

THE WOMAN WHO TURNED DOWN  
A DATE WITH A CHERRY FARMER  
FREDONIA, NY

Of course I regret it. I mean there I was under umbrellas of fruit  
so red they *had* to be borne of Summer, and no other season.  
Flip-flops and fishhooks. Ice cubes made of lemonade and sprigs  
of mint to slip in blue glasses of tea. I was dusty, my ponytail  
all askew and the tips of my fingers ran, of course, *red*

from the fruitwounds of cherries I plunked into my bucket  
and still—he must have seen some small bit of loveliness  
in walking his orchard with me. He pointed out which trees  
were sweetest, which ones bore double seeds—puffing out  
the flesh and oh the surprise on your tongue with two tiny stones

(a twin spit), making a small gun of your mouth. Did I mention  
my favorite color is red? His jeans were worn and twisty  
around the tops of his boot; his hands thick but careful,  
nimble enough to pull fruit from his trees without tearing  
the thin skin; the cherry dust and fingerprints on his eyeglasses.

I just know when he stuffed his hands in his pockets, said  
*Okay. Couldn't hurt to try?* and shuffled back to his roadside stand  
to arrange his jelly jars and stacks of buckets, I had made  
a terrible mistake. I just know my summer would've been  
full of pies, tartlets, turnovers—so much jubilee.

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from *Miracle Fruit* (Tupelo 2003)