

I deleted the verbal confrontation between Joseph with Dickey after the bombing of the tanks in Gottlieb Heights. I had considered this to be tangential to the plot of the book. It does reinforce Joseph's alienation, and highlights some the popular beliefs people have about Arabs.

The first floor cafeteria in the Federal Building was crowded with people wearing press credentials busy ordering burgers and typing fast on their notebook computers. Pope's Mills had seen its invasion, and now it was Gottlieb Heights turn to be in the spotlight. Joseph tasted his overcooked chicken that came out onto a gleaming metal tray, and looked for a bottle of Tabasco Sauce to cover the flavor. Not finding one on his table, he searched the adjacent table asking the man with a press badge who shook his head, returning to his work. Joseph ached to return to his apartment, to his own food and bed. The past two weeks have been an eternity with no end in sight. Joseph considered the option of packing his bags, and returning to Lebanon just for the food alone. What he would give to have a baked Kibbi in a warm pita served with green onions and pickles a bowl of Lentil Soup in an open air marketplace with the smell of fragrant spices in the air. The cafeteria was over air conditioned, and he felt a chill. He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to feel the warm Mediterranean breezes of his childhood.

Opening his eyes, he saw Dickey navigating through the tables balancing a tray in one hand and holding a black briefcase in the other. Joseph turned his head, trying not to be seen. Dickey approached, dumping his tray with a greasy pork chop, mashed potatoes with hard brown gravy,

and a pile of wilted lettuce on the table. “I hope you don’t mind if I sit down. I was told I could find you here. I thought that I ought to set the record straight with you.”

Joseph was ready to be conciliatory. “There is nothing you need to explain. I appreciate the assistance with the wood back on the river bank.”

Dickey attacked his pork chop, sawing it into pieces, mashing the meat with his potatoes and gravy making a large blown lump. With his mouth full he said, “Don’t get the idea that we are going to be best buddies because I tied a few knots for you. For a few moments we wanted the same thing. But it was rather an extraordinary situation and being that, people do things that they would not normally do. So don’t expect me to be helping you out in the future. I have spent my whole career taking crap from ‘Ivory Tower’ people like you who feel that they know everything. I bet that back in your country you probably thought that you were king of the shitpile. Well here things are quite different.”

Joseph moved out his plastic seat picking up his tray. Dickey motioned him to sit down, apparently not finished speaking his mind. With his mouth filled with food he said, “You don’t need to be afraid of me. I am not going to hurt you again. If I was, you’d be unconscious on the floor, and to me you aren’t even worth the trouble.”

“So then, what do I owe this... pleasure?” Joseph feigned curiosity when all he wanted to do was be far away out of the cafeteria.

Dickey went into his briefcase, and pulled out a paper bag. Inside was a white long sleeve shirt in a polyethylene bag. Surprised, Joseph opened the bag, examining the contents closely. Dickey said. “You can put your eyes back in your head. It’s real- all cotton and it’s button down,

and by the way I apologize for roughing you up in the restaurant. Now that we are even, you can go.”

Joseph took the bag, and stood up again to leave, but instead decided to stay. “No, we are not even. You have said your peace, now I speak mine. I have been in this country for twenty years, ever since I was thirteen, so I never had any real opportunity to enjoy the comforts of my homeland while I was growing up. You are right. My parents had a lot of luxuries back in Lebanon, but they gave up everything to move here. They were victims of war, who believed that America was where they could raise their son without any threats on their life. My parents were like any other immigrant. They started out fresh. They did not want any special consideration. I went to some good state schools, but nothing on the order of Princeton or Harvard in which you think the son of a rich oil sheik would go. Myself, I worked through college, even taking a hazardous job in a mine to make a living. So get the ‘Ivory Tower’ nonsense out of your mind.”

Dickey kept on eating, without looking at Joseph. “I wasn’t exaggerating when I said ‘Ivory Tower’. Arabs have taken over this country years ago. They run our banks and own most of the real estate in the cities. This used to be *our* country.”

Joseph covered his mouth and started chuckling. Dickey got red in the face. “Are you laughing at me?”

“No, I am sorry. I apologize. I am laughing at myself. I was feeling guilty for the past week because I thought I have said something to offend you. But as it turned out, you are an anti-semite, and there was nothing I could have done.”

“I resent that. I am not anti-semitic. I get everything from reading the newspaper.”

Joseph felt sorry for Dickey whose behavior seem to be motivated by fear, insecurity, and ignorance. “I have met a lot of anti-semites here and I don’t take it personally. I think my department head is one of them, and he thinks that he is a fairly enlightened individual. Anyhow, now that I know how you feel and why, I don’t seem to be so afraid of you. I know that I am not going to change any of your opinions about Arabs. Just for your information, there are about seventeen Arab nationalities in Lebanon, every one of them with their own beliefs and many feud with one another as much as we fight with them. With that in mind, I would challenge you to find a ‘typical’ Arab. So the first thing I would ask you is which Arab nationality you are complaining about taking over the United States.” Joseph checked his watch. “Boy, this time flew by fast. We got to do this again.” he said in a half jovial voice as he exited the cafeteria.

When Joseph came back to the makeshift office on the third floor, he saw Sam with headphones taking notes on a legal pad at a long folding table. The furnishings were non-existent even by government standards. There were two surplus metal desks with scratched gray tops that lined a blank white wall, and three green rusted file cabinets on the other wall with the folding table in the center of the room. Joseph took a seat at one of the desks. “I would like to thank you for sending Dickey down to the cafeteria to apologize, and give me a replacement shirt for the one he ripped up in Pope’s Mills. We had a very illuminating discussion over lunch.”

“How do you know that I sent him down there?” Sam said casually.

“It doesn’t take any detective work to figure it out. You were the only person of any authority present during the scuffle in the restaurant, and I know that he would not have come down on his own accord. That’s why.”

“So what’s wrong with him doing that?”

“I hope you did not threaten him, on my account.”

“No I did not. I made him take responsibility. I told him that if he did not make things right, that I would send a letter to his boss and tell him what kind of shit he was.”

“I can handle my own problems. I can take care of myself. I don’t need you being my protector.”