

**Arriving by Airmail**

in a blue envelope  
folded in wordless paper,

my mother's wedding ring.

I had remembered it this way:

a central stone, black,  
boxed in  
by claw-pronged settings,  
meant for a couple  
of shallow-cut diamonds.

Long before I grew up,  
I believed them lost,  
their sockets empty.

Today the ring lies in my palm:

At the center, a ruby  
I keep turning &  
turning against  
the window's light.

As for the diamonds—  
they were always there,  
no empty holes,

just meager.

What did my mother intend?  
A gift to trade, hoping worth?  
Or memory she wished were beloved?

No matter.

I still see her hands  
immersed  
in sinks and buckets of scalding water,

him leaving her to it.

TERESA McCourt