

cattails



April 2022

cattails

April 2022 Issue

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cattails is produced in association with:

Éditions des petits nuages

1409 Bortolotti Crescent
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1B 5C1

ISSN 2371-8951

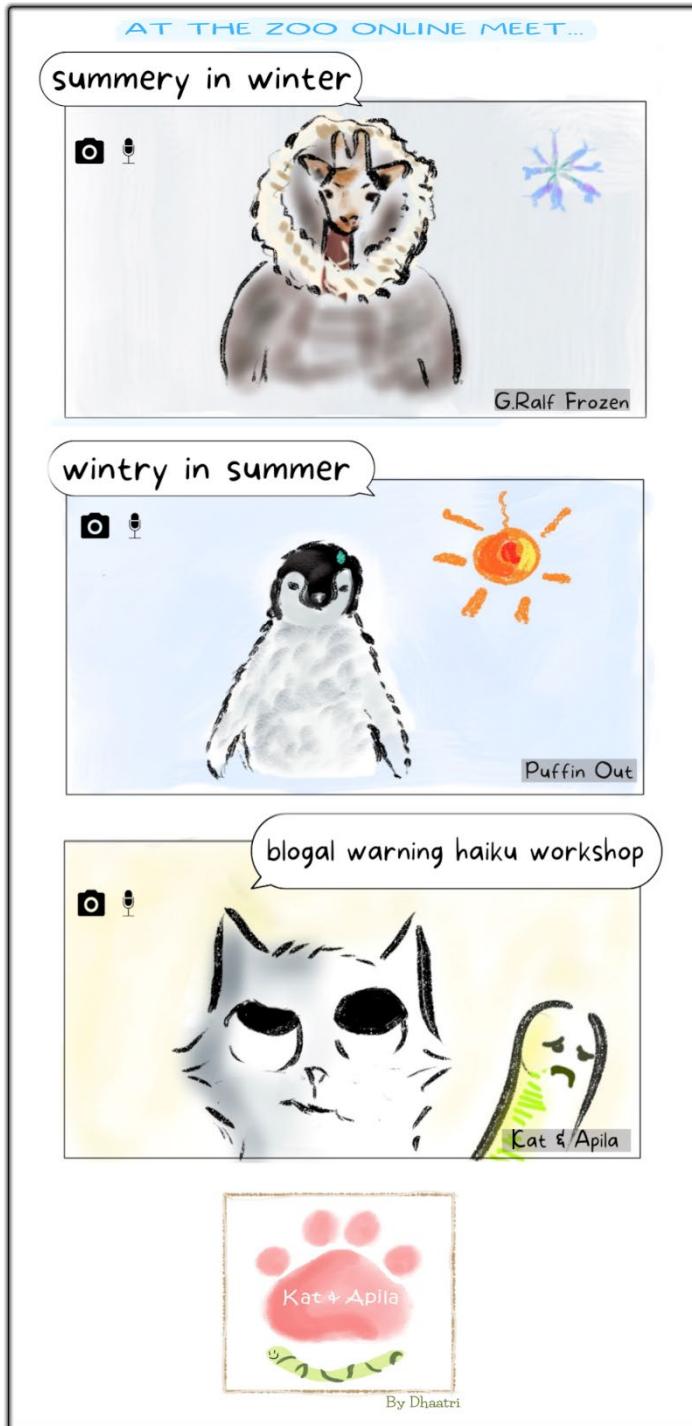
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Cover Painting Marion Clarke - Dreaming of Donegal
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Introduction

The South Korean-born German philosopher Byung Chul Han (1959 -) offers a critique of contemporary society as denying contemplation or *vita contemplativa* and being premised mostly on the pressures of labour and production or *vita activa*. Thus, we have become *animal laborans* or labouring animals. This is similar to the Buddhist notions of the causal link between action (*karma*) and suffering (*dukkha*). We have lost the faculty of appreciating anything that is not of material value, thus losing the eternal present of the moment.

He advocates making an effort at contemplative stillness and being in the moment to escape the relentless dissatisfaction in our lives. Perhaps all is not lost for us as haikai poetry offers us such an opportunity.

For Lavana, Geethanjali, Susan, David and Mike, the driving force has been not only this *vita contemplativa* aspect of haikai writing but also how to select those poems which best showcase this gift of the poets from around the world. Their dedication and commitment make this issue what it is. David has hit the ground running in his first stint as editor and I can vouch for how patient and good-natured he is dealing with the vicissitudes of the internet and working across time-zones. Mike has responded to the growing requests for tanka prose by taking on the mantle of editor from this issue onwards. He never fails to deliver an inspiring layout of the journal.

It is a great pleasure to introduce Dhaatri Menon, India as the new cartoonist for *cattails* featuring Kat & Apila. I warmly welcome Shobhana Kumar, India as Associate Editor, managing the e-newsletter and Facebook and Twitter handles for *cattails*.

This issue also features Marion Clarke's vibrant artwork of landscape in Northern Ireland. Our deep gratitude to her for this generosity.

We hope you enjoy the issue!
Sonam Chhoki

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Haiku



Bluebells at the Big Wood, Warrenpoint, Northern Ireland

within eggshells
the sound of stillness
at daybreak

Ash Evan Lippert, USA

dawn haze
a skylark soars
another octave

Keith Evetts, UK

spring morning
the mist lifts off
a sangam

Meera Rehm, UK (EC)

movement in the nest—
the young take turns
at the cradle

ruch w gnieździe—
młodzi na zmianę
przy kołysce

Krzysztof Kokot, Poland

the wagging tails
of new lambs at lunch
spring equinox

Nola Obee, Canada

baby squirrel—
where did you learn
to beg like this?

Jerome Gagnon, USA

juicy leaves—
a young koala tests
the sapling’s spring

Rohan Buettel, Australia

the horse’s mouth
carrot slipping
from the child’s hand

Edward J. Rielly, USA

faint footsteps . . .
the call
of a dark-eyed junco

Nicky Gutierrez, USA

cherry blossoms—
a Mount Fuji journey
in my tea cup

flori de cireş—
călătorie pe Muntele Fuji
în ceaşca mea de ceai

Steliană Cristina Voicu, Romania

the brook's
childish rockswirls
blowing kisses

Ron Scully, USA

soft dirt
slipping through my fingers
a pink worm

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

spring squall
the lightening sky fills
with starlings

Brad Bennett, USA

weeping willow
shivering with yellow
nightingale's song

tužna vrba
drhturi žutom pjesmom
slavuja

D. V. Rozic, Croatia

tent caterpillars
this jumble of roads
leading nowhere

Debbie Strange, Canada

pit stop
I fill up on
wildflowers

Hemapriya Chellappan, India

mid-flight hover
the hummingbird
stares at me

Christa Pandey, USA

morning swim—
the unmistakable chatter
of a kingfisher

Deborah Burke Henderson, USA

twig snap—
the bittern by the jetty
becomes a stick

Lorin Ford, Australia

sea cove
even in rain the chuckle
of cobbles

David Gale, UK

Roman mosaic
the shimmer
of fish scales

römisches Mosaik
der Fische
Schuppenglanz

Helga Stania, Switzerland

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returning prawn
languid nets collect
the breeze

Quendryth Young, Australia

wind shift
the scent of rosemary
from an open window

spostamento di vento
profumo di rosmarino
da una finestra aperta

Eufemia Griffi, Italy

garden fence
the blackbird equally bountiful
to my neighbors

vrtna ograda
kos jednako darežljiv
i susjedima

Mihovila Čeperić-Biljan, Croatia
(Translated by Đ. V. hif Rožić)

tree climbing weather
my child
a face in the branches

David Watts, USA

Jupiter's beard
the snick, snick her pruner
used to make

Jim Chessing, USA (EC)

where I pick a flower
the spider
restrings its orb

Nancy Shires, USA

great heron
always a hundred yards
ahead of the canoe

Michael Galko, USA

lake sunset
fire and water crackling
into stars

日落湖
火与水噼啪
成繁星

John Zheng, USA

The full moon
spreading a shawl of light . . .
field of sunflowers

Keith A. Simmonds, France

rice paper lamp
a golden glow
on the farmer's face

Robert Witmer, Japan

swirling fireflies . . .
the unhurried descend
of a night plane

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

a startled bird
flies into the sky
—earth tremor

Richard Kakol, Australia

returning
with an agony of feathers . . .
the cat's mouth

Veronika Zora Novak, Canada

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thin mud
the open mouths
of wild lilies

fango sottile
le bocche aperte
di gigli selvatici

Nazarena Rampini , Italy

the way out . . .
amanita mushrooms
on both sides of the trail

Kristen Lindquist , USA

following trail cracks—
the crooked necks
of giraffes

Richard Thomas, UK

throwing shade
a heron lands beside
the pink flamingo

P. H. Fischer, Canada

out-going tide—
the tipped posture
of a beach shell

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand

watching the schoolyard
from the chimney
a hungry seagull

sa dimnjaka
gladan galeb gleda
školsko dvorište

Vilma Knežević, Croatia

on the graves
of all my pets—
lilac shower

Ruth Holzer, USA

thunder crack
that half-breath till the sky
plops

Jan Dobb, Australia

wren notes
the warp and weft
in rainfall

Joanna Ashwell, UK

La Niña deluge
the creek behind the house
roars through my kitchen

Tom Staudt, Australia

fishing net . . .
in drops of settled rain
the dimming sun

ribarska mreža . . .
u kapima stale kiše
sutoni se sunce

Nina Kovacić, Croatia
(translated by Magdalena Lipovac)

grevillea
in the deepening shadows
lorikeet chatter

Gavin Austin, Australia

summer sea mist
a hush
in my bones

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

a year in a day mayfly

Gregory Longenecker, USA

sea foam
gathering at her feet
another birthday

Jamie Wimberly, USA

work day
at the zendo . . .
planting moss

Jill Lange, USA

wondering what
the river knows . . .
summer dusk

Angela Terry, USA

sudden silence—
a rivulet circles
matted leaves

Richard Tice, USA

the colors
of cupola and cross
stratocumulus

Joshua St. Claire, USA

lingering heat
we planted tulips
when he loved me

Carol Raisfeld, USA

birdsong
lost for words
in the hymn of peace

lagu burung
kehilangan kata kata
di himne damai

Christopher Calvin, Indonesia

on a piece of paper
an unknown address—
autumn wind

su un pezzo di carta
un indirizzo sconosciuto—
vento d'autunno

Antonio Mangiameli, Italy

cruising . . .
a balloon moon hops
behind the ship

krstarenje . . .
za brodom poskakuje
loptasti mjesec

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

the long way home
Orion's belt
tinsels the sky

Joshua Gage, USA

autumn rain
the jaunty purr
of a kettle

jesienny deszcz
raźne pomrukiwanie
czajnika

Marta Chocilowska, Poland

low tide—
a pelican scrabbles
the dusk hues

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

cast in bronze
the moon joins
the fishermen

Adrian Bouter, the Netherlands

late autumn
an empty dog-dish
fills with dust

Nika, Canada

crushed acorn
the old bent oak
weeps leaves

Agnes Eva Savich, USA

a child caresses
a dead ladybug—
the voice of wind

carezze di un bimbo
ad una coccinella morta—
la voce del vento

Margherita Petriccione, Italy

Buddha's shrine—
my musing
on the hovering clouds

स्तूप दर्शन—
मेरो ध्यान मडारिदो
बादलतिर

Manoj Sharma, Nepal

a leaf
for a bookmark
autumn's end

Bryan Rickert, USA

abandoned well . . .
layers of hidden stories
in the moss

ഉപേക്ഷിക്കപ്പെട്ട കിണർ . . .
ങ്ങിന്തിരിക്കുന്ന കമാപാളികൾ
പായലിൽ

Lakshmi Iyer, India

fresh snow
the first font
of the fox sparrow

Jeff Hoagland, USA

oaks chill to the roots pandemic

le querce gelano fino alle radici pandemia

Mariangela Canzi, Italy

an old friend
forgets where I live . . .
early falling snow

Dan Curtis, Canada

Christmas break . . .
a half-drawn heart
on the blackboard

Kanchan Chatterjee, India

winter moon
the koi blows
a perfect enso

Michael Henry Lee, USA

icy winter
the pond
I can't walk around

Wilda Morris, USA

overnight freeze
the woods filled
with shatter

Richard L. Matta, USA

Christmas calving
a flicker
in the barnyard light

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

deep snow—
she plans her garden
with children's crayons

duboki snijeg—
dječjim bojicama
planira svoj vrt

*Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
(translated by D. V. Rozic)*

ice-laden silvergrass
standing tall
after the storm

Matt Snyder, USA

the edge
of a winter dream . . .
tunnel light

冬之夢
的邊緣 . . .
隧道微光

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

wolf moon
whiskers of ice
at the edge of the creek

Laurie Greer, USA

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warm winter day
a cloud of gnats
climbs a sunbeam

Ben Gaa, USA

Himalayas—
all my poems on snow
half true

హిమాలయాలు—
హిమపాతం పెనా పద్మాలన్న
అర్ధ సత్యాలే

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi, India

clearing the patio coyote songs

Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA

winter waves
back and forth
a dead crab

valuri de iarnă
încoace și încolo
un crab mort

Mirela Brăilean, Romania

remains
of a dawn song
scattered feathers

Ravi Kiran, India

winter noon
the rooster finally
finds its voice

Elancharan Gunasekaran, Singapore

our last conversation
ripples frozen
in the pond

Julie Schwerin, USA

crematorium
jackdaws coalesce
in twists of smoke

John Hawkhead, UK (EC)

ice anatomy
examining the veins
of moonlight

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

mantra of leaves
the ashes of her daughter
on the lake

mantra di foglie
le ceneri di sua figlia
sul lago

Carmela Marino, Italy

winter branches
in so many directions
a life

Derek Sprecksel, USA

old snow
at the road's edge . . .
downshifting

Michael Dylan Welch, USA

a tit takes off . . .
rags of snow falling
from the birch bough

sinica odleti . . .
z veje breze padajo
krpe snega

Dimitrij Škrk, Slovenia

scattered bottle tops
full of moonlight
a conscript's farewell

Tim Roberts, New Zealand (EC)

out of
the ostinato
a blue note

Matthew Caretti, American Samoa

parachute packing—
up there somewhere
a star begins to fall

składanie spadochronu—
gdzieś tam w górze
zaczyna spadać gwiazda

Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland (EC)

iridescent clouds
swinging on a bare branch
a child's mask

цветни облаци
на голия клон се люлее
маска на дете

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

cold sunshine
a roe deer the colour
of withered grass

Ernest Wit, Poland

after work
retrieving the day's end
a dog's bone

Mira Walker, Australia

sumi-e lotus
a hope for
early spring

Lori Becherer, USA (EC)

cherry blossoms fall
is it the same in
the metaverse

капе вишневият цвят
дали е така и в
метавселената

Alexander Kostov, Bulgaria (EC)

Editor's Comments (EC) – Haiku

Thank you, dear poets, for sending in a record number of haiku submissions to *cattails!* I enjoyed reading your work but found it very challenging to choose just a few from your beautiful poems.

