

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