



prune juice

Issue #45

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

maybe
it's ok to be broken—
kintsugi

Pippa Phillips, USA

In a world of strong-armed ideologues spouting absolutes in no uncertain, black and white, US vs them terms, the word “maybe” stands up as a vulnerable, subversive poke at our assumed truths. Stark in its solitary position in line one, the humble word invites an appreciative inquiry; opens us up to possibilities hitherto unconsidered. “Maybe” acts as a declaration of dependence—we need more information. The river’s ice needs to be tested (Mark Forrester). We stick our hands in the soil to nurture possibilities (Thomas Haynes). We drop our illusions of who we thought we were (Dylan Stover). The agnostic word engenders trust in something bigger than our own understanding. Reminiscent of the [Zen parable of the farmer’s horse](#), Phillips’ opening line suggests that there may be more to reality than meets the eye.

We *are* broken. Undeniably. All of us. We do not wish for this. And yet this is what it means to be human. We cradle this emptiness (Rowan Beckett Minor), feel diminished (Shawn Blair), our identities free-fall (Robin Smith), our memories flicker (Lisa Gerlits), and once-cherished relationships divide (Allyson Whipple). Collectively, we hear the planetary time-bomb ticking (petro c.k.), the earth breaking at the seams (Kaushal Suvarna), and her inhabitants trending towards darkness (Sarah Metzler).

And yet...

As the Canadian poet and musician Leonard Cohen sang, it’s through our cracks of being that the light of love comes in. Our brokenness compels us to self-reflect (Tom Bierovic), to look to nature for inspiration (Victor Ortiz), to see the blessings that surround us (Marietta McGregor), to smile at what remains (Tony Williams), and to stand taller as a result (Sharon Martina). This is the love that compels the [kintsugi](#) artist to envision broken pieces reconciled into a unified whole, stronger, more beautiful than what was previous. This is the love that affirms our need for each other. Just as the pieces of a shattered vessel cannot re-member themselves, we too rely on the alchemy of grace to transform our brokenness into something precious and life-giving. Our “golden age” of humanity will come not from shunning weakness, vulnerability and fragility, but from embracing uncertainty, humility, and trust; discovering that our strength as a people and planet is most profound when we unite in, with, under and through the binding power of love.

Maybe.

May it be so. And may it be soon. Thank you, Pippa!

P. H. Fischer, Co-Editor
April, 2025

Senryu & Kyoka

nine months wait . . .
I cradle
this emptiness

(after Vandana Parashar)

darkening sky
this emo phase
isn't a phase

Rowan Beckett Minor, USA

awkward conversation
the slow spin
of a cake carousel

Mona Bedi, India

late winter
writing about less
more often

Brad Bennett, USA

i'm not falling
for that again
shooting star

Tom Bierovic, USA

near death
Dad's diminishing
coefficient of friction

Shawn Blair, USA

just as i left it breaking news

Sondra J. Byrnes, USA

arctic-tick-tick-tick

snap of a threat American flag

petro c. k., USA

chill wind
remembering the days
before we knew

Vera Constantineau, Canada

snowdrops
a deported man
comes home

Alvin Cruz, Philippines

senior living
baby steps
in the garden

Pat Davis, USA

garage sale
we reinflate
dad's ego

M. R. Defibaugh, USA

clothesline—
mom hides her underwear
between the sheets

Anna Eklund-Cheong, France

stargazing
I pity
the A.I.

