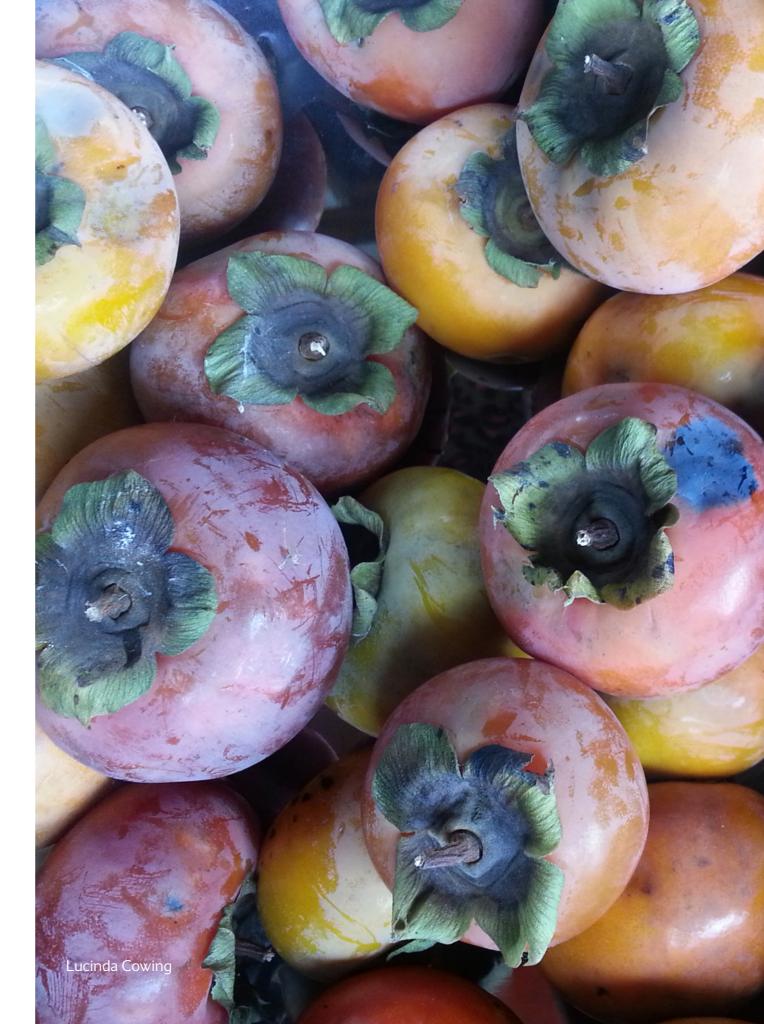
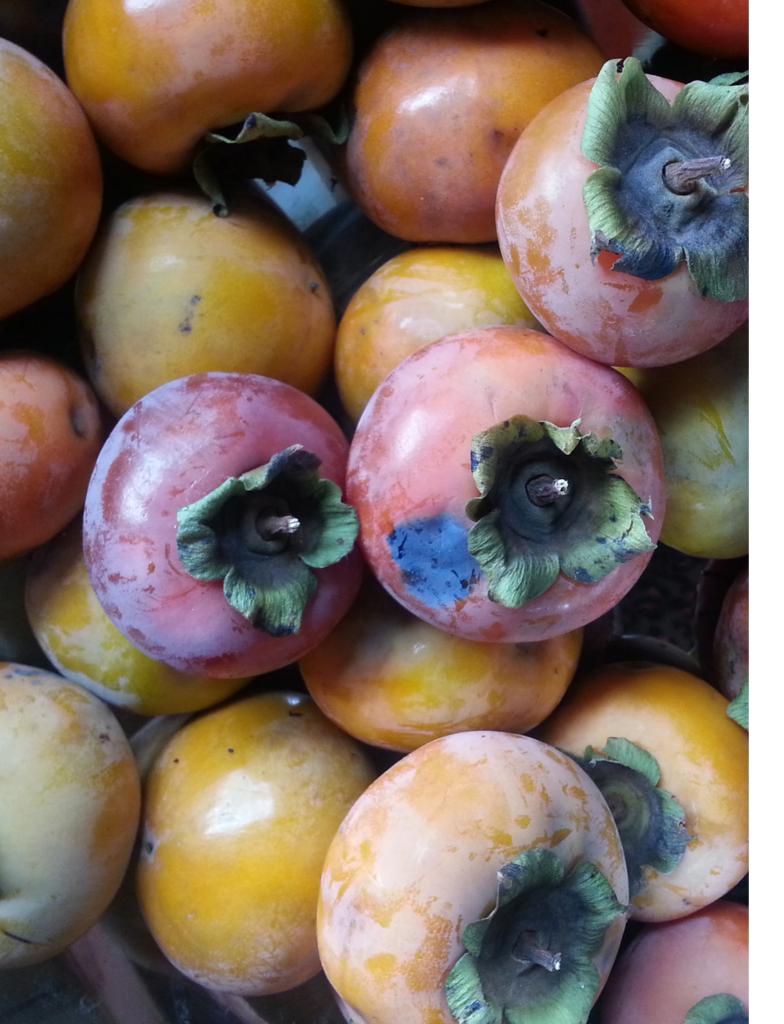
Every November, Persimmons

Split: a star-like reflection.
Flesh like the fire-belly of a newt, only since coming each autumn have I taken to swallow firm fresh mouthfuls, the jam-insides of others sun-dried.

My tree bears no shapes of pumpkins, acorns, hearts.

Year wanes, forest like dead moss branched, bambooed, deciduous tomb-embedded slopes.
Valleys fold, mountain. Ages since I've seen these orchards blushed with blossoms. Instead, same crimson vines retain another cemetery. Penetrate overlong tunnels to reach where the river tumbles and gravestones are made.





He's always there, waiting. Carts my luggage up narrow metal stairs. The mechanics of each other's language rusted. Before dusk, we savour persimmon cakes in the square of a ginkgo-gilded park.

He peels skin, slices hard-petaled tops, leaves stem to tie into curtains of orange strung onto bamboo poles. As they dry he honeys their flesh with his touch readying their pulpy, jelly inside.

Dried, they can keep for nearly a year.

November. *Happy Birthday*. A single shrunken offering. Its malleable body crusted with white crystals.

