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Healy Poetry Prize

English and Journalism Department

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## Lunchtime

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## Lunchtime

By: Kim Tran

I ran away from the smell of food cooking in my *Ba Ngoai's* kitchen.  
The smell of fish sauce and chicken power filled the air,  
marinating my lungs.

I ran away from many things as a child.  
The fear of being outcasted was one.

I was  
Terrified The Smell would follow me to school,  
Terrified The Smell would have my classmates scrunch their noses,  
Terrified The Smell would incentivize someone to ask why  
I would bring my lunch here.

I ran away from many things as a child.  
One of them being my *Ba Ngoai*.  
The woman who had the arsenal of spices and  
smells in her cupboard  
that she could barely reach.

I was  
Terrified that her foreignness would always end up as a  
mess every time we interacted with someone  
who was an  
All American Authentic.

I ran away from many things as a child.  
Away from my lunchbox towards the Lunchables.

I was  
supposed to fit in, but the aroma  
of the fish sauce in rice still sits in my breath.  
Every word I speak can't be  
all Authentically American like Applebees.

I was  
supposed to hate my food and not *Ba Ngoai*.  
Supposed to hate my food and not *myself*.

Supposed to hate the kids at my school for being mean  
And nothing else.