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## The Mandarin's Dilemma

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**The Mandarin's Dilemma**  
**Karian Markos**

for the Mandarin to voluntarily shed its peel  
to discard its protective layer  
and sit on a plate exposed  
it would have to accept that it may be devoured  
hungrily and unceremoniously

would it be too much for the Mandarin to hope  
that if it disrobes  
undoes its pithy corset  
revealing its segments  
they would one by one  
pass through a pair of delicately parted lips  
perhaps grazing them gently  
be lain onto the most appreciative tongue  
and swirled and savored until  
the thin skin containing its hundreds of juice sacs  
bursts open in a flood of ecstasy

why else but for its trepidation  
would it attempt to preserve itself  
when the alternative  
is to rot  
without having shared its gifts



*A New Day*, Betsy Cello