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**SOME FIGS  
FOR AFTER DINNER**

Deepa Bhasthi





*An invitation to my lover.*

For I have, I am a fig. And a fig wishes to be eaten.

It is just mid-morning, not the right time or proper way in society for a fig to be eaten. Apparently. Fruits, glistening wet in their ripeness, juicy and soft like satin pillow talk in a public square, have been ordained as dessert. Desserts are to be partaken off after an unhurried dinner.

The figs are in a glass bowl by the side, over there, covered in a blue, lacey cloth. By the time we are ready for dessert, they will be close to bursting with anticipation, the red in the blue, the blue embroidered by then with the leaking juices of the ripened fruits.

The table is set for many, though there are only two guests tonight. Red wine in translucent decanters is set aside two inches from the rose pink plates, to moisturize the tongue after a bite of the meatballs, perfectly round, as if they were formed on a lathe.

Here is how dinner, before

dessert is served, is to be conducted.

In our part of the country, we eat carrots with the first drink of whisky, to loosen the tongue. I drink to unbridle the tight blouse I am wearing tonight, it did what I wanted it to do when I rang the bell. You opened the tall teak door and couldn't raise your lascivious eyes to meet mine. There is a bowl of creamy mayonnaise to dip the raw, small strips of carrots in. Let's have our usual conversation as I slip one strip into the mayo, twist it slowly in the bowl and bring it to my slightly open mouth, sliding it in while you talk of insurance or of drawing me nude. The carrot crunches, when I take a sharp bite...what was I saying, you will ask me, distracted.

Several fingers of whisky down from a full bottle, my hair open now and in disarray, let's sit down to dinner. Of the pearly strands of rice I place for myself on a plate, one manages to sit against the hollow of my neck. I wonder how. Maybe I placed it there myself. You do want to wrap your tongue around it and eat it, don't you?

Dinner.

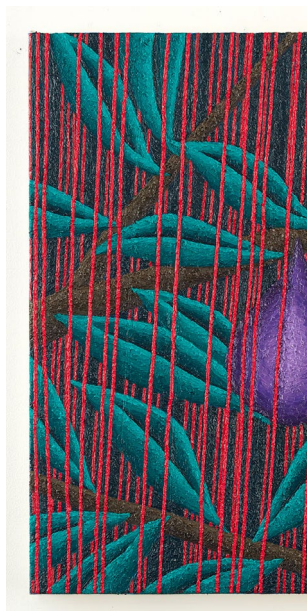
I do like a fancy sit-down at times, languid servings of three and a half courses, even if we have to serve it ourselves. You want to get to dessert mid-way. Wait, my darling, let the torture of longing for something sweet on your tongue stretch a little more. The fig that we are having after this meal will ripen some more by then, fed on the wine, oiled by the creamy coconut curry with mollusks, make-believe oysters, that we are eating.

This curry is real good. So good that against etiquette, I want to put the fork aside and use my fingers to mix in the

fleshy mollusk with the rice.

I am certain the yellow of the turmeric will seep into my fingers, the smell of the spices will embed itself into my skin and mix with other smells later tonight. This makes me want to put each of my fragrant fingers into my mouth and suck the smells of you in. I have always loved the way you cook. Will you want to lick the spices off my fingers too? Shall we save it for foreplay, your tongue jogging lazily up and down each of my fingers?

Do we have curd for tonight, before the fruit? Curd is supposed to cool the body down. Figs in yoghurt must be a super food sometime.





The fig is a gorgeous fruit, wouldn't you agree? Reddish brown, bordering on shiny black on the outside with a pinched bottom that makes its cheeks stand out against a hand. I like it best when it is split open though. The two lips part at the exact centre to reveal the fig's secrets. They say, like a woman, the fig's secrets must not be revealed, and that she must always fold unto herself, keep her body unuttered. They say that showing my secret will be the way I shall die. I laugh. I am a fig and for certain I shall keep, even when I am over-ripe

and burst into your mouth in all crimson and velvet glory. Some might say the figs taste best when over-ripe.

I will not let you die either. Make way for my ecstasy, tonight and for every night we eat together. Hold the door open, I promise not to shut it behind me. I am a fig but not its wasp, and a world of mere women isn't for me.

I am a fig and my secret is this.  
*The night is suddenly upon us,  
a starless night/ You lighting  
a candle, carrying it naked/*



*Into our bedroom and blowing it out quickly,/ The dark pines and grasses strangely still.* On such a glorious ink blue night, behind my parted lips are tiny jewels, transparent, shining in the dark, ready to be eaten, or worn around your waist. The honey, thick as sticky paste, lives within only when I am ripe. Fully, wholly ripe, glittering, rosy, honeyed, ready for you.

How will you eat a fruit tonight? Let me count the ways.

You could take it in your hand, squeeze it a little between your palm to release the juices within first. Break off the stem. The flesh is a shade of flaming crimson, the white milk surrounds the edges, nearly falling off now. Hold between two flimsy fingers the edge of the skirt and peel off, slowly. It is nicer that way, when slow. A ripe fruit will not be able to stand this measured torment, the moistness will seep through the flesh and drop into your hands. Lick away the juices, won't you? Peel away my skirt, my skin and part my lips. Look at me and make me blush. I beg you, put two fingers in and hunt for your treasure, for the rubies, for the diamonds which hide away on a bed of cool fluids, communal like the other bodily fluids we share.

Or take me in your mouth, one

gentle bite at a time, twirling your tongue around the very centre of me, there where I keep that translucent honey you like so much.

Or just be vulgar and put your mouth to the crack, and suck away the whole wet flesh in one large bite.

How will you eat a fig tonight?

Dessert is for after dinner, apparently. And it is only mid-morning now. But as I sit across you now in this room where the sun splits into thin slivers of warm gold and stardust, I couldn't care less about the hour. I let the fig run through the gaps of my fingers just now. The ripeness is just right. Not too soft and lush that it will burst into fire and rain its secrets upon your first touch. Not too raw that you will have to tease her with nibbles all over and a sweet tongue before she yields almost reluctantly and lets you have your way.

So what if this hour is not the ordained hour? The fig is bursting with hues of crimson and fiery purple. Just at the perfect stage of full-flavoured maturity. Why wait till after dinner?

Let's serve ourselves dessert. Right now.

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All images are from Nadia Ayari's '*The Fountain and the Fig*' series.