

failed ~~tanka~~?

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Cast List

In order of appearance

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Nitu Yumnam
Randy Brooks
Amrutha V. Prabhu
John Hawkhead
Jackie Chou
Bruce Jewett
Oscar Luparia
Susan Burch
Linda Papanicolaou
Charles Harmon
Maxianne Berger
Teiichi Suzuki
Anthony Lusardi
Tim Cremin
Ram Chandran
Daniel Birnbaum
Gillena Cox
Roberta Beach Jacobson
Ron Scully
John J. Han
Lakshmi Iyer
Jerome Berglund
John Zheng
Robert Witmer
John Budan
Christina Chin
Arvinder Kaur
Richa Sharma

Chen-ou Liu
Bona M. Santos
Colleen M. Farrelly
Gil Jackofsky
Rick Jackofsky
Diane Funston
Nicholas Klacsanzky
C.X. Turner
Bob Lucky
David Oates
Kathabela Wilson
Curt Linderman
Keith Evetts
Vandana Parashar
Patrick Sweeney
Neena Singh
Cynthia Anderson
Fanny Budan
Pitt Buerken
Luminita Suse
Debbie Strange
Gerry Mc Donnell
Alvin B. Cruz
David Lee Hill
Mark Gilbert
Marjorie Pezzoli
Richard L. Matta
Keitha Keyes
Mona Bedi
Jon Hare
Paul Beech
Željko Vojković
Katherine Winnick

Daya Bhat
Vidya Shankar
Mark Meyer
Peter Larsen
John C. Waugh
Krzysztof Mxchx
Cynthia Rowe
Minal Sarosh
Jeffrey Walthall
Marilyn Humbert
Daniela Misso
Mike Gallagher
Christina Chin / *M. R. Defibaugh*
Priya Narayanan
Tracy Davidson
Robert Erlandson
Carol Raisfeld
Irina Guliaeva
A.J. Anwar
Terrie Jacks
Suraja Menon Roychowdhury
John J. Dunphy
Priti Khullar
Wai Mei Wong
Richard Tice
Christopher Calvin
Cristina Povero
Robert Kingston
Mary Gunn
kris moon kondo
Bryan Rickert

dark night
in the evacuated street
patting a stray dog
“Everything’s gonna be alright...”
a homeless man sings

Nitu Yumnam

laughing all the way
through the whitewater
the only one
not inside
the raft

preaching to
the jiggly tadpoles
y'all like
being sinners,
don't ya

not trying
to entertain you
with a silly walk
looking for
my other shoe

Randy Brooks

water drops
on a sizzling frying pan
buzzzz...bzzz...buzzzzzz...
i listen to
this traffic jam

Amrutha V. Prabhu

chequerboard floor
we each take a step
towards each other
she on the white tiles
me trapped on black

John Hawkhead

an old friend
just a click away
on Facebook...
yet I hesitate
having outgrown our clique

a missing period
in a published poem
that was my fault...
excited to see it in print
I don't tell the editor

Jackie Chou

my Buddhist altar
offerings of fruits
candles and incense
right in the center
lottery tickets

Tokyo news alert
cherry blossom floods
houses swept away
hundreds of haikuists
feared dead

Bruce Jewett

election rally
the promises of politicians
fill the square . . .
my best pops
of bubble gum

Oscar Luparia

Covid 19 -
at least now
I have an excuse
for looking like
shit

electromagnetic pulse
<poof>
my poems
for the last year
disappear

a hard day at work-
knowing
I should have died
yesterday,
while I had the time

Susan Burch

where is she now
that little blonde girl
who got the part
I secretly wanted
in the fourth grade play

in his bedroll
in the park band shell—
a vagrant
does not want to hear
our poems to the moon

her disdain
bores right through and past
my family van—
black leather biker chick
riding pillion on a Hog

Linda Papanicolaou

face the bitter truth
robots will do our jobs
better than we can
as this android written poem
clearly demonstrates

