

# failed ~~haiku~~

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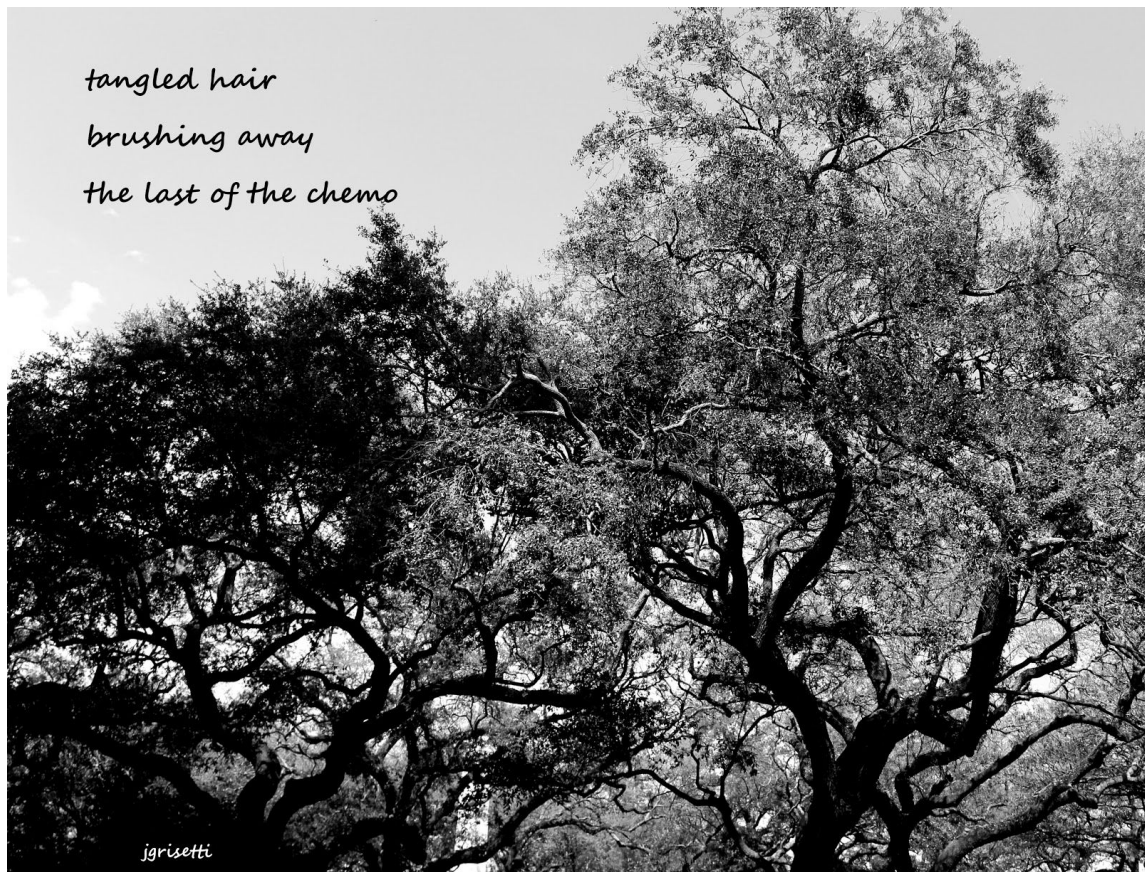
**michael rehling**

*'Failed' Editor*

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Haiga by Joann Grisetti

I selected this haiga for the cover for one simple reason, it works! The trees are wind blown, but like all trees tested by nature their 'random' arrangement is just what it has to be. They are being blown afterall. When someone has to undergo treatment such as chemo they are being 'blown' too, but that too is just right and fine. No need to worry about appearances if you might not be appearing anywhere soon. A shaved head, or one that just appears when your hair leaves you is nothing to worry about if you have cancer. Several members of my family have beaten cancer, and they did it with grit and no regard to anything that the disease threw at them. The image and the poem are both about acceptance and resolve at the same time. A strangely inspiring poem for me. Any battle fought bravely, even if you lose (and many do), is something to admire, and I do!

