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Each Stone

by Shelley Krause

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for my family



In the first days after our son's birth, I worried that I might not ever write again. When the exhaustion began to lift and I was able to hold a thought in my head, I instinctively turned to haiku. I didn't know much about the form. I imagined haiku as a way to capture those moments you want to hold on to but are afraid you'll forget.

I've read a lot of haiku since then, and have learned that many writers of modern American haiku eschew the 5-7-5 syllabic pattern of traditional Japanese haiku, focusing instead on the idea of writing a poem that could be comfortably spoken in a breath. What can you say in just one breath? A sigh, a gasp, a moment, a glimpse, a chance to see something as if for the first time. Straight ahead, but with a turn. Simple. But not easy.

Edith Shiffert, a contemporary Canadian-born poet and translator who now makes her home in Japan, has been writing haiku for much of her long life. She once said, "To be somewhere and write about it, that is what haiku is." For me, trying to write haiku has become a discipline, at once challenging and rewarding.

Come see where I've been.

Shelley Krause
Princeton, 2008



red-winged blackbird
at the top of a tree
holding, balancing



a bridge cannot say
if crossing is courageous
or foolhardy

A photograph of a sunset sky. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of orange, grey, and white clouds. The sun is not visible, but the overall color palette is warm and muted. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

calling back and forth

until the sun
comforts them —

mourning doves

birds into
windows

sound like a
heartbeat
stopping —

are we stunned,
or dead?





patient peonies
nodding, holding their blooms
while I search for string

what if every night



you slept with the knowledge
that the sun would come?

web across my face
as I walk to the street
and bring back
the news



all day, strangers ask
each other, "Did you see it?"

last night's heat lightning