

The Cat Cow



By Ahlam Bsharat

Translated by
Andrew Leber

want to hug the cat named Cow, who
survived the war

Squeeze her so hard in my arms

That her spots rub off on me

That I become like her

Or simply become her

The cat Cow

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I want to hug the ruined balcony, some of
which, not all of which, survived the war

*

And tell her:

My heart's balcony is with you, Balcony

My railing hugging yours

My washing hugging yours

My hoe stored in the corner hugging yours

My view hugging yours

Hugging every last thing in sight

Every atom of air

Every flight of birds

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I don't want to hug my friends,
the survivors of the war

Afraid they'll fall from my hands

Afraid they'll melt at my heat

Afraid I'll kill them with my hug

Even where the war did not

Ahlam Bsharat is a Palestinian writer who grew up in a village in northern Palestine and obtained a master's degree in literature from An-Najah National University in Nablus. She has authored poetry, picture books, short stories, novels, and memoirs, as well as a number of television and radio scripts (in Arabic), winning numerous awards and recommendations for her work. Her poem "I Saw a Dead Road on the Road" has been posted recently by ArabLit Quarterly at <https://arablit.org/2021/05/20/new-poetry-by-ahlam-bsharat-i-saw-a-dead-road-on-the-road/>. For more information, please visit <https://www.palestinewrites.org/participants-1/ahlam-bsharat>. You can follow Ahlam on Twitter @ahlamsharaa.

Andrew Leber is a translator and researcher who has translated numerous works of Palestinian and Syrian writers. You can follow him on Twitter @AndrewMLeber.

