A photograph of ancient Egyptian temple ruins at sunset. The scene is dominated by large stone blocks and columns. In the foreground, a large relief carving depicts a procession of figures, including a man with a beard and a woman with a tall headdress. To the right, a column features two circular floral motifs. In the background, a doorway is illuminated from within, and the sky is a deep, dark blue. The overall atmosphere is one of historical grandeur and mystery.

Sand and Stones

By Harry Jivenmukta

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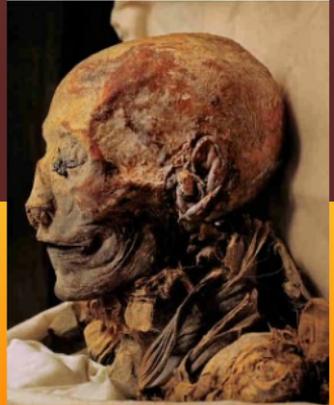
Sand and Stones



The princess of the desert,
she can sob and cry,
laugh and cackle,
sieve sand through
her fingers,
and dry the unwary
traveller into a mummy
or a white skeleton.

Old men and books

The old men
who squinted in the night
by firelight
in the desert
reading the tales
written by ancestors,
until the moon sank
into a new dawn morning.



The books laid out
ready to be read
by the descendents
of these withered scholars.

The price of camels,
goats and hides.
The keys to locks that
no longer can be found.

Qandisa

Qandisa, who wanders
around the desert fires
at night,
throwing shadows that
startle the camels.

She rips pillows
from under the heads
of sleeping traders.

They scabble around
looking for footprints
in the sand,
evidence of her.

She dances and whirls
like a dervish,
whipping up dust devils.



Sand and camels

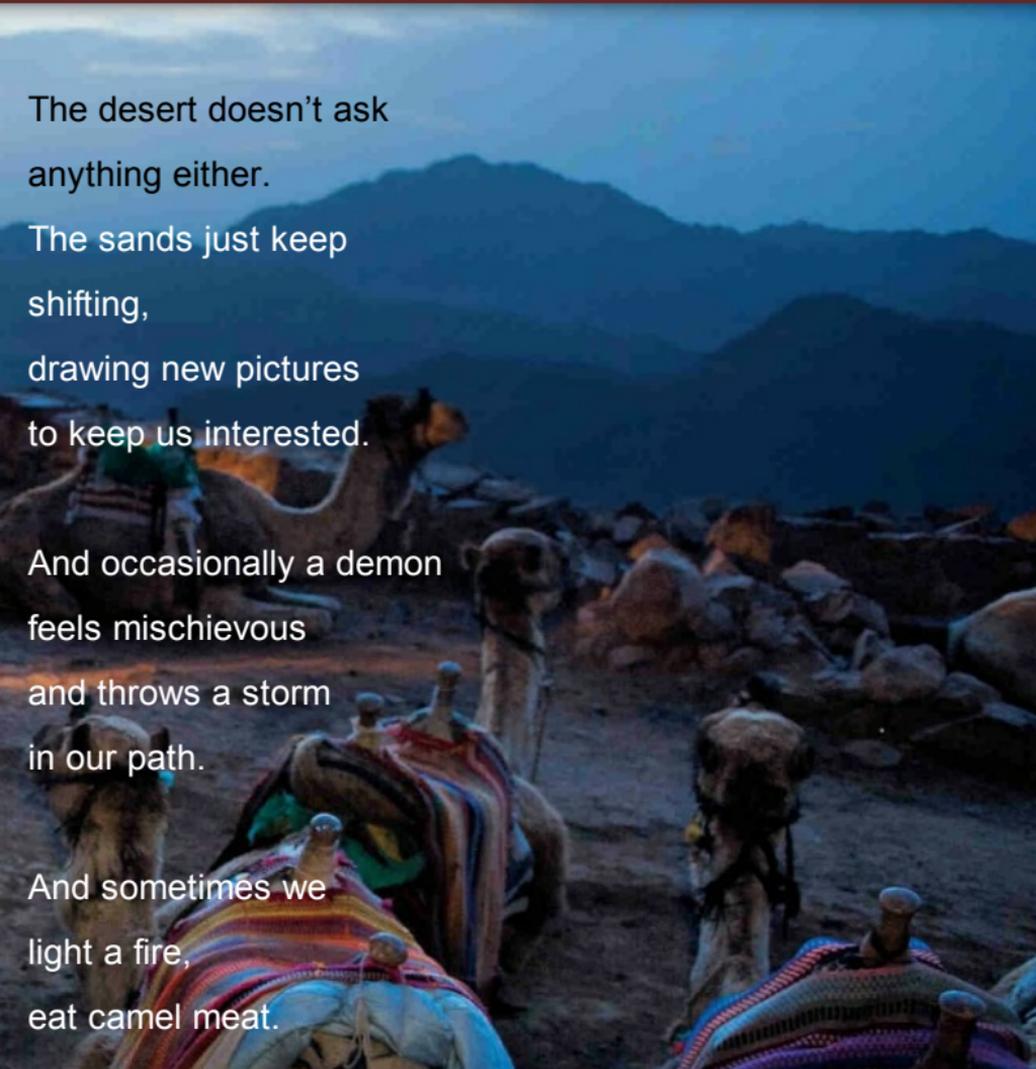
The camels never ask
Where are we going?
How long will we be gone?
When will we return?

