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The Catch

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Robert Lee

The Catch

Nineteen forty three. Disneyland's an orange grove, fantasy land for twelve-year-old Maurice who pitches for the New York Yankees, throwing oranges at trees, at passing trains.

Oranges were made for throwing
and Maurice spends hours
hurling dreamy curves at freight trains,
howling with delight at every strike
wondering where the train will take
that splattered burst of orange.

Or, winding up, he smashes angry streaks
of fastball orange against the rough
hide of trees, juice, pulp, and seeds
sliding down the trunks. Needs a catcher
if he's gonna pitch in the big leagues.

Truth be known, he needs a ball.
But his brother's gone, fighting
Germans, and Maurice doesn't understand.
The ball's nested in Matt's catcher's mitt
on the mantle

where it will stay till the war is won
and beyond.

Late season trains are filled with troops,
young men, waving and shouting
Chuck it here, kid. Show us your arm.
One man holds his hand like a glove.
Maurice throws from the stretch, bases
full, ninth inning, last game of the World
Series. The orange colors the air
a curving arc, a streaking train, and then
the catch!

Time stops, holds the orange beside
the soldier's face, a young astonished
face, remembered longer than a brother's.