

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.