



Living In The Freshest Chamber Of The Heart, by Mark Nepo

Our ability to find something to love, and to love again for the first time depends greatly on how we resolve and integrate where we've been before. A great model for us exists in the chambered nautilus, an exquisite shell creature that lives along the ocean floor. The nautilus is a deep-sea form of life that inches like a soft man in a hard shell finding his prayers along the bottom. Over time it builds a spiral shell, but always lives in the newest chamber.

The other chambers, they say, contain a gas or liquid that helps the nautilus control its buoyancy. Even here, a mute lesson in how to use the past: live in the most recent chamber and use the others to stay afloat.

Can we, in this way, build strong chambers for our traumas: not living there, but breaking our past down till it is fluid enough to lose most of its weight? Can we internalize where we've been enough to know that we are no longer living there? When we can, life will seem lighter.

It is not by accident that the nautilus turns its slow digestion of the bottom into a body that can float. It tells us that only time can put the past in perspective, and only when the past is behind us, and not before us, can we open enough and empty enough to truly feel what is about to happen. Only by living in the freshest chamber of the heart can we love again and again for the first time.