Memory Pictures

Hadeel Abu Johar travels roads and lanes of near memory, hinting at what is beyond, asking questions about the tension between the image and the event and about the human search for a place and its meaning.

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Salma used to think that the sea was far away and that she needs to take a bus to get to it. She sits on the sofa for her daily nap, and wakes up to draw scattered lines or to make a goblet out of clay...

I had forgotten my body in my long days of lounging on the sofa.

I had forgotten my body when the shadow of depression hit me, and my dresses became tight and unsuitable, and I began to run around in dark clothes, so as not to encounter my body.

I had forgotten my body in a café where I hid my hands, my belly, my waist.

I had forgotten my body so much that I began to cut up all my pictures.

What's left of my memory is cast off pictures covered with digital techniques, and a few ugly pictures that remained the same.

Do you know, Salma?

Your jewelry boxes are interesting, very interesting to me. Do you collect gold or silver jewelry in them, Salma?

Salma, from the last session:

No, I collect medications. Every time I take a pill I imagine I am swallowing a diamond ring. Salem, have you ever thought of swallowing a gold chain? Or a diamond ring?

Salem: No, never. I'm still surprised that this is what you do!

Salma: Don't you see how women blossom when they receive a ring or a diamond necklace?

Salem: I do, and I know very well that this is what jewelry boxes are for.

Salma: The idea of a pill in a jewelry box interests me, and, like other women, my mood improves when I see jewelry boxes.

This place is a joke, Salma said, rolling a cigarette and stuttering with concern for her health. How many times had she come close to the painful places, only to find out that the place was a just a trick, and the non-place was indeed life, with all its twists and narrow lanes, and the troubles they contained.

Loneliness is war.

These were Salma's last sayings:
Rambling is the limit of what you can do in this life
Rambling for a minute or more to ward off the dark reality,
The contradictions that settled within you.

Simplicity
Simplicity, same as when Salma took her clothes off at the beach to swim.

Not a rebellion
Since there's... there's no place here.

Salma said these things to me in 2013. Her words still ring in my head, attempting to find a place
But there is no place, in any place.

A defect of memory

Salma smiled. She is no longer angry because of her inner confusion
Or her utter forgetfulness of things, ways, and many of life's details
The memories wrestle within her, and she struggles to bear the burden of the days and what lives inside her.

My memories were carried away toward the ravine
They reside there
At the bottom of the stairs
The long stair that separates us from the wadi, where, in my childhood imagination, all the cars would be swept into
Like the filthy ball we used to like.
Yesterday I saw Salma drifting into the wadi
She looked lovely
In my last dream.

At the last moment, Salma canceled her last-moment flight
Wavering, Salma told me:
There's no place here.

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