

# failed ~~haiku~~

*A Journal of English Senryu*  
*Volume 8, Issue 96*

**bryan rickert** *'Failed' Editor*

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*Photo by Richa Sharma*

# Cast List

*In order of appearance*  
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**Susan Burch**

**Katherine E Winnick**

**Pitt Buerken**

**Diana Webb**

**Corine Timmer**

**Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo**

**Vladislav Hristov**

**Audrey Quinn**

**Chen Xiaoou**

**Timothy Daly**

**John Hawkhead**

**Patricia Hawkhead**

**Keith Evetts**

**Randy Brooks**

**Tracy Davidson**

**Debbie Strange**

**Sarah E. Metzler**

**Jo McInerney**

**Michael Henry Lee**

**Shawn Blair**

**Rehn Kovacic**

**Anthony Lusardi**

**Richa Sharma**

**Roberta Beach Jacobson**

**Maxianne Berger**  
**Kelly Sargent**  
**Mike White**  
**John J. Dunphy**  
**Chen-ou Liu**  
**Jerome Berglund**  
**Ann Sullivan**  
**Joanna Ashwell**  
**Nick T**  
**Oscar Luparia**  
**Neena Singh**  
**Ravi Kiran**  
**Thomas Haynes**  
**Krzysztof Kokot**  
**Rick Jackofsky**  
**Gil Jackofsky**  
**Pris Campbell**  
**Paul Beech**  
**Tony Williams**  
**Ram Chandran**  
**Cynthia Anderson**  
**Andrew Riutta**  
**M. R. Pelletier**  
**Susan Yavaniski**  
**Nicholas Klacsanzky**  
**John Pappas**  
**Vijay Prasad**  
**Lev Hart**  
**Lakshmi Iyer**

**Eva Joan**  
**Deborah Karl-Brandt**  
**Marsh Muirhead**  
**Tohm Bakelas**  
**C.X. Turner / *Jerome Berglund***  
**C.X. Turner**  
**William Scott Galasso**  
**Barrie Levine**  
**Scott Wiggerman**  
**Lavana Kray**  
**Marilyn Ashbaugh**  
**Mary McCormack**  
**Carol Raisfeld**  
**Jan Stretch**  
**Jamie Wimberly**  
**M F Drummy**  
**Erin Castaldi**  
**Robert Witmer**  
**Curt Pawlisch**  
**Vandana Parashar**  
**Mark Meyer**  
**John Budan**  
**Hege A. Jakobsen Lepri**  
**Tim Roberts**  
**Susan Farner**  
**Caroline Giles Banks**  
**Lori Kiefer**  
**Sondra J. Byrnes**  
**Govind Joshi**

**Arvinder Kaur**  
**Laurie Greer**  
**Steph Zepherelli**  
**Joshua St. Claire**  
**Françoise Maurice**  
**Jenn Ryan-Jauregui**  
**Ron Scully**  
**Gavin Austin**  
**Cynthia Rowe**  
**Shasta Hatter**  
**Curt Linderman**  
**Dan Campbell**  
**Adele Evershed**  
**Jenny Fraser**  
**Louise Hopewell**  
**John Zheng**  
**Linda Papanicolaou**  
**Rohan Buettel**  
**Mark Forrester**  
**Tim Cremin**  
**Ben Oliver**  
**Thomas Cirtin**  
**Mark Gilbert**  
**Bryan D. Cook**  
**Jon Hare**  
**Adrian Bouter**  
**Srinivasa Rao Sambangi**  
**R. J. Swanson**  
**Mike Gallagher**

**M. R. Defibaugh**  
**Alvin B. Cruz**  
**Wanda Amos**  
**Elmedin Kadric**  
**Jacob Blumner**  
**Alexander Groth**  
**Myron Lysenko**  
**Deborah Burke Henderson**  
**Vidya Shankar**  
**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**  
**Julie Bloss Kelsey**  
**Jonathan Epstein**  
**Eva Limbach**  
**Marilyn Ward**  
**Ingrid Baluchi**  
**Lee Hudspeth**  
**Richard L. Matta**  
**Eavonka Ettinger**  
**Michelle V. Alkerton**  
**Robert Epstein**  
**Patrick Sweeney**  
**Maeve O'Sullivan**  
**Ben Gaa**  
**Jackie Chou**  
**John Han**  
**Helen McDonald**  
**Peter Jastermsky**  
**Hazel Hall**  
**Irina Guliaeva**

**Mike Fainzilber**  
**Jo Balistreri**  
**Rob McKinnon**  
**Colleen M. Farrelly**  
**Kathabela Wilson**  
**Surashree Joshi**  
**Anna Cates**  
**Maya Daneva**  
**Mona Bedi**  
**petro c. k.**  
**Norman Crocker**  
**Kris Moon/Tom Clausen**  
**Charles Harmon**  
**Stephenie Story**  
**Kevin Valentine**  
**Janet Ruth Heller**  
**Lee Strong, OFS**  
**LeRoy Gorman**  
**Steve Black**  
**Lori Becherer**  
**David Oates**  
**Nancy Brady**  
**Joseph P. Wechselberger**  
**Bryan Rickert**

## **Bwahaha(lelujah)**

If I was evil, I would burn down all the pretty trees lining the roads. I'd give new meaning to the flaming reds of autumn.

the smoldering remains  
of a charcoal pit -  
every day  
a glimpse  
of a dystopian world

Have you ever wondered why the fires in Canada can't be put out? Maybe they're fueled by the flames of hell.

bell moon -  
reloading the hoses  
with holy water

**Susan Burch**



## **Pumpkin Racing**

Did you know that some people grow oversized pumpkins and turn them into boats? And some even race them?

bumper boats  
my father  
out of his gourd

There's also a pumpkin derby where 2 pumpkins with wheels race down a ramp and whichever goes the furthest wins the round.

lost seeds -  
my mother's  
I told you so  
when ours falls over  
again this year

**Susan Burch**

forgiveness  
a crossing of paths  
into twilight

**Katherine E Winnick**

Bonfire Night  
losing  
all illusions

oops!  
fish sticks floating  
on the river

**Pitt Buerken**

## **Fine dining with Jane**

We're in the Indian restaurant opposite the coffee and cake shop where Mr Woodhouse lurks under layers of icing waiting to haunt with warnings about the dangers of a Victoria sponge even though he was years before his time

churchyard  
from leaning gravestones  
crows from crumb to crumb

What would Ms Austen be planning now were she sitting here among friends. Would she be planning another picnic or wondering what would fill the area vacated by the shoe shop up the road ..Maybe there would be space for a ball. A fairytale fancy dress ball with her maid Elizabeth Bennett as Cinderella and Mr D'Arcy head to toe Charming sharing a confidence he actually has a fetish about her feet and dreams about her metatarsal

