

## *Three Chinese Characters*

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### **Friend**

The moon follows the earth's orbit for millions of millennia  
Unlike the sun that whitens the sky, he is silent  
A curtain of space unchangeably dark behind him.  
His flight is alone despite the stars decorating his path.  
When you write his name like a ladder,  
A small hook at the end of one leg,  
Does it anchor him to earth or sky?  
A charged brush skims over surfaces: paper wraps rock.  
Two ladders side-by-side writes friendship in black ink.

## Want

To want is like wood  
The eye and the heart below  
Between here and the horizon  
Stands a forest, statuesque, green  
The eye captures the forest  
It lies on the wet surface  
In flawless detail. Each branch  
A thought a breath a black line  
Burnt against the sky  
Outlines memory as simply  
As motion stilled. Few  
Pathways trek through the heart  
The sky like grass only blue

## Sky

From the outreaching fingertips  
Of your right hand  
Unfurls the east and from  
The fingertips of the left the west  
Between them a tender chain  
Of rock woods rivers of red and blue  
Green earth divides your legs  
A compass that measures and strides,  
Landscapes of clouds rest  
On your brow and whatever walls  
Were built are reduced  
To that single horizontal line  
Your arms reconstruct in bones and flesh

These poems are reimaginings or translations, perhaps, of three Chinese characters for the words friend (朋 peng2), want (想 xiang3), and sky (天 tian1).

