Keys to Renku

Key One: form
5-7-5-7-7, linked poetry
Connect to the poet before you (first poet: 5-7-5, next poet 7-7, then 5-7-5 again)
Cherry blossoms, love, and the moon are referenced in specified verses

Key Two: word choice
Choose sight, sound, smell, taste or movement words.

Key Three: “Kigo” word
….a season word, a nature word, a weather word
….a word that gives a hint or a clue to the season
(In a 36-verse renku, seasons change approximately every 8-9 verses.)

Key Four: present tense
Write from real experience or memory of the moment.

Key Five: Show the feeling, but do not tell or explain.

Key Six: Surprise! An “ah!” moment that wakes us up.
(In a 36-verse renku, the first 6 verses are calm. The next 24 verses can have change, humor, or unexpected turns, and the last 6 gradually fade and mute in terms of imagery)

Key Seven: Compassion toward nature.

Adapted from “Seven Keys to Writing Haiku” in: