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TUNISIA

from Tunisian rain, ^{all winter} on route between school and the café circuit, the Turkish bath and home. Now home is where you make it, but I haven't been able to make it in any one place ^{for} too long. I've spent three weeks in the student dormitory, 2 more in suburban shack on the beach with a crazed American compatriot, ~~and this week 2 more~~ months in town with two asshole Egyptians, and this week I moved into a small oblong room with two other Westerners in a house which three Tunisian families share.

My last domicile, altho no less novel or bizarre than the others, was perhaps the most entertaining, even if rather difficult to bear. In an addition to an eminently reasonable American, I had as roommates two Egyptian ~~brothers~~ ^{brothers}, Hatith and Ma fourth. This last had just arrived in Tunis when I moved in,

supposedly to take his doctoral degree in law (even tho he doesn't know a word of French, the language of legal instruction in Tunisia, and Egypt for that matter.) 35 years of age with a wife and kid in Cairo, Mahfouth ~~spends~~ ^{passes} his day in his P.J's putting ^{downing} around the house, occasionally donning a pin-stripe suit to go out on the street and ^{buy} a loaf of bread. But if his studies were less than arduous, his amorous adventures were quite strenuous indeed. Every day he received a sweet young law student in the morning, a sexy lycéeuse in the evening, not to mention the numerous and unidentified women who came each Sunday to cook a sumptuous meal before joining Mahfouth and his brother in the long Sunday siesta. Now Tunisia is a Muslim country with a very active vice squad who ^{corrupting} ~~away~~ anyone caught ^{corrupting} young Tunisian women. (all foreigners are fair game) with

several months to several years. The plot thickened when we (my American roommate and I) ^{discovered} that not only the neighbors but the local police kept were well informed of our roommates' pernicious activities, and that among the Sunday guests ~~was~~ ^{was} a ^{indicatrix} indicatrix ^{vice} vice, a professional whore who benefits from the favours of her clients several times before turning them in to the local vice squad.

Meanwhile, I had discovered that Hefth and Mahfuth were touched bags of the first order when I ~~committed~~ ^{committed} the abominable indiscretion of asking one frequent visitor (supposed the fiancée of Hefth) her name. I was treated to a venomous discourse on "respect" (for whom?) and my lack of it. These Egyptians' hypocrisy is merely laughable but their total lack of civility and general high-handedness continued to confound me. And the last thing I wanted to ^{do} was to spend a two months' vacation

in a Tunisian prison with these characters!
 I my roommate, a 17-year-old French girl who works in Tunis, and I moved into this house in the middle of the ^{medina} medina, which we share with ³ three Tunisian families (and as many television sets.) In theory, ~~a perfect opportunity~~ a perfect opportunity to perfect my Tunisian Arabic and take part in the workings of Arab family life.

As it now stands, my plans are to stay here this summer to study Arabic, and take two long trips to Algeria and Morocco ~~before~~ in June and August before returning home to graduate school. Why? I like it to ~~say~~ say that cerebral warfare and a genuine curiosity (in Middle Eastern Studies not in graduate school) were foremost in my mind when I made this decision. By some felicitous (perhaps tragic) coincidence, I'll be going to

Princeton, which puts me in easy striking distance of New York, if you all will be washing there next year. About coming here, by all means to - Tunis is supposedly dynamite in the summer. Write me soon if you do plan, however tenuously, to visit me. I'll be in Algeria ^{during} ~~during~~ the last three weeks of ^{June} ~~June~~ and then in school in Tunis until the middle of August.

Now, I've given you all ample material for "analysis" (I've had the strangest dreams in Tunis!) Send me your conclusions, as well as some news - Jim.

See you ^{round} ~~round~~ the resort -

Steve 