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## Lick the Plate

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## Lick the Plate

Yvette smiles in her blue dress—  
birthday number eighty-one.  
Whole fields have been laid to waste  
to bring her armfuls of flowers;  
wild thyme and poppies scent her.  
Her children crowd the backroom,  
drinking cups of raw red wine.  
From laughing lips her life pours out  
thick, rich as green olive oil—  
Americans with chocolate,  
Hershey bars handed to her  
when her thighs were thinner than her arm.  
Later that year Jacques came home,  
walking to her from Norway...  
planting cherry trees, almonds,  
growing chervil and babies  
in fields of lavender...  
the large pine, and the red earth...  
the cypresses in the wind...  
lying under chestnut trees...  
their house with its red tiled roof...  
the road to St. Emilion...  
There is singing, there is dancing  
the old men roll bocce balls  
as shadows fall long and low.  
A platter, silver and gold,  
bears the *pâté de fois gras*—  
all taste one small precious piece.  
Jean-Marie hands her the plate;

Yvette smiles in her blue dress—  
ever the Lady, she peels  
a peach with a knife and fork,  
not a finger touching fruit—  
yet laughing, holds the platter high  
then recklessly licks it clean.

-Tanya Rucosky  
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