

Anaranjado

To eat an orange is not
to prophesy, but years
before my guelita sucked
an orange section as her last
meal on earth—sweet
sacrament—my wife ate
three, four, five
oranges daily, slicing
the skin from pole to pole
and pulling back the peel
as if unfolding
a love letter. She would
sometimes say, *there should
be so much more.*

*Of how terrible orange
is, and life, I want
to say, because I am
remembering when my guelita
was young and ate the oranges
her mother offered to the Virgin,
and how Spanish has two
words for orange, so that
to say the setting sun
looks anaranjado is to say
someone has oranged the sky,
dressing it with fire to meet
the night, like my sisters
and mother and tía
bathed and dressed Guelita
each day, combed her white
hair, rubbed lotion in each
wrinkled joint,
to make the end burn
cleanly, sweetly.*

—John Alba Cutler

This poem won second place in the
2018 Clinton F. Larson Poetry Contest
sponsored by BYU Studies.