

**unteachable, relentless, what we may never fathom**

when she teaches you in the slow yawn of  
midnight, in the youth of your prime, recipes not  
from books but from memory and a yearn of  
past tongue— a metaphor for her immigration  
story (waters displaced from a mighty  
weight)—when the front yard blooms in the dogged  
boredom of spring and summer and you know she  
doesn't know floriography, much less the very  
language you speak, when that woman you've known  
from birth cups and cradles your baby cheeks, pinching down  
an earlobe, crooning the sounds that you could never translate  
properly (now words on a screen)—soothing the relentless  
knocking and ache beneath the dead of your sternum— when  
a high school assignment demands you rehearse a novel  
you've never opened (a pot of family resistance and unspoken  
history—sunflower yellow river simmering from  
voice) and you listen intently, knowing you'd  
reproduce that story into consumable form, when she tells  
you in the car that the family you know now is from the  
cultural necessitation of ancestry and trees and a river's  
relentless path from china to canada, but, still, she stays  
and endures, when the low murmur of her fingertip  
trails along the family tree, cutting off right before her  
name (except, there is no name) and she writes you  
two down in with the impermanence of shaky pencil  
graphite,

when she still has the pictures of your  
elementary classes taped on the aging wall— above is  
her wedding picture, framed, elegant in the way  
motherhood wasn't— when she pays for the  
drinks but still slyly slides hers over to you  
when she hadn't even started, explaining it all away as  
dislike, when that woman you can hate at times  
apologises her way through a plate of cut fruit,  
intending a peaceful closure to the warzone you  
two inadvertently introduced into the house,  
like the sole incense candle stuck into the ashtray  
inviting back the red and gold fortune you two tossed away  
resentfully, like orange lilies, pink larkspurs, and tansies  
bundled together and now chest-caged, like whistler wind

seeping through a forgotten open window (and  
warps the sill),

water

you can almost hear a mother's love in the lingering  
memory of metaphors and isolation, and you can almost touch  
the faint borders of an unteachable word that constantly challenges  
and challenges you—the same way nerium feels on the tongue or  
the same way water isn't meant to be held forever—igniting you with  
the imperial fear of having to love somebody back