

one-line twos



kala ramesh & marlene mountain

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These four one-line haiku: *she draws, where forest meets, three-fourths, mild breeze*, were published in a slightly different version in Moonset, Kernelsonline, Presence and 3 Lights

**one-line twos**

What is it about one-line haiku that fascinates me?

Is it because it's truly a one-breath poem? Or is it that each time I read one, the single line seems to break in a different place, swinging me into unknown seas?

Way back in 2006, when I was new to haikai writing, one-line haiku were uncommon, but I feverishly wrote many and sent them off to Marlene Mountain and Janice M. Bostok, two poets who wrote such good one-line haiku. Both responded with valuable comments and later Marlene recognized my one-line and other haiku on Facebook. With this encouragement, Marlene and I decided, in May of 2015, to write sequences of one-line haiku. We began in early May and continued until the end of August. No rules, no compulsions . . . we just wrote and had fun.

It was Marlene's idea to write one-line twos and arrange them in sets of six verses, with the two of us alternately writing the first verse of each set. In our emails, we exchanged news and wrote about many other things— on everything but the verse we'd just offered!

The editors of *Bones* liked our haiku so much that they were reluctant to just pick one six-line sequence for publication

in their journal, so here you will find our outpourings—all 96 one-line verses.

Marlene and I were inspired to write together and very much appreciate the editors, Johannes S. H. Bjerg, Melissa Allen and Aditya Bahl for publishing these sequences as a pdf booklet, which they have added to the *Bones* "library".

Kala Ramesh

Pune, India.

22nd November 2015

kala ramesh & marlene mountain

1

morning village hazy cows in different postures  
now that the first iris blooms i can go on

a wounded cobra drags its length across leaf month  
old art pillaged an oil spill spills wild as it wants

the river carries the raga of a thousand moons  
it does get back up a wide sky

2

a swallowtail loses its edges in the talk of shadows \*  
toe rings tinkle amma's autumn pace

where kidnapped raped married killed a world of girls  
banyan roots hang on a maze of relationships

before the dew unsettles a cardinal dries off the sun  
to see a mountain temple tilt at the hairpin bend

notes

kala long links in 1; marlene long links in 2

\* butterfly

1

overcast even more the second day of sundrops  
a distant call your voice near my breath

basho rebelled was rebelled against how neat is that  
she draws a bucket her face from the well

kudzu vines nibbled to the ground the take-over deer \*  
where forest meets water fireflies explode the night

2

the gibbous moon a one-breast enticer amongst stars  
i live outside my window inside

labourers' wombs ignited in the city's long power cut  
first lily opens possibilities impossible

her nipples through the t-shirt this self-awareness  
already wiser no need for older

notes

marlene long links in 1; kala long links in 2

\* a plant imported from japan uncontrolled

1

white horses gallop on colours beyond the horizon  
early morning still with me ramblin' rose

the lie betrayed a hundredfold cracked mirror mirror  
eternal crap dubya & dick \*

in twilight qualms the reek of loneliness stalks the ego  
overwhelmed by green the sky

2

just a touch of deer within tall things that just grow  
the mind dreams dreams pillows let go

the young killer fell for racist dogma a world so full of it  
in and out from an ensō the sound of om

we've been led up to summer solstice to be let down again  
our son settles in a far-away land

notes

kala long links in 1; marlene long links in 2

\* usa president *bush* & vice-president *cheney*, 2001-2009

1

on the fly only an adolescent whitetail the heat \*  
your face in the space autumn left

a civil rights day thunder stormed all over the night  
three-fourths of the himalayas unseen my fear

*'when god was a woman'* a start on past present future \*\*  
an oriental lark foretells morning light with a song

2

mild breeze breadth of the wheat field's whisper  
she 'now don't get ill' to his raised voice

this forest fire shocks the sun ghost white  
empty chair goldenrods beyond

taking flight a butterfly blinks on owl eyes  
deep in the melon a poet's next right

notes

marlene long links in 1; kala long links in 2

\* dragonfly. the young male has the wing pattern of the male and the body colors and pattern of the female

