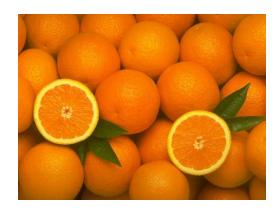
Luis Omar Salinas (1937–2008)

My Father Is a Simple Man

I walk to town with my father to buy a newspaper. He walks slower than I do so I must slow up. The street is filled with children. We argue about the price of pomegranates. I convince him it is the fruit of scholars. He has taken me on this journey and it's been lifelong. He's sure I'll be healthy so long as I eat more oranges, and tells me the orange has seeds and so is perpetual; and we too will come back like the orange trees. I ask him what he thinks about death and he says he will gladly face it when it comes but won't jump out in front of a car. I'd gladly give my life for this man with a sixth grade education, whose kindness and patience are true . . . The truth of it is, he's the scholar, and when the bitter-hard reality comes at me like a punishing evil stranger, I can always remember that here was a man who was a worker and provider, who learned the simple facts in life and lived by them, who held no pretense. And when he leaves without benefit of fanfare or applause I shall have learned what little there is about greatness.



from The Sadness of Days: Selected and New Poems. Houston: Arte Público, 1987. 141.