

FOR OWEN

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Walking to school you ask me

what other schools have grades.

I get as far as Fruit Street and your eyes go away.

As we walk under these yellow trees

you have your army lunch box under one arm and your

short legs, dressed in combat fatigues,

make your shadow into a scissors

that cuts nothing on the sidewalk.

You tell me suddenly that all the students there are fruits.

Everyone picks on the blueberries because they are so small.

The bananas, you say, are patrol boys.

In your eyes I see homerooms of oranges,

assemblies of apples.

All, you say, have arms and legs

and the watermelons are often tardy.

They waddle, and they are fat.

“Like me,” you say.

I could tell you things but better not.

That watermelon children cannot tie their own shoes;

the plums do it for them.

Or how I steal your face—

steal it, steal it, and wear it for my own.

It wears out fast on my face.

It's the stretching that does it.

I could tell you that dying's an art

and I am learning fast.

In that school I think you have already

picked up your own pencil

and begun to write your name.

Between now and then I suppose we could

someday play you truant and drive over to Fruit Street

and I could park in a rain of these October leaves

and we could watch a banana escort the last tardy watermelon

through those tall doors.