

MONA MEHAS

# QUESTIONS I DIDN'T

# KNOW I'D ASKED

POETRY INSPIRED BY

TAROT AND ORACLE



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Mona Mehas

LJMcD Communications

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## **The Queen of Tea**

When tea is gone, I read the leaves  
left behind in your cup  
looking for signs of your future  
it makes no difference what kind you drink  
the leaves tell me your story  
I am the Queen of Tea.

Herbal tea carries a subtle air of  
rose, chrysanthemum, lavender  
roibos identifies your wisdom  
I'm charged, traipsing your crooked path  
following into your psyche  
with ridges less defined.

I gather my robes about my shoulders  
my faithful dog at my side  
her smooth black head rests on my lap  
sipping my cup of white peony  
I gaze at leaves of green China tea  
visions of water at my feet.

As the Queen of Tea, I render service  
to those who need my sacrifice  
you sit, your questions answered  
my eyes look inward to your soul  
all I ask is blueberry essence  
with honey stirred into my cup.

I stay exhausted, deep in my thoughts  
you leave satisfied, your heart filled  
I rinse away your tea leaves  
to prepare for more offerings  
Lapsang Souchong in my cup  
I am The Queen of Tea.



## **Fascinator**

Under my crocheted fascinator  
of lace-trimmed diamonds dancing in stars  
the tight weave I made hiding old scars  
bringing comfort and warmth to my core

onlookers wonder when they see  
under my crocheted fascinator  
through my blue eyes, the ocean's shore  
sandcastles unearthing secret keys

My mouth opens; language is garbled  
stories untold of family lore  
under my crocheted fascinator  
there comes a song from yellow warblers

Into my ears, they trill and quaver  
fluttering wings in quick harmony  
their breath on my face drips like honey  
under my crocheted fascinator

### **Three Wands**

Three wands found on a forest floor  
In faith restore my love for thee  
and newfound glee

Wands change pallor of my skin  
Color within, leap forth in joy  
their wiles employ

Forest ensemble sings refrain  
Happiness reigns, give thanks to Earth  
for my rebirth

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## **Cobra and Elephant**

Dancing Cobra visited me today, surrounded by his children. They flaked from his skin as pieces of himself. He bowed his broad head and gazed inward from his brain to his navel, creating an open space as if a surgeon had made a precise incision but forgot to close. In that chasm grew the most gentle eye I'd ever seen, deep blue and heavy-lidded. The Elephant gazed at me with love and wonder, her wrinkles deep set with wisdom. She revealed generations through her eye, old struggles, and more to come. Energy beams bounced off her, pulling the Cobra children to her breast. I hungered to be among them. Before Elephant closed her eye, before Cobra reared his head, I climbed into the portal. Their combined energy was sublime and swallowed the world.

## **Drowning**

Drowning in my knowledge of not knowing  
Lifeboat, a false rescue, takes me under  
Trapped by ignorance, last breath escaping  
Tides control the boat, rising and falling.

I balloon, sick, just below surface  
Drowning in my knowledge of not knowing  
Hair fronds mix with seaweed beneath the waves  
My hand breaks through the scum, reaching empty.

Gulls land on my arm; they kiss my fingers  
Waves crash the boat, pulling it asunder  
Drowning in my knowledge of not knowing  
Losing hope, great resistance gulping air.

Heaving with great effort, I land the boat  
My stomach jerks as tides chase the sunset  
Gulls surround me and feed me mackerel  
Drowning in my knowledge of not knowing.

## **Ancient Connections**

Root me deep into the earth  
earth so brown my skin absorbs  
absorbed through feet to my legs  
legs bent under for support.

My belly as a pregnant bulb  
bulbing round with nourishment  
nourishing new life above  
above my twisting chest.

Manna creeping from my breasts  
breasts of growing wonder  
wonderful shades of teal and red  
red steadily climbing.

My arms lengthen, join my hair  
hair forming a mighty trunk  
trunk to carry my offspring  
offspring branching outward.

I birth the ancient connections  
connections most people never know  
new connections, the ultimate lives  
life I choose this time around.