The last two years have been difficult for most of us, to say the least. In some parts of the world, the pandemic still rages on as I write this. And in other places, we can only hope that our prayers and wishes for peace and hope will be heard. However, human resilience and kindness also come to the fore in troubled times. As the words by John Keats (*To Hope*) goes:

“Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.”

Presented here, are some haiku for you engage with and enjoy.

sumi-e lotus
a hope for
early spring

Lori Becherer, USA (EC)

Lori Becherer shares this simple haiku with a universal thought at its core – hence, it connects instantly. In the cold and bare winter months, what else do we hope for but an early Spring, some warmth, signs of life and colour? The visual of a simple sumi-e lotus flower floats in with the first line and then, in the phrase it glides to the hope in our hearts. Even though the traditional sumi-e would be in shades of black ink, the colour of the lotus seeps into the haiku, along with hope. The lotus is associated with enlightenment, purity, even regeneration in many cultures. Deeper layers in the lotus for those who seek it, in these troubled times.



parachute packing—
up there somewhere
a star begins to fall

składanie spadochronu—
gdzieś tam w górze
zaczyna spadać gwiazda

Eugeniusz Zacharski, Poland (EC)

Eugeniusz Zacharski reaches deep into the reader with the visual of a person packing a parachute. The act of someone using that parachute and diving is linked to a star falling. The second line, “out there somewhere”, with a complete lack of nouns is quite unique. I could not get the image of paratroopers out of my mind, even though it could just be an adventure sports enthusiast using that parachute.



scattered bottle tops
full of moonlight
a conscript's farewell

Tim Roberts, New Zealand (EC)

Tim Roberts brings us a gentle and delicate visual in the way of moonlight in scattered bottle tops. The “scattered bottle tops” themselves are not gentle but the moonlight that they gather makes it a soft image. Then, he leads us to a conscript saying goodbye to friends, family, warmth, comfort, and a life as he/she knew it at peace-time. A very poignant scene and in sync with the times.



crematorium
jackdaws coalesce
in twists of smoke

John Hawkhead, UK (EC)

John Hawkhead's haiku starts strong and direct with a single, five-syllabled noun. In the phrase that follows, Jackdaws which are social birds and often seen in flocks, become one with the twists of smoke from the crematorium's chimney – a very visual image that plays on the greyness of the birds, smoke and death. In the last few years, when news of death has become more common, and all too often numbers on a page, this haiku brought some disturbing realities to the fore – a seemingly simple visual with layers of meaning. I let my mind wander further and rest on how finally, all life coalesces and becomes one with the Universe, whether in the form of smoke, ash or earth.



Jupiter's beard
the snick, snick her pruner
used to make

Jim Chessing, USA (EC)

Jim Chessing brings the Red Valerian (Jupiter's beard) into focus in the first line, and the act of pruning it, in a rather unique second line. The visual in the fragment quickly changes to the aural with the sound of the snick of a pruner. These two lines make for a very cheerful and robust gardening day. And yet with deftness, the poet quickly changes the mood with the third line – “used to make”. If the phrase was – “the snick, snick her pruner makes”, the haiku would still be beautiful. However, the sound that the poet isn't hearing is what elevates the poem – “used to make” and not anymore.



spring morning
the mist lifts off
a sangam

Meera Rehm, UK (EC)

Meera Rehm conjures a morning at a sangam, a confluence of rivers. Spring's mist slowly lifts off the rivers and leads us to visualise the beauty of the waters melding, flowing together. The word 'sangam' instead of confluence is significant and brings in cultural tones. (Sangams are mostly places of religious significance but the word 'confluence' does not bring that same meaning to the poem.) The visual, however, is stunning if you have ever been at the meeting point of two or more rivers.



cherry blossoms fall
is it the same in
the metaverse

капе вишневият цвят
дали е така и в
метавселената

Alexander Kostov, Bulgaria (EC)

Amidst all that is happening around us, this haiku brought a smile and some metaphorical questions. Are there cherry blossoms in the metaverse? Do they fall? When do they fall? Are they as beautiful? Transient? Thank you, for bringing me to think about all this, of which I know so little. What are your thoughts about the metaverse, dear reader?

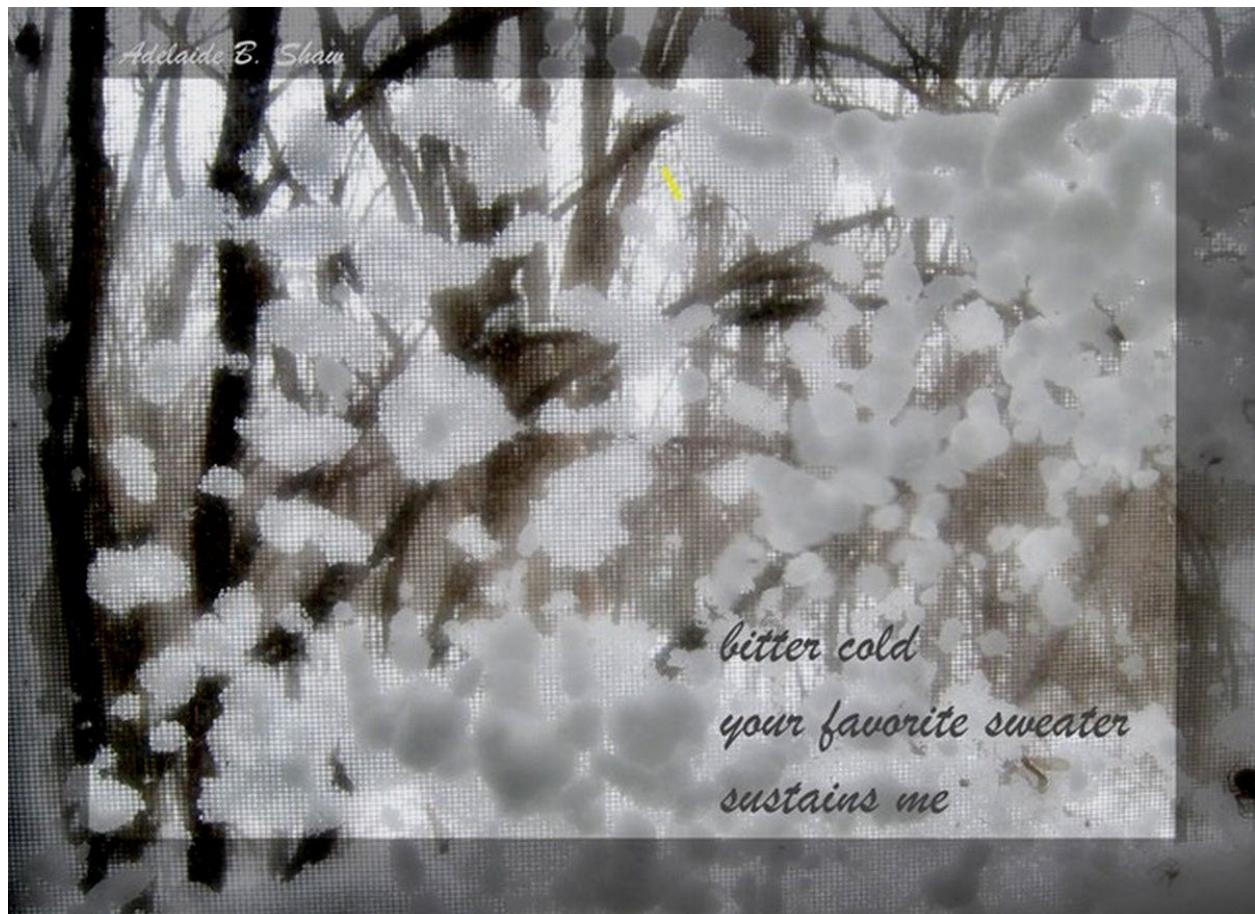
Wishes for peace and prayers for health!

Geethanjali Rajan

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Haiga – Part 1

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA



Alan Peat, UK



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an'ya, USA & Jonatan Pie, Iceland



Anannya Dasgupta - India



immersed
in the moment ...
a water body

anannya dasgupta

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Barbara Kaufmann - USA



Cezar Ciobîcă & Paul Alexandru – Romania



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Senryū



Twilight Reflections on Carlingford Lough
The lights of Omeath, Ireland and Warrenpoint , Northern Ireland

a cafecovidhug
the power
of forgetting

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

a conversation
conducted in hiccups
with the town drunk

Mike Gallagher, Ireland

a hot wind
I take her clothes off
the clothesline

Ernest Wit, Poland

a space filling up . . .
the things we don't say
to each other

almost dark
the dog's new igloo
stands ready

Carol Raisfeld, USA

anniversary—
I clear the year of cobwebs
from my father's shed

Mark Miller, Australia

ant epidemic
my sister stamps her foot
on our parents' grave

Bernadette O'Reilly, Ireland

babysitting
the smell of fresh crayon
beneath the paper

Joshua Gage, USA

baked potato
loaded with sour cream
he tells her it's over

Angela Terry, USA

beside yourself
the half of you
I don't know

Marilyn Fleming, USA

between jobs . . .
sowing yarrow
in my navel

Mariel Herbert, USA

bikini wax
she pulls it off
in one piece

Terri L. French, USA

birdso—
closing the window
on love

Mariel Herbert, USA (EC)

blues night two beer cans tapdancing across beale street

John Zheng, USA

bomb squad another robot bleeds to death

Debbie Strange, Canada

border crossing
hearing new music
in my name

Keith Polette, USA (EC)

childhood echo—
the bitter taste
of a cherry stone

Marta Chocilowska, Poland

church gate
the beggar's reflection
on his mirror shoe

Adjei Agyei-Baah, Ghana/New Zealand

crayon wars
the siblings
choose sides

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams,, USA

cutting through
the boredom of lockdown—
slasher flicks

Ruth Holzer, USA

death . . .
the search
for a euphemism

Keith Evetts, UK

deserted playground
a splash of sparrows
at the slide's end

Ingrid Baluchi, North Macedonia

distancing ends
a stink bug pressed
against the screen

Anna Cates, USA

draft and flame this uneasy friendship

Julie Schwerin, USA (EC)

empty train
blowsthroughourstop
no reason given

Ron Scully, USA

falling tulip petals
mom and I
part ways

Maya Daneva, The Netherlands

fireside . . .
Grandpa's tales
lively as the flames

Gavin Austin, Australia (EC)

first scar
she asks if ugly
is only skin deep

John Hawkhead, UK

fishing date
a slight tug
on my line

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

flame flicker
she stutters
his name

Gavin Austin, Australia

fractured identity he slips in and out of her mind

Debbie Strange, Canada

funeral home
a widow waits
for her husband

Poesy Sestina, USA

grandpa's bear hunt—
heavily armed
with giggles

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

grocery shopping
my eyes become
mother's spectacles

Richa Sharma, India

half-full belly . . .
I tell the moon
how my day was

Ashish Narain, Philippines

her grave
slant of a bare bough
in winter

Ravi Kiran, India

Holi . . .
remaining colours emptied
on the scarecrow

હોળી . . .
વધેલા રંગો ઢોયાં
સ્કેરકો ની ઉપર

Gujarati translation

Lakshmi Iyer, India

honking their way
through the silent retreat
wild geese

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

hospital sheet
his attempt to hide
the handcuffs

Justin Brown, USA

hysterectomy
my children's first home
gone

Poesy Sestina, USA (EC)

instructions other side
instructions other side
flip, flip, flip...

S Denny, USA

just a glance
the road not taken
between us

William Scott Galasso, USA

just two of us
on the empty lake
nothing to break the ice

само ние двамата
на пустото езеро
няма нищо което да разчупи леда

Nadejda Kostadinova, Bulgaria

little Sunday dress
her first funeral
is her own

Bryan Rickert, USA

living off the grid cartographer

Susan Burch, USA

lost cat
I lie on the carpet
in the sun

Brad Bennett, USA

making the coffee
an office manager
with no filters

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA

melting ice
her mother-in-law's
first compliment

Angela Terry, USA

midnight
with the stars . . .
my small nonspeaking part

Keith Evetts, UK (EC)

more than enough plums—
I leave holes in the netting
for birds to get through

Mark Miller, Australia

morning kiss
the coldness
of his chin

Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, USA

new york strip the dancer saucily removes their leg

Robert Beveridge, USA

old maid
it doesn't feel
like a game

Julie Schwerin, USA

old typewriter
rewinding the spool
memory smudges

Minal Sarosh, India

on the freedom side
of barbed wire
desert star

Terri L. French, USA

parking meter—
I feel my time
might be worth more

Michael J. Galko, USA

picnic basket
the young mother
folds up her toddlers

Joshua St. Claire, USA

preferred pronoun
you will always be
my thou

Keith Polette, USA

pulled taut
all his anger
in that one word

Mary McCormack, USA

quiet, crowded train . . .
we try to ignore her
loud tattoos

Anna Eklund-Cheong, France

reflection
in the train window
how I look to them

Quendryth Young, Australia

resurrection sunday
up before
anyone else

Michael Henry Lee, USA

resuscitation—
her first mouth to mouth
in three years

Pris Campbell, USA

sea glass
her well-polished
goodbye

Bryan Rickert, USA

seeds in their packets . . .
I could sleep
until spring

Tony Williams, UK

seven-year itch
a crack
in the river ice

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

she knows how to rattle me maraca player

Susan Burch, USA

shucking oysters
he tells me we're
moving on

Quendryth Young, Australia

sick day—
even the sky falls apart
sometimes

C. X. Turner, UK

slaughtering a goat
the kids play

Jon Hare, USA

so quick
through her lips
spaghetti noodle

Ben Gaa, USA

soon
much too soon
departing geese

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

street bookseller
the smile that follows me
after the purchase

Madhuri Pillai, Australia

tiny house
she squeezes in
her ambitions

Marietta McGregor, Australia

sultry night
the pull then push
of her tide

Ben Gaa, USA

sushi dinner date
rubbing chopsticks
hoping for sparks

Richard L. Matta, USA

switching off life support
we cannot know where
an electron is

John Hawkhead, UK (EC)

taxes
filing away
the pain

Christine Eales, UK

that painted ceiling
some lives too
best from a distance

Alasdair Paterson, UK

the swan dive
I envisage—
belly flop

Rohan Buettel, Australia

three stormy days
each one with a new name
we call a truce

Mary White, Ireland

total eclipse—
I block you on all
social media

C. X. Turner, UK

Veteran's Day
he relives the war
in faded photos

Padmini Krishnan, UAE

up the stairs . . .
in my friend's hand
parts of my wheelchair

po stepenicama . . .
u rukama prijatelja
dijelovi kolica

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia
Translated by D. V. Rozic

what's not said
about what's not said
Mother's Day

Brad Bennett, USA

wishing well drought conditions prevail

Pris Campbell, USA

wondering if she wonders
what I look like
blind dog

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA

your name on my lips
somewhere in another world
I know you hear me

Glenda Cimino, Ireland

Editor's Choice (EC) - Senryu

It has been a great honour and pleasure to read the senryu submissions for this issue. While haiku resonate with the seasons of the year, senryu rely on the seasons of human emotion. Our experience of the world may vary according to our location and circumstances, but senryu appear to offer a universal language for the human condition. I think that's why I find myself returning to the form time and again. Below are several pieces which caught my attention on multiple readings. I hope my admiration of these pieces will encourage you to reinvestigate them.

