

Stations of the Cross

by Maggie Sokolik

She had seen those nutjobs who carried Jesus-sized crosses around the Old City, walking the stations of the cross in their self-serving piety. They were worse than the Haredim, the hard core Jews with their goofy hats and bald wives. Each hat told where its wearer was from, although she didn't know which hat went with which place. She imagined the big fur ones were from Poland, or some other frigid clime.

There it was—a cross, leaning in the corner against the ancient wall. She had often wondered how heavy they were. She picked it up and felt its weight—lighter than she imagined. A stone in the wall of the Via Dolorosa showed the symbol VII. She had no idea what the seventh station was—an Arab shopkeeper across the narrow cobblestone walkway said, “Jesus fall the second time.” He didn't look up from his newspaper.

“What?” she asked. His coffee smelled like cardamom.

“Jesus fall the second time. You want a map? Ten shekels.”

“No thanks,” she said. “Can I just look at one?”

He shook his head.

“Do you know where the eighth station is?”

“Around the corner. By the souk. Jesus meet the daughters of Jerusalem.”

She picked up the cross, put it on her back, and walked towards the scent of cinnamon and cloves.