The desert doesn't ask
anything either.

The sands just keep
shifting,
drawing new pictures
to keep us interested.

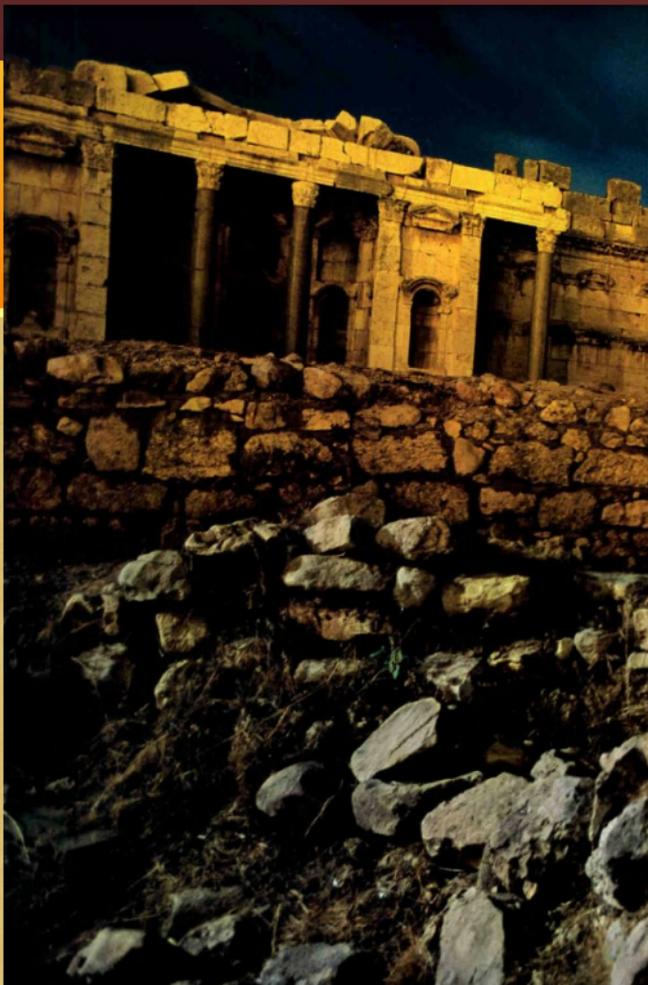
And occasionally a demon
feels mischievous
and throws a storm
in our path.

And sometimes we
light a fire,
eat camel meat.

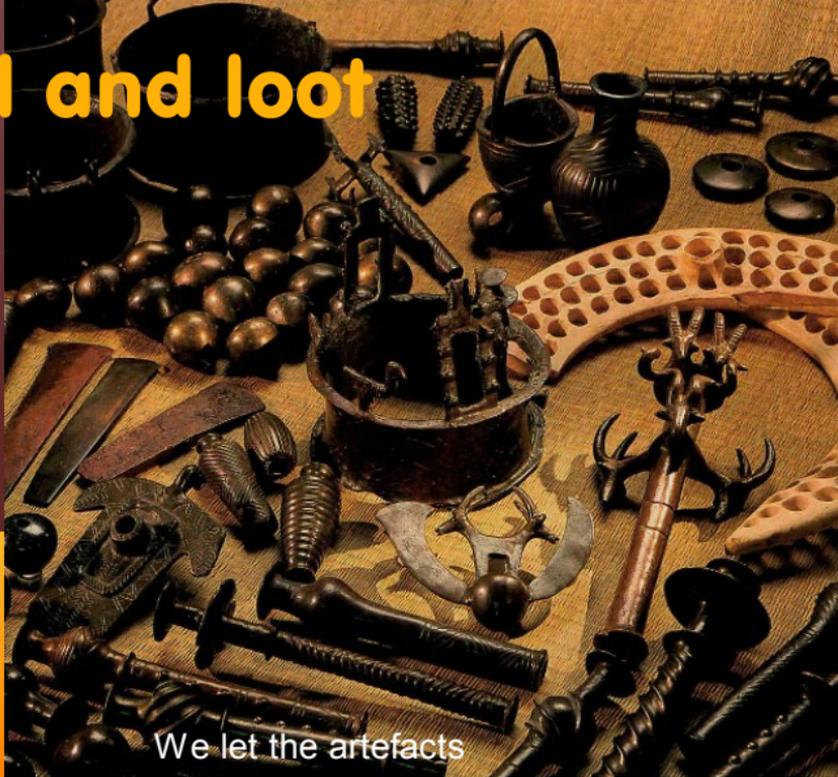


Stones and ruins

And when we find old ruins
the hollow voices invite us in
to sleep amongst ghosts
instead of under
the stars and the Gods.



