**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.