

Nikki Paley

Pears

Turning from 34th onto Park, I thought
"It was the pear that gave her strength,"
holding that golden-green in my right hand.

*To check for ripeness, press nearer the stem,
it should give to gentle pressure.*

Chilled and tender from the fruit man
on the corner, I felt guilty not buying more.
He wore the same green shirt he always wore—
hole beneath the pocket
still unraveling.

I used to love a boy who said pears were always
better cold. He gave me his Yankees cap before
I headed east, and I wore it for a while, but not long.

On the street, pears are only
cold in winter.

Since that morning uptown, I've grown thin-skinned
and grainy. It's because I'm not longer in New York.
Have you ever loved who you were somewhere else?

At eight years old, I knew a girl
with a pear tree in her backyard,
she showed me that a pear's core is shaped the same
as the pear itself. They ripen after being harvested,
from the inside out—not so with apples or plums,
though true for most girls.

Ever have a craving?

Broiled cinnamon, fried ricotta, ginger-glazed,
brûlée, rustic tart, canned in light syrup. They grow
from pink blossoms, bottom-heavy until fall

when they're picked like wild rumps from the sky.

I want to drop like a wild rump from the sky.

I didn't eat the pear that whole day—it stayed
a bulge in my side pocket, didn't bruise once.

I have, but the pear gives me strength. Listen:

as they ripen, they start to glow.

Buy them hard.