Sand and loot



We let the artefacts

blind us with flashes
of bronze, silver and gold.

We are grave robbers
thieving the evidence
of ages.

Over a coffee,
when we get back,
we can tell tales.

Desert fire



The lizard
blinked,
surprised.

And then
rushed on.



Sand and sea

The old slave dhows
that pitched on these waters,
in convoys for weeks
swallowing men
and jewels alike.

Even as they called to Allah,
the sea relentlessly took its
share of the spoils
of war.

Crying now for another shore
where wives wait for a
return of heroes,
their fishermen.

Stones and villages

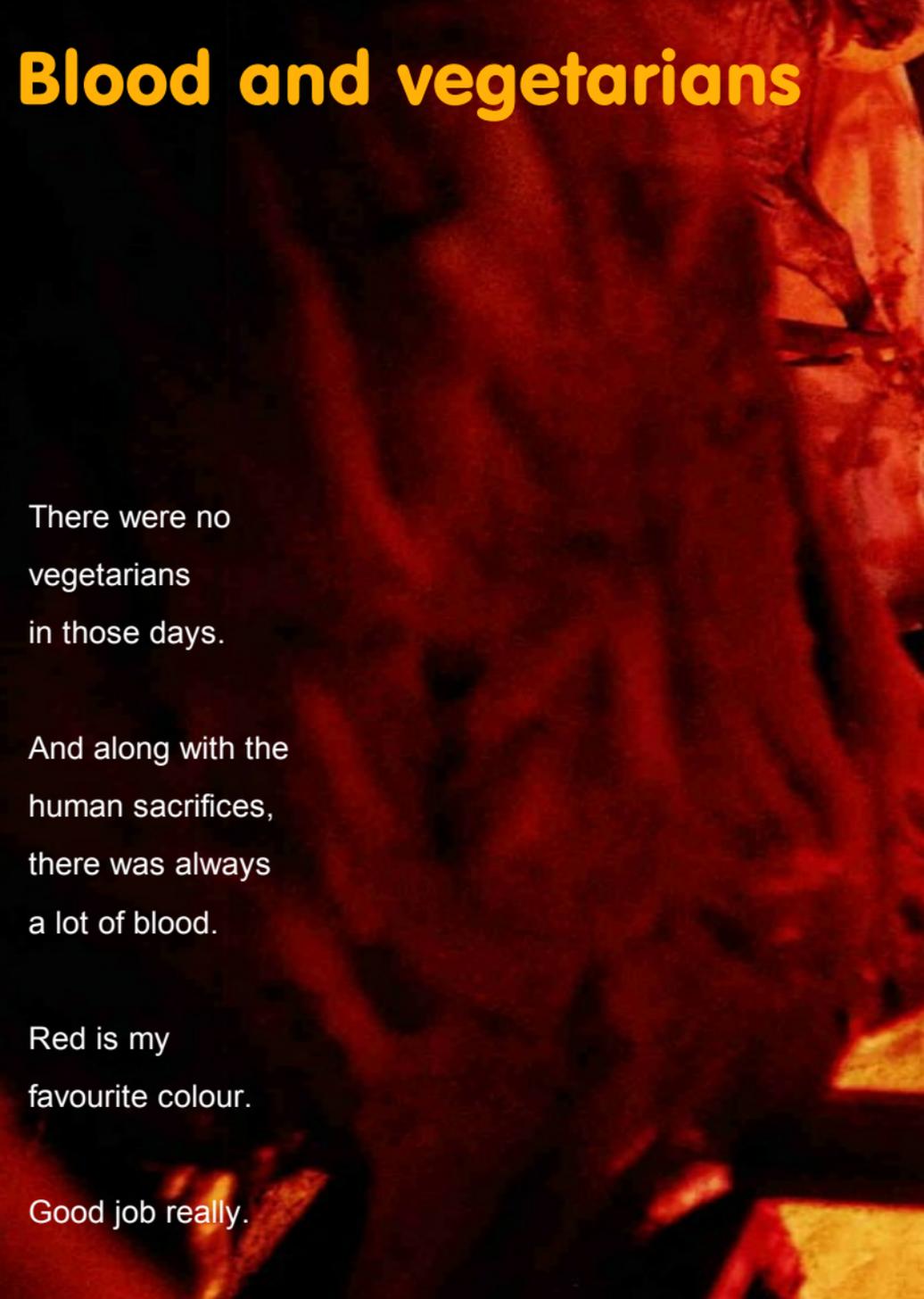


I wandered,
to distant settlements
high in the mountains
and far in the desert.

