

Doing Your Dead Father's Dishes

for Fred Sasaki

As I washed away the backwash
of your father's glass, the offering
plate for your grandmother's ashes
which held fruit so old & moldy
the apple & orange hardened
into a plastic feel & the last bits
of his spit clinging to a cold
metal spoon tongued smooth
of the ice cream it once scooped,
I thought I was cleaning my hands
w/his spittle & spirit, lathering
my skin w/the dust of his dead cells.

I know that's lurid & morbid to say,
maybe more than you care to bear
but my mother is still alive & my father
is unknown to me & could be a ghost
as well. Still I haven't had to clean
the kitchen of a lost loved one, to scrub
away the grime of leftovers, to strip
the bed of its sheets & pillows only
to see the yellow outline of what was
your father's sweat, the nights he turned
& twisted under the blanket feeling
the heat of dreams press onto his skull.

I imagine him waking from a hot sleep
& drinking a full glass of water in one
gulp for luck & constitution purposes.

I imagine him pulling back the curtains
to look onto the lake while stretching
the bones of his skeleton, his arms
reaching for ceiling, straining to gain
back the inches shed & lost, the light
of the sun flooding into his room
as it slowly rises over an expanse
of water blue & seemingly endless.