

go back-and-forth between playing the materialist card (paying for their McDonald's) and playing the card of altruistic dispossession (giving food to the homeless). One evening, Tarik recounted his first tragicomic encounter with a "recruiter," which took place well before the Syrian conflict began.

Tarik: I was dealing, I felt good, I had my drink, I needed another bottle.

FT: Whiskey?

Tarik: No, vodka, always! I avoid the mosque when I'm like that. You've gotta respect the house of God. So I come across this guy.

FT: You'd seen him before?

Tarik: Yeah. He knew what I did, but we'd never talked. He said, it's Friday prayers. I said I wasn't praying because I'd been drinking. He starts giving me all this stuff that was true: like, it isn't good not to pray, thinking about God will force you to stop dealing. It was a warning. It started off gentle. He was reeling me in [*laughs*]. He was keeping me from going to buy my bottle. I let him delay my getting wasted awhile, it would give him more *bassanate*. At least we'd see each other again in heaven! Then he tells me: "You're handicapped.... Life goes by fast. Seventy years in a life, for God that's nothing, it's seven minutes." It's true – space-time is different down here than it is up there! Einstein already proved it. Then he starts going off, like: "Your life is shit, a martyrdom action would be wonderful for you."

FT: He said it like that?

Tarik: Yes, like that! And I agreed with him. For example, if France was attacked by the Chinese tomorrow, it's my country, so okay, I'll defend it. If Algeria got attacked, fine. That way I'd be dying as a martyr. But he started reaching far off, with Palestine. I told him bad things are happening everywhere, we've been sending them money for 30 years and there's still no liberation! They're even buying rockets from the Israelis, it's bad! [*laughs*]. And then he tells me "I'm basically offering you a place in heaven, right away. I can contact some people if you're ready, they'll bring you the materials and you blow yourself up. Either in Palestine or here. Because right now, you're going to end up in hell, people know what you're doing, you're a soldier of the devil ...". They were already working out how to hit France, you* see! So I come back with: "No problem.

* Of all the boys in this book, Tarik is the only one who addresses me as *vous* (and calls me "*Monsieur*") – an almost anachronistic vestige of our teacher–student relationship, which I interpret less as a mark of distance than an expression of a kind of "respect," combined with a celebration of the "good old days" that brought us together.

I'll do it. You come with me, I need someone to push me, with the wheelchair. You're going to have to carry me on your back, to help me climb the stairs." He said: "No, we need people to recruit, you'd blow me up, you'd kill me!" So here you have this real asshole who takes money to recruit people to end their lives. He was recruited in prison, he's a big talker, he didn't come out of nowhere. But I knew he didn't have the balls to do something like that. Not the balls ... the stupidity, yes!

In his eight years of dealing, Tarik had two encounters of this kind. The sources of his skepticism can be read between the lines of his account: theological knowledge; an ability to debate; his nationalism; personal experience of war, for which he harbors no fascination. Religious knowledge, critical speaking skills, and attachment to the nation were obvious obstacles. Leaving with a one-way ticket also means having to abandon one's family, something Radouane was not resigned to doing. And, as shown by the trap Tarik laid for his savior, fear of death was probably the primary obstacle. To march toward death with the intention of dealing it out to others requires particular dispositions. "Balls" or "stupidity," as Tarik says. This marks a major difference between attacks on national soil and departures for Syria. Of those who go, almost none is *already* a fighter. They fantasize about battle but seem more like slackers. And sustained encounters with the sordid reality of war then generate a new phenomenon: returns home, the fruit of disappointment. A battle-hardened fighter must be able to handle incoming fire, he must already have seen death close up – if not already dealt it out. The "Caliphate" boasts of its "lions" but mainly gets, to quote Adama, "cats.")

Marley also offered a description of this scattered menagerie of "terros"* when I saw him recently in the prison visitors' room. I hadn't seen him since his fifth incarceration a few months earlier, in June 2017. His shoulders and "pecs" had grown, and he was still praying. He told me he was "holding up under the shock." Manda was getting clean clothes and a few extras sent to him. As for the person for whom he'd acted as a middleman, he'd "understood" he had to pay what was owed, sending Marley several hundred euros each month.

Marley: The *terros* here go down like raindrops! It's a tiny little scene, just like *le business*. They keep to themselves, in little crews. At the beginning, my whole life got taken over by this one so-called "*terro*,"

* A common abbreviation for "terrorist."