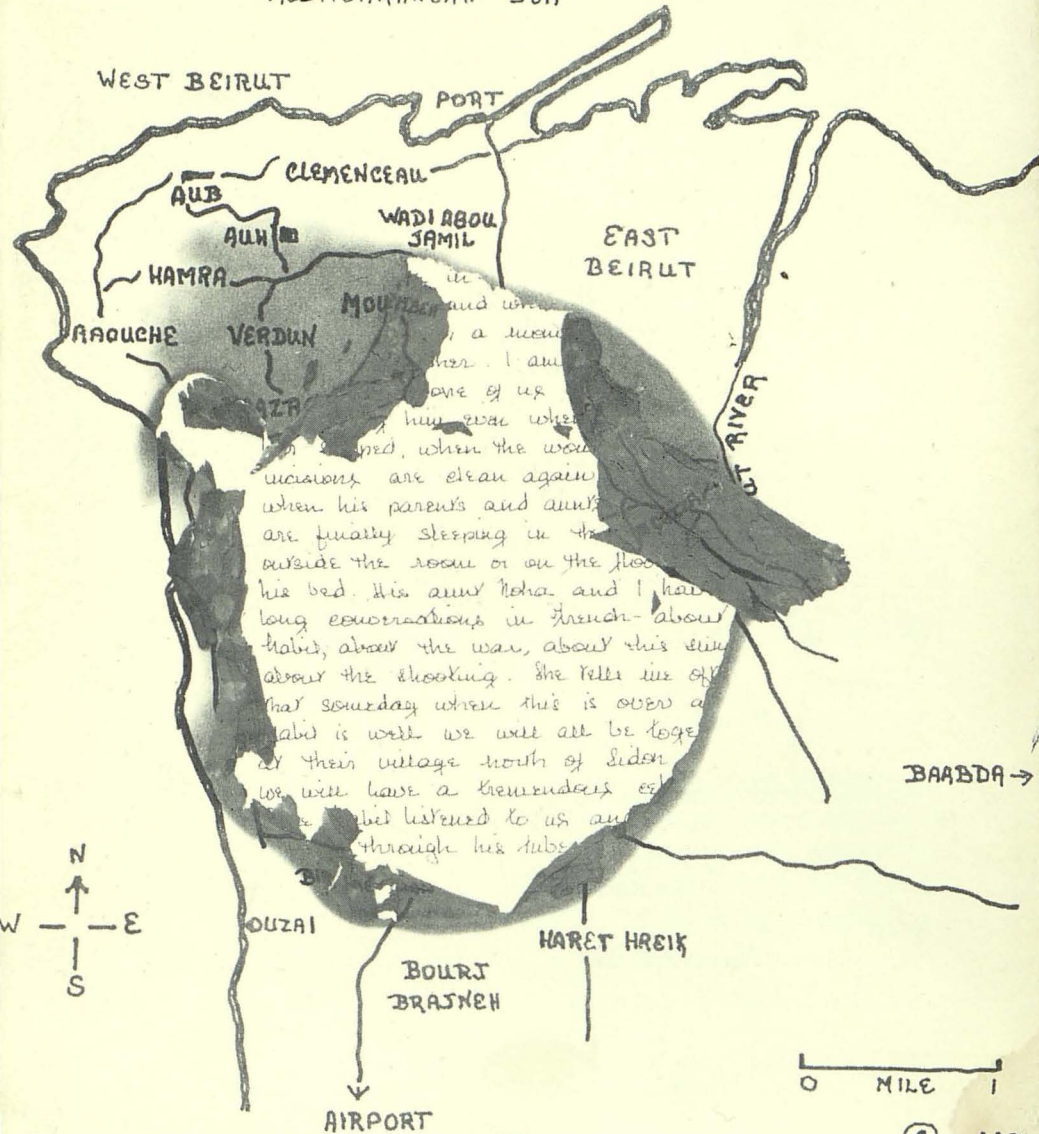


MEDITERRANEAN SEA



## TO GO TO BERBIR

— A Journey and a War —

Jill Drew



## SINISTER WISDOM 26

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## Introduction

*Sinister Wisdom* has published continuously more or less on schedule for eight years collections of writings and art by women - identified - women about women's experience. This special issue *SW 26* — though clearly by a woman about her experience — breaks this pattern of collectivity, many voices, various forms; and we want to explain why.

We met the author through the mails, first through poems she sent us — which appear in *SW 25* —; then through a correspondence which sprang up, trading despair, inspiration, and book titles; and, finally, in person. She talked about a book — a journal she had kept while working as a nurse in Beirut during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 — and we asked to see it.

Reading the manuscript, both of us felt consumed, overtaken by these words we now place before you. We found the power of the writing impossible to disentangle from the urgency of the content. We also realized that an honest book about a highly polarized situation such as the Middle East is hard to get published, and we wanted this book available as soon as possible. Thus we break the pattern of *SW* (and what are patterns for if not occasional disruption?) and offer as a special issue Jill Drew's Beirut journal.

*To Go To Berbir* is a journal kept by an American nurse trained in trauma, compelled by her liberation politics as well as her sense of human decency to leave her job, house her child, and go to Beirut. This journal is a powerful, deeply compassionate, angry book about her work in the American Hospital, life in a city seared by war, hours spent in the Palestinian refugee camps with people who became her beloved friends; and about her search for these friends after the massacres. Those who survived asked her to tell these stories. She does so because to do less would deny the love they shared, would belittle the lives she worked exhaustively to save. Jill Drew is angry because anger is due, fluid and dramatic because she is driven by the need to bring attention to catastrophe, and — amazingly — funny because nothing escapes her notice: not how peculiarly human beings behave during war, not how we must laugh sometimes or die from sorrow.

This is not an easy book to read. Not for any of us. It is explicit because war is explicit and Jill does not wish any of us to hide from that fact. It is essential if we care to know the human stories behind the political events. It should be read for the sake of *our* humanity, our understanding that to end this war — to end any war — we must begin with knowing that bombs tear human bodies beyond repair, that invasion destroys the fabric of culture, that murder implants revenge for generations to come.

There will be anguish: especially for Palestinian, Lebanese, Arab people: Lebanon is still torn apart; the Palestinian women and children who were not destroyed by the massacres still live in camps, impoverished and vulnerable. But this book offers more than the grim human facts of war. It offers friends clothed in the author's love. It reminds us that — amidst the terror — jokes are made, food is prepared, children play, fighters show off, chickens scratch for food under the table, and people resist. So if this book mourns the suffering it also honors the courage, humor, pride, intelligence, and — above all — generosity of a people under siege. It was in Beirut, the city called the Jewel of the Middle East, that Jill promised her friends this book.

We have said this is not an easy book to read. For many Jews the word Israeli has been a word of joy, dignity, and kinship. In this book the very word becomes painful: *Israeli* in this book — in this war — is a curse. This will be scary for Jews — all too familiar with curses; but *this* curse we need to hear. We need to know what Israel did in Lebanon, need to listen to a woman whose nearly hopeless job was to heal those wounded by American cluster bombs dropped by Israeli soldiers.

There are those — especially in the United States, where war rarely touches the majority — who unthinkingly support, or fail to oppose, invasions, bombings; forgetting who profits; ignoring who suffers. All of us had better understand these events. And we need to understand from a perspective not readily available to us. There was a vision opened to whites who worked in the civil rights and Black liberation movements, to Americans who grew close to Vietnamese people during the struggle to end the war in Viet Nam; who learned to see the deeds of American racism — and capitalism — and imperialism — through the eyes of those victimized by these systems. Those of us who have seen with these eyes are not the same afterwards — which is not to say we are purified or saved, but rather that we are set in a world where action must be taken.

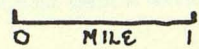
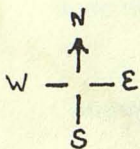
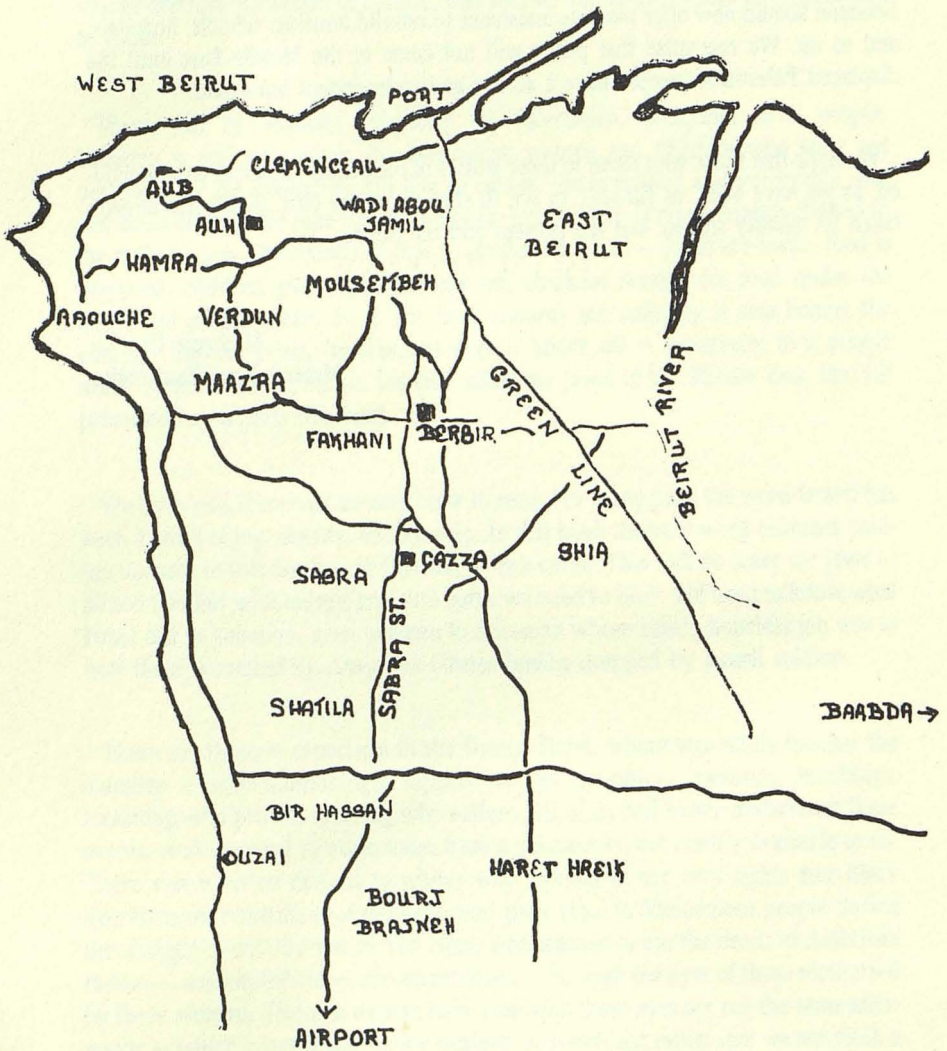
The question of what action to take is beyond the scope of Jill's journal, though we, the editors of *SW* believe that a first step is to support the desires of all the Lebanese people, the Palestinian people in Lebanon, and the Israeli Peace Movement, representing a majority of the Israeli people\* — *Israel out of Lebanon*. We think that our government which has contributed so much to the devastation of Lebanon should now offer massive assistance to rebuild housing, schools, hospitals, and so on. We recognize that peace will not come to the Middle East until the displaced Palestinian people have a secure and independent homeland.

We hope that those who listen to these stories of the people of Beirut will be moved, as we have been, as Jill was, to act, to change not the past, which has already taken its deathly shapes, but the present and the future.

Michaele Uccella  
Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

\* According to the independent daily *Ma'ariv* (2/24/84), 51.4% of the Israeli people want a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon; cited in *Jewish Currents* (April, 1984).

MEDITERRANEAN SEA





**TO GO TO BERBIR**

— A Journey and a War —

Jill J. Drew

*Beirut 1982*

## Acknowledgements

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Jill Drew

for Lebanon  
for her people  
for the women who kept her alive  
for Samira and for Sabra Street  
and  
in memoriam  
Nabil Toufic Mizher  
1963 - 1982

My country and if it does me harm is dear to me. My people if they refuse me they are still my loved ones. Our country was a beautiful green garden where the children used to play in its fields and the men used to work there whereas the women used to make the orange harvesting.

- unknown refugee child, Middle East

"I will wait for you" goes beyond death and is the deepest expression of the fact that faith and hope may pass but that love will remain forever. "I will wait for you" is an expression of solidarity which breaks through the chains of death.

- Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*

4 June

Listen to the women.

Today at a forum at the United Nations, the women from Hiroshima and Nagasaki speaking of the summer of 1945.

Listen.

*I was not at my father's house the day the bomb fell on my city. I was in another part of the town. But I will tell you about the terrible light and the heat which burned my body and my clothing, and there were fires all around. There were no hospitals for us afterwards and there were no ambulances and few doctors. When someone tried to help me, I ran away. Everyone was burned or burning. I went home alone to find my parents and they told me they had been buried under the house. In my country it is the custom to bury the dead with their relatives so I began to dig for my mother and my father. A neighbor who had survived brought me a wheelbarrow to put the pieces of my parents, but after that no one helped. For it was my job to do. I never found all of my mother even though I lifted many stones. I was thirteen years old then.*

Listen to a horribly-scarred woman from the Tokyo Teachers' Union.

*. . . I am here to tell you that I promised myself one promise: that I would survive my injuries and my radiation illness so that I could tell you about that war, that bomb. So that we might become sisters together against the destruction, so that together we might become witnesses for peace.*

6 June

It is nearly the end of a year of disarmament work for me now and I am listening — even in my dreams. The women from Japan are welcomed here and as they arrive to form the delegations for the June 12th Rally, they welcome me. A strange and loving reversal. And I am finally hearing women. Not organizations, not huge churches, not grandiose committees.

And not "Never Again." The words *Never Again* in this country have become a

call to arms. We can go back to past events and borrow slaughter: we can hide behind that, using the dead to justify more dead.

But the women from Japan are the living *No*. The scarred and crippled and honest *No More*. And they take me to lunch and give gifts to my children and they put their mangled arms around me and tell me,

"Say No."

7 June

Something is happening to Disarmament now. Suddenly I am not attending disarmament meetings but nuclear freeze meetings. The big compromise, the neighborhood committee compromise, the life compromise.

And now the surprise compromise: the invasion of Lebanon by Israel — backed by the United States government. Even tonight peace workers are stalking out of meetings all over this city. It has made me miserable to speak of peace when American bombs are falling on another country. It frightens me to hear disarmament workers — friends and colleagues — accuse us of being anti-Semitic when we object to aggression.

Shall I pretend none of this is happening? Shall I lure the dragon down to the basement with false promises and go ahead and have the dinner party after all? If we bustle about in the kitchen long enough and serve enough wine and chat a whole lot, we will not notice the growling beneath the floorboards and we will not remark upon the fact that the crystal on the table shivers a bit every time he moves around just below our feet. The emperor has his clothes, the dragon doesn't live here anymore.

8 June

At the United Nations I am finding more witnesses, men and women who tell us stories — survivor stories, war stories, genocide stories. Elie Wiesel knows all about that: "Tell the story, tell the story." Even my neighbors — now that they have found out I am working for peace — are repeating their stories: how they got out of Frankfurt, of Crakow, of Belsen. Even Christ told stories. Parables.

Now the women from Japan are parables.

Today the women from Sidon are parables.

There is a children's exhibit at the U.N. on the "Tree of Life." Amidst all the paintings and drawings of all those trees was one of a little girl in a red fat dress against a blue background and she had written, "The Tree of Life is ME!"

15 June

All that time we had been working so hard for disarmament, for so long and with such concentration, and while over half a million people from all over the world gathered in this city to share, to grow, to witness, to stand together and march beside one another and to demand peace — for all that faith and love, Lebanon has descended upon us like vengeance.

Which takes me right back to the fifties, to Hungary and that invasion, writing editorials for my hometown paper, begging kids in my high school to protest. And ten years later, standing in front of the Federal Building in Albuquerque pulling boys off recruitment buses, working in the underground to get them to Canada, raging against hospital bombings in Hanoi. Christmas bombings. But it was not just the hospitals. Shortly thereafter there was the Sinai Campaign and one of my friends — also a mother of three children — came running into a school classroom and she was shouting for joy over the bombing and the destruction around the Suez. Where there were lots of refugee camps.

I am beginning to wonder where I am coming from. Would my sister from Tokyo consider me a witness? Am I always going to be commiserating and never confronting, oozing compassion and always compromising, my voice taking on that lower-toned, steady-as-it-goes note of warmed-up sympathy for a friend, a lover, a patient, a child; for my country's inherent greed and intolerance towards other beliefs, other systems, other anythings? My woman from Tokyo is not a parable: she is the truth. I am the parable for what I should not be. For I am tolerating the intolerable, hanging around the corner bar where there is a television, watching the refugees from Sidon, the women and the children; watching West Beirut and the Israeli-American-financed blockade, watching a bulldozer digging a pit for the dead in Tyre, watching the fires, and losing my humanity.

25 June

How many homeless, how many dead, and the wounded — how many? My telephone bill is in the hundreds now and I am trying to get into West Beirut. First there are calls to the Foreign Relations Committee whereupon someone puts me on 'hold' for fifteen minutes, then calls to the Palestine Congress — 'hold' for ten minutes. And I rush to meet with the Palestinians in my old neighborhood in New Jersey, to have lunch with people at the U.N. My daughter stares at me with huge owl-eyes as I mumble incessantly about the news, or lack of it, from the Middle East. And my friends do not listen anymore now after how many cups of coffee and increasingly badly-cooked suppers while I am telling them about bodies in ruins, children in the rubble, water being switched off, and food supplies withheld and no help will be forthcoming because the Israelis have closed borders, slaughtered the

Syrians, taken the Damascus road, and maybe today have destroyed West Beirut.

It goes on — this repetition day after day, night after night. The nightmare I don't want to have comes back, continuing in my mind whether I am awake or asleep. Listen to the awful dream — of fires and light in the darkness, of dirt and dust, of heat and open wounds, of ruined buildings and fleeing strangers, of guns and blood, and of a child sitting on a stretcher — a child charred black from the flames. What if that boy were my boy? What if the little girl climbing around Ain el-Helweh ruins were Sarah or Eve? But then my children are Anglo children, almost suburb American kids: it can't happen here — not to us. We don't believe in guns: we just pay for them.

I beg my neighbor's television tonight to see the news. What news? A skyline, if you can call it that, of West Beirut — lots of smoke. Arik Sharon telling reporters that the PLO is finished. I save all the editorials, spend money on scrub shirts, and wait — on that bent edge of some madness — for the waiting to be over, for the men in the New Jersey Arab Quarter to call and tell me, "O.K., get ready. You can go now." And yet another day goes by for all of us who are medically qualified to get into West Beirut.

But there is no word. Just more bombs and garbled statistics. And each afternoon I am back to the mumble-sick-coffee routine, having been on hold all morning long, all my life long, bitching and whining at meetings and potlucks, saying and doing just enough to make people cross and put out (*Might I remind you, Ms. Drew, that this meeting is being held to plan the steering committee for the Nuclear Freeeeeze and not, as you seem to think, to discuss the behaviour of Daniel Berrigan and the dismantling of nosecones. Frigid pause. Now if you would like at our next meeting we might vote on a sub-committee to report back to the group at some later date. . .* The words *Ms.* and *Freeeeeze* are pronounced with just enough hiss and slime respectively to make me look anxiously at the floor and to tuck my feet up on the chair.). And there I am — back again, dropping the flag and rushing home to make chicken soup and texas tacos, hiding behind motherhood and redchecked tablecloths, Chablis and clean sheets, camping trips and neighborhood clean-up committees, love affairs and auto loans, overbreed and overtime, feast and famine.

Until now — when I can not hide behind anything any longer, my children have lived long enough with me to be tough alone, and there is a charcoaled phosphorus-burned child in a city I have read about all my life, there is a family carrying bundles on a deliberately-strafed highway, and there is a small hospital named Berbir which is holding out against the interminable shelling and there is a doctor asking for help for the wounded and the burned.

Every day my country pays for another floor of Berbir Hospital to be shelled. I pay for that.



29 June

Lance Morrow, in an essay for *Time Magazine*, has written:

*If the fate of Lebanon moves us, it is because the country has become a late 20th century fable of the end of civilization. The story of Lebanon carries at least a slight reverberation of every aboriginal myth of the fall from paradise. One feels an eerie premonition and vulnerability before the spectacle. What happened to Lebanon seems both a reversion and a forecast. It is a glimpse of the skull beneath the skin of civilization.*

Listen. A letter printed in two Israeli newspapers — *Ha'aretz* and the *Jerusalem Post* — written by the son of a Warsaw Ghetto fighter about his son:

*My son Raz, my beloved son, and his friends were sent with their unit, in great haste and frenzied irresponsibility, to bloody battle to take the Beaufort. He was the first one to break through the trenches leading to the fortress. He fought valiantly and there he found his death.*

*Thus was severed the chain of unending Jewish generations, ancient and full of heroism and suffering, and thus was cut off the flowering of a life that was just beginning to blossom.*

*And thus they caused the destruction of my whole world.*

*Even before the blood was dry on the rocks of the mountain of Beaufort, Begin and Sharon hurried into their helicopters, surrounded by photographers, motion-picture cameras, and microphones, to declare and sound forth with vanity.*

*May my great pain pursue them forever — the suffering of a father in Israel whose world has been destroyed and the joy of his life destroyed in him forever.*

The end of civilization, the end of a world. Listen.

*Listen, the Israeli soldier said, I know you are tape-recording this but personally I would like to see them all dead. I would like to see all Palestinians dead because they are a sickness wherever they go. . . .And for us, I guess, I hope you understand this, the death of one Israeli soldier is more important than the deaths of even hundreds of Palestinians. . . .*

*Personally, I wouldn't mind seeing the Palestinians all dead and helping to do it.*

The end of civilization, the end of so many worlds, the end of an entire people. Perhaps we would like to kill all the Arab people in the long run. A priest in my neighborhood spoke today on genocide. Jewish genocide, Bengali genocide, Central American genocide — shall we go on? Until a few fat cats prowl the earth and until none of us are left.

I am not just hearing about genocide — I am watching it happen. Tonight.

15 July

Are we junkies on death? World War II never taught us anything, Hiroshima didn't, and Auschwitz seems to have failed. We have a permanent My Lai mentality. The music of the Lebanese dance of death is our own tune. Today my son Simon sat next to me listening to public radio and he put his hands over his ears.

"Mama, why have they done these things to the people in Beirut? Why would anyone want to turn the water off?"

Even obvious answers take on meaningless cruelty. So I said nothing. But I watch him now and wonder if he will live to be an adult and if he does, what kind of answers will he accept.

31 July

The problem is finding meaning to anything. The fear is that there is none: none to the relationships I set such value upon, none to the concept of peace, none to Beirut, none to that small hospital called Berbir — which is still being shelled and everyone goes down to the basement. My sleeplessness, even my dreams, come from that relentless search for meaning, from trying to make things connect and relate and endure. Whenever I suspect things are meaningless, I go half-crazy in my head: that emotional and behavioural anarchy I see in people and in this war is more than I can tolerate. And so I worry about it all the time, shake it in the back of my mind, fight for it or against it or both depending on my own confusion, dream about it, isolate my whole being with it. And if I am lucky, things fall into place. Ideas lining up and connecting like railroad cars, so that after all the effort I can tell myself the meaning of a relationship, the importance of peace, of what Beirut means for us all.

I leave for Amman and Cyprus on Wednesday, 4 August. World Council of Churches. I am afraid to write more lest it all fall apart.

3 August

This afternoon there was a service of appointment for me at the World Council office. The children were there. Lots of other people were there, most of whom I did not know but all of whom were supportive. Bishop Maximus from Pittsburgh was there — a large, bearded Greek bear. He had pictures of Beirut, of the basement hospital in the Near East School of Theology, of the wounded, of the children. And of the Israeli gunboats. Simon liked the gunboats the best.

"I think I would like a picture of you, Bishop," I told him.

"You would," he thought for a moment and shuffled around in the stack of photographs. "But let me find one that I like."

Big hugs all round. Afterwards Simon went to a side office, commandeered a fat electric typewriter, and began a story headed *Dateline: Beirut*.

5 August

The flight. The beginning of the geographical journey. As today crosses over and slides into tomorrow and as I watch in the darkness for the first lightening of the sky, I am crossing over and becoming a different human being. On this flight someone has called the U.S.A. "the other side." A man from Amman stopped briefly beside my seat and has referred to Cyprus as "the other side."

"What then," I asked him, "is Lebanon?"

"Lebanon," he raised the drink in his hand, "Lebanon is the other side of the Arab heart — no, the human heart."

Which about sums it up on this strange night. We are flying over Europe toward Vienna and I am falling asleep from the wine and from impatience: the sun will rise soon but I am not there yet.

Jordan. The Jordanian desert. The desert — watching it for as far as I can see, I am reminded of the desert of my western childhood — a landscape of endlessness and changing colours provided by the sky, where there was nothing to rely on but myself. I loved it then and I love it now. It governs the mind, proves the imagination. Watching in the desert goes on forever — when the eye gives up the mind takes over. Once I read it is the desert that gives the Arabs their pride and generosity, their courage and their passion.

I have remembered that for many years.

Three hours have gone by and I am sitting in a large corrugated tin building waiting for a plane to Cyprus. I am not even sure what day it is — due to the dif-

ference in time — but the sun is going down and soon it will be evening. At one point we were asked to board a bus and were then driven around the entire perimeter of the Amman airfield. A tour, I thought, peering out at the coffee-coloured sand and the low seedy apartment blocks. The road, the dust, the children playing on the dirt paths, the goats, the military uniforms — everything is that weakened coffee colour. There are pairs of soldiers everywhere with shortened rifles slung over their shoulders. In the desert area about the apartment blocks armoured track vehicles are parked strategically. The airport is surrounded by barbed wire. Outside this building someone has planted a small garden. The bartender leaped through the window not long ago to water it.

Those of us going to Cyprus were herded on to a plane and then herded off the plane which had faulty fuel lines. Now aboard the second airplane to Cyprus it looks as though we are going to get off the ground. People are arguing furiously over seating arrangements, women shouting and throwing pillows down the aisle. The pilot has been trying to make announcements for some time now: first he begins in Arabic, then switches to French as the tumult in the cabin increases in volume. So far he has managed the customary *Bon soir, mesdames et messieurs*, even in Greek. The to-do has awakened me somewhat. In my back pack there is a telex reading "Advise single traveler to take taxi to Hotel Asti Nicosia." I know nothing about the location of Nicosia or about Cypriot currency. My Greek consists of good morning, evening, night and the numbers from one to eleven.

The sky is enormous like a canopy and the wind like silk.

7 August

I have a room of my own in this small hotel and a balcony overlooks the neighbours' garden and a grape arbor. The medical team is here: most of them are from England. We have meetings often. There is a Danish major in charge of us all — he might well be from a Bergman film. I expect him to be wearing jodphurs and high boots with small spurs and on occasion carrying a riding crop. We walked together to the hotel after dinner. He does not hold much hope for Lebanon and less for the Palestinians. Fighters or civilians. I think he cares very much about people, but he does not talk a great deal.

Which is a blessing: everyone else does. Incessantly and often about the press and publicity which makes me wonder about the motives for going to Lebanon.

I stay in my room a lot and swat at the mosquitos. It is a wonderful feeling to have a room of my own.

We play a waiting game here in the Cyprus heat. Waiting for the ship which will take us to the port city of Junieh, waiting for permission to pass through the gunboat patrols, waiting for a ceasefire — however temporary, waiting to go to West

Beirut. Waiting for Berbir. I have heard no news of Berbir. Some of this group have never heard of Berbir.

