

'THE RIOT'

2 copies

The Riot.

At the time of the riot in Baghdad I was working at one of the colleges as a teacher. It was called the Queen Aliyah College, and was for girls only. Opposite, behind an uneven wall, the brickwork of its face exposed and rough like ^a ~~that of some~~ mediaeval buildings ~~one sees~~ in Europe, was the chief men's college, called The College of Arts and Sciences. And at the end of the road was one of the gates of the city, a wide square where the buses stopped, with palm trees and a dusty road-surface, ^{and} with a kind of platform in the middle where criminals and sometimes political prisoners were hung early in the morning, and left there hanging for three hours. A friend of mine, a surgeon at the local hospital, used to try to persuade me to come along to these hangings; he said they fascinated him, rather as surgery did. But I stayed away, probably because of a fear that I might find ^{the same} a similar fascination in myself. I never saw my friend perform an operation---that was another thing he invited me to and I managed to stay away from---but people told me that he worked with a tremendous concentration, bending low over his patient, with the sweat pouring out of his brow even on cold days.

Nearly every year there was a riot of some kind among the students, in the cold weather, before or after Christmas; sometimes the riot was mild and sometimes violent. The most violent one had been just after the signing of a treaty with Britain, when Earnest Bevin was foreign secretary. Since then they had been fairly quiet. But it was said that the city, and thus the country, couldn't go on for long in this state; there were too many communists, too many Russian agents living in the tall, squalid blocks of flats near the gate on the other side of the

city, where some of the better-class brothels were. Students in the College of Arts and Sciences used to read Lenin and Marx under the lids of their desks rather as if these were pornographic. There was a steadily growing class of dissatisfied professional people who wouldn't tolerate Iraq's connection with England much longer; the treaty was represented as an act of slavery, only a voluntary treaty on the surface; the ministers were looked on as lackies of the British Embassy, and much odium surrounded the person of the Prince Régent Abdullilah, who was later murdered; he was said to have his finger in every big commercial deal in the city, especially the crooked deal, and to have amassed an immense fortune by corrupt bargains with the government over property and building contracts. There were also too many poor people. But they didn't complain. It was the students and the professional people who resented and smouldered. They hated the fat, illiterate ministers and under-secretaries who might ^{keep} keep them waiting in an ante-room ~~for two or three hours~~. The son of the prime minister was also hated. It was said of him that he drank a bottle of whisky a day, and was one of the lowest rakes in the country. Of all the things that were said about the people in charge it was difficult to know what was true. When later these people were murdered, their bodies dragged through the streets, it no longer mattered what the truth was; the only important fact was that the anger had been allowed to accumulate too long, and nothing could stop it.

During this riot, which wasn't a particularly bad one, I realised that I was looked on, hated and admired simultaneously, as an Englishman, not ^{at all} simply a friendly teacher from a foreign land as I thought I was. It was my first experience of being looked at with political hatred, namely, a hatred that is blazing

and fierce, quite without mercy, yet in the strangest way without anything personal in it. My own students, especially the ones who were close to me, in my special literature class, and who were usually the friendliest to me, were those who now looked at me most venomously; the girl who had the reputation of being my favourite student, and who against all precedent had come to my hotel-room in my first term at the college and asked me all sorts of questions about existentialism and Byron and life in London and Paris, and so forth, came up to me and hissed an insult in my face. The other students took little notice of me--- I mean those who never took the literature-classes and were mainly under other teachers. They seemed blind to me; their eyes looked vaguely past me when they turned in my direction, silvery, staring, with a damped flame, smoky. It was a miscalculation on my part to be in the college at all on the morning of a riot. Usually the day of rioting was known beforehand; after all, there had to be some plan; and the ~~friendly~~ 'friendly' teachers, those who weren't identified with the government ^{of} the British Embassy, were nearly always warned. But this time there was no warning. Even the teacher who was famous for his Arab nationalism didn't know. Afterwards I was told that this riot was the most spontaneous there had been so far; there really had been no plan.

It started during one of the classes. I realised what was up the moment I heard shouting outside, like a wall, because this was the week in which rioting was expected more or less. I was sitting in my favourite classroom, where only six students came, the most advanced ones; it looked out on a quiet quadrangle where the sun blazed down, making the walls look like solid mud, encrusted, dazzling, with the sky just visible beyond them. I've always been fascinated by low buildings, of the kind one sees in mediaeval

towns, long with deep roofs, and this quadrangle had something of the same kind. The air was nearly always dusty and parched. And some of the loveliest days were in the autumn, when the cold was coming; the air was extraordinarily clear, and the yellow walls gleamed in a blinding way, making people narrow their eyes, so that women in the veil, showing only their eyes through a slit, seemed to be giving out two sharp points of light, fixed in the black of their cloth, fiery and bright, yet closed in darkness as well.

