

Kay Ulanday Barrett

How to make a proper fried rice

On an empty stomach, I sliced my leg wide open
when I fell off a bike and now, no matter the
hour I know what it takes to make a proper fried rice.

After I saw *Candy Man* and walked frightfully home,
my lola read my rice in her bowl. The grains made a dull
thud on melamine and it was summertime
in Chicago, better believe a good bowl will tell us what's been in sin.

Measure the water to the second line of your middle finger.
It doesn't matter how small your hands are.
From kang kong to first kiss to majong block,
this is the line where you learn to feed yourself.

First:

Pity doesn't go away in steam or smoke.
Don't cook from the place that feels like abomination, that's what you'll end up eating.

Second:

If you hear tsismis of strangers through the wall cracks, close the lid immediately.

Third:

Go on, laugh like an ancestor you miss;
laugh for them and for the moments they never got the privilege to breathe in.

Last:

After every meal I wash my dishes clockwise,
five seconds to every side. It's like checking the
lock on your door just to be sure, I don't want no
leftover spirits getting too comfortable on my plates.