

Chimes of Coins or Branches

by Prema Bangera

It must be some sort of Freudian twist, but as her cold fingertips draw rings on my navel, I think of my mother. Here, her body watches my tongue, asking my lips to curl into the letters of her name. I can't get erect. I remember my mother's face—her eyes almost wet as she twirled a strand of D's gamboge-dread, the one he clipped for her. This was when I was ten. I remember how she watched the curves of his silhouette move across her window blinds. Outside, his drunken palm clutched the paint-peeling bars of our porch. She wasn't letting him in, knowing he could twist her arteries into shapes my step-father never knew. As I watched her through the half-cracked door, twisting D's knotted hair between her fingertips, I wondered where my step-father was—what taste lingered upon his skin. D's skin smelled like my mother's potpourri pillows. He was an old drunk, a junkie, and always wanted to come home to my mother, drink Red Bush tea with her at dusk. He managed to frequently use “hitherto” in his sentences. My mother said he had a good heart. But she only let him in after hearing the chimes of coins or branches against her window. This woman lying next to me, her charcoaled eyes ask for answers I cannot give, the happenings of wind chimes I cannot breathe through.

