

OTOROSHI

JOURNAL



Dear Readers,

Finally, at long last, for your reading pleasure, Issue 1, Volume 4 of Otoroshi Journal. First off, thank you to everyone for your patience and understanding. Many of you follow us on social media and know the personal battles we've both been facing, but we're going to persevere and keep Otoroshi going as long as we can. We feel that horrorku and related forms don't get the attention they deserve, and with so few markets publishing this niche within niche poetry, it would be difficult to quit now.

In this issue, you'll also find the top poems in our first renga contest. We had a lot of fun judging the contest, and were surprised and delighted at the variety of entries. Everyone who submitted should be proud of what they accomplished and should keep working on submissions for next year's contest.

We hope you enjoy this final issue of 2021, and look forward to reading your work for 2022. As always, thank you for reading our journal and dancing through these nightmares with us.

Sincerely,
Joshua Gage & Lori A Minor



OTOROSHI
RENGAY CONTEST
2021 WINNERS

FIRST PLACE
DEPARTURES

sudden chill —
a hand
on the bonfire

*empty bleach bottles
still this stubborn stain*

bagged clothes —
dark pools
within

*motel room
so many names
on his passports*

in a suitcase
bits and pieces

*screech owl...
walking on
without a blink*

Alan Peat and *Sherry Grant*

COMMENTARY

“Departures” is an original piece that doesn't use stereotypical horror tropes. There is an ominous and mysterious mood that makes the reader's skin crawl without being over the top. It's a slowly paced poem that creates a solid arch, taking the reader on a smooth, subtle ride.

SECOND PLACE
ENDLESS

barren hillside
the earth torn open
where the crypt was

*a single crow
on splintered wood*

long black coat
he stalks the village
with the usual knife

*after the kill
he cuts
fresh pieces*

tailor's shop
a broken window

*at the edge
of his new face
bloodied stitches*

Pris Campbell and *Alan Peat*

COMMENTARY

“Endless” is a solid røngag that starts slow and builds with vivid imagery and a disturbing tension. We felt like we were stuck in a horror film like Jeepers Creepers merged with Silence of the Lambs. The body horror is there, but it’s not obvious and explicit, which makes it that much more terrifying.

THIRD PLACE
CRIMSON THREAD

first strand
of a spiderweb—
glissando

*dissonance....
the cello plays without strings*

daughter cell—
the crone cuts
the cord

*palm reading
her finger hovers over
my severed life line*

embalmer's thread unspooling
the sole of my shoe

*étui
the needle slips
through the eye*

Pippa Phillips and *Jonathan Roman*

COMMENTARY

What we loved about “Crimson Thread” is that there’s no narrative arch. It’s a series of different images and topics that move from horror to horror without sticking to one theme or plot, but the links and shifts work seamlessly to create a nightmarish and mythic poem.

HONORABLE MENTION
NIGHT ECHOES

moonlight –
nothing to choose between
water and blood

*in mirror pieces
her kajal-lined eyes*

wide open
blue
clouding over

*pulling out
one more needle
from the voodoo doll*

an empty chair
begins to rock

*dead of night
in the doorway
webbed footprints*

Alan Peat and *Hifsa Ashraf*

COMMENTARY

“Night Echoes” is a more abstract piece, but the ambiguity leads to a suspense that works. It’s a simple and direct poem that’s muted in tone, but effective in its use of chilling concepts and ideas.

HONORABLE MENTION
UNDER THE COVERS

deserted house
a blink of light
in the empty window

*creaking floorboards
I am seven again*

following me
around the parlour
the portrait's eyes

*after I hear it
her did you hear that?!
our heartbeats*

the tiny spider's
giant shadow

*hairs standing
on end—the rustle
under the covers*

Jacquie Pierce and *Alan S. Bridges*

COMMENTARY

“Under the Covers” is a new and clever take on the Haunted House trope. Readers are left wondering if these events actually happened or if it’s the speaker’s mind playing tricks on them. As judges, there were points where we felt this all too closely, as though it were actually happening to us.

HONORABLE MENTION
BLOOD SACRIFICE

graveside manner
the shadow sorts body parts
for its creation

bones clicking
whispers of ghouls

a hiss of gas
twisting out
of the incision

chipped gravestone
the forked tongue licks
ancient words

sacred blade symbol
the sickle moon scar

eclipsed eyes
sifting through ashes
the dead heart

John Hawkhead and *Hifsa Ashraf*

COMMENTARY

“Blood Sacrifice” is a menacing and sinister poem. It reads as traditional demonic horror, but the striking and unnerving images carry the poem forward. This is traditional but straight out of a hellish nightmare.

