

# Translation

Michelle Valois

We bought a pomegranate in January on a gray, Swedish day; you carried it home in your pocket. I found a knife in a kitchen drawer among the cast-off silverware of previous tenants; you cut the fruit in half. Red seeds bright in spongy pulp, white flesh cradling the object of our labor. I put the knife away. You told me what to eat and how. I listened, cupping my half of the pomegranate in calloused hands and lifting it to my mouth.

How thick the braid that coiled around your neck and snaked down your back. How cold our rented room. How poor my attempts to pronounce the words we whispered in your mother tongue. The more pomegranate I ate, the more difficult the *kä* sound became—*kämpa* as in struggle, *kärlek* as in love—which was almost like the *shh* in my name, but not. Almost edible, the insides of this strange fruit: moist, chalky, acidic, sweet, and stinging the mouth's soft flesh.

You wiped the juice from my chin. I kissed the stains on your wrists. You told me, Eve plucked a pomegranate, not an apple. I said, everything gets lost in translation. You told me about Persephone, poor lass, who ransomed her return for just one taste. I said, I might go home one day.

That winter I carried the weight of our love on my tongue.