a wattle seedpod

haiku by lorin ford
a wattle seedpod

lorin ford
FOREWORD

Lorin Ford explains her engagement with haiku in these revealing words:

*My response to haiku, when subjected to it, was privately much closer to ‘so what?’ than ‘aha!’*. Then one day, *I heard this haiku read aloud:*

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picking up a jellyfish...
    my lifeline
    clear and deep
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– Dhugal Lindsay

*[sukuu te-no kurage-ya seimeisen fukaku*, written and translated by Dhugal]*

The effect was immediate – a physical quiver of recognition. *The memory of my original experience was vivid and unmediated by overt authorial presence... This was a happy accident. It made me realise that haiku are meant to be ‘seen through’ by us as readers, to our own experiences in the world.*

I like to think the older Bashō would have been pleased by Lorin’s story. Perhaps he’d wish all of us such insight and the modesty to write accordingly.

Writing skilfully within the popular mould for English-language haiku, Lorin has won endorsement from editors and empathy with readers without losing either her freshness or her Australian voice. This poet does not live in *Haikuland*. She may well become a haijin who helps move English-language haiku closer to poetry.

John Bird
for

*Laryalee Fraser*

the patient mentor

of my haiku beginnings

My special thanks and gratitude to Janice M. Bostok,
for reading my haiku and for her help with the selection
of haiku from which this book was developed.
first light –
eye to dreaming eye
with a kookaburra

river sunrise
a girl’s shadow
swims from my ankles

heat shimmer
a kingfisher’s wings
answer the river
the road home
all the old milestones
flashing by

country road
a new wreath
on the scarred tree

wattle in bloom –
old friendships renewed
at the funeral

headstone
a leaf crosses out
the I in his name
winter wind
an empty spider web
moored to the window

wool skeins
the shades of winters past
sorted anew

the crack of dawn arthritic fingers gather kindling

cold moon
the panel beater’s dog
howls at a hubcap
dry winter
a geranium wilts
in the pub window

skylight
a possum’s paw print
on the moon

cold night
the breath of children
being dragons

winter moon
a smudged fingerprint
on the ink stone
clear night –
cows huddled
behind their breath

Milky Way
a stream of termites
from the woodpile

crushed grass
where the calf was born
morning dew

the calf’s fur
licked into curls –
woodstove smoke
clear water –
a magpie’s song drops
into the pond

on a bare twig rain beads what light there is

the spring
in a wattle spray
... silvereyes

first lily light before sunrise

japonica sprig ...
the woodblock print
has faded
sakura ...
the taste of chilled wine
from a clay cup

butterflies
the book falls open
at his love poem

vestry steps
a sparrow raising dust
and confetti

Fathers’ Day
forget-me-nots
on the priest’s grave
the rusted hooks
in Dad’s tackle box –
spring tide

snapper run –
his red cigarette tip
bobbing on the bay

the sound of water
a fisherman fiddles
with his fly
fish story
a cormorant spreads its wings wider

rock pool
a puffer fish
in my face

wave wash –
soldier crabs march on
through the stars
rusted hinge
the butterfly’s wings
close, open...

laundry day
a magpie on the clothesline
singing down rain

cloudburst
a grey tabby
pours from the shed roof
red-brick lane each cat on its own window ledge

sliver moon
the sheath of a cat’s claw
on the doormat

Halloween
i go to the party
as myself
street café –
sparrow wait
on the tables

traffic snarl
the blue heeler
nudges my elbow

flooded road
a soft drink bottle
turns left

parked utes –
kelpie ears point
to the pub
solo bushwalk
the wolf-whistle
from a currawong

my lifeline
pressed to an insect’s –
scribbly gum

horseflies!
a wattlebird’s welcome
wing-snap
summertime
i wash nicotine stains
from the clock face

sunday speedboats
a water beetle circles
back to shore

heat wave
a dog shakes pond water
on the lovers

porch barbeque –
spiders drop in
from the rafters
silent night...
The shrill counterpoint of cicadas

Bon-bons
A wattle seedpod opens with a pop

Christmas party –
Mynahs watch over a nest in the garage

The scent of frangipani...
Alone with the moon
breathless heat
the horse’s hoof-fall
muffled by dust

heat haze
the miles
of boundary fence

prickly pear –
two old graziers blame
each other

red dust road
a cattle truck reaches
the vanishing point
desert sunset
the dingo’s shadow
inches closer

rock face
a red ochre handprint
above graffiti

didgeridoo
an emerging cicada
shakes-a-leg

a dream time
before theirs and mine –
Wollemi Pine
drought –
wind sweeps the stones
in the temple pond

long drought –
boulder lichen
holds on

temple looting –
another Buddha
loses his head

cinders fall
on the red hot pokers –
abandoned shack
red moon
the calligraphy
of charred trees

electric storm
a crack in the wall
lights up

rain!
i dance barefoot
between snails

a raga
from the junkyard –
summer rain
reef dive
a turtle climbs green water
into the blue

