

THE M A M B A

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"The Mamba"

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Edited by:

Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian

Kwaku Feni Adow

EDITORS' NOTE

After a long break, we are overjoyed to present the 13th Issue of *The Mamba, Journal of Africa Haiku Network*. We have received numerous enquiries during our hiatus, and while it was disappointing not to fulfill your expectations, we are comforted by the fact that you have kept us in your thoughts which shows how high you regard *The Mamba*. We appreciate your continued support through reading, sharing and submitting your outstanding haiku. This support has made everything possible to be back again. As with previous issues, this one features a collection of incredible experiences shared through the lens of haiku. You will also find a sterling review of Adjei Agyei-Baah's new haiku collection, *Scaring Crow* written by Keith Simmonds. We are confident that you will relish this edition. Thank you for your patience and let us celebrate this new chapter together.

Emmanuel Jessie Kalusian

Kwaku Feni Adow

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CONTENTS

- a fish skeleton
heavy spring rain
Aliyah Cassim 7
walking side by side
Ama Abrefa 7
harmattan
Obed Benyin-Mensah 8
April Fool's Day
Oluwasegun Oluseyi Adesina 8
chilly day
Kofi Sedem Letsa 9
savannah sunset
sunrise . . .
Adjei Agyei-Baah 9
mass burial
Kwaku Feni Adow 9
spring rain
Srinivasa Rao Sambangi 11
Omicron Christmas
Francoise Maurice 11
after his sermon
Patrick Sweeny 11
my new home
Matt Hetherington 11
dry cough
Jay Friedenber 11
scurrying ant
Ravi Kiran 11
summer breeze
Bee Jay 12
chasing grasshoppers
Emiko Miyashita 12
border crossing
Kamil Plich 12
burning house
winter lockdown
Michael Dylan Welch 12
it begins to dawn
Carley 12
the rainy season
Urzula Marciniak 13
from nowhere
Lakshmi Iyer 13
freedom
Mona Bedi 13
all of a sudden
Ram Chandran 13
meditation class
Amrutha Prabhu 13
early walk
Quendryth Young 14
magnetic bar
Gillena Cox 14
silent scrawl
Matthew Caretti 14
school project
Susan Plumridge 14
tasting a mango
my mother
Neena Singh 15
yearend
John Zheng 14
River of Stars: Haiku Sequence
Ron C. Moss 15
meal over
sickle moon
Ingrid Baluchi 15
at dusk
Angela Giordano 16
summer heat
John Zheng 16
Book Review 17
Scaring Crow: Adjei Agyei-Baah
Reviewed by Keith Simmonds

EDITOR'S CHOICE

the magnetic bar
grabs on to the fridge door
New Year calendar

Gillena Cox

The Editor's Choice this time is from Gillena's haiga. The haiku is so chosen for its simplicity of presenting the ordinary thing and yet leaving a lasting impression on the reader.

The picture we are invited to consider is of a person putting a New Year calendar on a fridge door. There is, however, no intrusion of this person on the happenings in this haiku which allows for a stronger focus on the images presented: magnetic bar, fridge door, new year calendar. By this absence, we are able to identify with the images in this haiku in such a way that we can go beyond them and read unspoken meanings into the haiku.

Many of us share a common disposition towards a New Year; the anticipation of good things and intending to seize opportunities. The impression of this haiku is that it exudes this sentiment by the writer's choice of the verb *grabs*. Interestingly, it is the fulcrum around which the magnetic bar and the fridge door revolves, setting it up nicely for the surprise and satisfying reveal in New Year Calendar, which as well represents all eagerness for the new year.

Kwaku Feni Adow
Secretary, Africa Haiku Network

Aaliyah Cassim
(South Africa)

a fish skeleton
at the bottom of the sea
a full belly swims

heavy spring rain
the ceiling
blooms

Amma Abrefa
(Ghana)

walking side by side
a lone beggar
and a dead moon



Obed Benyin-Mensah
(Ghana)

harmattan —
a pregnant goat seeking
fresh grass

Oluwasegun Oluseyi Adesina
(Nigeria)