I didn't find you.

Were you wrapped up
in a burkha,
or did you just
not see me?

Blood and vegetarians



There were no
vegetarians
in those days.

And along with the
human sacrifices,
there was always
a lot of blood.

Red is my
favourite colour.

Good job really.

Sand and coins

Small hands

held out coins

for some

ancient sweets.

Coins that now will sit

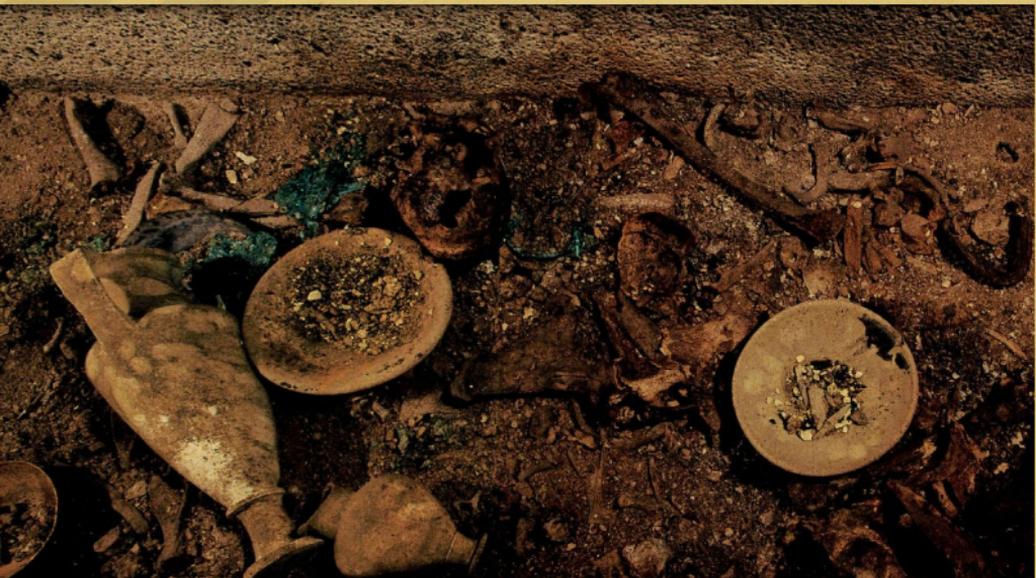
in glass boxes in the

Cairo museum

until they are looted

by the true

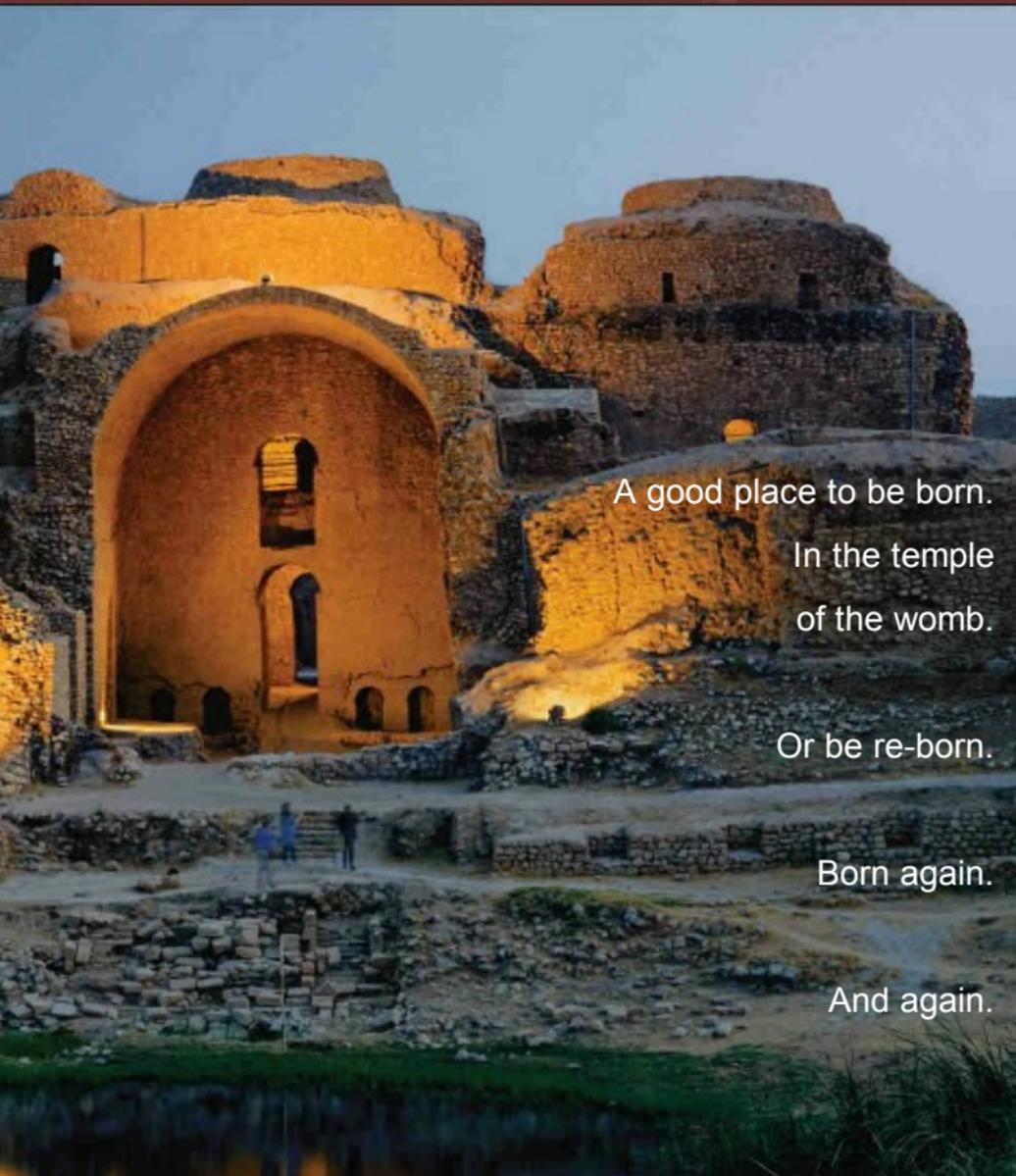
children of God.



Stones and girlfriends

You looked prettier
the last time
I kissed you.

Sand and wombs



A good place to be born.

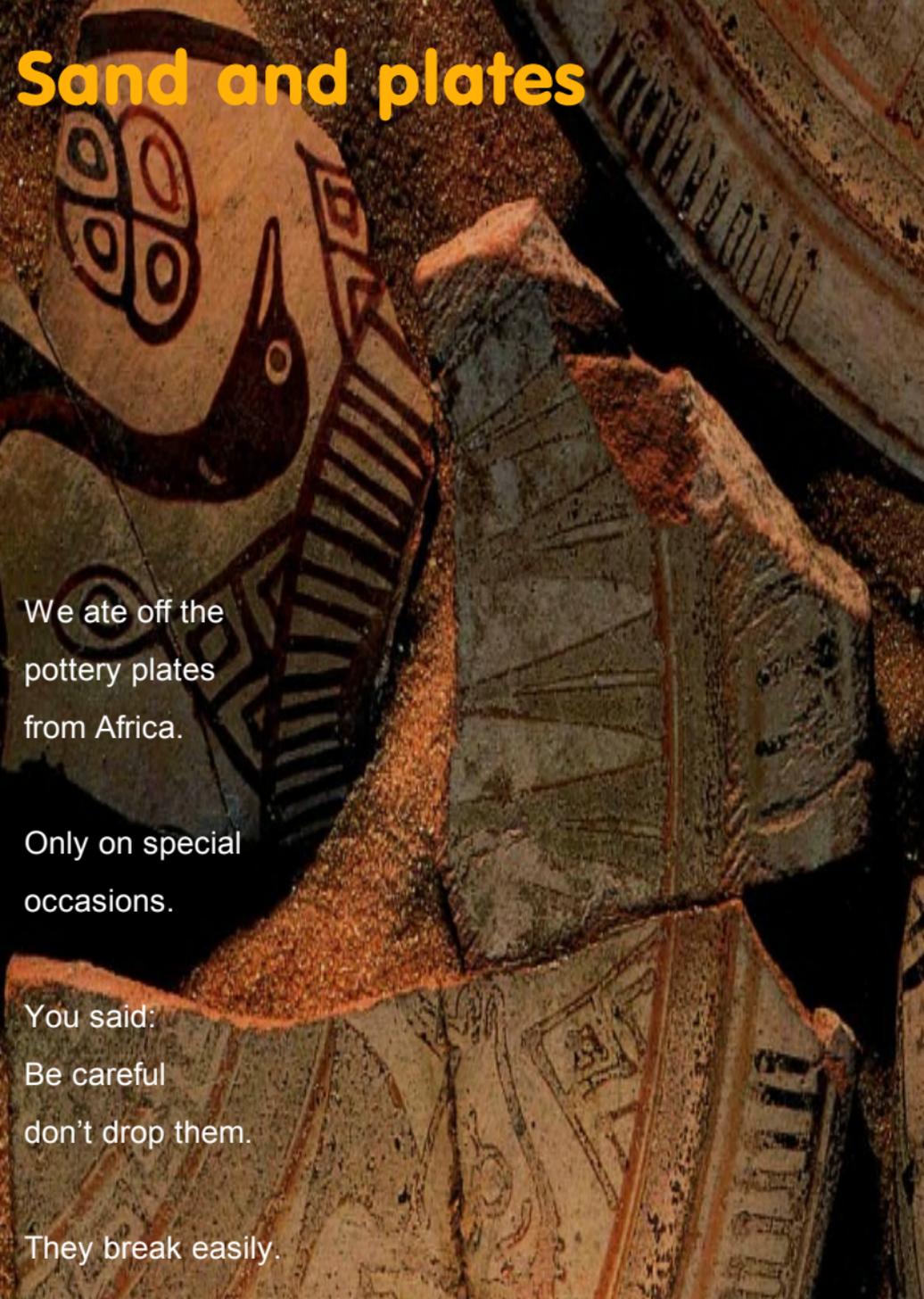
In the temple
of the womb.

