



A River Dies of Thirst

Mahmoud Darwish

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.

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.