

# failed ~~haiku~~

*A Journal of English Senryu*  
*Volume 9, Issue 99*

**bryan rickert** 'Failed' Editor

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*Haiga by Luminita Suse*

# Cast List

*In order of appearance*  
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**Mike Fainzilber**  
**Susanna K Hutcheson**  
**William Scott Galasso**  
**Amber Winter**  
**Thomas Haynes**  
**Lev Hart**  
**Penny Lowery**  
**Biswajit Mishra**  
**Timothy Daly**  
**Benedict Grant**  
**Robert Epstein**  
**Shawn Blair**  
**Joshua St. Claire**  
**Jennifer Gurney**  
**Randy Brooks**  
**Mariya Gusev**  
**Jacob Blumner**  
**Kelly Sargent**  
**Susan Yavaniski**  
**Joseph P. Wechselberger**  
**Katherine E Winnick**  
**Jerome Berglund**  
**John Pappas**  
**Ravi Kiran**

**Ingrid Baluchi**  
**Marilyn Ward**  
**Colleen Farrelly**  
**Maxianne Berger**  
**Ron Scully**  
**David Watts**  
**Roberta Beach Jacobson**  
**Oscar Luparia**  
**Barry J. Vitcov**  
**Marilyn Humbert**  
**Pris Campbell**  
**Charles Harmon**  
**Mark Hendrickson**  
**Marilyn Ashbaugh**  
**Colette Kern**  
**M. R. Defibaugh**  
**Gavin Austin**  
**John Budan**  
**Dylan Stover**  
**Govind Joshi**  
**George Skane**  
**Lavana Kray**  
**Bill Cooper**  
**Nick T**

**Alanna C. Burke**  
**Amelia Cotter**  
**Ben Oliver**  
**Marcellin Dallaire-Beaumont**  
**Eavonka Ettinger**  
**Robert Witmer**  
**Louise Hopewell**  
**Gillena Cox**  
**Jacob D. Salzer**  
**Audrey Quinn**  
**Jon Hare**  
**Malcolm MacClancy**  
**Pitt Buerken**  
**Tracy Davidson**  
**Bonnie J Scherer**  
**Jenn Ryan-Jauregui**  
**Scott Wiggerman**  
**Robert Lowes**  
**Adele Evershed**  
**Ruth Holzer**  
**Tony Williams**  
**Shiva Bhusal**  
**Padma Rajeswari Tata**  
**Mark Forrester**  
**Neena Singh**  
**Joanna Ashwell**  
**Teiichi Suzuki**  
**Cynthia Anderson**  
**Stephanie Zepherelli**  
**Shasta Hatter**

**Debbie Strange**  
**Anthony Lusardi**  
**John Zheng**  
**Lakshmi Iyer**  
**Natalia Kuznetsova**  
**Meera Rehm**  
**Wanda Amos**  
**Lucia Cardillo**  
**petro c. k.**  
**Laurie Greer**  
**Lori Becherer**  
**Caroline Giles Banks**  
**C.X. Turner**  
**Tim Cremin**  
**Jenny Fraser**  
**Mark Smith**  
**M. R. Pelletier**  
**David Josephsohn**  
**Rick Jackofsky**  
**Robert Beveridge**  
**Sarah Paris**  
**Luminita Suse**  
**Henryk Czempiel**  
**Sheila Sondik**  
**Vidya Premkumar/**  
**Shloka Shankar**  
**Shloka Shankar**  
**Diana Webb**  
**Vandana Parashar**  
**Dipankar Dasgupta**

**Richa Sharma**  
**Steve Black**  
**Jan Stretch**  
**Rehn Kovacic**  
**Arvinder Kaur**  
**Rohan Buettel**  
**Paula O'Reilly**  
**Cynthia Rowe**  
**Susan King**  
**C. Jean Downer**  
**Oliver Kleyer**  
**Marsh Muirhead**  
**Linda Papanicolaou**  
**Jamie Wimberly**  
**Lisa Sparaco**  
*Wilda Morris*  
**Barrie Levine**  
**John Hawkhead**  
**Mary Arnold**  
**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**  
**Lori Kiefer**  
**Milan Rajkumar**  
**Jenny Shepherd**  
**Patricia Hawkhead**  
**Sharon Martina**  
**Sondra J. Byrnes**  
**Gil Jackofsky**  
**Susan Farner**  
**Kathabela Wilson**  
**Wonja Brucker**

**Vijay Prasad**  
**Michael J. Galko**  
**John S Green**  
**Carol Raisfeld**  
**Maeve O'Sullivan**  
**Mark Gilbert**  
**Ann Sullivan**  
**Tomislav Maretić**  
**John C. Waugh**  
**R. J. Swanson**  
**Chen-ou Liu**  
**Quamrul Hassan**  
**Mike Gallagher**  
**Adrian Bouter**  
**Marylyn Burridge**  
**Capotă Daniela Lăcrămioara**  
**John J. Dunphy**  
**Mark Meyer**  
**Andrew Riutta**  
**Richard Tice**  
**Carol Judkins**  
*Lorraine A Padden*  
**Lorraine A Padden**  
**Sally Quon**  
**Jo McInerney**  
**Srinivasa Rao Sambangi**  
**Ramund Ro**  
**Manoj Sharma**  
**Eva Limbach**  
**Doug Devaney**

**David Oates**  
**Herb Tate**  
**Bisshie**  
**Heather Lurie**  
**Mona Bedi**  
**Tsanka Shishkova**  
**Tim Roberts**  
**Keith Evetts**  
**Mona Iordan**  
**Wilda Morris**  
**Nancy Brady**  
**B.A. France**  
**Christine Wenk-Harrison**  
**Vidya Premkumar**

**Irina Guliaeva**  
**Nalini Shetty**  
**Bernadette O'Reilly**  
**LeRoy Gorman**  
**Stephenie Story**  
**Erica Ison**  
**Maya Daneva**  
**Eric A. Lohman**  
**Kevin Valentine**  
**Curt Pawlisch**  
**Maurice Nevile**  
**Dan Curtis**  
**Matthew Markworth**  
**Bryan Rickert**

Commentary compliments of **John Pappas** on a select poem  
from issue 98.

voice from the ruins  
who will be  
my father now

**Mike Fainzilber**

special birthday  
thinking of the pouring rain  
on Mother's plot of earth

**Susanna K Hutcheson**

seventy plus cuts and bruises of unknown origin

a footnote  
in the scheme of things  
me

**William Scott Galasso**

reality tv  
helping me escape  
my reality

shielding my son's eyes  
from all the whale tails  
beach outlet mall

last night  
at the beach  
drunken mussels

**Amber Winter**



## **As If It Weren't Enough**

Now that I work in an office nine hours a day, I can't be present like I used to for pick up or drop off or special events. I've become the "other" parent in the school's eyes; the one who exists in the background but doesn't participate.

