haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Prakash Thambre

Issue 61 November 2026

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unfolding the story within

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

A team of editors compiles each month's issue by selecting poems from the previous month's prompts posted on the Triveni Haikai India website. Triveni Haikai India copyrights the magazine.

Our deepest thanks to Prakash Thombre for his brilliant ink line-drawing, showcasing the art of minimalism,

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

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Our heartfelt thanks to:

Gauri Dixit, Beverley George,
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Vidya Premkumar and Lev Hart,
,
for providing the weekly challenges
for the month of October 2025,

Prakash Thombre
for his brilliant ink sketch,
showcasing the art of minimalism,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Art Commentary: by Naini Shetty on Prakash Thombre's ink sketch



What captivates me most about Prakash Thombre's cover art is its elegant minimalism. A few seemingly effortless lines become a book, a body, and a reader in life's autumn. A beautiful spontaneity emerges in the way the strokes curve, pause, and flow. Nothing is overdrawn or laboured, yet each line carries a quiet weight.

Equally compelling is the expressive power of the surrounding white space. The figure exists as much in what is left undrawn as in what is depicted. This apparent emptiness is not merely a background; it creates a stillness that invites contemplation and allows the imagination to wander beyond the visible lines.

Like the haiku, tanka, haibun, haiga, and one-line haiku that find a home in haikuKATHA, the drawing relies on suggestion rather than statement. With remarkable economy, Thombre reveals a world of reflection, curiosity, and quiet grace. A wonderfully evocative cover for a journal dedicated to unfolding the story within.

