

haikuKATHA

unfolding the story within



Priti Aisola

Issue 46 August 2025

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haikuKATHA is the official monthly publication brought out by Triveni Haikai India. Its primary function is to publish the best in contemporary English-language haiku, senryu, tanka, haibun, tanka-prose, tanka-art, and haiga.

Each month's issue is put together by a team of editors who select poems from the previous month's prompts posted on the Triveni Haikai India website. The magazine is copyrighted by Triveni Haikai India.

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Issue 46
August 2025

haiku, tanka, tanka-prose,
haiga and tanka-art

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for the month of July 2025,

Priti Aisola
for her brilliant ink sketch depicting the Naag Panchami,

our contributors
for sharing their poems.

Editors' Choice Commentary: by Vidya Shankar
Editor's Choice: *Looney Tunes* a haibun by Cathryn Daley

Cathryn Daley

Looney Tunes

Mum drives us aimlessly into the night.
The moon hangs like a banana, and Mum laughs when I say that.
She then croons 'I see the moon, and the moon sees me,' over and over ...

a sudden drop
in body temperature
evening lullabies

In this almost-micro haibun, nothing much happens. Or so it seems. We read about a mother driving into the night — aimlessly. A casual nighttime drive, perhaps? She has her child in the car with her. She laughs when the child says something silly. She sings a lullaby, and from the concluding ku, we understand the child falls asleep (drop in body temperature). The title of the haibun is the name of a popular animated series. Going by the title and the lullaby, we infer that the child must be quite young. We also assume that 'looney tunes' refers to the mother's singing. We almost let this poem pass — a so-called. That's when we notice the narrator of the haibun is the kid in the car ... and our interest is piqued. We read it again, this time scanning for clues, for words/phrases that are meant to go beyond the explicit. We ask questions.

What is the kid trying to tell us? What did we miss? Why is the mother driving ‘aimlessly’? We notice undertones behind the word ‘hangs’. What is hanging? A threat? Danger? Maybe the aimless driving is not aimless after all. The mother is probably escaping from an abusive husband. She is scared but is putting on a brave face, a smile, because she does not want her child to know. Or, maybe the mother is deranged and is kidnapping her own child? Loony?

And all at once, the title and the lullaby are not so obvious anymore. The song makes the child feel safe. But it also distracts the child from focusing on the moon, or anything else. Added to this is the repeated singing which soothes the child’s mind, masks the pressure of the scene, and eventually, succeeds in the child falling sleep. But the sleep does not seem to be instant as the word ‘sudden’ implies. It is here that we sense a shiver running down our spine.

Cathryn’s haibun haunted me long after I had read it. This cliffhanger with its numerous unanswered questions and no convincing answers gave me space to stay with it, pondering over possible scenarios, hoping all was well with the child. One can only wish some kids did not have to go through trauma brought on by unhealthy behaviours and patterns of abusive or chronically stressed parents and adults.

