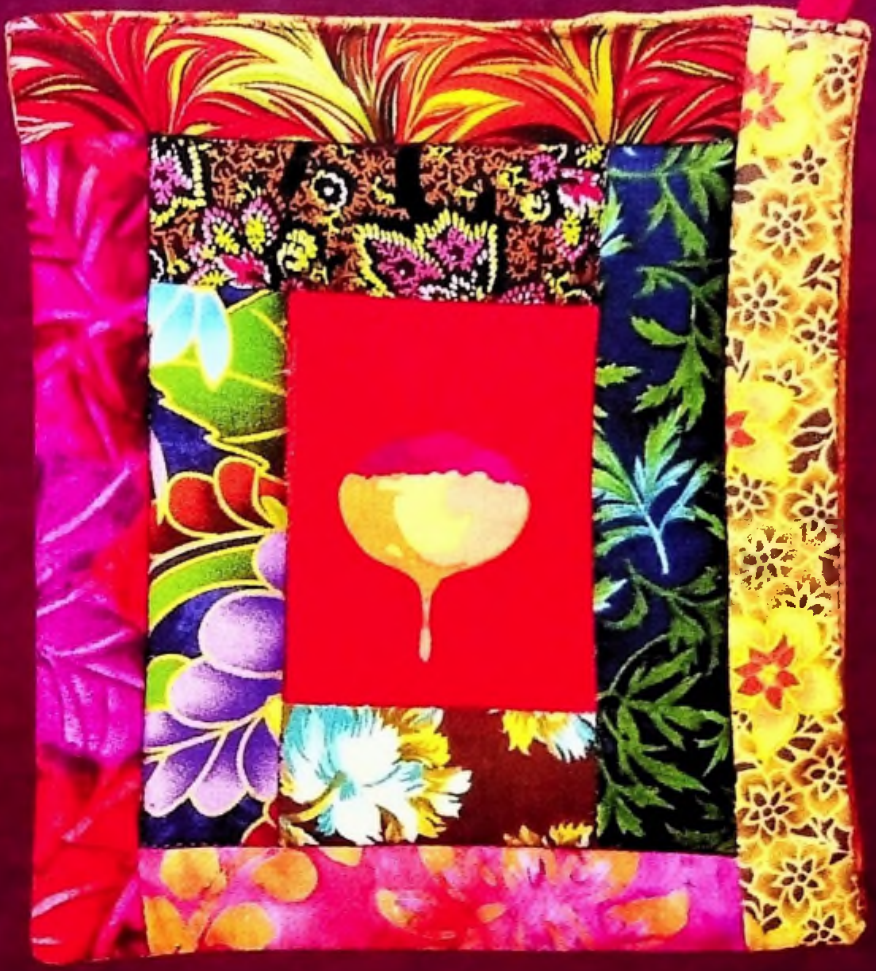
The Winter Garden



Haiku by Jack Barry

The Winter Garden

Also by Jack Barry:

After the Eclipse

All Night Rain

Swamp Candles

The Hermit's Handbook

For Jim
Where would we be
without y'all —
Jack

The Winter Garden

Haiku by Jack Barry

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2016

For Mary Leue,
still growing at 96—
my favorite winter garden.

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I want to thank all you readers, students and fans of haiku for appreciating the subtle and therefore all too often overlooked vigor of this, the world's most compact literary form. Next I must thank the editors and publishers who create the structure of our little haiku universe—without you we would all be wandering around mumbling our poems to ourselves. Finally I need to thank my friend Jim Weigang, the Man Behind the Curtain, who not only provided both photos and designed the cover, but also ran technical interference for me right through to the end.

I like to hear from readers, so feel free to contact me—I check my e-mail religiously every two or three weeks . . .

swampcandles@gmail.com

— Jack Barry
May 2016

Drifting in a sultry day on the sluggish waters of the pond, I almost cease to live and begin to be.

