

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Murali Sivaramakrishnan

Issue 25, November 2023

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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.

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Issue 25
November 2023

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

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

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for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of September 2023,

Murali Sivaramakrishnan,
for his watercolour painting
on handmade paper, 2020

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: Vidya Shankar Deep Diving: Anju Kishore

Off the main road are the many lanes and bylanes of Parry's. Everybody is in a hurry here — pulling, pushing, lugging.

I begin to walk gingerly, unsure whether to look up to read the store boards or down at the uneven pavement. Nearly getting talked into buying a rainbow-coloured wig, I slip into one of the many emporia here that sell soap stands, modular kitchens, and everything in between under a single roof.

Back in the sun, smiling flower sellers call out to me, pointing to my flowerless braid and to their mounds of jasmines strung together with tender marjoram that scents the entire street. A tiny temple at the corner bursts with camphor and kumkum. Almost everybody pauses at the entrance for a quick prayer.

I am drawn by the sight of burqa-clad women lining up at a row of wooden kiosks. Polythene bags of khoa sold by the kilo are disappearing fast. Perhaps a festival is 'round the corner.

Following the clang of stainless steel into the next lane, I stumble past little shops overflowing with steel utensils that spill over to the pavement. Further down at an intersection, I loiter among carts of wild gooseberries and sliced raw mangoes sold along with a seasoning mixture of salt and red chilli powder. Calls, laughter, and curses in multiple languages volley back and forth in the early summer air.

I leave the other lanes for another day.

taking flight
with a window pigeon
urban meditation

My first reaction to Anju Kishore’s haibun, ‘Deep Diving’, was that while it has some exquisite descriptions, it gave the effect of being too crowded and meandering without much purpose. Which nearly made me miss the title and the haiku. But I justified (in the writer’s voice), aren’t all wholesale and retail market places in India crowded? I went back to the haibun.

Deep Diving

Did the writer intend that one had to go beyond the explicit ideas expressed in the prose? Maybe. But I wasn’t sure how, so I dived deep literally, all the way to the verse at the end:

*taking flight
with a window pigeon*

What was taking flight with the window pigeons? One’s mind, I surmised. Like a window pigeon, our minds are ever unsettled, jumping from one thought to another, taking off at the slightest pretext from the past to the future to the past again. How does one control a wavering mind?

urban meditation

L3 took me back to the urban setting in the prose, and I walked with the writer, this time, mindfully. I now saw what she meant by “urban meditation”.

“Remain in the world, but be not worldly-minded,” say our scriptures. When the writer of this haibun walks through the lanes of Parry’s, she is in a state of deep observation but she is also in total control of herself. She sees all the products on display to be sold — there are enough and more sensory pleasures in those crowded lanes to entice anyone, but she has the mental strength to keep moving without getting entangled by impulsive purchases. She does buy something; that’s what has brought her to this bustling business colony in the first place.

But she deliberately keeps the details of her purchase from her readers. Those details are for the “worldly-minded”, not for one who seeks “deep diving”. For such a one, the navigation through the lanes of Parry’s is not meaningless meandering. Rather, it is an exercise of “remaining in the world” as a witness where one observes with detachment and without being judgemental.

Anju’s haibun is a classic example of how the title, prose and haiku work in harmony within the framework to produce a noteworthy haibun.