Vidya Shankar

deep snow ...
the days lengthen
into light

Alfred Booth

growing chill
the tang of raw radishes
warms our table

Anju Kishore

waterlogged sneakers
my grandson squishing home
from the frog pond

Barrie Levine

the song thrush
in my friend's story
autumn dusk

C.X. Turner

haiku

second storey
watching the river
claim my car

Dara Royal

summer noon ...
every leaf bears
the weight of light

Fatma Zohra Habis

late afternoon
a truck horn blares
a forgotten love song

Jahnavi Gogoi

puddle jumper
her two feet
scattering nightfall

Joanna Ashwell

reading glasses
the clearer patch
of dewfall

Joanna Ashwell

old spoon ...
feeding my mother
I open my mouth

Jharna Sanyal

twilight hush
the withered lotus
sinks

Kala Ramesh

hospice window
wind and flowers
in each other's rhythm

Kala Ramesh

haiga



image and ku: Kala Ramesh

haiku

the merging
of a thousand waves ...
seas with names

Kala Ramesh

a whiff
of autumn breeze ...
now here now there

Kalyanee Arandhara

horse mushroom
each one larger
than the moon

Kanjini Devi

two tiny hands
from behind the waist
rickety scooter

Kavita Ratna

haiku

boiling edamame ...
the moon drops by
our window

Keiko Izawa

blackening sky
egrets rise from the paddies
one by one

Keiko Izawa

unlit lanterns
around the temple pond ...
fireflies

Keiko Izawa

family reunion
I toothpick
the tasteless talk

Lakshmi Iyer

haiku

sand art
the mermaid's fins
in the tide

Lakshmi Iyer

monsoon rains
the road's a slide for
a krait slithering

Leena Anandhi

the murmur of mallards
in deep willow shade —
evening calm

Linda Papanicolaou

spring snow
a mint bush
scents the air

Lorraine Haig



image and ku: Marilyn Ashbaugh

haiku

bellbirds
a forest path saturated
with song

Lorraine Haig

near harvest —
the scarecrow sinking
into corn rustle

Marilyn Ashbaugh

storm signal
the trawler course corrects
a little too late

Mohua Maulik

summer breeze
the car reversing
in chirps

Mohua Maulik

haiku

death anniversary
the slow bounce of wildflowers
settling into a vase

paul m.

rock pool
the colliding white
of a passing gull

Robert Kingston

open window
the night rain
speckled with light

Robert Kingston

shoreline promenade
a smudge of ice cream
on the child's nose

Robert Kingston

haiku

morning star
power lines sizzle
with heavy dew

Ron C. Moss

a still curtain
on an open window ...
letters unopened

Samir Satam

election
my maid awaits
her silk sari

Sathya Venkatesh

curved railway track ...
I see the last carriage
from the first

Somu Sakthi



image and ku: Marilyn Ashbaugh

haiku

sickle moon
the new couple's talk
tapers down to murmur

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi

spring dawn
an orphaned buckling
tugs at my hem

Sumitra Kumar

noon lullaby
the distant rhythm
of a rake

Sumitra Kumar

autumn trip
a face worn soft
on the temple pillar

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy

the old guitar
in the corner
dusty blues

William Doyle A F

after the rain
cicadas
whetting the pitch

William Doyle A F

one-line haiku

rose baozhong steeped the blush of a redbreast robin

Alan Summers

entrails of traffic piling up into summer road trip memories

Alan Summers

cygnets and the river companions somehow the sky shows up

Alan Summers

wondering where I lost them worry beads

Arvinder Kaur

one-line haiku

shortcut home we race the rain

Linda Papanicolaou

sun between rain showers wren on the fence

Linda Papanicolaou

distant thunder the snail's home moving south

Marilyn Ashbaugh

autumn shore a half shell rocks its shadow

Marilyn Ashbaugh



flash flood
a new creek
in the cabin

marilyn ashbaugh

after our lovemaking
a cool breeze
wafts in through the window ...
who invited
the moon to peek in

Baisali Chatterjee Dutt

all that is left
of the four-leaf clover
in my diary
a residue of dreams
that never crystallised

Barbara Olmtak

his questions come
not to open wounds
but windows —
and I leave one ajar
even in the rain

C.X. Turner

he doesn't flinch
at the parts I've hidden —
instead, a smile
meets no resistance,
warmth rising through silk

C.X. Turner

he writes again
with that soft intensity —
I pause
where the line breaks
and find my breath there

C.X. Turner

60th anniversary
knowing every inch of each other
we still find pleasure
grasses swaying
to an autumn's breeze

Dinah Power

amid wild weeds
a lone sunflower
shows me the way
in this darkening world
I'll fight against shadows

Fatma Zohra Habis

alone I watch
the night sky
all these twinkling stars
fall in the form of words
blooming in the lake

Fatma Zohra Habis

trying too hard
to touch perfection
somewhere
deep in the woods
a tangle of wildflowers

Firdaus Parvez

the jasmine trellis
is all she talks about
as the bruise
on her arm
turns a deep purple

Geetha Ravichandran

under the moonlit sky
the placid lake reflects
all my contours ...
how the water lilies
serve as embellishments

Gowri Bhargav

i read
the tarnished letter
one last time ...
some stories only breathe
behind closed doors

Gowri Bhargav



after twenty years
stuck under the same roof
we seem mute ...
from different windows
we sculpt lost constellations

Gowri Bhargav

the crimson saree
brushing my ankles —
wasn't it yesterday
you knelt to clasp
those payals on me

