

## *Suburban Friends*

Orchids for city have-nots,  
rotund potatoes rolling lustily in bamboo backpacks,  
pungent, aromatic fish  
freshly dusted with chaff  
from fresh packing ice,  
honey gathered from  
the lowlands of Ri War.

They come, from barren hamlets,  
windswept, buried in fog,  
whittled down by poverty,  
even crumbling shacks  
of flattened kerosene tins  
and makeshift days  
of the city's inner courtyards,  
to strike a deal.

I've brought these bottles to you first  
knowing how you chase the thing called time.  
You look fidgety this morning  
it's Saturday *em*?  
Yes I'm better now  
should I tell you  
how she stilled my palpitations  
that woman from Sohiong,  
who sees even in the dead of night?  
That doctor you sent me to,  
he was hopeless.

To *sich ym lei lei*,  
believe me, I always know when  
to bring the potatoes.  
I've delivered here since the great flood,  
how should I charge you?

*Kong* you hoarder, you, sell me  
all your old clothes, old shoes, old newspapers.  
Umm, your bitch knows me.  
No discards for my grandchildren today?

*Shi shi*, so hefty and you can't even lift this pot!  
These orchids are called hybrids.  
What other names would they have?  
You call yourself a gardener,  
look at insects feasting on shrunken buds,  
those flowers so wilted!

*Didi* my fish, so alive,  
look at gills glistening  
I rush to catch truck early,  
I choose best one for you  
but I go now three months  
to visit *ma-baap* and arrange *shadi*.

After *Mei's* death  
their visits they tailored  
to suit mine;  
only Saturdays and holidays.

Legal tender—strictly cash,  
but always  
something more  
to bond us.