Tell me, mama, please, is the hermit crab sad

That his house is always changing – does he ever get mad?

And tell me, mama, how does the black bird know

That a hard rain is coming, and where does he go?

Tell me, mama, please, are the stories all true?

Are our islands sand that spilled from *Loa’s* mighty canoe?

And tell me, mama, tell me, is *Loa* mean or nice?

Because next to his canoe I would be just a grain of rice.

Tell me, mama, please, what does *iroij* mean?

Does it mean I’ll be the chief like you when I turn eighteen?

And tell me, mama, how does a chief decide

How much fish to give each person? How to honor men who’ve died?

Tell me, mama, please, why there’s ash in the skies.

Is this what it looks like when *Anij Loa* cries?

And tell me, mama, who are the men in the boats?

And why are they hiding their necks in their coats?

Tell me, mama, please, why we’re going away,

And why they burned our houses if they’re going to stay.

And tell me, mama, why don’t you make them all go?

You are our *iroij* – why don’t you say no?

Tell me, mama, please, where the *meh* and *ni* are?

An *iroij* shouldn’t have to beg for food from afar.

And tell me, mama, where in this camp can I fish?

Like *baba,* *jimma*, *jimma’s baba* - that is my wish.

Tell me, mama, please, why we cannot return.

I saw them fire our huts and boats – but can an island burn?

And tell me, mama, tell me, where my children will live.

I am almost now a man but I have nothing to give.

Tell me, mama, please, why you died so young.

I have many, many questions still upon my tongue.

And tell me, mama, tell me, tell me, who can I blame?

It’s somebody’s fault, but they all look the same.

Tell me, mama, please, what does *iroij* mean,

When navy boats and army tents are all that I’ve seen?

And tell me, mama, what does an *iroij* do

When his land’s been taken from him, and the ancient gravesites too?

Tell me, mama, please, are the stories still true?

Is *Loa* out there somewhere in his mighty canoe?

And tell me, mama, tell me, is *Loa* mean or nice?

Or is he just a gambler with gambling dice?

Tell me, mama, please, are the hermit crabs there?

That I’d watch on the beach while you played with my hair.

And tell me, mama, please, is anyone there?

Did you wake up at home? And if not, then where?