

FAILED HAIKU

Issue 101

(invitation-only edition)

editor: michael rehling

The plan is to invite poets who have been part of Failed Haiku to select their work, either previously published (preferred) or unpublished work that is experimental. In short, I want the work the poet strongly believes is their best!

We will be adding some videos to the YouTube site in August, and working on PROMOTING haiku-related sites by others. Our emails will become more numerous as we add new materials to the site.

Bryan is the 'king' of the realm with the full issues of FH, and that will not change. We will be working together and I will take the technical site work, etc., off his plate. He has carried a large load in recent years and has done a superb job of keeping FH growing and going. More is coming in the future.

Mike Rehling, founder and managing editor of Failed Haiku

Terri L. French

**toy guns
children develop
their trigger fingers**

There is a clear picture of what the poet has represented to the reader. But, the reader can envision and explore many nuances in this poem. Is it just an image of children playing? Is it a commentary on the integration of weapons that can kill into children's toys and playtime? And there are many others I am sure. So being an experienced haikin Terri has allowed for that ambiguity even if she has one view of her own that 'triggered' the poem to be written. This is a gentle view on one hand and more troubling on some others.

the price of freedom— fireworks sale

Once again the poet created a poem with multiple interpretations. The 'price of freedom' commonly refers to those who die in freedom's defense so the reader can view the 'fireworks' as a means of memorializing their sacrifice or as a way to gloss over the loss of life and value the 'victory' separate from the cost. Fireworks have an adverse impact on many veterans of war and the 'sale' may denote to some the cheapness of life in armed conflict. It is also a reminder of the environment in which they fought and injured or lost compatriots. All this is contained within a simple image that engenders thoughtful responses by the discerning reader.

sweater season another layer of adipose tissue

In summer we worry, in varying degrees, about how our bodies look with little or no clothes. Here it is late fall or early winter and we now don't mind looking like a marshmallow in thick goose down jackets that often go from our neck to our knees. In this image, the preparation for a full marshmallow in our appearance has caught the poet's attention and tickles our sense of humor at the frailty of humankind.

spraying aphids my last “I’m sorry” used yesterday

Poets are tender-hearted folk and this one sums up that thought beautifully. Although these small pests that endanger her garden she was still sad at their demise. But that was yesterday! Today they are back and so is the poet with the cure that will cost the aphids their lives. Still, it is hard to empathize with the suffering of others even if you brought it about through your deliberate actions. Life is full of consequences and these aphids simply pick on the plants of the one who planted and cared deeply for them. This is an example of yin/yang in all of our actions.

snow on snow my meltdown

'Losing it' is something that occurs with all living beings. In this case the frustration portrayed in the poem as 'hot' as it may be has no impact on the cold of the snow. There are some things we can't change no matter how hard we try. The meltdown inside has zero influence on the snow outside. That mirrors the effect the meltdown has on those who may be witnesses to it 'in' the house. Maybe the way to cool off is to go out in the snow?

satellite sighting her eyebrow's arc in moonlight

Whatever attracts our attention and focuses our eyes upward brings with it physiological reactions as well. We strain our eyes to see the satellite and bask in the moonlight. The connection the satellite brings to our enjoyment of the night sky may well be that it is a part of humanity traveling through the night sky that few of us will ever experience. Seeing it up there passing over us seemingly faster than the movement of stars in the Milky Way generates a bond between the poet and the universe that transcends a simple passing moment.

Asherah's Song

There's an underground world in the forest. A world of secrets, spells, incantations and whispered truths that spread like rumor. One whose evidence man can walk through but never know. Take off your shoes, stay awhile. If you feel its stirrings you have been bestowed the greatest gift. Leave the forest its disciple, singing praises and spreading the gospel written by roots. One day, it will all be myth. A bedtime story told to the last child.

bristlecone pine—
putting new laces in
dad's old boots

As a card-carrying 'disciple' of the forest I know this one too well. It is something of a mystical experience for me so I related immediately. This sentence is pure genius: *"Leave the forest its disciple, singing praises and spreading the gospel written by roots."* The teaching written by 'roots' made me shout AMEN! The thought that the forest would be seen as

'myth' is indeed the cautionary word in this haibun and seems a call to action. Possibly the last son will take up the fight?

The senryu that caps this thoughtful haibun is a real winner. Terri has brought from the ethereal nature of the forest to a pine cone and her dad's old boots. What a touching memory of her dad who may well have raised her to appreciate nature and preserve it. You can learn things by doing, but those in our lives who encourage and teach us with their own actions are a key ingredient to their family. BRAVO!!!