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COVER ART BY NELLIE ALLEN

autopsy table
I look down
at my corpse

MARIEL HERBERT

ruptured pimple
on school picture day
roachs pour out

mermaid singing
ten rows of teeth
touch sailors' hearts

RICHA SHARMA

deep fire a face re-forms

sickle moon
by the window sill
a spasmed breath

ALAN PEAT

blood moon
snail trails silver
on open eyes

where sea meets land
they buried her
the girl who lay
with devils
behind a stook of corn

SUSAN BURCH

shear delight Atropos cuts my thread from the tapestry

JOHN HAWKHEAD

creaks in the roof
the attic hatch
not how I left it

RICH SCHILLING

date night
extra body butter for her
rotting flesh

all by himself
the toddler's first steps
into the cornfield

BRYAN RICKERT

blood moon
the chupacabra catches
my scent

family camping
the bite of a chainsaw
into bone

JACKIE CHOU

night market
a hanging pig
rolls its eyes

dark alley
the moans
of a tongueless woman

KEITH EVETTS

witching hour
after the last bus
another bus

JOSHUA ST. CLAIRE

lunar eclipse putting it in his drink

no salt -
the voices behind the wall
whisper

old attic hush
the jinn becomes alive
from childhood stories

RICHARD L. MATTA

falling crow shadows the headstone

DANIELA MISSO

foggy evening
crossing the rails
a man without head

yellow breeze -
Ship of the Dead
enters the bay

KELLY SAUVAGE

bare branches
the weight
of her bones

CONTRIBUTORS

Hifsa Ashraf is an award-winning poet, author, editor, story writer, and social activist. Please visit her twitter handle [@hifsays](https://twitter.com/hifsays) to view her recent published work.

Susan Burch is a good egg.

Jackie Chou is a poet of short form and free verse poetry residing in sunny Southern California, who has work published in *Alien Buddha Zine*, *Spillwords*, *Fever's of the Mind Poetry Digest*, and others.

Keith Evetts has published research in *Nature* and other scientific journals. More recently his poems have appeared in *The Oxford Magazine*, *The Linnet's Wings* and *The Cherita*, and haiku and related forms in various journals. Married, with five grown kids, a grey parrot and a sense of humor.

John Hawkhead is a writer of short form poetry and haiku who has won many international haiku contests. With more than a thousand published poems, he has been listed on *The European Top 100 Most Creative Haiku Authors* for the past ten years. His book *Small Shadows* is from Alba Publishing.

Marigel Herbert's poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Failed Haiku*, *Haiku Dialogue*, *Liminality*, *Scifaikuest*, and *tsuri-doro*, among others. She lives in California with her family, and online at marigelherbert.wordpress.com.

Karl-Brandt, Deborah, *1981, lives in Bonn with her husband, two rabbits, and numerous books. Her haiku have won her prizes and honorable mentions. They appeared in national and international journals, as well as in anthologies, yearbooks, and on calendars.

Ngô Binh Anh Khoa is a teacher of English currently living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In his free time, he enjoys daydreaming and writing speculative poetry for entertainment. His poems have appeared in *Scifaikuest*, *Weirdbook*, *Star*Ling*, *Spectral Realms*, and elsewhere.

Originally from Russia, **Roman Lyakhovtsky** now lives in Israel. He holds a PhD in cell biology and currently works in the field of drug safety in clinical research. His haiku appeared in *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Scifaikuest*, among other journals.

Richard Matta grew up in New York's Hudson Valley and resides in San Diego, California. His poems are in *Healing Muse*, *New Verse News*, *California Quarterly*, with haiku in *Frogpond*, *Bottle Rockets*, *Presence*, *Wales Haiku*, and many other haiku journals.

Daniela Misso lives in a medieval village in Umbria Italy. Her haiku and senryu have been published all over the world. She was awarded 1st Place in the 2021 *AAA Annual Hortensia Anderson Memorial Awards* and 2nd Place in the 2021 *UHTS Fleeting Words Tanka Contest*. Follow her: <https://laodikepoetry.blogspot.com> and [@MissoDaniela](#)

Alan Peat F.R.S.A., F.H.A. is a UK based poet and author. In 2021 he placed third in the *International Golden Triangle Haiku Contest*, second in the *N.Z. International Haiku Contest*, and came both first and second (with Sherry Grant and Pris Campbell) in the *Otoroshi Rengay* contest.

Bryan Rickert, the current Haiku Society of America Midwest Regional Coordinator, has been published in many fine journals and anthologies. He is the Co-Editor of *Failed Haiku Journal of Senryu* and edits *The Living Senryu Anthology*. Bryan has two books available: *Fish Kite* (Cyberwit Publishing) and *Dust and Stone*, co-written with Peter Jastermsky (Velvet Dusk Publishing).

Joshua St. Clair is a certified public accountant who works for a small company in Pennsylvania. He enjoys writing poetry on coffee breaks and after putting the kids to bed. His work has appeared in print, around the web, and on sticky notes on his computer monitor.

Kelly Savage spends her days exploring the literary, visual and performing arts. Prone to wandering, she travels the US, seeking answers to the big questions within the food, music and handiwork of others. Kelly is co-editor of *Failed Haiku*.

Rich Schilling writes what the voices in his head tell him. He haunts Webster Groves, MO. Instagram: [@rjssix](https://www.instagram.com/rjssix)

Richa Sharma loves to write Japanese short poems inspired by her love for nature and literature. Her work has appeared in numerous reputed haiku journals like *Presence*, *Failed Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *#FemkuMag*, and others.