



AYŞE KULIN

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AYLIN

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## **ALSO BY AYŞE KULIN**

*Last Train to Istanbul*

*Rose of Sarajevo*

**A Y Ş E K U L I N**

AYLIN

TRANSLATED BY DARA COLAKOGLU

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# FOREWORD

“She walks in beauty, like the night

Of cloudless climes and starry skies;

And all that’s best of dark and bright

Meet in her aspect and her eyes.”

On Thursday, January 19, 1995, Aylin Devrimel Nadowsky Goldberg was found dead by the cleaning lady, a car axle embedded in her chest. No concrete evidence suggested she had been attacked by an intruder. There were no signs of a struggle. Her hair was, as usual, immaculately coiffured. She lay flat on her back under her minivan, wearing a crisp, gray evening dress with a crescent-shaped diamond brooch on the collar and a diamond ring on her finger.

According to the autopsy report, Aylin had died two days earlier, on Tuesday night.

It was indeed a strange scenario. The police never identified a motive, and the unprecedented speed with which they closed the case raised many eyebrows. The official verdict was death by “freak accident.”

Bedford, New York, was an upstanding community, full of wealthy and influential figures. The residents did not tolerate scandal or criminal activity.

No one could understand how a person lying diagonally under her car could accidentally die an axle through the heart.

Aylin’s family turned to private detectives to reopen the case. There were also rumors that the Turkish National Intelligence Service had started an investigation. However, no evidence could be unearthed. Some thought that Aylin may have been murdered by a clandestine organization. It was certainly a more likely explanation than “freak accident.”

Only Porgy von Schweir saw what happened that fateful Tuesday evening. Only Porgy knew the whole truth. Unfortunately, Porgy von Schweir was a dog.

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Aylin Devrimel Nadowsky Goldberg lived a colorful and productive life, marked by achievement and fulfillment that few people experience. She was highly intelligent, multitalented, and very brave.

Nothing written can fully do justice to her character.

This book has been created with the help of those who loved her, so that her voice echoes through the world to which she was devoted. It is also a farewell to the many friends she left behind.

Had she lived, she would probably be the American ambassador to Turkey. Or perhaps she would be applying her innovative light therapy to the White House staff. There are numerous ways in which she could have succeeded, thanks to her incredible ability to learn and adapt, and to master any skill through diligence and altruism.

And had she lived, she would be soaring through life like the wind.

AYŞE KULIN

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# THE FUNERAL

*Tuesday, January 24, 1995: 10:30 a.m., New York*

There had been a downpour in the city that morning, but the dark clouds had turned into a penetrating cold, and the skyline leaned against a deep-violet horizon. At the intersection of Madison and Eighty-First, the windows of the Campbell Funeral Home were covered by a thin layer of frost. In spite of the freezing chill, the ceremony hall felt as if it had been heated by an invisible fire. An open mahogany coffin lay on the raised platform and a long line of people filed past, paying their last respects to the uniformed American officer before returning slowly to their seats. Everybody wept quietly, as was expected at a dignified military ceremony. Even the Turks, young and old, who traditionally found it hard to subdue their feelings, took care to rein in their emotions and abide by the solemnity of the occasion. Still, the tears came from deep within their hearts as they sat shoulder to shoulder, locked in their grief.

The woman who lay there among the flowers looked more like a Hollywood star than a soldier. She may have been in the uniform of a lieutenant colonel, but she was a Turk. There were red shimmers in her fashionably styled hair, and the contours of her face were flawless. The subtle downward slant of her perfect lips seemed to be uttering, “There, you see. Once again I’ve done something you never expected.” Her long, slim fingers were intertwined just below her bosom, so fragile, showing no sign of death. Death was too unbecoming for the woman who lay in this ornate coffin, decorated with garlands of colorful flowers. Even within its rigid walls, she had such a peaceful yet mischievous face. Death seemed so distant and alien that the scene taking place resembled a wedding more than a funeral. This ethereal figure looked as if she were waiting for a handsome prince to place a gentle kiss upon her lips and wake her—as if, any minute now, she would suddenly flutter open her eyes and start her incredible life anew. What a wind would blow then!

Breaking free from the suburbs and out to the shores of the Atlantic, reaching out to the Mediterranean like a mare’s head and meandering in old central Europe, she would be a tempest, too strong to be crammed into a single country, too fast to spend a life with a single spouse or have a single profession. And yet that tempest could also be a calming and curing breeze, a tireless voyage that could not be held and could not rest.

Aylin!

Aylin Devrimel—a Turkish girl descended from a family deeply rooted in the Ottoman tradition—in the uniform of an American officer.

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Turks filled the larger part of the hall—the childhood friends with whom she had shared school desks and whom she had never given up, her relatives, Turkish diplomats stationed in New York. They had all come to bid her farewell.

Aylin Devrimel Nadowlsky was one of the ten most renowned psychiatrists in New York. Many of her patients, their lives redeemed through her care, had come with their families to offer the final tributes.

