

When the Moon Took Maman Lila, It Took Me, Too

by Ava Minu-Sepehr

My grandmother stood on the curb. In her hands
were envelopes, which she pressed into our bodies
the way she might push yellow wanting from her chest.
In her mouth was scarlet Persian, like paint.

We delighted in her sun-glorious language—
which, estranged from Iran, felt only ours.
The pomegranates in her apartment were cracked
from ripeness and grief. I was blurry and small.

We left her with mint and lemons and no children,
and when we drove off, she became small on the curb.
In fact, it looked as if the curb swallowed her and then
dusted and blew over like a city desert.

On Monday her body was filled with strokes,
no words, just scarlet bleeding which killed her. The moon watched
her leave and did not intervene. I was not there

I was not there, to watch her body become
hurting and still, or watch her red mouth turn blue and numb.

The first, aching time back to Los Angeles,
I searched for her hands and her language
in the small apartment, in the papers, in the fruit bowl.
I even sought the dusted curb, the moon, I couldn't find her.