Gauri Dixit

a spider web
being woven
one thread at a time
an eternity
in an afternoon

Jennifer Gurney

seashells
shimmering in moonlight
my thoughts
surface from the deep
well of desires

Kala Ramesh

this shelf
of herbal supplements
long expired
as if holding on to these
will bring you back

Kanjini Devi

you enter the room
in a turtleneck sweater
the temperature rises
and butterflies flutter
in this widow's garden

Kanjini Devi

tanka

a frost moon
through weeping willows
breaks ...
this cave in my chest
is just too much to bear

Kanjini Dev

mountains echo
the pride of peacocks
and elephant's trumpets
sharing secrets
is not my cup of tea

Lakshmi Iyer

a flock
of white cockatoos
battles the wind
how much easier
it would be to say yes

Lorraine Haig

rinsed by shadows
I face the skies
wondering
how many stars
shape the green silence

Marilyn Ashbaugh

the grey-pink sky
turns into a deep orange
autumn dusk
stripping off another layer
between us

Mohua Maulik

she blushes
behind the veil
on their first night
the questions he has
about her virginity

Mona Bedi

haiga



full of song
as the breeze swings by
the bamboo

padmapriya

image and ku: Padma Priya

another film
I don't care for
until the villain
says exactly
what I couldn't tell you

Nalini Shetty

monsoon breeze
I wear your shirt
all the places
your hands once touched
release your scent

Nitu Yumnam

dawn to dusk
the clouds over the hill
all the weight
a child bears
to become something

Nitu Yumnam

nail's edge
caught in the skin
just can't
pull out
what you said

Nitu Yumnam

unread books
pile up on my table
I blame
the pleasant spell of
monsoon rains this time

Padma Priya

strawberry moon
the door opens
before I knock
is it her heartbeat
or mine?

Padma Rajeswari

this strong wind
after a week-long rain ...
change is in the air
yet nothing shifts
within me

Priti Aisola

a gut feeling
that something is amiss
with me —
again the evening breeze
through the open door

Priti Aisola

the boy holding up
a slipper as cellphone
to take a selfie
his smile will silver-line
all clouds today

Priti Aisola

open borders
a trust we worked for
long before
her first piece of lace
dropped to the floor

Robert Kingston

in a dark corner
of your universe
you'll find me
on my knees holding
blue irises held in a prayer

Robert Kingston

silent snowfall —
a nursery rhyme echoes
in my childhood tongue
but where is the child
who breathed it like a prayer?

Sandip Chauhan

tanka

a solitary crow
caws raggedly
at dusk
voices under my window
catch on the climbing rose

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

summer dusk
a flock of parrots flying
under the gibbous moon
in my mother's young voice
i listen to a story

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



image and tanka: Sreenath

Alfred Booth



Things I Now Remember

From over the wall, mimosa drifts, softening the squeak of the cemetery gates.
Wind comes and goes, following sunlight's nimble trceries.

wind-chimes hung long ago a willow's song

Only winged presence adds liveliness to break the looming sobriety. In this place,
no children compete with the silence. They think life is too vast for them,
preferring wheelbarrow races and yellow raincoats, but will chatter endlessly
about days at sea when the waves came and went in baby steps.

clowns cartwheel between the merry-go-round fairy tales

At night ghosts wander, but few of my fellow wanderers know how to recognize
them from the shadows of moonbeams.

the tears of Perseus crossing the universe life flashes

Andrew Riutta



Newberry Indians '65

This coming August my parents, if all goes as planned, will be attending their 60th class reunion. And so, for months they've been pretty intent on keeping track of the former schoolmates who will also be going to the gathering. Every Roger and Donna – yet at the same time, those who won't be making it because they're simply not here anymore, no longer alive ... a list (already so heavy for them to bear) that just gets bigger as the year deepens, even as recent as today. They've each certainly had their own share of health challenges to confront this past half decade: diabetes, brain aneurysms, and spells of skin cancer with countless other varieties of decline simultaneously biting at their heels, so to speak. My father especially keeps talking about the reunion like it will be a last stand of sorts. A Battle of the Little Big Horn for those in wheelchairs or holding onto walkers and canes for their dear lives.

