

Excerpts from  
**DEATH SELF**

A COLLABORATION

Paintings by Rini Price

Poems by V.B. Price



## I. BEFORE THE PAST HAPPENED

He could not tell  
how his life should be.  
He just knew it was wrong.

But what did it matter  
when all around him  
people, like forests,  
were going up in smoke?

There was a freedom  
in calamity  
he had just begun to savor.

He was like that now:  
a confection  
turned into somebody's  
longing for more.



## II. MOTHER OF DEATH

Just for yourself  
you plucked me from school  
on a wild, sunny day when I was six.

We sipped chocolate sodas.  
We frolicked in our smiles.  
I never knew  
I wanted anything so much:  
my movie star mother,  
your beautiful lips,  
the perfume of your wrists,  
your eyes wanting mine.  
Such sweet shock to be desired!

When you take me again  
I will feel just the same.



#### IV. OUTER SPACES

The wall came down,  
was tarnished away,  
ridiculed into a heap,  
a nothing  
that became an opening,  
an absence  
that became a road.

All walls crumble,  
all resistance breaks,  
all force decays:  
it's the way  
that humor takes,  
like faith and death  
and justice,  
always breaking free.



## VII. READY TO BEGIN

Clearing away the normal  
patterns and wastes of my day.  
I prepare to meet myself on the page,  
to see what is there,  
to know, through the words,  
what was waiting for me.

Clearing the path  
for the end to start,  
one waits for what is  
as one waits on creation.



## IX. SYMPATHETIC RAPTURE

The great owl of death  
seizes me by the breath,  
covers me with her wings,  
breaks my will with her kiss,  
devours me like an eclipse.

In sympathy, I shudder,  
releasing all resistance,  
enfolded in her shadow,  
in the night of her body's shade.

As prey, I have no choice.  
In moonlight, though,  
as a lover letting go, I am all hers,  
cradled, embracing, all unafraid.



## XV. AGAIN AND AGAIN

That's what they mean  
by "waking up,"  
by "dying to who you are"  
-that's Death Self,  
the guide,  
the way into being  
alive as you die,  
day after day,  
living your death  
with every breath,  
timeless and ending,  
beginning and gone.

Fear dies  
when death is alive,  
when death wears life  
like an edgeless light.  
That's why  
the now never dies  
when death is your guide  
for fear's not there  
to divide it.



## XVII. DEATH IS THE REST

Making room in your mind  
for life without your mind

closed shut,  
allowing all you are

to see you  
where you are,

you feel the free light  
behind you

is inside you,  
sensing Death,

Mind, the Divine,  
are all the same.

What's in a name?  
Death is the rest.  
Open up, give it room,  
let it breathe  
the fear right out of you;  
it is what's left of you;

it is you, free of you,  
knowing you

like the truth  
you know

when laughing  
overcomes you.