Keith Evetts, UK

street corner painting the world away

Mike Fainzilber, Israel

Valentine's Day . . .
testing the thickness
of river ice

Mark Forrester, USA

dementia
in all of her siblings
flickering porch light

bedtime
I fold back
her wings

Lisa Gerlits, USA

still standing
post-anthem
portable toilets

LeRoy Gorman, Canada

post-supper chat
helping you separate
the plastics

Benedict Grant, Canada

an itch that can't be scratched testosterone

John Hawkhead, UK

cold railway tracks
the clatter of staples
pulled from my breast

Patricia Hawkhead, UK

he asks
where the head is
first shovelful

Ruth Holzer, USA

old book smell i catch the rye

Kimberly A. Horning, USA

project 2025 rereading 1984

Gregory Longenecker, USA

email body soaked with survivor's guilt

Roman Lyakhovetsky, Israel

checkpoint chai the thawing of our accents

Ruchita Madhok, India

wedding day
so much taller
in his tux

Sharon Martina, USA

hacky sack
keeping the conversation
going

Mary McCormack, USA

a new label
on the swear jar
'blessings'

Marietta McGregor, Australia

devil winds trending hate speech

the strength
of plain weave
amish country

Sarah E. Metzler, USA

Nazi lingo—
the white rose* signs
in full flower

Kati Mohr, Germany

* The White Rose (German: *Weißer Rose*) was a non-violent, intellectual resistance group in Nazi Germany which was led by five students and one professor at the University of Munich. The group conducted an anonymous leaflet and graffiti campaign that called for active opposition to the Nazi regime. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Rose

half moon—
thinking of him
thinking of me

Katie Montagna, Ireland

birth order the rattle of closet bones

Ron C. Moss, Australia

context the difference between this poem and

the smile
she saves for assholes
new boss

Robert Moyer, USA

school shooting
a permanent tooth
halfway in

David Oates, USA

walling in or
walling out the butterflies—
immigration

(after Robert Frost)

