

Voices

Naomi Shihab Nye

I will never taste cantaloupe
without tasting the summers
you peeled for me and placed
face-up on my china breakfast plate.

You wore tightly laced shoes
and smelled like the roses in your yard.
I buried my face in you
soft petaled cheek.

How could I know you carried
a deep well of tears?
I thought grandmas were as calm
as their stoves.
How could I know your voice
had been pushed down hard inside you
like a plug?

You stood back in a crowd.
But your garden flourished and answered
your hands. Sometimes I think of the land
you loved, gone to seed now,
gone to someone else's name,
and I want to walk among silent women
scattering light. Like a debt I owe
my grandma. To lift whatever cloud it is
made them believe speaking is for others.
As once we removed treasures from your
sock drawer and held them one-by-one,
ocean shell, Chinese button, against the sky.