

# failed haiku

*A Journal of English Senryu*  
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**michael rehling**

*'Failed' Editor*

[www.failedhaiku.com](http://www.failedhaiku.com)

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# Cast List

*In order of appearance*

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**Julie Warther**

**(Dan Schwerin and *Julie Warther*)**

**(Julie Warther and *Angela Terry*)**

**Willie R. Bongcaron**

**Ashish Narain**

**Gail Oare**

**Simon Hanson**

**Eva Limbach**

**Theophilus 'Femi Alawonde**

**Jerry Dreesen**

**Pris Campbell**

**Pat Davis**

**Maeve O'Sullivan**

**Garry Eaton**

**Steve Smolak**

**Dave Read**

**Madhuri Pillai**

**Ian Willey**

**Jesus Chameleon**

**Fatma Gultepe**

**Michael O'Brien**

**Jo Balistreri**

**Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian**

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

**Bruce H Feingold**

**Elmedin Kadric**

**Rachel Sutcliffe**  
**Debbie Strange**  
**Guliz Mutlu**  
**Bruce Jewett**  
**Olivier Schopfer**  
**Nells Wasilewski**  
**Adjei Agyei-Baah**  
**Marietta McGregor**  
**Lorin Ford**  
**Lynn Edge**  
**Nola Frawley**  
**Nancy May**  
**Chen-ou Liu**  
**Lynette Arden**  
**Angela Terry**  
**Nathan Hassall**  
**Celestine Nudanu**  
**Robert Witmer**  
**Christina Sng**  
**Kwaku Feni Adow**  
**Barbara Kaufmann**  
**Meik Blöttenberger**  
**Barbara Tate**  
**Bob Carlton**  
**David Oates**  
**Christina Martin**  
**Lucia Fontana**  
**RashaadThomas**  
**Ed Bremson**  
**Rob Scott**  
**Helen Buckingham**  
**Ivan Gaćina**  
**Marshall Bood**

**Samantha Sirimanne Hyde**

**Susan Burch**

**David J Kelly**

**Keitha Keyes**

**Goran Gatalica**

**Shloka Shankar**

**Aparna Pathak**

**Ola Lindberg**

**Debbi Antebi**

**Elizabeth Crocket**

**Bob Lucky**

**Elizabeth Alford**

**Chase Gagnon**

**Peter Jastermsky**

**Zoran Doderovic**

**Steve Black**

**Jill Lange**

**Bill Kenney**

**A. M. Pattison**

**Myron Lysenko**

**Jennifer Hambrick**

**Anthony Q. Rabang**

**Joe McKeon**

**Munia Khan**

**Gabriel Bates**

**Rick Hurst**

**Diarmuid Fitzgerald**

**Eric A. Lohman**

**Francis James Franklin**

**Sondra Byrne**

**Tim Graves**

morning commute . . .  
another remake  
of Yesterday

homecoming --  
the fiddle player's  
shredded bow

**Julie Warther**

## **Speak Now . . .**

basket of petals  
the bride's daughter  
holds back

*everyone looking  
for the best man*

you did say  
baggage  
a late snow

*making room  
for a ham and a turkey  
first Christmas together*

in the roundabout  
we keep to our lanes

*uprooted bulbs . . .  
the words  
we don't say*

**(Dan Schwerin and *Julie Warther*)**

## Termites in the Joists

termites in the joists . . .  
keeping her diagnosis  
to herself

*dandelion wine --  
so many unanswered questions*

darkness setting in . . .  
the silent treatment  
not working

*only shadows  
where once she watched  
children playing*

a hedgerow gathers  
fast food wrappers

*as the cloudy  
haze deepens  
mood indigo*

**(Julie Warther and *Angela Terry*)**

bomb threat  
what black sunday  
means to her

ginger brew  
the tangy taste  
of her words

new suede shoes  
lo and behold...  
flash flood

homing pigeons  
the night lends cover  
to the coop

**Willie R. Bongcaron**



sunlight streams in  
a gap in the curtains-  
its always my fault

**Ashish Narain**

wilted petals  
the promise of the lily  
living will

distant sun  
lining up perfect seashells  
on the windowsill

translated headstone  
another family fable  
laid to rest

**Gail Oare**

moonrise  
the neighbour's cat  
acquires mystique

patting the old cat  
the warmth of the sun  
looking back at me

**Simon Hanson**

offline  
the cobweb  
abandoned

boy from Aleppo  
his smile as  
the dog stops barking

hermitage  
the unpaved way  
inwards


**Eva Limbach**  
[Website](#)

Haiku senryu-  
to friends  
I'm nuts.

