

Monica Kam

Harbour

Bitter melon, braid the umbilical cord
Is it longer than the harbour, that shrinks
Ready to war and win
With drunken fists, grappling air
Swaying
To kiss it all goodbye

Bitter melon, braise the lamb
And the family frown
Succulent, inquisitive
Soaked without umbrellas
As they pass through the door
A display of their disdain
The monsoon meal is chewed
Low hanging toothpicks stay
And arguments to pierce.
To pick at with the heart
Like an old casserole dish
We could tell you had eaten
And like this we continue

Bitter melon, braid the umbilical cord
Against the straight backs of our city
To have climbed its crutches
And to live life below neon
Squinting
It overflows like happiness you are told
On a high, but the tables turn
Your eyes sewn to the plate. You will birth

Measure it down the cowering of our spines
As we grow? Let it swim, embrace your neck
Like a dubbed hero
Saying
With pursed lips
Before the body surfaces.

Brought up with superstition
Kissed to its forehead
But ready to serve.
The uncles arrive, touching your belly
Staining the floor red
Still
Between bitter breath.
Loyal to their lips, searching for fruit
To point with five fingers
To remember that night we were handed back
Stained down the sides.
Well, and overstayed your welcome
Until the pomelo is peeled.

Long enough to let you down
A bamboo field built to last.
Is to fall on sky scraped knees
In the eyes of the harbour
Is a reflection of doubles
To hold both is to end
And you are sewn to your seat
Silence.