This issue is a 'retrospective' issue. I don't do 'Best Of' issues because what I personally like 'best' is irrelevant even to me, and most other folks if they are honest with themselves. If I chose your poem to appear in Failed Haiku then I think it is worthy and represents a part of the whole 'what is a senryu' discussion that will go on long after we have all left this earth!

The poems I have selected say something to me about the poet and display a voice of their own. I will comment on the poems, but my reasons for choosing to select the poem for this issue may not be yours. My personal observations are just that, and may not represent the poet's motivations for writing it.

In this new phase of Failed Haiku, I need to lessen the workload, so issues will be shorter and much more focused. We will still publish FOUR full-blown issues a year, but the others will be shorter and/or edited by someone other than me.

I hope you continue to enjoy each issue, and as always, I welcome your comments and suggestions.

Mike

# Cast List

*In order of appearance*

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**Joann Grisetti**

**Michael Henry Lee**

**Lorin Ford**

**Nancy Shires**

**Rachel Sutcliffe**

**Ingrid Baluchi**

**Dave Read**

**Paula D. Lietz**

**Barry George**

**Esther Rohm**

**Jean Holland**

**Terri French**

**Hansha Teki**

**Mike Keville**

**Terrie Jacks**

**Debbi Antebi**

**Chase Gagnon**

**Valentina Meloni**

**Eric A. Lohman**

**Eufemia Griffo**

**Dave Read**

**Tim Murphy**  
**Peter Jastermsky**  
**Sondra J. Byrnes**  
**Jackie Maugh Robinson**  
**Guliz Mutlu**  
**Barbara Kaufmann**  
**Debbie Strange**  
**Nicholas Klacsanzky**  
**Angela Giordano**  
**Kelly Sauvage Angel**  
**Helen Buckingham**  
**Elmedin Kadric**  
**Ingrid Bruck**  
**Radostina Dragostinova**  
**Bryan Rickert**  
**Liv Saint James**

string bikini  
crossing that imaginary line  
in the sand

## **Michael Henry Lee**

What continues to intrigue me about this poem is that on first reading each reader draws the 'imaginary line' in a different location. Think about it. Where do you think the line is? Is it in the sand or somewhere else?

beach sunset  
the tide takes back another  
amber bottle

## **Lorin Ford**

What do we have here? Is that a cry from of an environmentalist? Or it is it a simple observation on the meeting of nature and human nature? We do toss our beer bottles everywhere it seems, so it could be either. But at the end of the day both the beer and sun run out. It happens irrevocably and we lack all control over the timing. Sunsets are predictable and sometimes the end of a day brings us to a beer, but in this poem, there is 'another', and maybe if we presume by inference 'another and another'. Who knows why this is a multiple beer day, you have your reasons and I have mine. Gets you thinking doesn't it? Celebration? Sadness? Regret?

she said don't  
you'll fall on your head  
i did

## **Nancy Shires**

Did she or didn't she? Fall on her head? Or did she  
'don't' instead? The poet has skillfully left the ending  
of the poem entirely to the reader.



valuables left  
at owner's risk  
I take myself with me

## **Rachel Sutcliffe**

When I first read this one it was just a wonderful ironic twist of a senryu. I love irony. If you leave your car in a lot those signs are always there. Lawyers require them making the customer responsible for their valuables. A cut and dried image we can all relate to.

But Rachel has left us now. Her illness caught up with her and took her life. She knew what real 'valuables' are truly comprised of. They all fit within your own skin. She is missed and she will continue to be missed. But we have her poems.

war zone child . . .  
she asks where there's a clinic  
for her doll

## **Ingrid Baluchi**

We have way too many war zones, but not nearly enough precocious children. Especially when the children have a doll in need. This poem says a lot more about adults than about children. Children don't make war zones but sadly they tend to make up the largest segment of refugee camps and bombed out villages. There is that favorite tool of senryu poets again. Irony. In this case another very sad irony.

googling a word  
I should probably know  
autumn fog

## **Dave Read**

Does anyone not relate to this one? I want to point out that we have a wonderful seasonal reference in this poem. And autumn fog is goldilocks fog. Not too warm, not too cold, but just right! That fog is just enough to blur the meaning of a word. We all can relate to that fact, and we all know that Google is where you go to clear that fog.