Connect Four  
pieces of my  
former life

When we walk into the high school for the Sound Safari, a swarm of teachers and parents envelop my ex and his husband, the token gay couple for our district, while I quietly take our children to play the games.

Jenga  
letting it all  
fall down

**Thomas Haynes**

## **Still an F**

His emails became increasingly more frustrated. It wasn't a surprise to receive a call on my work line.

“Hello, this is Thomas.”

“Oh man, I apologize. I thought I was dealing with a man, not a young lady. I apologize for my tone. You see, from the name, well, I just didn't know. I didn't realize you were a woman...”

And on it went, with nothing I could do except think, “Sir, you had it right the first time.”

office gossip  
my body up  
for grabs

**Thomas Haynes**

in its native tongue  
a magpie encouraging me  
to #@!#&!

the fragrance  
of a pencil sharpener  
time travel

**Lev Hart**

letters home  
every week -  
sanitized version

**Penny Lowery**

horror stories  
the ghosts  
as old as me

**Biswajit Mishra**

just for a second  
I held the wind in my hands  
breakup

### **kitchen lesson**

*“you know where the ketchup lives,”* she scolded her son as they cleared away after dinner, *“everything has its rightful place.”* she felt unsteady on her legs as she geared up to leave this house where she had lived and loved, but now did neither.

new pen  
she signs her name  
on the divorce papers

**Timothy Daly**

coffee and birdsong in that order

**Benedict Grant**

fired.  
packing up  
the lucky bamboo

**Robert Epstein**

dawn  
and your cheek on mine . . .  
I'd stay  
like this forever, but  
my bladder

new masseuse . . .  
her Nine Inch Nails  
concert tee

**Shawn Blair**

produce section  
she compares her husband  
with all her exes

**Joshua St. Claire**

warm from the dryer  
I slide on your sweater  
to capture the heat

**Jennifer Gurney**



reading  
over my shoulder  
commuter train jerks

stoned teenagers  
roll a log  
into the pond  
of course,  
it floats

**Randy Brooks**

opening windows  
while driving on a highway  
our silence implodes

**Mariya Gusev**

new year's  
the staccato cheers  
of gunfire

**Jacob Blumner**

folding his socks  
mismatched —  
what I can't  
bring myself  
to say

writing  
dad's obituary  
in pencil —  
still wanting  
to please him

newly divorced —  
the TV remote  
in my hand

**Kelly Sargent**

loading the dishwasher  
another bone  
of contention

plastic bags  
full of shit  
on the moon. . .  
when will I stop  
being surprised

**Susan Yavaniski**

none of me  
after age eight ...  
family snapshots

funeral thank-you notes—  
saving her teabag  
for a third cup

**Joseph P. Wechselberger**



enso -  
i find  
my way home

Katherine E Winnick

hummingbird feeder  
just enough to get me  
through tomorrow

## **Headlights**

My uncle who was for a great while sleeping in his van along the outskirts of parking lots, shared with a grim miscreant possessing similar hard luck stories, sends me a youtube video from some segment on the local news about a guy in our hometown who converted his residence into an opulent 'party palace' of collectors' memorabilia asks me where people get the money to do things like that I respond that working in probates I can authoritatively tell you few of them earn it, most inherit it must be nice.

*chasing  
its own tail  
car cigarette lighter*

**Jerome Berglund**

new tax bracket  
all the dogs  
wear boots

slipping  
into old age—  
an unmailed letter

pool hall blues  
the crack and roil  
of a bad break

**John Pappas**



small-town weekend  
this desire to do  
something regrettable

near empty hall  
the soloist rehearses  
a requiem

**Ravi Kiran**

junk mail guilt  
another appeal for cash  
blocked

**Ingrid Baluchi**

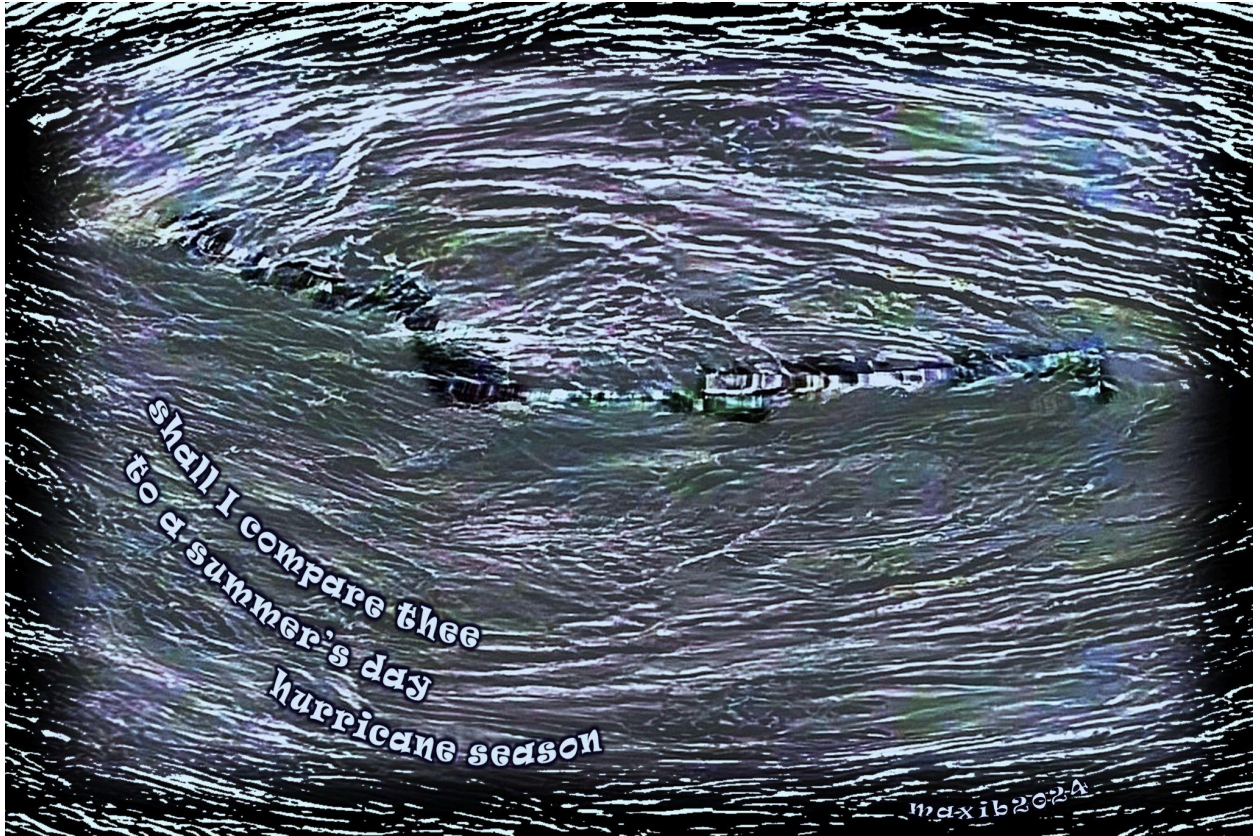
matryoshka doll  
deep inside my confidence  
Mother's voice