Or be re-born.

Born again.

And again.

Sand and plates



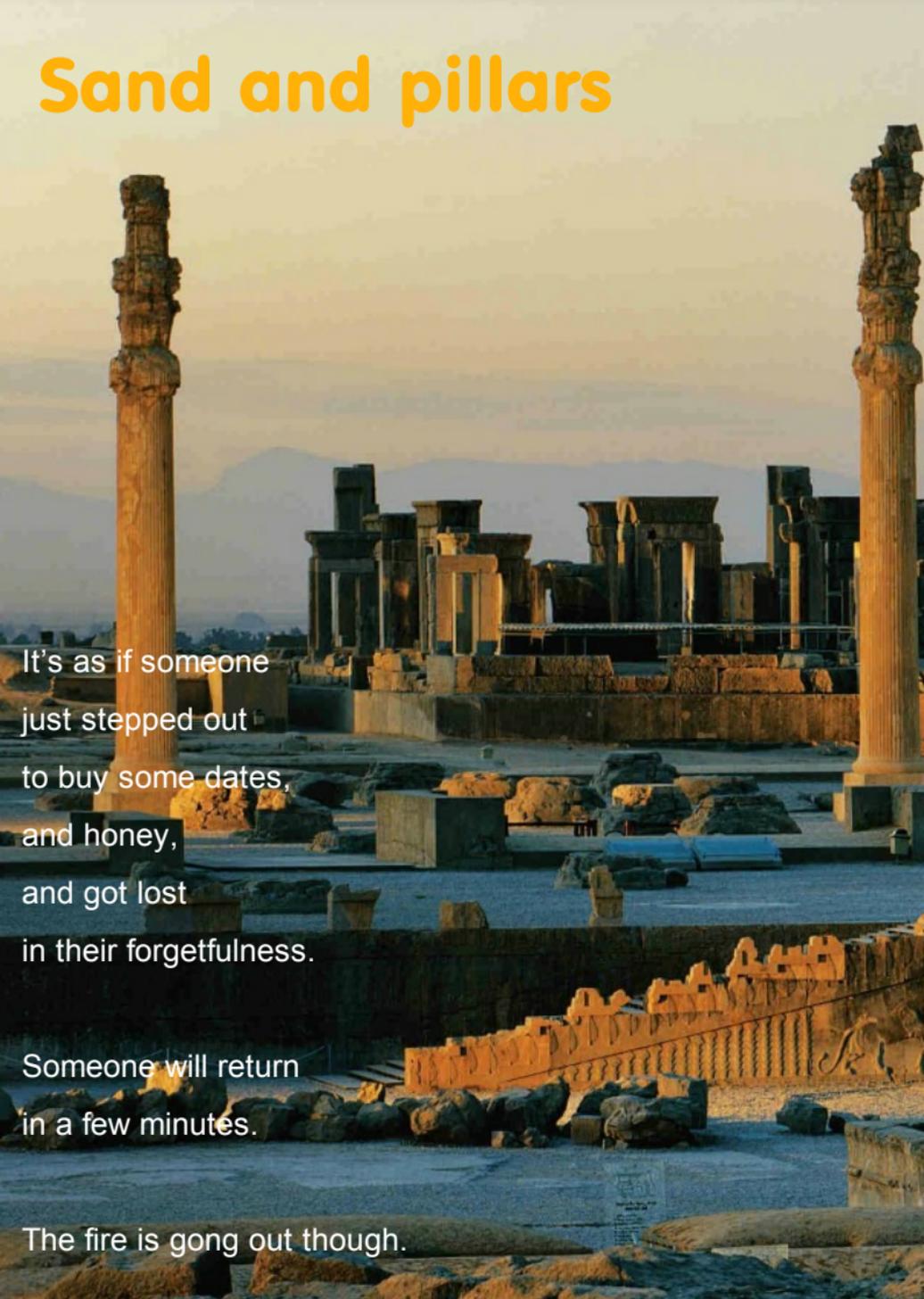
We ate off the
pottery plates
from Africa.