switching off life support
we cannot know where
an electron is

John Hawkhead, UK

John Hawkhead takes us on an extraordinary journey. It's starting point is a bleak one. There is no guidance to the reader about the circumstances of the patient, but we understand there is nothing more that can be done. Following this information comes a phrase which fully captured my imagination. It appears to reference the uncertainty principle, which is fascinating in itself. However, the juxtaposition of this 'phrase' with the initial 'fragment' set up multiple chains of thought in my mind. There is the 'death' of the machine as it is switched off and there is the death of the patient. The cessation of electrical activity within their brain, which we believe is responsible for consciousness. These ideas lead me back to the wording within the 'phrase'. I picture an adult explaining ideas of death to a child, and the child trying to navigate its way through unfamiliar terrain, perhaps even touching on the nature of a soul and its continuation after death.



birdso--
closing the window
on love

Mariel Herbert, USA

Mariel Herbert's poem is almost concrete in its presentation. The reader is presented with an abrupt end to what was probably a beautiful experience. There is a visceral and visual power to the first line which is only strengthened by what follows. Perhaps the story being related refers to a different age, when people spoke to each other in person, without the aid of technology. Although the word closing is used in the second line, the presentation of the first line puts me in mind of a slammed window. An abrupt and deliberate end. There are no reasons offered for that end, which leaves us, the reader, a space to ponder.



border crossing
hearing new music
in my name

Keith Polette, USA

Keith Polette has conjured a situation which directly addresses my fascination with words. As I read the setting, the narrator is entering a new country and meets an official with an unfamiliar accent. The official has no experience of the name they see written before them, so makes an educated guess. And, while it may be a good guess, the narrator hears something new in their own name. A name they must have heard a great many times before. Imagining that possibility is wonderful, but is there even more to consider? This feels like a lesson; even in the most familiar and mundane of circumstances, there is still something new to discover and marvel at.



draft and flame this uneasy friendship

Julie Schwerin, USA

Julie Schwerin has offered us only six words here, but they paint an incredibly complex picture for me. Friendships inevitably have their ups and downs. Here we are directed towards one which seems likely to be more turbulent than most. Alongside it, we are offered the parallel of draft and flame, a pairing which conjures a remarkable host of images. If the draft is very weak the flame is steady, but as the draft increases, the flame struggles to maintain integrity. Ultimately, if the draft is very strong, the flame will be extinguished. Do any of your friendships conjure such turbulent images?



fireside...

Grandpa's tales
lively as the flames

Gavin Austin, Australia

Gavin Austin gives us more incendiary images. In the first line, we are not told what sort of fire to consider. Is it an open fire or a wood burner in a house? Perhaps it's a campfire, whose flames leap high into a dark sky. Whichever, these scenarios all suggest comfort. In counterbalance to the domesticity of the setting comes adventure. Grandpa is telling stories and they're not gentle ones. They crack and spit like knotty logs, blaze and shimmer, and cast curious shadows out into the coldness beyond.



midnight
with the stars...
my small nonspeaking part

Keith Evetts, UK

Keith Evetts takes us outside on a quieter night. The grandeur of the cosmos laid out above us. Vast bonfires of elemental gases coruscating. Their lights reaching across incredible distances. Is it humbling to see such vast energies and scales of magnitude across space? Many people would say so. What I like so much about this piece is we are not 'told' what to think. We are 'shown' the vastness of the visible universe and left to wonder at our place within it.



hysterectomy
my children's first home
gone

Poesy Sestina, USA

Poesy Sestina takes us to the immediacy of the human condition. A personal inner space. She relates a surgical procedure which many women experience. We would expect such a surgery to leave the patient feeling incomplete. And, while a sense of loss is evident, that loss is presented indirectly. Her children's first home has gone. Somehow that description provides a more profound sense of absence. Despite the obvious connection between mother and child, a link has been lost.

David J Kelly

cattails — April 2022

Haiga – Part 2

Curt Pawlisch - USA

**Easter morning
the sepulcher open—
surf upon the sand**



image/text/Curt Pawlisch

cattails — April 2022

Dan Hardison – USA



*awaiting
the end of day . . .
night watchman*

Dan Hardison

cattails — April 2022

Debbie Strange - Canada



shoulder season
it's not what you think
it is

words/image©DStrange

Dian Duchin Reed - USA

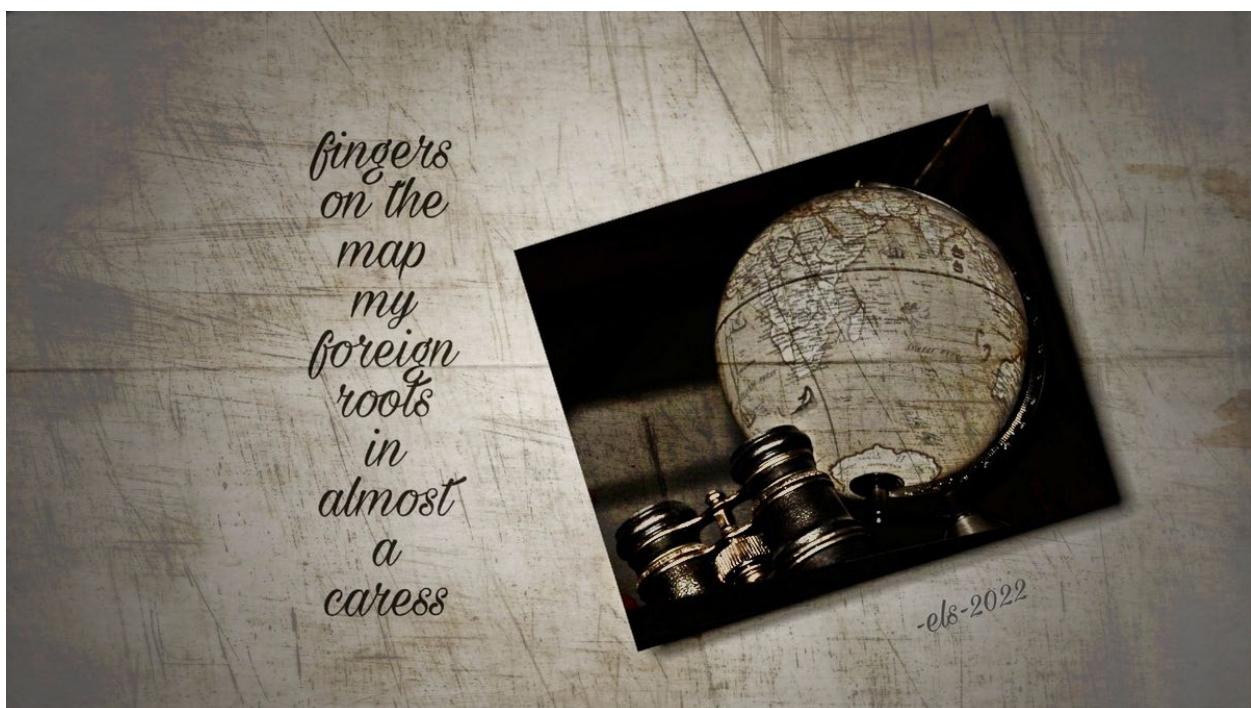


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Dimitrij Škrk - Slovenia



Elisa Theriana - Indonesia



cattails — April 2022

Tanka



The Path of Winter

a flock of birds
startled
by the sound of gunshot
dividing the sky
into now and then

Stefanie Bucifal, Germany (EC)

bird song
a fresh day unfurls
yet I cling
to the night before
and the longing it brings

चिड़ियों की चहचहाहट
एक नये दिन का खिलना
मगर मैं बीती रात
और उसके साथ आयी
चाहत के आलिंगन में हूँ

Teji Sethi, India

I feel its body
still warm in my hands
red breast fading
the robin
that used to sing

Maureen Edden, UK

I awake
after a night of love
disillusioned
a moth flaps at the window
in long fingers of sun

Carol Raisfeld, USA

something about
bare trees reaching
into the predawn sky
capillaries of darkness
guiding the light

Jon Hare, USA

a tree-lined side street
glows in the warmth
of the autumn sun
it takes more than a *w*
to make emptiness whole

Jim Chessing, USA

material things
food, booze, drugs, or
love
how we choose to fill
the holes inside us

Susan Burch, USA

tiny arms swing
and mouth babbles
I wake up
to a twitching womb
and an empty cradle

Padmini Krishnan, UAE

we wrap
our arms around
each other . . .
sun dogs embrace
the ice-splintered sky

Debbie Strange, Canada

under the roof
the chirping of swallows
comes and goes ...
but it's not so easy
to let go of my pain

sotto il tetto
il cinguettio di rondini
viene e va ...
ma non è così facile
lasciar andare il dolore

Daniela Misso, Italy

I have lost
all I have lost . . .
how quietly
snow falls
from the pines

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

after losing you
amidst this pandemic
day and night
my voice wanders
in the space between stars

Hifsa Ashraf, Pakistan

pandemic blues –
the spirit sags
and the pen slows
until my mind opens
a door in the wall

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

as does the moon
you come in and out
of my life
in this world of dreams
within dreams

Diana Saltoon, USA

dreams break
through the thunderstorm
skin on fire
I wake in the flashing light
to see your back still turned

Pris Campbell, USA

wildfire
flows down the mountainside
towards the house ...
in our burning garden
the roses bloom flame-red

Richard Kakol, Australia

the last blossoms
finally fall
with little fanfare
I dump the ashes
of a solitary man

Bryan Rickert, USA

memories
taking the place
of dreams –
every day I change further
into what I will become

Ruth Holzer, USA

a broken bowl
repaired with lacquer
gold-tinged
all these cracks
on my life's journey

Richard Kakol, Australia

grandfather
says there is gold
in the quartz
the hammer says
more broken glass

Joshua St. Claire, USA

once I painted
a golden griffin
on the clock's glass door –
how long since I've heard
the chiming of magic

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

copper chimes
barely tinkle
in the slight breeze –
I, too, need a strong wind
to sway my stand

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

on the old jetty
I run my hand along
cast iron fencing ...
eye a summer crinoline
a black ball and chain

Margaret Owen Ruckert, Australia

sometimes
i choose to believe
your endless lies
i need the peace
to plot my escape

Tom Staudt, Australia

morning light
glistens on spider silk
spun branch to twig
once there were bonds
that bound us life and limb

Gavin Austin, Australia

old soul
of a giant tortoise
teach me
the wisdom and strength
of my ancestors

Marilyn Fleming, USA

here you see
the grave of the richest man
in the churchyard
in the summer heat
his flowers dry up, too

Pitt Buerken, Germany

two yellow roses
on a granite headstone
how smooth
life was
in your presence

Richa Sharma, India

death
when I think of it
resembles
dandelion's fluff
gently scattered by the wind

Gail Brooks, USA

wherever they are
I feel at peace –
at the cemetery
rainbow windmills
spin in a summer breeze

Anne Louise Curran, New Zealand

the bliss
of go-slow healing
time to be still
and again
be still some more

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

waves ripple
under a low-flying pelican -
wind carries
hook, line, and sinker
farther from the pier

Richard Tice, USA

the groan of ropes
on the barnacled pilings
the perfect moment
we will one day look for
... will one day need

Ron Scully, USA

morning trail
a brief stop
to view the web
interlaced
with sparkling dew

John Zheng, USA

a butterfly
folding and unfolding
its blue wings ...
to stay or to go
the question holds me still

Chen-ou Liu, Canada (EC)

earthy smell
the petals of a flower
still closed
a butterfly rises
from the child's hands

Carmela Marino, Italy

my little son
scoops the water
from a spring ...
his fingers
dripping moonlight

David He, China

longing to go
beyond the moon
to reach
the domain of stars ...
the child in me

Kala Ramesh, India

books
you left behind
collecting dust ...
even the autumn moon
looks smudged today

Kala Ramesh, India

this morning
a host of sparrows
on the dewy grass
my footprints overlay
their tiny prints

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

footprints march
beside the icy trail
I chose
the safer path
crushing frosted blades of grass

Lenore English, USA

you insist on proof
irrefutable facts
yet melt
at the wonder
of a snowflake

Joanna Ashwell, UK

the chance
to have a child
gone
with my hysterectomy
... ahead just empty years

Keitha Keyes, Australia

you and I
have long ended
only letters
remain from days when roses
fell into our open hands

Pris Campbell, USA

even in this forlorn
corner of the world
a street lamp
outshines
the whole milky way

Ryland Shengzhi Li, USA

on the way home
nothing left to talk about
between us ...
the phone lines sagging
with late night snow

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

buried deep
in a used book store
the volume
of poetry I gave her
when we were still in love

Bryan Rickert, USA

the customer's story
his daughter
ill and disabled
taken by darkness
or into the light

Simon Wilson, UK

night of the full moon
our long-awaited rendezvous
fails again
just the empty shore
the sound of waves

Diana Saltoon, USA

distant lights
on the far off shore
second thoughts
I've gone too far
to turn back now

Marilyn Fleming, USA

just for once
I want to shout
to the mountains
that in this lifetime
I came here

Bhawana Rathore, India

storm-torn
from a eucalypt
my walking stick
holding the birdsong
and susurrus of leaves

Hazel Hall, Australia

we had hoped
to keep him one more day –
Mother and I
sit on the bed with Father
lying still between us

Ruth Holzer, USA

a moist breeze
sways the pine needles ...
mother's face
blossoms with the news
of your homecoming

Neena Singh, India

I tuck dreams
of long-lost smiles
under my pillow
this world
only I can travel

Mary Davila, USA

an ancient richness
of a culture
not mine
the depth of light
in her smiling eyes

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

so close
to falling
so close
to love
i remain silent

Pamela A. Babusci, USA

in silence
she crochets by the fire
lacy snowflakes
drift softer than breath
onto her apron

Debbie Strange, Canada

like a ruby
in the sunlight
my wife scatters light
and lifts my spirits
– it must be love

Simon Wilson, UK

only now seeing
the world as he saw it
my son's moved out
and left six pairs
of designer sunglasses

Jim Chessing, USA

at the source
of a river I sit
trying in vain
to silence words
long since spoken

Srinivas S, India

the river
travels beyond the moon
I stay fixed
mixing up moonbeams
with the winter night

Jeanne Cook, USA

seeking
starrier horizons
time and again
I find myself
returning home

Srinivas S, India

mollusk
there in a window
where I work
it is the same
without me

Ash Evan Lippert, USA

the windows
need a good clean –
my views
on the outside world
are blurred by sadness

Keitha Keyes, Australia

preparing
the family home
for sale ...
I pack the memories
room by silent room

Gavin Austin, Australia

mother
in the old silver frame
so near and yet ...
I try to see in her eyes
the stories untold

Neena Singh, India

a flash of starlight
through a window pane
of the nursing home ...
on her nightstand
the last flicker of a candle

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia (EC)

of our thoughts
so much is left unsaid
and yet we move
like passing clouds ...
no end and no beginning

Lakshmi Iyer, India

Editor's Choices (EC) – Tanka

a flash of starlight
through a window pane
of the nursing home ...
on her nightstand
the last flicker of a candle

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

This tanka may be speaking of the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effect on residents of nursing homes around the world. It could, however, be open to other interpretations, equally valid. We don't know who the narrator is, but it feels like an adult son or daughter (perhaps both) sitting with their mother in her final hours. They notice the starlight and are comforted by the beauty of the image. The word *pane* is unnecessary, perhaps, but the word may enter the reader's subconscious mind as *pain* for the residents, their families and their caregivers.