Victor Ortiz, USA

two decades on
the frog I kissed
still a frog

Vandana Parashar, India

schoolyard shadows skipping part of the story

Jacquie Pearce, Canada

maybe
it's ok to be broken—
kintsugi

unsexing the cherry despite my best intentions

Pippa Phillips, USA

mammogram center
the restroom hooks
set low

Ann Schechter, USA

device by device I pull the plug on division

Robin Smith, USA

produced by Phil Spector
spring peepers

the jingle-jangle
in the consultant's bangles
layoffs coming

Joshua St. Claire, USA

new apartment
a squiggle of hair
under fresh paint

cliff swallows—
he says he wants to die
as a woman

Dylan Stover, USA

fracking—
breaking open
the local council

Kaushal Suvarna, India

another bill
from the divorce attorney
long division

Allyson Whipple, USA

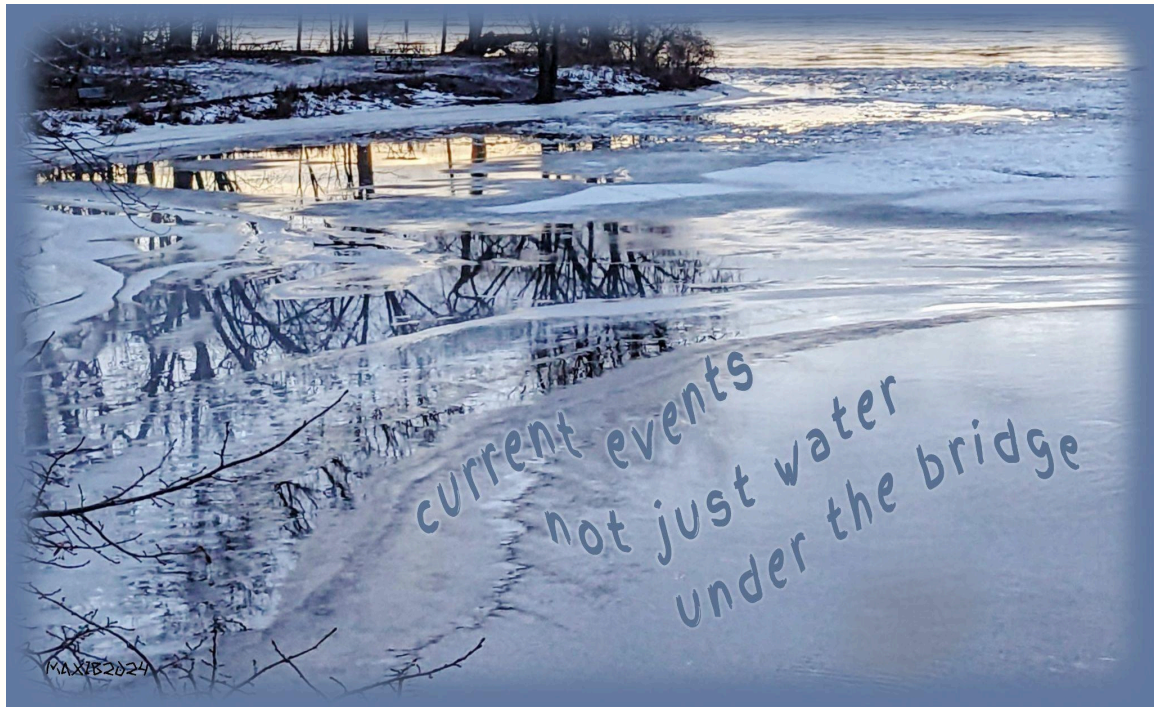
a kindly smile perhaps her last daylily

Tony Williams, UK

a lethal dose
swallowed whole
internal dialogue

Stephanie Zepherelli, USA

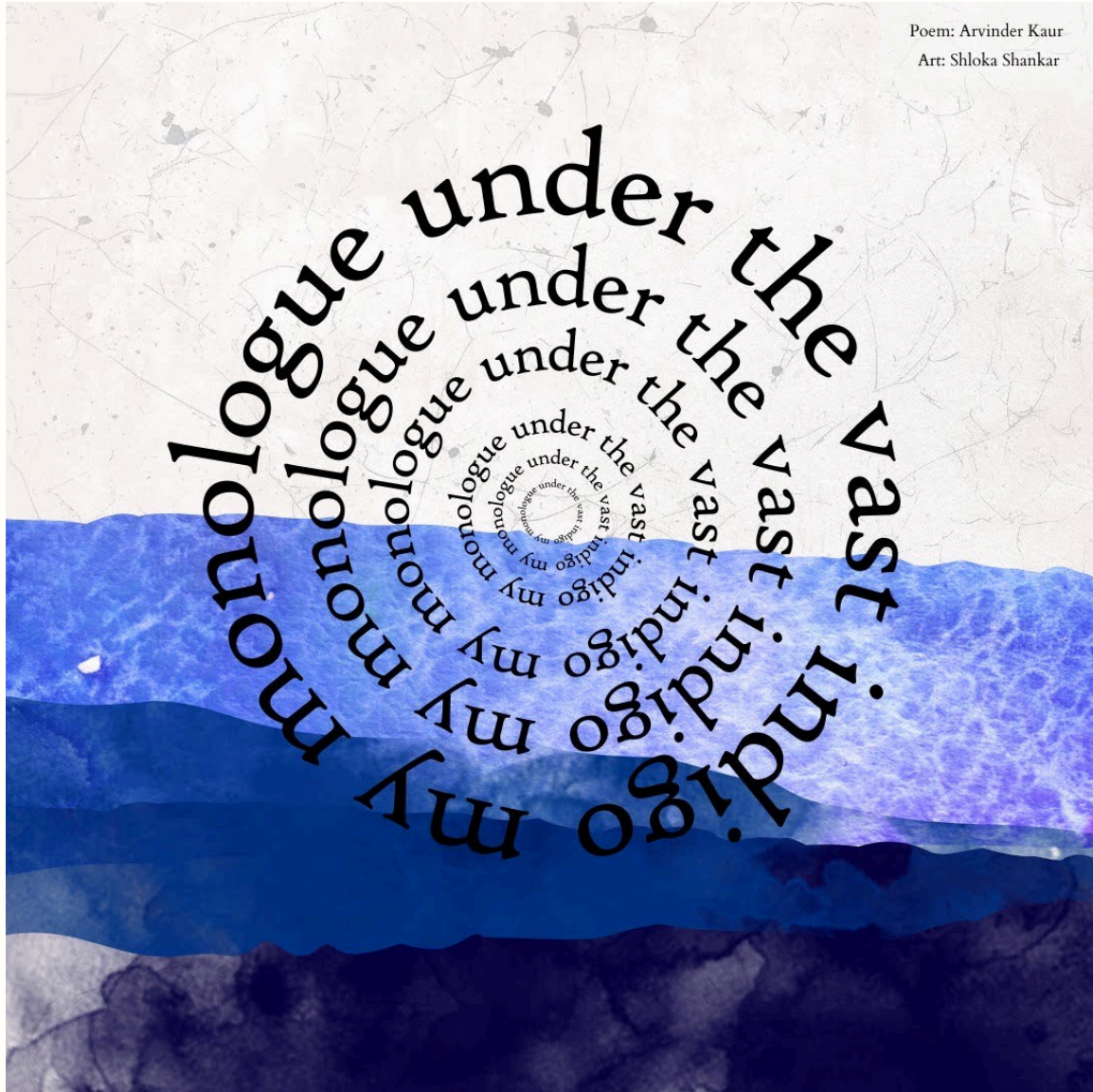
Haiga



Maxianne Berger, Canada

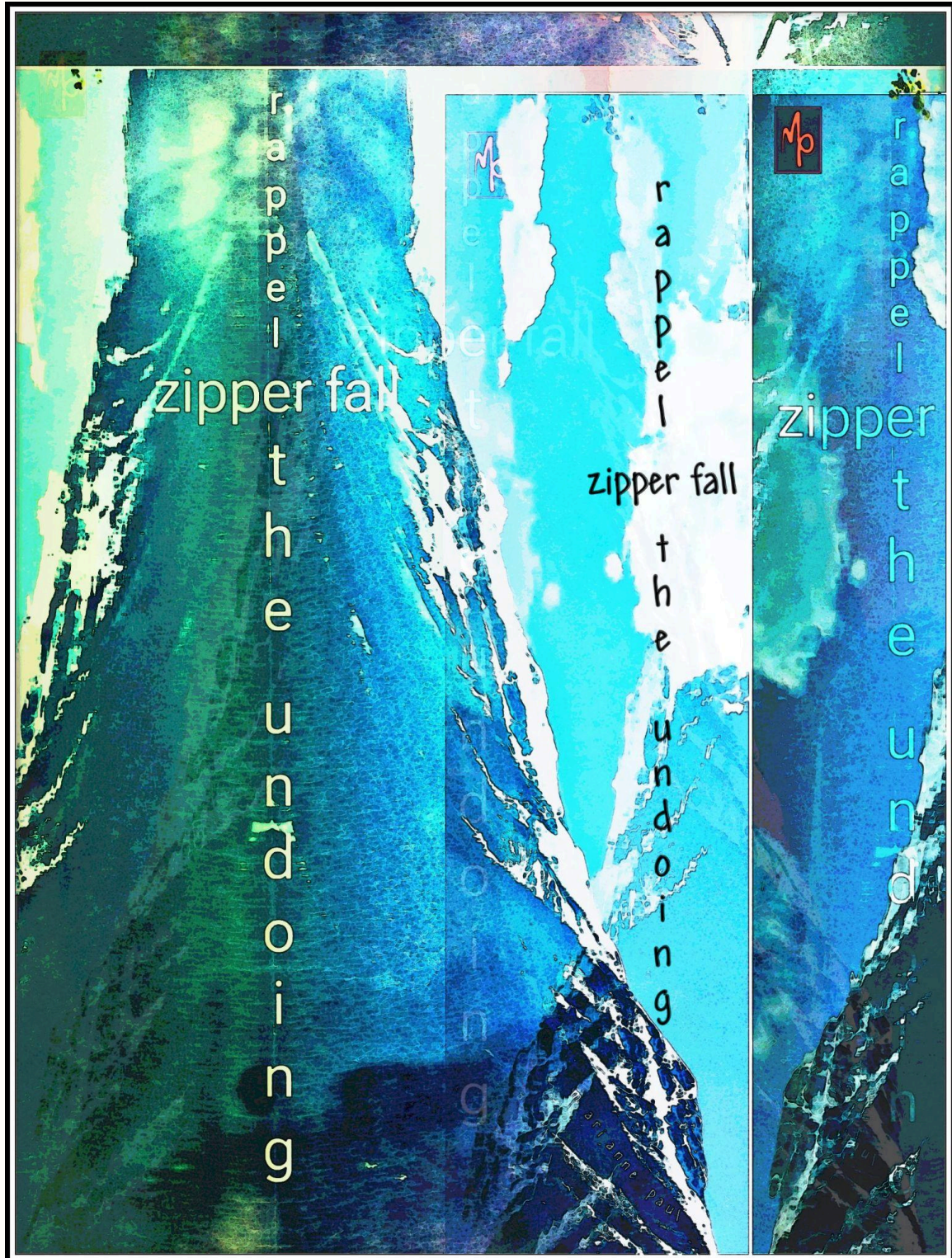


Jerome Berglund, USA

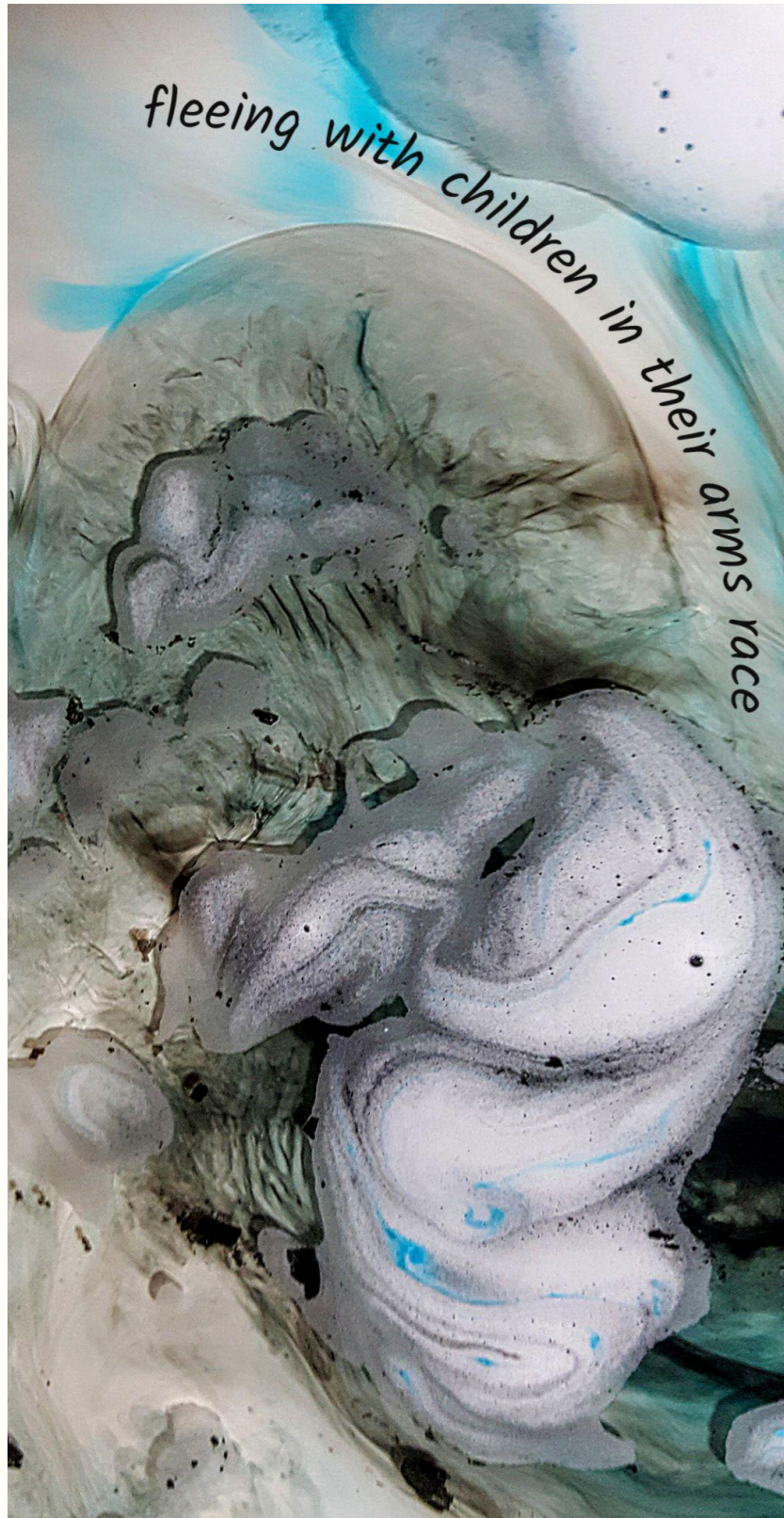


Poem: Arvinder Kaur
Art: Shloka Shankar

Poem: *Arvinder Kaur, India*
Art: *Shloka Shankar, India*



Marianne Paul, Canada



Julie Schwerin, USA



Julie Schwerin, USA



Robin Smith, USA



Robin Smith, USA

Haibun & Gembun

Haibun

Ozarks

(a crossword puzzle clue jogs his memory)

...I was there once...with...what do you call them...
...my roommate....my college roommate...

(the one who died in a motorcycle accident)

...Yes...
...his family had a cabin...on a lake...and a sailboat...
...a small one...with a small sail...we went out on it...

(you were good friends)

...Yes...

(if he were still alive, you'd probably still be friends)

...Who knows...

forgotten shelf
the fragile reach
of cobwebs

Cynthia Anderson, USA

(Out of) Control

Now that all mentions of “climate change” on government websites and all the scientists investigating “climate change” have been purged, we’re going to get back to business as usual, namely the pursuit of freedom and liberty, especially as concerns the future of our great nation.

