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.