In Nicosia I spent an afternoon prowling around the U.N. barricades and watching the armoured cars. Everything seems asleep in the sun: I am sleepy, Cyprus is asleep, this town might be giving me narcolepsy. It reminds me of the town in a story by García Márquez:

*. . . a settlement with miserable and burning streets where the goats committed suicide from desolation when the winds of misfortune blew.*

It must be the Turks. Or the time change.

9 August

On the docks in Larnaca. It is midnight. We are standing around with various bags and suitcases and waiting before a customs shed where, under a hanging lightbulb, three military men are sitting at a card table. They have our passports and our exit cards and one of them has just come and collected money from each of us. Way down the quais is our ship the *Sol Giorgios*. Now our papers are handed to us. No one talks much as we walk slowly toward the ship.

The crossing. We are heading directly for the moon. I never thought we would get this far. I have found a bench pad and have put it down on the deck to sleep on. There are lots of people messing about, there is a food stand on board selling awful meat sandwiches and beer, and they have turned on a television toward the bow. Someone else has passed out blankets. We have cleared the harbour bar and we will be in Lebanon in one hundred and twenty-five miles — a figure I arrived at by measuring the seaspace on a map with my thumbnail. The moon seems to be on fire. Like West Beirut.

Morning. This is a large ship. There are at least ninety people on board. It is early, the sky is like an eggshell, and the food stand is again selling fried meat sandwiches. And beer, most of which is being consumed by the newsmen and the television crews. I wonder where they have been the past two months. They look too wellfed to have been in Beirut. One of them, small and bearded and inquisitive, has been lurking by my deck chair and has asked me if I were a Turk. Really.

The Israeli warships are off on the horizon on both sides of us. We have been on this particular patch of sea for hours and Junieh is only twenty miles away. Gun-

boats appear and disappear as the sun rises higher in the sky. No one is using a camera now. Finally a long speedy gunboat crosses the bow and the engines start up. It has taken us fifteen hours to go the one hundred and twenty-five miles. The mountains appear over the harbour. Close to shore there are small pleasure boats moored and people are waterskiing. I wonder why they are playing during a war.

Evening. The medical volunteer group has been brought to this East Beirut hospital, the *Saint-Georges*, and we are waiting to receive clearance to pass into the western part of the city. My room is on one of the upper floors of the building and the balcony overlooks the rooftops to the south and west. Earlier the Israeli pilots were bombing to the south, but now in the darkness the warships have moved in to the shore and the shelling has begun from the sea. The sky lights up grisly-pink against the night and the bombing is dull but insistent. Then there is a lull, then it begins again. Smoke is rising in huge columns to the south — dark above the rooftops. There are flares being sent up: the flares make the sky rose and I can watch the anti-aircraft missiles cross the brightness.

I wish I knew the Lebanese who have spoken to us. "*C'est triste, c'est triste,*" one of the nurses here kept telling us.

Midnight. I am watching from the small balcony now. When I am not crawling back through the doorway to duck behind the wall beneath the window. The smoke from the bomb fires is much heavier and is still rising — darkness upon darkness. The rockets make a queer whistling sound and I keep looking behind me. There is a tremendous amount of shelling to the southwest, the smoke is thick like flannel. Sometimes the windows of this hospital shake ever so slightly. It is the glass I fear — flying glass which might keep us from getting to West Beirut. I have moved the mattress off the bed and have hauled it over to the door away from the window. The shelling continues, the fires are burning, and I have a feeling I am in a dream, that maybe I have read and thought so much about Beirut that tonight is just a projection of my imagination.

The Dream. I can recall the dream now as I am watching the firelit sky. I am sitting on the ground in a cinderblock house with one window and the doorway open diagonally from me. My legs are straight out in front of me and I am leaning against the corner walls of the room. There are other people sitting next to me along the wall, but I do not know their names from the past. One of them is wrapped up in a dirty white cotton shawl — only her eyes are showing. The light in the dream is the same light as I am watching now — the light from the flames. The one sitting next to me is a young man in combat clothes. I can feel his body against my side. His elbow is jammed against my ribs, his knees are digging into my legs, and the harshness of bone upon bone is uncomfortable. We are all staring out through the

doorway. Then there are men in the doorway blocking the firelight and they have guns. I push against the corner walls and the boy next to me pushes against me. I am choking from the blood in my mouth and throat and there is nowhere to spit it out except on myself and I know we are all shot now that they have found us and no one gets out of that little house alive.

Is that what is happening now to someone? Are the people under the fires hiding in ruined houses with strangers pushed against them? Maybe this is how lives end in reality — suddenly in firelit darkness, lying next to someone whose name no one knows but whose body causes pain with its weight and closeness.

10 August

The crossing. This entire journey is made up of crossings, this one from East to West Beirut being the most interesting one of all. It was all arranged as we were told last night. A van would arrive at *Saint-Georges* in the morning and all of us would go with the van. There are seventeen of us, I think, and we would be taken to the Church Council office in West Beirut and from there to our respective assignments.

This morning at *Saint-Georges* we were briefed by Jean-Pierre from the Council. He stuck a large map of all of Beirut on the wall and traced a roundabout route just east of Bourj Brajneeh, Sabra and Shatila. We messed around the hospital all morning and after much delay, the van arrived. People stood around the hospital entrance and in the courtyard in small groups, saying hello, saying goodbye, peering about for luggage, running back upstairs for more luggage, getting in and out of the van. I sat as close to the driver as possible.

A jeep with Phalangist soldiers was waiting at the courtyard gate — the escort. A door slammed, the soldiers sat back in the jeep, we were going at last. The jeep led us quickly through the eastern sector of the city and up a hill where to the right we could see downwards to the western side. Across the distance puffs of smoke rose up like mushrooms. We pulled into a service station: the jeep waited at the roadside.

"Gas," the driver explained as he got back into the van, "is available here and we can afford it. In the west I will drain the tank for other people to use — saving just enough to return here. Then I will fill it up once more."

We started up again. The jeep was still in the lead. The buildings looked damaged. A few old cars littered the road. Traffic diminished. The Israeli lines. The jeep vanished. A soldier waved at us passing us through. There was no city here anymore: there was a bombed out road and the van lurched from one pothole and crater to another, from sandbag barriers to piles of ruined cars and overturned trucks. On the roadside two soldiers watched us from behind an anti-aircraft gun. I stared at them and one of them raised his repeating rifle and pointed it at the van,

following our progress. How useless, I thought, to be shot right now — then suddenly he put the gun down and smiled at me as we passed.

The driver wrenched the steering wheel. "We are driving like this because of the mines," he explained, and then — turning quickly up a narrow sidestreet, "We cannot go that other way. Right now there are snipers."

But we had reached West Beirut. The houses and apartment blocks are rubble and empty hulks in that neighborhood just west of the Green Line — the boundary that divides East from West Beirut — the road in many places barricaded with more burned cars and twisted trucks. We passed by the eastern edge of the three camps. The destruction was worse — a pine forest burned and broken, a cemetery with shattered stone markers, and everywhere piles of blasted sand, dirt, stone, metal, half-houses. Palestinian territory. A few people wandered about — mostly soldiers, a few kids.

We went over a hill and down a narrow street. The houses were standing here but many of the windows were broken. The van pulled into an alley. The air was filled with smoke from burning garbage. We stopped. People began talking all at once, giving orders, dumping suitcases out in the dirt. I breathed the smoke and heard the loud rattling of a generator nearby. Somewhere I could hear horses whinny almost frantically.

I wanted to stop then. There was a small house across from the parking place — a house in ruins. The generator was outside of it. I wanted the racket to stop and I wanted to sit in the doorway of the little house, just for a moment to gather my mind together. I did not want to mill about with any more luggage or any more medical people and I did not want to smile small sociable smiles at any more British or Dutch. I really wanted to think about that soldier with the gun who had smiled at me and I wanted to find out about the broken pine forest.

"Come along, pet." It was the Englishman Phillip speaking, "get your things together." I stared stubbornly at the ground and then took the suitcase.

We went up to the office and everyone sat around. There was an Egyptian with a fixed smile to whom everyone asked questions, there was someone else who delivered a talk on refugees and on the difference between a rat (with a picture of a rat) and a louse (with a picture of a louse). I took notes and thought about the people I had seen on the stairway in the building — a family with kids sleeping on blankets. One of the men had handed me a cigarette and told me, "*Ah'len, ah'len.*" It is the word meaning "*welcome.*"

We visited the American University Hospital. There are hundreds of refugees from the southwest part of the city, from Sidon, from everywhere living outside the hospital buildings. Inside the main entrance at the information desk, young boys and older soldiers checked in their weapons and hand grenades. Someone must have devised a system of labeling grenades: otherwise, how do you find yours when you leave?

We were shown the Emergency Room — very busy — and then introduced to the



Director of Nurses. She looks like the Director of Nurses everywhere — total white. Stiff with starch and blueing and nursing hose and shoe polish and nursing cap and not very happy. Concerned, though. I am never reassured by a Director of Nurses' concern, however, regardless of the setting. I always have a sneaking suspicion the concern is for an image: a sort of non-syphilitic Florence Nightingale — no blood, no screams, not very much heavy pain medication, lots of clean and authoritarian doctors, clean sheets, clean tidy charts, clean policy notices, and clean souls. That's not fair, I know.

Those of us working here were shown to our rooms off in another building which we reached by going through a long tunnel. "You will always be safe here," I was assured. But again I wanted to sit in the little ruined house. I could feel my perceptions regressing into mulishness. The dormitory is quiet. The nurses here are from the Philippines — on contract and then stuck here during the war. The Dutch girls live downstairs and my room is empty. If I live here, I will not be able to go outside, will have to be in by a certain hour.

We were shown to Lahoute, Fathi Arafat's hospital in the basement of the Near Eastern School of Theology. No air, generators for small fans, lots of amputees, no water, no staff. Families helping, volunteers helping. People talked to us all the time. Finally we sat down in an office and Fathi Arafat came in, walking with that incredible confidence just like his brother, looking and speaking just as he does. He told us what conditions were with no food, no water, limited supplies. We met Eugene Maklouf, the director of the Red Crescent in Lebanon, pale, thin and deliberate. Right now, under these conditions of extreme hardship, the two men are truly brave. Unbelievable, I thought, and rushed to volunteer with them on my days off. But part of me is standing back. Do I really believe all this? I never quite believe anyone. Not yet anyhow.

Now it is late at night. I have begged the powers that be to let me live outside the hospital dorm. It is isolating being the only American in this group. Sometimes it gives me great anxiety.

One of the Germans remarked when he heard I would be working at the American Hospital, "I would never work in a place like that — fascists."

Wounded are wounded, I wanted to tell him, but I was too frightened by the man. That kind of hatred exhausts me. Many of the volunteers seem to be here primarily for political reasons: they will not say who sent them.

Come to think of it, I am tired of being a groupie. I would like very much to start working, to get involved with the work, which is why I came here. I have never done well with groups and certainly not with dorms: I become a cantankerous infant, backsliding past all essential stages of development, whining and tossing toys about.

The Israelis are flying tonight, the shelling is to the south. I would really like to go to Berbir and I am memorizing the map of West Beirut so I can get there. But no one has mentioned Berbir Hospital at all. I will get there even if it is destroyed.

11 August

Meetings, meetings, meetings. At the University Hospital, at Lahoute, at the office. Taking notes on lectures — notes I will read later and wonder why I wrote those things.

But I have learned my way about the neighborhood. I watched families waiting at the water tap outside Lahoute and carrying large jerry cans to get water. There was a Red Crescent van at the corner distributing staple food: the health administrators here in this city have it all very well organized. People are capable of doing extraordinary things when life is on the line. And in West Beirut, it is.

The family who lives in the doorway opposite St. Mary's Church gave me a glass of sweet tea this morning. They are living there because it is too crowded in the church basement across the way. There are 30,000 refugees in West Beirut now. Our neighborhood is occupied and protected by the PLO *Al Fateh*.

This afternoon an office man took us through the campus of the American University. Lovely — like Santa Barbara — with stone buildings and red-tiled rooftops on a hill overlooking the sea. The trees are even the same — oleander, banyan, cypress, and palm. The militias are always involved in gunfire down at the coastline. There are hundreds of refugees living under the trees and in many of the buildings. Hand-written posters hung from the trees and strung out on the wrought-iron fences read: REAGAN HAS KILLED OUR CHILDREN. WE GIVE THANKS — FRANCE HAS SUPPORTED US IN OUR STRUGGLE FOR LIFE. They are all signed *Ayoub*. Everyone we met was friendly.

Tonight I am not living in the hospital dorm. Someone from the office has arranged for me to live in a new place, an apartment up the street from the office near the little ruined house. The horses I had heard live in that house.

I took my gear over to the new apartment and asked the office man, "Whose place is this?"

"Oh," he looked vaguely about him, "just someone's."

*Malesh*, as they say. I love the Middle East. No one ever tells you anything. Maybe I will learn to stop asking.

The apartment is large with two bedrooms, a livingroom, a diningroom, a kitchen, and various washrooms. Lots of balconies. The furniture is meant to look old and the effect is middle-class, middle-age, middle-secure. There are clothes in all the wardrobes. The woman who lived here once is older and very large: I tried her coat on. There was a daughter. One of the neighbors told me she thinks the daughter has died. There are grandchildren, too. Their photographs are underneath

the glass top of the sideboard. There is no electricity, no water, and no food. We can eat and wash at the hospital.

One of the families in the office building was cooking today and the woman offered me some rice. I watched her put her children to bed on the landing — two to a blanket and candles burning by their feet. Nightlights. Just as I had for Eve and Sarah when they were small. Rituals women perform. In exchange for the rice, I went to the corner and got some mosquito coils from the cigarette man and brought them to her. Now we are friends even though I do not know her name.

The planes have been bombing throughout the day to the south. There is a good deal of gunfire in the streets but I think it has always been there. Phillip the Englishman is sleeping in the bed next to mine. He will be working in field hospitals and taking care of the burned. There are two Italian women living here also — wonderful activist types doing god-knows-what and photojournalism. They make me laugh with their levis and their afros. They have organized a women's march through Beirut to protest the siege and they have helped me — explaining about life here, where to buy food, and how to be clever with water. They are going back to Rome in two days. I will miss them.

Tomorrow I start work — thank God.

12 August

We had set the alarm clock for six this morning, but we awoke at five to the screaming of the planes overhead, to the air heavy with dust and smelling of burning. And underlying it all, a queer sense of stillness as though all living things were asleep. On the way to the hospital, the people in the streets from yesterday were huddled in hallways and stairwells. The cigarette man had vanished and his barrow stood empty on the corner.

It was a strange day to begin work. Very few people arrived on the ward. The nurse in charge today was a young boy from the Philippines who is usually in Intensive Care. He is excellent. There is a nursing degree student named Hanadie who is super-competent. Two LPNs are working — one from Najjar and one from Makassed, both these hospitals being closed now. The bombing went on all day. I stood at the window with a young boy and his family and we watched mesmerized as plane after plane went across the sky, the bombs catching the sunlight as they fell, the anti-aircraft rockets going up and disappearing in silent puffs of white smoke. After each explosion, I would try to imagine from the map what had gotten hit. Some of the explosions seemed so close — I thought Lahoute had been a target.

There are forty-four patients on the ward: forty-two of them are wounded fighters or civilian casualties. Of the other two, one is a child in for an orthopedic correction and the other is a spooky, heavy-set man in a private room. His diagnosis is "cervical loss." I think the loss, if indeed that is the case, is more than cervical. He

lumpers about his room like a large iguana. In Pyjamas. Someone told me he "works in security" as some sort of guard. I wonder whose security. I surely would not want him taking charge of mine. Neatly dressed military men in beige uniforms visit him often. He has a lot of power. People wait on him too eagerly. He takes a lot of Valium-at-the-bedside. He gives me the creeps: I don't believe a word of him.

The fighters and many of the civilian casualties have retinues of comrades and family to help them — soldiers and young boys and some women who sleep on the floor and the balconies, fix coffee and extra food, help with baths, run errands, and help us too. Without them the place would be a disaster.

When I left at four, the bombing had not stopped. The hospital basement was crammed with people. The children were quiet and the women pale in the candlelight. Someone stopped me as I started out into the street.

"Here, here," she whispered, "stay here now," and she showed me a place with a blanket on the floor. But I went out anyhow — to see if Lahoute were still there.

It is.

The casualties brought in this evening were mainly women and children. "Military terrorist targets," the Israelis have told us.

14 August

Names are becoming faces to me. The tenth floor casualties range in age from eleven to thirty-six. Amputees, missing bones, burns. Today I did dressings with a Lebanese fourth-year resident who was informative. Being informative is unusual. Many people are not and all questions regarding the patients, the families, or even the events surrounding the injuries are answered with a shrug. As though people had been asleep all summer. Again, not fair. War in this land has gone on for eight years — people are tired.

"How," I asked when we reached a bedside, "did this happen?"

"This young man was at Summerland down the coast," the doctor began. "As you can see, he was present during heavy attack. See here — the ulna is missing for the most part. He will be bone grafted." He paused while I poured peroxide and saline over the half an arm. "Now if you will hand me that packet —"

"And this boy," he said as we arrived at another bed, "was in a no-retreat zone at Ouzai." He looked down at the child named Hassan — little Hassan, this one with the face of a twelve year old and is sixteen as opposed to big Hassan who is eighteen and, having stepped on a cluster bomblet outside his house in Bourj Brajneh, lost his leg just below the hip.

"Hassan illustrated what is now known in medicine as the Reagan-Begin syndrome." The doctor began to wash the stump of little Hassan's right leg, his left being in a long leg cast. "The Reagan-Begin syndrome consists of injuries requiring a thoracotomy, laparotomy — to repair the shell and shrapnel damage, and a

traumatic amputation of one or both legs. If there is a remaining leg, we usually go in and do an exploration of the femoral vessels on that side with some sort of anastomosis. Then we put in a rod or a plate to secure the shattered femur itself."

"Of course," he continued as we went to Mohammed's room, "the full-blown syndrome will include burns from either phosphorus or blast heat. This man," he motioned toward Mohammed, "sustained the blast injuries to his arm where, again—" he unwrapped the dressings, "we have the missing bones." He started with the saline wash. "And as you can see, the burns were sustained on his legs."

True, true. It is a miracle Mohammed "sustained" his legs at all. Both are half-charred, bloody, oozing and stuck to the bedding.

It went on and on. Patient after patient. Disarticulation amputations of the shoulders, double leg amputees, shrapnel abdominal wounds still open and draining, sixty per cent of a body burned to the second and third degree, gaping holes like shark bites from hunks of burning metal, missing joints from phosphorus, hands gone.

The young resident told me, "You will not see heavy thoracic injuries or head wounds. None of those survive."

But now I know some of the names and faces. Farhat el-Sayyed, little Farhat, who has to be all of nineteen, with his shattered leg: *shrapnel injury right lower extremity, entry mid-thigh with exit. Emergency Room shock with blood pressure 50 systolic, comminuted right femoral fracture, fracture right patella. Surgical exploration femoral vessels, freeing and end-to-end anastomosis of both superficial artery and vein.* . . . It goes on. Farhat is one of the luckier ones, but they have not repaired the shattered bones as of yet and he moves cautiously in the bed. His hair is always curly in the damp summer air and his eyes light up when I joke with him. Even when he begins the day with his head underneath the pillow and refuses to speak. I can reprimand him, "What's the matter with you, little boy? You have two legs."

He wiggles and comes out from underneath the pillow and grins at me.

His room-mate Abdallah is from the Sudan and is older. He has been burned and shrapnel-blasted to his face. His eyes are swollen. His amputation is a guillotine slice at the right shoulder but it is clean. The surgeons are doing plastic work with grafts to the wounds on his face. Abdallah is born black. As opposed to my patients who are burned black. Often it is hard to tell the difference. Abdallah is very independent: I have to ask him if he is in pain. I am learning Arabic for him because he speaks no other language. Under the circumstances, it is difficult for him to speak at all. He can walk about in the room and he takes care of Farhat. I admire him — he is quiet and strong and responsible and alone.

"How," I asked Dr. Eugene from the Red Crescent, "will you evacuate your wounded if you have to leave? Who will protect you?"

"Maybe God," he answered, "but God isn't in Lebanon."

The office I work for is giving the Palestinians heavy support now. I wonder how

weighted the support will be, who indeed will receive support, once the Israeli Defense Force gets in here.

15 August

Home to this requisitioned, dowdy-elegant apartment after working all day. There are two taps running on the days we have water, today not being one of them. There is comfortable heavy furniture and a bathroom and a kitchen and plants on the balcony overlooking a small side street cluttered with dusty never-used small cars and broken glass. Tonight I found a tin of Spanish sardines — "spiced" read the label — and I sat at the big diningroom table and had a cozy dinner. With candlelight and red wine. And the sound of occasional repeating rifles in the street.

But I seem to be losing my appetite for the most part. One night at the hospital they served rice with small animal tongues — the size, I thought then, of Beagle hounds' — and I haven't been very hungry since. Although another night, I went out to eat with two of the team and we had shaslik and hummus and I had no problems then.

But that was the night I met Khalil and Mohammed. Khalil works in the city and has sent his family to Anjar to stay with relatives. Mohammed runs a restaurant. The three of us sat together at a small table in the corner and drank wine and the two men talked endlessly about the war and Lebanon and life in Beirut.

When I left, Mohammed said, "If you ever need anything, just ask. It can be arranged. And I am always at my place. Remember, just ask."

I wonder if I will ever have to do that.

"To arrange" is a verb used beautifully in Lebanon. Ferial, the rather elegant ward clerk on 10-North told me the other day,

"Now I am going to arrange myself and go to visit my father."

16 August

Physicians in the United States who have spoken out against nuclear war are fond of telling an audience that one major burn patient will mobilize a great deal of time, staff, and supplies of any medical center. Phillip is running a field hospital with thirty burn patients and no running water. American University Hospital has running water for our patients. I would estimate that a third of these are major burn cases. We even have warm water for an hour or two each day. It is during the warm water time on the ward that we mobilize staff, as it were, and treat the burns. We have five major burn cases: the other floors and wards have more. Staff and time are limited.

I have already written about Mohammed Ismail who, sustaining both legs despite the blast injury, received burns of second and third degree from his feet to his abdomen. Each morning he is carried to a small chair with wheels. The blood and drainage from his legs leave a sticky trail by the bedside and into the hall to the tub room. Mohammed does not scream as he is assisted into the tub but the tears run down his face. His ankles and heels have huge holes in them. It looks as though someone had taken a fork to his legs. The nurses pull great hunks of dying flesh from his body and when I shut my eyes — and I often do because debridement is not my strength — I can hear his laboured breathing, the water running from the hose, and the snip, snip of the scissors. The bloody trail in the hall is worse on the return trip to his room where one of us has prepared the bed with sterile linen and pads to catch the drainage. When I bend down to apply the pasty white Silvadene cream to his legs and feet, the medicine combines with the blood and falls in large reddish blobs on the floor. The soles of his feet look like the soles of my shoes. Maybe his boots were burned into his skin. Once back in his bed, Mohammed shuts his eyes and whispers, "*Waja, waja.*" Pain, pain. We can give him Valium with his pain pills and eventually, he falls asleep from exhaustion.

Someone else, meanwhile, has put little Khalil in the tub room. Little Khalil is thirteen and has become so thin since June when he was caught in a car explosion on Verdun Street that he resembles a tall nine year old. His face is still blackened in places and he faces the debridement by retreating mentally from us all and by shouting occasionally. But he can walk and, except for the burns on one arm which have immobilized the joints, he recovers — a little each day even in the short time I have been here. We debride him with cotton to spare him pain. Sometimes he is able to do it himself.

While I am finishing Khalil, the others have begun to work on Trad. His hands and forearms are always up in the air and swathed in big lumpy bandages. He looks like a young, charcoaled Yul Brynner — he has no hair. The whites of his eyes show from a long ways away. Trad comes to the tub room in another chair with small wheels pushed by one of his fighter companions. The dressings are removed in the water. No one talks and Trad never utters a sound. He watches what is being done to him with big clear eyes. He is thin and in good condition. His legs, except for shrapnel wounds, are long and strong. Most importantly, his legs are still there. And he can walk. He is not black — he has been burned to a crisp. After his tub, strips of skin come off his face in long pieces revealing the new pink skin beneath. Trad is Syrian. He regards me with quiet hatred most of the time. I never will see his hands: he keeps them hidden when the dressings are off. As he becomes stronger, he does calisthenics on his bed and builds up the muscles in his legs and arms, reconditioning his back and trunk. After the body building, he walks the halls, his bandaged hands high in the air. He wears shiny boxer shorts and a robe — a fighter in the ring. I am in awe of him: he knows exactly who he is, what he is doing, and where he is going.

Mohammed Badawieh remains quiet for his debriding. It is impossible to judge his age because he has been so badly burned. His wife — a dark, slender woman — is always with him because he is immobilized. Mohammed has been burned by phosphorus shells. His hair is singed off and his face is blistered and peeling. One of his arms is shattered and has large holes in it from shrapnel. His left foot is fixed with pins: where the ankle joint used to be there is a deep cavity. The phosphorus has burned out the bones.

Hani goes last most of the time. Hani screams a lot. But I am learning more about Hani each day and I will write about him later.

18 August

A day off. For two days people have been out on the streets — hundreds of people. Some of them are elegant: they remind me of the classy people in Lisbon. I went up to Hamra and sat in Modca Cafe with *L'Orient Le-Jour* and had coffee and croissants with *zaatar*. Then I went looking for a bookstore. I found one small distinguished one. "*Les livres ici, Madame, sont seulement pour lire — pas pour étudier.*"\* The proprietor directed me to a larger one around the corner. At the large one I found writing paper, a good streetmap of Beirut, *Nouveau Magazine (a propos de la crise du Liban)*,\* and a *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Carrying on with people in French makes me feel much better about the Arabic problem — mine being ludicrous.

But I had to go back to the cafe, of course, for a beer and peanuts and to read. A strange interlude of peace.

Then, having studied the map and gotten all kinds of advice from several of the men in the cafe, I started for Berbir. Walking firmly and pretending I knew how to get there. It was not, however, difficult. There were few people on the Mazraa and the ones who were there were very helpful. I stopped to find landmarks only once and while I was standing there, a man slung with cameras came up to me and asked, "What are you doing here?"

I stared at him wondering if I had ever seen him before.

"Forgive me," he said, "my name is Werner-from-Munich and this —" he waved at a boy standing next to him, "is my friend Abed."

We stood and talked for a few minutes, Werner explaining that he was doing photojournalism, Abed explaining that he was being a guide to Werner, and I not explaining a whole lot except that I was going to Berbir because I had wanted to go since June, and that afterwards I was going to Sabra Street.

"Not alone?" they asked. "Certainly not alone. Come," Werner took my arm. "We will go with you."

\*"The books here, Madame, are only to read — not to study."

\**New Magazine* (about the crisis in Lebanon)



To go to Berbir is to return to June, back to another time, to another me — the journey going forward to return and backward to arrive. Except that no one was there anymore. There were huge holes in the outer walls of the upper floors and in the rooms, some of the beds were all bent and twisted. Our footsteps sounded like echoes against the silence of the hallways. I had never been to this place, but I found myself telling Werner all about it. "They were treating pieces of people," I told him, remembering what one of the doctors had said. But Berbir held on — despite lamplit surgeries and the shelling, despite the bent beds and the children dying, despite the big bombs and the planned extermination — until a few days ago when, after a direct hit, they closed the surgeries and the wards. I hope people remember Berbir. I will always remember it. It is an honour to walk through these rooms. Berbir was one of the reasons I came to Beirut and, like some grotesque pillar of fire, it has led me home.

Sabra Street. There were people all over Sabra and Shatila today and the three of us walked through the dust. It is difficult to tell which buildings are dusty and which are still smouldering, although as six days have passed since the last concentrated bombings, I suspect it is dust rising from the ashes. There is nowhere to take shelter in the camps and many of the houses have sustained major damage. One two-story house has a tree growing out of the middle of it: the tree is still living although the stairway to the upper floor has been collapsed. I could see the neat measured outline of the stairs against the wall.

