**Memento Mori**

Laurence Lumsden

The pomegranate slips from my hands and lands on the kitchen floor. A dull thud. The flesh splits, and the soft interior is exposed to the kitchen’s halogen glare. An ooze of pulp. A dark-red stain spreads around the site of the impact, trickles over the cold tiles and around my feet. A backwards step.

The fruit’s dismal end has been sudden and calamitous, and I’m not yet ready to accept it. I think it must be possible to save something, anything, but the promise inherent in the seeds is slowly dying. Potential never to be realized. A truth denied. The tart sweetness of the juice that I’ve been anticipating for myself, selfishly perhaps, is consumed by a paper towel. A blood-soaked bandage.

Part of me still clings to the belief that this isn’t how it’s supposed to be.

But what would a mortal man know, when the Gods have blindly rolled their dice, and the landing of the fruit has been pre-determined to occur on a spot where it simply cannot survive. Ectopic, my wife explains tearfully to me, her voice stumbling over those callous consonants. From the Ancient Greek, *ek* meaning *out of*, and *topos* meaning place.

An act of God.

Demeter searched the world for Persephone, but Hades gave the daughter pomegranate seeds to eat so she could never leave the underworld. The forbidden fruit. Zeus wasn’t involved in the attempted rescue though he was the father. Which made sense really, since he was the source of the whole bloody mess in the first place, and Demeter was better off without more of his interference. If anyone was to blame it was him.

This is a woman’s reality, in a time when a father’s role is superfluous.

The insatiable paper towel does its job, and the bruised remnants of the pomegranate lie forlorn on the floor. We pick up the pieces in our bare hands, careful not to make a bigger mess, and drop them into the compost bin. They land softly on the leftovers from last night’s silent meal.

It takes a lot of handwashing to remove the stains from our palms.