

A SUMMER IN LEBANON WITH TETA!



Frida Anbar

Illustrations Georges Takla

The background of the page is a rich, textured painting. The upper portion features a sky with swirling, intense colors of red, orange, and yellow, suggesting a sunset or a dramatic, fiery atmosphere. Below the sky, a town is depicted with numerous buildings, many of which have prominent red-tiled roofs. The buildings are rendered in various colors, including yellows, whites, and pinks, and are set against a backdrop of more muted, earthy tones. The overall style is expressive and somewhat abstract, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement and energy.

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This book is dedicated to my niece Regina Anbar.

A special thank you to Leina Abouchahla
for editing the text.

NOTE



The Lebanese French Canadian writer, Frida Anbar and the Lebanese artist painter Georges Takla, combined their efforts to produce this interactive e-book. It is intended for young Lebanese in the world and also for every person who vibrates for this small country named Lebanon. They hope that members of the Diaspora will feel like going back to discover its beauty and magic as Regina does in the story.

This book includes a song by the famous Lebanese singer Majida El Roumi (p. 15) who has generously agreed to be the patron of the project. Who else but her, our nationally and internationally acclaimed Diva could be associated with such a production infused with the love of the country?

Have a wonderful journey to Lebanon with Regina !



It's Sunday! Regina just woke up.
She is so excited! This is the day she
spends with her grandmother, her **Teta**.

The 8-year-old girl was born in the
United States and she lives in the
suburbs of Washington.

Her dad, Michael, is of Lebanese origin and her mother is American. Teta often speaks with big bright eyes of this magical country called Lebanon.



Regina has often asked for a trip to the golden country nestled in the Mediterranean. However, her parents have always opted for a less complicated, less expensive and certainly less dangerous destination like Miami.



When Regina flips through the pages of her dad's childhood photo album, she is fascinated by family gatherings, happy faces and beautiful landscapes.



• •



**Every Sunday, Regina and Teta prepare
a Lebanese dish together.**

**The little helper washes the vegetables, spreads the
dough and stirs the sauce.**

**Teta gives strange names to the platters, which Regina
has quickly learned to identify.**



Sambousik : fried dough stuffed with spiced minced meat and onions.



Mloukhiye : chicken soup with green leaves, garlic and coriander.



Rez ala djej : rice cooked in broth with chunks of chicken coated with almonds and pine nuts.



Sambousik





Fattoush : salad with mixed vegetables sprinkled with sumac spice and served with fried pita bread cut into pieces.



Mhalabiye : dessert made of milk flavored with orange blossom and rose water.



Tabbouleh : salad with parsley, tomatoes, mint, onions and cracked wheat.



Fattoush





But this Sunday, Teta greets her at the door less cheerful than usual. As soon as the little girl enters the house, she detects a sudden sadness. Oriental songs do not resonate as usual.



The phone rings while Teta is chopping onions for the Sunday Tabbouleh and Regina is pressing the lemon. Teta is speaking in Arabic; her voice is stressed with emotions. When she returns to the kitchen, her eyes are red. Regina guesses this is certainly not because of the onions.



Each summer, Regina's parents, who are University professors and anthropologists, must conduct research in Alaska.

Regina is so excited to be at her grandmother's during their absence.

Two days after she arrives, it is an ecstatic Teta who announces:

- Regina! We are leaving for Lebanon tomorrow night. My sister will undergo surgery there and I must be with her. It is impossible to reach your parents so I am taking you with me!



It is a very long flight and the little girl can't tell if it is day or night anymore. She is all numb. When the plane lands, white buildings and the shimmering sea spread before her eyes.





Aam Behlamak Be Helm Ya Lebnan
Majida El Roumi

Beirut looks bewitching in the sun, surrounded by a line of green mountains tenderly interweaved.

Regina holds her grandmother's hand tightly.

She feels as if she has just landed in a familiar country which is welcoming her with opened arms.



