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Metamorphic

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Metamorphic

Dominique Cottrell

I used to sit for lunch where the dirt glittered,
Full of mica like someone had left me a gift.
Muscovite forms in tiny sheets only a molecule thick,
Peels apart at the slightest breath, but it leaves beauty
As it flakes apart, the first of the silicas to decay.

When left to their own devices,
Ants will choose garnets preferentially to build their hills.
A small mountain of perfect, red dodecahedrons. To them it must seem
Like a momentous thing, a garnet that I could fit underneath
The nail of my pinky finger.
Humans are not the only ones who love beautiful things.

There is something miraculous about how when rocks
Are under monumental pressure—so much heat and weight that they're
Forced to melt, reform—
They create perfect dodecahedrons of garnet and delicate, flaking mica
As if to say, if I have to change, I'll change for the better.

I used to pick up mica and put it in my pocket, hoping each time that it would
stay intact;
Keep garnets in the bottom of my bag.
I'd put a pen in there, or my wallet, and the muscovite was destroyed;
The garnets slipped into the lining, forgotten.

Still, in the dead of winter, I took out my old rain jacket,
And for the first time since summer, I put my hand in my pocket;
In the darkness, in the rain, I saw sparkling mica on my fingertips,
Almost wet in the street lights,
And I thought of New Mexico sun,
Of the desert, of beauty under pressure;
Of the perfect summer.

A gift for myself. Only 40 million years in the making.
What will I become, under pressure?