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Deserter's Longing

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LUKE GELBER

DESERTER'S LONGING

HERMOSILLO 1913

I peeled a mango in the fields
outside León and handed it

to you, letting sun-congealed juice
roll down your arms. Lo siento

I said, but you licked your fingers
and shrugged. No te preocupes -

the only safe way to eat these
is naked, lying in a tub.

Here, miles from the howl of war
fruit hangs heavy on bloated boughs

like the shoulders of fusiliers.
I pluck a mango in the shade,

slice it endwise and wrench the pit
from both halves like a warm bullet.

I imagine sitting naked
in a bathtub with you, your back

and long black hair pressed to my chest,
your teeth drawing soft, radiant chunks

of flesh from the tip of my knife
while gold juice glazes your bare neck.