

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

## THE FRUIT DETECTIVE

*Searching the globe for the next must-eat treat.*

BY JOHN SEABROOK



*David Karp: one of his obsessions is a "top secret" planting of dragon fruit.*

One hot summer day not long ago, just as the specialty food stores around town were putting up "First of the Season" signs to advertise their peaches, a rare and extraordinary shipment of apricots appeared in Manhattan. They were white apricots, which you almost never see in the United States. Unlike the familiar tawny-colored varieties, these had pale, almost translucent skin, with a yellow blush. And, unlike the cottony supermarket fruit, the white

apricots tasted great: a rush of sugar, with a complex, slightly acidic aftertaste. The flesh almost melted in your mouth, and the juice was so plentiful that you had to bend over while eating one, to avoid staining your shirt.

The apricots were available at Citarella, which has four branches, and only at Citarella—a fact that pleased the store's produce manager, Gregg Mufson, a great deal. Like his competitors at the other high-end specialty stores

around town, such as Eli's, Dean & DeLuca, and Grace's, Mufson tries to titillate his customers by giving them uncommon fruits—curiosities that they may have encountered in a restaurant, on their travels, or on the Food Network. "Anything new, anything different, and if I can get it directly from the grower it's even better, because there's no middleman," said Mufson, who is in his mid-thirties and wears a neatly trimmed goatee. "I want them to go 'Wow!' I want to blow their minds with something. They'll eat these apricots, and they won't forget that taste, and then they'll come back and buy some more of my fruit." Mufson pays attention to the food press, so that he can be sure to have the trendy fruits and vegetables in stock. "When the *Times* did an article on rambutans"—bright-red, golf-ball-size, tendril-covered fruits from Southeast Asia, with translucent, sweet-tart flesh—"we sold ten cases of them in a couple of days." Appearance, he added, is the most important quality in attracting people to new fruit—the more colorful the better—followed by sugar. "Basically, if it's sweet, people like it," he said.

At first, not many customers paid much attention to the new apricots. "That's a white apricot," one of the produce workers in the store said when a customer asked about the fruit. "First one I ever seen," he added. But the customer went for the Apriums—yellow-skinned, pink-fleshed plum-apricot hybrids, which have become popular in the past few years.

Soon, however, word about the white apricots got out. The pastry chef at Citarella thought they were one of the best fruits he'd ever tasted. The chef Daniel Boulud bought two cases of white apricots and was "crazy for them," Mufson said; Boulud used them to make apricot galettes. The owner of Citarella, Joe Gurrera, gave a white apricot to Martha Stewart when she came into the East Hampton branch of the store, and "she was blown away by it," Mufson reported. "Blown a-way." The store sold out of its supply in a couple of days; the next shipment disappeared even more rapidly. Mufson was delighted. "My boss gave me a compliment! My boss never gives me compliments. He said, 'This is the best

RUVEN AFANADOR



fruit ever. We got to get more of this stuff.' All I can say is David really scored this time."

David is David Karp, a sometime "provisioner" for specialty stores like Citarella, and a noted fruit writer. He is the Fruit Detective, a persona he invented around the time he worked as a provisioner for Dean & DeLuca. His job is to range around the country and the world and find exotic fruits, or uncommon varieties of common fruits. In recent years, he has travelled to Madagascar to investigate vanilla, to Sicily to hunt for blood oranges, and to the Australian outback to research bush fruits. But most of his work is performed in California. The Fruit Detective is a familiar figure at the Santa Monica Farmers' Market—he's the one in the pith helmet with the leather chin strap, his fruit knife in a holster on his belt, looking like a slightly demented forest ranger as he interrogates farmers with rapid-fire questions and eats their fruit. Readers of Karp's articles, which appear regularly in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Gourmet*, follow him on his quest for pomelos, Asian pears, mulberries, and persimmons. Most people experience a truly great piece of fruit very rarely—that perfect peach you ate one summer day long ago, a taste you hope for in every subsequent peach you eat but never quite recapture. Karp's goal is to have that experience again and again.

I first heard about the Fruit Detective from a friend, an organic farmer in southern New Jersey named Torrey Reade.

"Anything new on the farm?" I asked her one day about a year ago.

"Well, we had a visit from the Fruit Detective."

"What's a fruit detective?"

Torrey wasn't sure, exactly, except that the fellow was passionate, almost manic, about fruit. "He left his business card—wait, I think I may have it in my wallet."