**Theophilus 'Femi Alawonde**  
**[@Theophy\\_Frank](#)**

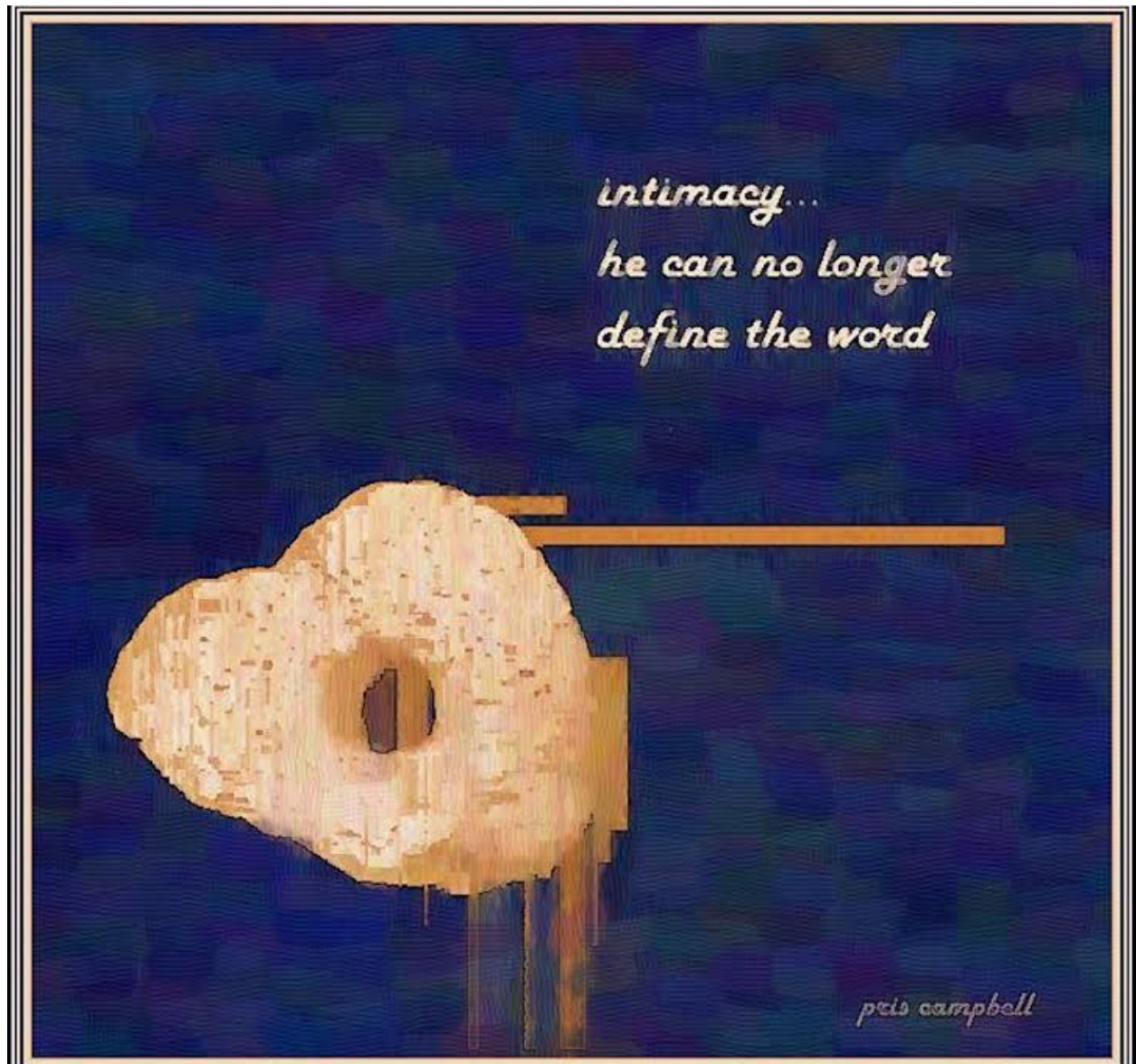
finding an ant  
on the kitchen counter  
its short life

**Jerry Dreesen**



roses bleed  
all over the patio--  
my first time

pris campbell



**Pris Campbell**



after the fireworks  
darkness  
reverberates

old friends  
outside the Alzheimer's wing  
rename the flowers

e-book  
nowhere to press  
a flower

**Pat Davis**

## Apples and Oranges

It's a warm June afternoon. I'm waiting for a northbound suburban train at Dalkey station. I am eleven years of age. On the platform near me, in her black habit, is a Loreto nun who is a resident of the convent attached to my primary school. I start to peel an orange from my lunchbox. She recognises me and asks me which secondary school I'll be attending in the autumn.

My parents have decided to send me to a new non fee-paying comprehensive rather than the Loreto secondary school in Dalkey which two of my older sisters attended. I tell her this. The new school is located in a less salubrious suburb of South County Dublin, and managed by a progressive lay headmistress. The nun's response is this: 'You'd be the kind of girl to go to a comprehensive alright.' 'What do you mean, Sister?' I ask, puzzled. 'Eating an orange in public,' she says.

