

On the Verge Writing Contest 2020, First-Place Poetry Winner

By Rachel Lachmansingh

when you leave your country don't forget

my mother has mangos for eyes. good mangos. ripe mangos. mangos that bleed when she cuts them. sometimes I watch her peel the mangos in her eyes and they bleed ammonia, and they bleed flat island soda, and they bleed saltwater she swallows sometimes, swallows saltwater, sometimes. my mother's mango eyes regrow best when no one is watching, and she dips them into her stomach when they don't stop bleeding, she dips them into her stomach when her children aren't eating, when her children are sleeping, aren't sleeping. my mother's mango eyes come from my grandmother, who got them from her own mother, who got them from her own mother, her own mother, her own mother, her own mother. my grandmother has mangos for eyes and sometimes she'll slice halves for me and put them on a plate so the fruit flies never go hungry, hurry, curry, first flurry. so she can regrow them in private where no one will find the pictures she still has from home, from home, home, home, hose, host, host, ghost, ghost, goat, boat, boat, boat, boat. we go to the grocery store to replace her mango eyes sometimes, but they always bleed ammonia, flat island soda, saltwater, saltwater, saltwater, watersalt, water made of salt, water made of sea, she just wants to see. she tells me not to worry, the best eyes are over seas, over seas, losing family overseas, over seas. my mothergrandmothermother pierces her mango eyes to make sure everyone has a piece, just a piece, just enough to eat, and sometimes i watch her eat grief, eat grief, just brief, just a piece, just peace, just appease, just a lease, a lease, a please, please, please, please. my mother has mangos for eyes and sometimes they bleed, and it is imminent, imminent, imminent, immigrant.