Charles Harmon



Maxianne Berger

dust
and memory of life
all together
get sucked into
a sweeper

even though
a paper doll
without eyes and a nose
a melancholy floats
on her face

Teiichi Suzuki

rom-com movie night
no words spoken
between us
but the tickle of your fingers
in mine

Anthony Lusardi

low tide
starting the family
wiffle ball game
an argument
right off the bat

“spring is not usually
this wet and chilly,”
says my neighbor
for the fourth straight year
since I moved here

Tim Cremin

dropping me
in this remote hamlet
the bus
moves gushing black smoke
and a donkey brays at me

Ram Chandran

he went back from war
with a wooden leg
all his furniture
had a wooden wedge
in case they'd wanted to laugh

Daniel Birnbaum

leaned against
the wall
backyard chairs
the wind knocks them over
and takes a seat

Gillena Cox

retro
dress day at work
I shave
my legs to show off
my scuffed go-go boots

petty crime
so many years ago
I can't
even remember
if I did it or not

her 16th
Christmas in our family
purrs
under the tree and occasional
naps in the manger

Roberta Beach Jacobson

day lilies
prohibited in Intensive Care
forgotten
in the waiting room
survived the night

Ron Scully

one year older
I make it a daily rule
to watch videos
of laughing
monkeys

my nemesis's email
about his new feat
I applaud him
then quickly
delete it

the passing of
two uncles this month
in my office
I begin to put things
in order

John J. Han

falling stars ...
mother talks
about the Lord
who light their lamps
in the moonless night

Lakshmi Iyer

all the Marxist
magazines that stacked up,
I didn't read
written by
narcs anyway

Jerome Berglund

train to Shanghai
two passengers
with no common tongue
exchange smiles
from time to time

John Zheng

springtime
the bright green bench
at the quiet bus stop
a perfect spot
for pigeons making love

a steady beat
the jazz drummer
keeping time
round midnight
in the flat upstairs

Robert Witmer

Outnumbered

For five dollars we rent a tiny park overlooking San Francisco's Cliff House. Though we anticipate a simple ceremony with a small group of friends, the rent includes two handsome mounted policemen who arrive for crowd control. At precisely noon as if on signal, a thick fog begins lifting, revealing a grove of Eucalyptus trees and the Pacific Ocean. Two faded yellow school buses, crowded with monks and priests from a distant monastery appear. The officiating Roshi insists that all of them participate as part of their training. In 1972, Zen is still in its American infancy and none of them have experienced a Zen Buddhist wedding. Perhaps this will be an American first. Eventually, we are married in a ceremony conducted by more priests than guests.

lingering incense
in empty zendo
after sesshin
an elderly sensei
requests bourbon

John Budan

a bunch
of frozen bananas
turning it around
and around wondering
how am I to eat them

Christina Chin

bringing home
a sequin gown
in midnight blue
a glimmer of the dreams
she never shared

zoom date
on a spring evening
her emoji flowers
so fragrant
in the chat box

the moment of your birth
those locks soft and black
my tremulous smile
when people say
you look just like me

Arvinder Kaur

swirls of lights
in the night sky
once again
I kiss the Fool
in the tarot game

Richa Sharma

the new hire
dressed in a burka ...
for three months
everyone notices her
but no one sees her

a long walk home
after my first AA meeting
a neon sign
brings the flavour of beer
to the tip of my tongue

Chen-ou Liu

she drills
to the depths
of my gumline
my smile
not priceless

rainy afternoon
two pots of tea
and a plate of scones later
I waddle
to the water closet

beating a deadline
the effort
I have to spend
tuning out
the chatterbox

Bona M. Santos

first stars
in waning twilight
an etched Star of David
pokes out
from the rubble

avatars
embracing on the screen
my computer
searching
for memories of you

Colleen M. Farrelly

at eighteen
I had a lot
to learn
at ninety-three
I have a lot to learn

the night
of my mother's death
my brother and I
walk . . .
until dawn

visiting
the family graves
a small boy
plays happily
among the headstones

Gil Jackofsky

singing along
with a classic rock station
the lineman
plays a power chord
on his air guitar

darkness
and a hard rain fall
on Kyiv
the answer . . .
still blowing in the wind

Rick Jackofsky

nice to be coddled
by a sweet mother hen
my mom
not warm and fuzzy
I hatched anyway

