

NANDINI DHAR

Bonsai

In the courtyard of our house, my mother has ceramic flower pots. In those, she plants saplings—banyans, orange, mango—all those big trees—which plant roots in soil, shoot up stems in the face of the air, try to tickle the cheeks of sun and moon. Her pleasure is in taming what cannot be generally caged. She forces rooms on things—even those whose nature is to roam around in woods and streets. To love things to the state of dwarfment, to make the world around her more and more like herself. She works hard to keep them small, trims their leaves every single morning. That's how they never outgrow their pots. Winding wires around them, she dictates them their shape, tells them which direction to bend to the last detail. She does all of these with a vengeance—as if her fingers, in trimming, plotting and re-plotting, are revenging themselves. From someone, something, many ones, many things.

What I really think it is, she is unwriting me with every one of her potted trees. Re-scripting my annals of disobedience abandonment into those of interruptions stunted growth endearments