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Schlubatis Orchard

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SCHLUBATIS ORCHARD

by Karen Frederick

We are apple picking in October sun
when I toss a fruit to you, plucked
from the tree, red,
but not the red of a Radio Flyer,
rather the red of a male cardinal
who watches from above.

Too many episodes of *Cheers*
and I long for Boston—
baked cobblestone streets
of U.S. history,
cooled by the salt of the sea.
I step on them, headed
for the next crab cake,
stone-ground mustard on the side.

Then again maybe it's Seattle I want—
where I've never been
but remember from a childhood
full of *Frasier*.
I can go up the Space Needle,
to the top, where I pierce
the sky and start new in
the unfamiliar familiar city.

You catch the apple and it is black
against your hands. The skin flakes,
falls to the ground, scattering
into brittle leaves
and soggy earth, shouting to me.
It's time to leave, to go, for good.