Source: Song lyrics of *Fields of Gold* by Sting

**Paula D. Lietz**

Paula's work always has a layered approach. Her images are at once complex and simple. This was an issue dedicated to 'found' haiku and so the poem is a lyric. At the end of a growing season, the harvest is indeed an epitaph of itself. But when the poem is placed with her image of that very field and the headstone we are confronted with multiple interpretations that fit the words. That is the essence of good senryu.

his quiet funeral—  
a man who did  
most of the talking

## **Barry George**

Wow! What a wonderful image we have here! This man who kept the room spellbound in life has left it silent at his funeral. The thing that may annoy us about someone we know well, may well be the thing we miss the most when they leave us. A well-crafted senryu indeed.

the quick freeze  
of nose hairs  
winter deepens

## **Esther Rohm**

We associate certain events with certain seasons. That is the basis of 'kigo' in haiku. But here in the second line, we experience a totally human event tied to a season. The last line of this senryu makes the association even 'firmer' if I can make a poor pun. It is 'deep' winter that this event recalls for the poet. And when I gave it a quick thought I made that association as well.



## Jean Holland

There is a mystery in this poem. By itself, the poem could present a dark and foreboding image to the reader's mind. But then that tulip bloom in all its orangeriness attaches itself to the 'twilight' in line one and I am struck by the fact that the self-medicating aspect of the poem may just be the beauty of the closing of a perfect day. One of the most beautiful times of day is twilight. You can reflect and slip into restfulness.





## Terri French

Every version of yourself is as new to you as it is to others. Hiding away from everyone else to meet with yourself is the time-honored work of any poet. The image is of the poet themselves. Hiding something of the new person from themselves. Do you wonder how that meeting went? I do...



**Hansha Teki**

In my family, we have had a few physicists. But most of us have heard about chaos theory, right? Suddenly sometimes a plant or animal in nature just changes. Look it up, they don't all 'evolve'. That is the introduction of chaos theory to what seems an otherwise tight string of logic. The image in this haiga has all the attributes of a man-made structure we all know well, but nature has either 'adapted' or 'taken over' that pole from top to bottom. The poet has had an observation and is now left to explore its meaning. Nothing in the image changes, but the poet himself has! Chaotic isn't it?

no one can see

my tears in the rain



but if you listen

Mike

## Mike Keville

Oh, I love this one! The image has spilled out of the frame along with the rain and the poet's tears. Nothing more to say but BRAVO!



## Terrie Jacks

The image in this haiga is enough to make it a favorite by itself. But this is a perfect example, for me anyway, of the value of having the 'last word' carry the senryu home to the reader. If you don't 'exhale' you can't take the next breath. There is so much power expressed in

the image that I can't decide which is more powerful,  
the poem or the image. You decide for yourself!



funeral  
losing another  
piece of me



debbi antebi

**Debbi Antebi**

That torn wing is so beautiful I could not take my eyes off of it. A loss is often seen as unpleasant and painful but I find that funerals are a time when the spirit and life of the person spill out into the universe of family, friends, and even acquaintances. In a strangely beautiful way the 'soul', if you will, gains a new purpose and in no way 'dies'. This haiga was touching beyond words for me. When I leave this world I hope I leave more than sadness to those who knew me.





morning fog -  
the last of my darkness  
lingers

## Chase Gagnon

For reasons I have no ability to explain this haiga reminded me of Hamlet's encounter with the ghost of his father. My friend Chase may well think me nuts for that, but it did. I love 'fog'. And the fear of 'dreams' that Hamlet had in his famous soliloquy when combined with this image of a harbor filled with lingering fog was mesmerizing and calming at the same time. I would only remind the poet that 'fog' always clears eventually.



