

TANKA POETS ON SITE

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

of prompts

performed for Tanka Sunday August 18, 2013
on the Queen Mary, Long Beach CA

A CELEBRATION

sampling by Tanka Poets on Site



Tanka Inspired by
Kathabela's Prompts:

"No ordinary flower"

"What cannot be contained"

"What fruit do you identify with or talk to"

And Gary Blankenship's
"Children playing (in the road)"



July 28, 2013: prompt: no ordinary flower

(I always think of my life now as a bloom on a long branch. "No ordinary flower". All of us can trace the arched stem of our lives as in process, and retrospect helps to see the very individual and interesting shape. I never imagined the unusual bloom my life would create. With sudden and intense transition... my life took a different turn, it was a traveling flower. When Rick and I joined our lives, he had a companion for his amazing invitations to international conference, and I who had never traveled became an adventurer with him, to China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Iran, Slovakia, Croatia, many European countries and more... One of our early trips together was to Shanghai, China. There in mid-May, the campus at Shanghai Jiao Tong University was abloom with magnoliaa. It was in Shanghai, with delight, that I saw the largest magnolia flowers I have ever seen. Standing there, having arrived in China, I held one close to me, but did not pick it, it was bigger than my head... I think it picked me! It had a very long stem, a curving branch that leaned toward me, and I posed with it, as if with a lover, or a long lost friend. I've always loved magnolia, and after that, even more so. In Pasadena there are streets named and lined with Magnolia. I remember (have to find) a tanka I wrote about an old woman I saw, standing at the very trembling top of a ladder on Magnolia Street, with a pair of garden shears, to cut a magnolia bloom... I did not have to climb so high or risk so much. So when I wrote this tanka for the prompt "at the same time" it came from that magnolia in Shanghai, more than ten years ago, it seems like now... what now magnolia your stem still attached your bloom my breast a blush your time a thousand miles away We all share the arching stem of life... it's bloom., what are the rare flowers of your life, what do they look like, their details, and what is their emotional content...in your tanka?)



JENNIFER THOMPSON

he becomes her
just as the sunset adorns
a pale blue sky
color by color
they bloom

JEAN HOLLAND

Wildflower's
seeds, tousled by northeastern winds
now nestle, seeking nourishment
my legs, no longer wayfaring,
plant both feet before you

SUSAN DIRIDONI

hillsides of Kyoto
are splashed with carpets
of bright color
the wild azalea far from
garden and bonsai pot

CAROL JUDKINS

the easy bruise
of gardenias...
soft sounds
from loving hearts
perfume our world



JOSIE HIBBING

at the tip
of his paintbrush--
a rose
unfolds its redness
in the twilight

TRACY BEH

ascended
cloud mountain unknowing
descended freed
left you there as grace-offering
a peace rose blooms in the labyrinth

ALEE IMPERIAL ALBANO

...and the sun
at zenith peels
a soft soul
redness not of a flame
but a blossoming heart

MICHELE HARVEY

no rose queen
nor peony am I
my place is in
the weed-strewn, dappled light
the violet at your feet

RALF BRÖKER

dad's birthday
the reddish yellow rose
still laying
by the fieldstone
next to his stele

ORRIN T. PREJEAN

after the gala
moving around
the gothic mansion:
she, clad in chartreuse, enters;
delectable Hemlock in her hair

LIE BONGKY

moonless sky
the scent of jasmine
colors my night
tossing whispers of love
straight to your heart

SHEILA WINDSOR

a shade too bright
and made of plastic
we followed it
thru the streets of Venice
sunflower in the guide's hand

GERRY JACOBSON

shyly blooming
at the autumn
equinox ...
our first dahlia
of the summer

JOSIE HIBBING

a pressed dandelion
in your baby book...
for twenty years
you have been blooming
in my heart

SHEILA WINDSOR

poppy, cornflower,
daisy and love in a mist
my paintbox
as vibrant as the wild flower
meadow this sizzling day

KATHY UYEN NGUYEN

the way he unwinds
the texture of his heart . . .
pressed into my hands
fresh-cut daises
along with a ribbon of kisses

KASH POET (kashinath karmakar)

kash flower
changing the horizon
not for the first time
this autumn festival
without my Dad

TRACY BEH

how you curve
toward light arching grace
stems, buds, flowers
spring naturally from your spirit
partial shadows your true abode

SONDRA J. BYRNES

now well past prime
the garden and i—
here no flower is ordinary
even the late rose of sharon
has power over me