hurricane-force wind
the velocity
of a spin doctor

Seth Friedman, Canada

Neighborhood Bully

I loved to watch the chimney sweeps dance to *Chim Chim Cheree*—Dick Van Dyke, his Hollywood smile, his bendy body barely human—they, in sync with their brooms, the cut-out skyline blowing spurts of fake smoke from pasteboard stacks. I didn't know about London's boy slaves, coal-sickness plaguing their breath.

Israeli checkpoint

When we lived in Bethlehem in the Occupied West Bank, a friend took in a tabby—named him PK for Palestinian Kitty. Relocated to Jordan, by the U.S. Embassy, for our safety—we adopted a street kitten—JK.

the Judean sun swelters

Back in the U.S., our fur-baby won't leave our old cat alone, pounces from behind the couch, from under our bed, from a dining room chair in ambush. Kiki, in self-defense, growls and strikes back—her hissing calls to mind the sound of sweeping, but not the Mary Poppins kind.

off each Uzi

John S Green, USA

Seeds

Looking in the mirror, I try to avoid my eyes. I've done everything I'm supposed to. My hair is curled and coiffed. My makeup, subtle and carefully executed. Jewels in my ears and on my neck. A thousand-dollar dress of lace and satin. I grab my Bible flowing with ribbons and flowers and pray, *"What's wrong with me, why I can't just be happy, why I can't be like the other girls? Please, God, fix me."* The veil is brought over. My mother puts it on, beaming. And hollow, I smile back.

spring garden
wishing I was
the groom

Thomas Haynes, USA

Communication

My father was a man of few words, most of which I can't repeat here. He would beat me if I said them.

Sunday supper
mixed messages
in the alphabet soup

Bob Lucky, Portugal

Veterans Gathering

Knock. I move to the hotel peephole. The maid with her depleted cart at the opposite room. I had affixed the DO NOT DISTURB sign. Then asking myself,

What if the cameras caught me pocketing a handful of chocolate when the cleaner was in another room tidying up.

