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INNATRAEA

BOOK FIVE: TURSİM



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"Kadin ne istedigini bilmez derler. Kimse
ona sormadi.

They say a woman does not know what
she wants. No one asked her."

—Author Unknown



Prologue: Halicinin Kizi

(The Carpet Seller's Daughter)

*Kizim, sana altın birakamam. Ama sana açlık
birakabilirim—ve açlık, altından daha uzun yaşar.*

My daughter, I cannot leave you gold. But I can leave
you hunger—and hunger outlives gold.

— Tursi saying

The dust made her cough again.

Sofia beat the carpet with both hands, the wooden paddle too heavy,
her arms aching in that deep way that meant she'd feel it tomorrow.
Afternoon light slanted through the shop's open door, catching the dust
motes she'd freed from the wool, making them dance like tiny golden
insects before they settled on her hair, her eyelashes, the simple dress
her mother had sewn last spring.

She was eight years old, and she was tired.

"Enough."

Her father's voice came from behind her, and then his hands were
there, lifting the paddle from her grip. Halil set it aside and lowered
himself to sit on the worn stones of the shop floor, his back against the
wall, his legs stretched out before him. He patted the space beside
him.



Sofia sat. Her shoulders burned. Her palms were red.

"Look at it," her father said.

She looked. The carpet hung before them, threads of deep crimson and midnight blue woven into patterns that spiraled inward like the shells she'd once seen a trader bring from the Ara'ayim Isles. It was old—older than her father, he'd said, maybe older than his father too. A family in the upper *mahalle* had asked him to clean it, to restore it, to make it worthy of their floors again.

"What do you see?"

Sofia considered. "Dirt?"

Halil laughed, that warm rumble she felt in her own chest when she sat close enough. "Yes, dirt. We've established you're very good at finding dirt." He nudged her shoulder with his. "What else?"

She looked harder. The patterns. The colors faded in places, bright in others, where the wool had been protected from sun and feet and time. The way the spirals didn't quite match on each side, a subtle asymmetry she hadn't noticed before.

"It's not even," she said. "Here—" she pointed, "—the spiral goes one way. But here it goes differently."

"Ah." Her father leaned forward, elbows on his knees. "Good eye. Do you know why?"

Sofia shook her head.



"Because a woman made this. A *dokuma*, maybe your age when she started learning. Younger. And she made a choice." He traced the air with his finger, following the uneven spirals. "She could have made it perfect. Symmetrical. Every spiral the same. That would have been easier, in some ways. Safer. No one could criticize her for doing it the expected way."

"But she didn't."

"No. She wanted more." Halil turned to look at his daughter, his dark eyes catching the afternoon light. "She believed she could make something more beautiful than the pattern she'd been taught. And she worked for it. Thread by thread, late at night probably, her fingers cramped and her mother telling her to sleep." He smiled. "And now, all these years later, people pay twice as much for her carpets. Because she didn't settle for what was expected."

Sofia looked at the carpet again. At the uneven spirals that suddenly seemed intentional. Brave.

"Baba," she said, "how do you know it was a woman?"

Halil's smile deepened. "Because the men who work the looms do it for money. They make what sells, what's safe, what the buyers expect." He reached over and tucked a strand of dusty hair behind her ear. "But the women—the *dokumalar*—they create because they have something inside them that needs to come out. And that—" he gestured at the spirals, "—that is what it looks like when someone refuses to keep it in."



From the doorway, Sofia's mother made a small sound. Not quite a word. Sofia turned to see Sevda standing there, a basket of bread and vegetables on her hip, watching them with an expression Sofia didn't yet have the language to name.

Worried, she would think later. *Afraid*.

But her father only smiled at her mother, warm and untroubled. "We're discussing art, Sevda. Our daughter has a good eye."

"Our daughter has chores," her mother said, but there was no sharpness in it. Just something tired. Something that bent away from the two of them on the floor, surrounded by dust and carpets and afternoon light, speaking of women who refused to be contained.

"She's learning the business," Halil said. "Every carpet seller needs to understand what makes a carpet valuable. Isn't that right, Sofia?"

Sofia nodded, though she understood—even then, even at eight—that she was not learning to be a carpet seller. Her father could teach her everything he knew about wool and dye and pattern and price. He could sit with her on the shop floor and tell her about dokumalar who wanted more. But Tursim did not allow daughters to inherit shops, and they both knew it.

They both pretended not to.

"Come," Sevda said from the doorway. "Both of you. The bread is still warm."

Her father rose, brushing dust from his trousers, and held out a hand to pull Sofia to her feet. His grip was rough and warm, calloused from years of honest work. She would remember his hands. She would remember them for the rest of her life.