bay shallows
a starfish moves its fingers
over mine

ebb tide
the beached jellyfish
quivers

the sound of shells
drawn in by an ebb-wave...
another breath
low tide –
bits and pieces of her
wedding china

a seagull
claims the sandcastle
... incoming tide

summer affair
the purple sea urchin
i brought home
anzac parade –
swallows swoop over
the eternal flame

even the names
in the shade have faded –
memorial park

clouded sun –
his old tweed coat
in shades of grey

beer garden table
the blurred edges
of many circles
rain shadow
the kitchen tap’s
drip ... drip ...
cicada husk ...
also clinging
to a straw
lunar eclipse
a moth taps circles
on the ceiling
look, the first
sasanqua camellia!
the cat’s pink yawn
Mothers’ Day
the weight of fog
on a late rose

candlelight
through rice paper
... grandmother’s face

pomegranate seeds
the tang of her secret
on my tongue
politely ‘good mornings’
from a building crew
... autumn

city schoolyard
a teacher shows children
how to skip rope

red leaves –
the tree-climbing vine
drops its disguise

wind chill
a spider wrapped up
in a rolled leaf
calm afternoon...
how easily the birch tree
lets go its leaves

sundown –
rainbow lorikeets
fade to black

windblown leaves
the ‘living statue’
packs her bag
autumn walk
a tissue paper box
follows me

willi-willi
the golden retriever’s
giddy orbit

unswept leaves
my foot brushes
a sparrow
leafless trees –
ice-green lichen
blooms on the roof tiles

rehab courtyard
a dry leaf shuffles
the circuit

twilight mist –
that old wanderer’s beard
through the screen door
express train
a hag’s apparition
at the window

terminal
the click of high heels
falters in mist

night river –
trains ripple over
the floating city
half moon...
she turns her pale face
to the darkness

winter beach –
i throw a stick
for no dog

finally getting
the why of loneliness –
bright sun on ice
land’s end
a seal returns
the dog’s bark
Biography: Lorin Ford writes haiku and longer poems. She lives in Brunswick, Victoria. Much of Lorin’s early childhood was spent on the foreshore and beach of a Melbourne bay-side suburb. From age nine she lived with her father, who ran the pub in an East Gippsland timber town. She left school early, preferring a ‘glamorous’ career in hairdressing to her year 9 correspondence lessons. Later, after a variety of jobs – from art school model to veterinary nurse – she received an Honours degree in English Literature and subsequently taught English and ESL in high schools. Lorin wrote a few poems in her teenage years and returned to writing again this century. Over 300 of her haiku have been published in Australia and overseas.

Acknowledgements: Many of the haiku in this book have previously appeared in the following journals, anthologies and exhibitions. My thanks to each of the editors who have kindly considered and published my work:

‘a procession of ripples’ (Canada), Clouds Peak (USA), Chrysanthemum (Germany), Famous Reporter, FreeXpresSion, Frogpond (USA), haigaonline (USA), ‘haiku dreaming australia’, Haiku Harvest (USA), Kokako (NZ), Mainichi Daily News (Japan), Modern Haiku (USA), Moonset (USA), Moving Galleries, Page Seventeen, paper wasp, paper wasp Jack Stamm anthologies ‘clear water’, ‘rusted hinge’ and ‘a maple leaf’, POAM, The Poets Republic, ‘Second Australian Haiku Anthology’, Shamrock Haiku Journal (Ireland), Simply Haiku (USA), Stylus, The Heron’s Nest (USA), The Mozzie, The Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Haiku Invitational (Canada), tinywords (USA), Yellow Moon, World Haiku Review (England), World Haiku Review (Europe) and WHR Treetops (USA).

Awards include: 1st prize in the 6th and 7th Annual paper wasp Jack Stamm Awards, 1st prize Shiki Salon Annual Haiku Poets’ Choice Award, 2005 and 1st prize Haiku Hut haiku competition, 2006
Lorin Ford’s imagery takes me right smack dab to her native Australia. Brilliantly inviting, *a wattle seedpod* offers close-up looks at small yet crucial events. She moves easily between human and natural worlds, most often seamlessly blending the two in an ideal haiku balance. Naturalist and poet, she takes me to a place where day-to-day existence can be as harsh and dangerous as it is rewarding. The beauty and utter realness of her work quite take my breath away.

Ferris Gilli, associate editor, *The Heron’s Nest*

A lively and engaging collection. Written sometimes with humour – always with sensitivity – these haiku reflect the fine detail of Australian rural and urban images.

*a wattle seed-pod* makes a positive contribution to contemporary Australian poetry.

Beverley George, President, Australian Haiku Society

Lorin Ford is a poet with a gift for precision. She brings her skill with language, keen insight and poetic sensibility to these cameos of vividly-recalled moments. The effect can be likened to a seedpod bursting open, potent with life and energy.

*a wattle seedpod*, her first haiku collection, is one to be savoured for its richness, variety and depth.

Lyn Reeves, haiku editor, *Famous Reporter.*