

The Tiny Saint

Velvet skies laze
above the tiny saint's marred body.
The pungent stink of cigarettes and whisky slaps her awake.
In the darkness, she gropes for a branch.
Beads of sweat glistening on her smooth, brown forehead.
Steadying herself on blood-crusting knees,
she kindles a fire.
Boils milky tea.
Fries up eggs and choriz and buttered toast.
Caramelizing pork aroma intoxication.

The tiny saint remembers the squat nun at Pali Market,
trumpeting the Bible, chastising the greedy, damning them to fire and brimstone.
In shame, she covers her nose
leaves his breakfast on the crooked stool.
Swallows a hunk of pão, 2 rupees worth.
Hides the rest in the nook of a banyan tree.

Melting wax, the tiny saint moulds patiently.
A house, a baby boy, a heart.
Wick-attaching,
her onyx eyes hoard tears.
A few spill, denting paraffin leg.

Candle-balancing barefoot to the church, sharp stones puncture soles.
She tucks a post-stampede carnation behind her dirty ear.
Combs her hair with soiled fingernails.
Waves to the bubble brew sellers, swirling their bubble wands in the hot air.
Tries to catch floating, iridescent soapy bubbles in her mouth.

Mr. Tall and Burly asks for two hearts.
The tiny saint thinks it sounds like gluttonous infidelity fast-food adoration.
She sells her tear-blemished leg to Mrs Whiskery, with a limp.

Rattling the coins in her rusty tea-tin.
Gazing heavenwards.
The tiny saint kneel-walks up 77 stairs.
Breathes in the perfumed smoke.
Re-lights all the extinguished, melting altar candles.
Arranges the sun-bright marigolds.
Weaves through the crowd of genuflectors.
Bows to Mama Mary.
Leaves behind her sandal-squashed carnation
and a ruby-red trace of self-induced stigmata.