*first assembly a sea of green gaberdine*

**Maeve O'Sullivan**



grave site  
a crumpled Kleenex  
in the morning glory

clock museum  
the mickey mouse clock  
strikes one

**Garry Eaton**

magnolia sometimes between his cigar smoke

a mockingbird  
elaborates some  
on the crow's caw

that vintage taste  
at my brothers' house —  
I bring the wine

**Steve Smolak**

stump speech  
a hollow log  
fills with ants

cannonball ....  
he displaces  
himself

brake lights  
catching my breath  
with the bus

### **Storm Front**

The tapping became thumping. I knew the rain had turned to hail. I peeked out the window, tried to gauge the size of it. The last time it hailed, our roof was hammered into ruins. We were left with major repairs, and saw our house insurance increase. As I started to worry about money and hassle, I felt a small tug on my sleeve.

"Daddy," my boy said, bright eyed and in pyjamas, "Maybe, tomorrow, we can make a snowman?"

sunlight ...  
I turn away  
from my shadow

—

## **Lost**

He was always losing things. Jackets, binders, toys, calculators. Some was recovered from the lost and found, some wasn't. One day he came home wearing one glove. "Where is the other?" I asked, "how could you not see it missing?" He shrugged, tossed the one he had into the closet.

open fields  
the space that fills  
a backpack

**Dave Read**

she waits  
for the unexpected  
at the hospice window

insomnia  
a pot of haiku  
brimming in the dark

**Madhuri Pillai**

a trip to find myself  
the waitress says  
here you are

window seat  
caught between a cough  
and the clouds

check-in counter  
she can't explain what happened  
to all my miles

commercial break  
how well a diaper absorbs  
the blue fluid

here's what you missed  
at yesterday's meeting:

**Ian Willey**



new moon  
boys in the back of the bus  
change their pants

**Jesus Chameleon**  
[@JesusChameleon](#)

henna-haired girl  
no longer my student  
a 14-year-old bride

**Fatma Gultepe**

abandoned school  
thinking of the child  
we never had

**Michael O'Brien**  
**[@michaelobrien22](#)**

## The 4<sup>th</sup> of July

We sit together on the porch sipping champagne, swallowing  
bubbles of memories. The street is quieter than usual except for the  
hiss of cicadas and the back and forth of the creaking swing.  
Pinwheels and sunbursts illuminate the night. The neighbor's dog  
barks.

How could we have known without sparkles, the flap and flutter of  
tattered twilight, shouts, giggles, commotion of children, we'd forget  
to hold hands?

along the fence  
the zinnias  
lose color

—

her sour tears—  
he hacks down  
the last lemon tree

only one spoonful  
to honor her ancestors—  
lutefisk

**Jo Balistreri**

mathematics class  
a millipede curls into  
the number six

**Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian**  
[@ekalu28](#)

grocery shopping -  
cookies in the cart  
not on the list

**Valentina Ranaldi-Adams**

Hanoi  
an army of motorbikes  
running red lights

separation  
she texts him a selfie  
in her new lingerie

sexcessful

**Bruce H Feingold**

sweatshop  
the fly finds  
a way out

moonshine speaking French for a while

a new tattoo  
to cover the old  
spotted dolphin

**Elmedin Kadric**



another date  
still waiting for sparks  
over dinner

grandma  
how she sees my face  
with her hands

removal van  
following our life  
at a distance

**Rachel Sutcliffe**



**Debbie Strange**

undecided journey  
an emptiness of  
where or when

**Guliz Mutlu**

led by their devices  
hunters stream pass  
oleander blooms

rattling compressor  
vinyl pumpkins inflate  
my neighbor's lawn

**Bruce Jewett**

sexology

dining alone  
the fortune cookie says  
you're going to fall in love

low light  
all the secrets  
we reveal

brand-new GPS  
the child asks where the woman  
who speaks is hidden

**Olivier Schopfer**

the morning after  
a scarf left in his loft  
he hopes--on purpose

**Nells Wasilewski**

[Website](#)