**Marilyn Ward**

mallard's broken wing  
I wish my disability  
were visible

relativity  
I nod as Aunt Gladys  
prattles on

**Colleen Farrelly**



**Maxianne Berger**

different numbers  
on his home and away jerseys  
so goes his defense

**Ron Scully**

nightly news  
the iffy truth  
of the weather forecast

**David Watts**

magic show  
so often sawed in half  
assis tant

celebrating each crease of cardboard cat

location  
location  
location  
brain scan

**Roberta Beach Jacobson**

eclipse . . .  
on a sunny day  
his burial

faded photographs  
the unforgettable color  
of some memories

**Oscar Luparia**



**captured**

**by filtered  
light**

**in the fallen  
arms of a forest's  
dream**

**Barry J. Vitcov**

the line  
of children after...  
ducks on parade

**Marilyn Humbert**



dog dead in the street war has drained my tears

### **The Period**

- charcoal-colored dot in a book or piece of paper
- a female's year divided by twelve
- reason for 'on the rag' teases
- something a man can take away
- erased forever with a hysterectomy or aging
- sweats in cold rooms after it's gone
- room now for thinning hair products in the bathroom cabinets

hungry for more  
clumsy fingers drop things  
down the gully

### **Pris Campbell**

too little, too late  
monoku  
mailed in after deadline

**Charles Harmon**

late thaw  
after all this time  
forgiving me

**Mark Hendrickson**

she says  
she missed me  
loaded gun

biopsy  
scraping barnacles  
off my haiku

**Marilyn Ashbaugh**



crossing over  
a poet's pen  
runs dry

marilyn ashbaugh

a crack  
in the asphalt  
my memory lapse

childhood home  
still small enough to squeeze  
through the milk chute

**Colette Kern**

more often than not  
I write a winning poem  
after the deadline

the jeepney's engine  
dominating our first  
real conversation

**M. R. Defibaugh**

smalltown gossip  
the purple tongues  
of strelitzias

drawn-on eyebrows her first day back

his pause  
before the snap  
fortune cookie

**Gavin Austin**

## **Philistine**

Twenty-five bucks entrance fee to the local art museum, the cost of a rack of beer. Among blank canvases and the spray-painted truck tire, I notice a familiar vacuum cleaner mounted, as if on display. It appears identical to the one I recently discarded at the thrift shop. I ask a docent why housekeeping would store their cleaning equipment in a glass display case. With a disdainful glare she dismisses me with, "it's a valuable work art." I decide that the next time I want an aesthetic experience, I will visit an appliance store where admission is free.

a cotton boost  
plunge bra  
glued on canvas  
modern art  
for the cultured

**John Budan**



“nice legs”  
then she showed me  
six more

*you got a fast car...*  
a windshield fly loses grip  
at forty-*fī-ee-ive*

making rent—  
in the corner web  
another fly

**Dylan Stover**

mountain village  
the villagers  
now in the city

**Govind Joshi**

a flock of gulls  
joins the plastic owl  
on the church roof

**George Skane**



**Lavana Kray**

no relief  
for the organist  
extra innings

coldwater backstroke approaching sir splashalot

**Bill Cooper**

the *de* growing *me* distance *nt* between *ia* us

**Nick T**

the child  
she didn't have  
to help save the planet



*Nick T*

**Nick T**



**Nick T**

renaissance space  
his book collection creates  
an illusion of depth

anxiety management  
a freezer full  
of dessert options

**Alanna C. Burke**



## **Precancer**

A rising sophomore in college, she returns home from a late summer road trip. She discovers a girl's pink sweater in her parents' coat closet.

It's not hers. It's too small for her.

Her dad isn't home.

Her mom chain smokes and tells her the power went out while she was gone.

They and some of the neighbors got bored and snuck into the community pool one night.

She's not to worry, she's told. The detective says the neighbor's daughter is fine. Everyone was drinking that night, her mother explains, and the age of consent here is 16.

Mom's Thanksgiving  
arguing that women  
are people, too

## **Amelia Cotter**

migraine aura  
the growing rattle  
of a pan lid

**Ben Oliver**

end of hike  
dragging our feet  
we pass a centipede

**Marcellin Dallaire-Beaumont**

sunday service  
melting in the sun  
an easter bunny

motion sensor  
a raccoon lights up  
the backyard

**Eavonka Ettinger**

spelunking  
the light at the end  
of a root canal

sightseeing  
at the Sistine Chapel  
a pain in the neck

**Robert Witmer**

a drawer full  
of odd socks  
family reunion

we sink  
beer after beer  
floating bar

giggling at  
his every word  
dad's new girlfriend

**Louise Hopewell**

i'm gonna sit here  
until i experience  
a haiku moment

\*\*\*

there was a time

knots bore its fascination  
in macrame crafted pieces

holding me together  
since circumstances  
ripped us apart

**Gillena Cox**

packed Irish pub—  
beer foam slowly drips  
from his beard

lemon candy . . .  
my own face  
unrecognizable

first date—  
the aftertaste  
of a strawberry

**Jacob D. Salzer**

salted bike paths . . .

I predict six more  
weeks of winter

**Audrey Quinn**

an introvert  
in an extrovert's world  
snow day

**Jon Hare**



pointing the way –  
liver spots  
on my hands

**Malcolm MacClancy**

18th birthday  
now she features a blog  
on raising children

**Pitt Buerken**

witch hunts and windmills  
stubbornly sticking  
to the same script

fleeing one conflict  
to face another...  
border control

**Tracy Davidson**

no runs, no hits  
only errors —  
my haiku record

## **Twisted**

Living and working in Anchorage, Alaska, a Russian originally from Siberia remarks about the recent -25° F cold snap, “Damn it’s cold here”.

in the heat  
of the moment  
the core  
    melts down

**Bonnie J Scherer**

war memorial  
fading from our remembrance  
the why

**Jenn Ryan-Jauregui**

our best  
and worst selves  
house of mirrors

**Scott Wiggerman**

men's locker room  
high-pitched questions  
for dad

deep into the movie  
the glow  
of a lowered phone

**Robert Lowes**

milestone birthday  
my Facebook feed full  
of hip exercises

60<sup>th</sup> birthday  
choosing between roses or lilacs  
for my tattoo

gin martini  
at the bottom of my glass  
I find my mother

**Adele Evershed**

coming soon--  
taxman  
ferryman

feeding the geese--  
waiting to eat  
their livers

**Ruth Holzer**

treatment centre  
I give my daughter  
the hug I want

sudden rain  
we blame his outburst  
on dementia

**Tony Williams**



superbowl again —  
my struggle  
with roman numerals

**Shiva Bhusal**

divorce papers signed  
preparing the ground  
for pink lilies

**Padma Rajeswari Tata**

groundhog day  
the oncologist's shadow  
smiles

your ashes  
watching the family  
scatter

**Mark Forrester**

zipping his fly  
my grandson sticks out  
his tongue

garden swing  
reading my poem  
to the wind

**Neena Singh**

speech bubble  
what is love  
without an exclamation

**Joanna Ashwell**

how pretty  
a red plum flower's bud  
MRI brain image

**Teiichi Suzuki**

## **A Tale of Two Sisters**

As girls, they endured their mother's death, then their father's abandonment. Raised by their grandmother, they lacked nothing that money could buy—but their early losses broke them open, made them bold seekers of love and adventure. Neither would stay in Michigan. Louise married a hotelier, moved to South Dakota, and ran a renowned fishing lodge. Mabel married an inventor and embarked for California at the turn of the last century. She named her only child Ina Louise. Two generations later, I became Cynthia Louise. Maybe my wanderlust came down from those sisters who would not be defeated.