**As soon as they step out of the airport,
Teta and Regina are greeted by an
army. My God, there are more than
twenty people shouting their names.**



Regina passes from hand to hand. " **Bint Michael**"! Her cheeks are pinched and kisses resonate.

What a heartwarming welcome! Everyone speaks to her in Arabic; she does not understand the words, but she deeply feels the emotion in all her relatives' shining eyes.



- Look Teta! The sea! Like in the pictures!

**Regina opens the window and feels the
invigorating sea air.**

The highway runs along the coast and driving is so different from the U.S. Nobody wears a seatbelt in Lebanon ! Uncle Joseph drives quickly and the sound of horns echoes from all sides! They are going to Batroun, a small coastal and historic town nestled along the

Mediterranean, where the family residence is.



When they arrive at the house at night, it's party time! The table is set for more than thirty guests and it is full with hundreds of small colorful dishes. Family, friends and neighbors are waiting to welcome them. Rocked by laughter, animated conversations and the delicious smell of grilled meat, Regina falls asleep on her chair, her heart filled with joy.



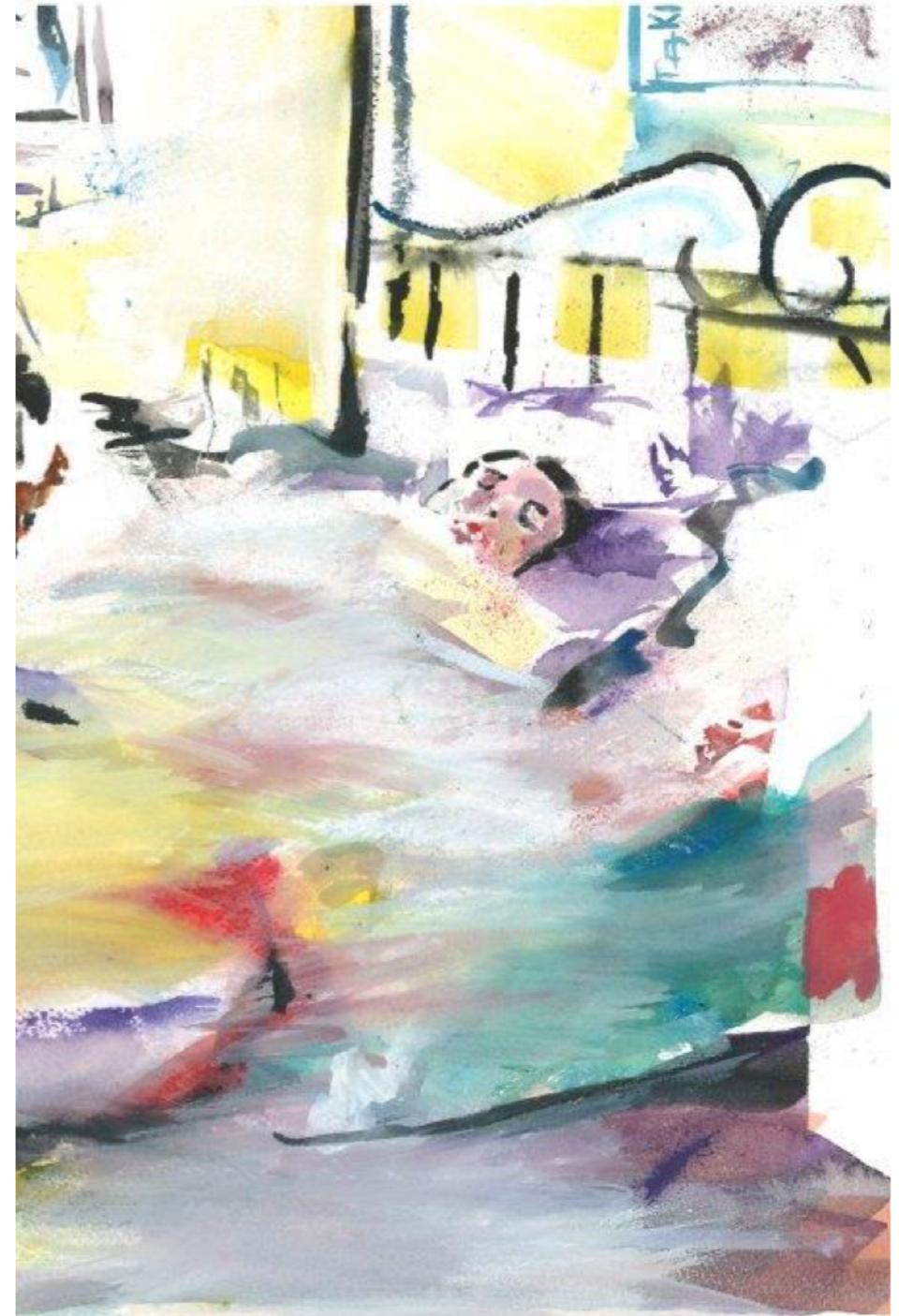


**Tonight, she will sleep in her father's room
and the wind will whisper in her ear the story
of her ancestors.**

The family home is huge with white marble floors, wide windows, honey-colored arches and large balconies overlooking the sea.



As Regina wakes up, she is spellbound by her father's childhood memories: newspapers yellowed by time, school books and a drawer full of small cars. She wonders how one can leave such a country where happiness seems so natural.