The ellipsis leads the reader to pause a moment, imagine the scene, and feel the emotions that arise. Line 4 changes our focus from the vast sky beyond the window to a small table beside this woman's bed. The word *nightstand* is a good choice. Not only is it a rather standard feature in many hospital-like settings, it also echoes the 'n' in *window*, *pane*, and *nursing*.

Line 5 strengthens the emotional component of this heartfelt tanka. We get the impression that the metaphorical interpretation for *the last flicker of a candle* is far more important than the stated reality. Candles may not even be allowed in this nursing home, but the image created is powerful – even if it stretches the truth.

Thank you, Ivan, for submitting this poignant tanka, and focusing our attention so beautifully on the last moments of a loved one's life.



a butterfly
folding and unfolding
its blue wings ...
to stay or to go
the question holds me still

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

This tanka opens with a very peaceful image, with the ellipsis inviting the reader to sit back and enjoy the vision and the mood it creates. There's no rush to finish reading and move on to something else. Perhaps we're drawn to blue because it's a favourite colour, or because it can be perceived as sadness on the one hand or the wonder of vast skies or seas on the other.

We can consider why the butterfly is performing this action. To dry its wings after emerging from its cocoon? To cool off? Because it simply feels good? We continue reading, hoping to find an answer to our question. Instead, we discover the poem's narrator has no answer! The word *still* can be read as either *staying in one place* or as *staying for an ever-longer period of time*. Both readings seem valid.

The closing couplet is an effective metaphor for all kinds of decisions we make throughout our lives. Do we stay in school or drop out in order to travel? Remain in a relationship that's turned sour or seek out more healthy connections? Take a chance on a change in occupation or stay in a job that pays well but doesn't give us pleasure?

The opening lines suggest the narrator is taking time to consider the options. There's no rush for a decision, just a balanced, thoughtful approach – folding and unfolding, staying or going. The question is all the more powerful, holding our attention for a little longer and giving us a reason to believe that the final decision will be the best possible.

Thanks, Chen-ou, for giving us the opportunity to contemplate and enjoy this tanka.



a flock of birds
startled
by the sound of gunshot
dividing the sky
into now and then

Stephanie Bucifal, Germany

Stephanie's tanka begins with a rather neutral but easy-to-imagine scene from nature. Birds can be found in any season all over the world. Although a single word often feels too weak to hold our attention for one line, the word *startled* gains power and strength when standing alone. As readers we wonder what has startled the birds and we're likely surprised by the new challenge Stephanie brings to our attention with *the sound of gunshot* in line 3.

Along with the auditory sense, we have a visual image of a flock of birds breaking up. At the time of this writing, it could easily be a metaphor for the situation in Ukraine and the deep divisions among the world's inhabitants. Families are being torn apart. Many are fleeing for safety. Others remain – either through necessity or a sense of duty.

The closing couplet can be interpreted in two ways. We can see *now* as *in this moment*, while *then* could suggest the past or the future, as in *it was* or *it will be*.

This tanka reads smoothly and includes effective sibilance. The images are clear and easily imagined, with the first and last lines acting as bookends for the huge story that lies between them. All in all, a strong tanka, speaking eloquently of another world challenge.

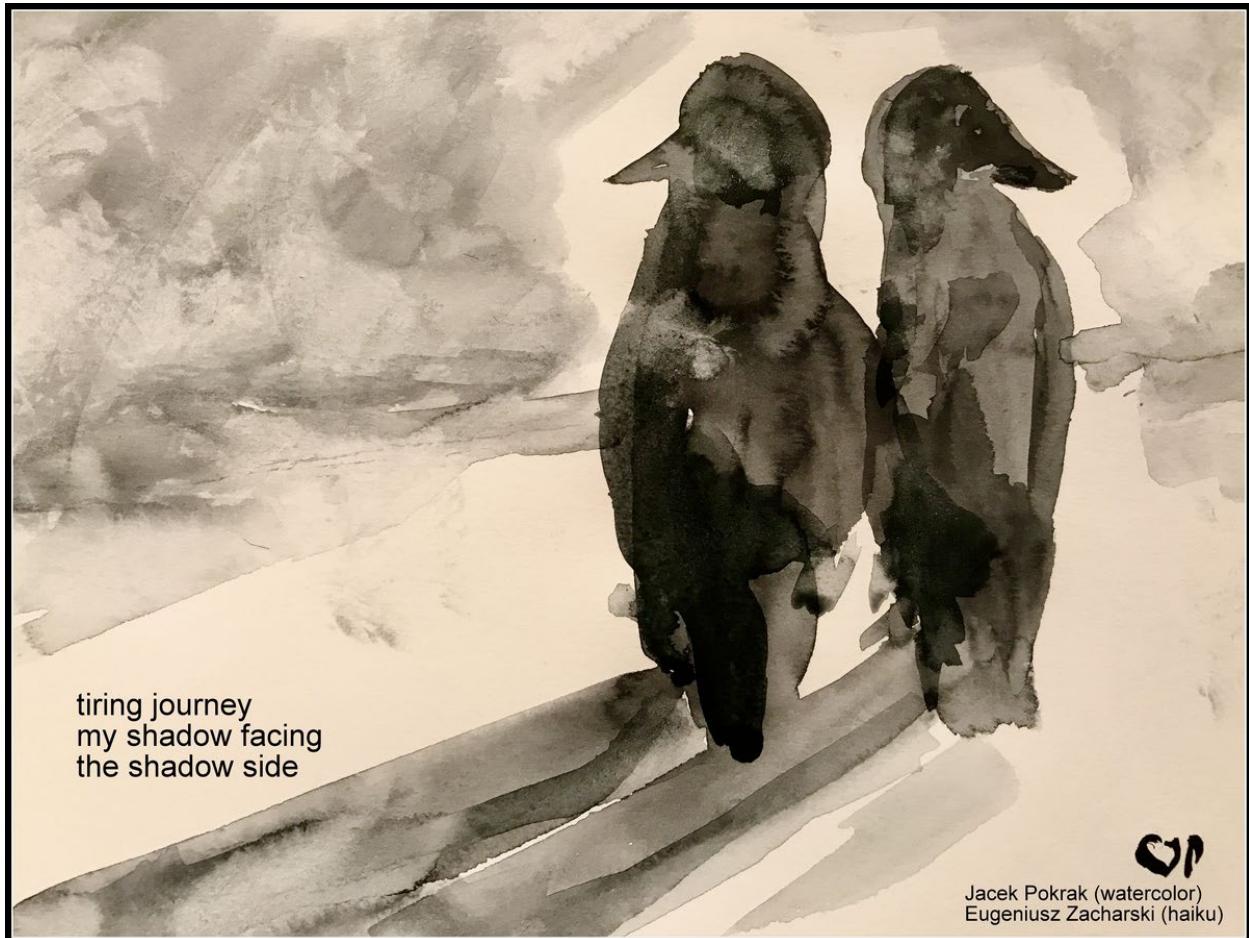
Thank you, Stephanie, for sharing *a flock of birds* with your fellow *cattail* poets.

Susan Constable

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Haiga – Part 3

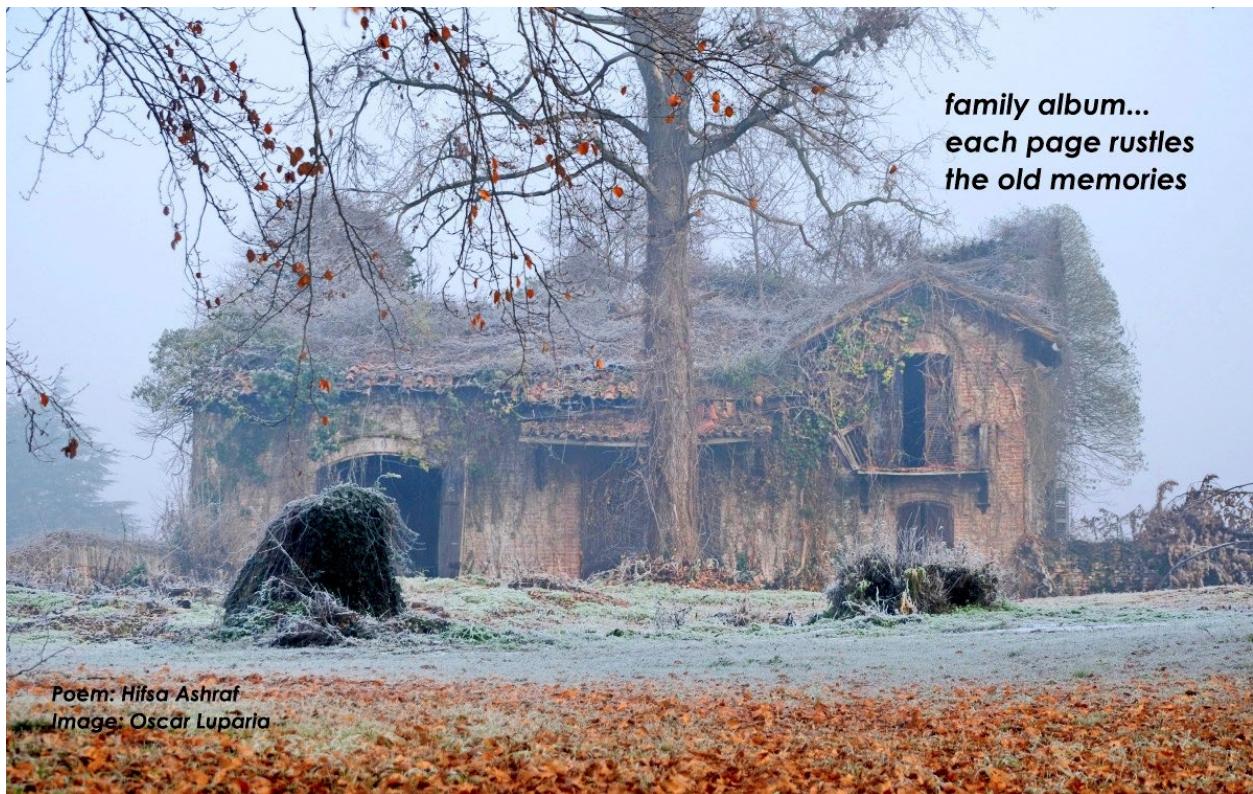
Eugeniusz Zacharski & Jacek Pokrak – Poland



tiring journey
my shadow facing
the shadow side

JP
Jacek Pokrak (watercolor)
Eugeniusz Zacharski (haiku)

Hifsa Ashraf – Pakistan & Oscar Luparia – Italia



Ivan Gaćina - Croatia



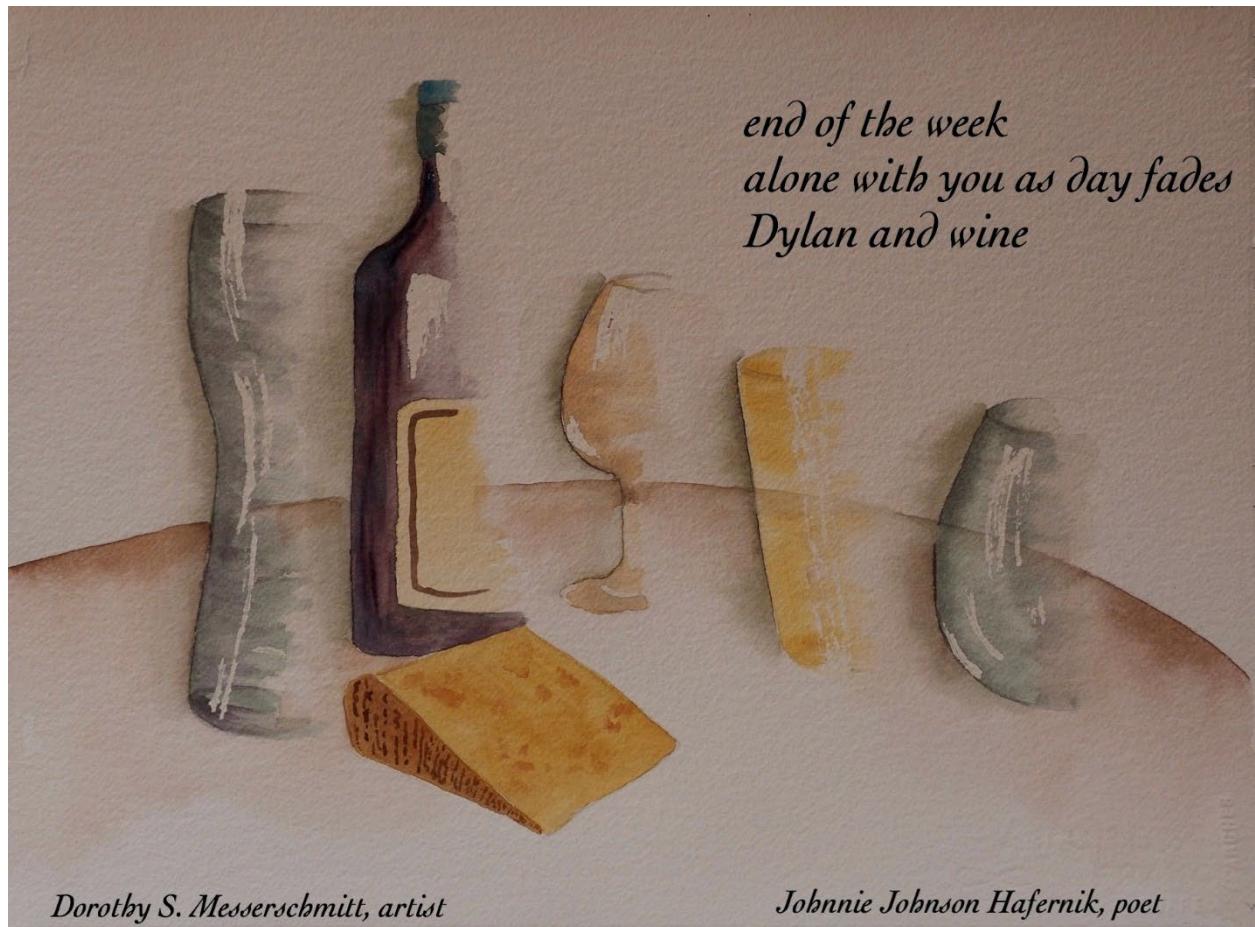
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Jenny Fraser - New Zealand



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Johnnie Johnson Hafernix & Dorothy S. Messerschmitt - USA