A respected officer in the US Army, Aylin Devrimel Nadowlsky Goldberg was granted the rank of lieutenant colonel and awarded the Meritorious Service Medal within two years. Many of her fellow officers, of all different ranks, had come to pay their last respects to their extraordinary colleague.

Also present were her children—her dear niece Tayibe, and Mitch’s sons, Tim and Greg—whom she had reared, educated, and influenced, whose problems she had shared. They were even closer to her than they were to their own mothers. They came to embrace her and bid her good-bye for the last time.

Her husbands, from her early years and her later years, her lovers, admirers, friends were all there, people acutely aware that they would never hear her vibrant voice again. They had been blessed by the joy of knowing her and now faced the sudden pain of losing her as she set off on her final journey.

She was the flippant girl who trapped herself in the golden cage of an Arabian prince marriage years ago, then managed to fly away from that same cage by her own will.

She was the hippie girl who hung around with the flower children in ratty jeans, got hooked on a physicist writing his dissertation, shouted, “Make love not war!” and tried to change her entire world.

She was the resolved and avid student who had chosen to study medicine at the relatively late age of twenty-six.

She was a successful doctor in that wild and splendid metropolis, New York, where competition ruled mercilessly but where incredible dreams were fulfilled.

She was the young woman who fell madly in love with the Afghan ambassador who was her father’s age.

She was the dear wife of psychologist Mitch Nadowlsky, an immigrant from Istanbul.

Aylin. Aylin, whose soul could not be confined to cities and continents. Her great successes, deep solitude, and vast pain . . .

*Her divorces, her yearnings, her new loves . . .*

*The army—*

*Samuel Goldberg, the last husband, the last grief . . .*

After the viewing was over and everyone returned to their seats, they closed the mahogany cover the coffin over Aylin's beautiful face.

A young woman at the piano softly played Verdi's *Requiem* as the speakers took to the podium one after the other.

The Turkish representative to the United Nations spoke first, and then Ahmet Ertegun stepped up. Leaning on his silver-headed cane, Ahmet Ertegun began his speech with a quotation from Byron

*"She walks in beauty, like the night*

*Of cloudless climes and starry skies;*

*And all that's best of dark and bright*

*Meet in her aspect and her eyes."*

Byron had written this poem for Lady Wilmot, a woman he had fallen madly in love with. Aylin reflected everything beautiful in her eyes. She was now the owner of this poem.

Ertegun was followed by Talat Halman.

*"In this ocean there is no death*

*No despair, no sadness, no anxiety*

*This ocean is boundless love*

*This is the ocean of beauty, of generosity."*

Talat Halman recited these lines of Rumi's work, which he had translated into English himself. He told the listeners that this woman was molded of beauty, generosity, and love. She was to exist perpetually, like a drop in Rumi's ocean of eternal life. He spoke of Aylin's strange, catlike, hazel green eyes. In one eye there was vigor and joy, he said, but there was always a slight shadow of gri

in the other. “Una furtiva lagrima,” he said. “A furtive tear drop.” As he spoke, the melody of the famous aria “Una furtiva lagrima” from the opera *L’Elisir d’Amore* was heard from the piano. It was the opera Aylin had listened to in the last hours of her life.

It seemed as if an invisible hand blended the music, the poems, the tributes—though nothing had been planned. There was a balance and an order that inspired awe. Byron, Rumi, Donizetti, and Aylin had become one.

*Tuesday, January 24, 1995: 12:50 p.m.*

Two hours east of Manhattan, you will find Calverton National Cemetery, the burial ground for US Army officers.

There are crosses and crescents, Stars of David, and symbols of Far Eastern religions on the small gravestones that neatly line the emerald-green lawn that extends as far as the eye can see. Men and women of all beliefs, colors, and ranks lie here side by side as human beings who have come in and passed through this world. Their only commonality is their service in the US Army.

The funeral procession entered the cemetery at one o’clock sharp. A band led the soldiers as they slowly marched alongside the coffin, the congregation following closely behind.

At the entrance to the cemetery, an official stopped the cortege and asked Nilüfer which religious symbol should be inscribed on Aylin’s tombstone. He held a booklet with nearly fifty options, and Nilüfer gazed in astonishment that so many religions, sects, and orders existed in the world.

She told him, “My sister stood above all religions. I do not want to reduce her to any one. It is better not to put a symbol.”

But he was not to be deterred. “There must be some philosophy or system of thought she believed in. Please take a look and choose something. We must put a symbol at the head of the grave. There’s even one for atheists.”

“Aylin did believe in God. She was not an atheist.”

The man was getting irritable. “Well, whatever she believed in, you need to choose one.” Nilüfer called Tayibe to her side and they went through the symbols in the book. Tayibe spotted an emblem that resembled the wings of an eagle.

“Let’s choose this one, mother,” she said. “The bird’s wings symbolize freedom. That is appropriate for my aunt.”

