

MANNA

BY QURAT DAR

There used to be *khujoors* the size of buckets,
Hanging from palms that brushed my shoulders
Every night, *anar* that hung in triplets
And cracked open at the slightest touch,
Spilling a thousand perfect rubies,
Rivers of milk (which you must choose when
Asked by an angel) and wine (not the kind that
Makes you lose yourself, not now that you're
Found).

There were olive groves and immaculate figs
(no sacrifices here, not even on minute wings),
And palaces, marble pillars inlaid with
Lapis lazuli and gold.

The pillars have crumbled,
The ruins have been picked clean –
Pits and pith litter the courtyard.
The date palms have been cut down,
The rivers have been soiled
By trespassers,
Who laughed at the absurdity of swimming in
Drink, and shook the fig trees
Until they were bare, pressed the olives
For oil to burn down the groves,
Having arrived quietly, unannounced,
And left just the same.

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