

NOT COFFEE,

TEA

I don't drink coffee,
No one in my house drinks coffee
Someone once told me that love smells like coffee
But the smell of coffee is a foreign concept to me

I don't drink coffee, but
I drink tea,
The smell of jasmine
Brings up old memories, of family at dim sum,
Spinning a lazy Susan
With enough food to feed a village.

Love doesn't smell like coffee freshly brewed
It smells like my grandma's house,
Like her fried rice
Or my uncle's chair sui bao
Or my aunties broccoli casserole
Which she never makes enough of.

Love sounds like my grandma's too-small kitchen,
Which echoes all of our laughter off tiled floors.
It sounds like the catch in my grandma's voice
As her tongue, heavy with all it remembers from across the sea
Struggles to commune with mine.
Mine that still trips over the letter r,
And freezes in fright when it needs to work

Love sounds like
My grandma's broken English

Looks like her concerned face
As she asks
If I ate today,
Asks if I'm OK,
And it's the motions I use to express
Yes, I ate enough
Yes, I'm doing OK
This is what love is to me

Love may be in a different language than me,
It may be a language no one ever bothered to teach me
Because it was more important for my clumsy tongue to know English
Rather than know how to speak to my grandma,
But that's okay
Because love is not foreign to me
It's not coffee, it's tea.

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