

#FemkuMag



issue #14

# *#FemkuMag*

*An e-zine of Womxn's Haiku*

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*issue fourteen*

*Editor: Lori A Minor*

*Cover art: Lori A Minor*

## **a note from me to you**

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank everyone who submitted to the contest, as well as my co-judge Tia Haynes. I am overwhelmed in the best possible way at the outcome of not only the amount of submissions Tia and I received for the 2019 Marlene Mountain Memorial Contest, but also the quality of work within the submissions. There were 186 poems submitted, which made our decision quite difficult. Tia and I spent hours discussing the haiku and senryu we received and narrowed down the list to 26 poems. From there we went to 15, then to 9, and continued discussing until we reached the final 6.

There are an abundance of factors that go into judging a contest and each judge looks for something different. Because of this, I'd like to add that just because your poem did not place does not mean it wasn't good. There were numerous ku that we fell in love with and this made our decision that much more difficult. With this being said, if you did not place, please do not hesitate to submit your contest entrees to the August issue of #FemkuMag.

Thank you ladies SO much for all of your hard work and dedication. Words cannot express how much I appreciate all of you. I hope you enjoy the contest results, as well as the regular issue.

Stay radical always,  
Lori A Minor, editor

## *judge's note from Tia Haynes*

*I was surprised and delighted when Lori asked if I would co-judge the Marlene Mountain Memorial Contest this year. What a unique opportunity to showcase the talent of womxn haiku poets (because we have it in abundance) with topics relevant to our struggles and successes. Lori routinely publishes incredible work in #FemkuMag and this outcropping of it in honor of the great and revolutionary womxn poet Marlene Mountain has, as expected, produced the same high-quality and challenging work. Many many thanks to her for including me in its history.*

*One of the great joys of this experience was getting to see where we are going as a community in vision, scope, and experimentation. It was quite difficult selecting the winning poems and often it was with a bit of heartache that we needed to rank them. Especially when the senryu/haiku was written about a sensitive topic. I know I am walking away inspired and with hope that a new womxn's voice is emerging. A voice that speaks with frankness and honesty about where we have been and where we are going. I hope you find the poems we have chosen to be as memorable as we found them to be.*

# 2019 Marlene Mountain Memorial Contest

## **First Place:**

*mansplaining the rape field*

*- Roberta Beach Jacobson*

## **Second Place:**

*saving herself  
for nothing special --  
old lace*

*- Susan Mallernee*

## **Third Place:**

*bipolar mother's monochrome smile*

*- Martha Magenta*

**Honorable Mentions:**

hot (f)ashes the combustibility of womxn's rights

- *Debbie Strange*

porn punk  
all the positions  
I should fit in

- *Benedicta Gyepi-Garbrah*

deep below  
my placid surface

b o m b c a r b o n

b o m b c a r b o n

b m b c a r b o n

b m b c r b n

b b c

- *Robin Anna Smith*

## *Judge's Commentary by Tia Haynes and Lori A Minor*

### **First Place:**

*mansplaining the rape field*

*- Roberta Beach Jacobson*

*Never have there been so many excuses for rape than we have today. There is a pervasive cruelty that joking about assaulting womxn is just "locker room talk" or that rape occurs because our clothes are too revealing/too tight/too high cut/too anything, or we flirted so we really were asking for it, or even because we were in a relationship with the person then it doesn't count as rape. It's even been spread around social media that the #metoo movement is just a "witchhunt" for men, but this could not be further from the truth. The reality is that sexual harassment and assault happens to 1 in every 6 womxn in America.*

*Roberta's senryu is important because of its truth and relevance which is present from the very first word "mansplaining", a term which has come to light within the last few years, and is when men try to explain things to womxn with usually incorrect or oversimplified information in a way that is condescending or patronizing. Womxn are talked down to by men frequently, daily, and have been for hundreds of years, and especially now when it comes to womxn's issues or our fight for equality. Then, there's the wordplay on "playing the field" which is used when someone dates multiple people with no intention of serious commitment, usually in reference to men. While "the rape field" could be reference to rape culture as a whole with its prevalence and casual acceptance, it could also be referring to one particular person's history*

*with sexual assault and how men (and even some womxn) have tried to downplay the accompanying pain and suffering.*

*In four words Roberta has provided us with layers we could dig through for hours. It is written in a style that completely encompasses everything Marlene stood for in both haiku and within society. This is truly a feminist senryu as it has the power to erase the stigma of speaking out, it stands up for victims, and is a pushback against the patriarchy.*

## **Second Place:**

saving herself  
for nothing special --  
old lace

- *Susan Mallernee*

*There is a dangerous and patriarchal belief that womxn (and not necessarily men) are to keep themselves "pure", meaning virgin, for their wedding night. If a womxn does not then she is seen as "insert word here", there are so many to choose from. It still seems that even today in 2019 that womxn are not "supposed" to enjoy their sexuality nor have the freedom to express it. This has led to harmful policies involving stripping womxn of access to birth control options, and sometimes even basic gynecological care. The idea of saving yourself for marriage can be toxic. Of course, there's nothing wrong with wanting your first time to be special, or even on your wedding night, but there is too much pressure for both men and womxn to be "perfect" or "good enough". Unfortunately, that has become the ideal standard because womxn are believed to not have the right to anything better. Womxn should be taught consent and respect, not abstinence.*

*Here "old lace" not only ties to the wedding dress this girl has worn and the fragility of virginity, but also harkens to a time before, possibly the dress here was one worn by her own mother. It brings to mind the generations of womxn that have been sexually oppressed, shamed, and suffered in silence. The delicate treatment given here to quite a hot button issue today, something Marlene would not have shied away from, also embodies the gentler side of Marlene's work making it truly something special.*

### **Third Place:**

*bipolar mother's monochrome smile*

*- Martha Magenta*

*Maternal mental illness is a subject that seems to be hushed up in our culture. Especially in today's mommy wars where mothers are pitted against each other in seemingly every way: who has the cleanest house, who breastfed the longest, who birthed without medication, who provides organic home cooked meals three times a day, who stays home, who works outside the house, whose children watch the least amount of TV ... and on and on it goes. When under all the pressure, womxn have an identity that goes far beyond the role of "mother". There are hopes, dreams, goals, desires and personal struggles existing alongside all those parenting responsibilities, which is uncomfortable for some to accept.*

*The thought of a mother struggling with bipolar disorder, or any mental illness such as depression or anxiety, while trying to care for her children is heartbreaking and more common than people realize. So much is said here in so few words. An entire world is laid out bare of a mother doing her best to get help but in the process is stripped of her personality, as it so often happens with mood stabilizers, antidepressants, and antipsychotics. Her children have lost her and she herself.*

*This monoku struck a chord with both of us not only for the subject matter but for its craftsmanship. In this piece there is room left for the reader to decide whether the poet's mother is bipolar or the poet is the bipolar mother, as the senryu can be broken up (bipolar / mother's monochrome smile) or read as all one phrase. Although, had she used "the" at the beginning ([the] bipolar mother's monochrome smile), it would have solidified one meaning*

*and you wouldn't get all that blank space we love in Japanese short forms.  
What a difference one word can make.*

*A poignant and timely senryu for today as mental health awareness is  
ever-increasing as is the fight to keep medical care available to all.*

I knew I was  
her favorite -  
white butterfly

- *Roberta Beach Jacobson*

out of the closet  
she misses her clothes

- *Roberta Beach Jacobson*

new cornea –  
my inner world  
still blurry

- *Lavana Kray*

birthday candles –  
a gathering  
of butterflies

- *Lavana Kray*

ghost moon  
the way he stares  
straight through me

- *Lucy Whitehead*

admitting  
I was wrong  
tangled weeds

- *Lucy Whitehead*

koi pond  
a flash of fire  
beneath his ice

- *Lucy Whitehead*

spilled milk  
children  
in the cages

- *Guliz Mutlu*

a street cur  
at the boutique window—  
her downcast eyes

- *Radostina Dragostinova*

the long tunnel  
of her silence  
anorexia

- *Radostina Dragostinova*

more down  
    than up  
    aging tulip

- *Julie Warther*

headless dandelions . . .  
the childish things  
I put away

- *Julie Warther*

cut off again  
mid-conversation  
deadheading the roses

- *Christina Sng*

my mood  
in menopause  
jet stream

- *Christina Sng*

petrichor  
the gears of my mind  
disengage

- *Christina Sng*

ringbearer  
his little tux  
a little big

- *Elizabeth Alford*

scam likely soliciting my "opinion"

- *Elizabeth Alford*

pine needles unclogging my gutter mouth

- *Elizabeth Alford*

scarlet roses  
his eyes luring me  
deeper deeper

- *Cyndi Lloyd*

a watermelon rind  
on my plate  
one night stand

- *Cyndi Lloyd*

the curse of having curves for his craving

- *Benedicta Gyepi Garbrah*

eyes look forward  
from behind  
my big butt

- *Benedicta Gyepi Garbrah*

lollipop-  
must every stick  
be licked?

