

## Sweet Corn Halwa: A Recipe by Kamini Bhandari

The light strikes violently; the curtains have been pulled apart. Your grandmother is standing against the light, like some messiah of the morning—the kind that hurries you out of bed so that it can be made and pushes you to the bathroom and then pulls you out of it, and directs you to the breakfast table before everything becomes cold, and, finally, leaves you to wander until the next morning. On occasion, you resist; you tell her that you are on holiday, that you are allowed to sleep till much later, for example. But inevitably, each morning unfolds in the same way; the morning's chaos must exist so that the house can be rushed back to a gentle, careful order.

Today, you are especially wistful. Please Nani, you say, I was up late last night. She is not an unreasonable woman, so she explains: Malti (who you know is the sweet lady who sweeps the floors and cleans the bathrooms) will be here soon, and you have to bathe before that. What if I don't bathe? you say, thinking that this will work. It doesn't.

Soon, you have brushed your teeth, bathed, and are sitting at the table with all your other cousins. By now, because breakfast is hot and delicious, everyone has forgotten the rush of the morning. You eat loudly, and soon, your grandmother finds a spare moment to sit with you. She asks all of you how the food is, calling one grandchild by the name of another. You do not correct her; all your mouths are full. Each time a plate begins to empty, she swoops in with another heap of food. You manage to mumble, lost in some otherworldly place, the following words: Nani, how did you make this?

She begins all you need is two bowls of corn, some sugar, some ghee, some malai (the skin of boiled milk), and some cardamom. Okay, that's easy, you say. First, grind the corn down to a coarse grain. Then, warm up some ghee in a pan, and begin cooking the corn in it. How much ghee, Nani? You ask. Two tablespoons, she says. After that, keep cooking the corn until it begins to let off steam, and then add the malai to the mix. Let it sit for just two minutes. You begin to write all this down on your phone. She says, Add two tablespoons of sugar and cook it for five minutes. And then, as a nice last touch, garnish it with some cardamom. Wait, that's all? you ask. That's all! she says.

She rises and goes into the kitchen and comes back with more and though you try to say no, there is nothing to do but eat and laugh and be together, and it is good.