

## manggang hilaw

Shangrila Plaza

my mother peels wash sniffs  
naked sour green mangoes  
harvested from nature's limbs/embrace  
prickly against her nostrils ticklish on her  
sunburnt lips blistering red/raw  
she doesn't complain

not now

not ever

she only slices firm green mangoes  
dull paring knife stops against calloused thumb  
end of downward motion  
moving swiftly muscle memory  
each thin piece top to bottom carved without  
a second thought  
working around the small seed sac  
lustrous on my mother's leathery lined palm  
she gently brushes its smooth exterior before  
handing it to me trusting the safety of  
my soft pale hands

*itanim molplant it she says*

nodding eagerly i slide the seed into my pocket  
remembering to find a cool safe spot for planting later  
once sunrays no longer  
threaten to burn/bleb

streaks

of green

and white

painted flesh

served sweating tangy juices pooling on  
(stained chipped battered) plastic plate  
relentless heat beams through leaf gaps  
my mother and i coolly  
shaded/sheltered under Lolo's mango tree  
pleasantly windy she summons *hangin*  
with a whistle turned tune

a song in Ilocano i remember  
her favorite

breezy melody swoops her away  
preparing dips galore eyes closed  
my fingers dip-drip-dip in  
alamang/isdang bagoong/suka/asin  
becomes conglomerate on mango slice  
i suck until flavors transfer over  
soon complaining about sticky fingertips  
shrimp bits wedged underneath soft fingernails  
lips rimmed with bagoong  
suka awakens stomach ulcer

palms dusted with asin  
my mother wipes my mouth with dampened towel  
her hand brushes through my uncombed hair  
i continue to suck green mango slice  
legs swinging/swaying on duyan  
listening to my mother's lullaby  
asim/sourness ng manggang hilaw  
melting on my tongue