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*Thinning the Veil: Honoring Our Ancestors.*

## **From the Depths**

In my dark, deep underbelly, where I've not yet begun to explore, quakes swell and rumble in the fight to unleash well-hidden secrets. From the depths, a ship rises through the murky haze; it breaks the surface with a whimper, the source of all my life's clamor. So profoundly buried, it lifts slowly, my chest expands with hope, and the sails take root in my lungs. From the depths of wondering, the ship answers questions I didn't know I'd asked of loneliness and need and others still unformed, unknown before now. As it passes through my heart, the ship brings longing and cries from ancestors. When it reaches my brain, I am complete; great sails open, they catch the wind, my mind an ocean to serve the ship. I've never known such happiness; my joy is too perfect. My crown opens to the blinding sun in all its glory; the sails lift – it's gone.

A wise person said rest is a verb. I knew on a deeper level that I existed of pure rest, but I never understood the wanderlust inside me, why I was never content in one place. The day the ship rose from the depths and passed through my heart, I understood the longing. I experienced the emptiness when it left through my crown, taking a piece of my soul. I was suddenly overwhelmed with the need to feel sand between my toes. Tomorrow, when I'm fresh, I'll remember quiet evenings with clear eyes; I'll live my truth on the page. For now, I anxiously await the return of the great ship, bearing my core being over the horizon.

## **Shadow Soul**

I am but a shadow of my soul  
eyes closed against dangers hidden deep  
wire ensnares my dreams for safety, keep  
unwanted thoughts under my control

On the outside, I appear peaceful  
I am but a shadow of my soul  
presentation to fulfill my role  
grit my teeth, the cage tightens and pulls

breathe deeply stale air, stay locked away  
push enraptured mind to become whole  
I am but a shadow of my soul  
break free my entrapment of decay

An open mind my ultimate goal  
purple flower blossom to the sky  
burst open the cage, one more forceful try  
I am but a shadow of my soul



## **Embrace**

I live in constant embrace, arms around  
around myself in fear of losing  
losing the me I'm embracing  
embracing without conscious choosing

I've managed to hide from her so long  
long enough to almost forget  
forget that I'm a part of her  
her heartbeats echoing my debt

We are the same, this ghost and I  
I called her forth when I was weak  
weak enough to acknowledge need  
need she filled with her mystique

I draw her closer in my embrace  
embrace forever, step out of shame  
shame in myself, my foolish pride  
pride of our strength, one woman aflame

## Left Hand of Fortune

Nomad ancestors danced my life  
their flames spit yellow and orange  
skirts swayed with sounds of violins  
hand-carved in rosewood, rich with soul  
tambourines sang along in time  
itchy left hand, money to come

move onto ships, speed silently.  
Nomad ancestors danced my life  
silver giants cross darkened space  
collecting precious passengers  
horses extinct for centuries  
protection from becoming food

rhinos with their horns of silver  
hippos torn from watery homes.  
Nomad ancestors danced my life  
new generations wandering  
other worlds, their nomads long dead  
scratching our palms, we hear their call

hippos' broad noses smell water  
laced greens and mud, cross galaxies  
they tell us where they want to go.  
Nomad ancestors danced my life  
saving them is our life's journey  
our nomad Hippos quell the itch

left hand of fortune leads us on  
horns of rhinos glow their magic  
seeking new home in need of light  
they feel the itch, choose where to go.  
Nomad ancestors danced my life  
in rearview, planet is aglow

gentle horses extend their wings  
listen closely for calls of help  
they fly one by one through bay doors  
rescue horses to worlds unknown  
alone on ships, we scratch our palms.  
Nomad ancestors danced my life

## **Demonized**

I have a chain around my neck  
it occurred naturally from chasing my tail  
sadness to madness  
I began to strangle myself  
I'm locked inside a cage of my own making  
notched ears like a feral cat  
I'm my own third eye  
pain and grief are the demons that live hidden  
swallowed, bundled inside  
I'm losing myself in that place in my brain  
that seeks the opaque  
I'm demonizing my psyche  
my eyes are craters  
sunken so deep above my cheekbones  
space leaks through from the other side  
my inner being fights to emerge anew  
I spread my wispy wings  
leave my empty shell behind  
one step to break through the chain  
and fly away, forever roam  
the lonely night

## Seasoning

Nothing and absolute exist in change  
Round, fertile Earth nurtures yellow dragons  
their brown pentacles stabilize the soil  
Sweet, white Mercury ignites in center  
she grows Northward from Autumn, dry to green

her passion cleanses cold blue metal cups  
Nothing and absolute exist in change  
Tortoise undulates through salty Water  
Saturn sends healing emotions to Mars  
Righteous white tiger yearns for West Winter.