stardust wind  
my guardian angels  
everywhere

**Cynthia Anderson**

a black tie affair  
outside my window  
tuxedo finches

online dating  
all the requirements  
i don't have

**Stephanie Zepherelli**

## **Family Recipe**

I get off the bus and start to walk down Dad's long driveway. Three of my sisters walk out to meet me. Our mother has committed suicide and we are gathering at Dad's house. Tammy says it's too bad Mom didn't call you, you're a trained crisis counselor. A few months ago I had advised Mom that she could have no contact with me until she got psychiatric help. She couldn't call me. "I killed our mother," I say and start to collapse. Carol catches me. Tammy and Zoe get under each arm and half-drag and half-carry me into the house. Dad asks if I will be alright and Zoe tells him we got this. They lay me on Tammy's bed and massage my arms and belly saying over and over it's not your fault, it's not anybody's fault, Mom was sick. I cry myself to sleep. When I wake up, Zoe is still holding my hand.

smell of cinnamon  
in oatmeal cookies  
I remember now

**Shasta Hatter**

a wooden cross  
tended with plastic flowers  
ten years now

pain...  
my activity  
for today

**Shasta Hatter**

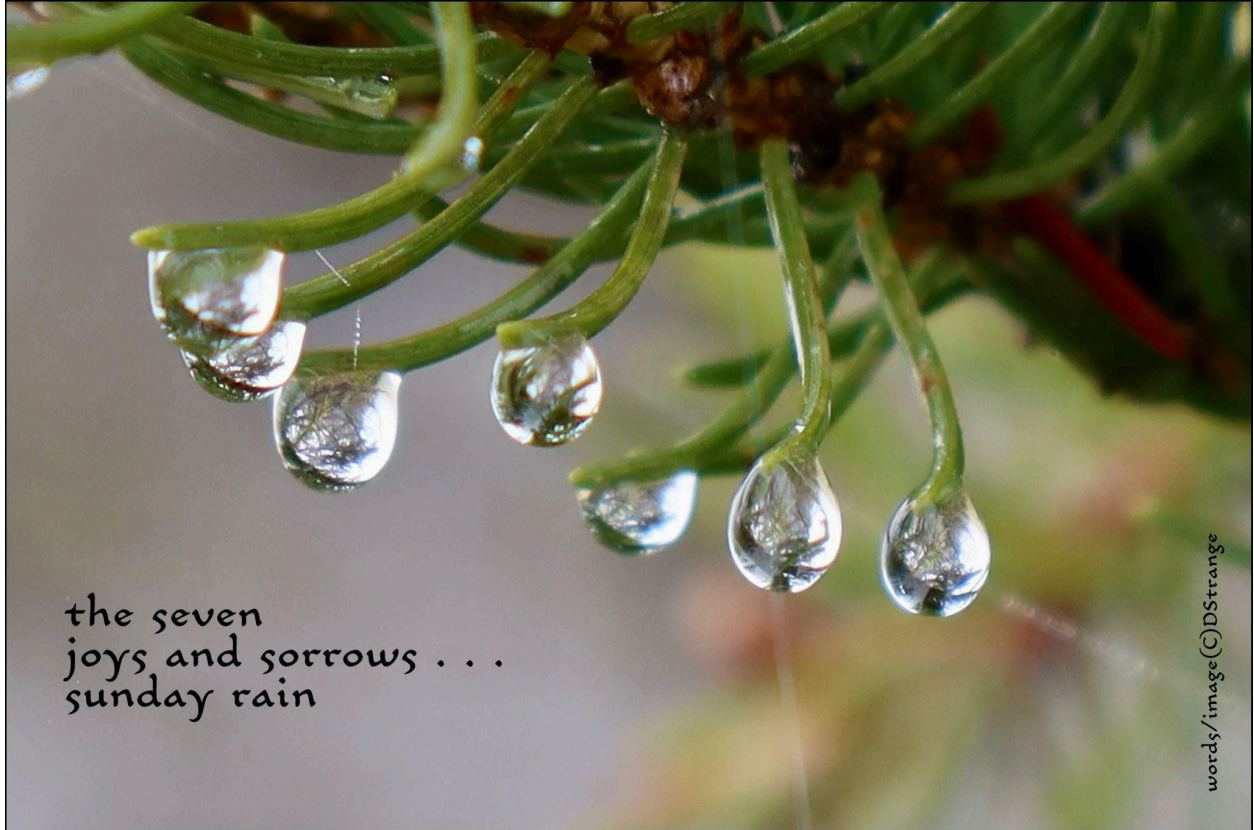




whirlpool  
galaxy  
the  
downward  
spiral  
of  
catastrophic  
thinking

words/image(C)DStrange

**Debbie Strange**



**Debbie Strange**

The image features a solid red background with a fine, woven texture. In the lower-middle section, there is a small, bright, out-of-focus light source, possibly a star or a distant planet, which creates a soft, glowing halo effect. The text is centered horizontally in the upper half of the image.