CB CRANE

out in the backyard
our optimism battles
with nature's grumpy
adherence to cycles and
decay as tulips burst home

CHRIS WILKINSON

This hyacinth corsage
Blessed by Persephone
Guards me through my sleep
Forest drums extoll your smiles
We wake to the smell of lavender

GARY BLANKENSHIP

plastic
a bouquet on his gravestone
faded
replaced every memorial day
until she no longer remembers

KRIS KONDO

little girl imagines
living in a dandelion world
golden then silver
magic swirls with wishes'
breeze bourn promises

ALEE IMPERIAL ALBANO

I, water hyacinth,
on my stillness skies
dwell unseeing
under raging waters
my flailing roots

in sacred rites
I, lotus flower, ensconced
incense curling
but weightless to brush
my murky depths

fathom deep
there you find me
I, anemone,
nymph and blossom
of impossible beauty

in us, coral flowers,
schools of liquid fish eyes
find slumber
in truth without softness
for we are rocks

always
I, water lily, catch
the dawn's
hesitance to leave
after a night of bliss

JENNI L. BACKS

apple blossoms
through an open window...
the fragrance
of her thighs
around him

KATHABELA WILSON

so long neglected Queen
urn full with pleasure
she lives on air and weeps
ensconced in pink spills
from her tight sheath unfurled

LECH HAIKU

tell me does he
have a right to touch
the redness of petals
of the blossoming rose?
my shadow

KATHABELA WILSON

out of her thin shell
she breaks
in tears
a quiver
full of green

HEATHER BROHMAN

snow white's petals
determine prince charming
intentions
he loves me
he loves me not

TRACY BEH

coolly spinning
webs of perfume
as rain pelts
my midnight's garden...
bed of spider lilies

GARY BLANKENSHIP

two dollars
the oldest rose bright red
ignored
until it blooms and we marvel
at the beauty of a discount rose

PAT GEYER

certain beauty
no other time of year...
royal it has risen
from behind a garden rock
purple pasque flower

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

in Colombia – sequestered
a night-blooming cereus
apparitional
immaculate white flowers
slip away before dawn

KATHABELA WILSON

still dark surrounds
this heavy branch
white sky a tinge of pink
first word magnolia
speaks aloud

KATHABELA WILSON

you look in
my window too
magnolia my sister
with a poet's heart
no ordinary bloom

KATHABELA WILSON

born before the bee
beetles for a charm
ancient magnolia
transform with heady scent
you waft the world

SUSAN DIRIDONI

hillsides of Kyoto
are splashed with carpets
of bright color
the wild azalea far from
garden and bonsai pot

BRIAN ZIMMER

how many
clouded faces frown
above
my need to enter
white swamp mallow

SUSAN BURCH

inside
those blackened petals
lies her heart
holding on tightly
to Love's ashes

July 15 prompt: what cannot be contained (Kath)

(I love these (Webster's) definitions of uncontainable: 1. Being irrepressible. 2. Being strong. 3. Being overwhelming. 4. Being overriding.] 5. Being overpowering. 6. Being compelling. 7. Being unmanageable or ungovernable. For me, this is the nature of life itself, in each one of us, in our true poetic wonder, and beyond it all the extraordinary universe. It refuses to be defined or contained. The photo I posted for today's prompt... just a small illustration. Roots don't stay underground. Petals, and leaves defy gathering, fences, plots and plans... Devin Walter Harrison wrote this off-prompt today, he inspired me. our engineering of Tanka site under construction how reductive the mind that thinks to proscribe how it can be contained What is uncontainable in your life. How unmanageable, ungovernable are you? How has this quality been active in your life and in your poetry? In my experience, and in my tanka, I feel that this sense of the uncontainable displayed in all its potency within a small space (as in our poems here) is closest to evoking the mystery wonder and vitality we aspire to express because it is what we feel as poets and aspire to admittedly impossibly contain. Can you begin to express this in small situations that illustrate, in the feelings those details evoke, in your tanka. And... life, I think is not without irrepressible humor about it all!)

