

vertigo

refuse to sleep in his castle of cast-off bones,
bones that hold up his throne the way they once homed a soul.
instead, sleep between the trees in the garden by the river.
your ear pressed to the mouth of its banks,
where pomegranates fall from
a tall tree with blood red fruit.

when you wake, split one open, and
look down at the seeds.
feel the vertigo you once knew from
tipping your head back to face the stars.

all stories are the same,
fresh themes on old melodies.
trust me.

you, too, are a story, and it is not new.
on your first day here, you met a woman
lovely as late summer and twice as bittersweet,
and you thought she'd teach you salvation.

my dear,
she may not be your mother,
may not bear her own crown and torch,
but let her lead and let her light.
listen.

like you, she welcomes flowers and bids them farewell
as that great hourglass turns,
and her voice only gains sound after passing through
somenanelse's lungs as stolen breath.
like you, she walks with shadows and shades for company
in the garden by the river.
it is a different garden, growing different people, but it blooms all the same.

once upon a time, she reached up — hungry— and picked
a low-hanging prize from
a tall tree with blood red fruit.

unlike you, she had never yet seen barren hills
rolling like an unkempt sea during almighty tempers:
a reminder to pay tribute, give thanks, make offering, beg pardon.
so she consumed the flesh of that fruit and left the core to rot.

my dear, listen and remember.
sink ankle-deep into the first cursed thing you can find.
palm a pomegranate with those stained fingers of yours,
and crack it down the middle with all the power you have here.
pluck out the seeds, fit them between your teeth, and
break them.