

Appetence of Vietnamese Daughter

My mother doesn't know what to do. She has already fed me
the food she brought. She says I've taught you this before.
Negative space: the only native emptiness there is.
In my dreams I am thin & if not thin, a mother
sticks a spoon into my chest, which is an empty bowl.
There is a house in me. It is empty. I empty
enough to keep the gentle curse of dreams forgetting
they are hungry. Teeth and throatbare. Incisor and instep.
The red wire blue wire optimism of my mother's voice,
when she says, Who needs a last meal? If joy is what tethers
us to this life then most days, I watched my mother contemplate
an exit into the disordered evening. I would go too far.
Throw up for hours afterward—it's easier, my blood outside me,
pried open until the wound widened into a throat, dragged
out of the body. My disappointing shape.

Sources: Diana Khoi Nguyen, Ocean Vuong, Hai-Dang Phan, Eric Tran, Hieu Minh Nguyen