

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