

MARGE LAM

Chinatown East

Keep holding me like this
and help me untie my birth language
my first language
steeped in bruises, knotted up in a child's still
body
petrified with fear
words thrown at me
alcoholic bodies raging into me
embedded like ceramic shards
all around my little heart
me, so small and already, convinced
my home felt like captivity

When I sought my freedom
learning this new language
all around me
language of the good people
where families kissed and hugged each other
and parents asked their children how they
were

I began to beg
for brown bag lunches
embarrassed by my thermoses of fragrant rice
stewed in pork fat
wanting to belong between
pieces of white bread
I ran into the arms of British table manners, fine
cheeses
English literature, Led Zeppelin
feeling myself evaporating into creamy skin
bleached hair
steel cold blue eyes

took me many decades to realize
I got lost
trying to disappear

Now, as I begin to relax
in your embrace
I find myself
a little shy
surprised by my greediness
for your 5000 year old
Fujian phrasings
found in the singsong rhythms of
our Taiwanese tongues

So teach me our old language of love
with enough patience
untie all these crunchy knots
and unfurl my native tongue
help me make room to express this want
in between my legs
all through my body of ancestral wounds
drip hot words into my ears
I am ready to come home.

Marge Lam, born on unceded Coast Salish Territories, Vancouver, is an artist, freelance journalist and community worker. She is an emerging writer for Diaspora Dialogues and has also co-hosted for Stark Raven Radio and freelanced for CKLN and CBC Radio One. Marge is currently making home in Toronto.