Uncle Joseph and Aunt Leina greet her with **Knefe** and fragrant **Manaichs**. Regina devours them while the hot cheese stretches from her mouth. The doorbell is constantly ringing and people parading in. Teta is delighted and winking at her. Welcome to Lebanon!



**The garden is large, but slightly affected
by the passage of time.**

In the old shed, Regina finds a red bike!

The little girl is so excited !

Uncle Joseph helps her to inflate the tires.

- You see this olive tree Regina, it is as old as your great-grandfather. It was planted in the year they were building the house for their children, and then for you Regina. The Lebanese people have always been proud of their land. It's your legacy darling, the love of the country. You know, people leave and forget their roots. They should never lock the door. A country only exists and vibrates through its people. Please make me a promise, little girl; never forget this land called Lebanon.





In the garden, a small brunette girl with dark eyes stares at Regina and starts speaking to her in Arabic.

**Regina only picks up her first name: Zeina.
Immediate complicity settles between the girls.**

**Zeina's mother, their neighbor, takes them to
the beach for the day.**

**The fresh water is crystal clear and the girls
have the time of their life.**





In the evening, the small group pass by the main street of the village to savor an oriental ice cream called "**Ashta**".

Regina is surprised: everyone seems to know her here!



It is truly remarkable! In Washington, she is anonymous. In Lebanon, everyone has a story to share about her family and her dad.

