Kaanjithinai / காஞ்சித் தணை she grows from the land hoisted like the muvendars' fish, bow, tiger. standing long before and after the union jack She sways as the carnatic winds blow Behold her forked tongues and berried limbs Infinite reaching fingers Grasping wide; growing wild Reaching For the earth; Having seen all the stars around my throat, down my chest my shield. plucked from her granting limbs She is the Giving Tree every inch a benediction from her fragrance I barricade around me her bark. her leaves, her roots. I look at her and say The seeds of your foremothers knew the seeds of mine I wonder how they felt fighting their mahabharatic wars of the South kaaniimalai around their neck she swears to bring them home safe and in her, they never doubt with every breath they hold their homeland in their lungs revolution as their brethren breathe out the same

I learned From my father's sister's son's wife when she spoke of your tale *Akka* told me, conquerors wore wreaths of *vaanji* while those warriors who stopped their quest, – protectors of their people their bodies strewn at the border of their land –they wore the flower of *kaanji* and their people rejoiced in verse; they sang the *kaanjithinai* 

kaanjimalai, Will you bring them home to me again? Will you take me home to them? in the streets my people lie I hear their bodies break their mothers' hearts with them when I close my eyes I fear theirs won't open my people go to war, Kaanji amma, my people go to war with nothing in their hands except maybe a sign and their souls, bleeding out in their grasp bludgeoned, without a care

do you remember me, amma? or have my soils gone too far they say you bear our transience our fragility hold us, against the tides of war. you fight for The People the ones who call this place home In that case, Kaanji *amma*, I think you must be tired; I know why your tendrils droop.

Or, perhaps, *amma*, you haven't forgotten us at all. I am so low, kaanji ma, lower than your deepest root. stretch your hand out further find us in the dirt. give my people rest

Written from pain from the murder of Tyre Nichols on January 10, 2023.