

A Man Then Suddenly Stops Moving

BY ALBERTO RÍOS

The old Russian spits up a plum
fruit of the rasping sound
he has stored in his throat
all these lonely years

made in fact lonely by his wife
who left him, God knows
without knowing how to cook for himself.

He examines the plum
notes its purplish consistency
almost the color and shape of her buttocks
whose circulation was bad

which is why he himself wears a beret:
black, good wool, certainly warm enough
the times he remembers.

He shoots the plum
to the ground like a child
whose confidence is a game of marbles
whose flick of a thumb

is a smile inside his mouth
knowing what he knows will happen.

But his wife, Marthe
does not spill out
when the plum breaks open.

Instead, it is a younger self
alive and waving
just the size he remembers
himself to have been.

The old Russian puts him onto his finger
like a parakeet
and sits him on the shelf
with the pictures.

For the rest of his days
he nags himself constantly
into a half-sleep
surprised by this turn of events.