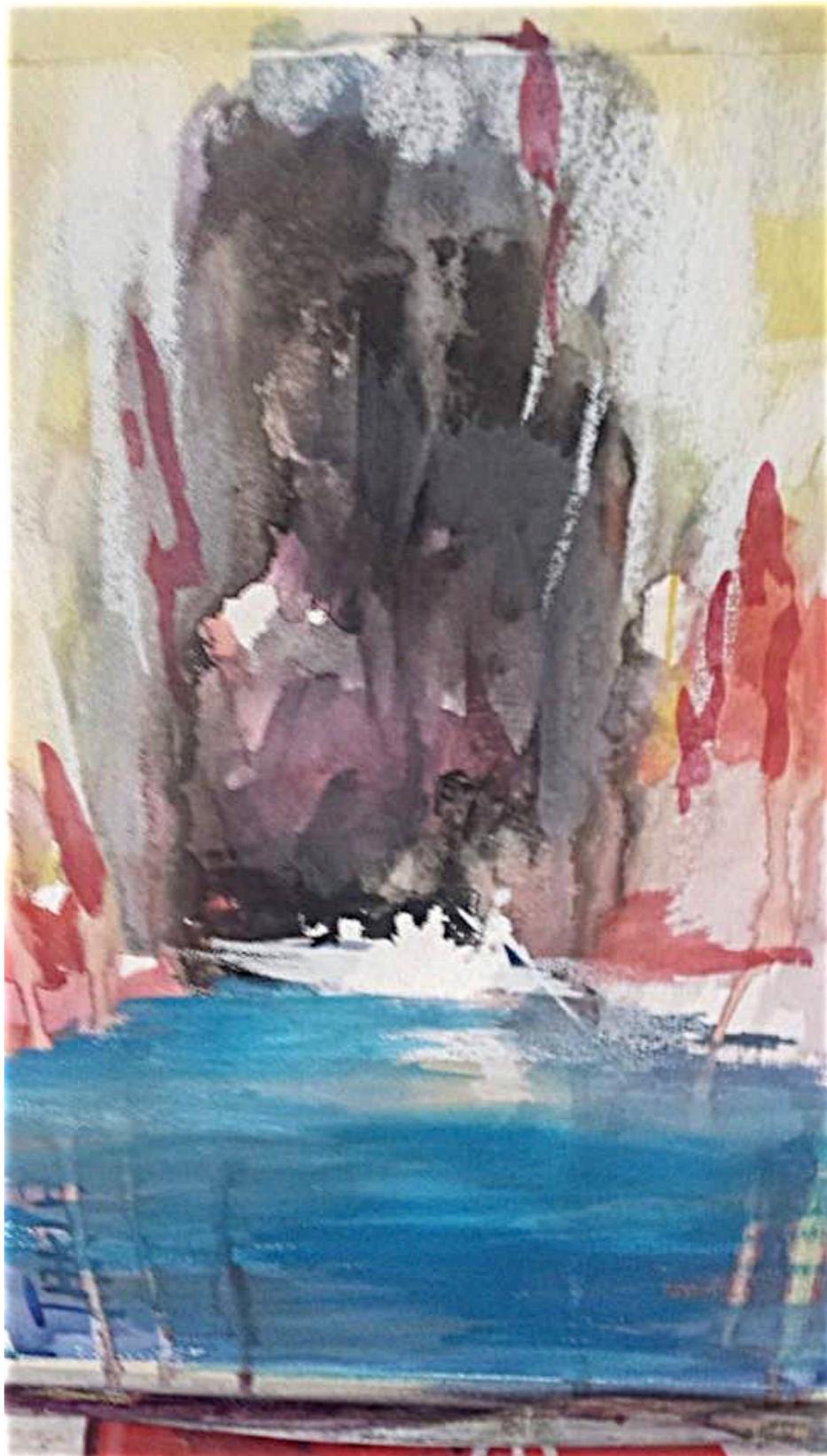
Tonight, there is a gathering again.
Tables are full of food and people arrive in
groups. There is such a carefree joy in the air
that Regina is swept away by the atmosphere.
Teta spends the night in the hospital with her
sister, who gets better and better.





Zeina shows her how to make the best **Shawarma sandwiches; alternating a layer of bread, meat, tomato, onion and mint sauce and sesame oil.**

Despite the barrier of language, the joyful and tanned little girls are communicating through the universal language of friendship.



Today, Uncle Joseph insisted on taking them to visit the Jeita Grotto. Regina should visit other areas of Lebanon than the sea and the village square!

Regina is delighted to discover in a boat ride the magic of glittering stalactites of different shapes and colors. A true wonder that this naturally preserved cave!

**In the evening, they
have dinner in front of
the citadel of Jbeil.
The view of the water,
in the shadow of
Roman ruins, is
magical.**





- This country, my country, is wonderful ! I am proud to be Lebanese declares Regina ! Her skin already browned by the tireless sun and her belly rounded by the delectable food.

This morning, Zeina wakes Regina up. Quickly, we must go! This is a surprise. The road is long and winding. Zeina's parents are inviting Regina to discover Bcharré and the cedar forests of Lebanon. Everyone is admiring the breathtaking view between the valleys and mountains over 1400 metres in altitude. The cedars are majestic and grandiose, prepared to proudly face the passage of time.