I think I was going through 'The Rape of the Lock' line by line, or perhaps it was the first act of Hamlet. Almost every phrase would have to be explained. I enjoyed these lessons thoroughly. Sometimes the room would seem to be filled with the nymphs and sylphs Pope was describing; the poetry would actually touch and enchant the room, nearly every morning, so that it was a part of the extraordinarily clear, yellow light that blazed outside and of the books we were reading from, part of their print and texture; and sometimes it would be a more mysterious light, when we went through Hamlet, more stark, less decorated with this dazzling brightness, less delicate and glittering; there would be more sombreness, but also the room would seem less immediate to us, we would be more taken up in the words, it was more mental, but at the same time there was the special relish these words created, a dramatic relish, enacting even in their sounds the splendid, sad, endless struggles that lay permanently in the fibres of life, underneath. I enjoyed acting the lines, and sometimes clowned about, but this produced an atmosphere of over-excitement.

^{Not a} The girls came to the college in their abbas, [or at least most of them did.] These were black cloaks that stretched ^{up} over their heads like a hood, made of silk, which they could draw up to their

eyes so that they were completely hidden, except for a slit at the ^{old} brow. Only the ~~poor~~ women of Baghdad, and then usually of the poor classes, wore the veil proper, a piece of black cloth that stretched across the face just above the nose. The educated classes had dispensed with it on the whole, and women covered their faces at will, if they went out into the streets at all. Not all the girls wore the cloak, even those from the traditional families; the Christian Arabs and the Assyrians never did, but came in ordinary western clothes. The head of the college was a Turkish woman, a spinster, and her assistant a Canadian married to one of the government ministers, who was later imprisoned for some years by the revolutionary government. The result was a slight element of suffragettism in the college, though of course it made poor weather against its total opposite outside ~~the walls~~. When the girls took off their abbas and put them on hooks in the entrance hall they revealed western clothes underneath--high-heeled shoes, tight jumpers, little trinkets and clasps, and most of them wore lipstick. I remember one clasp, worn by Miss Existentialist on her jumper, which was a miniature representation of a telephone, cream-coloured, its wire in the form of a little golden chain.

Not all the students were young girls. There was a woman of thirty-five or so who had lost her husband some years before, and was said to write poetry; she chain-smoked and sat quite still in a hunched way, broodingly, her great black eyebrows seeming to weigh down on her eyes and almost close them, in sleep, while her lips smiled slightly. She had the character of someone reflective and gifted: sometimes she was quick and fluent, and sometimes totally dull, unable to suggest anything, only smoke endlessly, wrapped in her strange, silent darkness. One of the unexpected things in the college was that smoking was allowed, even in the

examination room. There was also another woman of the chain-smoker's age, her closest friend, with a long, dark, rather beautiful face; something seemed to hold her back all the time, in the flesh, something ancient perhaps, from the past, a kind of dragging, slow-footed quality that stopped her mind from lighting up and only gave her dim and heavy thoughts, borne slowly out of a brooding, insensate concentration, so that everything in her seemed soft and drowsy, in a desert heat, even her voice, which came out unwillingly, strained and deep; her slowness wasn't like that of her friend---it had nothing reflective in it; and she had the same kind of smile, but it was girlish and inconsequential, not sad as her friend's was; yet they both had something ancient in them that pulled them back in different ways, and made this quick western or Christian learning difficult for them, while fascinating. The beautiful one took me aside one day and asked me if I could accept a gift of a new fountain pen from her--- she had heard that I'd lost mine. I was delighted and took it without thinking. Later in the day the other teachers told me I shouldn't have done this; it meant that she wanted a good mark in the examinations, which were just coming round at the time. I refused to believe it, but when I failed her later on she looked at me in a completely disgusted and dishonoured way, and told me she would never have thought ^{me} capable of such a thing; her look made me feel completely treacherous. Her work was childish, with a slow, dim understanding; there was something lovely in it, but the sentences didn't finish, and there were strange misconceptions. The chain-smoker also was sad at her friend being failed; there was a brooding, end-of-the-world feeling round them both. It was a world I could glimpse into, for a moment. Perhaps the atmosphere was a little like a harem, especially when the classroom door was closed and the girls were quite themselves. They were in no doubt---

except one, a pale, slim, gentle girl whose answers were always to the point, and whose brother was a teacher at another college--- that I marked the examination papers according to the liking I had for each of them. It seemed quite natural to them that the girl whose brother was a fellow-teacher of mine should come out top, and that Miss Existentialist should come second.

The noisiest part of the morning was the break, when the long recreation-room was filled with girls, and a bar at one end served lemon-tea and Turkish coffee in glasses. At first I used to go there every day, but it always meant being drawn into one of the talkative little groups and then, later, being reproached for having shown some students more attention than others. By the end of the first term I was having tea on my own, in a little room reserved for the clerks and the bursar of the college, or I would go over to the men's college opposite where there was a proper teachers' common room. But the recreation-room was the most pleasant; it had cheerful frescoes on the walls and little tables for four people, and settees along one wall; it had all been arranged by the dean, a small talkative and charming woman whose head was full of once-fashionable clichés from western Europe; Paris was the place for her, and her room was full of the latest Parisian magazines, the fashion ones and the artistic avantgarde ones. She would tell the girls all about the 'artists' that one saw in the streets of the Latin Quarter and Montmartre, and she spoke French with a wonderful fluency.

