

The Cooking Calculus of Sylvia Plath

by Crystal Hurdle

money money money!
food food fo--
never enough
an all-inclusive summer camp
prescient greedy Sylvia drinks
six glasses of milk at lunch time
wants as many stomachs as a cow
could store provender for hard times
years down the road

again asks her mother to send
her blessed cookbook again
"Ted likes this" in her black hand
beguiles the bidding collector
dramatic irony
the hopeful recollections of a happier home
a groaning board
the way to man's heart is through

while abroad, she and Ted can live
on one pound a day
cooking from scratch
bargaining for potatoes and butter in Benidorm
one stall a couple of pesetas cheaper
maybe some fish but not meat

the cookbook's anticipated selling price higher than
the cost of a brand new kitchen
with all the mod cons she never had

Today's *The Really Garbage Cookbook*
instead of her *The Joy of Cooking*
how to scavenge-feed oneself

Sylvia too classy
to resort to Dumpster diving
for still viable edibles
not yet compost or maggoty meat
a better strata of poverty
as she frantically turns the pages
wanting cheap and filling to look and taste good

she forces herself to do up a budget
to remember which brackets to start within
is it the square or the round?
square meals eye of round

next to the veal dish
Ted savours
too expensive for often!
chuck and top rump tarted up with parsley
made to melt in your mouth
the cheaper cuts of meat tenderized
what he doesn't know won't
cover up anything with grated cheese
and call it by a French name

the way to a man's heart
is through his woman's bank balance

Irma von Starkloff Rombauer
cookbook author/philosopher/prose poet/financial advisor
"Assume the worst but serve it with parsley"

credo of life for the impoverished
dough biscuits
 clams bread
 cheese cabbage
 bones
 bare bones

eat it bank it
want more and more of it
too bad you can't eat paper

Sylvia licks her lips
turns a page
gains confidence
starch fills you up
bring home the bacon
the way to a man's

calculus rictus plague
ledger sheets
red and black [ink] Sylvia's favourite colours
debit and credit
neither a borrower nor a lender be
begging and borrowing
promise you'll do anything

good to be in a stew
earn and eat your greens
take a mallet to the meat
punishingly thin and tender
bruised innocence
fresh flesh
toe to tail will get you more
use all of the animal
bake your cake and bank it too
save money, good eco/nomy

clever housewives
do the math =
thrifty Sylvia boils spilt milk
flays the carcass) (
knows shows
the (spent) appetite saves all
and (parsimonious) love costs dear