breaking bread
with a leftover dream —
noonshine

Alan Summers

teacup cooling
on a silent piano —
autumn rain

Alfred Booth

ganga glowing
with a thousand prayers ...
deepdaan

Anjali Warhadpande

kitchen door —
a tarnished handle
covered in frost

Artur Zieliński

unmarked grave —
candles' glow
from the next tomb

Artur Zieliński

just when I think
I'm done with romance -
the rough sea in Aldeburgh

Beata Wrzal

urn and all
into the drink ...
döstädning

Billie Dee

through the green valley
... a red train
stitching the hills

Bhagirathi Eshwar

haiku

last light —
one carriage after another
takes the sun

Bhagirathi Eshwar

autumn rain
the apple's split
widening

C.X. Turner

winter sun
the second-hand record store
sells blues

Dipankar Dasgupta

the guide points
four centuries back ...
North Star

Dipankar Dasgupta

aster petals
in the hollow of a stone
a winter wave

Disha Upadhyay

power outage —
laptop screen glows
on the unwashed mug

Gauri Dixit

snowmelt
the hill station blooms
with gutka wrappers

Govind Paliath

mud-brick gompa
the rushing Indus
carries morning chants

Govind Paliath

Winter drizzle
the worn corner
of a prayer mat

Jacek Margolak

autumn rain
the haystack darkens
from the top

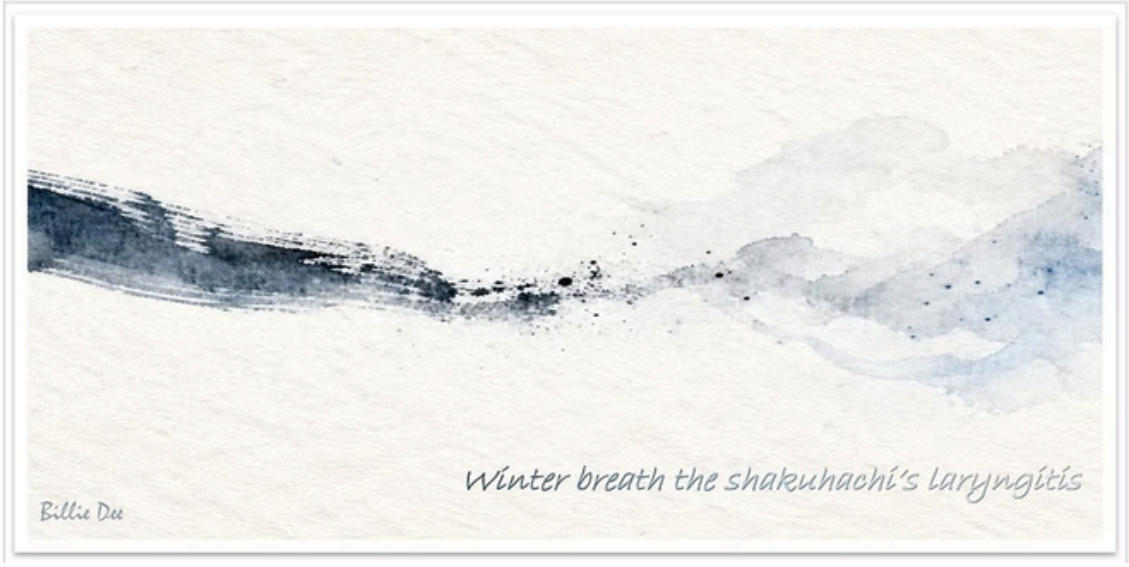
Jacek Margolak

back among pines
the engine ticking
as it cools

Jacek Margolak

Jack-O-Lantern
a flickering flame
within each smile

Joanna Ashwell


Winter breath the shakuhachi's laryngitis
Billie Du

fallen oak
honey fungus
ringed in rain

Joanna Ashwell

Fishing Rights
the kingfisher still
as the river flows on

Joanna Ashwell

moonrise ...
the gleam
of a tent peg

K. Ramesh

where the morning mist
colours the mountain top ...
a bald eagle

Kala Ramesh

low tide
sea pier stilt-walks
into oil

Kavita Ratna

summer breeze ...
hopscotch prints
in red mud

Kavita Ratna

superfast train ...
our maid doesn't need
any introduction

Lakshmi Iyer

spring light
on the worn headstone
a bright penny

Lev Hart

open to the sky
the barn's foundations thick
with summer grasses

Lev Hart

leaf by leaf
back to where it was
spring forest

Meera Rehm

where mountains
meet the summer sky ...
boys on yak backs

Milan Rajkumar

childless —
cracks in the parched earth
widen with summer

Mona Bedi

haiku

sparkling
with the solstice dawn ...
shattered beer bottle

Nicholas Klacsanzky

winter rain —
a brahminy kite still
on an antenna

Raji Vijayaraghavan

temple visit —
a kick to the stray
before going in

Rupa Anand

height of summer
the mason hums
a Bollywood tune

Rupa Anand

flags torn
each gust
lets in more sky

Samir Satam

fish skeleton
even its shadow
has ribs

Sandip Chauhan

lifting my sunglasses —
the mountain pass
comes into color

Sandip Chauhan


shuttle of the loom
the warp and weft
of autumn leaves
marilyn ashbaugh

quiet Sunday —
raindrops dripping
from umbrella tips

Sathya Venkatesh

sanctifying
one more plastic bottle
the Ganges

Soumya Mukherjee

beach picnic —
foam fills
the plastic moat

Souvik Chakraborty

chipped idols
under the peepal tree
autumn wind

Shalini Gupta

haiku

spring breeze
the clanging metal door
of an old birdcage

Shalini Gupta

bedtime stories
untangling
my daughter's hair

Shivangi Sharma

monsoon night
the last matchstick
fails to ignite

Sumitra Kumar

old dog
guarding nothing
faithfully

Thomas L. Vaultonburg

touching
the temple threshold
moss

Vikram Kolmannskog

one-line haiku

gleaming windows the spell of a begun day

Alan Summers

river river the ripple of an otter undulating the moon

Alan Summers

the yé-yé girl sings in the study old vinyl

Dipankar Dasgupta

what i send out the ripples

Kanjini Devi

the hills a little softer morning mist

Sathya Venkatesh

colour coding beginnings maanthulir

Shloka Shankar


city heat
the juice vendor
gulps down
his dry throat
milan raikumar

kintsugi
I threw one porcelain cup
and glued it
she never let me forget
my life of wrong notes

Alfred Booth

counting
every sunrise every sunset
and the long hours
making everything matter
. . . until it didn't

Alfred Booth

day by day
a little more sky
in autumn
since we said goodbye
my poems shorten

Alicia Samson

petal by petal
the flower opens
once more
somewhere inside me
spring begins

Amrutha V Prabhu

tv news blends
with birds cacophony
what 'breaking news'
are birds sharing
I wonder

Anjali Warhadpande

into the cold wind
stepping over stones
my feet vanish —
beneath the full moon
the shadow takes me in

Artur Zieliński

another autumn
a puddle at the door
touching the threshold
a leap into muddy water
no turning back

Artur Zieliński

this autumn too
the moon ripples
on Chilika
a boatman hums love songs
over maccha and handiya

Dipankar Dasgupta

perhaps
she offered love
on the river bank
I still can't figure out
if the full moon is perfect

Dipankar Dasgupta

first autumn
the cypress shadow lengthens
across the doorstep
I measure what remains
between you and me

Fatma Zohra Habis

curdled coffee
in the ceramic cup
on this cold counter
a vase holds yellow gerbera
still fresh

Gauri Dixit

each strand of hair
adding weight
this morning
the Madhumalati vine
bent with a hundred blooms

Gauri Dixit

after the call
I keep the phone to my ear
a little longer
the room settling around me
one pipe knocks in the wall

Jacek Margolak

scraping dry mud
from my mother's garden boots
line after line ...
the quiet way she asks me
to stay a few more days

Jacek Margolak

between trains
an old man breaks his bread in two
without a word
the half I did not ask for
warm in my coat

Jacek Margolak


calm river
a
still child
with his
fishing rod

so close
I feel your wings' vibration
fanning the air above
if I close my eyes
I am flying too

Jennifer Gurney

both reaching
for the same coat
our hands touch
an unopened letter
falls to the floor

Joanna Ashwell

another anchor
of familiarity lost
to unseen shores
I unravel once again
without your hold

Joanna Ashwell

one last blossom
twirling in the wind
over and over
the ways we hold on
to love unspoken

Joanna Ashwell

perched
on plants and trees
fireflies flash in sync ...
these spaces in rhythm
seem magical to me

Kala Ramesh

first day of school
her tight grip
around my finger
her eyes between
goodbyes

Kala Ramesh

tanka

bereft of colours
the evening
eases into meditation,
I sit quietly ... not wanting
to disturb the hour, the scene

Kala Ramesh

a sudden hailstorm
hitting the nasturtiums
I recall
the day you were given
your diagnosis

Kanjini Devi

gurgling
within a cosy cradle ...
a year ago
she was
not even a thought

Kavita Ratna

a cloud
of tumbleweed blows
through the barn
I should have realized
you never planned to stay

Lorraine Haig

the wildfire
bearing down upon
our seaside town
when there's nothing left
but to walk into the sea

Lorraine Haig

a kite
tethered to the clouds
unlike
my heart that plunged
when you walked away

Lorraine Haig

mist rolls in
obscuring the signposts
beyond our discord
... my compass needle
continues spinning

