



Volume 12
Issue 2 Fall/Winter 2003-04

Article 7

1-1-2004

Thanksgiving in Baghdad

Tabitha Jensen
Concordia University - Portland

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jensen, Tabitha (2004) "Thanksgiving in Baghdad," *The Promethean*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 2 , Article 7.
Available at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol12/iss2/7>

This Story is brought to you for free and open access by CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Promethean by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.



THANSGIVING IN BAGHDAD

Tabitha Jensen

I was cleaning my room this Thanksgiving, as Air Force One jetted across the world so the Commander in Chief could spend two beautiful, P.R.-inspiring hours with the troops. The troops who have been fighting chaos and hatred for an exhausting eight months. Much longer in fact, if Afghanistan hasn't completely evaporated from your memory.

Under my bed was the worst. Magazines tracing my adolescence- *American Girl* to *Seventeen* to *Cosmopolitan*. Clippings of Leonardo DiCaprio from *Titanic*. Old calendars, research reports from every grade, birthday cards from relatives I barely knew. All was easily tossed into an ominous garbage bag, until I came across my scrapbook. Nestled in a bed of unused stickers, themed papers, and die-cuts were the remnants of an epic project that wasn't. Opening up the crisp cover, I discovered that I'd only completed two pages; a spread chronicling September 11th. Pictures of the tower before and after, a newspaper blurb about Ground Zero, a miniature American flag tacked on flag-tiled paper. What really caught my eye was a fancy ribbon; a burst of red, white, and blue set on a pin. I smiled, recalling that strange world gone by, when every Girl Scout troop and charity was feverishly tying them together to be snatched up even faster. When you couldn't find patriotic ribbon still in stock at any store. When the country was still reeling from an attack that defied imagination.

When people still cared.

It was strange, the good such atrocity brought out of people. For a month or so, the entire nation reverted to a state of community normally reserved for storybooks. Virtue and goodwill replaced Louis Vuitton and Versace en vogue. We sent our prayers, our blood, and our tears to strangers we didn't know and would likely never meet. Our causes became one another, with every penny drive evoking a generous passion in the masses. Our world was smaller and terror was much too close for comfort, but we were all there for each other. Not knowing what atrociousness lurked in the next day, we found comfort in the common threads of humanity that ran raw through us all.

The nationalistic t-shirts have long ago been donated to Goodwill, being anti-American is "cool" again, and pop stars have ceased breaking into "The Star Spangled Banner". We count on our fellow man to uplift us about as much as we expect the toaster to water the flowers. Taking a vacation to visit one of our European allies should carry a travel warning. We hear about the progress that is made as the casualties of war mount with each passing day. We've been

advised for two years to be on an elevated alert for terrorism, but we are not alert. We drift through with our eyes shut to the rest of the world, to the suffering of our neighbors, no different than we were on September 10th.

I'm not sure how you measure safety in the world. The number of terrorist scalps, the rate of violent strikes, how many nations we bestow the gift of democracy upon, or the amount of police per capita. Perhaps we *are* safer than we were the day suicide hijackers made their last journeys into infamy. With the military action, heightened security, and worldwide awareness, the likelihood of a large-scale massacre is far less than it was before. However, here in my own small world, I certainly don't feel any safer. If I encounter trouble, my neighbors won't be there to help out. The benefit of the doubt will no longer be bestowed upon my mistakes; I'm no longer a sister in the great United States. I'm another person in a sea, another barrier to selfish dreams. In the big wide world, we may have whipped the audacious into a tedious submission. In the process, we've abandoned the reverence for each other.

I contemplated the ribbon for a moment before closing the cover, leaving it to battle the dust bunnies once more. A part of me wanted to remove it from the display, pin it to my shoulder proudly to evoke that bygone era. But I quickly decided against it. It was just so out of fashion now.