

Where To Now?

by Mark Nepo

The selected poems below are from Mark Nepo's book: *The Way Under The Way: The Place of True Meeting* (Sounds True):

INSEPARABLE BY MARK NEPO

A small voice swept through the hole
in my heart, right there in the middle
of a day filled with the sweetness of
things outlasting our mistakes.

The voice led me to a thatch of
berries I had to eat, though the berries
were nested in a ring of thorns.

But this was the only food that
would heal. And everything I'd been
through, every path I'd tried, every love
I'd lost, every friendship I'd held onto like
a handle in a fire, every certainty that had
crumbled into doubt—all of it said,
"This is the only food."

The small voice whispered, "There
is no other way but to bury your face and
eat of these berries. Of course, you'll
scratch your cheeks. Of course, you'll
bleed. But this is life."

The berries nested in the thorns.
Inseparable as love nested in loss.
As peace nested in trouble.

Like God, waiting as a berry
to be eaten, all tangled
in the thorns.

WHERE TO NOW?

Now that I've come out of hiding,

my fears are forgetting to be afraid.

Now that I've dropped my opinions
in the rain, my story is too small
to cover my heart.

Now that I've put down what I thought
was important, I'm surprised by angels
lost along the way.

How we got here doesn't matter
and where we're going is just
something for the mind to chew.

I'll meet you here, in the palace
that difficulty opens—the magical
doorway, the shape of who we are.

UNDERSTANDING LEAVES

The leaves do what we can't.
They wait their whole lives.

At first they dream of air
and wait to slip from wood.

Then they dream of openness
and wait to stretch in light.

Then they dream of thirst
and wait to soften in the rain.

At last they dream of nothing
and simply unfurl.

Photosynthesis is how this waiting
is described in the physical world.

The mystery of waiting is what
turns light into food.

To wait beyond what we think
we can bear is how things
within turn sweet.

Mark Nepo is the author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *The Book of Awakening*. Beloved as a poet, teacher, and storyteller, Mark's recent work includes, *The One Life We're Given* (Atria, July 2016), *Inside the Miracle* (Sounds True, November 2015), and his

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