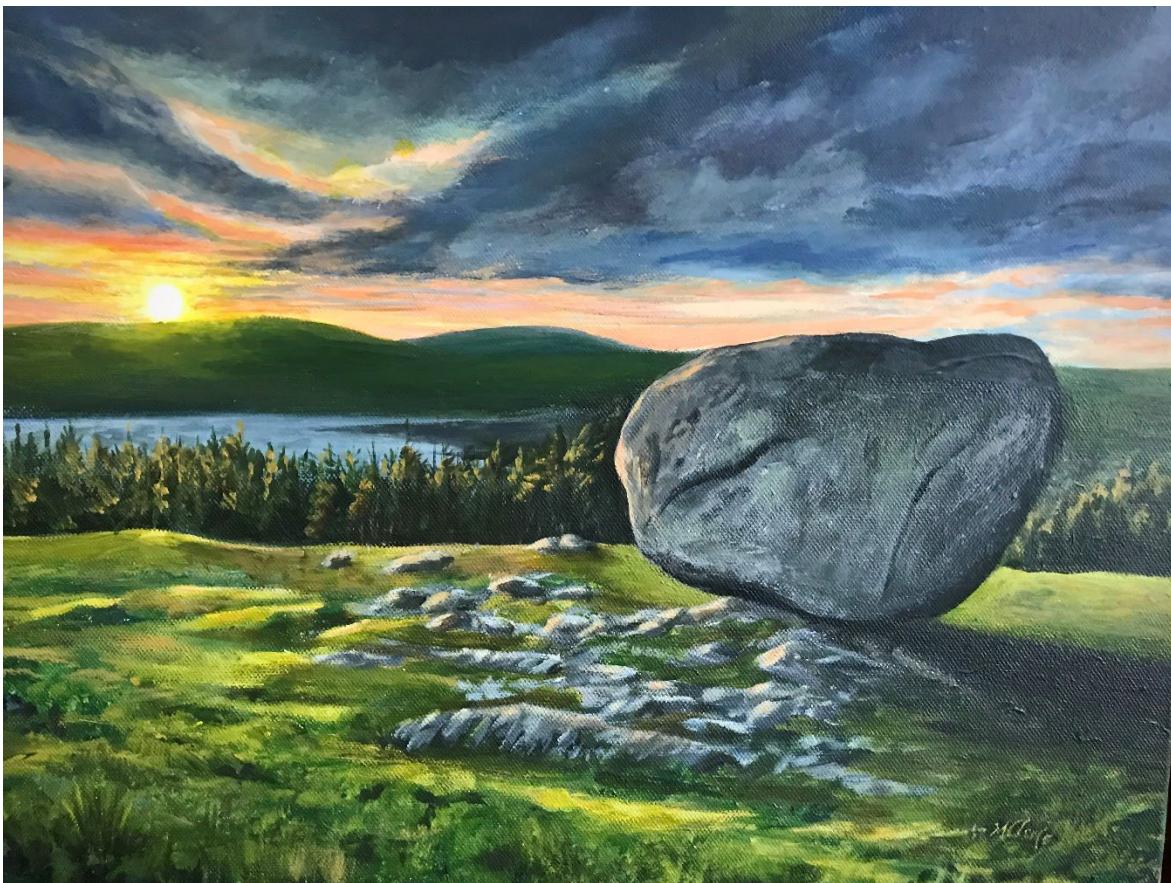


Julie Schwerin – USA



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Haibun



Sunset from 'An Cloch Mór', Mourne Mountains

The Collection

Diana Teneva, Bulgaria (EC)

We collect everything — a bus ticket that will later unleash painful memories . . . a past we have already lived, a future that is yet to come . . . words we have been in, words that shelter us now, words that will bury us, and they will be here even after us . . . roses that bloom even after mom, the house that will remain after dad . . .

We collect, and we don't even know where we will store these pieces of memory — whether in our past days or our bodies or in some part of the world where we will find ourselves by chance . . . We just follow the traces of lost time, we take here — there a piece, just as the hungry one takes pieces of fruit to quench his thirst for what has not happened yet.

where am I going
with this flower dress . . .
strawberry moon

Slipping

Jenny Fraser, New Zealand

Sometimes the moment dissolves into unset jelly, when
the fluid suddenly rises and what's been there
all along gathers dimension, gains depth and relief. Spills
light . . .

waking from a dream
a sculpted garden wahine
stirs

The Sorcery of Matter

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA (EC)

Deep in the heart of the wood, I have lost my bearings. I rest on a rotting log netted with yellow threads of decay. I imagine the shuttle-pulse of life within those creeping, seeking threads, let my mind slip inside to be borne along on streaming cytoplasm. No cell membranes bar the way. A slime mold is just a blob of living matter—no cells, no tissues, no nervous system, no brain.

But if you shock it with cold air, it somehow remembers the timing of the blasts, and recoils just before the next one is due. Offer it tidbits of food arranged like the map of cities, and it mimics the road-and-rail network linking them. Place it in a maze and it navigates efficiently . . . without a brain. Meanwhile, I'm still searching for the path.

mind
the stardust flowing
in my veins

Existence

Aparna Pathak, India

The book was about black holes. I bought it at a book fair when I was a ten-year-old. Since then, black holes have fascinated me. They say it is impossible to escape from their gravitational field. Once you enter it, you lose the entire trace of your existence.

teeing area . . .

preparing for an ace
in the hole

Crazy Xλ Street

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

On the hung inverted plaque was the inscription “Crazy Xλ Street”. Although I drank a few extra glasses of wine, my first thought was that it was a joke. The weird label awakened my brain, taking me back to my student days.

The puzzle looked like the Rubik's cube. Crows flew out of the broken window pane of the abandoned house and white mice ran out of a hole in the wall.

The situation was not clearer even after an apple from the singing tree fell on my head. Obviously, it was time for me to learn a few more lessons.

The morning prayer of lost souls lay ahead of me, and the snow swallowed my ideas like a living organism. I found the last hope in a golden key around my neck. I tried to unlock the inscription on the mysterious plaque and return to the infinite loop, a beginning with no end.

cruising . . .
my memories sail
among stars

SCYTHE

Dr Brijesh Raj, India

palace ruins
the lingering light
of sparklers past

They are getting long in the tooth, the cloud-eyed Lama and this Diwali day. A stray diya on his path only throws up more shadows. He shelters beneath an old Peepal, bearded and embraced tightly by ligneous opportunists. Branches part to reveal a brooding swirl of kites in the distance. The monk intones an ancient chant. Adjacent trees shiver and hiss, leaning menacingly closer. Dried leaves skitter and scrape before an unseen breath. The ulcerated rockface boundary exhales the echoes of silenced song.

dark night
the slow growing smiles
of inner demons

The Peepal stretches its arms into a sky emptied of dreams. Leaves blanket the still form beneath. Raptors move in for a closer look.

screech of parakeets
coconut fronds
nod back

population 15

Tim Gardiner, UK

Mitake is not even on a map. It's sunk in mountain mist much of the year. I hate it. I hate the neighbours. All they do is complain about my dog's incessant barking. No-one will miss their bitter tongues. Mother said they can't even write a proper haiku.

pinned note
the strict rage
of 5-7-5

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yamaguchi_arson_and_murders

Stifling Air

Kala Ramesh, India

The owner of the slaughter house stands outside with the receipt bill, counting the goats tied to a pole.

I watch as a large man tries to pull a full-grown female goat out of his van. She refuses to budge. Does she sense that she is being dragged to have her throat cut?

autumn nightfall
shredding images I don't
want to remember

Trapped

Bryan Rickert, USA

We all file into one of the elevators at the Sears Tower, at the time, the world tallest building. It is huge and holds, to my ten-year-old eyes, about 100 people. The elevator attendant's job is to give the crowd a history lesson about its construction during the sixty second ride to the top. With a slight German accent and an enormous smile, the older man launches into his memorized speech. When he reaches out to push the button for the Observation Level, I see it on his arm. The tattoo. Carelessly placed, sloppy, and fading. Not an image. Not a name, but numbers. I had only seen that in pictures and on TV. Here, in person, meeting this Holocaust survivor had a whole other affect on me.

claustrophobia
the last breath
we all share

Thin Ice

Lew Watts, USA

For the first few months, I held my breath each morning like a King Canute of dawn, convinced that I could slow things down enough to heal the world. But eventually the tide rushed in and all became a blur, days racing forward, then weeks, as though I were wishing away the last years of my life. By then, the drink had taken hold.

body clock
I set the alarm
to shivers

Last week, after an easterly roughed up the lake, the wind shifted and the mercury fell to zero. At night, strips of slush drifted offshore. By morning, the inshore was clear and stirred to a gray syrup. Each day I watched the lake, felt my pulse slow in my bones. Now, with the wind died to a hush, the water is freezing into pad-like plates. In between, it heaves and wallows, slowing by the hour. Soon it will stop, forever.

no longer shaking the meniscus of gin

Ad Lib

Hazel Hall, Australia

ticking clock
the familiar odour
of burnt toast

Our mother gets up early. Makes four lunches. Two rounds for each of us and three for Dad. She wraps the sandwiches in grease proof paper and puts each lunch in a paper bag with a piece of fruit. Sometimes she pops in a piece of home-made cake as well.

bright spring day
a copper full of whites
and laundry blues

Then she calls us to hurry and get ready for breakfast. The table is already set, a last chore the night before. After we have left for school, Mum washes up, dries the dishes and makes the beds. She runs the carpet sweeper over floors in the upper part of the house. Once weekly the kitchen oven is scrubbed until spotless. On other days she washes, irons, shops, bakes, sews, darns, mends, recycles old clothing, cleans the silver, dusts, and weeds the garden. At night in bed she pores over literary classics.

wrung out
she props herself up
with tea and a Bex

On Wednesdays when we come home from school Mum is on her knees cleaning the linoleum in the kitchen and bathroom. She gives us each a job. Peel the potatoes. Shuck the peas. Set the table. We want to play. We complain.

uni scholarship –
the bank clerk salary
her folks preferred

After dinner more jobs are allocated. Washing up. Drying dishes. Putting the dishes away. We grizzle.

chipped mirror—
another self
looking back

When we are older our mother enrolls at the same university where my brother and I are studying. Students call her “quaint”. Say she is “the salt of the earth.” She graduates with a Bachelor of Arts and enrolls in a Masters before cancer claims her life.

breaking free—
a female eunuch
not her thing

—————

Bex was an analgesic powder used for headaches during the twentieth century

I am a Canadian

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

"I will not sit down. I will not shut up. I will not comply. I want my country back. The True North strong and free . . ." sticking his head out of the window, a trucker chants while driving down the street to Parliament Hill.

Between the intersection transformed into a mosh pit and Parliament buildings plastered with "no more vax pass," "fake news," and "the Great Resist" signs, a white man holds up a giant maple flag. He calls out to a convoy of trucks streaming down the street, "Freedom, Canada United."

Under the slate-grey sky, downtown Ottawa echoes loudly with chants and slogans steeped in the language of the American Revolution. The GoFundMe page for freedom convoy truckers is showered with right-wing American donations.

Golden Arches
in the storefront window
a homeless teen

a high-rise shadow
on the cardboard shelter
omicron winter

I Stand with Ukraine

Cyndi Lloyd, USA

CNN footage sweeps across a rubble-strewn street in Kyiv, landing on a photograph of a toddler who's wearing what could be a yellow birthday bow. I wonder about the poets who belong to our haikai community. *Are they safe and well?*

I can't stop thinking: *All that loss. So many people separated and displaced. And for what?*

Later, I learn that a six-year-old boy was killed. My mind returns to that child in the picture. *Is that family safe?*

patches of blue
above the artillery smoke
the sun too

Kindness

John Budan, USA

It is a gradual climb up the same hill on which my grandfather marched on the last day of his life. A lone sycamore tree that bore witness is dropping its frozen brown leaves, reminding me of the twenty-three thousand mangled soldiers that dropped on these farm fields. Down below, I hear the peaceful rippling water of Antietam Creek, which flowed crimson, saturated with the blood of fathers, sons, and husbands. As I reach the crest, the old Dunker church looms as it did on that day in 1862, when General “Stonewall” Jackson approached it on his horse. Eating a fresh peach while surveying the carnage, he turned and addressed his aide, “God has been very kind to us this day.”

museum sword
rusted memories
best forgotten

Fruits of the Earth

Sushama Kapur, India

Emerging from the cold storeroom at the back of the house, I am gleeful. I have just finished arranging the produce from the kitchen garden on a very large table. As I almost skip back to the kitchen, my mind becomes busy with how I can use it all for the annual family lunch. After all the bragging I had done about this new hobby of mine, I must not let my vegetable patch down.

the pause—
pickled beets sing
in their marinade

Ever since my brother-in-law's untimely death in a car crash, my sister and little nephew have been living with us. I am always looking for ways to bring a smile in her quiet eyes.

breath by breath out of the mid-air storm

Four hours later, the air humming with talk and laughter, I note the empty plates on the dining table and the very happy faces around it. Taking a quick glance at my sister, I see she is intently chatting with the grands . . .

tap on my arm
nephew wants to see
my green thumb

The All of One Day

Glenn G. Coats, USA

I want to sweep out the garage, but the girls lay out the army blanket; unload plastic tea cups and saucers. Ask me to spread jelly on crackers and to mix up some lemonade. Soon the morning is gone.

winter picnic
a patch of sun
on the carpet

I hope to polish the counter-tops with car wax, but the girls pester me about the chickens. I tell them to reach slowly, one hand on a chicken's back, other goes underneath. I use a football to demonstrate. "Hug them, but not too tightly," I say. Each girl takes a turn, holding one and petting her like a puppy. Soon it is mid-afternoon and we return the birds to their coop.

braided sunlight
shimmers
in the rainbow mane

The girls remember the box of stones, ones gathered at the creek. "Can we paint them?" they ask. I squeeze dabs of color on wax paper. They dapple some like ponies. Others have stripes. Moon and stars. Fish and boats. My job is to print names on each finished piece. I set the stones by the fireplace to dry.

in and out of dreams hummingbirds

It is getting dark and I haven't started supper. My daughters flip through stacks of books, pick ones out for bedtime. "Three each," I remind them. Enough to stretch a while into the night.

to cross one more river evening lullaby

Fountain of Youth

Pris Campbell, USA

My friend sees my tears but they carry no meaning. We stand next to the fountain in front of my old college library. I stood in that same spot when I was sixteen, first time away from home, future unfolding. Lost in innocence, not yet saddled with loss or body broken from an illness of over three decades.

How can one explain how memories can rip your heart apart??

late camp-out
long after mosquitos leave
the fire burns down

Return to Socerb

Dimitrij Škrk, Slovenia

The castle is still here, on the rocky edge, quiet and in the distance. In my memory it is much bigger and also the distances are much further . . . Everything is so shaky now.

The sound of the bora through the strings of the pines remains the same. The view too down the cliffs to the sea.

little schoolboy
unfolds his sandwich
confusion in his eyes

Amongst my Uncles

Simon Wilson, UK

the breeze
scented by roses
— a buzzard calls

The vicar tips one tube of ashes into the hole. She has slightly more trouble with the second tube, which is heavier and less cooperative.

“That'll be our Jim.” mutters my uncle. He is ninety-one and is entitled to find humour in death. My sister confirms that the second tube was indeed Dad.

