

It is often hot in Marrakech in the evenings.

And not just the lasting sun.

Heat radiates from the market stalls, street food sizzling through dust and sweat into the clear sky. Lights and Lanterns, thousands of miniature suns, coloured in their own spiritual way, boiling the air closest to them.

Masses of human sludge eek this way and that, pockets of people gathered, to nurture the gifts and trinkets being sold, rejoicing the collective for some continued atmosphere. Unfamiliar faces populate the crowd, white skin, an uncomfortable mix of red and pink, at once complimenting and clashing.

I never liked those faces, aesthetically.

I often sit here, the view is kind.

I remember sitting here with Moussfa and his son, who puffed away viperously on Camel cigarettes, while we shared our Houka. Each toke of the American tobacco taken seemed to hurt into Moussfa, each cut deeper and more draining than the last. He's like me. It's what we know. I used to teach.

I find culture clashes depressing. It's an event, something to be celebrated. I don't understand that. A life lived is exactly that. It doesn't mean we are the same. They are white, and I can see that. Each whisp of smoke for that Virginian tobacco pollutes the air, but so does my vice. I can't see the moon.

I often sit here, I do like to watch. It's fairly high up, a wooden balcony stretching round the first floor of a tea room, tiled pillars, marbled designs, smoke and never ending chatter. There's a table at the far end of the balcony, one that if I sit in at the right angle, can see the market beneath me. I have never bought anything from this market.

I don't know this waiter.

I've always had time. I had to decide what I needed to do. Coming here, sitting in this chair, a pot of apple tea, a gold rimmed glass in front of me.

They might joke about an old man, sitting by himself on a tea room balcony overlooking a market. But that's for them, the people they are with. I don't take the tea. I used to.

A cashmere headscarf in a bag. A picture of a local sitting on a tea room balcony. It's my memory too.

I don't think I'll visit that tea room again.