



Naming a storm:
Haiku and tanka

Stephen Toft

2016 chapbook

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dawn light –
sheep surrounding
the fallen tree

returning to
my childhood town
after 25 years –
the floorboards worn smooth
around the barber's chair

plates stacked
outside a hotel room...
afternoon silence

cemetery snow –
the symmetry undone
by a fox

late summer –
boys building dams
in the stream

clear sky
a bouncy castle
inflating

back street –
distant sound
of the parade

autumn dusk –
balloons outside
my childhood home

hungover
the ringing
of a buoy
lost in the fog

waking up to somebody else's winter

lawn mowers
chained up on a truck...
october mist

grieving...
my neighbour's
long beard

caught on the breeze
scent of the departed
lumber train

longest night...
rowing out
to the moonlight

kissing
the freckles
on her back
a map of
unknown stars

dreaming into blackbirds

the whistle
of our baby's nose –
winter night

crows at dusk...
my waning love
of melody

driving
through country lanes
at night
the stars always turning
away from us

night snow
the infinitude
of sorrow

long train journey
a man brings on
the smell of autumn

the drunk
old sailor leans closer
and tells me
he only knows one knot
but it's a fucking strong one

hospital rain –
we draw shapes
on the window

midnight
nobody's name
to whisper

crows where
I dreamed
there would be
doves

after the op
my surgeon outside
studying the clouds

thunderclouds
the decoy falcon
flying low

visiting her family
we make love
almost silently

a white cat
lying on the pavement
in the evening sun –
I hope to die as
beautiful a death

morning fog
next door's mail
on my doormat

workmen
staring into a ditch...
winter stars

derelict church
wild flowers fill
the graveyard

fishing at dusk
the heron and i
failing together

low tide...
the complications
of truth

who is it
that makes her
sing that way
the romanian girl
serving coffee at dawn

cemetery sun
a rose unfolds
the darkness

a murmuration
of starlings
the concrete poem
in pieces

front row seats –
a whiff of the actress's
perfume

rising late –
the warmth
of where you stood
watching
the sunrise

love poetry –
the art of naming
a storm

journey's end
shadows in my
baby's ear

during the sermon
I think of the time we first
made love outside...
the town where they tried
to fence in the river

sudden
hail shower
we are all
dancers

gathering glasses
a chimed melody
I just can't repeat

night sky
the asymmetry
of love

melting snow
the giant chessboard
reappears

climbing up
to my old treehouse
the milky way

sleepless night
the sky full of
mathematics

spring rain
the barber says
I'm shy

constantly
balancing on a wire
but today
the strange temptation
to see if I might fly

About the Author

Stephen Toft is a poet and homelessness worker who lives in Lancaster, UK with his girlfriend and their children. His poetry has appeared in a variety of international journals, contests and anthologies. In 2008 Red Moon Press published his first collection, *the kissing bridge*.

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Magazines: *Children, Churches and Dobbies* (c&d magazine), founded June 1993; *Down in the Dirt*, conceived 1994, founded 2000

