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.