one Regency slipper  
up for auction for a princely sum  
still taking the piss

**Diana Webb**



**Corine Timmer**

home again

*river fog*

the illusions of the journey

*even the silence*

in my baggage

*so familiar*

fading light

*enclosed garden*

tonight I can't find

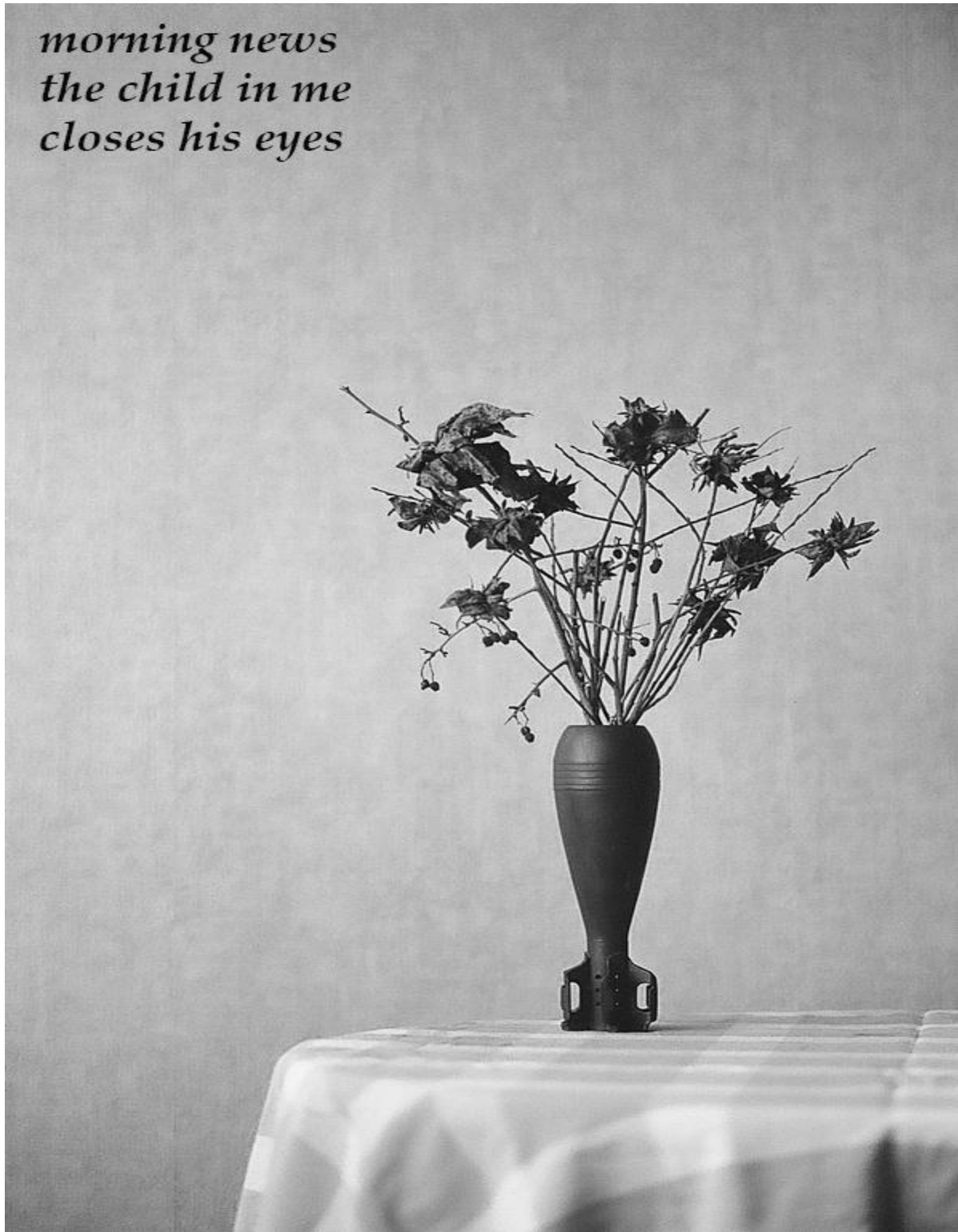
*just escaped*

me a dream

*the last butterfly*

**Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo**

*morning news  
the child in me  
closes his eyes*



**Vladislav Hristov**



*wind in the garden  
the warmth I didn't  
give her*

**Vladislav Hristov**



quiet meeting . . .  
no-one liked  
the book

above the mourners  
a branch bends  
to breaking point

cold snap  
cursing  
my lost glove

**Audrey Quinn**

window seat  
staring at myself till  
the tunnel ends

lurching ship  
chessmen escaping  
from the board

**Chen Xiaou**

## **dream**

I am sitting in the lap of my colleague's PhD student with whom I have shared no more than words, photos, and voice messages on WhatsApp. We are in her flat in Buenos Aires surrounded by her books and work on disabilities. Her small arms are around me and she strokes my back like my mother used to. She smiles like her profile picture, washing away the sight from this morning in Paris of what gravity can do to a man's ankles after falling from a fifth-floor apartment.

cold sweat  
my fiancée no longer  
my crutch

**Timothy Daly**

bindweed  
dying in the tenement  
he was born in

jam jar tadpoles  
they offer us another chance  
if we can afford it

random bombs  
children in the swimming pool  
now a mass grave

**John Hawkhead**

chasing a dream  
down the garden path  
into our sunset

retirement  
every day now  
a sick day

**Patricia Hawkhead**

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TRIPLE WORD SCORE			N <sub>1</sub>				TRIPLE WORD SCORE				DOUBLE LETTER SCORE		patricia hawkhead	TRIPLE WORD SCORE

**Patricia Hawkhead**

grey dawn  
a woodpigeon tells it  
like it is

autumn reunion  
a list of dead colleagues  
next to the menu

for days I pass  
the bent old cedar  
nobody notices  
before I realize  
it's gone