— Henry David Thoreau

straight
down
sun
children's
backyard
see-saw
left

hanging

tangled sheets
trying to remember
poems from a dream

bedroom curtains
belly open
where your skin is whitest

your lips in the morning frantic geese

boy practicing trumpet finally the sun clears the trees

distant thunder
a butterfly passes through
bicycle spokes

dents
in the stone mason's wheelbarrow
still no rain

thunderheads
all the fledged swallows
back in the nest

trying to decide
just when to bolt
the fawn's fading spots

lightning flash the cat jumps out of his own shadow

bend in the stream
the great blue heron
turns his head

the smell of sweet fern following the hermit thrush

not a word all day
at last the heron
lunges into fog

white
caps
one
cliff
swallow
sails
away
from
the
rest

following the wrack line
the one-legged gull's
perfect prints

the whole line of ducks
pops over a wave
already gone

summer passing
the rescued robin flees
my open hand

blueberry blossoms
float along the current
the sinking moon

landing back
among the tall reeds
the heron folds his wings

moon shadows sharpen the hermit thrush's dying notes

searching for the bittern
sunset shadows
gather into one

banjo
suddenly
out
of
tune
first
evening
cool

retired early raking up the first few fallen leaves

Missing Child poster
Boston Ivy clings
to a high brick wall

ladybug searches
for a crack in the wall
wind through bare branches

one white mushroom September dusk

cold
sun
barely
making
it
to
the
top
of
the
hill

rain drops tapping fallen leaves missing my step

t'ai chi in the rain
a wisp of wood smoke
rises through the trees

high cries of geese milkweed fluff letting go

jumbled boulders
a blue jay feather
twists downstream

balled up spider
the curve of the earth
covers the moon

rustling leaves
the old dog brings back
the wrong stick

frost in the shadows
faces on a bus
pulling out

wondering what
you meant that day
tangled bittersweet

empty beach
out of season tourists
turn the other way

fog horn a single cormorant beats over the darkening sea

tide
going
out
the
old
couple
leans
closer

whispering strangers
dry leaves skitter
over frozen ground

white haired now
pausing half way
across the bridge

sun still
warming my face
the daylight moon

pushing garlic
into cold ground
remembering her voice

funeral mourners'
shadows dip into
the open grave

snow
flakes
not
landing
the
old
cat's
silent
meow

paper wasp nest torn open December wind

wild turkeys
bending the lowest branches
winter rain

one doe keeps watch
while the others nibble
frozen apples

back at the truck
empty-handed hunter
searches for his keys

children's laughter
the last two leaves
shiver on the maple

café chairs stacked on the tables the blue at dusk

snow until dark
the long line of tail lights
heading home

shoveling the driveway alone winter dusk

one light upstairs
snow still piled on
the widow's front steps

piles of sticks
left ungathered
the winter garden

I sat my first ten-day Vipassana course in 1985 . . .

first meditator
settles in her blanket
a small patch of moon

chattering mind
snow flakes skitter over
frozen ground

snoring neighbor
I remember Buddha means
Awakened One

second day kicking fallen branches off the path

third day aimless snow flakes finally sticking

four days silent
my face at the bottom
of my empty cup

slowly stirring his tea the old man checks his watch

dust in the corners trying to remember your last words

still following my breath
a distant train rumbles
through the night

snow gathering all day meditation

wind moans
across the roof
straightening my back

last one left in the hall snow before dark

meditator's walk
stepping in the other students'
deep footprints

just a trickle
from the frozen stream
two chickadees

white foam spins
in a river eddy
my passing shadow

Noble Silence over
the first guy I talk to
doesn't speak English

4 AM
meditation
a
plume
of
woodsmoke
rises
to
the
moon

fresh
deer
tracks
the
silence
inside
the
snowbound
cabin

blue snow drifts the curve of the moon at dawn

noon sun
never clears the trees
the silent passing raven

lowering our voices
as we step into
the snow-bent pines

moon shadows spreading
over unbroken snow
an owl's softest call

dead of night
the overnight log
thumps in the wood stove

guttering
candle
bending
to
kiss
your
downy
neck

melting stream that same chickadee's same two notes

clear sap drips
from bare maples
the first few stars

the whole t'ai chi class
kicks to the east
snow on the wind

cancer again the page corners folded in the seed catalogue

boy's jacket
in the thrift store window
faded blue

one year later
the dead boy's name
spoken out loud

first time the little girl
says my name
rain on old snow

returning geese
wood smoke pours back in
the open window

halter scars on the old mare's face the last of the snow

stallion's
ears
flatten
April
wind

black channel cuts
through pond ice
the hawk's thin cry

empty milkweed pods
the rain-swelled river
crests its banks

goose on her eggs
the black beyond
the crescent moon

finally letting her hair go gray daffodil tips

old farmer
takes the passenger seat
spring rain

singing her heart out
all the car windows
rolled up tight

wiggling
her
baby
tooth
rain
on
new
leaves

every light
on upstairs
first spring peepers

remission telling her story a little faster

folding away
that old love letter
swallows in the rain

the old man's sigh
Tibetan prayer flags
torn by the wind

fog bound pond the white throated sparrow calls again

single mother
rocks her baby
rocking herself

farewell tears
beside the railroad tracks
a whiff of chamomile

hot
wind
the
little
boy
asks
if
he
can
play
too

mourning doves
calling through dusk
your gauzy summer dress

luna moth
dances through the truck stop
the rising moon

shooting star across the whole field just one firefly

spiders weave
their webs at dawn
the veery's spiral call

wind-blown marsh grass
watching until both hawks
disappear

longest
day
just
a
chickadee
tips
the
see
saw

In a world overwhelmed by clamoring voices,
haiku offers living proof that the less said the better.

— Stuart Tarry

Jack Barry lives in the hills
of Western Massachusetts.
This is his fourth volume of haiku.

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