The card said "David Karp, Fruit Detective." It had raised lettering that looked slightly crooked, and it gave a residence in Venice, California. The name reminded me that I once knew a David Karp, whose passage from brilliant Upper East Side private-school kid to heroin addict was a sad but familiar story of money, drugs, and wasted talent.

I stood there rubbing my finger over the lettering, wondering what had become of that David Karp, while Torrey described her encounter.

"We were trying to grow Charentais melons," she explained, "which is a French exotic, and he had heard about us from a health-food store in Princeton. Somehow he found us and came down to see about getting some for Dean & DeLuca. He was wearing this funny hat and shorts—no one in South Jersey wears shorts in the summertime, because of the bugs. We showed him our melons, which he liked but didn't love, and then he started asking, 'What else do you have?' So we told him about the pear tree that was growing near the old privy. He demanded to see it immediately. It produces these tiny, inedible pears, but he thought it might be an heirloom variety and got very excited—he was actually hopping around in the weeds."

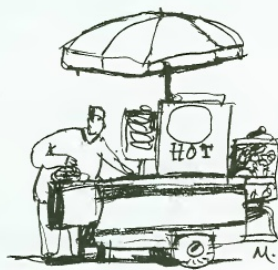
The more she described the Fruit Detective, the more he sounded like my David Karp. I kept the card and, over the winter, sent the Fruit Detective an e-mail. After he confirmed that he was the person I was thinking of, we talked on the phone and made plans to have lunch the next time he came to New York on "fruit work."

I hadn't known David Karp well, but I had heard a lot about him from some friends who had grown up with him in Manhattan and told memorable Karp stories. Karp's father, Harvey Karp, was an extraordinarily successful businessman, whose house in East Hampton was reputed to be a palace. David was brilliant. He was fluent in Latin, and, it was said, read only the poets of late antiquity. He published a translation of the sixth-century writer Venantius Fortunatus when he was twenty. Not only did he get 800s on the S.A.T.s but he got 800s on a friend's S.A.T.s, too—and

he did it while coming down from LSD. He also knew more about punk rock than any of his friends, and he was well versed in drugs.

After graduating from Wesleyan, in 1979 (word of the S.A.T. caper had got back to the authorities, and he and his friend were suspended for a year, but he finished in three years), Karp worked on Wall Street in risk arbitrage and option trading, where he was soon making more than a hundred thousand dollars a year. He collected rare books and rare wines. He produced a Lydia Lunch album, "13.13," in 1982, and cultivated friends in the downtown rock world. But his dabbling in heroin had turned into an every-weekend habit, and in 1984, after drugs were found in his desk at work, Karp got fired. At this point, a less apocalyptic spirit might have stepped back from the dark side; Karp moved into the Hôtel Plaza Athénée in Paris with his fashion-model girlfriend and a supply of heroin, and indulged in a life of total hedonism—sleeping all day, living off pastries from Lenôtre, getting high and staying up all night reading St. Augustine (in Latin), and, when his drugs ran out, taking the Concorde back to New York to buy some more. Eventually, he ran through most of his money and returned to New York, where he was soon supporting his habit by selling off his book collection and by dealing heroin to friends and friends of friends.

Karp has been completely sober—no drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes—for almost twelve years. In 1990, after waking up on a floor strewn with broken glass and Cap'n Crunch cereal ("Junkies love sweet stuff"), he had allowed his parents to put him in detox at Gracie Square Hospital, and he then spent seven months in rehab in Southern California, doing the twelve-step program. On returning to the world, he called up a college friend, Eric Asimov, who writes the "\$25 and Under" column for the *Times*, and proposed a freelance piece about apricots. Fruit was connected in Karp's mind to the great love of his life, a woman he had met in college, with whom he had shared an interest in collecting fruit-crate art and the elaborately decorated wrappers around blood oranges. "I thought it would intrigue her if I became a fruit







"Oh, that. That's a design flaw."

expert," he explained. He'd try to find great fruit, and woo her with it. He got the fruit, but not the woman. "This is very pathetic," he told me. "The story of unrequited love. But what can I say? She was the love of my life." In the course of pursuing her, he began amassing "dossiers" on different fruits, which contained the names of thousands of fruit growers, breeders, marketers, wholesalers, and retailers. Ten years later, he is a unique source of information on the fruit industry—a vital link between the "knowers" who love obscure fruit and the "growers" who cultivate it.