Diane Funston

Zen Zoom meeting
the koan read
with glitches
and now somehow
better understood

bird droppings
on the red alder leaf
I leave the smudges
on the painting
to themselves

Nicholas Klacsanzky

on the yoga mat
s t r e t c h i n g
a deep breath
the goat pose
floors me

the percussionist
chimes in . . .
another joke
mistiming
his delivery

C.X. Turner

All Weather Is Good

this year
we planned
to reminisce
but can't agree on
where we've been

imagining
a life without her
an empty glass
waiting to be filled
and emptied

picking
at the grilled fish for two
trial separation
but not yet at the stage
where we split the check

driving home
through the storm passing
through the world
I'm passing through
alone

wishing
I knew which star
to wish upon...
the neighbors banging away
in the apartment upstairs

Bob Lucky

son's visit

"I watered the mint
and it perked up."

"I know –
it's so emotional"

at the funeral

son not ready to hear
a doctor's

"pneumonia is
the old man's friend"

David Oates

feeling faint
eighth grade Fridays
stations of the cross
no one seems to notice
how painful this is

Kathabela Wilson

cutting
words
creating
narrative
self-harm

Curt Linderman

contemplating
the full moon
alone this winter night
the loos all occupied
by the women of the house

the labrador teaches me
how to be happy
with a cold river
and a bitter stick
my teeth chatter

two hedgehogs
hump in a ditch
in the poet's notes
their undying love
under the stars

Keith Evetts

pounded ice
dropped down
the back...
the things you said
last time we fought

just like
mother's silk saree
I cut
the finer parts of me
to make you look good

sharp turns
of an unfamiliar road
how do I know
we'll get our
happily ever after

Vandana Parashar

When heroes stumble
boys weep into their soft hands
and the Wu Wei of cherry petals
polka dots the black mud
in empty playgrounds

Get started now, son!
if you intend to count every grain
of sand on all the beaches of the world
with nothing but those
tiny toes and fingers

Patrick Sweeney

the young guide
shows his fiancée's photo
eyes glinting
he points to the old temple
this is where we met

holiday season—
our bucket list
for travel
discussed every day
canceled by night

perched high
the Tiger's Nest monastery
climbing, climbing
I catch my breath to sing
hymns learnt in school

Neena Singh

daily walk
in a dying landscape
the plastic package
from a neighbor's catheter
catches the wind

trapped
by the good advice
of others
I activate
my jet pack

twisted
family tree-
a few happy twigs
scattered amid
the rest

Cynthia Anderson

Dear Shelly

Warm weather is approaching .Its time to dig out my white blouses and t shirts.But what about the embarrassing problem of my bra showing through the light fabric? What's a gal to do? After many sleepless nights of grappling with the problem, I have found a solution. A consultant at the Bra Boutique informs me that the answer, based on science, is to wear a red colored bra.The human body has undertones of red and the color absorbs light rather than reflecting it. I am passing this simple fashion tip to all my friends.

my lazy husband
washing my delicates
with his muddy socks
how practical
adding bleach

Fanny Budan

the burglar
takes a nap
in the armchair
it's a policeman
waking him up

not Santa
but the Chinese deliver
the presents
unfortunately not equally
reliable

Pitt Buerken

dolled up
in a beach tank top
and faux feather boa
a snow woman
winks at passersby

loud singing
in the elevator shaft–
someone's way
of coping with life's
ups and downs

Luminita Suse



Debbie Strange



Debbie Strange

A LOST REVELLER ON BLOOMSDAY

A drunk man was sleeping in a doorway in the afternoon. He was dressed colourfully in a striped blazer and cream trousers which were now soiled. He had a white, straw boater sitting crookedly on his head. He was woken by two Guards, his eyes squinting in the sunshine. The Guards got him to his feet and proceeded to question him. This took place as I approached and passed the doorway on my way to a laundrette, further on down the street. On my way back he shuffled past me, still groggy, clutching to his chest, a badly torn copy of James Joyce's Ulysses.

the busy city
oblivious to a drunk
and his lonely plight
pages falling from his book
the loss of unspoken words

Gerry Mc Donnell

accidentally
meeting you
at the casino
nothing happens
by chance

in love
with the one who
loves another
a hole
in my umbrella

Alvin B. Cruz

walking
my old dog along the shore
pounding surf
pumps up the pace
two pirates on the prowl

David Lee Hill

the robin's
ho-hum commentary
on the world
a peasant takes aim
with his lucky arrow

accidentally stepping
into the bad part of town
my colleagues pull me away
from a friendly acquaintance
needing a favour

Mark Gilbert

spaghetti
spaghetti
I can twirl you all day
let the basil
fall where it may

Marjorie Pezzoli

farmer's market...
forcing a smile
for the salsa lady
a passing seagull
drops sour cream

Richard L. Matta

wolf whistles
not the done thing
anymore — but
how I enjoyed them
pretending to blush

a balancing act
morning tea at Grandma's
cup and saucer
a big slice of cake
and polite conversation

grandma maintenance
is very cost effective —
always on standby
to care for the kids,
no charge for overtime

Keitha Keyes

how dear to me
the first rose
you gave
the petals of which
fill my potpourri

missing you —
the heaving ocean
shares my misery
like a lone boat lost
in stormy waters

tattered diary
his words still
speak to me
for I shall always remain
daddy's little girl

Mona Bedi

an oyster
pried open and served
touch of hot sauce
the slippery tongue
of the sea

some old guy
with slicked back hair
and a fancy suit
syncopating down the street
to his own funky beat

Jon Hare

crime writers gather
on the lawn
camaraderie abounds ...
such a great plot twist
such a great murder

Paul Beech

fireworks
dogs in the darkest corner
of the room
my hunting dog is happily
looking for a way out

Željko Vojković

love -
finding beauty
in silence
the hush in the mountains
the adoration in your gaze

Katherine Winnick

rearranging
myself for the next role
wondering
if i am an anagram
trapped in a woman

Daya Bhat

a moment
of uncontrolled rage...
silence
so unsettling
i let go

Vidya Shankar

my reflection
in the bowl of udon
flickers in the broth
as my noodles quickly
go cold and sour

Mark Meyer

Kauai
garden paradise
doomed
when McDonald's
opened

the succubus
breathes a nasty limerick
in my ear
I fall out of bed laughing
wake up and forget it all

Peter Larsen

his shoes, socks, pants,
shirt, jock strap, filthy
jacket piled on floor
guessing I didn't make
the rapture

dusty road
winds through
glorious desert hues
boogers
in my nose

John C. Waugh

many days later
in my boardshort's pocket:
handful of tiny shells
and
phone number card

Krzysztof Mxchx

at the cat show
the sleek feline out-licks
her live-wire sister
her *mode de vie*
as yours once was

that video
of our life on Facebook:
eighteen minutes
without one moment
of your imagination

Cynthia Rowe

public water tap
standing in a queue
the ladies
discuss the latest
celebrity breakup

Minal Sarosh

behind the sex shop
a mannequin
in the dumpster
posing...
an attractive nuisance

an avid surfer
and damn if he didn't
look the part . . .
forever young in his
obituary photo

Jeffrey Walthall

my family's
uncompromising
points of view
...how to mend
our broken circle

first sip
from a bone china
teacup
there's mum bustling
around her kitchen

Marilyn Humbert

every day
I hang out the washing
wondering
where did it go
the odd sock?