After the first yelling started outside, the head of the college, a pale, quiet, sad-faced woman, came round to each class-room and told the girls quietly that they must keep their places and that anyone ^{who took} taking part in what was going on outside would be

punished. She said this with narrowed, slightly fluttering eyes, her lips pursed, but clearly she felt apprehensive. Her hand was shaking a little as she closed the door again. Some of the yells outside were rather blood-curdling, and the girls got up from their places one by one, taking no notice of me. There was a bustle in the entrance hall outside. [It was clearly the time for rumours to start flying.] It happened to be nearly break-time, and people drifted into the recreation-room. As yet there seemed to be no violence outside. The assistant head, the Canadian woman, told me it would be better to stay in the college, as she hurried past. There wasn't another teacher to be seen. Even the bursar wasn't in his little office, nor the clerks. It was a bright, clear day, and the sun streamed through the tall windows. There was no one serving tea. [I looked for the woman of fashionable clichés, but she wasn't to be found either.] Even the head of the college had disappeared. There were only students and me. I began to hope that they liked me---all of them.

The yelling outside increased, and then there was the sound of smashing glass. I went out into the narrow quadrangle that gave onto the street, and saw that most of the students of the college opposite were collected on the roof and were dropping sizeable boulders down, to prevent anyone coming into their college. The police were collectedⁱⁿ in the road, which was otherwise quite deserted as I had never seen it before. The students were sling-
ing small stones and pebbles down at them, and the police were moving about dexterously, finding little areas of shelter, crouching down, their rifles cocked and ready, though almost certainly they had orders not to fire. To one side, standing by an official car, there was a police-officer directing matters. There wasn't another vehicle to be seen. The usual beggars and mules and donkeys,

the
and sun-bleached, creaking carts, and ^{the} old cloaked women, soft
of foot, gliding swiftly along the pavements, to which they always
seemed to belong so little, were no longer there. I noticed that
there were ^{also} girls [as well] on the roof opposite; they were waving
down to our girls, who seemed to be taking the situation in a giggly
way. But then the stones started flying dangerously---they must
have spent hours collecting this ^{etc} armament together on the roof,
behind ^{of} the low promontory. It seemed that the police were trying
to force an entry into the college, ^{perhaps} perhaps to clear the place with
tear-gas, and as they got nearer the building, from a flank, the
boulders and stones began to fall more thickly, making dull thuds
on the sandy earth below. One of the windows of our college was
suddenly smashed, and everyone ran inside. The police pushed the
remainder of the girls back, and the doors of the college were then
made fast. I decided to go and sit in the recreation-room, and
to look as unconcerned as possible, though I was very frightened,
and could see myself being strung up on a pole and having my limbs
cut off slowly and one by one [ending with the genitals], while the
girls danced a [frightful] kind of feminine death-dance round me.

I told myself that I'd had good training during the war for behaving
calmly while in a state of pure funk inside, ^{but} and I composed myself
on my chair and began to read [the] book I'd brought from the class-
room; (or rather, I tried to.)

Still none of the girls took any notice of me. ^{To me} This felt to
me like the negligence of people who had absolute power in their
hands; [a judge might be negligent like that before putting the
black cap on his head.] But suddenly one of the outside doors
burst open with a terrific force, and I thought, 'Here goes! ^{W. comes!}

[There'll be a real fight now!'] Apparently, the police hadn't been
strong enough to stop the riot spreading into the street. But I

was mistaken. It was only one young man. However, there was blood running down his face, [together with sweat,] and he was yelling frantically. He dashed straight into the recreation-room---to get me, I thought---followed by several of the girls, and began yelling in the most distressed way, his eyes quite blind, [clearly seeing nothing round him at all,] even [me,] trembling all over, his shirt in rags, while the girls gazed at him with rapt sympathy. It seemed he was making a sort of speech. His eyes passed over me while he talked, settled on me, passed on again, pierced through me, while the words poured out of his mouth. I began to ask myself where all my Arab friends were. Surely they would realise I was in a fix?

[But they were all far afield. One was in the hospital on the other side of the square, another ran a bookshop, another was in the ministry of justice, another at the racecourse outside the city. They would probably hear about the riot when it was all over.]

To my surprise, the young man turned away, his speech and his voice exhausted, and one of the girls led him out of the room like a child. ^{but} He had ^{stirred} ^{their} ^{passions}. They also were ^{getting} in a wild state ^{now}. Miss Existentialist dashed up to me and, lowering her face to my level, and staring me straight in the eyes, her teeth bared, her nose almost touching mine, asked ^{me} in her broken English, didn't I feel a bit uncomfortable now, wasn't I a little afraid, how did I like it, eh? I smiled at her in an aimless and sheepish way, and shrugged. [But I could say nothing. Words absolutely refused to come to my lips.] And she turned away, giving me a last biting glance, as if my silence confirmed something in her mind.

