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Sarajevo

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SARAJEVO

Allen TenEyck

"You can't get lost in this little town
Only three roads traverse its valley
following Rijeka Miljacka."

Each step brings a new discovery...

a courtyard, a turbaned tombstone, a carved doorway,
a greenspace, a mosque with stately minaret,
a flower stall, a shop purveying wondrous stores,
a beggar—saying nothing only pleading with
luminous, dark eyes,
a cafe hard by a bookstore, a temple turned meat market,
a cathedral square whose cruciformed centerpiece peeks over
the rooftops at the onion dome of the other cathedral,
a slasticarna dripping sweets and honey, and sladoled¹.

Cafes, cafes, cafes,

a han² beckoning into its cool courtyard passersby with promises of exotic foods *et alia*,

a well flowing sweet water where the worshiper washes
hands and face and neck and feet,
a doorway so low you stoop to enter an ancient candle smoke
blackened basilica turned orthodox where high candles
celebrate life
and low candles remember the dead.

And I am overwhelmed by
antiquity and quaintness, by dark and light, by smells,
by food and drink—*corba* with *bamia*³, *losanska*⁴, *loza*⁵, by
sounds—voices, music, din, cars—
by laughter
by beauty and grace
by symmetry and asymmetry.
And I am lost, but not afraid,
surrounded by people,

¹ice cream

²an inn

³baby-okra broth

⁴a kind of stew

⁵grape brandy

tall, short, swarthy, milky white, sultry, beautiful,
dark-eyed beauties,
*dimijas*⁶ and mini skirts, sandals and high heels,
barefoot gypsy children,
laughter and talk, always talk, the challenge of barter,
linked arms, and shopping bags,
muezin's call to prayer
and hospitality.
"Molim vas⁷...I am lost."
"Where do you want to go? I'll take you.
But first let's have a coffee."
And I am found.
"You can't get lost in this little town...."

⁶Muslim woman's baggy trousers

⁷Please, excuse me...