**Soft & Sovereign**

Poems on Life, Love & Becoming

by Jamila Gomez

# Dedication

For every Black woman
who’s ever been told
to be strong
when she just wanted to be soft.
For the ones learning to choose ease,
joy,
and themselves
every single day.
This is for you.

# Author’s Note

I wrote this book because I was tired.
Tired of carrying everything.
Tired of shrinking myself to fit expectations.
Tired of pretending that being 'strong' didn’t come at a cost.

This collection is a love letter to softness —
to the process of unlearning survival mode
and choosing to live, really live, in the lightness of joy, ease, love, and freedom.

These poems were written in the quiet moments,
between heartbreak and healing,
between grind and rest,
between who I was
and who I’m still becoming.

If you see yourself in these pages,
know this:
you are allowed to choose yourself.
You are allowed to rest.
You are allowed to live soft
and still be powerful.

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# SECTION 1 – The Weight & The Wonder

This section is about what it means to carry everything and still find beauty.
It’s about the weight of being a Black woman in this world — the expectations, the labor, the inherited exhaustion — and the quiet wonder that blooms anyway.
We’ve always made something out of nothing.
This is where that story begins.

## The First Soft Thing I Ever Touched

before the world told me
to armor up,
before survival
had sharp edges —
there was the cotton of my grandmother’s slip
hanging on the line,
the fat fingers of okra in her garden,
the way her voice
softened when she called me baby.

there was softness
once.
i touched it
before it slipped away.

## On Being the Backbone and the Broken

they never tell you
the one holding everything
is usually the one
crumbling quietly
when no one’s looking.

i learned early
how to smile through heaviness,
how to laugh with my teeth
even when my chest
was caving in.

they call you strong.
but strong
is just another word
for lonely.

## What My Mother Never Said Out Loud

she never warned me
life would chew me up.

but her eyes told me.
her body told me.
the kitchen full of thankless work
told me.

i watched her
become what the world demanded
and promised myself
i never would.

## Kitchen Prayers

the women in my family
pray over cutting boards,
between pots and pans,
whisper amen
into bubbling pots.

they don’t ask for much —
just enough.
protection.
for their babies
to come home safe.

the smell of garlic,
the scrape of a knife —
this is how we pray.

## The Sound of Black Girl Laughter

it’s the sound
of freedom
on borrowed time.

a sound
that cracks open the air,
makes room
where there wasn’t any.

black girl laughter
is not small.
it’s survival,
set to music.

## Inherited Tiredness

my mother was tired.
my grandmother too.

not the kind of tired
sleep fixes,
but the kind
stitched into your bones.

i was born
already carrying it.

now,
i’m learning
how to set it down.

## A Poem About My Skin That Isn’t About Survival

my skin
is not a battlefield.

not a cautionary tale.
not a hashtag.

today,
it’s just skin —
warm, soft,
bathed in light.

that is enough.

## The Girls Who Taught Me How to Live

they taught me
how to laugh
with my whole body,
how to dance
like no one’s looking —
and if they are,
who cares?

they taught me
how to hold sorrow
and joy
at the same time.

magic
in friendship.
in freedom.

## My Grandmother’s Hands

her hands
were maps —
wrinkled, worn,
marked by years
of holding too much.

they stirred pots,
braided hair,
wiped tears,
folded prayers
into every meal.

when i look at my own hands,
i see her.

## The Weight & The Wonder

being a black woman
means carrying
what no one else will
and still laughing
like it’s light.

it’s knowing
you’ll be asked
to hold everything
and still choose joy.

it’s heavy.
it’s holy.
it’s wonder.

# SECTION 2 – Loving, Losing, Loving Again

Love has shaped me and undone me,
taught me how to hold on and how to let go.
This section is about the lessons love teaches — about others, yes, but mostly about myself.
How I learned to stop mistaking sacrifice for love,
and how I finally learned
to love me.

## You Can Call Me Tender

i’ve been hard
for too long.
calloused where i should’ve been cradled.

i want to love
like soft rain,
like hands that don’t ask me to shrink.

you can call me tender now —
because i finally know
that being gentle
doesn’t mean being weak.

## Loving at the Edge of Myself

i used to give
until there was nothing left.
until i was skin and apologies,
until my love felt like drowning
in someone else’s ocean.

i didn’t know
love wasn’t supposed to cost me
myself.

## A Lesson in Leaving

leaving doesn’t always look like slamming doors.
sometimes it’s quiet,
a decision made in the middle of the night
when you finally realize
you deserve more.

i thought i had to break something
to be free.
but sometimes,
you just have to walk away
without turning back.

## How I Mistook Sacrifice for Love

i used to think
that shrinking meant loving.
that saying yes
when i wanted to scream no
was what made me worthy.

but sacrifice isn’t love
when you’re the only one bleeding.

