

Erica Wright

American Burial Rites

God says we get the timbre wrong,
 let rain fall too fast
onto our wool and leather.

 We only ever try once,
blame mechanical failure
 and aunts who hide their gin
better than others. We love
 our dead, no question,
but cover the satin quick,
 slap the lids as if popping
pickups on their way.

 “Drive safe.” Our sons
can’t hear us over the engines,
 see our mouths flash teeth
then hide them. Mostly
 the time’s about shovels
and how they’re angled
 away from our unused bodies.
Ice deters us, but we break even
 earth to dispatch our offices.

Erica Wright
American New Year

The stars kiss without moving
their mouths much. Their hands
stop the cold with animal skin.
It's got me cornered again,
too fool to have noted the exit.
We drink our praise with strychnine,
or anyway, we mean to. Plastic flutes
will never be crystal, sure, will never
slit our tongues. On this list of goals,
“hiding” in ink that shows in black light
like crime scene splatter.

*There are the brains, there are the hearts,
there are the chewed up, alien parts.*

We swear we will never be as nice again
(and are right), are wrong that it matters.

Erica Wright's poetry collections are *All the Bayou Stories End with Drowned* (Black Lawrence Press, 2017) and *Instructions for Killing the Jackal* (BLP). She is the poetry editor at *Guernica Magazine* and an editorial board member of Alice James Books. Her latest novel is *The Granite Moth* (Pegasus).