I realised that my first few months at the college had been based on a mistake; I'd been invited out to Baghdad by Arabs, not through any official English organisation, and I'd assumed

that for this reason I wasn't identified with British Embassy politics, whatever they were. But this was wrong. For the first time I was hated in my flesh, for a matter that was beyond me, which I'd never created and which I knew almost nothing about.

I felt very sorry for myself: here were people burning against Embassy condescension and aloofness---if indeed they were burning against any such thing---and hadn't I burned against it as well, in other forms, at home, all my life? didn't I know what snubbing and condescension meant, better than they did? And they picked on me? In the name of liberty or progress? They performed the same blind act against me, in my flesh, as they condemned in their government! And who said the British Embassy was behind everything the government did? What was the evidence? Let them provide a little more than rumour and hearsay! And another thing, there was no such thing as power without submission. ^{But} Who was to blame the British if they ^{the British} used influence where influence was tolerated? Instead of saying that the British were behind everything that happened, even the weather, and that all Englishmen were spies, why didn't they stand up and make a government of their own, and clear their cities of slums, and rally the poor people? And why did they build me up into a figure---a poor damned fool of a teacher!---unless they were burning with envy, that little maggot with a political face, that masquerades ⁱⁿ under the word 'liberty'? ^{freedom} I couldn't help it if they felt inferior! And who were these people who felt inferior? Who were these girls who were beginning to bare their teeth at me now, who were their young brothers across the road? Quite half of them came to college in long, bright, American limousines! It was the done thing among the girls to offer me a lift at the end of the morning---me, the imperial master, who hadn't even a broken-down Ford, even a bicycle!

Their servants swarmed round the gates every morning, salaaming and smiling, come to fetch the little ones! These were the purveyors of liberty to the people---the sons and daughters of tight-fisted shopkeepers and manufacturers, who needed ~~the~~ political slogans to hide the ^{brutal} discrepancy between themselves and the malaria-ridden, tubercular, half-starved masses under them! Yes, they needed a scapegoat! And here was I, a sitting target for a small, mean class who sent out their children to learn English for further commercial advantages!

In fact, much fewer than half the girls came in limousines. There were a handful of very rich girls. Most of them were the children of professional people, [I believe]--lawyers, teachers, doctors and so forth. They were middle-class. Their hates were of the [deadly] abstract kind. [They were not ^{much} different from the British people they professed to hate; ^{really} indeed, they were less liberal, less generous altogether; for they hadn't travelled as far along the middle-class road towards perfect citizenship. That was to some.]

But I was confident, [really,] that nobody would touch me. They never did touch a foreigner. And, it was strange, they liked the English. Half of the things that stuck in my throat about England they admired. [I thought I could quite easily walk out into the street and go home without being touched. But also I thought, considering the size of the boulders being flung about, and the unfathomable quality of all human nature, that I wouldn't do so.] I stayed where I was, partly fuming, partly quaking, and partly making silent self-justifying speeches. Some of the other girls followed Miss Existentialist's lead and gave me taunting and hostile glances; but the hatred in their case was less concentrated; one or two [broke into] giggles. I found out that one of the girls

had left the college and run across to the other side ^{of the} ~~of the road,~~
^{after} having heard ^{that} her brother ^{had been} was injured in some way. The police
were firing into the air, they said, although I didn't hear any
reports.

^{her} I was, as it happened, rescued. A Kurdish friend, hearing the
noise of the riot from the ministry of justice where he worked,
telephoned my home to see if I was there, then came straight across
in his car. He liked to make grand gestures, and enjoyed walking
from his car through a hail of stones to the college, slowly,
dressed in his immaculate white suit, tall and slim, with a panama
hat at an angle over his brow, his arms swinging at his sides loose-
ly, his pace long and prowling. He prided himself on knowing most
of the important communists in the city, and on being the only
landowner they treated as a friend. ^{He'd} taken me one evening,
with an air of conspiracy, to the flat of a communist cell, where
there were two small, urgent-looking men with revolvers in their
belts, who treated me with little ceremony at first, seeming to
remonstrate with my friend for having brought me; one of them, with
a glint of humanity in his eyes despite himself, took out his
revolver and played with it rather ostentatiously, but my friend
laughed and told him to put it away. The flat was high over the
city, and we all sat on the terrace together, looking over the
iron rail at the flat roof-tops below where people sat on hammocks
and divan beds, and the twinkling lights in King Feisal square,
and the rolling, brown river in the distance, with lighted mosques
on the other bank. The two communists were also Kurds, from the
mountains; they were brisker than Arabs, without the black,
drowsy, piercing eyes; proud people who had always wanted a
country of their own, and felt that England had prevented it by
bringing Iraq into being as a Kurdish-Arab state; they caused