The vicar says some words about resurrection and about my parents being part of the village's history. The former is possibly correct, the latter definitely is. They met at the village school, which is next door to the church where we are standing, they were bombed there in 1940, and twelve years after that they married in the church. Seventy years later, still together, we are laying them to rest.

I stare across the Ribble valley to the hills beyond. I fished in that river with my grandfather and I left the skin of my knees in the school playground, where I was taught by teachers who had taught my parents. Beyond the first set of hills lies a village with the name of one of my uncles on the war memorial. Another uncle ran the village pub. Behind me, by the church doorway, another uncle's name is carved on the war memorial.

compost heap
the raindrops sparkle
on dead flowers

Window

Subir Ningthouja, India (EC)

Images flash in my mind as I scrub my 'extra' shaving blade handle. I remember buying it that late evening on the way to the hostel. The shopkeeper was about to pull down the shutters. Three and a half decades ago.

I wonder if it recalls my shaking hands before the exams, the times it fell before the various viva voces. Does it still hear the palpitations of my first date? Feel the warm confidence of my digits in anticipation of movie outings and cricket matches?

I don't know why I still keep it as an 'extra' with occasional scrubbings. I haven't used it all these years.

daybreak
a birdsong finds me
murmuring

Stay the Night

John Zheng, USA

After the old T-Bird wheels around a bend, the GPS chimes “Welcome to Nevada.” The sun has bowed out, and patches of clouds have transformed into black-cloaked ghosts roaming the darkening sky.

boring drive
a big yawn
to tearful stars

When the car gasps over the hills, the city lights of Las Vegas dance like showgirls in the far distance. The road becomes a runway in the headlight, and the T-bird gains speed to take off.

empty hands
his last greenback
fed to the tiger slot

Stranded

Tom Staudt, Australia

“Somewhere here looks good.” “I’m afraid it has to be right here; we are out of petrol.” I park the car in a spot next to a light pole. The night is warm but a cool breeze is blowing in from the sea. Jason looks at his watch. “It’s almost three, we should get some rest. “Let’s have a snooze in the car. We can get some petrol in the morning.” I nod and curl up on the driver seat.

“Ben, hey Ben, wake up!” I open my eyes. Directly in front of my face is a little boy eating candy floss. I jump up and hit my head on the car roof. “Damn, that hurts.” “What’s going on Jason? Who are all these people?” All around us are shoppers and stands, someone is screaming, fresh flounder only five Euros.

We had parked our car in the middle of the weekend market place of Cannes. Jason looks at me laughing out loud. “That’s so typical . . .” There is no chance to move the car for hours. We explore the market, getting some coffee, a freshly baked croissant and let the day go by . . .

moonless night
the sleeping city
full of dreams

Beware of Lake Horses

Bryan D. Cook, Canada

We've been slowly trolling the dawn tranquility for trophy lake trout. Now, as the sun matures, there's distant thunder. A tournament is underway, and the bass boats have unleashed several thousand horses in their race to the eel-grass beds. Erect tails of white spume flag the lake. In the distance, one turns and heads our way. We don't notice, tensed for that elusive bite to telegraph over 580 feet of steel line.

Suddenly a prow rears before us, planing at over 60 km. Two yahoos in manic haste towards the spawning shallows, camouflaged to not scare the fish! We're a shadow below their horizon.

Like Eadweard Muybridge's images of a horse in full flight, all reveals in slow motion. An endorphin rush or a hunter-gather instinct enables split-second choices for survival. Waving would be futile We tense to jump.

A last second swerve and the bow wave kicks our skiff. No acknowledgement of error; no slowing down; disappearing peaks of hunting caps turned backwards on red-necks. Our curses swallowed by twinned 150 horses. Still regretting not having noted their license number, I order a new life-jacket which better fits my expanding girth!

bass-boat wake
the heron's
fractured reflection

In the Night

Dan Hardison, USA

Gathered as a family watching television, a passing siren fills the air. More sirens follow and they stop down the street. A phone call confirms—the Institute is on fire. A school building over a hundred and twenty years old, it has been some twenty-five years since students graced its halls. Even in its sad state of neglect, it is majestic with stonewalls and castle-like towers and turrets.

tattered leaves
covering the ground . . .
faded dreams

We walk the two blocks and watch from the sidewalk. The massive walls engulfed in flames crash to the ground in a spray of sparks. Nothing can be saved. It is just a decaying old building lost to time and flames, but for a six-year-old, it will remain forever.

for a moment
the world stands still . . .
daydream

Valley View

Marilyn Humbert, Australia

Two years ago, bushfires raged out of control for months at the end of 2019 and into early 2020 across millions of hectares in our Alpine National Parks. Today we are following a track along a ridge above the snowline. We pull to the side of the trail. On the edge of the drop, stretching in every direction all we can see are remnant charcoal-towers of snow gums and alpine ash forests.

aeolian air . . .
high country requiem
for the wildwoods

Deep roots

Carmela Marino, Italy

Despite the uncertain weather, we follow the dirt road that takes us to the archaeological site of Sacco Vecchia: a village that rises on a cliff in the center of Cilento. The sound of cowbells, the buzzing of flies, the fluttering of butterflies make us feel as if we are in the footsteps of Cicero. The crunch of pebbles under the shoes and even the smell of cow dung seem pleasurable.

cicadas in chorus—
in every blade of grass
I find myself

I breathe the familiar air and retrace the steps of that little girl with a lump in my throat. The last bend and we behold a spectacular scenery. One by one, the steps carved from the rocks lead us through the ancient ruins of the church of San Nicola. Here time has stopped, it seems closer to God. Here, where an ancient wind blows, only silence is the master.

summer wind:
over the mountains
my ashes

I sit on a stone between the four walls of the church, absorbed by all this peace. Suddenly a little voice breaks the silence. A smiling child picks a feather from the ruins and turns it between his fingers.

childhood home—
raindrops fill
the vacuum

So Much to Say

Lakshmi Iyer, India

We are returning from our native village Palakkad with my grandparents. It is the last week of May. Our school reopens in the first week of June. As usual, the southwest monsoons have started. It is a new experience for them. They have never witnessed such heavy and hard rains.

As we settle into the train journey, Grandma says softly, 'Now I realise why you hesitate to come all the way. Not a joke traveling with kids, luggage and us two old bundles!'

Father nods and says in a raised voice, 'It is very difficult to get tickets. Hence, I always get your surety before travelling. As soon as we reach Surat, please don't start nudging me to book the return tickets.'

Suddenly, the sound of paper. I look aside to see grandfather folding a small bit of paper into a paper boat. He presses the paper with his broad hands. Tearing off the unwanted edges; he folds a double, a quarter and then a square. He opens the mouth of the paper boat at the top and puts it by my seat. Now and then, his gleaming eyes look afar in the heavy rains. I place the paper boat against the closed window shutters. How I wish I could sail it! All of a sudden, the train halts at an unknown station. The side tracks are filled with running water. My brother slowly opens the window to read the mileage on an electric pole. At that moment, I slide out my paper boat. I know it isn't going to sail, but I still hope that it might be picked up by someone and set our dreams afloat.

new almanac . . .
grandma calculating
the movement of planets

Untitled

Antonio Mangiameli, Italy

Although it's been several years, I often talk to my high school philosophy teacher. He is a very tidy old man, lives alone, has a long and well-groomed white beard, wears elegant clothes, cares a lot about his appearance and that's why he periodically comes to me to check his teeth, he wants to have them healthy and white. Yesterday, unusually, he came with a woman, perhaps a gypsy, told me he had become even wiser and asked me for some gold crowns for him.

loneliness
the happy smile
of first love

A Fated Meeting

Gerry Mc Donnell, Ireland

We met on a Sunday afternoon in a cafe on O' Connell in Dublin. She had come to Ireland from Germany to meet her boyfriend who didn't show up. She slid into the red leather booth, facing me. She was crying. She asked me would I like to accompany her on her tour of the city. We visited the National Gallery and the Civic Museum. In St. Stephen's Green we sat on a stone seat near a fountain and inhaled the perfume from the flower beds. We kissed. We went for a drink. We kissed again and she said, 'it's a pity we don't have a bed.' We went back to my place and made love, erasing our loneliness if only for a short while. A week or so later I saw her in a late-night cafe with a group of people. I guessed her boyfriend was sitting next to her. I smiled and passed on.

moonlight
borne away
on the ebbing tide

Birthday in Venice at the Grand Hotel Des Bains

Glenda Cimino, Ireland

I am not good at throwing things out. Each item draws me into a memory I might otherwise have forgotten. I don't know how this 45-year-old empty bottle of Rosatello rosé wine ended up in a cardboard box of random things in my house in Dublin. I lift it out, admiring the bevelled glass and the charming brown parchment-effect Ruffino label.

A bittersweet memory comes to me

It is the 24th of September 1976, and my boyfriend Kevin and I are in Venice for the first time. The occasion is my 30th birthday and we plan to have dinner in the Grand Hotel des Bains, on the east shore of Venice's Lido. We have very little money, so staying there is not an option. But we are happy to be together.

Thomas Mann stayed there in 1911 and it was setting for his 1912 novella, *Death in Venice*, and also for the 1971 Visconti film. We admired Dirk Bogarde's performance as Gustav von Aschenbach, a composer suffering from ill health, who goes to Venice to recuperate and becomes fatally obsessed with Tadzio, a beautiful young boy staying in the same hotel with his family. It is the end of the season and the fear of the cholera sweeping Venice is driving the visitors away. But Von Aschenbach stays because of his attraction to Tadzio. He dies on the beach from a heart attack brought on by cholera. Or perhaps he dies of a broken heart, knowing his love is unrequited.

cold stretch of beach
a row of blue changing huts
closed for the winter

The hotel with its 191 rooms is as magnificent as it appeared in the film. We admire the white exterior, the balconies, balustrades, and Murano glass . . . its vast frontage that dominates the beach.

The dining room, with its high ceilings, shiny parquet floors, art nouveau furniture, white linen and crystal and china service on the tables, has maintained its belle époque splendor. It is nearly empty, but we are welcomed by a solitary waiter who is friendly and kind. He seats us at a table by the window overlooking the sea. I feel very special. We share the bottle of rose wine.

I look up the hotel online and I am shocked that it has fallen into disrepair and was closed in 2010. A real estate fund bought it for a planned conversion into a luxury condominium apartment complex—but nothing has happened yet. A large fence surrounds it, with a guard employed inside.

I search the Swedish actor, the beautiful young boy who played Tadzio, and the image of him in Wikipedia now bears no resemblance to the youth. He is an old man, with white hair and a long white beard. Dirk Bogarde died of a heart attack in 1999.

Kevin left me, and has been gone for nearly 40 years. It seems that it was only yesterday when we were in love.

all that remains . . .
an empty bottle
we shared in Venice

Noncommittal

Anna Cates, USA

Some say the secret to a man's heart is through his stomach. Though I bear somewhat of a hobbyist's interest in the culinary arts, I do not say whether I agree with that or not.

L

LO

LOV

LOVE

OVE

OVEN

Oh Nuts

Robert Erlandson, USA

"Don't seem to be on the lookout for crows, else you'll set other people watching."

- George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans)

On a visit to Sendai Japan, I took a taxi from the train station to my hotel. The trip took us through a large city park. I was surprised when the driver stopped the taxi—I looked out the front window and saw a crow carrying a nut, a walnut I was later told, dropping it in front of the car, it then flew back to the side of the road. With the crow out of the way the driver slowly continued. I quickly turned and looking out the back window saw the crow fly back out and eat the freshly cracked nut. I noticed that other cars were doing the same thing as crows placed nuts in front of them. I laughed out loud; the driver laughed with me. At the hotel, the concierge explained to me that crows have been doing this in Sendai for as long as he could remember.

<https://japan-forward.com/the-secret-why-japanese-crows-are-the-worlds-wisest/>

Riches

Joanna Ashwell, United Kingdom

I gather them all in a pile. Some of them are brand new. The way the copper shines, one and two pence coins – they feel like gold in my palm. I am excited and my breath becomes faster and faster as we approach the arcade. My Nana is eager too, she loves to hear the dropping of the coins. The fairground music is all around us and the click clack of the slot machines is now audible. Finally, we find an empty space and load our coins. Time after time, pulling the lever until all the fruit matches in a row. It happens and I hit the jackpot . . . I'm rich. I do a champion dance, scooping the coins into a bag.
“Nana, there must be at least £2 here.”

each turn
a surprise in
the goldfish bowl

Detritus

Keith Polette, USA

I hear the garbage truck with its heavy wheeze enter the street in the predawn dark. It stops at each house in the neighborhood just long enough for the lobster claw at the end of its hydraulic arm to grab a gray bin, hurl up it in a blurred arc, and dump its contents into the toothless opening of the hard stomach it carries on its back. As I peer through the window, it's like watching a hard-fisted drinker, numbed by repetition, in a morning bar-crawl, throwing back shot after shot of stale whiskey. Insatiable, cold hunger burning in its unblinking eyes, the truck swallows the street before moving on to drink up the rest of the city.

never enough
plump pigs in the world
for a big bad wolf

Fuel for the Fire

—after “Wood Gatherers in the Snow” (Vincent Van Gogh, Neunen, 1884)

Janet Ruth, USA

Four figures—a boy, a man, a woman, a girl—trudge through dingy snow at dusk. The creak of footsteps. The brittle air. The sun slides behind a low hill—a fiery ball against an ashen sky. The light is failing. Their faces are in shadow. The woman’s white cap, a single spot of white that mirrors the snow. Their backs and heads are bowed beneath the weight of willow saplings cut long and bundled, a load of logs, and the burdens we cannot see. None are dressed adequately for the season; no jackets, arms and hands bare and raw from the cold. Home is not yet in sight. Their feet are numb in clumsy wooden clogs.

end of day
a glimmer of embers
on the cold hearth

A Rising Desert Thermal

m. shane pruett, USA

This is no place to explore the implications of a recent divorce, even in the full flush of a super bloom. I love the desert, but Death Valley is too much . . . too much brown, too much vast desolation. It is crushing. I can see a million or so wildflowers, a bright yellow glaze over the distant hillside but I can't connect to them. The sky is a flat, pale blue. My mind can't encompass the scope of everything in front of me. Even the birds seem to have deserted me; the doleful trills of a far-off rock wren simply echo my isolation.

a small bee
traverses the salt pan
—mariposa lily

The Roadhouse 95—I'm after comfort food . . . fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, and a thin American beer since that's all they have—“*the big one please and thank you.*” The waitress brings me complimentary pie, calls me “hon” and tells me I look like I could use it. It satisfies nothing. A local fellow with at least a dozen teeth slouches into my booth, buys me a beer, and asks what ails me. Even I can see the humor in the situation and so I summarize my woes. He wanders back to the bar, sagely reminding me, “*it can always get a little worse.*” I walk to my room in the dark, stopping for a six-pack of good ale along the way.

cholla garden the mess I've made of things

A wrong turn and somehow, I'm headed right back in the valley instead of taking the long way around as planned. The morning spills into the wide basin below. Desert paintbrush and evening primrose shine in the fresh light and a rock wren, closer than before sounds upbeat in the clean air. At the top of an unnamed summit, I marvel at the thousands of small flowers crowded among the rocks and crevices and the surprising profusion of insects. A bee works efficiently and diligently from bloom to bloom, oblivious to how short-lived the boon will be. I find myself humming along.

a flight of ravens—
dark shadows disappear
among the flowers

Storm Clouds

Gavin Austin, Australia (EC)

The afternoon wanes; through the window the sky thickens to dark porridge. It almost rains, threatens . . . waits.

