

Tangent

In the painting the woman is surrounded by oranges. Bright green background and then oranges ad infinitum. Some sprout from trees, others pop seemingly from mid-air. And her in the foreground with a veil sitting just below her eyes, sloping up at the corners. A low-cut dress, round breasts, perfect circles.

My husband says, *just remember the lathe makes a circle*. He winds the wheel forward, stops, winds it back. He wants me to be inspired by machines. At night he dreams my silver bracelets float from my wrist each one now separate and silent. *The lathe makes a circle*. I repeat as I walk to work, do dishes, fall asleep.

The circle is nature. Shape of tree counting rings. Dead center of every flower. Place to start a story. Round robin in the classroom, cross-legged on the floor. Whoever isn't with us, please join the circle now.

We call it *the one with the seven eyes*. It hangs on the wall, faded turquoise ceramic. A circle in the middle surrounded by six smaller ones. Above the baby's crib, the entrance to a home. Protect us from the envy of others' eyes.

There was a night my father saw the moon in my eyes, slipped the perfect paper ring around my too skinny finger, orange glow of the cigar fading in and out as we walked.

My mother studied the lens of the eye under an electron microscope. Magnified each thin layer. A cross section. Pupil, retina, cornea, sclera. She said even the universe is curvilinear. Movement of a ball or bullet through space.

Today my father is sitting on his balcony peeling an orange, he twists his hand toward the sun, careful not to let the juice drip below his wrist. Soon he will lose his left eye. Cancer floats in first, then the knife. And we will live our days as if under a bell. The silent curve of walls. Wait for the tap, the vibrations to begin.