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Freedom

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A poem by Egyptian writer Iman Mersal. Translated from the Arabic by Robyn Creswell.

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We no longer fear
the punishments of the grave
or life in foreign countries.

They're all dead now,
the well-intentioned women
who warned us about hymens and whoredom.
We angry teenagers, starring in our own nightmares,
have morphed into pillars of the family.
We wear glasses because our eyesight is weak
and swallow painkillers in the middle of the night.

We're like those soldiers
who imagine they'll recover their dignity
once the king has left the scene.
We've become our singular selves,
the whole company of us,
and now face the harvester's scythe.

We got old with no warning,
before we understood that this is what happens
when your dreams come true.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.