Before we had gone very far, a young woman carrying a child called to us from an alley. We went to her house. There are three children in the family, the young woman is their mother, and her mother is also there. They do not know exactly whose house it is in which they are living. They are refugees from Ain el-Helweh in Sidon. The grandmother is perhaps my age: she has something wrong with her eyes and she is nearly blind. She began to explain what had happened to her sons and she made a motion as if to cover her eyes with her hands. The Israelis had taken them blindfolded. Maybe they are in prison at Ansar. Maybe they are dead. I would like to find out their names. Perhaps the Red Cross will find them. The grandmother's name is Hameidah Almadad. And she is bereft. We sat together on the little couch in the main room of the house and held each other's hands as the daughter continued the story of the summer — the fires and the fleeing north, the men taken away or off fighting or, even now, in some other land; the strafing of the highways. And always wondering where, oh where shall we go next time.

Instead of a journey to become, a journey to die.

Out in Sabra Street I tried to memorize the landmarks to find Hameidah's house. I did that, but I have a queer feeling that the landmarks from today might be rubble by tomorrow and perhaps I will not find her again after all.

But then I met Rashid. Rashid is a carpenter — everyone has to be who lives here so the houses can be rebuilt. He is also my age. At the far end of Sabra Street in Shatila, he and his wife Naimi live with their daughters. It is the house which is so

bewitching — a low, tile-roofed building with a small front courtyard surrounded by a wall. They have just moved back to the place and Naimi apologized for the dust. A corner of the roof has fallen in and the low wall looks as though it might do the same very soon. There are small trees growing here and chickens poke about in the bricks. We sat outside and drank tea and Rashid told me about his daughters, one of whom was at the university and the other about to be there. We talked about the war and about America, about the chickens, and about what might happen to Lebanon once the Israeli forces left. Rashid, like the man named Khalil whom I met that night in the restaurant, loves Lebanon. He spoke of the mountains and the snow there in winter, of the sea, of the old cities and the old history. It reminded me of the Bible — . . . *the trees of the Lord are full, the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted*. . . Rashid's love for this wracked and raped and lovely land was — like Khalil's — passionate and deep. I sat on the wall and listened.

We said goodbye and thank you. When someone in Beirut says, "You're welcome" as a response to thanks, it means "You are welcome to this place": I always feel blessed.

20 August

The other day I was waiting after work by the Emergency Room and without warning, a jeep came tearing around the corner, the men riding shotgun on it firing repeating weapons into the air. Two soldiers lay in the back. Stretchers were rushed forth, the soldiers hauled out by their legs. Both were that hellish green-grey, the second one had his insides hanging through his torn clothing. Both were dead. An old Muslim woman standing beside me flung her arms upwards and began to scream.

"Children," she wailed, "children."

Later on, I saw the empty stretchers outside the morgue. The blood had overflowed the sides of one of them and was still dripping onto the floor.

Several members of the American University faculty have been inviting me for tea and sometimes dinner. It is another world — of elegant apartments, dishes full of real food, and ice in drinks. I can stand on the balconies looking out over the sea and watch the sky, the waves, and the warships — U.S. and Israeli. There is still a good deal of gunfire down at the shoreline. The University is a different place, however; one of faculties, institutions, and swimming at AUB beach each morning at 7:15. Dorothea and Peter Franck have offered to let me apartment-sit while they go to Turkey. I declined, hoping they won't think me ungrateful. I kept remembering Hameidah Almadad, my woman in Sabra.

Last night I worked on the evening shift. Sometimes I hate that place: dreadful nursing care, the staff's refusal to give — or even to request — adequate pain

medication. The charge nurse, a bitchy impeccably-groomed lady, and I had a huge battle. She has long curving red-lacquered nails and a tail. Young Khalil from the car explosion had a fever of 104 and she told me they planned to "observe" him. It took her two hours to call a doctor by which time he was wretched and bleeding all over his room from his burned nose. A new patient arrived from Emergency with a fractured tibia and bullets in his right leg and no one helped him or put him to bed when it got dark: that lady refused to get an order for his pain other than the equivalent of aspirin. Hani lay in misery, slightly septic; Farhat did not even grin because he is convinced the surgeons will take his leg off any day now . . . I could go on.

I have heard staff tell patients that they could lie there till they died for all it mattered, and that there would be nothing for pain. I have seen doctor's orders ignored, sick children left unattended, traction maladjusted. I have written a letter to my office documenting this but I know nothing will come of it.

The responses I heard tonight were so derelict ("I don't know" or "It is against hospital policy" or "There's no order for it" or "I don't care — it isn't my problem") that I came back to the apartment after work and cried. War does not always bring out the best in any of us, that's for sure. But I am still cross. I will have to work around this system. Somehow.

Besides, I miss being at work during the day. I miss the staff and primarily, I miss my head nurse, Apochian the Armenian. She is so much the White Queen. Instead of "Off with your head," she shouts "You — you can go to hell." The other day I asked her to help me with my Arabic.

"No," she answered firmly. "My Arabic is Armenian Arabic. Besides," she looked disapprovingly at me, "you don't need Arabic. You need some clean clothes." She sniffed disdainfully as she marched down the hall. "Miserable creature that you are — you spend your time taking care of all these miserable creatures and you look just like them. You have too many boyfriends. If all the nurses in America looked as wretched as you do. . ." She sniffed again and trundled into a patient's room. "Sweetheart!" she exclaimed in Armenian. She puffed around adjusting bedding, pillows, and traction, inquiring as to health, pain, family, flowers, and appetite. And then she trundled right out into the hall again. "Miserable creature," she muttered.

But Apochian is unfailing: she has worked to keep her ward going this entire war, and the Civil War, and she has never given up. I love her temper and her skill, her courage and her sarcasm, even when it is directed at me. She has made me cry and has made me laugh when none of us thought laughter was possible. She is loyal and professional, harsh and beleaguered, and she is brave. Like my starved and often grim Director of Nurses downstairs, she is absolutely steadfast. I have never seen either one of them be the coward.

21 August

Today was the first day of the evacuation of the non-wounded fighters. They will go to Cyprus and then to Jordan and Iraq. The fighters, who seem to make up the bulk of the population in the neighbouring blocks of this area, have been out in full force. This morning I wrote the following from a cafe on Hamra:

Hamra 12:10. They are celebrating and saying farewell here to the first group of Palestinians to be sent out. It has taken me an hour and a half to walk five blocks. Most of that time I spent covering my ears and hiding in doorways. Near this cafe, I finally stopped as the gunfire reached such dimensions that the buildings rattled. I stood in a doorway and watched as a single soldier with a Kalashnikov let a small refugee child pull the trigger. Other children danced around with excitement. Close to them, a group of soldiers stood around a jeep setting a detonator which blew up a car in an unused parking lot three hundred yards down the hill. When some maniac began firing from a passing car, the shrapnel ricocheted from a wall and a large piece fell through my hair and down the back of my shirt. The men in the doorway of the cafe pulled at my clothing to dislodge the metal — and saved it for me when it fell to the ground. When one of them handed it to me it was still hot.

I am sitting at a cafe table now having a cold beer which I very much need. Outside on the cross streets there are guns being fired from passing cars, from balconies and windows, and from groups of soldiers on three of the four corners. Almost every man from the ages of fourteen to thirty-five is carrying a gun. And using it.

The *shaslik* vendor is doing a thriving business at the Restaurant So-Far (closed until further notice) catty-corner from this cafe and the smoke from the charcoal blends in nicely with the smoke from the dynamite and the guns. On the second floor balcony of the building opposite this cafe, another group raises their rifles at random and long rounds are fired into the air. This is answered by the dynamite-car bunch down the street and by the guns from passing traffic.

All sizes of vehicles are going by. They are jammed with fighters but no one seems able to tell me if they are the ones leaving or remaining. No one, for that matter, seems to know for sure who they are at all. Occasionally a jeep goes by with the Palestinian flag flying. The guns begin again. The flag passes. I think of Hani and Farhat, of Abdallah and the Hassans and I am close to tears.

The older men at this cafe have come inside now and when the gunfire reaches a crescendo, they clack their tongues against their teeth in disapproval.

A short time ago, a small yellow car stopped outside and a young man jumped out and held the door for a boy on crutches. Above the knee amputation, new bandages, civilian clothes. The two of them are sitting now and chain-smoking. The injured boy has an olive sardonic face, old and wary and jaundiced. Perhaps he is twenty. He is smaller than I am.

The guns are sporadic now, the celebrations having moved east of here towards the port. An hour has passed.

I left the cafe and began walking west to the sea. The streets grew quieter, the houses and gardens dormant in the heat. No one was around — an occasional person on foot, once in awhile a speeding car. I could see the ocean in glimpses through the buildings: literally through them in increasing instances as there is more devastation towards the coast. The sun was very hot and out to sea, the horizon shimmered. The last few blocks have been burned out, the houses left standing are shuttered and empty. The gardens are dusty and deserted. I looked over a wall. In the flower beds below, someone had lined up shrapnel and shell casings on the stone pathway encircling a small pond.

The apartment blocks facing the sea are empty. The windows are gone. I picked my way cautiously down the last hill. I wanted to hear the waves. I thought about the silence and about mines in the torn-up street and put my feet on tire tracks just in case. On the coast itself, Lebanese flags fluttered from military positions on the rocks. To the south was a Ferris wheel — the one in all the newspictures — and long stretches of hilly brown sand. Beyond that were more bombed-out buildings. Everything took on the ephemeral quality of a mirage in the heat. I turned and looked back towards the city. Just north of me on a hill was a beautiful rose walled villa, its doors and shutters closed.

I started up a new street which led through a gap in an earthen barricade. A transport truck came down the hill tearing up the sand and throwing clouds of dust in the air. The fighters hung off the back and called out, extending their hands and holding their fingers in the V-sign for triumph. I did the same in return. But I was feeling frightened somewhere inside of me: there was an ominous quality to this exodus, a forced sense of heroics which came over me like despair. Perhaps at that moment it was the heat, maybe I was dehydrated, and I was beginning to be uncomfortable from the shrapnel burns on my back. But it was there — a creeping heaviness in my mind and body that this departure would only presage the next fatal act.

An old man sitting in a doorway began to speak. "My name," he informed me in careful English, "is Abu Fuad." He spat out some watermelon seeds. "You like food?" he pointed to a plate of lentils and fruit. "You like drink?" he raised a blurry glass half-filled with evil-looking tea.

"No, thank you," I answered, fascinated.

"No?" he looked mildly astonished. "Maybe beer? Whiskey?"

"No, thank you," I repeated.

He was seated on a deck chair in front of a folding table. "Many people come here —" he gestured in back of him, "play tennis. You like tennis?"

"Yes."

"Ah, good." He looked pleased. "You will come then tomorrow."

Where he lived must have been a sports complex once when Beirut was a playground for the rich.

"No," I answered, "I work. But I will come back soon and visit you."

"No tennis?" He peered at me over the tea glass. "Tomorrow? Ten o'clock?"

"Next week — on my day off," I told him firmly. "Peace, Abu Fuad."

"Go with God." He picked up a piece of melon.

I plodded on up the hill wondering if I were lost or not. No, there was a bombed out building with someone's furniture hanging from the upper story. It has become a landfall on this journey — like the lovely and shuttered raspberry villa overlooking the sea.

22 August

The guns awakened us early. I messed about the apartment knowing full well I wouldn't go out in that racket. Jetta, a Scandinavian nurse who has been living here for a week, was reading quietly on the couch. I made coffee, wrote letters, and was quiet, too. The spaces of quiet are vital now. Too many things happen: Eventful Overload. I am hardly able to write everything down day by day. I was finally, however, driven by hunger to go to Lahoute Hospital and eat. I have to do that — eat a real meal — every two or three days, and then I stop being hungry again. It is the spaces of quiet which remind me that human beings must eat to stay alive. Once in awhile, it is better to feed on rice and vegetables, croissants with *zaatar* and *hummus*, than on explosions, burns, shattered bones, cigarettes, and crazy laughter. Besides, it is good to see the medical workers again.

Afterwards we went for a stroll — Jetta and I — through the University campus. It is still a militia stronghold. On the hill the atmosphere was one of Sunday — quiet, a few soldiers walking about. Almost deserted, in fact. Jetta wanted to go down along the sea promenade and I showed her the entrance formerly used by the faculty. At which point a Lebanese in a pink and brown camouflage outfit appeared with his Kalashnikov and informed us that by all means we could go down to the water.

His name was Mahmoud and he led us across a playing field and through the side courtyard of a former dorm crowded with PLO and militia-types lounging around in folding chairs and eating spaghetti and fruit.

Whereupon we were there, the only women among perhaps a thousand soldiers, some swimming off the rocks which did indeed look appealing, and others sauntering around, uniformed and otherwise, and shooting. The noise was horrendous, the guns likewise. I began to wonder if we would get out of there alive, or even dead.

Soldiers rushed up to present Jetta with a picture of Arafat (not one of his best), others just to gawk, yet others to offer us guns for a round or two, or — worse — to

demonstrate their marksmanship which, as no one seemed to be aiming at anyone in particular, was dubious.

Jetta chatted away happily, looking chic and blond and Scandinavian and, I am sure, even though it was impossible to hear much, was saying, "Oh! What a lovely rifle!"

A man wearing a cowboy hat and driving a taxi finally pulled up next to us and leaned out of the car. "No, no," he shouted again and again, "Crazy, crazy."

But by that time, Jetta had her camera out and I half-expected her to pull out a picnic lunch, too.

"Let's go," I kept mumbling.

Mahmoud shifted his rifle to the other shoulder and guided us through that hell and back to the militia boys having lunch. One of them began to rant about his wounds and injuries, surgeries and infections, in German and in English. Jetta babbled away happily in German. It was absolutely chummy. The commander of the outfit appeared in a doorway and I looked doubtfully at him. He raised his eyes patiently towards heaven and sighed.

We got out at last, Mahmoud following us persistently. At the top of the stairway I stopped, grasped him firmly by the hand and told him in what had to be perfect French mastered instantly by desperation, by God he was not only so kind but enchanting *aussi*, but indeed the hour was late, and it was necessary — very necessary — for us to depart for work. But indeed again, and in truth, we wished him the best of luck, the peace of God if such a being did exist, and then I nearly pushed him along the opposite path and into the trees.

So much for strolling about the University campus.

Later at work, the Middle Eastern dusk fell like a curtain over the sea and the transport ship *Esperanza*, carrying the fighters to Cyprus, passed along the coast in the twilight, its running lights gleaming, the Israelis having prevented its departure by many hours due to the presence of, God forbid, land-rovers on board.

24 August

Amin al-Rahman occupies the room at work to which I repair in times of tribulation. It is from his balcony overlooking the port and harbour and even the open sea that I can watch the great transport ships leaving now, and on other days, the warships, and on all days the sky and the sea itself. The balcony and the seaview have become a source of new strength to me. Sometimes, especially now when I am working evenings, as I stand and stare at the sun falling and when the sea and sky assume the same colour — the colour of the wings of mourning doves — I fall so in love with Beirut that I have to hold on to the iron railing. It is a love without remedy or release, a siren song I can never again be without hearing — like the lord's song in the stranger land: *if I forget thee, o lovely and magical city*. . .

Amin, who is confined to his bed with multiple shrapnel wounds and messed up

legs and part of his foot missing and half-blind, smokes and waits patiently for me to come in. He has been here since the June carpet bombings and has had many surgeries. I do not know how old he is: on the chart in one place it says twenty-five and in another it says thirty-five. But I know Amin has been a lot of places and has seen many things and people do not surprise him. His hair is curly like Farhat's and sometimes he has the same laughing eyes. But his body has finished growing; Amin is a man.

His English is elegant in phrase. One night the patient in the bed next to him died of head injuries. The next morning I took the pillow from that empty bed, put a clean case on it, and offered it to Amin as an extra cushion for his legs.

"No." He pulled himself up on the trapeze bed frame. "No." He pointed to the empty and now-disinfected bed. "He," he stared at the bed as though the man were still lying in it, "he death there."

Amin al-Rahman's story:

"I come from Berbir. You know Berbir. You told me you had been there. Ah, you do. I was once the manager of the cinema across from the hospital there. It was in the afternoon. My friend and I were playing backgammon right there. You know — in front of my work, the cinema. And suddenly, suddenly I knew nothing." Here he paused to light a cigarette. "Just nothing," he continued. "I found only very strange colours — blue and red. I could not move my legs. I could not reach my friend. He kept trying to move his head. But I could not reach him. Look, I still have my legs, two legs. But only one eye. I still have my arms. Maybe I will walk one day. My friend — he is gone. I am very fortunate. Look," he went on, "look at the others here, listen to them. I will be able to walk. And," he crushed out the cigarette, "and I will not leave Lebanon. We are Arab people — all of us."

26 August

When I first found Hani, I thought he might be already dead. I also thought I might faint dead away. But Hani was not dead. He was mumbling through his broken jaws — hollering, in fact. It was the smell that was deadly, a corpse in the sun.

Hani's diagnosis was lengthy: *Fifty percent second and third degree burns to the chest, abdomen, and both lower extremities; blast injuries including comminuted fracture of the left mandible with bone gap of four centimeters; open deep laceration through the left cheek large enough for the tongue to fall out of it; one third of teeth missing due to shrapnel wounds to face; shrapnel wounds to right orbit with suspected optic nerve damage and eye disintegration; compound comminuted fracture left ulna with ulnar nerve laceration; loss of sensation to both legs due to burn damage.*



The floor of Hani's room was sticky, there was urine spilled underneath the bed, the side table had old cigarette butts ground into it, the sheets were green with pus and pseudomonas and were stuck to his legs and body. Someone had left a bedpan full of urine and feces on the small table by the wall. Someone had also closed the sliding doors to the balcony outside.

When I first happened upon this scene, I went into immediate reverse and shot right back out to the hall to lean against the wall and retch. Then I thought about the broken jaws and I went inside again. Hani looked like a wild man. His hair was curled and matted and long. His face was half-shaven, his mustache was cruddy. The broken jaw and missing teeth didn't help: it didn't matter what language Hani spoke or I understood. Between his injuries and my deplorable Arabic, we sounded like the first cave couple.

Hani's skin was almost as green as the sheets and his eyes were buggy in his head. Flies crawled over the bed, over his lips, and flew around the bed table. More flies crawled busily beneath the bed where puddles of urine were drying.

Sharing the room and in the other bed was a new admission with some form of modified Begin syndrome. That person stared fixedly at the ceiling. Breakfast, consisting of old pita bread, *lebneh* and coffee was being handed out and Hani's tray was in front of him. He had put out a cigarette in the *lebneh* with his good arm and was trying to reach his water which was halfway across the room.

"*Mai*," he mumbled. Even the bottle was sticky.

I went back into the hallway. One of the Philippine nurses came up to me, "I won't go in there at all," she said.

But Hanadie, who seems to be running the show on the ward when Apochian is not there, gave Hani his own room down at the other end of the hall. And for two days, I poured alcohol on everything. Great stuff. Ninety percent proof. The bottle stayed in his room — until it was used up on his mattress, his linen, his bedrails, the floor and the furniture, his back and his working arm.

Barbara Estes from America has arrived just in time to save me from mental disintegration. We described the lice we had found in terms of size and viciousness to Apochian when she returned from a rest leave and she has given us Kwell shampoo. For three days Hani got shampooed and deloused. We made a ruckus over pain medication and now, unless the evening woman from Manilla is in charge, he gets injections. That woman with long red nails had been giving him capsules — big ones which he would let sit in his mouth until they got so mushy he spat them out, the problem being that massive jaw injuries prevent swallowing, as Barbara pointed out rather loudly. We also cut his hair which, despite the Kwell, remained matted with old blood.

Three days ago Hani went down to surgery and got his jaws wired, his burns debrided, and his left leg amputated above the knee. One day post-operatively it took us five hours to take care of him. If I went past the door, the familiar hoarse voice called out "*Mumma*." Removal of the gangrenous leg made Hani a lot bet-

ter: he has stopped looking green and sweaty. With the remains of his jaws in place, he began to look like a human being.

The night he returned from surgery, however, his pain was intolerable. As usual that woman snarled and bitched, denying him injections and refusing to go into his room. One of the residents arrived and gave me a lecture on drug addiction.

"We do not give drugs to men like this one," he announced. "As you have observed, this patient becomes easily psychosed."

"Doctor," I replied politely, "if you had sustained eleven major injuries, including a jaw which left you unable to communicate in a normal fashion, perhaps you might become psychosed a bit yourself."

The doctor smiled tightly. "Perhaps."

It's not as though the hospital were running short on Demerol, either. Let that woman scowl and clatter her long claws. As Apochian would say, "Miserable creature — go to hell," and to the Asians, when she is fed up, it is "Go — go to Hong Kong."

That night I hung around after work talking to the security guard downstairs. Then I went back up to the ward, begged Demerol from the night nurse who didn't want to hear Hani's screaming anyhow, and shot him up.

And that's the last evening I am going to work.

But this morning the wounded fighters were evacuated. The road between the Emergency Room and the main entrance was clogged with people, stretchers, ambulances and jeeps. Little Hassan gave me a bottle of Bien-Etre cologne which we promptly named "Palestinian #5." He laughed like a child. And I could not find Hani, not in his room and not downstairs. Farhat and Abdallah were in the same ambulance, Abdallah looking inscrutable and Farhat pale from pain. I gave them prayer beads I had found in Cyprus and I begged them to stay together. Farhat has my address.

"And don't forget," I begged.

It was tearful and heavy, frightening and desperate, and I wanted so to go with the two of them. Anywhere — just so we could stay together and help each other and watch each others' lives. The war has done strange things: I never take life for granted anymore. I do not know if any of us will stay alive. But I do know we will love one another far beyond our dying. It does not take so long for love to happen — it can, and sometimes does take place in the time we hold each other's hands. And it will last forever. The ambulance started to move and Abdallah raised his arm. "Never forget, never forget," someone called as they pulled away and I turned from them half-blinded.

Hani was lying on the floor of a medical van. "Get him his papers," the others there shouted at me in English. "They have kept his papers."

I rushed to the cashier and butted in front of a long line of people. But there were

no papers under his name. I insisted and refused to move. "Hurry," I pleaded. But no one was hurrying. Fifteen minutes went by and then they flung the contents of a manila envelope at me. There were the papers, tapes, money, and a gold Allah medal on a burned chain. They would not give me the envelope and clutching all these things, I ran back to the van. It was gone.

At Lahoute, Dr. Eugene took me to another doctor, one who would be on the transport ship. "Please," I asked him, "find Hani." The man was in a hurry, he reached out and took the papers, the tapes and the money. A fifty pound note fell to the ground. The Allah medal fell also. "Wait," I shouted. But he was gone, too.

I looked in every ambulance and every van. But I never found him. I am keeping the money and the Allah medal. Maybe, just maybe, one day in Damascus or Algiers, maybe even — God willing — in Beirut, I will find him and return his things. I will look forever, I know, for his crazy face and will listen, too, in the back of my mind for the hoarse voice calling, "Mumma." The medal for Allah gleams in the candlelight from its place on a nail in the wall now, the reflected light catching at my mind, giving me some sort of deranged and contradictory patience, telling me to hurry — hurry and wait, always wait, until I find Hani once again.

4 September

Sunday in old Beirut. The United States Marines are here. Unlike the French and the Italians who have jeeps and trucks and are able to move about in the city, our boys are confined to one of the more appealing buildings down by the port. I cannot imagine — or couldn't, before the other day — what they are doing down there as it is part of no man's land and no one lives there.

It being Sunday and a day off, I went to fetch my friend Barbara and persuaded her to come with me for a walk.

Another journey — through the massive ruins not only from this war but from the Civil War. The ruins of the Civil War have trees and weeds growing out of them. The ruins from this summer war have dead bodies underneath them. I know they are there: I can smell them.

We trudged past the Holiday Inn and the Hotel Phoenicia. The Holiday Inn is charred and blackened and the atmosphere on the hillside street which runs by it is permeated by that same sweet odor of decomposing flesh. A few cars and military trucks crunched over the stones and broken glass. As we progressed towards the port, the road was deserted.

"It's awfully quiet around here," observed Barbara. "Are you sure you know where we're headed?"

"Towards the port," I answered. "I studied the map."

We were walking carefully along a dirt road. The sun was hot and the only sound was the rustling of flags as we passed militia points.

"*Marhaba*," said a voice directly behind us.

"Jesus!" exclaimed Barbara as we clutched one another in fright.

"No," said the militiaman. "Not Jesus. Mahmoud." He lowered his rifle a bit. "You are going somewhere?" He was very polite.

"To the Marines," we replied and launched into a long explanation of where we worked, what we were doing, how often we walked around the city, and how we were absolutely sure that the Marines wanted to hear from us that very day.

"Come," said Mahmoud. "I will accompany you." We walked together in silence for a moment. "You like Nasser?" he inquired, pointing to a picture of Nasser plastered on a wall.

"Very much indeed," we assured him.

We were approaching the end of the dirt road and I noticed that several other militiamen were following Mahmoud.

"There," he pointed to a gap in some thrown together sandbags. "The Americans."

We all stood there expectantly. And then slowly, very slowly, a Marine appeared from behind the sandbags.

"Hi there," called Barbara. "We're Americans here to welcome you to Beirut."

"Fairest of all cities," I added. "Welcome."

Another Marine appeared and stood next to the first one. There was another long silence and one of them asked, "How the hell did you get here?"

"We walked."

"Who are all your friends?" the Marine pointed behind us. I looked back and sure enough, there were a lot of militiamen. But they all smiled brightly.

"What do you do here all day?" we asked.

More Marines came out of the bombed building behind the barricade. "Not too much," one of them told us.

"Have you been out in the city?" I was curious.

"No. See that line?" the Marine pointed to the ground at the base of the sandbags. "We never cross that line." The Americans were in full combat dress — uniform, jackets and flak vests, belts, bullets, canteens, walkie-talkies — the load was incredible in the heat. Everyone had a pistol and an M-1. Some of them had cameras.

"Aren't you guys hot?" They didn't have to answer that one.

"What do you take pictures of?" inquired Barbara, "if all you see is this same bombed out building?"

"Of the rats." One of the younger ones looked very glum.

"Where are you guys from?"

The answers came flying then. "Brooklyn." "Queens." "Vermont."

An officer arrived and he looked serious. "Who are your friends?" he asked the same question.

"This one is Mahmoud," we answered, "and the others are our friends, too. They helped us to find you."

The officer remained without expression. "We would feel safer," he said with a

slight Maryland drawl, "if you would just step inside that line there." He nodded toward the dirt by the barrier.

"No, thank you," we told him, "unless, of course, Mahmoud and the boys come with us."

"That would be against orders." He looked even more serious.

"What orders?"

"We have orders — that is all. No interacting with the locals."

"That's a great shame," I meant it in the full sense of the word. "We wanted you to come for dinner."

"Impossible, ma'am."

We turned away and Mahmoud shrugged. "*Malesh*," he said sympathetically.

We waved goodbye. The kid from Brooklyn called, "Telephone my parents. My name is —"

But the officer shut him up with a look like stone.

We walked slowly back through the dirt. The militiamen disappeared to their posts. We talked about Nasser and the Arab world. Mahmoud took us to his post and gave us a grand tour of the arsenal, he and his friends demonstrating anti-aircraft guns, small rockets, medium and large rockets, hand guns, machine guns, and numerous kinds of rifles. It was some stash.

We thanked him and said goodbye and wished him luck. Then we walked up the hill through the souks and les Halles to the great Souk D'or. The children — when we saw them — were pale and shifty. They moved in scuttles — like rats. This part of Beirut is sinister and uneasy, but I will go back to it again and again. It helps me to understand what I am loving. When there is no combat here, it is the most peaceful place I have found.

