

Placing the Accents

—
Truong Tran

Apogee Press
Berkeley · California
1999

recipe 1

bottle of beer
the question begins
glass of ice
the family stories

if words were bricks
bricks were words
would you break a window
would you build a house

recipe 6

fork is used
when eating with a plate

chopsticks
when eating with a bowl

between one and
the other

it's not
about choosing

the mistress

with wages earned on the assembly line he stopped drinking cognac it's worth drinking only in the company of soldiers buys burgundy by the gallon cigarettes by the carton facing the wall in his living room in a chair he sits telling stories in the evenings smoke the silhouette of a woman dancing from tobacco tucked between fingers lips if i could just smoke while sleeping if only she could of stories told the gun he held to a general's head the general who cried hung my promotion i was supposed to be colonel the american officer who ate at his table he described the meat how tender it was simmering in a clay pot i told him names are for people a dog is a dog while on leave as if one could just leave he had his nephews stand guard with plastic rifles tin foil helmets they could have been officers if only they would listen of the stories the one he liked best was about a woman not just any woman my bride to be full of anger and spit and love she cleaved her finger the engagement ring intact in a fit of jealousy she returned it in a box with a note that read i return this ring for you have been taken she discovered my secret my mistress the war