Kitchen Homily

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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.