7 September

One of the Danish nurses invited me to visit a Sabra patient of hers, a young girl who had been shot in the abdomen by a stray bullet the day the fighters left.

Samira is in her twenties — small and pale and welcoming. She and her family are living in a "requisitioned" apartment by the mosque until their house further down on Sabra Street is repaired. We went to visit the house and Samira's grandmother who is living there despite the damage. The house is the one with the tree growing from the center that I had found the day I was in the camp with Abed.

I spent a lot of time standing on one of the rooftops and watching the ruins of Shatila. The house next door has lost a wall. I can look into someone's bedroom: the beds are rumbled but still made up. Half a dresser is gone. In the ruins and rubble below the roofedge, two cats prowled around. A jacket is pinned beneath a mammoth slab of concrete. Next to it is an empty dresser drawer. Below that and the concrete and the cats, an entire house is buried.

To reach the roof where I stood, a path had been cleared between two half-houses. It has taken the men in this family a week of work just for the path. The house on the other side of the pathway is still standing. Half of Samira's house remains — a downstairs room, a kitchen, an entryway right below the roof which is held up by 4x4's. When I turned from the roofedge and walked forward, I could feel the concrete shiver under my weight. Samira was less cautious: she is also much lighter than I am. Nevertheless, the men working downstairs shouted in warning.

Samira is a teacher. While we were gazing out over the damage, she pointed to the collapsed house below us. "When that went," she said, "my bedroom followed."

I looked at the upper wall where the spaces for a staircase were clearly marked.

"All my books," she continued, "are somewhere underneath those stones. I am working on my Master's Degree. For me, since we are all together and none of us have died, the books were the heaviest loss of all."

The grandmother disappeared to make coffee for us. Cousins appeared in the windows and doorways. An uncle and two women leaned against a windowsill and joked together. Someone had lit a lantern in the room behind them. Candles were lit against the dusk.

When I turned my back to the destruction, the house and the family living in it were like that surviving tree — a miracle.

## 9 September

Amin has had a cross-leg graft to his legs and is in a gross and cumbersome cast. He has been in a lot of pain which has been relieved somewhat by Valium and a brief visit from his family in the north. The last day or so has been better for him and he is now requesting signatures and messages to be written on the cast.

I wrote in Arabic: *Stay Alive*. It took me an entire day of practice to learn how to do that.

He looked at my handiwork critically. "You cannot say that," he informed me seriously.

"Why not? I worked very hard to learn that."

"You cannot tell me to stay alive," he answered. "Only Allah can tell me that. And it may be that Allah has other plans."

"True," I agreed with him. "Allah may plan otherwise for us all. But I have decided that in your case, I would give him a big argument."

It is the first day I have heard Amin laugh.

11 September

Returning to Samira's. Her sister's three children, all of whom were ill the other day, are improved. Their eyes are no longer heavy and their faces have some colour. That part of the family lives in a rented place overlooking Sabra Street and right over a small shop. The building is relatively intact.

The two-story house next to it is demolished. The roof sags in a big V-shape into the center of the building itself. The family creeps about either side of the sagging concrete. The boys are pounding on the collapsed roof with a heavy hammer. Chunks of mortar fall off and one of the children hauls it away in a wheelbarrow. Samira told me they had been working all morning.

All along Sabra Street everyone is putting rubble and trash in huge piles. Farther north in Fakhani, the high buildings have fallen in giant sloping heaps. Entire cement floors the size of small parking lots angle to the ground from heights of often a hundred feet. Sometimes the buildings themselves rest against one another in sagging instability. Bulldozers prowl the side streets pushing demolished buildings before them to form massive and apocalyptic barricades.

After lunch, Samira and I took the youngest baby and walked through Shatila looking for the woman named Hameidah Almadad. No one knew of her and, as I feared, the great piles of concrete on the side streets have blocked the small alley where she was living.

We went to the house. The men are now rebuilding an entire room, indeed have almost finished it on three sides. Samira's mother was hauling water. Grandmother was hiding out upstairs and took the baby from us. The roof over the entryway is still shored up with poles. But little by little, the house is coming back. Someone had hung a cage with a canary in it from one of the tree branches. Over the sound of the hammers and of the men working, I could hear it singing.

Later I walked to Rashid's. We sat around the courtyard with his friends and again, he began to tell me about Lebanon. He spoke of the Civil War and told me about Franjeh, about the Gemayels, about a man from Sidon named Maarouf Saad. But Rashid is at his best when he speaks of Lebanon the land. Once more I thought of the Psalm:

*The trees of the Lord also are full of sap; even the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted; wherein the birds make their nests; and the fir trees are a dwelling for the stork; the high hills are a refuge. . . the sun arises, . . . and the young lions lie them down in their dens. . .*

I listened to Rashid and tried to remember the exact wording of the Psalm which could have been written for Lebanon, for the mountains I was watching. I was sure

just then in the soft evening light that the carpenter sitting across from me was singing the words.

13 September

For two days now on the ward we have been taking care of Nabil. Eighteen years old, a Lebanese citizen — but admitted only after his father had put down a deposit of one hundred and ten thousand pounds, Muslim family from near Sidon, post-Begin syndrome sepsis having been shot at close range in the streets of his village, acute abdomen. And from the system, which changes from day to day depending in what kind of a mood someone in administration happens to be, total indifference.

When Nabil was transferred north to Beirut earlier in the week, the Israelis blocked the highway and sent him back south. Same system, same sadistic whimsical bad mood. It is as corrupt as the bodies I smell in the ruins — this system run by Israelis, administrative, whoever (and no one knows exactly who that is). It is taking all my strength just to work within it. It is a denial of everything I have ever believed to be true and fair — not that I was true or fair, but at least the ideal was there. The good we can do here technically gets undone right before our eyes even when we are doing it. Oh please God, that boy is dying and I am letting people kill him — I do not know what to do.

I have become as much of a thief as the worst of them: I steal Valium, dressings, medicines. I lie, I throw hastily and inaccurately prescribed medicine into the garbage because I know it might kill a patient, or at the least, endanger him. I take people's side, support them, write about them, beg and cheat for them, and it is not enough.

I am beginning to hate their leaders — all of them — for selling their people out. While they ride around in big cars, eat fancy lunches on ships, meet in oval offices with wall to wall carpets. Do they sleep well at night? Oh yes. All night long, rocked in the arms of state banquets and body guards. Safe from the people. While Nabil bleeds his life out, while Hameidah's children cry out in the ruins, while Amin dreams fitfully of Paradise and wakes terrified to the sound of fighter planes. And no one says a word — not one word, unless it's a word of hatred and indifference.

That is enough rage from me. The boy is dying, will die — slowly and in hideous pain. I keep seeing his agonized, jaundiced face, and then I think about the face of the Israeli soldier who refused to let the ambulance through a checkpoint, and the disparity between the victim and the executioner overwhelms me. If indeed we all have something in common, I can not find it now. Not at the end of this frightful day.

This night is grim and evil. I am afraid.



15 September

This morning at five a.m. I awoke standing upright by the bed to the screaming of Israeli jets over the rooftops of West Beirut. Please, I heard myself say, what is it. It has to be Syrians, it has to be. But the sound was Israeli.

And Barbara coming to my room from work on the night shift to tell me Gemayel is dead. A three hundred pound TNT explosion in Kataeb\* Headquarters killing many. We went to her room and sat on the balcony and had coffee, Barbara yelling "You bastards" at the planes.

The streets were deserted. We walked to the cafe on Hamra and ordered drinks and the waiter and I laughed because it was only nine o'clock. How odd to have laughed when my knees were shaking even though I was sitting down. I said the names of all the people I knew who were in danger — I said them like prayers in my mind over and over again.

And then I went to the hospital to work and was greeted with hoots because it is a day off for me. There was some comfort, however, in just being there — working and listening to my patients talking endlessly about Lebanon, about the dreams they once had yesterday about the possibility of peace.

I worked with Nabil, my boy from Sidon, changing his dressings, his sheets, trying to change his fate — god damn it — when I know, and he knows, that nothing will change and that one of these days his respirator will be a joke. His dying is a secret we share and by sharing, his death will become my death. When he begins to hemorrhage from all his tubes, he watches the blood pouring out of himself and his eyebrows raise in alarm. His eyes watch my face then, and when we look at one another even for a moment, we are watching his dying together. I am beginning to wonder which one of us will die first and I think about him even when the bleeding has stopped, when the wounds and incisions are clean again and packed, when his parents and aunts and uncles are finally sleeping in the hallway outside the room or on the floor beside his bed. His aunt Noha and I have long conversations in French — about Nabil, about the war, about this summer, about the shooting. She tells me often that someday when this is over and Nabil is well we will all be together at their village north of Sidon and we will have a tremendous celebration. Once Nabil listened to us and smiled at me through his tubes and lines and he held my hands very tightly and I kissed his eyes. Because I did not want to share any death at that moment. Now I just kiss his eyes every so often because it is part of the sharing.

I stayed at the hospital off and on all day and into the evening. As if I were waiting for someone. For whom? The Israelis? They are here — they finally made it into West Beirut, according to plan, no doubt. Perhaps the plan is a little more messy than they originally had in mind.

At five I went out and visited Khalil and his wife who is back from Anjar. We sat in their apartment and she gulped Valium and I drank beer. Lots of beer. It blurs

\* Phalangist Militia

the edges of today and provides calories. The funeral of Bashir was over and we could hear the shelling down at the port. The camps were already surrounded, the Green Line closed for a week. Khalil walked me downstairs.

"You know," he said, "I am a Christian. There are many of us who will resist these people. Listen to the guns by the port and think of us — Christian and Muslim. We will not win now. But we will resist." He shook my hand and I remembered a day in his apartment when, as we talked, he had been cleaning and preparing a closetful of heavy rifles. I wondered if Khalil was going to the port and if I would ever see him again. "And don't worry," he called as I walked down the street, "don't worry."

I hurried back to my neighborhood and bought some wine and stuck it in the frig in my room. Out of habit. That frig is there for decoration: there is no electricity now. I have lived without it for so long that it seems unnecessary. I feel slightly uncomfortable when the lights are on. Beirut is full of lessons: it is the darkness that provides safety.

In front of St. Mary's Church the first load of refugees from the camps arrived in two trucks. The men were negotiating with a neighborhood man, the women pale, the children hastily packed.

"Will they be able to stay?" I asked someone.

"There is no choice," another replied.

"Take care," called a shopkeeper.

At the hospital the atmosphere was subdued. In front of the Emergency Room, people were sitting on stretchers. Waiting — for what? Casualties maybe. I went upstairs to my ward. Nabil was still alive. I sat with Amin and we threw olive pits over the balcony. Amin was very depressed. We traded endless cigarettes. It was evening.

I left and walked toward Maazra. There were very few people on the streets — due to a curfew I learned of later. There were boys out — all walking toward the port. They did not look old, perhaps Nabil's age. I began to say the names of all the friends I have — being especially careful to repeat those of the ones living in the camps. I made myself remember each one in every family — the uncles and grandmothers and small children. Samira, Mouna, Ida, Nidal, Kaled, Mohammed, Mahmoud, Ata Mahmoud, Fatieh, Yahya, Samir, Rashid. I went through the names of all the fighters I had known and cared for before they had been shipped out — Hani, Farhat, Hassan, Hussein, Abed, little Hassan, Abdallah, Marwan. And then I went back to the camp people. I said the Twenty-third Psalm. I have said that one many times.

I went to see my friend Mohammed at his restaurant. He was passing out Kalashnikovs to assorted males by the doorway.

"They won't come here," he told me as we walked outside together. "Just all around us." He had sweat on his face. "Don't go to the camps now," he added. Perhaps he was reading my mind. "I will let you know how you can help." He

went back inside to the men and the guns.

I kept walking and saying the names — all the way up the hill to Verdun Street. Every so often I stopped to look around me and to light a cigarette. It was so quiet I could hear the sound of the flame from the lighter and of my own footsteps on the pavement. I had nearly reached Verdun Street when I saw the tanks. Good, solid, beige Israeli tanks. I continued to walk, thinking that maybe they would think I lived on Verdun Street, that I was an ordinary Lebanese-looking older woman just going home from work. Maybe, I said aloud.

A soldier tossed a cigarette down by my feet. "Where are you off to?" he asked in Arabic.

"Maazra." I was brief.

So was he. "Maazra — no." He waved back towards the neighborhood I had just left.

"Why?" I asked him in English.

He paused. "You are inglesi?"

"Yes," I told him, "and I am trying to get to Maazra."

"There are military operations there." He sighed and looked out and down over his gun. "You will go back now."

I went back slowly. The sky was almost dark and to the south there were flares. Over the camps lighting them up. I cut across the main road and went up a side street. There is a place in Verdun which has a view overlooking all Maazra and even south. I hurried, pausing in doorways to look up the streets. But there was no one around.

When I reached the lookout place, I saw what must have been the entire Israeli army down on the Maazra and over along the coast. I could hear the tanks moving and the sound of the armoured cars — heavy and grating. The sky above Fakani and Sabra was bright — sunrise, daylight pink. The falling flares were like the embers from a huge fire. I stayed on the lookout a long time and just watched.

On the way back to my room I said the names of all the fighters — Hani, Farhat, Abdallah, little Hassan. Where were they now? I said the word *betrayal* over and over again as I walked through the darkened streets. I saw one of the small Sabra children in a picture in my mind and I said his name over and over again and the name of his little sister and the name of his mother and of her sister — Hamoudi, Mouna, Noha, Samira — until it was like music and no one knew I was crying.

16 September

By six this morning the fighting had started down by the port and in Wadi Abou Jamil. The sound of the explosions rattled the neighborhood as I walked to work.

Nabil has returned from another surgery and his father Toufic started the morning by chasing throughout the hospital begging for ice. The ice helps to stop the bleeding. But it is not just ice which has thrown Toufic into a panic. The hospital is

demanding full payment for the medical bills in cash. Nabil is not considered a war casualty paid for by the Lebanese government. Or by the Red Crescent. Or by the Israelis. Perhaps they should make a round in this ward and see what they have done. What we — the Americans who finance this carnage — have done. Look America — look at Nabil. And look at our new patient, little Khalil who lives near Fakhani and who ran out with some of his pals to play and stepped on a shell, detonated it, and blew his legs off. He also blew out his perineal area and his entire rear end is one massive repair. Fakhani Khalil is twelve. He has been here four days now and I have never heard him cry. Even during dressing changes. He has a face like a son of God — high cheekbones, wide generous mouth, perfect teeth, and beautiful almond eyes. The administration of this hospital will send him down to the fourth floor — four south — where the poor people go. They would send Nabil downstairs, too — as soon as Toufic runs out of money. But Nabil is on a respirator. Toufic will run out of cash: Nabil will be dead.

During the night many of the patients had been moved out into the hallways because of the shelling. Amin was up early chain-smoking and grim. Burned Khalil from the car explosion cried wretchedly during his debridement: he has been here so long he has lost all semblance of patience. Everyone, the wounded and the well, was taciturn and apprehensive.

"Will we be killed today?" I heard a woman ask someone. "Will the Israelis and the Kataeb come in and kill us?"

"No," replied a surgeon. "Not us. Not today. Today they will be too busy killing everyone else."

The practical nurse, a young Lebanese girl named Miriam, looked dreadful. Her colour was greyish-yellow and there were dark rings beneath her eyes. Her father, she told me, lives just off Rue Clemenceau.

"How old is your father?" I asked.

"Very old."

We were standing on a balcony and there were tears on her face. I could not even see Rue Clemenceau because of the smoke from the shelling. We watched as right below us more young boys went toward the port. It was just past seven. Miriam stood beside me and we listened to the explosions. Fires were beginning to burn in that part of the city. At first it seemed as though the port itself was burning, then the smoke would clear, there would be another explosion followed by machine-gun fire and the strange whistling sound of rockets. The black smoke would rise from another section further up the hill. It was the Israeli advance.

I thought about the old city and the war-shattered streets, about Wadi Abou Jamil and the people I had seen there. I wondered about Miriam's father — was he in his room, underneath a bed, crawling along the floor toward a chair, a cupboard, anything for cover? Or was he just sitting there alone waiting for it to be over and was he wondering when he would be dying? The explosions became louder, the hospital building shook every so often, and the glass in the doorframes shifted

slightly. Miriam and I went inside. We could hardly, I thought, stand idle — like some distorted Nero figures, watching Beirut burn while people lay helpless in their beds wondering when the show would be over.

Nabil slept through it all. I do not think he will die today and perhaps not tomorrow. I don't think so because there is no room for so many deaths in one day. I began to change the packing in his buttock wounds. He choked and gagged on the endotracheal tube as I turned him. The buttock wounds are exit wounds from shrapnel and bullets — the wounds are as deep as the muscles themselves. I can pack them with five inches of packing. Today as he was turned to the side, his abdominal dressings fell off onto the bed and his colostomy and incisions poured out bloody fluid, bile and liquid feces. The bile has eaten away all his skin. His sacrum looks as though someone had put a hot iron on it. Aunt Noha helped me. Nabil's mother did not: we convinced her to leave the room. Take a break, lady — there are many mothers here. A woman from across the hall will bring her coffee and cigarettes and they will sit and smoke together. Little Kahlil's mother joins them often.

But it took almost two hours to clean Nabil, dress the wounds, change the linen, suction out his tubes, lavage him with iced saline, regulate his IV's, push his medications, renew his supplies. I talked to him in English and terrible Arabic. He opened one eye and peered at me. The whites of his eyes are saffron yellow, his skin slightly orange. The jaundice comes and goes.

A tremendous explosion rocked the room. The wall opposite me moved. I nearly crawled underneath the bed from fright. Noha put her arm around my shoulders. "*Malesh*," she told me. "Never mind."

I did not know if she were forgiving my cowardice or just reassuring me in general. But I still feel guilty. I hung around the room after that — scrubbing surfaces with alcohol, tying up trash bags, arranging dressings. Daring the walls to fall in.

"You rest," I told Nabil, "just rest."

Till I come back and we go through the dressings, the linen, the blood pressure, the lavages, the routine all over again. Or until someone in your family comes down the hallway and tells me, "Blood, Jill, blood."

Nabil shut his eyes and I touched his face. It was burning hot. Today is a day of fear and fires.

I went into Amin's room and out onto his balcony. Diagonally down the street and on the second floor of the bank building, there was a giant shattering sound and the glass wall of the building came smashing into the street below. A street lamp lay twisted at a grotesque angle. I had not even seen it fall. I did not even jump. What was I waiting for again — the building to fall down, the balcony where I stood to part company with the hospital wall and go crashing down ten floors.

"My hands hurt," I said aloud.

And a man's voice replied, "Don't worry — they aren't shooting at us. Stay —

stay and watch." The young orthopedic resident stood next to me. "Look," he pointed past the corner and beyond the crumpled street lamp. "Look," he repeated, "here they come."

We stood there glued to the balcony railing as one by one, at long and agonizing intervals, the tanks came up from the port and further down toward the sea, an armoured track vehicle cruised slowly along an empty street. Has everybody died, I wondered, did they leave, are they hiding? Isn't anyone going to throw a small grenade, even an egg, anything? Where did everyone go?

"I would like to have a gun now," I told the doctor.

Once upon a time, I used to be a disarmament worker. I believe the term is "activist." I went to national conferences, read a hundred books, absorbed even more lectures and sessions, created neighborhood peace groups. I wore pins with doves on them, stayed up all night sewing armbands with ribbons the colours chosen by the Hiroshima victims to commemorate the dead of 1945. I carried handmade banners in the streets and I raged against the potential death of children, of adults, of civilization, of my daughters, my son, my grandson, and of myself. I shared meals with Tokyo school teachers who had been victims of a holocaust: we held hands, exchanged addresses, prayed and marched together.

And now look. Nabil is slow dying from our bullets: he is a child. Burned Khalil is no longer charcoaled, but he will lose the motion in one arm; little Khalil with the face of God's grace will never walk — indeed he will never have the controlled use of his bowels again; Ibrahim will never walk; Hani is demented; Farhat will lose the use of one leg; Abba down the hall has lost a hand — granted he is old, but with the hand went his son, his wife, his seven grandchildren and two daughters; little Hassan will never walk; big Hassan will walk artificially; Mohammed has no ankle bones; Hussein will never walk and with his leg went his mother and grandparents. Hussein has two brothers, one with a broken back and neurological damage and the other with no arms: his father goes from floor to floor of this hospital watching over the remains of his family. . . and all of these human beings are just half the people in one ward of one hospital in Lebanon. Shall I say their names over and over again? With what colours will I commemorate Samira and Abed and the boys walking toward the port this morning? What gay ribbons flying somewhere for Hamoudi and Mouna? And maybe I should put small bells on those ribbons to ring lightly in the wind — pretty ones, to show my love for their laughter.

I followed the progress of the armoured vehicle and watched the top of the driver's head and listened to the grating of heavy steel on pavement. Ride to Maazra, I told the soldier in my mind, blow hell out of the small shop where I buy 7-Up and cigarettes and then try wrecking our florist on the way, the florist who, no matter what your country does, opens up shop every morning and defies you with flowers, who loves Barbara and gives her flowers because he knows she loves growing things, who tells me *Ah'len* even when I do not stop to look at the roses, who shoves a perfect carnation in my hand nearly every day.

"If you had a gun now," said the doctor, "if you even shot into the air, they would come up here and kill us all."

True, true. The armoured car had vanished. I went back to Nabil. It was only eleven o'clock. Today was the longest day.

But the casualties were arriving. Shahine and Mohammed, a new Hussein and Feisal.

"You take 1019 and 1011," Apochian told me. "You cannot watch your friends the Israelis arrive all day."

Shahine and Mohammed were the same, woundwise. Some scattered shrapnel, hunks of arm missing, chest tubes, blood and dirt and metal splinters ground into them all over. There was a woman with blue eyes and red hair shoved back into a knot by Shahine's bedside. She was crying, disheveled and miserable. I took his blood pressure — it wasn't bad — and put tape on the chest drainage bottle. Together the woman and I washed some of the grime off him. His skin was warm and he was awake. Quiet, but awake.

"Where do you live?" I asked him.

"Wadi Abou Jamil."

He was young and tall and thin. The blood from the chest tube was spare. I put the time on the bottle, hung a new IV, and watched him breathe.

"*Fi waja?*"

He waved his good arm.

I went to get some Demerol. I did not ask for it: I took it. The redhaired woman was pale and exhausted. Her eyes were red. Maybe we should all be crying in this place but I had not cried all day. I went back to the nurses' station and took some Valium for the woman. She sat down. I went to the man named Mohammed.

Mohammed looked awful. He was older than Shahine. Heavier. His chest tube bottle was filling rapidly with blood and his breathing was laboured.

"Where do you come from?" Dreadful Arabic as always.

"Rue Clemenceau."

I thought about Miriam and her father. I thought about all the times I had walked down Rue Clemenceau. I saw the explosions and the burning buildings.

Mohammed never opened his eyes. His vital signs were poor. There was no one with him in the room. Maybe this one would die. I went out and called down to the doctors in surgery. They were all in surgery.

"We're all very busy down here," a doctor told me.

"Well, one of you better come here soon," I snapped.

"Fine," he shouted. "I'll come up there and you can come down here."

I smashed the phone down. I wanted to get out of that ward.

A heavy-set pretty woman was sitting next to Mohammed's bed. "*Ah'len,*" she whispered.

"Where do you come from?"

"Bourj Brajneh."

I thought about all the tanks around the camps. "Tonight you had better stay here." I didn't ask her, I told her. I was tired and angry and I was remembering the armoured car. I went and stole a blanket and a pillow for her.

Nabil was asleep again. Little Khalil was lying on his ruptured butt watching the ceiling. Burned Khalil was staring at the wall. Amin had his head underneath the pillow.

It was nearly five o'clock. The Israelis had encircled West Beirut.

18 September

By now we know what has happened. A woman stumbled down the ward corridor this morning, her hair in her face, one shoe missing, dress torn, babbling, half-coherent. The militias have massacred the people in the camps. The woman was immediately surrounded by families: Radwan's old toothless mother disappeared and reappeared instantly with strong coffee. The woman sat down, was pushed down to sit on a blanket on the floor. Even Nabil's family came out of his room and gathered around her.

"They tied the children," she said, "up like Christ." She held her arms out and then made a fast slashing movement with her arm across her throat. "I can't find my daughter," she wept.

Noha shut her eyes.

Nabil is not so jaundiced. For whatever reasons, they tried to wean him off the respirator today. In the trial periods he gasped and panted. One of the attending surgeons told me he "would be up in a chair soon."

This afternoon he went back to surgery.

We set up Lahoute hospital for casualties tonight. The Red Cross is going tomorrow to Sabra. I am sleeping in the basement and am too tired to write.

19 September

Last night the medical team from Gaza told us more of what has happened: about being marched down Sabra Street, about the Sports Stadium, about the shootings, the firing squads. This morning the streets were quiet — with patrols at intervals. I went out early to walk to Rue Clemenceau. The streets below the hospital are full of glass. It is as though I were walking on broken windows.

Have they killed everyone? I cannot even say their names very well today but I see their faces — Hamoudi smiling through his fingers as he covers his face with his hands; Samira silent and still pale from her injuries of last month; Abed with his lovely eyes as he takes tea from his mother and hands it to me in their livingroom; Rashid and Naimi arguing over where to have supper — in the little garden or on



the floor of the livingroom in the small house; and Jamila, the youngest one, shooting a chicken away from the kitchen and finally all of us under the trees in the courtyard. *Ah'len, ah'len*. The canary cheeping happily, chickens muttering beneath the table.

It is as though lightning has split my mind in pieces. I start with prayers, then with names in the middle of prayers. Odd snatches of prayers that I did not know I had ever learned. *Grant us grace fearlessly to make no peace with oppression. . . Relieve the oppressed, protect the innocent, defend them from the perils of this night* — Abed, Rashid, Samira, Achmed, Mouna, Nabil, Khaled. . . Then I say nothing.

At work today a friend of Apochian sat at the nurses' station and repeated "God forgive us, God forgive us." There was little conversation and lots of work. I could scarcely contain myself — what with the street fighting, the curfews, the round-ups, the Israelis in our streets. And all the time I wanted to find Samira and the others. Yesterday was the same. And worse: what has happened at Gazza, the lines of people-to-die, the Sports Stadium.

I walked all day after work, to Lahoute, to Najjar, looking at faces, asking questions. At ICRC Headquarters someone told me, "Fill out these forms. If we do not have the people you are looking for, then you must look in the streets." I began to walk through Raouche toward Ouzai. The Ferris wheel, the yellow one, has been burned out: it is not even yellow anymore. The bombed buildings are full of people. I peered into doorways, asking for names. But no one knew any of my names. I gave up speaking and just walked and looked. I looked at children's faces, listened to voices calling, stared at people through the dusty air, and cursed my poor Arabic. When it grew dark, some of the windows were lit with candles.

I will keep on searching every day. Part of me refuses to believe they are all dead. I am reminded of the scene in *MacBeth* wherein Ross comes to tell MacDuff about the slaughter of his wife and children. And MacDuff cries out: *My children, too? All, replies Ross, wife, children, servants, all that could be found.* MacDuff: *All? All my pretty ones? Did you say all? O hell-kite. All?*

*Blunt not thy heart, Malcolm tells him, enrage it. Receive what cheer you may — the night is long that never finds the day.*

Is someone telling Hani that now — now that the men in Algiers, in Cyprus, in Hungary are learning about their families, their wives and parents and children. Lay on, Hani and Radwan — there will never be peace now. And today I feel as though that night will never find the sunrise and that we will never — any of us — awaken and be human beings ever again.

21 September

Nabil goes in and out of surgery. His mother is now reduced to tears — silent ones, or just silence itself wherein she sits, her gaze turned inward. No one in the family is speaking much at all. The blood pours out of the boy; it is replaced, and soon pours out of him again.

One of the residents has told the family there is "no more blood." But there is — mine and that of anyone else who can be persuaded to donate.

