**Just Dinner**  
*by Jill Fukumoto*

1  
For new mothers  
Make pigs feet  
    Hooves, skin and all,  
Black vinegar, sweet  
Chinese sugar  
    Looks like bricks,  
Whole eggs,  
Ginger  
    Slice them young and mild,  
Boil hot.  
Eat to heal the body¹  
After becoming one person again

2  
Two eyes never seemed like enough  
for stomachs hungry and blind  
Maybe made us smarter  
Maybe better swimmers  
like the fish they came from  
Chinese kids eat eyes²  
    like candy  
if Popo tells them it will make them strong

3  
The first time I found bugs in the tong³  
I was too toddler to realize  
Probably ate  
What was swimming in front of me  
The second  
Or third  
Or fourth  
    Or fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth...  
I scraped them to the edge of my bowl  
Fished out what the chicken in my soup  
Should have already eaten  
But hid in the watercress

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¹ Pickled pigs feet are given to new mothers after birth to replenish nutrients lost during the pregnancy and labor process.  
² When I was younger, popo would tell us that eating fish eyes would make us smarter.  
³ Tong: Soup
And wiped them onto a graveyard of a napkin
Drank broth
until the bottom became porcelain again

4
At weddings we eat
    Everything
    That walks on land
    And lives in water
Eat odd⁴
Courses
    with old country muscle memory
Fill our mouths fearlessly
We remember how jellyfish
Crunch
    Firm and slip
Between molars
Will try to slide its way to your throat
Chew well
    Or choke
It's not a sting that will kill you
But the hesitation to bite

⁴ Special occasions such as weddings, funerals, and birthdays in Chinese cultures dictate a certain amount of dishes served during banquets to ensure fortune and good luck; and odd number of courses is always made.