Karp moved to California in 1999, because that's where so much of the nation's fruit comes from, and he lives in a small cottage in Venice with his cat, Sahara, who, he is convinced, once saved him from dying of an overdose by licking his face until he woke up. When he isn't searching for fruit, he collects books about fruit, compiles songs about fruit, and corresponds with fruit lovers all over the world—chefs, specialty stores, and amateur fruit enthusiasts who simply want to know the difference between a Pluot, an Aprium, and a plumcot.

Does he have any other interests? Aardvarks, Karp says. "I love them, because most people think they're unattractive, but I think they're incredibly soulful." Once, when he was visiting the Philadelphia Zoo, he climbed into the anteater pen, hoping to commune with the animals, but instead experienced "a nasty confrontation with the business end of an anteater."

We met in April. In the intervening years, Karp had lost the hair on the top of his head. "I've grown glabrous," he said, using the term of art for a fuzzless nectarine. He looked very fit, not at all like a former junkie—more like a guy who eats a lot of fruit.

Over lunch, he told me that he had recently wrapped up a research project on bitter almonds ("I'm not, generally speaking, a nut enthusiast") and was hot on the trail of European greengage plums, which are common abroad but extremely rare in the United States. "Have you had one? Oh, my God, you'll die when you taste one—it's an atom bomb of flavor. I'm convinced there's a small planting somewhere in California, and I won't stop until I find it." He didn't

eat much of his pasta, and what he did eat he liberally coated with dried chili peppers, a shaker of which he carries in his black canvas bag. He scolded me for drinking a Coke: "That stuff is bad for you. Have you ever seen what it will do to a penny?"

After he had finished his lunch, he said, "O.K., ready to eat some mind-blowing fruit?" It is Karp's custom, whenever he meets people for a meal, to bring along remarkable fruit. Eric Asimov recalls an occasion when the Fruit Detective turned up with a bright-red fruit from West Africa called a miracle fruit (*Synsepalum dulcificum*), which, Karp said, had a startling effect on the taste buds: for an hour after you've eaten it, even the sourest foods taste sweet. "I tried one, and then I ate a sour lemon," Asimov said. "I was stunned at how sweet it became."

Karp took from his bag a large, heart-shaped, scaly greenish fruit that I had never seen before—a cherimoya, a fruit native to South America. Taking out his grapefruit knife, he concentrated his full attention on slicing into the white, custardy flesh and peeling several sections for me. The focus he brought to this task, the specialized equipment he used, and the obvious tactile pleasure he took in the procedure, combined with the prospect of an imminent mind-blowing experience, were all powerfully reminiscent of the David Karp of twenty years ago. And, as promised, the fruit was amazing.

One day in 1962, a Mormon missionary walked into a Safeway in Los Angeles and asked for a Chinese gooseberry. The produce manager didn't know what that was, so he asked the main produce buyer for Safeway, who, in turn, called Frieda Caplan, the founder of Frieda's Finest, a local wholesaler of specialty produce items. She didn't know, either. A few months later, a broker representing New Zealand farmers was walking around the L.A. wholesale produce market, trying to sell Chinese gooseberries. The other produce buyers weren't interested, but Caplan, remembering the Safeway buyer's query, said, "I'll take all you've got," and that turned out to be two thousand four hundred pounds. "No one is ever going to buy something called a Chi-



nese gooseberry," a shipping official told Caplan. The rind of the gooseberries was kind of furry and reminded him of New Zealand's national bird, so he suggested naming the fruit after it—the kiwi.

People who grow and market unusual fruits tell that story a lot, usually as a way of illustrating the potential that exists in the American marketplace for something new. Although the United States is the most ethnically diverse country on earth, that diversity is not reflected in the fruit stocked by the average supermarket. The mango, which is one of the most popular fruits worldwide, is not among the top ten American fruits (which are, in descending order, bananas, apples, watermelons, oranges, cantaloupes, grapes, grapefruit, strawberries, peaches, and pears). Our vegetables are considerably more diverse than our fruits. Portobello mushrooms, arugula, fennel, radicchio, mesclun, Swiss chard, and jicama—all specialty items ten years ago—are now in American supermarkets across the country, but sapotes, litchis, and loquats are not. American travellers in Asia and Latin America find many delicious fruits—jackfruit, longan, and breadfruit—that are never available fresh at home. This is because the United States Department of Agriculture has outlawed the importing of certain foreign-grown tropical fruits to prevent the spread of tropical pests. But two years ago the U.S.D.A. began allowing papayas and rambutans grown in Hawaii to be imported to the mainland after they had been treated with electron beams—the same process that neutralizes anthrax spores in the mail (though anthrax requires a much higher dose). The new technology, many in the exotic-fruit world believe, will greatly expand Americans' awareness of the fruit that the rest of the world eats, and bring a cornucopia of new items to the produce department.

