



## *A River Dies of Thirst*

**Mahmoud Darwish**

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Translation by Catherine Cobham

A river was here  
and it had two banks  
and a heavenly mother who nursed it on drops from the clouds  
A small river moving slowly  
descending from the mountain peaks  
visiting villages and tents like a charming lively guest  
bringing oleander trees and date palms to the valley  
and laughing to the nocturnal revellers on its banks:  
'Drink the milk of the clouds  
and water the horses  
and fly to Jerusalem and Damascus'  
Sometimes it sang heroically  
at others passionately  
It was a river with two banks  
and a heavenly mother who nursed it on drops from the clouds  
But they kidnapped its mother  
so it ran short of water  
and died, slowly, of thirst.

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**CREDIT:** Darwish, Mahmoud. 2009. "A River Dies of Thirst." Pp. 36 in *A River Dies of Thirst: Journals* by Mahmoud Darwish. Translated from the Arabic by Catherine Cobham. Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books. Gratefully reprinted by permission from the publisher of the poem.