

Marriage Papers

Chee Siew Hoong

Why can't I find that piece? The words are different. On it
are shreds of a nondescript sentence, written in black rollerball ink
like the rest, on lines of printed hydrangea blue. They were whole once,
I know, before that fight that ripped it apart, and scattered them –
ashes winging in the mid-afternoon air. I remember- the roti man
drove past our house, sounding his horn. And the children. The children
were watching, I suppose, they watched everything- the roti man,
the dog coming back through the hole in the fence, and us. Such thin children they
were, with long arms, and large eyes. Ours. Where are they now?

Perhaps I left them too long. And the years got them, either that
or the silverfish. I can't remember.

Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. Line by line, precept by precept.
How careful you were to keep them, tucked in between the pages of your book,
and in between breaths, when I saw you last. You were talking, I think, as always,
about old men and women who gathered up their years and went on to do
something crazy, like sinking their minds in a university or worse, living with
Some mountain tribe in a climate with a minus zero degree Celsius.

I hope you found them. I can't remember if you did.

But I remember your hair,
set about your face like grey washcloths when they brought you back. It was late at night, and I was in
my pyjamas, and about to go feed the cat a third time that day, and go to sleep. They found you. I
believe you were coming home. If only you could've told them yourself. I wouldn't have minded the
truth.

But I want them now-

those papers- proof that we lived and loved .

And had children that we bore and loved as best we could.

That we were. That I was.

That missing piece- to reunite with the date on this one, the incomplete surname, the half signature,
Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh