

Second Harvest by Annassi Mehdi - translation

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- second harvest - drawing and story by annassi mehdi

Page 2 - translation

- "Mistrust white hair and believe wrinkles, mistrust almonds and believe apricots"
- I don't recall when and why it was said, but I remember liking what it meant.
- Almond Tree Blossom
- You can't count on white hair to judge someone's age, or use almond tree blossom's to tell the exact time of the year, but wrinkles and apricot flowers might be more precise.
- Apricot Blossom
- This saying stood the test of time, but it might not be correct very soon

Page 3 - translation

- Grilled corn in the streets of Casablanca used to be my telltale sign that the school year's about to end and summer is about to kick off.
- But
- Now I can find it most of the year.
- Corn is not alone in this, figs, pomegranates and watermelons are appearing in different times than they used to, but there is a special reason for watermelons

Page 4 - translation

- Normally watermelons appear at the end of spring, that's when pick-up trucks full of them start to show up, but lately, they are almost available all year long, and all because of what's happening in Zagora.
- Zagora is located in the east of Morocco, in a very dry area where it rains very rarely
- The weather is very dry and so are the landscapes, for watermelons to be associated with this region, is already a bad start. a fruit that consumes huge amounts of water, it shouldn't be planted there.

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- The main production of this region used to be palm dates, trees that adapted through the years to the lack of rain and dryness of the soil, but lately things shifted towards watermelons because of the quick profit that can be made.
- and here is why
- This part of Morocco is very warm, for a longer period compared to the rest of the country, keeping the soil warm enough to produce a second harvest of watermelons, while the rest of the world produces them in spring,
- that's why this second harvest is mostly destined for the international market, granting higher profits and so, encouraging more and more farmers to follow suit.

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- Export increased by 260% just last year
- This shift is having major draining effects on the water resources that are barely in the surface, and need to be extracted from the ground reaching groundwater that is supposed to be a safety net for the region, and instead extracting water faster than it takes for it to replenish.

Page 7 - translation

- Zagora and its surroundings rely on a specific type of agriculture, that is passed down generationally, and it consists of:
- Date palms: are the most exposed to the sun and heat, casting shadows on what's under it, keeping the moisture from irrigation to evaporate.
- Trees: that sometimes can be found on the second level, to provide fruits and shade.
- Wheat and vegetables: that provide resources for the personal consumption of farmers and their sheep.
- This ecosystem worked for the longest time, until the international market entered the scene.

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- The financial gain from planting Watermelon and exporting it is too big to ignore, and I understand why local farmers switched to it.

I wonder if my Grandfather had the opportunity, would he be tempted as well? Would he produce something out of its season, to earn a better living, and disproving his favorite proverb on the way?

He might have, but I like to think he would never give in.

May he rest in peace.