Part of being a fruit detective means figuring out what will be the next kiwi. That's not Karp's only interest; he spends at least as much time tracking down the classic varieties of familiar fruits as he does sleuthing exotics. But the intrigue and potential payoff implicit in the next big fruit are irresistible. When I saw Karp in April, he was enthusiastic about the prospects of

the pitahaya, which is grown in Central America and in Asia, where it's known as dragon fruit. He talked up dragon fruit during his meeting with Gregg Mufson, of Citarella, a few days after our lunch. "Giant, flaming-pink, spineless member of the cactus-pear family, the most spectacular-looking fruit I've ever seen," Karp told Mufson, practically spitting with excitement. He said that, while some varieties aren't so tasty—"they taste like a snow cone, like they were made of gelatinized mousse with sugar"—others are much more interesting: the magenta-colored flesh has the texture and flavor of watermelon, sometimes with a hint of strawberry.

Mufson was initially skeptical about dragon fruit, but after listening to Karp he got more curious.

"Know where we can get some?" he asked.

"I have a connection," Karp said, with a manic gleam in his eye.

Karp told Mufson that although no foreign-grown pitahayas were currently allowed into the country, he knew of a "top secret" planting, which was about three hours south of Los Angeles, outside the desert town of Borrego Springs. The planting was a partnership among a specialty-produce grower, Kevin Coniff, who had propagated a variety of pitahaya for Southern California; a farmer, Thomas Antel, who owns the land where the pitahaya plants were growing; and a large wholesaler of fresh produce, D'Arrigo Brothers, which was putting up the money. The reason the pitahaya planting was secret was that the partnership, or "consortium," as Karp delighted in calling it, was trying to develop an exclusive American market for dragon fruit, and they didn't want their plans publicized before they were ready. "It's like opening a movie in L.A. or New York. They'll want to get it into fancy markets and affluent areas, with a lot of foodies and food press, and the word spreads from there."

Mufson said that D'Arrigo Brothers had done something similar with broccoli rabe. Over the past ten years, the company created hardier varieties of broccoli rabe, so that what was once a specialty item has become available year round, with D'Arrigo Brothers controlling most of the distribution. "Nearly all the broccoli rabe that comes into New

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York, the D'Arrigos handle it," Mufson said.

Karp slapped his fist into his palm. "They're up to the same thing with dragon fruit!" he exclaimed. "Boy, this sounds like a case for the Fruit Detective, if ever there was one."

Mufson stared at him. He had never met anyone like the Fruit Detective before.

In mid-June, I flew out to Los Angeles and joined Karp for five days of fruit work. Before this trip, I imagined that David Karp was a man who had been redeemed by fruit—someone who had found in fruit a way of escaping his demons. What I came to realize over the course of our five days together—five very long days—was that Karp had not really banished his demons at all. He'd just found a way of channelling his particular needs and talents (the desire for esoteric knowledge, the pursuit of extreme pleasure, a sympathy for shady characters, and experience in dope dealing) into a career as a purveyor of amazing fruit—a career, it turns out, that serves those needs and talents very nicely.

Much of our time together was spent in the cramped cab of Bessie, as Karp calls his white Ford Ranger pickup truck, which became ever more cramped as it filled with fruit during our travels. Days began early and ended late, but Karp was never tired. "All I need is my morning fruit fix," he'd say cheerfully, offering me a slice of "exquisite" Snow Queen white nectarine from Reedley, California, as I blearily slid into the cab.

