

## Bypass

By Shreya Jalali

His scent cuts through the room's dim romance  
Cold blade draws the first line  
Across particulate thoughts spilling over a dam,  
his lips  
so chaotic they seem  
together  
serene.

There are killers here  
– no different from lovers  
Telling their stories amongst the remains:  
Scene littered with a hand here, a heart there, drenched  
In the shrieking hum of fluorescence  
Flickering lights that falter like a pulse

It's hard to breathe here, on this precipice  
Does he see me waver?  
Does he feel my doubt as I sink my folded hands  
Elbow-deep in red  
Flowing slower, fading into fingerprints with less and less hope

After all,  
Everyone's just looking for something to worship  
And finding it gone.  
The scalpel, the gods, this – your choice  
From here, I see the drained remains  
Of who we were, hidden away  
Like a crime, a polite white sheet over the body

He swallows my hunger  
It keeps him fed, behind that sheet  
His eyes half-shut, leak  
Formaldehyde tears.

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