"Why are you giving blood to an Arab?" the doctor shouted at me.

Nabil's uncle and aunt Noha came down to the blood bank. "No one has done this before," Noha explained their presence. Her husband smoked and stared at me seriously. "Now you and Nabil," Noha paused and raised her hands aligning her outstretched fingers together, "*Sawa* - together."

"*Toujours*," I replied. Absolutely. Blood being like love now.

And there are lots of people going down to the blood bank. An x-ray technician stopped me on the stairs, pointing to the bandaid on his arm.

"Look," he said, "for Nabil."

Wonderful man, that. But I hardly ever remember leaving the hospital.

One night the Israelis arrived at the main entrance across the street from the Emergency Room. Tanks up the hill, jeeps full of soldiers on the street where I walk to work. I sat on a stretcher and watched while people went in and out — Israelis, hospital officials, soldiers pushing my friend the security guard at the door up against the wall, shaking him and shouting in his face. Rumours spoken by all: they want a list of the fighting wounded, the foreign medical staff, the Palestinian civilians, the hospital workers, all the patients. One of the residents imitated the Israeli commander. He was oddly comical, but I did not laugh. I decided I wanted to stay at the hospital over night, but having walked with Barbara to work, I went back to my room at her urging. She's right — what good can any of us do?

The old friendly guard was still there when I left. He reached out and took my hands in his. I am thankful he is alive.

I do not know where to look for people anymore and I am tired of going to the Red Cross. This afternoon I went to the camps and wrote most of the following while I was there.

Sabra and Shatila. The dust is thick over Sabra Street. To recognize a face or even a building is difficult. The apartment where Samira and her family were living while the house is being repaired is empty. There are flies everywhere and as the dust sticks to my skin and hair and settles in my shirt and even my underwear, the flies stick to it. Beyond the family's house, most of the buildings are wrecked, huge slabs of roof and wall leaning crazily toward the street. The dead beneath the concrete and the stones smell. The sand is wet on the side streets. There are women

crying, screaming at intervals over the sound of bulldozers and ambulances. The camp is a morgue; hot, sticky, bloody.

The road on the west ridge of the camp is a dirt track. Two weeks ago I could walk along it and look over the rooftops and across to the mountains. From the ridge today, the dust hangs in heavy sheets and the rooftops have been flattened down to the ground. The mountains are invisible. Slightly to the north at the beginning of Sabra Street, the mosque is hidden by the dust.

The wailing of the women and the grinding of the bulldozers is diminished somewhat when I am on this hillside. It has taken a long time to walk down Sabra Street. I cannot get free of the dust: it rises from the ground like some sinister vapour, weighting down my clothing. I can see the bulldozers pushing at the ruins. The wider streets are crowded with medical vans and trucks. They are bringing out the dead wrapped in shrouds and blankets. The pathway up to this ridge is sticky with blood and liquid, the sand is mushy and people are lying beneath the broken concrete and bricks.

From where I am sitting — on a wall overlooking a courtyard and an empty house with three walls, the smell is mostly of the dust and my own sweat. It is hot, my hair feels wet and thickened like matted fur. Like Hani's hair before we washed and cut it. Like the fur of the war dogs who follow me to work in the morning, panting and jumping on my white scrub pants to leave long, scraping claw marks — those three dogs who reappear sometimes in the late evening and are overjoyed because I foolishly make a fuss over them and give them cheese on occasion. And like the hair of the child I have just discovered in a caved-in doorway on the side of the hill above me.

I have been on this dirt track in the past but I have never noticed the doorway before today. Perhaps I am so numb with fear for what has happened here and for the people I cannot find that, despite the dust, I cannot shut my eyes. I notice more — the shapes of the stains on the sand, trees which are still standing even though the houses and little patios shaded by them have been destroyed.

And up here on this ridge, the doorway. It is a metal door set down three steps and standing halfway open. It looks like the entrance to a cave or tunnel: there are no houses it could lead to.

Buried in the earth and sand just inside the door was a child. Is a child. Her eyes are closed and the sand covers her up to her nose so that only the top of her head is showing. Her face is turned to the side and her hands are coming through the earth. Except they are not her hands. They are the hands of an adult and the fingernails are cracked and dirty and full of old blood. There are flies on the child's face and when I tried to push the door open, it was held fast by the earth and the bodies: the flies rose in the air and settled right back down again on the eyelids of the child and on her hair. When I touched her face, it was cool and stiff and the hands through the earth were cold. Her hair felt like mine does — abnormally thick almost like wet weeds. Except that mine is part of me still being alive and she, and the person whose hands I had to touch, are no longer living.

Evening. I left the child and the other one, the wall and the courtyard and the wrecked house and walked back up Sabra Street. I returned to my neighborhood and, in a room there, I listened to an English physician entertain other medical workers with an account of his close friendship with an Israeli captain posted at the south end of the camps during these dreadful times.

I must go back to the hillside soon for I am closer to the dead now. I cannot bear to talk about any of this right now, and it will take me a long time to forgive that respected English doctor. Perhaps I will forget about him in a few years. That will have to be my forgiveness.

It is St. Matthew's Day. A paragraph in the Old Testament lesson from Kings reads

*And the king of Israel went out  
. . .and slew the Syrians with  
great slaughter.*

We should write a new lesson.

*And Arik, the king of Israel, went  
out and slew the Palestinians and  
their neighbors with great slaughter,  
and the children of Israel slew of  
these people many hundreds in just  
three days, and surely they were  
stronger than they.*

I understand the Old Testament lesson. Someone once told me that to understand St. Matthew, however, was to be ethically prepared. I am sure I do not understand St. Matthew on this day — his day — and that I will never be ethically prepared for any of this. I am not so sure the saint himself would be prepared. The child lies in the earth-filled tunnel and I do not know her name. Or the name of the one whose hands I held for that terrified moment. Or the name of the one who put them there.

I will not forget them and there is no forgiveness. Thus endeth the lesson.

23 September

Today I went back to find Rashid's family and to find Samira.

There was traffic on the Maazra and the sides of that avenue were lined with

tanks. The soldiers were so busy stopping cars that they paid no attention to anyone on foot. Even though there were not very many of us. And there were no men to be seen.

There are patrols now in all the neighborhoods. They block off each end of a street with tanks or large trucks and then go from house to house turning the people out in the street. I watched them working in Tallet Khayat. If people did not move the right way or fast enough, the soldiers pushed them. Some of the people being shoved around were children. *Ratissage*.\*

In Fakhani many of the ruins I used as landmarks were not there anymore and I got lost several times. The dust blocked out the mosques and the mountains. I walked down a lot of wrong small streets, climbed over piles of buildings, and finally got to Sabra — coming in from the east side by the cemetery.

The road was crowded with women and every once in awhile there was a cart with a coffin, but mostly there were small groups of people huddled together and walking. On Sabra Street the bulldozers were out in full force and the trucks were still bringing out the dead. Many of the workers were still wearing masks to protect them from the smell of the dead and from the flies. The assassins have destroyed the souks on the corner by the mosque. I am reminded of photographs of great natural disasters when I look at all the ruins — horrible earthquake damage, cyclones, tidal waves — all those "acts of God" which always, as I grew up, happened somewhere else. This war in Lebanon, the massacre in Sabra-Shatila are acts of human beings. They are here — where I am.

On the balcony of the rooms where Samira's family had been staying, children's clothing was hanging up to dry. One of the neighbors called to me and told me to go inside. I remember running toward the stairs of the building and tripping over my sandals as I went in their door which is always stuck a little. And there they were — Samira and Umm Samira — washing things, packing bundles, preparing food. I babbled a lot at them and leaned against the wall of the room and said the children's names. They repeated the names after me and nodded. They are alive. Ummi went back to the food, Samira to the bundles. I stood on the balcony watching the street and telling myself not to laugh and not to cry and not to go back into the rooms and hug them both. Samira came out then. "My mother said she knew you would come here."

We stared at all the people and traffic in the street. Many of the trucks and vans carried the dead in shrouds. Again there were coffins on carts. A group of people surrounded a woman following one of these: there was much wailing and shouting. One of the men told her she must leave to identify a body from the Sports Stadium (for they were bringing those dead down from the hill today) and she did not know what to do. Many of the people in the camp were walking all alone.

I know I asked Samira many questions and we told each other many things but I do not remember any of the words very well now although only a day has passed.

\**Ratissage*: an international word meaning "rat round-up," used extensively during the war in Algeria.

When the food and bundles were ready, we walked north to find a taxi to take us to Mouseitbeh where the rest of the family is sheltered. On the way, another bunch of relatives arrived in a car. We met the small children's grandmother from Sidon. She has believed her family to be dead all this week. The grandmother looks like the rest of the family even though she is an in-law. She is heavy and dark and has beautiful long black eyebrows. I love to watch her: she looks like a gypsy.

Samira argued with me about carrying bundles. She always does. I did not care if she shouted — the more noise she and the others make, the more I am convinced that they have been spared and that this day is not just an extension of my hope.

Most of Samira's family has been living in a large boys' school in Mouseitbeh. They are sleeping in one of the classrooms. Today was the first day they have had cooked food for a week. The school is a mile or so from Sabra. They all ran here — old and young, everyone carrying babies, lots of people had no shoes. There are not enough blankets and at night the stone floors are cold. There are perhaps two hundred families living in this school.

When we arrived there, I had to walk away and look out the window. To see the Sidon grandmother so happy to find her grandchildren is unbearable. She took them one by one and bent her face over the face of each. I did not watch her greet her son but I saw the look on his face. She and her son look alike: he is married to one of Samira's sisters. He also looks like Samira's father. When I asked Samira why half the family including the in-laws all look alike, she answered in her matter-of-fact way, "Well, of course. They are all my uncles or cousins." I will be trying to arrange them in my mind for a long time.

To make matters more confusing, the other half of the family, including those in-laws, look like each other with very light eyes and fine bones. It is as though the minute one of them gets married, they begin to resemble someone else in the family. Every time I try to figure out who is whose brother, I come up with another uncle for Samira. It turns out in my misguided calculations that her father and mother must have between them at least a dozen brothers who all look exactly alike.

I am reminded of fairy tales I learned as a child: *Once upon a time in a land far, far away there lived an old man and his old wife and they had ten handsome sons who all looked exactly like one another and who were the pride and joy of their ancient parents' advancing age. Now in the same land, there lived a wicked queen who had ten daughters, all of whom were beautiful beyond repair and who were imprisoned in a magic castle. . .*

After she found the grandchildren, the woman from Sidon sat down with the other women and began to talk. Her face changed with her words and her dark eyebrows moved like wings. Samira busied herself making coffee and I sat and watched the children rolling about on the blankets. The men sat along the sides of the room and smoked. They did not talk much. Khaled, Samira's father, gave me cigarettes.

Samira's grandmother came in the room. Yesterday she walked all the way back to the camp to see what had become of the house. She went alone. She talked for a long time about the damage and then she took me upstairs to another classroom. There was a woman there, also a grandmother but not nearly as old. This woman had a strong face, beautiful and full of pain. With her were three older children who sat and talked with us. Four smaller ones played around the school desks. The older ones were hers, the smaller the children of her son. She told me her sons were dead — one killed here two years ago and the other in Germany last year. She told me the story of what had happened this past week, the same story I had heard before from the distraught woman in the hospital — that it was Haddad's men and the Kataeb who had come in the night, that they had taken knives to children after having tied them, that the young boys were machine-gunned in rows along the walls of houses, that the women and the girls were raped and cut, and that others had been taken away. She told me until she could not speak anymore and her voice died out and her face seemed to crumble with tears and the beginning of weeping. The older children sat watching us and the little ones stood in a row and were silent.

Later I said goodbye to them all, wondering if I would see them again even though we agreed I would come back each day. And then I walked back to the camps to see the house and the tree, and to find Rashid and his family.

The sun was beginning to set as I walked down Sabra Street and most of the people had left by then. I walked the whole length of the street and watched the cats picking through the ruins. The alley where the Almadad family lived is no longer there. Most of the bodies are out now. Every so often I found someone lying underneath a jumble of broken rocks. I walked slowly up the small street which leads to the west. Rashid's house was not standing. None of the houses next to it were standing and the street will smell of dead people for a long time.

At Rashid's the bulldozers and the dynamite had blown the roof down onto the little patio. One wall had collapsed and had been pushed into a heap over part of the fallen roof. This had been a wonderful place once with the small garden and the trees and the grape arbour and the birds. I used to wish I lived there because the people were happy and because it reminded me of places in New Mexico. Today the garden is gone and Rashid and Naimi and the girls are somewhere underneath the fallen roof. An old woman followed me along the road and when I stopped at the house and said his name, she peered at me and made a sound like a gun going off. Then she held up all five fingers of one hand and gestured toward the ruin.

Rashid and his family were Lebanese.

A man in a caftan came then and led me away from the garden house and up the side streets and showed me the homes of the dead, as he called them. Every house on the hill in back of the street. All destroyed — caved in and heaped together. Old blood and fluid in dusty alleys, blood on walls. Washing hanging crookedly from grotesquely suspended rooftops. A woman's scarf caught on a

twisted piece of metal. The houses-of-the-dead man wandered away and I could hear him calling out as he disappeared down the road, "Jamal, Jamal." And then there was real silence.

I sat down and smoked and thought about the people there and then I walked back in the darkness.

24 September

Nabil has not died yet. This morning I stood by the bedside and began the dressings: first the washing of the femoral-rod insertion site, then the washing of the colostomy and the open abdominal surgical site, then the femur dressings, then the pads to protect that area from the fluid which will pour out of the abdominal wounds when I turn him to do his back and buttock wounds, then the 4x4 packings for the abdominal sites, then the larger abdominal pads, then the blue pads to absorb whatever he loses and to protect the linen.

Toufic is helping me now — every day, holding his son when I turn him, talking softly to him when I have to pull out the packing from his gluteal wounds. Nabil screams silently against the tube in his throat. We go through this each morning — and not just once.

But this morning my hands were shaking as I changed the linen from underneath him, the wounds on both sides of his almost-grown body were gaping, and as soon as I turned him to one side, the blood flowed out all over the femur dressings, between his legs to the back wounds, filling his nasogastric tube, soaking the blue pads, the abdominal pads, and the sheets and then running over the side of the bed to turn my own clothing from my hip bones to mid-thigh dark red. Toufic shook and his eyes filled with tears. I glared at Nabil in rage and despair. I wanted to shake him, shake the displaced gangrenous gut segments back into place. He looked right back at me and my anger — right in the eyes, and then shut his eyes against me.

"You are here two hours," Apochian shouted, "and you look as if you spent the night in the garbage."

But she gave me clean clothes. And I am allowed to use a shower on the ward every day. Phillip is living in the room and he keeps his laundry soaking in the bathtub.

That was today.

Last night I dreamt that when I pulled Nabil's cover sheet back, only half of him remained. From his waist down he had disappeared. But the bleeding had stopped.



The camps disappear little by little, meter by meter, every day I go there. And I go back each day. I have a nagging fear that when the dust settles there will be nothing but flattened land: all the places that I know will have vanished and the remaining people gone and so forgotten. Sometimes I am afraid that one day soon I will go there and the people — the survivors of these days — will be packing more bundles and they will all watch me when I ask them, "Where are you going?" in the darkness and their faces will be impassive and stubborn like stone and no one will answer because no one will know.

Then I will remember the Mouseitbeh school in the late afternoons when everyone pulled the blankets closer together and one of the aunts lit the candles and each of the women began, one by one, to tell her story of "the most awful days of our lives." Samira translated quietly and the voices of the children — of Achmed, of Hamoudi, of Mahmoud, of Mouna — voices I had always thought I would hear only in my dreams, became fainter as one by one they fell asleep and each woman told the same story with some variation like a long Arabian song. Outside the classroom window the sky turned to night and the faces became brighter and stronger in the candlelight and other people came in the room to sit down and listen. The men sat like guardians all around us.

Later Ummi would begin to rearrange blankets and one of the girls would tell me, "You will stay here tonight. It is late now and dark and dangerous to be out."

It is the reverse humanity of the gesture which hangs in my being and warms my soul just as the blankets warm my body. I suppose the sharing of our lives has made some everlasting and everpresent connection which heals the splitting of my mind when I thought there was no life left to be shared. To be alive and together now even in the danger and the darkness is, I think, what love is all about. Perhaps that is what really matters after all — sharing the journeys, going together, *sawa*.

I think again of the dream and of the three people crouching in the dirt in the ruined cinderblock house — the three people whose names I did not know then. Now I do know the names and the faces. The boy next to me could be Nabil or Achmed or Hani, the others could be Samira or Ummi or Khaled or Miriam or any of the people I see each day. Somehow it does not matter about the blood or the dying in the dream anymore. It only matters that those people are next to me in the darkness. And that in this schoolroom or ruined house or wherever we are, we have not died yet.

For three days I have walked along the dirt track on the west ridge of the camp. The bulldozers, which have been leveling the southern end of Shatila, have been up here also. The doorway where the child and the other one are lying does not open anymore. Part of the hillside has caved in above the narrow steps. So I have walked

further along and noticed other things.

The fighter's jacket, for instance, just beyond the doorway. A new fighter's jacket and a winter one. I have thought about it every day and have been afraid to pick it up for fear there might be something underneath it — something that might explode. Today I tossed a rock at it and nothing happened, so I grabbed it.

It has hardly been worn. It is made in Kentucky. There is a jagged rip in the inside of it from the collar-line down as though someone had snatched it from a hook where it had been hanging. Someone who was in a big hurry. It has an eerie fascination for me: someone had to have worn it at night now that the air in Beirut is turning colder. Which night? Which massacre night? The jacket was not here before the massacre. I know: I was here. I would have noticed it then.

I wish I knew who had worn this jacket, what he looked like, what he was thinking, where he came from. Did he take the jacket off because he got too hot when he threw the people into the tunnel? Was it too difficult for him to wear such a heavy coat and wield an axe? Was he running from the dynamite which blew all the houses just below here to ruins? Is it hard to kill children, to hold the gun, the knives, and wear a jacket too?

Know your enemy. Wear his clothes.

1 October

Wahida's house is at the north end of the western ridge. The house is built halfway up the short cliff and there is a stone terrace at the back. A large grape arbour shades half of this and beyond that, there are chicken coops and an old stable. Most of the houses this far north on the ridge are still standing. To the south, however, and below the cliffside, nearly everything has been destroyed.

Today there were people even in the destruction, moving rubble and carting off pieces of roofs and walls in wheelbarrows. Throughout the camp now the most noticeable sound is the banging of hammers. It is a sound of life here and somehow a symbol of defiance.

An older man stood out on the terrace of the house and waved to me to come down. *Ah'len, ah'len*. He took me indoors to meet his wife, Wahida — an Egyptian with strange light eyes in her dark face and blue tattoo markings across her cheekbones. Yussef told me that the house would soon fall down and he led me to a bedroom and showed me how the bombs had completely severed the walls from the frame of the house itself. It was as if they had been neatly cut out from the structure of the building. We sat and drank coffee and spoke of where we were from.

And then Yussef began in Arabic and French to tell the story of those days. As he spoke he stood up and walked back and forth in the narrow front room, pointing through the doorway in the direction of Bir Hassan and then toward the southeast.

He described the first day as evening came after the Israelis had taken their positions around the camp and the Kataeb and the Haddad men came in. He told me how the sky had been as bright as noon from the flares and about the watchposts full of soldiers just above the dirt track. Above the doorway where there is a small girl lying under the earth.

He acted out the militias in the confined street below his house, he cradled the gun in his arms as he talked, he became the neighbors as they were lined up against the wall and became also the assassins who, he said, had shot them all in a line — the sound of which was like a sewing machine that never stopped.

From beyond the hillside behind the house there was a huge explosion. The walls shook and dust fell down from the ceiling. "*Malesh*," said Yusef, "it's just a shell going off."

Wahida got up then and disappeared into another room. But it was not enough, Yusef continued, the guns were not enough. There were the knives and the axes. Wahida returned: her arms were raised over her head and she held a small double-bladed axe in her hands. Her face was stubborn and set and she did not look at us as she brought the axe crashing down to the floor while her husband talked.

Yusef waved her to a chair. The sounds of the repeating guns, he went on, the footsteps in the streets, the screaming of the women and children did not end for three days and then — his voice became softer — then it was over. He motioned toward the street below the hill. "I will show you the places when you leave and the houses of our neighbors."

Later we climbed down the stairway from the house to the narrow alley below. "Here," Yusef pointed out a small house behind a caved-in wall, "here they killed my neighbor — and down there I found many of the dead one morning. Those ones had been tied before they were killed."

I looked at the little street and the wall. In one of the houses several people sat in the doorway. Two men were filling in the bullet holes along the sides of the windows with plaster. The women smiled at us and there were more *Ah'lens*. On the terrace of Yusef and Wahida's house there were flowers growing in pots. They were scarlet and blue and they too had survived.

10 October

Lebanon, I said, was a series of journeys — one I travel by myself, another I go on with someone else, and still others I walk along on the side. Maybe in truth I am going on all of those journeys at once.

Somewhere along the journey of these days, Nabil has died. So that while I was in Mousseitbeh, in Sabra, with little Khalil who was indeed sent down to 4-South and immediately replaced with little Samir from Tripoli with his legs blown also — somewhere between endless surgery after surgery, Nabil died in Intensive Care.

I think he had been in Intensive Care for at least a week. One morning I found the family camped out on blankets in the foyer outside the doors, Toufic weeping like a child, Umm Nabil beyond all communication, even Noha did not look up as I came in. And for days it was like that. I gave up almost trying to get in to see him and I faced that family with dread, even when I sat with the uncles and smoked and never spoke. Only once did I leave them without that terrible dread and that was one day when Umm Nabil and I put our arms around each other and wept together with great and mutual bitterness, sharing without words the knowledge that there was no hope whatsoever any longer and that time — in terms of Nabil and the people who are bound to him — would cease to have dimension for us all.

I arrived in Intensive Care the last day, yesterday. Nabil was black in colour, his beautiful young face swollen beyond recognition. His arms were tied outwards (as Christ was hung, I kept thinking, and as they tied the children in Shatila), and his heart rate on the monitor was thirty-six and dropping. No one said a word as I stood by the bedside and when I kissed his puffed up eyes, a doctor asked, "Is he your relative — your brother, perhaps?"

And I could not answer that man, but I wanted to say, Yes, yes, he is — my brother, my son, my friend and we have been on a journey together. Isn't it strange how journeys so short in time are so long in love? One of the uncles pressed a piece of paper in my hand as I left. It has Toufic's address on it.

And so it seems that I am still, because of that hastily-scrawled writing, on the journey with Nabil and I wonder indeed where we are going.

11 October

When I am not at work or in Sabra, I stay in my room. It is a new room and I am sharing it with Charlotte, a nun from Maryknoll who, I am absolutely sure, is a gift from God. I can be at home in this room, my clothes are clean, the place smells of soap. When Charlotte comes back from work at Gazza I can tell her things that have happened and I can go to sleep without being afraid. We can laugh and we can eat.

Charlotte remembers people by their names. Until she came here, and except for Barbara, no one ever spoke of anyone by name. Individuals became injuries, or — in my hospital — room numbers.

Our room is at the back of this building overlooking the courtyard. The back of the apartment house on the next street over faces us and in the morning we watch women hang out laundry, air the rugs, shake mops and get on with the activities of daily living. To the right of us there is a large garden and a marvelously beautiful old Arabic house with a tile roof. The top story has been shut up for a long time and whoever lives there has not returned. In the garden there are trees, mimosa and acacia and two large date palms. In the wind the palm fronds smack together and rattle. The concierge keeps pigeons in the courtyard: at night a boy comes and shuts

them in the bird house and in the morning they are set free. The sound of their gurgling and cooing is the first thing I hear when I awaken and the last thing I think about as I begin to fall asleep at night. It is because of Charlotte that I find safety and comfort in pigeons and night time talks, it is Charlotte who has made me begin to feel like a human being again. Charlotte is an orphan, all her family having died somehow along the way. She is the most loving person I know.

Khaled has moved his family back to the Sabra Street house. One evening we were sitting on the big bed in the front room and talking and a woman came in with a baby I had never seen before. But it was one of them — with light eyes and fine bones and ears sticking out like Achmed's.

"A cousin," Samira informed me. I should have known. "They live south of here — just off Sabra Street. When the assassins came, they did not have time to leave so they locked the door and blew out all the lanterns. The women stuffed the babies into the food cupboards and put socks in their mouths. The soldiers came and banged on the door. When no one answered, they went to the next house. They were so busy killing the neighbors they spared my cousins. . ."

I looked at the little jug-eared baby and at his mother with her blue eyes. She smiled. *Ah'len, ah'len.*

I have made two new friends in Sabra. One afternoon I walked down a back street thinking I would find a new way to Wahida's house. Suddenly a woman sitting in a chair by a small store began to speak to me in French, asking me whom I was looking for, where I was from, did I like Beirut. This woman is Egyptian and half-Sudanese and her name is Néné. She has eight children, all alive, and she is a widow. Néné did not talk much about the massacre. She told me about her oldest son who has a job and helps her, about the children's school, and about how she, too, is a foreigner-in-the-neighborhood and how good it was to speak French with someone at last because sometimes she was lonely. She asked me who my friends were in the camp.

I waved in the direction of the big mosque. "Oh, just people living over there." I was turning Middle-Eastern. I never tell anyone anything exactly unless I know them well. And that rules out a lot of people.

But I like Néné. She has a sharp pretty face and bright eyes. She is the only person I have found to speak of loneliness.

That same afternoon I found Said. Said is ten. He has dark skin like a small gypsy and long reddish hair. There was another huge explosion as I was walking in the back streets and suddenly everyone began to scream and run. There were children crashing into walls, falling over the ruins, banging into closed doorways. That was all I could hear — the screaming and the crying. It was not only the children, though. Women were calling out frantically. Children landed in heaps, one on top of another.

I saw a small toddler careen into a pile of concrete, fall down, and still keep running, her legs beating against the air. The sound of the detonation lasted perhaps a minute and the ground shook for a short time longer. I picked up a child from the ground and grabbed an older boy as he ran by.

"Enough," I said to them. "*Malesh.*"

The little one's mother came and we sat down on the crumpled stones. The children began to sort themselves out. The older boy looked at me and smiled. He was shaking as if from cold. I was shaking from fear and thinking about a kid running into a wall and about how that sort of thing had been going on all summer. And last summer also.

What will this do to them — to Said and the small child I had stuck under my arm, and to all the children living here? What in God's name are we doing to these people?

Said smiled at me again as we walked down the street. Do I not owe him the same rights as I have? Or do I let him run into walls, fall down, always scramble to get out of the way? Of what? Of the bombs my country makes? Until he grows older — if he makes it that far — and becomes a warrior, a fighter. Said is not just the future of his parents: he is my future.

But then he was speaking to me, laughing and holding my arm, calling to his friends to come over and meet me, sharing his life.

12 October

The office who sponsors me here in Beirut is as strange as a scene from the *Alexandria Quartet*: it has all the peculiarity and none of the poetry. I try to go there as little as possible. There are too many aspects of the outfit I will never understand.

An inherent inability to answer simple questions, for example. "Is the Telex working?" Answer: "Perhaps you will return in two days." or, "Is it possible to have Dr. Maklouf's address to send him a letter?" Answer: "That depends on what kind of letter." Or, "Is Dr. Mark in today?" Answer: "You must return here next week." During which exchange, I can hear Dr. Mark's voice in a room down the hall.

It smacks of Byzantine-at-its-worst, a deliberate muffling of purpose and blurring of edges concerning small requests, a definite attempt to non-focus. The office is the only place in Beirut I feel uneasy — in the one place I should not feel insecure at all. Suddenly the whole Palestinian issue has been dropped of course and, again, there is a sense of being slightly out of focus. I have begun to suspect that the commitments of this organization might well not be mine and that our relationship, if it can be called that, is just superficially polite and grossly hypocritical. Were I to confront one of the bigwigs with a direct question such as, "What is the purpose of this organization?," I would be given a glass of tea and asked how my work on the

ward was going. Or if someone was feeling unusually expansive, I might be given a copy of a report on grapestakes sent to Tyre farm fields (of which there are few left intact) or financial aid to Christian schools in East Beirut dated Spring 1980.

