

Half a Lotus

by Meg Tuite

This girl is a godless godhead. She lives in India and follows a trail that her words make. She spreads a gospel that no one says no to. Attempt to disagree and she stretches the smirk of the all-knowing, continues preaching. Her language is old and reeks of the Bhagavad-Gita. She quotes an ancient legend that is untraceable. She wanders over a land that encompasses nothing of a past she embodies like a country.

She steals 100 wallets and three leather jackets from a leather shop in less time than it takes to sew up a loose button or say nine times, "a stitch in time saves nine." She can cart off an espresso machine and a juicer from a kitchen shop faster than it takes a shop owner to look right through her.

An Ayurvedic astrologer tells her that she is a child of India. Is a girl born in Indiana a mistake of just two letters on a Scrabble board?

Businesses she owned went bankrupt. She saved an old woman from the blackness of memory and loneliness. Loans were not repaid and partners were shafted. A lien may have been put on her property when she got on the plane. That is the karma of those left behind. She moves forward and there is not a wisp of her when she looks back.

She can do half a lotus, cry for hours through a night that whispers of capitalism and exile. Her swollen eyes speak of days of silent sobbing, but the families she lives with believe she is up all night meditating. She can walk to the market and back without shoes.

She grew up playing football. She wore torn up sneakers and told people to "Fuck off!" She was born on land that corn was familiar with. She did every drug she could get her hands on. This was the

godless godhead. A place where no bad thoughts troubled to grow. A voidless history of mushrooms, LSD and getting laid.

Bad haircuts and sweatpants are replaced with saris and silk wrapped around her head. She steals trinkets now and again to keep in practice. She can hold someone's captive attention for two hours before they start to glaze over. Her visa allows her to stay in India for five more years. There are no expectations of a white face with blackened feet.

She used to hear the word "crazy" and laughed. The world of Prozac was mocking her? She detects far deeper voices rasping from the mouths of infants in India. She only has to listen to them calling to know which dirt she stands on.

Most of her life she was married to hatred. Boils were lanced off her back. A man was smacked in the face more than once for saying something intolerable. Now, she lets the boils come and go. When she fights with a family, she just moves on. This is a land of empty bowls and open doors.

People speak of family in India and ask about her's. Her mother died and she has a daughter. She held her mother's dead body. She bathed her mother in tap water in Indiana, dressed her in lavender and chartreuse.

In India she walked around for a week covered in her mother's ashes and then bathed in the Ganges like the holy ones.

Every night when she rocks and cries, her daughter sleeps in someone else's arms in the land of opportunity that betrayed her. She is business savvy, spends hours each day with storekeepers telling them how to bring in more money to their shops and cafes. One of them always hires her for a meal or two a day. Her needs are few now. The shopkeeper believes he can't live without her, until one

day he discovers he can't live with her.

She storms out of each town with dirty feet, a necklace or some silk fabric stuffed down the front of her sari and a mantra of piece and prosperity on her lips. There are other towns and other words to fill up those vast cavities of loss.

