

failed ~~haiku~~

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sonam chhoki

'Failed' Editor

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The Weight Off My Chest

In my younger days, I was soft, but strong. The only things that are soft about me now are the white wisps of my hair, and the floppy pouches I call "winglets" that dangle under my arms. I wish they had cut them off too, as a kind of consolation prize, though maybe they'll grow in and fly me home someday.

**family dinner
my grandchild asks
if I'm a man**

words/image © DStrange

Haibunga by Debbie Strange

A Note of Thanks

To all the poets who sent in their work my sincere thanks. This issue features quite a few poets who are trying haibun for the first time and I hope that you are now encouraged to write more. To the more established poets of haibun my gratitude for entrusting me with your poems.

Sonam Chhoki

Cast List

In order of appearance
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Risë E. Daniels

Jackie Maugh Robinson

Pitt Buerken

Elizabeth Alford

Mark Gilbert

Colleen M. Farrelly

David Oates

Lee Felty

Ingrid Baluchi

Mark A. Forrester

David J Kelly

Joanna Delalande and Oscar Luparia

Maeve O'Sullivan and Mark Ritchie

Pris Campbell

Pat Geyer

Marilyn Ashbaugh

Helen Buckingham

Bryan Rickert

Hazel Hall

Marilyn Humbert

Mark Meyer

Angela Giordano
Paul Beech
Agus Maulana Sunjaya
Jo Balistreri
Frances Browner
Guliz Mutlu
John J. Han
Peter Jastermsky
Ishaan Singh
Gautam Nadkarni
Ed Higgins
Kelly Sauvage Angel

Charging Tiger

All day there are these involuntary triggers that manifest themselves from our earlier evolutionary days as a “fight or flight” reaction; a needed response then to a charging tiger. Unfortunate in these times the need to be that reflexive exceeds the actual dangers we face in our everyday lives.

We stand the ready to fight against perceived enemies though only yesterday we labeled them “friends” ... “compadres” ... “co-hearts” ... “peers”. How quickly we build a story to match our perceptions and give validation to how we feel, the words and tone we use, the aggression we spew – active or passive.

How much energy spent, how much we lose in those moments, and how little we gain for a “tiger” that does not exist.

that moment
when thought falls away
to just be

Risë E. Daniels

Optics

This earth ball revolving on its axis exposes different planes to the verity of sun rays. Time's paradigm shifts from minute to day to death.

Trust the kaleidoscope to image this instant's truth. One twist, a different reality in focus.

not just Alice
through the looking glass~
bits and pieces

Jackie Maugh Robinson

Ascension Day

It's pouring for hours and now, after the funeral in the church, it's pouring down on us, too. Many people have come to accompany him on his last journey, and they are now standing around the still open grave. There is unrest, and when the crowd gives me a free look at the grave, I see the grave filling up with water, and the coffin slowly rising. Behind me a sonorous voice sounds: "I wouldn't have thought that he will ascend so quickly to heaven".

funeral service
to be the core of attention
once in his life

Pitt Buerken

Small Talk

What do the birds say when they chirp? Do they speak of the tenderness of worms, the crunchiness of mantids and ladybugs? Of morning sun peeking through leaves, bouncing rainbows off still water in puddles or standing baths under the mellow shade of white birch? Do they complain, as we do, about the stark cold, the brisk wind, and the remnants of last night's rain dripping from branches lined with empty nests?

checkout counter
we smile
for the camera

Elizabeth Alford

crash

All I remember upon waking, 4:32am, grey light.

the delicate crash
of four feet
not two

Mark Gilbert

Excerpt from Wolf v. Huntsman, Docket #: 18-9714

attorney slipping--
a case
laid out

“Now, I’m not saying my husband, Big Bad, was a saint. Heaven knows he wasn’t. The smoking. The gambling. The granny-eating. But, he was my husband—a good provider who always kept the pups fed, a good father who nuzzled them when they were scared... How am I supposed to raise the pups, protect them from predators, and bring home enough bucks to feed them?”

“Was he always a provider?”

