

THE RIDE HOME

In a concrete jungle

I breathe in and step into an oasis

This car that will take me to a place

Takes me places

The smell of the seats unlock old memories

Cigarette smoke and heavy cologne

I blink once

And in an instant I'm transported

To somewhere far away

Through my window

I see desert stones

Make up complexes

I don't know

Distant dusty mountains and kids outside houses

The blazing sun douses me in heat

Sunburnt skin in cool evenings

As we sit under the moon and fragrant jasmine leaves

The rose bushes glistening

Flavored smoke trails float to the sky

Our voices carry through the dark street

And we laugh the night away

In the mornings we run around
With our shrieks and stomps and children sounds
Brushing our hands through endless rosemary
Back to the beige balcony overlooking

The walled garden of pears, lemons, grape vines twisting
the neighbor's branch is overhanging
we ask if we can take their fruit
on tiptoes we try and fail to do it
so we ask our uncles to pass them down
we bite into a sweetness we've never found
We think that this place might be heavenly ground

hours later,
we smell our hands
still as fragrant as the garden lands

weeks later,
we say goodbye
shake hands with the rosemary bush
until next time

years later,
the home will be sold
I don't have enough money to save our memories,
which we treasure more than gold
forever seeking a home we will never feel again
family grows old and vines extend
home will never be the same
we grasp at smells that we can't name

sometimes a breeze will stop me in my tracks
for micro-moments I am transported back
to the scent of flowers and desert sand
to the aromas of fruits picked off the branch
to the smell of our furniture, and khaltos' perfumes
the soap in the bathrooms, and hand-made foods
a breath of dry air and the smell of stray cats
I would do anything to get it all back
the amalgamation of all these things
leads stagnant tears to my eyes that sting

And I look back and I laugh and I cry
and I smile because I lived this life
Here's to childhood, to innocence, because we didn't consider

That those times were sweet, and all else would be bitter

That we'd spend our whole adult lives trying to find

The joy in these moments, re-lived one last time

I snap back to reality in this stranger's car

And I begin to wonder if we are strangers at all