

what she says

the sun brings her gift and at night cools, then moon, then cold. the sky brings water, pulse of the world, drumming its rhythm into me, feeding our roots...movement above, movement below...stillness. slower than day and night, i am what we have always been.

i caught her when she fell...into my arms, like when she was small. she knew me, used to trace her fingers along my heart. sometimes she would hum. i paid attention. knew her like all my children, like her mother, and her grandmother before her. knew her like the grass and the olive tree, like lemon and jasmine and stone.

they say forgetting is long, but that's only partly true. i have never forgotten my children. and when they forget, when they go, they always come back one way or another. i embrace them when they do. i remind them that they are home, help them to understand what that means, what it has always meant.

the young ones are easy. the old ones too. they forget but they remember again. it's the middle child that's hard. sometimes they leave. Sometimes they have to leave to remember.

i do not have language for the new ones. they take and take. they understand nothing and forget everything. I remind them whenever I can. they do not know what I hold in my memory, the truth that lies beneath fragments of stone. there in the roots, you will find it.

they do not know that I will choose who stays, who goes.

i know who loves me.

i caught her when she fell. wept with her mother and the others as her blood seeped into me. folded her

into my arms for safekeeping. sometimes they come to me before their time. they are sent by the foolish ones long before their time.

i caught her, lifted her in my arms to the sky and sun. look at me, i said, through the smoke, through the dust. and she saw the breath of the orchards, the ancestors coaxing fruit in the shadows. a thousand shaheed all saying, yes we are here.

i know who loves me. i caught her when she fell.