“Yes, we never wanted for food. He came home with fresh, healthy meat every night. Even during the rabbit scare of ’13. Now, we are hungry every night, and the pups ask why we are eating squirrels when their friends eat deer. And to think of how our provider was callously taken from us...”

“Can you explain to the court what happened when you went to the Medical Examiner’s Office to identify Big Bad?”

“Oh, my. That horrible day when I got the call, I left the pups with my mother. I never expected it to be as bad as it was when I arrived. My husband’s underside was slashed open, swollen and distended. [sob] Inside his stomach were... rocks. Large, jagged rocks.”

“Rocks? How many?”

“More than a dozen that were already removed from his [sob] body. I understand they had to cut him to get that little girl and her granny out. But they could have called for help or sewn him up. Why did they leave him there and stuff rocks in him?”

“Why, indeed. Mrs. Wolf, what did you learn in the coroner’s report given to you three days later?”

“It said that my husband suffered 90 minutes after being cut until he died. Suffered alone in agonizing pain.”

“Objection! Hearsay. Mrs. Wolf doesn’t know how much pain the deceased felt prior to his death.”

“Sustained. Jury will disregard that last remark.”

“Mrs. Wolf, what did the report list as the cause of death?”

“Blood loss. He bled for 90 minutes on Granny’s floor until he passed.”

“Exhibit 5, your Honor. What happened when you came home to your den that night?”

“I picked up an injured rabbit to feed the pups and curled up on my side of the den. His side was empty, and the pups whined all night. Junior gnawed on an old bone.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Wolf. What is a typical day like now?”

“I have to leave the pups on their own at night to hunt. I haven’t caught as much meat as Big Bad. The pups whine and paw at me, saying how hungry they are. I have to hide them every night to hunt

and train them not to make noise when I'm gone. Pups make a lot of noise. I can't lose them, too."

"Thank you, Mrs. Wolf. Your witness."

a pile of rocks
on the table—
the jury's heart

Colleen M. Farrelly

Urban Bubble

During the milk strike, some farmers poured out milk blocking the interstate. A friend said, "Throw the farmers in jail."

When I asked, "Where will you get your milk?"

He said, "From the store."

all concerned
by burning field
the city feller

David Oates

The River

There is a river close by full of nothing much darkness where nothing much winds sail their vessels. It's a winter river now. Nothing but currents and nothing stays fish with no money banks with their nothing much checks. As I walk through the nearly trees, almost promises made.

Lee Felty

Hidden

As usual, two skinned sheep hung in the butcher's shop window each by a hind leg, but today, passing through the Turkish quarter en route to the vegetable market it was noted, with the strange compulsiveness of a sneak glimpse, that the dangling heads were wrapped in plastic. No longer able to discern the over-sized startled eyes, some semblance of comfort was felt that maybe death for them was not quite as horrific as one imagined. Perhaps someone complained; after all, carcasses are no real pleasure to look upon, however great the desire for meat.

But I can tell that the butcher is a kindly person as he sometimes throws tidbits of offal and fat out onto the dusty street for the occasional stray mongrel. What better way to recycle the unwanted? No waste, no landfill, scarcely any carbon footprint.

spirited away
somewhere else
a plastic bag rides the wind

Ingrid Baluchi

The Assumption

Year round, the pond attracts geese. Because the geese feed well on scraps of abandoned food, they no longer migrate, becoming—in effect—domesticated, flying rats. They stand in people’s way, honk angrily, frighten children, leave shit across the sidewalks, picnic tables, parking lots.

The township first places a pair of realistic-looking, plastic wild dogs—one wolf and one fox—around the pond, trying to frighten the geese away. Every few days someone moves the dogs, testing out different positions, but they never seem to bother the birds at all.

They next run thin pieces of string several feet above the pond in a checkerboard pattern. The string is tied to a mesh fence circling the pond.

The string proves largely effective at keeping the geese out of the pond itself, though they still gather nearby, and every now and then one finds his way

through the defenses.

bare branches

trembling

storm clouds

I worry about the blue herons I sometimes see at the pond, uncertain if the string lattice might deter their large wings.

