

Deer Heart



Stephen Toft

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Front and back cover photos: Kyle Hemmings

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is/let, Under the Basbo, Scryptic, Otata, Hedgeron, Amaryllis.

first snow
what
is holy?

in the hollow
of a tree i find
a cathedral

winter landscape myself in diagram form



after the frog
i dissect
an earthquake

between the ribs a whale a winter star

longest night:
calling owls
intersect somewhere
within me

tonight she says my hair needs moonlight

cherry blossoms convincing nobody

body count dusk lingers

crow's inner circle
the dark part of my eye



wilderness
i warm a shadow
with my blood

that flower quietly fuckable

the possibilities
inside my
deer heart

shouting
my poem into
the wind
it disappears,
gains meaning

summer rain a forced confession

as my wife sleeps i wrestle a rainbow



thinking outside the box four dead kittens

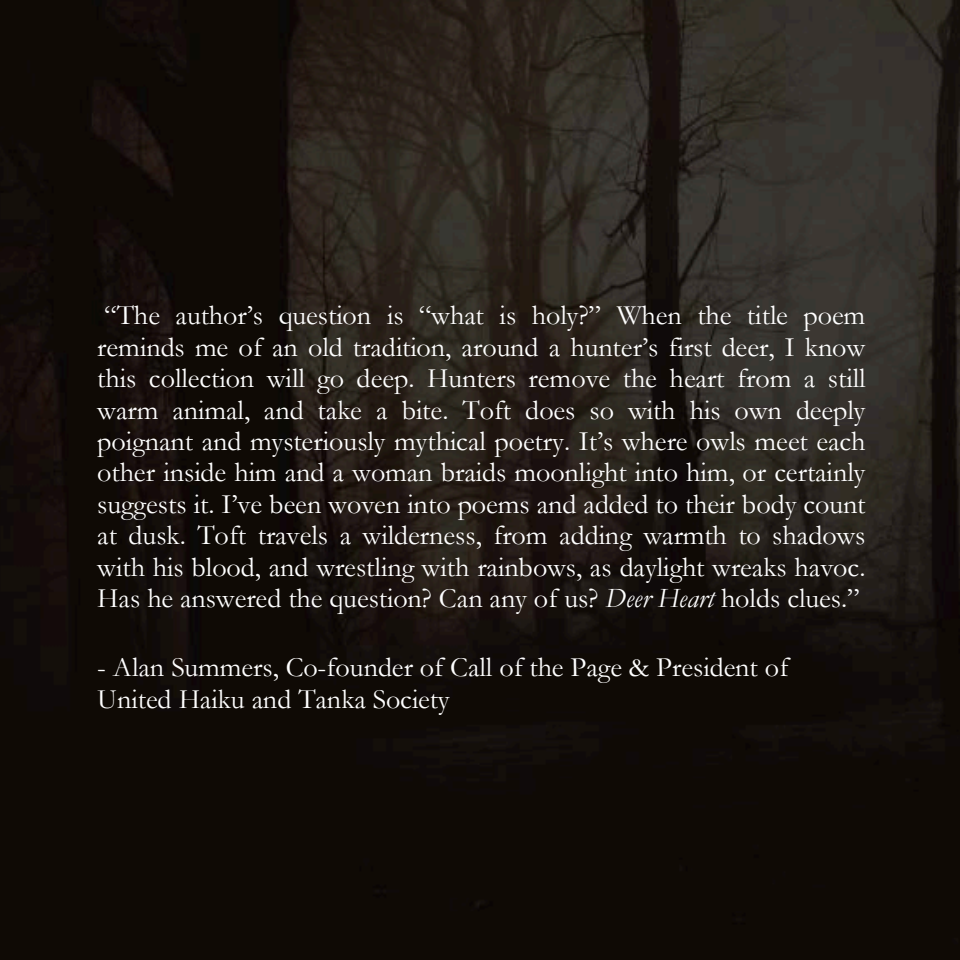
crows on a branch the suicide note writes itself

summer stars
an eel slides towards
my nightmare

dying blackbird
you say
the strangest things

Stephen Toft is a poet and homelessness worker who lives in Lancaster, UK with his wife and their children. His first collection, *the kissing bridge*, was published by Red Moon Press in 2008, and in December 2016, Scars Publications released his chapbook *naming a storm: haiku and tanka*.

Phil Openshaw is a photographer and visual artist from England who works within a wide variety of media, including commercial and fine art photography, Abstract art, digital image manipulation, audiovisual transformation and generative sound art, coding, calligraphy, electronic music, printing, painting, and asemic writing. Website: www.philopenshaw.com



“The author’s question is “what is holy?” When the title poem reminds me of an old tradition, around a hunter’s first deer, I know this collection will go deep. Hunters remove the heart from a still warm animal, and take a bite. Toft does so with his own deeply poignant and mysteriously mythical poetry. It’s where owls meet each other inside him and a woman braids moonlight into him, or certainly suggests it. I’ve been woven into poems and added to their body count at dusk. Toft travels a wilderness, from adding warmth to shadows with his blood, and wrestling with rainbows, as daylight wreaks havoc. Has he answered the question? Can any of us? *Deer Heart* holds clues.”

- Alan Summers, Co-founder of Call of the Page & President of United Haiku and Tanka Society