

Japanese Garden, Manito Park
 Our future would not be revealed
 in a fortune cookie. We sculpted
 our own fate like a bonsai tree.
 Atop a wooden, arched bridge
 you took a photo of me, standing quiet
 and still as the pond below us.
 I adored the simple beauty of pink lotus,
 floating gently in calm water.
 Talkative and analytical, you admired
 the architecture of the bridge,
 tracing the arches and intricate design.
 We were yin and yang, complimenting
 the other all these years; a Japanese
 garden to revisit again and again.

Rose Hill
 After 16 years, the roses remain.
 Do you remember the pebbled path
 that led us back to where we began;
 a casual stroll, mindful of stray thorns.
 One of your friends married at Rose Hill
 only to divorce one year later. All those
 roses gathered around could not perfume
 a sweet romance gone sour. Even a lone
 sun dial couldn't turn back time to bliss.
 If we ever return, we'll walk the same
 pebbled path; tracing our steps in youth,
 every moment together a blooming rose.

Pacific Northwest, The First Chapter
 Winter of 1989
 I arrived in Spokane
 carrying a duffel bag,
 a backpack, and diaries
 of my travels;
 the heat of Mississippi
 faded like a lost memory
 into snow covered sidewalks
 punctured with footsteps
 and childhood dreams.
 A forest of pines welcomed me,
 beckoning to come and explore;
 the Pacific Northwest
 would become my next story
 and I was in no hurry
 to finish the first chapter.

Inland Empire, Two Ways
 San Jacinto, California,
 is a desert rose
 slowly wilting under the heat
 of an overbearing sun.
 Streets lined with magnolia
 and orange trees from Seville
 bear the scent of beaten down,
 leaving a trail of decay.
 Spokane, Washington,
 is a blue lilac
 abundantly blooming beneath chill
 of the pacific northwest's breath.
 Pine and apple trees congregate
 in the background
 of an evergreen city
 dispersing drops of possibility.

The Lilac City

calls us to come home.
 After 16 years of enchantment,
 the street names have blurred,
 the lilacs have long since faded;
 their large petals no longer emit
 the heady fragrance I remember.
 We left behind all that we adored;
 our vintage apartment—San Marcos,
 exquisite South Hill, Riverfront
 Park's clock tower, the Flour Mill,
 the Spokane River, Riverview Thai,
 pine trees, our petite flower garden,
 everything precious...gone in the blink
 of yesterday's eyes. Wake me up
 when the lilacs bloom. Our bags
 have already been packed.

The Lilac City



Sandy Benitez

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WWW.ORIGAMIPOEMS.COM
 origamipoems@gmail.com

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