Zeina and Regina are photographed hand in hand. Click Clack sings the camera and Regina knows she will carry in her heart the memory a glorious country and people that are wonderfully charming.





After a day of rest in Batroun, the discovery of the country continues.

Regina eagerly pushes the door of the car!

What a view!

The old city of Baalbeck stands before her.

The little girl is fascinated by the Roman ruins she saw in the pictures so many times.

**She tries to imagine life in the
third millennium BC.**

**Regina insists on taking a photo
where her dad took the same shot
at her age at the foot of the
temple of Jupiter!**

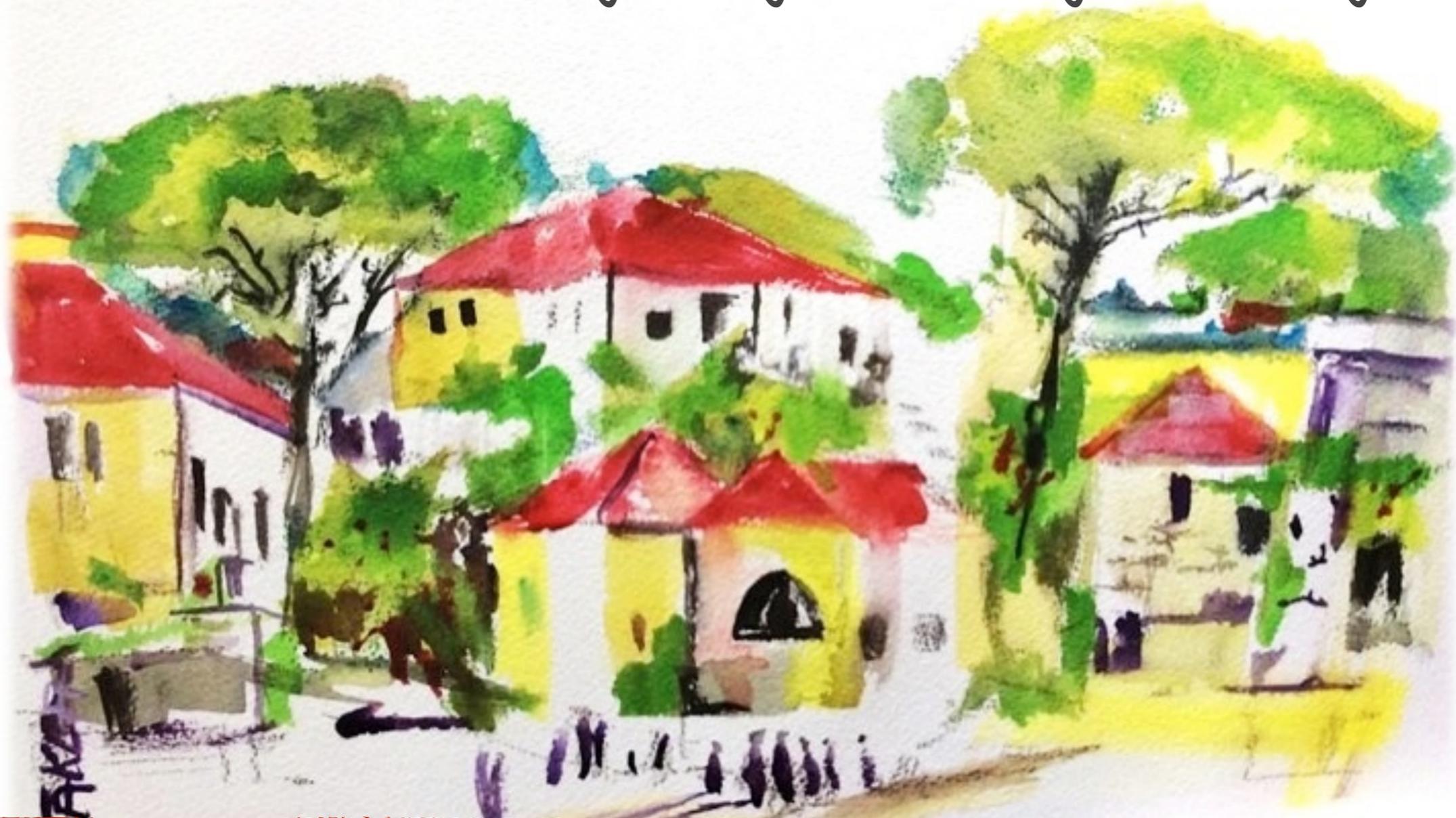
**Lebanon is so rich in history,
scenery and gastronomy.**