## To The Girl I Used to Be

baby girl,
i wish you knew
you didn’t have to work
for love.

that your softness
was already enough.
that you never had to fold yourself small
to fit inside someone else's hunger.

i want to hold you now,
tell you
love is not supposed to hurt.

## Black Love Feels Like This

it feels like
coming home
after the longest day.

like someone seeing you
without asking you
to shrink.

it feels like
laughter that fills a room
and silence that doesn’t feel empty.

black love
feels like safety.
like softness.
like being free
and still being held.

## The Art of Being Chosen

they taught me
how to chase,
how to earn,
how to beg for love
that never stayed.

nobody taught me
how to stand still
and let myself
be chosen.

now i know —
being loved
without performing
is an art.

and i am
the masterpiece.

## A Lover’s Silence

some people leave
without leaving.

their silence
becomes a wall,
a void,
a slow kind of goodbye
you almost don’t notice
until it’s too quiet.

and when they finally go,
you realize —
they’d been gone
long before the door closed.

## What I Thought I Needed

i thought i needed
someone to save me,
to love me loud enough
to drown out
the parts of me
i couldn’t hold.

turns out,
i just needed
to choose myself
when no one else did.

## I Learned to Love Me Last

i spent years
trying to love
everyone else right.

gave them
my softness,
my patience,
my light.

i left myself
for last.

but when i finally
turned inward,
i found
the kind of love
i’d been searching for
all along.

# SECTION 3 – Becoming My Own Home

This is the season of unlearning.
The part where I stop searching outside myself
for belonging, for peace, for worth.
Here is where I learned to become
the place I could rest.

## The First Time I Said No Without Explaining

it felt like rebellion.
my throat tight,
my stomach turning —
but my mouth steady.

no.
no reason.
no apology.
no softening the edges
so you’d still like me.

just
no.

and it felt
like freedom.

## Things I Left Behind in Therapy

other people’s expectations.
the story that said
i wasn’t enough.
my habit of saying sorry
when i wasn’t the one who hurt me.
the weight of my mother’s survival
on my shoulders.
the belief
that healing had to look like perfection.

i left all of it
on that couch
and walked out
lighter.

## Not Everyone Deserves the Softest Version of Me

i spent years
giving the best of me
to people who mistook it
for weakness.

now, i keep my softness
for those who water it back.
i learned
that love isn’t about
how much i can give
until i’m empty.

it’s about
who makes room
for me to be whole.

## Black Girl Miracle

they called me strong
like it was the only thing
i was allowed to be.

but here i am —
soft, whole,
free.

a miracle
they never saw coming.

## I Am My Own Sanctuary

there is a quiet place
inside me
where no one else lives.

i built it
from the rubble
of every time i broke.

here,
i am safe.
i am soft.
i am sovereign.

## The Luxury of Boundaries

they don’t tell you
how luxurious it feels
to say no.

to choose yourself
without guilt.
to stop bleeding
for people
who never learned
how to love you soft.

my boundaries
are velvet ropes.
not walls —
but invitations
to treat me right.

## I Don’t Owe You Softness

i spent years
giving the best of me
to people who mistook it
for weakness.

now, i keep my softness
for those who water it back.
i learned
that love isn’t about
how much i can give
until i’m empty.

it’s about
who makes room
for me to be whole.

## The Healing Didn’t Look Like I Thought It Would

i thought healing
would be pretty.
clean.
a straight line.

instead,
it was messy.
ugly crying at midnight.
apologies
i didn’t know i owed myself.

but it was real.

and every scar
is proof
i made it.

## A Black Woman’s Becoming

it isn’t linear.
some days,
i feel whole.
some days,
i’m still gathering
the broken pieces.

but every day,
i become more
of myself.

a soft,
loud,
free
Black woman.

## Becoming My Own Home

i spent years
searching for home
in other people,
in places,
in anything outside myself.

but home
was never there.

home
was always
this body,
this breath,
this heart still beating
after everything.

i became
the place i could rest.

# SECTION 4 – The Divine & The Daily

Holiness doesn’t live in temples alone.
It lives in the laughter of Black women,
in the hum of daily life,
in the whispers of the ancestors when the room goes quiet.
This section is a reminder
that the sacred has always lived in us.

## My Ancestors Talk to Me in My Sleep

they don’t show up
how you’d expect.
no thunderclap,
no burning bush.

just dreams
where my grandmother hums
a song i’ve never heard
but somehow know.

just whispers
when i’m washing dishes,
telling me:
you’re doing better than you think.

## God Sounds Like a Black Woman

when i stopped listening
for a voice in the clouds
and started listening
to the women who raised me,
i realized:

god sounds like a Black woman.
soft and sharp.
sings when she’s sad.
laughs from her belly.
tells you the truth
whether you want it or not.

