

Chinese Apples

by Forrest Roth

Mother still calls pomegranates “Chinese apples,” much to my embarrassment. A bowl filled with them sits on our den table. “Look at this, a Chinese apple!” she will say, as if it suddenly dropped from a perfumed cloud, while our guest remains silent. She’s an expert at presentation: taking a paring knife she cuts the fruit at its equator and, breaking it open, produces two perfect halves. Not a single seed falls. She lets our guest look upon the juicy bouquet; he has yet to say whether he actually wants any or not. Curious of the offer, he reaches in to try one, searching her face for the appropriate response he should take. “Eat,” she commands, “and don’t worry about the floor.” He listens to her, and while they spit seeds on the carpet I try to explain—will it never end—that pomegranates didn’t come from China originally, but Persia. “Well,” she says in between seeds, “it’s only a name I enjoy, dear.” Spit spit spit.

