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Two Poems: Vertigo; lockdown

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Creative and Literary Works

Two Poems

Jer Xiong

Vertigo

The mountains do not direct propriety, no,
neither do the winds lead to
my proper name. I pen
what's found at isle's end—
untitled coordinates,
unbecoming tides—
and mother foretells me as
the bad left destined to break
off.

My path is fraught.
This burden one writes new
rites. When stars reveal only
crumbling compasses,
I must plot a light from the axis
beyond.

Where you go, mother chides,
I will not know.

Between us, the point of return
remains uncharted.



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lockdown

I only wish to return but
the living lies inside
the bones of home.
I sweep dusty
corners to drive out
phantoms. Binding
prayers on doorways
draws no relief in
inventory—far from
you, separated
by virus, highways,
and the seconds are
less forgiving than
last year—the patio
cactus is drowned.
I thought I knew
how to keep alive.

About the Author



Jer Xiong is a Hmong American writer and a Nonfiction candidate in the MFA Creative Writing program at California State University, Fresno. She's been an editor for the *Watershed Review* and *The Normal School*. Her works have appeared in *maivmai*; (559) *JOU-RNAL*; *Celebrate Hmong*; *Flies, Cockroaches, and Poets*; and Pos Moua's *Karst Mountains Will Bloom*. She's a member of the Hmong American Writers' Circle (HAWC) and co-founder of Hmong American Ink & Stories (HAIS).



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