MARY WHITE

from the chimney pot
bursts
of birdsong
such music
little creature

ORRIN T. PREJEAN

after you left yesterday
i piled my hands
full of your left-over thoughts
ran to my room
spread them out
and got high

LOUIS OSOFSKY

this morn'
I'm going out to count
the clouds --
if you wait for me still
I might bring back a few

KATHABELA WILSON

how did it happen
her smile a prompt
he leans close
even without a pen
to leave a mark

SCOTT ABELES

I'll join you in hell
if that's what it takes –
hot night
you spread
like fire

WILLIE BONGKY

loneliness
once the full moon brightens
the naked sky...
your joys and longings
buried in musty letters

RALF BRÖKER

how it feels
to hold the tears while you wear
your bridal dress
amongst the pictures
our children laugh about

JEAN HOLLAND

exhaling
hazy visions, the trash barrel
burns glowing embers
floating, then fading
recollections of youth

CRISTIAN MOCANU

after the summer storm
as I'm watching my step
ambitions dwindle:
can my soul be the puddle
reflecting the rainbow?

CLIVE OSEMAN

no space to spare
yet everyone so distant
in this place
casting burdens to the breeze
to drift away unheard

GARY BLANKENSHIP

a crack
in the concrete
sprouts
find the sun
yellow flowers

TRACY BEH

a crimson dawn...
deluge of birdsong
awakens the uncaged
a flight of pure feathers
beyond their sanctuary

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

his laughter
so unrestrained
tears rolling
down
his cheeks

HEATHER BROHMAN

Your heart
Rages like a bull
I wept
For I could not contain
your soul

TAD WOJNICKI ISRAEL

a tugboat's wake
overflows the deck
as if to say
watch out for what
you can't see

KATHABELA WILSON

bursting new seams
such feelings as
a body can't contain
so autumn makes
a sparkly fringe

SONDRA J. BYRNES

the heavy sky
lets go—
deep rain puts
out a scorching
rage

PAT GEYER

the occident
not by accident
reimages societies
whether good
bad or ugly

PAT GEYER

nothing to say
very loud...
soapbox
filled with the blares
of political bubbles

KATHABELA WILSON

on an ordinary street
roots of great oaks
make sidewalks swerve
we too are the stuff of what
the earth cannot contain

CHRIS WILKINSON'S

we are the stuff
earth cannot contain
swerving past haiku
pentangle poetry
our staff of oak

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

tinder ignited
the time worn flares
enters the sky
where the gods are
revised pantheon - a clean sweep

NE TAYLOR

frizzle frazzle
whirly twirly
flopsy mopsy
no witch's spell
tames my demon locks

CLIVE OSEMAN

no space to spare
yet everyone so distant
in this place
casting burdens to the breeze
to drift away unheard

SHEILA WINDSOR

into this fragrant
cottage garden of a day
wind blown faces
each mouthing the name:
. . . . Nagasaki

SHEILA WINDSOR

into this fragrant
cottage garden of a day
wind blown faces
each mouthing the name:
. . . . Nagasaki

JOSIE HIBBING

from a river of silence
I drink the beauty
of your words--
the rhythm in my heart
flowing... flowing...

CHRIS WILKINSON

supernova insight
light that dims the sun and moon and stars
flooding out all triumph and despair
you smiled at me
you cared

GARY BLAKENSHIP

the first time
he grabbed my finger
and smile
I knew I would love him
and never tell him no

GARY BLAKENSHIP

emotions
explode from the page
showering
poet and reader alike
with thoughts they grasp tight

JENNIFER THOMPSON

unravelling
so easily in your hands
silk ribbon
that pretty bow under thumb
undone...my hair let down

DEBORAH SG

Voice of crushed seashells
Underfoot while she mourns
Railroad to nowhere
Railroad to everywhere
Where wrens sing

KATHABELA WILSON

high tide at our front door
I leave it open
wave washed floors
to start again
with your new heart

TOMISLAV MARETIC

after all my
prayers and devotions,
after so many
efforts...these
uncontainable passions

ALEGRIA IMPERIAL

how her fingers
tuck in stray words...
tip to tip
of sunset shores crow's
yardstick for skies

SUSAN DIRIDONI

illustrator
to Lilliput Review
inventiveness
cannot describe his humor
so irrepressible his good cheer

BETH ZIMMER CUNNINGHAM

folded secrets, attic scents
memories unearthed
deliberately placed for me
she whispers from the grave
adults forbidden playground

July 5 prompt : identifying with or talking to fruit (Kath)

(Johannes S. H. Bjerg's wonderful post today (off-prompt) turns into our prompt! I especially enjoy it because I love peaches, and "always wanted to be one" as I told him. He said "maybe you are"! Well as a young teenager I went to a writer's conference with my journalist dad, and one of the older writer's there gave me the nickname "peaches and cream". So I aspired from a young age! What fruit do you really identify with, what are you, fruit-wise? And/or what fruit do you like to eat and talk to, as he does? Draw the parallels clearly in detail in your tanka!