April Fool's Day —
a flock of birds fleeing
from scarecrows



Kofi Sedem Letsa
(Ghana)

chilly day . . .
seamstress misses the hole
of a needle

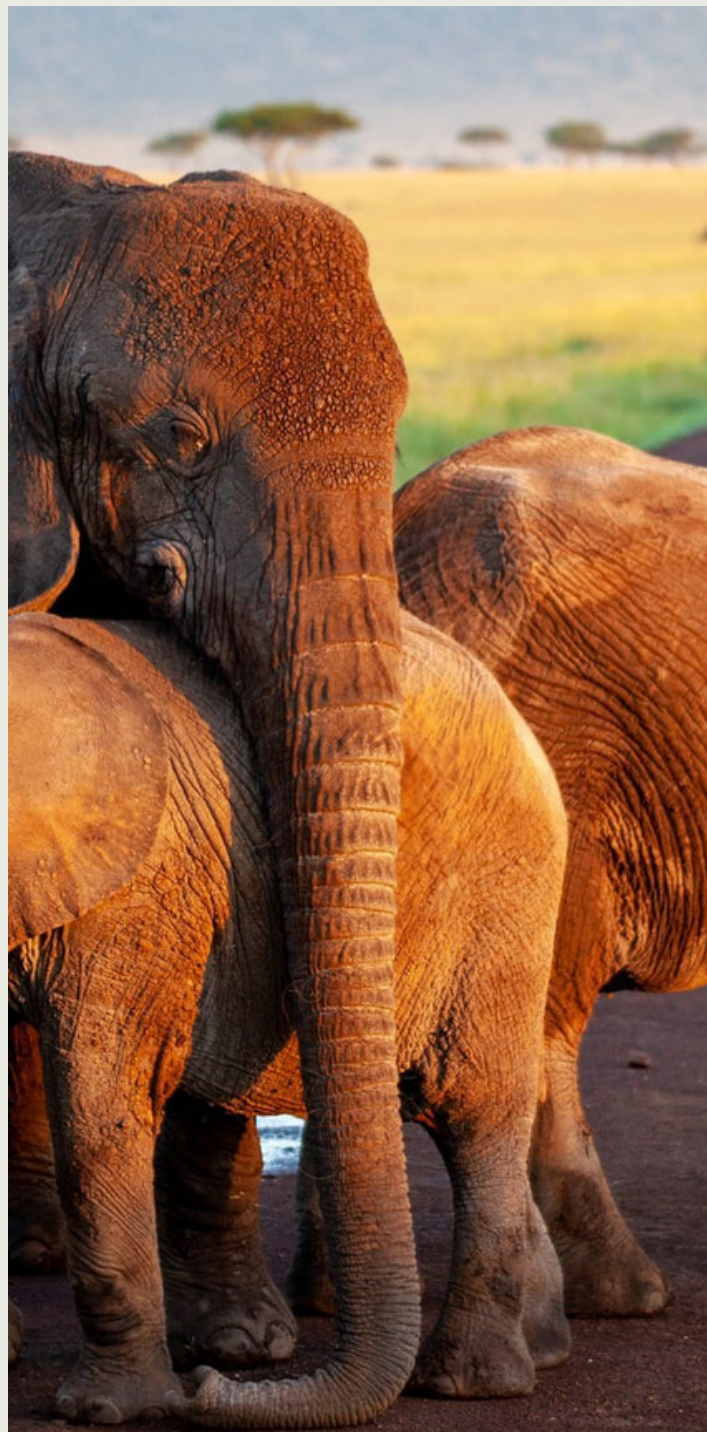
Adjei Agyei-Baah
(Ghana)

savannah sunset
the lion licks his paw
after the day's hunt

sunrise...
a dozen of beaks
open to a single worm

Kwaku Feni Adow
(Ghana)

mass burial
all the goodbyes
unsaid





**HAIKU
FROM
OTHER
PLACES**

Srinivasa Rao Sambangi
(India)

spring rain
the whole sky
a garden sprinkler

Patrick Sweeney
(Japan)

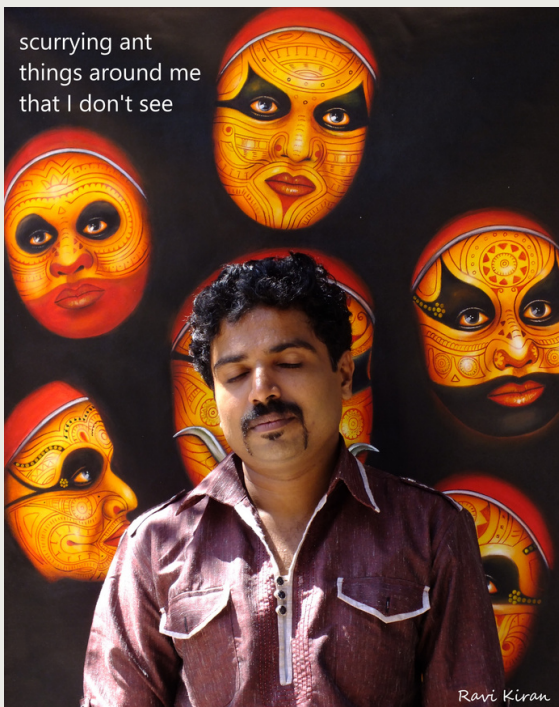
after his sermon
the swallows fly
to the woman with bread

