

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Milind Malick

Issue 39 January 2025

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within

haikuKATHA is the official monthly publication brought out by Triveni Haikai India. Its primary function is to publish the best in contemporary English-language haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, tanka-prose, tanka-art, and haiga.

Each month's issue is put together by a team of editors who select poems from the previous month's prompts posted on the Triveni Haikai India website. The magazine is copyrighted by Triveni Haikai India.

**

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within

Issue 39
January 2025

haiku, tanka, haibun, gembun, tanka-prose,
gembun with tanka, haiga and tanka-art

Founder/Managing Editor:

Kala Ramesh

Associate Editors:

Ashish Narain

Firdaus Parvez

Priti Aisola

Sanjukta Asopa

Shalini Pattabiraman

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Vandana Parashar

Vidya Shankar

Web Editor: Ravi Kiran

Proofreader: Sushama Kapur

Cover Art: Milind Mulick

Design: Kala Ramesh

Copyright © haikuKATHA 2021

All rights revert to the author upon publication. Works may not be reproduced
in any manner or form without prior consent from the individual authors.

Triveni Haikai India: www.trivenihaikai.in

CONTENTS

Editor's Choice Commentary: Shalini Pattabiraman	1-4
Editor's Choice : <i>Cartographer of Tides</i> by C.X. Turner and <i>During a Roller Coaster Loop</i> by Alfred Booth	
 haiku	
Alfred Booth	5
Baisali Chatterjee Dutt	
Barrie Levine	
Billie Dee	6
C.X. Turner	
Fatma Zohra Habis	7
Joanna Ashwell	
Kavita Ratna	
Keith Evetts	
Keith Evetts	8
Lori Kiefer	
Padma Rajeswari	
Priya Narayanan	
Rashmi VeSa	9
Sandip Chauhan	
Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta	10
Susan Yavaniski	
Tejendra Sherchan	

CONTENTS

one-line haiku

Arvinder Kaur	11
Billie Dee	
C.X. Turner	
Kala Ramesh	
Marilyn Ashbaugh	
Mona Bedi	
Srini	

two-line haiku

Marilyn Ashbaugh	12
------------------	----

four-line haiku

Linda Papanicolaou	13
--------------------	----

concrete haiku

Kalyanee Arandhara	14
Lorraine Haig	15

zip haiku

Keith Evetts	16
--------------	----

tanka

Alfred Booth	17
Baisali Chatterjee Dutt	
C. X. Turner	

CONTENTS

C. X. Turner Fatma Zohra Habis	18
Firdaus Parvez Gauri Dixit	19
Gauri Dixit Kala Ramesh	20
Kala Ramesh Kanjini Devi Keith Evetts	21
Linda Papanicolaou Marilyn Humbert Mohua Maulik	22
Mohua Maulik Nitu Yumnam Priti Aisola	23
Priti Aisola Srini Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	24
Suraja Menon Roychowdhury Susan Yavaniski	25
haibun	
<i>Small Gifts</i> by Alfred Booth	26
<i>During a Roller Coaster Loop</i> by Alfred Booth	27
<i>Facing these End Times</i> by Andrew Riutta	28
<i>The Long-distance Runner</i> by Billie Dee	29

CONTENTS

<i>Cartographer of Tides</i> by C.X.Turner	30
<i>Swiping Right</i> by C.X.Turner	31
<i>Grandson</i> by Florence Heyhoe	32
<i>Sans Mirror</i> by Gauri Dixit	33
<i>Layers</i> by Joanna Ashwell	34
<i>Unbiased</i> by Kanjini Devi	35
<i>Winter Lingers</i> by Kanjini Devi	36
<i>Soundless</i> by Lakshmi Iyer	37
<i>Wilber, Nebraska</i> by Linda Papanicolaou	38
<i>In the Middle of Nowhere</i> by Lorraine Haig	39
<i>The Red-bellied Black</i> by Lorraine Haig	40
<i>Open Door</i> by Martin Duguay	41
<i>Old Walt on a Longboard</i> by Matthew Caretti	42
<i>Wrong Place, Wrong Time</i> by Mohua Maulik	43
<i>House of Illusions</i> by Mona Bedi	44
<i>Broken Winds</i> by Nalini Shetty	45
<i>Missing List</i> by Nalini Shetty	46
<i>A Question with no Answer</i> by Namratha Varadharajan	47
<i>Faultlines</i> by Sandip Chauhan	48
<i>Un-done</i> by Susan Yavanski	49

gembun

<i>orphaned joey</i> by Lorraine Haig	50
<i>blue swallows</i> by Susan Burch	51

terbalik

<i>punctured tyres</i> by Kala Ramesh	52
---------------------------------------	----

CONTENTS

tanka-prose

<i>Sattvic Space</i> by Kanjini Devi	53
<i>Snow</i> by Lorraine Haig	54
<i>A Man's Tale</i> by Lorraine Haig	55
<i>Old Fisherman</i> by Lorraine Haig	56
<i>Unshackled</i> by Marilyn Humbert	57
<i>Midnight Raga</i> by Suraja Menon Roychowdhury	58

gembun / terbalik

Kala Ramesh	59
-------------	----

haiga

Debbie Strange	60
Nalini Shetty	61
Nalini Shetty	62
Ranu Jain	63
Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta	64

tanka-art

Nalini Shetty	65
Sandip Chauhan	66
Sreenath	67
Sreenath	68

haiku, tanka, haibun, gembun, terbalik,
tanka-prose, gembun / terbalik , haiga and
tanka-art