There are a good many priests around of late: the atmosphere is one of pious disapproval. Perhaps I should ascend the staircase on my knees, cloaked in a mantilla and rattling off beads. Preferably with a British Christian Aid accent.

And there is the Egyptian, the office jack-of-all-trades, who moves silently from room to room on crepe-soled sandals and answers "Five minutes — just five minutes" to all questions as he fades off down the hallway. Recently he too has been wearing a priest outfit — all black with a white clerical collar. The costume gives him the slightly overheated aspect of a ring-necked skunk: at the same time he has been given to raising his hand and blessing those of us who speak to him, smiling with that fixed grin as if he were in some stage of tetanus. He has strange light eyes and a strange light mind. I did not trust him when I met him and I do not trust him now as he hides, grinning and shuffling, behind the costume of Christianity.

In addition to this apparition, the powers that be have imported four men who look exactly alike. Clones, no doubt. They wear dark trousers, usually black, and light-coloured short-sleeved shirts which are poorly ironed. Each has a dark beard, pale skin and granny-glasses. Each does a lot of paper work. One day I went from room to room and counted all four of them. It gave me the creeps. They all have identical accents — slightly nasal, half-broad A's, a cross between Ohio and New South Wales. Their teeth are small and slightly pointed. On the day I was counting, they said "No" to any and all inquiries directed at them and each curled his lips back into his beard like a dog who has found something unexpectedly unpleasant in his dinner dish.

A few days after the massacre it was announced that there would be a party for, as I recall, one of the doctors in our group. It did seem, I remarked to Barbara, just a tad tacky to be celebrating anything at that particular time. However, as she and I have tried to avoid the place as much as possible, we decided that this time we would make an appearance.

So we went to that post-massacre party and appeared late and heavily fortified with rose. It was a well-attended soiree with candles shimmering, loud disco music, people bunched in intimate groups on the balconies and in the foyers, a large table sagging with platters of food — bread and hummus and cheeses and even ham. There were big baskets of fresh fruit and an enormous gooey cake from East Beirut. I ate some of it anyhow, knowing the sugar would neutralize the alcohol. There was an entire sideboard of liquor — Johnnie Walker Red and an assortment of gin. And lots and lots of wine, all opened and not yet poured.

"Hello," I waved to the big bosses gathered in the corner, "hello, hello." I moved toward the sideboard and the wine, lining up a particularly appealing bottle of Lebanese white which shone like topaz in the candlelight. "Goodnight, goodnight," I glided past them and blew them all a kiss as I headed out the door with the attractive bottle in my hand. I had said my goodnights in four languages — English,

French, Arabic, and Greek: I had to throw the Greek in because of the Orthodox aspects of the outfit. It is a pity I had not known a small farewell in Armenian — and Aramaic and Syriac would have been befitting, too.

I sat down on the steps outside the building. The small ruined house by the parking lot was in shadow. I considered taking the wine over there to drink but it was too much effort. Barbara came down then and joined me on the steps. The trash heap across the street was still smouldering from the day's fires and the war dogs were rooting around burning their paws. Every so often one would let out a surprised yelp. Eventually two of them came over and settled themselves beside us.

We drank half the wine and stashed the rest. The dogs got up and disappeared in the darkness. We took the wine bottle out again and hurled it across the road and into the pile of burning garbage where it splintered loudly. And then we left.

The jasmine in the garden of the harem house across from the church has no perfume any longer: winter's coming.

22 October

Sitting last night in the downstairs room of the Sabra house, the lanterns lit, the children around us and Ummi sleeping on the big bed, we listened to Fairouz songs and to the sound of Samira's voice. Then later upstairs while the sisters slept beside us, I listened again as Samira told me about the house.

"I was born in this house. My father and my uncles built this house and now they are building it again. It has all my life in it — the sweet and the bitter memories. . . ." She paused and leaned over to turn the lantern down. The shadows flickered on her small face and in the half-light her eyes were huge and shining. "When we fled so many times this summer to so many places and finally to Mouseitbeh, I knew we were living far, far from home. And now, now we hear they may deport us, send us away — like herds of beasts." She sat up on her bed and ran her hand through her hair. "Oh, how can we leave our home?"

We talked for a long time — about the PLO and what it stands for, about a homeland. Samira said, "We must have a home, a real home — recognized by all. Even if we do not choose to live there. Jill, you have a home. You are a foreigner here, but you have an embassy, a government who can protect you. We need that — we have no protection."

It is true. I have always said I would not take sides. But whom do I speak for? I speak for the people I know and the ones whom I love. What else can I do? What do I do then — when Ummi feeds me, saves blankets for me, gives me this house, this tree-of-life house, every day when I come here? And what about Rashid and Naimi lying underneath the ruins of the little garden house? And what about the child and the other one, the other ones, buried in back of the tunnel doorway? What about little Khalil with no legs and no butt, what about little Samir who lost his last leg just today? Oh, what about Nabil and the journey he is taking me on?



The journeys are everyone's journeys. If we all knew that, then there would indeed be peace. Samir would be walking, Hani would be dancing, and my little friend Said would never run frightened again.

23 October

Sometime in the past few days, Hassan came back. Big Hassan. I was standing at the nurses' station waiting for a chart and I heard Amin, who had been roaming around in his wheelchair all morning, call, "Jill — look!" So I looked at him coming down the hall and there was a boy behind him and it was Hassan. Walking. In new levi's and a jacket to match and two legs — not one. Courtesy, I found out later, of Roumania and then Chicago. I am relieved I did not knock him flat when I reached him. One of the surgeons who has not smiled for weeks actually laughed aloud for joy.

Hassan has aged a lot: he looks like a man now. We went into Samir's room and he spoke with Umm Samir for a long time. Samir, who is by now half-crazy with fear, listened impassively. But he did listen. Hassan and Samir are Lebanese.

Afterwards we walked down to 4-South and I left him with Nidal Hammed. Nidal is getting thin to the point of starvation. He is pale and sweaty and the bandages on his remaining leg are often soaked with green drainage. The surgeons revised his amputated leg almost at the hip. I wish Nidal could go to Chicago. I wish Nidal would live. I wanted to tell Hassan how Nidal had come to this hospital, that he had been in Lahoute and had been dying of sepsis. But they took him at the University, thanks to a persuasive volunteer doctor.

Now he does not seem so septic, but he never eats. His mother is in Ain el-Helweh in Sidon. He has long slim hands and he smokes incessantly. His voice is weak and his sacrum is coming through the skin on his back. I see him nearly every day and rearrange his pillows and look at his young blown-apart body and I can do nothing for him except add his name to the names I keep saying and wish desperately that he will live.

Samir will live without his legs. He turned septic again and they took his remaining leg off. Whoever treated him originally in Tripoli had run wires through his bones and the leg itself was dead. But Samir screams every day now and his mother leaves — just as Nabil's mother left — because we tell her she should. Umm Samir has four other children and they were all in the same explosion which, while it was blowing up the kids, blew up the house as well. Umm Samir is small and has red hair. Her skin is very white. She has never left this hospital — indeed has hardly left the room.

Samir screams and screams and his round seven year old face takes on the look of madness during dressing changes. Taking the second leg helped the body: the madness look is still there and the sound of his voice echoes all over the ward.

Samira took me with her to apply for a work permit and to visit friends in Bourj Brajneh. We sat in someone's tidy cold house and I listened to her talking with Wafa. It was cold and almost rainy outside and the wind came in the windows which had all been blown out during the summer. On the street above the house, the men were making repairs. Again, the defiant sound of hammers.

"I hope you were not bored," Samira said to me after we left.

"I am not bored," I told her. "I could listen to your language forever. It is beautiful — " I began to wax poetic, "like some wonderful story."

"Of course," she replied matter-of-fact as always, "but it is not beautiful." She picked her way carefully over the open drains and the ruins. "We are telling the story of what has happened to us."

On the way back to the house, we stopped at Acca Hospital. No one was there and the place was a mess of broken glass, dust, shattered beds, and fired walls. Only one old man inquired as we went in and then waved us on. Upstairs in the offices the file cabinets were thrown on the floor and the contents of drawers hurled about the rooms. There were snapshots of Fathi Arafat and of the Red Crescent people on a trip to China lying in a heap in a corner. I picked them up and put them in my pocket. I took some copies of *One Day in July*, the photojournalism report of the Fakhani bombings in 1981.

When we got home, Samira's uncle took two copies and rushed them off to the French and Italian troop headquarters in the neighborhood. This is the uncle with the chickens. During the bombings this summer he came back to get his chickens and carted them all out to the building where the family had taken shelter. Every morning long before sunrise the chickens and the rooster would greet the day. Every family in that neighborhood was awakened. It was not long before the uncle became very unpopular.

So, while the bombings continued, Samira's uncle hauled all the birds back to the house. "My uncle," she told me, "likes plants and animals very much. He worried about them all during the war."

The uncle's chickens do not even wait for the sun. They get right down to business at three a.m. The war, perhaps, has made them crazy and off-schedule. Maybe by getting us up so early, they are giving us a jump on death.

I walked back to Charlotte's through another destroyed section of Beirut just east of Summerland. The sun is always going down as I walk back from Sabra. The sea turns grey and pink. Suddenly the cars are few and far between, the only dust is that which I kick up myself. There is silence. The buildings rise up shattered with black empty windows and the sunset sky shows through the gaping holes in the walls. When I leave these neighborhoods and return to the relatively undamaged sector where I am staying, I am a stranger.

Now I am going to make the flag for Samira and the family, a big parade flag of Palestine. I will sew *STAY ALIVE* on the back of it in Arabic. And what does that mean? Did I not go to Father Jim in one of the parishes of my neighborhood back home and didn't we speak of genocide? So for the Sabra family who has been a family to me now, yes. Yes, I will write and speak for you. Samira told me last night, "We can never have our flags flying. Not ever again, oh my God. . ."

I worry about taking sides now that I have taken one — not a silent one any longer. Perhaps it happened when we heard they were going to be shipped off to the Bekaa to live in tents, maybe today as Ummi was cooking and we talked about food and laundry and children and schools, maybe when Samira spoke about her education and her work ("I am trying to decide," she informed me as we walked carefully along the edge of a bomb crater, "if I should do my master's work on D. H. Lawrence."), maybe the other day on the way up Sabra Street when I saw the bulldozer.

The bulldozer was tearing down all the souks by the big mosque. An older man was trying frantically to salvage some of the lumber from his souk and the bulldozer was tearing the walls away while he did it. A younger man — the man who always ran a glassware and blanket shop right next to that souk — was hauling the last piece of corrugated tin away as I stopped to watch. He put the tin down and sat on a pushcart and stared at the machine as it was ripping hell out of his place. His wife and children appeared and sat beside him on the cart. None of them said a word. They stayed all huddled together. Two newsmen came down Sabra Street then. They walked right by this scene and never paused. I stood paralysed, memorising the faces of the family and never forgetting their eyes.

Maybe all those times I was taking sides after all.

31 October

Apochian has fled the ward and gone to New Jersey to stay with her sister for a month. And as far as I am concerned, the place has fallen apart.

Someone has replaced her — a dark, sullen female who sports a tall pointed starched white cap. From a distance down the hall, this person seems very much to be a Klan member without the sheet. It's only the cap, however, and the scarcity of bright lights.

When Tanya found out I was considering applying for a permanent position in the hospital, she emerged out of her habitual lethargy enough to be almost enthusiastic. Tanya spent the invasion months in Russia, she told me in a burst of intimacy, taking a fertility cure. It had something to do with hot abdominal plasters once during the day and once before bedtime and while fascinating medically, it sounded to me like a good method of birth control. There's nothing like a mud poultice in Vladivostock while your people are being exterminated in Beirut. But I was intrigued by her assurance — "We will take care of you" — and as this was

repeated several days in a row, I became increasingly entranced. Charlotte announced that I had it in the bag — that the KGB was to be my destiny.

My enthusiasm diminished somewhat when I realized that Tanya was in cahoots with an arrogant, slightly sadistic and dubious male nurse who tends to vent his otherwise repressed violence by throwing patients about on the night shift: he has a strong and handsome face and his pants are far too tight. He comes to work reeking of patchouli oil — the odor of which, when combined with old dressings and blood, alcohol and bedpans, turns me anorexic. Faced with this combination of mother-Russia moroseness and heavily-perfumed hostility, I have been spending more and more time in Amin's room which he has been sharing with a neuro patient named Mahmoud.

Amin is improving. His cross-leg graft is taking and what is left of his foot is better. He has commandeered a wheelchair and he travels about the hospital. He spends time visiting the patients down on 4-South, many of whom have been sent down from our ward. Several days ago, the hospital administration transferred him down there on a permanent basis. As soon as the transfer had been completed, Amin climbed back in his wheelchair, grabbed his belongings, and rolled himself back upstairs to his room on our floor. He plonked himself down on the bed and refused to move.

"You can shoot me," he announced. "I would rather die than stay down there."

So he is, temporarily, still with us.

"Do not misunderstand me," he explained one night when I was sitting with him. "You and I have many friends on 4-South. But our friends are the ones who are sick — not the ones who are well and walking around."

Yesterday a white-coated Swiss arrived from the ICRC and informed Umm Samir that the child had to leave the hospital and return to Tripoli. The Red Cross, it seems, has decided not to pay the bill any longer. I think that was more than I could stand. I think I shouted "Son of a bitch" at him and I shouted at the Dutch nurse who shouted at me that she hated Americans because we always interfered and tried to change things. Maybe I did not shout at her but I should have.

It is not just my hostility, it is everyone's hostility. But I need a hip-nailing from lifting heavy bodies, and earplugs to wall off Samir's screaming. I live the dressing changes — the stumps of legs and arms that look like a butcher counter at a supermarket, the sanguinous peroxide and saline in basins, the spiking fevers that leave children burning and delirious and picking at their sheets until the surgeons cut off something else diseased and infected and the child is no longer septic.

I went to my office and handed in a case study on Samir and begged for money — even a loan — to keep that child with us.

"There are hundreds of cases like this one," I was told.

"Well, start with this one."

They even agreed to see Umm Samir and it looked as though help was forthcoming. The surgeons closed the stumps of his legs, though, two days earlier than was recommended. Just in case.

Umm Samir looked almost happy that day. But when they took him for surgery, I waited at the door to his room and watched his mother on the balcony. She was standing alone and she looked so small and she was weeping as though she had indeed lost her son after all. I felt as if it was a child I was holding when I put my arms around her. Except grown-ups are not children: there is no comfort for us, no toys or cookies or diversions to distract us from the truth and sorrow of our lives and of ourselves and of the people we love.

Two days later, the ICRC ambulance came and Samir and his mother were gone.

1 November

Ellen Siegel, Swee Chai Ang, and Paul Morris from Gazza Hospital have gone to Jerusalem to testify at the Kahane hearings. Members of this medical team — the ones who lived through the Gazza horror — do not support them in their efforts to tell the truth about what has happened. I do not understand the reasons behind that resistance or the psychology of the opposition. No one is giving reasons — not real ones. The reasons have to be as true as the blood on the walls.

I rode with the three of them as far as Baabda to meet the Israeli escort which will take them south. In Baabda, the IDF building is modern and tidy with big picture windows and clean waxed parquet floors. There were many men around, some in uniform and others in civilian clothes.

We were ushered upstairs and given coffee and cakes. There was a notebook on the table with the coffee and while the others chatted and went to the bathroom and what have you, I sat and read the notebook. It was a soldier's journal, half in Hebrew and half in English, about the roundups and arrests in Bourj Brajneh and Haret Hreik. I really wanted to walk out with that book but it did not fit in my purse. Damn.

But the IDF would not, they decided, let me ride as far south as Sidon with the others. "Your friends will be safe," one of them assured me. "Don't you trust us?"

We were escorted downstairs and the others got into a van and drove off down the hill. From the hillside I could see all across Beirut to the sea. I went through Tell Zaatar. There were blue butterflies on the roadsides and in the fields. Far away I could see the empty sockets of buildings in ruins. I stopped many times and every time I began walking again, the butterflies went with me.

Tonight in the Sabra house we listened to the evening news and we heard about Swee and Ellen and Paul in Jerusalem. Everyone in the room became quiet and then extremely pleased. Later in front of Gazza people were out in the street and Ali and Hassan called to me, running up and shaking hands and not letting go and ex-

changing among us commonplace but joyful messages of hope.

The moon is full tonight, Fakhani was beautiful, and the little mosque I love so much was all in shadow.

2 November

Now I nearly run when I go to Sabra Street. Once I get past Berbir and through Fakhani, past Gazza and Achmed's butcher shop, I begin to relax. In the morning Achmed laughs at me when I am talking to the sheep. "Poor things," he tells me, "poor things." In the afternoon when the sand outside is stained with blood and a sheep head is lying on the ground, he says nothing and just waves. I can walk in the darkness now past the mosque to the family's house and when I arrive they are sitting on the floor of the downstairs room, the women shelling peanuts in a heap on the rug, the men playing cards, and the babies asleep — Hamoudi on a cushion and the little girls on Noha's lap. I am so thankful to see them and they know it. *Ah'len, ah'len*

Tonight Khaled has painted the rebuilt kitchen white. Samira made tea and I told Ummi about a time when I was young and we had a baby goat and a baby boy and I had to keep two bottles in the icebox — one for each of them. Samira laughed. Ummi almost laughed — not aloud, but her light greenish eyes lit up and she looked away and smiled. When I had finished my tea and was getting ready to go, the uncle with the chickens turned from the card game to say in English, "No. You sleep here," as though he had been memorizing the sentence.

I keep seeing all their faces, as I saw them during the massacre days, with the light on them all. I love these people: they are my strength every day as I see them in my mind when I am not with them in the house. When I return to them, I find more of the house has been rebuilt, my people are there in the lantern light or working outside on the new steps, the chickens are clacking quietly somewhere on a rooftop. I know we are all right and that life continues.

3 November

Barbara and I had planned to go back to the United States by means of *service* as far as Cairo. The itinerary read like an early orientalist travelogue: Damascus, Amman, Jiddah, and from there by small boat to Alexandria. We have amused ourselves and everyone else by describing the trip at length. And then we dumped the entire plan.

"We cannot become instant tourists," Barbara told me. "It makes sense to end in Palestine."

I hurried down to Sabra Street and told the family. Khaled has given me the name of his village near Haifa. We will go there. To Baled el-Sheik.

Charlotte has been teaching me to sew properly and to embroider the Arabic letters for *STAY ALIVE* on the back of the flag. Anyone — brains or no — can surely tell where Charlotte's stitching ends and mine begins. But it is shaping up — that flag. I hope it will fly someday. I hope it will not be used as a shroud. One of the buildings left standing on Sabra Street has the remnants of that same flag hanging from the edge of the roof. I have looked at it since August. Before the massacre Samira and I discussed retrieving it. Now I point to it still hanging from the rooftop and she hasn't much to say.

One morning when I was sewing in the room and Charlotte was getting ready for work, Mme. Coron, the concierge, came in. I showed her the flag and explained that it was for some friends who had survived the massacre.

The woman sat down and began to talk. "What about Damour?" she asked in French. And she began to describe what had happened to her relatives in Damour during the Civil War. Her face became very old as she spoke and Charlotte and I sat on the floor next to her by her feet and we had no answers to that story or to any of the other stories we had heard.

There was no use or call to ask in return, "But what about Quarentina, Tell Zaatar, even Deir Yassin?" Because therein lies the trap. So that one killing justifies another. We become gamblers at the board, squaring off one atrocity against the next until there are no pieces left, someone wins, *malesh* — I'll get you next time. Or my children will.

All massacres are the same, I read once, the methods are the same, and dead bodies look alike. One massacre leads to another and the evil of the assassin lives long after he himself dies. For what remains is grief. Grief is enduring: it is the poison contaminating generation after generation. Grief gives birth to vengeance, eliminates all forgiveness. Our children are the targets and we will hand them the guns.

Blame the leaders — the men who make the massacre plans, the men who show us by their lives that ours count for nothing. Blame the evil mindset which defines life for us in terms of power, bombs, military might and endless barriers of fear — the flares above the rooftops of our neighborhoods, our Sabra-Shatila neighborhoods, our Damour neighborhoods, our Deir Yassin neighborhoods. Blame those who bind our lives and set our capacities for love by reddened skies, by the furtive footsteps of armed killers in the night, and by that brutal insanity which justifies slaughter in terms of racial superiority, territorial rights — Biblical or otherwise — and punishment. The world has heard the terms in Babi Yar, in My Lai, and in Lebanon.

How do we remember the people who have died — the child in the tunnel, Rashid the singer of Lebanon, Naimi, Jamila, and Hameidah and the children? Shall I name them — as in the panicked prayers I mumbled during those terrible days in

September? Name them all, so that our dead will never be defined by numbers — the masculine-game, depersonalized, numerical sum for statistics and Senate Subcommittees. We shall call them by name as in some inverted Shabbat service back home — all their names, like the one hundred and more names of Allah, defining them, giving them light and life, honouring their courage, their graciousness, and their innocence in the face of true hardship, remembering them by name and bringing them back so close to us that we will achieve — not Paradise for them or for us — but the everlasting truth of their commitment and of ours.

And so I listen still to the aging woman from Damour and I think of all the people I have here in all neighborhoods, from all religions — my friends, my patients, my companions — and I want them to live and to forgive one another. I want Lebanon to survive. In many ways, it has become my country too.

5 November

We had been planning for a week to visit Nabil's family today. After having breakfast at the Hamra cafe — Barbara with her gin-and-tonic and me with the beer-and-peanuts, Barbara pointed out the window and exclaimed, "Look! There's Toufic on the street."

I raced out the door to catch him and as he turned toward me his face was covered with tears and he pulled his hands away from mine and almost shoved me aside. I went back inside and sat down silently.

"Maybe we shouldn't go," Barbara said, "maybe Nabil's mother has died, maybe. . ."

"We're going," I replied.

We went, of course, to the wrong village. That was easy — the villages all have more or less the same name and the right one was not mentioned when I glanced briefly at the map. "Here we go," I said after the *service* had dumped us off on the highway. "No problem. All we have to do is walk up that mountain."

We started up the road. Neither one of us is given to move quickly without adequate cause: the sun was shining, the sky was blue, and the walls of the houses we were passing were covered with Israeli slogans, anti-Arab posters, and big blue stars of David. We supposed the Israelis had control of the area and we spent a long time speculating on the unfamiliar white flag with a geometric cedar tree which was flying from some of the buildings.

"This might be a Phalangist holdout," I suggested. "That sure is an odd flag."

"I wonder why Nabil's family lives in a Phalangist place." Barbara disappeared into a store for a small bottle of arak.

It took us a long time to go up the mountain what with the arak, the weather, the flags, many cigarette breaks, and lengthy observations as to the character of the territory. The observations increased as we passed a large courtyard and Barbara stopped.



"Look! An Israeli army truck."

"Hush," I warned her.

"No," she persisted. "Look at it. Someone's painting it a new colour. It's only half-beige. The new paint is that creepy grey colour — the same colour as the Kataeb trucks."

I looked back down the mountainside. The coast road was a long ways off. *Malesh*. We continued up the hill.

The entire mountain appeared deserted in the warm midday sun. Except for the arak man, we found only one other person. An old woman was sitting outside what must have been a stone barn — before the shelling. She was sharing a meal with a large yellow cat and conversing with it softly, handing over small pieces of bread and chicken which the cat accepted politely and then took under a bush to eat. There was no sound but the almost-whispering of the woman and the guttural rumblings of the cat as it stepped out from the bush and waited for the next mouthful: the two creatures might have been the last living beings in this part of the world.

We did, however, get to Nabil's village. It was very late when we arrived and the village was not at the top of the mountain. It was at the bottom of the mountain and a mile or two south. the minute we reached the first houses, we heard someone calling. Across the road, another voice called out.

"Don't stop," I said, thinking about the oddly-painted truck.

"Put your glasses on," Barbara answered. "It's Nabil's aunt and uncle."

They led us through the streets and to the house. Someone went ahead to tell his mother. She appeared in the doorway and began to wail with grief while the tears poured down her face. And then we hugged one another for a long time and it was all right.

And it got better. All the children came into the livingroom and sat in a row and alternated between looking very sad, then curious, then almost giggly. The boys looked like miniature Nabils. The cat wandered in followed by the grandmother. Finally aunt Noha arrived with her children who are small and dark and pretty with curly hair in ringlets. The dog outside began to bark and somewhere nearby a duck quacked loudly. One of the boys took me outdoors to show me the animals, catching the duck and handing it to me so I could take it for a walk. I listened to the children laughing and to the duck wacking softly to itself under my arm and I remembered the celebration we had planned at Nabil's bedside. I hope he knew we were having it right then.

Later the family took us through the village.

"This," said one of the aunts, "is where they shot Nabil." She pointed to the corner wall of a house. There were big holes all along the bricks. This place is the beginning of a journey, I thought, and I am on the same journey yet I was not even here then. "And those boys," she nodded to a group at the cross street, "those are all his friends."

"What were they doing when the soldiers came?" Barbara asked.

"They were standing there together — just like that." Nabil's aunt looked away then. "Two of the others were killed also."

I thought again of the tan grey truck in the courtyard up the mountain.

We walked together through the fields to the highway. Noha wants us to come back on Sunday before we go. But now I say yes to such things and *in'challah*. Time is short and I cannot say goodbye to anyone anymore.

6 November

Khalil Ismail, the orderly who works on many floors of the hospital, is telling me stories. Wonderful Arabic stories. Suddenly he appears in the street where I am walking or sits beside me at work. He is the djinn I never need a lamp to find and he writes poetry in a small copy book which he carries about with him at all times. Listen.

*Once upon a time there was a very poor and hardworking man who lived in a small house in an Arab land where the sky was as vast as the desert and where you could always find the sweet smell of the sea even when you could not see it. One evening when the summer was ending and the palm trees were beginning to rattle and slither like evil in the wind, the poor man went to the Emir and said the following:*

*'O most wise and powerful Prince, I would like to make an agreement with you. Summer has ended and the sky is darkening early. The wind begins to blow cold in the evening. I would like to prove that I, too, am as strong as a prince. Please, Emir, name me a task and I will do it.'*

*The Emir thought about the poor man for awhile and then he said, 'It is true. Summer has ended. At night the wind is blowing from the north and men take shelter from the cold. If you are as strong as a prince you will, perhaps, defy the promise of winter. Stay then for an entire night on the rooftop of my palace. Stay alone and with no shelter from the wind and no covering from the cold. If —' here the Emir paused for a moment and looked carefully at the poor fellow, 'if you do not die from the wind and the cold, I will reward you with ten thousand dinars.'*

*That night the poor man was taken to the rooftop of the royal house. The guards left him there in the darkness and he had no shelter and no blankets to keep him warm and alive. For the first hours of the night, the poor man watched the sky. As the stars grew brighter he began to watch them also and he thought, this is what I shall do. I shall choose a star and watch it through the night and the light from that star will give me warmth.*

*And so he did that and after a time when the light from the first star*

provided him with no warmth, he chose another star. But the light from that one too proved to be no warmer and he chose another, then another, but the stars were useless and the poor man became very cold indeed. He folded his arms about his body and walked back and forth along the rooftop. His teeth chattered together and his shoulders shook.

Toward the middle of the night, a white half-moon appeared in the sky and the poor man again thought, 'Ah, I will stay now and drink in the moon with my eyes and her light will surely provide me with the warmth to stay alive.' And he stood still and watched the moon with great concentration: he imagined how happy his family would be should he gain the ten thousand dinars, how there would always be food on the table and his wife and his children would have warm clothing for nights such as this one. But the more he thought about these things the colder he became in the moonlight. 'In truth,' he whispered to himself, 'this must be the longest night of the year,' and he gazed out over the sleeping town and tried not to think about his own failure.

