

BlazeVOX 13

Spring 2013

Julie Perkins

Drought

meringue cloud—overbaked—
crumbles into ashes

devoured by blue sky, blue, blue, boundless blue
parched lake, unyielding

mouths open like cups raised
overflowing with emptiness

The Duel

An Afghan girl—let's call her Lina—taps her phone,
and calls a boy. Whispers fly like fists,
breaking through barred windows, the cultural asylum
where they live, apart, in love.
Goodbye, too late. Discovery. She's fractured family honor:
the phone falls as her brothers beat her, promise her death.

An American girl—let's call her Amy—cries for like the millionth time at the death
of Romeo (Leo) oh Romeo. She picks up her phone,
sighs, and calls a boy lacking Leo's honor
(as star-crossed lover, as anguished infiltrator), though the boy's fists
shine like bruises. He fought for her love,
she granted him asylum.

Cloaked like a man, Lina flees to the foreigners' base, pleads for asylum,
assures the soldier of her death
if he withholds this act of love.
He unlocks the gate and flips open his phone.
Later, in the tent, Lina bites her fists
to keep from crying. Three soldiers—women—guarantee her honor.

*What does it mean to honor
a woman?* Amy wonders. In the asylum
of her bed the boy fists
her. Afterward his coming feels like death
trickling toward her heart. Her phone
vibrates and she wonders now, *what is love?*

Lina's sister visits the base, argues her love,
says *come home*. No. How is it honor
to hang up her life for using a phone?
The sister leaves. Brothers drive by day after day after day. Asylum
here, how much longer? The village aches for her death.
She will not blame the foreigners for unclenching their fists.

Amy kisses his fists,
waits for the boy she does not love
to leave. She wonders, *how does a phone die but never suffer death?*
Later, alone, she watches Teddy (Leo) poor Teddy question his honor,
accept the verdict, succumb to the island asylum.
That night, like every night, she sleeps clutching her phone.

New name, new village. New love? No, but a husband. Honor.
Their baby punches tiny fists against the air. Lina breathes, receiving her asylum,
forestalled death, the charged buzz of her phone.

Minthe

Dug from dirt,
terra-cotta potted,
contained to face
south side winter sun.

How much do you remember?

River running circles around death?
Laughter turned to tears under
Hades' hands
haunting—or was it love?

Tea-steam whispers:
I am still beautiful.

Your tears taste sweet on my tongue.