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"Bridges of Words: Haikus Uniting Cultures from 57 Countries of the World" by Esperanza Pretila

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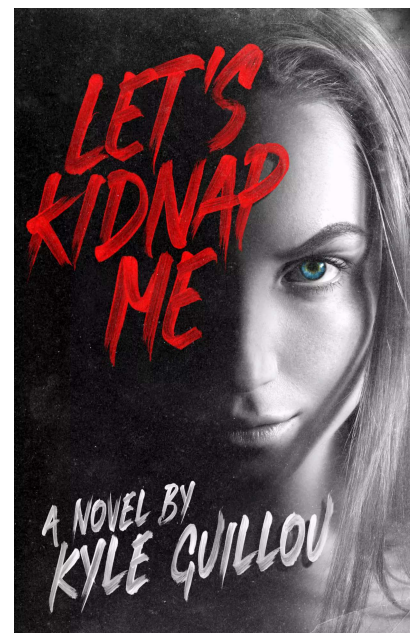
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Have you ever tried to describe the heartbeat of an entire country using only seventeen syllables? It's not just a challenge—it borders on the impossible. And yet, *Bridges of Words* takes that very impossibility and turns it into a global meditation. It invites the reader to see not just landscapes, but lives—through the lens of haiku, a form that's as fleeting as it is enduring.

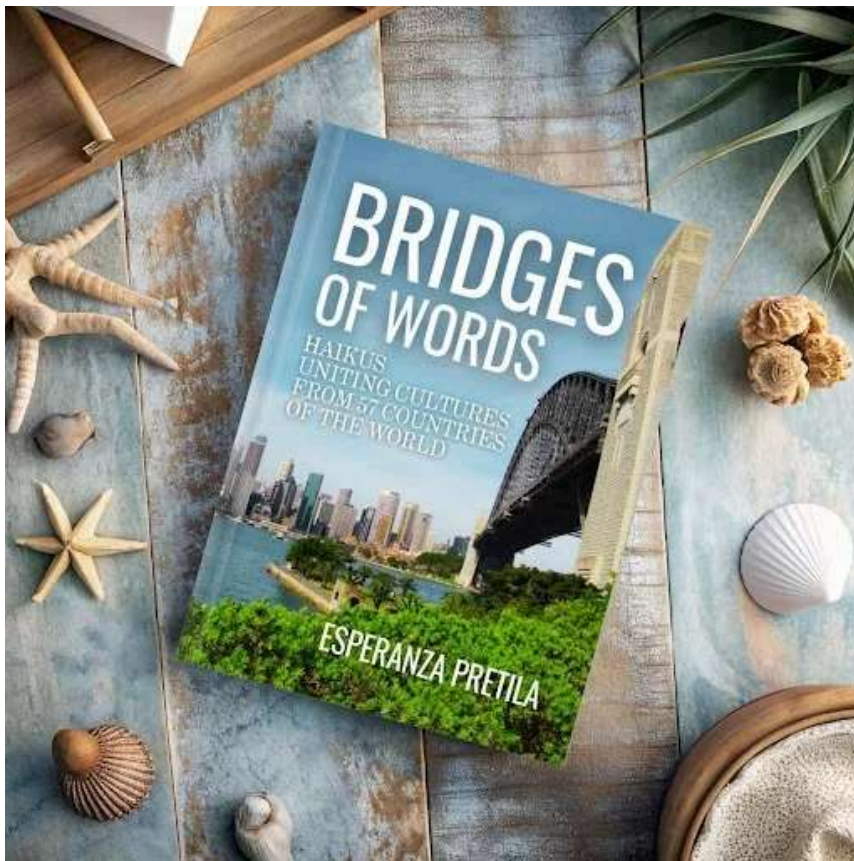
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Scientific research suggests our brains are wired to respond more deeply to pattern, rhythm, and brevity. That's one reason poetry—especially short-form poetry like haiku—can cut through complexity to leave a lasting impression. In this anthology, Esperanza Pretila uses that very tool to offer 57 poetic windows into the cultural soul of 57 countries. The result isn't flashy. It doesn't preach or sell. Instead, it listens. It distills. It shares.

Each entry reads like a moment suspended in air: samba rhythms through Brazilian favelas, cherry blossoms falling in Kyoto, echoes of the Nile winding past temples in Egypt, voices rising in harmony beneath Australia's Southern Cross. What unites them is not style, but sincerity. The haikus aren't trying to impress—they're trying to connect.

This isn't a book of generalizations or vague tributes. Pretila's verses feel carefully rooted in place, in rhythm, in truth. They embrace the specifics of local culture without turning people into caricatures. For instance, the Philippines is not just presented as an archipelago—it's a "pearl" that gleams through storms and calm, a symbol of resilience that reflects both beauty and endurance. The United States doesn't get a grand patriotic treatment; instead, it's introduced in the quiet hush of a Brooklyn whisper and the sunset's glow over LA. Subtle, precise, and dignified.

There's no hierarchy in the way these countries are presented. No nation overshadows another. In a world that often ranks places by power or wealth, this poetic equilibrium is quietly profound. Haiku becomes the great equalizer here. Whether a superpower or a small island, each is rendered in equal syllabic space. That choice alone carries quiet moral weight.

Neurologists have found that the brain responds empathetically to storytelling—even in microform. These tiny poems stir that empathetic response. They offer, not argue. They show, not explain. And in doing so, they achieve what lengthy debates and manifestos often cannot: they make us *feel* the presence of the other.

What's remarkable, too, is how the book is framed by Pretila's personal sense of purpose. In a moving preface and dedication, she shares memories of those who shaped her—a grandmother's unwavering belief, a father's quiet support, mentors who opened doors. This background isn't self-indulgent; it's part of the book's scaffolding. The bridges she builds with words are rooted in bridges built by lives around her. She doesn't claim to speak for the world. Rather, she writes as someone who has *listened* to it.

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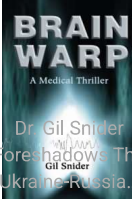
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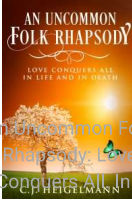
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