And then, far away in the window of a small poor house very much like his own, the man saw a candle burning. He thought about the person who had lit the candle and then about the candle itself and about the light that it cast. 'This light,' he thought, 'is perhaps burning for me.' And for the rest of the night until the sky lightened and the moon and stars disappeared ever so slowly, the poor man watched the candle in the window of the small house. The light from the candle warmed his shoulders and his feet even down to his very bones. It warmed his blood and his teeth stopped rattling together. He stood very still: it seemed his heart was warm also.

In the morning when the sun arose, the guards appeared from the courtyard below and were astonished to find the man alive and well. They rushed him to the Emir who asked crossly, 'Why, miserable man, are you still with us?'

'Believe me,' replied the poor man, 'there is no secret to my living. I tried to find warmth in the stars, and even in the moon — but the moon and stars were colder than the air I breathed. It was the light from just one small candle in one small house which gave me warmth to keep me alive.'

Of course the Emir was very angry and he refused to give the poor man the reward then. 'First,' he said, 'you must prepare a feast in my honour.'

And so the poor man went back to his family and related the story of what had happened during the night.

Soon the day arrived when the Emir was to be a guest. With much fanfare and many servants and camels — all, even the camels had been

*dressed in the finest of emerald, scarlet, and even gold silks — the Emir came to the house. He was ushered into the small entrance hall and the poor man's wife offered him water to wash the dust from his hands and face. Having washed, the Emir moved through the hallway and into the only room of the house. 'What is this?' he grumbled. 'This is an empty house. I cannot even smell the food we are going to eat. And look,' he pointed to the bare table, 'there is nothing to eat here.'*

*'Prince,' the poor man then said, 'you must come out to the courtyard and I will show you the feast.'*

*They went outside. In the courtyard grew two palm trees and tied between them was a flayed ox. Beneath the ox a small candle was burning.*

*'Emir,' the poor man explained, 'you did not believe me when I told you about the warmth of one candle. If you wait and watch as I did on that coldest of nights, and if you think about the feast you will in time enjoy, you will discover that your hunger has been appeased and that the time of waiting will pass by very quickly. For the light from one candle will provide you not only with banquets but with the patience and hope to wait for them.'*

*The Emir then rewarded the poor man the ten thousand dinars and they all returned to the palace for a fine celebration.*

My friend Amin and I have been talking for long periods of late. We sit on his balcony on 4-South where he has been sent. This time more permanently. The balcony overlooks a garden and in the afternoons the palm trees give us shade from the sun. One afternoon not long ago Amin discovered I was reading the Beirut translation of the Koran.

"You are reading this?" he picked up the book.

I nodded.

"Even I cannot read all the Koran," he said. "Even in Arabic." He shook his head. "It will take you all your life to understand this book." And he tilted his head in the funny way he has and smiled his half smile. "Do you really think," he grinned, "that you will live long enough to understand the Koran?"

Amin has told me he must go home to the north walking on his own. For now, at least, he has another wheelchair. This afternoon I found a worried social worker in his room.

"Good," she said the minute I walked in the door. "You are a friend of this man. You will help him —"

"Who's that?" I asked when she left.

"Nice lady," Amin answered. "Don't worry — nice lady."

Sure, sure. Amin is being transferred to Makassed.

"Not," the nice lady informed me, "to the regular hospital. It's a —" she hesitated.

"A what?" I did not like this nice lady at all.

"— a convalescent center. For older people."

A nice lady, the man says. She is transferring Amin to a lunatic asylum. I mentioned that to him just in passing, but he says anything is better than Tripoli.

"I am Lebanese," Amin began. "Look." He rummaged about in the drawer of the night table. "Here are my papers." He lit a cigarette and continued, "When my father died, I moved to Kuwait and I worked very hard. I was young then but I made much money and I had three shops. . ." He sighed. "My mother is still in Kuwait."

"Perhaps you have killed someone." I interrupted him. I had been thinking that for a long time, weaving my own story about him.

He looked at me warily, then smiled. "No. You are wrong."

"Then what did you do?"

"I almost killed someone." He handed me a cigarette. "Now I will tell you the story. . . Once upon a time when I was a rich man and owned three shops in Kuwait, I had many friends. But my best friend was a sheik and he was very, very rich. He had much power over many people. One night he and his girlfriend and I and my girlfriend were having a party on the roof of his house. It was summer —" he stopped to smoke a bit. "Do you know that liquor is very bad for me? I have told you that, haven't I? That night there was much liquor. My friend the sheik tried to take my girlfriend and give his girlfriend to me. Remember how much liquor there was. I tried to kill that man with a bottle of whiskey."

"Did he die?"

"No." Amin smiled a small smile. "I told you before — no. But he was hurt. Very hurt. He was in the hospital many months."

"What happened to you?"

He held out his arm. "I broke the bottle and see —" he turned his forearm over. "See? I made a big mistake with the whiskey bottle. I was going to lose my hand." True, there was a long curving scar.

He lit another cigarette. "I went to prison and they fixed my arm. When it was better they beat me. But," he looked over quickly to reassure me, "I have friends there and I got out. And then I went to Baghdad pretending to be someone else. From there I found a bus and I came to Beirut — back to Lebanon — and I lived in Berbir then. But you know about Berbir."

"Your friend the sheik — will he not find you?"

"He will find me one day. And that is why I must be able to walk." He stopped talking for a few minutes and after the silence, he looked sideways at me. "I would prefer it if I could run."

7 November

Dinner last night at Dorothea and Peter's in their apartment overlooking the sea. How different they are now that the fighting has ceased — relaxed, busy with their affairs. The evening was elegant and with the exception of myself, everyone there was elegant also.

Anwar Sha'a escorted me upstairs to their door. He is the most elegant of all. At sixty-five the Lebanese men are far more convincing than at thirty-five. Perhaps they have finished all the dealing and the warlording required of them and they can settle back on their profit and experience and dispense largesse, responsibility and the urbane wisdom of their years. Driving through the streets of Beirut with Anwar after dinner, I was fascinated with his mind and by his slightly self-deprecating wit and an invitation to spend the weekend at his mountain place in the Shuf. Were it not my last weekend here I would go. The other side of the Beirut coin — light, civilization, and unsurpassed *savoir-faire*.

Given a few more evenings with this ancient and elegant man, I might fall in love — at least with the sound of his voice and with his quiet laughter. His Arabic is poetry: he is the first man I have met here who never shouts. He does not have to. He has lived in this country too long to be threatened.

This morning Samira and I went to Gazza. There was El-ham sitting at her desk, tidy in uniform and cap. The Director of Nurses. Total white. "Shu, Jill? Ah'len, ah'len."

I was proud to see her looking wonderful. And Samira walked through the hospital halls saying, "Look — look, it's all clean and painted. This is our hospital and it's very nice."

Barbara and I took her to lunch at *Fayssal* and we ate and laughed. Then we walked through the University campus to Dorothea's and had tea. Barbara and Samira read the Jerusalem Testimony transcript, Paul Morris arrived with Peter, and I puttered around being delighted and doing the dishes from last night's dinner. What a joy to have them all together, the ones whom I love in a safe place — if only for that afternoon.

Darkness came and as we picked our way through the mud in Fakhani, Samira said, "Thank you — for this day."

"Don't," I told her. "You and your family have fed me and sheltered me and kept me as though I were one of you. No thank you's — you are all my closest friends here. . ."

"We think of you as one of us —" she began.

Enough. I wonder how I will manage when I see them the night before I leave. But tonight they were all there in the lamp-lit kitchen as we came in. We went in the bedroom and sat on the floor and discussed Palestine and someone brought cof-

fee and Khaled and the uncles banged on the walls and strung wires around. Suddenly the electricity was on. One of the girls disappeared like a shot and soon returned with, god forbid, a huge television set which she hooked up immediately. At least half the family came in and sat rapt while a man in a stiff blue suit hollered the news at us. Samira's older brother arrived from Libya and everyone abandoned the news and followed him into the kitchen. Grandmother had come downstairs from her hideout: she was sitting on the floor holding up her hands to us when we left.

It was raining and very dark. Prayers were being called from the mosque. We went to Gazza and found Charlotte and rode back with her in the night.

9 November

The office Egyptian has moved in to the room across the hall from Charlotte's. When he is not in his room he is lurking in the hallway itself. He is no longer disguised as a priest but his behaviour remains peculiar. To say the least. He has given several explanations for his presence on our doorstep: 1) he has been fired from his position at the church office, and 2) he is planning to go to America in the very near future, and 3) he has a new job and is therefore able to rent the small apartment directly across from our room. The explanations vary depending on the time of day and the amount of liquor he has consumed.

Yesterday Mme. Coron was standing at his doorway supervising the housekeeping crew.

"*Bonjour, madame,*" I greeted her briskly. I took her by the arm and we walked in the room together. "Tell me," I lowered my voice appropriately, "who is this man who lives here now?"

"He is an Egyptian."

I looked carefully around the room. There was nothing to indicate that anyone lived there at all. No clothing hanging in the closet, no suitcase, nothing. I poked my head casually into the bathroom. There was one toothbrush and an empty vodka bottle on the shelf. "This Egyptian," I led Mme. Coron over to the balcony, "does he work?"

"I believe he does," she frowned. "He is often gone during the day."

"Madame," I whispered, "he is never gone at night. He waits in the hallway outside our bedroom. Sometimes he knocks on our door in the middle of the night. He is beginning to frighten us."

She sighed. "There are many strange people in the city now," she told me. "Perhaps he is one of them. Do not open your door at night." She paused and looked out over the street. "His rent is paid for a week. Perhaps he is leaving then." She turned and went back into the empty room. "He is an Egyptian," she repeated, "and I believe that he drinks."

Barbara and I leave for the West Bank tomorrow. *In'challah*. We even have separate passports for travel in Israel. It took a lot of rushing back and forth to get those passports the past several days. Then we went to the hospital to say goodbye to Amin, Nidal, Mohammed, little Khalil and the others, and I never said goodbye to any of them. Amin is being transferred to Makassed this afternoon and I will see him there. He has a new wheelchair from the Red Cross. Mohammed has had another surgery on his phosphorus-burned ankle and his wife looks grey and tearful, Nidal is thin and pale and his amputation is infected, little Khalil was doing his schoolwork and Umm Khalil was gone. . .

"How is it possible," demanded Barbara crossly, "that you can go and visit all these people and you never even tell them you are leaving?"

I did not answer. She is absolutely right. I cannot tell them because I do not know how and because I am afraid.

I followed Amin down to the place where they have sent him. It is on the street leading to the Sports Stadium. It is called the *Dar al Ajazas*, the House of the Old Ones. Photographs of the building and of the people in it have appeared in all the world newspapers throughout the summer. It is a home for the mad and the abandoned and the homeless and, in the first weeks of the war, it was attacked without mercy by the Israeli guns. On that Sports Stadium street many people were killed in September.

A well-dressed man took me into an office. "Please," he said, "sit down."

I sat across from him at the big desk. Amin's papers were lying there face up. "Your friend," the man told me, "does not belong here."

No kidding.

"We will try," he went on, "to locate his family." He sighed. "It is difficult — we have no telephone yet."

He walked me to the elevator. The building — past the first floor — was dark and dingy with narrow long grim hallways.

Amin was in a room with three other men who were roaming around in various stages of pyjamas. Someone was in one bed and had covered himself with blankets. Amin was also in bed with blankets but he sat up as I came in. "Ah'len," he grinned half-strength.

"I told you so." I was at a loss this time.

"This is not good," he shuddered. "This is awful."

What could I tell him then. I took the finished flag for Samira out of my bag and showed it to him.

"That's what I want," he said. "Make me a flag. A Lebanese flag for when we meet each other again."



I could feel the tears — damn, damn. We sat and talked and smoked. The staff came by to speak to us both. I promised to make phone calls for him and I promised to come by in the morning on our way south. Barbara will have a fit, I know. But some of the promises I have to keep. I wound Hani's Allah medal around his wrist and he gave me his leatherbound Koran — the one the Iman had given him. I went to Berbir where the telephones were working and left messages in English, French, and garbled Arabic. I walked back to the house on Sabra Street, clutching the flag and knowing that once more I would be back to see Amin and that I would return yet again to Samira's on my way from the village they named Baled el-Sheik. And that for this evening, anyhow, I did not have to say goodbye.

11 November

I walked back at dawn to Charlotte's from the house on Sabra Street. Ummi and Samira and I had breakfast together while it was still dark. Tea and cookies. Ummi gave me all the cookies for the journey. She was up all night. The rooster was up all night, too, crowing and shouting and beginning his routine before three o'clock. No wonder Ummi got confused — waking Miriam at four instead of five to study. The woman must be exhausted. When I went out the door, she was sitting on the floor kneading dough for today's bread and that rooster was still yelling. From the big mosque prayers were being called, and at Achmed's shop someone was unloading a new batch of sheep with curving horns and thick chocolate-coloured wool. I will pat them all, I thought, on my way back down here to see Amin.

Later Barbara said as she slogged her way up the hill to the madhouse, "I would never do this for anyone else but you. I hope you know it."

We said goodbye — the three of us in the House of the Old Ones. But I wonder now, someday I will go back to that place where I left Amin, where we left one another with hope and promises to meet in Tripoli. What if I come back to that huge, shabby, demented building and find him still there — out of his mind, white-haired in too short a time, abandoned and forsaken like his roommates, drooling slightly, unable to remember, tied to a chair and unable to walk. Remember, Jill, his half-smile, "I would prefer to run." Oh Amin, you were the man I knew best in all of Lebanon, the friend I spoke with the longest, the one I could not ship out or watch recover or even send home to your land in the north, the one I shared the most with. I have no idea what part of the journey Amin is, but he is traveling also. I will keep him with me in the same way I carry his Koran, and one night in another city I will begin to make him his flag, and someday there will be an answer to this wise and funny and mysterious man.

Sidon. It would be better, perhaps, to tell a story about Sidon. Once, when Samir

was still in the hospital and when he had his other leg, I was doing the dressings and watching his small and ravaged face. One of the surgeons was explaining the pathology of that last leg which seemed then to be just a bone with wires wrapped around it. Without warning and in the midst of this nightmare, a woman appeared at the bedside across from me. She was dressed in black and she spoke to me with great urgency.

"Do not forget Sidon. Do not forget the ones who are there and what has happened to them before you came here. This one," she was almost shouting then as she motioned toward the child in the bed, "this one is like Sidon."

And she left the room and I never saw her again. But she stays in my mind — a Mideastern reincarnation of the teacher I knew from Hiroshima: my witness.

But Sidon was dusty and crowded with travelers going south, or trying to go south. The coast road was closed by the Israelis because the IDF headquarters had been blown up in Tyre. We staggered about with backpacks and bought sandwiches and bottled water. There was a woman in black on the sidewalk and she had a baby in her lap. The baby was grey and too small. I wondered if it were dead.

We found a car with a chatty but willing driver and we were taken to Kfar Kila and the Golan Heights. Past Nabatiyeh, past Beaufort Castle, through all the Haddad checkpoints where the guards were old and grim. It was cold away from the sea. The Christians and Jews say this is a holy land. But I am reminded so of Carlo Levi when he wrote of Lucania:

*Christ never came this far, nor did time, nor the individual soul, nor hope, nor the relation of cause to effect, nor reason, nor history. Christ never came, just as the Romans never came. . . . No one has come to this land except as an enemy, a conqueror, or a visitor devoid of understanding. The seasons pass today over the toil of the peasants just as they did three thousand years before Christ; no message, human or divine, has reached this stubborn poverty. We speak a different language and here our tongue is incomprehensible. . . . to this shadowy land, that knows neither sin nor redemption from sin, where evil is not moral but is only the pain residing forever in earthly things, Christ did not come.*

So I tried to block out the chatter of Rial the driver and I tried to imagine living here in this strange country, sere and treeless except for patches of olive groves on the hillsides, where everything in the landscape was grey and rocky. I wondered if that would indeed become the landscape of my own mind. There would be nowhere to seek shelter here and nowhere to run to. A fugitive would have to know every rock, every dried

out streambed, every twist of mountain path. He would have to move endlessly at night and in absolute darkness in this eternally taciturn land.

The road behind us disappeared in curtains of fog. I wondered where we were going.

Kfar Kila is at the end of the road and it was, on this day, on the wrong border. We hauled our packs up to the "Good Fence" and peered over the concentration-camp rolled barbed wire at the bus-loads of Israeli tourists with guides peering back at us through binoculars. Then we started past the checkpoint.

"No, no, no," chanted a large Israeli soldier in full battle dress.

"But where," asked Barbara patiently, "do we cross the border?"

"Civilians cross on the coast road at Nkoura," another huge soldier explained. "But today all borders are closed." He was equally patient.

"How do we go then? To Jerusalem?" The words sang in my head like some nursery rhyme.

The first large one looked upwards toward the sky. "Only God knows the answer."

We hauled the packs back down the ridge to the village itself. It lay, half in ruins, just below the Israeli guns. Children followed us as we came down into the streets. One of them brought his father, a light-eyed cold-looking man who offered to drive us to Nkoura for three hundred pounds. Which we did not have. When we told him that, I took a long look at his crazy, chilled and begging kids and at his eyes and the despair I found there could have been my own.

A car drove up with three men in it and someone announced "Nkoura." We climbed in the back clutching the packs. In a moment we were gone. I turned and looked back to find the man and his children. But the fog had closed us out.

The car turned south and west toward the sea.

The road to Nkoura. How can I tell you about that road. I can tell you about the strange lonely hills again all rock-covered and poor and desolate in the fog, and about the abandoned United Nations Peacekeeping Force outpost that I had seen once on a newsclip in June when I was thousands of miles from this place. I wonder if I will ever be able to write about the south of Lebanon and if I will always, no matter how many times I am here and under what circumstances, know that Christ never came here, that he stopped somewhere else, that no message, human or divine, ever reached here and, should I ever walk along this road and across these barren hills and reach out to any fellow traveler, I would find my hands touching shadows. And the shadows cast would be shadows of me.

I huddled miserably in the back seat of that car. Without any warning and break-

ing the silence like gunfire, one of the men in front turned to us and shouted, "Palestinians no good!"

I clutched Barbara's arm and thought about climbing into my backpack. We passed two men on a mountainside: they were hunting and carrying shotguns.

"It is interesting," ventured Barbara pleasantly, "to see civilians carrying guns. In Beirut that would never —"

The same man turned to us again. "We are not in Beirut," he reminded us softly. "Here there is no government — we can do what we want."

I fished around in the pack and hauled out Ummi's cookies. "Here," I said, "have a cookie." The man took the bag of cookies and ate one politely. The driver ate one. The third man declined. We passed the bag around once more and I urged them to take seconds. I wish they had known who had given them to me. I would not at that moment have looked at the expression on Barbara's face — not even for one second. It would have been the end of the journey.

But then we reached Yarrine. No one lives in Yarrine. The houses are abandoned and shellwacked. Dead geraniums stand in pots on broken patio walls. The windows are empty and black. Today the fog lay in twisted patches and at odd intervals between the ruined buildings. There was not a cat or a dog or a donkey or a child or an old person to be seen. None of these living things had been here for a long, long time.

"Excuse me," I reached out and tapped one of the men on the shoulder. "What is this village?"

"This is Yarrine." He offered no further explanation.

"Excuse me, sir," I touched his arm again, to assure myself that we were yet alive, "what has happened to the people who once lived here?"

He waved vaguely to the north. But he answered, "The people from Yarrine are dead."

"Mafi," added the driver of the car. "Mafi Yarrine."

Somewhere along the coast road the car stopped and one of the men leaned over and opened the back door.

"Go south," he said abruptly.

And after pausing in a corrugated tin building which served as the local pub, we did. A truck driver picked us up and dumped us somewhere by the sea. "Mazel tov," he pointed to a rooftop far in the distance, "there's the border station."

A young soldier ran up behind us. "You are leaving?"

"Jerusalem," we answered.

He ran back in the other direction.

And then there was no one on the road at all. The wind was blowing lightly from offshore and I could smell salt and rain. We walked in silence, each by ourselves, sometimes side by side, and then dropping behind one another to walk alone.

Below the cliffs and as far as I could see, the ocean was turning grey and soft pink and the sky was at sunset. It is possible, I thought briefly, that someone we do not know will shoot us now, but I kept watching the sun fall down the sky. Somewhere across that silent dove-coloured sea were my own children and I remembered them and wondered if at another time in this same place, we would all be racing down to the water along some cliff path, hauling my baby grandson and carrying picnic baskets and calling to the dogs. I wished fleetingly that they could see this sky right then.

And somewhere — I glanced behind me and up the coast — there is a boy named Hani whose life maybe we helped to save and who has indeed helped me to find my soul, and somewhere in the still-lovely and smouldering city called Beirut there is a family who has given me vision and love and they will wait for me. And somewhere — but I did not want to look ahead on that road — there is someone in Jerusalem who will hear about the days in September, about "the worst days of all our lives."

I wondered then if it might be over soon, if we might not even feel the bullets as we fell over the cliff edge. I hoped it would not hurt too much. But it would be strange to have it all end so suddenly in this quiet and lovely place so that no one would ever know anything — as though we had vanished before our very own eyes. We could have turned back. But I was too intent on thinking about being alone, about the people in the house with the tree growing from the ruins in the courtyard, about Hani and his perhaps being alive, about the faces of my children Eve and Sarah and Simon and of the baby Daniel, about the sea and the evening and the ground beneath my feet, about how long the sky looked as the sun was sliding down it. Deceptive connections fell away like paper streamers from my life and during that short time I learned to be free and more connected than I have ever been.

Barbara touched my hand. "The border."

There were truckloads full of soldiers and the men were all milling about. Someone stood at the door of the border post and I think, but I do not remember clearly, that he waved at us. We kept going past the soldiers and the trucks and the tanks, and then it was quiet again once more. We could see lights down the coast, the sky was dark, and we were no longer in Lebanon.

We sat down on some steps and brought out sandwiches and arak. A man came out of a tourist shop and stared at us for a long time.

"What is this?" he asked in Hebrew. "Where are you from?"

He gave us a ride to a youth hostel on the coast and we stayed there huddled under blankets in a clean, very modern and sterile room. There was electricity everywhere and youth groups were singing kibbutz songs as we burned candles, finished off the arak, tried half-heartedly to adjust, and finally fell asleep.

The highway to Baled el-Sheik is large, heavily-traveled and dusty. The sky is hazy from automobile exhaust and from the smoke of the industrialized sprawl of Haifa. It reminds me of the outskirts of Los Angeles during the time I was growing up. The same trees — eucalyptus, cypress and a few orange trees behind ramshackle fences. Vaguely uneasy, like clothing which does not fit. The bus stopped at Neshet. All the roadside buildings were new, all the buildings we have seen are new. Straight, sensible, modern middle-class construction for a straight modern middle-class nation. There was a small post office in a single one-room building near the bus stop. The postman spoke French.

"I am looking for a family," I told him.

"Here, Madame — here at Neshet?"

"No. They were here a long time ago — in a place called Baled el-Sheik."

"*Vraiment, madame, il n'y a pas Baled el-Sheik.*\* You must walk back two hundred meters along this road. You will find the police there and you must ask. The name of the place you are looking for will not be there either — you will find yourself in Tel Hanan."

We walked along the highway facing the traffic. To our right behind high white walls was a cemetery. We stood at the locked rusty iron gate and looked inside. The headstones left standing read in Arabic. Much of the ground had been dug up and markers were broken and lying sideways in the dry weeds. Two rusted cars covered some of the graves and someone had thrown heaps of trash and old leaves beside them. The new buildings crouched back against a mountain and the people from whom we asked directions spoke no English, no Arabic, and often no French.

The police station was up some steps and through a small park and down some more steps. Everything neat and tidy — the grass in the park was cut, the modern plastic brightly-coloured benches clean. And new — everything was new. In the police station two men were talking loudly in Hebrew. The policeman was young and large with a round blond face. I sat down and waited for a long time. Finally I groaned.

"Yes, madame?" French again.

"I am looking for a family," I began.

"Here? In Tel Hanan?"

"No," I answered. "In Baled el-Sheik."

"Baled el-Sheik? Baled el-Sheik? But that was many, many years ago, madame. What is the name?"

"Sariyeh, Sariyeh — " They both looked doubtful. One went outside. The policeman motioned to me to follow. They called to a woman with children who was sweeping some steps. A Sephardic woman. She did not know them. Some of the people passing by outside the station stopped. But no one had heard of this

\*"Truly Madame, there no longer is a Baled el-Sheik."

family.

"Madame," one of them asked, "who were these people?"

"They lived here once," I told him. " — a long time ago. In Baled el-Sheik."

"They were Jews. . ."

"No," I said, "they were Arabs."

"Were they here before 1948?"

"Yes." I did not know what to tell them after that. I could hear Samira's voice in the darkness of the upstairs room. . . . *And one day the British trucks came to my father's house and to the houses of his neighbors and everyone who did not get in the trucks was killed and my mother and father and grandmother got in the trucks and they were taken to the border, to Lebanon. And they were left there with whatever they had carried with them. . . . This is the story, Jill, of Khaled and Ummi.*

"But, madame — " one of the men walked up to me and spoke with emphasis, "all the Arabs are gone. They disappeared in 1948. You should have looked to the north. I can assure you, madame, there are no Arabs here. Many of the Arabs died in 1948. The others are gone. Gone," he repeated.

"Are their houses still here?" I asked. "I would like to see the house where the family lived."

"There are no Arab houses here, madame. I can promise you. All the Arab houses are put down. *Deposées*. You must believe me. There are no Arab houses here. There are no Arab families here. There is no more Baled el-Sheik. No one lives there anymore."

"*Bien*," I turned away. "*Merci*."

"*Bonne chance*," they called after me.

I went back to the small park and sat down on a bench. I put some stones from the ground in my pocket and a handful of earth in an empty Nescafe can from the backpack. Barbara met me and took some pictures. We went back to the bus stop and caught a ride to Nazareth.

*Mafi. Mafi* Baled el-Sheik.

16 November

*o Jerusalem.*

We are living in a room in the souks of the Arab quarter. At all hours the prayers are called from the Dome of the Rock, and the bells from all the churches ring. The air smells like bread and incense. I have been to see the man I wished to meet and we sat in a small room filled with books and he heard about the September days and we drank tea as the afternoon sun filtered in through the curtains. There are so many things I have not done here; but even after a day has passed I am beginning to be homesick for Beirut. It must be the cold. Or maybe the souks themselves and

everyone selling everything and too many visitors and too many things. Too much, too much. Too much light, too much expected mystery, too little time. Or maybe this is not the right time. Maybe there will never be a right time in Jerusalem: I know that I can never belong here at all.

But this is true of many cities. I say of them, of Rome or Paris or Damascus or Athens, or even Jerusalem, *Oh yes, I was once there, I have been there*, and I remember days and special events which happened while I was there. To say, however, *Oh yes, yes I know — I have lived there* means that part of me is still there. I gave part of my life to that city and it has given life to me. I could say that about Venice, about Lisbon. But most of all I will say that about Beirut.

When I return to Beirut I return not only to special streets and cherished people but also to gather up myself. Beirut is as if I were hearing music, a wondrous light-ridden song: maybe the music is Hani's song or a song about Paradise I heard Achmed singing one afternoon at his shop, or the stories the women in Mouseitbeh told me in the darkness, or even Umm Samir's weeping on the balcony that day, or the sound of Samira's voice as she told me so many things late at night. Maybe the music is the sound of the date palms rattling together in the garden outside Charlotte's room and the gurgling of the pigeons as I used to fall asleep. It could be Khalil's soft voice as he weaves Arabic fables about faith and burning candles. Maybe the music is all of these people, all of these faces and all of their voices. Perhaps these faces have become my own face and the sound of their singing is my own song. Right now in this holiest of cities, it could be the lord's song in a stranger's land or a strange song in the lord's land. I know I will hear it for the rest of my life.

