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prune juice

Issue #44

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Founded by Alexis Rotella in 2009, *Prune Juice Journal* is recognized as the longest-running international literary journal dedicated solely to exploring new directions in English Senryu and related forms, including Kyoka, Haibun, Haiga, and Rengay.

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Best of Issue

Each new issue of Prune Juice features a best-of-issue senryu chosen by one of the co-editors.

the number
of those unaccounted for
autumn leaves

Alvin B. Cruz, Philippines

The close of yet another year is upon us, and we are so grateful to you, our *Prune Juice* family, for trusting us with your work and submitting to the past few issues. We have been awed by your honesty, tickled by your wit, and gutted by your grief. The vulnerability that emanates from these little poems reminds us of our responsibility to curate work that is attuned to and respects our individual as well as collective journeys.

This issue's "Best of" winner astounds in its quiet power and global relevance. We recognize that, by selecting this poem, we may be inviting questions on the use of kigo in senryu. However, we feel that Alvin's poem expands beyond the discussion of kigo. If anything, the more prominent sense of seasonality inherent in this piece is a human sort of season - a season of loss and pain. Here, there is a reckoning with an immense, inexplicable, and yet universal, kind of grief. "Autumn leaves" in this context becomes a visual tool that allows the scale of this grief to truly sink in. We can picture a forest floor blanketed with shriveled leaves, leaving behind stark, barren branches that are now devoid of warmth and colour. In a way, we are the barren branches that have been impacted by the tragedy befalling those connected to us. Whether "those unaccounted for" represents victims of war, natural disasters, pandemics, abuse, or otherwise, this poem gives us a way to communicate the magnitude of our grief without resorting to mere statistics. Because it doesn't matter if our entire family or "only" one friend has been impacted - the pain we experience can't be quantified, compared, or measured on a numerical scale. Instead, this poem gives us a path towards articulating and processing our grief by finding kinship with the natural world.

It is our hope that, despite the heavy sentiments expressed in this poem, we can offer some comfort to those among our *PJ* family who may be suffering, and to reassure you that, even though your pain is unique to you, you are not alone. Moreover, there is a promise within Alvin's poem that this pain will transform into something bold and beautiful; as with the coming of spring, we can be certain that the barren branches will blossom into fresh colours that completely renew the landscape.

Thank you, Alvin, for providing us with this piece that we can carry with us on our own journeys towards healing.