However, one way or another, the herons manage to find their way in—not constantly, but from time to time. Once, while walking

around the pond, I spot a blue heron standing in the water, just a few feet from its edge.

As I watch, the heron steps backward slowly toward the bank; I have never before seen a heron walking that way. (I am reminded of last winter, when the pond was frozen over, and I watched a heron striding cautiously over the ice.)

It takes only a few backward steps for the heron to be standing on the bank, but the time moves slowly. The bank is muddy, with patches of ice still scattered among the dry reeds on the shore.

The heron waits for a moment, then takes off flying. For a second, one wing catches on a string, lifting it with him. I hold my breath.

Then the heron pulls away, letting the string bounce back. The heron rises in the sky, turning in a broad curve above the nearby trees.

evening chill
the hedgerow
returning to forest

Mark A. Forrester

excremental interest

According to Freud, a child's fascination with bowel and bladder control should be over by the time they are four. That must make me a slow developer, because my interest in poo has lasted considerably longer.

milking parlour
an old brown cow goes splat
against the wall

During childhood my scatological interests extended far beyond the mundane. I was especially fascinated by giraffes chewing the cud. Like cows, they're ruminants, but the food has a great deal further to travel. There's a gruesome magnetism to an animal throwing up a mouthful of partly digested food, munching it for a while and then swallowing it again. Especially when you can watch the bolus shuttling back and forth.

rising and falling
the level of excitement
in a small boy's voice

As a 'grown-up', I've attempted to share this natural wonder with younger generations. Sadly, there isn't always a giraffe handy when you need one. On the bright side, in the pursuit of zoology, I've discovered all sorts of other animals that do interesting stuff with faecal material. Hippos spray it around the place, rhinos trample it in an arena, badgers leave it at their territory boundaries, rabbits eat it for breakfast and dung beetles cut it up into pieces and bury it, like pirate treasure.

stool sample ...
it still comes as a surprise
being full of it

David J Kelly

FALL

This is my autumn painting, framed with pine wood, so joyfully painted despite the small palette and my hand still tired from the summer swirl.

The brush, encouraged by this new landscape, covers the canvas carefully. Someone could say there are thousands like this one: I don't care, because this scenery and these seasonal colors are my life, made of reality and woven dreams. The shades of fall permeate my whole mind, my memories gently become tinged with red and yellow (even though I will keep a bit of green on the canvas, essential for hope).

autumn colors
on the whispering leaves
and inside me

In this small rectangle I can create a new day and a new time, so that my dreams will not fade. I can forget the perspective, while mild contours soften the obstacles of life...

This season opens the door to nostalgia, but the golden afternoons relieve my soul, the rainy evenings dispel the worries and save what is important to me, what I hold most dear. Sometimes even the mornings shrouded in thick fog can suddenly make room for a wonderful view: yellow trees with echoes of sun, the tower of a small church, the orchard that doesn't look so far... It feels like heaven: I'll raise my hand to take an apple – I'm all grown up now – it is a forbidden fruit no more...

And later I will find the first chestnut fallen to the ground, like a symbol of good luck. Why is it so beautiful, so joyful? I know: my canvas was painted at the right time.

forgotten gloves –
in my pocket I hold tight
a little chestnut

prose text: Joanna Delalande
senryū: Oscar Luparia

Reverie

The girl in the baby blue top is in the moment and out of it at the same time. Her hand on the kitten's neck is the only thing keeping her in the present but her mind is elsewhere.

the scent
of mother's fur —
struggling to breathe

The girl knows she should return his call, but can't bring herself to pick up the phone. Much easier to remember how good things had been between them, before his ex rolled back into town.

held in position
my eyes on his —
somewhere a bird

Ekphrastic haibun by Maeve O'Sullivan (prose) and Mark Ritchie (haiku), written in response to the painting "Girl with a kitten" by Lucian Freud (1947).