Our heartfelt thanks to:

Neena Singh, ken slaughter, Prakash Thombre,
Muskaan Ahuja, and Lev Hart,

for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of December 2024,

Milind Mulick
for his brilliant watercolour painting,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Shalini Pattabiraman
Editor's Choice: *Cartographer of Tides* by C.X. Turner
and *During a Roller Coaster Loop* by Alfred Booth

C.X. Turner

Cartographer of Tides

wave after wave —
spindrift scatters
into nothing

The tideline is fractured: crab shells splintered like molars, a rotting net knotted tight against driftwood ribs, and a single gull feather, caught mid-drift, its edges worn to translucence.

A shard of green glass catches the light, its edges dulled by time like the glass I pulled from your hand that night when you pressed it into your wrist.

I wade into the water. The cold, biting sharply at my legs. The weight of that memory drags me deeper.

storm's edge —
salt carves its story
into open skin

Editors' Choice Commentary: Shalini Pattabiraman
Editor's Choice: *Cartographer of Tides* by C.X. Turner
and *During a Roller Coaster Loop* by Alfred Booth

Alfred Booth

During a Roller Coaster Loop

In the morning quiet, the mirror reflects traces of turbulence, both physical and emotional, lingering like an echo, hopefully diffused in the silence of a timid prayer for whoever might answer. The first shadows criss-cross as I walk through the neighborhood to the bus stop, breathing in the frigid February air, the dim light not yet able to warm much of anything, yet slowly it brings a broad smile. Continuing on board, I greet my favorite bus driver, the one who whistles. I am still alive, I tell myself each morning during this walk and perhaps on a long path to stay that way.

I arrive at my destination two floors underground. Here, the dark green upholstered chairs are not all empty. As I find a spot close to where I must go, a nurse calls my name. People nod and I exchange a few whispered hellos; conversations in this room are difficult. Beyond that, they are part of what I need. The room is backlit with walls of pale yellow and blue. An uncurtained window opens onto the hallway from the elevator.

I have named this place the donut hole, a room waiting to sanction — or curse — an entire existence. I remind myself every morning that mine is filled with abundance. And that yes, there is still a lot of room for another pair of shoes, a few more dear friends, a few more tattered books.

waiting
until the swallows return
this back and forth

Editors' Choice Commentary: Shalini Pattabiraman
Editor's Choice: *Cartographer of Tides* by C.X. Turner
and *During a Roller Coaster Loop* by Alfred Booth

The days are shorter, and darkness lingers longer. Winter saps the energy, and the body curls into itself, longing for heat, for light, for the warmth of fellowship. In most parts of the world, the yearning for light and brightness is so strong, that over centuries we have built rituals and traditions to bring that bit of cheer into the winter months. Yet, SAD or seasonal affective disorder is more commonplace than we think and affects many people during these harsh winter months. Especially if one is lonely and living in isolation, these feelings become more pronounced than ever as there is no one around who can help mitigate the feelings. An increase in the ageing population, especially in the rural countryside, where isolation is also very much physical and geographical, creates vulnerability among this group.

Given the weight of all this information and battling with my own struggles with the early onset of darkness in winters, I found the 'Cartographer of Tides' a significantly moving haibun.

On first reading, I was pulled into this haibun by the evident lyricism tinged with a deep sadness. The opening ku attests to the feelings of isolation and grief experienced in the shape of things, 'spindrift scatters into nothing' and the repetitive force of 'wave after wave' pushes us deeper into that nothingness.

Turner turns to the landscape to find the language that allows her to speak of these feelings. Her words do not distinguish between the body of the landscape and the landscape of our bodies as both merge: crab shells splintered like molars, a rotting net knotted tight against driftwood ribs. 'molars' and 'ribs' adding an expanded imagery where the human is so tightly woven into the animal and the natural world that what comes next shocks the reader.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Shalini Pattabiraman
Editor's Choice: *Cartographer of Tides* by C.X. Turner
and *During a Roller Coaster Loop* by Alfred Booth

There is an immediate loss of breath too as the pause builds tension and it takes a while for the reader to move from the 'green glass' pressed into the wrist to wading into water where 'the weight of memory drags me deeper'.

The ending ku extends the overwhelming feelings of grief 'into open skin'. 'Salt' lends it a grittiness and the abrasive quality of its texture on the wounds does make it quite a kinesthetic image.

I felt quite shattered at the end of that reading because language like that pulls the reader through the emotions and I found myself with the speaker in the haibun going through the experience with them.

I read Turner's heartbreaking haibun, 'Cartographer of Tides' and then turned to Booth's 'During a Roller Coaster Loop' again.

Between the two haibun, I kept going back and forth. Perhaps, dear reader, if you did the same, you too might encounter the soothing effect of Booth's long sentences as his prose given its own tenor of sadness, still brings you back home into safety with the force of his writing: 'I remind myself every morning that mine is filled with abundance. And that yes, there is still a lot of room for another pair of shoes, a few more dear friends, a few more tattered books.'

The ending ku is poignant and yet filled with hope, 'swallows' symbolise this beautifully. It reminded me that this season doesn't last forever, and we just need to wait for it to turn.