Nilüfer said to the man, “We have chosen this.” He looked at the symbol they were pointing to and ruffled the index pages of the book.

“This is the Sufi symbol. They did say that the lieutenant colonel used to be a Muslim.”

“We have chosen the symbol with wings because it reflects my sister’s personality.”

Tayibe and Nilüfer strode over to the ceremony and stood at the front of the crowd that had gathered underneath a huge tent. The coffin was draped with the American flag as the band started to play the national anthem. The officers stood at attention and saluted. The civilians placed their right hands on their hearts. The Turks turned their palms to the sky and whispered prayers. Finally, “Taps” sounded from the bugle, echoing a heartbreaking, bitter lament against this heavenly judgment before fading away into silence.

With mechanical movements, two soldiers in uniform folded the flag on the coffin into

triangle, before presenting it to Nilüfer. Nilüfer pressed the folded flag close to her breast as if she were embracing her sister.

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When the ceremony ended, the soldiers pivoted sharply on their heels, turned, and marched away in a row. The crowd started to disperse silently. Nilüfer stood motionless, arm in arm with her daughter.

Sam said, "We have to leave, Nilüfer."

"Aylin is not buried yet."

An officer approached. "The ceremony is over, ma'am. The burial will take place after you leave."

"I want to see my sister buried."

"That's against regulation here."

"I will stay until my sister is buried. I am not going anywhere."

"That's not possible, ma'am." The man smiled gently, loosely taking hold of Nilüfer's arm and directing her toward the car.

Sam, who had gone ahead, ran back when he heard Nilüfer's scream. Those by the gate turned. Nilüfer struggled desperately against the officer, whom Sam led a few steps away, where they spoke in hushed tones.

When they came back, the officer was grumbling.

The mourners, soiled with mud, returned to Aylin's grave. The rain had eased a little and the iron case started to descend into the pit. Nilüfer abruptly took a handful of earth and threw it on the coffin. This was a silent order. The Turks, Americans, Muslims, Jews, Christians, men and women young and old all followed suit and kneeled, gathering the soil in their hands and tossing it onto the coffin. Earth, flowers, and leaves softly fell over Aylin's coffin.

It had finally stopped raining.

Tayibe and Nilüfer came to the gate of the cemetery. Nilüfer was utterly dejected. She had used her last ounce of strength to see Aylin buried and she was exhausted.

Suddenly, her daughter cried, "Look, Mother, look!" Nilüfer lifted her red, dried-out eyes. A river of light streamed out from behind the dark clouds. She turned back to Aylin's grave, where Tayibe was pointing. The sun—glimpsed for the first time since Thursday—was beaming directly onto the Sufi wings on Aylin's tombstone. The intensity of the light cut through the cold air like a sharp knife, bathing Nilüfer and Tayibe in a golden shaft.

Nilüfer blinked. Oh, this was a soft, peaceful light at last.

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# MUSTAFA PASHA OF CRETE

## THE ANCESTORS

The years of political tumult that marked the decline of the Ottoman era still echoed throughout the empire. It was harder than ever to be a statesman, as the Christian community, triggered by France and Russia, started to revolt, and Greece lay in wait like a hungry wolf. The pervasive instability impacted even the highest official posts; Sultan Abdülmecid replaced his grand vizier twenty-two times during his twenty-year reign.

Born in 1798 in the town of Polyan in Thrace, Mustafa Pasha is remembered in history by the name Giritli, meaning “of Crete.” He was just as renowned as the governor of Crete and had been subject to the mercurial Sultan Abdülmecid’s constant dismissals. He was appointed and dismissed as grand vizier three times, but considered himself lucky compared to his predecessor, who had held the post and been dismissed from it six times.

Renowned for his bravery, Mustafa Pasha became famous during the Egyptian Campaign in 1821. He was still a very young soldier then, but was appointed military chief as a result of his heroic deeds. Indeed, he would display a remarkable talent for mastering difficult battles throughout his entire life.

One of God’s luckiest creatures, he was educated in Egypt under the guidance of his maternal uncles. He studied hard, learned French and Arabic, and was rewarded with high-ranking posts in the entourage. Upon his uncle’s death, he inherited a salary of 450 purses a year. The incredible courage he displayed suppressing the revolts in Egypt was also generously rewarded by an appointment as a guard to the governorship of Crete.

But a peaceful administrative post could not compare to the harsh military rule of the battlefields. Mustafa, used to the demands of war, soon tired of the placid life in Crete and volunteered to help suppress the revolt in Lebanon. Upon his return, he was rewarded the title “governor of Crete for life” at the young age of thirty-two. From there, the road to Sultan Abdülmecid’s court was paved for the unyielding pasha, and he was named grand vizier.

As grand vizier, he soon discovered that the principles he lived by on the battlefield could get him into trouble in court. As military chief, he had not needed diplomacy. But a statesman was expected to lead with precision, foresight, and sensitivity; Mustafa’s rough and direct manner began to upset people. Soon, his title was enriched by a second: “Crazy.”