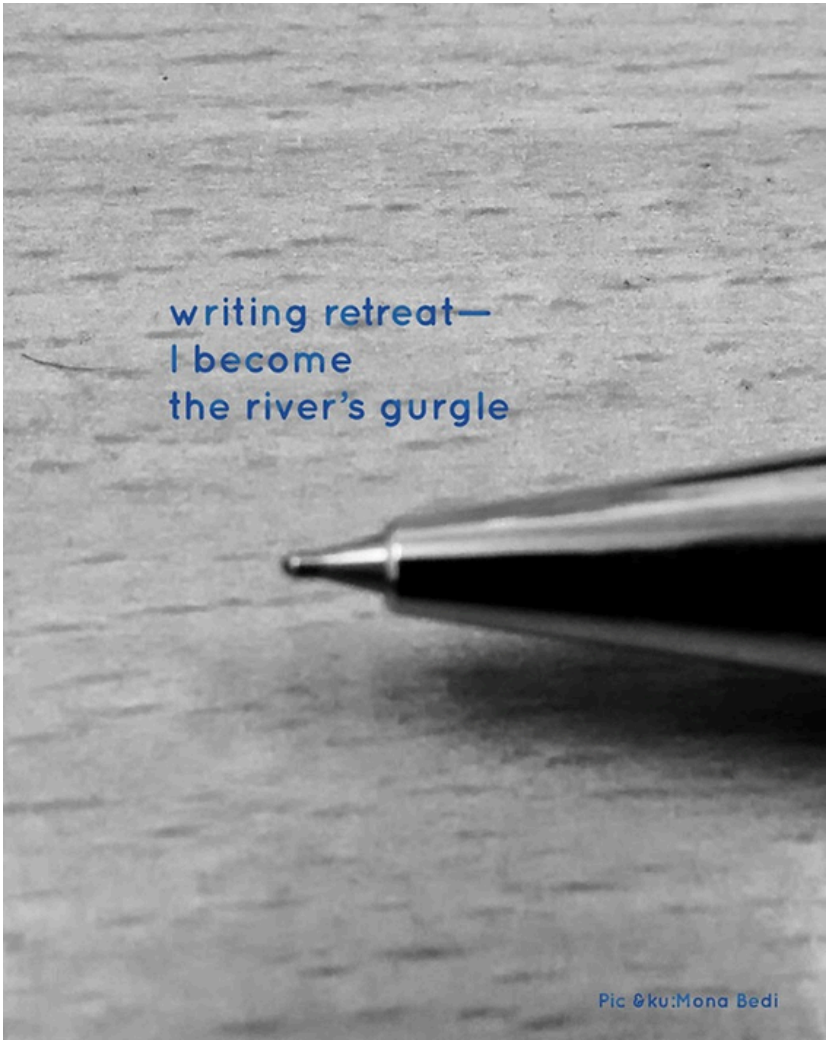
Marilyn Humbert

post operation
learning to walk again
through dreams
day and night
between words

Nicholas Klacsanzky

cafe meetup
no words exchanged
but we grab
our tea cups and sip
at the same time

Nicholas Klacsanzky


writing retreat—
I become
the river's gurgle
Pic &ku:Mona Bedi

the quail darts
along a chain-linked fence
how much longer
will my thoughts keep me
from loving you?

Nicholas Klacsanzky

dry twigs
on the garden footpath —
snapping some
she lets go of the self
shrivelled by doubt

Priti Aisola

homebound,
before my mind's eye
an ashram I love ...
wandering in its moonlit garden
i lose myself

Priti Aisola

arthritic shoulder ...
helping him wear
his button-down shirt,
she hides from him
the nagging pain in her arm

Priti Aisola

making up
each other's side of the bed
every morning
thankful for another day
of weathering the storm

Raji Vijayaraghavan

sunny days
the long chats
through open doors ...
our words now lost
in the winds of change

Raji Vijayaraghavan

scarlet scarf
on the railings —
rustling softly
the stillness of winter
on too long a night

Rashmi Buragohain

bone by bone
my body learns to carry
its weight again —
among the ribs of a log
a fern begins to uncurl

Sandip Chauhan

my mother's shoes
a size too small
for my feet
how far she travelled
without leaving home

Sandip Chauhan

cleared at last
to bear half my weight
on the injured leg ...
a flock of sandhill cranes
lands against the wind

Sandip Chauhan

morning mist
settles over the meadow
blurring distances
old wishes stir
beneath the silence

Sathya Venkatesh

i check my phone again
for a message ...
outside
it seems
darker than usual

Sathya Venkatesh

whisking together
dried leaves and dust
winds paint
everchanging landscapes
in the colors of October

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

a hawk
digs its claws deep
into the rabbit
ripping its shuddering flesh ...
I chop beets, my hands stained

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

pausing
to hear your message
stars
i never noticed
before this moment

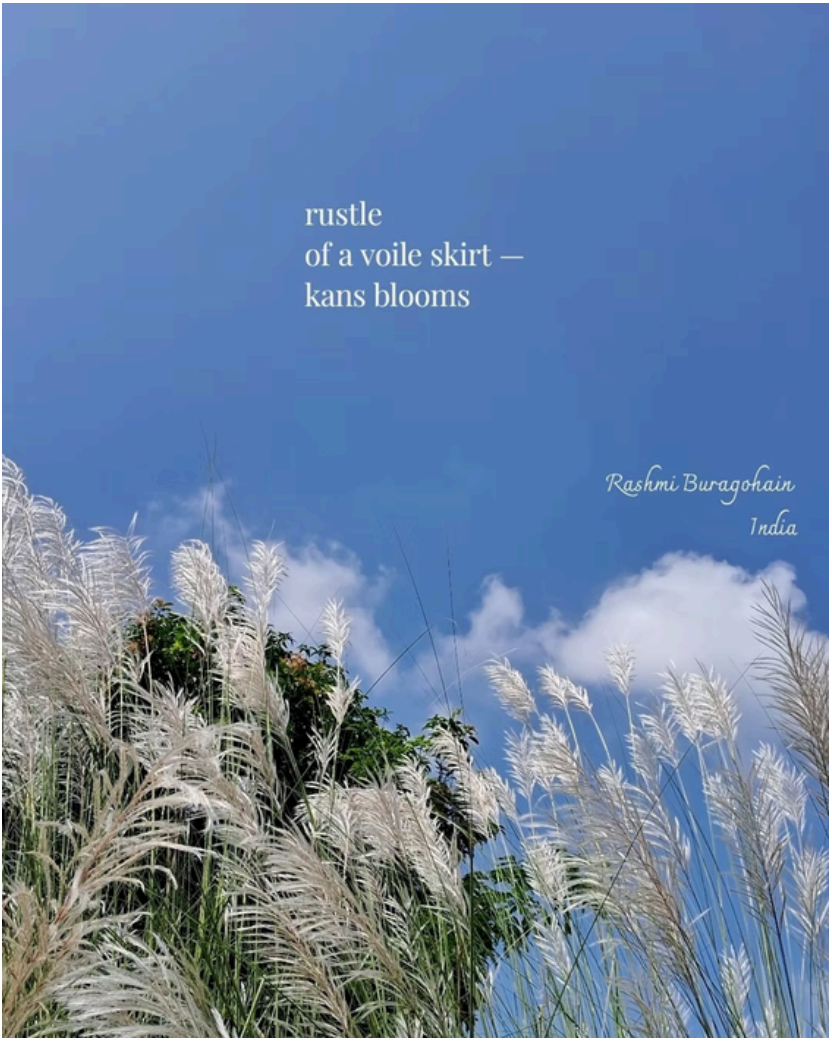
Susan Yavaniski

every time our fights
escalate to the extreme
the fear of a divorce
arrests my heart…
somehow a full moon again

Tejendra Sherchan

for them
matter of death or life
to cross borders
how the arctic terns fly
to my homeland

Tejendra Sherchan


rustle
of a voile skirt —
kans blooms
Rashmi Buragohain
India

Alfred Booth

Solar Flares

the tall tales of men who see too far

I am old. A stately maple with whirlybirds that fall sometime after the eighth or ninth full moon. They are ready now. I have brothers and children who have spread out close enough to me that we can sing together to the same rush of wind.

