

My Name Means Memory

By Devreaux Baker

*My name is Hafiza, I came from the East
during the war. If you close your hands
over the tops of mine you can hear
nights unwrap themselves bent*

with their burden
of broken wood or reaching deep
into frozen earth, fingers going numb
with their own memories.

Wrap this memory like a shawl of dreams
around your shoulders. My husband carried
our youngest son ten days and nights
from our home to the camps

moving like a chant through fields
of frozen birds, crying when he broke
their wings beneath his boots.

Pain was the swelling around the dark fruit
we were forced to eat for bread. It was the wafer
that melted against our tongues causing us to carry
the dark seeds into our throats, rattling beneath our ribs

until they blossomed deep inside our bodies

and caused us to dream a pathway
for reunions with death time and again.

They are the flowers of witness that bloom even

when I try to forget. Carry this picture then
in your locket and wear it on a silver chain
next to your heart forever, as I wear it
softly swinging on a thread of memory,

swinging between my breasts like a prayer
repeating the same words over and over,
*my name is Hafiza. I came from the East
during the war.*