Crazy Mustafa Pasha of Crete was appointed to his final office in 1866, his reputation restored.

once again by outstanding military achievements. He had hoped to settle the Cretan revolt but was summoned back to Istanbul before he could broker peace. He died with a broken heart, never witnessing the tolerant society he was determined to help foster.

But Mustafa would have gone to rest with immense peace in his heart had he known that his descendant would reprise his volatility, boundless courage, defiant spirit, and sharp intellect, that little girl four generations later would bring his people great happiness.

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# HILMI PASHA

Mustafa Pasha of Crete was rumored to have had forty concubines, seventy thousand gold coins, ninety-nine farms, and two hundred houses. He also had eleven sons. Hilmi and Veli were the most handsome and cleverest among them. Appointed ambassador to Paris at the age of twenty-two, Veli Pasha preferred to make use of his inherited courage to engage in debauchery rather than battle. He flirted with Napoleon's wife, Eugenie, audacious enough to give her a ring with a V made of diamonds. To wear alongside the ring the emperor had engraved with an N. As opposed to Veli—or, as the Parisian ladies called him, “Le Beau Veli”—his brother Hilmi spent most of his life observing his father's tumultuous career in Istanbul.

He had no interest in flirting with the Parisian aristocracy. He lived just as fully in Istanbul where he had seen the ins and outs of a cosmopolitan lifestyle and known prosperity when his father was grand vizier. He was erudite and cultured, speaking various languages and studying French art. As the son of a nobleman, he was used to lavish extravagance. He did not need Paris. Besides, Hilmi Pasha had made a very fitting choice for the son of a grand vizier by marrying the daughter of the minister of protocol. She was a prize—noble and well schooled in all the ways of the court—and Hilmi insisted on treating her as such. He commissioned the architect Garnier, the man behind the Opéra de Paris, to design their home on the shores of the Bosphorus. Hilmi called for nothing less than a mansion, big enough to accommodate his extensive family and, naturally, a splendid banquet hall.

Years later, one of Hilmi Pasha's daughters, Melek, met her young neighbor Hasip at the age of seven as they played hide-and-seek in the grove. Children, of course, are notorious gossips, and the rumor that Melek would marry Hasip when they grew up reached the ears of her mother, who kept the news secret from her husband. Hilmi had inherited his fair share of his father's fierce nature, and his wife did not want to be on bad terms with the Bayndrl family, as it was said they were descended from the Prophet. Moreover, little Hasip's uncle lived in Paris, and the family planned to send Hasip to his uncle within a year to be educated like a westerner. Mrs. Hilmi did her best not to block the path of a perfect prospective son-in-law, but the wings of fate would not grant her wish for a long time.

Hasip took his time returning to Istanbul. Life in Paris was so exciting that he arranged for a clerkship in the Turkish embassy, where his uncle had served as ambassador. Hasip grew to be tall and handsome with deep-green eyes and a wrestler's physique. He also fit in well with the aristocracy thanks to his family's influence. He fenced with the founder of the Olympic Games, Baron Coubertin.

Coubertin, took long walks with his dog at the Bois de Boulogne, and made appearances at all of the elite parties. The French knew him as “the handsome man with the handsome dog,” and the Turks called him “the young, vigorous, and crazy Hasip.” He had left Melek, the lovely grandchild of another crazy man, far behind and forgotten her.

In the meantime, Melek blossomed into a coquettish and attractive young girl, though she was quite petite. She was fluent in French, English, and Greek and was an accomplished pianist. She was descended from aristocratic lineages on both her mother’s and father’s sides. The matchmaker worked tirelessly to find her a far more eligible suitor than the youth next door—now a distant figure in Paris. That suitor was the Nizam of Hyderabad, who sent his prospective bride a box full of jewels instead of the customary sweets.

Mrs. Hilmi was wild with joy. The richest man in the world was pursuing the daughter she had always found a little small and frail. But although Melek was born under a rising star, a secret power seemed to pull that star down. Tragically, the Nizam of Hyderabad drowned in a shipwreck on his way home from England before ever laying eyes on his fiancée.

At once, the matchmakers went back to the drawing board; this time landing on a candidate who could not be disregarded, despite the fact he was not as wealthy as the Nizam—Prince Mehemmed Ali of the Egyptian dynasty.

Melek was not given the chance to weigh in. In those days, if a suitable husband emerged, the girl’s opinion was not considered, even in the most modern of families. When her dowry was complete, Melek and her family gathered on an autumn day at the Tophane wharf, where they saw her off to Egypt. On board, Melek leaned against the rail and waved her handkerchief to her mother and father until they were no longer in sight.

Three years later, the same crowd gathered to welcome Melek on her return home. The potbellied Egyptian prince had turned out to be impotent.

That summer, a love story shaded by memories was rejuvenated in the groves of Emirgan.