I hope the year is filled with happiness, good health, and harmony. Happy New Year!

Shalini Pattabiraman

haiku

lost for words
the sharp intake
of winter frost

Alfred Booth

salon visit
following the scissor's snip snip
with my eyes

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

gran's summer house
just enough night
for the sleeping porch

Barrie Levine

plug-in light
just enough
for the child's dream

Barrie Levine

haiku

first dawn ...
the pounding in my head
in my head

Billie Dee

last call ...
the barkeep wipes down
one more year

Billie Dee

uneven grass
winter's thin light
on every blade

C.X. Turner

across the valley
a tractor's floodlights
plough the dark

C.X. Turner

haiku

every shade of grey
on the seagull's wing
winter sea

Fatma Zohra Habis

bound to itself
the first edition
of snow

Joanna Ashwell

colouring book
the pull of white
outside the lines

Kavita Ratna

until they are
but specks
departing geese

Keith Evetts

haiku

escape from the city
the smell of exhausts
comes with us

Keith Evetts

falling leaves
our city down to the last
sparrow song

Lori Kiefer

dancing
with the spring breeze
a skirt in the balcony

Padma Rajeswari

New Year's Day
waking up with a hangover
of the year gone by

Priya Narayanan

haiku

sunset beach
the basking mound turns
into a turtle

Rashmi VeSa

soft breeze —
a withered tree crowned
with new blossoms

Sandip Chauhan

autumn wind —
a straw hat pinned
to the gate

Sandip Chauhan

monsoon breeze
the faint sweetness
of sugarcane

Sandip Chauhan

haiku

Earth Hour
i am
moonlit

Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

highway standstill
a gull rides the summer wind
seaward

Susan Yavaniski

fleeting autumn
we eat the apples
meant for a pie

Susan Yavaniski

city at night
in the lighted trees
no nestling birds

Tejendra Sherchan

one-line haiku

after the river quietens hollow bones

Arvinder Kaur

taking down the mistletoe widow's moon

Billie Dee

riverbed splitting a thousand thirsts

C.X. Turner

midnight rain alive with croaking frogs

Kala Ramesh

earth tremors in my mind an avalanche

Kala Ramesh

stepping into spring a snowman loses himself

Marilyn Ashbaugh

smoggy night the The Great Bear loses its tail

Mona Bedi

the ancient river's throat sore

Srini

two-line haiku

shrinking in bath water
the kitten's meow grows

Marilyn Ashbaugh

four-line haiku

snowy night
on an empty street
the traffic light turns
 green red green

Linda Papanicolaou

concrete haiku

the of icicle
tips an fringe moments
 frozen

Kalyanee Arandhara

concrete haiku

summer
down
pour
splashing
into
its
s o u n d

Lorraine Haig

zip haiku

midsummer night in the churchyard
teens try to waken the dead

Keith Evetts

tanka

all the secrets
told beneath the willow
bend in fierce wind
yet I have kept my word
and loved you from afar

Alfred Booth

after dropping off
his last load of laundry
the dhobi leans
against the lamp post ...
a robin's evening song

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

a child waits
at the frosted window —
each moment
between snowflakes
softening the world

C.X. Turner

tanka

footsteps echo
down the frozen street
I walk slowly ...
this heaviness
older than the stars

C.X. Turner

behind closed eyes
there is a safe place
the sound of falling snow
with the rhythms of winter
my thoughts drift

Fatma Zohra Habis

no flowers
remain below the ground
spring arrives
and I am still waiting
for this war to end

Fatma Zohra Habis

tanka

another year
passes, giving way
to a new
the heart continues
its old wordless poem

Firdaus Parvez

your breath stops
and the moment echoes
in my mind forever
like the hush that follows
a deeply moving symphony

Gauri Dixit

for many years
all these people,
random gaps in between
doesn't life feel like
a poorly formatted page?

Gauri Dixit

tanka

dancing
to his words singing
in my mind —
does love not make one
do reckless things?

Gauri Dixit

it's the door
that's always half shut
this recurrent dream
holds so much of me
yet to be discovered

Kala Ramesh

I wait
and wait
for things to happen ...
a raven
perched on a lamppost

Kala Ramesh

tanka

day in day out
attending to her needs
the dining table
 my workspace
with all the books stacked

Kala Ramesh

beneath the blooms
of Tibouchina
my dog's grave
now a Fuchsia
flowering all year round

Kanjini Devi

an empty conch
that has remained as though
there'd never been
the painful beauty of the moon
the sighing of the sea

Keith Evetts

tanka

summer spent
in the company
of ancestors —
I become another ghost
among the gravestones

Linda Papanicolaou

shoulder to shoulder
on worn stone steps
our supplications
and the struck bells
continuous chiming

Marilyn Humbert

claps and cheers
for the toddler's first
tottering steps
why the whispers
as he falters on life's journey

Mohua Maulik

tanka

peeling paint
visible in the moonlight
this winter
learning to pay attention
to your body language

Mohua Maulik

the lovebird
all by itself in the nest ...
how to tell
this fragile heart
some paths are walked alone

Nitu Yumnam

the house lizard
trapped between a dustpan
and a broom ...
its freefall as I toss it
out of the window

Priti Aisola

tanka

the sun
after days of rain
what else
will it take to lift
the settled gloom within