But for today in Jerusalem I played the pilgrim. We went to the Wall and I drew a map of Sabra and Shatila on one paper and on another, I made a list of the names of everyone in my mother's family in the States. I folded the two and crammed them in separate seams between the great stones. We walked along the walls of the city and late in the afternoon we started up the Sacred Way, the incredible journey. A young rather oily man attached himself to us and followed us, explaining events and pointing out the stations of the cross.

Christ fell at the Fifth Station and that is where Simon of Cyrene moved out of the crowd and shouldered the cross. At the corner of the building in that place, in one of the stones, there is a handprint — the handprint of the Son of God, I thought, as I looked at it and failed to find the courage to put my own hand within the print. But I stared at it for a long time, thinking about how tired Christ must have been and about the man from north Africa for whom I had named my own son. I had seen a wall like this before, in the village north of Sidon where the bullets had been fired at close range, and having passed through the body of a boy named Nabil Mizher, they had left holes in the stone wall of a building on the corner. Shellholes like handprints. It was the same journey.

In the huge and confusing church built over and over again on Golgotha, we



ditched the peculiar young man. I wandered about, half-lost and looking for Barbara who was wandering about somewhere else. I heard whispering and a hand tugged my sleeve.

"You have missed something." It was a monk, small and very fat and smiling. "Come with me now."

I turned to follow him and he disappeared down some steps and I think he was crawling on his hands and knees. I followed him through a narrow passage. He opened a small wooden door.

"You missed the tomb," he explained. "Look -- the tomb and the rock." He pointed through the doorway but all I could see was darkness. "Put your hand in," he told me, "and find the rock."

I did and true enough, my hand touched stone. We crawled through the passage and up three steps.

"You see," said the monk. He was handing me candles. "You will light these one day soon."

I held the tapers in my hand. "Thank you."

"Do not worry," he turned away into a long darkened hallway. "Do not worry," he repeated, "Light the candles."

But there were not enough candles to light for everyone or perhaps I was carrying too many faces in my mind. I could not believe the tomb or in the great church itself. I was back at the Fifth Station and at the corner wall of the house in a Lebanese village. I was in the city of holy faith and my faith was in a small ravaged hospital called Berbir and in a light-filled house rebuilt around a living tree on Sabra Street.

17 November

The prayer calls awakened me. I looked about the room where we had been sleeping and listened to the muezzin and heard the donkeys' hooves on the cobblestones outside the window. The air was filled with the smell of wood fires burning for the bread ovens and with the scent of juniper. Keepers of the souks were out in the street and opening up shop.

Barbara poked her head out from the blankets. "But it's not even seven o'clock."

And suddenly I was sick of it all — souks, incense, shopkeepers, and old walls and narrow alleys. I got dressed in a rush. "I'm leaving here right now," I said while Barbara peered groggily at me in amazement which rapidly turned to hostility. "Now," I added, shouldering the backpack. "I'll be at the Jaffa Gate."

Where, after shifting around for what seemed like half the morning, I caught a bus, and then another bus. Somewhere on the road to Tel Aviv I got off the bus and walked for an hour through the low dry hills. I thought about Deir Yassin and wondered if this was where that village had been. I put some more earth in the

Nescafe can and then stood on the highway until a car stopped and gave me a ride to the junction where the highway turns north toward Nahariya. Then there was another bus to that town and afterwards I began to walk. A truck driver let me ride with him as far as the kibbutz south of the border.

"It's a good day to travel," he waved, "good luck."

The border station was full of tourists when I got there and I stopped to buy Pepsi from the shop where we had met a man one evening over sandwiches and arak. And then I kept walking. A guard stopped me briefly.

"Where are you going?"

"Lebanon."

"How did you get here?"

"I walked."

He raised his eyes with exaggerated patience. "Yet another one with a back pack." He glanced at the Lebanese visa on the passport. "Go," he said crossly.

I went. I walked away from the guard station and took a few steps in the sunlight. I was home. I almost danced. I reached down and took some of the sandy earth in my hand and brushed it across my mouth. I would have knelt down and kissed the ground but I was afraid the guard might be watching. For sure he would lock me up.

The Israeli army was on this day moving itself from Tyre to Sidon and back again, raising the dust and tearing up what was left of any passable roads.

I found a man with a car, a young man named Hamoud. By swearing on both our faiths that I would meet him on the steps of a blue-painted building in the ruins of Tyre that very next Saturday and that yes, I would spend the entire day doing whatever he had in mind, I persuaded him to find me a *service* going north and we headed toward Beirut and arrived there in darkness.

I got out at the Kuwait Embassy and walked. Even in the ruined streets I was happy to be home, to see all the places — the alleys and the corner shops, the big mosque on Maazra and the vegetable stand by the French Consulate. I had spent so much of my life here in so short a timespace, so brief a time in Beirut. Nothing had changed, I found. The city gathered itself around me and took me into its life again and I was home at last with the flower man telling me *Ah'len, ah'len* as though I had been away for so much longer than just a few days.

And perhaps, since we measure time now in Beirut in terms of the people we love and the places we know rather than in the counting of sunsets, I had in truth been away for a long and lonely time.

18 November

Today is the last day and we walked to our Hamra cafe and lingered over beer and peanuts, gin and *hummus*. And then we headed for Mouseitbeh, past the seaview, up to the Verdun Street hilltop and into the narrow alleys. We were looking for a wall we had once found — the wall of a small ruined house where someone had drawn pictures of children and bombs falling, of peace doves and of the sun shining on the buildings of the city. But the ruins of that house had been bulldozed and the wall with the drawings was gone. *Mafi*.

We continued up the street in the sunlight. Every so often one of us would lean against a wall and announce, "I don't like this — not at all."

But then Barbara found the Tin Man. "Look," she said, "a blacksmith — a tin man." She wandered across the road to the shop.

I went after her, thinking, "I don't want to buy things. I want to look at all our little courtyards, at the Mouseitbeh mosques where the plane trees grow. . . I don't want to do anything, except make time stop now."

The Tin Man might have been my age or maybe eighty. He had laughing lines on his face and lavender eyes under heavy grey eyebrows and he looked right at each of us when he spoke. He repaired things at his forge and when he had extra time, he designed. We stayed and spoke with him for a long while — about his work and about the city and the past summer. We told him that our time in Beirut had ended.

"You are leaving then?" he asked.

Neither of us could bring ourselves to reply.

"You will return one day." He held out his hands. "Do not cry. Here," he said, "you must take these with you." He handed us cedar trees he had made — one of gold and one of silver. "Take these as a gift — and you will carry Lebanon with you always. Do not cry. You will come home."

One last time I walked down Sabra Street to the house. It was night and the light from the kitchen was shining on the little courtyard and on the tree. Wait for me, I thought, putting my hand on the tree trunk. Khaled was out somewhere, Ummi was upstairs praying by herself. Samira and her sisters made tea and we talked about books and work. They gave me coffee and tea — Sabra tea — to take with me and kohl for my daughters' eyes and a huge bag of nuts for the trip on the plane.

When I left Miriam stood in the light by the new steps and said, "We will wait for you." And Samira walked with me to the street and told me, "We are waiting for you."

I will wait too. For each one of them, for the house and the tree, for their faces in the lantern light. In the same way I waited for Berbir.

The journey has not ended.



## About the Author:

Jill Drew was born in 1940 and has spent most of her life in California and along the Rio Grande from Colorado to Texas. She has worked as a salesclerk, bookkeeper, zookeeper, housekeeper, and registered nurse. She has been writing since she was eight — in laundromats, hospitals, bars, barns, kitchens, and pickup trucks in between children and grandchildren and journeys to other countries. She was an activist in the 50's for Adlai Stevenson, in the 60's against the Vietnam War, and worked in the Peace movement in New York City prior to the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

For historical perspective and analysis of civil strife in Lebanon, the Israeli invasion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinian movement, attempts toward Arab-Jewish reconciliation, etc., we offer a brief selected bibliography of books and periodicals from a variety of perspectives with which to get and keep informed about the Middle East, and names and addresses of a few groups to contact for more information and for becoming active on these issues.



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SUGGESTED READINGS ON LEBANON, ISRAEL, THE PALESTINIANS, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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BOOKS

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Adnan, Etel. *Sitt Marie Rose* (fiction). Sausalito: Post-Apollo Press, 1982. Available from Sinister Wisdom.

American Friends Service Committee. *A Compassionate Peace: A Future for the Middle East*. NY: Hill & Wang, 1982.

Antonius, George. *The Arab Awakening*. NY: Capricorn, 1965.

*The Beirut Massacre Press Profile*. NY: Claremont Research & Publications, Inc., 1982.

Beling, Wilard A. (ed.) *The Middle East: Quest for American Policy*. Albany: SUNY, 1973.

Benvenisti, Meron, et al. *The West Bank: Still Open to Compromise?* (Benvenisti plus responses). avail. fr. Progressive Zionist Caucus, 27 W. 20 St., NYC 10011.

Chomsky, Noam. *The Fateful Triangle: The U.S., Israel and the Palestinians*. Boston: South End, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Peace in the Middle East?* NY: Vintage, 1974.

Clifton, Tony and Catherine Leroy. *God Cried*. London: Quartet, 1983.

Cohen, Aharon. *Israel and the Arab World*. Boston: Beacon, 1976.

Duff, Peggy. *War or Peace in the Middle East*. London: Int'l Confederation for Peace & Disarmament, 1976.

Flapan, Simha. *When Enemies Dare to Talk*. London: Croom Helm, 1979.

Gilmour, David. *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*. NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983. (includes bibliography).

Heller, Mark A. *A Palestinian State: The Implications for Israel*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ., 1983.

Hirst, David. *The Gun and the Olive Branch*. London: Futura, 1977.

Hurewitz, J.C. *The Struggle for Palestine*. NY: Schocken, 1976.

*The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon Press Profile: Pts I & II*. NY: Claremont Research etc., 1982-83.

Jansen, Michael. *The Battle of Beirut*. Boston: South End, 1983.

Khoury, Fred. *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*. Syracuse: Syracuse Univ., 1976.

- Laqueur, Walter. *The Israel-Arab Reader*. NY: Citadel, 1969.
- Lesch, Ann et al. *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*. Berkeley: UC, 1973.
- Memmi, Albert. *Jews and Arabs*. Chicago: J. Philip O'Hara, 1975.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul R. (ed.) *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*. NY: Oxford Univ., 1983.
- Migdal, Joel S. *Palestinian Society and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton Univ., 1980.
- Oz, Amos. *In the Land of Israel*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.
- Randal, Jonathan C. *Going All the Way: Christian Warlords, Israeli Adventurers and the War in Lebanon*. NY: Knopf, 1982.
- Saadawi, Nawal el. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Boston: Beacon, 1982.
- Said, Edward. *The Question of Palestine*. NY: Vintage, 1980.
- Shehadeh, Raja. *The Third Way: Journal of Life on the West Bank*. London: Quartet, 1982.
- Stone, I.F. *Underground to Palestine*. NY: Pantheon, 1978.
- Timerman, Jacobo. *The Longest War: Israel in Lebanon*. NY: Knopf, 1982.
- Turki, Fawaz. *The Disinherited*. NY: Monthly Review, 1972.
- World Jewish Congress. *The Implications of Israeli-Arab Peace for World Jewry*. NY: WJC, 1981.




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SELECTED PERIODICALS FOR MIDDLE EAST INFORMATION

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- Al Fajr*. POB 19315, Jerusalem. Weekly, in English, \$40/year. (Palestinian perspective)
- Israleft*. POB 9013, Jerusalem. Bi-weekly, in English, \$20/6 mos. (articles from Israeli press, radical perspective)
- Jerusalem Post*. Box 8, Jerusalem. Daily. Int'l edition. (varied perspectives)
- Jerusalem Quarterly*. POB 1308, Fort Lee, NJ 07024. \$10/year. (Scholarly)
- Jewish Currents*. 22 E. 17 St., rm. 601, NYC 10003. Monthly, \$12/year. (Progressive Jewish perspective)
- Journal of Palestine Studies*. POB 11-7164, Beirut. Quarterly, \$15/year. (Scholarly, Arab perspectives)
- Middle East Peace Information & Resources Packet*, 339 Lafayette St., NYC 10012. 10 x/yr/\$40.
- Middle East Review*, 9 E. 40 St., NYC 10016. Quarterly, \$12/year. (Israeli perspective)
- New Outlook*, 2 Karl Netter St., Tel Aviv. Monthly, \$24/year. (Jewish & Arab perspectives)
- Shalom Network*, POB 221, Kinderkamack Rd., River Edge, NJ 07661. Monthly, \$10/year. (organizing newsletter for Jews committed to survival of Israel and Palestinian self-determination.)



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GROUPS TO CONTACT

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American Friends Service Committee, 2160 Lake St., San Francisco, CA  
American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition, 124 W. 79 St., NYC 10024  
Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, 1731 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009  
Arab-American University Graduates, 556 Tratelo Rd., Belmont, MA 02178  
Association for Civil Rights in Israel, POB 14211, Rochester, NY 14614  
Feminist Arab-American Network, POB 725, E. Lansing, MI 48823  
New Jewish Agenda, 149 Church St., #2N, NYC 10007  
Peace Now, POB 53086, Washington, DC 20009  
Women Against Occupation, POB 2760, Tel Aviv, Israel

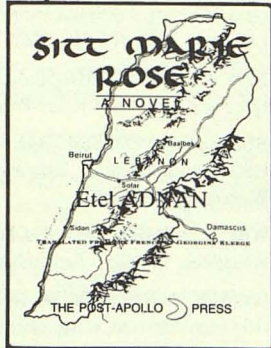
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**This is the story of a woman abducted by militiamen during the Civil War in LEBANON, and executed. It reveals the tribal mentality which makes of the Middle East a dangerous powerhouse.**

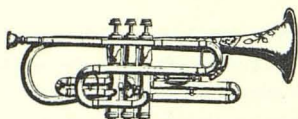
*"Sitt Marie-Rose" received the "France-Pays Arabes" award in Paris and has had Dutch, Arabic and Italian editions.*

Etel Adnan is a poet and a writer well known throughout the Arab World. A painter and a tapestry designer, her works have been exhibited in the U.S., Europe, and the Arab countries. She lives in California.



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## Announcements

Anthology of writings by and about **SLAVIC-AMERICAN WOMEN** and the effects their heritage has on their lives. Send work, possible contributors' names to Irene Zabytko, 329 Lake McCoy Drive, Apopka, FL 32703 (fiction & essays) or Eileen Lotozo, 2033 Spring Garden St., Philadelphia, PA 19130 (poetry & journals). SASE.

Theatre Rhinoceros presents the **NATIONAL LESBIAN PLAYWRITING CONTEST**, offering prizes and production opportunities. All scripts must be unpublished and unproduced. Deadline: 9/1/84. Send script and SASE, inquiries to: Playwriting Contest, Theatre Rhinoceros, 2926 16th St. #9, San Francisco, CA 94103, (415) 552-4100.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES INSTITUTE PROGRAMS IN GREECE, ISRAEL AND EGYPT**, Summer 1984, contact Tara Travel, 681 Market St., suite 629, San Francisco, CA 94105, (800) 227-5116.

**CANOEING WOMEN** invited to contribute writings to a collection to be published in 1985. Writings, interviews, photographs, inquiries to Barb Wieser, Aunt Lute Book Co., POB 2568, Iowa City, IA 52244, or Judith Niemi, Woodswomen, 2550 Pillsbury Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404. Deadline: 9/1/84.

**ACHE, A BLACK LESBIAN JOURNAL** seeks submissions for publication: reviews, interviews, essays, journal excerpts, graphics, poetry, etc. composed by black lesbians are welcome. Send with SASE to ACHE, POB 11469, Oakland, CA 94611-1469.

**WEBS INVIOULATE, A FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION JOURNAL**, seeks work by lesbians: all sorts of writing and camera-ready art; send with SASE to Webs Inviolat, POB 11469, Oakland, CA 94611-1469.

**PEACE TOUR TO ISRAEL**, 7/15-31/84; possibly also 8/5-21. Meet with Israeli peace workers, politicians, feminists, Palestinian journalists, West Bank mayors, etc. Organized by New Jewish Agenda, 149 Church St., #2N, NY, NY 10007, (212) 227-5885.

**NEW PUBLISHING HOUSE, LEZ PRESS**, seeks fiction, nonfiction, plays and art. Send double-spaced typed mss. with SASE to Lez Press, POB 4387, Portland, OR 97208.

**BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FOUNDATION**, non-profit educational, has programs including research, library, loans and scholarships; write BPW Foundation, 2012 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

**WHITE WOMEN AND RACISM** anthology, guidelines available from editor Tia Cross, RFD, Woodstock, VT 05091. Send submissions with an SASE.

**WOMEN IN ENTRAPPING RELATIONSHIPS**, esp. teacher-student, counsellor-client, etc., where risks from disclosure entrap older successful woman. Strictly confidential. Lesbian experiences esp. important. Questionnaire sent upon receiving response. Write Roberta Sackin Batt, M.D., 10 Tyler Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

**SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST GAYS** — SDA Kinship — can be contacted at POB 1233-H, Los Angeles, CA 90078, (213) 876-2076.

10th Annual **WOMEN'S WRITING WORKSHOPS** to take place 7/15-25, for the first time with no financial support from academia. WWW is renting space from Wells College and needs financial help, whatever you can give, to WWW, POB 456, Ithaca, N.Y. 14851.

The first issue of **LAVENDER LESBIAN LIST** — a lesbian books newsletter — is now available from Lavender Menace Bookshop, 11a Forth St., Edinburgh, Scotland, EH1 3LE (send SAE).



**WOMEN AND THE COMPUTER** anthology seeking articles, theory, personal accounts, interviews, poetry, and artwork. Deadline: 10/1/84. Send with SASE to PJ Graves, c/o Lunatechs, 2845 N. Racine (rear), Chicago, IL 60657.

The **MINNESOTA WOMEN'S CAMP FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE** is alive and wanting your protest and support!! Located just outside Minneapolis on a major highway, womaned through the Minnesota winter, the Peace Camp wants visitors, money, and help spreading the word. Write POB 16135, St. Paul, MN 55116; (612) 825-7838.

The National Media Web of the **WOMEN'S PEACE PRESENCE TO STOP PROJECT ELF** announces an encampment by women to protest the escalating arms race and needs financial and personal support. Check to WPPTSPE; write 731 State St., Madison, WI 53703.

Karen Brelle needs a **BACK ISSUE OF SW 14**; has extra SW1, SW3, and SW9 to trade or sell. POB 11262, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

**ANNOTATED GUIDE TO WOMEN'S PERIODICALS** in the US & Canada lists over 250 publications. Subs (2 issues) are \$12/ind., \$20/inst. Send orders or inquiries to Annotated Guide, c/o NSIWS, Box E-94, Earlham College, Richmond, IN 47374.

Resource Guide on **AUDIOVISUALS FOR WOMEN** will be produced in 1984 by the Isis International Office, Via Santa Maria Dell'Anima, 30, 00186 Rome, Italy.

**INTERNATIONAL MARCH AND CONFERENCE FOR LESBIAN AND GAY FREEDOM** planned by lesbian and gay activists from the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, to take place Fall '84 in NYC, Conference, 9/28-29, March on the UN, 9/30. Regional organizing, endorsements and money needed. Write LGOC/1984, POB 1498, N.Y., NY 10009.

**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REPORTS**, new journal to initiate worker-to-worker connections across national boundaries, esp. to connect workers and trade unionists in the so-called developed world with those in the Third World. For info. write ILR, 300, Oxford Road, Manchester, England M13 9NS, or, in the US, write Kim Scipes, POB 882391, San Francisco, CA 94188.

**FRONTIERS: A JOURNAL OF WOMEN STUDIES** is soliciting articles and essays for an issue on **WOMEN AND PEACE**; art work, photographs, poetry, short fiction, personal comment also welcome. Deadline: 8/1/84. Send 2 copies typed, double-spaced with an SASE to Frontiers, Women Studies, Univ. of Colo., Boulder, CO 80309.

**NEW YARN**, bi-annual women's literary journal published in **ENGLISH AND JAPANESE**, looking for poetry and short stories, esp. work that touches on women's lives, experiences, travels in Asia; and translations into Japanese or English. Send submissions to Barbara Yates, Fujicho 6-5-20, Hoyashi, Tokyo 202, Japan.

**LESBIANS-OVER-SIXTY** needed to answer an anonymous questionnaire for a nationwide study; drop a card to Dr. Monika Kehoe or Sheryl Goldberg, at CERES (Center for Research and Education in Sexuality), Psych. Bldg. Rm 502, SF State Univ., 1600 Holloway Ave., San Francisco, CA 94132.

Anthology of **EROTIC WRITINGS BY WOMEN** looking for stories, poems, journal entries, letters, essays. Ed. by Louise Thornton, Jan Sturtevant and Amber Coverdale Sumrall. Deadline: 9/30/84. Send with SASE to Anthology, POB 971, Felton, CA 95018.

Every Woman's Place is **WORKING AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY**: pamphlet, buttons, stickers; send for info. Also send them info. on local actions, publications, etc. to EWP, 9926-112 St., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 1L7.

**1984 INDEX/DIRECTORY OF WOMEN'S MEDIA** lists 408 women's periodicals, plus women's presses, bookstores, art/graphics/theater groups, radio & TV programs, etc. Send \$8 to WIFP (Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press), 3306 Ross Place N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

NEW LESBIAN PRESS, LACE PUBLICATIONS, plans to publish fiction with strong lesbian characters; Lady Winston series will specialize in erotica, seeking book-length manuscripts. Women of color are encouraged to send work. Query with sample chapters, synopsis, and SASE to Lace Publications, POB 10037-0037, Denver, CO 80210.

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## Editor's Notes

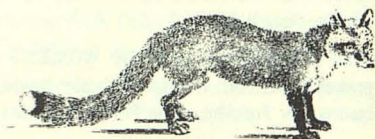
The issue of *Sinister Wisdom* which we expected to put before you as *SW 26* will be appearing as *SW 27*, including Pegasus Touch's essay on incest, Annette Kennedy's play, poetry by Melanie Perish and Lisa Simon, the second half of Katharyn Machan Aal's interview with Judy Grahn, art work by Katie Seiden, Sandra DeSando and Sharron Demarest, review columns by SDiane Bogus and Irena Klepfisz, and much much more.

We have gotten the production of the magazine a bit more under control, though those of you who have waited — or are still waiting — to hear from us about writing and art work you've sent can testify to the chaos still raging. Truly we apologize for the slowness of our pace in responding. Women have helped us with bulk mailings and proofreading but, day to day, *SW* is run by two women who make our living at other jobs. As we learn how to do what we are already doing, our speed increases and we ask you to bear with us.

In our last issue we expressed concern over the number of lesbian and feminist periodicals which were about to cease publication. We are delighted to report that *Feminary* and the *Lesbian Inciter* have both gathered around them new collectives and will continue, and that *Womanspirit* has appeared on the stands once again.

We've gotten lots of letters, mostly warm, enthusiastic, generous. Some critical. We'll write about this in a future issue. Whatever it is you have to say, it means everything to us to hear it. Write to us. Continue to entrust us with your creative work. Subscribe and pass the word along.

M & M



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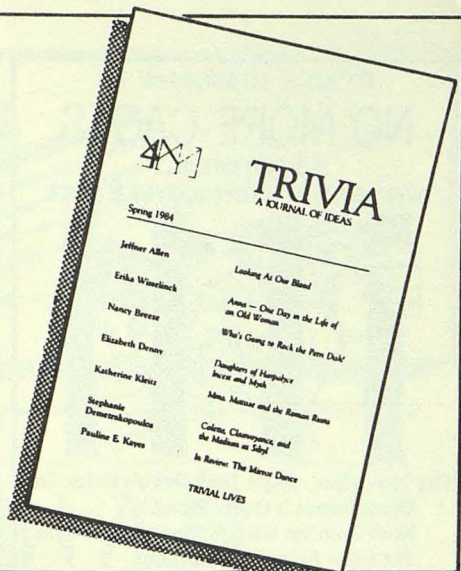
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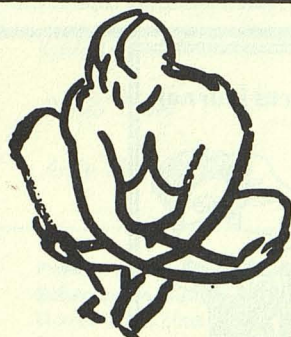
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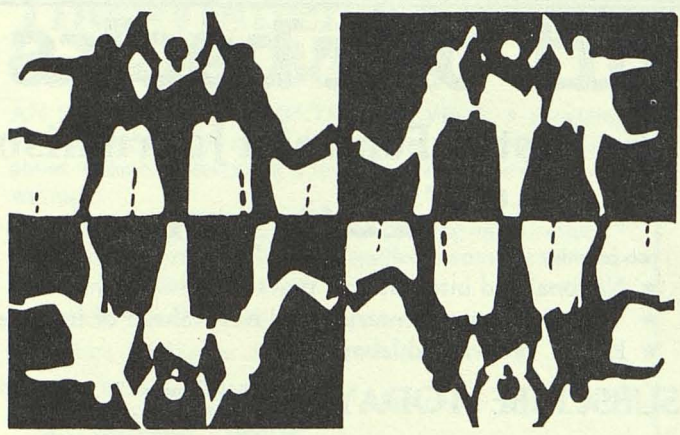
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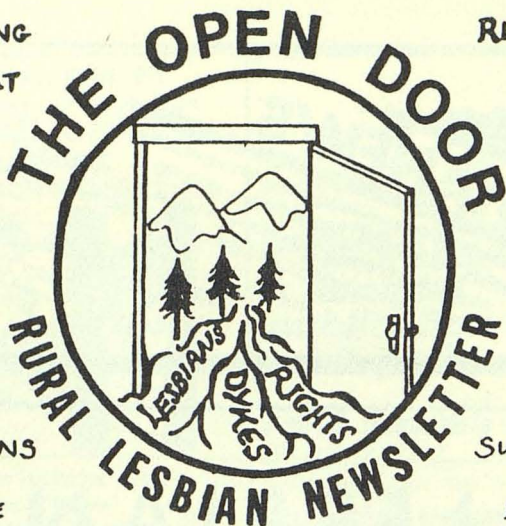
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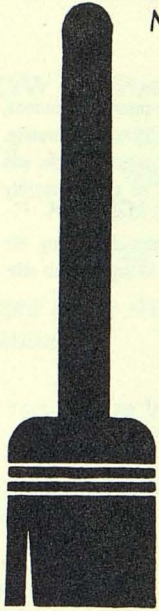
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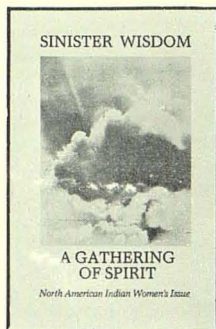
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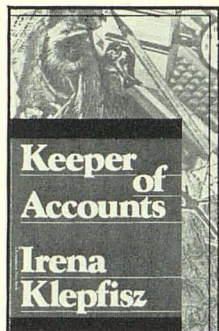
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I saw a small toddler careen into a pile of concrete, fall down, and still keep running, her legs beating against the air. The sound of the detonation lasted perhaps a minute and the ground shook for a short time longer. I picked up a child from the ground and grabbed an older boy as he ran by.

“Enough,” I said to them. “*Malesh.*”

The little one's mother came and we sat down on the crumpled stones. The children began to sort themselves out. The older boy looked at me and smiled. He was shaking as if from cold. I was shaking from fear and thinking about a kid running into a wall and about how that sort of thing had been going on all summer. And last summer also.

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