Hasip returned to his country because he had run out of money and grown tired of the hectic pace of life in Paris. He was twenty-eight with shiny red hair—a very handsome bachelor. One day, he was wandering the grounds when he came across his childhood love in her garden. Twenty years later she was still pure and untouched, despite all the storms she had lived through. Melek’s mischievous glance and cherry lips had not changed, but her face seemed shadowed by a mysterious sadness. It was as if God had saved this girl for him, keeping her protected until he was ready.

Melek and Hasip were engaged soon after. Hilmi Pasha gave his consent only after he learned that the young man was an excellent hunter. Shortly after the wedding, Melek’s mother died suddenly of a heart attack, as if she had only been waiting to secure her daughter’s happiness. She bid farewell to this life at a party she threw at the Grand Hotel in Vienna, her lifeless body supported by her dancing partner as the Viennese Waltz played on.

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# THE BAYNDRL SISTERS

Once married, Hasip made use of his education by founding the School of Agriculture in Istanbul where he lectured for years. From there, he was appointed advisor to the General Administration of Agriculture in Istanbul.

Melek and Hasip lived happily in their spacious home on the Sea of Marmara until the First World War. They were blessed with five children, three daughters—Esma, Leyla, and Ecla; and two sons—Esat and Hilmi. The war stripped them of the prosperity that had ruled in their grandfather's days, bringing misery and famine to everything it touched. Although the Bayndrl family did not suffer from starvation, Hasip had to sell some of his property to allow his family to continue living in the manner they were accustomed to. Indeed, the youngest of the family, Hilmi, was born in a villa far simpler than the mansion on the bay where his older siblings were born.

The Bayndrl house was a study in contradictions. Hasip reared his children with the ironclad discipline of a typical Turkish patriarch, but he also encouraged them to develop a European mindset. He was proud of his Parisian upbringing and thorough education in European culture, and he was keenly involved in overseeing a similar education for his children. He focused particularly on the knowledge of foreign languages and did not discriminate between the girls and the boys. All of the Bayndrl children spoke Greek, French, and English in addition to their native tongue. Hasip favored Greek because his paternal grandmother was the daughter of a priest from the island of Chios. There were always at least a few Greek servants at home, as well as a Greek nanny. The children also had a governess who taught them French.

Despite the turmoil of raising five children, Melek and Hasip's household never lacked parties filled with music and dancing. The guests ranged from former pashas, ministers, and ambassadors, to members of the diplomatic corps and contemporary artists. But when the visitors took their leave, Hasip transformed into a tyrant. The family had to take its place at the dinner table at seven o'clock every day. If there was even a five-minute delay, Hasip's silver-handled cane began to dance, usually across the back of his older son, Esat. His daughters also got their share if he was really furious.

When Hilmi came down with pneumonia, Hasip, who was very fond of the boy, had Hilmi's bed brought to the living room so he would not get bored. That same day, Esma invited a young French naval officer, the grandson of the Duke of Rochefoucauld, who was visiting Istanbul, for tea. When Hasip returned home and saw that a guest had been ushered to the room where his sick son lay in bed, he got so angry that his cane fell on the young girl's face like a thunderbolt. Still, in some ways, he was tame, never meddling with his children's fashion choices or their friendships with the opposite sex.

As teenagers, Esma, Leyla, and Ecla pranced from one party to the next with the English and French officers who were abundant in Istanbul. But their revealing outfits and modern lifestyle led to gossip among the old families of Istanbul. While most other daughters found suitable husbands at a young age, the Bayndrl girls had to wait until their late twenties.

When Hasip's sons were of age, they followed in the family tradition and went to France to continue their education. But thanks to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, Hasip's financial situation was worse than ever. They had sold the villa and moved to a flat in the city with only a distant view of the Bosphorus. Hasip continued to lecture at the School of Agriculture, trying hard to feed his extensive family while still giving his sons the best opportunities. By now, the girls had left behind the exuberant lifestyle of their youth, and Melek had come to terms with the sad fact that her daughters were still unmarried and would soon be considered old maids.

But then something unbelievable happened: the Republic of Turkey was founded, and many of the empire's oldest traditions fell out of favor along with the dynasty. Ankara became the capital, and a new era blossomed in which well-educated youths with a mastery of foreign languages were suddenly in demand for the recently established state offices. The government built new schools and recruited young engineers to Anatolia to construct bridges and dams. New railways spanned the country from west to east, north to south.

As for Hasip, he was invited to the inauguration of the School of Agriculture in Adana and stayed to deliver a number of lectures. The Adana elite organized dinners, teas, and card games to keep their visitors from Istanbul entertained. At one of these parties, Hasip played a game of bridge with a young lawyer who had just opened up an office. His name was Zihni. When Hasip realized that his companion came from a respected family and spoke fluent French, he thought of his daughter still waiting for good suitors in Istanbul. He asked Zihni why he remained a bachelor.

Zihni had not been able to find the girl of his dreams, someone modern and cultivated who spoke foreign languages, at least in Adana. When Hasip told him about his own daughter, Esma, Zihni could not believe his ears. Would this noble gentleman introduce his daughter to a young lawyer such as himself? Indeed Hasip would.