Priti Aisola

the sound
of mountain rain ...
a poem
without words or meter
but not without music

Srini

a new cycle begins
with the ending of the year
... how strange
that one day I too will die
while yet learning how to live

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

tanka

they say
there is an underground river
slaking the earth's thirst
deep in the pools of your eyes
that must be what I seek

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

I ask my dog
where the hours
have gone
as if the day is just one more thing
I've put in the wrong place

Susan Yavaniski

only enough
to whet my appetite ...
a few dumplings
and some small talk
to get us acquainted

Susan Yavaniski

Alfred Booth


Small Gifts

as days shorten
 trees shrink into themselves
 first snow

Again I sit on a park bench where undressed branches whisper with wind wisps. It is early December, and here in this place more leaves are flat than hanging. Refusing to capitulate and take the tram, I am too old for the uphill/downhill adventures shopping requires. So I rest here until my breath flows like the few clouds above me lingering long enough to let a few raindrops decorate my phone screen. My words are inadequate for the desolate beauty surrounding me. When it's important I never remember poetic words to speak eloquently of loss.

I don't know why these thoughts conjure this memory from August 1970. I follow my 15-year-old footsteps, alone at a summer music academy, wandering beyond the closest perimeter of the town, stumbling down a not-that-steep hill, and crossing a small creek. I pick up a smooth, mottled stone. Further on, I discover the bridge leading over water to the iron gates of a cemetery, which, ignorant of the etiquette for such a situation, I allow myself to enter. I say solemn hellos to the names still legible on tombstones, the simple beauty of which moved me more than I expected. I thought Chopin nocturnes would express these nascent emotions in a more fitting way than the few words I could think of. I leave the rock on one of the more abandoned tombs. Retracing my footsteps, I tell myself that a better reason for sadness is death.

first snow
 trees shrink into themselves
 as days shorten

Alfred Booth
~

During a Roller Coaster Loop

In the morning quiet, the mirror reflects traces of turbulence, both physical and emotional, lingering like an echo, hopefully diffused in the silence of a timid prayer for whoever might answer. The first shadows criss-cross as I walk through the neighborhood to the bus stop, breathing in the frigid February air, the dim light not yet able to warm much of anything, yet slowly it brings a broad smile. Continuing on board, I greet my favorite bus driver, the one who whistles. I am still alive, I tell myself each morning during this walk and perhaps on a long path to stay that way.

I arrive at my destination two floors underground. Here, the dark green upholstered chairs are not all empty. As I find a spot close to where I must go, a nurse calls my name. People nod and I exchange a few whispered hellos; conversations in this room are difficult. Beyond that, they are part of what I need. The room is backlit with walls of pale yellow and blue. An uncurtained window opens onto the hallway from the elevator.

I have named this place the donut hole, a room waiting to sanction — or curse — an entire existence. I remind myself every morning that mine is filled with abundance. And that yes, there is still a lot of room for another pair of shoes, a few more dear friends, a few more tattered books.

waiting
until the swallows return
this back and forth

Andrew Riutta
~

Facing these End Times

Maybe if I fire a happy emoji into the comments of this livestream video on YouTube ... some Russian girl singing Hildegard Von Bingen right in her living room, probably not too far from The Kremlin ... Vladimir Putin won't shoot his long-range nukes directly into this dented-up, northern Michigan trailer park. Winter here has been hard enough already. My heart's pipes froze ... and when I tried to thaw them, the hair dryer only blew out sparks that burned holes in the carpet.

week-long depression ...
I feed animal crackers
to a wary mouse

Billie Dee
~

Long-distance Runner

final sprint
pacing each breath
with stride

Through the window
his nurse watches a cardinal land
on a snowy branch. Smiling,
she turns to plump the pillows.

hospice room
dawn reflected
in the bed rails

C.X. Turner

Cartographer of Tides

wave after wave –
spindrift scatters
into nothing

The tideline is fractured: crab shells splintered like molars, a rotting net knotted tight against driftwood ribs, and a single gull feather, caught mid-drift, its edges worn to translucence.

A shard of green glass catches the light, its edges dulled by time like the glass I pulled from your hand that night when you pressed it into your wrist.

I wade into the water, the cold, biting sharply at my legs. The weight of that memory drags me deeper.

storm's edge –
salt carves its story
into open skin

C.X.Turner
~

Swiping Right

Her letters begin with careful loops, ink tracing each word as though neatness could soften the weight of their stories.

frozen lake

She writes for men she'll never meet — prisoners whose voices linger in their blue ink, spilling into every blank space. One letter bears a doodled face, eyes wide and hopeful, captioned: "Me on a good day?" Another, a harsh sun, its rays outlined like a child's attempt to warm a cold world.

the surface holds a stillness

Each letter grows heavier — longing, regret, dreams crammed into cramped margins, voices held tight in silence. She folds the pages into neat stacks, eyes drifting to the frost-laced garden, where a magpie flicks its tail, restless as the wind, a blur of black against the pale sky.

I cannot shatter

haibun

Florence Heyhoe

Grandson

There is a hole in my abdominal cavity. Greedy for my company, it sucks the breath from me. The edges roll like waves, but they won't float me to Cambodia.

backwash
drowning in the depths
of your absence

haibun

Gauri Dixit
~

Sans Mirror

I smudge the colour corrector lightly. There are so many more layers to add — the concealer, the foundation, the dusting powder, the setting spray. Am I layering them in the right order? What if I mess up a step?