Books: *Hops Quaint in the Attic, the Window, Open Cover Before Sniffing*, (Wrens), *Autumn Reasons, Contents Under Pressure, the Average Day's Odds to Feasting, Clungby Goss, the Key to Believing, Domestic Matters, Ice, Cooves, Excess Verbes, L'arte, The Other Side, The Boss Lady's Editorial* (regular and 2005 Expanded Edition), *Deafly, Seeing Things Differently, Camp/Overcamp, Death Comes in Threes, Moving Performances, Six Hours, Life at Cafe Aloha, Cooves, Rough Mixes, The Entropy Project, The Other Side (2004 Edition), Stop... Sing Your Life, the Beauty and the Destruction*, c&d v167.5 (Writing to Honor & Celebrate, editor edition), *Blister & Burn* (the Kuypers edition), *Shim*, c&d v170.5 Distinguished Writings editor edition, *Living in Chaos, Silent Screams, Telling It All In, It All Comes Down, Hiding to the Surface, Odagopus, Chapter 38* (v1, v2 & v3), *Finally, Literature for the Sixties and Eights* (v1, v2 & part 1), *A Wake-Up Call From Tradition, Incessant, Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Kuypers, Evolution, Growth, Get Your Buzz On, Janet & Jean Together, go-on, Telling Poetry to the Streets, the Cam-Hicks Old-town Union, the Written Word, Deal, Prepare Her for This, Unmarked, Living in a Big World, Puffed the Tigger, Visitors to the Unknown, Janet Kuypers: Barbed, She's an Open Book, "44", Section and Other Stories, the Studies of Women, Prominent Poet* (Kuypers edition), *Blundered, the 2013 Distinguished Prose/Novel/Tanpo, Chronic Elements, Friday, Stability Stability Shit Shit Shit, a Poet's Work 1,000 words (author art book and video art book), Life, in Color, Post-epitaphic, Burn Through My, Under the Sun (photo book), Poetical Identity, Inwarded, 100 Haikus, One was the Horse, Let me See you Stripped, Part of my Path, Range Studies Life & Death, Say Nothing, Tullius/et, when you Dream tonight, the Pacific Yaku of Poetry, a year long Journey, Don't Worry, Salses & Souders, Sals & Morrow, Bitter & Bure, Rise & Repeat, Service & Thrive, (and the) Warm & Furry, Tarnish & Triumph, Oh, the Elements, Side A/Side B, Balance, Chaos Theory, Writing to Honor & Celebrate (Revised) Writing, Breaking/Saves, Choking the Myotic, the Book of Sces, No To Poet, Life on the Edge, Tearing up my Day, Life Smith, Durable Remains, General Remark, Hops & Cooves, Seeking the Green, Layer of Cooves, Dark Matter, Survived of the First Crossing Through the Greyhound, Weathered, edit, bit in my Book, (some) 10 national, Entitled Poetry, edit, Entitled Poet, Enriched with Digs, An Open Book, Library Town Hall (2 editions), Prominent Poet (2 editions), 100 Words, 1,000 Words, the 2012 Library Data Book, It Was All Proscribed, Cultural Touchstone, the Mission Grove edition and shipbooks edition), *Purpose, Telling, Chomp Ticks, After the Apocalypse* (story edition), *After the Apocalypse* (prose edition), *Entertainment, Gull by Association, don't forget it, don't let us read, bare minimum, Poet on Seapath, Drawing, Art is Not Meant to be Touched, the Boston Path, a New Poet, Need to Know Bares* (revised edition and extended edition), *the "need to know" 2015 literary date book, on Solitary World, What Must be Done, Abled, Salvation, the 2016 literary date book catalogue, the Ocean Fog, Sunrise in the Sanctuary, from Smoke, the Interpretation, a Stormy Being, Cooves On the Moon, Informing in our Prisms, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art, the Electronic Windmill, Changing Women, the Swan Road, the Significance of the Frontier, the Svesvatorator Upanishad, Harvest of Cooves, the Little Monk, Death in Whilago, Manifesto, Meet, in the Palace of Creation, R.I.B.I., Bob the Jumble Boy, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Dive, Thomas of Tea, Cracking Down, Hatched, Blue Color Ballet, vapours, in Your Blood the knowledge's feelings of Gull, the Ad-ventures of the Key to Believing Bays, Anis Nin: an Understanding of her Art (second printing), *Deard Under / Carlo Newman, 12 Times 12 Equals Grass, a Marble Nude Pauline Bernabeau with a Marble Apple in her Mouth, Mouth, Challenge of Night and Day and Chicago Poems, Lighten Up, Not Far From Here, Materialized, You Have Finally Won, Avenue C, Sakuraba Rhythms, Down Syndrome, the Dark Side of Love, the girl is a man's best friend, Angel's Syllable is Good Boss of Devil's Spine, Poems and Stories from The Blue Call Book of the Dead, Cat People, Death of an Angel, Ghost, Science A Carmudgeon's View, Ghost Dancers Leading from a Tome, the A-D Window, Open Windows, Anais Ninke, Interesto, Gunther, Cato, Scream Cloud Island, When the World was Black and White, a Petal Under Pressure, the Holy See of CEE, Book 15 - Thailand to Volcanoes, Lost in an Echo, I Was Charles Bronson's Secret Hostage, Erasable Bond, Royal Dams's Death Scene 'Is of This, Understood, Alaska Shotgun, Champagne - Hot Water, How a Bullet Behaves, the Time in the Lounge at WagonWheel 1) Come in Avirick), Postcards from Exile, the Five Stages of Madchick, Star in Formation, Shadowing Other Footprints, the Girl Next Door and Other Poems, Major Arcana, She Puffed Wicks and Gears, Short Takes, Seeing Strangers, He-Friving Inside, The Tribes, Joshua Drove Out of the Land, Botany of the Insect, Manner-Chained, No Roll - No Ocean, Ditching at the City's a nation of straggle with gaps, the Bleating Halls of 100 Drammas, Make the Wind, The Planner, the Carrison, The Pyre On Which Tomorrow Burns, Cowboy Hat and Railway, Nevaria, Splinary, Bovey, Give What You Can, Come Fly with Me, Out of the Web, Don't Tread on Me, Entering the Ice Age, Entering the Ice Age, the Line to Power, From the Farallon, Falling Into Blaine, Unknown, Faraway Bound, Exploding on the Scene, Moving the Earth, Autumn Again, Up in Smoke, No Return, Wrapping it Up, Link in the Chain, Short out of a Condo, Incessible Ink, a ew era, Idols, Friction, Sea Drift, and Then We Moved, Approaching Front, Beyond the Gates, the Curve of Arctic Air, Idea, a Med Escape, Testament, the New Deal, the Captive and the Dead, When the Walls are Paper Thin, Nighttime City, Suggested Torture, Down in the Dirt 1004, Clearing the Debris, Skeletal Remains, When the World Settles, Along the Surface, Into the White, Life... from Melting Down in It, Wake Up and Smell the Flowers, Looking Beyond, See the World Barn, America the Lost, Catch in the Treants, Widom in Broken Hands, Symbols Manifest, Grounded, Perfectly Imperfect, #PBL the Strings, an I really exist?, Home of Last, Spreading a Rural Story, Treading World, Black Cat, a Bad Influence, Too Many Miles, the Path of Least Resistance, Hello goodbye goodbye hello, When the Walls are Paper Thin, Planets Apart, Planets Apart, Nighttime City, the Breaking, Spinning Torture, New moon, a Perfect Storm, 6 Feet Under, The Hive, the 23 Engines, Solidated Birds, Lost the Bird, the Blind Eye, the Ruck the Effort the Yell, Lost into Pines, the Chomp***

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