When Hasip returned to Istanbul, an air of excitement filled the Bayndrl house. The blue-eyed and handsome lawyer was to visit Esma in ten short days. Esma had flirted with many young men from various nations and carried on daring relationships for her day. She was a bright girl, extremely active and talkative. Yet she could not help but be carried away by the idea of this new potential suitor. According to her mother, this was her last chance. Melek had the walls painted and the curtains sent to the dry cleaner, Esma began a strict diet, and her younger sisters, who were far more beautiful, were sent away on the day Zihni was due to arrive.

When Zihni saw Esma, he was instantly sure that she had been created just for him. God had given him three times what he had wished, for Esma was fluent in French, Greek, and English; well-versed in music, painting, and art; and always had a quick retort. She epitomized the new Turkish values with her modern mannerisms, a jewel for a man wishing to make the most out of his career.

Indeed, a few years after they married, Esma attracted the attention of the first president of Turkey, Atatürk, at a party. He convinced her to join the national assembly, and she became one of the first female deputies, not only in Turkey but in the entire world. She represented Turkey at many international conferences throughout her life. Her husband, Zihni, went on to become the notary of Ulus, the most respected neighborhood in Ankara at the time.

Just as Esma was married off, Hasip's older son, Esat, began to make a living, alleviating Hasip's finances a bit. Now, his most beautiful daughter, Leyla, was to have her turn. She was his favorite, resembling her father most in both looks and character. She was tall and robust, had the same reddish-blond hair and green eyes, and a personality just as difficult to handle as her father's. She had

adapted to their financial struggle with the greatest poise of anyone in the family, wearing old dresses without complaint.

A cousin lined up many of her husband's friends for Leyla and the youngest daughter, Ecla, but neither sister would settle, and the young suitors did not particularly want to marry the snobby girls who were approaching thirty. That is, until Cemal Bey entered the scene.

Cemal worked at the State Railways in Ankara and met Leyla over dinner at her cousin's house. He was one of the most attractive men she had ever met, tall with green eyes. They could have almost been siblings. They made up their minds almost immediately that night, and Leyla accepted his proposal without hesitating.

Cemal came from Ibrad, a village nestled in the peaks of the Taurus Mountains just off the Mediterranean. The inhabitants of Ibrad descended from strange stock. According to legend, a polytheistic Roman tribe that settled there accepted the Islamic faith before switching to Christianity. They decorated their houses in the Italian style, and their dialect included many Italian words. They preferred not to trade abroad or marry their daughters outside the tribe. One proverb stated, "Why should a stranger take our best and see our worst?" Cemal was one of the first of his generation to venture outside his insular community and marry a girl not from Ibrad.

And so a second engagement was celebrated in the Bayndrl house. Soon after, Cemal left his fiancée in Istanbul and returned to Ankara to look for a house. They would begin preparing for the wedding once he found a suitable place. But an appropriate home could not be found, despite Cemal's good salary. Instead, he spent the whole of his income on leisurely pursuits and was seen flirting with the young daughter of a colleague. Still, he had no intention of giving up the charming Leyla, whose attentions he positively relished.

Month after month, Leyla waited proudly as Cemal offered excuses, claiming there was too much construction in the city. And though Cemal would visit his fiancée, marriage was never mentioned. Three years went by like this. Cemal received two promotions, many buildings were completed, and finally Leyla heard of her fiancé's debauched reputation in Ankara.

Back in Istanbul, Leyla's cousin nagged her husband about setting her cousin up with a man like Cemal until he organized another dinner to introduce a friend who was intent on finding a wife. Leyla and Ecla were among the guests to welcome him that evening.

Nusret Kulin was the son of the Kulinoviç family, who had immigrated from Bosnia to Istanbul during the Austro-Hungarian tumult. He had just returned home from studying mechanical engineering in Germany. Leyla observed the spectacled young man's buoyant nature with a careful eye, noting his frequent bursts of laughter and storytelling skills throughout the evening. They even chatted and danced for a while. Leyla grew fond of the young man, thinking him smart and optimistic. But unfortunately, Nusret Kulin's heart settled instead on her dark-haired sister. Soon, the Kulin family visited the Bayndrls to ask them for Ecla's hand.

And so the youngest, most coquettish daughter became engaged to the dashing young engineer. Melek was elated to learn they would be married within a few months, although the situation looked rather strange. Leyla was the older sister and had been engaged for three years, yet Ecla would marry before her. Hasip felt very sad for his favorite daughter, now in a bind, but Leyla would not allow her father to have a frank discussion with her fiancé. In the end, she was the one who came up with the solution. She convinced her father to let her take a day trip to Ankara. Both saw fit to keep it a secret from the rest of the family.

