Interracial Marriage

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Tonight, I just want to be left alone with my day-old casserole: sagging California veggies glued together with cream of mushroom soup and Velveeta cheese, mixed with deep freeze beef, covered over with not quite crunchy Stovetop stuffing.

But no. In the Styrofoam box sits a Lao dish: ribbons of rice noodles, red and green peppers like party streamers, a festive orange sauce screaming spicy, and the translucent shoots of the delicacy you love: chicken feet.

No doubt it’s a niche market. While breasts get filleted and ice-glazed, wings and legs get shrink-wrapped, and even backs get vacu-packed in plastic zip-locs, the rubber shoes of chickens go out the back door to this savory fate.

Tonight, I’m content to let you nibble down the nubbly skin and spit out metatarsals like seeds of bone. But now the kids prod me, sucking air through their teeth to knock the edge off the spice. When our three-year-old invites, “Come on, Dad, try it,” I know

I’m outside this circle. So I, too, hook my incisors on the back side of the raspy gelatinous skin and peel, whittle down the cartilage ends of the phalanges, add my clinks of bone-to-plate, suck the sweet air through my teeth, the five of us together, eating chicken feet.