## Valentina Meloni

The wonderful vagueness of the image only serves to 'sell' the image in the poem. It is the cement of this haiga for sure. The poem is a wonderful observation of nature and would be a brilliant haiku (and maybe is), but the poet's notebook is the target of the snail.

When we don't have an idea of our own, nature has a way of providing one for us.

frozen lake -  
I hesitate to break the ice  
between us

### **Eric A. Lohman**

I live between Lake Huron and two large inland lakes. We know about frozen ice, even now as I write this paragraph ice is the key ingredient of our lakes. This, for me anyway, is a hauntingly touching image. Silence is actually a better bond than speech. Quite often the best relationships are built upon it. I have no idea what the poet was thinking, but a loving peace fell over me when I read this poem.

white canvas  
dipping the black ink  
into my dreams

## **Eufemia Griffo**

Only writers love black and white more than ink drawings. I did not see a 'canvas' but a metaphor for blank pages. If you want your dreams to really last you write them down. Don't you do that? I do. I see the whole poem as a skillfully disguised metaphor for the process behind this very poem. I fell in love with this one truly. It might be the poet in me, don't you think?

voting  
for the loser ...  
autumn chill

## **Dave Read**

Well, I have lived to vote in many elections and sometimes I discover the 'loser' won! The essence of a good political 'senryu' is to NOT tell the whole story and this poem does it perfectly. Regret sometimes comes on election day, it did for the poet, but often it appears further along the calendar. A simple short observation on the nature of democracy can be potent indeed. This one penetrated several decades for me.

double rainbow  
the busker's dog  
howls along

## **Tim Murphy**

The first line is the title of a song. I love it when poets weave a real moment into a poem, and the song is about the 'chemistry' of relationships. The lone busker is singing it with his dog. I had to smile, and I just smiled again, making my own 'double rainbow'. So nicely woven into this poem is the relationships people have with their animals. This is one of those poems I really wish were mine. But then, the poet lent it to me didn't he?

another lost night  
my date  
with melancholy

**Peter Jastermsky**

You never really 'lose' any portion of time. But the poet has found a reason to 'date' his sadness. In an almost Jungian moment we realize that our 'circle of friends' actually does include US! We can pity ourselves better than anyone else on the planet. A fine senryu to chew on.



yesterday's weather—  
revising an email  
i already sent

## **Sondra J. Byrnes**

There is nothing so potent to any poet as 'revision'. We live with it in our poems and it often carries over to everything we do. I love the first line because it begins a mystery that is only 'solved' with the last word of the poem. The 'storm' of yesterday becomes the 'clear skies' of today, or is it vice versa? Ok, there is no final resolution here, just the realization by the poet that the past is irretrievable. That is especially true on the Internet.

pill lows my insomnia

## **Jackie Maugh Robinson**

You have to see this poem. But you just did, didn't you? I can't sleep some nights and I just slip out and watch a rerun on the science channel. Here the pill has failed and become a trap of its own. Such an intriguing poem, I wonder if one of you readers will stay up tonight thinking about it?

autumn sunset  
all the ways  
to say goodbye

## **Guliz Mutlu**

If you watch sunsets as I do, and I am willing to bet you ALL do, then you know there are many versions of one sunset. If you think about that goodbye the sunset thinks with you. The golden yellows turn to brilliant pinks and then some deep purple slips in and then... Well you get it, don't you?

trailhead  
I pack a snack  
and beginner's mind

## **Barbara Kaufmann**

One of the most famous books on Zen was written by Suzuki Roshi, and is called 'Beginners Mind'. In the mind of the beginner there is nothing but possibilities and promise. The journey looks long, best to pack a snack you think. But once on the path the realization that the journey is a lifetime, and the path is yours to walk in your own 'way', makes a snack seem truly useless. The trick of course is to remain a 'beginner' and relearn that fact every day. Same for haiku poets too!