## How to Pray Without Words

sometimes
prayer is a breath
you didn’t realize
you’d been holding.

sometimes
it’s the way your body
finally unclenches
after a long day.

sometimes
it’s standing still
long enough
to feel the sunlight
on your skin.

## Softness Is Holy Work

they taught me
divinity lived in suffering.

but i found god
in the way i exhaled
after a long cry.
in silk pillowcases
and slow mornings.
in laughing without looking over my shoulder.

this softness —
this ease —
isn’t weakness.
it’s survival.
it’s sacred.

## Grief as a Portal

grief cracked me open.
not to destroy me —
but to show me
what was underneath
the armor.

it wasn’t just sadness.
it was love.
it was memory.
it was everything
i thought i lost
still living
inside me.

## The Universe Speaks in Whispers

it’s never loud.
not the way i thought
it would be.

the universe
doesn’t shout.

it nudges.
a song at the right moment.
a stranger’s smile.
a quiet knowing
that blooms
when you finally get still.

you just have to listen.

## A Poem for Every Version of Me That Made It

for the girl
who thought she had to earn love.
for the woman
who stayed too long.
for the version of me
who almost gave up.

every past self
deserves a poem.
a thank you.
a soft place to land.

because they all
carried me here.

## Burning Sage, Burning Shame

it’s not just smoke.
it’s a ritual.
a cleansing.
a letting go
of every voice
that told me
i wasn’t enough.

i burn sage
like an offering.
like an act of defiance.

i let the smoke
carry my shame away.

## I Am My Ancestors’ Wildest Dream

they couldn’t dream
of soft mornings
and freedom
and ease.

but here i am —
breathing,
laughing,
living without permission.

every joy
is a prayer
answered
long before i was born.

## The Divine & The Daily

divinity isn’t just
in temples
or sermons.

it’s in the way
my grandmother laughed.
in the sun
warming my skin.
in the breath
i take
before i speak my truth.

holiness
is woven
into the daily.

# SECTION 5 – The Soft Life Manifesto

This is where I lay it down —
the weight, the grind, the survival.
This is the declaration:
I choose joy.
I choose ease.
I choose softness, not because the world made it easy,
but because I finally decided
I don’t have to carry everything anymore.

## The Soft Life Manifesto

i refuse
to bleed for love.
to hustle for worth.
to carry what isn’t mine.

my softness
is not up for debate.
my peace
is not a prize you earn.

i choose joy
on purpose.
i choose ease
without apology.

this is my manifesto:
i will live light,
love loud,
rest often.

## What Peace Feels Like in My Body

it feels like
slow mornings
and nobody needing me.

it feels like
a deep exhale
that starts in my belly.

it feels like
a room
where i don’t have to shrink.

it feels like
soft music,
warm tea,
the sound of my own laughter.

## I Don’t Want to Hustle, I Want to Heal

they told me
success meant grinding
until there was nothing left.

but i want mornings
without urgency,
days without pressure,
a life that doesn’t
cost me myself.

i don’t want to hustle.
i want to heal.

## A Black Woman Deserves Luxury

luxury isn’t just diamonds
or plane tickets.

luxury is
peace and quiet,
boundaries honored,
a soft bed,
no one asking for too much.

luxury is
being able to rest
without the world
falling apart.

and yes —
sometimes,
it’s diamonds too.

## The Shape of My Joy

my joy
isn’t loud
unless it wants to be.

sometimes,
it’s the shape of a slow morning.
a clean kitchen.
a belly laugh
with no audience.

it looks like me
dancing in my living room
for no one but myself.

it looks like freedom.

## Soft, Still & Free

i don’t want
a life
that runs me ragged.

i want
soft mornings,
still afternoons,
free evenings.

i want to breathe
without holding my chest tight.
to exist
without earning it.

soft.
still.
free.
that’s the dream.

## Ease is My Birthright

they told me
i had to hustle,
struggle,
prove myself
every second.

but ease
belongs to me too.

peace
belongs to me too.

i was born
worthy
of softness.

## No More Suffering for My Softness

i used to believe
i had to earn rest.
had to break myself
just to deserve
a moment of peace.

not anymore.

i don’t need
to bleed
to be worthy
of softness.

## Rest is Resistance

they want you tired.
want you grinding,
breaking,
empty.

but every time
i choose rest,
i am choosing
myself.

rest
is resistance.
it is rebellion.
it is survival.

## How Light Feels

it feels like
shedding coats
you forgot you were wearing.

like laughter
that lives in your chest
long after the moment passes.

like finally
putting down
what was never yours to carry.

light feels
like me,
unburdened.