

To those I have the privilege of calling my teachers, family, and friends.

To Walker, Dan, Tyson, and Kayla, for their steadfast presence throughout the creation of this.

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I stumbled into Haiku during the Covid lockdowns while sneaking into a gym. I needed something to keep my mind busy while doing cardio, so for some reason, I started writing Haiku about lifting weights. It helped provide a semblance of sanity at a time when precious little made sense. Fortunately, these aren't in here. One day, driving home from my trespassing, I saw a little bicycle abandoned on a sidewalk littered with the detritus of winter, next to a soccer field, and suddenly-

A child's bicycle, Overturned in filthy snow-Footprints in white fields.

-popped into my head, and I realized I was not obligated to write about lifting weights. Soon, I made it a goal to write at least five a day, and now, having sorted through three thousand Haiku, I finally feel like I have something to show you.

If I have learned one thing about this art form so far, it's that a good Haiku should be both a butterfly and a blade, delicate like the wings of a monarch yet sharp enough to dissect reality, or at least one moment of it. And that's what all these are. They're just moments, a few butterflies in an infinite meadow swarming with them, simultaneously appreciated and dissected, and now they're here, preserved.

Thank you, dear reader, for a moment of your time. I hope this is as much of a joy for you to read as it was for me to write.

After the downpour, A sudden smell of flowers Overpowers me.

A chorus of frogs, Synchronized with cicadas-The swamp's symphony.

Thousands of birds sing As I sit in the spring park, Waiting for my friend. A day at the beach,

Matching every grain of sand

To a distant star.

To take off my shoes

And draw up a steaming bath

After the journey.

Fall's first falling leaves: Auburn helicopters float, Littering the trail. Lake Pokegama, The soft splash of a child's bob-Shimmering ripples.

Crimson canopies,
The first crisp hint of a frostAutumn's arrival.

Crinkle, crackle, crunch The rustle of my footsteps Over the dry leaves. Flock of geese hollers, Startled by an unseen foe-Wings churning water.

A child's bicycle, Overturned in filthy snow-Footprints in white fields.

My billowing breath, Futile against the snowflakes-They just keep falling. Prodding through the snow, A single blade of green grass Longs for distant spring.

Indecisive snow
Brushes against my windshield
And returns to rain.

What are they thinking, Blackbirds perched on power lines, Watching the highway? Billions of snowflakes, Each unique, each meaningless-Together: blizzard.

Desires drift away

Contentment is a gardenLet no one intrude.

Grandfather's breakfast Journey of the trembling fork Chubby cheeks, dentures Fickle is the mind, Fluttering between desires Like a baby bird.

When upon the trail,
Fold your hands behind your back
Don't pick the flower.

Coffee hits my tongue, I rub the sleep from my eyes Guess I'll keep living... Daily cold shower-Why do I torture myself With such silliness?

Headlights and tail lights-Ephemeral memories Swimming past my eyes.

Pines whisper with wind Horn blast from distant highway-Silence falls again. Black widow mother Amidst the tomato vines-An hourglass at dawn.

On a midnight walk, Following a hooded man From a good distance.

Buzzing in my ear-What must you say, mosquito, Before I slap you? Screaming sirens, strobes, Someone's bad day, my green light-All is in balance.

October meeting: Raindrops gather on the glass, Entwine, and vanish.

We become brothers, Extending olive branches For past transgressions. Our impermanence: Two ships passing in the night In an endless sea.

The small, plump sparrow Sits inside the chain link fence, Perfectly fitting.

Your thoughts drift through you, Formless as silky white clouds-Poof! They dissipate Runners in the night
The synchrony of four limbs,
Fading out of sight.

Sunshine pouring down, Brilliant sky devoid of clouds-So much summer left!

A stroll through the woods Broken branch as walking stick-Splinters in my palm. Hello, stinging friend, Your yellow suit striped all black, In love with flowers.

Stream consumes a stone-Not a memory remains Of the river's stone.

Swift lightning fingers
Tear the fabric of darkness,
Sew it with thunder.

To take off Man's coat, Wind's anger always loses To the sun's kindness.

The tree full of birds Falls silent as I approach, Frightened by the ape.

Twin yolks in the egg-Would they have been blood brothers, Masters of the coop? Headwater, delta Rivers in each other's arms Flowing out to sea.

She tills the soft earth, Summoning life, drawing breath With warm rain fingers.

What millions of thoughts Passed through us in our silence, Unsaid, understood?

A creaking wheelchair, These shimmering summer leaves-First time I've...seen them

What is it, old age? Staring at the face of God Through white cataracts.

The blossoming tree: Wispy white rivulet curls Like Grandmother's hair. Am I a garden?
Gray hair sprouting on my head
From the summer rain.

A raindrop or two? Now, I don't mind that at all! But a thunderstorm?

On the fishing pier,
The wood creaks beneath my weight
And the fish aren't fooled.

Another red light-How long do I spend waiting For the perfect time?

A man dressed in black, A lawn chair in a graveyard-A sweet reunion.

Do not waste your pain-The cruelty of a blue sky Must be remembered. In a silent room, Sitting with my memory, Listening to rain.

A snow in April-Tenuous, like poetry Uttered, forgotten

All the songs of birds-Did God curse them, like Babel, And confuse their tongues? From the untamed field, For you, a yellow bouquet-Fresh dandelions.

A black umbrella, Rippling in the gray wind's gusts-Everything is clouds...

Give me golden skies, Storms shattering midday heat-Give me summer, now! Sunset's swirling clouds-Did God spill milk in the sky While drinking his tea?

An empty light post-Completely useless at night Except for the dog.

Play me your trombone, O you bullfrog maestro, From your lily pad! How many raindrops Must land upon my black hair Before I turn home?

It was not your fault,
The accident of your birth,
The curse of desire.

The waterwheel turns, Human souls at the millstone-It's all samsara. The Spring of Man came
Fall was inevitableHis will couldn't bend Time.

Cleaning once again-Keeping entropy at bay In my living room.

Tilling fertile fields In Mount Diablo's shadow-Distant Spanish song. Lilac fingernails
Lilacs blooming in the fieldsThe smell of water.

Your tongue in my mouth-How long can a fire smolder, Nocturnal mother?

Save yourself the tears! Don't waste the skin of your knees Weeping in the rain. I, too, like the snow Melt in the presence of spring-Rosy, blushing cheeks

Snowmen in the park, Lamenting the sun's return, Counting numbered days.

Roadside teddy bear-A hasty memorial Under the oak tree. Outside my window, Seasons pass, yet I remain, Withering, like leaves...

Sisyphus scowling, His stone slides down the steep slope-Still he smiles, somehow.

Bulbous, heavy clouds Waddle past, pregnant with rain-Thunderstorm mothers. Suddenly, summer-Sunbeams scatter through the haze, Summoning thunder.

A slow mist rising,
A lone crow's echoing callThe smell of fresh rain.

To seize lightning bolts
In the soft meat of my hand
And throw them at Zeus!

The wanderer's choice:
To pace the paved asphalt path
Or begrime the shoes?

Be gentle to you
For a flower cannot bloom
Under acid rain.
-Collaboration with Shannon Smith