

# The Night of the Scorpion

I remember the night my mother  
Was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
Of steady rain had driven him  
To crawl beneath a sack of rice.  
Parting with his poison - flash  
Of diabolic tail in the dark room -  
He risked the rain again.

The peasants came like swarms of flies  
And buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
To paralyze the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns  
Throwing giant scorpion shadows  
On the mud-baked walls

They searched for him: he was not found.  
They clicked their tongues.

With every movement that the scorpion made his poison  
moved in Mother's blood, they said.

May he sit still, they said

May the sins of your previous birth  
Be burned away tonight, they said.

May your suffering decrease

The misfortunes of your next birth, they said.

May the sum of all evil

Balanced in this unreal world

Against the sum of good

Become diminished by your pain.

May the poison purify your flesh  
Of desire, and your spirit of ambition,

They said, and they sat around

On the floor with my mother in the center,

The peace of understanding on each face.

More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,

More insects, and the endless rain.

My mother twisted through and through,

Groaning on a mat.

My father, sceptic, rationalist,

Trying every curse and blessing,

Powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.

He even poured a little paraffin

Upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.

I watched the flame feeding on my mother.

I watched the holy man perform his rites

To tame the poison with an incantation.

After twenty hours

It lost its sting.



# Thoughts Of A Scorpion Naturally Chosen Poems

**IM Harris**



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