I lived here long before the vineyard was parceled off so my human family could build a house. The wooden structure has since been remodeled now, although I am not concerned with the beauty of such things. Three summers ago, a gardener who lives close by, gave my beautiful sprawling branches a significant trim.

Until this latest warm season, my replacement branches have grown upright to join my canopy. The air has become hot and dry and my moss has slowed its upward growth. I am not afraid as my roots grow deep. But my ash and birch cousins cry out in pain. Our collective memories do not tell of any similar situations.

My eight bird families have had fewer young ones this year. The frog in the lake below no longer serenades the summer stars. Fireflies have disappeared. So have dragonflies and the larger butterflies. There is little left in the prairies for donkeys and horses to graze. Someday soon, the swallows won't return.

crevasses melt the secrets deep within snow banks

Billie Dee

Doctrinal Weight of the Rio Grande

The gates are closed at Elephant Butte Dam. No more water this year, just a naked riverbed with the faint smell of silt. Downstream, the banks yellow, willow and hackberry roots reaching for a riparian past. As dawn crests the indigo mountain, the river dwindles to gravel.

Lotus Sutra
the suchness of form
of flow

Caroline Giles Banks

The West Mebon Reclining Vishnu
Bronze, 11th Century, Cambodia
Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2025-2026

Larger-than-life. Monumental enough to require an entire museum gallery for exhibition, Reclining Vishnu invites veneration, affirmation of art's power to channel the Divine. Orange-clad monks arrange lotus flowers around the plinth, testimony that it is more than a flesh-made artifact.

Forged in fire, Vishnu reclines. Resting his head on one hand, fingers held open like a fan of fortune, he contemplates — as gods do — ways to make and ways to take away.

puzzle pieces
I make a prayer
for words

Chen-ou Liu

Is the Past Ever Past?

Outside my waterfront house, the tide recedes, revealing a skeletal expanse of mud, moonlight silvering the empty spaces where her weight once broke the surface. Now the flats are a hardened ribcage of silt and broken shells.

The hallway carries a draft of salt and damp wool. Beneath the floorboards, a slow groan advances toward the bedroom door. I lie still, listening.

half-asleep again ...
I see her turn back
and not turn back

Colleen M. Farrelly

Trolling: A Tritina-Haibun

Dark waves kiss fiery flames, tattoos circling his arm
like a coral snake in wait — its ink fresh, yet not fading
like the bucket hat draped over his tacklebox. A fish

in water (me, not his bait bucket), I swim past, fish
for his compliments. Flirt a bit. His shy blush disarms
me. He stutters, stammers, sputters (his speech fading

as a deep blush spreads). I feel other crushes fading
as he leans closer, his lips puckered like a batfish
that suddenly pulls back as a stray hook guts my arm.

first warmth fading twilight's fishy business

Diana Webb

Up in the Air

A second-hand book arrives in the post, a gift from a friend from a hospice charity shop. A book first published in 1932. This reprint was in 1942, before I was an early baby boomer who heard Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty in my mother's womb, when she saw that work performed at Covent Garden, the new home for the Sadler's Wells Ballet after the war. The book titled 'Balletomania' tells how the author loved that art, which I love too. The spine is almost coming off. The pages yellow-edged, aflutter with dust. A whole chapter on the dancer Anna Pavlova, whose swan costume I saw behind glass when I was just a child. I think of all the times I've attended the ballet since. Eleventh birthday treat. Afterwards, with my widowed mother, time after time. With my teenage school friend. With my daughter. With my partner, these past few years, on at least six occasions. The pages flicker through black-and-white prints of sylph after sylph ...

scent of roses
on breeze through the window
a heart-shaped petal


untended roots ...
cracks widen
in the footpath
photo and haiku: samir satam

Glenn G. Coats

Stories

I rehearsed them in the car. Turned them over and over like stones. Considered beginnings, middles, and endings. With one hand on the wheel, I scribbled notes on a pad while the sun from the east burned my eyes. Kept them like secrets for days and weeks. Tell no one, for that is the kiss — of death.

Dreamed them between prayers. Between pacing around the house. Asked the hard questions. Does this make sense? Does it sound right? Will anyone understand what I am talking about?

Stretched them as long as I could. Until they began to break up. Like patterns in a kaleidoscope. Then I picked up a pen — always black ink — always on cream paper — no lines. We had traveled long enough.

somewhere the blink of light river dark

Jacek Margolak

The Thermometer

My father kept a thermometer on the outside wall. Not the kitchen wall — the one facing the field where the wind came from. He read it before breakfast and said nothing. The mercury climbed in summer and fell in winter, and he nodded as if the glass confirmed something he already knew. When he died, I left the thermometer where it was. It still reads the weather.

first frost —
the wind from the field
finds the wooden wall

Joanna Ashwell

Holding On

My alarm clock still has a tick, a soft susurration within daylight and darkness. The hands make their way around the numbers, sometimes they slow and I change the battery. It is in the quietest of moments that I really notice the pulse of time. It carries on regardless of whether I am having a good day or not.

frequency shoals
a glimmer of light
in every pocket

Krzysztof Macha

The Fifth Year

The girl's name was Salomiia. She was very beautiful, like her mother and her aunt. The girls in her preschool class called her Mija.

She had been playing with my dog for quite a while, talking non-stop. By then I knew she had an older brother, two hamsters, and a dog that actually belonged to her father. Her father no longer lived with them.

"I used to have two rabbits, but they died. Or maybe they ran away. I don't know anymore. That's what Daddy told me once. Daddy is at war. Once I heard him telling Mom that two of his friends had died. Or maybe they ran away. And now I really don't know whether the rabbits died or ran away..."

dandelion —
a child draws in breath
not yet

Lakshmi Iyer

Picture Perfect

Dad loves photography and our albums are filled with our childhood black-and-white photos taken on a Canon camera he purchased in 1962 when he first travelled to Japan.

spring dawn
the shine
on my oily braids

Years pass. He reaches eighty and speaks of detachment and karma. We listen to each word as if the Lord were narrating. After two surgeries, with a little ability to walk with the walker, his confidence is lifted.

autumn twilight
phrases of the Gita
in dad's bookmarks

Our temple festival begins in April. I ask Dad to get ready and sit on the raised washing-stone fixed at the side of our house so he can easily watch the chariot pass our entrance. He gets ready. His face reminds me of the Godfather. I quickly take a picture.

orange sky
the fluttering balloons
leave the seller's hand

Dad is admitted to the hospital. I go to see him before he is transferred to the ICU. He blesses me with both hands and praises me for all the effort I put in each time an emergency call reaches me. I wipe away his tears.

hard breath
the crows caw fades
wing by wing

Slowly, I realise that dad has a pleasant smile as he leaves our threshold. The picture I took is later framed as a keepsake.


after the applause
the flamenco dancer
unpins her hair
© Sandip Chauhan

Lew Watts

Circle of Life ...