"Tomorrow," he said, "I'll show you how to match dyes. It's harder than it looks—the colors change in different light. But you'll learn." He squeezed her hand once before letting go. "You always do."

Sofia followed her mother toward the small courtyard behind the shop. But at the threshold, she paused. Looking back.

The carpet still hung there, crimson and midnight blue, its uneven spirals holding the last of the afternoon light. A dokumalar had made it, her father said. A woman who wanted more. Who had more to say. Something had been inside her, and needed to get out.

Sofia didn't know her name. Would never know it. But she knew, suddenly and certainly, that the woman had been real. Had lived and wanted and refused to make her spirals match. Had left proof of herself woven into wool, and that proof had outlived her by generations.

I want to leave proof too, Sofia thought.

She didn't know yet what that meant. Didn't know what it would cost, or what it would build, or how far it would carry her from this dusty shop where her father taught her dangerous things.

But the wanting had started.

And it would not stop.



*Bir baba kizina ne verir? Ellerini. Gozlerini. Dunyayi
nasil gordugunu. Ve bir gun, yoklugunu.*

What does a father give his daughter? His hands. His
eyes. The way he saw the world. And one day, his
absence.

— *Baba ve Kiz*, author unknown

Halil watched his daughter pause at the threshold.

Watched her turn back to look at the carpet—really look, the way he'd
been teaching her to look—and he knew, in that moment, that
something had taken root. Something that would grow whether he
tended it or not. Whether Sevda approved or not. Whether Tursim
allowed it or not.

What have I done?

The question should have frightened him. Perhaps it did, somewhere
beneath the pride that swelled in his chest as Sofia's eyes traced the
uneven spirals one final time before she turned away.

Halil lingered in the shop as his wife and daughter moved toward the
courtyard. His hands found their familiar work—sorting through a pile of
unfinished commissions, checking for moth damage, for wear, for the
subtle signs of neglect that wealthy families never noticed until it was
too late. But his mind stayed with Sofia. With the expression on her
face as she'd looked back.

Hungry, he thought. *She looked hungry.*



The carpet she'd been beating was worth more than his shop. More than his home. More than everything he'd managed to build in forty-three years of honest work. The family who owned it didn't know that—they thought it decorative, inherited, one of many beautiful things in their beautiful house. They didn't know that the dokumalar who'd made it had woven her whole life into the wool. Had made something so fine that collectors three generations later would have paid fortunes for it, if they'd known what they were looking at.

But they didn't know. No one did except men like Halil, who spent their lives with their hands in other people's legacies. Who learned to read value in thread count and dye saturation and the particular way light caught imperfection.

He set down the carpet he'd been examining and looked at his hands. Calloused. Stained with years of dye that no amount of washing would ever fully remove. These hands had taught Sofia to grip a paddle, to beat dust from wool, to feel the difference between silk and cotton in the dark.

And what good will it do her?

The thought came unbidden, in a voice that sounded like Sevda's. He pushed it aside. He'd been pushing it aside for years—the practicality, the reality, the way Tursim worked and had always worked and would likely always work. Daughters did not inherit. Daughters married, or they didn't, and either way their fathers' trades passed to sons or nephews or apprentices or simply ended.

He had no sons. No nephews. No apprentices besides his daughter—no men to pass on the deep knowledge that couldn't be taught to someone who didn't already have the hunger for it.



He had Sofia.

Sevda is right to be afraid.

He thought of his wife's face in the doorway. The way her breath had caught when he'd told Sofia about the dokumalar who'd refused to make her spirals match. Sevda had heard what he was really saying. She always heard it.

You are worth more than what they will allow you to be.

You can want things they will tell you not to want.

You can refuse to keep it in.

Dangerous lessons. Cruel lessons, maybe, for a girl who would grow into a woman in a city that punished women for wanting. Halil knew this. He knew it, and he taught her anyway, and he could not make himself stop.

Because when he looked at Sofia—really looked, the way he looked at carpets, seeing beneath the surface to the structure underneath—he saw fire. Banked low, barely visible, but there. Waiting for air.

He could smother it. That's what Sevda wanted. Keep her daughter small and safe, teach her to want only what Tursim allowed, let the fire die before it ever had the chance to burn.

But Halil had spent his whole life handling beautiful things made by people who refused to be small. Carpets woven by dokumalar who chose asymmetry over safety. Tapestries that told stories no one had given their makers permission to tell. Art that outlived the artists, that carried their wanting forward through generations, that proved—thread by thread—that they had been here, had mattered, had refused to disappear.



He could not—would not—look at his daughter and choose to diminish her.

