

Letter to Gim Gong

by Carrie Green

I recall the scent of oranges,
 the sunlight through green leaves.
 You let me follow you
 on fat, dimpled legs.
 I tugged your long queue,
 picked oranges off the ground
 and placed them in your basket.

The day you left
 you tickled my chin
 with orange blossom.
 I held the flowers so tight
 I crushed them,
 and when I opened my tiny palms
 I cried at petals
 torn from branches.

I have not seen you since.
 Do you remember my bright, black eyes?
 You called me Moon Cake
 for my full, round checks.
 I dreamed you faded,
 your skin drained spirit-white,
 your eyes colorless as water.

I hoped my husband would find you
 in the Flowery Flag Nation.
 He sends gold coins
 but no word of you.
 Now the news of your return reaches
 as far as Chung Tong May.
 The villagers call you
 the Man Without a Queue,
 but I do not believe them.

I hope my mother-in-law
 will let me leave these fields of rice
 for groves rich with fruit.
 I will feed you sweet pastries
 and chicken cooked in wine.
 If foreign devils have stolen your queue,
 I will cover your bare neck with my palm.