

Mandy Shunnarah

everyone's favorite palestinian

I guess every hometown has its hero,
that guy who just won't shut up about
the *one time* he scored the championship goal,
was an extra in a movie, the winner on
some such game show. Ours was just
from two thousand years ago.

Sure, it was fun at first, seeing the man
everyone won't stop talking about
& being able to say, *Hey, I know that guy!*
At the market, you'd hear the neighbors talk:
Look at him out there, making us proud.
He put us on the map—we're The Holy Land™ now!

Some of us knew him way back when, the days
when he was just a kid from somewhere.
(Aren't we all? Nothing special about that.)
My great-great-great-times-35-grandmother used to
babysit & said despite what the songs about
his birth say, some crying he did make.

My great-great-times-36-uncle worked at his dad's
carpentry shop. Said Joseph was a good guy,
if a little boring, the last to know Mary was stepping out;
fool enough to think the child his & kind enough
to raise him despite. Tongues will wag.
Bad gas travels fast in a small town.

The worst part is the tourists wanting to see
where he was born, where he walked, where he died.
It's creepy. Odder still when they show up
to his birthday party every December like
they were friends. & the conspiracy theories!
Some people even think he's still alive.

They talk to him like he's some god,
bringing him their problems like he's got
all the time in the world, asking his forgiveness
for shit he can't possibly care they've done.
He's heard it all but is too nice to say:
Have you considered getting a therapist?

They celebrate his murder & fund the war
machine that kills the rest of us Palestinians.
They love us best when we're dead.
They come from all around the world
to evangelize, tell us OGs we should have
a "personal relationship" with the guy.

We look them in the eye & think:
You didn't even fucking know him.