The homoeopath calls it grief — this hyperpigmentation.

autumn morning
the glow on her face
even in death

haibun

Joanna Ashwell

Layers

What I am, or what I am not is not what I am prepared to tell you. You expect too much, for caring so little. I am like a fledgeling thrashing in the first thermals of air.

twig by twig the open rise of a beak

Where do you think this conversation is going? I dodge the quick-fire questions. I am not molten glass for you to forge into a shape.

first feathers the frost fire of plumage

Comfort is a worn cushion, an old coat; not the peeling of my skin. I take time to dissolve like a rainbow stripped of sunlight and water. These barriers I hold, have served me well.

flight path through a dream of stars

Kanjini Devi

Unbiased

A Hollywood star arrives early and rolls out her mat at the back. She had showed up late yesterday and has not been introduced to the others. The rest of the class saunter in at half pace, it's Day Three of their detox, most people struggle on Day Three. I take them through a gentle sequence of movement with emphasis on twists today. It soon dawns on them that we have a celebrity among us, their eyes widen in her general direction. I carry on as if it's just another day in paradise, it does not get more magical for me than teaching yoga in a shala overlooking rice fields.

corpse pose listening to breath and birdsong

haibun

Kanjini Devi

Winter Lingers

I wake up with birdsong and decide to go with gumboots as I don't relish the splash of slush on my bare feet this early. The air still bites, though the shawl around my shoulders adds a layer of warmth, and my cheeks tingle. My pockets are half-filled with pellets before I venture out to the chook pen. A sudden crow from the rooster startles me and the silhouettes on the perch jump.

rising sun
obscured in haze
the earth thaws

Lakshmi Iyer

Soundless

I rush to the washroom
open the tap to its full ...
my tears run through
my choked voice

Pale, fatigued
disgusted, angry
I call out to my ancestors
questioning
the dynasty of truth

Tonight, the sky is bare
stars hidden under
dark rain clouds

In the mirror
I see my grandkids
looking at me
and I hear
my inner voice prompting
me to be just me

roll of honour —
a white butterfly flutters
in the rising sun

Linda Papanicolaou

Wilber, Nebraska

13 October 1873*

“... Mrs. Morey saw the fire coming from the south some five or six miles distant. Mounting a horse, she rode with all speed to the schoolhouse where her three children, two nieces, a nephew and some grandchildren were attending school. Over the objections of the teacher she attempted to lead them to safety, but within a mile the fire overtook them. Her oldest daughter was burned to death on the prairie. They were found by Silas Bullis, by a neighbor who heard the children’s screams. Eight were already dead from burns and suffocation though Mrs. Morey and two of the boys were still alive, clothing burned off and flesh falling from their frames. Mr. Bullis loaded them onto his wagon, drove to his home and sent for Dr. Roat. Mrs. Morey died three weeks later. The boys would survive, though badly scarred for life ...”

prairie fire —
years on yet still in documents
the stench of hair and skin

Notes:

*From an account in Wilber Wilberske Listy, translated by F.J. Sadilek, the Wilber Republican, 18 June 1906

Lorraine Haig

In the Middle of Nowhere

There's something about the colour out here. The sky cobalt blue, the red ochre plains cushioned with the soft grey green of spinifex. You might see a frill-neck lizard, but they'd be tucked up under a bush somewhere.

At night, travelers' eyes are glued to the road in anticipation of a looming shape ahead. Cattle like to gather on the tar for warmth. When the sun drops it's very cold. Of course there are the 'roos. You wouldn't want to hit one of those big buggers, kangaroos as tall as a man.

And there's the iron ore trains, two and a half kilometers long. There's one in front of us right now, loaded. It's come to a halt at the crossroads. Don't worry, I think. It's sure to move soon. We stretch our legs, brew tea, and swipe at flies that seem so pleased to see another living thing. The heat intensifies from all the wagons in front of us. It seems we're the only grey nomads around today.

terracotta dust cloud
a mob of emus
running through fire

Lorraine Haig

The Red-bellied Black

As the morning shadows melt away, it slithers out from under the house and rises to meet me.

I freeze.

Seconds feel like hours as we face each other, a meter apart. With my terror increasing, another part of my brain is focused on the pale shine of its underside, its flicking tongue, surely smelling my fear.

warm gust
the sudden flight
of pigeons

Someone once told me that if you are bailed up by a snake, don't run. But the primal urge is too strong. Just as I was backing off, the snake seized the moment and fled to the bushes, leaving me filled with the sweet scent of honeysuckle, the memory of a snake's pearly pink belly and the surprising realisation that it wasn't red.

silent prayer
a kookaburra starts
to laugh

Martin Duguay

Open Door

man overboard
my trowel scoops
a bee from the bucket

It's been a glorious autumn afternoon for a bike ride. My wife and I are climbing the last hill near our home when we hear a dog yelp across the road. An emaciated dog is limping in front of the corn field. I pull my water bottle off my bike and give the poor stray a drink. Without much thought, I tell him that he's welcome to follow me home if he needs a place to crash. I walk slowly next to my bike, and he hobbles along in my wake.

