

The background of the cover is a watercolor wash in shades of yellow, green, and blue. A horizontal line of small, dark, bird-like silhouettes stretches across the upper half. On the right side, there is a large, vertical, dark blue shape with a wavy, organic edge, resembling a stylized rock formation or a large leaf. A thin, dark blue line runs horizontally across the middle of the cover, passing behind the title and the large blue shape.

SHARING SOLITAIRE

Michael Morical

SHARING SOLITAIRE: HAIKU AND RELATED POEMS

Michael Morical

Finishing Line Press
Georgetown, Kentucky

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Shamrock Haiku Journal: "Rice in Husk."

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"Moving Day."

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*For my parents, my brother Jim, Chan Master Sheng-yen
and my life partner Yu-wen Fan*

Moving day

a book of linked haikus

The book begins with a preface by the author, "Moving day". The first three and last three poems are "Chiang Town", "Wandering Home", "Dreaming". These poems offer an insight into the author's life and the challenges he faces as a poet and a person.

Spring wholeness

the dawn's first light

the words in her poetry

The collection is a book of linked haikus and short poems. The poems are written in English and are inspired by the author's life and the challenges he faces as a poet and a person.

Foreword

Reading Michael Morical's collection of haiku and other poems, *Sharing Solitaire*, is like eating peanuts. One consumes one poem after another until every one is gone. Luckily, of course, readers can return again and again for more and on each new encounter they will discover that the collection evolves as they read (and reread), the haiku becoming subtler and more complex and providing more and more surprises, like this early poem that sets the tone for so much that is to come:

Cicada drone
drowns conversation.
Our hairy legs touch.

This haiku introduces one of the Morical's central subjects: distance and contact (usually unplanned or accidental as it is here) between human beings, beautifully encapsulated in the title: *Sharing Solitaire*. Often, as here, the poet parts company with familiar haiku guidelines, which helps underscore the tension and the unexpectedness in each poem's small drama.

As the collection progresses, Morical edges closer to the prosody of non-haiku poetry making good use of metaphor, pun, and irony, sometimes beyond or beneath the concentrated "moment" of suspended images.

Moving day,
a box of naked Barbies
left behind.

This haiku begins the chapbook's second section, "Manhattan." The first, third and fourth sections are "Chishang, Taiwan"; "Wandering Home"; "Brooklyn." These divisions offer another shape to the collection: a discontinuous, semi-circular journey between continents, countries, and cultures:

Sipping whiskey,
she doesn't mind
the weeds in her paddy.

The contrasts in cultures are both global and local (China and North America; Manhattan and Brooklyn) which parallel, of course, the tensions in human relationships:

Packed in the G,
we hold our briefcases high,
belts rubbing.

Morical's haiku are at times slyly surreal:

Stone frog
under museum glass,
thinking of water.

dark and edgy:

In my mailbox
a rubber copy of your ear,
bagged and tagged.

Often they are just plain amazing:

Out on bail,
I take a slice of apple
from a busker's knife.

Most of his haiku are experiments in form as one is accustomed to reading, especially in European haiku journals as in the title poem:

Commuters connect
GameBoys by cable,
sharing solitaire.

All his haiku "and related poems" treat the subject of nature as Mizuhara Shôûshi describes it in a recent essay in *Modern Haiku* (38:3): "... when we recite a superior haiku, we have the feeling that it is truer than Nature itself because something exists in the haiku that captures our heart. That something is none other than 'literary truth'." Shôûshi's statement, of course, applies to all poetry.

— Philip Miller

Mount Union, Pennsylvania
March 28, 2008

CHISHANG, TAIWAN

A train stops in Chishang,
hawkers hollering.
No one gets off.

Stacked stone by stone,
wall around a field of weeds
where the path turns.

Bent ninety degrees
she shuffles to market,
dragging her shadow.

Rice in husk
dries on the street –
an eye out for chickens.

Sipping whiskey,
she doesn't mind
the weeds in her paddy.

A visitor finds
tangles of prickly vines,
tonic in the weeds.

— Philip Miller
Major, Union, Pennsylvania
March 28, 2008

Cicada drone
drowns conversation.
Our hairy legs touch.

Home from market,
bag empty of the bitter
greens he sold.

A toothless vendor
grins, ladling sweet
potato soup.

Three old men
wait for a lady
feeding her ducks.

Bitter melons
grow from cracks in the sidewalk –
tonight's soup.

You leave at planting –
yard full of seedlings,
chilies out to dry.

MANHATTAN

In mountain fog
I ride by memory,
skirting the edges.

Water towers down,
he divvies rain
he saved in the typhoon.

Uprooted by wind,
lilies cross a lake
the morning after.

Horizon dissolves.
Silence casts a flicker
over the expanse.

Paid mourner
in the bed of a pickup
waits for his cue.

Leaving town:
Mountains shrink in the rear-
view mirror.

MANHATTAN

Moving day,
a box of naked Barbies
left behind.

Standing in a dumpster,
he drops a piston rod
in his shopping cart.

I land on my gut
facedown on Broadway,
balanced on beer.

Old-time religion:
Don't worry about fungus,
bang that tambourine!

I take the *Times*
from a trashcan and read
around the gum.

From the war protest,
cotton candy blows
onto my tongue.

