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Margaret Randall

“Have Some Dessert”

Ellie Randall Spaghetti smothered
overcooked pasta and ground round
with a two-pound brick of Velveeta
melted and burnt to a darkened crust on top.

After moving west she added a bowl of chile
to her repertoire: sweet green pepper
and onions, canned black olives
and reliable hamburger

with a can of pinto beans
and red chile powder on the side,
everyone serving
their own preference for heat.

Few at our table knew the meat
was horse instead of beef.
Bloody eggs and powdered milk
brought Mother the satisfaction

of saving a few cents here, a dollar there.
She always willing
to explain how it added up,
Dad beaming at her reliable thrift.

My childhood predated the anorexic angst
burdening later generations,
diets and other fads were novelties to us.
In high school

I could always take ten pounds off
despite the ritual milkshakes
at the soda fountain down the street.
Chocolate is still my flavor.

But as I grew the pounds increased
imperceptibly, exponentially:
my armor against Grandpa's abuse
catching up fast.

My 98-pound mother always boasted:
Look how much I eat,
never gained an ounce,
claimed her perfect figure a matter of will while

urging me, always urging me:
Have some dessert.

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