

Grandma in Santa Monica

by Majid Naficy

- Do you live alone?

- No

I am living with God

Up there: one, two, three

In a room filled with scents of spices

And the familiar sound of bubbling pottage.

In the morning, I go to the House of the Elderly

Where women draw pictures

And men play chess.

I sit at the samovar

And pour tea with cardamon

For everyone.

When my grandson is here

I cook rice with barberry chicken.

Then we go to the gym

He lifts weights upstairs

And I exercise in the water.

The sun that comes from the skylight

Takes me with it to Tehran, where

Every day from dawn to dusk

I worked in a carpet factory

Tying knots and pulling shuttles

And shedding tears for my children.

Fahimeh burned herself for love

Saeed was hit on the road

Taqi lost a leg in war

And Babak was seven years in Evin prison

With some bullets in his legs

Kept for mementos.

Wednesdays I go to the Farmers' market

After shopping, I sit in the shade

And watch people come and go

With their baskets in hand

Talking in a hundred tongues.

And then, came the day

When everything went red:

From Grandma Molook's basket

To the carriage of her grandson, Brandon,

From strawberries of Li

To Amigo's cherry tomatoes,

From the pagoda of a Chinese stand

To the Mexican orange bags,

From Azadeh's anti-war fliers

To the rage of a redneck Joe,

From the donation box of battered women

To the newsletters of homeless men,
From the tambourine of streetplayers
To the sandals of preschoolers
Gathering around their teacher
Like hungry chickens,
And death driving boldly
In a red car
With bodies of the Persian grandma
And her American grandson
Under its bloody wheels,
And the rain pouring incessantly
Over the vegetables and the injured
And a pair of woman's shoes
Left on top of a car.

Today is their anniversary
And I am offering noodle pottage.
Look! The neighbors are coming
They want to take the elevator
to reach the thirteenth floor
And sit on the rooftop
Where it is closer to God.
They'll eat pottage and take pottage home
And remember Grandma Molook
And her baby grandson Brandon. (*)

July 27, 2007

*- On July 16, 2003 an elderly driver ran over people at Santa Monica Farmers' Market which led to over 50 injuries and 11 deaths, including an Iranian grandmother and her infant grandson.