

# The Prairie Light Review

---

Volume 34 | Number 2

Article 78

---

Spring 5-1-2012

## Take and Eat

Cindy Crosby  
*College of DuPage*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

---

### Recommended Citation

Crosby, Cindy (2012) "Take and Eat," *The Prairie Light Review*. Vol. 33 : No. 2 , Article 78.  
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol34/iss2/78>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact [orenick@cod.edu](mailto:orenick@cod.edu).

# Take and Eat

Cindy Crosby

## Second Place winner of the Prairie Writing Award

### *Beets*

I say too loudly  
and hold the can so  
the label is clearly visible.

She raises her eyes to look at me,  
not understanding—  
wanting to understand—  
Muslim in the Lutheran food pantry.  
She hides her fear behind  
a spill of black hair.

In Afghanistan,  
she'd never seen canned beets,  
Chef Boyardee Ravioli, Hickory Farms spicy mustard,  
Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ Sauce, Hershey's chocolate syrup,  
or the assorted pink, green, and yellow miniature marshmallows  
that instinctively she knows will not nourish  
the five mouths to feed at home.

Only desperation  
those rumbling bellies  
those tiny mouths  
could propel her here.

But...  
How do you explain salsa, or Hamburger Helper?  
Taco shells, pizza kits, Ramen noodles,  
California smoothie mix, or the foil-wrapped hotel coffee packets  
and other flotsam and jetsam hastily plucked  
from someone's kitchen cabinet for donation?  
Carb-lite pasta, energy bars, Girl Scout Thin Mints, microwave popcorn,  
Funfetti cake mix, Hormel Chili, Gatorade, Suddenly Salad?

Her English starts and stops with "hello,"  
I've never toyed with learning Pashto.

She grips her four-year-old son's hand.  
He glances at me shyly through thick dark lashes,

eyes the candy,  
but doesn't whine or beg.

I want to give him the world.

Instead, I convince her to take  
a few bags of beans,  
black olives,  
a small package of cookies.  
*You can fill this basket to the top,* I show her, pointing.  
She shakes her head.

I pantomime, wave my hands  
Talk slower, talk louder  
Beg her to take  
*Rice! Noodles! Soup?*  
She leaves without so many things.

The gulf between us  
is wider than  
the words she doesn't understand.

On my way home  
I'll stop at Whole Foods  
Load my cart with fresh spinach, strawberries  
Nine-grain flour, expensive Greek yogurt,  
Lean sirloin, apples grown without pesticides,  
Fresh fruit juices, brown eggs from free-range chickens.

Happy chickens  
Who lay their eggs in nests  
I don't like cruelty.