summer breeze —
beyond the wind poppies

summer breeze —
beyond the wind a thin horizon

Arvinder Kaur



Godot never arrives

Our drama teacher was a short, stocky man. He had a sallow complexion but he always sported a colourful tie around his nonexistent neck. He spoke softly under his breath even while reading the soaring soliloquies of King Lear. But there was a streak of sadness that lingered in his brown eyes. One day, in a vulnerable moment, we found him staring outside at the laburnum blossoms. Do you see a life lesson in these flowers? He asked, leaving us surprised as we had a glimpse of the heart behind the tough demeanour. That day we were to start Hamlet. You know there is a Hamlet in all of us, he began.

morning glory
just another tomorrow
to procrastinate

Barbara Sabol



To the Skunk Living under My Porch

Who can blame you for wanting
the comfort of a warm burrow,
a pantry of grubs and beetles, a den
with a roof. Since the glaciers'
retreat, you've figured how to fend off
danger, to adjust your palette
to any and all matter. I know what it is
to finally settle down, stake
a claim, call it home. I give you leave,
dear squatter, to share this space,
trusting our tracks will never cross.

changing seasons
a garden snail
slips into her shell

C.X. Turner



Museum of Temporary Things

September mist
a crow steps sideways
between guy ropes

There's no one now. Just the square of pressed-down clover where their tent stood. Soft hollows where knees might have been. I imagine them laughing, or not speaking at all. Just the rustle of foil packets, the shush of zipped doors, the muted clink of enamel mugs.

Among the nettles lies a small anklet, bright with mirror work and tiny bells. The kind worn barefoot at weddings. One thread has loosened, catching on a thistle stem. I crouch to look. Sunlight flares off each glass tile — pink, gold, a green like pondweed. It has a faint scent of sandalwood and metal. I leave it. Some things feel more true when left as they are.

campfire smoke
the places she touched
still warm

Caroline Giles Banks



Toy Stories

A Maya village in Belize. Sitting near a grove of chicle trees, a girl cradles her new baby doll. Mama had washed and dried the soda pop bottle, swaddled it in a repurposed huipil. Mama says keep the baby close. She is beautiful.

festival breeze —
green tamales gifted
neighbor-to-neighbor

Tariffs see-saw up and down. Shipping containers, stacked like castle keeps of crayon-colored Lego bricks, lie idle in U.S. ports. Big box stores put orders for holiday toys on hold. Shelves for Barbie are bare. Grown-ups downplay Scrooge proclamations that kids should expect no more than two dolls under the tree.

weevils spoil
bags of flour —
Let Them Eat Gruel

Cathryn Daley
~

Looney Tunes

Mum drives us aimlessly into the night.

The moon hangs like a banana, and Mum laughs when I say that.

She then croons 'I see the moon, and the moon sees me,' over and over ...

a sudden drop
in body temperature
evening lullabies

Diana Webb



Notes from the Rim of a Singing Bowl

The ferrule of her stick leaves dents in the air as she follows the trail of low liquid light. It sprinkles like snow on the tight-knit back gardens, a sheen of pearl the length of the sill. Slow to appear, it keeps her guessing. To which small jewel shall it pull? The trees, silhouetted along the horizon, stand static in waves. Moist leaves in the guttering all give way as the lunar essence slips over ceilings, silking each surface. The TV goes dark.

screen goddess
the child's finger orbits
her silver-foil crown

Dru Philippou

Rebirth

I want to come back as a marigold — not a brilliant red or rich mahogany brown, but the classic golden yellow kind with the giddy, ruffled petals and musky scent.

At the Hindu temple, I would be part of a mala, suspended in a half-moon above the chai pot counter, or draped around a deity's photograph, illuminated with butter lamps. I would offer myself to Ganesha, although he prefers the hibiscus and holy grass. Sometimes it's enough to be tossed in the air and land at the guru's feet or placed in a bowl with the other blessed flowers. I would even sway in the breeze above the temple's threshold, listening for the bell's ring as pilgrims enter.

Mostly, I want to be part of the circle of women making malas. The stories and laughter they share. Their hands full of sun.

god-intoxicated
this final blossoming
into light

Ganesh R.



Sand Through Clenched Hands

Our two-wheeled family demon wobbled beneath me, possessed with just enough fury to defy gravity. My father's hands — small but firm — gripped the handlebars as I fought to stay upright. The ground rushed beneath us, each near-fall a threat waiting to materialise. His voice, sharp with worry disguised as discipline, rang in my ears like warning bells. I resented it, but I also clung to it.

