

By Nivedita Nath

## **Capital**

Pick lavender and strain it through wax, then  
Pray for rain to brush these hills with verdure.  
Your hands will coarsen as you spin  
The clothes of your sheep into fine reams of wool.  
Farahna knows the weaves like the lines of a poem  
She will tell you that djinns blow their secrets into carpets.  
The lavender that rolled across the tips of your fingers  
Will bristle at your toes, a purple floor for dreamy winter nights.

Marjan stares across the store room window  
The djinns' secrets hung like a despot across the display  
They put a number to it, like a branded prisoner, they call it a fair price.  
The lavender pressed against leaves of her grandmother's diary  
And all the incense of Iran wafted through her numbed memory.  
The store shutter cut fine steel lines through woven patterns of clouds-  
Fine steel lines unfurling like a barcode draped around her foreign body.  
The prisoner here, Marjan, is not the carpet it is he who thinks it sold.