



Source: James Glanz, '2 Sunni nominees for charter panel called Baathists', *New York Times in International Herald Tribune online*, 02/07/05

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The elderly woman is sitting on the shabby red leather armchair, a lamp pouring a small circle of light on the needlework she holds in her hands. As she cuts a piece of golden thread for the final touches of her work, she knows she won't be able to enjoy it more than the few hours left until the sun rises. Then he will come to fetch it to add to his collection of master-crafts. Eventually he will put it up for auction, as he has in the past. In the early days he used to give her some of the profit from auction, although she never knew what share it represented. Now all she will get from him will be merely her daily supplies to cook her meals.

But what he doesn't know and never suspects, is that at dawn she takes photos of the work she has done during the night using her old Polaroid camera, making her own shadow collection. It is the same old camera that she used during their travels together in order to collect images and embroidery designs and patterns of the inhabitants of far away places. She knows he makes his fortune using her crafted work, giving her no credit and not mentioning the origins of the designs from which she had articulated her own creations adding from her imagination and life experiences.

Even when organising his collection for the auction he doesn't notice that each of the works contains a central circle with something that might be letters, interwoven with branches and leaves. These are her initials and it is her own logo, which she has stamped on every sketch of the designs she made out of those photos she took years ago. They were both so young then and enthusiastic about their project, he didn't even notice she made this small 'insurance' mark. After the first time he sold one of her works 'forgetting' to mention either the creator or the background she has kept her photographs, all meticulously documented, in a safe she rents at the bank.

Why does she keep doing it, day in, day out? Well, she has to. It is her life work, and making those stitches keeps her aware of her existence. And she knows her work bears her signature at its very center, at its very heart. And this magnificent work will eventually find its place in one of the important museums, and she will be there for as long as her work exists. Then it might be mentioned alongside the breathtaking medieval tapestry 'The Lady and the Unicorn', or the marvellous and unique Bayeaux tapestries. Both inspired her work when she saw them during her stay in Paris as a young artist. But her works won't be anonymous. They will bare the trail of skilled women, unknown to the world but very much alive in her mind.

As for his fortune, as long as she keeps producing her magnificent works, he won't be able to resist fetching them. Why doesn't she insist on getting paid for her work? Well, that is her decision. She wants him to reinforce every day his need of her skills, those same skills shared by the women and young girls they met during their travels; their faces burnt by the sun or pale from sitting in dark rooms; their hands wrinkled.

She knows that eventually it will turn out that his fortune will pay honor to all those anonymous women, because the mark she made at the heart of each embroidery will one day lead an enthusiastic scholar to her sketches and books. He, or even better she, will then encounter numerous stories about craft masters, identified by name, place, date, photo whenever possible, and examples of each woman's work. This is her treasure. It will be some compensation for her life fortune, which was not much different from that of the women whom they met so many years ago.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Rivka D. Mayer.*