the events are not so painfully clear in my travel-weary mind, I will probably recall them in finer detail, but for the moment, suffice it to say after some wine (on the train) and ten renderings of "The Ballad of John and Yoko" (by popular request) we now sit here in the station at Edmonton and off the train!

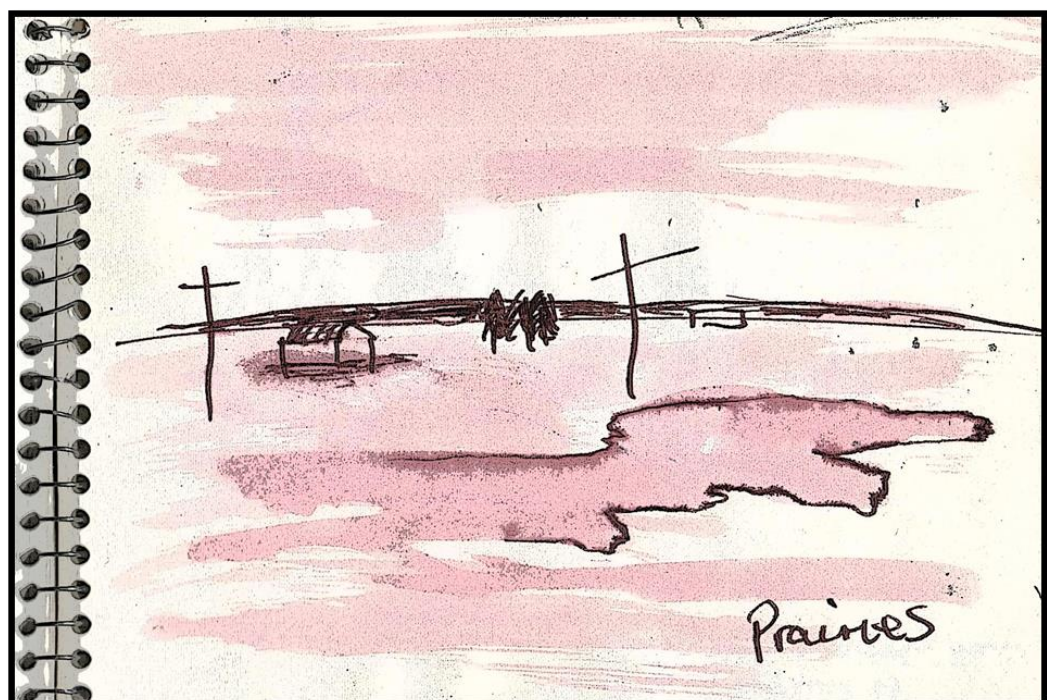


*Date: 16th of January 1978*

2 p.m. on a Monday afternoon and I'm eating a makeshift breakfast of muffins, Canadian style, with milk and coffee in the snack bar of the Trans Canada Super Continental Express (the name owing more to marketing technique than reality).

Events so far since I, or rather we (me and my 'pals' who had been thrown off the train), boarded the train on Saturday morning. Well before I even had the chance to put my luggage on the luggage rack I had another noisy argument with an obstreperous conductor. I began to think there was something in my manner that the Canadian railmen didn't like until I discovered that just minutes earlier he had been punched and had a knife drawn on him by a guy who also happened to be a CN employee on his day off. Actually the reason being was that he tried to drag the guy out of the first class lounge by his hair (as the guy was wearing jeans). The guy didn't take too kindly to this treatment as he was trying to impress some girls at the time.

Anyway, aside from these petty boring details and on to something else - the train was delayed for 5 hours yesterday in Winnipeg, so I and another guy left the train and went to the "Country Kitchen" to get some burgers and coffee. This little walk was quite 'refreshing' as it was minus 35 degrees Celsius!





### *"The Country Kitchen"*

The "Country Kitchen" meal was typical in the super modern style - everything comes in little packets - even the vinegar. Typically, 'muzak' was oozing out of the loudspeakers, endlessly caressing you into a moronic trance; the 'muzak' reminiscent of what they perhaps play in mental asylums to calm down the patients.

