In synagogue in the suburbs, we fill with song in book after book and the Tigris rises up and makes a blessing. We are in our seats, running our hands on the velvet beside us. Our mouths are moving. Our eyes are down.

There is one story and one story, and we repeat it each week. This story is true and foolish. Words huddle, back to front, with occasional laments and long echo. We are waiting to learn about today, tomorrow, why we must suffer. I am wearing a white dress, my father a tie.

Even at this moment, the river insists on flowing. I smell the perfume of the desert. Old men advance with their widening language, pushing carts, selling words without farewell, without salt, without the flesh of worry. Silver birds quiver in the sun.

Then, I'm not at the water. The sermon has ended. There are round tables of bread on old platters. My father laughs, his cheeks like globes. A day of rest. All day we are lucky.