

## **Please Call Me by My True Names**

Don't say that I will depart tomorrow – Even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving. To be a bud on a Spring branch, to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings, learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, to fear and to hope. The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that is alive.

I am a mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river. I am the bird that swoops down to swallow the mayfly.

I am a frog swimming happily in the clear water of a pond. And I am the grass-snake that silently feeds itself on the frog.

I am a child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks. And I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate. And I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, and plenty of power in my hands. And I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to my people dying slowly in a force-labour camp.

My joy is like Spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom all over the Earth. My pain is like a river of tears, so vast it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names, so I can hear all my cries and laughter at once, so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up and the door of my heart could be left open, the door of compassion.

Thich Nhat Hanh

*This poem was written in 1978, during the time of helping the boat people*