

ROSITA GEORGIEVA

Family Reunion

You don't need to know my language
to trace the family tree from my nephew's
straight eyebrows
to my mother's eyes—the colour of autumn.
Tonight the sky looks honest and revealing
in my great-grandfather's garden
where the stars smell of quinces and apples.

My aunt, a famous tailor, measures you
unconsciously,
my little son, huddled up in her arms, unknits
her buttons
while humming an ancient song of his own
about threads and needles.
The awards and accidents in the family
are weighed, one by one, on the Scales—
you'll hear stories about cousins who climbed
a peak
and did not return from Aries,
about an uncle experimenting with his life on
an island,

and mostly about my brother who's late
tonight.
When he was seven, he was lost in the woods
but he managed to find the way back
and brought a huge bouquet that we named
Temptation—
the scarlet dot of a wild strawberry, a sweet
drop of blood,
against the velvet green of nettle.
The scratches from the nettle stayed for several
days and were gone
while the strawberry still puts him into
trouble.

Do not smile at my mom, she's not looking at
you,
she is smiling at the man who once knocked
on her window,
covered her head with a wreath of daisies
and took her out into the torrent. He was not a
vision—

his lips were warm and smelled of earth,
his eyes were hectic with decisions.
Under the frowning oak his heavy wings
embraced her.
Later he crossed the rainy meadows, he
crossed the border
of her tiny world fenced with vines and lyrics
to search for recognition
and become a legend. They spent together only
a torrent,
she's never heard a word from him,
but she can't stop blaming him
for calling her beyond the daisy fields,
for touching her cheeks in a disastrous,
life-long fantasy.

My great-grandfather is not listening.
So many losses crowd the distant planet of his
heart.
Do not ask him anything, do not raise your
demanding voice.
He has no name. His Rising sign is Cancer.
So there would be a little space for you in his
heart,
crowded with deaths, not to love you—
to protect you

in his garden
where the stars smell of quinces and apples.

Rosita Georgieva is originally from Bulgaria, a mother of two, and a Masters candidate in English at York University. Many of her poems have been published in European and American magazines and anthologies including The Path Not Taken (1996), International Review (1996), and Poetic Voices of America (1999).