Our Spirit is the bridge between seasons  
where security must begin and end  
Nothing and absolute exist in change  
Goat fuels our fire, Wood separates the Earth  
nine red carnations, purple primroses.

Swords in the East communicate wisdom  
Azure dragons behind yellow Spring flight  
their sour breath blooming toward kindness  
Nothing and absolute exist in change  
Green rectangles in Venus soar through Wind.

Angular Jupiter on Fire down South  
Summer passion drives the Vermillion birds  
Wands poised with bitter enthusiasm  
purified in heat; create, or destroy  
Nothing and absolute exist in change.

## **The Dark Parts**

The bleak cards in my oracle deck  
bothered me, my mind closed to truth.  
Dark parts in my CT scan  
immersed me in deep fears.  
Shrouds of doubt gave way,  
reality  
made me see  
hidden  
shade.

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***untitled tanka***

Grief pools in my heart  
like a poison I can't purge  
sadness trapped in blue  
Overwhelmed, I struggle to  
temper the darkness within.

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## **Spinning Death into Life**

There is only one experience  
we clamor to avoid but lose the  
battle, no matter the strength of our  
armor, or purity our goals, or  
under whose banner we choose to fight.  
Their legs curl underneath when they die,

trampled beneath our faithful steed's feet.

There is only one experience  
like it or not we share the same fate  
fast in our stirrups holding them down  
more alive on their knees, skin splits, turn  
belly up to molt, crawl out anew.

Wander away, quench our thirst, our heart  
shines like a star in need of healing,

There is only one experience  
Naked, we dip our feet, rivulets  
circle outward searching for meaning,  
taste with scopulae, spread empty web.

A song in our ears trilling upward  
trees bear fruit on faraway hillsides  
white noise, green stars encircle the sun

There is only one experience  
Our empty vessel gives back to earth  
patiently spinning silk from our soul.



Adoration must lead to downfall  
crown of glory cuts into our brain  
our filth becomes the cage we call home  
muddy cloak the last warmth we will know  
There is only one experience  
boredom, loneliness our enemies.

I'll not die spinning my web alone  
Share a cup of laughter with a friend  
under outstretched arms, broker new peace  
weave histories together, embrace  
generations across verdant fields  
There is only one experience.

## **World Inside Her Belly**

She held the world inside her belly  
sparkling crystals, dancing rubies  
Lovers brought her roses and lilies  
and declarations of her beauty.

Sparkling crystals, dancing rubies  
did not protect her from the struggle  
With declarations of her beauty  
in cries for war, she would not buckle.

Without protection from the struggle  
she rose to face the consequences  
In cries for war, she would not buckle  
honor and nature her defenses.

She rose to face the consequences  
doves and crows around her head  
Honor and nature her defenses  
her long wait over, jewels she shed.

Doves and crows around her head  
wings grew closer with each swoop  
Her long wait over, jewels she shed  
protection from oncoming coup.

Wings grew closer with each swoop  
she continued birthing jewels  
Protection from oncoming coup  
birds sang of peace and world renewal.

She continued birthing jewels  
lovers brought her roses and lilies  
birds sang of peace and world renewal  
She held the world inside her belly.

## **The Ferryman**

Across the river, he ferried them; what they ran from,  
he knew  
women draped in shawls the color of sunset, children  
sad and dirty  
bent men, their days of battle behind them, swords  
limp at their sides.  
Young warriors in armor came aboard to stock his  
weapons.

In silence, the ferryman pushed on, leaving the  
broken shore behind  
littered with dead bodies, vultures soaring in the sky  
above.  
Bottomless, the river they crossed could devour the  
travelers  
but the ferryman entreated her to buoy them gently.

He carried swords onboard though they never saw  
battle  
they gleamed in the sun and kept the float steady  
retired fighters' strong hands caressed them with  
longing  
children stared in wonder at the massive hilts.

Flashes of light appeared on the river, reflecting off  
the blades  
from the opposite shore came messages of welcome  
another day's work, the ferryman rested under the  
stars  
his bed, the ferry, the river rocking him to sleep.

