

Dream of Burying My Grandmother Who Has No Grave

by Sharanya Manivannan

We buried her upright, in the stance of warriors.

My brothers and I driving
out alone to do this, miles and miles
from the memory of warmth, lifting her
small strong body out of the vehicle
and laying it down
beside the railway track. My gloved hand
brushing frost from her face in the
Siberian winter of a dream in which I
was my mother, and she, mine.

We buried her there without
ritual, lowering her slowly into a furrow,
covering her with fistfuls of ice, hurrying
against the long wail of the approaching train —
the engine of our car left
running, our shaking hands, a sorrow
blinding as snow. Near the end,
my brothers stepped away.
I was the last to see that dowager face.
The sting of the ice from her forehead
on my lips all the way back to waking.

Sometimes her love lights my body up
from the inside out, a love like a good
vodka. Grandmother whose body rose in
smoke, I carry your sweet burn within me

even into this, the frozen tundra of a life
with not a stone left standing
to bear witness.