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Next day my students were as cheerful and talkative as ever. Miss Existentialist smiled in the same way. I peered into their faces but couldn't find a trace of the feelings of the previous day. The girl who had run across to the men's college was asked to go to the head's office that morning, and was given a severe talking-to. But she wasn't punished. [She gave as ^{her} excuse the fact that her brother had been injured, and she couldn't bear to be separated from him.] There was still a sign of apprehension ^{fear} in the head's face. She had a sad, lip-biting manner underneath her authority. The other teachers drifted back and sat in the recreation-room or the clerks' office as usual during the break, not mentioning the disturbances. I believe most of them agreed with the principles behind it, in any case. They belonged to the professional class. They felt they were worth some sort of social position, and they saw people like me, much younger, coming from England or France or America and getting salaries that made theirs look absurd. [I remember one man in particular who never forgave me for arguing 'against' sociology in a club-meeting; it was his pet subject, and my attack was unquestionably personal, he said, designed to get him out of the college. In fact, I didn't know him. Endless intrigues resulted from this sort of thing, the doggy, evil-smelling, cowardly intrigues that go on in colleges everywhere, among people who think of themselves as a cut above others mentally. Why couldn't they have burned down a college or two? And put vegetable-allotments in their place for the poor!]

I was surprised to see the young man who had given a speech in the recreation-room ^{to} the day before. He came across to take

a glass of tea. We even spoke to each other. He had ^{kindly} soft eyes and a most charming smile. I asked him what he had been saying the day before but he looked quite blank. I even began to feel unsure that it had happened. The sunlight poured through the windows. It was one of those extraordinary mornings again, ^{and} when the poetry we were reading seemed to touch everything lightly. The girls were all cheerful. I clowned in the special literature class as before. The dean sped through the entrance hall as on every other morning, looking heavy with clichés. How lovely it was to be in Baghdad! How delightful people were! Perhaps abstract ^{lectures} ^{is}, while the deadliest ^{lectures} there is, the pickiest forgotten.

Rome. 1964.

THE RIOT.

Maurice Rowdon.

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At the time of the riot in Baghdad I was working at one of the colleges as a teacher. It was called the Queen Aliyah College, and was for girls only. Opposite, behind an uneven wall, the brickwork of its face exposed and rough like that of some mediaeval buildings one sees in Europe, was the chief men's college, called The College of Arts and Sciences. And at the end of the road was one of the gates of the city, a wide square where the buses stopped, with palm trees and a dusty road-surface, ^{and} with a kind of platform in the middle where criminals and sometimes political prisoners were hung early in the morning, and left there hanging for three hours. A friend of mine, a surgeon at the local hospital, used to try to persuade me to come along to these hangings; he said they fascinated him, rather as surgery did. But I stayed away, probably because of a fear that I might find a similar fascination in myself. I never saw my friend perform an operation---that was another thing he invited me to and I managed to stay away from---but people told me that he worked with a tremendous concentration, bending low over his patient, with the sweat pouring out of his brow even on cold days.

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I think I was going through 'The Rape of the Lock' line by line, or perhaps it was the first act of Hamlet. Almost every phrase would have to be explained. I enjoyed these lessons thoroughly. Sometimes the room would seem to be filled with the nymphs and sylphs Pope was describing; the poetry would actually touch and enchant the room, nearly every morning, so that it was a part of the extraordinarily clear, yellow light that blazed outside and of the books we were reading from, part of their print and texture; and sometimes it would be a more mysterious light, when we went through Hamlet, more stark, less decorated with this dazzling brightness, less delicate and glittering; there would be more sombreness, but also the room would seem less immediate to us, we would be more taken up in the words, it was more mental, but at the same time there was the special relish these words created, a dramatic relish, enacting even in their sounds the splendid, sad, endless struggles that lay permanently in the fibres of life, underneath. I enjoyed acting the lines, and sometimes clowned about, but this produced an atmosphere of over-excitement.

The girls came to the college in their abbas, or at least most of them did. These were black cloaks that stretched over their heads like a hood, made of silk, which they could draw up to their

eyes so that they were completely hidden except for a slit at the ^{old} brow. Only the ~~poor~~ women of Baghdad, and then usually of the poor classes, wore the veil proper, a piece of black cloth that stretched across the face just above the nose. The educated classes had dispensed with it on the whole, and women covered their faces at will, if they went out into the streets at all. Not all the girls wore the cloak, even those from the traditional families; the Christian Arabs and the Assyrians never did, but came in ordinary western clothes. The head of the college was a Turkish woman, a spinster, and her assistant a Canadian married to one of the government ministers, who was later imprisoned for some years by the revolutionary government. The result was a slight element of suffragetteism in the college, though of course it made poor weather against its total opposite outside the walls. When the girls took off their abbas and put them on hooks in the entrance hall they revealed western clothes underneath—high-heeled shoes, tight jumpers, little trinkets and clasps, and most of them wore lipstick. I remember one clasp, worn by Miss Existentialist on her jumper, which was a miniature representation of a telephone, cream-coloured, its wire in the form of a little golden chain.

