

Nude Body of Gutters

by Prema Bangera

You lose her. In the vortex of guttered water,
her tangled hair entwines. Tornado-like.
Her body spinning boisterously at its core.
Her name: Izra—the wooden doll with black pebbled eyes.

~

Your body was five. Your mind was forty-two. Papa's hands were covered
in wire. Your arms, cable-scraped. Ma said: *You are an abortion—living*. She was
the sequins of tattered saris. You hid under odnis[1], listening to Sanskrit chants,
clutching Naana's Izra, like the single weed inside your Ma's marigold gardens.
Naana[2] said, *Izra has the answers*.

~

Break wood. Break light. Break time. On flesh, tree-lines are drawn
out of prayers. Izra: her nude curves sprawl in gutters. She is breathing,
pivoting with the tides, pirouetting into the ocean. Her body is the hum
of a closed room, giving birth to birds made of leaves.

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Papa said: *Your name is a temple-prayer*. Ma wanted to bathe you in lotus petals.
You only believed in the apparitions of the stars. Your face: ruptured
hallelujahs of the waifish monks.

~

You will lie in a field of perennial-voices. You will meet Izra in Shanghai,

under bridges of pillars laced in Mandarin. You will smell the
opium,
once exchanged for weapons. Your body will turn into ashed-
wood.
Your mind, still breathing. You will never be alone.

[1] A shawl that is part of an Indian female's outfit.
[2] Maternal grandfather in Hindi

