



If We Want To

Mahmoud Darwish

Translation by Catherine Cobham

We will become a people, if we want to, when we learn that we are not angels, and that evil is not the prerogative of others

We will become a people when we stop reciting a prayer of thanksgiving to the sacred nation every time a poor man finds something to eat for his dinner

We will become a people when we can sniff out the sultan's gatekeeper and the sultan without a trial

We will become a people when a poet writes an erotic description of a dancer's belly

We will become a people when we forget what the tribe tells us, when the individual recognises the importance of small details

We will become a people when a writer can look up at the stars without saying: 'Our country is loftier and more beautiful!'

We will become a people when the morality police protect a prostitute from being beaten up in the streets

We will become a people when the Palestinian only remembers his flag on the football pitch, at camel races, and on the day of the Nakba

We will become a people, if we want to, when the singer is allowed to chant a verse of Surat al-Rahman at a mixed wedding reception

We will become a people when we respect the right, and the wrong.

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