

# Mosque of Doves

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*None of this belongs to you:  
 ocean-blue domes thronged with doves  
 doves known as reverend blue-rocks  
 not one dove-covered pilgrim  
 scattering seed to the mourning-dove flocks*

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Blue smoke billowed over the old city;  
 as explosions scatter the white doves from the rooftops.

Orange explosions lit up the district's palm trees, minarets, and dusty roofs, while a fire  
 burned on the city's edge.

The minaret studded skyline was lit up with huge flashes of light.

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The doves of the mosque have returned.

The legend of the blue mosque tells us that birds who alight on the surface of the dome are turned white by the pure holiness of the place. As bloodshed is forbidden in the shrine, the doves are unharmed, and congregate in vast flocks on the mosque grounds. Pilgrims to the shrine consider it their duty to feed the sacred birds, and it is thought to be good luck to have the birds land on you.

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The doves are the first to leave, and  
 last to return when fighting breaks out:

after the massacre the men of that town went into the desert: washing the bodies and  
 tying

their toes and covering each in a shroud...

*(of) encircling sorrow and graves*

The Umayyad Islamic dynasty ruled the Muslim world from 661-750 AD. In the years of

their reign, a rebellion arose in Mecca. As the armies of empire lay siege to the city, the leader of the uprising took refuge in the Noble Sanctuary of the Shrine: the holiest place in Islam. An envoy was sent asking him to come out, to which he replied:

*Do not harm me; I am a dove of the mosque.*

The envoy did not speak; but strung his bow and shot an arrow into one of the doves. As it fell to the ground, the other birds scattered, abandoning the shrine. *Now*, said the envoy:

*I have liberated the mosque from its doves.*

As is the way with conquerors, the desecration of the mosque was blamed upon the rebel. In the literature of the Umayyads, this man came to be known as: *the allower*, or, *he who allowed the forbidden to happen*. After all, wasn't it he who desecrated the Shrine by taking refuge there?

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The soldiers ordered us to leave

...the city encircled...drove the insurgents into the Euphrates

(fragment found before or after Homer)