Not all the students were young girls. There was a woman of thirty-five or so who had lost her husband some years before, and was said to write poetry; she chain-smoked and sat quite still in a hunched way, broodingly, her great black eyebrows seeming to weigh down on her eyes and almost close them, in sleep, while her lips smiled slightly. She had the character of someone reflective and gifted: sometimes she was quick and fluent, and sometimes totally dull, unable to suggest anything, only smoke endlessly, wrapped in her strange, silent darkness. One of the unexpected things in the college was that smoking was allowed, even in the

examination room. There was also another woman of the chain-smoker's age, her closest friend, with a long, dark, rather beautiful face; something seemed to hold her back all the time, in the flesh, something ancient perhaps, from the past, a kind of dragging, slow-footed quality that stopped her mind from lighting up and only gave her dim and heavy thoughts, borne slowly out of a brooding, insensate concentration, so that everything in her seemed soft and drowsy, in a desert heat, even her voice, which came out unwillingly, strained and deep; her slowness wasn't like that of her friend---it had nothing reflective in it; and she had the same kind of smile, but it was girlish and inconsequential, not sad as her friend's was; yet they both had something ancient in them that pulled them back in different ways, and made this quick western or Christian learning difficult for them, while fascinating. The beautiful one took me aside one day and asked me if I could accept a gift of a new fountain pen from her--- she had heard that I'd lost mine. I was delighted and took it without thinking. Later in the day the other teachers told me I shouldn't have done this; it meant that she wanted a good mark in the examinations, which were just coming round at the time. I refused to believe it, but when I failed her later on she looked at me in a completely disgusted and dishonoured way, and told me she would never have thought capable of such a thing; her look made me feel completely treacherous. Her work was childish, with a slow, dim understanding; there was something lovely in it, but the sentences didn't finish, and there were strange misconceptions. The chain-smoker also was sad at her friend being failed; there was a brooding, end-of-the-world feeling round them both. It was a world I could glimpse into, for a moment. Perhaps the atmosphere was a little like a harem, especially when the classroom door was closed and the girls were quite themselves. They were in no doubt---

except one, a pale, slim, gentle girl whose answers were always to the point, and whose brother was a teacher at another college--- that I marked the examination papers according to the liking I had for each of them. It seemed quite natural to them that the girl whose brother was a fellow-teacher of mine should come out top, and that Miss Existentialist should come second.

The noisiest part of the morning was the break, when the long recreation-room was filled with girls, and a bar at one end served lemon-tea and Turkish coffee in glasses. At first I used to go there every day, but it always meant being drawn into one of the talkative little groups and then, later, being reproached for having shown some students more attention than others. By the end of the first term I was having tea on my own, in a little room reserved for the clerks and the bursar of the college, or I would go over to the men's college opposite where there was a proper teachers' common room. But the recreation-room was the most pleasant; it had cheerful frescoes on the walls and little tables for four people, and settees along one wall; it had all been arranged by the dean, a small talkative and charming woman whose head was full of once-fashionable clichés from western Europe; Paris was the place for her, and her room was full of the latest Parisian magazines, the fashion ones and the artistic avantgarde ones. She would tell the girls all about the 'artists' that one saw in the streets of the Latin Quarter and Montmartre, and she spoke French with a wonderful fluency.

After the first yelling started outside, the head of the college, a pale, quiet, sad-faced woman, came round to each classroom and told the girls quietly that they must keep their places and that anyone taking part in what was going on outside would be

punished. She said this with narrowed, slightly fluttering eyes, her lips pursed, but clearly she felt apprehensive. Her hand was shaking a little as she closed the door again. Some of the yells outside were rather blood-curdling, and the girls got up from their places one by one, taking no notice of me. There was a bustle in the entrance hall outside. It was clearly the time for rumours to start flying. It happened to be nearly break-time, and people drifted into the recreation-room. As yet there seemed to be no violence outside. The assistant head, the Canadian woman, told me it would be better to stay in the college, as she hurried past. There wasn't another teacher to be seen. Even the bursar wasn't in his little office, nor the clerks. It was a bright, clear day, and the sun streamed through the tall windows. There was no one serving tea. I looked for the woman of fashionable clichés, but she wasn't to be found either. Even the head of the college had disappeared. There were only students and me. I began to hope that they liked me---all of them.

The yelling outside increased, and then there was the sound of smashing glass. I went out into the narrow quadrangle that gave onto the street, and saw that most of the students of the college opposite were collected on the roof and were dropping sizeable boulders down, to prevent anyone coming into their college. The police were collected in the road, which was otherwise quite deserted as I had never seen it before. The students were alinging small stones and pebbles down at them, and the police were moving about dexterously, finding little areas of shelter, crouching down, their rifles cocked and ready, though almost certainly they had orders not to fire. To one side, standing by an official car, there was a police-officer directing matters. There wasn't another vehicle to be seen. The usual beggars and mules and donkeys,

and sun-bleached, creaking carts, and old cloaked women, soft of foot, gliding swiftly along the pavements, to which they always seemed to belong so little, were no longer there. I noticed that there were girls as well on the roof opposite; they were waving down to our girls, who seemed to be taking the situation in a giggly way. But then the stones started flying dangerously---they must have spent hours collecting this armament together on the roof, behind the low promontory. It seemed that the police were trying to force an entry into the college, perhaps to clear the place with tear-gas, and as they got nearer the building, from a flank, the boulders and stones began to fall more thickly, making dull thuds on the sandy earth below. One of the windows of our college was suddenly smashed, and everyone ran inside. The police pushed the remainder of the girls back, and the doors of the college were then made fast. I decided to go and sit in the recreation-room, and to look as unconcerned as possible, though I was very frightened, and could see myself being strung up on a pole and having my limbs cut off slowly and one by one, ending with the genitals, while the girls danced a frightful kind of feminine death-dance round me. I told myself that I'd had good training during the war for behaving calmly while in a state of pure funk inside, and I composed myself on my chair and began to read the book I'd brought from the classroom; or rather, I tried to.