## **Here Again**

Emerging from the darkness of multiple lives into the latest interpretation of lightness, I'm here again. The warm womb-cave where I sleep between lives allowed blue sky to break my slumber, birdsong to wake my ears. A sapling at the entrance grows tall enough to reach the sunlight dappling through overhanging branches. Multiple lives behind me, the original authentic self is overshadowed by subsequent incarnations, each impacting the next. Images of other times, other lives flash before me, memories guide me into this new existence. I am a dance, a collaboration of poetry over time. Like the young tree reaching for the sun's warmth, I'm connected to everything around me, influenced by my elders. I am an elder. I am universal and self-absorbed. I'll conjure my own image for a new self, authentic to the moment.

## **The Gods of Coin-Toss**

Hope for the future, come out alive  
razor-sharp, gleaming, two swords are crossed  
hilts gripped in choices, powered by drive  
enter fight blind, no matter the cost.

Sound choices made, our riches gain strength  
hope for the future, come out alive  
accomplish this; we go to great lengths  
we are much loved; for grandeur, we strive.

Battle for top billing, cheat, connive  
our elders starve; our children, beggars  
hope for the future, come out alive  
hefty price for our blatant errors.

What have we gained for our heavy loss?  
What magic taught us how to survive?  
Our fate left to the Gods of Coin-Toss,  
Hope for the future, come out alive.

## **Hunger**

Her hunger infinite as the absent moon  
need burns within like blazing wildfire  
to quench the thirst demanding blood  
without sacrifice to darkness

Need burns within like blazing wildfire  
cut deep the sword crowned with gold  
without sacrifice to darkness  
clenched fist straining into gray

Cut deep the sword crowned with gold  
cloud of unfathom knowing  
clenched fist straining into gray  
nerve endings hidden, sight unseen

Cloud of unfathom knowing  
pinpricks of pain the facets reach  
nerve endings hidden, sight unseen  
make themselves known in screams of day

Pinpricks of pain the facets reach  
red hot pokers flash deeper yet  
make themselves known in screams of day  
peace-makers in guise of cortisone

Red hot pokers flash deeper yet  
reign in whispers of relief  
peace-makers in guise of cortisone  
false freedom at her fingertips

Reign in whispers of relief  
wrap around the throat, unleashed  
false freedom at her fingertips  
provides the poison to deceive

Wrap around the throat, unleashed  
starvation amok, death by thirst  
provides the poison to deceive  
Her hunger infinite as the absent moon



## **Death's Invitation**

Beneath the moon, full and bright  
My sad diary is read aloud  
I'm welcomed to my deep, dark night

Waiting in bushes since twilight  
Nostalgic memories pluck my heart  
Beneath the moon, full and bright

Brain contorts, it tries to fight  
Leaving beauty, but when I reach  
I'm welcomed to my deep, dark night

Complacent, placid, content with plight  
My tired eyes close with heavy lids  
Beneath the moon, full and bright

Wings sprout, I await my flight  
My breath is quick; short and shallow  
I'm welcomed to my deep, dark night

Sky's a-sparkle, stars delight!  
Weightless, my pain disappears  
Beneath the moon, full and bright  
I'm welcomed to my deep, dark night!

## **Exhaustion**

Sometimes I get so tired, it's all I can do to stay upright. I push on because that's what is required of me. My feet are lead, my eyes, sand. People offer guidance or support, but I turn them away; I want no one around me when this happens. They don't understand I need solitude to discover my own path through the rigors of life. I wonder what it would be like to have no demands. Would it be different? Would I feel less a person? Or would freedom lighten me and give me wings? Would I sprout leaves and flowers for butterflies to alight? When I take these tangents, I lose track of what's in front of me. Crawling in search of the task at hand wears me down; I need a reset. To lie on a forest floor, pines above me, dropping needles on my face, is sublime. The sky above changes into a myriad of colors, like a stained glass window. I sleep, but in my dream, I'm laughing, jumping from one color to the next.

## **Deep Beneath the Surface**

Buried deep beneath the surface, a bud  
is molded by the hands of an elder  
spindly roots reaching downward absorbing  
nutrients to feed the newborn flower.

The elder works the rootstock embedded  
buried deep beneath the surface, a bud  
begins to take shape and through osmosis  
learns what a bud needs to know about life.