rejected submission  
finding the other door  
into the editor's mind

overstepping  
my stepping stones-  
swan running on lake

**Adjei Agyei-Baah**



McDonalds bags  
shuffle between gusts  
strip mall

country FM  
the boogie woogie  
of a wooden bridge

**Marietta McGregor**



at the fun house  
all my clones pregnant  
with clowns

Sunday morning  
my next door neighbour's  
new leaf blower

our mood rings darken the sickle moon

election year  
the Halloween season  
extended

**Lorin Ford**

closure list-  
the post office  
of my birthplace

autumn dusk...  
our six-two grandson cleans  
the ceiling lights

**Lynn Edge**

introvert  
wearing multi-coloured hat  
extrovert underneath

**Nola Frawley**

spring sunset  
the nursery rhyme  
of an old tsunami

speed dating  
a shepherd  
in a cold blizzard

**Nancy May**  
**[@Haikuintaining](#)**

*I had an affair...*  
she keeps fixing the holes  
in my sock

Pleasantville  
atop each wall  
shards of glass

back from the washroom  
her blouse buttoned lower:  
blind date

sleepless again  
counting the syllables  
in *Failed Haiku*

**Chen-ou Liu**

<http://chenouliu.blogspot.ca/>

film group  
after the critique  
I buy radishes

mental hospital  
all the hedges trimmed  
close to the rails

**Lynette Arden**

<http://www.lynettearden.com>

first Halloween  
he trips on  
his superman cape

floating past  
the timeline  
the deadline

**Angela Terry**

madhouse  
a slip-moon  
my keeper

**Nathan Hassall**

**[www.nathanhassall.co.uk](http://www.nathanhassall.co.uk)**



martial discord  
he forgets my birthday  
again and again

eightieth birthday  
mother's missing tooth  
nestled in the cake

roadside beggar  
among the coins  
a cherry blossom

**Celestine Nudanu**

commuter train  
I'm the only one reading  
the times

playing hooky  
he's caught red-handed  
picking wild strawberries

busking at Christmas  
a battered guitar  
reflects a star

**Robert Witmer**

by the creek  
a headless swan  
napping

chain lightning  
this indecipherable pain  
in my stomach

disassociation  
taking myself  
elsewhere

**Christina Sng**

homecoming-  
receiving the news  
before the person

birthday cake  
I blow out  
my old age

**Kwaku Feni Adow**  
[witwriteblog.wordpress.com](http://witwriteblog.wordpress.com)

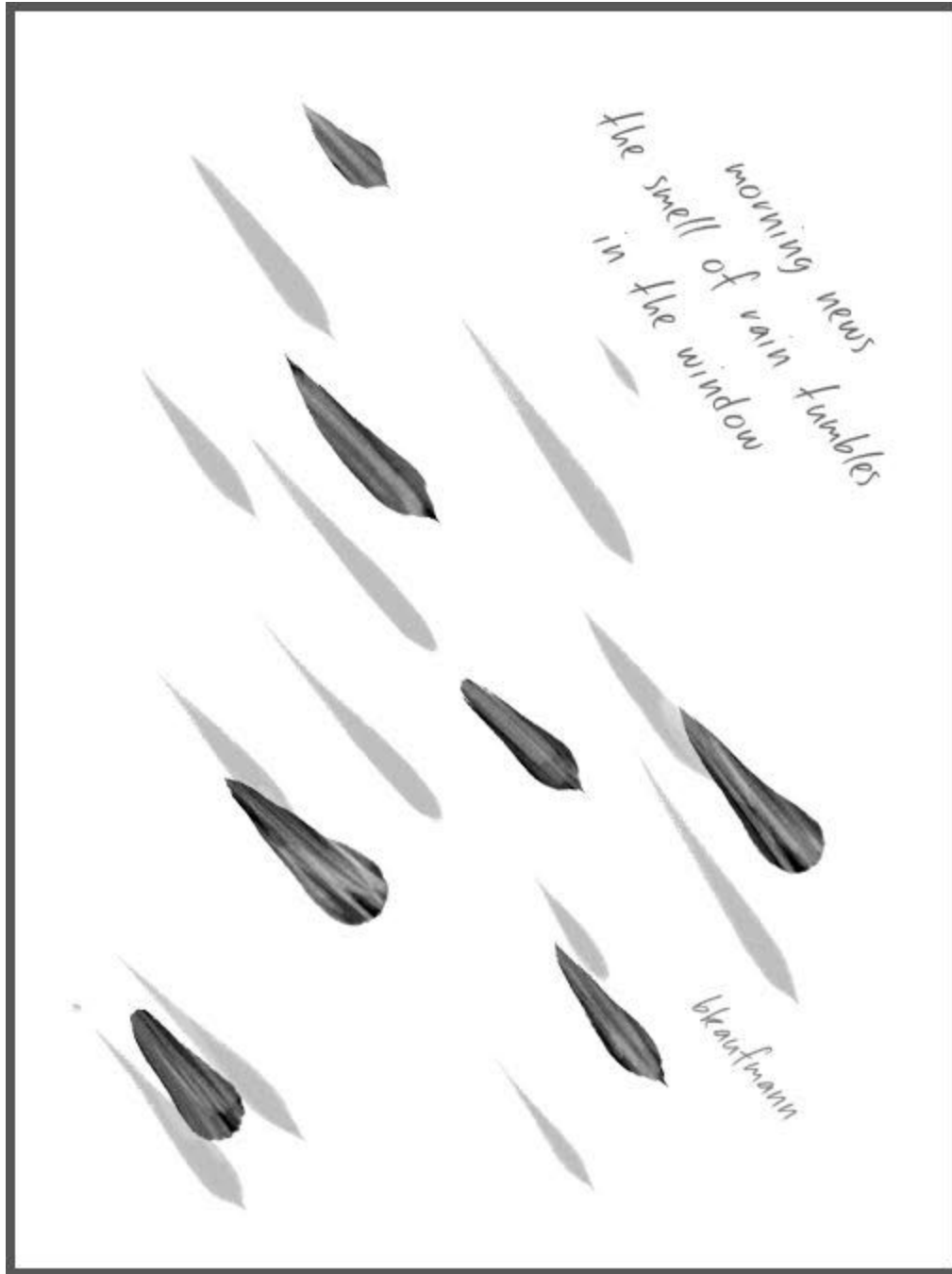
test results I learn to live one day at a time





autumn tides -  
returning the beach  
to the locals

b kaufmann



**Barbara Kaufmann**

[wabi sabi ~~~poems and images](#)

