

ten tanka



Philomene Kocher



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for my mother
Rose

who shared her love of words
among other gifts

outside the doctor's office
overhearing
“the bone scan was clear”
half a block later
I stop for the lilacs

rain washes the dust
from the bus window
and I can see
more clearly
what tears do

over the years
the wound on the elm
has closed and healed
like the place
in my heart

at the haiku conference
someone says we wouldn't last a week
if we really did live together
and yet these friendships
that build over the years

in the salon
the woman who is waiting
looks so much like Mom
“your hair is lovely” she says
and I almost weep

tiny shadows
of spilled sugar
on a white counter
I gather the sweetness
that I missed before

on the bus
the little boys
playing I Spy
one to the other
“let’s both go first”

her sixtieth birthday
my cousin and I
make a family
snowman, snowwoman
and snowchild

no longer a child
the first time
I tied my own skates too tight
setting a pattern
to unbind decades later

on the sidewalk
a sap puddle
below the broken branch
in my fiftieth spring
new life rises in me too

a few words

Poetry has always been a part of my life, although my grade school poems have come and gone except for memory. I grew up on a farm outside of Hepworth, Ontario (pop. 400) which is now part of the town of South Bruce Peninsula. Farm life offered closeness to nature in all its rawness and beauty. After living in Guelph and then Toronto, I have called Kingston my home since 1988.

My haiku journey began in 1991 when my Aunt Margaret introduced me to haiku through a small newspaper clipping. I loved the elegance of the little poems, and wrote my first haiku from a memory about farm life.

the farmer combines
while across the road the sheaves
stand proudly in stooks

My good fortune was to find my way to Haiku Canada. This community has blessed me with friendships that have deepened over the years despite the miles between us.

Many haiku poets began experimenting with tanka over the past few decades. I wrote my first tanka in 2001.

at 41
my mind and heart begin
to approach my body
with its breath by breath wisdom
and its clay loyalty

It felt liberating to add those two extra lines that allow me to share more words and feeling. I have also explored the forms of haibun (prose + haiku) and haiga (picture + haiku), as well as writing linked verses with other poets.

My first solo haiku collection, *hearing the silence* (King's Road Press, 2011) happened to coincide with my 20th anniversary as a haiku poet. This collection, *ten tanka*, celebrates my 10th anniversary as a tanka poet. For all the gifts haiku and tanka have brought into my life, I am grateful.

acknowledgements

Some of these poems have appeared previously in:

Ash Moon Anthology: Poems on Aging in Modern English Tanka
(Modern English Tanka Press, 2008)

GUSTS: Contemporary Tanka

Haiku Canada Members Anthology

*Lighting the Global Lantern: A Teacher's Guide to Writing Haiku and
Related Literary Forms* (Wintergreen Studios Press, 2011)

LYNX: A Journal for Linking Poets

RAW NerVZ HAIKU

'Scapes : Poetry & Company : A Kingston Community Anthology
(Hidden Brook Press, 2007)

Twenty Years Tanka Splendor (AHA Books, 2009)





Philomène Kocher lives in Kingston, Ontario where she explores poetry and photography. She is fascinated by all aspects of voice.