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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