



WORMS

BY CHAVONN WILLIAMS SHEN

I APOLOGIZE TO WORMS WHENEVER I REMEMBER
that I'm upending their worlds with each uprooted vegetable.

My father, used to being uprooted,
harvests celery, carrots, and onions,

for our waiting mouths. With bruised fingers
and a mouth made salty from sweat, I listen

as he tells how he grew up with a mouth made salty from curses
left unsaid, and how his fingers used to harvest for white folk,

their mouths full of slurs left to bake under a Mississippi sun.
Years later, he'd have his own garden that he came to love. He'd save

seeds from Minnesota's unrelenting frost.
He'd name the flowers he planted.

When I can, I thank the worms and their work
to make my father's land love him back. 🐛