October--  
scraping stubbornness  
out of a pumpkin

between the silo and oak a fellowship of fog

pumpkin picking--  
a young boy spits  
in the wind

passion play  
this year Jesus bears  
a new tattoo

steller jay the voice I was born to sing with

**Meik Blöttenberger**



low tide  
remembering what I try to  
forget

rock garden  
picking an engagement ring  
two carats

cheshire smile  
grandpa's teeth on the  
nightstand

**Barbara Tate**

Drifting fog--  
gravediggers shiver  
at dawn.

Rain lets up--  
she puts houseplants under  
the dripping eaves.

Dust cloud--  
the flag man reverses  
his sign.

clear night at last  
the stars are not where  
I left them

**Bob Carlton**

[www.bobcarlton3.weebly.com](http://www.bobcarlton3.weebly.com)

cooler day  
the mascot's costume  
slightly less hellish

from the back seat  
"Dad, did you ever smoke  
marijuana?"

boys' restroom  
woman's torso drawn naked  
but for a bikini bottom

**David Oates**

**[Wordland](#)**

Sunday 8pm Eastern on 91.7 FM and 97.9 FM Near Athens, GA  
Streams on [www.uga.org](http://www.uga.org)



**Christina Martin**

news of you  
in my dream it seems  
you are fine

tea bath  
sinking in the tub  
of memories



**Lucia Fontana**

I flew on Bird wings  
Captured in 12 bars of F  
Billie's Bounce the Blues

**RashaadThomas**  
**[@BlackYodaYogi](#)**

home alone-  
at least the teapot whistles  
at her

sipping wine...  
watching tonight's moon  
on TV

car radio—  
I try to decide between  
banjos and cellos

at my age  
just hoping to  
live long enough  
to catch the next season  
of Fargo

**Ed Bremson**

divorce papers arrive  
a passing truck hauls  
a twisted wreck

flight delay -  
clouds drift  
into the future

9/11  
one leaf falls  
then another

**Rob Scott**  
[@haikubobb](#)



~~nopunku~~

syn tax  
vampyrrhic hacks  
on latch

~~nofunku~~

**Helen Buckingham**

Virtual sex –  
on the cell phone comes  
erotic whisper.

**Ivan Gaćina**

an empty welfare envelope  
curled  
in the snow

# Marshall Bood

full moon...  
again questioning  
my mental health

winter chill —  
all these bad bones  
in my body

out of sync —  
the barbershop quartet's  
newbie

**Samantha Sirimanne Hyde**

therapist

breakup

I find myself

an alcoholic

5/13/15 SOB

"I've got the three wheels," allowed one friend. "You know, the living room table, the garden camera, the place where everyone dumps their stuff."

"Right," I said. "Our biggest compromise is a chair in our bedroom. We never sit in it, we just pile clothes and magazines on it."

"Junk attracts more junk. If you clear it off, it's likely to stay clear. And here's another thing," she continued. "When you buy any kind of device, put the cords, the manual, all that stuff in a Ziploc bag. Whenever buying a big bunch of necessary stuff, plan when you get rid of the device, you can get rid of the ancillary parts, too."

For a virtual purge, another friend called. "I just did it myself. Walk around your apartment and ask yourself—'if I were moving, would I pack this or get rid of it?'"

"I only keep anything the sentimental reasons alone," someone else chimed in. "Only if I'm still using it."

The suggestions were helpful, but that lay rule was too draconian for me. I'd never get rid of the Justice Nutter Book. I snatched from the shelves a chair I took with Justice Sandra Day O'Connor when I checked for the new chair. It never did fit, or the doll-sized outfit that our previous neighbor wore when she came home from the hospital. (At least, these items didn't take up much room.) I have a friend who keeps twelve tennis racquets left over from her days playing college tennis.

When one of my college roommates visited New York, we waded for an hour in the East River about the plagues of clutter.

"What, in life," I demanded, "does immediate gratification equal to waiting out a medicine cabinet?"

"No, nothing," she agreed with equal fervor. "But she took it even further. 'You know, I keep an empty shelf.'"

"What do you mean?"

"I keep one shelf somewhere in my house, completely empty. I don't carry other stuff in the room, but I keep one shelf full."

