

CERTIFIED

Here is my passport, my bill of lading, my one-way ticket, my nowhere fare, my stub you've stamped

to certify. All night I clean the lint from rusted laundromat machines. All night

I mop and polish schoolroom floors. All summer while you go off to Florida or France, I tend

your mother's bones, empty her bedpan, feed her baby food as she babbles in the granny bin. My fingers

have pulled bodies of bitter melon from the vine and splayed them open on the chopping board.

Come sit and eat with me sometime— I'll make a meal from seeds and pith, a sustenance of green

and verve plucked raw from my own nerve. I steel myself, passing through each turnstile, bending

through each furrow, threading the factory needle back and back into a hundred collars and sleeves— Eyes

that sweepingly appraise the education in my hands, the dusky sheen of my corn, the perfume of my salt

and pickled shrimp, the bile I drop into the soup to make me strong.

