

# 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.