## Debbie Strange

Debbie is a master at haiga. I don't know what the diagnosis is she is referring to, or if the poet is the one

who has received it, but I do believe that dragonfly is indeed lucky for them. At least I want to believe it. The hints of color in the dragonfly may just be the poets way of conveying her own feelings about the situation and imbuing the dragonfly with her own hope.

memorial day—  
plastic flowers  
on a grave

### **Nicholas Klacsanzky**

I found this senryu to be particularly heartfelt. It may seem that 'plastic flowers' are not appropriate by some, but I took the opposite view of the scene. Those imitation flowers will be there for many seasons to come. The 'real thing' won't last a week. A day does not go by that I don't remember those who died too soon in a place far away. To me it does not matter that they died yesterday or sixty years ago.

solitude –  
the TV stays on  
all night long

## **Angela Giordano**

Whimsy is a favorite tool of senryu poets. Here we have the 'noise' of a television providing 'solitude'. When I can't sleep I often use this electronic drug to find my way to a form of rest. Most of us have done it, and this poem allows the reader to select their own channel and fit it silently into the poem.



quantum gravity  
adjusting the length  
of my bra straps

## **Kelly Sauvage Angel**

Some things in physics can't be ignored. You just have to deal with them, and here the poet is 'adjusting' gravity. That first line is 'sheer' genius (yeah, that was a pun), and when we finally get to the last word of the poem we have to wonder? Was gravity defied? But then, and I speak for most, if not all men, bras are a mystery to us. Why fight it??? we think, but most are not brave enough to say that out loud...

burning  
last year's diary...  
the exorcism complete

## **Helen Buckingham**

No idea what the diary contained. We are not given a hint, well maybe a small hint. We usually think of exorcism as a removal of the bad and evil from our lives. But, and I have explored this myself, maybe it is just removing the attachments in our lives so we can find a new direction. I can't say for sure but I like to think that the poet has just kicked the pants of old fears and moved on. Wish I had been at the fire with my diary!