\*\* book by merlin stone

1

on a leaf an inchworm stretches the inch prowls the air  
taller the purple the less it has a name

after these fake rains i resolve never to lie again  
the very limb that may not last a crow

at day's end the waxing moon in conversation  
disappeared a tiny poem barely begun

2

blood of 9 more the confederate flag brought to its knees \*  
deep within you and me the untouched

testosterone at the pond she chooses one blue dasher to lay \*\*  
the self lost in the breath of the starry night

picture this a picture from three billion miles away a pluto  
a storyline snatched from my dream space

notes

kala long links in 1; marlene long links in 2

\* charleston sc events. the symbol of racism/hate

\*\* dragonfly

1

on a roll warmongers hard-peddle america the only  
her plait in step with her hips a string of jasmine

evening primrose open long enough a hummingbird  
waves climb to a steep drop the seaside fort

odor of bear fur more of the joe-pye weed taller this year  
those translucent cheeks as we peel onions

2

from emptiness comes form says the buddha in the heart sutra  
across the top of water and all over minds

neti, neti, not this, not this, i negate the world around me  
deep-rooted so ancient bared sculpture a cover-up

bending over to kiss her cold forehead now these tears  
sometimes a sadness being in haiku

note

marlene long links in 1; kala long links in 2

1

fog moves in downward yellow of the daylily patch  
free of fetters songs the birds sing

in my lifetime we won't see the death of all sea animals  
an ant an ant a sugargrain many times their weight

a black swallowtail dries off flutters above the world it left  
fireflies circling beyond circles the silence

2

ashes immersed for centuries we've done that to rivers  
i feel my way thru the field i no longer roam

the raw strength in her step over boundaries unlimited  
trees surround an overcast grown tall

a feeble inner voice voices the distant thunder  
one of those if only moments won't let go

note

marlene long links in 1; kala long links in 2

1

last of its skin sloughed the lizard suns in the wind  
a boomerang from my childhood no return

hiroshima 70 more years of guns and drums and hurtful talk  
strains of the shehnai fall gently on the morning dew \*

cool august night the spell of a darkened moon pulls beneath  
a green vine snake curves on the air it breathes

2

between past and future thoughts alone an autumn lyric  
a change in the sun two deer stretch the field

along with birds the path seems like no path at all  
women in combat no take out every man

boxed in i search for a key to open spaces i dream of  
right to choose content haiku poets content

notes

marlene long links in 1; kala long links in 2

\*a wind/reed instrument popular in indian classical music

Being an editor can give you a luxury-problem (as we say in Denmark): you're sent pages of poems from which you cannot possibly choose one or two, the whole lot being so ... whole, one coherent "entity" of writing you cannot pick apart and hope to be able to sleep well afterwards. This was the case with the series of sequences, or a sequence of sequences, sent by Kala Ramesh and Marlene Mountain, two of today's great writers of haiku.

Who in their right mind wouldn't grab the chance to somehow preserve this collaboration, this conversation, this "call and response" from the USA to India and from India to America; available to readers across the world!

To pick one sequence for 'Bones' wasn't going to do their work any justice and, if we'd picked just one for the journal, I would have hated to omit the rest of this great, giving, expanding, dynamic and first of all 'knowing' sequence of sequences. 'Knowing' because Kala and Marlene are women who 'know' about the world, the good and the bad things in it, and they're not afraid to drag that knowledge into haiku. And why should they be? Haiku isn't about writing lovely sceneries and sticking to culturally foreign kigo. Haiku is a process of digesting the fact of being, of living where and when your actual life is lived, and there's nothing that

can't be written about. Haiku is about real life, it doesn't belong to a special 'cosy, emotionally deep, cherry-blossom-coloured corner of life;' no, it's also about hazy cows, dim presidents, power cuts, women's rights, absurd politics and ... you name it.

So, at 'Bones' we're grateful that Marlene and Kala agreed to our suggestion to make their submission for the regular journal into a book(let), and we're very happy to be able to bring these gems to the readers.

Højby 2016  
Johannes S. H. Bjerg