Now, years later, I sit by his ICU bed. Tubes, machines, and that relentless beep. His chest rises unevenly under the plastic shell of a respirator. The hospital nights are long and airless, thick with antiseptic and the stifled silence of hope. The old fear is back, coiling in my gut, heavier than before. Back then, I wanted freedom. Now, I just want him to breathe.

Something shifts. A wobbly start becomes a few seconds of balance. I grin. His voice draws nearer, no longer a command but a presence. With each push and sway, the ground stops rushing up, replaced by the thrilling blur of motion—weightlessness finally brushing my fingertips.

I lean close to him. "You're still holding the handlebar, aren't you?"
And for a moment, I swear his fingers twitch.

faded photographs
whispers of laughter
ring in my ears

Glenn G. Coats
~

Winter Range

The campus is quiet. Most of the students have gone home for the holiday. I sit at my desk and shuffle through exams. Outside the window, smooth trunks of crepe myrtle sprout from the ground like arms. Down the hall, I can hear the sound of a vacuum cleaner — a few voices. It's getting late.

I walk quickly along the brick-lined paths, think about the ride ahead — narrow roads that wind all the way to Charlottesville, and the highway that cuts across the mountains. I climb steps by the science building and cross over High Street. My car is alone in the lot.

I use my handkerchief to clean the headlamps and taillights. Rub grime from the windshield. I turn on the ignition and nothing happens — dead — not a sound. I pop the hood and stare at the empty place where the battery once was.

change in the air
a hawk plucks
the lowest wire

Jackie Chou
~

To Frida Kahlo

Regarding Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird

Even with your mustache, your eyebrows like two feuding snakes, a dead hummingbird for a pendant, and a spider monkey by your side, the black cat with pensive gaze will always steal the show.

the slant tips
of a steel tweezer
winter chill

Jagajit Salam
~

Continuum

It's Bhadra morning. I walk towards the pond holding a brass plate containing druva grass, perilla seeds, rice grains, tulsi leaves, seasonal flowers and cut fruits all neatly arrayed on a banana leaf. After lighting a candle and incense sticks, I close my eyes and begin to recite the mantra chants. At some point, I come to realise that my daughter has been taking a video all the while to show to her grandma.

lengthening shadows
with each count
the japamala shifts

Joanna Ashwell



Void

The rainfall speaks volumes. I have nothing to say. The darkness unveils shadows.
I have nothing to say.

peewit calls
finding a threshold
of forest calm

You left without warning. No note, no speech, no explanation. The moon has no
colour. The river has no song. I have nothing to say.

a dream
within a hollow
broken stars

wishbones
pulling a piece of sky
valley lake

Kala Ramesh

Lantern

under one roof
we played, ate, and most often
fought, but quickly resolved issues
for we needed one another. As we grew older,
moving in separate ways, we built walls higher and higher,
the interiors grew dark. Out of nowhere, a ceiling appeared,
a summit of opinions that refused to allow any redeeming sun-
light to freshen up our lives. Sadly, we are now only moving
in the opposite direction. So gradual a shift, we fail
to see it. In the sanctum sanctorum, I stand
before my Goddess with this
nagging thought
I am
a
l
o
n
e

ground fog:
in front of my eyes
things blur

pleating sunlight
did a cormorant skim across the lake

Lakshmi Iyer


What's Next?

hard rains
the slippery slipper
tweets

I walk through the hilly streets of Trivandrum, climbing up and down. I don't mind.

I wade through glossy autumn leaves and mossy tiles as dirt seeps in between my toes. I don't mind.

I slip for a second, my heart sinks. I don't mind.

My hands search vigorously for the umbrella inside my cloth bag. Forgotten? Never mind!

The rain spreads on my face lavishly, dripping the kumkum on my nose. I don't mind.

My cell phone rings. By the time I pick it up, it stops. SPAM for the tenth time. I don't mind.

I make an attempt to pay the shopkeeper through GPay, the password is lost in my brain. I DO MIND!

