

Icicle Glasses / Day Thirty-Nine
from The Autobiography of Death
Kim Hyesoon

2018

translated by Don Mee Choi

The thing that death gave you—
your face leaks
your face overflows

Your face is the grave of your nose
your face is the grave of your ears
your face is the grave of your face
once again your face overflows uncontrollably

The subzero temperature grows on your face then dies
(You were underground from the moment you were born)

The air that sticks to your eyes is as cold as the knife blade
the wind that sticks to your heart is as hot as the palm of a hand

You want to shout that you miss me
but there is another ground beneath the ground

You wish to sing solo but you are stuck in the chorus
In this world there is no ear that can make out your voice

Love sickness, the chronic illness of the ghosts!
Love sickness appears daily like the first dawn!

You hang your eyeballs to the ground and plead
You beg to be let in
To have your face overlap with my face
That my tongue is your tongue
That you shed my tears

Water streams out
You hallucinate
You go mad

Saint Martin's Four Wishes
unknown

13th C.

translated by Ned Dubin

In Normandy there lived a peasant
of whom is told so quaint and pleasant
a fabliau that I've a notion
to tell you. Such was his devotion
to Saint Martin that he'd invoke
him in all things he undertook;
whether elated or depressed,
it was Saint Martin he addressed;
every day he called on Saint Martin.
The peasant set out on a certain
morning, as was his wont, to plow.
He'll not forget Saint Martin now.
"Saint Martin!" he cried out, "giyyup!"
and that's when Saint Martin showed
up.

"Peasant," he said, "you have been loyal
to me, and never start to toil,
no matter what your task may be,
without first calling upon me.
You have well earned my special favor.
Now leave your harrow, drop your labor,
and get you home with a light heart,
for I will truly do my part
and herewith promise I will grant
whatever four wishes you want,
but use your wishes wisely, for
once they've been used you'll get no
more."

The peasant bowed low to the ground
in reverence, then turned around
and hurried home walking on air.

There's trouble waiting for him there.
His wife, the one who wears the pants,
lit into him: "What evil chance
brings you home now, oaf? Did you quit
work 'cause it's clouded up a bit?
You've hours of daylight left for tilling.
Or is your paunch in need of filling?
Are you afraid you'll miss your chow?
You've never taken to the plow,
no-life for you is one big lark!
We may as well sell off the stock
since you won't work them anyway!
See what you call a working day—
you're back when you have scarcely
gone!"

"Don't be upset, my love, keep calm,"
the peasant said. "Our fortune's made!
Henceforth our burdens may be laid
aside, of that much I am certain,
because I met up with Saint Martin.
He gave me four wishes to use
as I thought best. I've yet to choose;
I meant first to consult with you,
and as you advise me to do
I now intend to make my wishes
for gold and silver, land and riches."
When she heard this, the woman
reached

to hug him and toned down her speech.
"Husband," she said, "can this be so?"
"Indeed yes, as you soon will know."