

# Chicago Zen

I

Now tidy your house,  
dust especially your living room  
and do not forget to name  
all your children.

II

Watch your step. Sight may strike you  
blind in unexpected places.

The traffic light turns orange  
on 57th and Dorchester, and you stumble,

you fall into a vision of forest fires,  
enter a frothing Himalayan river,

rapid, silent.

On the 14th floor,  
Lake Michigan crawls and crawls

in the window. Your thumbnail  
cracks a lobster louse on the windowpane

from your daughter's hair  
and you drown, eyes open,

towards the Indies, the antipodes.  
And you, always so perfectly sane.

III

Now you know what you always knew:  
the country cannot be reached

by jet. Nor by boat on jungle river,  
hashish behind the Monkey-temple,

nor moonshot to the cratered Sea  
of Tranquillity, slim circus girls

on a tightrope between tree and tree  
with white parasols, or the one

and only blue guitar.

Nor by any  
other means of transport,

migrating with a clean valid passport,  
no, not even by transmigrating

without any passport at all,  
but only by answering ordinary

black telephones, questions  
walls and small children ask,

and answering all calls of nature.

IV

Watch your step, watch it, I say,  
especially at the first high  
threshold,

and the sudden low  
one near the end  
of the flight  
of stairs,

and watch  
for the last  
step that's never there.