

Cinnamon Pie

Your hand reaches into the jar and scoops
one tablespoon to tell the story of how
your husband, The Colonel (my great-great
grandfather, Lieutenant Governor of Nebraska,

Civil War veteran, pioneer), always had to have
two different kinds of pie
for his mid-day dinner. I like to imagine you
as irritated, not desperate, on some raw March

morning one hundred fifty years ago when
you looked into the larder and saw nothing
to make another pie, no new dried fruit appearing
overnight, no nuts, no meats, nothing

for the damn second pie. I like to think
a little grin danced across your face when
your eyes lit on the spice jars; that you thought
to burn his mouth a little, jolt his head

up from his plate to see you. Maybe
you hummed to yourself as you concocted
the simplest of fillings: sugar, water,
flour, salt, and cinnamon; perhaps you had a little

giggle on that dreary sub-zero Midwest
morning, cows bawling in the darkness outside.
"I'll give you two pies," I want you
to think as you carefully poured the liquid

into the bottom crust (the same flakey
crust I make today, the recipe handed down
my father's line to my mother, to my sisters, and me.)
And later in the day I see you serve him

that pie with a vindictive twinkle, see you watch
him bite into the hot red spice— But your hand
was too generous with the sugar,
Great-Great Grandmother Belle,

because I know when that man first tasted
the pie I am making today, his stern face
lit up for an instant, and even though I bet
he only gave you the briefest nod,

I think you tucked it away, to be taken out
later and examined, as I examine
the faded, spidery handwriting
on the back of your photo.

**Katrina Hays
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