

## Burnt Rice

As I called out for you it was all I could smell;  
I was angered,  
Angered by that smell,  
All because you had so carelessly left the rice unattended,  
It was your single duty to cook the family a meal,

While some earnt, some learnt you remained here,  
There was nothing particularly special about your role;  
All you had to do was cook the rice.  
Yet you had failed that too,  
Was it simply too much to ask?  
Your ignorance was frustrating,  
At times I would find myself pitying you,  
'I would hate to be her' I would snidely mumble under my breath;  
It was a hopeless life you had led.

At the summoning of her husband, she would come,  
At the anger of her kids, she would lower her head,  
She was incapable of speaking up;  
She let everyone look down on her,  
In the end, I did too,  
And yet you were just laying there.

You seemed so peaceful in your sleep,  
An expression I only remember from my childhood;  
As she would warmly embrace me,  
Chuckle at the sight of my chubby face, full with my large black eyes;  
I often wondered what happened to that side of her,  
But I myself knew we had all robbed it from her.

As I shook you out of your sleep it was all I could smell,  
The smell of the burnt rice,  
But it wasn't a mere nap to be woken from.

And so,  
On my darkest days;  
I find myself cooking rice.  
I leave the stove on,  
I let it burn—  
And I drown in that smell,  
The scent, it wanes and waxes;  
A smell locked into that moment,

Where I had thought my hopeless mother was still alive.