

Maadulampazham* (In Which Her Daughter Hears the Diagnosis)

round galaxies of blood
packed inside your hull
each self-contained sigil
waits to be called forth
one perfect string of red
fire opals curled up inside
the velvet box you hid
lest they be discovered
or ripped from your grasp

overripe globules of life
leave acrimsonstain
a smear of loss
without its former name
jewels smudged to shadows
like a viper who waits
in corners conceals her brood
until seasons of pressure give way & they're freed
by some force then swallowed whole

you salvaged polished
categorized its seeds
once juicy rubicund
kept safe hidden by
vigilance & muscle
memories lemon Pledge
swirls on maple wood
daily meals scrubblings
lights out times four
you washed dried & sorted
starched pressed & folded
a place for everything &
everything in its place

the remains of its peel
Punica Granatum Persephone's bane
left to sour on the branch
the devil's subtraction reducing fibers
to bits unraveling connections frayed false
a sort of reverse alchemy scrawling
a freehand alphabet tangled yet disjointed
within the rind shaping faulty semantics
for which exists no lexicon
unable to decipher the movements of thought
unable to unknow the unraveling of hope
a displacement of home throws out

I pick up these moments
one by one like coins
from a fountain obscured
finally brought to the surface
I gather the sum as
I bless the thing that pulled
and split you open

my touchstone my source
I used to drink
each night while I wished to see your heart
illuminated by the sun
I try to ease the pain of culling
you down from on high

*Tamil word meaning both pomegranate and a woman's mind