

## A Supermarket in California (Allen Ginsberg)

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!—and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

*Berkeley, 1955*

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## SUPERMARKET SURFER

—after Allen Ginsberg

what bohunkian images i have of you  
crash against my niggernoggin as i shiver and stroll  
long air-conditioned aisles at 2 a.m. the liquor  
under lock and key, the lettuce full and moist with  
a fresh spray of mist and neon  
my cart wobbles giddily on crooked wheels as i sputter  
between the confused and the absurd as i cruise for  
pudding  
and citrus-free hand lotion. there's plenty of disabled  
parking outside. it is lonely here though the  
automatic doors never close and a bleak phosphorescence  
never dims and bananas are going at two pounds for  
the price of one. the bin of avocados is small  
and most of them more like plankton-stained golf balls  
or too rotten. somewhere, i am detected via camera  
lens while picking over pepper mills between  
the spice racks and the baking soda

hang ten toward checkout is a certainty

the only Walt here is Disney  
the pork chops are killing me  
i am a nobody angel  
my heart is a frozen delicacy