“Refugees”

Until half past eight Pin's daughter belongs to the pocked concrete walls the puffs of steam and the piles of pieces she makes into clothing to the rhythms and roaring of the machines She walks home more slowly in the summer to let the warm wind sweep the day from her face In the tiny apartment the television mutters advertisements out the window beside her mother who greets her who cannot see There was a forest and two great rivers that Pin's daughter can no longer remember There was the bombing and there was the lesson of the stolen rice in the meeting hall and the beating and then Pin's daughter belonged to her mother for whom the world disappeared She cooks fish and rice Her mother nods and eats and smiles and tells the story of the leave-taking from Vaisali At ten o'clock she goes to her room Pin's daughter's husband who tells riddles as her father used to but in different words comes home to share the two night hours they belong to each other On the couch he asks the question he has saved for her She sleeps with the answer waiting on her tongue