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After Dinner

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Maysa Vang

After Dinner

In the kitchen, my father sits overlooking
soiled plates and spoons, aware
rats creep between the walls and
ants feed on the leftover rice.
Flies linger around ceramic pots to his left,
circling around his mute face.
I glance over from the sink in between
scrubbing and rinsing as he listens
to a static broadcast about the old country,
eyes fallen into a slumber, still awake.
He ponders the cornfields cricketing,
the harvest of his youth, juices
of hand-picked cucumbers, ginger, cantaloupe,
savored slowly on his tongue, remembering
untainted moonlight, rushing river
music, miles of earth wet under the soles
of his feet, and once when the hunter's
black sky was so pure
he could've drowned,
but learned to swim in the dark, to live
at ease and drink from creased banana leaves.
Now he sits alone at the table, blue
veins and blemishes bulge from hands
long fingering poverty—freed
to teach me, it's more than enough—
plates, spoons, rice, and walls.