*amber alert the scorch of summer*

**Anthony Lusardi**

wedding aftermath  
half-filled drinks  
in the trash cans

finding words  
to say on the phone  
with the prostitute

**Anthony Lusardi**

deep night window light lonelier than moonlight

*I want you to want me*

I read the billboard  
to my wife

**John Zheng**

beach festival  
the merry-go-round rides  
with the gibbous moon

**Lakshmi Iyer**

grave visiting day -  
the silent majority  
vainly disturbed

**Natalia Kuznetsova**

whisky moon  
we discover  
we too can sing

**Meera Rehm**

snow turning to sleet  
the sudden change  
in our conversation

**Wanda Amos**

another spring...  
same military uniforms  
new faces

un'altra primavera ... stesse divise militari nuovi volti

**Lucia Cardillo**



imposter syndrome blaming it on the rain

the wind  
shifting again  
promises

**petro c. k.**

windy day sharing a smoke

antique quilt  
piecing together  
a family history

making a tent  
with his knees...  
homeless camp

**Laurie Greer**

small victories  
opening the door  
to an empty dryer

a special stamp  
for the IRS envelope  
*The Giving Tree*

**Lori Becherer**

audio fiction low down pillow talk

new econiche

bears couch surf

the town dump

**Caroline Giles Banks**

crisp morning  
the terse exchange  
of our sighs

mum's scarf  
unraveling a little more  
with the loss

short day  
the barber cuts  
the chat

**C.X. Turner**

liking stuff  
I don't really like  
Instagram

bird sanctuary  
a plastic bag  
of dog poop

**Tim Cremin**

drawing into  
a crescent moon  
birth imminent

body a low ebb—  
riding out  
with flat tires

pullingmyselftogether  
another  
warning

**Jenny Fraser**

the rocks its turns  
the rocks i turn  
spring river

**Mark Smith**

Chinese buffet—  
Spanish  
through the kitchen door

**M. R. Pelletier**



cautious steps  
avoiding the squeaky board  
and discussion

dentist's chair  
sounds from another room  
bring no comfort

**David Josephson**

counting the fleas  
on my sheep  
another sleepless night

kigo debate  
a tsunami  
in a tea cup

dewdrop blues an eight-bar haiku

**Rick Jackofsky**

## **Sister Peanut**

Whether she had ever had surgery was irrelevant; the important thing was whether she was possessed, and if so, by what. No one had claimed responsibility, and she had started speaking in ancient Zetaic four days ago. (It took three and a half days to find a scholar who recognized Zetaic.)

Your people had been on the phone with every terrorist group in the Yellow Pages. No one even had a linguist on staff. The cartels were from the wrong part of the world. Even the demons didn't remember how to conjugate "eat" in that language, and every demon knows how to say "eat" at least seven hundred ways. Then, as if your entire life had rushed toward this plot point, you stopped. Picked up the phone. Dialed. Hoped he wouldn't answer.

salt lick  
the high school drama teacher's  
spring play selection

## **Robert Beveridge**

day moon  
another hole  
in my perception

Erev Pesach  
my shadow passes over  
the homeless

*Mehr Licht!*  
a flock of geese  
flying north

**Sarah Paris**

## Dry Eye Syndrome

After we said goodbye, smiling, pretending we didn't know it was our last, I  
watched you walking down  
waited for tears. But my  
shroud refusing to melt  
Now you are gone forever.  
chrysalis, shriveled up, never to break open to release the wings within.

your death  
in the mirror  
my own

that dark October Street and  
grief remained arid, a black  
into the flow that eases pain.  
And my mourning still a

**Sarah Paris**

elderly couple  
Siri listens diligently  
to their logorrhea

**Luminita Suse**

pulling the hat deeper  
on the cold winter night  
screams from the park

**Henryk Czempiel**

showing off  
my birdsong app ---  
spring ginkgo

newborn grandchild  
on my lap  
the pull of quicksand

**Sheila Sondik**



Haiku: Vidya Premkumar  
Art: Shloka Shankar

in fragmented light a kaleidoscope of truths

**Vidya Premkumar/Shloka Shankar**

sepulchral skies a face for each atrocity

**Shloka Shankar**



## **Themselves as Stone**

A pressing topic. He sums it up. Tom's a gargoyle. Jane's the Saint. Emma's an angel . Or could she be ? Could she be? A shelagh na gig ? No. That's Anne . Already established. So Emma's an angel and Fred's the other. And you then? What are you Pete ? Me ? Well I'm the beast of course. The heraldic one on the family crest that welcomes them at the door.

haiku group  
post ginkgo round the chapel  
the kukai

**Diana Webb**

low-cut dress  
every eye on the food stuck  
between her teeth

my husky voice  
he says he is hard  
of hearing

pizza dough  
mom stretches the last  
vowel of my name

Pandora's box  
the therapist  
takes notes

**Vandana Parashar**

zen garden  
a lizard  
summing me up

**Dipankar Dasgupta**

dying at a better place wind

**Richa Sharma**

man flu  
the director's cut  
with commentary

the photo  
hidden in the Bible  
the love that never died

**Steve Black**

blue sky  
through tears  
still blue

micromanaged  
a puppet  
to his OCD

**Jan Stretch**

so different  
the moon viewed together  
winter evening

**Rehn Kovacic**

valentine's  
a rose drawn in dust  
on the windshield

**Arvinder Kaur**

snake on the path  
we both maintain  
social distance

**Rohan Buettel**

Spring woodlands walk  
we skirt around the mud  
and our feelings

**Paula O'Reilly**

the camelia tree  
drops a pink petal  
on the seat  
where we spotted  
our first shooting star

her new kitchen  
the wafting scent  
of trial & error

**Cynthia Rowe**



polite smiles ...  
she explains her poems  
for the umpteenth time

damaged goods  
I find myself  
back on the shelf

**Susan King**

slamming door  
the child in me  
returns home

**C. Jean Downer**

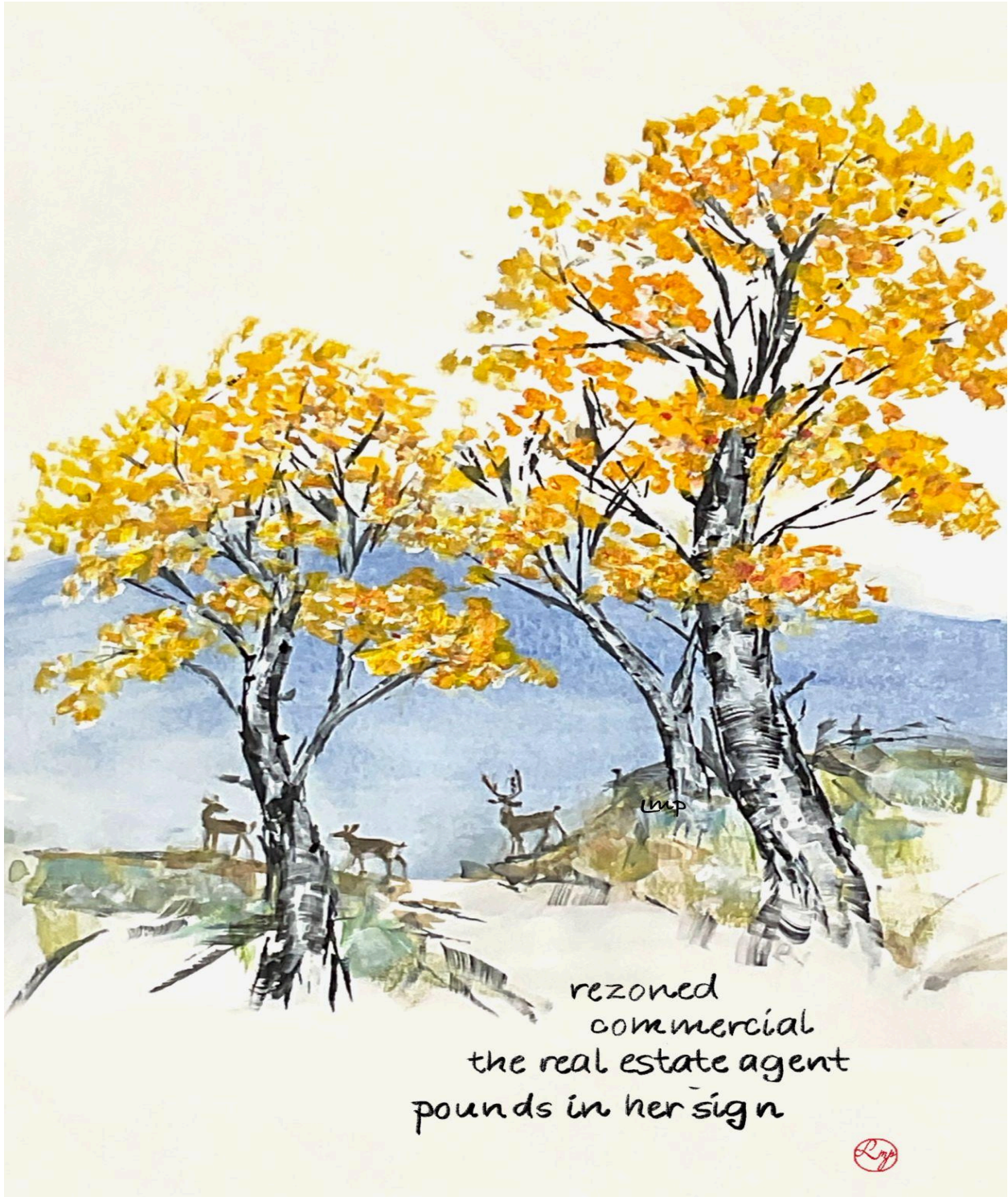
whispering poems  
and secrets in my ear  
hot tub foam