... the ranger says, as we stare at a dabbling mallard. The duck hasn't come up for air when he returns a few minutes later. "Critters' got to eat," he says, as a turtle surfaces beside what is obviously a dead duck. In my sudden shock, a thought flashes past. How things turn full circle. And I think of you.

Lying in a cot in a diaper, an applesauce smear on the sheet. Your eyes are closed but I know you can hear. How thankful each recipient will be. What a wonderful thing you are doing. I lean closer. Talk about when we were kids. The girls, the fights. Then later, our annual trips. As I recite the name of each river we fished, the faintest smile curls at the corners of your mouth. And then it begins, and then it ends, with a slight shudder and a single word, "Mamma".

end of the run
I tie on a flesh fly
and an egg

Marietta McGregor

how I wish I could tell my mother . . .

... about the last professional job that didn't grind me down but made me happy
... that we bought a holiday cottage in the village where she loved to visit for holidays with our family
... of her three beautiful great-grandkids, two boys and two girls, who entered this world after she left us
... who was always happiest sitting outside under a tree or in a grassy field, how I discovered haiku and the joy of short poems about nature
... all those things I forgot to say, never thought of, and questions I shied away from asking, until it was too late.

bye bye blackbird
singing another
of her lullabies

Mariola Grabowska

My Only Wish

I'm staying at my grandpa's for the holidays. As always. I was promised I'd go to camp with the guys this year, but nothing happened. "You have to understand," my mother said without looking at me. I didn't want to understand. Her face is gray and her hair is matted with sweat as she waves goodbye to me. I feel relieved that she's gone. She's ugly. She looks old. Not like my neighbor's friend's mom.

When I return, I see her mowing the lawn. She welcomes my help.

perseid night
every crunch of gravel
stirs my hope

Mark Meyer

Chapter 2 (draft 9)

As if it had long awaited my return, there it was, under the lamp's glow: a small, ornately carved rosewood box on the desk in my study. As expected, the precious gift from J. was within, wrapped in violet silk. Hesitantly, I took a small sip of the cloudy, opalescent green elixir from its crystal vial. It was quite bitter, yet somehow the flavor was enticingly spicy, deep and smoky. I took a larger sip, then another. I waited what seemed hours, but soon enough it all began — that warm gray mist in my mind, the vertigo, that gradual transfiguration. And though it seems now but a fevered dream, I shall try my utmost to recount all the strange and curious events that transpired that darkest of autumn nights. Better I had never savored that first seductive taste.

twelve demons dance
on the head of a pin ...
(Monday nights only)

Matthew Caretti

Foresight

We can't see the forest for the trees on this old Earth,
or those oceans and their rogue waves sweeping us
out to sea. Or skies twisting themselves into knots
that turn homes into splinters, with basements and
bathtubs not enough to save us from the angry gods
on high. Then the floods flow biblical through summer
camps submerging all of us as we try to make a dash
across the swiftwater gulch, as we reset gravestones
along lost shorelines, as we wave goodbye to cranes —

winches afflicted and sea walls unfinished again—
lost to the gulf's flogging. This time there's no time.
No trawlers trapped in ice, no floes tempting bears
to commit suicide by drowning. Killer whales saved
from the failing cycle of currents. A thousand million
icicles re-formed in their wake. The fjord mirror-cool.
Yet we can't see the forest. We refuse to see the trees.

twilight
the mangrove asks
what we want

Nalini Shetty

Seams

At the railway station, my father once asked, "When you say you miss home, which house do you mean?"

I laughed because there were too many possible answers: the blue house with the cracked veranda, the rented room where rain came through the window, the apartment where I now kept my winter clothes in a suitcase.

"The old one," I said.

He peeled an orange between us. The skin came away in one long, fragrant spiral.
"You left that house years ago."
"I know."
"And yet you keep returning to it."
"Not always."

He handed me half the orange.
"Then why does it keep returning to you?"

The announcement for the next train broke across the station. People gathered their bags. A child dragged a red suitcase behind him, its wheels knocking over every seam in the concrete.

I looked at my father.
"I suppose I don't know what to do with all of it."

He was quiet for a moment.
"Nothing," he said. "You don't have to do anything with it."

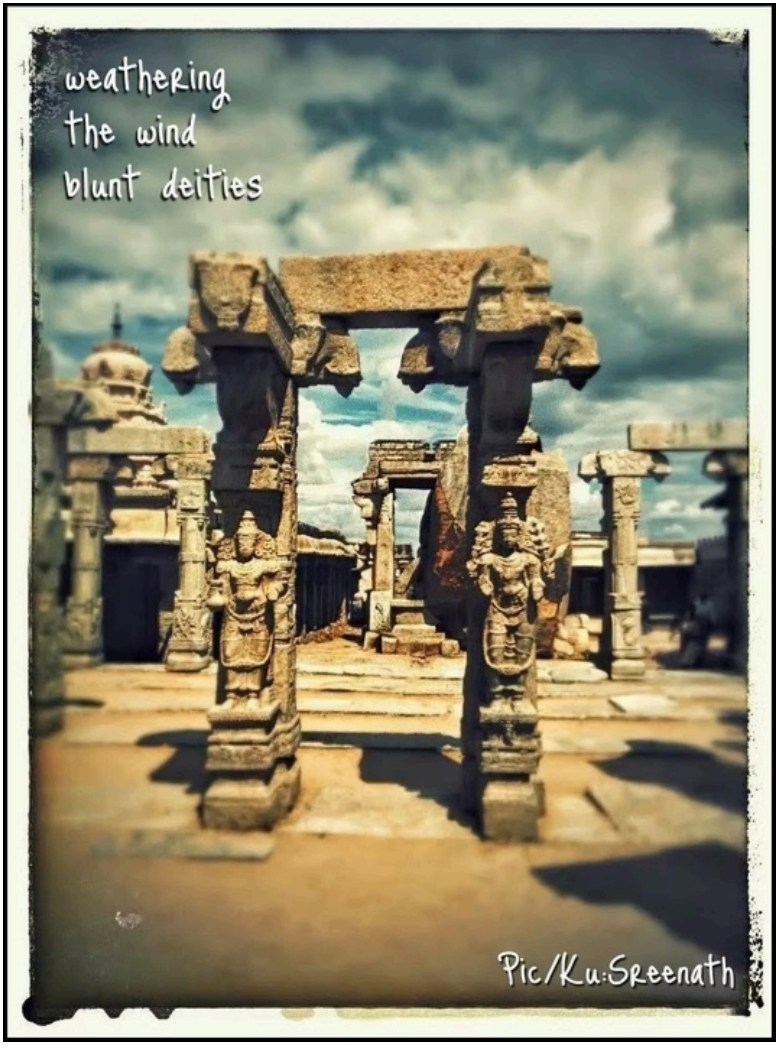
The train arrived. We watched people step down, greet one another, lift bags from the luggage rack.