Twins

I fly to the ceiling whenever the other me is groped by the old man. I carry the memories for my 'body shell' so all she remembers after is a shadowed figure and that something bad was done. When both parents are dead ('tell and they'll give you away') and the price for telling secrets has faded, I slip into her consciousness. Feed her memories bit by bit. We both weep over what could and could not be.

a meteor
whizzes past Earth
bedtime stories

Pris Campbell

The Once That Once Was

Fifteen years since. They said my broken heart needed fixing. I took a walk in the park the morning before I left for the hospital. It was the end of March. As I walked down my path I found a rack of deer antlers shed for the new season. I knew a new season for my body was almost here too.

lone white antler
glows in sunshine...
i know my body will mend

Pat Geyer

The Last Time I Saw Carla

10,000 ripples
the black ink water
in a new moon bath

The last time I saw Carla we listened to her favorite song on a 45rpm record with a red plastic disk in the center.

I've written so many words since then and crossed them all out and threw them away. Even if I could find the right words, it wouldn't matter.

bone white
and polished smooth
dead tree standing

Marilyn Ashbaugh

F UNFAIR

our eyes meet
over the waltzers
no ballroom

Candyfloss in my hair I throw up into the Big Dippering night flick
gobbets of regurgitated toffee apple from my frock sobbing he loves
me he loves me..... not.

zombie company
I order myself
another burger

Helen Buckingham

Samantha

When she was eight we would collect yellow dandelions before school and pretend they were a wedding bouquet.

When she was ten I taught her how to make necklaces and bracelets from clover blossoms at recess.

When she was thirteen she left eighth grade for high school and I hoped that we had taught her enough.

When she was eighteen she walked past the school and I yelled out her name from my classroom window. For a moment all I saw was the empty stare and the needle marks.

meat grinder
how life on the streets
can tear you apart

Bryan Rickert

Voyeur
Montreal 2015.

They board at Atwater. Her face is a white wax flower, framed by hair as black as nimbus clouds. He's tall, muscular, heavily built. One arm owns her shoulders. The other locks on the safety pole confining her into his space. They're deep in conversation. At Guy-Concordia, shadows begin slipping into the carriage. Is she turning away? He's removing his arm. Muttering something, neck red and twitching, yet her face is expressionless. As if boarding for the first time, she moves to a vacant seat at Peel. What has happened? See her sitting, back upright, legs crossed, face cool as alabaster, eyeing a destination beyond his presence? He's standing watching, in exactly the same place, clutching the passenger strap. Her eyes don't budge. By Mc Gill, separation has sculptured their story. She's moved through the train to another carriage. Disembarking at Place-des-Arts, he's nowhere to be seen. I catch a glimpse of her, gliding out of his obsession on silver stairs, into the light.

empty sky
trying to find you
in the blues

voyeur —
the rhythm of wheels
where stories spin

Hazel Hall

Then Stillness

Just before dawn I make my way towards Sultanahmet Square following worn cobblestone paths. To my left the Bosphorus Strait shines black in fading starlight. An unfamiliar head scarf chafes my neck. Already the Golden Horn is thrumming with colour, bustle of workers, shoppers and sightseers like me. I watch scooters buzzing between cars and trucks nosing along narrow lanes vying with metro-trains and buses, all slowly moving forward. I am surrounded, people, rumbles of haggling from bazaars, laughter, crash and crackle of storemen unpacking merchandise then the sky cracks with early light.

call to prayer
the crowd turns as one
towards Mecca

Marilyn Humbert

memento mori

So, are you ready?...then repeat out loud these three words...."nation figure mellow".....fine, so now I want you to commit them to memory in the same order.....good; I'll ask you to repeat them in a little bit... ready?...then let's move on....next, on this blank page, I want you to draw a clock face and label the hours....(here's a pencil; take your time).....ok, now I want you to draw the hands on the clock to indicate the time of 2:40.....fine, and now, please repeat in the order given the three words I told you to memorize.....

present future past?
the time when I won't know
what time it is

Mark Meyer

**Your absence
(To my mother)**

Every time through "the old portal" of the square that led me there, where our lives had separated, the real suffering began: crossing the threshold and entering your empty room that for years had been your prison.

