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Haikus and haiku sequences

I'm British. I read law at London University, 1966-1969, but never practiced it. By a long and winding road, I wound up teaching English at the British Council in Quito in the 1980s. In 1992, I arrived in Mexico with two suitcases and a typewriter, and have been here ever since, with two adopted daughters making my Mexico ties even closer.

I have been semi-retired for almost 10 years now, with working as a tutor for Leicester University's MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics my main work hours. Since September 1st, 2020, I have been fully retired and have been writing haikus as a sort of preparation for retirement writing projects. Kerouac, who wrote a Book of Haikus, said "a haiku must be very simple and free of poetic trickery and make a little picture and yet be as airy and graceful as a Vivaldi Pastorella". He believed in 'found haiku', and 'Cliff is Dead', below, is a found haiku. While I take lots of liberties with the 17 syllable form, I have found that haikus are a great discipline for observing and scripting everyday life. I have spent the last 5 months at our beach house in Chelem, Yucatan, so Sea Life is to the fore, honouring the here and now, linking micro to macro.

Sea Life

Palms shake like Tina.
Wind chimes doo doo.
Where is the sea?

The full moon over
the sea has her
mouth and eyes.

Our upright iguana
stands on scaly tiptoes
reaching for more sky.

The sun shines as
rain tumbles through clouds
to earth and sea.

The hard-riding waves
herd fish in droves
to the green rocks.

Trees are for thinking under.
Think twice about palms
where coconuts rain.

Hard wind, seas and rain,
palms bend in storms,
but don't break.

Tiny hummingbird
shimmering on a wire,
safe in the world's arms.

Our morning pool
- a siren call
for insect swimmers.

Insects like Jesus,
walking on water,
because they can't swim.

Their morning reflections
alive
In the sun.

Blackbirds take a drink,
before carrying off wavers
to their waiting young.

Waving, nodding, breathing,
leaning, our palms don't
do social distancing.

A storm coming?
Clear blue skies,
palms waving breezily.

Breathe in the moment
and let the tides
decide time and place.

The sun got up, before the sea.
Its sleepy eye winking
at the conference of birds
in our seaside garden.

Two short stories

Cliff is Dead

He was in his leathers,
only at the inquest the police
said his trousers were open.

Not like Clifford, Lorna
said to herself,
kneeling to touch the skid marks.

"I do kneel", she said.
"More of a statement." "Yes", the
policeman said, "it's only..

on your knees, in that jacket
you're a real hazard. Drivers notice you".
"They're meant to", she said.

The autopsy showed he'd 'climaxed'.
"It's the speed" the young policeman said.
"Gives them a kick".

Betsy her name was.
Dyed hair. Big bust. Finger tattoos.
"You shouldn't kneel. Cliff wasn't a saint."

Betsy 'didn't know him well',
but she called him Cliff, and shared
his bacon sandwiches.

Lorna called him Clifford,
and made his bacon sandwiches.
Cliff. Or Clifford. Both dead.

Lorna moves on, and got
up in dead Cliff's leathers,
she and Betsy open a transport café.

They dish up the full English,
to bikers drawn up at the scene
of the accident, transformed into
Cliff's Corner, the sign over the van.

In a story or film perhaps.
But Lorna cleared the site,
went home to nowhere.

She made his two helmets
Into hanging baskets, tomatoes
In one, nasturtiums in the other.

(After Alan Bennett's monologue 'The Shrine')

Smoke from the Sixties fire

In 1970, at a light near
Denver, a mobile home lock
combination for weary travellers.

“Going out of town”, he said.
“Call me when you’re in”, and they
did, amazed that they were.

Pizza, red wine and beer,
filling body and soul
in a delirious fat moment.

Further on down the road,
the gas pumper at Truckee.
Motioning to the snowline above,
“I’m pretty high”.

He was, but they got there,
and heard the snow shivering
to Nights in White Satin,
played on his chain saw.