

# Hungry Ghosts

These are the realms of unenlightened heavenly beings, humans, animals, constantly fighting demons, hungry ghosts, and beings in hell.

Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art*

Hungry Ghosts (*pretas*) have their own realm in the Wheel of Life and are depicted as teardrop shaped with bloated stomachs and necks too thin to pass food such that attempting to eat is also incredibly painful.

Wikipedia

Such a tiny mouth,  
too small for the spoon that dangles  
from fingers that end the bony arm  
bowed 'round your gibbous belly.

Elbow to knee, finger to ankle, spoon to earth.

How could the bowl of such a spoon—  
big enough to boil rice  
ever pass or even touch your lips?

( two halves of a cherry between the melons of your cheeks)

And the rice—could it pass even single file down the reed of your neck?  
The desire in your eyes casts shadows.

Finally you feed each other. Two arms lengths apart, tears streaming,  
you choke on the cold broken rice.

Melons in your cheeks.  
Moon in your belly.  
Earth at your feet.

and still you are  
never



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Hope Alvarado has been writing poetry for ten years. Her work has appeared in many literary magazines and anthologies. She lives in Dana Point, CA though on special occasions you can spot her in stores that import fancy items from all over the world, possibly in Glendale.