At the moment, a sweet little girl is emulating her mother by terrorizing her little brother, in her 'sweet' mother-like way, into submission, much to his distress; he expresses his dissatisfaction by letting out a wail that threatens to shatter the windows.

For a second his protests were silenced with the promise of a coke. But then his mother got him in a half-Nelson, and, sweetly cooing in his ears said if he didn't stop his whining, she would put his organ of protest (his mouth) temporarily out of action with a hard smack!



*Date: 17th of January 1978.*

It is now 5:30 a.m. and due to insomnia, caused possibly by the non-gratification of various carnal desires; but, the urge of personal survival, having a slight edge over the continuance of the human race, I could rather fancy lying in a large sumptuous bed with silk sheets, and being served a succulent meal by --- (enough of this inane waffling!).

I should rather tell you something about my traveling companions. I have just been playing crib and rummy with a 'friend' called Tim who is 16 years old and who has travelled east and west across Canada looking for work, but without any success; penniless, he is now on his way back to the Salvation Army hostel, as his parents put him under their care when he was 13. He has recently served three weeks in jail for stealing \$15 in pennies from his cousin who is a girl of 23.

A lot of the guys I have met on this train seem to have 'done porridge' (been in jail); it is very interesting to hear the ways in which the criminal barbaric authorities handle our 'lost children'. Perhaps we can call the authorities 'lost wolves', or rather 'hungry wolves'.

Tim says that the Salvation Army is worse than 'living' on this train, while another guy I talked to called Al, convicted of breaking and entering, says that the train is just like prison. This isn't difficult to imagine - what with the continual sound of clashing metal sliding doors, guards with an 'only doing my job attitude', who 'patrol' up and down the gangway, and who are the 'law-of-the-train'.

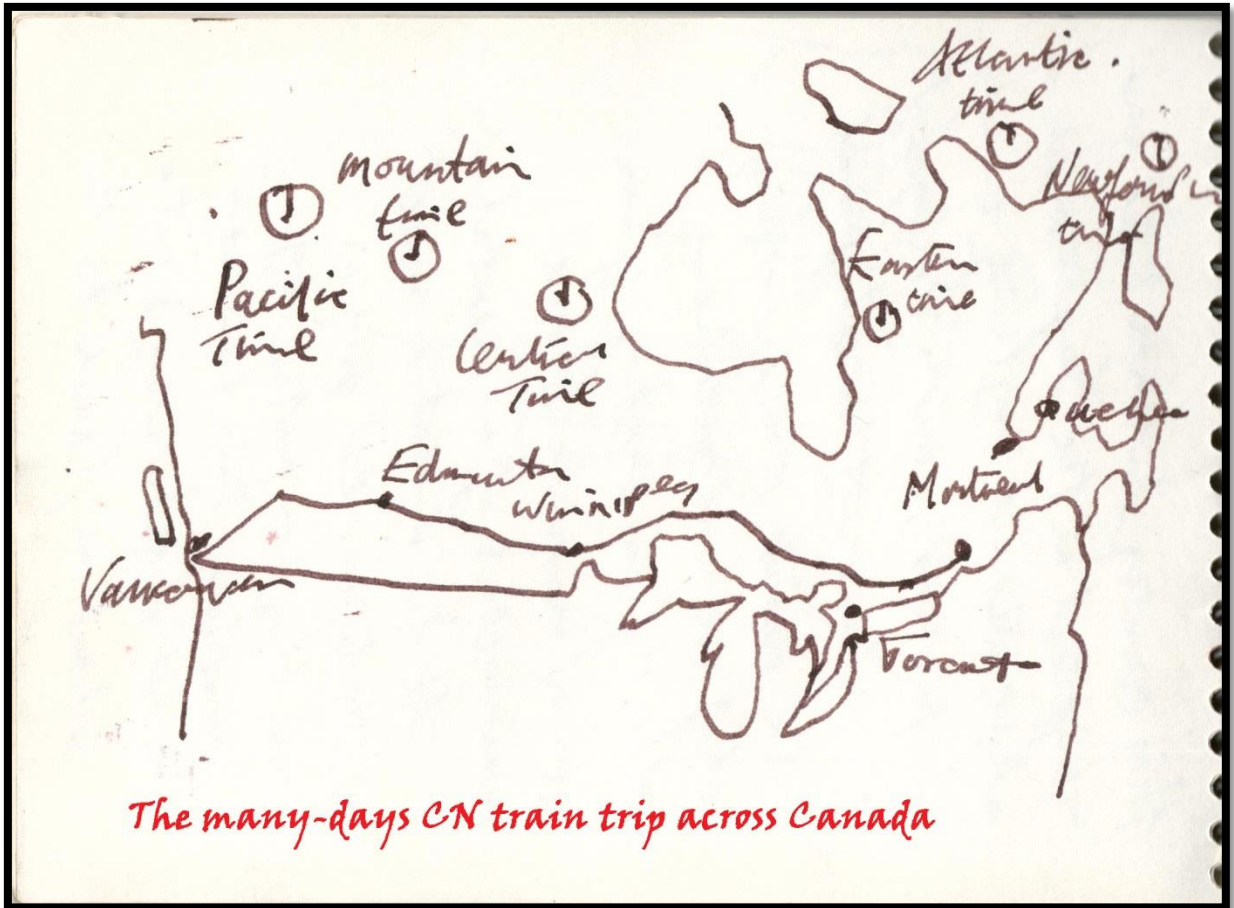
He was also telling me that if you refuse to work in prison they leave you in your cell naked and you are only allowed one-and-a-half hours exercise every week, in which you walk around in a circle; otherwise you sit in the cell reading books of their choice, only leaving your room twice a day to empty your can. Not even pigs on a farm are treated like that!. If you commit an offence considered serious enough in the prison they 'put you in the hole'; that is, you are naked, and it is completely dark, cold and wet and rat infested; you shouldn't feed the rats or they will bite you.