haiku

still afternoon
the sky, the pond
... the pond, the sky

Adelaide B. Shaw

running, running
the rush of adrenalin
before the bombs

Adelaide B. Shaw

note by note
I coax a nightingale
from my fingers

Alfred Booth

open window -
alone in the room
with birdsong

Amoolya Kamalnath

haiku

lavender winds
from lavender fields
under a lavender dusk

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

its wings battered
a dragonfly
finds my shoulder

Bonnie J Scherer

hoarfrost
deep in the woods
the missing child's sock

Bryan Rickert

morning rain
the steady rhythm
of factory work

Bryan Rickert

haiku

protest march
a child raising a slogan
he doesn't understand

Govind Joshi

knit one purl one
air raid siren ...
knit two purl two

Jan Stretch

happy
with new trinkets
child bride

Jharna Sanyal

foreclosure
the chimney
for the swifts

John Pappas

haiku

walking
just to walk —
drifting petals

John Pappas

daybreak
waves keep touching
the dead turtle

K. Ramesh

village by the sea
a corroded Shiva stands
with his left foot raised

Kala Ramesh

autumn chill
a weathervane squeaks
above the French ruins

Keiko Izawa

haiku

old temple gate
the guardian god
with a dusty scowl

Keiko Izawa

village well
a screechy bucket wakes up
the neighbourhood

Lakshmi Iyer

acid attack ...
the blossoming stops
midway

Lakshmi Iyer

silence
in the attic
a rain of moonlight

Lakshmi Iyer

haiku

moonset
the cherry blossoms' silence
deepens

Lev Hart

autumn evening
a woman in her garden
beside her head

Lev Hart

cat kibble
the crunch of moon shadow
on the kitchen floor

Linda Papanicolaou

father's bookshelf —
the winter sun on a jar
of Lincoln pennies

Linda Papanicolaou

haiku

evening concert
the wind's sound
among bellflowers

Lori Kiefer

distant rain
the harbor's entrance
awash with sky

Lorraine Haig

marram grass
the storm releases
a rotting dinghy

Lorraine Haig

the barn door
slowly opening
winter stars

Marilyn Ashbaugh

haiku

patchy fog
the sea slips
into echoes

Marilyn Ashbaugh

Belfast hangover
still wary of revealing
my religion

Marion Clarke

rows and rows
of mosquito nets —
makeshift relief camp

Milan Rajkumar

falling leaves —
the rustle of a farewell
in my backyard

Mona Bedi

haiku

pool party —
dad's friend says hello
to my breasts

Mona Bedi

writer's block —
ellipsis after ellipsis
on a blank page

Priti Aisola

day moon
someone like dad is crossing
the road I built

Ranice Tara

mango saplings —
tomorrow's summer
in today's soil

Rupa Anand

haiku

autumn gusts
the foreboding
leaves leave behind

Sangita Kalarickal

pinecones
whorls into whorls
of pain

Sangita Kalarickal

crowded bus
as if his touch were
accidental

Sumitra Kumar

mixed drinks ...
grandfather waltzes
with his walking stick

Suneet Madan

one-line haiku

wondering what to wear mixed clouds

Keiko Izawa

boom of the surf autumn sea

Linda Papanicolaou

speaking in our native tongue sycamore

Marilyn Ashbaugh

spring the river a river again

Srini

annual review reading my boss's face first

Susan Burch

two-line haiku

regrouping at the river's bend
corpses

Lev Hart

difficult to breathe in my car
caged hens

Ranice Tara

four-line haiku

she stirs
in her bed gently
 ever so gently
the spring dawn

Kala Ramesh

waves
 repeatedly
clash with one another ...
his stammering

Kala Ramesh

as ancient
 as the Prana
 flowing through me
this river

Rupa Anand

concrete haiku

m t r
o h a
n e i
s n
o s
o o n
n u
. n r
. d a
. i
o n
f
r
a
i
n

Dipankar Dasgupta

concrete haiku

fading

into

new

forest

an

old

orchard

Lev Hart

tanka

the pigeon coos
louder this morning
as if to say
all will be well
even if all is not

Amoolya Kamalnath

breaking
linking
every thread within
relationships - i weave
the tapestry of my life

Amrutha V. Prabhu

a mayfly
circles the garden light
playing catch
in a daydream again
with my grandchild

Anju Kishore

tanka

on the mantelpiece
mother's unfinished knitting
 the yarns
 she started long ago
 around the fireplace

Arvinder Kaur

a middle child
sandwiched
between the whole grain
and the big cheese ...
nothing but baloney

Bonnie J Scherer

created with joy
for nieces and nephews
handmade gifts
are nooses ... snares
for wanting love in return

Bonnie J Scherer

tanka

playing duets
in harmony
these sisters
otherwise
out of tune

Bonnie J Scherer

sand
in my butt crack
those little things
you do
to annoy me

Bryan Rickert

murmuration
of starlings
how you twist
then turn
my words around

Bryan Rickert

tanka

fake it
till you make it
fifty years
of muscle cramps
from this smile

Bryan Rickert

the fear of falling
into a lake of bones
reoccurs to me
hearing the forecast—
a dry summer ahead

C.X. Turner

fragments
of a shattered lamp
hanging ...
all the shadows
my own

C.X. Turner

tanka

on this quiet day
a burst of twittering
at the bird feeder
I open the last text
you sent years ago

