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POETRY | FALL 2021

## Pomegranate Protocol

By Ceren Ege

My mother helped people to see long  
before I opened my eyes

She wore surgical gloves the same color  
as her scrubs in the OR and in  
the kitchen to peel pomegranates so her hands  
wouldn't wear the seeds' blood

My mother taught me to how to tighten my  
goggles long before I knew  
I would love to swim and she tightened  
her own before peeling away  
every onion's armor so this way Mother  
found a way to keep her eyes  
dry even in the kitchen  
to keep us laughing near a burning stove  
and keep our stomachs full enough so the  
empty seat at the table would go unnoticed  
thinking we never noticed how the  
goggles filled up anyway

Summers came and went in our home faster  
after my father's passing  
Us sisters begging in the same routine  
pleading to be taken  
from the beach to the diner to the campfire  
speckles of white ash illuminating  
our faces in a way that reminded Mother of  
the x-rays that showed her lover's lungs  
speckled with bubbles of dense marble clouds  
growing bigger  
sinking his chest

Mother never over-waters our pothos plants  
asks that we sleep with the doors cracked open  
She does not let lotion soften her cracked hands  
does not let her eyes water her cheeks

because she says there may be a flood  
once she lets the rain begin falling

I remind my mother  
*you taught me how to swim*

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**Ceren Ege is a Turkish-American poet currently based in Massachusetts, where she works at the Attorney General’s Office to help advocate for affordable energy. Ege gripped onto poetry as a safe practice of self-care around the time her father’s cancer tightened its grip into metastasis. She continues to write to normalize conversations of grief and loss, especially during COVID-19 when everyone has grieved the loss of something—whether it was a person, place, amenity, or an idea of how life would be. Advocacy and social justice draw her to one day practice law, while creative writing keeps her soft in a world bedecked with adversities that tempt us to harden. “Pomegranate Protocol” “is an acknowledgment of the need to grieve and permission to do so.” “Dictum Wisdom,” also in the Fall 2021 issue of *Intima: A Journal of Narrative Medicine*, is “an acknowledgement of Ege’s father’s life, of the shared pains that allow us to connect, and a proposition that we should,” said Ege. Her poetry has won a Hopwood Undergraduate Award and the Arthur Miller Award through the University of Michigan’s Hopwood Program.**

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