

UNDERSIEGE

M a h m o u d D a r w i s h

Excerpt

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When the planes disappear, the white, white doves
Fly off and wash the cheeks of heaven
With unbound wings taking radiance back again, taking possession
Of the ether and of play. Higher, higher still, the white, white doves
Fly off. Ah, if only the sky
Were real [a man passing between two bombs said to me].

Cypresses behind the soldiers, minarets protecting
The sky from collapse. Behind the hedge of steel
Soldiers piss—under the watchful eye of a tank—
And the autumnal day ends its golden wandering in
A street as wide as a church after Sunday mass...

[To a killer] If you had contemplated the victim's face
And thought it through, you would have remembered your mother in the
Gas chamber, you would have been freed from the reason for the rifle
And you would have changed your mind: this is not the way
to find one's identity again.

The siege is a waiting period
Waiting on the tilted ladder in the middle of the storm.

Alone, we are alone as far down as the sediment
Were it not for the visits of the rainbows.