Before I boarded, my father said, “Call me when you get there.”
“I will.”
“And when you come back, don’t bring anything.”
I smiled. “Why?”
“We already have enough things.”

That evening, in the room where I kept my winter clothes in a suitcase, I unpacked one sweater and placed it over the back of a chair.

For the first time, I did not fold it away.

rain-dark roots
finding the earth
through a wall


weathering
the wind
blunt deities
Pic/Ku:Sreenath

Neena Singh

Born Free

At an ethical elephant sanctuary in Khao Lak, Phuket, the massive trunk of 47-year-old Chom-Pu sways as she reaches for food. Tourist camps have left their mark on her back. Now she ambles through the forest to a quieter rhythm. I feed her sugarcane and she devours it so easily, asking for more. Lala, the young caretaker, smiles and presses another stick into my hands.

bamboo grove —
an ancient rumble
deepens the green

I bathe 63-year-old Som-Boon, an ageing matriarch. Years of trekking have sapped her strength and blunted her tusks, but not her grace.

“We call her Grandma,” Lala says. “She teaches us patience.”
Som-Boon's warm brown eyes lock with mine. Pointing the water hose at her, I say, “Som-Boon, I am a grandmother too,” and a sudden playful shower drenches me.

autumn wind —
carrying back home
the musk of soil

Rashmi Buragohain

Reverie

Every time I passed that quaint whitewashed house, I would weave stories. Sometimes sweet, sometimes bitter, but alwaysabout romance. Until one day, a bulldozer stood there.

a clover
in the woods —
blaring loudspeaker

Shalini Pattabiraman

The Resident Domestic

Between cups of chai and coffee, let in the usual staple. Slap some butter on bread and eat it. Simple. Familiar. Violent. To carry in your body the yoke of working hands — knead flour, salt and water. Bond it with the whiteness of milk that was once bought out of glass bottles, replaced these days by packets in colour-coded plastic, each code suggesting that a specific type of milk belongs to a specific type of person or a specific type of dish. Full fat cream for kheer; skimmed milk for the body that cannot dissolve all this sweetness nestled in sebum and sweat leaking out, resting on chairs, faucets, surface tops where fruit flies assemble in humid heat. My share of water breathes out of my body just like yours takes it in — sluicing each exchanged droplet through rain and harvest, washing a fistful of last year's rice for the kheer you will yourself to never eat again. We all reside here within the boundaries that preserve what will eventually fade away.

dark clouds
on a September branch
the lightness of claws

Sumitra Kumar

Red Carpet

On an official trip, we have a task at hand. We have to, with our engineers, unpack and erect a jumbo machine at our stall before the start of an international fair in Germany; all the while nurturing the hope that our equipment, well packed, has sailed the seas without incurring damage.

west winds ...

Having rented a car, we are on the long drive from our hotel in Wuppertal to the site in Düsseldorf. Be it narrow streets or wide boulevards, they are spotless and inviting — come, drive down! Even the woods have an orderliness, a bewitching green-canopy welcome for commuters.

a spider's silken web

For this reason alone, I wish to be born again to experience smooth rides throughout India.

in the spotlight

Vishal Prabhu

In Passing

There is something deeply evocative about prayer beads. In and of themselves, and in the way they turn or wrap around a hand. The coming on and sliding off of leaves on a tree seem to mimic their motion, or vice versa. All kinds lay under a tarpaulin at the Tibetan woman's makeshift shop. The ubiquitous Rudraksh. Big and small. Beads made of sandalwood. Of lotus seeds. The lady indicates that the latter change colour the more they are turned. Crystal ones of different colours. My local bookshop friend tries to tell me that they are heavy-duty, the ones used by adept monks. I get mine after a small bargain.

poplar breeze
the weight
of a summer night


wildflowers bloom
on mother's grave—
I arrange a few
in the vase she once kept
beside my bed
Pic & ku: Mona Bedi

Alan Summers

leaves of the maple I hear my voice waking up

empty shelves
when earth meets rain
we begin to fill

Billie Dee

I shoulder my creel.

twilight
beyond the reeds
a skim of swallows

Chen-ou Liu

The wind tears the salt spray off the waves, stinging my face.

anniversary
where dad's ashes were scattered
flowers of foam

Hifsa Ashraf

A ghazal without an ending ...

after rain
I keep the front door
ajar

Jacek Margolak

Where the river was.

low water —
a heron's print
in dry mud

Joanna Ashwell

love affair

distant moons
naming a star
so far away

Lakshmi Iyer

why condition our beliefs and faith

will the crow
ever find out
the cuckoo's baby

Matthew Caretti

where the leech has sucked

summer poem
scratching again
at basho's ashes

Neena Singh

through the years . . .

