

Kalo for The Soul

The wash basin ran full again
And the evening was over.
Stories had been told,
Hands that cooked, blessed.
Hands. Not people.
Favorite nights.

My mother yelled
To get the mingled kalo ready for her husband.
Husband. Not father.

Why wasn't the rice softer?
And wasn't the bean soup red by now?
Where, stupid girl, was the steamed matooke?
And why didn't he come home the night before?
Nights like these made me a philosopher.

When my father wasn't there,
Everyday except the eighth night of each month,
We morphed into modern peasants:
Breakfast at leisure
Lunch on lucky days
Dinner, if anything at all.

On the 'eighth nights'
Divorce china graced the linen
And we ate in wealth and luxury
As if trauma were currency
As though we hadn't
He hadn't
Lost everything.
As if the familial eighth night obligations
Were not a sorry investment.

The milk in my smile spilled out
Throughout the night in conscious pretense.

He was the only reason
Nights like these existed
And three quarters of me wished he would stay.

Stupid girl, stop poking at your greens

Eat your kalo
Eat your now-red-bleeding beans
Stupid girl,
Stop wishing he would stay
Stupid girl,
Stop wishing
Girl stop wishing,
Stupid
Stop being
Stupid, girl.

I hate routines:
Monotony is a sing-song felony,
But nights like those –
Until water hit lead basin again –
Were different.