ogni giorno
io stendo il bucato
domandandomi
dov'è andato a finire
il calzino spaiato?

brilliance
of red leaves ...
a desire
to put on again
my glossy lipstick

brillantezza
di foglie rosse...
un desiderio
da rimettere
il mio rossetto lucido

Daniela Misso

pigs bladder
after the slaughter
such fun for kids
such laughter
kicking ball

Mike Gallagher

almost seventeen
when I stopped walking
manual wheelchair
by the bedside window
stargazing

different
time zone
same-day delivery
the flowers arrive
a little too late

karaoke night
the last to grab the mic
a mannish boy
got his mojo working
but the thrill is gone

Christina Chin / M. R. Defibaugh

reading challenge
at school
the child wishes
he didn't find
reading challenging

middle seat
on an airplane
stuck
between a rock
and a hard place

from deep inside
the dentist office
a scream
the child, it seems,
has bitten the nurse's finger

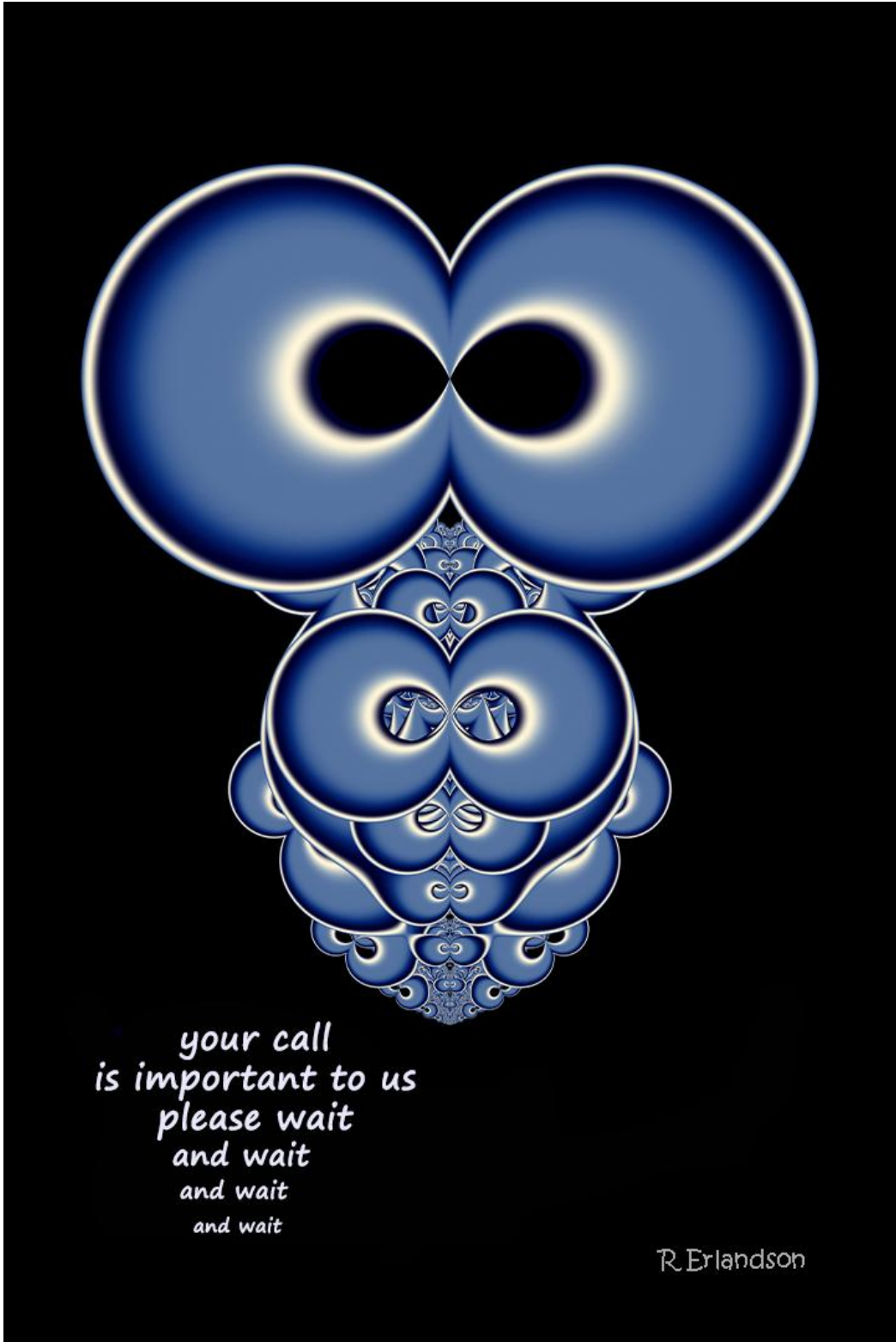
Priya Narayanan

his aftershave
not strong enough
to mask
the post-sex scent
of other women

fresh baked cookies
Gran's secret ingredient
proves popular
just aroma and crumbs
linger when the cops come

AI
did not write this kyoka...
or did it...
I switch myself off
and on again

Tracy Davidson



*your call
is important to us
please wait
and wait
and wait
and wait*

R. Erlandson

Robert Erlandson

girls' night out
as always
only the widow
knows where
her husband is

at the gym
not wanting to brag
or anything
but I can still fit into
my high school earrings

his hairline
decides to recede
suddenly
the need for quirky hats
and white linen spats

Carol Raisfeld

no one
in our yard
dies
a natural death
snowmen

together forever
words on the heart
the teddy holding
in front of
the garbage truck

Irina Guliaeva

handsome star
her second look
a little longer
the grass on neighbour's lawn
still much greener

A.J. Anwar

autumn walk
a skipping shadow
lost on the trail
catches up
to mine

Terrie Jacks

fifty ways

I tried to get rid of you