It was struck by the perversity of this resolution. An empty shelf. And one

1/17/16 SFB

Susan Burch



ceasefire  
the fragile fate  
of hope

@motto\_sakura





David J Kelly  
[@motto\\_sakura](#)



a goanna  
strides towards us —  
our move

plastic flowers  
on the gravestone —  
drought proof

explosion  
in the back shed —  
Dad's home brew

**Keitha Keyes**

my older son  
measures shadows of passerby  
with a fishing rod

**Goran Gatalica**

migrating geese i leave my poem open-ended

paraphrasing a burp family dinners

using air quotes the dilettante in me

—

**30 x 40**

I've been a part of this house for the past two decades. I'm the size of your average room, give or take a few square feet. My occupants have remained constant, something I've come to admire. They have wept inside me, slept open-mouthed, become women, heard the sharp echo of a packet of crisps, and have looked for a way out. A few stray quotidian pieces of furniture line my walls. I'm no stranger to leaky ceilings and peeling paint. I've been symptomatic of home. A fallacy. I've experienced everything except the inevitable.

crumbling the underbelly of my desires

**Shloka Shankar**

[Facebook page](#)

History class -  
the teacher asks us  
not to look back

five days...  
my daughter and I share  
something common

**Aparna Pathak**

funeral  
how my siblings  
have aged

how our kids have grown  
while we grew  
apart

weighing my words  
only you and me  
in the boat

**Ola Lindberg**

family dinner  
I use my mug  
to cover the stain

attending  
his small funeral -  
dead leaves

young orphan  
inheriting  
loss

**Debbi Antebi**





**Elizabeth Crocket**



yellow moon everything I'm afraid to say

4<sup>th</sup> of July  
every hotdog  
has its day

farmer's market  
checking out  
the farmer's daughter

**Bob Lucky**

abandoned garden  
I clip off another  
fingernail

election year—  
a finch throws a chick  
from the nest

the way "fuck"  
rolls off your tongue...  
cherry blossoms

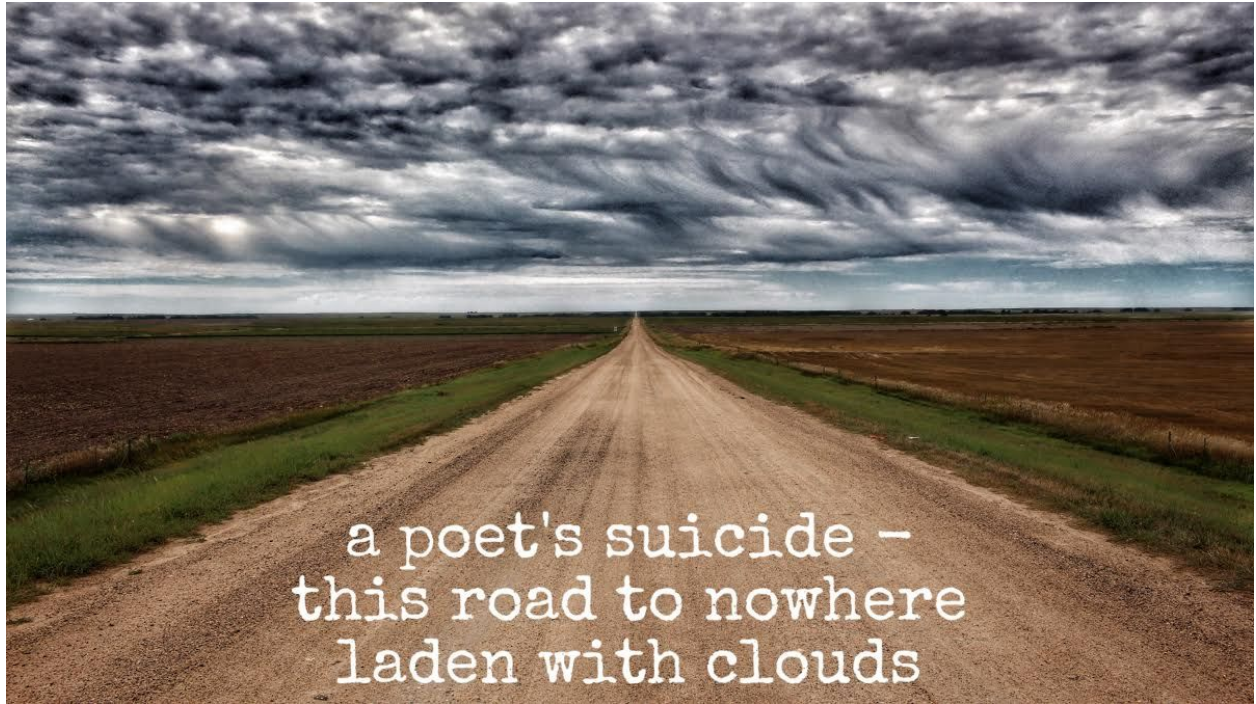
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### **Cheap Date**

We drive for miles down the main thoroughfare, having just bought two Chinese lunch specials: sweet-and-sour chicken with fried rice, sweet bread, and one eggroll apiece. Upon reaching the lake, we eat quietly on a bench and watch sweat drip from the foreheads and chests of future basketball stars as they practice their craft on the courts. Our backs are to the water, jackets pulled tight around us, the still-steaming food slowly warming our wind-chilled hands.

