

# 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.

~

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