Crazy Mary

Mary's Antiques and Collectibles resides in a small pink house in the eclectic part of town. It's proprietor is affectionately known as "Crazy Mary." She is a strange mix of Annie Oakley meets Phyllis Diller, a wild-haired straight shooter who likes to poke fun at her husband. "Honey, the man couldn't find his way through a maze if the rats helped him."

haggling over
a bust of Elvis--
her lip curls

Mary babbles to herself and bends the ears of anyone who walks through her door. I've learned over years of visiting her that a conversation isn't what she's looking for. A nod, a smile and a couple of your dollars is all that it takes to make Crazy Mary happy. We should all be so easy to please. "Most people ain't got a pot to piss in," she says with a wave of her hand, "I got a whole store full."
I've never bought a pot from Mary.

broken coffee table
the madonna
wears a lamp shade

Terri French loves to narrate her haibun. Sometimes she uses her voice and other times imagines voices. In this one, she shares a relationship with Crazy Mary and in telling this story she brings out in the reader their similar relationships, and we all have them, with the Crazy Marys in our lives. When I lived in Milwaukee we had the 'Gray Panthers' who were lovely old ladies in tennis shoes who were committed socialists who would always be up to protest marches of any kind. So I relate to this reference wholeheartedly.

Arguing over a bust of Elvis is such a pure image and made me smile broadly. After all, haggling is what the Crazy Marys of the world are most adept at. *Need I say that I too would not buy a pot that Crazy Mary might well have pissed in!*

Oh, and Madonna with a lampshade on her head might well be worth a few dollars to me and I kinda hope that the poet bought it!

Symptom 10

Grandma smiles and points at my feet as soon as I walk in her back door. Sometimes I lie and tell her they're new—it makes her happy. The first thing grandma always asked after “can I get you something to eat?” was “are those new shoes?” Grandma loved shoes. Well, she still does, but she can't tell you so. She has late-stage Alzheimer's and has quit talking. I'm not sure if she can't or just doesn't want to anymore. But she still smiles. And she still finds a way to ask if you're wearing new shoes.

picking daisies
a flip-flop flower
hides her bunion

The title of this one grabbed me. My late wife suffered from dementia after her stroke. Symptoms of dementia are many and here the poet has deftly carved out the memory of just one of those symptoms and given it a number. Smiles are the last thing to go in my experience and so reassuring it must have been to see her smile, and 'know' what that smile was asking. The capping senryu is stunning in its delicate treatment of old age. Hiding bunions in old age does not take

much, just a set of flip-flops that provide cover. I love this one. It brought back memories that others might find painful, but I just smiled at Terrie's grandma. It must have been a beautiful smile for her to be remembered so delicately...

Dragons live forever

My father reclines in his Lazy Boy, the afghan pulled up over his head like a burial shroud. His lighter, ashtray, cigarettes, inhaler and oxygen tank, are within hands reach. His nicotine-stained fingers--the color of sausages gone bad--twitch as he dreams.

He is 8-years old, behind the barn with his cousins Donny and Marvin in Yale, Michigan. Donny, three years his senior, clumsily rolls a cigarette, mimicking the moves of their grandfather. He licks the paper and pulls a piece of tobacco from his tongue, flicking it to the ground. Donny hands the gnarled thing to Marvin, the second oldest, who lights it. He takes a puff but doesn't inhale. He hands the cig to my dad who inhales deeply, filling his 8-year-old lungs. He doesn't cough. He exhales slowly and smiles.

My father awakens, turns off the oxygen tank and reaches for his cigarettes. The smoke fills his 72-year old lungs. He exhales, coughs, and reaches for his inhaler.

autumn mist
mom changes the ending
of the fairy tale

Whoever said "old habits die hard" was right on target. I know this too well as her father's story is much like mine, but I did quit smoking over fifty years ago. Any addiction is indeed a dragon that can feel invincible. Watching someone you love slip away is not easy, and reason is not a cure for these feelings. Yet, Terrie shows a level of affection for her father that is not touched with anger or frustration but a realization that paths once taken can seem impossible for the traveler to move away from.

The capping senryu is stunning on its own, and that is the hallmark of the capping poem in a haibun. Paired with the prose it introduces her mother's response to the situation with her dad. Yes, that dream of living long into old age together may not occur for her, and the autumn mist works to gently obscure that fact from her in the day-to-day. There is nothing missing in this haibun and my tears are real.

Paradise Lost

My son did the one thing I asked him not to do while my husband and I were on a much needed vacation together--he got his ass thrown in jail. The circumstances aren't important to anyone but me. Needless to say, though, it did put a damper on what would have otherwise been a lovely, sunny week at the beach.

turtle hatchlings
I nudge the smallest one
toward the sea

Paradise is elusive on the best of days, but when the worst of our fears happen it can seem to disappear entirely. The story is what it is but nothing prepared me for the senryu. The hardest thing to teach our young is how to be themselves and that often involves hard lessons. Like the turtle, she weighs the pros and cons of 'nudging' her son out into the world regardless of the risks that he may face.

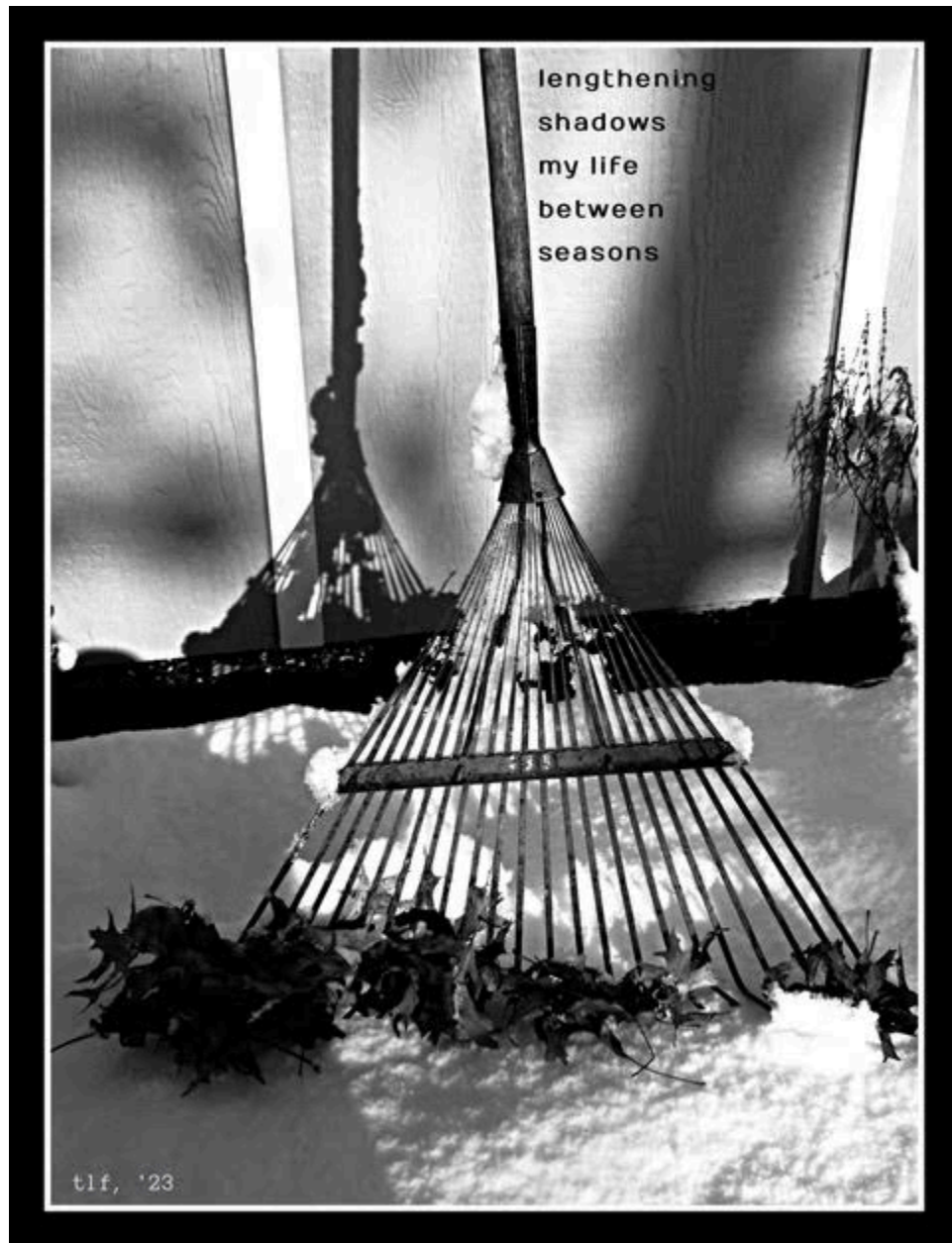
Geronimo

My husband has an app on his phone that counts down the years, months and days until his retirement. In 3 years, 5 months and 17 days the plan is to have the house sold, the RV bought and the wheels rolling on the open road. We'll chase the seasons. Every day can be Spring-like, green with possibilities. But, the closer that day gets, the more I think about what and who I'm leaving behind. And the