

Peeling the onion

by [Luci Shaw](#) in the [December 25, 2013](#) issue

There's not much I don't know about you—
yellow, red, sweet—grubbed up roots and all.
Essential for a vigorous cuisine, alerting
the sense—the crackle of your paper brown outer
skin, your translucent inner sheaths like
vegetable undergarments, your pungent heat
rising from sharp steel and cutting board
to my blurred eyes, your precise circles against
the wood, before the sizzle in the buttered pan.

Reluctant to relinquish our intimacy
your sharp essence clings to my fingers, like
a reputation. Hours later, in the dark, you season
the air around my hands, I'll stud you with
stars of cloves to bury in the belly of the bird
before roasting. Or nestle your pearls
with a stalk of mint among the green peas.
If I leave you too long in the pantry, your
patience exhausted, attenuated, soft at the center,
you send up green spears through the mesh bag
that call out *chop me, make a salad, I am delicious*.

How do I interpret my own
layered membranes, like growth rings?
I try to peel away the layers of my
onion heart, never getting all the way in.