

Renuka Raghavan – Five Poems



Featured Poet

Aurora Borealis Reviews

a found poem

Underwhelming
Lights didn't put on a show, as promised
Too fucking cold, barely saw anything

Our tour guide was an idiot, had us looking in the southern direction for the Northern Lights

Buyers beware: You need clear skies
No one said seeing the Aurora was weather-dependent
Trip sucked, 0 stars (See what I did there?)

What a disgrace
It took nearly four hours
The most boring night of my life

Instead of looking for the Northern Lights, we had to go looking for a lost passenger from our tour bus

Save money and explore something else
Now I know why they call it hunting for the Aurora Borealis
Honestly, y'all might have better luck hunting for Bigfoot

No pictures, no lights, no refund
Just a green smudge. What's the big deal?
Best night ever: no Aurora, but I swear I saw a UFO!

Ride or Die

By the river's edge, a tremendous grove of trees
huddle together in a cluster, like whispering mothers
standing apart from the others in a school yard.
Many with limbs missing or torn,

scarred by blades of relentless axes,
frost stripping their shawls of yellowing leaves,
battered by wind and waves,
their roots withering little by little,
wrecked and broken beyond belief,

they stand,
collectively,
—this is how survivors fare.

Scavengers

That ghazal recitation was his last outburst of color. He'd slash a word here and there, replace it with one of his own, a linguistic swordsman, a lone hero, waging war on stupefying boredom, defending the lost cause of verse. He was our mill into whose hoppers the grains of empty hours poured, and there, within his cogs, bloomed the fragrant aroma of the spoken words of his Motherland. We tasted his words with fervent hunger, greedily savoring each spoken syllable like a juicy morsel, until we were full. An outcast by choice, he withdrew into himself, so that the more we focused on him, the less we saw. The once blissfully tranquil sky-blue walls of his home were now thickening, graying, storming into the monotony of his acrid dialogue. Eventually his wish was fulfilled. He was forgotten.

*his mind left bereft
like bones after a heartless
kill—we scavenge on*

Corvid Behavior

When I was younger, Papa used to call me *Tillu* and read fables. The one about a crow so thirsty and clever he made a few drops of water reach the top of a pitcher by adding stones, one by one—my favorite. I was a hummingbird, one with speckled wings, flitting from one day to the next, relishing everything sweet before me. Then, that year, the monsoon drowned our house, the courtyard filled with clouds, the veranda became a wind tunnel, and me with my stippled wings, got caught in it.

I fell from my bed into a wonderland. Petals paraded across blue skies, shrouding mister sun and sister moon. Black and white portraits with mouths torn out, spoke iambic morals. I couldn't find my glasses, righting myself, squinting as much as I could without closing my eyes, I peered into the back garden where I saw a tiny feline curled at the foot of Papa's ghost.

Half-hidden under a palm frond, he was collecting stones, one by one.

In the Yellow

One chore leads to another still
at the onset of this cool Spring day,

the dog snoring on her bed,
witch hazel blooming.

You have to pay attention
to know when a door presents itself.
In the clement sun-pollinating morning,
the kitchen bursts into flame,

the portal opens and I step
back into another day.

Not the mere memory of it,
but the time itself, that easy light and air,

my body still mine,
but years before my womb carried another.

The depleted skins of Meyer lemons,
squeezed dry, lay in a heap

as my father's brittle hand sprinkled another
spoon of sugar into a glass pitcher.

My mother hummed
as she arranged her herbs and spices,

mustard seeds, turmeric, bay leaves,
coriander and saffron,

all lined in identical jars
below the windowsill.

I return reluctantly,
or perhaps not at all.

Renuka Raghavan is the author of *Out of the Blue*, (Big Table Publishing, 2017) a debut collection of short fiction and poetry. She has been published in literary journals across the country, with her most recent work featured in *Mom Egg Review* and *Gravel Literary Magazine*. Renuka serves as the fiction book reviewer at Červená Barva Press, and is a poetry reader for Indolent Books and the *Lily Poetry Review*. She is also a co-founder of the Poetry Sisters Collective. Her second poetry collection is forthcoming from Nixes Mate Press. Visit her at [www.renukaraghavan\(dot\)com](http://www.renukaraghavan(dot)com)