dandelion...

I harder I blow you off

the more often we meet

speaking words of heat

they lapse into coldness

dinner uneaten

a bottle of wine unfinished

...sour grapes

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

afternoon yoga class
up since 5 am
my corpse pose
complemented by
snoring

2 am
I assume
my wife changed the lock
when my key fails to open
our neighbor's front door

John J. Dunphy

living
in the moment
battle of will
between me
and 'add to cart'

aging together
blurred vision
flaws in us
to us
no longer visible

Priti Khullar

how palpable the way
your eyes hold me
for a moment—
I'm almost ready
to run for this falling star

Wai Mei Wong

sumi-e newbie—
half-submerged
in snow
could be a log
or submarine

driving her home—
cataract surgery
at eighty-one,
Mom sports a new look
with mirror sunglasses

after crossing
the Columbia, Amtrak
slows down
in the warehouse district
to enjoy graffiti

Richard Tice

blind date dinner
in between talks
suddenly, a jinx
two hearts in common
it's a match

Christopher Calvin

walking in the rain
umbrella dripping
my empty stomach
mistaken for
a rumbling thunder

huffy teenage son
walking the house
nagging and whining
tell me what
the empty-nest syndrome is

Cristina Povero

as if
this shortness of breath
was not enough
you deal me a second
joker to contend with

Robert Kingston

he offers
the vacant bus seat
to an attractive girl . . .
flashing him a smile, she replies
it's okay, i've been sitting all day

Mary Gunn

grade school
Xmas Concert
a silent shepherd
in the very last row
because i sang off key

looking for
what i lost yesterday
digging deeper
I only find what disappeared
last month and last year

kris moon kondo

in the absence
of my wife
autocorrect
telling me what
I really meant to say

kissing you
in a dream
I threw up
a little bit
in my mouth

pretending like
she doesn't know me
in front of
her friends–
backyard deer

Bryan Rickert

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