**Keith Evetts**

talking about  
her firstborn  
she calls the rapist  
a donor, not  
the father

old farm truck  
all of our earthly possessions  
to California or bust

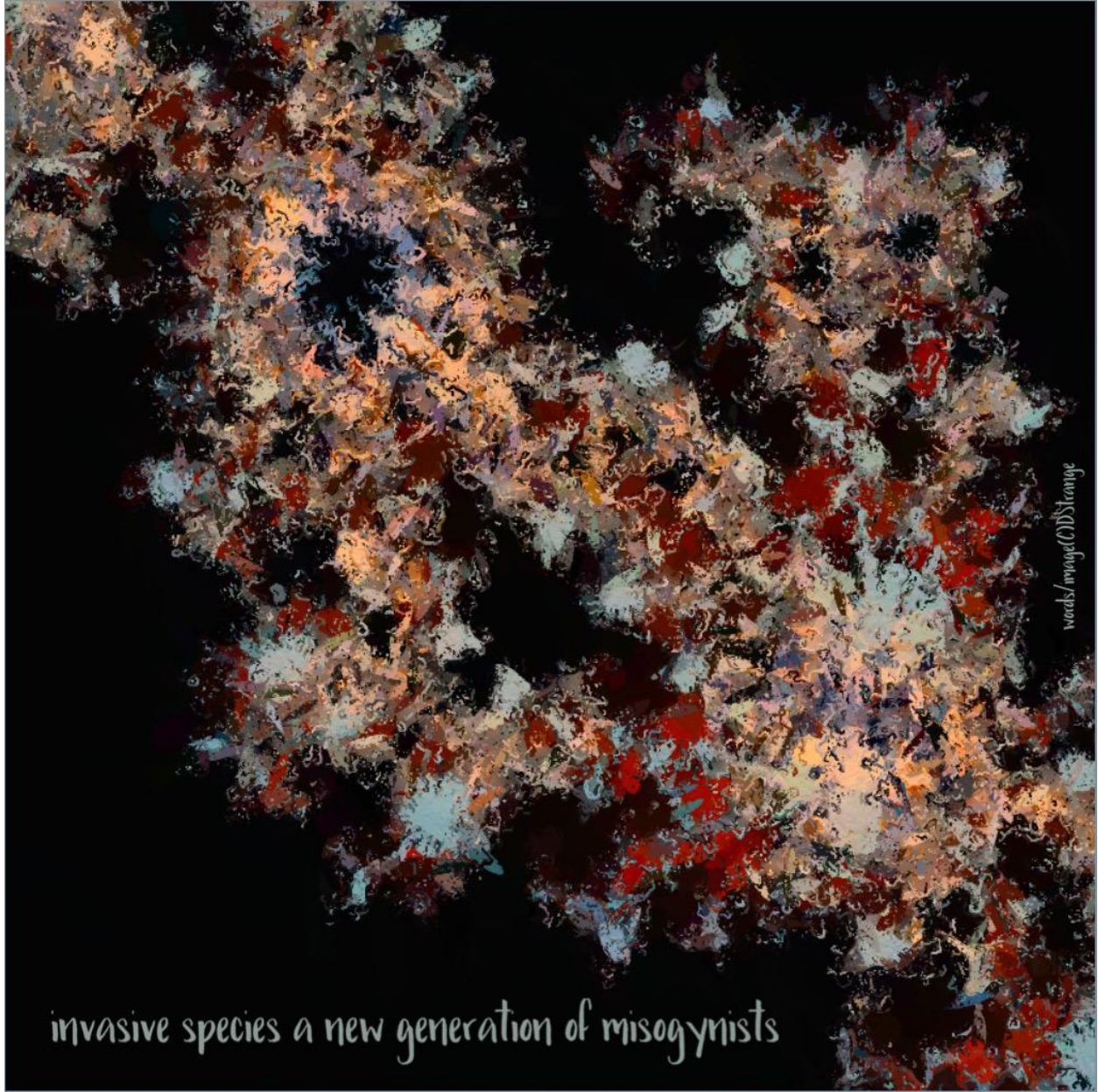
**Randy Brooks**



advent calendar  
counting down the sleeps  
to Die Hard Day

local carnival  
even scarier  
than the ghost train...  
fifty pairs of eyes  
of goldfish in plastic bags

