

LEELEE

Not babies. They are not born yet. It is not painful for the mother.

FARRAH

How do you know?

LEELEE

They are not killed. Many have children afterwards.

FARRAH

Oh okay, no problem then.

START -----

LEELEE

Imagine you are so hungry, Manang. As if you have not eaten in months. Your tongue like salted fish, but you cannot find a way to swallow it. You cannot hold your body up, your mind grows too weak. It is only the juices that can save you. You drink so carefully. You do not waste. You kiss the belly - nothing dribbling from the sides of your mouth. The little little body, your savior. Made only for you. Every piece increases your strength. Your heart pumps strong. Your blood moving inside like a healthy river. And then the cord. You bite. Seems so tough, hard plastic, with no flavor. But you must chew. Use your teeth, continue chewing and chewing. Your tongue gains back feeling, restoring your laway. And the cord, it burst. The warmest, most golden pineapple, freshly candied cashews, steaming *arroz caldo*, the flavors so powerful, filling you with energy, with life.

FARRAH

That's not the kind of-- I don't want that life.

LEELEE

*Aswangs* have lived for centuries! Everybody in the Philippines, they know what we do and they accept it. (pause) I waited so long to become *aswang*. When I am a small girl, I ask Mama so many times, please, I want to be like you.

FARRAH

How old were you when she told you?

LEELEE

She never say.

FARRAH

So, how'd you know?

LEELEE

So many people talking *chismis*. That my Lola and Mama are *aswang*. So of course, they think I am also. If I will be teased, I wanted to have the powers.

END -----