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## Love Affair in the Pantry, Early '80s

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## Bauer: Love Affair in the Pantry, Early '80s

### LOVE AFFAIR IN THE PANTRY, EARLY '80S

Curtis Bauer

The latch never clicked shut and after forcing it one afternoon my mother stripped the weak metal in two and it hung there for a decade, then more, yet the doors still held in shadows of what we should and shouldn't eat, what we could and couldn't afford—cheese, flour, corn syrup, molasses and honey the government gave us, generic salted crackers in tin *Saltine* boxes, HyVee Cola with grape and lime and cherry syrups or something else to remind us of those flavors, and cereal none of us wanted for breakfast but ate because what we were told to do we did furiously. The cookbooks, too, my mother inherited from some great aunt who had several subscriptions, and pork & beans tins, chicken noodle soup, beef and fish bouillon cubes I thought were candy once, and on the middle shelf sat enthroned the gilded, glowing cans, the holy row where the Lord God Almighty must have placed what we were not allowed to touch, a biblical test of temptation and faith for our house alone when the pantry doors opened wide and my covetousness stared back from the eyes of the patrons of my lust—Count Dole of Pineapple, Duke Starkest of Tuna and my most desired Lady Blue can of Mandarin Orange. I desired her, would pass hours in front of her smooth blue figure circling her perfect waist with my fingers, holding her curves close to capture her intimate scent. My mother caught me once and shrieked. After that I'd wait for the house to empty,

but she should have known I'd fall again—boys  
becoming men do this. She should have seen  
my decline from *He is such a nice boy* to *Where  
on earth did you come from?* but she did not wonder  
why every evening I found an excuse to linger there  
in front of the shelves and Lady Blue or how desire  
can slap courage into a boy some afternoon and move  
his limbs to lift forbidden fruit and consume it whole,  
and who's to say we're not conscious of our early sins?  
I carried her from that throne, sat her on the counter  
top and moved in close to undress her, peel away  
the celestial blue top, inhale those sweet curves, and kiss  
those delicate lips, her flesh and juice a sweet I'd never  
tasted, consumed until then, until I had all of her.