My wife takes it upon herself to bathe him. Soon, I hear her sobs. Blood is flowing profusely from his injured paws. I dry him as best I can, and we take him to our vet. He surprises us with his prognosis. "Your dog should make a full recovery." He turns to my wife and asks, "So what's his name? I need it for his file."

She gives him a blank stare. Our senior dog passed away a few months ago, and my wife has made it clear to me that she doesn't want to go through the pain of losing another family member. "Come on. You know you're going to keep him."

She lets out a giggle. "Lucky."

Matthew Caretti

Old Walt on a Longboard

field trip
an adolescence
in the forest

Old growth gone, we plant a few more saplings. Add a youthful understorey of earthy smiles curving like loam under fingernails. A mountain stream provides a swift lesson on time. Then into the timeless glade beyond the new crack of old spines spirited away from the storage room.

leaves of grass
students stretch
in the sun

Old lava stacks into the makeshift walls of star mounds mounting the mystery in this place. We trespass down moss-covered stairs, pondering the makeweight of our collective soul, of its individual parts and purpose. Our bodies electric soon balanced in the sandy shallows, moving beyond.

midday set
wishing myself
a surfer too

Mohua Maulik

Wrong Place, Wrong Time

I went higher and higher up on the swing until I was horizontal with the bar. I must have been about 7 or 8 years old but I still remember that curl of excitement at the pit of my stomach, the rush of air, my exultant laugh and then — a sickening thud.

dense fog ...
playing on a loop
the what ifs

Mona Bedi

House of Illusions

The doors of the elevator open slowly. I step inside the maze and immediately scatter into a zillion me. Parts of me get lost in the mayhem, never to be retrieved again.

a forest disappears into itself winter mist

Nalini Shetty

Broken Winds

Yeor Hills rise like a green sigh from the chaos, a sanctuary breathing within the city's concrete sprawl. As I step onto the trail, the traffic's blare dissolves, and is replaced by the cadence of cicadas and the rhythmic rustle of bamboo. A langur perches high in the canopy, its gaze steady and inscrutable. Underfoot, the soil smells of rain long past, mingled with the musk of fallen leaves.

Further in, I find a stream threading through moss-covered stones, carrying the forest's whispers to unseen places. The hills seem to murmur of forgotten time when shadows of trees outnumbered rooftops and each gust of wind carried an unspoken prayer. I linger, knowing the city will call me back, but for now, I let the quiet hold what I can no longer bear.

morning mist
even the sun waits
to touch the waters

Nalini Shetty

Missing List

A gate materializes in the middle of my living room, glowing faintly green. A note taped to it reads: "Knock twice for pizza. Knock three times for wisdom." I knock four times, just to see what happens.

The gate creaks open to a committee of penguins in bowler hats. One adjusts its monocle and scans a clipboard. "You're not on the list," it declares, exasperated.

"I didn't know there was a list," I say.

The penguin sighs, as if explaining something obvious. "There's always a list. You've been ignoring it your whole life."

midnight breeze —
the weight of unopened
invitations

The gate slams shut before I can respond. A note flutters to the floor: "Better luck next time. Or maybe not." I pick it up and flip it over. The address scrawled in neon ink reads as mine — but reversed, as if challenging me to see my own reflection anew.

ceiling cracks —
a tiny spider maps
my mistakes

haibun

Namratha Varadharajan

A Question with no Answer

I stare intently at my silhouette in the still pond, searching for a clue. I have, since birth, known this brown skin, these small hands, those thoughts that swirl. Yet, the reflection is murky. The shadow looking back at me has no defined borders — a gully with no ends, innumerable forks, and potholed with fall-through questions. Undefined, with destination unknown, where do we go from here?

cannot be cupped
into my palms
rippled moon

haibun

Sandip Chauhan

Faultlines

Returning after years, I find traces of myself in places long forgotten: the labyrinth of streets, the sagging roof, the worn courtyard tiles, the etched window ledge.

The mirror next to the window is smaller than I remember, its ornate frame chipped and splintered. I lift it carefully, its cracks dividing my face into pieces I struggle to recognize.

The walls hold a silence heavy with my mother's footsteps, the cadence of my childhood laughter ringing in the distance. This house remembers more of me than I do.

summer dusk ...
a gecko's silhouette
traces the wall

haibun

Susan Yavaniski

Un-done

Twice around... she demonstrates beside me on a fallen tree halfway up the mountain, showing me, a woman on the verge of being — so old — the special knot her mother taught her when she was a little girl. She shows me again. *How many times?* Simple enough, yet they come unknotted, no matter how I tie them ...

scrawled to myself and forgotten

Lorraine Haig
~

The holiday death toll rising.

under a grass moon
the orphaned joey's
two a.m. feed

Susan Burch
~

Builders have started to take their land ...

only
in our throats now
blue swallows

Kala Ramesh



on punctured tyres
a cycle
against a grille

a maze of cobwebs

Kanjini Devi
~

Sattvic Space

We have gathered to celebrate the couple's wedding anniversary. Most of us are old friends who have shared the love of kirtan for decades, and others are friendly strangers. Regardless, we all immediately connect. Each guest has arrived with a cushion in one arm and a gift in the other. After hugs and introductions, we take our seats, some in chairs, some on the mat. The wife sits to my left with her harmonium, and the husband sits to my right with his mridangam. They are both Hare Krishna devotees, so the feast will certainly be sublime. But first we chant.