Lorraine Haig



Wanderlust

The football size Easter egg has a scarlet bow tied around its waist. It's too beautiful to eat, and I don't want to crack it open to find emptiness. So, it remains a decorated splendor that we pack in our homemade camper. We drift North to where rainforests grow to the edge of the sea.

radio music
the windows open
to salty air

Near the border we swap our trailer for a green and white canvas tent. We buy an aluminium boat and a Russian Blue cat we name Sinbad. He can smell a town before we can see it and leans out through the window.

burnt cane
the pungent scent
of sugar

The rains come, and the road floods. Many travellers just camp and wait. A truck driver offers to tow us through and tethers us to the back of his semi-trailer. As the water pours in we sit on the top of the seat. Sinbad, wailing, retreats to the highest point next to the egg.

flood plain
a mob of kangaroos
crossing the bridge

haibun

In the tropics, we rent an old shack facing the sea. Lured by prawns called banana and tiger you become part sea-creature. Hauling in your net, scales glitter on your skin. Cane toads gather like pets outside the back door. They eat Sinbad's food and chorus beneath the streetlights. How we yearn for change. You want a bigger boat. I crave my own kitchen. Brisbane or Darwin. We flip a coin.

Matthew Caretti



**Bound,
or Something about All Sentient Beings**

spring longing
into the taro patch
morning shadows

By the time the new season begins, Princess is the size of a rugby ball. All pink skin and white wiry hairs. She spends ample time playing with the scores of puppies in the compound. Seems to think herself one of the pack, and just as much as all the others, loves to have her neck and belly scratched. Despite her birth defect, she outpaces them in races round my shack, both in speed and soon-size. My strokes on her neck give way to her own rump rubs against an old palm. The shade of that tree soon insufficient, she is banished to the rainforest pigsty, its very shoddiness allowing for a sustained series of escapes.

island hog
fastest on three legs
I ever saw

I know all along the endgame of her rearing, yet find ample distraction in her spirited exploits to put aside my distress. I sit long on an old coconut palm stump simply watching her. When she sleeps, her slow, easy breath. When snacking on some leftovers I've brought her, a certain glow of gratitude. There is an intelligence in those long-lashed eyes. A communication in the snorts and smiles when, even as a fully grown sow, she receives a happy shift of scratches behind her jagged ears or a visit from the village dogs. But tonight, edging the shadows of that pen, a fire and the slow turn of the old islander's spit.

clove hitch
the uncertain knots
of stardust

Mirela Brailean



The Umbilical Cord

I carefully wrap her body, all skin and bones. Her eyes, now even bigger, are looking nowhere. She has lost most of her hair. Her thin lips with unveiled teeth seem to be smiling.

after storm
a few broken eggs
under the tree

At 13, she weighs less than a 5-year-old.

Her illness struck all of us like lightning. Since then, every day has been a struggle for survival.

She asks me in a whisper to take her for a little walk through the hospital park. When I carry her on my back, she likes it. I make a chair out of my hands. She holds my neck and leans her head on my shoulder, her presence as light as feather. I hum her favorite song. Hot tears roll down my chin.

She is physically healthy, but something in her mind refuses food. On our way back, I ask her to take a few sips of mashed food. When she does, I feel like I won another little battle in the face of death.

swallows
all day at the nest
in and out

haibun

I keep count of the drops in the infuser that she is connected to during the night, praying for a miracle to happen, checking from time to time if she is breathing. In this disease-stricken body, her heart is still fighting. I don't know for how long.

Love you, mom! I hear it as if it were a dream. My little wonder, I love you too. I won't be going anywhere.

children's room
on the windowsill
a white feather

Nalini Shetty
~

Bird Strike

A thud against the window, mid-morning. I find the bird — maybe a dove — on the porch, one wing open like a question mark. Breath shallow. One eye watching.

I wait. A minute. Then another. It twitches once, then stills. The world carries on — traffic, the neighbour's radio playing something upbeat, a pressure cooker whistle in the kitchen.

