

Prize

By Raj Kaur

After Marina Abramović's [Rest Energy](#), 1980

The scene is one you already know well by now. Lovers, pre-tragedy. Both gripping the hurt between them tightly. Is it necessarily only one's fault when the arrow is unleashed? It takes two for this trick to work. Nothing but each other holding each other in place. Their legs sprout like roots from the same old, gnarled tree. Perhaps they could stay like this forever, for a hundred years at least, nothing but rot taking them down. They could be a living thing.

Try to imagine it now: light spilling through leaves, time kept in so many rings. This cannot last. Can the fear of wounding each other be called love? Whatever the case, it is there. In her clenched fist, his tight jaw. It tugs at them both. Can you see it? Sometimes it happens as an accident, a miscalculation, a breath drawn out of sync. Other times it is a vengeful, too-easy release of the bowstring. The woman, stuck like a prize pig, quiet and murdered. Still holding the wooden limb of the bow. And the man, spinning backwards, away into chaos. My breath catches at the thought, but then, how good is love that does not make you sweat?

It helps to imagine the woman smiling, I think. Squealing with laughter even in death. Picture a feast at the end of it. The man, turning away but still, as if he can't help it, a part of her forever: the apple of her heart, sweet and cold, and all filled up with him.