**Oranges**

**By: Gary Soto**

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| The first time I walkedWith a girl, I was twelve,Cold, and weighted downWith two oranges in my jacket.December. Frost crackingBeneath my steps, my breathBefore me, then gone,As I walked towardHer house, the one whosePorch light burned yellowNight and day, in any weather.A dog barked at me, untilShe came out pullingAt her gloves, face brightWith rouge. I smiled,Touched her shoulder, and ledHer down the street, acrossA used car lot and a lineOf newly planted trees,Until we were breathingBefore a drugstore. WeEntered, the tiny bellBringing a salesladyDown a narrow aisle of goods.I turned to the candiesTiered like bleachers,And asked what she wanted -Light in her eyes, a smileStarting at the cornersOf her mouth. I fingeredA nickel in my pocket,And when she lifted a chocolateThat cost a dime,I didn't say anything.I took the nickel fromMy pocket, then an orange,And set them quietly onThe counter. When I looked up, | The lady's eyes met mine,And held them, knowingVery well what it was allAbout.    Outside,A few cars hissing past,Fog hanging like oldCoats between the trees.I took my girl's handin mine for two blocks,Then released it to letHer unwrap the chocolate.I peeled my orangeThat was so bright againstThe gray of DecemberThat, from some distance,Someone might have thoughtI was making a fire in my hands. |