Only on special
occasions.

You said:
Be careful
don't drop them.

They break easily.

Sand and pillars

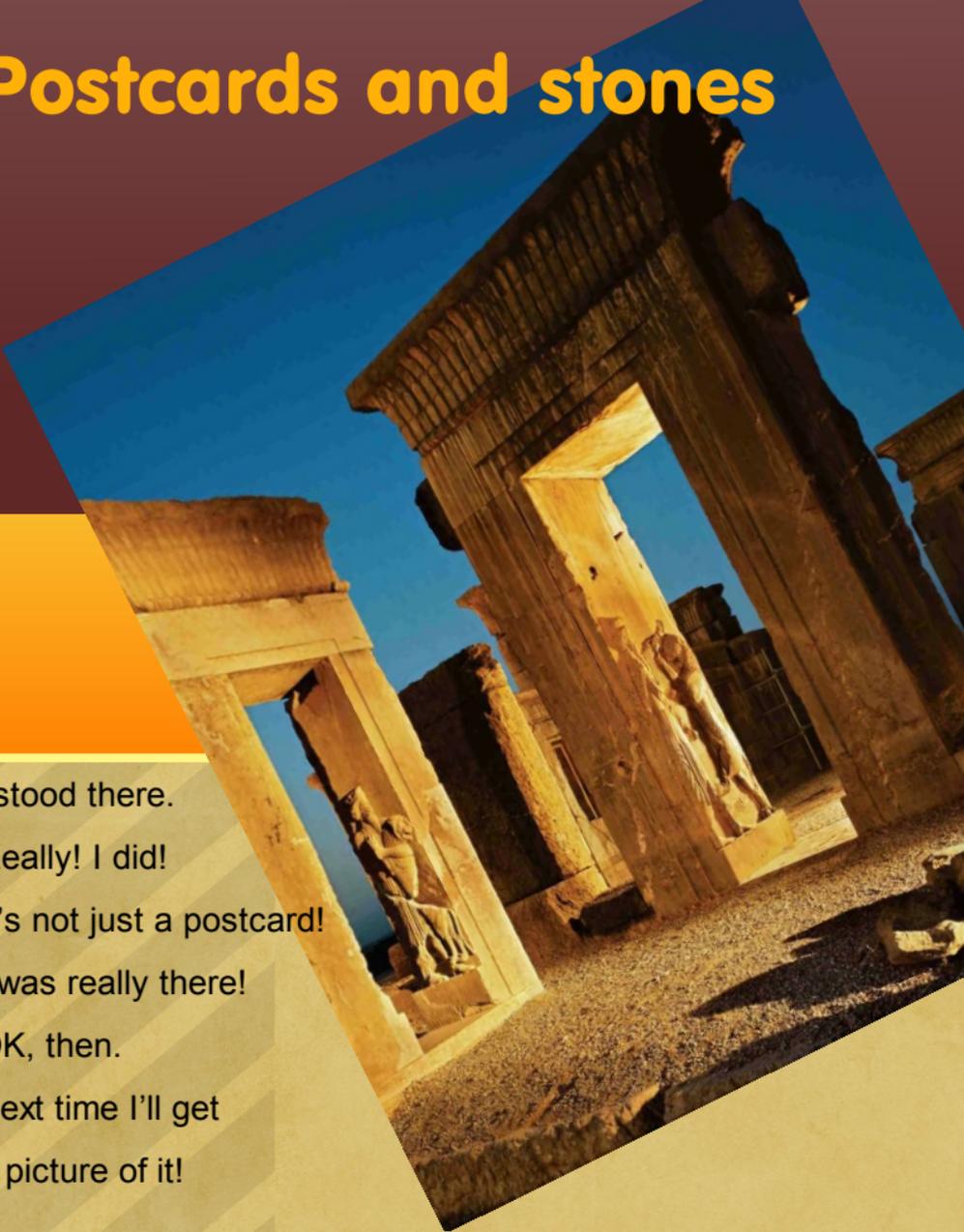
A photograph of ancient ruins at sunset. Two prominent standing columns are visible on the left and right sides. In the background, there are several other structures, some of which are partially destroyed or in ruins. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, suggesting the time is either dawn or dusk. The overall scene is one of historical significance and decay.

