



The Gutter Spread Guide to Prayer

Eric Tran

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PsychiatristAsianAmericanGayGuy wields a wickedsharp wordweapon to explore the dailyplate of complexity handed to him. This debut collection earned Eric Tran the Autumn House Rising Writers Prize in 2019.

*My Mother Asks How I Was Gay
before Sleeping with a Man*

*She says I've taught you this before: press the skin
of pears to your nose to sense if they're ripe,
Sound out foreign words, spring-load them on your lips*

*before flicking them off your tongue. Measure drinks
with your fingers, test gold with your teeth. Do you trust
the strength of ice with the weight of one toe,*

*the day's weather without throwing yourself into it,
the spice of a pepper by biting the tip? Son,
the world is not known by its surfaces alone.*

*When you cut new flowers, split their stems
like a giant vein, teach them to drink water again.
I warned you once not to touch fire-red coils,*

*but you had to reach out your hand, palm the heat,
hold the fire in your fist to learn how to be afraid.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (March / April 2020)

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