I came to see you every day, mom, we spent hours together talking about this and that while I caressed your white hair and cold hands. I comforted you by reading my poems and you listened silently as if proud of me.

together
one more day
in verses

Sometimes I found you in the dark, with eyes wide-open, bearing your cross. Insomnia devoured your restless soul. You didn't want to give up and the will to live made you stronger and more combative ...

You were always there, fragile and frightened, but there for your family.

approaching storm
in the dark of the room
the glow of a lamp

already spring-
your absence
in the rose buds

Angela Giordano

THE MASON

Chippings fly from the chisel's point with every ringing stroke of the hammer. He's carving kerbstones from basalt down the quarry, just twelve years old, a slim lad with blue eyes. His father has put him here to work long hours and hand over his pay. A skilled mason he is too, and a jolly good job as the foreman is not above raising a stick.

The year is 1905.

calloused hands
no pot of porter
his reward

Time has flown and the mason now sports a ginger tache. It's 1916 and the Battle of the Somme rages in France, he serving as a Bombardier with the Royal Garrison Artillery.

The mason shares a dugout with a Birmingham boy. They exchange rations, strike matches to burn off lice from each other's uniform, play poker, tell of their sweethearts back home. Soon now, letters written, a good dram or two warming their bellies, zero hour signalled by a shrill whistle blown, they'll go over the top together, bayonets fixed...

Tonight though, the mason goes alone, stealthy in shadow. Below a wooded rise he fires two rounds from his mortar. The Jerry machine-gunners, having claimed many a Tommy's life, will claim no more.

medals a gleam
in the risen sun
we salute

Paul Beech

My Father

He said several times that he could not always take care of me. There would come a time when I would have to look after myself. It could be the darkest time of my life.

"When that time comes, you can't even believe in your own shadow," he said.

He was a criminal.

I did not cry when I was told that he died in a shootout with the police. I only keep his words in mind.

returning geese
cross the moon
ebb tide

Agus Maulana Sunjaya

The Black Hills

At sixteen, my father left home for a CCC Camp in the Black Hills of South Dakota. There was no money. His folks were running short on hens. Drought didn't help grow the garden. My dad had never been away, had never worked other than as a paperboy. His hands blistered digging new roads, thinning the dead and useless wood from thickets, planting shelterbelts. Heat and mosquitoes were part of the job. But so was friendship—talking between shovelfuls of dirt, first serious discussions, clowning around and singing at night, bathing and playing ball in Horsethief Creek.

talking spirits
at Crazy Horse...
a coyote yelps

Years later my father attributed his love of nature to time spent outdoors in the Depression. We kids thought his streak of stubbornness, his controlling ways might have sprung from the camp as well. There was a right way to plant a garden, trim a tree, cut logs, and God help us if we complained about the work or did it without respect for the land. We had few material goods, but we had acres of trees, meadows, a creek, and rolling hills. We planted his ashes there. We thought he'd be pleased.

a lonesome road
up through snowy pines
my whistle echoes

Jo Balistreri

SO LONG, MONTAUK 1999

I live in a cottage beside Fort Pond where white-tail deer roam the yard. When I awake, my bed bathes in an orange sun. Or have I left the light on? From my perch on the kitchen stool, at the word processor, I can see Crazy Golf, the red roof motel, Harvest Restaurant. Waves ripple, the only sound at five o'clock of an evening, the last day of September. Every morning in Pink Tuna taxi, my first stop is the Bake Shoppe, for the best coffee in town. The cold clings or heat pads press my shoulders. I sit on a bench outside the Chamber, between calls. Read my mail. Chat George, Geri and Aoife too, share a cigarette with Sid the Squid. Wait for Jeff to swing out of his truck to open the book shop.