Still none of the girls took any notice of me. This felt to me like the negligence of people who had absolute power in their hands; a judge might be negligent like that before putting the black cap on his head. But suddenly one of the outside doors burst open with a terrific force, and I thought, 'Here goes! There'll be a real fight now!' Apparently, the police hadn't been strong enough to stop the riot spreading into the street. But I

was mistaken. It was only one young man. However, there was blood running down his face, together with sweat, and he was yelling frantically. He dashed straight into the recreation-room---to get me, I thought---followed by several of the girls, and began yelling in the most distressed way, his eyes quite blind, clearly seeing nothing round him at all, even me, trembling all over, his shirt in rags, while the girls gazed at him with rapt sympathy. It seemed he was making a sort of speech. His eyes passed over me while he talked, settled on me, passed on again, pierced through me, while the words poured out of his mouth. I began to ask myself where all my Arab friends were. Surely they would realise I was in a fix? But they were all far afield. One was in the hospital on the other side of the square, another ran a bookshop, another was in the ministry of justice, another at the racecourse outside the city. They would probably hear about the riot when it was all over.

To my surprise, the young man turned away, his speech and his voice exhausted, and one of the girls led him out of the room like a child. He had stirred their passions. They also were in a wild state now. Miss Existentialist dashed up to me and, lowering her face to my level, and staring me straight in the eyes, her teeth bared, her nose almost touching mine, asked in her broken English didn't I feel a bit uncomfortable now, wasn't I a little afraid, how did I like it, eh? I smiled at her in an aimless and sheepish way, and shrugged. But I could say nothing. Words absolutely refused to come to my lips. And she turned away, giving me a last biting glance, as if my silence confirmed something in her mind.

I realised that my first few months at the college had been based on a mistake; I'd been invited out to Baghdad by Arabs, not through any official English organisation, and I'd assumed

that for this reason I wasn't identified with British Embassy politics, whatever they were. But this was wrong. For the first time I was hated in my flesh, for a matter that was beyond me, which I'd never created and which I knew almost nothing about. I felt very sorry for myself: here were people burning against Embassy condescension and aloofness---if indeed they were burning against any such thing---and hadn't I burned against it as well, in other forms, at home, all my life? didn't I know what snubbing and condescension meant, better than they did? And they picked on me? In the name of liberty or progress? They performed the same blind act against me, in my flesh, as they condemned in their government! And who said the British Embassy was behind everything the government did? What was the evidence? Let them provide a little more than rumour and hearsay! And another thing, there was no such thing as power without submission. Who was to blame the British if they used influence where influence was tolerated? Instead of saying that the British were behind everything that happened, even the weather, and that all Englishmen were spies, why didn't they stand up and make a government of their own, and clear their cities of slums, and rally the poor people? And why did they build me up inot a figure---a poor damaged fool of a teacher!---unless they were burning with envy, that little maggot with a political face, that masquerades under the word 'liberty'? I couldn't help it if they felt inferior! And who were these people who felt inferior? Who were these girls who were beginning to bare their teeth at me now, who were their young brothers across the road? Quite half of them came to college in long, bright, American limousines! It was the done thing among the girls to offer me a lift at the end of the morning---me, the imperial master, who hadn't even a broken-down Ford, even a bicycle!

Their servants swarmed round the gates every morning, salaaming and smiling, come to fetch the little ones! These were the purveyors of liberty to the people---the sons and daughters of tight-fisted shopkeepers and manufacturers, who needed the political slogans to hide the discrepancy between themselves and the malaria-ridden, tubercular, half-starved masses under them! Yes, they needed a scapegoat! And here was I, a sitting target for a small, mean-class who sent out their children to learn English for further commercial advantages!

In fact, much fewer than half the girls came in limousines. There were a handful of very rich girls. Most of them were the children of professional people, I believe---lawyers, teachers, doctors and so forth. They were middle-class. Their hates were of the deadly, abstract kind. They were no different from the British people they professed to hate; indeed, they were less liberal, less generous altogether; for they hadn't travelled as far along the middle-class road towards perfect citizenship. That was to come.

