



T. Cole Rachel

Rock Orange Sweetness

↳**Rock**↳

Standing on top of the oak railroad

bridge near the bottom of a dry river, I threw

a rock at my cousin

and yelled for her to go back to the house

we saw a snake--a small garter or bull

and she was scared. We wanted her gone

sure she'd tell on us for climbing up the rickety

trellis and digging through the old wrecks underneath

the boxcars like rusty knives, crumpled

like behemoth Kleenex, red iron tissues. I held a rock

warm in my hand, and hurled in her direction
a fired warning that arced up across a hot swath
of blue and came down hard and impossible
on her forehead. Wailing and bloody, she ran
for the house and I stayed on the bridge, a stick-
figure against a big sky, fretfully squinting
towards home.

↪The Orange↪

it's nearly 6am when I emerge into daylight
from the ft. Hamilton subway stop, squinting against
a cold drizzle and a wombish sunlight, misting its way
down 11th avenue, where an elderly man drops
a box of oranges in front of the 24-hour circus circus
fruit stand, one of which rolls hallucinogenically
halfway across the wet street, shockingly orange
against the gray slick of the avenue, it is the definition
of orange, the most orangey orange that ever orangeed
and even more shocking is the memory it resurrects

of a girl named Christy, who wrote me letters from a distant
California, having undergone a religious rebirth and flight from the Midwest
moving to some communal home surrounded by orange groves
where one might pick a fat orange like this one on 11th avenue,
where one might eat that orange feeling very centered and clear
and spiritually unbroken, unsullied, intact
and I am seeing her, long hair California tan and billowy
Tibetan shirts, looking giggly and perpetually 12 under a tree
loaded with heavy fruit
eventually I know reality will place her someplace in India, roving
with a group of Jesus hippies, building squatty buildings, pissing
in the Ganges with the locals, but this morning I am remembering
her letters and the sweet oranges, she is there
in those trees, with her kind notions of the universe and perpetually
teenish laugh, and I am there with her even as I walk, orangeless
through the murk of Brooklyn morning, back again
to my godless apartment.

↳ The Sweetness ↳*

you must admit that you have known this, the gentle sway
of this closeness, the warmth of hand-holding, the occasional accidental
brush with unexpected goodness, the small dusting of kind words
that somehow cling to you

they have pooled around you, these moments
that you have skirted, brushed, sometimes
just barely seen, and if there is a shape
that could hold them, it might only be the sky
or the light angling across your face or maybe even these
yellowed letters pulled from an empty closet, containers
of a goodness that predates your life, the quiet
communications of the long dead

before all of those Easters and Sunday dinners
there is a sundress and a back porch full of fuzzy begonias
we are flickering outside the windows, unborn
and the letter is folded, held, placed carefully

in a box for us to find years later

dear sister

it's fall here again, and quiet. the trees

are all noisy and red. full of leaves

it's like when we were girls and lived

with aunt Ida, and it's kind of lonesome here

with no people. how is it in town?

i miss your face. things are always so much better

when you are here

in this photo she looks sideways

at him, he stares into the camera

all white teeth and broad shoulders

and her smile is one you know, a look

that understands the fleeting honey

of that moment, the click of camera

her eyes, *he is mine*

you have known this, a swelling, a wave
of such toe-curling delight that only his hand in your own
her quiet breathing beside you at night, can tether you
to this world, can keep that goodness
from sweeping you away completely

and who hasn't held this light, carried it
in their hands, tasted of it
as our limbs tangle in the memory of some childhood street
when we are new and empty, knowing
that we are wanted, that we will know each other forever

in this photo he holds her in his arms, the waves
behind them are a threshold, an entry
to some joy we all hope to know, rushing up
to greet our bare feet

and this too you have known, the simple pleasure
that can only spring from the company of those

who've seen your face wet, your hair a disaster

your laughter too loud, your sobbing too quiet

it is a car moving through some faded summer

the tinkling of a radio, the sun on your neck

your fingers tasting the air outside the open window

and who hasn't, as a child, been driven

in a car late at night, curled in a backseat

as streetlights give way to dark, to starlight, to the moon

and then you are awake, with only the gentlest memory

of this sweetness that has brought you home

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