**Tracy Davidson**



**Debbie Strange**

sugar addict enabling cookies

family reunion

hotdogs and all the fixings  
for a fight

**Sarah E. Metzler**

poised fork . . .  
debating what  
an oyster feels

**Jo McInerney**



Michael Henry Lee

holiday season  
the neighborhood pub  
all aglow

**Michael Henry Lee**

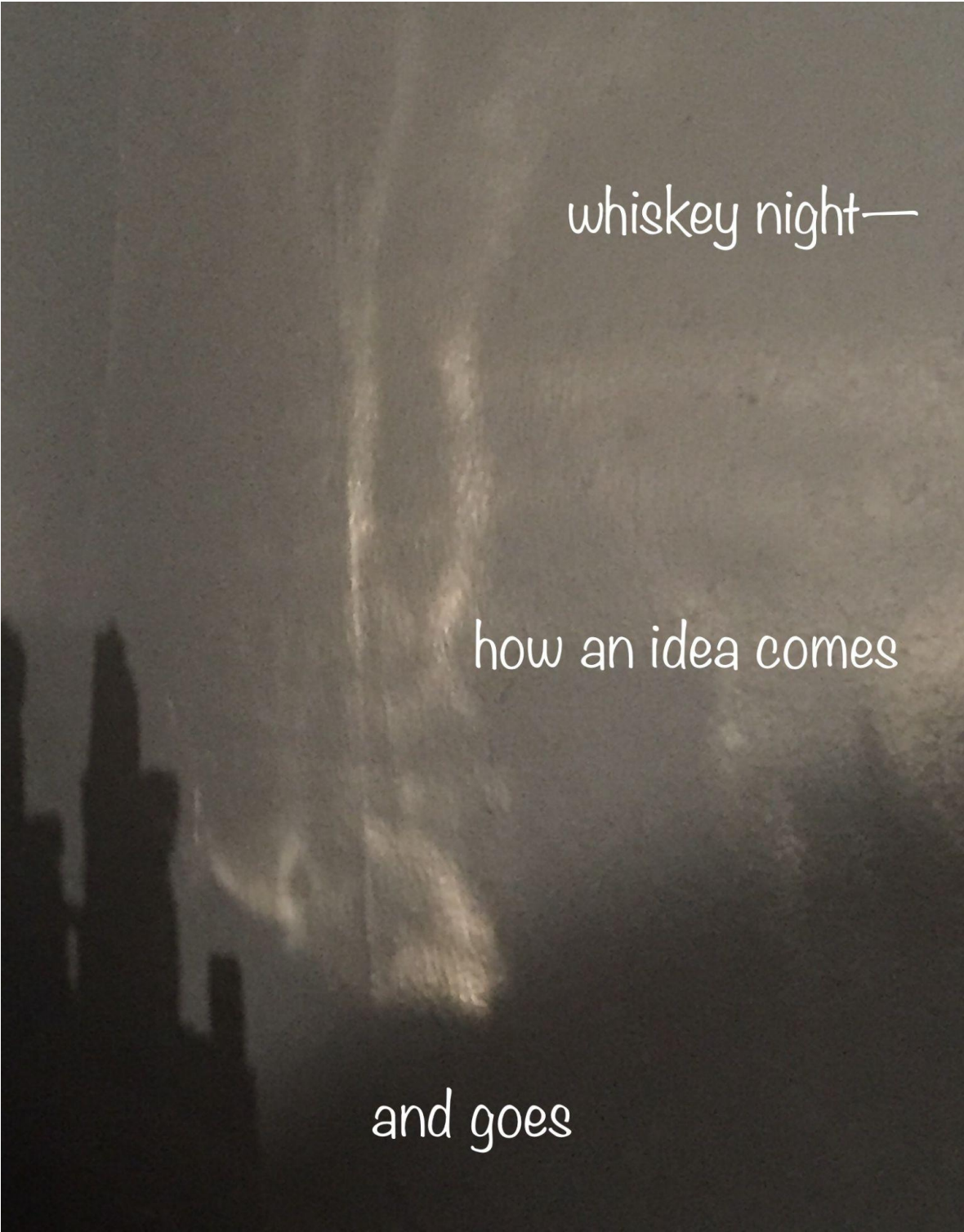
mocking me  
behind my back  
an itch

**Shawn Blair**

roadside diner  
mistakenly asks  
for vegan options

**Rehn Kovacic**





whiskey night—

how an idea comes

and goes

**Anthony Lusardi**



out of okays autumn rain

richa sharma

**Richa Sharma**

defying  
the laws of physics  
physics

food pantry chats  
every one of us  
employed

**Roberta Beach Jacobson**

max1b2025

home along grinchin'g it's a wonderful life

**Maxianne Berger**

learning to sign  
the world  
at my fingertips

my daughter wants a Barbie  
I put my foot down —  
flat

**Kelly Sargent**

old churchyard  
the locals all  
at odd angles

stone-walled estate  
the rise and fall  
of a beach ball

third trimester  
still rolling snow  
for the head

**Mike White**

Insomnia  
author tries reading  
one of his own books

clothing-optional beach  
I enter wearing  
a look of resignation

Christmas honeymoon suite  
newlyweds request  
more mistletoe

**John J. Dunphy**

test results  
the young doctor's *I think*  
barely a whisper

down on one knee  
with my small diamond ring ...  
she replies, *prenup*

in the ring  
jabs, missed punches  
and clenches ...  
round after round  
I fight my drunken shadow

**Chen-ou Liu**



raking the muck  
am I going to find  
anything sharp

**Jerome Berglund**

banana peels --  
my son asks  
to move home

no longer lingering at my own reflection . . . kaleidoscope sunset

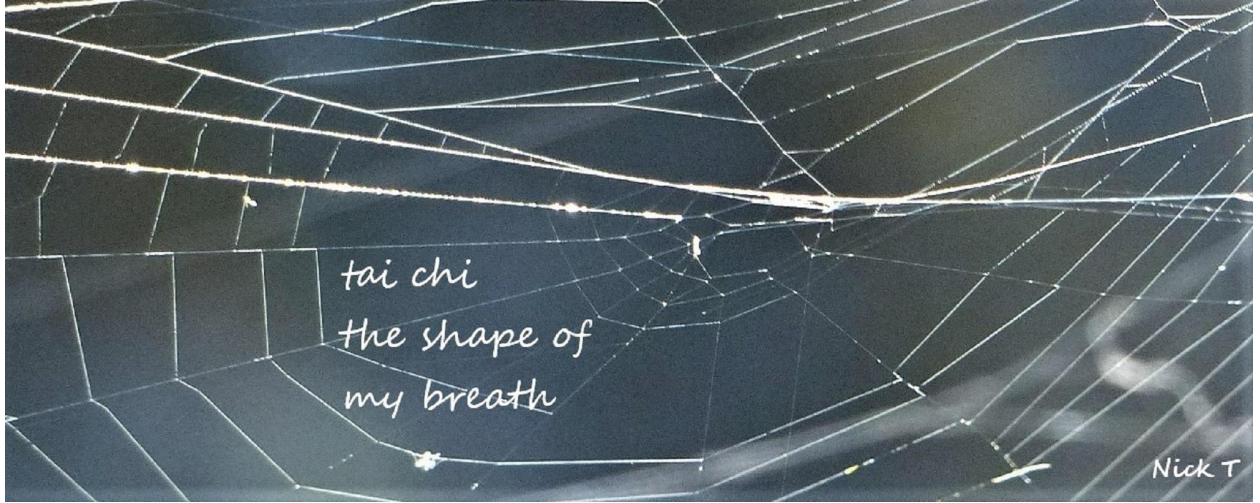
**Ann Sullivan**

sugar daddy  
forgetting why  
I should have left

open debate  
hearing you  
not hearing me

quick brew tea  
missing the point  
of our morning chat

**Joanna Ashwell**



**Nick T**

*Mouth of Truth*

my smile through clenched teeth  
after the dental bill

**Oscar Luparia**

manure cart  
the horse doesn't stop  
for a pee break

shelter home—  
the young girl's story  
in her eyes

**Neena Singh**

now I see it  
now I don't  
parking slot

**Ravi Kiran**

becoming Thomas  
just as much good-bye  
as hello

tomboy  
razor-thin lace  
cinches my waist

another diet pill  
counting the calories  
to perfection

her hands  
his hands  
caressing my curves  
down to my  
grave

**Thomas Haynes**



a single cloud–  
yachts on the lake  
hoisting their sails

shivering hand – checkmate with pawn

**Krzysztof Kokot**

bifocals—  
my glasses  
half-full

two outs . . .  
bottom of the ninth . . .  
a fly ball to deep right  
knocks an apple  
off the foul pole

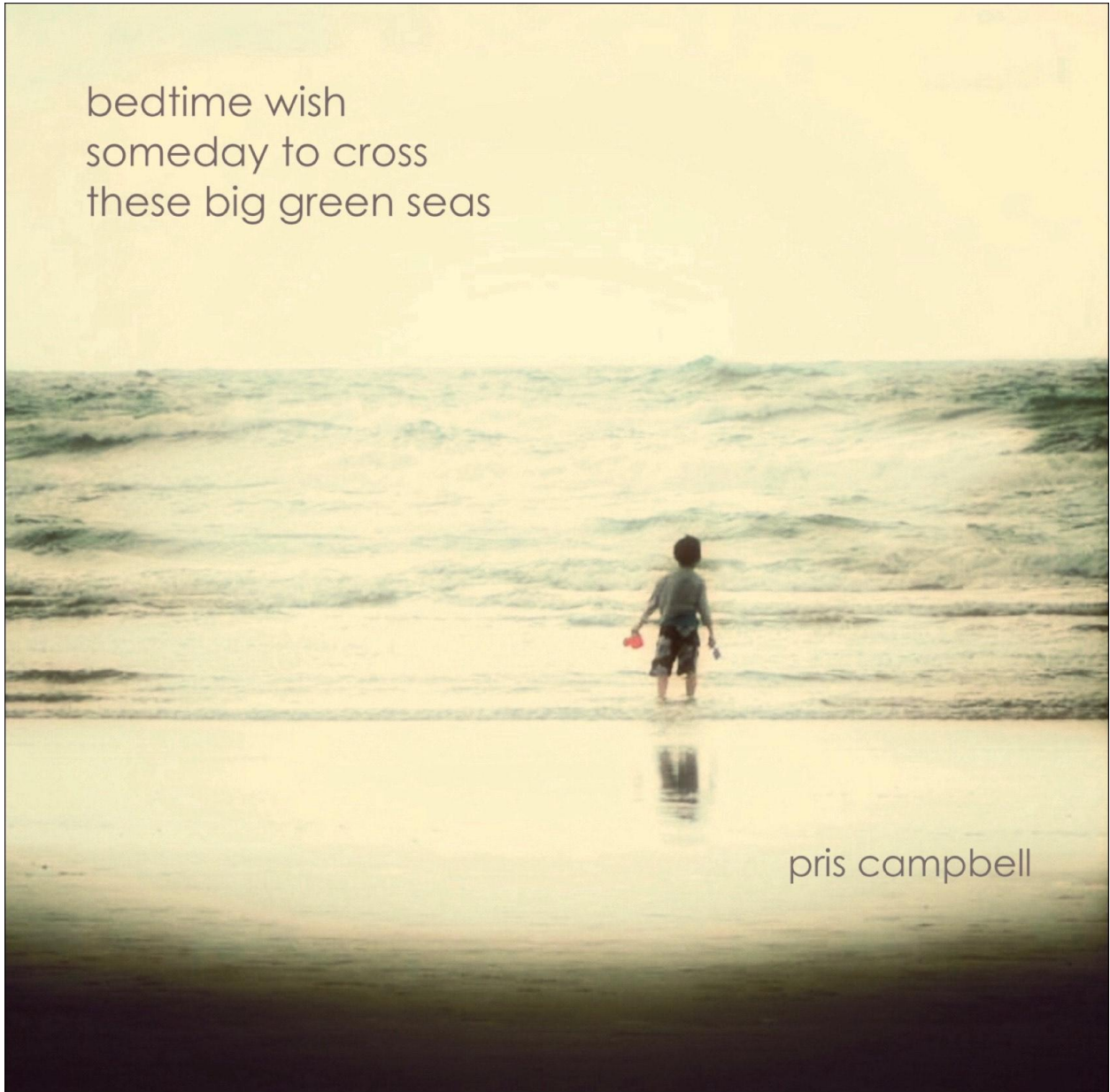
**Rick Jackofsky**

winter evening—  
easing down the hall  
the scent of onions

the  
only  
thing  
we  
know...  
nothing

**Gil Jackofsky**

bedtime wish  
someday to cross  
these big green seas



pris campbell

**Pris Campbell**

## **The Wager**

He had a thing about it, our dad. Not quite a craving perhaps, but not far off. He simply adored Mum's meat-and-potato pie.

Returning from work on weekdays or relaxing at weekend, nothing quickened Dad's grin like a steaming meat-and-potato pie for dinner. With salt, pepper and lashings of brown sauce, of course. He claimed he'd never tire of it.

So Mum put him to the test.

"I'll make you meat-and-potato pie every day for the next fortnight," she said, "and I'll bet you won't want it again for a while."

When the fortnight was up, she said, "What would you like for dinner, darling?"

He replied, "meat-and-potato pie, please, my dear."

And we all groaned.

the condiments  
of desire  
lead many astray

**Paul Beech**

at least  
I only have to do it once—  
old age

**Tony Williams**

autumn stars-  
she has no one else  
to talk to...

**Ram Chandran**

life expectancy  
more or less  
what I expected

leftovers  
not enough of me  
to go around

haunted houses  
my cousins childless  
by choice

**Cynthia Anderson**



## **Sunday Morning Truths**

Some esteemed scientists, I just saw on Bing, are now saying that  
there's evidence  
of the existence of a universe even before the Big Bang.

I wasn't there, so I couldn't tell you one way or another.

Every hour I profit from my ignorance . . . At least this seems to be the  
case.

My brain showers down what little it knows and there arrives in the  
air a sweetness  
so wholesome---like the dime store candy I'd feed myself for lunch  
and supper  
in the 70s.

When summer was a yellow haze covering the crumbling  
neighborhood walls, glued  
by God right over the tarpaper. And boys were in love with tree forts.  
And lemonade  
stands---the girls working them.

Back before our thoughts began setting off nuclear air raid sirens  
inside the apple-  
blossom wind.

doomsday news---  
a pop-up add  
for Tic Tok porn

**Andrew Riutta**

A flock  
of thoughts ...  
taking aim

**M. R. Pelletier**

skin doctor  
the orchid at reception  
getting too much sun

repellent up to my knees in tick country

**Susan Yavaniski**

the cushion  
not comfortable enough  
for enlightenment

dappled porch  
remembering only  
in a second language

moss blossoms  
saying the three words  
she believes

**Nicholas Klacsanzky**

milky way  
she rates it  
five stars

homecoming  
the rumor everyone  
remembers

lost love  
the faint hum  
of winter stars

**John Pappas**

a search for love in her thalamus

an entire pause remains unnoticed

**Vijay Prasad**



**Vijay Prasad**

blah blah blah blah blah  
blah **in my head** blah blah blah  
blah blah blah blah blah

your gaze a road at night in the rain

**Lev Hart**



bitter melon juice  
i gulp my grief  
ounce by ounce

**Lakshmi Iyer**

opened my heart  
just for the blink of an eye  
and got lost

**Eva Joan**

tsunami  
before and after  
you left

the bus stops  
in a colorful line  
six umbrellas

**Deborah Karl-Brandt**

## **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms**

The blued barrels of the shotguns stuck out over the hood of the station wagon, pointing away from the men who were smoking, the smoke rising in the breeze, drifting into the cornfield. The corn stalks rustled in the breeze. Two pheasants lay on the roof of the station wagon. The dogs were somewhere out in the corn, looking for the other downed birds. The men shared a bottle in a brown paper bag  
and waited for the dogs.

