

Monet Paints Nymphneas at 79

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This is how it ends:

He is on the Japanese footbridge,
or maybe the gravel path
like lace on the water's border.
With hat pulled low, he watches
the shifting of the lilies,
grasping with a lens-less eye.

The brush is as long as his forearm.
Veins run dark in his hands,
indigo lifelines tracking
across ancient topography.
There are knots in his fingers.
Surely the ache is too much
to lift the brush, surely the strain
burns his eyes like the sun he loves.

And yet, that orb still rose.
The light still bathes the lilies
as it did yesterday, as it will
tomorrow's starborn morning.

So gently the paintbrush
lingers on the canvas,
like fingertips on eyelids,
like laying calla lilies to rest,
like he understands such
a thing could break a heart.