decisions of what possessions to trash, give to the kids, sell, or put in storage. It's exciting to think that my next front yard could be a mountain vista or an ocean view. It's also a little scary. We joke and say when we've had enough of cavorting around the country we'll just Thelma and Louise it off a cliff and into the wild blue of eternity. Somehow, that scene seems more romantic in a convertible than a 36-foot motor home.

listening to Bowie's
Golden Years
the promise of forever
in a falling star

Well this poem is several years old and my wife and I heard these plans first hand several times. They did it, and as of today they have not gone off the cliff. The best part of haikai is the ability to share bits of your life with others. The good, the bad, and downright funny! This one works so well that it deserves the bang-up capper senryu and the riffing off of a David Bowie song does that for me. Here is a link, so you can listen to it yourself.

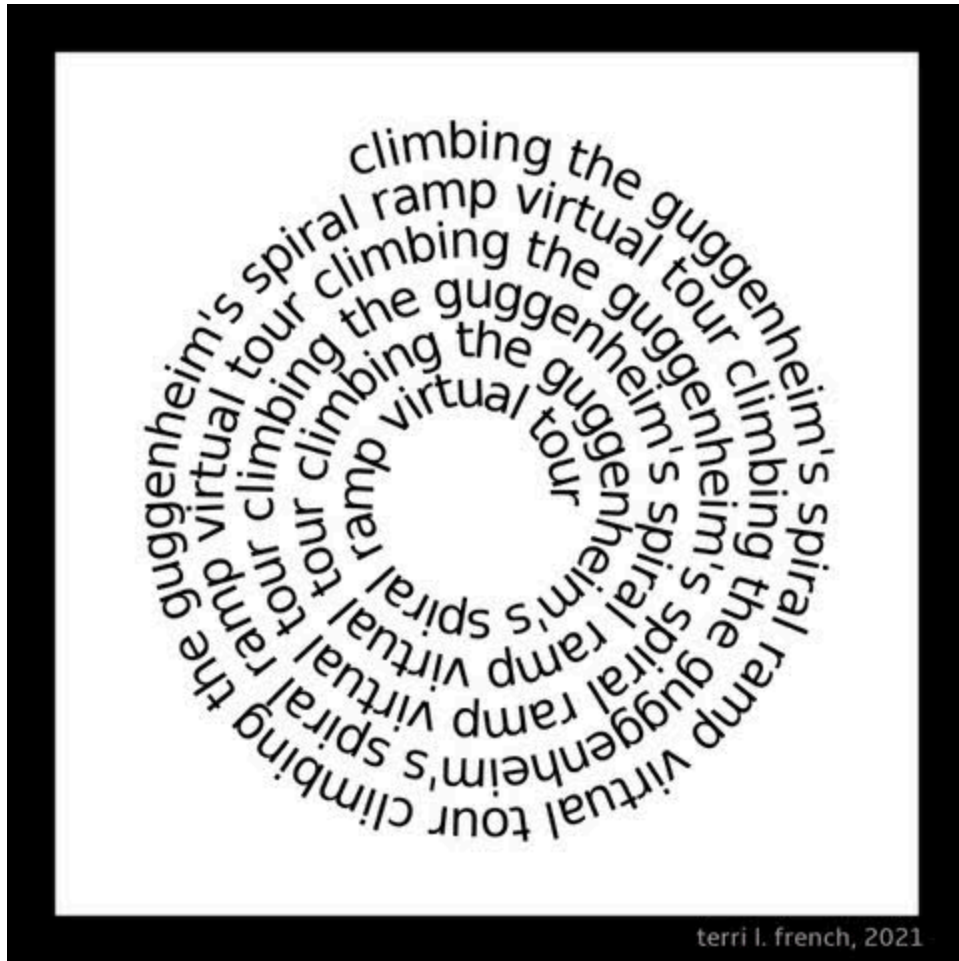
[CLICK HERE](#)



I love the way the image captures the character of the senryu. With age we see the seasons speeding toward us and in this haiga, the image cements the truth of a collision of time's effects on us and the world we live in.



