

Lola

by Lisa Abellera

I know you through the rich dark brown soil
crumbling in my fingers like chocolate cake.
I imagine you nurtured bell-shaped papayas,
coaxing their smooth, leathery skin
from green to yellow,
while mangoes, the colors of the island sunset,
hung with their tantalizing sweet scent,
as you tended to them as only a mother could.

I have seen you only once,
in a weary black and white photograph
creased with years of reverent storage
in your son's weathered leather wallet.
Bamboo trees stretching their slender tips
and banana trees fanning their thick leaves
in the tropical breeze
while you sit surrounded by your boys
in your rattan chair
that cradles you like a queen.

His homage to you remains
in those sour green apple,
thick bumpy-skinned lemon
and fuzzy orange apricot trees
that grew up with me.
Like you, he returned
to the earth, the same earth
that feels my sun-browned calloused hands
as they coax these speckled pears
from green to yellow,
while thin-skinned Meyer lemons
hang like Christmas ornaments
and oranges the size of softballs

offer up their warm, sticky sweet nectar
as if to raise a glass to you.