Antoinette Cheung, Co-Editor
December, 2024

Senryu & Kyoka

636.8
just enough bookshelf
for a catnap

Steve Bahr, USA

whatever it takes this body gunslinging to hellfire

Rowen Beckett Minor, USA

folding up
the extra chair
prayer circle

Tom Bierovic, USA

the funeral . . .
four frozen casseroles
ago

Gordon Brown, USA

mesmerised by ventilation pipes art gallery

Owen Bullock, Australia

eating my
morning pop-tart
now I can believe
in seven
impossible things

susan burch, USA

but it's good cake
they tell me
erotic bakery

petro c. k., USA

choosing
their own name . . .
a tailfeather wafts
into the river

Aidan Castle, USA

fallen sign
pedestrians directed
heavenward

Jeanne Cook, USA

stay-at-home dad
each day
beginner's mind

church bells
my daughter's laugh
becomes religion

Shane Coppage, USA

the number
of those unaccounted for
autumn leaves

Alvin B. Cruz, Philippines

ninety-one
dad declines
the extended warranty

Dan Curtis, Canada

first grade lessons
reading, writing,
hiding

Pat Davis, USA

cardboard spaceship
a sense of belonging
far from Earth

M. R. Defibaugh, USA

always
the last word
bitter sage

June Rose Dowis, USA

caution tape
crows fade into
the arson

June Rose Dowis, USA

bureaucracy . . .
trying to coordinate
my six legs

Seth Friedman, Canada

the backbend
in her groove
boudoir moon

Ben Gaa, USA

surprise party
what happened to all
the marshmallows

Barbara Anna Gaiardoni, Italy

road trip
again my brother spies
something green

as long as
we're together
incense stick ash

Lisa Gerlits, USA

tried
today
tired

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

country dancing—
a NO FISHING sign
over the urinal

Lee Gurga, USA

new granddaughter
I pretend to remember
her middle name

Roberta Beach Jacobson, USA

together again
we hold up
the rain

Elmedin Kadric, Sweden

a lapful of puppy curled into my ennui

Julie Bloss Kelsey, USA

hearing it
from my own mouth
mom's sigh

Kim Klugh, USA

the day unraveling into a polyphonic silhouette

Lafcadio, USA

barely holding our marriage together hyphenated names

Barrie Levine, USA

garage sale
I reach for something
she would have liked

Gregory Longenecker, USA

climate conference
we sneak out
to climb trees

Hannah Mahoney, USA

asylum seeker
starting the puzzle
with the boarder

Sarah E. Metzler, USA

haikubituary
three lines are
all I need

Laurie D. Morrissey, USA

colder weather
the heart left
on the bathroom mirror

Gareth Nurden, UK

I'm sorry
the last of the plums
soft and moldy

Helen Ogden, USA

stretch marks
line by line
a poem

Debbie Olson, USA

midwinter
another day of
mismatched socks

John Pappas, USA

hash brownies
somewhere out there
a call's loon

Vandana Parashar, India

once upon the strains of a mellotron

Christopher Patchel, USA

white noise you were almost in the room

Pippa Phillips, USA

the surgeon's
warm tone—
winter sun

Barbara Sabol, USA

sun through a prism—
waiting for her pony
to grow a horn

also the right to remain

Julie Schwerin, USA

monogamy
I return to him
with a pen name

Richa Sharma, India

walking me home
after walking her home
her afterglow

Tomislav Sjekloća, Montenegro

ray · leigh scat · ter · ing my in · ter · net per · so · na

retreating inside the absence of her voice

Robin Smith, USA

divided house
the bacon shrinks
while it sizzles

Joshua St. Claire, USA

waiting to speak . . .
a stinkbug inches up
the curtains

Dylan Stover, USA

winter chill
the warmth
of the poop bag