AUM vibrating
through floorboards
I listen
to the unstruck sound
of my heart chakra

Lorraine Haig
~

Snow

It's Christmas and the bees are busy in the Melaleuca tree again.

Snow in summer
outside my window
in the wind
a blanket of white
carpets the ground

Lorraine Haig

A Man's Tale

There are men who dance, who might take you in their arms and whisper in your ear. There are some who drink with mates in the pub. They might spin a yarn about the one that got away. I've heard the lingo of jackaroos as they talk around the campfire. There are those who work late or say they do. And some who can stop an argument with their voice or their fists. Although I once had a yearning for a blonde-headed surfer, those days are long gone. Thankfully I'm invisible to catcalling men.

Ah, but I love to watch when family gather round; how he holds a room with his stories.

grandfather's
globetrotting tales
wide-eyed kids
prepared to accept
he's walked on the moon

Lorraine Haig

Old Fisherman

His small boat is moored in a narrow creek. On low tide it sits in the mud. A few rickety planks and poles allow him access. Mangrove pegs poke from the murk and small crabs scuttle about feeding. On my visits we sit on the bank and talk about whatever is on his mind. We sip tea from tin mugs and his voice is slow and gentle. Trawling days are long gone but his mesh nets are kept repaired and ready. He tells me the arthritis in his hands will stop him one day, but for now when he's hungry he knows where the mullet will be.

houses line
the new canals
perhaps
you are sailing
the river of stars

Marilyn Humbert

Unshackled

All day, cicadas scream their song, like the restless ocean waves, crying for a mate to love. At gloaming time as the half-light melts from grey to black, I wander my mind's garden, its twisting paths of gravel and brick.

in the garden
of my childhood home
nodding heads
of pink ladies beneath
a belladonna moon

Around the corner, past the prickly grevillea hedge, my footsteps sure and bold, to where the climbing rose and honeysuckle entwines a pergola, bursting with flowers...

honeysuckle
its scent entices me
this evening
and he whispers a spell ...
the alchemy of love

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Midnight Raga

It's past midnight and I've tentatively turned the lights off, as I wait for her. She and I have a stormy relationship. I fight her, until she subdues me. Or I chase her and she eludes me. Sometimes she gives in, but then gets her revenge a short while later, in the deep of the night when she vanishes, leaving me wide-eyed, counting the stars and the sheep and my breaths and wondering why the owl hoots in twos ...

what do I know
of dreams and such
elusive things
long ago I sang a song
I never learned its ending

Kala Ramesh



heart-to-heart
talk with her school friend
thunderbolt!
the rain draws a curtain
around them