jokes about women  
the scent of whiskey  
on every word

## **Marsh Muirhead**

i came unprepared

visiting family, i borrow  
small pebbles from  
neighboring graves

**Tohm Bakelas**

**Fallow**

inside

*midnight bus  
still taking passengers  
street lamps*

the deer skull

empty  
but for a jar  
of rain

tealights

*soju bottle  
by the tree  
an offering*

**C.X. Turner / Jerome Berglund**

the sound of waves  
swallowing  
my fear

somewhere  
in this hospice  
a baby cries

**C.X. Turner**

commercial... is hemorrhoid cream *really* worth a twerk

**William Scott Galasso**



simmering  
in the slow-cooker . . .  
first line of my novel

celebrity death  
my generation

t  
h  
i  
n  
n  
i  
n  
g

**Barrie Levine**

GMC truck door  
on the mesa trail  
story needed

**Scott Wiggerman**



trench warfare -  
the whiff of jam  
from a rusty pot

Lavana Kray

**Lavana Kray**

long cold rain  
across the prairie  
all those lies

long cold rain  
across the prairie  
all those lies

**Marilyn Ashbaugh**

her dress brushed his imagination

stinging nettles  
always that cost  
to adventure

**Mary McCormack**

at the party  
again, the dog can't  
hold his licker

Down! Stay!  
the veterinarian's wife  
puts the kids to bed

music store  
guitar sale! cheap!  
no strings attached

**Carol Raisfeld**

frisbee golf  
score one  
for the dog

**Jan Stretch**

first snowflakes...  
the littlest voice joins  
the chorus

**Jamie Wimberly**



crack in the bowl I go to pieces

slicing the dry mango

nothing left

between us

**M F Drummy**

Interstate truck stop  
the smell of urine  
but butterflies

truck stop goldenrod five finger discount

**Erin Castaldi**

saving the blueberries  
for another day  
bear scat

tiny fingers  
squeeze the crayon  
a smile on a dinosaur

**Robert Witmer**

tied up in knots—  
trying to comprehend  
string theory

**Curt Pawlisch**

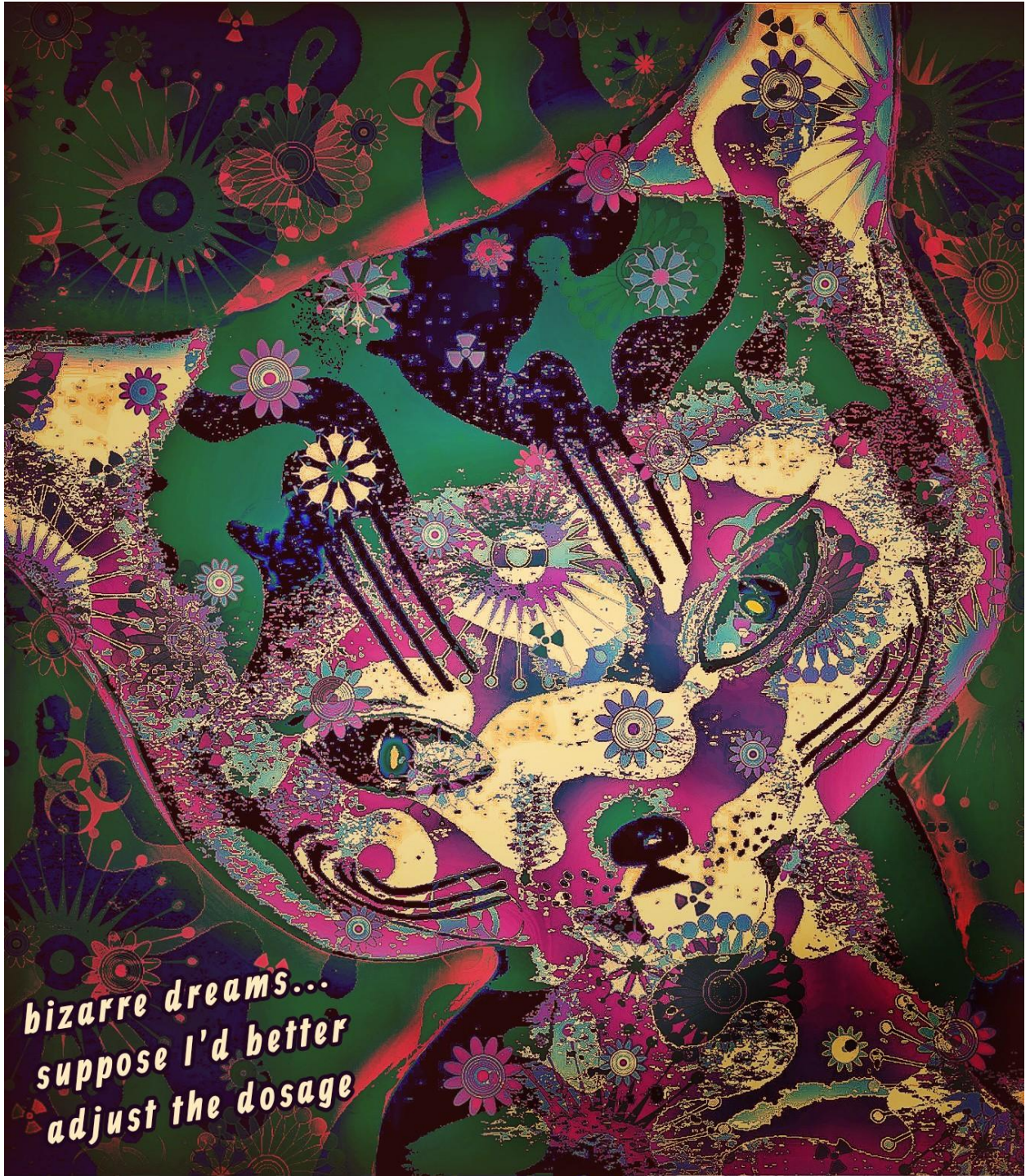
myth of normal  
mother in front of  
the guests

a silhouette  
in the fogged mirror  
why can't I remember  
the person I used to be  
before meeting you

with every wash  
the robe shrinks  
so do I  
every time  
he touches me

standing under  
the shower  
watching the water flow...  
what's it about betrayal  
that excites us so

**Vandana Parashar**



*bizarre dreams...  
suppose I'd better  
adjust the dosage*

**Mark Meyer**

## Got Talent

My act now includes the hilarious grunting pig chasing a braying donkey and a tap-dancing dog and cat fight. The rib-splitting finale in which I juggle fresh eggs during my rooster crowing impersonations is now updated. Instead of the usual COCK-A DOODLE-DOO, I include the French COCORICO as well as the Spanish GALLO-A DOODLE-DOO. Spectators compliment me on my political correctness.

holiday talent show...  
at senior center  
nodding residents  
aroused from sleep  
clap at the wrong times