Françoise Maurice
(France)

Omicron Christmas —
the curfew closes the door
to Santa Claus

Matt Hetherington
(Australia)

my new home
the smell
of old dog



Jay Friedenber
(USA)

dry cough
the slow death
of a winter sun

Bee Jay
(Australia)

summer breeze
this Father Christmas
a woman

Kamil Plich
(Germany)

border crossing
after you
stork

Emiko Miyashita
(Japan)

chasing grasshoppers
for the caged
chameleon

Michael Dylan Welch
(USA)

burning house—
leaves swirl
around the fire truck

winter lockdown—
my B-grade haiku
wins an award



Carley

*it begins to dawn
in the baker's office
last coffee*

Art&poem by Wieslaw Karlinski

Urszula Marciniak
(Poland)

the rainy season
the tourist stops humming
a rainy song

Lakshmi Iyer
(India)

from nowhere
an oak in the center of the earth

Mona Bedi
(India)

freedom the span of an eagle's
wings....

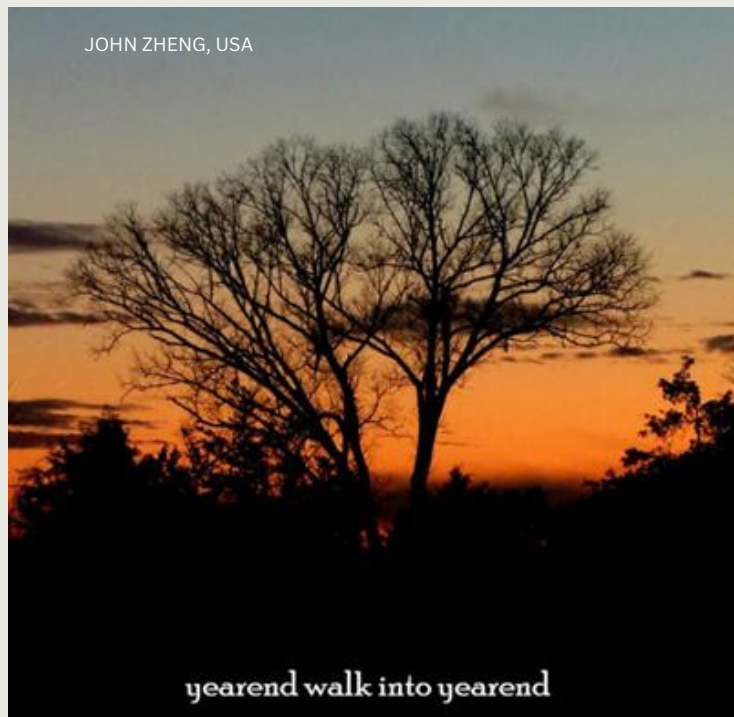
Ram Chandran
(India)

all of a sudden
a spider drops from the ceiling
then climbs up

Amrutha Prabhu
(India)

meditation class
a woodpecker hammers
on every clock tick

JOHN ZHENG, USA



yearend walk into yearend

Quendryth Young
(Australia)

early walk
a spider breakfasting
on its web

Roberta Beach Jacobson
(USA)

late afternoon sag of shoulders

Matthew Caretti
(American Samoa)

silent scrawl
across his mask
just breathe

Susan Plumridge
(Canada)

school project
the leopard draws
attention

EC



the magnetic bar
grabs on to the fridge door -
New Year calendar

Neena Singh
(India)

tasting a mango
again and again
an unyielding fly

my mother...
always the dark side
of the moon

Ingrid Baluchi
(North Macedonia)

meal over . . .
the ash
between three stones

sickle moon
across the plain
a lion's roar shifts the herd

River of Stars
Haiku Sequence by
RON C. MOSS
(AUSTRALIA)

waterhole
hippos graze through
the dusk

a pride of lions sip the fading light

shades of indigo
giraffes move about
touching the sky

the dark rumble of water buffalo
fear

moonlit tusks
an ancient elephant
shakes his head

zebras cross through a river of stars

venus rising
giant fruit bats swarm
the darkness



at dusk...
the shadows legthen
of the camel drivers

Angela Giordano

John Zheng, USA



summer heat a Halfeti rosebud ready to unfurl

Book Review

SCARING CROW by Adjei Agyei-Baah

Scaring Crow is a remarkable collection of haiku dealing with the theme of the scarecrow by the prolific Ghanaian haikin, Adjei Agyei-Baah, who is a serious exponent of this form of Japanese poetry which he fervently promotes throughout West Africa and beyond.