Mark Teaford, USA

night crickets
which one of you
with the broken heart

Elisa Theriana, Indonesia

three-prong assault
on our snow fort—
retreat to hot cocoa

Richard Tice, USA

honeymoon
breaking the cork
in the bottle

Finch Vogelsang, USA

the old neighborhood
so many things
aren't

deconstructing
the jigsaw puzzle
vacation's end

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA

grief journal
she edits
the punctuation

Christine Wenk-Harrison, USA

October falling in shades of ale

Scott Wiggerman, USA

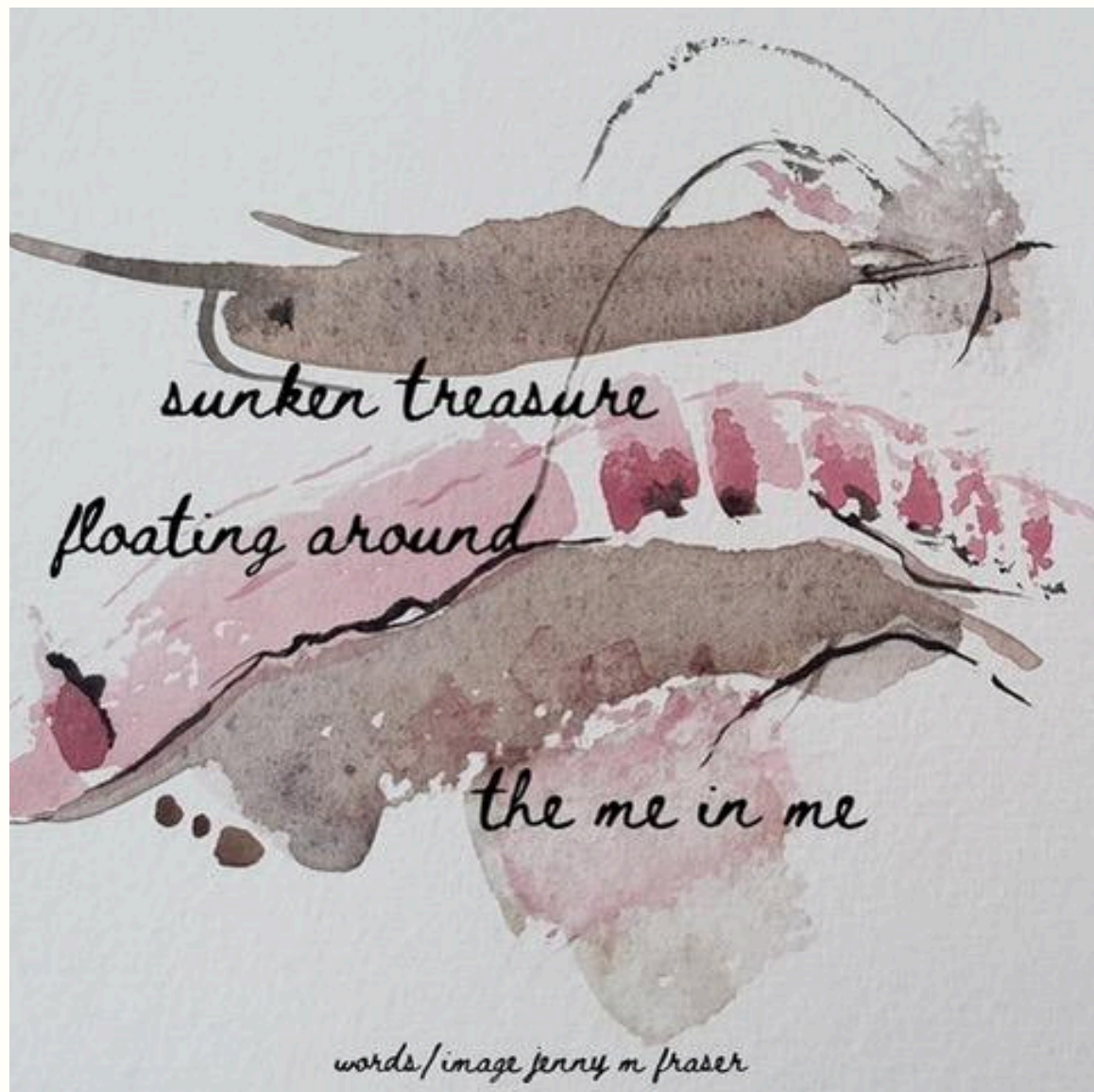
bonsai
what's become of
my passion

Susan Yavaniski, USA

Haiga



Wanda Amos, Australia



Jenny Fraser, New Zealand



Anthony Lusardi, USA



Marianne Paul, Canada



Pippa Phillips, USA



Debbie Strange, Canada



C.X. Turner, UK

Haibun & Gembun

Haibun

Incubus

Where is the line between dream and nightmare? It's not a line pulled taut to be hurtled over or limboed under. Nor, is it clearly delineated like bright yellow crime scene tape, crossed under only by those equipped to handle what lies on the other side. No, the line between dream and nightmare is kite-string thin. One swift and troubled breeze can unfurl it, taking you to places you hadn't intended and just as abruptly bringing you crashing down into your own rapidly beating heart.

pillow talk
Freddy says
"knock-knock"

Terri L. French, USA

At Heart

What it comes down to is that I am still just a little boy who wants to run around and play in the woods. Distilling my days down to simple poetry and the happiness that comes with splashing in the creek and climbing trees.

corner office
a collection of stones
in need of skipping

Bryan Rickert, USA

Fleeing the Dark

We work the graveyard shift-pepper spray in hand, panic buttons clipped, GPS tracking every move. The numerous safety drills we have attended assure us that these gadgets keep us safe. Today, on the usual long drive from work in our pooled car, navigating dark roads, the winding stretches of wastelands, a woman runs towards our car, screaming for help.

Without a word, we speed home.

weight on the pedal—
the scream
I left behind

Rashmi VeSa, India

No More Tests

All that time wasted worrying or secretly hoping

childless menopause comes early

Eavonka Ettinger, USA

Linked Verse

Rengay

Unto Dust

first confession
not knowing how
to begin

*communion stuck
between my teeth*

confirmation
his name scratched
into the pew

*holy matrimony
maybe someday
she'll convert*

church barbecue
taking holy orders

*pushing
his wife too far
last rights*

John Pappas, USA
Bryan Rickert, USA

Moonrise

last day of summer
hobbyhorse clouds
jump the fence

*juggling an armful
of windfalls*

five in the elevator
the league
of women voters

*heating up
the fundraising thermometer
overflows*

another rally
leaves of grass underfoot

*blue moon
the tide begins
to turn*

Dan Schwerin, USA
Julie Schwerin, USA

Sequences

Story Hour

all in my head

constant craving
a little smackerel
of something chocolate

a heffalump

BFF
I share a laugh
with my past self

getting unstuck

childhood photos
learning to love
my plain jane face

Cynthia Anderson, USA

I'll Fly Away

scent of jasmine

*the slow lather
of mother's body
my reflection*

in the pew

wobbly voices
sing in a choir
night service

quiet sobs

*soul music
screaming disbelief
into my pillow*

Eavonka Ettinger, USA
Peg Cherrin-Myers, USA



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