

sam roxas-chua

A BEAST IN THE CHAPEL

Several times I asked my father
to pull on my ears
until my feet were lifted off the ground.

Several times I asked him
to look into my eyes
and blow out the red lanterns —

those soft pendulums
that keep me up at night,
twin stars of vermillion arias.

Several times I placed my hand
inside his mouth and fished for summer,
moon, winter, and tow.

Several times I hid my name
behind my ears
when he called me *Bakla!*

Several times my hands shimmied
under the breakfast table
where my mother sat me down

and said he wasn't coming home —
it was Christmas, I wore a red tie.
And on that same day,

a man was found in the river,
his face eaten by fish. Several
times I asked *Who was he?*

Who was he? Several times
I sucked on plums to think of him.
Several times I dreamt I had gills.