**Oliver Kleyer**

a raindrop  
falls through my smoke ring  
Father's Day

closing time  
my unbalanced checkbook  
falls to the floor

**Marsh Muirhead**



**Linda Papanicolaou**

reviewing my chapbook stink bug

emerald skies  
sometimes I wish  
I had a broom

**Jamie Wimberly**

black ice  
the car skids  
near arrest

*April sleet*  
*the cruelest month*

**Lisa Sparaco**  
***Wilda Morris***

## **Pushing the Envelope**

When I was seven and my brother four, we found a gray and white kitten, light as a feather, wandering in our backyard.

We never had a real household pet before, just goldfish or turtles from the five-and-dime. We begged mom to let us keep her, subject to the rule that we take care of her every need and never bring her inside.

We named her Pushaloo and housed her in an enclosed area under the back porch with a half-size screen door that latched from the outside. It was part of the foundation of the house, dark and dank. Every morning we opened the door to feed her a bowl of milk and bits of dinner leftovers.

She had the run of the backyards on our block while we were in school but always came back for dinner and her bedtime. My brother and I treated her tenderly.

Push stayed with us for a couple of months, then disappeared for good. I felt a hole in my heart but my little brother didn't seem to notice. My parents were relieved that animal care responsibilities were no longer necessary.

Her loss was the first in my life, and the pain was mine alone to bear. I cannot forget her, this brave little being eating and sleeping under the porch, figuring out for herself the right time to move on to the life meant for her.

beach arcade  
my quarter jams  
the gumball machine

**Barrie Levine**

dark confessional  
the blesséd release  
of a silent fart

shoreline jetsam  
in a knot of kelp ribbons  
a refugee child

night crossing a wall of indifference

**John Hawkhead**



house guest  
after the holidays  
stale cookies

### **cul-de-sac**

It took me forty-two years to get back to where I started. A mid-century neighborhood with a mid-century house for a mid-century woman.

open trunk  
the souvenirs of summer  
fade in autumn's sun

**Mary Arnold**

the red envelope  
in a stack of mail  
Valentine's Day

wolf moon  
my hunger  
for haiku

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

mountain guide  
from the bridge of his nose  
a long drop

retired firefighter  
his struggle to  
blow out the candles

returning cat  
I brush the day  
out of his fur

**Lori Kiefer**

razed village—  
how much land does one need  
for a grave

**Milan Rajkumar**

election leaflets  
through my letterbox  
straight to recycling

**Jenny Shepherd**

winter hills  
no longer able to find  
a bra to fit me

man-cave  
how he pokes about  
inside me

catching a rose thorn  
my husband wants to know  
could I get lockjaw

sugarcraft spinning my love web

**Patricia Hawkhead**

21-gun salute  
he takes the red-eye  
home

kids learning  
to let the little things slide  
playground politics

**Sharon Martina**

first firefly my rhinestone cowboy

first word

about his wheelchair--

my blinking cursor

**Sondra J. Byrnes**

remembering  
my uncle—  
battered cavalry bugle

working hard  
to forget everything  
I ever knew

youth has many paths  
old age—  
but one

**Gil Jackofsky**



demons in  
my new backyard  
bush honeysuckle

birthday flowers  
wilt in the window  
the counting stops

**Susan Farner**

puddles  
the splash  
of enlightenment

**Kathabela Wilson**

groundhog day  
all eyes on  
climate change

**Wonja Brucker**

all her edited smiles moonlit

resists touch the withdrawn in her

**Vijay Prasad**

rolling cigarettes-  
the deliberateness  
of slow suicide

a lot of fascism is just simply hating rainbows

**Michael J. Galco**

## **Late Night Walk**

Heading home, through the crisp evening air of Amman, I spot cats in a driveway. Then more, one on the roof of a car. Then a lady. She is unloading from the passenger side, but pauses. There must be at least eight cats approaching this woman.

I say, "That's a lot of fur-friends!"

"I have thirty!"

I repeat, "thirty?"

"Yes, I love them."

"I love cats, too." I exclaim, tapping my heart.

"Thank you so much!"

Another round of smiles, and I disappear into the darkness.

stocking up  
before Ramadan  
crescent moon

**John S Green**

a balloon  
in need of a string  
me without you

## **Mailbox Blues**

Gone, the shaking-hand letter written by grandpa, the lipstick-kiss sealed envelope, the love offered in a note sprayed with perfume. The art of letter writing replaced by talk texting and instant gratification. Once again, I wish to see my name handwritten in gracefully executed cursive waiting in my mailbox.

staying in touch  
old friends on a bench  
remembering old friends

**Carol Raisfeld**

new year trip:  
I buy a darker shade  
of lipstick

**Maeve O'Sullivan**

The Big Boss  
small talk before  
I learn my fate

**Mark Gilbert**

asphalt over pebbles  
mansplaining their divorce

**Ann Sullivan**

editor's sharp  
scissors: a basket full of  
"so what" haiku

**Tomislav Maretić**



my muse  
prefers motel rooms  
at 3 a.m.

zen fishing--  
grasp and release

**John C. Waugh**

inheritance --  
her recipe for stock  
and how to pick a bone

fabricated from the pages of world affairs papier-mache mallard

**R. J. Swanson**

a wishing fountain  
in the hospital garden ...  
few heads among tails

a white-haired man  
stares into his reflection  
the pub's Happy Hour

**Chen-ou Liu**

valentine's day  
the only text he gets  
grocery list

how crazily  
we loved each other --  
old chat logs

**Quamrul Hassan**

tonsure day  
a mother's wish  
coming true

more distant now  
lighthouse beams surfing  
the waves

**Mike Gallagher**

loyalty his receding hairline

blue hero(n)

public housing the driveway in their poems

**Adrian Bouter**

our dog  
waits for the reply  
echo canyon

**Marylyn Burrige**

the red rose blooms again –  
I'm learning  
to enjoy middle age

**Capotă Daniela Lăcrămioara**

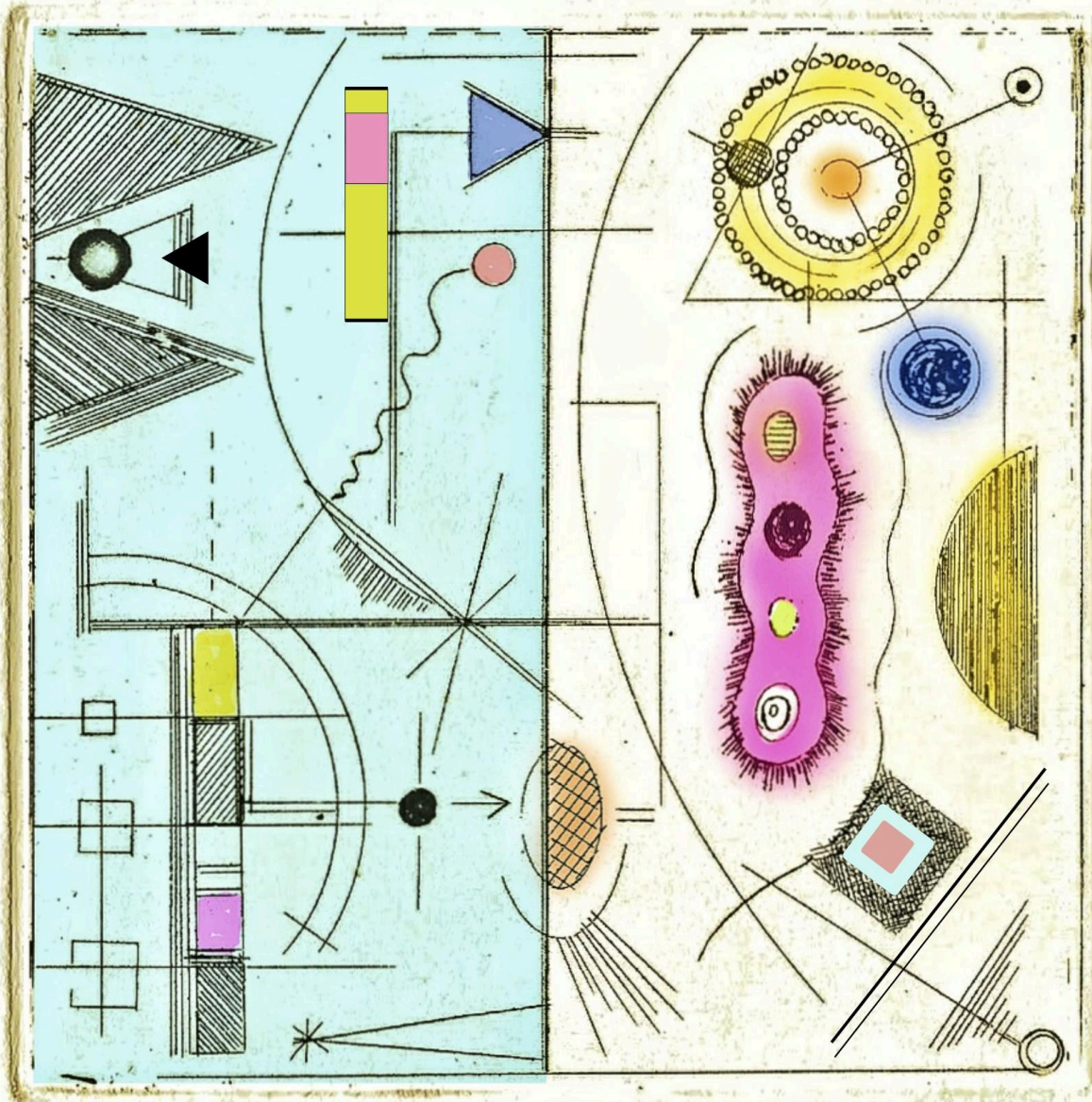
double homicide  
the gated community  
unhinged

taking in his sleep  
a televangelist demands  
more money

going on line  
parents discover  
their only daughter  
beautifully photographed for  
an escort service

**John J. Dunphy**





mental sketchbook—  
conjuring the image  
of his new poem



**Mark Meyer**

## **War Cry**

I have never been to the Witch Tree in northern Minnesota, a three-hundred-year-old Eastern White Cedar that grows out of the rock right on the shore of Lake Superior. But it's on my bucket list. Also, the Platte River in Nebraska---in the spring---to watch a million or so Sandhill Cranes simply explode north. And I'd like to bring my Native father even farther west than that . . . to see the everlasting sky penetrated deep by the tallest snow-capped peaks and then, on our way back, the Wounded Knee Cemetery, where after humbly offering sacred green tobacco---out of a medicine pouch made from the skin of his Adam's apple---the old man could skid around in his electric wheelchair inside the parking lot and have his own little Ghost Dance.

cigarette break---  
I hold a dead mantis  
up to the sun

**Andrew Riutta**

hilltop climb . . .  
as far as the eye can see  
smog

assault  
on the castle—  
miniature golf

rail crossing  
a flattened penny  
for your thoughts

condensed soup  
with love she gives me  
the lima beans

**Richard Tice**

wartime  
the Dear John letter  
he kept

*every so often*  
*the braille of a scar*

**Carol Judkins**  
***Lorraine A Padden***

(z)inquiry  
another empty bottle  
without an answer

now serving  
my backyard  
mycelium internet

**Lorraine A Padden**

what do I wear  
the first time I meet  
my mother?

