

Two Poems · *Sarah Randolph*

DISTANCE

The sound of the bell was a food for the gods, our friend in the robe told us, like the singing bowls we did not bring home. To be a guest in that country meant to accept gifts: pigeon eggs, biscuits, cup after cup of sweet or salt tea. We liked the darkness of the rooms with their few bare bulbs that had no switch, and most the kitchen where the cook took our apples and lifted his skirt shyly to let us clean the gash in his knee. We used our only clean cloth, a menstrual pad. The cup must be filled until the pot is gone, lest we give offense, and the guest sends pictures back to the youngest monks who cook their own meals and laugh like the boys we had no longer believed in. Their English teacher, a secular man who had introduced us and translated the story of the cook's fall on flagstones, accepted a ride back to the city in our jeep.

INTERIOR

A shift in the consciousness of two people has occurred and a calm is in the house, as in a painting of three aubergines. Over the movements between rooms as over a landscape of shifting light the mind is allowed to rest, naming each object in an open field. The one with insomnia sleeps. The other is imagined to read and wait. The decorative is restored and with it the potential of pleasures for their own sake, held lightly, as after an illness when the body is washed and trembles a little. Across town I am relieved, bucket of water poured to ground. In my mind is a meal where I see each one equally, eating home baked bread and talking of small and smaller things.