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The Alchemy of Guavas and Dough

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The Alchemy of Guavas & Dough
and Other …..Ough Words

I

when dough become duff
after too many hours
of steaming
is nothin but tough magic
bought at a price
wrought in history
by her story

the high boil of guavas
coiled in a rack
of dough
in a flour bag
slow me down
every time
to weigh
digest the meaning
of sweat
and worms

and so waitin for dough
to turn into duff
is rough
on a girl’s nerve

I roll dough
with my mother
in guava season
not knowing then
the drought in her mouth
the slough of memory-skin
dead tissue holding her story
story-seeds eaten by worms
deep-seeded worms
but for a wriggle
now I see you
now I don’t
II

as if she has no body
my mother all hands and arms
gloved to elbows in flour
kneading dough to please
kneading dough
owed to guava
needing duff for beauty
art’s sake
a plough through dough
to honour sweat

I recite in silence
more things are sought
and wrought in prayer
than this world dreams of

I cough and cough
hiccough and hiccough
from I could remember
I like to eat …..ough words
they get stick in my chest
in thought

but what is sought
and wrought by prayer
when there is the brow
of your mother’s sweat?

III

in the stewing summers
silence reigns
except for orders
and the weight of dough
stretched in the quiet
fingers lost in a mound
of dough
two stumps hobble
across the table

Enough! she says
when the dough is still
dough
we lower the flour sack
stitched and swollen
with dough and sliced guava
deep into a high pot
of bubbles
skittish on the stove
a nervous pot
stays the tough course

IV

her story trough is empty
though
as she fights off
sweat with a sweep
and flick of her thumb
she thinks
of half-eaten worms
and I watch her fold
butter beaten soft into sugar
ribbons of creamed sugar mixed
with strained guava seeds
vaulting in space
for a drink of brandy

I forget by now
the skinnin and slicin
seedin and strainin
through a sieve

and the peeling bough
of the guava tree
bearing up under my feet
the shaking of branches
the drop plop of guava
and the sough of leaves

V

and I wait
for the bubbling
to die down
dull its desire
to turn dough
into duff
I wait
for the guests
to arrive
and the lightness
of duff
there is no host really
my mother remains
the servant

I see the sweat race
but never drop
on her duff
(or dough)

I love old-fashioned
guava duff
with brandy sauce