Lessons cover how to crack the topsoil  
when compacted and dry from lack of rain  
Buried deep beneath the surface, a bud  
is boosted in the arms of the elder.

On the day the bud peeks out, the bright sun  
both hails and repels the baby flower  
alone now, the elder's attention turned  
Buried deep beneath the surface, a bud.

## **Emperor, Gatekeeper**

Emperor, father, gatekeeper, rule maker  
He was there for you, the children he loved  
Who was there for the ones he left behind?

For reasons only known to their mothers  
the other children were hidden away  
so he could not influence their lives.

Many spent years searching the world  
for missing connections in their family tree  
only to end up alone and broken-hearted.

Information gathered caused doubts to root  
and walls to form with questions unanswered  
some went mad and died alone.

The prodigal son came bearing his burden  
turned out long ago by the one he hoped to impress  
the castle was warm inside but cold to his touch.

He stopped just short and rested his weight  
his eyes downcast, his soul weary  
proof of parentage buried deep in his blood.

Like magic, he appeared with pride to his father  
true blood in his veins, but the son changed his heart  
turned away from hard eyes, quick on his feet.

Be always ready to watch for dangers invading  
the idyllic peace you have built for yourself  
may tumble if ugly truths are allowed to surface.

The devil awaits beyond the great door  
if you dare to face him ill-prepared or unlucky  
Beware the teeth of your ancestors.

## **Emperors and Swords**

I knew nothing of a father except those of others  
no words of wisdom imparted with love  
the only action I've been held to  
was the chatter inside my mind.

Some childhood friends had benevolent fathers  
TV dads always brought home money  
I've survived with rules I made  
good or bad, they were my own.

Some dads built elaborate cages for children  
punished severely when rules were broken  
My cage was of my own making  
relying on my inner voices.

I banned the Emperor, flipped the cards long ago  
no need for him when I could heal myself  
I left his presence, walked into mine  
opened the cage, finally free.

## Escape

Cogs of my imagination hold me, keep me deep inside the blue. I try to escape; my tendrils reach like bubbles. Tentative machinations form loops, expressing my existence in a maze. My inner workings of wires, veins, and vertebra pretend to be molecules. My throat screams darkness, my eyes form rapids. Paths I begin lead nowhere, returning after each false attempt to plan my next venture. Upward is a cruel trick with trappings of infinity and hardness. My cells fracture, forward encasement thickens, my resolve undaunted. Surrounded in blue, the turnpikes of ventricles lead me down a secret twisted ladder. Climbing a spiral staircase, I find a key. My mind opens, humanity flows through my lungs. Freshness fills me as I slide down a hook on slippery wings. Wrapped in stillness, redemption awakens me. I ride a wispy feather, leaving my old shell in the prison of blue.

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## **I Drew the Death Card**

I drew the Death Card  
Of ghostly ghastly supernatural significance  
Cherry-chocolate, lemon-lime  
Flavors your choice, take your time  
Time stands still  
Shuffle the cards, draw down Death  
No escape, your Death awaits.

Make a new beginning  
Discretely discard moth-eaten memories  
Old-fashioned outfits, lousy lovers  
Pitch them all, slowly recover  
Time to shine  
Your new day is around the corner  
Turn it into your new conclusion.

Death is both old and new  
A beginning butterfly, our due demise  
Gaping gasp or hopeful heartbeat  
The one part of life we cannot cheat  
Is this when?  
If the future knowing is so important  
Then why did we have yesterday?

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## **Wings Within My Heart**

No body shall contain my soul  
nor coffin in the cold, dark ground  
I will escape, my spirit, whole  
my dreams come true in flight, unbound

Wings within my heart have opened  
they carry me through blissful sky  
moon and sun, beside me, motion  
affirmation, we do not die

All ye mourners at my bedside  
shed no more tears for me today  
cast your gaze upward, see clear-eyed  
my soul among the clouds at play

## **Biography**

*Mona Mehas (she/her) writes about growing up poor, accumulating grief, and the climate from the perspective of a retired, disabled teacher in Indiana, USA. Her work has been published in over forty journals, anthologies, and online museums. Mona is a Trekkie and enjoys watching Star Trek shows and movies in chronological order. She is busy with her second chapbook and a novel. Follow on Twitter @Patienc77732097 and linktr.ee/monaiiv*

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