



# Ten Poems

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Translated from the Hebrew

by Rachel Tzvia Back

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## First Quarter: Crescent

Once there was no earth, the universe was bare

and all my sides were luminous

and my face was luminous and my eyes were luminous

and the soles of my feet were luminous

and even the place where the soles of my feet stepped was luminous

And I wasn't capable

of even the slightest waning

of even nearing the awareness of waning

and from the moment there was awareness of waning, waning was formed

Later there was earth

and in the power of its orbit came the crashing sickle

like the falling of the meteor in the Big Bang

And the hour of my birth was the hour of my death.

**First Quarter: Apogee**

I am in the center. Encircling planets in their orbits distance themselves from me.

At my core I am hidden even from myself.

In the dark I can't see me.

The vastness of my longings, for example, or the size of my heart.

Therefore, I know nothing about my love.

My need to nourish what surrounds me  
flows from me like an indispensable movement, inevitable  
like the need to nourish myself.

And about the body: it's here, wishing for something else.

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**Second Quarter: Second Lunation**

Perhaps tonight  
no one is dreaming you —  
white, virginal, ceremonial,  
replete like God.

Belong to me tonight, so  
I can hear you  
near, as at the moment of birth,  
whispering in my ear  
my ineffable name  
three times.

Adore me,

bend over me gently, here's my neck  
spiraling toward you from under the blanket.

Look, my face is soft  
and your body is ready  
for whatever comes.

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## Second Quarter: Perigee

I donned my inner body to become a woman.

My expanses flowed over their contours

open-lipped toward you

My skin continued beyond its gait.

Given over to myself I dissolved my borders

delighting in the honey as it carried me forth

At night you came to me wrapped in my dream.

The days troubles removed themselves from the room

my light filled the house.

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**Second Quarter: Three-Quarters Full**

My body's scent is heavier than me, spilt on the road –  
will you know me now that I am made fluid?

Tonight my neck will lengthen to reach you –

I am marking my moves.

The mango is dripping, emitting its sweetness through the window.

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## Second Quarter: Third Luration

I watch the movement of the leaves –  
that's how I want to come to you, elemental,  
slowly, dazzled to discover my body  
at the hour it opens to you surprised  
by its hidden beauty.

You'll let my body to be my body, to speak its private language  
only it understands. I'll ask you to love yourself in the ways of the flesh.

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## Second Quarter: Full Moon

My nights are longer than the inner darkness  
my dreams are spoken in their private names  
unfurling in slow motion and the hours drag on.

Often I think of my life  
that lives outside the frame of my life.

The span of my existence is shifting.

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**Second Quarter: Filling Up**

Like a pair of hungry nurslings my eyes rise to your orbit

My gaze is fixed to the suckling nipple

as it fills my body with its flowing white, purifying my expanses

to ready them for tomorrow's new day.

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### **Monday: Pre-Dawn**

Like a home, I leave you –  
when I come back I turn on the light.

You follow me to the kitchen  
waiting for a sign of love.

I'm hungry –

you offer

a plate, a chair, a bed.

I am conciliated.

I fold my body into yours

while my head leaves



for its winding paths.

How I longed to capture the words of beauty,  
their perfection round  
like a river stone.

Homes that I left come back to visit me.  
At night I repay their visit.  
Farewell within farewell within farewell.

Still I know nothing about your ways in me,  
like how your mornings are readied for solace.

**Third Quarter: Waning**

What is the exact distance  
between the light's source  
and its sorrow.

In this arena the hand-to-hand  
combat between us is  
becoming dense.

Interwoven laser beams  
scan the data of each insult  
and its orbit, locating even the evasive and abject ones.

We are like iron flakes in a paralyzing  
magnetic field, arrayed  
according to prior orders.

In the absolute diminishment  
the points of birth and death  
become one.



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