

## Sheri Vandermolen

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### Hatchling Season

My favorite neighbors are not  
the spectacled cobras  
that take diurnal pleasure  
in making their smooth way  
along the pliant branches  
of the ubiquitously blossoming  
hibiscus bushes  
lining our property walls,  
but they're also not  
at the bottom of my list —

at least, that is,  
until hatchling season,  
when the gardener casually tells  
of discarding a dozen leathery eggs  
he found tucked in a corner  
of the labyrinthine lawn  
(some with contents already dispensed),  
then poking around shrubs,  
under wash buckets,  
in a fruitless effort  
to locate the serpentine mother and/or brood...

and when an oxford-shirted businessman,  
doubling as wildlife rescuer,  
then rushes to the scene,  
where, with stick in one reflex-ready hand,  
a crocker sack in the other,  
he nabs a foot-long hatchling  
cornered (by a wary beagle) in a nearby yard.

Locating no trace  
of the rest of the ophidian family,  
the catcher accepts his small fee,  
then displays the contents of his bag  
to the fascinated crowd,  
before motoring off, to release the snake —  
to the wild or to the side of our subdivision  
(for another capture, of rupees),  
I can't say for sure.

## **Self**

You strip yourself of corporate servitude,  
select a tribal-punk batik shirt,  
soft linen pants, bright-red leather shoes,  
which impart to you the fluidity  
of a Kannada line rolling off the tongue  
of Sandalwood star Sudeep.

You have slipped into the sustaining comfort  
of self.

## Unloosed in Translation

Both sides slow down, speed up,  
speak loudly, try sign language,  
give thanks for common ground,  
even when the American ear  
loses "geyser," "valve," "veil,"  
hears, instead, "geezer," "wall,"  
or a twisted Pink Floyd  
"smile from a whale."

Hinglish's amiable creativity picks up,  
where languages' uniformity fails.

**Sheri Vandermolen** is editor in chief of Time Being Books. From 2008 to 2014, she resided in India, exploring the subcontinent via camera and pen until her repatriation to California. Her verse pieces and photographs have appeared in various international journals, including *Boloji*, *Camel Saloon*, *Cargo Literary*, *Commonline Journal*, *Contemporary American Voices*, *Contemporary Literary Review India*, *Earthen Lamp Journal*, *Eastlit*, *Foliate Oak*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Muse India*, *Papercuts*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Taj Mahal Review*, and *Verse-Virtual*, as well as in the anthology *Veils, Halos and Shackles: International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women*.