Firdaus Parvez

what am I
but a speck on a speck
on a speck
in the milky way ...
hopefully shining too

Firdaus Parvez

I said 'enough
of writing poems'
so I stopped
and in the silence I heard
the muse chuckling, scribbling

Joy McCall

tanka

i admire
black indian ink
so why
am i so uneasy
in my dark skin

Kala Ramesh

your eyes glint
with a distant look
i turn away
for i no longer share
that dream with you

Kala Ramesh

i am
sweet-blooded
beyond count
the sum of restrictions
on a diabetic diet

Kala Ramesh

tanka

autumn
even the most hard-hearted
will sit up
to watch which way
the wind blows

Lakshmi Iyer

same old couple
out walking their dog
this autumn dusk
we greet one another
as if we were friends

Linda Papanicolaou

on my knees
where the little stream
slows to a pond
am I a sky god
for the water beetle?

Linda Papanicolaou

tanka

he says
he loves only me
words
empty as clouds
in a drought

Lorraine Haig

at the forest edge
a maze of branches
casts shadows
their rustling messages
as baffling as his excuses

Marilyn Humbert

I wish
my mind
would just stop ...
oh to be still
as an egret

Marilyn Humbert

tanka

hair coloured
makeup in place -
is that all I require
to match the exuberance
of youth?

Mona Bedi

an untethered kite
floats freely in the sky —
the many times
I too want
to be left alone

Mona Bedi

divorce settlement —
I let him have a house full
of material things
keeping the memories
just for myself

Mona Bedi

tanka

week after week
sowing fenugreek seeds
while the pests
feast on the seedlings —
her cancer in remission

Priti Aisola

years ago
your only letter spoke
of a crippling backache
and now
this news of your death

Priti Aisola

orange spots
on the plumeria leaves
but still
the pink flowers bloom —
in pain, yet she smiles

Priti Aisola

tanka

moving day
we negotiate what stays
what goes ...
finally, not even our love
survives the cut

Reid Hepworth

the Rottweiler
within her
still holding
the bone
I've already dropped

Robert Kingston

waiting in line
so many faces
at the border
i ask the question
what if it was me

Robert Kingston

tanka

the vibrant colors
of fall leaves every year
so clichéd ...
the freshness of my grief
on the date you left

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

rotten fruit
in the bowl -
when you have
a bad day,
I do too

Susan Burch

not even
a ripple on the pond
when I wanted
to be remembered
as a wave

Susan Burch

tanka

collapsing star -
the moment
I realize
I'm not as special
as I think I am

Susan Burch

morning glory
trails over
the woodpile —
let's get the heat
back into this fire

wanda amos

Adelaide B. Shaw

The Morning Cafe

A man in his seventies. Large sloping shoulders, a full chest. His thick white hair, brushed back, curls where it rests on his collar. A strong face with a firm jawline and sharp chin, matching the sharpness of his nose. Well dressed in a brown suit, pale lavender shirt and paisley tie.

He reads his newspaper, going from back to front, licking his thumb before turning each page. Lick ... turn. Lick ... turn. Every now and then he runs a hand across his eyes as if to shake off something. He reaches the front page. Reads, then stares ahead, elbows on the table, chin on his hands. Presently, he retrieves a cane from the back of his chair, stands and walks towards the door. The newspaper goes in the trash bin.

cold March winds —
the lingering winter
of the spirit

Anju Kishore

Deep Diving

Off the main road are the many lanes and bylanes of Parry's. Everybody is in a hurry here — pulling, pushing, lugging.

I begin to walk gingerly, unsure whether to look up to read the store boards or down at the uneven pavement. Nearly getting talked into buying a rainbow-coloured wig, I slip into one of the many emporia here that sell soap stands, modular kitchens, and everything in between under a single roof.

Back in the sun, smiling flower sellers call out to me, pointing to my flowerless braid and to their mounds of jasmynes strung together with tender marjoram that scents the entire street. A tiny temple at the corner bursts with camphor and kumkum. Almost everybody pauses at the entrance for a quick prayer.

I am drawn by the sight of burqa-clad women lining up at a row of wooden kiosks. Polythene bags of khoa sold by the kilo are disappearing fast. Perhaps a festival is 'round the corner.