These punishments are inflicted upon people because of the fact that they committed the crime of stealing from fat, rich people whose lives are so full of garbage anyway.

I'm tired of writing this now, and I doubt if I can stay awake till 7 when breakfast is served.

Time	IAN	Time	IAN
10 09	12	110	
12 103	15	130	
14 104	21	210	55
15 104	31	320	145
20 112	33	355	230
<del>20</del>	35	360	29
31	48	430	355
39	50	430	475
40	57	45	525
42	62		
46	66		
50	72		
52	80		
53	81		
63	83		
70	87		
72	90		
82	100		
82	100		
	110		
	114		

Point score in card game between Ian and Time



*The many-days CN train trip across Canada*

## **Flying back to Europe**

A sudden urge to write, while I remember my thoughts, if I can only gather them!

*Time:* 00:25.

*Place:* In the sky.

At the moment my senses are being bombarded by various stewards and stewardesses of the Scandinavian variety; all these people have the same power relationship towards me as the CN railway guards; however, there the comparison ends. At the moment I'm watching a movie, or rather I'm watching a preview to the movie – which is a program about Swedish glass. The movie is starring Glenda Jackson called “The Incredible Sarah” about the actress Sarah Bernhardt.

*'Kerouac' ramblings:*

Train – metro – bus – bookshop – airport – meal – bus – aeroplane – three brandies – a cigarette – a talk with a Danish man – meal – coffee – headphones – Pete Johnson – Aretha Franklin – Spanish classical guitar – movie – DC10.

I'm drinking cognac with coke, listening to Delius, and watching a cartoon on the small screen.

My thoughts on the way back to Norway inevitably drift back to memories of Bente.

*Epilogue:*

Little moon burning bright,  
In the darkness of the night,  
Peaceful and tranquil, not like me.  
Is this poetree?

You spy on me behind clouds, and trees;  
But I know you're there all the time,  
Because we've always been friends.