first day at work  
the waitress serves  
her boken English

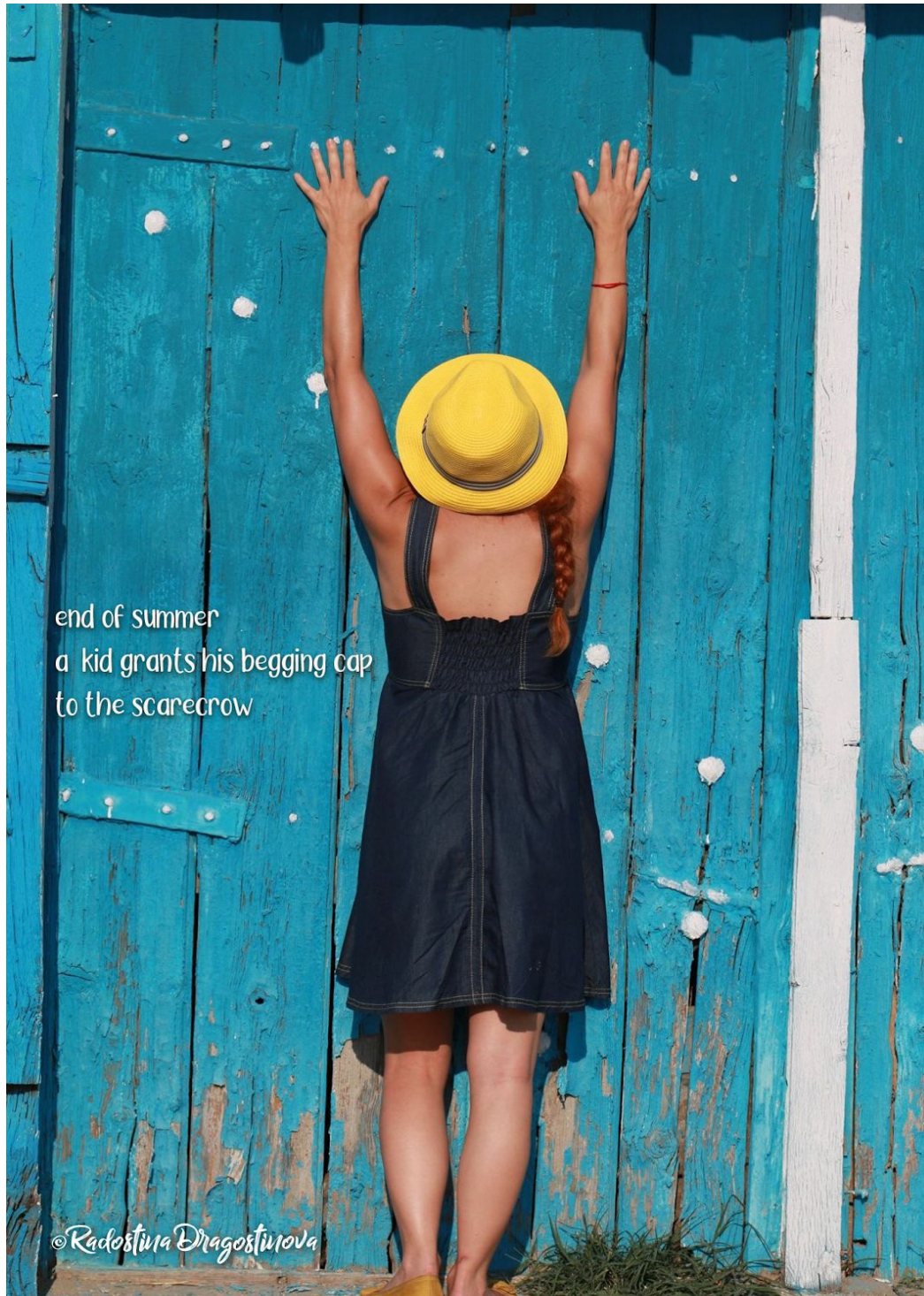
## **Elmedin Kadric**

Give me the peasant class I say!!! My grandparents came to this country as displaced persons after WWI. They all spoke 'boken English' their whole lives. I would rather see my grandparents again for one second then God Almighty for eternity. The poet has shared an empathy with the imperfect. No better ingredient for a good senryu, don't you think?

the sky trips  
on the ground ~  
fog

## **Ingrid Bruck**

Is the poet or the fog tripping? I am obsessed with fog myself, because most people think of it as obscuring the view, and I just love 'the view' that it provides. So much of life is unclear and unfathomable, so why not get used to it I say! Keeping the fog from us until the last is perfect poetically. After all although the fog is the point of the poem, it has obscured everything else even the sky and the ground.



**Radostina Dragostinova**

A scarecrow has no bones, no body of their own. Everything they have is 'propped' around and sometimes through them. They are a 'construction'. The image in this haiga provides a person as a scarecrow, and a female scarecrow too. Is she standing, or is she face down on those boards waiting to be propped up? I think standing, and maybe, just maybe the 'kid' is hers and off to school again after a summer 'begging'. Now our scarecrow is left begging. When our 'kids' grow up there is the longing to regress ourselves, to grow up with them, maybe different this time around. That yellow begging hat is just the perfect image. The hope is that a mom is the construction of choice here, and that when the 'kid' comes home from school, there will be a scarecrow waving and smiling at him. Coming to life again. Obviously, I enjoyed this one immensely because it spurred my imagination.

her short skirt  
the in and out movements  
of a sweat bee

## **Bryan Rickert**

Hmmm... This poet has observed a moment in time and frozen it for us. In fact, I am getting 'hot' and 'sweaty' myself just reading this one. And those 'in and out movements' are a story all in themselves.

bombay sapphire -  
we fill our glasses  
with empty sky

## **Eva Limbach**

What a wonderful image! If you drink 'bombay sapphire' gin you drink empty sky. I had never ever thought of it that way, but I will never think of it any other way from now on! If you focus on your full glass of this wonderful gin you will not see anything but empty sky. I toast the poet for this fine senryu!



change room-  
I try on lives  
other than my own

### **Liv Saint James**

They are called 'changing rooms' for a reason, but the poet has found a better reason for the name! She may never buy that rhinestone vest, or the tie dyed t shirt, but she can live those lives for a brief time in that wonderful and private room where 'change' is not only allowed, but encouraged. There is that wonderful senryu irony for you. Bravo!

liner notes  
to a life well lived  
the poems of friends

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