

Shayla Hawkins



Manchineel

"The little green apples that fall from the large branches of the manchineel tree may look tempting, but they are poisonous to eat and toxic to the touch. Even taking shelter under the tree when it rains can give you blisters." — FROM FODOR'S CARIBBEAN TRAVEL GUIDE

I was so confident he lied
when he said he loved me,
I expected his teeth to crack
from the blasphemy,
his tongue to split and slither
like a serpent's.

But he was everything I thought I needed:
black, tall, strong.
So I ignored the thunderclouds in his eyes,
the lightning in his smile,
and ran to the hurricane
waiting in his arms.

I ignored my broken spirit,
the blisters on my heart that multiplied like maggots
whenever I touched him.
He was everything I thought I needed:
black, tall, strong.
So I ignored the paradox of his cruelty,
a poison that left me crying in
an empty burning desert.

