

# Sindoor *usamah ahmad*

that is the red powdered sorrow  
kept kindly in metal pots, lids shut  
not seeping out but carefully blown out of place

that is the red powdered sorrow  
made of dried blasphemous whispers,  
shrivelled thoughts and impotent desires

that is the red powdered sorrow  
clouding my vision and filling my lungs  
suffocating the corners of my eyes

that, then, is the red powdered sorrow  
that fills these tear ducts  
and makes the finest of clays



*They say sindoor is a red vermilion powder applied to the parting of her hair. At their wedding he applies it to signify forever that he is her husband. Later she applies it herself in her daily dressing routine, saying that it represents his longevity.*

*When he dies, she is told not to put it on anymore. How brazen, they say, to wear a vibrantly red powder when it was probably her bad karma that killed him. Well, she thinks, perhaps this clear forehead will be regarded as my shame, or perhaps as my unapproachable freedom.*