**fruitbox**

every morning, i stand at the counter like clockwork,
knife in hand, slicing apples and getting rid of the skin

peeling oranges so the rind doesn’t get under your nails,
placing grapes in neat rows and cutting baby carrots in halves,
tucking them all into a plastic box with the utmost care,
like love should be something portable.

love is found in the apples i cut for you.

you don’t ever say much when you take it.
just a glance, a nod, the “thwip” snatch of the lunchbox,
and the jingle of keys, the door closing behind you.
no “thank you,” no words at all in fact.
but i don’t need them.
because this is how we speak—
through gestures, through offerings,
through silence, through fruit boxes.

love is found in the apples i cut for you.

some days, i wonder if you notice.
if you see how i pick the ripest, freshest fruits,
how i take care to cut the bruises and stems away.
if you know that i wake up early
just to make sure the fruit box is waiting for you.
if you know that this is love.

love is found in the apples i cut for you.

when I was younger, i used to ask myself why.
why we never said the words that others said
why we never hugged like they did on TV,
why love is something sliced into bite-sized pieces,
something packed away for a mundane work lunch
but i do not ask anymore.

love is found in the apples i cut for you.

it took me a while but i understand now.
that love lies in the unspoken, in the habitual,
in the quiet labor of a kitchen knife at dawn.
love is in the fruit that you eat without thinking,
in the way that you leave the box empty in the sink,
without any expression of gratefulness

merely a silent confirmation that you received it.

love is found in the apples i cut for you.

and so i keep cutting.