Following the clang of stainless-steel into the next lane, I stumble past little shops overflowing with steel utensils that spill over to the pavement. Further down at an intersection, I loiter among carts of wild gooseberries and sliced raw mangoes sold along with a seasoning mixture of salt and red chilli powder. Calls, laughter, and curses in multiple languages volley back and forth in the early summer air.

I leave the other lanes for another day.

taking flight
with a window pigeon
urban meditation

Ashish Narain
~

How Distant is Far?

"Don't eat meat or eggs today," mother instructs me on the phone, "It's your grandfather's shradh."*

Why, I wonder? This is a man who never knew I existed and was dead long before I was born.

I do what she says nonetheless.

lentil soup
seasoned with a flavor
of home

*Shradh is a day of commemoration for a person who has passed.

Bille Dee
~

Lucky Strikes

Short of breath and blue around the lips, Grandmother clutches my hand.
“Tell me I’m not dying, child ...”

door of sand —
I tilt her hourglass
on its side

Eavonka Ettinger

Sticks and Stones

pecking order
an injured chick
hides in hay

Just out of my dreaded 1st-period PE, I am grateful to be moving on with my day. I walk in laughing and enjoying myself as much as is even possible before Algebra. Suddenly, there's that uncomfortable hush of stifled laughs and anticipation of drama. All eyes on me. I feel the slow creep of a burning blush as I look towards the board. And there it is, so unbearably large, a drawing of a whale and what I realize must be a butterball version of me with the slogan:

Save the Whales
Feed Eavonka

I am frozen until Mr. Hagen finally seems to notice and rushes to wipe it away.

But nothing can or will.

Kala Ramesh
~

The Abyss

I need an operation to see if the tumour is malignant. The doctor collapses my right lung and separates my ribs to reach the lymph nodes.

darkening sky

Back home, I bury my groans in the pillow and wait. The walls turn deaf.

the unknown stretches

Hours hitchhike on tiny tick-tock sounds of the clock. Each time my lungs heave, the sympathetic ribs wail in sync. Like a beetle, slowly but surely, I climb out of the darkness to bask in the rising sun.

into infinity

Lakshmi Iyer

Rhythm of Rain

Our newly built house has reflective windows on the first floor. It adds to the decor of the house.

Dawn rose with a woodpecker's shrill call. We had no idea how troublesome the bird would become. It developed a habit of climbing the adjacent coconut tree to get to the ledge of the reflective windows. One day, we were surprised to hear the woodpecker peck at our windows with all its might. The knocks increased day by day.

visiting hours
the SILENCE board
at the entrance

Lorraine Haig

The God of Winds

When I grizzle, my mother warns me that if the wind changes, I'll be left with a permanent scowl on my face. I begin to wonder what type of wind shift could bring about this metamorphosis.

Could it be a gentle breeze on a sunny day when I scowl at my sister? Maybe the swirly one that can lift your spirits or your skirt. Perhaps, it might be the knife wind that slices through you, its icy blade piercing your back, exiting through your ribs. It might be the westerly prising its long fingers around the window frame that will permanently pucker your features, or the one that circularly breathes for a whole month. Mum could be talking about the hefty one that snapped the wattle tree, tossing it with the strength of a comic book superhero or the tantrum wind that blew the new house next door to smithereens.

up close
the smiley face
of a spider

Lorraine Haig

Magic fingers

The screen door bangs to announce dad is home from work. He is wearing shorts, a long-sleeved checked shirt and socks to his knees. He wears the same outfit every day, even in winter.

My father is an artist. With four small children to raise it is not what he does for a living. On weekends, he drives out to the countryside with his sketchbook. He has a passion for rustic, tumbledown shearing sheds and old withered eucalyptus trees.

Sometimes, we gather around him. His pencil hovers over the paper. There are squeals of delight as we try to guess what animal will appear.

life drawing
a wash of light
over curves

Mona Bedi
~

The Ride

A new grandmother is as inexperienced as a new mother. The roles change. Some say that once you have brought up your kids you should be more adept at managing the grandkids. I don't agree. Today, travelling 35 kms to see my granddaughter's school, I realise I am old. I don't have the same energy and enthusiasm. I had as a young mum who would even hitchhike to go attend her child's parent-teacher meeting. That is a thing of the past. I am now in a cab, and all I can think of is home and a hot cup of tea.

tree rings —
the life we make
for ourselves

Reid Hepworth

Lazy Days

Summer has come to an end. In a few short days we will be forced into long pants and thrust back into school. That dreaded loss of freedom.

