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Orchard Scenes

Grandmother and grandfather
would walk gingerly up the muddy paths,
each clutching a basket with shears while
feeling the breeze from the
north-easterly winds.

The raked leaves and loosened soil
accompany the cangkul.
An old clipper and a rattan basket
filled with young lime leaves
soon leave a fragrant and zesty scent
lingering on the orchard grounds.

They would then sit
next to a tool shed while watching
the sun slowly rising,
its glow slowly heating
the rusted sheets
with a reddish warm
brightness.

A palette of memories
and the tingling warmth of the sun
with the humid breeze
would drape the surrounding hills
with a blanket of thoughts.

Memories of a marriage
and the loud bursting of firecrackers
and bowls of steamed rice
with chicken, laced with sesame oil
and spring onions.

Memories of a favourite grandchild
and second auntie pinching
the chubby cheeks of a
grumpy baby boy.

Memories of candour,
of youthful hope and love,
joy and sorrow,
a basking of emotions
under the evening sun.

Salted Fish

The wispy charcoal flames
brew silently under
the black wok
patiently waiting for
the scaly salt-encrusted gelama.

The embers flicker within the
red charcoal stove;
tiny embers falling through
the cracks into the
crowded bottom pit.

Wispy smoke gathers
on the brownish oil
cascading upwards.
The oily smoke rises
to the tin roof
as second brother peers
from the rusty door
to the broken window pane
of the tiny kitchen.

Grandmother gingerly lays
the tiny salted fish into the thin
lard oil, *worrying*
about the small pot
of rice at the corner
of the kitchen.
The pot looks destitute
and forlorn against
the smoky black wok,
the hot oil consumes
the salted fish ferociously
and a distinct smell
permeates the kitchen,
the smell of the salty seas.

Grandmother
looks ahead
and worries about
the clay pot of rice
and how small
it looked in the corner
while the fried salted fish
crackles fragrantly in
the hot wok.