- *Benedicta Gyepi Garbrah*

cirrus clouds wisping out  
my self-harm scars  
fading

- *Hannah Mahoney*

first day of summer  
my daughter flexes  
her bicep tattoo

- *Hannah Mahoney*

non-binary —  
caught between his and her  
birthday cards

- *Julie Bloss Kelsey*

blackout drunk —  
I come to my senses  
during karaoke

- *Julie Bloss Kelsey*

flashbacks —  
my missing pieces  
finally come home

- *Julie Bloss Kelsey*

he loves me  
he loves me not  
a mum lies in shreds

- *Helen Buckingham*

home front  
love-in-a-mist  
on a bed of flint

- *Helen Buckingham*

soft soap shuffle  
playing  
pass the pain

- *Helen Buckingham*

graduation day  
her daughter came home  
with the zipper on the other side

- *Irina Guliaeva*

spring cleaning  
mum wonders for whom  
all this concealer

- *Irina Guliaeva*

summer blaze—  
remnants of ice cream  
around my lips

- *Réka Nyitrai*

courtesan—  
at dawn she becomes a lark

- *Réka Nyitrai*

aligned clock the moon between her breasts

- *Réka Nyitrai*

dew melon  
the sweetness of a kiss  
yet to give

- *Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo*

grass of frost  
the roses will bloom  
when you come back

- *Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo*

a bead of wax falls  
from the candle  
IV drip

- *Valentina Ranaldi-Adams*

solar eclipse  
a kiss  
at totality

- *Valentina Ranaldi-Adams*

stone angel  
the rose slips  
from her hand

- *Valentina Ranaldi-Adams*

bound with rope  
pastor says the Lord  
will tell me when

- *Tia Haynes*

scars  
only my husband can see  
Easter Sunday

- *Tia Haynes*

waiting  
and waiting  
Judgement Day

- *Tia Haynes*

toad in my path  
the doctor says  
it's too soon to tell

- *Erin Castaldi*

can't find  
my resolution  
New Moon

- *Erin Castaldi*

magpie the white streaks at my temples

- *Debbie Strange*

kudzu  
pain  
chokes  
me  
out  
of  
my  
life

- *Debbie Strange*

surface tension  
we hold it together  
drop...by...drop

- *Debbie Strange*

sudden rain  
passing in this summer...  
just like me

pioggia improvvisa  
di passaggio in questa estate...  
proprio come me

- *Lucia Cardillo*

psychotheRAPIST

- *Corine Timmer*

a rainbow in the waterfall in me

- *Corine Timmer*

a slice of full moon  
through the bedroom blinds  
—the things we don't tell

- *Corine Timmer*

house for sale -  
a fallen leaf  
chases the wind

- *Angiola Inglese*

the warmth of his  
breath too close  
first date

- *Christina Chin*

summer hit  
a neck grip against  
the car door

- *Christina Chin*

departure train s[low] sigh of relief

- *Christina Chin*

suspended on the she oak—raindrops  
despair of another menses

- *Wanda Amos*

infer  
til  
it  
y  
Y

- *Wanda Amos*

without words  
no tears  
these holidays

- *Maria Concetta Conti*

summer  
she always travels  
alone

- *Maria Concetta Conti*

#nofilter a little vintage

- *Lori A Minor*

# *Femku Features*

## *A Strawberry*

*At rehab, she explains why she is called a strawberry. It isn't because she has a strawberry birthmark and it sure isn't because she bakes strawberry pies. It is because she trades sex for drugs.*

*a long shot -  
the sorrel filly  
in her first race*

*- Valentina Ranaldi-Adams*

*Top secret*

*Olivia sends a whatsapp message to Leo. Leo forwards the text to Tom and Lyla. Tom shares his screenshot with Annie. Annie didn't tell anyone about her new tattoo. She sends a voice mail to Omar ...*

*cyberbullying  
she decides to unfollow  
her victimhood*

*- Eva Limbach*

## ***Lost Innocence***

*I am 12 years old sitting on my bed. My father just finished beating me and I have dried my tears. I didn't know what I was doing to myself. I only knew that it would make me feel better. Self abuse. Before it was mainstream. A way to release the pain. To feel some sense of euphoria. The wounds heal...but the scars remain.*

