

Almond

by Mercedes Abraham

In my mind's eye there is an almond lying crossways below the head and the heart lines on the roadmap of my life. Its pressure against my palm casts soft shadows as if its deliciousness permeates immediacy.

Inner vision trains focus, preceding definition.

Hailing meaningful reflections:

Almonds of childhood — fending off needless tears and chocolate impulses, almonds of my teens, slivered and toasted industrially baked settling in on egg washed croissant...mashed into the kitchen sink of the catch-all bear claw, then the taste and shiver of amaretto liquor as a young adult.

A treasured memory of the blending of ylang-ylang and sandalwood oils with an almond base in massage school, leading into a rancid smell of neglect and regret of expense wasted as that same mixture gathered dust in passing years.

And then there was Bijan.

Bijan has long since disappeared from my life. A majestic and proud black sheep of a Turkish family...was living all the way in America. Solitary and stoic, he once made a trip across 3000 miles of desert and mountain for a destined meeting with me. It was his one trek across and I followed his travels through stories told into payphones to his friend along the way. That was how we met.

Stories of bus glass and silicone sealant; towers of stacks all glued and illuminated by sunlight streaming in through the windows preceded his arrival. Sated and patient Bijan matched his description upon introduction.

Without thought of unknowns...all confident and stuff like the world traveling grown-up that he was, he saw me as I was. I knew everything back then, nodding knowingly making assuming sounds to indicate comfort and wisdom. Bijan humored me patiently without turning away.

Years later, having transplanted to my City of Light...Bijan found me. I trekked to his tiny abode. Stacked towers of freshly dusted siliconed bus glass pillars refracted ice blue light and tiny geometrics with their rough edges...the smells of homemade pasta sauce permeated his place.

We truly enjoyed ourselves. He was still older and wiser than me. We cooked and speculated...dialogue wove our focus and intent. A meal then shared in reverent silence.

And then he produced an almond.

He said that his father each night had ritualized the almond. He first washed his hands up to the elbows, brushed his teeth, washed his face...cleaned his fingernails. If he had congestion, he'd clear his nose of that by inhaling water from the crook of his flattened thumbs up fist. Bijan demonstrated by making a fist and turning the thumb towards the ceiling and dropping the thumb knuckle. The hollow was for the water. The personal preparation completed, the bowl which soaked the almond was prepared.

A prayer said into the reflection of the water at its base...for clarity, was quietly contemplated. A cloth, colorless muslin, lay flat to soak the water and finally the almond itself enfolded to soften its husk over night.

Upon awakening, the almond was peeled and laid gently upon the tongue to be contemplated then ingested. In gratitude and with an open heart and mind Bijan's father rejoiced in receiving the nourishment of Almond into his body. A new beginning each time with the strength of a tree each day...rooted and kissed by the sun, honored as a gestating seed and invited as a permeating entity to proceed as One with the current of life.

I was awestruck with this beautiful teaching which touched my soul.

It was an exit for me in knowing and an opening to receiving.

The almond rolled into many things seeds clarity and recall: memory.

