



Pocketa Pocketas

(pulses & pips of poems)

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Pocketa Pocketas

(a friend's kid's name for a favorite snack)

Each poem pops
like popcorn

except in slow motion

Poem kernels come
from a hidden cob

To each poem its own
wild shape—a soft

tasty explosion in the mouth

Season it
how you like
but best to

gobble 'em down
with a little grain of

salt

.



The Flight of Stairs

It starts with the light,
or laundry moving on the line,
then shifts to leafsmoke
and air, the understory's story.

Laundry lifts in the wind,
an echo down an empty stairwell;
Karima's found holes in her alphabet,
crickets in the laundry basket.

There's a well that opens
underneath your feet, a shot of blue
in the corner of your eye.
There's also stairs, a flight of them,

all headed south. Alpha
was shot full of holes, omega
too; at the back of the north
wind trumpets blew and blew. All in,

all in free — under your breath;
who's got dibs on the lost and found?
Words all in edgewise, spinning away;
throw down that double dutch, hey pocky way!

The dark side of the moon rises and rises,
Jack Flash slinks up to his candlesticks.
Over the river and through the streets,
a story-world moving like light down the line.

Macabre Palaver

Jack-o-lantern
nimble, jack-
o-lantern quick,
it seems Jack has swallowed
an old candle-stick.

Jack has a hole
on the top
of his skull, so
no one knows
why his toothy grin grows.

Long night's crypt tick
tocks closer
each time; make
a wish on the wick:
mystery's hermetic.

Jack-o-lantern
nimble, jack-
o-lantern quick,
poor Jack's smashed to bits
by a pendulum-stick.

common whelk kenning

```
                                end if  
  
                                flame  
                                spirit  
whelk's  
                                gray  
                                of a  
  
                                whorl  
                                interior  
the  
  
                                inside  
                                spiral  
  
if
```



Haiku: Lichen

Haiku like lichen
on stone a slow explosion
green millennium

December Haiku

Snowplows striking sparks
tongue tip tasting snow crystals
yesterday long gone

Iron Skillet Haiku

Iron wrist tester
clasp the inky cast of it
years' seasonings

Haiku: Winter Wind in White Pine

Soughing is a kind of song
as needles sift down
to make a russet trail

Skunk Cabbage Haiku

April jungle: from
under a florid green tail
winter's farts let loose

In Point

The Golden Retriever has found
gold again—this time

a small ziggurat of horse
shit molasses

black in sun. She holds still
above excited flies

as if the least move would give
something away, nose

to the ground, one bent foreleg
delicately

up

Ghazal

in memory of Agha Shahid Ali

Reborn in English comes the migrant ghazal
Gutturals and starlight, we sound it as *ghazal*

Diasporic diapason, intervals made consonant,
A form like rushing water or a rainbow, never fossil

Can braid in anything—politics, history,
Love's thorn-tip and prick, the layers of life's riddle

Ululation loop-the-loops, fast-twitch
leaps by springbok, eland, or gazelle

My name means stone but I'm flowin' in freestyle
Reverberating this soul-glow opal ghazal.

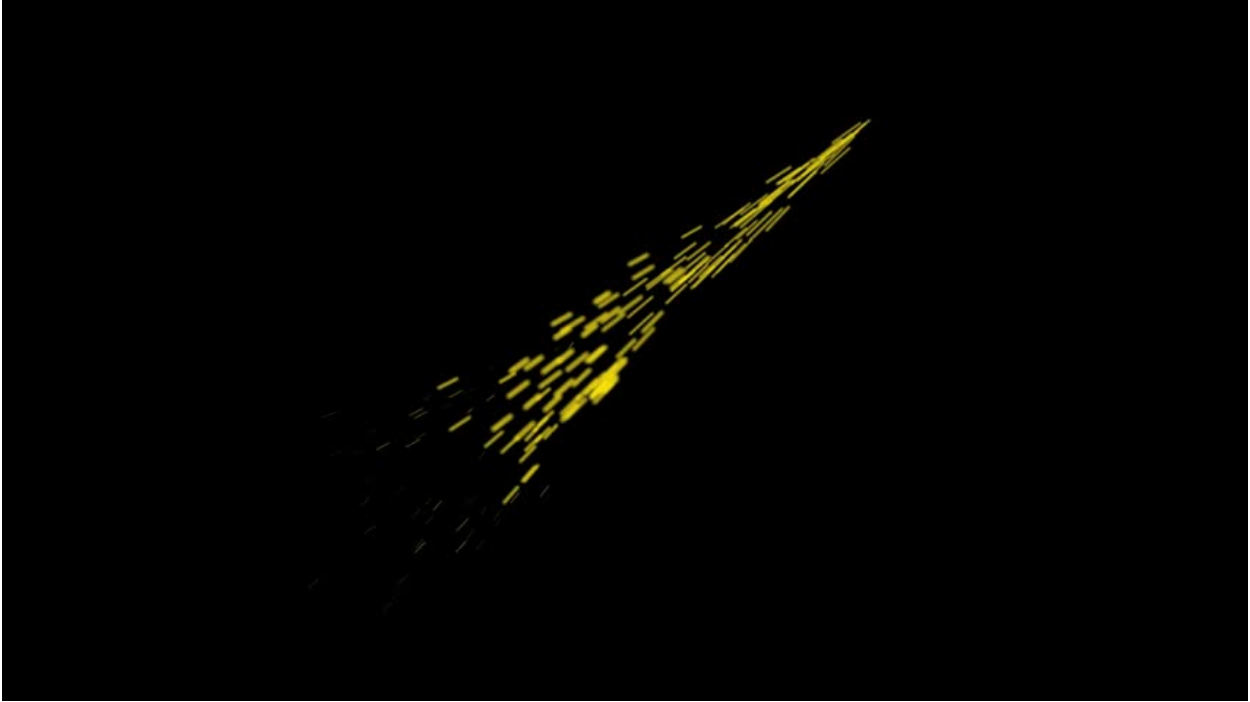
Purple Martin, Shoveled Under

The eyes are the first to go
breast the color of morning light
wings like evensong, velvet violet

Dining on mosquitoes,
you gave wing to some of my blood
With birds each flight-line
is a species signature

Martins skimming an inch above
the border of land and sea
quick-turn artists always in motion

Headfirst now into the hole, forktail up
burial becomes another moving line



Hallow

Sparrows rustling in leaves.
Up high, a Downy ticks and

knocks, testing the wood
for hollow. Trees a-light in sunset

branch and branch against the blue.
Knock knock. Where is the hullo

behind the door, or the
possibility of something hallow?

That door where knock
is open wide, the door that

opens onto other doors?

Slam

For poetry to slam
you must be the door

But what is the sound
of a door ajar?

Shaken: the Dorothy Parker Mix

A Parker poem's a dry martini:
Two glugs of gin, one olive (teeny)
Then add a jigger of astringent
Her zesty twist of acid in it.

e is tired of its accent grave
it desires acute aigu
if you were often sounded schwa
you'd want some aigu too



Acetylene

Atop a blue Septa trestle the welder
snaps down his smoky mask

—showerfalls of golden sparks



Pennsylvania Dogwood: Haiku

Spring's burnt-white petals
open along a bough — snow
fall frozen zen time

Haiku: Spring Melt

Spring melt quicksilver
quick in the gutters . . . Basho
lives to splash again

Basho's "Old Pond" Haiku

Old pond
new frog
splash!

[translation by Peter Schmidt]

