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Nadia woke slowly the next morning, an incessant honking rising from the street below till she could ignore it no longer. The telephone rang, but by the time she picked it up it was too late. The red light on one of its buttons began flashing immediately. As she suspected, when she called down to reception she was told that her father had left her a message. He wanted to meet her for lunch, she was to call him. The receptionist's high voice was annoying, a caricature of a female voice, like so many women in Egypt. Except for Manal. Her low voice was a consolation in a country determined to infantilize its females. She wanted to hear that voice again, perhaps be reminded that Egypt, Palestine, even her entire trip, was bigger than her father. She had been doing herself a disservice, being so dependent on his approval and attention. She doubted that her father, twenty-five years ago a new student in Canada, had moped about and pined for his family. Why should she? She didn't call him back.

An hour later Nadia met Manal at the closed gallery. She had followed instructions and brought a towel.

"I will paint you in perfumes and powders." Manal unrolled a frayed canvas sleeve and laid out an array of small bottles and vials, each looking a hundred years old and glistening with ground metal and stone: a dozen variations on the colour brown, just as many more blues and greens and reds, all of it makeup powders she had been collecting from the markets.

"*Kohl.*" The word had two syllables in her mouth, the breathy *h* stayed in her throat with promise of more. She poured it into the palm of her left hand and added drops of amber, a heady scent released from another vial.

"*Anbar.*"

With her thumb, she drew the outline of Nadia's body on the large strip of paper tacked on the wall.

"*Al Azraq.*"

She shook glistening blue powder from another vial onto her palm. Her voice was deep and steady, her eyes never meeting Nadia's.

"*Sifrun.*"

She rubbed copper-coloured powder over the blue, deepening and darkening the flesh. Manal's face was stained where she touched herself and the perfumes spilt more than once over her clothes. She was oblivious to everything but the smearing of the paper.

Mineral dust filled the air, landed on the floor. Manal wiped her hands with an oiled rag every time she changed colour. She stood in profile, her shoulders and arms held up, one hand painting and smudging, the other outstretched as a palette, her skirt

hiked up, her feet bare. Nadia was mesmerized by the long muscles that shadow-danced in and around her shirt, up her arm, down her legs. There was an equine firmness to the line of the jaw and the long profile of her nose as she turned her head back and forth from paper to Nadia to paper again. She breathed deeply, expanding her chest like an athlete. Thick lengths of flesh and bone sharing the arm in a rippling choreography that ended at the fingers.

“Stop moving,” Manal ordered.

This moment does not belong to me, Nadia thought, and it was an immense relief. She was learning something new, a feeling of submission to the will of another. The ecstasy and divinity of submission. Translated literally, the word Islam meant submission, but to the will of God. Nadia didn't know much about Islam and hadn't really cared to explore—until now. She could see that there was a beauty and an expansiveness in submission, in giving over to something. It felt almost heretical to think in such a way. Her mother would not be impressed.

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