Today though, we wake early, the sun barely a sliver over the treetops. Sleep still etched on our faces as we slather bread with jam and wrap it in wax paper. We slip out of our homes and meet each other at the end of the street. A gaggle of miscreants looking for adventure before school starts and the weather changes.

We jump on our bikes, ice cream buckets and nets swaying from our handlebars as we crisscross each other down the narrow, quiet streets. Hockey cards clacking in our spokes like an old-fashioned train picking up speed around a curve.

As we near the marsh our excitement builds. Skidding to a collective stop, we drop our bikes on the embankment and strategize the best place to go in. The marsh smells dank. The water, thick and brown, curdling at the top. Cattails taller than us sway in the breeze. A red-winged blackbird watches us from the tip of one.

I quickly slide down into the water with my bucket and net. As soon as I hit the bottom and try to walk, my sandals are sucked off my feet. I bend down and search for them with one hand, but lose my footing and fall in. The splash catches the attention of one of my friends, who starts to laugh. I spray him with water and in his effort to avoid getting splashed, he also falls in. Pretty soon we are all in the water, splashing at each other. Any thought of catching frogs is long gone.

bathtub ring
mother revises
my chore list

Robert Kingston
~

Bright star

Rudderless we take the birch path into the wonderland. It is autumn and little is said as we amble past many of the sculptures and changing leaves that we would ordinarily pause at.

but for the wind
the silence
of her voice

Sandip Chauhan

Unplugged

A tranquil trail meanders through the breathtaking landscape of Great Falls Park in Virginia. Here, the Potomac River's majestic waters cascade over ancient rocks, crafting a serene, natural masterpiece. It's a place far removed from the city's hustle and bustle, where only the gentle rustling of leaves and distant bird calls fill the air.

As I walk along the trail, with my earplugs playing music, I suddenly feel a strong urge to stop. I pull out the earplugs, letting the echoes of the woods and the rhythm of the river take over.

soaring bald eagle
I become
the boundless blue sky

haibun

Sangita Kalarickal

(Hi)Story-time

My daughter thinks I'm the best cook in the world. She loves the red tanginess of my spaghetti Bolognese. The layers of spice in sambar over red parboiled rice. The pink and white checkered flavors in my Battenberg cake.

I have never told my mother how I feel about her food.

I don't tell my daughter I feel the same about my mom.

leaves sashay
down from golden trees...
again

Susan Burch
~

After Sinus Surgery

Monday
30 sneezes

Tuesday
30

Friday
6

Was something wrong with me? Yes, my septum had been straightened, but maybe it had left the path open for something nefarious to migrate into my brain.

full moon
the spider in the corner
missing

Susan Burch
~

Everyone Needs Love

On the way home, we pass a house with a “Welcome Porch” sign. How nice porches have someplace they can go.

group therapy going off the railing

Susan Burch
~

Enough

I was hoping you could love me a little. It doesn't even have to be that much. Just a small piece of you for me and me alone.

blue sky pocketing an eyeful

Reid Hepworth
~

The golden years, not all they're cracked up to be.

disabled seating
readjusting my view
of myself

Sangita Kalarickal
~

slant weight of memories on our backs

the maple seeds
her little shoes
drag in

Bonnie J Scherer

(B)reach

The ophthalmologist's receptionist greets me with a smile. Knowing the routine, she gets me seated comfortably in the dim light of the examination room.

The doctor enters with his usual grumbling of a greeting and quickly begins. Rolling his chair close to mine, he swings the phoropter toward my face. "Let's have a look at the chart." As he leans in, I notice for the first time how his thick black spectacles exaggerate his beady eyes.

"Is it better or worse, this way or that?" He cycles through the set of lenses. "How about this?" he asks.

