

Peach

By Jennifer Tonge

Come here's
a peach he said
and held it out just far
enough to reach beyond his lap
and off-

ered me
a room the one
room left he said in all
of Thessaloniki that night
packed with

traders
The peach was lush
I hadn't slept for days
it was like velvet lips a lamp
he smiled

patted
the bed for me
I knew it was in fact
the only room the only bed
The peach

trembled
and he said Come
nodding to make me
agree I wanted the peach and
the bed

he said
to take it see
how nice it was and I
thought how I could take it ginger-
ly my

finger-
tips only touch-
ing only it Not in
or out I stayed in the doorway
watching

a fly
He stroked the peach
and asked where I was from
I said the States he smiled and asked
how long


I'd stay
The fly had found
the peach I said I'd leave
for Turkey in the morning I
wanted

so much
to sleep and on
a bed I thought of all
the ways to say that word
and that

they must
have gradient
meanings He asked me did
I want the peach and I said sure
and took

it from
his hand He asked
then if I'd take the room
It costs too much I said and turned
to go

He said
to stay a while
and we could talk The sun
was going down I said no thanks
I'd head



out on
the late train but
could I still have the peach
and what else could he say to that
but yes

Jennifer Tonge, "Peach" from *Poetry* (February 1999). Reprinted with the permission of the author.

Source: Poetry (Poetry Foundation, 1999)