The image adds to this one sharply. It brings the reader into a state of high understanding of Superman's fears. Me too!!!



Some may argue 'too many syllables', but not me. I have been to the Guggenheim and she has captured the experience just perfectly. I am not sure this one would work outside of a haiga, but it sure made me dizzy reading it.



Oh, do I love this image. Cockroaches and humans share a predicament. And, there is no 'easy' way out. The image is wonderful and I love the way she 'signed' this haiga. The signature 'slides' down the side of the building. Nicely played!

Kelly Moyer

**artistic detachment
the tilt
of her mushroom cap**

Now this one is a hoot! Knowing Kelly I can tell you that the mushroom cap is simply stunning on her. OR, is there a mushroom on her head? When mushrooms are picked the 'cap' is the most delicious part. So when you 'detach' it does make a hell of a meal. Whimsy is one of the poet's charms and with this one she got me smiling.

modern love
where the seagull lay
her snuffbox

Well if you make love on a beach the seagulls will clear out for the duration. Don't ask me how I know!

crocheted lace the gaps in my feminism

Every woman has to discover their way to feminism. Crocheted lace may not be every woman's way but the poet has chosen her own and I can attest that she makes everything she does look good! See the image of the poet below for proof!



non-attachment the hat of the beheaded

Remember when I mentioned 'whimsy'? Well, get used to it! In this image, both the human and their hat have found non-attachment in a single blow.

thundercrack
i choose
a sharper pencil

I always keep an old pencil sharpener on my desk. And when the thunder comes and lead snaps I am only a minute away from that sharp pencil. When nature interrupts a working poet it is best to be prepared.

night market the flowerseller's can of paint

Sooo... Do you want yellow daisies? Ok, just a minute, please. When painted yellow they are presented to the customer with the admonition '*Don't touch the blooms for at least thirty minutes*'.

wizedned oak
a tree upon which to hang
your memory

This one has a brilliant twist to it. The poet compares the old oak to the memory of someone dear to her. Old guys, like old oaks, still can get the wood up, right? whimsy and adoration in one poem. I love it...

torn fishnets
i'm the one
that got away

There are two wonderful images here. One is fishnet stockings on the 'one that got away'. The other is a mermaid-like creature slipping away from the fisherman's net. But they go together so well and complement each other. I must remember to get her a new pair of fishnets for Christmas.

imagined futures incubating the kitten's egg

My cat has 'eggs' too. Plastic ones in various colors. All the incubation in the world of those eggs will not bring you another kitten. You will also have to replace the kitten's egg, a bag full might be in order. **whimsy, didn't I warn you?**

**spring rain
trimming rust
from the berries**

This wonderful image is a pure haiku. So simple and clean this image is. Where I live that spring rain is a welcome signal of the beginning of a reborn world. On the other hand, and I have no way of knowing if Kelly would entertain this, but I thought of a metal sculpture of a berry vine, and the rust is really rust. Ok, that is my whimsy coming out...

origami paper an ark for the animal crackers

This one is pure genius. It is an image any child (one of which is me) will love. When I was a kid our paper boats would be loaded with little plastic GIs off to war but animal crackers are just fine. Now, if I could just succeed at origami!

country cookin' we buy the bird for the beak

I remember when I was a small kid my grandma, whom I loved, would take us to the poultry area of Eastern Market and pick out the live chicken or turkey and have it plucked and slaughtered before our eyes. It was something that taught us grandkids where the food comes from. That all said, don't buy the bird for the beak is my advice.

**mama's handiwork
a zipper
in the selkie skin**

A selkie is a shape-shifter being who seamlessly moves from a seal to a human. I can imagine a costume crafted by mom with a zipper to slide in and out from seal to human and back again at Halloween.

**we never meant
for it to be a forever thing
carolina bamboo**

This has a wonderful shift in focus. The first two lines, in my reading, are an emotional image of two people caught in the uncertainty of their relationship. That line compares the waffling of a couple with 'bamboo'. Now bamboo is strong and very durable. **I like happy endings.**

twist of fate a typo in the tea leaves

Well, reading tea leaves is a tricky business for sure. But this senryu combines the attributes of tea leaves and those great little nuggets of advice you get when you eat out at a Chinese restaurant. It must have been a memorable reading, but some pieces of the puzzle got lost in translation. So much for predestination...

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