eastern Detroit...  
how worn and cracked with age  
these faceless streets

**Elizabeth Alford**



a poet's suicide -  
this road to nowhere  
laden with clouds



street magician  
his vanished  
sense of wonder

## **-Feeling the Fire-**

When I was a kid I liked to burn things. There was just something so dangerously empowering about watching the most sinister element of nature peacefully gnaw away at something between my fingers. My romance with fire only deepened when I heard a kid at school bragging about how his older brother could touch a flame to his palm and keep it there for five seconds. He told everyone there wasn't nothing in the world that could ever hurt his brother, and he was the strongest person who ever lived.

Three years later his brother died from a gunshot to the leg. The store clerk started keeping a .22 pistol under the counter after being robbed one too many times. He bled to death in the parking lot of that liquor store twenty minutes before the Detroit Police even showed. They found him dead on arrival. I think his ashes were buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery, in the shadow of an old oak tree.

But that day, when he showed his brother how to touch a flame to his palm, he was God: immortal and strong. Just looking at his face could kill a man. And I wanted that power. I think we all did. My record: thirteen seconds.

Tonight, ten-odd years later and two thousand miles away, my girlfriend is brushing her finger lightly against my palm under a misty San Francisco moon hanging above the bay, and I'm wondering if she feels the callouses on my skin. But before I have a chance to feel self conscious, the smile in her eyes lit up by the city gives me my answer: she's feeling the fire.

whats left of the storm—  
a cable car's headlight  
pierces the fog

### **-Edge of Nowhere-**

The clouds shift and the heavens dance over a sleepy town in Nebraska, where the only source of earthly light is the gas pumps that line an all but empty truck stop off interstate 80. Even the vending machines are dark, empty, and lifeless with faded decals beneath the billions of burning eyes belonging to the one true god who no human knows, and who knows no human.

unzipping my fly –  
Jesus loves you written  
beside the urinal

After pissing in the restroom I step back out into the world, to an even deeper and more beautiful darkness – a life-worn man leaning against his truck and smoking a cigarette with his face to the sky. I glance into his gray eyes from across the concrete and wonder what he's wishing for, if anything at all.

star trails...  
death will never take me  
alive

### **-Up-and-Coming-**

The empty lot where one of my many childhood homes once stood is littered with garbage. I walk by casually, hands deep in the pockets of my black hoodie, flicking the sparkwheel of a dead lighter. I pretend not to notice the used condoms melted to what's left of the foundation, the hypodermic needles crushed and empty of the same drug that destroyed my father, and the countless dead leaves that rustle along to the sound of plastic bags trapped in barbedwire.

Although, no matter how hard I try, I can't help but imagine it as a Starbucks in ten, maybe even five years. A place where people will sit with their

twelve-hundred-dollar Macbooks, composing their masterpieces in a venue where everyone can see them doing so next to a tall cup of frothy coffee. The same spot where I sat up for days on end filling notebooks with my vicodin-fueled angst – all before I gave writing when living became too bearable.

urban renewal  
I give my last cigarette  
to a homeless man

### **-Speechless-**

For the first time in my life I am lost for words -- and I'm a poet. I've found words in everything for as long as I can remember. But you, you are like trying write a poem about the night sky, describing the beauty of every last star a million times over. Like trying to write billions upon billions of novels based on every person who has ever been blessed enough to breathe the air we share together now.

of all the eyes  
that have cherished the moon  
I stare into yours  
while the crescent  
waned

**Chase Gagnon**

morning mirror  
the imposing briefness  
of form

**Peter Jastermsky**



war veteran  
on the back of the medal  
nightmares

**Zoran Doderovic**

at the bank  
of mum and dad  
no overdraft facility  
my brother gets  
all the credit

love letters from america  
the last one dated  
a year after the war  
not in my grandfather's hand

waiting by an open door  
for the fly to leave  
i don't want to kill anymore

**Steve Black**

VA hospital ...  
millennials  
step in line



**Jill Lange**

for the mosquito  
I just swatted –  
this haiku

moonlit lake  
the parts of her  
I can't reach

abandoned factory –  
parking spaces marked  
Reserved

afterglow  
she tells him to burn  
the Polaroids

gathering driftwood  
she tells me I remind her  
of someone

**Bill Kenney**

her tectonic body shifts its plates—

**A. M. Pattison**

election campaign  
dead wood stacked  
for burning

surrounded by geese—  
so many crumbs caught  
in my goatee

my old friend  
I help print out her email  
on euthanasia

**Myron Lysenko**

the day  
the moon died  
chew toy

dust devil all the mansplaining

autumn morning  
squeezing more sun  
out of this sundress

presidential candidate debate blood moon

**Jennifer Hambrick**  
**[Blog - Inner Voices](#)**

afterschool fog  
the No Smoking sign  
blurs

**Anthony Q. Rabang**  
**[@bigbangthony](#)**





(a wordless three line haiga)

