That ability to be bothered, and the need to ease it by at least trying to act with decency, was why
Cummings was on his telephone one day getting increasingly upset.

“We have to remove the human waste and the body. And that’s going to cost money,” he was saying.

He paused to listen.

“Yeah, they’ll say ‘Buy the bleach,’ but how much bleach do I have to buy? They’ll say, ‘Buy the lye,’
but, Christ, how much will that cost?”

He paused again.

“It’s not water. It’s sewage. It’s yeccchh.”

He took a breath, trying to calm down.

“No. I haven’t seen Bob. Only pictures. But it looks awful.”

Sighing, he hung up and picked up one of those pictures. It was an aerial view of Kamaliyah, the most
out-of-control area in the AO. Sixty thousand people were said to live there, and they had been largely ignored
since the war began. Insurgents were thought to be everywhere. Open trenches of raw sewage lined the streets,
and most of the factories on the eastern edge had been abandoned, one of which had a courtyard with a hole in
it. That was where soldiers had discovered a cadaver they had been calling Bob.

Bob was shorthand for bobbing in the float, Cummings explained.

Float was also shorthand, for several feet of raw sewage.

And what was “bobbing in the float” shorthand for? He shook his head. He was exasperated beyond
words. The war was costing the United States $300 million a day, and because of rules governing how it could
be spent, he couldn’t get enough money to get rid of a cadaver that was obstructing the 2-16’s most crucial
mission so far, bringing Kamaliyah under control. It needed to be done quickly. Rockets and mortars were being
launched from Kamaliyah into the FOB and Green Zone, and intelligence reports suggested that EFPs and IEDs
were being assembled there as well (47-48).
Unorthodox:
The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots
Deborah Feldman, Simon & Schuster

“Bubby, what’s a virgin?”

Bubby looks up at me from where she is kneading dough for kreplach on the cast-iron tabletop. It’s a humid day, perfect for getting dough to rise. The steam rising from the stove fogs up the rain-splattered windows. My floury fingers leave smudges on the glass bottle of olive oil with its picture of an artfully draped woman snaked around the words extra virgin.

“When did you hear that word?” she asks. I notice her shocked expression and realize I’ve said something bad, so I stutter anxiously in response, “I d-d-don’t know, Bubby, I don’t remember . . .” I turn the olive oil around so that the label is facing the wall.

“Well, it’s not a word for little girls to know,” Bubby says, and goes back to rolling the delicate potato flour dough with her bare hands. Her pink cotton turban is askew, so that the glittering rhinestone set into the knot is over by her right ear, and a thatch of white fuzz is visible. When I’m married, I’m going to wear the fashionable turbans, made out of terry cloth and piled elegantly into a square knot on top of my head, and my neck will be shaved clean, even though Bubby says her neck itches all the time when it’s shaved closely (24).
This is the kind of night that leaves a mark. When I surface, its events and the shame of them will be gone from my head, cut away as though by some surgical procedure. I will not miss the memories that were carved out of me: when my father carried me in his arms through the glass sliding doors, my head lolling the way it used to when I was the little girl whom he carried to bed. When a friend, being interviewed by the doctor treating me, had to answer “vodka,” which is like a curse word, in the fact that we exploit it in private but don’t dare utter it in the presence of adults. When a row of people looked up from their laps because the scene of a girl, dead-drunken at sixteen, momentarily distracted them from their midnight emergencies.

I won’t remember the chair that wheels me down the hospital’s hall, or the white cot I am lain on, or the tube that coasts through my esophagus like a snake into a crawl space. Yet I will retain these lost hours, just as my forearms will hold the singes of stranger’s cigarettes in coming years, as my back will hold the scratch of a spear-point fence, as my fingers will hold the griddle scars from a nonstick grill. This is the first of many forgotten injuries that will imprint me just the same (xi-xii).