

Yéyé (爺爺)

by Cindy Lim

The month before my grandfather fell
The sun hung low, hanging from its shine
Our paint-chipped van wedged into our driveway
Carrying him into our lives
He is the blue moon we didn't remember was coming
His hair carried greater hues of silver
Like the shine of a knife
His smiles fold the wrinkles on his face
He says something
like *hello* or *granddaughter* or *you got big*
but his tongue flicks in a different pattern than mine
spit falls in a different language
Chinese slipping like rice porridge from the spoon

We loved him
not enough; his heart was a bus we kept missing
his gasoline smile fueling someone else's love
His voice had overdosed on time
The tick tock tick of spit-sucked characters
We could smell the minutes on his breath
As he walked down the driveway
carrying wooden jewelry we'd never wear
those days, we stuffed our culture in our closet
but these days, I've learned
guilt can be accessories too

I've always meant to build a bridge to you
but in that night sky
the moon blurred by summer fog
I told you in English, *I love you*
It was some of the only English you knew
and you smiled yourself to sleep
and your shaky arms wrapped around me
it was always custom for family
to say goodbye to you last

So even as they lowered you six feet under
I always wondered
if you ever understood