



Whirlwind Missions

Ashley's Dispatch

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“Ashley, you’ve got to come over here to Mama Selena’s house.” Mama said into the phone. Jesse and I were sitting in the mission working the kids on their homework. I had just finished helping Jocelyn, Josie and Angel with their reading workbook when I got the call. I looked over at Jesse who was leaned back in his chair, joking around with the older guys. “I’m going to find Mama.” I told him. He nodded and continued his conversation.

Outside the mission little boys are digging in the dirt and the girls are spinning around singing Spanish rhythms. I ask one of them, “How do I get to Mama Selena’s house?” The little one points down a grassy path that leads behind the apartment building. My high heel boots sink into the grass with each step. Note to self: these are definitely not “mission tough.” I walk past the back porches where rugs and clothes have been hung out to dry, past the gardens full of red peppers and cilantro, and I begin to climb up the worn out, black iron staircase into Mama Selena’s apartment. Clack! Clack! My heels announce my arrival.

Rahat, Mama Selena’s son, rushes out to greet me with a cabbage samosa, a type of vegetable fritter. I take the hot treat with both hands, “Thank you, Rahat!” Before we enter his Bengali house, it’s custom to take off our shoes. I post up against the door frame about to take off my boots when Rahat grabs the heel and yanks it off. I laugh at this sweet gesture from this young boy.

With my shoes off, (I wish I’d worn matching socks) I step into the kitchen onto the linoleum floor. Both women turn around to greet me. “Ashley! You made it! You’ve got to try this!” Mama says as she takes a seat at the kitchen table. Mama Selena smiles at me from the stove where she’s frying up the last of the cabbage. “You eat!” She tells me, placing a paper plate full of white rice. “Pumpkin.” She says pointing a gold painted fingernail at a pot full of curried pumpkin. To not eat would be an insult and it smells SO good. I take a big spoonful and smother my rice with the orange liquid. The first bite is full of oriental spices and flavors that excite my pallet. The rich pumpkin has absorbed all the meaty flavors of the broth and the fresh white rice sticks together adding a delicious texture. It’s hot and spicy and I feel like I’ve been transported to Bangladesh. My mom and Mama Selena talk as she finishes her cooking and steepes a tea bag in a pot of hot milk to make chai. She pours me a mug full. It’s hot with hints of cinnamon spice. It’s the sweet ending to a spicy meal.

Please pray for our ministry to the Bengali women at Azalea Place Apartments. It’s these simple tea times together that make all the difference!

Love,