Thoughts ahead,
feet gaining ground,
I step on your shoe.

Paths collide
face to face on the station steps –
no ground given.

Bottle on a stream
sails between rails,
no train.

Brought together
by a busted main,
we run the subway mazes.

The F pushes breeze
over a sultry platform –
out of service.

Coming and going,
two men meet
in the closing doors.

Packed in the G,
we hold our briefcases high,
belts rubbing.

Break dance on the el,
Statue of Liberty framed
in window scratchings.

He reads *Frankenstein*
aloud through three boroughs,
the express slows.

Walking the A,
she taps cardboard that says
Please, where is to go?

For Giona

Staring on the F,
a boy asks me:
Where are your teeth?

Commuters connect
GameBoys by cable,
sharing solitaire.

WANDERING HOME

In the café car,
a stranger playing poker
speaks my memories.

Neon Santa
straddling a funeral home
waves to the sunset.

First to deplane,
I'm shown the door
to missing stairs.

A brook feeds the stream.
One reflection trickles
into another.

Peace Bridge:
Mountains and river lead
to a dusty road.

A shattered motor scooter
bakes on the sidewalk –
one shoe.

Facing skyscrapers,
an acre in cabbage
and an old bathtub.

Stone frog
under museum glass,
thinking of water.

Camped in the station,
a family shares
one man's dinner.

Greyhound all night:
a bottle rolls up and down
someone's life story.

Sunset
smokes cornfields
billowing fallow.

She snaps up
in her death trance:
Better start dinner.

I slip a rosary
into the stiff hands
that kneaded my bread.

Absence arrives.
The patch of ice between us
floats away.

Special Delivery:
a dozen death certificates,
no forwarding.

My bare ass
sags in a mirror I make
believe is curved.

Crossing off a day,
I wait till the month is gone
and a page is turned.

We meet in a thresh-
old, pass a bottle
and share the rain.

Two equations
tumble into marriage –
long division.

I throw out pictures
of your ex in a bathtub.
You won't ask.

After a thunderstorm,
you decode the darkness
behind my window.

You scrub the floor,
slopping Mr. Clean,
listing my sins.

We walk the graveyard
before our child is born,
looking for a name.

Train assembled,
you ring sleigh bells
for our son's dream.

Back home to air-con,
not a stick of furniture.
You left me a wrench.

Currents meet
at the ship's forward edge.
We divide our share.

Facing windows,
two shut-ins
look out.

BROOKLYN

I learn Brooklyn
getting lost alone,
the snow sticks.

Heads down,
ducks circle the pool
in a frozen lake.

A flowering crab
holds clumps of snow
where blossoms go.

She side-steps
an icy stone path,
walking through footprints.

In my mailbox
a rubber copy of your ear,
bagged and tagged.

Morning melts
the snow on bare trees.
Your face is showing.

BROOKLYN

The path between
snow-covered hills
and a meadow sprouting.

After the windstorm,
a dead branch falls
with the weight of rain.

Wings tilted,
a heron against the wind
glides backwards.

A pigeon lands on
the rip in my awning,
falling through.

Lake shimmers up
on the bottoms of leaves
coming down.

Out on bail,
I take a slice of apple
from a busker's knife.

I turn to face
the footsteps behind me –
wind and leaves.

Sharing a blanket
under the bridge, we listen
to Thanksgiving rain.

Sitting in a flurry:
When I know the heron's here,
it flies away.

About the Author

Michael Morical grew up in Indianapolis. Remembered for stealing the pitcher's mound, he got a B.A. from Indiana University in East Asian Languages and Literatures with a concentration in Chinese studies. This led to work in Taiwan as an English teacher and assistant mis-translator of B movie subtitles. Much of his writing is based on what he has seen and experienced living and working in Asia. He has studied poetry with Marie Ponsot, Marilyn Hacker, Judith Baumel, and Elaine Equi.

His work has appeared in several magazines, including *The New York Quarterly*, *Rattapallax*, *The Antigoniish Review*, *The California Quarterly*, *GSU Review*, *Chan Magazine*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *The Same*, and *NYCBigCityLit.com*. One of his poems is in *Ghost of a Chance*, an anthology of contemporary ghost poems edited by Gloria Vando and Philip Miller.



Sharing Solitaire enlivens the haiku, turning it into a freewheeling all-terrain vehicle. Nature and human nature, from melon patch to subway station, give Morical witty, touching, vivid images. He takes the given world in by surprise, with its grit and beauty. Michael Morical is master of words fit to transport his look-out outlook.

—Marie Ponsot

Michael Morical can conjure stories in a trice—a busted fragment, an incisive observation—and more, he knows what's important about them. These brief capsules will make you nod your head with recognition, and shake it with rue, but mostly they will make you care, and that's the hardest job for a writer to do.

—Jim Kacian

The camera shutter of of Morical's quick wit and sight captures the odd moment, the eccentric scene or the truth unspoken between lovers. These are instants that hold your attention with their vibrancy and eclectic vision.

—Karen Swenson

Raised in Indianapolis, **Michael Morical** studied East Asian Languages and Literatures at Indiana University. That led him to Taiwan, Japan and India where he taught English and wrote about life there. He holds an M.A. from the City College of New York. He is currently a freelance editor in Taipei.