Cemal was startled when his fiancée appeared at his door early one morning. Leyla began talking before he had a chance to speak. She had been waiting for three full years, she said. Maybe Cemal had changed his mind about this marriage, but she needed to preserve the honor of her family. Everyone in Istanbul was gossiping about the never-ending engagement. Her mother was extremely

upset, and her father had lost his confidence. To resolve the issue, they needed to get married immediately and divorce two months later.

Cemal was astounded to hear this offer, but Leyla insisted she was very serious. She felt compelled to save her father's hurt pride and was ready to give Cemal any guarantee he needed for the divorce would come through, as long as they were married before Ecla's wedding. Cemal listened to Leyla in disbelief. What a tough person this serene girl had turned out to be. He felt suddenly guilty for disregarding her feelings and her family's honor for such a long time. He agreed that Leyla could set any wedding day her heart chose.

Leyla's trip ended in victory, and she triumphantly shared the good news with her father when he picked her up at the station. Two Bayndrl daughters would be married, only ten days apart. The parents were thrilled, but the relationship between the two sisters became tenser than ever as they immersed themselves in the urgent business of securing dowries.

Leyla had hoped for a modest wedding with only family members present, but Hasip Bey rejected the idea of a small ceremony and planned for the event to take place at the Acacia Hotel where her sister would also be married. The newlyweds would honeymoon for ten days at the hotel, participate in Ecla's wedding, and then leave for Ankara. However, on the day of her sister's wedding, Leyla was still distressed by her forced marriage and secretly envied Ecla for finding a man who actually wanted her. Leyla told her husband she was ill, and because Cemal refused to leave his young wife alone with a fever, he did not go to Ecla's wedding, either.

Leyla and Cemal left for Ankara the next day. The new bride and groom settled into lodging provided for them by the State Railways, a cute little house with a garden right behind the station. Cemal had kept his promise and married Leyla, so he returned to his former lifestyle with a clear conscience. Though he no longer flirted with the French engineer's daughter, he left Leyla alone every night to join a game of poker with his friends. At home, Leyla turned on all the lights in the house and the garden and read for hours. When she heard her husband's footsteps, she ran to her bed and pretended to be asleep. Husband and wife lived under the same roof without any quarrels for two months. For Leyla, there were no grounds for any discussion. She had made an agreement and was simply waiting for its expiration date.

Two months later, when Cemal returned home, he saw three suitcases by the door and assumed that someone had arrived from Istanbul to visit his wife. But the luggage belonged to Leyla. The young woman quietly told her husband that their two months were up, and she had reserved a ticket on the train to Istanbul the following day. She would summon her lawyer to draw up the divorce papers as soon as she arrived.

Cemal Bey could not believe his ears. He had not thought for a single second that Leyla's bargain was in earnest. But here she was, without any sign of anger or regret. He tried to object but was once again taken aback by her determination. She thanked him for sticking to his promise and declared that it was time for her to follow through with her end of their agreement. Cemal was so disturbed that he couldn't sleep the whole night through. He knew he had failed to appreciate his good-natured, proud, intelligent, and beautiful wife. He begged her to give him another chance, another two months to prove he was worthy of her love. At last, Leyla consented to a trial period of one additional month. But the conditions of the contract would be different this time around. Cemal Bey was to come home every night like all the other husbands, dine with his wife, and go out with her, not other people. In short, they were to live like a normal married couple. Should Cemal find himself getting bored with this lifestyle, then he was to share his feelings frankly. Cemal accepted, finally realizing the good fortune that had almost slipped through his fingers.

In the end, the husband and wife lived together not for one month, but for a lifetime. In fact, Leyla would have a far more harmonious marriage than either of her sisters, despite its inauspicious

beginning.

~~Leyla and Cemal's first child, Nilüfer, was born after a very difficult delivery when Ecla's~~ daughter was six months old and Esma and Esat's children were both three. With so many grandchildren, the Bayındır family had finally found happiness and peace.

No one could have predicted the dark clouds of disaster that would gather just a year later when the very healthy Hasip, an avid hunter who had not even swallowed an aspirin until his sixteenth year, fell ill and needed an operation. Unfortunately, during the procedure, the surgeon made a rare error and pierced Hasip's bladder. Hasip—who hated hospitals—had to tolerate all the indignities that recovery entailed. The wound had to be dressed continuously, and he was told it would take six months for the scars to heal. In despair, Hasip chased the nurses and doctors out of his room with his silver-headed cane, cursing them all. In the end, they brought him home to wait patiently for those six months to pass by.

Several weeks later at their home, Melek was playing French songs on the phonograph at top volume for her husband to enjoy. When she called for him and heard no response, she grew uneasy. Entering their bedroom, she found him sitting upright in his armchair with a bullet hole in the right side of his forehead. His pistol had slipped from his hand and fallen to the floor, a thin red stream flowing from his brow. Trembling, she reached for the piece of paper on his knees. It read:

I don't have the patience to bear this misery for six more months. I am taking my own life.

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# AYLIN

When Aylin was born in August 1938, she already embodied many of the traits of her forefather. Although the pain inflicted by her grandfather's suicide had started to subside, his story was still told often.

