

The Pan, the Pot, the Fire I Have Before Me **Ishigaki Rin**

For a long time
these things have always been placed
before us women:
the pan of a reasonable size
suited to the user's strength,
the pot in which it's convenient for rice
to begin to swell and shine, grain by grain,
the heat of the fire inherited from time immemorial--
before these there have always been
mothers, grandmothers, and their mothers.

What measures of love and sincerity
these persons must have poured into these utensils--
now red carrots,
now black seaweed,
now crushed fish

in the kitchen, always accurately
for morning, noon, and evening, preparations have been made
and before the preparations, in a row, there have always been
some pairs of warm knees and hands.

Ah without those persons waiting
how could women have gone on
cooking so happily?
their unflagging care,
so daily a service they became unconscious of it.

Cooking was mysteriously assigned
to women, as a role, but I don't think that was unfortunate;
because of that, their knowledge and positions in society
may have lagged behind the times
but it isn't too late:
the things we have before us,

the pan and the pot, and the burning fire,
before these familiar things,
let us study government, economy, literature
as sincerely
as we cook potatoes and meat.

not for vanity and promotion
but so everyone
may serve all
so everyone may work for love.

--Translated from the Japanese by Hiroaki Sato

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY
Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

MUSÉE DES BEAUX ARTS
W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they
understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or
 opening a window or just walking
 dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently,
 passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always
must be
Children who did not specially want it to
 happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must
 run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy
 life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how
 everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the
 ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken
cry,
But for him it was not an important
 failure; the sun shone

As it had to on the white legs
 disappearing into the green

Water; and the expensive delicate ship
 that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of
the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed
calmly on.

NOT WAVING BUT DROWNING
Stevie Smith

Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning:
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking
And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his
heart gave way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.