

## Expatriate · Carolyn Forché

American life, you said, is not possible.  
Winter in Syracuse, Trotsky pinned  
to your kitchen wall, windows facing  
a street, boxes of imported cigarettes.  
*In The Realm Of The Senses*, you said,  
and piles of shit burning and the risk  
of having your throat slit. Twenty-year-old poet.  
To be in love with some woman who cannot speak  
English, to have her soften your back with oil  
and beat on your mattress with grief and pleasure  
as you take her from behind, moving beneath you  
like the beginning of the world.  
The black smell of death as blood and glass  
is hosed from the street and the beggar holds  
his diminishing hand to your face.  
It would be good if you could wind up  
in prison and so write your prison poems.  
Good if you could marry the veiled face  
and jewelled belly of a girl who could  
cook Turkish meat, baste your body  
with a wet and worshipful tongue.  
*Istanbul*, you said, or *Serbia*, mauve  
light and mystery and passing for other  
than American, a *Kalishnikov* over  
your shoulder, spraying your politics  
into the flesh of an enemy become real.  
You have been in Turkey a year now.  
What have you found? Your letters  
describe the boring ritual of tea,  
the pittance you are paid to teach  
English, the bribery required for so much  
as a postage stamp. Twenty-year-old poet,  
Hikmet did not choose to be Hikmet.