The little girl grew up hearing about her very proud, very peevish, unbending grandfather who never knew that her love of weapons and her daring courage later on in life were most likely thanks to the genes she inherited from him and from her great-great-grandfather Mustafa Pasha. Indeed, she was to have the kind of fearlessness that surpassed all common boundaries.

When Aylin was born, her older sister Nilüfer was seven. The year 1938 was full of new experiences for Nilüfer. She had moved from a house with a garden to an apartment, started school, and her mother was expecting another baby.

One day, Nilüfer was sent to a friend's house for the night. When she came home the next morning, she found her mother lying in bed with a baby girl who was even smaller than Nilüfer's dolls. The baby stretched her tiny hands out from her bundle, eyes like two thin lines. She had absolutely no hair and a wrinkly face.

Her mother said, "Look, Nilüfer, I made this little girl for you. She is all yours." From that moment on, Nilüfer considered herself Aylin's protector and would intervene in her sister's life without moderation. But Aylin never took offense and loved Nilüfer all her life.

The apartment the family moved to just before Aylin's birth was in the most modern building in Ankara at the time. It had four separate entrances facing the tall clock tower in the middle of Kızılay Square, the nicest area in the city. The majority of the tenants were well-off bureaucrats who socialized most evenings. Soon, these adult friendships trickled down to their children, who formed long-lasting bonds.

When Aylin began first grade, Nilüfer finished middle school and was sent to Istanbul to study at the French high school. In her absence, Aylin became closer than ever to her best friend, Betül. They also played with Ayşe, the daughter of a young engineer whose elder brother was Auntie Ecla's husband.

Nilüfer missed out on those days. She was a big girl attending high school in the big city, and it was apparent that she was becoming a young woman of incredible beauty. When she visited Ankara for the holidays, everyone on her street gathered at the windows to witness her loveliness. Besides her staggering looks, she also possessed great intellect and was deeply interested in metaphysics.

Leyla was uneasy about her older daughter's dream to study at the university. She thought a girl should get married and have children once she finished high school. The good suitors that lined up

at the door in a young woman's youth could very well disappear by the time she graduated.

—Just as Aylin's parents enrolled her at the American school in Istanbul, Nilüfer finished high school and returned to Ankara for the summer. It would be many years before the sisters crossed paths again.

Nilüfer began to experience the exhilaration of being a pretty young girl in Ankara. As Leyla watched her daughter turn into an exceedingly beautiful woman, she became alarmed that Nilüfer might get carried away with the wrong man and tie herself to a bad marriage at a very young age. Nilüfer was well aware of her beauty and the privilege it afforded her. In fact, it appeared that she had a monopoly on Bayındır beauty. Aylin looked like a beanstalk, and her other cousins were either too dark or too short.

In spite of Leyla's warnings, Nilüfer began to flirt with Aziz, the son of a rich businessman. Aziz fell in love with Nilüfer at first sight. When Leyla realized that she could not stop the youngsters from seeing each other, she begged them to get engaged, but Aziz's father vehemently rejected the idea. His son was still a student. Aziz stood his ground, professing his undying love for Nilüfer until his father agreed to give his consent once Aziz finished his studies in Scotland and took over the family business. In the meantime, Nilüfer continued her friendship with Aziz in spite of both families' objections. After three years of studying economics in Scotland, Aziz was called to military service for two years, postponing the young lovers' marriage even further.

Just before Aziz started his service in September, the lovers went to the registry office and got married without informing their families. Nilüfer had left home with her swimsuit dangling from her hand, and when she came back three hours later, the wet swimsuit was wrapped in a towel.

"Where did you swim today?" asked her mother.

"At Tarabya Beach."

"As if there's no sea right in front of your house."

"I was meeting friends."

"Was it crowded as usual?"

"No. Very few people. It was so romantic." They sat face to face on the terrace, in the big armchairs that looked out to sea. Leyla lit a cigarette. Nilüfer reached for the pack, pulled out a cigarette, placed it between her lips, and lit it.

Her mother said, "You should wait till you become Mrs. Tansever before you smoke a cigarette right in front of my eyes, young lady."

"Pardon? Didn't hear you."

"Oh, yes you did, Nilüfer. Young girls don't smoke. You must wait until you can call yourself Mrs. Tansever."

Nilüfer exhaled. "Very well, then I can smoke my cigarette."

Now it was Leyla's turn to be astonished. "What do you mean?"

"I am Mrs. Tansever, Mother, as of three o'clock this afternoon."

Leyla could not decide whether she should feel angry or happy about the news. Her new son-in-law was the only son of a very wealthy man. Furthermore, he was getting a very good education and was sure to have a secure future. She did not object to Aziz; she was simply against her daughter dating someone without getting engaged. Now her daughter just stood there, married. In her heart, she felt relieved.

After his military service was over, Aziz returned to London to finish his studies, his young wife at his side.

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