But I was confident, really, that nobody would touch me. They never did touch a foreigner. And, it was strange, they liked the English. Half of the things that stuck in my throat about England they admired. I thought I could quite easily walk out into the street and go home without being touched. But also I thought, considering the size of the boulders being flung about, and the unfathomable quality of all human nature, that I wouldn't do so. I stayed where I was, partly fuming, partly quaking, and partly making silent self-justifying speeches. Some of the other girls followed Miss Existentialist's lead and gave me taunting and hostile glances; but the hatred in their case was less concentrated; one or two broke into giggles. I found out that one of the girls

had left the college and run across to the other side of the road, having heard that her brother was injured in some way. The police were firing into the air, they said, although I didn't hear any reports.

I was, as it happened, rescued. A Kurdish friend, hearing the noise of the riot from the ministry of justice where he worked, telephoned my home to see if I was there, then came straight across in his car. He liked to make grand gestures, and enjoyed walking from his car through a hail of stones to the college, slowly, dressed in his immaculate white suit, tall and slim, with a panama hat at an angle over his brow, his arms swinging at his sides loosely, his pace long and prowling. He prided himself on knowing most of the important communists in the city, and on being the only landowner they treated as a friend. He'd taken me one evening, with an air of conspiracy, to the flat of a communist cell, where there were two small, urgent-looking men with revolvers in their belts, who treated me with little ceremony at first, seeming to remonstrate with my friend for having brought me; one of them, with a glint of humanity in his eyes despite himself, took out his revolver and played with it rather ostentatiously, but my friend laughed and told him to put it away. The flat was high over the city, and we all sat on the terrace together, looking over the iron rail at the flat roof-tops below where people sat on hammocks and divan beds, and the twinkling lights in King Faisal square, and the rolling, brown river in the distance, with lighted mosques on the other bank. The two communists were also Kurds, from the mountains; they were brisker than Arabs, without the black, drowsy, piercing eyes; proud people who had always wanted a country of their own, and felt that England had prevented it by bringing Iraq into being as a Kurdish-Arab state; they caused

much of the political unrest. But they were also Muslims, and now felt thoroughly Iraqi, on the whole. My friend was married not to a Kurd but a girl from Beirut who spoke fluent French and who had never worn the veil. He told that in this communist cell, which was like hundreds of others in the city, there were armed men waiting for 'the day', which would happen in two years, five years, ten years; but happen it certainly would. And happen it did, in about eight years, with staggering violence, to the surprise, apparently, of the diplomats and so-called Arab experts. The prime minister was murdered and dragged through the streets with his feet cut off, the Prince Regent and the king were both shot, and the British Embassy was burned to the ground. A Kurd became the leader.

I was happy to see my friend in the doorway of the recreation room. He had a wonderful smile on his face, and looked immensely tall with the girls round him. And we walked out of the building arm in arm, with the stones still flying about. Not much notice was taken of us. Students were still yelling on the roof, although the police had gained an entrance. Things had abated somewhat. The road was uncannily still and deserted, apart from policemen dotted everywhere, still ducking down behind walls and trees, as if they were in battle, while the strange, blood-curdling cries echoed down from the roof. It wouldn't last much longer, my friend said. It was a damp squib. The police were well in control. The prime minister, for the moment, had charge of things; he had the right 'instinct'. His mistake eight years later, people said, was one of foreign policy, in not joining the Arab 'crusade' against Israel with sufficient enthusiasm; the 'Baghdad Pact', engineered by England, cutting across Arab unity, was a blot on his career, they said. Anyway, he was murdered.

Next day my students were as cheerful and talkative as ever. Miss Existentialist smiled in the same way. I peered into their faces but couldn't find a trace of the feelings of the previous day. The girl who had run across to the men's college was asked to go to the head's office that morning, and was given a severe talking-to. But she wasn't punished. She gave as her excuse the fact that her brother had been injured, and she couldn't bear to be separated from him. There was still a sign of apprehension in the head's face. She had a sad, lip-biting manner underneath her authority. The other teachers drifted back and sat in the recreation-room or the clerks' office as usual during the break, not mentioning the disturbances. I believe most of them agreed with the principles behind it, in any case. They belonged to the professional class. They felt they were worth some sort of social position, and they saw people like me, much younger, coming from England or France or America and getting salaries that made theirs look absurd. I remember one man in particular who never forgave me for arguing 'against' sociology in a club-meeting; it was his pet subject, and my attack was unquestionably personal, he said, designed to get him out of the college. In fact, I didn't know him. Endless intrigues resulted from this sort of thing, the doggy, evil-smelling, cowardly intrigues that go on in colleges everywhere, among people who think of themselves as a cut above others mentally. Why couldn't they have burned down a college or two? And put vegetable-allotments in their place for the poor!

I was surprised to see the young man who had given a speech in the recreation-room the day before. He came across to take

a glass of tea. We even spoke to each other. He had soft eyes and a most charming smile. I asked him what he had been saying the day before but he looked quite blank. I even began to feel unsure that it had happened. The sunlight poured through the windows. It was one of those extraordinary mornings again, when the poetry we were reading seemed to touch everything lightly. The girls were all cheerful. I clowned in the special literature class as before. The dean sped through the entrance hall as on every other morning, looking heavy with clichés. How lovely it was to be in Baghdad! How delightful people were!