autumn leaves
return to earth
fading our footprints

Vishal Prabhu

empty tourist town

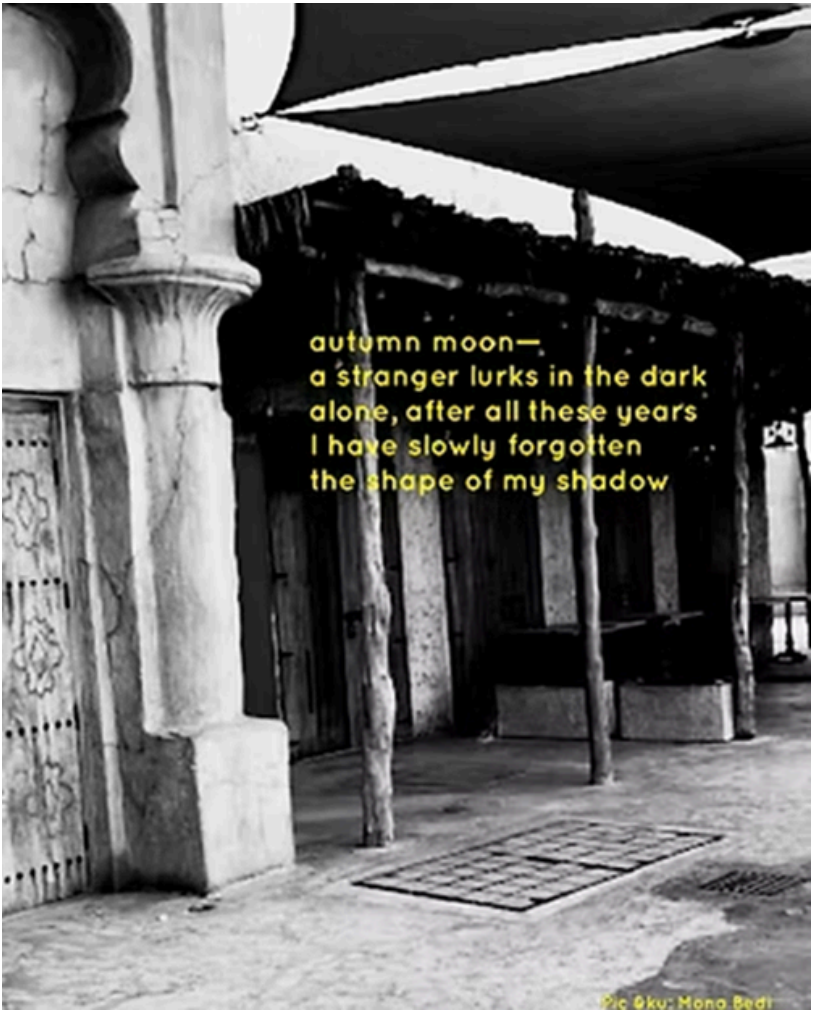
cold window
a potted geranium
on the same side

C.X. Turner

~

his new
signature
for college

he is asleep again


autumn moon—
a stranger lurks in the dark
alone, after all these years
I have slowly forgotten
the shape of my shadow
Pic &ku: Mona Bedi

Alfred Booth

The Sun Still Rises

Why does heartbreak fall upon us? Thrice I have endured its torture. The first time I escaped to a foreign country. To still my heart, I chased a dream of artistic mastery, of fame, of being center stage, of learning to be humbled by the applause.

And then, my goals changed. By chance, I met you at the entrance of The Body Shop close to the Paris Opera, and the look in your eyes was the brightest spotlight I had ever imagined. Every desire meshed between us as if the curators of life had cast a beautiful spell to join our destinies. We lived in bliss. Until the day it wasn't. I was stunned. Your friends were stunned. They insisted, "You must be mistaken, you've never been this happy." You were never fully capable of telling anyone, much less me, why the floodlights of your love suddenly burned out.

Yes, my life has continued without you. I have filled it with a newfound glow in books, music, and poetry. Timidly, I have allowed myself companionship, but love now lacks the intensity of soul mates. I never found another spotlight, shielding myself since our separation. Heartstrings are such fragile things.

midnight
I leave a candle
until dawn
birdsong reminds me
I have lived another day

Amrutha V Prabhu

A Pinch of gold

News reads "lead chromate adulteration of turmeric and cinnamon"

before each bite
I pray
for what I cannot see
greed dissolving
on my tongue

Amrutha V Prabhu

Words and the In-between

It was her week off. She wanted to sort out her wardrobe. I wanted to browse Dr Khader Valli's millet recipe book. But we began talking, and before we knew it, the afternoon had melted into evening. Childhood memories led to marriage, children, food and the ancient guardian creature Yali. One topic tumbled into another. We simply followed the conversation wherever it took us.

twilight sea
the last light fades
on shimmering waves
I watch the blue
flow in silence

Dipankar Dasgupta

Fastback

New Volkswagen. Every time I take a right turn, the car honks. For no good reason. Passing car drivers show me the middle finger. She laughs in embarrassment. At the dealers, the salesman who had been warm and friendly before the car was sold, is more than cold. "I am not a magician," he informs me with supreme indifference. She frowns. The way her father did in their log cabin in Bristol Hills. "Can't you fight?" she asks in irritation. I try to. In vain. Some battles are lost before they begin.

don't be mad
for the answer is no
says her message –
tail lights glimmer
on Queen Elizabeth Way

Volkswagen for sale. Almost new.

Fatma Zohra Habis

Echo

I asked the road why it was tired. It didn't answer right away. Footsteps passed over its chest, there was moaning and noise in the air, and along its edges the tears of those who had said goodbye crowded together. When I bent to touch its dust, it was soft mud, kneaded by the feet of passersby.

in my shoe
I carry some of this mud
returning
from the cemetery
my shadow follows

Fatma Zohra Habis

Two Lamps

My tea has gone cold, its leaves settled at the bottom. Black when I began, the window has turned gray without me seeing it change. The street lamp went out while I wasn't looking; my desk lamp burns on, now pale across my papers.

night narrows
as the page widens
in a strange way
it carries me to worlds
I never chose

Jacek Margolak

The Flour Bin

The wooden scoop still rests in the corner of the bin, worn smooth where her thumb used to press it. Every autumn after the threshing, she filled three linen sacks with flour for the bread. I bake once a week now. The kitchen smells as it did forty years ago, though the table is smaller and no one stays long enough to wait for the loaf to cool.

wild cranes
across the river
their calling
reaches both banks
at once

Jacek Margolak

The Orchard

On the night train neither of us could sleep. We did not give our names. She told me about the orchard her family had lost — she still knew the exact number of trees. I told her something I had never said aloud. By the first stop she was gone, before the city outside had a name.

first ice
the station light
through the glass
one bare branch
moves across the floor

Jacek Margolak

The Line

My grandmother crossed no border to become a foreigner. The border crossed her. After the war the mapmakers moved a line a few centimetres on paper, and the house she was born in woke up in another country. She was put on a train west with one suitcase and a key to a door that now opened onto someone else's life.

