

Of Wineapples and Acorns

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I follow Calista because of the photograph of a pomegranate tree that she tweets. I zoom in, realising I haven't known how or where the fruit grow. The pomegranates are blushed and golden on the branches, topped with tiny crowns.

'Wineapples,' I whisper to the screen.

I'm brought back to myself as a child, peering at strange fruit on a cart outside my Dublin school. The fruit-seller calls them wineapples and splits one open, seducing me with the seed-rubies that belch from its heart. Sharp and gritty in my mouth, I love the seeds' alien nature, and the heft of the sundered carapace in my hands. This is exotica; this is beauty; this is the elsewhere I crave.

'Gorgeous,' I respond to Calista's tweeted photo.

She replies instantly. 'This tree grows beside my house.' And I imagine a place of whitewashed walls and a blue door, the sea beyond. 'Show me an Irish tree!' she types.

I take my mobile phone, run to the balcony, and snap the crenulated, just-starting-to-turn leaves of my only potted plant.

'Oak,' I tell Calista.

'Very nice. And the fruits, what do you call them?'

'Acorns!' I reply. 'They're not for eating ☺'

'Yes. We call them βελανίδια,' she types, and I hop to Google Translate, listen, and say, 'Velanidia.'

We talk about the pomegranate's calyx and the acorn's cupule, how pretty they are, how perfect and essential. We talk about Greek sunshine and Irish drizzle. We move to DMs and Calista tells me she has fallen out of love with her husband. I tell her I have been single for two years and eight months, and that my father has dementia. She says she loves Greece, but she needs to find freshness, locate peace. I say I dislike the western city I'm in and its eternal, energetic clamour.

I sit on my bed at late hours, crack open my laptop like the cleaving of a pomegranate. The screen, in my midnight room, is my mirror and portal, its silver-light my connection. I scroll and tab, flit from platform to platform, from encyclopaedia to document. My last stop, always, is Twitter, to see if Calista is there. She has not posted in three hours. She has not posted in twenty-one hours. Has she gone?

The city without hums and hurries, screeches, slows, and re-starts. I sleep. I turn over and my eyes flick open. The red light of my phone, charging by my head, is bright as a ruby. I lift my mobile and go straight to Twitter. The numeral 1 hovers over the message icon and I quicken as I tap on it. Calista. She tells me she is flying to Ireland. She tells me that my oak needs solid ground, a rooting place, and that I do too.

'I am open to you,' she says.

I send her back words from a poem: 'The end cracks open with the beginning: rosy, tender, glittering within the fissure.'

'I knew you would understand,' Calista types back.