

Prophetic
by Kavi Kshiraj

december is grief. our sun is only a star, carving
my throat open when i swallow light, tangible. i see
you in the gaping hollow of your absence, around
molten edges, and my mother calls me hanuman.
my mother says, be better, says, you'll do more like
a shattering femur.

i split my chest apart, split my skin, blood-slick hands
wrapped around a dark handle and blade limned by
decemberlight, and your touch-worn notes fall out.

one day, we'll be done with this:

one day, you'll leave your fingerprints soft on my
pieridaelungs, and i'll hew fruit apart while your legs
dangle from a marble countertop, and i'll slip grocery
lists and sticky notes against the gentle harpcurve
of your ribs, and -

december is a ravaging. i bleed, an arrowhead excised
from my flesh, still dripping red from my curled hand,
and my mother braids my hair. i watch the sky.

Kavi Kshiraj is a queer, Indo-American poet found in
New Jersey. They spend time on hobbies such as writing,
mythology, and their various identity crises.

The House Plant
by Crystal Stone

after Sabrina Oras Mark

Some thought it was because of all the men I wasn't fucking. Others thought it the men I was. Still, a friend said it might do me good, make me less lonely. By then, I had wet dreams of masturbating alone. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I ate sandwiches under the desk and they called me by name on the loud speaker. I didn't breathe. The mouse jumped out of a box of books. The kids chased it into the woods. These woods' kids had no mothers, just leaves. Perhaps cicada murmur. Leaping toad fingers. I was lost in the forest tapestry. My white walls had nail teeth that bit the print still. I named the morning hush Not Baby, But Something that Needs Care, and then Poverty, or the Outsides of Poets and finally If Drunkenness Were Closer to God. One night I thought I made it out, but it was only under. I stripped my clothes unlike a newborn. But like kudzu vines. Like something I saw when I walked too far. Hanging in effigy of the swamp. Maybe the past. Back then, we hopped the pool fence and jumped in with the vacuum snake. It wasn't the snake that made us turn, but what walked in the corner, before cameras, by the trash cans and beach chairs and concession stand and lights, with dark stone eyes. They were all there, rolled up, ready to be fed. At home, there was a new still I didn't yet name. With aloe arms. I thought, Here Could Be Where She Doesn't Light. I knew that it would die. Every day closer to my blood like tired miners sleeping on the job.

Crystal Stone is the author of two collections of poetry, *Knock-Off Monarch* (Dawn Valley 2018) and *All the Places I Wish I Died* (CLASH 2021). Her poetry has previously appeared or is forthcoming in *The Threepenny Review*, *The Hopkins Review*, *Salamander*, *Poetry Daily*, *Writers Resist*, and many others. She is an MFA candidate at Iowa State University, formerly served as a poetry editor for *Flyway: Journal of Writing and Environment* and gave a TEDx talk entitled "The Transformative Power of Poetry" in April 2018. You can find her on Twitter @justlikeastone8, on Instagram @justlikeastone, or at her website www.crystalstone.com.