

YakGwa

By Seowon Lee

My mother brings home from the Korean market
YakGwa,
in plastic molds when she is ready for us to talk again,
and I listen to her explain why my words pass like slivered winds,
my anger placated by the wheat flower saturated in honey,
fried in the sesame oil that coats my fingers as I break off the
eaves one by one at first,
and eat the perfect circle in the middle,
whole even without carefully crafted petals.

Waiting in the line of Jewel Osco our cart full of swollen fruit,
bruised apples costing \$4.99 instead of \$1.99 cause a heated debate
in broken up phrases, missing the, is, was, past and present participles, noun verb
agreements,
like the missing eaves of YakGwa, once placed on lacquered royal tables
now held in plastic containers for \$1.99.

When he runs *my* hair between *his* fingers, and says chinese girls have smooth hair,
I hold my tongue, my throat constrained in dense honey, in
wheat flowers,
unable to form the sharp vowels or hold the consonants for very long
as I try to come up with the right retort but simply say two words I've mastered
so far,
Thank you.

So I devoured the alphabet, 26 petals with different sounds
uneven shapes that aren't molded to the shape of our tongue
so unlike artisan strokes that represent human, air, breath,
and hold as much meaning in two syllables as five,
But now there is no need to paint my words in honey, or fret over missing eaves,

They run smoothly from
my fingertips,
polished in lustrous sesame oil.