CHRIS WILKINSON

Holding the fruit
To silently consume the joy
Encompassing the harvest
In the echo of your words
Secretly, we are cherries.

TRACY BEH

Grandma's damson wine
hid atop a tall cupboard...
en pointe on a chair
I reach for forbidden pleasure
even now I taste you.

TRACY BEH

So now we know
how you are you.
Formed by
cookies,
Kathabela.

VERONIKA ZORA NOVAK

sweet flesh
of the white cherry
lingers
voracious were the appetites
of our innocence

GENIE NAKANO

Oh summer heat
free me of my skin
underneath
I'm soft and moist
a newborn peach

NE TAYLOR

trains in the backyard
tomatoes jiggle
apples fall
victoria station
gathers odd fruit

WILLIE BONGKY

an open laptop
busy with the chatters...
diced dragon fruit
sitting next, all red
and crunchy for the taking

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

longan 'dragon eye'
squeezed out of its skin
translucent flesh
always beguiling
when under its spell

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

paired sweet cherries
tossed into my mouth
bloodstain my lips
on the way down
'shiju' love suicide

RALF BRÖKER

if you don't mind, lime
I would add some mint to
your fruity acid
some chilled prosecco
will make us dance

GERRY JACOBSON

melting
into your softness
God is there
listening
in the mulberry tree

GARY BLANKENSHIP

in brambles
the most succulent berry
black raspberries
your arm scratched on its thorns
pie forgot I clean your wounds

GARY BLANKENSHIP

sun ripened
red juicy delectable
tomatoes
picked fresh of the vine
eaten dripping over the sink

NE TAYLOR

dripping over the sink
ripe blackberries
my lips purple
your lips waiting
i share

NE TAYLOR

raspberries
trifling
with ladyfingers
soaked in single malt
my whipped cream moustache

PAT GEYER

young lovers
touch...
the sweet pink
of cherry juice
their blush

GARY BLANKENSHIP

elderberry wine
the jar passed back and forth
if grandma knew
we'd stole two or three
one left we move ever closer

KATHABELA WILSON

a big spoonful of me
peaches and cream
my blush
barely knowing
what it meant to be ripe

MISO WONG

green banana dawn. . .
I don't see him watching me
reading the paper
and eating breakfast until
I look up and swallow

JANETTE HOPPE

I too –
feel like the strawberry
at the bottom
of this champagne flute
intoxicated

NE TAYLOR

raspberries
trifling
with ladyfingers
soaked in single malt
my whipped cream moustache

KATHABELA WILSON

raisins and caraway
from Andalusia
seed cake passed
mouth to mouth
the essence of yes

BRUCE D. REED

three small peaches
from my tiny baby tree
first year's crop
I moved to the country
John Prine said to plant peaches

PD LIETZ

blackberries
I follow the valley
ice cream pail in hand
over his shoulder
the bear looks at me

TERRI HALE FRENCH

a hand full
of raisins
I remember when
I couldn't wait
for my cycle to end

JENNIFER THOMPSON

don't you see
they are merely plates
of cherry picked platitudes
and all you do
is eat

AMANDA DCOSTA

biting
succulent strawberries
in the evening
laughter echoed
through the rafters

GENIE NAKANO

peach
my skin
is just a cover
for sweetness
reclining..
just below

JEAN HOLLAND

wild blackberries
lining dusty back roads
leaves that favor....poison oak,
I ponder
scratching my ankle

PAT GEYER

"You're wearing a
nightgown" I said to a fig
"Isn't it too hot?"...
as the nutella melted
I figured I should lick

GILLEN& COX

you are perfect
as an eyeball peeled
to see
desire of a poets souls
drunk on the passion of words

SONDRA J. BYRNES

wild blackberries
in the woods—
a handful
of sweet nothings
still nothing

dark plums
in a white bowl—

your look
bruises
a quiet afternoon

tart granny apple—
what they say
about her
when she's
gone

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

itinerant mango
steamy happy fruit
makes me giddy
when it feeds me
joy slips down my throat

July 23 prompt: children playing (in the road)

The street where my wife, Chris, lived before we were married was a playground. At almost any hour or type of weather there was a group of kids playing in the street - someone hollering car if a vehicle came by. the kids ranged from high schoolers to a toddler with a saggy diaper. (And sometimes adults.) The only thing that slowed the games was lunch and many ate it on the fly, sandwich in one hand, drink in the other - the former laid on the street when their turn came. Games involved anything with a ball, ball and stick, or stick; variations of tag; and lots of wheels - bikes, skates, skateboards. (The was 30 years ago, so rollerblades were not common.) There might be hopscotch or jacks without regard to gender - but mostly a batted, kicked or thrown ball.

