

Poems by
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Rice

"You'll need three cups of water.
The grains grow bigger after
they've cooked." She poured
the water on the heavy, iron pot,
carefully measured a cup and a half of rice.
"This is enough to feed nine people.
Then add some salt." She reached
for the round container with the little
girl smiling under the umbrella.

Unlike my mother, I always took my time
adding salt to the boiling water.
I studied the cardboard tub, wondered
what adventures hid behind the umbrella.

After my mother casually mentioned
that salt came from the sea I thought
of pirates trying to steal our salt and rice.

The sweet, starchy fragrance filled
the air as the water boiled away.
The red, blue and yellow plates rested
on the open shelves lining the kitchen wall.

"You need to occasionally stir it," and her wrist
masterfully inserted the spoon all the way to the
bottom of the pot and brought up the rice- softer
and tender- which had been closer to the heat.

This step always left me exhausted.
The spoon refused to go as deep
when guided by my inexperienced hands.

The plates paraded through the kitchen-
one child at a time.
There was no space for more.
The rice became white mounds
surrounded by a red, blue or yellow frame.
Then we sat on whatever chair was empty
and ate- sometimes quietly,
sometimes my mother's stern look
reminded us we were being too noisy.
Most times, we just sat down and ate.