We stopped at farmers' markets and roadside stands along the way. Karp has been known to conduct stakeouts of certified farmers' markets that he suspects of being "cheaters" (farmers who buy fruit from wholesalers, remove the stickers, and sell it as their own); if he finds proof, he may publish the cheaters' names in the *L.A. Times*. We didn't catch any on our trip, but when Karp found people selling fruit that was inaccurately labelled he would instruct them on its true heritage. In one market, he found farmers from Vera Ranch, near Vallejo, selling plums called mirabelles, which, he explained to the woman behind the counter, weren't mirabelles but myrobalans. "These are much too large, totally out of season, and there is a tartness in the skin of mirabelles these don't have, and mira-

belles generally have a clingstone"—a pit that is attached to the flesh.

"Wow," said the woman. "You know your stuff."

In the truck, we talked of fruit constantly. Karp is especially passionate about stone fruit—apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, and cherries—and, because it was cherry and apricot season, we spent a lot of time on those fruits. We discussed the genealogy of different varieties, and the way the great varieties were described in the works of fruit literature that Karp most admires—chiefly, Robert Hogg's "The Fruit Manual: A Guide to the Fruits and Fruit Trees of Great Britain" (fifth edition, 1884) and Edward A. Bunyard's "The Anatomy of Dessert" (1929). Karp quoted, from memory, passages about the "melting" quality Bunyard prized; after a while, it was hard to tell when he was quoting and when he wasn't. "At its ripest, it is drunk rather than eaten," he'd say, referring to Coe's Golden Drop plum. Discussing the transparent gage, he pronounced, "A slight flush of red and then one looks into the depths of transparent amber as one looks into an opal, uncer-

## EYES

My most honorable eyes. You are not in the best shape.  
I receive from you an image less than sharp,  
And if a color, then it's dimmed.  
And you were a pack of royal hounds  
With whom I would set forth in the early morning.  
My wondrously quick eyes, you saw many things,  
Countries and cities. Islands and oceans.  
Together we greeted immense sunrises,  
When the fresh air invited us to run  
Along trails just dry from cold night dew.  
Now what you have seen is hidden inside  
And changed into memory or dreams.  
Slowly I move away from the fair of this world  
And I notice in myself a distaste  
For monkeyish dress, shrieks, and drumbeats.  
What a relief. Alone with my meditation  
On the basic similarity of humans  
And their tiny grain of dissimilarity.  
Without eyes, my gaze is fixed on one bright point  
That grows large and takes me in.

—Czesław Miłosz

(Translated, from the Polish, by the author,  
Carol Miłosz, and Renata Gorczyński.)

tain how far the eye can penetrate." If I got something wrong or forgot a point about fruit made in an earlier conversation, Karp was quick to correct me. By the end of five days of fruit talk in the fruitmobile, I was counting the minutes to the time I could say goodbye and not have to talk about fruit anymore.

I also watched Karp eat a lot of fruit. I saw him grazing in a cherry orchard with the farmer, who, after sampling cherries for half an hour, had to run for the bathroom. Craig Ledbetter, an apricot breeder with the Department of Agriculture, whom we met near Fresno, said, "David eats fruit that I wouldn't touch, and I eat a lot of fruit. Soft, half-rotten stuff on the ground—he has no problem putting that into his mouth."

On our first day, we drove down to Borrego Springs, in the hope of seeing the pitahaya planting. But Thomas Antel, the landowner, would let us view the plants only from across the road. Karp, clad in his pith helmet, attempted to extract information from Antel about the consortium's intentions. (When I asked later if the pith helmet was necessary, Karp said that he was always get-



ting clobbered by falling fruit, and that last year in Hawaii he had been struck on the head from the height of twenty feet by a durian—a delicious but terrible-smelling fruit familiar in Asia. “Without my helmet, that durian would have killed me,” he said.)

“So how are the plants doing?” Karp asked, taking out his notebook.

“It’s a learning experience,” David, a learning experience,” Antel said, looking nervously at the notes Karp was taking. “What can I tell you? I wish I could show you the plants, but there’s too much money involved to screw this up.” He rubbed his face hard with both hands, and his mood seemed to darken. “People feel a sense of entitlement, like they can just come down here and see what we’re doing.”

Karp was undaunted. “Where did the breeder get his breeding stock from?” he demanded. “Because they say there are some varieties that taste better than others.”

“They may be right, David, they may be right. Look, I can’t talk about this. There’s some very big players involved in this thing, and they don’t care who gets hurt—that’s just the way it is.”

