chernobyl cherries

you chose not to plan this trip but live it
abandon your package hotel    catch a ferryboat,
run out of drachmas    borrow a sleeping bag
from a rockabilly with an old american car
walk to the beach in the dark

sleeping on the beach is not even a thing anymore
the hippies have all found cushy jobs and gone home
plus you never were a hippie anyway    still, you try
to get comfy on the dunes    it doesn’t go well
but you can’t remember where you left your hotel

night rain makes splash dents on the sand
soaks through the cotton sleeping bag
actually a button close quilt sewn by spyro’s gran
the sun takes forever to pull on her clothes
molten face crowing at your damp bones

at the kafeneion spyro is studying the news
though he doesn’t seem the type    a map, huge arrows
aimed from russia at greece    you ask why
he waves his hands, pkwaahhh! and, in german, atomkraft
you say, nein danke    he looks skyward, and laughs

easter back home is done and dusted    you don’t know
of greek easter, puzzled when spyro drives to church
at midnight the churchyard explodes — only fireworks
on to a late taverna for the easter soup he swears
is vegetarian, actually for diehard carnivores

skipping your return flight, you stay all summer
‘chernobyl cherries’ are cheap and tasty that year
the irradiated floral quilt, embarrassing then
would now cost more than you can afford, even with your job
from some trendy designer store or online etsy shop

Lane Ashfeldt

Lane Ashfeldt. ‘Chernobyl Cherries’.
Transnational Literature Vol. 9 no. 1, November 2016.