

When it snowed in Damascus

by [Ann Struthers](#) in the [December 26, 2012](#) issue

The palm trees put on white hoods,  
saber cacti were sheathed in cotton wool,  
children licked it off the balcony railings  
as if it were whipped cream.

It stayed for a remarkable 24 hours and every car  
in the city sported a snowman on its roof!  
Pickup trucks carried snow people riders.  
All the photographs of the Great President  
on University Avenue had bushy snow eyebrows.

Everyone laughed. They laughed a lot  
over little things. When the old lady  
who was throwing her garbage  
out on the street nearly hit me  
with a plastic bottle, we both laughed;  
students running to catch the bus missed it,  
and they laughed; the girl who cut the party cake  
which fell apart, laughed. They all laughed  
when the Great President's eyebrows  
slid down over his face.

Their laughter was lighter than snowflakes,  
as strong as spider silk. It was the fabric  
that protected them in that palace  
where the desert is unfailing, dark  
as the secret police and dependable as their poverty