



In-between by Daniel Cheung

Recipes for when you are (home)sick

Priyasha Shri Saravananselan

I used to make chai for my father every morning before school. I would wake him up with it at 7 am and he would drop me off at 7:20. I did this throughout middle and high school. And then after I was done with school and school was done with me, I started packing for Burnaby.

I packed my suitcase so poorly, with things that don't fit and other things that would fit well for a party but not for a commute to a classroom. but I wasn't paying much attention to the suitcase, I was paying attention to the passport, the ticket, the study permit, oh god I hope they don't find an issue with the study permit, and with saying bye.

let me say bye clinically, efficiently, let me not linger in the last word, my voice might break and they might see the fear through the cracks.

I said bye. My voice was firm.

I was headed to my first year at the university my brother went to. He has charted his way through this place, so if I take the same steps I cannot get lost - I clung to this affirmation but of course, the affirmation refused to cling on to me. I got lost. I mean, I found my way to Burnaby just fine, I said bye to India just fine, I reached my brother's home just fine. But for the first two years, it felt like one shoe was smaller than the other and whoever had knitted my sweater had missed sever-

al stitches; something was consistently off with me.

for the first two years, I forgot how to make my home smell like chai. I watched packets of instant rice circle the blocks under the microwave's tangy orange light, I watched packets of channa masala do the same, and for, oh gosh maybe more than two years, my taste buds forgot their mother tongue.

What is the right spice blend for the dal I want to make, why are these questions congesting my lungs, why am I not able to ask for help, and why am I not able to make a home here?

I reached a state of acceptance. you have forgotten the ingredients that turn into a meal you call home because you never knew that one day you will decide to leave it and you will miss it and want to recreate it. you did not realize that roots cannot be ripped out and replanted into new soil.

Two years offered plenty of stories to fill this chapter, it was time to move on. When I went back to India to visit, I watched every movement in the kitchen with intention. I asked questions, I noticed how there was never an exact tablespoon measure to anything, spices were added by feeling.

Now back in Burnaby, I was confident knowing I brought back the right utensils and memories of the emphatic

sound mustard seeds make as it pops in hot oil. Golden turmeric stains under my fingernails were proof of fieldwork. I ground fresh ginger garlic paste and when it hit the pan I was greeted with a familiar smell. The paste, some hot ghee, tomatoes, onion, turmeric, chilli powder, oh what joy to see the colours befriend each other. The right combination of smells is a time machine for a home-sick heart.

Anyone who moves to another country, away from family, has pieces of homesickness stuck to their heels, following them wherever they go. I search everywhere with my hands outstretched, looking for scraps of familiarity to keep me warm. I found that warmth in food.

Reflect by Belle Villar

