Under the Lemon Tree

By Marsha De La O

Not rain, but fine mist
   falls from my lemon tree,
   a balm of droplets in green shadow.

Six years now my mother gone to earth.
   This dew, light as footsteps of the dead.
   She often walked out here, craned her neck,
   considered the fruit, hundreds of globes
   in their leathery hides, figuring on
   custard and pudding, meringue and
   hollandaise.

But her plans didn’t work out.

The tree goes on unceasingly—lemons fall
   and fold into earth and begin again—
   me, I come here as a salve against heat,
   come to languish, to let the soft bursts—
   essence of citrus, summer’s distillate—
   drift into my face and settle. Water and gold
   brew in the quiet deeps at the far end
   of the season. Leaves swallow the body
   of light and the breath of water brims over.

My hands cup each other the way hers did.

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