It's as if someone
just stepped out
to buy some dates,
and honey,
and got lost
in their forgetfulness.

Someone will return
in a few minutes.

The fire is going out though.

Postcards and stones



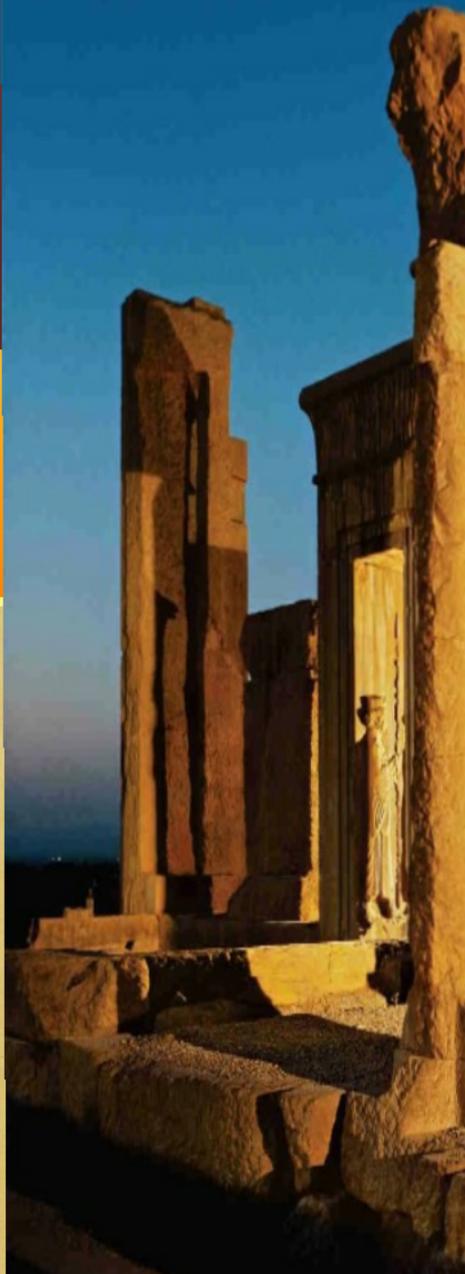
I stood there.
Really! I did!
It's not just a postcard!
I was really there!
OK, then.
Next time I'll get
a picture of it!

Unbelievers!

Stones and pillars

When everything is flat
from horizon
to horizon,
a bit of vertical
can be very welcome.

Someone was very
thoughtful.



Stone and ice cream



Everyone hold hands,
just like the teacher said.

These steps can be
dangerous.

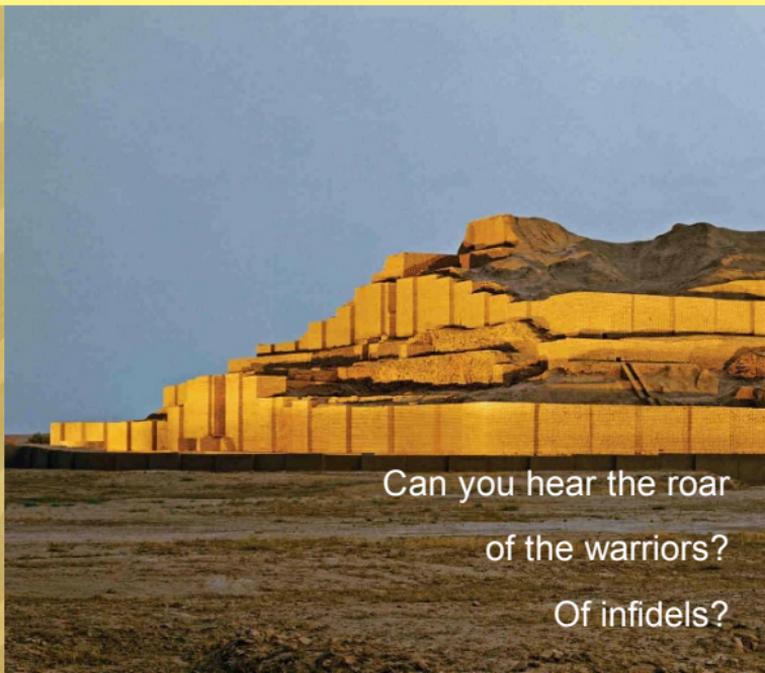
At the top?

Ice cream, of course!

Dreams and defences

Defences manned by ghosts,
resisting an imaginary army.

You wouldn't have said that
3,000 years ago!



Can you hear the roar
of the warriors?
Of infidels?