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Curry Love

by Shevlyn Byroo

Long practice has taught me that one pleasure leads to another.

The slow repetitive motion of stirring and the heady aroma seeped into me and slowly my hold of the wooden spoon eased. The familiar smell of frying onions, curry leaves curling and crisping in their heated confines rose and rifted around me. Then the quiet popping of tiny black mustard seeds and whole coriander, sang in unison. In went the black cardamon, wrinkled and wise, splayed star aniseed releasing their aromatic fragrances and spluttering the oil. The smell of home and today- the smell that will no doubt put a smile on my son's face when he walks through the door.

Kashmiri chilli powder is added, the heat lowered. Then garam masala, turmeric and dhania powder in equal measure. I do not measure but use the colour and smell as a guide. Green chillies, cut lengthways. He likes the food hot. Indian hot. Salt. Chopped tomatoes add a hiss and I close the lid. Let it cook down.

On big days when asked what he would like to eat. His reply was always- 'curry'. As he grew older, I taught him how to cook it himself.

"But it never tastes the same," was his reply.

I lick the centre of my palm and add a dab of the thickening sauce. The salt is just right,' you can always add more later if you need to.' My mother's voice chimes. The flavour is good and the hint of garlic and ginger adds a freshness that I am looking for. The heat comes through and warms the back of my throat. The colour a fiery red.

I can already see his smile, broad and happy when I serve up the curry piled on a mound of golden rice. I add the lamb on the bone- he likes to suck on the marrow at the end. Stirring it all in, I lower the heat and let it simmer.

I ask Alexa for the time and put on a radio station to calm my nerves. There was a time when this boy was mine. Not shared, within easy reach. I could not have imagined that there would be a time when there would be such a distance between us. He's not mine anymore...

I tidy up the kitchen and check on the curry, the lamb breaks away easily, potatoes are added. Once the potatoes are soft, I scatter the dhania on the top - not too much, he doesn't like it. The lid is closed the curry is complete.

Can I call him? Check how soon, he will be home... I decide not to. Maybe this time I am not an overbearing mother.

His key scratches in the keyhole. I remain where I am so that I can get a better look at him as he re-enters my orbit.

He looks tired. He drops his bag. Now he towers above me, his long arms hanging loosely, his hair tousled. I resist the urge to fuss. He would not like that.

"I could smell the curry from outside Mum. I'm so hungry."

I hold him close, tea towel still in my hand, while he peers over my shoulder and reaches out, lifting the pot lids. Just for a moment he is mine and I am his mother who can cook him the curry he loves.

For now - this is enough.