Sweat trickles at the nape of my neck. What sits beside me in the gloom? Perhaps my future nightmares, shapeless for now but gathering force, like the distant rolling thunder.

A glint of spittle pearls my lower lip. Lightning rips up the sky with a rush of wrath that splinters the silence; shakes me. All flash and rumble it taunts and moves on, restores me to the stillness that grows between heartbeats. To the enemy that broods within; the oncologist's words echoing like firing-squad rifles.

wishing well
bruised frangipani petals
scent the darkness

The Bricklayer's Rope

Silva Trstenjak, Croatia

Translation: D. V. Rozic, Croatia

Sunbeams light every pile of soil sliding from the shovel, freed of darkness. The crunch of metal upon the stone is even louder than the stonemason's whistling from the building site. A path is marked with stretched ropes, secured to the ground with the pins. And there I am, smiling . . .

my neighbor's yard
the width of a path
for my wheelchair

Concierto de Aranjuez

an ekphrastic haibun

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

A boy begins to lose his sight at three years of age, eventually becoming totally blind.
He studies musical braille, learns the piano, the violin, the guitar. He composes for each,
becomes known and helps to elevate the guitar to an essential orchestral instrument.

perfumed paseos
sweeping crescendos
from his guitar

trickling fountains
a cool spray to taste
what cannot be seen

the Garden Aranjuez
rising melodies
in the fragrances

Juaquin Rodrigo

Born: November 22, 1901, Sagunto, Valencia, Spain

Died: July 6, 1999, Madrid, Spain

Pat-Pat

Terri L. French, USA

Not the big squeeze hug of a bosom buddy or your favorite aunt. More of a good ol' boy less formal handshake. I come from a family of non-huggers. We stiffen up unintentionally when someone approaches us with open arms. Covid has brought back the fist bump of which I am particularly fond, especially when followed by a finger-splayed POW! But, after over two years, I'm ready for a hug, even if it's the kind mothers give while burping babies.

spring breeze
leaving myself
wide open

Island Fare

Matthew Caretti, American Samoa

Besides the *palusami*, options are limited here for an aging vegan. My choices: a garden salad or beef lo mein sans beef. I go in for the latter. Slurp my noodles. Crunch the lightly braised carrots. Relish the many hues of the peppers. Top it all with a couple bottles of Vailima.

it's a lifestyle thing
green sea turtles
and me

Editor's Choices (EC) – Haibun

Judging from the number of submissions, it seems haibun is thriving. This makes the selection of Editor's Choice pieces all the more challenging. Of the four haibun here, two of the pieces give seemingly innocuous topics like memory and daily shaving an unusual slant; the other two use language in an inspiring and imaginative way.

The Collection

Diana Teneva, Bulgaria

We collect everything – a bus ticket that will later unleash painful memories . . . a past we have already lived, a future that is yet to come . . . words we have been in, words that shelter us now, words that will bury us, and they will be here even after us . . . roses that bloom even after mom, the house that will remain after dad . . .

We collect, and we don't even know where we will store these pieces of memory – whether in our past days or our bodies or in some part of the world where we will find ourselves by chance . . . We just follow the traces of lost time, we take here – there a piece, just as the hungry one takes pieces of fruit to quench his thirst for what has not happened yet.

where am I going
with this flower dress . . .
strawberry moon

The Collection by Diana Teneva describes the endless search for memory, a search which is never complete as time flows through our hands. I imagine that during the last two years of lockdown restrictions and isolation, that many of us have undertaken a similar inner journey of ruminations. Perhaps this is why Diana's deeply felt and personal narrative struck a chord.

The closing haiku is a surprise, an immediate image of the moon concludes the search with stillness.



The Sorcery of Matter

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

Deep in the heart of the wood, I have lost my bearings. I rest on a rotting log netted with yellow threads of decay. I imagine the shuttle-pulse of life within those creeping, seeking threads, let my mind slip inside to be borne along on streaming cytoplasm. No cell membranes bar the way. A slime mold is just a blob of living matter — no cells, no tissues, no nervous system, no brain.

But if you shock it with cold air, it somehow remembers the timing of the blasts, and recoils just before the next one is due. Offer it tidbits of food arranged like the map of cities, and it mimics the road-and-rail network linking them. Place it in a maze and it navigates efficiently . . . without a brain. Meanwhile, I'm still searching for the path.

mind
the stardust flowing
in my veins

In this centenary year of Ulysses, Joyce's celebration of language is worth remembering. He said, "The important thing is not what we write but how we write . . . "

*Jenny Ward Angyal's use of language is what drew me to **Sorcery of Matter**. She explores imaginatively how apparently insentient blobs of matter carry the seeds of consciousness and shock the mind into mutual recognition with matter. A few examples to illustrate her delightful use of language: "yellow threads of decay", "shuttle-pulse of life". How wonderful that while "searching" for her way out of the woods, she finds the power and mystery of life. The use of "Sorcery" in the title certainly adds to the magic of the piece.*



Window

Subir Ningthouja, India

Images flash in my mind as I scrub my 'extra' shaving blade handle. I remember buying it that late evening on the way to the hostel. The shopkeeper was about to pull down the shutters. Three and half decades ago.

I wonder if it recalls my shaking hands before the exams, the times it fell before the various viva voces. Does it still hear the palpitations of my first date? Feel the warm confidence of my digits in anticipation of movie outings and cricket matches?

I don't know why I still keep it as an 'extra' with occasional scrubbings. I haven't used it all these years.

daybreak
a birdsong finds me
murmuring

*Subir Ningthouja,'s **Window** deals with an unusual topic, a humble razor. This innocuous item brings out some memorable moments in the narrator's life. The poet creates a sense of immersion in the memories, which is quite unexpectedly moving and gives the razor something of a talismanic quality. The haiku ends the reverie with a birdsong contrasting with the poet's troubled murmurings.*



Storm Clouds

Gavin Austin, Australia

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bruised frangipani petals
scent the darkness

Storm Clouds by Gavin Austin is another haibun which stands out in the use of language. The mirroring of the narrator's unease and anxiety by the elemental forces of nature (the eponymous storm clouds and thunder) is described in imaginative metaphors. The darkening sky evokes "dark porridge" and the silence is "splintered". Yet another memorable example is "A glint of spittle pearls my lower lip". Faced with the life-threatening diagnosis of cancer the narrator likens it to a firing squad. Although the theme is serious, Gavin's use of language prevents the haibun from descending into a mere morbidity or bathos. The haiku achingly conveys the frailty of life.

Sonam Chhoki

Haiga – Part 4

Keith Polette - USA

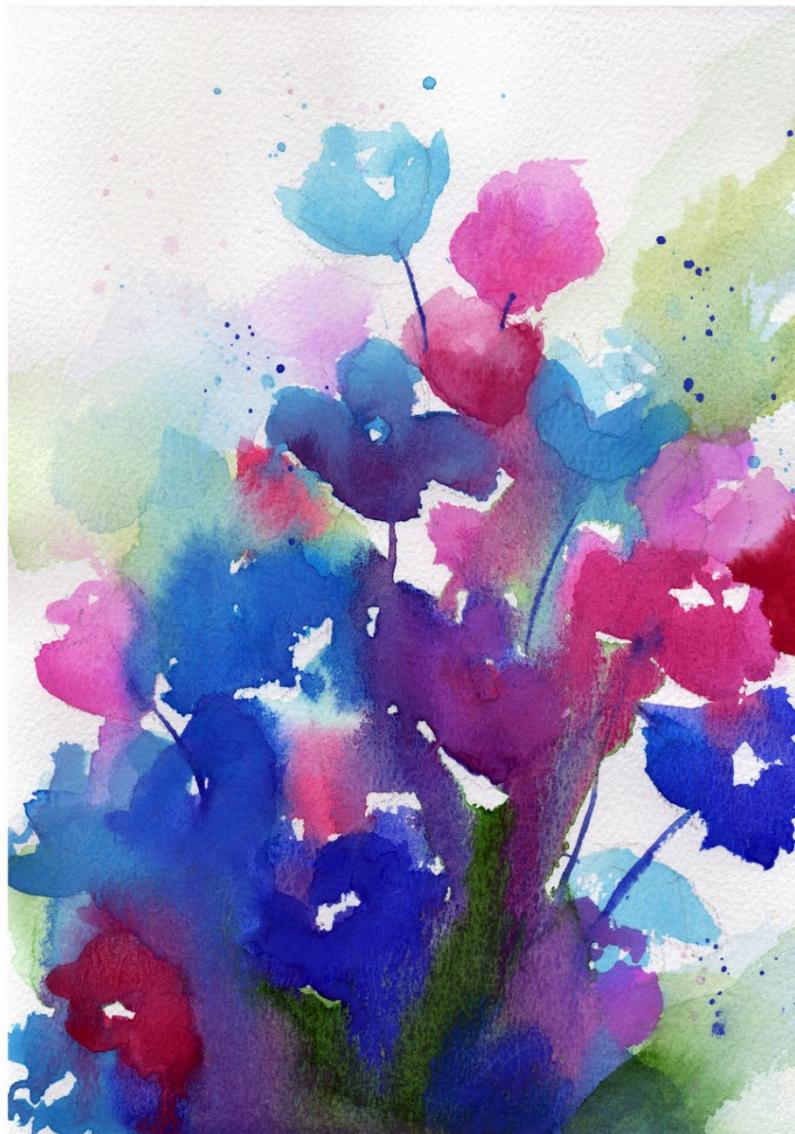


Linda Papanicolaou - USA



cattails — April 2022

Liv Saint-James – Australia



petals overlap once there were no spaces between us

cattails — April 2022

Mariel Herbert - USA



cattails — April 2022

Poesy Sestina & Berend de Kort - USA

Poem: Poesy Sestina

Photo: Berend de Kort



*sinking car
into his voicemail
her final words*

cattails — April 2022

Tanka Prose



Home

Jenny Ward Angyal, USA

As we get older, my husband and I often wonder how much longer we'll be able to live on our remote, five-acre Eden. Browsing the website of a retirement community in town, I notice that all the women—no, the ladies—are elegantly dressed and wear pearls to dinner. I've never owned a strand of pearls. Never wanted one.

I snap shut my laptop and go out onto the screened porch. Lying on the slate floor beside my hiking boots is a dead moth no larger than my smallest fingernail. Its triangular wings are the silvery green of lichen, delicately scalloped with pearly white, blotched and mottled with bark-brown. Against the shaggy trunk of an old apple tree, it would blend in perfectly.

slipping across
the last threshold—
leaf and wing
and dappled shadow
enfold me as their own

Painting the Night

Gavin Austin, Australia

I settle back in my veranda chair. A wagtail dances on the gatepost, as late afternoon sun gilds western slopes of the ranges. Kestrels glide high in silent air-funnels, their shadows brushing the ridge top. Bell birds toll in their dark gullies. The white-faced cow stops picking among the bracken, raises her head, and stares with dark liquid eyes as wallabies emerge from dusky wattle glens. Pearl clouds, scalloped with pink, jostle as they range overhead; blue-grey shadows eat up the hills. Kookaburra laughter fills the valley, echoes and dissipates; dying day crystallises into night.

silently
you invade my thoughts
never far away
the lingering indigo
of each fading sunset

Rage

Fanny Budan, USA

Cold hands tremble with anticipation, and my heart flutters as I apply makeup and slip into my chiffon bridesmaid's gown. Today is the day my bestie boo and I have dreamed of for so many years and I don't want anything to spoil it. I drive slower than usual on streets filmed with black ice, but apparently, the pickup driver tailgating me feels that I'm driving too slowly. Finger extended in a vulgar gesture: he forces me off the road and passes. Several miles outside of town, I see the truck again, upside down in a snowbank. I don't know if the occupant is alive, dead, or injured, but I know that I will not allow him to ruin this special day.

sparkling glass
on a frosty road
closer and louder
a chilling siren
pierces the mist

Lost Son

Pitt Buerken, Germany

After being away for many years, I return this morning. Just once more, only short-lasting, I tell myself. I walk along paths that used to be familiar. Images. And I keep looking around, but no one knows me anymore. Finally, I land in the old café at the harbor. The table in the bay window is free. There we had sat a last time before I left.

mental screen
of dull memories -
lost in thought
I pour a dollop of cream
into the white-blue tea cup

Nighttime Voices

Pris Campbell, USA

I WANT YOU I NEED YOU BUT I'M NEVER GONNA LOVE YOU... Meatloaf, now dead, sings over and over on YouTube. The face of an old love pops up for the first time in years. It's the late seventies and Bat Out of Hell rules. I have my own vinyl to play it repeatedly. We're living in a one-bedroom apartment after our Boston commune years and sailboat down the east coast, the trip ending in South Florida. Against my better judgment I said yes when he asked me to marry him. His words were often sharp. He was an insatiable flirt but the hook was still embedded too deep to leave. Six months in, he meets a woman at a bar and tells me he plans to start dating once a week, expecting me to cave. Anything for love. I'm in the process of negotiating him out of the apartment and my life, a life he will enter once again for eleven months before leaving me to marry someone else six months later. I'm crushed but Meatloaf bleeds my pain.

the story isn't over
until the fat man sings
they say
mistakes swiftly made
unravel in dark forevers

Retinal burn in darkness

Sonam Chhoki, Bhutan

In the basement they find evidence of his treason.

Old door panels, bits of ply board and discarded mirrors all covered in dizzying colours. Tiled pillars of a minaret and leaded windows of a gothic church awash with green-gold light. Still others span vistas of white cloud swirls in ultramarine expanse, purple haze of dusk through trees, blue mists over verdant slopes and the orange glow of ripened earth.

"You call this art?" the head interrogator sneers.

The single light bulb overhead sharpens the thrust of her chin.

"Why these daubs? Why have you eschewed the Brave Flag Bearer, The Selfless Mother, the Patriot Peasants? Why not the Great Leader?"

He shakes his head and murmurs something about the intrinsic purity of colours.

"Purity? What religious superstition you spout! Now, what will you plead?"

"Insanity," he whispers.

cut, clip, cut, clip
turquoise tesserae body
fins of gold leaf
an angel fish ripples
in the sea of dreams

Waiting by the Well

Barbara Curnow, Australia

For a long time, I peer into a well, which seems to be empty. I lower the bucket, but nothing comes up, so I sit down and wait for rain, or a miracle. Both seem unlikely under this big blue sky.

A friend comes by, looking thirsty. “Don’t bother” I say “the well’s empty”. But she lowers the bucket just the same and it comes up brimming and dripping! “Have some” she says, but I’d rather try again myself.

My breath whispers a little prayer as the bucket descends. I think I hear a “plop” when it reaches the bottom, but it comes up dry.

From my bag I take out a pen, paper and a book of Hafiz’s poetry. He speaks of God and light and fright, confronts me with questions and captures the heart of an opening rose.