*

I arrived here one day on the Jitney. Waited in the Gazebo for Anne. We walked home to Ditch Plains. What thoughts consumed me? Not staying, that's for sure; not living here through the 1990s. There were about sixty of us that summer. The Leps, the locals called us, for Leprechauns. By the end of September, we were ten. I cycled all over town today, to find somewhere to dump my garbage. There are no bin-lorries here, no postmen either. Jamaican girls gather on the bench by White's Liquors. Fishing rods tilt from a Jeep Chevrolet. 'Quaint little drinking village with fishing thrown in,' the stickers say. I used to drink here too. The sun scorches my left side; branding me to this place.

in a gazebo
at the end of the island
hearts open

*

It's Sunday evening, the train is leaving. Sketches of sunshine remain in the autumn sky. Wisps of cloud trail a plane. I sat on this bench at Port Royal writing my story for the Pioneer. Had walked down from Farragut after eight hours of driving, jaded, my hair a bush. I was flying to Ireland the next day to see Eavan for the first time; Barbara and kids home from Dubai. I felt fat, but the story was a success. They sat around O'Murphy's bar, reading it. Jackie got goosebumps; Gillian a reason to write home: "This is why I stay."

*

I walked from Rough Riders up to the Montauket on one of those nights I couldn't stay in. Couldn't be by myself. Couldn't miss out on anything. Patted the POD's head, his spikey new haircut. Thought myself in love. Again. Waves lap; voices laugh; the air whispers on my legs. Nothing moves. Not the trees. Not the water. Sea and sky merge colourless. Nothing on the horizon. No horizon. A light shines from a house nestled in the cliff. One light. Whose light is it?

*

How am I going to leave this house, the crickets chirping, the breeze on the pond? How will I pack my books and pottery? Curtains and cushions bought with hope? How will I leave the grubby green couch where Maria and Dessie used to smoke? The brown beauty board, this room my haven in winter. Patio doors open onto a deck of purple hydrangea, trees bristle; a smooth green lawn leads down to the lake. Water silver grey. Reeds sway. Ducks and swans glide by. I told Willi, the landlord, I was going. Avoided his eyes.

*

It's all happening – apartment in the Bronx, City College, Poetry Outreach. \$4,000 saved, home for Christmas. I bought the bike from Scottish Danny, my bag dangles from its handlebars. 'No wonder you're losing weight?' a waitress in the Plaza diner serves me an extra stack of hotcakes, syrup on the side. Jenny Craig, I christened the bike. I bought my first American car, a Chevy Spectrum, from Hilary and Paul. Nine years later, moving on. A rusty nail wrenched from a plank of driftwood.

*

I used to lie on this beach and bake in the sun before the dinner shift in Luigi's. Walked for miles; gone for hours, dreamt about living here, cooped up in a cottage with a battered typewriter. Today is windy, the sand stinging my skin, blinding my eyes. I'm sitting on the burnt-out log where Pizza Noel and I met Collette one day. Another one who got away. I walked here with Christine all the way out to Gurneys, with Maria a million times, with Ma and Da on their holidays: "It's much nicer than we were expecting." "What were you expecting?" "Somewhere like Atlantic City."

*

I walked here with Laura on a New Year's Eve. With Phyl and Catherine home to Ditch: "No wonder you lost weight trekking two miles for breakfast." The surf swells today, foamy. Seagulls soar. Clouds track the sky. Beach grass sways sideways – the worst place for ticks. And if I look behind, I see nothing for miles except the Atlantic Terrace Motel, yellow and forlorn, jutting onto the strand, obstructing my view. All the pain that was there for coffee and eggs. When the one I thought I loved was gone.

*

It's November, Navy Road is freezing, the wind whistles, waves thunder - teal green with flecks of white - sea horses galloping towards the shore. I walked out beyond those cliffs the day I left Luigi's. 'He's a handsome man,' Maria said. 'Can I live without him?' 'You'll have to.' Joyce painted this scene, sold it for \$60. Three houses on a sandy cliff with brown, leafless trees stretching out to sea. Does anyone live in them? I walked here with my nephews. Tommy's sheepdog, Fla, sniffing after us. Fetching sticks the boys threw into the Bay.

