

Mideast of the Briar Patch

by Vickie Cimprich

1973, Paris

*Dans les parcs, dans le Métro
aux Château de Vincennes,
toujours en français,
Chaarie Kamal
proposes marriage.*

*Hélène Australienne et moi
are eating our ice cream cones,
bitching about the ubiquitous
Arab mashers.*

Lonely, bored, horny
in the Tuilleries Gardens,
social skills finely honed
nowhere near girls his own age,
a person comes near to chat us up.
Regardless of oil deals, another's feelings,
imperially irritable and infantile,
I smash my cone
in his face.

1976, Lees Junior College, Jackson, Kentucky

Only 200 some students enrolled
in this backwater school
and 12 of them international.

The coach steers ballplayers
from Maggofin, Perry, Knott Counties
away from my remedial comp. class,
and it fills with Japanese and Iranians.

Manoucher wears his pin stripes daily.
John Ouladi asks me home for dinner.
His Breathitt County teen bride
serves tasty marinated meat.
We discuss the Shah, our classes.
In May, he gets his C regardless.

1982, U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament

The Palestinian I shook hands with
on 48th Street is somewhere
in this joyful parade of 800,000.

(Somewhere too, the Antwerp rabbi
 who gave me a Swiss watch
 when I didn't have the time of day.)

1990, Gulf War

The morning radio
 smart-bombs an Iraqi woman
 out of her shelter and
 into our house.
 Desert Storm
 is scaring the baby out of her
 four months early.
 Our bedroom carpet
 from Reza Palavi Tehran
 absorbs the blood.

2001, Session on the Abrahamic Faiths

Il hamduhl Allah, I say
 to Dr. Farid Esack at the greeting of peace,
 relieved that
 my pronunciation isn't too hard
 to get around.

2004, Istanbul

A parrot catches to his cage my
 dazing forward to the Blue Mosque.
 Mr. Ergun sweeps out from his booth
 to translate, and append:
*O your eyes! how full of soul are your eyes,
 full of soul. You must let me give you a coffee.*
 Plenty vendors are around. I'm safe enough
 to sip and purr

You must teach my husband to speak English.