I'm ten years old again. Friends come over. We take cover in a fort assembled with blankets draped over chairs. Long pixie sticks, a hundred chocolate kisses, armies of M&M's on the bedspread arranged by color in companies and platoons. I don't know the playbook we used for the M&M wars, or even why there had to be wars. I gather up the scattered candies. Check the peephole again.

flashback
the never used stashes
of meals, ready-to-eat

Richard L. Matta, USA

Hold-fast

Main Beach. Steps from the sand. One big room with double doors to a wooden deck facing the sea. Wide open unless a big blow looms. Outside shower and loo. Tin roof that rattles and booms in summer rains. He likes the beach. And the kangaroos that hop along the sand. He can't swim. Never learnt.

Not many live here. Only him and a few fishermen, in cabins along the foredune. His wife never really settled. When she dies, their daughter leaves home. He stays on. The shack's cosy enough, suits him. He sidles in deeper, like a hermit crab he picks up at low tide.

oil spill
barnacles black
as thunder

Fashions change. He's in a time warp. No kangaroos. Shacks changing hands for megabucks. High-rises at his cottage's flanks. Dream World, Sea World, revamped motels, gastro-pubs. Tattoo parlours, vape joints. Wetland draining for strip malls, floating fat and shit-balls.

A developer urges him to sell the last shack fronting Main Beach. Millions. Money for jam. Daughter mails glossy brochures for retirement villages. He's a hold-out. He tells anyone who'll listen, "time this old fella learnt to swim."

after the storm
a salvage party
puts to sea

Marietta McGregor, Australia

Fermi's Paradox

As much as I want to believe there is intelligent life on other planets, I can't seem to find much here on earth, so my hopes are small.

war zone
the rubble of
baby bones

Bryan Rickert, USA

The Boxer

Papa says he needs to speak to me in private. *Papa* is what we call my grandmother's second husband, who despite his age and his drinking, is solid as a brick. A holdover from his years in the ring, like brain damage from having been battered too often in the head.

impressions
that last a lifetime
scar tissue

Even as a child, I openly disdained Papa, who favored brawn over brains. I knew who was responsible for my grandmother's bruises and black eyes. Once a fighter, always a fighter. Papa spoke in jokes, put-downs, and crude Chicago expressions like *yosh* and *jagoff*. In short, he was everything I hated.

for better
or for worse
those brute fists

I am uncomfortable when Papa pulls me aside. He begins, "I've never told you this—and promise you won't say anything to anyone, especially your mother—but I thought you should know that I'm your mother's real father, not your other grandfather." He refers to my grandmother's first husband, who my mother clearly looks like in features and coloring. I'm dumbfounded, disbelieving. I reply with silence.

Later that night, I tell my siblings what Papa has told me. They laugh it off. He has already given the same speech to each of them.

truth or dare
shifting secrets
of family history

Scott Wiggerman, USA

Linked Verse

Sequences

Vignettes

all the shooting angles of mushroom cloud

*trying to take in
one more star*

all the shooting angles of mushroom cloud

lost for hours
in the Insta feed

all the shooting angles of mushroom cloud

*a tiny gap
in the thermal curtain*

Roman Lyakhovetsky, Israel
Lorraine A. Padden, USA

End Times

doomsday prep
the squirrel's stockpile
in the attic

*refurbishing
grandpa's bunker
the new Cold War*

family feud
all the good recipes
behind enemy lines

*street preacher
his revelation heavy
with whiskey*

avenue of the americas
at every neighbor's house
a different flag

*nuclear winter
business as usual
for the tardigrades*

John Pappas, USA
Bryan Rickert, USA

Last Call

hospice

*watch party
the ups and downs
of the ekg*

preceding him in death

a hit
from the hip flask
last rites

a vase of lilies

*window rain
laughter from
the nurses' station*

Bryan Rickert, USA
John Pappas, USA

Edwin

last kiss . . .
that moment when we
became
just me

daily reminder . . .
the empty hangers
on his side of the closet

three months after . . .
finding comfort
in his favorite chair

Joseph P. Wechselberger, USA



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