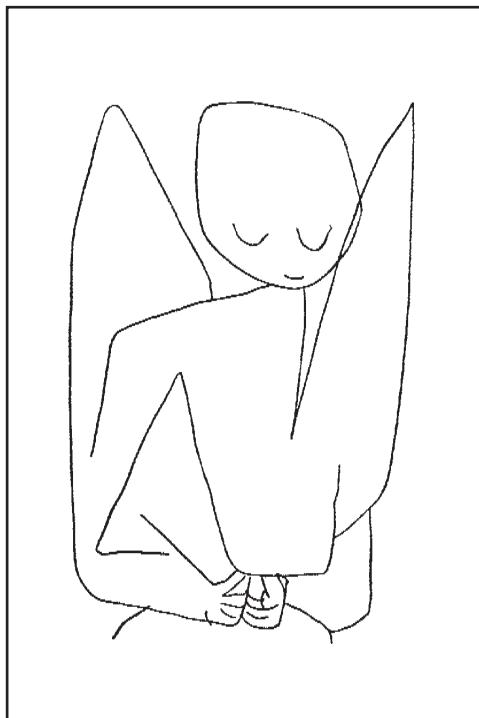


A Small Book on Blue



*The Bell
Color of Grief
Listening
Noon
This Heaven*

B L U E

The Bell

In the tower the bell
is alone, like a man
in his room,
thinking and thinking.

The bell is made of iron.
It takes the weight
of a man
to make the bell move.

Far below, the bell feels
hands on a rope.
It considers this.
It turns its head.

Miles away,
a man in his room
hears the clear sound,
and lifts his head to listen.

The Color of Grief

We drop petals
on the water
in his memory,

as if he
and the river
were one.

We talk
about him
while the flowers float away.

How lucky we are
he died
in the river behind our house,

where the ducks he loved
waddle up the lawn.
How much better

to remember him here,
where the river whispers
he's alive!

than at the grave,
where his five years
are carved in stone,

and the hardened earth
is silent
and grief is green

and always edged
with dying flowers;
for we know grief

is blue, like the river,
which takes our flowers
when they are fresh

and carries them away.

Listening

It was all I could give—
my eyes two drops of rain,
my hands on the table two sleeping birds,
my chest turned toward you with no shield,
the two wounds of my ears,
my slow-breathing silence,
my head slowly nodding
a flower heavy with dew,
the sun coming from behind a cloud,
a piece of light
falling on the table between us like bread,
falling on hands, our hands touching,
this moment of my listening,
this dark time of your voice, saying,
“this flower, this light, this bread,”
your words a piece of bread
you break in two
and share.

Noon

The mind is a farmhouse far out on the otherwise empty prairie, somewhere in Kansas or Nebraska. Inside—a homemade bench and table, a grandfather's four-poster bed, a modest study with books. There are few possessions—a coffeepot, a pair of work gloves, a sewing kit, a lantern. The windows are plain, without curtains—no one ever comes down this road. A stairway leads to closed upper rooms sparsely furnished and filled with light. It is good sometimes to climb the stairs, to unlock the doors and stand in one room after the other, looking out the window to see things as they really are, shadowless beneath a thousand miles of open sky.

This Heaven

How wonderful to stand in striped pajamas in the early morning light drinking the first cup of coffee as my daughter learning to ride her new yellow bike sails up and down the block while neighborhood children one by one appear on scooters or skates greeting each other as they always do with shouts and salutations sailing over the last summer flowers and dew-drenched lawns which their barefooted parents tip toe across to say good morning to say isn't this heaven to stand in the lane in awe every child playing until Sarah stops her bike beside me and asks me to bend down for a kiss I think but no she wants the pink purse hanging from my shoulder which she'll take on the school bus and suddenly all the children are gone the bus chugging down the lane and I'm left alone rolling my daughter's tiny bicycle down the suddenly empty suddenly terribly quiet lane.