

LAST ONE STANDING?

FICTION

Vibha Vasanth

Finally! Someone who can hear me. Bless you and your powers of telepathy. Hi there, hello. Now, enough with the pleasantries—you have much to hear. I am the lone survivor, and the conditions are worsening. Let me stop you before you go any further—it’s much worse than you think. I mean, what else can you expect when a thirteen-year-old, with *zero* kitchen skills, gets her hands on her mother’s prized vintage baking collection? Everyone else with me? Gone. A group of four, reduced to one, the others rendered unusable. And I’m fast headed in that direction.

Someone needs to have a word with Radha about leaving her ward home alone. Radha, if you’re a telepath too, I have just one question—how could you? I’ve been in your family for four generations, and you let your daughter make sure I don’t reach the fifth?

Please don’t think of me as incapable of empathy. It’s sweet that Radha’s youngling would like to bake her mother a treat for when she gets home from a long day of work. But at what cost? What this girl was trying to make, I simply have no clue. She marched into the kitchen and beelined for the highest cabinet where us vintage folk were stored. Did she stop to consider using the bakeware in the kitchen drawers? Not for a second. She clumsily climbed onto the counter and grabbed the box in which I was kept. When she put me on the counter, I saw an array of ingredients had been laid out, all of which I’m not sure are used in baking. Certainly not the mango pickle.

The first of us sacrificed was the sifter. Sure, Mithra was an odd-looking contraption with a barrel and a levered handle, but it must be obvious that Mithra wasn’t meant for eggs—especially not straining eggs. I

can't say I have ever heard of a recipe calling for strained eggs, but Radha's youngling had her ways. Poor Mithra died a clogged, goopy, and eggy death.

Before even turning on the oven the girl had grabbed the cake decorator. Shikar looked like an enormous syringe straight out of a horror movie, but I bet even you know to fill him with icing and not fondant. With a broken piston and fondant-jammed insides, Shikar's ungraceful end arrived.

And the mechanical whisk! I couldn't tell you about the atrocities Manasvi faced. I shudder just thinking about it. How she was forcefully stuck into rock-hard butter and cranked against all that resistance until her gears gave out!

Enough about them. I'm the one in trouble now. I'll excuse the girl for not knowing how to use Shikar, Manasvi, or Mithra. But a rolling-pin? That's perfectly self-explanatory. I look just like the rolling-pins of today. You know what they say: a rolling-pin, is a rolling-pin, is a rolling-pin. So why is this girl using me to *mix* her suspicious looking batter? The wetness is soaking in and destroying my gorgeous wooden surface—leaching inside, permanently settling, becoming the perfect festering ground for mold to thrive. This cannot be my undoing—I'm an heirloom, a supposed immortal. Somebody get me out of this batter!

Oh. I'm being lifted. The youngling has heard me! She's also a tel—

Why am I headed towards the eggs!?! The youngling is hefting me in the air. I see the egg in her other hand getting closer. I already know what's coming. Thwack! Crack! That's right, the youngling is using me to crack open her eggs. Didn't Mithra's eggy death give the girl enough? How many more eggs could she possibly need? Apparently more than one because the next egg is getting closer and—crunch! A third? Looks like it. Crack!

Everything hurts. The worst part? The eggs are going into the batter, shells and all. Thwack! Crunch! Looks like five eggs did the trick. Somebody find me an Advil. This ringing in my head is more than I can take. The youngling finally sets me down. She shifts her attention to the "batter," transferring it into a loaf-pan. Maybe I'm going to make it out alive after all.

Oops, I spoke too soon. I am back in the youngling's grasp. You won't believe what she does next. That batter in the loaf-pan? She sticks me right in there. I feel a blast of hot air. Good God it's the oven. Quick, you need to help me. I simply cannot go inside. It will quite literally be the death of me. Gah! The youngling already has the pan in her hands. Why do you sit there and not help? Can't you see me getting closer to the oven? And now I'm

sweating. All the soaked-up batter is coming right out. This could be a silver lining—if I wasn't still in the batter! I have most certainly not made peace with my situation and will continue to scream at you to help.

Wait. I hear a click. The creak of the front door. Footsteps. An aghast scream at the kitchen's entrance. A startled youngling drops the loaf-pan on the floor. Praise the Lord Radha is back! I spill out with the batter and roll away.

Radha's face, getting redder by the second, is truly a sight to behold. Her eyes look ready to pop right out. We're mere moments away from a forehead vein throbbing. With the mess her daughter has made of the kitchen, I cannot blame Radha. That's when she notices the state of her vintage set. And there goes that forehead vein, throbbing in sync with Radha's mounting fury.

Now I'm sure you're itching to hear about the reaming Radha is about to send her daughter's way. But you know what, I may be covered in what's surely an inedible batter, but I got away. And after today's more than stressful events, I need to nap it off. So, if it's all right, I'll just leave the rest up to your imagination.