

Shayla Hawkins



The Mango Virgin

He stood outside Prince George Wharf
boasting the red, green, and yellow spheres
of his mangoes.

I walked apart from the crowd,
ignored merchant calls to buy souvenir shirts.
I carried no visible camera,
but, still, he knew I was a tourist.
Our eyes locked. He pointed at me.
“You,” he said, “Come here.”
I heard the whisper of chimes and Bahamian sea
in his voice. I obeyed.
“You never ate a mango, young mama?”
My tongue grew heavy in his presence.
I shook my head. His lips parted to a
gap-toothed smile.

“Such a shame,” he said. “You can do many
things with a mango.” He laughed. The sun
threw a slanted gleam over his kinky
salt-and-pepper beard. He lifted a knife from
his cart then joined the blade to a mango.
Its flesh yielded a soft hiss as it shaped itself
to the knife’s rhythm, its juices spilling,
running down the man’s arm.

When he finished, the mango slice lay luxuriantly
atop the knife, both bodies glistening
with the sun’s brilliance. He clasped the fruit with his
dark brown fingers and held it to my mouth.
“Eat,” he coaxed. “You be a mango virgin no more.”

The fruit slipped over my lips. I chewed,
sweetness bathing my tongue and teeth like water.
I reached into my purse to pay, but he stopped me.
“No charge, m'lady. When you learn the mango's secrets,
you come back to see me.” He smiled again then winked.

I walked away.
The sidewalks changed to clouds,
the human throngs
blurred to forests.
I brought the mango to my mouth
and sucked it softly.
I felt like the first woman
as I wandered on,
tasting God's tongue,
moving towards a secret,
coming into the rest of my life.