**Joe McKeon**

neither a dragon  
nor ever a fly-  
dragonfly

brave selfie  
with a buffalo  
chasing him

**Munia Khan**

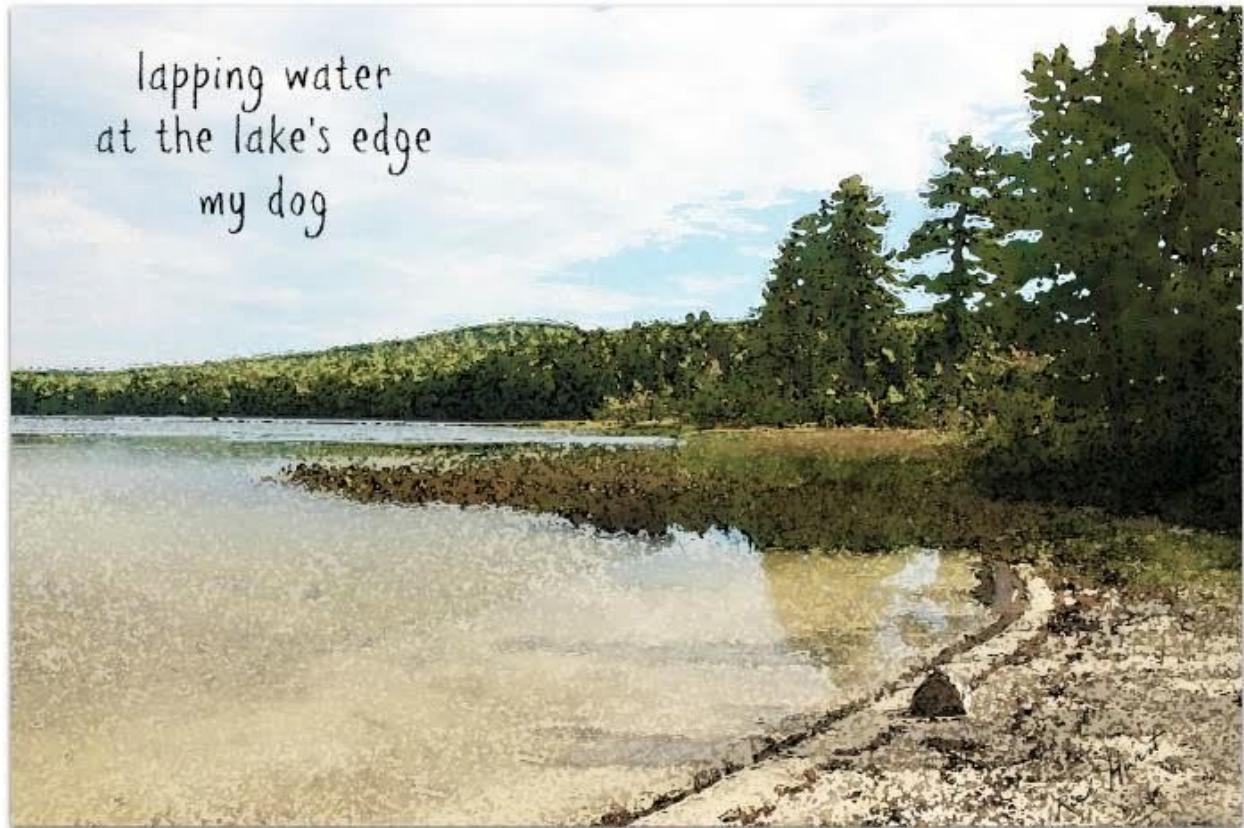
[Website](#)

dusted vinyl I wipe off the past

**Gabriel Bates**

**[Website](#)**

**[@falsepoetics](#)**



**Rick Hurst**

two men fishing

still rods

gentle ripple

three young men

skinny dipping

drips from their torsos, legs and ...

**Diarmuid Fitzgerald**

punch-drunk  
he hits a few more  
hors d'oeuvres

sharp grief  
cutting yourself  
on her name

**Eric A. Lohman**

**[@ealcsw](#)**

picket line  
at the abortion clinic  
health and safety

binary game  
the best men  
go both ways

alarmed I wake  
before the crows

global warming  
our progress  
glacial

**Francis James Franklin**  
[@AlinaMeridon](#)  
[Website](#)

after dinner  
his confection  
of lies

loose board  
in the fence flapping  
her self-absorption

insomnia  
running a reel  
of outtakes

out of the corner of my eye  
i memorize the eye chart

**Sondra Byrnes**  
[@sondrajbyrnes](#)



Setting my sights high  
I remarket myself  
as failed poet

**Tim Graves**

ripples in my tea cup the sweetness of rain  
on the way home i sit on a stump and arrive  
if there were dragons what song would they sing

**Mike Rehling**  
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