Later, I bury it near the rose bush. No ceremony. Just quiet. And dirt under my nails.

shovel blade
how cleanly
the roots divide

Ron C. Moss



Approaching Darkness

That majestic white-faced heron is in my dream again. Standing in the cool aqua blue water it returns as a sign of my leaving. Maybe it's my time to die and this sacred bird has come to show me the way home. I take a deep breath, willing myself awake.

cold sweat ...
soft wing-beats fluttering
the silence

Sushama Kapur
~

Disarmed

My two year old daughter's second name is exuberance. Driving this point home to me for much of the day, she holds out her hand to hold mine, as we walk to the corner store in the growing dusk. I am fairly exhausted and for a change, the little chatterbox is silent. I look down at her upturned face framed by curls falling on shoulders and my tiredness melts at her earnest look.

Her next remark, however, floors me completely. Pointing to the sky, she says, "Look Mamma, the moon is walking with us!"

night drizzle –
the feathery touch
of light

Teji Sethi



mosaic

sundays were kept aside
for baking cakes and pickling
fresh cuts

my poems
still smell of pungent vinegar
lemon rinds and morels

while you create recipes
i push some baby onions into a jar
ma, sitting on the dining chair
spectacles on her nose
circles spelling errors in red
once a teacher always a teacher
you wink

the brine turns pink with vinegar
and it is the first time i feel
kitchens couldn't get
more cosier than this

noon lull ...
folding my teens
into crisp white sheets

Anju Kishore
〜

the idli-spoon that came with my dowry

a breeze
scoops up curls
of his now white hair

Kala Ramesh
〜

a snake slithers through water's edge

neither blue
nor green
the river is

Sangita Kalarickal
〜

waiting for letters on the ouija board to move

the way gran
speaks to me
through her curries

Shloka Shankar
~

For an overthinker, I don't like thinking about things.

demurrage
but what if I'm
not ready

C.X. Turner



The Weight of Small Things

On the bathroom tile, the rings are still there, where she placed them carefully ... each one sliding off with quiet reluctance, leaving a finger thinned by years of wear. She told herself she'd only take them off once.

She told herself she wouldn't answer anyone new until she knew how to say goodbye properly. But tenderness doesn't ask permission, and ruin doesn't either.

Somewhere, something is breaking open. Somewhere, somehow, she is almost whole, even as she's broken into pieces.

this morning
keys left behind
by the open door ...
some things are gone
before we understand

C.X. Turner



Archive of Refusals

She said the light felt wrong, but I kept the keys.
The hallway smelt of damp leaves and engine oil.
No one had been in for years.
I thought.
On the windowsill: a bowl of water with a single coin beneath the surface.
No note, just the low hum of something old inside the fuse box.
I leave my coat unbuttoned.

outside
a fox waits politely —
I light
two candles
but neither for me

C.X. Turner



Unfolding

Each day the small wildlife pond sinks lower. Rain is promised, but the clouds hold back. Water sloshes from the green watering can, filled at the water butt, then carried to the grassy edge.

Mornings begin at the just-clipped hedge, coaxing ladybirds from dry leaves before they vanish into the green wheelie bin — perhaps never seen again.

Later, the sun finds my upper back. Stillness lingers. It isn't about shame anymore — how gently the body learns to open again, without apology, into light.

between shadows
a shimmer of invitation
across my side
still learning the language
of warmth without fear

Nalini Shetty
~

Thread

A girl lives in the guest room mirror. She braids her hair when I do, blinks when I blink, but never smiles. I once asked her name, and she mouthed mine. Since then I've stopped looking too closely. Still, on festival days, I leave an extra bindi on the dresser.

in my sleep
she teaches me
to sew a tear shut
the needle
already threaded

Rupa Anand
~

Karma or Destiny

The smart navy and white wood-vinyl exterior house is quite different from the brick-and-mortar ones that exist in their country of birth. They came here five years ago. The boy procured a job in his profession almost immediately. The girl, one to her satisfaction also. In that short span, they ticked all the rungs in the ascending ladder of rise. Jobs, house, car, new passports, a baby to boot, a dog, a cat and a visiting magpie. Besides the car, the garage is home to a huge assortment of suitcases and miscellaneous items.

the summer warmth
 of pink strawberries
 in every pot
the songs of a motherland
 unsung in their hearts

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury

Norwegian Night

The full moon shines in a pale, not yet dark sky, even though it is close to 3 A.M. In far-away India, this moon is dedicated to the guru, that dispeller of darkness. I lean out of the window and inhale the night breezes, the elusive fragrances that come and go.

one by one
they have all left
only their songs
dammed deep inside
where are you, Saraswati*

*Saraswati is the goddess of music and learning in the Hindu pantheon. It is also a lost underground river of myth.

