

PASTA

When I first fell in love with you that winter
I made you *pollo puttanesca*—a whore’s dish:
linguine, her thin elegant tongues lapping at fiery,
oily sauce—tomatoes, cherry peppers, capers
crushed with red pepper flakes—chicken legs simmered
on a cast-iron stove by a creole streetwalker leaning
voluptuously out of shuttered wrought-iron windows,
garlic perfuming her hair, beckoning into the evening
alleyway below. An olive ciabatta heel to polish your plate;
when I asked you upstairs, you readily came.

Then came a long packaged-macaroni phase: I ate
on the couch with my roommate, outrageous overseas
phone bills, wept into reconstituted powdery orange
“cheese.” You returned, we settled into farfalle,
frozen pesto, broccoli chopped into the pan at the end,
marinated artichoke hearts, a toss, a quick urban meal,
food made to be bolted by the half-starved at nine pm,
tired after a long workday apart, famished, headachy,
too sleepy afterwards for washing up, for anything but
brushing, flossing, wrapping leftovers for the next day.

Lately I wonder what’s next—new shapes, flavors,
strange subtle oils to dress? Rotini tricolore’s too wacky;
not primavera—we’re past that kind of naïveté, crave
real simplicity. No capellini—too thready, insubstantial;
nor manicotti—no meaty, heavy, twice-baked meals.
I’m thinking what sounds good tonight might be
fresh, locally-made fettuccini, veiled in light cream,
whisked with a touch of ground nutmeg & Marsala,
followed by a tender green salad with no strong cheese,
but perhaps, tossed with the pasta, a few tiny green spring peas.