

## Stranger

When the stranger came, asked  
for bread, I said *Welcome*, told  
the women bring linen, meat, fresh  
melons, the finest dates, figs torn  
from the valley floor. I knew  
the tales: the widow's son, the old  
man who touched her cruse of oil.

But the stranger ate in silence.  
*More Wine!* I called the pantry  
maid, *The best we always save  
for last.* My guest pushed his plate  
away, tugged at his tie, slipped back  
into shoes beneath his chair, stood  
up to leave. *Don't go!* I touched  
his sleeve, held tight. *Stay the night.  
Desert sands blow cold, pack hard  
as stone.* He wrestled free. I reached  
out again. *Wait! You forgot my name.*  
He turned, face to face, his eyes  
flames. My thigh burned hollow.  
Too late. Alone, I listened to the wind.

—Donnell Hunter