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# Proof Positive

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## Proof Positive

You didn't kajal your eyes today and you wish you had.  
The tasseled shawl is red on your shoulders  
but there's a black leather jacket on the back of the chair  
and you can pass.  
This Midwestern coffee shop is full of men,  
but you had to get out of the room today,  
even if blood and tissue were churning between your legs, proof precious  
that you still protect yourself.  
A flower pot outside chokes with cigarette butts. Sidewalk shattering into ice.  
But on the table slim volumes are bleeding poetry -  
Asghar, Munaweera, Piepzna-Samarasinha.  
They are everything, these raw tearing words that could have been written for you,  
and you had to come here, red lipstick smeared on the lip  
of the mug you drained to ease that down-deep clench  
and something is happening . Red draped around you like a flag.  
You clutch the pages with your aththamma's hands,  
skin thin as the prescription paper your aththi kept in his office,  
bruise-dark knuckles, studded with dandruff pores.  
It's barely four but glass bulbs flare in the awning outside.  
Flash of yellow-blue. The track team boys are running by.  
Tall thin blondes who you wanted once - you thought they could fix you. This afternoon you  
don't. The words of brown women are rising within you.  
Outside at the colour lights  
are battered cars you do not recognize and they never stop coming.  
Outside is a world that still makes you wonder how you ended up here.  
But at least here the eyes of the boys slide right past you. Unseeing.  
You turn back to the other women. *Tell it again.*  
*If you say it happened to you*  
*then I can say it happened to me too.*

kajal - eyeliner

aththamma - grandmother

aththi - grandfather

Lalini Shanela Ranaraja