

*Shayla Hawkins*



## The Mango Virgin

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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.”

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Calabash

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.

