

For Those Two Seconds

*Inspired by "Blind Curse" by Simon J. Ortiz*

For those two seconds  
before he bumped his fruit cart into me  
I thought he wouldn't  
not with a face so calm  
But he did  
I was sure he saw us  
my mother my sister and I  
We were there  
on a cobblestone street of Jerusalem

His fruits stayed in the cart. Nicely packed  
stacked and layered  
by the thousands  
but one  
fruit slid off the cart and rolled  
I wanted to follow it. But  
just stood there  
Saw mom's mouth moving fast  
Saw words but didn't hear them  
Words flew away, tumbling invisibly  
Words between mom and boy with cart.

I was  
focused on the fruit  
rolling further and further from me, saying  
You just might be significant  
but you might not be anything  
Suddenly I couldn't see the fruit any more.  
Saw leather sandals  
looked up  
surrounded by  
not just the boy with the cart  
but many  
open mouths  
shouting words  
fierce eyes  
fingers pointing  
on and on, forever

Boys my age but not  
Their faces contorted in pure rage  
As faces got closer all I could think was: yellow fruit  
Would the fruit survive their fury?

Just when I pictured yellow seeds seeping into sun hot stone  
My grandfather arrived.  
Boys scattered.  
They left behind my perfect yellow fruit on the ground  
I turned around.  
One boy apologizing.  
If my grandfather had not walked up  
at that space of split time  
would my fruit still be yellow or  
crushed into the sidewalk,  
dispensable as a woman.

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