The agricultural landscape in which the Fruit Detective travels is made up mostly of small organic fruit-growing operations—farms of mainly a hundred acres or less, many of which produce the older varieties of plums, apricots, peaches, and apples that were loved by generations of Americans before the coming of the harder but flavorless supermarket varieties. These farmers survive by looking for niches. A niche could be a classic variety of fruit that the big commercial growers don’t produce, such as the Blenheim apricot, which is, in the Fruit Detective’s opinion, one of the best-tasting fruits in the world. Or a niche could be a brief window of time in the growing season of a particular item when the commercial producers don’t have any fruit and the small farmer can name his price. But since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, in 1994, many of the larger growers of commodity fruits, such as tomatoes and mangoes, are finding that they can’t compete with the cheaper labor and production costs in Mexico, and so they are also looking for niches in order to survive.

“The marketing window keeps getting smaller and smaller,” said Andy

Mariani, who farms eighty acres, most of which are devoted to cherries—Black Republican and Rainier, among other varieties—in the Santa Clara Valley. “We used to have a window here between cherries from Stockton and cherries from Washington. First, it was a couple of weeks, then a couple of days. Now it’s almost nothing. The Stockton growers use sprays to retard the ripening process, so they can sell when the price is highest.” Mariani’s cherry harvest was in full swing on the day we visited, and, as a result of an abrupt downturn in cherry prices caused by the Stockton farmers, he had lost his “candy bar”—an expression sometimes used in the fruit world to describe a lucrative crop. “We just lost seventy-five thousand dollars in one day,” Mariani said. “I would have been better off in the stock market.”

Karp worships farmers like Mariani and, as a writer, takes every opportunity to promote their efforts. Eric Asimov said recently, “David is more like a wine writer than like a food writer. He brings that level of connoisseurship and obsessive attention to detail—the importance of the soil, the cultivation methods, and the growing region. Wine writers talk about the importance of *terroir*, or place; David is the first writer to bring that concept to fruit.” He added, “Grape growers make the cover of wine magazines, but you never read about the great peach or cherry growers, except in David’s pieces.”

Most food writing is about cooking—it’s less about the ingredients than about the rendering of those ingredients, and the consuming of them in communal settings. Karp is interested in the primal act of tasting—eating fruit right from the tree, vine, or bush. (“I’m not a foodie,” he says. “I’m a fruitie.”) His goal is sensual pleasure, but he has a rarefied idea of what fruit should taste like. The particular kind of taste he’s after is one that the nineteenth-century writers on

fruit described as “high flavor”—a fecund, almost gamy taste that, according to Karp, has been all but lost as fruits have been bred for mass production and long-distance shipping. “High flavor is the flavor of a pheasant, hung until high,” he said. “You bite into the fruit, you taste the sugar, the texture, the acidity, and there’s an almost overpowering aroma. That’s what fruit should taste like. But Americans don’t know that, because most of the fruit we eat is trash fruit.” A real peach, allowed to ripen on the tree, is too fragile to withstand the rigors of a cross-country journey by truck or train, and so breeders have created low-acid, high-sugar peaches, which can be picked when they’re still very hard but still taste sort of sweet.

We found the white apricots on a small farm in Brentwood, about an hour east of San Francisco. The farmer was Ross Sanborn, who is eighty-two years old. He wore faded denim overalls and had a full head of white hair and a face deeply browned from years in the sun. (“Hey, looks like you’re going on a safari!” he said when he saw Karp.) Sitting in the shade of his porch, Sanborn told us that he had been trying to breed white apricots for almost thirty years, working with plant material he obtained from Morocco and Iran in the nineteen-seventies. Finally, he said, he believed he had come up with what he’d hoped was “the perfect ’cot.” He called it an Angelcot.

After we had finished talking, we followed Sanborn out to the part of the orchard where the white apricots were growing. Karp went up to a tree, picked an Angelcot from it, and held it in the tips of his long fingers, caressing the velvety “pubescence,” which is the fruitie term for the fuzz. “There’s something so sensuous about apricots—of all the fruits, they are the most like a woman’s breast,” he said, denying himself the pleasure of tasting the fruit as long as he could. He unsheathed his fruit knife, neatly halved the ’cot, and examined the pit. Then he bent at the waist and brought the pitless half up to his mouth, inhaled, and bit. The fruit melted. The juice ran down his chin. A bite, then another bite, and all that remained of the apricot were the bits of flesh sticking to the Fruit Detective’s face. ♦

