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Opium Poppy

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Banerjee: Opium Poppy

Opium Poppy

Bakul Banerjee

At the edge of the road, the gaunt old man dozed on the dusty cement porch. His frayed white shirt was two sizes too big for him. The rickety rocking chair creaked, as I climbed crumbling steps to find my friend somewhere inside.

His blood-red eyes opened to reveal two muddy pools of water stained by the red earth. On his lap, his fingers were kneading a lump of gum. Must be opium, I concluded.

I was twelve. The girl, my friend, came to the door, wearing a sari with many mended holes and a smile. I wonder who scored opium poppy seedpods in lush fields by Kandahar.