Surely there’s something here to inspire my own writing!

For a third time, I try my luck with the well. The bucket’s far from full, but a few drops of ink fall onto my page and run in little rivers. The start of something; something to work with.

I wonder
who’s pushing my pen . . .
I watch
a poem take shape
each petal unfurl

One way

Robert Erlandson, USA

"Entropy is the universe's tendency to go completely bullshit"

- Anonymous attributed to Lars Onsager, Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1968

Climate change, urban blight, polarized politics, the destabilizing distribution of wealth, the destruction and mismanagement of our Earth's resources. Physics has demonstrated that there is an increase in entropy for any system undergoing an irreversible process.

"Entropy is the price of structure." - Ilya Prigogine, Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1977

An example from physics; entropy can be reduced by increasing pressure and decreasing temperature. A refrigerator is a structure that reduces entropy. But this decrease in entropy is paid for by an increase in entropy of the environment surrounding the structure. For example, you need energy like electricity which must be harnessed or generated, you need materials and you need to build and maintain the structure.

"It's our job to take entropy and randomness and find meaning."

- Khaled Hosseini, novelist

Greenpeace, the Environmental Defense Fund, the United Nations, The International Council for Science, the World Health Organization, these are just a few of the worldwide efforts to find meaning. There are countless regional, national and community efforts in every corner of this world seeking to find meaning. Artists, writers, poets, and people everywhere are striving to find meaning.

continued...

"Creativity is our only weapon against entropy."

- Dean Cavanagh, playwright, novelist

entropy
cosmos' arrow of time
its arc
simple yet profound
disorder will abound

Pretty Bubbles in the Air*

Amelia Fielden, Australia

One summer Sunday we set out for the short drive to Carkeek Park on the western edge of suburban Seattle. Packed to the max with children, Border Collie, picnic gear, frisbee, bats and balls.

High on a cliff above Puget Sound, this park has everything for a family day in the outdoors: vast swathes of grass, a playground, hiking trails. Down the steep iron staircase, and parallel to train tracks, a strip of pebbly beach scattered with rock pools.

And today, the Bubble Man.

On the tray of his pickup truck parked beside the central lawns, is balanced a big tub of soapy water.

Dipping his hooped wand into this tub, he magics out streamers of giant iridescent bubbles.

an old man blows
his fragile creations
into the blue
seagulls fly so high,
nearly reach the sky

Kids come running from every direction. They leap and squeal, trying to catch the uncatchable.

The bubbles burst, as bubbles always do.

continued...

dog passed away
children no longer children,
I exist now
in a 'singles' bubble'
on the far side of the world

* from the first verse of the 1918 song composed by John Kellette and others

*"I'm forever blowing bubbles,
Pretty bubbles in the air,
They fly so high, nearly reach the sky,
Then like my dreams they fade and die"*

What lies beneath

Terri L. French, USA

From my window I watch large chunks of snow falling from the trees. Six inches accumulated in the last two days, a rarity in Alabama. Our road crews are not prepared for it, so we stay in, cuddle by the fire, drink hot toddies and watch movies. Growing up in Michigan I tired of our long winters, but here, when the first flakes begin to fall, the wonder and excitement of a child wells up inside of me. I know it won't last. By the end of the day there will just be patches of white on the ground and a lot of brown sludge. For now, as it leaves the branches and hangs in sparkling droplets from thin limbs, I marvel. A titmouse lands on the feeder outside the window, staring at me with its beady black eyes, cocking its head in a quizzical way as if to question my need to find meaning in melting snow.

my second childhood
a bit of time
left to blow
from the
dandelion clocks

A World With No Return

Ivan Gaćina, Croatia

A spiderweb waits in the world with no return. No one knows from which side the path leads from light to darkness and vice versa.

Time runs out.

Puzzles hover above the necropolis while traps of death lurk at the entrance and exit of the branched tunnel, and passers-by intertwine with dead souls on the borders of (non) existence.

The margins of fear hide the truth. Rain and sun form miraculous phenomena.

The forgotten rhapsody is imprinted in a double rainbow with eternal letters and an unknown code. The threads of life are torn, the golden shades form a new image of the living and the inanimate, of the beginning and end.

Yesterday will be but a memory.

at the seashore
an old woman knits
a rainbow-colored sweater . . .
waves carry away the noise
and old memories

Adrift on a Cloud

Lakshmi Iyer, India

Opening the doors of the dusty attic, I sit on the wooden staircase holding a coir rope; lest I fall down. A sneeze here and a bigger one follows. Mother starts to call me to come down. I hurriedly rush to my father's bookshelf and go through an old dictionary purchased for two rupees. Father's signature with the date in it takes me to his yesteryears. I remember him recall his studies under the small egg-shaped lantern.

As I flip through the pages, I find the word, 'introspect' underlined with red ink. Those long sleepless nights call for a place in the hearts of hundreds of villagers' prayers who call him, 'the radio man'. His tireless efforts walking the path to his destination breezes the passing clouds of difficulties . . .

an ink bottle
on the wooden table
memory spills
on the frameless sky
beyond our horizons

Imagine

Chen-ou Liu, Canada

"Canada is one of the richest countries, now with significant surplus in its federal budget; therefore, there is no justification for not massively engaging in the improvement of the situation of all those that face inadequate housing and living conditions." After the UN Rapporteur on adequate housing made his concluding statement in March 2008, a silence fell over the conference room. Not a single question was asked.

For the reporters, these words, "massively engaging in the improvement," came across loud and clear many times from the politicians standing side by side in the spacious, high-ceilinged foyer of the House of Commons. As the preacher in Ecclesiastes once claimed, "what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun."

outside the shelter
a snow-covered sidewalk
except the patch
where a man and dog sleep
this omicron winter

November

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

Bare trees, naked trees, skeletal trees. Words we use to describe trees without their foliage. We see the upper part of trunks, the limbs, branches and twigs. We see the curving, the bending, the twisting shapes hidden by leaves in summer. Branches reach up and out and sideways. They crisscross, grow their way over and under other branches. They are lines against the sky, each with its unique shape and shading. They are abstract. They are real.

the wooded ravine
wind-shorn and dun colored
and hard edges
the bare-bones look of now
yet subject to change

Zero Gravity

Tom Staudt, Australia

The white starched tablecloth is so stiff it hardly bends over the edge. I wheel the trolley into the first-class cabin. “How do you take your caviar?” I ask, when the floor is slipping away from under me. The trolley elegantly floats in front of me. Behind the first row, the heads of two passengers slowly emerge with wide open eyes, dodging a bottle of Bollinger hovering next to their seats.

The absence of gravity creates a bizarre ballet of food, bags, glasses and people; all suspended in mid-air. For one peaceful moment time seems to stand still, but what goes up must come down.

The emanating chaos is strangely amusing, people covered in caviar and onions, others in red wine or juice.

I am surprisingly clean, only my shoes look pretty messed up.

a booby chick
steps off the cliff
he vanishes
when the wind catches his wings
and sends him on his first flight

Drops of light

Diana Teneva, Bulgaria

The dawn is breaking and colouring the world in pinkish red. Drops of light are seeping through the cobweb weaving the hyacinth in its veil. A light breeze is tousling the scarlet peonies. Candle-lit crocuses are attracting early-birds' looks . . .

gazing at
the primroses . . .
the tornado
my butterfly dreams
have never made

The Banana in the Road

Simon Wilson, UK (**EC**)

It was surreal enough to have been a metaphor. As I turned the corner, a banana lay in the road. The gentle curve suggested a slightly defensive posture, but I fear that would not be enough to protect it from serious injury as the day progressed. I thought about stopping to pick it up, but, despite my diet, I am not yet reduced to eating from the gutter. For a moment I even thought about stopping and moving it to one side, as I would a kitten or an abandoned fledgling, but this seemed a bit silly. So, I left it to its fate. Someone, somewhere, probably looked in their bag at lunchtime, then looked again, staring at a space where a banana used to be.

fragments
that make up a day
come together
a mosaic
of a life

Seasons

Gavin Austin, Australia

Sunlight courts the cool darkness. In the mountain ash canopy, parrots swoop and dart: red and blue jesters in their grey-green galleries. The leaf-littered path leads to a bridge over a stream, deeper, into the mossy embrace of newly-bathed forest. Blunt green fingers, born of earthen womb, reach blindly for the nurturing hand of sunshine. Nearby, the bole of an ancient fallen tree is shrouded by lichen and fungus: the king being slowly returned to his kingdom.

the flowering gums
are scarlet once more
as I return
carefully I place a rose
beside your carved name

Moving Forward

Adelaide B. Shaw, USA

It is a small pond, frozen in mid-January. A lone man skates backwards. Hands clasped behind. Slow and relaxed he does figure eights.

certain of the past
aware of the present
I plan the future,
keeping my eyes open
as I look ahead

High Water Mark

Simon Wilson, UK

In our photograph albums my wife's hair length shortens and my beard changes from ginger to white. Two children grow, then disappear. A walking stick appears in the pictures.

In the last photograph I am sitting on a bench. I have a cup of tea in my hand and a scone balanced on my knee. I remember the day well, struggling to walk the three-mile circuit we had done several times in the past. We watched Marsh Harriers wheeling over reedbeds and saw damselflies hover over ponds. In the afternoon we visited an old windmill on the Broads and had a cup of tea. We photographed dozens of dragonflies basking in the afternoon sun. They are long gone now. Once they enter their adult stage they have, at best, four months to live. Four glorious months of summer. There is no decline for a dragonfly - it is fast and bright and beautiful, then it is gone.

We laugh at the photograph. On the wall behind me, there is a sign referring to the floods of 1953, with a line and the words "High Water Mark".

an owl hoots
the city falls silent
in the dark
I become fearful
and reach for your hand

Editor's Choice – Tanka Prose (EC)

The Banana in the Road

Simon Wilson, UK

It was surreal enough to have been a metaphor. As I turned the corner, a banana lay in the road. The gentle curve suggested a slightly defensive posture, but I fear that would not be enough to protect it from serious injury as the day progressed. I thought about stopping to pick it up, but, despite my diet, I am not yet reduced to eating from the gutter. For a moment I even thought about stopping and moving it to one side, as I would a kitten or an abandoned fledgling, but this seemed a bit silly. So, I left it to its fate. Someone, somewhere, probably looked in their bag at lunchtime, then looked again, staring at a space where a banana used to be.

fragments
that make up a day
come together
a mosaic
of a life

I suppose some of our loyal readers and tanka prose writers will groan at my choice. Is it worse than "A Day in the Life" by Lennon and McCartney? Well, I have never seen a banana on the road. How odd. Perhaps it's no better than knowing how many holes can fill the Albert Hall. It's these little things we see that make up a day.

Mike Montreuil

cattails – April 2022

Haiga – Part 5

Radka Mindova & Radostina Dragostinova – Bulgaria



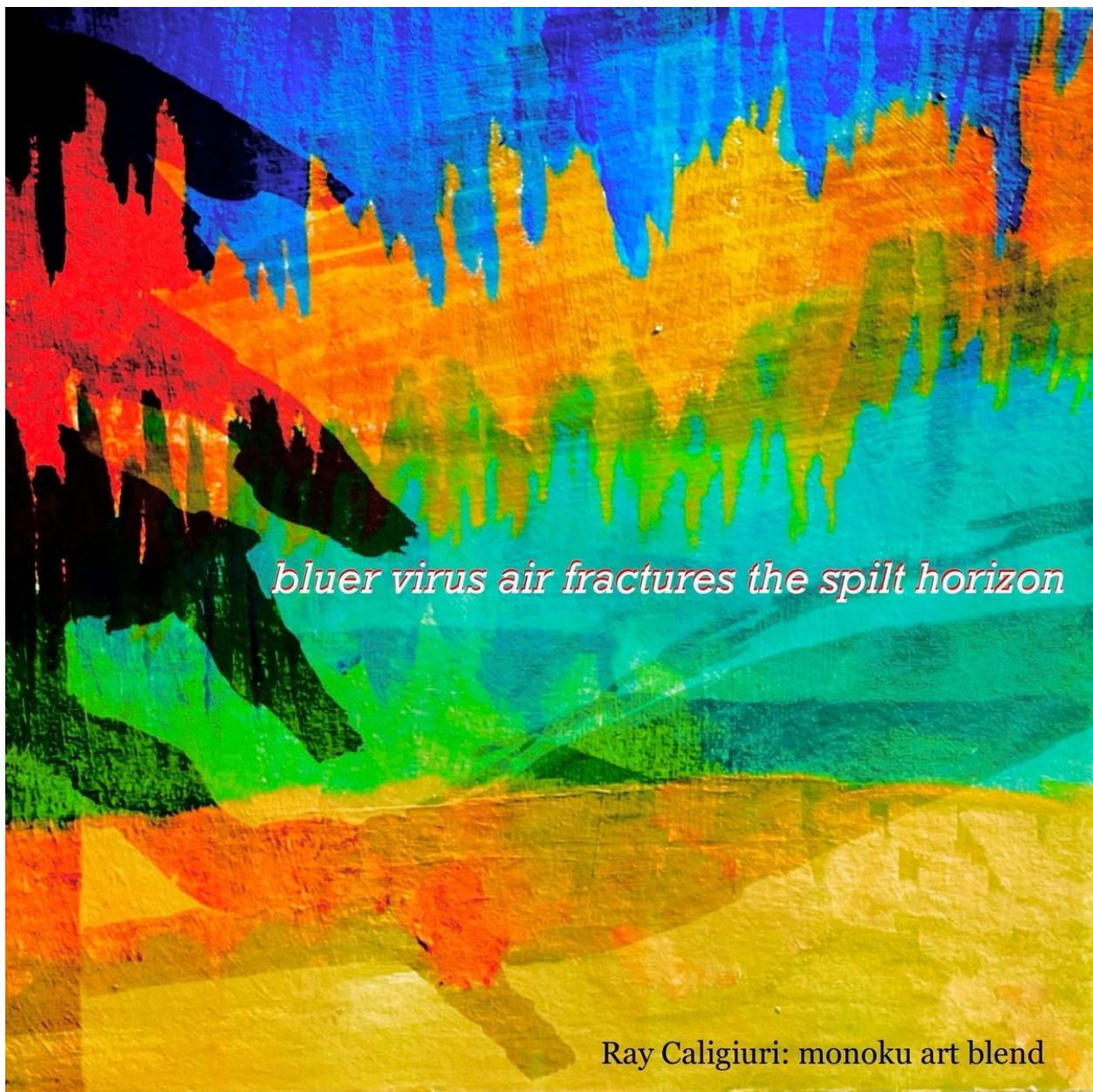
Radostina Dragostinova – Bulgaria

these rainy days
when mom loses memory
safety pins



© Radostina Dragostinova

Ray Caligiuri, USA



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Robert Erlandson – USA



here we are
dancing with the clouds
ossifying

R Erlandson

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Silva Trstenjak & Grozdana Draskovic - Croatia



*pandemic end -
I take a walk with mom
for an ice cream*

haiku: silva trstenjak

photo: grozdana draskovic

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Sunrise over Carlingford Lough, Warrenpoint, Northern Ireland