this mirror reflecting nothing you would know

**Sally Quon**

four years on  
social distance markers  
wearing thin

seeing yours  
in another's smile . . .  
day moon

autumn planting . . .  
dad followed by a trail  
of sparrows

**Jo McInerney**

Newton's First Law  
calling the new wife with the name  
of the old one

the focus  
on students less bright  
astronomy class

**Srinivasa Rao Sambangi**

prequel  
a mean shelter cat's  
tragic backstory

block party  
a random assortment  
of cats

**Ramund Ro**



moon  
inside the cloud . . .  
her sweet lies

**Manoj Sharma**

how to save the world  
the lingering scent  
of a joint

**Eva Limbach**

should you require proof  
that he can keep a secret  
just ask anyone

if there is one thing  
she simply will not stand for  
it's intolerance

**Doug Devaney**

lots of female  
and minority bosses  
on tv

haiku poets  
weigh the fate  
of a comma

once again  
the tv crime's trail  
through a strip club

I'm pretty good  
at understanding people  
in books

**David Oates**

grandma's old tea-pot  
out of the spout  
green shoots

gathering dust  
on the mantle-piece  
mother turns in her urn

blossom fatigue  
scrolling through  
last year's selfies

**Herb Tate**

book club  
three bottles of Chardonnay  
and a mammogram

bladder infection  
the constant state  
of water

**Bisshie**

failing heart  
all the time  
I thought we had

dying  
in slow motion  
my mother

**Heather Lurie**

falling leaves—  
a grasshopper's song  
fills the loneliness

**Mona Bedi**

shabby armchair  
a patient listener  
to my haiku

**Tsanka Shishkova**

**spearmint  
surprise  
hot  
bite  
of her  
first  
kiss**

**Tim Roberts**





restless all night  
the times I could have fixed  
that banging gate

spring morning  
my wife pretends  
to be asleep

**Keith Evetts**

daughter trying on  
my high heels  
next level

**Mona Jordan**

phone outage  
I miss out  
on seventeen spam calls

**Wilda Morris**

yard sign  
local honey for sale  
--red light district

leap year  
making February  
even longer

**Nancy Brady**

figuring out  
the breaks in life  
my enjambment

**B.A. France**

saved photos  
for next year's  
day of the dead

**Christine Wenk-Harrison**

dark web the gutter mind runs into a reservoir

**Vidya Premkumar**

unemployed  
the only event in my calendar  
my period

spring cleaning  
washing off my high-fives  
from the mirror

**Irina Guliaeva**

first date  
she googles him  
under the table

lost and found  
my old self  
in the mirror

**Nalini Shetty**

## **Cover**

Mum's fur coat, handed down from her eldest sister, found its way onto our single bed for extra warmth during winter months. How mum felt about her gesture I never knew: feelings were never talked about in our family.

in the early hours  
a fox moves stealthily  
through city streets

**Bernadette O'Reilly**



shrinking snow  
the billboard pitches  
bikinis

warm rain  
a child's chalk rainbow  
joins the parade

**LeRoy Gorman**

starlight  
long distance  
therapy

**Stephenie Story**

that time of evening  
the burger vans  
roll into town

**Erica Ison**

rain drizzle  
the way mom is  
more or less OK

another selfie  
my sister in the shadow  
of her husband

**Maya Daneva**

midnight mass —  
voluptuous curves  
of incense smoke

high fidelity —  
sounds of an older couple  
coming through the wall

**Eric A. Lohman**

spring flowers  
a homeless vet's  
cardboard sign

pull of the moon  
she blushes before  
inviting me in

**Kevin Valentine**

where new enthusiasms  
go to die—  
out somewhere in the garage

artificial intelligence—  
acting like  
a lawyer

**Curt Pawlisch**

Disney park restroom  
a man adjusts  
his Mickey ears

a baby's sock  
further down the path  
the other one

the old fort  
loading the cannon  
can after can

**Maurice Nevile**

lost  
in my beach book  
summer fog

paint peeling  
off the garden shed  
another year older

paper cut  
he tells me I look good  
for my age

my life story...  
a few pages short  
of the afterword

**Dan Curtis**



going through some shit pig and i

lab partner—  
just enough chemistry  
for a kiss

busy getting done  
the nothing i'm doing today  
drifting cumulus

my retirement plan...  
decades-old beanie babies  
for two dollars apiece

**Matthew Markworth**

in spite  
of all our efforts  
father dies alone

poetry reading  
the bookstore cat  
unmoved

motel room  
unpacking  
my solitude

**Bryan Rickert**

**after his death  
a few songs  
without notes**

**-David Watts**

When I first read David's beautiful poem, I was deeply impressed with how deftly and succinctly he expresses the profundity of grief and absence -- the absence of a friend or loved one, perhaps, who had recently passed away. But as I read and thought about the poem, I began to see the poem shimmer and shift. At the time I encountered David's poem, I was teaching Sam Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* to a class of high school seniors. *Godot*, if you haven't read it since your senior year in high school, introduces the audience to two hapless friends who seem duty-bound to keep a meeting with a mysterious character who never shows up. Despite never having Godot set foot on stage, Beckett makes Godot's absence a presence with which the characters (and audience) must contend. So we too must recognize both David's speaker's grief over the loss of a dear friend or family member and that loved one's continued and reified presence -- in mind, in memory, in music.

The fragment (L1) of David's poem tells us where we stand, or, rather, it knocks us off of our feet as loss does. How long "after his death"? We do not know. The ambiguity of time here captures well the nebulousness and borderlessness of the grieving process. The death does not seem immediately recent, nor does it seem in the distant past. A few months, maybe, have gone by -- time enough where grief isn't an all-obscuring and overwhelming reality, but still something that surfaces regularly -- when you want to pick up the phone to call the person, remember their laugh, or hear their favorite song. During this time, grief is a part of you, but not all of you.

It is in the subsequent phrase, "a few songs / without notes," that the reader can feel deeply the speaker's consideration of his loss. One possible reading of these lines is that the speaker hears music that is missing an essential component -- certain particular notes of the melody have been left out, for example, or an instrument has been completely omitted. Connecting the poem's fragment and phrase, we might surmise this reminds the speaker of his loss and causes him to grieve. (Was the person who passed a musician, and is it their specific part in the chorus or ensemble that is noticeably missing?) Music, however, is sound and silence in time. One might argue

that the silence in and around a song is one element that helps us identify and enjoy it as music. In this reading, by bracketing the absent notes within “a few songs” -- by still naming them as notes, even -- the notes that are not there become part of the song, shaping its melodies and harmonies. By this poetic attention, the speaker transforms what seems to be missing into an integral part of what they are experiencing. The absence becomes presence; in some form our loved ones remain with us.

Another possible reading might be that whole songs have been rendered noteless. Silenced. This seems bleak, as if the poet is focusing on the uniqueness of the loved one’s voice or contribution to the world being lost completely. But can a song without notes still be a song? I think of John Cage’s seminal 4’ 33” -- a song in three movements wherein the performer(s) do not play a note. Cage’s famous piece is not silence but a structure or frame for the listener to appreciate the ambient sounds surrounding them. It, like David’s deft poem, is transformative and allows us to notice that the music that appears to be absent is all around us.

In his poem “The Waking”, Theodore Roethke tells us that “[w]hat falls away is always. And is near.” In just ten syllables, David’s poem, too, reminds us that acknowledged, remembered, or considered absence can be a different form of presence if we are open to awareness. In grief, and in poetry, we can let the silence speak to us. And we can let that silence sing.

**-John Pappas**

**Bryan Rickert** Failed’ Editor  
**editor@failedhaiku.com**  
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