We saw the same phenomenon at Kahneeta - kids of every age playing in the park streets and lawn (really the drain field) until stone cold dark. (Our group had a no-electronic vacation - well, the kids not the adults.) It was usually the pool until lunch and street play until 1030 or so. (I will admit I can do without skateboarders.) One of younger kids didn't have a bike so he ran behind the others pretending. Are your streets a playground for kids - or adults? What do they play? How long? What kind of play goes on in your tanka?

ORRIN T. PREJEAN

feeling somewhat old
long after darkness falls
my 31 yr old self steps outside
to leap into the middle of
left-over kid-laughter

SHEILA WINDSOR

a year
from the call
the thud
of a ball on the wall
I'm just this side of lost

TINA HOFFMAN

All the poets, dead.
They scream their cold epitaphs
in the soil. They play
as if tomorrow were more
reasons to live life again

HEATHER BROHMAN

'Bobby Orr'
Car five porch dwellers cry out
Reluctantly shift
Instantly resume
Bobby takes one for the team
Score

SHEILA WINDSOR

summer long
up early and gone
to the common
of daring and danger
no adult may follow

JOSIE HIBBING

in the moonlight
the village children play
shadow tag on the street--
recalling those carefree days
of my childhood

OTTERI SELVAKUMAR

on the road
children playing too play
run with running
no care full broken
a house window

PAT GEYER

in the road
sometimes on the playground
little rascals
playing war...
little do they know

CHRIS DOMINICZAK

a pier's height
her shadow teetering
carved stone or sea submerge
and remerge
this umbilical cord

JOSIE HIBBING

street children
flooded the puddle
after the rain
this child in me yearns
to jump in the mud

TOMISLAV MARETIC

a car is passing...
the brief time-out
in the football
match for the children
playing on the road

CAROLE HARRISON

swinging so high
I glimpsed another world
over the treetops . . .
what was big
now grown smaller

RALF BRÖKER

big grin
on the boy's face
first time
he beats his father
playing checkers

TRACY BEH

high-jumping I soar
colliding into a passerby
profanities fly...
chastened, reformed
a lady now, I play indoors

KATHABELA WILSON

listening in the child cave
wise and wary perched
on staircase ledge
sounds of grown ups play
where none should dare

DEVIN WALTER HARRISON

street hockey - we dazzled
each other with stick work
on slippery winter roads
until earth's orbit shifted
and left behind frozen warriors

CHRIS WILKINSON

When you hear the whistle of the bombs
You know they won't fall on you
My best friend said
He tossed me a football
On the field of childhood

SONDRA J. BYRNES

no one playing
in the road –
a greater force
sucks children
into grand theft auto

KATHABELA WILSON

cement yard swings
over and over
the wall we named
popcorn clouds one by
one the taste of sky

GARY BLANKENSHIP

the city cousin
visiting from across the country
seemed a sissy
so we picked on him
without mercy that summer

he took it better
than we wished he would
until we gave
we weren't bad just immature
taking too long to learn that summer

schooled
by grandma in her quiet way
we grew
into fairly decent adults
hoping karma ignores that summer

GARY BLANKENSHIP

down a hill
too steep for my old bike
miss a truck
on the first cross street
a dog found me on the next

VIOLETTA ANTONIA SORCINI

Sweet smells of laughter
supple limbs once climb full
breasts filled with energy to
spare no cares of tomorrow
only dreams of play

KATHABELA WILSON

they played shouts above
sunset stayed underbridge
where dark grew long
and green and our words
were blue-eyed grass

BRIAN ZIMMER

many secrets
under this bridge
her toll
a paradoxical poem
received in her own hand

BRIAN ZIMMER

her this time —
my sister and I
shriek with laughter
falling against parked cars
both of us middle-aged

SUSAN BURCH

slowing down
to avoid the kids
on the street
a deflated red balloon
becomes a used condom

Since August 1, 2012 members of Tanka Poets on Site, an online collaborative group on Facebook has written tanka on 382 prompts. We archive all the poems written to the site, and estimate that we have collected close to 8,000 tanka from international poets.

The prompts are given by Kath Abela Wilson (Kathabela), assisted once a week now by Gary Blankenship.

Gary is the head archivist, assisted by Kathabela, and recently joined as assistant archivist by Susan Burch.



Kath Abela Wilson
Editor and Director
of
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