**John Budan**

taking back red  
from the horrors of war  
fall foliage

**Hege A. Jakobsen Lepri**



BARBED  
WIRE  
MADONNA  
NO  
FENCE  
LEFT  
TO  
SIT  
ON



TIM ROBERTS

**Tim Roberts**

a cat crosses  
four lanes  
against the light

Rocky Mountain wedding  
their dog  
as the witness

**Susan Farner**

Senior Center mixer  
hugs set off  
Life Alerts

**Caroline Giles Banks**

singing  
from the same sheet  
the wren and I

**Lori Kiefer**

those senryu  
without a third line  
blister packaging

a new book  
leaving loved ones  
behind

**Sondra J. Byrnes**

autumn morning  
the overlapping calls  
of two junk dealer

**Govind Joshi**

bubbles  
we bathe mama in rainbows  
one last time

missing mama  
how hard to draw  
the flicker of a firefly

**Arvinder Kaur**

evening star  
a night light  
in the little library

no big ups  
no big downs...  
middle age

**Laurie Greer**



dead flowers  
in the graveyard  
silent children

**Steph Zepherelli**

## Agony Aunt

Have you heard from your cousin lately? Been over a decade? I can't believe it. I always said that the two of you should be closer because you're the same age. The big rugby star! Didn't you ever play? You should have. You're built for it. I've been saying that since you were little. It's a shame to waste those broad shoulders. Well, he is a bit taller than you and a bit broader than you, but still. We all said when he went to states, he's gonna make it big! What a powerhouse! He got a full ride to Florida State and the rest is history. You know what he learned there? What's really important is not what you know, but who you know. That's a good lesson for you to learn, too. He meets Florida State rugby fans everywhere. That's how he got his start. What are you doing now? You should be doing what he is doing. He's raking in the dough. You should see his mansion in Charleston. An Italian travertine foyer. An outdoor wood-fired pizza oven. A hedge maze. We love to visit! He has a guest cottage by the main pool, the one with the mosaic mermaid. Yes, he kept the house, because, well, you know. He got the kids, too. We love playing with his little ones out there. They're doing much better now. Oh yes, he is seeing someone. You know him. He only dates pageant girls, but now he's with a Miss Congeniality. I don't know how you and your wife and those three kids of yours live in that itty-bitty, itty-tiny, wee-little house. My Gawd, it's like a dollhouse. Your cousin's guest cottage is bigger. Oh, I'm sure you're happy. I guess some people don't mind the simplicity, but just consider that things would be easier if you just made more money. When you have money, it's just as easy to live in Fiji as it is to live in Pennsylvania. The Susquehanna River is not exactly the South Pacific, you know. It's never too late to really make something of yourself, so you can finally start enjoying life. Maybe you could follow your cousin on instagram for self-improvement tips.

*draining  
all that glitters from another  
glass of champagne  
no one ever seems to mention  
his abusive ex-wife's name*

**Joshua St. Claire**

deep autumn  
a crumpled photo  
in his hand

**Françoise Maurice**

storm drain  
we dare to enter  
the grate beyond

square peg the shape of loneliness

harrowing world  
the horror poems  
write themselves

**Jenn Ryan-Jauregui**

same crow  
waits on the mailbox  
red flag

**Ron Scully**

finding the boy  
in grandpa's eyes  
skipping stone

she chooses  
the floral bandanna  
last treatment

**Gavin Austin**

plum blossom  
the wind showers her  
with little messages

smoke haze  
seeps beneath the sill ...  
from my window  
the harbour bridge  
takes on a ghostly hue

**Cynthia Rowe**

## **Fallen Flowers**

I walk up to the door of a music store. There is a group of twenty-somethings in front of me: each one hesitates in the doorway. It is very annoying. Later that day, I complain to my twenty-two year old granddaughter. She looks shocked. "Grandma, we have to know where all the exits are in case we have to run."

a torrent of rain  
gray sidewalks washed  
with columbine

**Shasta Hatter**



our distance deepens  
as we gather together  
—holiday dinner

**Curt Linderman**

a beautiful brown my wife's middle finger

happy hour tripping over a tombstone

**Dan Campbell**

blister pack...  
pretending to lose  
my virginity  
again

**Adele Evershed**

missing you  
wind whistles  
through the gap

finding a fit  
on a cold day  
a hot flush

**Jenny Fraser**

camping  
the gourmet flavours  
of instant noodles

mothers' group reunion  
comparing our kids'  
divorce stories

dentist visit  
she drills into me  
the importance of flossing

**Louise Hopewell**

## **Angling**

A red earthworm writhes on the hook. A catfish bites it, then flops, struggling in pain and panic to escape while the angler reels in the line. The world today is like a pond. Some nations are anglers while others are fish splashing on hooks.

power outage  
news on Ukraine  
turns dark  
no moonshine  
this rainy night

**John Zheng**

Christmas shopping  
a big box from Amazon  
mostly bubble wrap

**Linda Papanicolaou**

falling asleep  
in father's recliner —  
I follow his lead

**Rohan Buettel**



country lane—  
a long stretch  
of idle thought

doom  
scrolling  
all  
the  
way  
down  
to  
my  
birth  
year

**Mark Forrester**

a visit from Santa  
his breath smells  
like Uncle Bud's

**Tim Cremin**

doorbell . . .  
he's home from school  
half a dozen times

back to GMT . . .  
the neighbourhood magpie  
hasn't got the memo

small hours  
whichever way I turn  
the dripping faucet

**Ben Oliver**

bagging leaves--  
the wind replaces them  
with my neighbor's

breaking news: three dead—  
next up: how to preserve  
picnic leftovers

**Thomas Cirtin**

that Xmas song  
when war was over  
(only in brackets)

**Mark Gilbert**

## **Heritage**

estate auction

grandma's piano  
out of tune  
chop-sticks memory

in her album

sepia ancestors  
posed for posterity  
without names

a pressed rose

Valentine's Day  
tears for  
what might have been

**Bryan D. Cook**

pedestrian right-of-way  
diligently waiting  
for cars to pass

**Jon Hare**

white w(h)ine

slow snow...  
little bits of peace  
here and there

night falls  
on the last ferry  
the old man

New Year's Eve  
champagne too cheap  
for a change

**Adrian Bouter**



second marriage  
feeding the parrot  
with a new name

**Srinivasa Rao Sambangi**

spring cleaning  
dusting the Daruma doll's  
blank eyes

**R. J. Swanson**

wasted  
whispered sweet nothings  
in a eunuch's ears

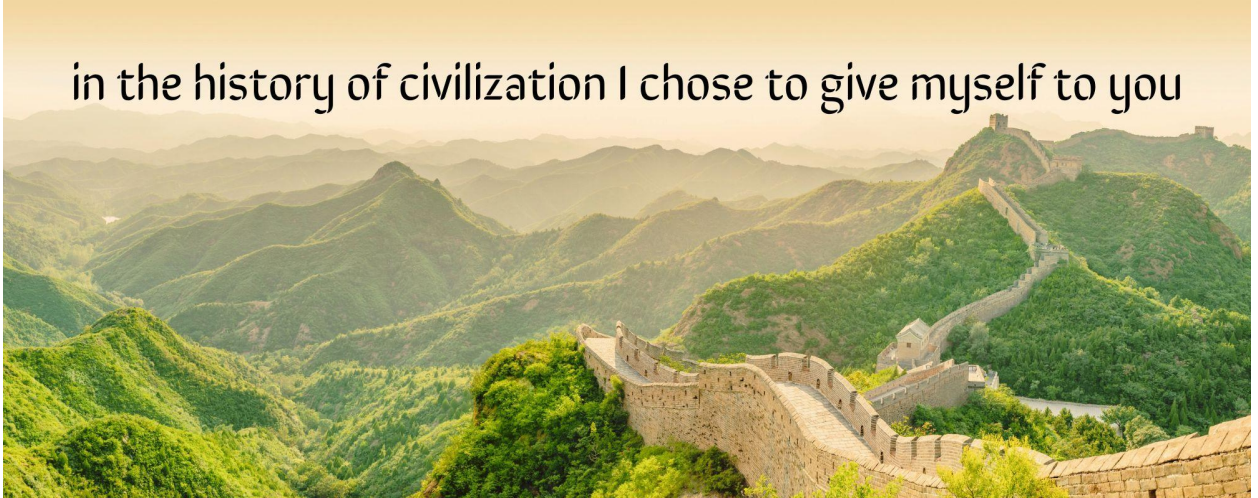
**Mike Gallagher**

desert sun rolling the perfect joint



**M. R. Defibaugh**

in the history of civilization I chose to give myself to you



**M. R. Defibaugh**

wild card in Vegas  
the one he's marrying  
changes her mind

the emptiness  
between us  
musical chairs

**Alvin B. Cruz**

your limbs  
entangled with mine  
morning glory

haiku deadline  
living left of the date line  
a bonus

**Wanda Amos**

how we both end up laughing gulls

**Elmedin Kadric**



checking her messages  
the dog smells  
every branch

seatmate  
on my flight home  
the moon

**Jacob Blumner**

grandpa's record collection –  
all I hear  
is his voice

**Alexander Groth**

secret sunshine–  
nestling high in a tree  
the sniper

**Myron Lysenko**

sun-warmed pond  
the final swim  
of the season

**Deborah Burke Henderson**

## **Tomar**

“Open your books to page 97,” says our history teacher. I am still flipping the pages when I sense all eyes are on me. A wave of giggles spreads.

