Two Poems: Vertigo; lockdown

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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.
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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