*

A lawnmower drones; planes land in East Lake Drive airport. Birds screech, crickets chat, the water is still. I used to park the pink taxi here in Snug Harbour. Westlake Fishing Lodge, Clam & Chowder, Bait 'n Tackle, Ice cream, bass, eels. Diamond Cove Marina was Captain's Cove when the POD worked here. I brought him his denim jacket on a day like this. Warm. Breezy. Hot in spots. He'd placed it on my shoulders walking down Flamingo earlier. I've put on three pounds. My phone is dead. Bought a cream coat with a fur collar. Papers cover the kitchen floor, as I prepare to go.

*

On the bench outside Ronnie's, a December breeze brushes my cheeks. 'Can you take me to Funkie Town' is blaring out of Plaza Sports. A guy in a white T-shirt sits at the counter in John's Pancakes. A black 4x4 the only car on Main Street. I sat here, hungover, with Hilary one morning after Labour Day Monday. Munched on bacon egg cheese on a roll. Mulled over endings. 'We are family' piped out of Plaza Sports. Not for much longer

at the end of the season
doors are closing
like my heart

Frances Browner

Curiosity

Children ask how tall I am. Not my children, I'm their aunt. I'm taller than they are, but I am neither a child nor a mother. They don't understand why.

between
two birthdays
my height

Guliz Mutlu

Peasant Words, Pleasant Memories

As a first-generation immigrant, I love to live in the United States. However, each passing year draws me closer to my native country, which I left behind more than three decades ago. For many years, my younger siblings in Korea and I were too busy to stay connected. Now, as we age together, we exchange text messages several times a week. One thing we enjoy doing is to recall some of the rustic words we grew up with. Korean has a number of words equivalent to “ain’t” (am/are/is not), “y’all” (all of you), “gettin’” (getting), “git” (get), “larnin’” (learning), and “cain’t” (can’t). My siblings and I understand these Korean words but no longer use them in our professional lives. After mimicking our regional dialect, we have a hearty laugh—not because we despise it but because it brings fond memories from our days as peasant children. Lennis Leonard Broadfoot’s excellent book *Pioneers of the Ozarks* (2008) consists of interviews with native Ozarkians, many of whom speak a dialect called Ozark English. One of the interviewees, Miss Nancy Ann Rasor, states, “Me an’ Bill an’ Mary go barefooted all summer an’ work like the dickens, but we jist don’t like to wear shoes at all, ’cause they hurt our feet” (132). Imagine country people in Korea saying this in Korean.

near retirement
the joy of watching reruns
of “Hee Haw”

John J. Han

The Stealthy

The quest for road dominance can take over a person's senses. Many drivers think they're starting off one better than the driver next to them. But you never know what another person's packing. There are stealth cars designed for just one purpose: to convince another driver that the plain car next to them has a dull albatross engine when it really hides a juiced-up purple tiger. I drive a stealthy, too, but the purple tiger option was beyond my budget.

I did have a brief bout of dominance once. I beat out a tractor hauling a steaming pile of manure. But, it was close. The smell almost stopped me in my tracks.

eleventh hour
a nightfly asleep
at the light

Peter Jastermsky

Around the World in 20 Minutes

A few weeks ago, at a friend's urging, I downloaded an application called Google Earth. I skimmed through the plethora of applications embedded in my phone and found the "App Store". The thing took a few minutes to roll into my phone's memory. On opening it, a 3-D image of the Earth miniaturized to the size of a comparatively big pebble was displayed. I quickly realised that I could zoom into towns, villages, streets and houses and even out of the Earth. I could travel to any region of the world without having to pay for flight tickets. I could swim from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific and to the Indian. I could visit the most beautiful temples of all times without standing in a long queue. I could zoom into mountain peaks, deserts, forests and countries on my bucket list and the list never ends....

But, all I found myself doing was zooming into my house....

scorched earth...

the conservationist zooms in
on a tree

Ishaan Singh

Poetic Injustice

The other evening being at a loose end I decided to eat out. I drove over to Colaba Causeway and paced the pavements till I came across an eatery with the name, The Kebabs And What-Not Place. What particularly appealed to me was the promise of what-nots. So I entered the restaurant with a good deal of enthusiasm.

The burly Sikh at the door bowed so low he almost brushed my shoes. I was led to a table at the corner and made myself comfortable. A steward in a monkey suit of parrot green handed me the bill of fare.

A word about this menu card. It was not one of your run-of-the-mill affairs which state in very prosaic terms the dishes offered with the prices on the right hand side at a discrete distance. This one was pure poetry. Every dish was described in words which would have made even Shakespeare come panting with his tongue lolling out. Consider the following for instance:

Served on a bed of fragrant rice
Our lentils curry rich with spice

Now I have always been a lover of poetry. Ever since I had to memorize and recite, "The boy stood on the burning deck..." in the fifth grade with my arms behind my erect back. In fact, this poem on the card even beat the one on daffodils by William Wordsworth. I mean, whoever heard of eating daffodils.

All the dishes in the a la carte were likewise described in meter and rhyme and a short time later I had selected the ones I wanted to savour. I was practically singing as I waited for the order to materialize. True to form, the waiter came in bearing the tray aloft with a spring in his step. I was drooling as the good fellow served me

the delicacies and could hardly wait to taste this sonnet of Indian cuisine.

What can I say? One spoonful convinced me that the chef had a much brighter future as a bard than as a cook. Suddenly the fare tasted like a badly written limerick. After suffering the agony of consuming the culinary disaster on my platter I made up my mind.

Yessir! I would give up poetry for good.

Western Cuisine...

the Maitre d' decides it's high time

he learnt French

Gautam Nadkarni

Syntax Connections

Consider this. Only a sentence ago we were complete strangers, oceans of time, distance and thought between us. Once inside the written word has such beguiling power. Yet, like moon-tide, some sheer magic drew us together into these unfolding words. Their perfect syntax of word on word, sentence upon sentence, whole thoughts connecting between us. As in the chambered nautilus whose spiraled pearlescent luster holds a geometry belonging only there. Likewise, we spiral through words searching some clear new treasure, exploring deep nuanced word-rooms, believing some meaning more than the ocean's dark sound can be found there.

words unfurling
the arc of meaning
running swiftly

Ed Higgins

Gotsie (sans) Johnson

Daddy was a writer. A brilliant one, from what I understand. I remember coming upon his transcripts from Northwestern several years after his passing, while I was still in high school. A 4.0 grade point average in both his undergrad and graduate studies in English. His alma mater was the only university to which I applied. I had no desire to tread anywhere other than within his footsteps.

Word on the street—or at least whispered within the family closet—was that he was once a rather successful alcoholic, as well. I don't know the details, but there was a divorce, my half-siblings' resentments and some sort of coming to Jesus. Little wonder, I suppose, why I grew up kissing my wallet-sized picture of Christ, procured from my Sunday School classroom, a more passionate goodnight than one might consider natural.

Before Ol' Gotsie married my mother, assuming the role of family man, he'd given up the sauce, only to take a job as a lowly tech writer for Ipsen Industries, later serving, day in and day out, as her whipping boy. Every Saturday afternoon, during her coffee klatches with the neighborhood ladies, I got an uninvited earful about how little money my daddy made, what a poor lover he was, how he simply wasn't man enough. But, from what I could tell, he was more than okay.

After all, he shielded me from her wrath on the mornings when I inadvertently walked across her clean kitchen floor or threw up a little of the raw egg and orange juice I was required to down at the start of each day. We'd settle upon a couple of stools at the soda bar at North Park Pharmacy and sip real Chocolate Cokes while discussing the myriad options I had before me. Indeed, he contended, I could be a prima ballerina as well as the first Lady President. I might even

ensure that, in spite of his conservative leanings, the Equal Rights Amendment finally got passed.

I've done none of that. I didn't even graduate with a 4.0. But, ultimately, I never gave in nor up. Had he lived, he'd probably lecture me on the importance of making wise choices, but I doubt he'd mean a word of it. For, while I may take pleasure in channeling the spirits of Bukowski and Vonnegut, I sure as hell never spent a single night writing verse for Hallmark. And, he'd appreciate that.

wild raspberries
the EMTs follow mom
up the lower hill

Kelly Sauvage Angel

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