How surprising that I, from South India, would share my surname with a medieval dynasty that ruled over the North!

moon gazing  
so many city lights  
again and again

**Vidya Shankar**

haunted barn  
a headless child bobs  
for apples

Memorial Day  
one life traded  
for a graveside flag

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

trying  
to understand  
charred roses

at friendship's end  
our memories scattered  
leaves

**Julie Bloss Kelsey**

climate change  
kicking the kigo  
down the road

**Jonathan Epstein**



living in a bubble father's war diary

**Eva Limbach**

chilled bones  
a heavy haze covers  
the soup queue

**Marilyn Ward**

chemotherapy . . .  
all the hairstyles  
I dared never to try

**Ingrid Baluchi**

colossal boulders  
scattered in the scree...  
all my bad choices

**Lee Hudspeth**

fleabag motel  
the vibrating bed  
doesn't take coins

missing you  
the ocean takes three syllables  
from the sand

always changing the narrative  
...mockingbird

**Richard L. Matta**

revision  
after revision  
picking weeds

my pregnant  
thirteen year old student  
Sponge-Bob backpack

quite proud  
of my smile wrinkles  
self-reflection

**Eavonka Ettinger**

browsing the thrift store  
an old floor lamp  
hunches over

**Michelle V. Alkerton**

dam(n)age

holiday shopping —  
only twice do I violate  
my moratorium

**Robert Epstein**



all day rain  
walking on my own  
clean slate

**Patrick Sweeney**

banter with my friend  
in a corner shop doorway -  
November shower

**Maeve O'Sullivan**

used car lot  
two old men  
talking Porsche

tapping our feet  
with the boys in the band  
another round of Hot Damn

pushing all my buttons  
the accordion woman's  
blues

morning after  
the diner full  
of concert t-shirts

pausing our fight —  
chicken fried rice with  
yum yum sauce

**Ben Gaa**

## **Sad Music**

Before I started writing poetry, I often sat in the library listening to Chinese music with my headphones on. The melancholic lyrics made me question what obstacles kept people from being with the ones they loved. Perhaps there are more reasons for doomed romances than I can count.

Tanabata  
one misstep shy of falling  
from the magpie bridge

**Jackie Chou**

lost out of state  
my cell phone  
dies

interrupted by  
my boss's email  
a haiku walk

napping at work  
the distant murmur of  
business talks

**John Han**

shadows eating crumpets under the skylight

**Helen McDonald**

barking up the wrong dogwood

**Peter Jastermsky**

## Broken Poems

A poet is reading on line. The comments box overflows as listeners post snippets from her reading. *I love this*, they say— *and that*. Are they listening to all the poem? Or plucking out something from the larger story? Now that enlightened sentiments are as scarce and fragile as ourselves, I wonder if these picked-through phrases express a greater need, perhaps an obsession to be noticed. Just one small phrase— a truth that each of us can cling to while we try to cling together in these times of fragmentation. jigsaw world

*ups and downs*

all the merry-go-rounds

*in the amygdalas*

of hope

*lifelines needed*

**Hazel Hall**



dating site photo  
his arm  
cut out  
with someone  
he used to hug

powdery snow  
another lie  
about my period

back home  
where granny`s ashes were spread  
a fence

**Irina Guliaeva**

joyriding  
to the party  
grenade in hand

it was our song  
until they played it  
with bullets

**Mike Fainzilber**

rocket strikes  
pink bougainvillea  
among the dead

**Jo Balistreri**

high tide—  
lifejackets bobbing  
against sharp rocks

**Rob McKinnon**

shooting stars  
I wish for  
one last kiss

waning crescent  
hope fades  
in his eyes

spring rain  
on his gravestone  
my tears

**Colleen M. Farrelly**

pinhole into  
our upside down world  
obscura

**Kathabela Wilson**

cold snap the tattered blanket of your philanthropy

brewing my pavlovian responses the scent of coffee

**Surashree Joshi**

rental  
left behind  
a sex doll

wet leaves . . .  
an argument  
with myself

**Anna Cates**



Thanksgiving...  
turkey bones  
for the street dog

family reunion  
each of my sisters  
with her own made up story

**Maya Daneva**

killed in action —  
the burnt edge  
of a family photo

he promises me  
a lifetime of togetherness  
long distance call

**Mona Bedi**

barren field . . .  
shavings from  
a losing lotto ticket

under  
the same rock  
the same key

**petro c. k.**

Old friends  
buried in a bottle  
Vietnam

**Norman Crocker**



**Words- Kris Moon**  
**Photo- Tom Clausen**

corporate picnic  
worker ants  
stage a hostile takeover

**Charles Harmon**

mountain laurel  
the friendship we shared  
slipping away

**Stephenie Story**

crowded beach  
not enough swimsuit  
for her father

back alley club . . .  
the depth of the blues  
seeps into the night

people camped  
beneath the freeway  
no road home

**Kevin Valentine**



midnight  
on my birthday  
five raccoons

**Janet Ruth Heller**

at the hospice  
folding all her laundry  
one last time

**Lee Strong, OFS**

cOffee ring On cOffee ring negOtiatiOns

pundits on radio

the Perseids

pepper us with light

locked ward

imaginary visitors

make the day

**LeRoy Gorman**

suicide watch  
the attendant nurse  
phones his mother

**Steve Black**

our one-sided  
conversation  
dental hygienist

after sixty years  
the death  
of her landline

**Lori Becherer**

that song I loved  
fifty years ago  
tire ad

midnight  
remembering the priest's  
wine breath

young man  
walks his puppy  
on sorority row

parking-lot  
the cashier shows us  
how to use the machine  
that will take  
her job

**David Oates**

krill oil capsules  
becoming  
a blue whale

**Nancy Brady**

political speech  
feedback  
from the lectern mic

storm  
brewing  
tea

**Joseph P. Wechselberger**



every day the day of the dead inside

bento box  
compartmentalizing  
this pain

not needing  
a full moon  
this monster  
I keep  
turning into

**Bryan Rickert**

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