

KAREN PRIDMORE

CINDERELLA WAS AN OPTIMIST
(For Alan Marshall)

Old enough
to have the key
of the door —

at the back
of the hotel,
after lunch,
they form a queue
as the pot-bellied cook
squeezes out
from the doorway,
like a cat
out of its territory
and upends
the repast refuse.

First in queue
prompts his penniless peers
to spread their share of
newspaper
and receive
a dripping mass —

 c
t h c
e h h
fat o
 e p
l
e e b
a o
v s n
e e
 s s

disintegrating cream slices

and

S P I T !

They turn their backs
and eat like dogs,

unable to face their diners
unable to walk away.

Desperadoes are too old
for optimism.

They tore up their children's
Cinderella books

an
age
ago.

