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## Kitchen Homily

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## Kitchen Homily

Elizabeth Theriot

Despite so many years she always has to ask,

*is it good?*

Autumn falls like sifted powdered sugar

and she fills herself in the same way

we fill our bodies with her food.

Gumbo, etouffee, chicken parmesan;

she boils, stirs, elbows deep in dishes

every night and her wild hair

reminds me of the things she's missed,

blue freshwater oceans or cold Russian snow

white like flour, unfelt by perfect legs

young still and tan from mowing yards.

Cakes and pies for every season:

cherries, flaking crust, cheesecake batter, red

velvet, German chocolate, praline topping,

apple mincemeat for Christmas breakfast

pecan on Thanksgiving while we watch the parade,

too sweet to eat without milk. She hums

and breaks eggs with a practiced motion of the wrist

in the kitchen warm like baths

that lend me lobster glaze, pale

skin slowly transformed under soapy water

while cookies brown in the oven slowly transforming

a delicate alchemy of minutes.

Momma never burned one

not that I've seen, not even

after Maw-Maw died. This is how

she expands herself like rising bread:

the rarity of an empty house

open windows, Journey's Greatest Hits.

She told me it's her therapy but really, I think she means

*church*, the wholesome universal alchemy of raw dough and fingers

thick with cinnamon sugar. My mother with her wild, witchy curls bakes barefoot,  
toenails bright red against the tile, oversized t-shirt covered with flour.