I feel his hand on my thigh.

baby seals
tracked by a killer whale ...
a hot soapy bath
washes away
the chill

Bryan Rickert
~

Bitter End

A small fly kills itself in my coffee. I try many times to shoo it away, but when my back is turned, it plunges to its death. Staring out the window into the gloom of a cloudy autumn morning, I start to envy the bug and its tenacity to get the job done.

morning fog —
not even sure
if I have
the motivation
to find my car keys

Lorraine Haig
~

Cruising for a Bruising

In your dreams you travel to strange cities or forget where you left your car.
How you ended up in a farmyard was never explained.

a hard kick
during the night
you said piglets
were nibbling
on your toes

Mona Bedi
~

Muse

I see him in my dreams. Everyday. I feel him in my voice, in the words I speak. He rushes through my veins with vigour and hope. He makes me what I am even after he is long gone.

closet cleaning —
a jingle of coins
from dad's coat
I chance upon the one
he called a lucky charm

Rupa Anand

Au Revoir

How do you say goodbye to something that has sheltered, protected, and nurtured you? You don't. You say a prayer to the Universe for every brick, tile, tap, fan, geyser and each piece of furniture that has contributed to your and the family's well-being for years.

You hope that the new occupants will appreciate the same.

twilight lingers
in the sixth-floor flat
how full
this quietness
within my ex-home

Sangita Kalarickal

Finding Solitude

At first sight, you'd think it was a shimmering mound of brown mud. It's only a closer inspection that would reveal at least two hundred ants huddling together in the mild sun. I have heard one of the reasons they do this is to keep warm. A strength in numbers.

with friends
on a wintry beach
the only
footsteps I recognize
are my own

Susan Burch
~

I'm Concussed but

I'm not dying right? My mom told me a story of one of her husband's relatives who tripped on the slippers by her bed, hit her head, and never woke up.

pinball moon -
what if it's just
a matter of time
before I slip
into death's arms

Susan Burch
~

Delusion, Illusion, & Allusions Oh My

I would just like to lose
a little bit of weight
without doing anything at all.
Is that too much to ask?

if the entire
Statue of Liberty
can disappear,
why not
a couple of pounds

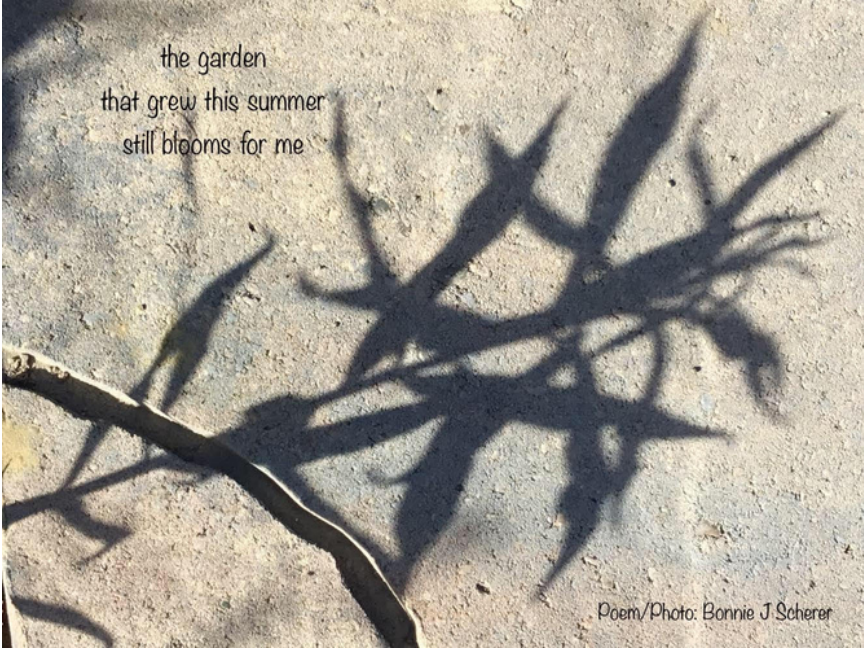
gembun with tanka

Susan Burch
~

My boss ignores my email about feeling like a sitting duck

the receptionist desk
right by the door -
if there's
a workplace shooter,
I'll be the first to die

haiga



the garden
that grew this summer
still blooms for me


Poem/Photo: Bonnie J. Scherer

tanka-art

*perched on a bench
this summer day
a flutter of wings
tickling
my fancy*



Poem/art: Bonnie J Scherer



maple leaves
a fiery red
the colour of love
or is it anger
enveloping the world

barbara olmtak

tanka-art



Dear Readers
thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 25 December 2023!
with many more fine poems
from our contributors.

Team: *haikuKATHA*