1. Gary Soto
2. Oranges
3. The first time I walked
4. With a girl, I was twelve,
5. Cold, and weighted down
6. With two oranges in my jacket.
7. December. Frost cracking
8. Beneath my steps, my breath
9. Before me, then gone,
10. As I walked toward
11. Her house, the one whose
12. Porch light burned yellow
13. Night and day, in any weather.
14. A dog barked at me, until
15. She came out pulling
16. At her gloves, face bright
17. With rouge. I smiled,
18. Touched her shoulder, and led
19. Her down the street, across
20. A used car lot and a line
21. Of newly planted trees,
22. Until we were breathing
23. Before a drugstore. We
24. Entered, the tiny bell
25. Bringing a saleslady
26. Down a narrow aisle of goods.
27. I turned to the candies
28. Tiered like bleachers,
29. And asked what she wanted -
30. Light in her eyes, a smile
31. Starting at the corners
32. Of her mouth. I fingered
33. A nickle in my pocket,
34. And when she lifted a chocolate
35. That cost a dime,
36. I didn’t say anything.
37. I took the nickle from
38. My pocket, then an orange,
39. And set them quietly on
40. The counter. When I looked up,
41. The lady’s eyes met mine,
42. And held them, knowing
43. Very well what it was all
44. About.
45. Outside,
46. A few cars hissing past,
47. Fog hanging like old
48. Coats between the trees.
49. I took my girl’s hand
50. In mine for two blocks,
51. Then released it to let
52. Her unwrap the chocolate.
53. I peeled my orange
54. That was so bright against
55. The gray of December
56. That, from some distance,
57. Someone might have thought
58. I was making a fire in my hands.