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The Melons in the Seed

by David Schelhaas

On that cool spring day
when I took from my hand
Those small, flat seeds
And placed them in the soil,
Who could have imagined
These seven fat striped beauties?

Now, smiling down stupidly
At this wedge of watermelon
Smiling back crookedly at me,
Juice running down my chin,
I need to know
If the seed knew all along
How it would grow,
Or if, perhaps, it just played a hunch,
Made a snap decision
When its sap began to flow.

Did the seed say
(if seeds indeed could talk),
I think I wanna be a watermelon
Ripe and juicy watermelon
Not a melancholy rutabaga
Or a narrow-minded cuke
But a jolly watermelon,
Round and bawdy, gushy, gaudy watermelon
Is what I wanna be?

Then did it muster all
Its energy and wit to slowly grow
These seven hymns to sweetness and delight?

Did it grab that hazy pink
At random from the sky?
Did it measure out the sugar
It could hold and still not cloy?

Did it plan the sharp, melodic crack
When knife first bites,
The eager leap with which the melon
Opens to the taste when ripe?

Did all this come by whim or chance,
A hunch and nothing more?
Or did the seed already know its mission
When I dropped it in the soil?

Did some strictly coded DNA
Insist that it must be
A watermelon, ripe and juicy,
Round and bawdy, gushy, gaudy watermelon
And that's all that it could be?

And if that's so
Then I must know
Who planted that genetic code
Inside the seed I planted in the cold
Spring soil.

For surely gradual accretion
Of component parts, across the centuries
Of seed time and of harvest
Cannot explain the mystery of the melons in the seed.

In my heart I know the only hand
That's fine enough to code that little seed
Is the only hand that's large enough
To hold the wide, wide world.

But my heart cannot inform my head,
The mystery still stands.
I sit here silent, juice on my face,
With folded, sticky watermelon hands.