The first time I walked
With a girl, I was twelve,
Cold, and weighted down
With two oranges in my jacket.

December. Frost cracking
Beneath my steps, my breath
Before me, then gone.
As I walked toward
Her house, the one whose
Porch light burned yellow,
Night and day, in any weather.
A dog barked at me until
She came out pulling

At her gloves, face bright,
With rouge I smiled,
Touched her shoulder, and led
Her down the street, across
A used car lot and a line
Of newly planted trees
Until we were breathing
Before a drugstore. We
Entered, the tiny bell
Bringing a saleslady
Down a narrow aisle of goods.

I turned to the candies
Tiered like bleachers,
And asked what she wanted—

Light in her eyes, a smile
Starting at the corners
Of her mouth, a fingered
Nickel in my pocket.

And when she lifted a chocolate
That cost a dime,
I didn't say anything.
I took the nickel from
My pocket, then an orange,
And set them quietly on
The counter. When I looked up,
The lady's eyes met mine,

And held them, knowing
Very well what it was all

About.

Outside
A few cars hissing past,
Fog hanging like old

I took my girl's hand
In mine for two blocks,
Then released it to let

Her unwrap the chocolate.

I peeled my orange,

That was so bright against
The gray of December
That, from a distance,
Someone might have thought
I was making a fire in my hands.