

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Each poem in this collection represents one of the seven chakras, the energy centers of the body. These poems reflect who I was, who I am, and who I hope to be. Together they strike a unique balance of beauty, sadness, and hope, and writing them was part of a spiritual and emotional cleansing process that I found incredibly liberating.

Beneath the Mango Tree

Cappy Spruance

I Muladhara/Root

I long to return to Cherry Cove
to trace a toe along the coast
and photograph glass wind chimes,
as if a picture could catch their lazy sound.
To chase a cat down cobbled steps
past broken clam shells picked apart by crows.
To sit in soft sand
cooled beneath thick madrona leaves
and stare into morning.
To kayak in the early fog
forgetting that the ocean breathes
until I'm run aground,
stuck in tide pools until the afternoon.
To sit upon the rocky shore
and stare out to the other side
a red canoe made double by glassy water
the dense green trees mirrored
until I see an endless forest
hidden from the world.

II Svadhisthana/Sacral

I let them beat me,
their words like clubs,
and bore the torment in silence.
When my own people could stand it no longer,
the whiplash of turning their cheeks
too painful to bear,
I stood before them
starving.
Days without bread cannot compare
to children without fathers
eyes without light
houses without inhabitants.
Everything I'd lived for
became another's death sentence.
Who first called me Mahatma?
Prayers grew louder.
"I know a way out of hell."
Riots stopped
then began again.
How do you ask a man
to sit in silence with
a line of rifle barrels
pointed at his heart?
And how do you live inside your own mind
knowing that he died
with your face in the back of his eyes?

III Manipura/Solar Plexus

She returned to geometric cityscapes
blindingly reflective
angular windows glinting in the heat
frustrated travelers pushing toward paychecks.
At night she'd climb in bed,
shut the windows,
and close her eyes
to see golden roads

mustard colored houses
 saffron tinted fabric
 curry stained rice
 and that little place
 between her stomach and her breast
 would light up,
 a lantern in the window.

In the morning, she smelled it.
 Curry again,
 and basil and dirt
 and that little light would warm and glow
 like a pool of melted butter,
 a tiger chasing its tail.
 If she shut her eyes,
 she could hear it past the subway platform,
 calling out from street markets
 men with pots of ghee and
 mangoes, fresh picked
 and the tiger ran faster
 melted quicker
 glowed brighter
 burst its from holy prison
 and spread across her insides
 until she became liquid sun.

IV Anahata/Heart

My love is poorly punctuated, misspelled,
 written on coffee-stained napkins
 from the diner down the street.
 It whispers in the nighttime,
 its silhouette hanging
 high in the perfumed air,
 muffled by musk.
 It waits by the window,
 one paw poking through the blinds,
 watching with yellow eyes.
 It's a carefully crafted mud pie

decorated with brown cherry pits and strawberry stems
 left on a doorstep.
 A post-it note shoved into a mailbox
 taped to a small flower
 "don't tell anyone."

My love is a lighter, flickering in the sticky air
 up in the nosebleeds
 while Stevie Nicks sings Gypsy and spins,
 sheer black shawl billowing.
 A white sand dollar,
 washed up on the beach
 where tourists stop to say it's beautiful
 but forget it died long ago.

A stack of letters you kept
 treasured
 but never replied to.
 A broken traffic light
 blinking erratic destruction.
 A mix tape
 unwound from years of repeated plays
 buried in a glove box
 forgotten.
 My love is a crow-beaked mask
 meant to drive the devil away
 but serving as a death sentence by mistake.

V Vishuddhi/Throat

Kaleidoscopes drop past my throat
 as pages rustle in the wind,
 and the words I speak reflect the sky.
 I become the breath in my ears,
 alive as the breathing earth,
 my head tipped to the shade.
 Hasn't it always been this way?
 Just this moment exists
 in this new world I've found
 so I'll bring it back with me

as if in a ship across the sea.
Soft eyes in the shadows
watch my expansion through the valley
and I stretch across the horizon.
Leaves rustle in the wind
singing the poetry of vibrations
and I am reborn.

VI Ajna/Third Eye

What figurines we are
propped on the mantle of the universe.
The boy is ignorance,
the girl is want
and we never grew up.
Oh, lonely chess pieces
engaged in a game of wits
controlled by the witless.
We cannot rest
we cannot stay
we cannot linger
anywhere
so we tie our jaws shut
and moan through the dark,
our broken spirits scouring the sky
for a sign of our significance.

VII Sahasrara/Crown

What if afterward is simply
solitary confinement?
And Krishna is no one
and the hope I've gathered
slips through the hole in my bucket
and nothing waits beneath the tree
but an abandoned flute
and squashed mangoes?
Maybe this is as good as it gets

and my midnight prayers are just
short cries into darkness
until we meet earth once again.
When all possibilities of later
cease to be,
and lotus eyes shut for eternity,
you forget – lemons have always been a fruit.

