

# BlazeVOX 2k9

Fall 2009

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## A BLACKBIRD

A blackbird shuffled over daises  
Ignoring summer's warming joys  
That bloom in happy, active noise  
And drip with high noon's languid ease  
Beneath the sheet of turquoise.

She kept repeating her one song  
In its descending minor key;  
The twigs of sound to build her empty  
Nest in shadows that belong  
To a willow tree.

## LOOKING FOR DRAGONS

I went to look for dragons in the woods,  
My backpack filled with gear and maps and books  
That listed all the traces that I should  
Be looking for on trunks and mud by brooks.

I memorized the data that was written  
And plotted my course through its habitat.  
But somehow, all the tracks remain still hidden.  
I didn't even find dried balls of scat

Left in long ferns that cluster by old trees.  
Then what I thought were dragon calls were really  
Just ordinary whistles from the breeze.  
But still I sit here waiting, patiently.

The pine and eucalyptus blend in shadows  
Of haze that rise up from the birds' frail dreams  
To shimmer with the moon's pale golden halo;  
A circling dance of cloudy dragon moonbeams.

FOOTPRINTS ON THE BEACH

I spun my footprints in  
Rich female mocha sand  
Here at the edge of day  
And of a continent  
Where the sun transmutes  
The Pacific into mercury.  
But Thetis with her foam  
Has teased them all away.  
All record of my movements  
Sink back into the earth  
With her indifferent wave.

## RAITARO: THE THUNDER CHILD

*Japan: the Jōmin Period, circa 609 BC*

In ancient days when Jim-mu was the emperor,  
Who ruled the central land of reeds with honor,  
And nature spirits spoke to men directly  
Because they listened more attentively  
And held to values such as 'truth' and 'balance'  
'There dwelt beneath a mountain's misty silence  
A wrinkled couple who were poor and childless  
But living in a simple happiness.  
Poor Bimbo always worked his tiny fields  
With diligence that never matched their yields.  
Yet, nightly he still thanked all six Daikoku  
In his arthritic hut there by the bamboo.

But then one year some evil foxes brought  
A horde of cursed and thirsty ghosts who caught  
Up each and every drop of dew and rain  
Out from the air to spread the empty pain  
Of drought to all the people of the land.  
Its gnawing turned the shoot and buds to sand  
Transforming Spring into a Winter scene:  
A brown and lifeless landscape cold and lean.  
Each day old Bimbo still went out to work  
His fields despite unseasonable cold and barks  
From foxes or the sticky calls of ghosts  
Who tried to lure him to their deadly hosts.  
One day when mushrooms should be at their height  
His bones were shaken by a roar and light  
Flashed knocking him down with a crackling sound.  
He slowly raised himself up off the ground  
And saw a burning egg-shaped sphere of bright  
Mist swirling in a phosphorescent white  
That slowly faded. But, where it had spun  
Upon the beige plot all the plants begun  
To regenerate. He gasped, "A miracle!"  
On the earth there lay a bright red, beautiful  
Newborn baby boy who laughed and smiled.  
He reached up to old Bimbo with his mild

Brown eyes that had a look of recognition.  
He picked him up in laughing jubilation  
And asked, "August and honorable baby, who  
Are you come here from the heavenly blue?"  
The only answer was a birthmark on  
His chest; like skilled calligraphy was drawn  
The Kanji meaning 'thunder.' "We'll call him Raitaro,  
And thanks to holy Kwannon and great Jizo  
Who gave to us this joy despite our life  
Of poverty and heavy age!" his wife,  
Aya, wet her sleeve with salt tears saying,  
"It's been so many years that I've been praying  
For a child, and what a special boy!  
This is my long life's single greatest joy!"  
He grew-up quickly. As he did the dew  
Had gradually increased and winds that blew  
Down from the pine-clad mountains scattered seed  
Of light rain grew more frequent adding speed  
To his growth: in one year he had grown  
Into a youth of sixteen and a cyclone  
In strength and speed but he was always ready  
To do whatever made his foster parents happy.  
A nine-tail fox sent badgers to discover  
What had made all these changes in the weather.  
Inside a ruined mansion under chilly  
Moonlight dripping in the shadows he  
Sat with the other foxes in a council  
Debating ways in which they might do evil.  
The badgers jumped through broken screens and kneeling  
Before their fox lord with his pale ears twitching  
They told him all that happened to old Bimbo.  
"First of all, we must kill this Raitaro:  
Leave nothing left of enemies who challenge  
Our power, whether youths or in their dotage!  
It's only with a manner strong and cruel  
That our earth deities again will rule  
This land, repelling heavenly invaders  
Led by that damned 'august' old buzzard emperor!"  
They howled, "Attack! Attack, o fox!  
May their heads be bashed upon the rocks!"  
In dark tsunami waves of fur they rose  
And rolled out like a typhoon wind that blows  
In from the ocean, shattering the boats  
When water serpents shed their summer coats.