*the smell of my burnt flesh still lingers*

*- Veronika Zora Novak*

## **atonement**

mute swans  
under a moon bridge  
the things  
I should have confessed  
make no difference now

the peace  
that accompanies  
forgiveness  
after this long drought  
an ecstasy of rain

on this day  
of my atonement,  
your face  
a fragile watermark  
at the edge of sky

1st verse: First Place, UHTS Fleeting Words Tanka Contest 2016

2nd verse: GUSTS, Number 25, Spring/Summer 2017

3rd verse: Moonbathing, Issue 16, Spring/Summer 2017

**- Debbie Strange**

*domestic violence*

*the arc  
of his fist  
thunderbolt*

*cactus blossom  
the way she paints  
her love story*

*midnight rants  
the heartbeat sound  
after that*

*wiping  
the spots off the glass  
his last dinner*

*in between  
the clink of dirty dishes  
her self-talk*

*rare family dinner  
the taste of red chili  
burns the silence*

home alone  
mopping his footprints  
he left behind

broken vase  
the life I spent  
piece by piece

window cracks  
the jigsaw puzzle  
of her marital life

- *Hifsa Ashraf*

## *Commentary on Corine Timmer's tanka*

the elephant cow  
mourns her dead calf—  
in the cupboard  
my baby's clothes  
still with price tags

First published in *Moonbathing*, Issue 19 Fall/Winter 2019

A womxn who loses her husband is a widow and children who lose their parents are orphans, but there is no word for a mother who loses her child. Mothers, no matter human or animal, possess an undeniable bond with their children, so when a child is lost, there is undeniable grief. Infertility and the death of a child are not often talked about, perhaps due to the sensitivity of the subject and the immeasurable pain. It might be difficult to know what to say in a situation like this, but sometimes words fail us. Comfort, not necessarily through words, but even just sitting with your loved one and letting them know you're there is the best form of medication for someone facing grief. It's impossible to understand something fully without experiencing it hands on, but this tanka has a stunning and poignant juxtaposition, not just because one grieving mother finds solace in empathy, but because no verbal communication was needed to find this friend, if you will. This tanka provides a breathtaking juxtaposition between the image in lines 1 and 2 and the phrase in lines 3, 4, and 5 and linking and shifting within the phrase when L5 pivots and gives that incredible "ah-ha" moment. As a whole, these five lines are a beautiful, heart-wrenching novel. In both form and emotion, this tanka is timeless. Grief comes in many shades of gray and this poem is only one tone.

## *Commentary on Anna Maria Domburg-Sancristoforo's Haiku*

moon night —  
retelling myself  
our story

notte di luna —  
mi racconto di nuovo  
la nostra storia

*Memorie di una geisha*, July 11, 2019

*The contrast between the femininity of the moon's radiant glow and the darkness of the night sets the mood for this beautiful haiku. After reading it a few times, stepping away, and coming back to it, I was able to dig a little deeper into the poem. What is this story? Why is it being retold? Perhaps memory issues, such as dementia, have caused the writer to forget pieces of an important relationship and she's telling herself their story in hopes of remembering the beauty that resides deep within a lost part of her memory. When reading more into it, there could be an indication of PTSD from an abusive relationship. Maybe the writer is retelling her story involuntarily through a series of flashbacks, which would amplify the symbolism in line one as the moon is trying to illuminate her way through the darkness. Of course, there is the possibility of no true darkness at all within this ku, but instead just a simple re-telling of a love story or friendship. Either way, it is beautifully composed and provides room for most people to relate. What a gorgeous piece!*

## **Announcements:**

**#FemkuMag in print-** As most of you know, #FemkuMag goes into print every three issues, combining them into a three-in-one anthology. Below you will find the link to the website print edition archives, where you can find links to purchase all available print issues. Currently, the newest issues available are ten, eleven, and twelve, which includes the March issue for international womxn's month.

<https://femkumag.wixsite.com/home/print-editions>

**Title IX Press-** Over the last year I had a few of my regular contributors ask if I had considered starting a small press under the Femku platform. At the time, I hadn't, but now I am so glad it was brought to my attention. At Title IX Press, a womxn run press for womxn, I aim to continue the legacy of womxn haijin all over the world by offering a safe space to publish topics that might not be picked up by other publishers. If you're interested in learning more, please check out the guidelines, which are provided below via the link.

<https://titleixpress.wixsite.com/home/guidelines>

**Donations-** I am now accepting donations for both #FemkuMag and Title IX. You should *never* feel obligated to donate and to be honest, I probably won't mention it often, because that's not what I'm here for, but I have had a few people ask if I take donations, so I felt like it would be nifty to have the "donate" button on the website, just in case!