the darkness in the room slips into conspiracy mode

haiga



haiga

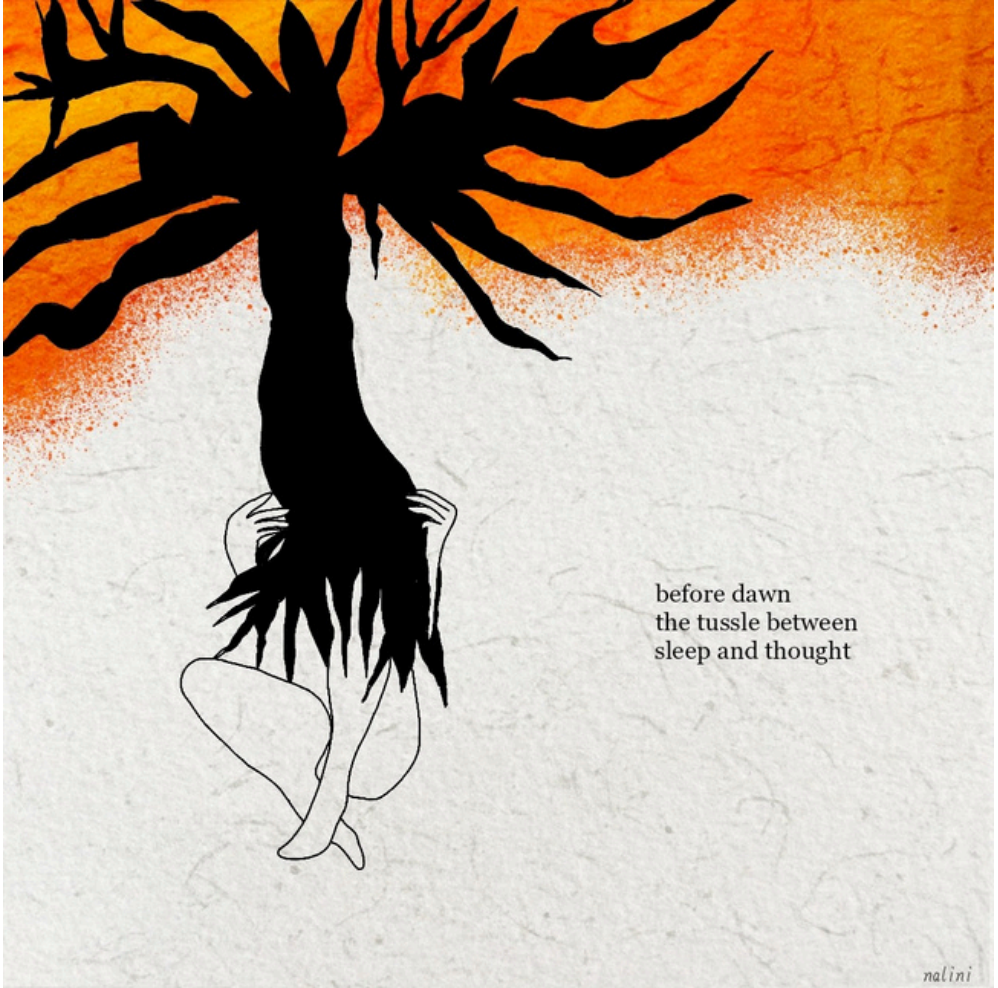


image and haiku: Nalini Shetty

haiga



the final mangrove a footnote in the cityscape

image and haiku: Nalini Shetty

haiga



image and haiku: Ranu Jain

haiga

dead engine
moving at the pace
of valley fog



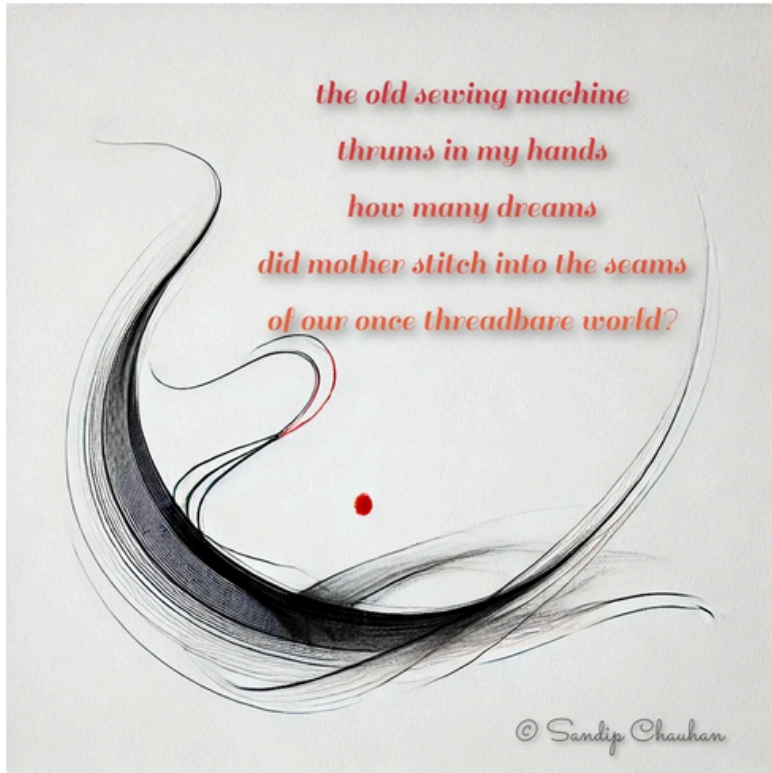
image and haiku: Sankara Jayanth Sudanagunta

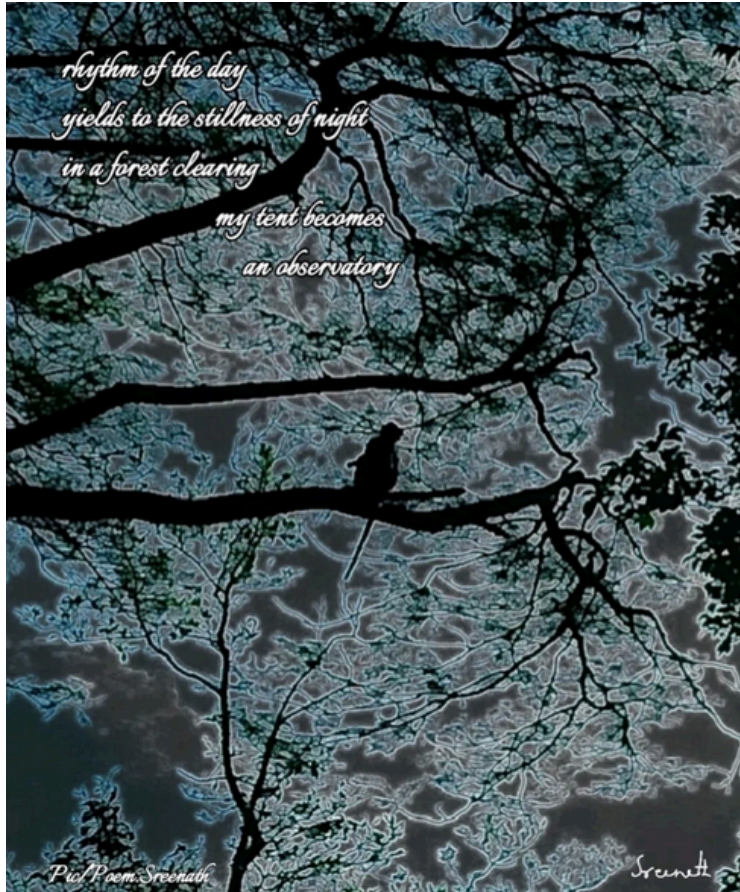


as the wheel slows
a lump of clay holds its shape
with each turn
his hands press the earth gently,
forming what will outlast him

nalini

image and tanka: Nalini Shetty





in the prison
a vision of Christ
now i'm out
why are you hiding
behind the faces

Pic/Poem:Sreenath

Sreenath

Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 February 2025!
with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*