

# Juicy | In the Umbra

by Beth Thomas

## ***Juicy***

The old man watches the shoppers build pyramids of fresh produce in their hand baskets. He licks his lips and mouths the air, salivating, unashamed of his propensity for the round, pink grapefruit, the almost egg-shaped oranges, the firm, juicy tangerines. He wrings his knotty hands and smells the tartness in the air and for a moment he forgets things like clocks and old age. His hands feel young and perfect, as will hers for a time after he returns home. He studies the harvest. There is the perfect fruit and there is the callused rind, and to know the difference, you must hold it up to the light and study it.

---

## ***In The Umbra***

He pulls the drapes together and moves on. The moonlight makes her crazy. Drunk again, she's laughing and suggestive when she shouldn't be, pulling her cotton nightgown up around her waist and running through the house barefoot and wild. Her graying hair hangs in a braid down her back, coiling and letting out snakelike. He follows at a distance, bouncing her name off of the walls like a bat. She shouts out as if to rattle him awake, but he already is. She's speaking in tongues that he can't understand, laughing and flirting with him from across the room. Beyond the small panes, the unbroken line of sea, hanging above it the sliver of moon looks like an eye halfway closed. She gasps and turns her back and collapses on the floor in a tight fist of shadow. Close the windows, pull the drapes shut, close them, closed.

