

MANI RAO

[Back from the markets of lust]

Back from the markets of lust, haven't bought anything.

Our trolls rally on the windowsill—the leopard who mates for life,
handless martial greybeard, taped up windowpane, ancient ring.

Living in the presence of each other's lives, from order to chaos,
dispelling heat.

The one star you find and pin with your eyes as I scramble for a wish.

We see the lightning together, gasping, lips sealing around a vacuum.

I watch you asleep, stealing your time. It rains and rains, the tanks
fill up and the grass grows inches overnight.

The jealousy because I think you are dying faster, the faint darkness
between your lips, the striving for a piece of your skin.

You lock me up to make sure I am there when you return.

I wait for days to see you; when finally you appear I walk away.