The autumn dawn surged on the orange leaves  
Of maples clinging on against the breeze  
That gently teased the murmuring rice stalks.  
Raitaro's sickle swooped swift as a hungry hawk  
With long and deep swings quickly gathering  
The harvest with his sweating and his singing.  
He tied the stalks for Bimbo into thick  
Green bales near where he sat with two smooth sticks  
To heckle each and every stalk with care.  
Then suddenly a shriek split through the air.  
"Aya? By all the kami of Japan  
What's happened?" Bimbo cried as they both ran  
Back to the hut and saw that it was covered  
By squirming foxes and large badgers layered  
Upon the sides. But on the roof alone  
The nine tail fox crouched growling in full blown  
Fury "Kill him! Kill that thunder brat  
Feast on his flesh just like a garbage rat!  
To smother this boy's power is the key  
To gaining for our masters victory!"  
His nails sank in the slanted thatch, he curled  
His chops and howled like demons in the netherworld.  
Raitaro took a strong stance with his two  
Kama sickles. In his hands they flew  
And sliced like lightning through the ripening barley  
With flaming swaths exploding into fury.  
The corpses and the severed limbs were scattered  
Across the yard. The barking, blood-bespattered  
Attackers frenzied crawled in waves away  
From him on high-pitched crests of foaming spray.  
The nine tail fox watched apoplectic as  
His eyes turned bright red from an icy topaz  
On seeing all his plans were being dismembered.  
"Pathetic runt!" he spat, "you may have butchered  
This mangy band of kits, but you have not  
Yet seen my power!" he raised his tails and shot  
Long arrows of his fur like iron needles  
That pierced Raitaro, causing him to crumble  
Down to the earth as they passed through his body  
And exited in red fog. "Victory!"  
Poor Bimbo held the lifeless, bloody boy.  
The fox yelled to his cheering henchmen "Destroy  
Those geezers! Burn the hut! Bring me the meat  
Of that punk to be my tasty treat!"

Old Bimbo raised a sickle, his hands trembling  
Before the wall of bestial faces snarling  
In circles round him. But in all the action  
No one had seen the silence, swift reaction  
That thunder child's blood caused within the earth:  
The vegetation blossomed in a rebirth  
Of life. Beneath Raitaro's navel there  
Began to swirl in phosphorescent flares  
White lightning that exploded through his body.  
He opened up his eyes and they were ruby  
Red just as his human form was burned  
Away. The air in crashing thunder churned  
Around the pearly white and coiled figure;  
The dragon son of Raiden, lord of Thunder.  
He darted to the nine tail fox and snapped  
His jaws down on the tails. He quickly wrapped  
The demon in his white steel coils crushing  
The bones and flesh, then shot down at the rushing  
Beasts howling in a boiling din of terror  
To catch and fling them up into the air.

The couple crouched in fear beneath the pine  
And pleaded, "Dragon, mighty power divine,  
Please spar our poor old lives we did not know  
The heavenly White Dragon came below  
To dwell among us and we treated your  
Augustness not with feasting and with honor  
But as a human orphan."

"Foster-parents,  
I have no cause to gripe or for complaints.  
I came because your simple piety  
Is known within the land of Nenokuni  
Beyond the rainbow bridge and ocean sky  
To aid you in your struggle. Please don't cry.  
The life in me has blessed this plot of ground  
And thus, here fruit and rice will always be found  
To grow and I will always care for you.  
I thank you for your kindness." He then flew  
Off into purple thunderheads upon  
The pine-robbed summit of Mt. Hakuzan.