

**Alex Lockhart**  
*Black Bananas*

Even discriminating welfare mothers  
could not be blamed for eschewing  
the sad sacks of bruised tomatoes  
of Walmart's dubious produce section  
The poorest of Bridge Card shoppers  
in big-box birdcages  
would reject a pest-infested stalk of  
cauliflower or quarts of curdled milk  
Would a sensible consumer volunteer  
to advocate for rotten avocados  
what with their splotchy rinds wilting  
from their humiliating humid existences

So surmise my surprise  
when I realized the graciousness  
of altruism  
Those who selflessly forfeit their  
precious leisure days to enter a  
concertina maze of electrified teeth  
Enduring the indignity of an unpaid  
phase of metal detection procedures  
and contraband sweeps inside  
their mouths and beneath their feet

Is this a degradation worth their salt  
Do tears ever abrade against the grain  
of a thankless morale  
Does it ever taste like consuming  
spoiled fruit to  
patronize pariahs like Calcutta  
lepers littering the landscape with  
lost limbs for someone else to come  
behind and clean up.

Your integrity and resolve is moving  
The courage you wear like a thick peel  
to foster us like Syrian refugees  
despite our seedy and grubby deeds

You could be swimming in sunlight and  
white sands of pure Lake Michigan shores  
with children and aquamarine weekends  
Your interest disillusioned my skepticism  
That, of your own accord,  
you'd donate yourselves to mentor  
some socially crooked miscreants

But a fruitless chore is not yours  
At least not in this All-American  
profitable institution  
I'm beholden for your effort,  
others are too,  
for the revolutions we receive  
around the crystal face of  
your timepiece  
For your head pledge and heart space  
Your attempt to vitalize the fruit  
languishing on the vine, the wormy  
apple that others avoid

Before my childhood perished  
like a sere toddler in a hot car,  
my mother stayed my intent  
to dispose of a hand of  
overripe blackened bananas  
She transformed the soft fruit flesh  
into a moist baked loaf of  
flavorful banana bread instead

She saw value in what otherwise  
appeared to be decaying refuse

Not unlike my appreciation  
for her capacity to see veracity in the dregs  
I'm consoled and impassioned  
by your generosity and compassion  
Your measures haven't gone unrewarded  
My recompense for your diligence—  
I will endeavor to be the best  
loaf of banana bread I can be