

What to Pack in Case of Exile

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Tehran, 1982

Grandmother, help me pack
the two persimmon trees
in our backyard.

Help me wrap the branches
in soft white cloth,
concealing the fruit,
each one a hand-held sunset.

Those trees make millions of red-orange suns
that we eat, squelching the skin and flesh
between our teeth, drinking down
the light turned rich and syrupy,
summer after summer.

I want to take the golden plum trees too,
and the picnic table humming with ants;
the cicada shells and birthday songs.

Help me pack the persimmon trees
and a hammock to rock to sleep in,
so that wherever I am, the wind from the Alborz
mountains will find me.

“What to Pack in Case of Exile” is based on the true story of a Bahá’í woman, Lida, who escaped Iran during the Revolution in the 1980s.