When we think of the scarecrow, we imagine an object, generally in the form of a man, made out of sticks and old clothes to scare birds away from crops, but Adjei's scarecrow is more than that. He is omnipresent in the fields and the farms and is endowed with human qualities. In fact, it's through his eyes that we are given a broad view of social matters, an awareness of the natural surroundings, a vast spectrum of human passions, feelings and emotions. The collection causes us to reflect on important issues and challenges faced by peasant farmers as they grapple with disasters such as floods, hurricanes, drought, forest fires, locusts and all sorts of pests, from season to season.

The personification of the scarecrow is revealed in several ways as he is intricately bound to the aspirations and longings of the farmer in his daily life. In his vestimentary appearance, for example, he is portrayed as someone who inherits all the clothes from "grandpa's will"; he also gets an old hat, a military uniform from a veteran's farm, or knitted rags from World Charity Day in a show of solidarity. For Halloween, he is seen in Grim Reaper's dress, or with a crooked scythe. To evoke events of a religious or spiritual nature, his role is quite clear. During All Saints Day, he "glows in fireflies" or can be seen "wearing a cassock", at Ascension, we witness him "rising in the wind" and for Palm Sunday, he "waves a frond". Then in more festive mood, with his "hat in Jackson's pose", he reminds us of the king of pop.

It is certain that we cannot imagine the farmer without imagining the scarecrow, for the latter is bound to the farmer by bonds that are quite intimately interwoven. For instance, the farmer's daughter who just got married is proud and happy to toss her bouquet in the scarecrow's arms:

countryside bride -
leaving her bouquet
in the arms of a scarecrow

The small farmer takes off his shoes and leaves them in the care of the scarecrow before entering the sanctity of the fields:

back to the fields -
our shoes rest at the feet
of the scarecrow

His children play hide and seek behind the scarecrow or attach their kites to him. The drunken farmer can find some kind of consolation in his presence:

midnight banter
the drunken farmer
and a scarecrow

Comfort and relief of a more visceral nature can also be experienced in his company:

yet another pee
the comfort
of a scarecrow's shadow

In this eminently symbolical work, when crops are poor or bad, the scarecrow appears with "bowed head" and when the harvest is promising there is a party as he is seen with "arms wide open". As guardian, protector or overseer, he not only identifies with the ambitions and expectations of the farmer, but also with his misgivings, shortcomings and foibles. In this regard, he is far from perfect, far from infallible. The author reminds us of this in his own inimical way, often with a touch of mischief and an infectious sense of humour, but without diminishing in any way, the intensity and profoundness of his message. The scarecrow cannot stop a young raging bull from attacking him nor can he avert the terrible onslaught of locusts:

a party
before the scarecrow
locusts feeding

He submits to "a crown of bird poo", a daring crow "pecks the armpit", a bird flees his company in the wee hours of the morning:

morning light
a bird flutters from
the scarecrow's bosom.

We cannot read Scaring Crow without concluding that it's a work of tremendous allegorical significance. Mr. Adjei Agyei-Baah's knowledge of and love for farmlife amaze us as much as his keen and insightful mastery of haiku as a powerful vehicle of communication. The bond between scarecrow and farmer remains strong, vibrant, firm, throughout the work. Like the farmer, the scarecrow can be a victim of natural disasters like forest fires, going the way of all flesh, reduced to "a charred martyr", "smoulders in fireflies" or a "cross of moss". Even the author identifies with this meditation on their mortality:

the skeleton
I'll become -
feeding the scarecrows to fire

We get the impression, though, that there is much more to the relationship between scarecrow and farmer than meets the eye, there are secrets to be unlocked, revelations to be made as the author continues to pique our curiosity:

how sad
the scarecrow remains dumb
on what he sees

And we cannot fail to pay attention to the significance of his thought-provoking declaration:

African drought -
the peasant farmer, not different
from his scarecrow

With the rapid strides in agro-technology, education, financing infrastructure, we can only hope that better days are coming for the successful development of peasant farming across the African continent.

Keith A. Simmonds
24/06/2022

Scaring Crow

Haiku

Adjei Agyei-Baah





The Mamba

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