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: tablespoon, 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 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.