She never spoke the new language cleanly; at the market she still counted in the old one, under her breath. Near the end she asked me for a handful of soil — not from here, from there. I told her the crossing was closed. She nodded, as if she had always known the country she longed for existed only inside her.

after the funeral
a wind from the east
smelling of rain
now she can go back
any time she likes

Lorraine Haig

A Change in the Air

The red ochre road begins near the church. It wanders down the hill bisecting the fields of corn, onions and greens and ends overlooking the weir. From the nearby bakery the yeasty scent of fresh bread wafts across the rows of silver beet as he cuts and bundles the dark fronds for tomorrow's market. Noisy Miners gossip as they fly their haphazard course. Pigeons fluttering like ticker tape circle over the river behind him. Crouched in the shade of his broad brim, he's content that there's not an icy wind or a crumb of cloud to mar the impeccable day.

sold sign
on the farm gate
house stumps
and a flagstone path
are all that remain

Lorraine Haig

A Place of Her Own

My mother lived with us while she searched for the right house. My stepfather made all the decisions but now she's alone. We searched for three months but couldn't find the right one. To our amazement the house across the road became available. No signage outside, just a small advertisement in the newspaper. We rushed across for a look. She bought it that day and lived there for twenty years.

last box
stowed in the trunk
looking back
the driveway empty
except for shadows

Mona Bedi

Turning Season

Year after year the festival season knocks at my door. Yet, with each passing year, the excitement and enthusiasm seem to fade a little more.

Is it age catching up or the loss of meaningful relationships?

every morning
the cuckoo outside my window
sings the same song —
the empty spaces inside me
no longer ask to be filled

Sandip Chauhan

An Open Circle

Who owns the shade of a tree? The person who planted it, the neighbor whose courtyard it crosses, or a passerby who stops beneath it at noon? There are deeds for land, receipts for timber, laws governing the fruit. A bird may carry a seed across three kingdoms and never learn their names.

the henna leaves
crushed to release their color
on the bride's palms
a suhag my mother once sang
comes back in a stranger's voice

Sandip Chauhan

An Outdated Map

The house in my memory has more doors than the one standing there now. A wall has moved, the staircase has changed direction, and the courtyard grows smaller with every visit. Where the old kitchen ended, a new room begins. Somewhere among these changes, I have become a guest in rooms where I once knew every hiding place.

my brother
picks out a trail of stars
across the sky
I recognize the pattern
only when he joins the dots

Sandip Chauhan

Mother Tongue

Some Punjabi words refuse to arrive in English alone. They bring a courtyard with them, the cool grain of the floor beneath bare feet, a brass tumbler on its ledge, the blackened underside of the milk pan. Perhaps this is why, even after all these years, I sometimes begin a poem in English and find its last line in Punjabi.

myna calling
from somewhere beyond
the railway tracks —
halfway through its second note
I hear my childhood name

Sathya Venkatesh

The Golden Exchange

Every Diwali, boxes of sweets arrive from every direction. The contents tempt me, the calories haunt me, and my sweet tooth makes the whole exercise harder. I open one, offer another, and repack a third for someone else. I wish Diwali gifts came in other forms — a handwritten letter, a little birdhouse, a tinkling wind chime, or a travel coupon for a nature getaway.

autumn leaves
tumble in a whirl
of russet gold
i follow the birdsong
riding the breeze

Sathya Venkatesh

What We Weather

Setbacks in my husband's business during the early years of our marriage brought heartache and insults. Some said I had brought him bad luck. Their words hurt, but I was determined to grow beyond them. I looked for ways to improve our situation and took up a job. Together, we balanced work and family responsibilities, including caring for our in-laws. We worked hard and slowly rebuilt our lives. Today, my husband trusts my judgement, and we make decisions together.

after the storm
two swallows take flight
from a bare wire
the wide sky
opening before them

Sathya Venkatesh

Undercurrent

During my recent tour of Sri Lanka, I met an intelligence officer, a man of few words. Since he was travelling alone, I often tried to draw him into conversation. Our shared love of scriptures and books became an easy connection. Gradually, he spoke of the violence he had witnessed and years spent always being on guard. He had missed watching his daughter grow up. Having retired early, he now had time for family and the things he loved. Yet his routine remained strict; he swam every morning and evening. One particularly cold morning, I asked, "You're not swimming today, are you?" He smiled. "Of course I am." I teased him about his fitness. After a pause, he said, "If I don't swim, my body won't move. I have so many injuries inside." I fell silent.

winter dusk —
beneath the quiet waters
a current runs deep
the moonlight touches
only the surface

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Food Noise

rice and lentils
ground to a fine batter
her daily grind
of feeding my family
so that she can feed hers

Waiting at the door of the expensive restaurant for the valet to bring our car, I chitchat with the turbaned doorman. "Did you enjoy your dinner, madam?" he asks politely. 'It was OK,' I respond. He is silent for a few minutes, clearly struggling to contain his thoughts. Finally giving in, he lowers his voice and says, "Why would you come here and pay so much to eat ? There was a time when everyone longed for home-cooked food. I wish I could eat at home, but my family lives in the village". I look at him, struck by the simplicity of his comment, the honest longing in his voice. What could I say to him? That I get tired of cooking? That I am bored of the same flavors at home? That I am just bored? That sometimes homes only live on in our memories?

we served
apple crumble with a scoop
of ice-cream
the glow of a job well done
despite the scorched soup


maze board...
weaving her way
into the hearts
of everyone around
a new bride in her new home
words & art
padmapriya

Amrutha V Prabhu

a candlelit dinner ...

the little forest
draws me back
through tangled paths
each time a little deeper
into the dark

Firdaus Parvez

My right to be imperfect...

dropping anchor
on yet another memory
I handle the hours
in a daydream world
another bird out of tune

Sumitra Kumar

When people in your life keep you in a waiting room ...

bus-stop queue
an infant's toothless smile
from over
the shoulder
of a stranger

Tejendra Sherchan

My ever losing battles with them.

oothecae
in the dark corners
of the house
their invasions
make my home a battlefield

Results of indianKUKAI #55

hosted by Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh, & Rohan Kevin Broach. Certificates designed by Teji Sethi





Results of indianKUKAI #55

hosted by Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh, & Rohan Kevin Broach. Certificates designed by Teji Sethi



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thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 December 2026
with many more fine poems
from our contributors!

Team: *haikuKATHA*