

Kaş

The worn leather of his small sandals click against the smooth stone, echoing around the walls. Yusuf is hurrying. The smell of Turkish pide wafts from an alleyway where flat dough, heated in an outdoor oven, adds another stroke to the heat of the day. He savours the fresh, floury aroma. The alley way of bleached white stone walls is close and narrow. The bright reds of the Turkish carpets draped over peeling light blue wooden railings of the balconies above, speckle the walls like blood. A trader calls down, “erkek yeğen” - my nephew. Yusuf turns, his hazel eyes looking up to his Umja - his Uncle - who is standing on the balcony above, framed against a cascade of native purple geraniums. Brushing aside a thick strand of dark hair, he gives him a fleeting smile then hurries on .

The scorching heat grips his body as he steps into the open marketplace. It causes him to pause mid step. A woman sits on the low yellow stone wall, her white dress tied at the middle by a bright gold cord, a crimson trimmed scarf covers her head. Her features seem to shimmer like a desert mirage against the background of a fountain, the sun turning water droplets into tiny diamonds. Yusuf squints through the haze. He calls “annelik etmek” - mother.

Heavy wooden poles with deep grooves weathered by the harsh Turkish summer sun, stand nailed into place with oddly shaped scraps of supporting timber. White fabric stretches over the tables and the men beneath, cool in the shade, thoughtfully tug at long beards and wait for their turn in an endless game of backgammon. They sip sweet tea from small glass cups and talk in low tones about village politics and the coming harvest of olives from the groves nearby.

Loudspeakers mounted on minarets near the village square sound the call to prayer. It is mid-afternoon. Both mother and son will be late to the mosque. They hurry forward. The boy trips, gets back to his feet and they press on. Lights in expanding celestial circles are suspended above the worshippers who kneel on red squares set into a fawn-coloured carpet. They slip into the back between marble columns in a darkened corner.

A flash of sunlight penetrates the multi-coloured glass. The boy in his mind sees a path winding down to a nearby narrow pebble beach with white frothing water on the foreshore. It is where he wants be. The prayer is finished. He runs past the olive trees. Yusuf leaps from the edge of a rugged rock into the cool blue waters. His mother watches, smiling.

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