So much variety for such a tiny country!
Regina straightens her shoulders with pride.
She feels Lebanese! The glorious past of her land is slowly
waking up in her sleepy memory.

Tonight, Teta tells her that her parents are back home from Alaska and they are very worried to know that their daughter is in Lebanon. Now that Teta's sister has recovered and returned home from hospital, they will have to confirm the dates of their return to Washington. Regina seeks refuge on the swing.





**Confused, Regina wonders how to tear herself
from this country, from these lovable people,
from this lifestyle,
this perfect climate,
the scenic landscape
and the delicious food?**

**The little girl feels like she has lost the
memory of her lifetime before Lebanon.**



Regina clings to Aunt Leina!

Uncle Joseph threads his way smartly between the sneaky cars.

The brakes squeal and the horns honk. Welcome to Beirut!



**After a short walk
through the brand new
and entirely rebuilt
oriental architecture
downtown, the small
group moves towards the
Corniche.**



The view facing the sea in front of the luxurious hotels with bright facades is totally breathtaking.

Regina is photographed biting into a thyme **Kaake.**

This country, she can't help it, it has captured her heart!

On the last night, Uncle Joseph and Aunt Leina give her a bracelet with the word 'Lebanon' engraved on it in Arabic.

- Do not forget that you are Lebanese and although your life is certainly abroad, your roots, like those of the olive tree in the garden, are here. Try to convince your parents to return Regina. It is important to feed the source. Do not be sad. Lebanon is tattooed on your heart now that you understand its essence and that you loved it.



**Regina, your face shines like the moon, little girl. When you return,
we will take you to discover the historic south, and the picturesque
town of Zahle in the Beqaa valley.**



**Here, there is always something new to discover. It is a
magical country; you will never get tired of it. But do
come back. Do not do like the others who leave and
forget.**



While packing, Teta is laughing and crying at the same time. She does not know where to put all the boxes of sweets that the family is sending with them, along with bags of thymes and bottles of homemade rose water and orange blossom.



Suddenly, Regina becomes deaf and speechless. Her little heart is aching and sadness shows on her face.

She follows Teta like a small robot.

Her eyes are filled with tears.

**Between her and Zeina, a pact to meet every year
in the U.S or in Lebanon. Between Regina and
Lebanon, a love story that is just unfolding.**



**As soon as the plane takes off, Regina bursts into tears.
Teta whispers words she does not hear. Beirut already looks like a
tiny white dot encircled by the sea.**



Through her tears, Regina makes a promise : never to forget the land of the Cedars.



She realizes that they are linked forever. The strong emotions that she felt make Lebanon a part of her.

She finally relaxes. She will return to Lebanon!

This is certainly not a promise, it is an affirmation!



Text by Frida Anbar

www.fridaanbar.com

Illustrations by Georges Takla

www.taklaart.com

Ashta

Milk flavored ice cream with the powder of Aleppo.

Termes connexes du glossaire

Faire glisser ici les termes connexes

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Rechercher le terme

Contenu - Contenu

Bint Michael

The daughter of Michael, in Arabic.

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Kaake

Bagel style cake.

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Contenu - Contenu

Knefe

Lebanese cheese dessert in a bagel style.

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Manaichs

Thyme and olive oil on a pizza dough.

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Shawarma

Lamb meat marinated in spices and cut in very thin layers.

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Teta

Grandmother, in Arabic.

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