Suraja Menon Roychowdhury



Self-Contained

She is the mortar and she is the pestle, grinding away at her perfect chutneys, herbal tinctures and nascent dreams. He is the mortar and he is the pestle, grinding away at his numbing 9 to 5, crushing the deal, losing his mind.

i took
the other road
guilt-free
waltzing off with you
and a box of chocolates

Vaishavi Ramaswamy

Waves of Bliss

New Year's Eve -

in pink uniforms
smiling faces
pass around sweets
to celebrate
lives being saved

31st. December, 2010
Two minutes to a new year.
We are here tonight; centre stage.

He is in bed. My five-year-old. The nurse injects a dose of short-acting insulin through the IV line in his hand. He is asleep.

This is when I wake up to his diagnoses.

2006 - Autism Spectrum Disorder.
2010 - Hypothyroidism.
1st January 2011 - Type 1 Diabetes.

Without a realisation of night passing into day, I fall asleep. He wakes up the next morning with a wince and a sob. I immediately play his favourite song, a Tukaram Abhang*. A soft smile appears on his face.

tanka-prose

Oblivious to the catheter on his hand, he croons “Anandache dohi Ananda Taranga ...”*

how do I carry
the weight
of your illness
while you sing
of ecstasy?

*Abhang - a Marathi devotional song

*Anandache dohi Ananda Taranga - translates to "Waves of joy in the ocean of bliss." It's a line from a Marathi Abhang by Sant Tukaram, which depicts a state of profound, overflowing happiness where the very core of existence is bliss. The phrase implies that the individual has become a source of happiness, with joy radiating from within and creating waves of delight around them.

(Source - Google)

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



Guruvayoor

The eleventh lunar night at the Sri Krishna temple. Guruvayoor, Kerala, India.

A dim corridor lit with oil lamps. A fresh scent of sandalwood and the holy basil keeps wafting in waves. In the outer sanctum, the devotees with anxious expressions hurriedly gather on either side of the temple corridor.

temple bells ...
a languid elephant
carries a palanquin
swaying in procession
the godhead arrives

People prostrate to a caparisoned elephant carrying the idol of the temple deity.

A piercing polyphony of pipes, drums and cymbals begins. This slow rhythmic orchestration gains momentum, and stabilizes to a new tempo.

Circumambulations happen in tandem to the music and rhythm, three times around the main shrine. The ceremonial procession culminates in the inner sanctum. The elephant is garlanded, worshipped and fed with a fresh offering of food. The frenzy of the crowd now dissolves into a soft single-minded chant of “krishna krishna” in hushed tones ...

The idol is taken down from the elephant's back and carried inside the sanctum sanctorum.

Vaishnavi Ramaswamy



A Letter

with a red and white
handwoven bag
did we part ways
long ago
dear angami friend? *

A square-faced girl with bright eyes and a tiny smile.

The day we met, it rained so heavily that we shared an umbrella to reach home.
And then there were so many more umbrellas ...

Today, after so many years, it has been raining heavily. In the incandescent light,
I fondly take out your bag and from it, your letter. The thirty-five-year-old ink
has slightly faded. The feeble scent of lavender still lingers ...

Do you still remember me when it rains?

still tracing
my fingertips along
your oval cursive words
pulsating
in flashback

Results of indianKUKAI #50
hosted by Amoolya Kamalnath, Kashinath Karmakar, Neena Singh,
& Rohan Kevin Broach. Certificates designed by Teji Sethi

The winner is **Joanna Ashwell** with 23 points!

kintsugi . . .
the sunset
in her wrinkles

Joanna Ashwell
Barnard Castle, UK

In the 2nd place is **Marilyn Ashbaugh** with 22 points.

fifty springs—
the creek bending
a little deeper

Marilyn Ashbaugh
Edwardsburg, USA

In the 3rd place is **Arvinder Kaur** with 18 points.

wrapping myself
in years of fairytales
grandma's quilt

Arvinder Kaur
Chandigarh, India

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thank you for being with us.

See you once again on 22 September 2025
with many more fine poems
from our contributors!

Team: *haikuKATHA*