

Two Tablespoonfuls

she asked the Crem for. Or it might have been, *two tablespoons*, the former being an official measurement, rather than an informal tag or nickname: *table-spoon*, *tablespoon*, *tablespoonful*, *Nanna*, *Mama*. Table-spoons being part of the profusion of 18th-century spoons: *mustard-spoon*, *salt-spoon*, *coffee-spoon*, *half-spoon*, *step-spoon*.

She didn't ask for the equivalent 14.8 millilitres: how do you measure that out from the cremulator? Can you ask whether it's more demerara or caster? Just two tablespoons from the interred mass; a sprinkle of grey icing on an earthy chocolate cake. Pot up a rose on top, though, and watch it wither.

Not dessertspoons, soup spoons. Both lack gravity. No, she requires the best spoon / best-spoon / bestspoon. The Sunday roast spoon: two slices of pale meat, peas unpodded, carrots like worn-out suns. The favourite spoon.

Not three teaspoonfuls, the ten-a-penny, clink-in-the-cutlery-drawer kind used to stir sugar into wan tea. *Two tablespoons* – for serving or eating. Not half a fluid ounce, because this was not fluid, but more flour, self-raising.

Were they for a diamond, a pendant, to be mounted on a glinting sceptre? Or who's to say they wouldn't end up funnelled, bottled, nestled in the spice rack, between *Marjoram* and *Nutmeg*?

It used to be you carried your own spoon around to every table: your personal spoon. Not the stainless-steel municipal free-for-all of shared spoons, rows and rows of them, names taking and sloughing off hyphens: *grapefruit-spoon*, *slotted spoon*, *sugar-spoon*, *love spoon*.

Two tablespoons. The table and the spoon, joined for decades, centuries, by a hyphen, until they became a measure in themselves. Those two full spoons she took, then fired that hyphen - a dart into the bullseye, missile into the sun.