



## **I wish to show you my feet**

Once I had washed off the dirty strips along my sandal straps, and sanded the hard skin off my heel, I knew my breathtaking adventure had come to its end. Syria, land of the sun, of figs and coffee, of pain and hope. Syria, where I found freedom amongst a repressed community, and individual love amongst a suspicious people. But the destination is merely an excuse. What matters is the road trip, and this one can essentially be summarized by three figures; Saria, Fares and Majd.

I first met Majd over tea. That night he thread before me in the labyrinth of Damascus, showing me how to find the best Falafel place, amidst what seemed to me as innumerable and identical other Falafel places. I encountered his fellows the next day, Saria and Fares, on the road towards *Qal'at al-Hasan*. Was it the stumble of the rusty bus, or the way they laughed at my dirty feet? Nonetheless after this ride, we became best friends, and from then on, my rich experiences on this foreign land were inspired by the tribulations of these three young men's daily lives.

Happiness became so simple. I had nothing else to give but the limitless energy of my smile. Hence I gave it a thousand times, a million times, did not count it anymore; it flowed out of every word.

I stopped speaking to listen for the rhythm of life. And I have never had so much time to wait. Sitting in a souk while a little boy runs to get me fresh dates, half an hour bargaining with a stubborn taxi driver, another time lapse discussing the temperature with a baker, yet again waiting on the side of the road hitchhiking our way back home, are amongst countless moments of serenity.

Most importantly and so ironically, I found myself in Syria as fearless as ever. There was nothing to dread, because in this new reality surrounding me, I had no plan, no debts, nor duties. I had nothing to lose but a readiness for action and a rush to live.

Accordingly, we ran up North and down South, from the Mediterranean sea to the Euphrates river, Saria, Fares and Majd by my side. As we settled on a clandestine rock for the night by the seashore, we joined our body heat and shared our struggles. Fighting against mosquitoes and crabs, but also for a non-repressive Syrian society, and a less stressful life in the West. I grasped the extent of their doubts and dreams, and together we reinvented men and women on Earth.

These three loyal comrades were the passion of my trip, and will remain attached to my heart, constantly pulling eastward. Now that I am back into the reality of home-life, I open my doors and wish I would in turn take their hands through the complexity of my society. I keep thinking: "*Wallah*, if only they could see how my feet can also be clean".