"Halil." Sevda's voice from the courtyard, patient but tired. "The bread is getting cold."

"Coming," he called back.

He took one last look around his shop. The carpets waiting for restoration. The tools of his trade, arranged the way his father had arranged them, and his father before him. Someday this would all belong to someone else. A buyer, perhaps, or simply no one—the shop closed, the knowledge lost, another small ending in a city full of them.

But Sofia would remain. Whatever he could give her, whatever seeds he could plant in the years he had left—those would remain.

It was not enough. He knew it was not enough.

But it was what he had.

Halil went to join his family, leaving the crimson and midnight carpet hanging in the dying light, its uneven spirals holding a secret only three people in all of Tursim knew how to read.



Sessizlik de bir dildir. Kadınlar onu en iyi konushur.

Silence is also a language. Women speak it best.

— Tursi saying

The bread would be cold soon.

Sevda had left them there—her husband and her daughter, sitting on the shop floor surrounded by dust and carpets and light that made everything look golden and possible—and walked to the courtyard alone. Her hands knew the work without her mind. The olives, the cheese, the small dish of oil her mother had taught her to season with herbs from the window box. She arranged everything the way she always arranged it—Halil's portion largest, Sofia's nearest the bread, her own tucked to the side where she could reach everything, refill everything, attend to everything without being asked.

She had learned this choreography from her mother. Her mother had learned it from hers. Generations of women setting tables in exactly this way, making themselves small and necessary and invisible all at once.

Her hands trembled as she set down the oil.

She could still hear Halil's voice. *The dokumalar. They create because they have something inside them that needs to come out.* Still filling their daughter's head with women who wanted more, with spirals that didn't match, with the dangerous idea that refusal could be woven into something that outlived you.



He doesn't understand, she thought. He never has.

She loved him for it. She hated him for it. Both things lived in her chest, so tangled together she could no longer tell where one ended and the other began.

Halil looked at their daughter and saw fire. Potential. A bright and hungry thing worth feeding.

Sevda looked at their daughter and saw a pyre.

She had known girls like Sofia. Girls who asked questions. Girls who wanted more. Girls whose fathers had loved them too much and too recklessly, filling them with hope that Tursim would spend their whole lives crushing out of them.

She knew where those girls ended up.

Married to men who didn't want bright wives. Bitter and silent in kitchens much like this one, setting out bread for husbands who had never once asked what they were thinking. Or worse—the ones who couldn't learn to be silent. The ones who kept wanting, kept pushing, kept refusing to make their spirals match.

Those girls didn't grow old.

Sevda pressed her hand flat against the table, steadying herself. The evening light had turned amber through the courtyard, and somewhere in the distance the Alsiyama evening call had begun, and everything was exactly as it had been yesterday and would be tomorrow and she could not breathe.

I was a girl like Sofia once.



The thought came unbidden. She pushed it down, the way she'd learned to push everything down—the wanting, the questions, the bright hungry thing her own mother had crushed before Tursim could do it more cruelly.

Her mother had succeeded. That was the worst part. Sevda had learned silence so well she sometimes forgot she'd ever known any other language. She had learned to make herself small and necessary and invisible, and she had survived, and surviving was supposed to be enough.

It was enough.

It had to be enough.

"Halil." She kept her voice patient. Tired. "The bread is getting cold."

Come now. Before you give her anything else I'll have to watch her carry.

"Coming," he called back, and she heard the distraction in it, the way his mind was still in the shop, still with Sofia, still turning over whatever he'd seen in their daughter's face.

She heard Sofia's footsteps first. Light and quick, a child who hadn't yet learned to move carefully. Then Halil's, heavier, steadier.

Sevda didn't look up. She was arranging the bread, adjusting the placement of the olives, making tiny corrections that didn't matter because if she looked up she would see Sofia's face and she would know—she would see—what Halil had planted there today.

"Smells wonderful," Halil said, settling onto his cushion. "Sevda, you've outdone yourself."



She hadn't. It was the same meal she made every evening, the same bread from the same baker, the same olives from the same merchant in the market. But Halil said this every night, and every night she murmured something in response, and this was the choreography of their marriage—his praise, her deflection, the words that meant nothing filling the space where other words might have lived.

Sofia sat down across from her. Sevda made herself look.

Oh, she thought. *Oh, no*.

Her daughter's eyes were bright. Not with tears—with something worse. With seeing. With that terrible clarity that came from having a door opened in your mind, a door you could never close again, a door that showed you exactly how small your world was and exactly how much larger it could be.

Halil had done this. With his carpets and his dokumalar and his *she wanted more*. He had taken their daughter's safe small world and cracked it open, and he was smiling, proud of himself, proud of Sofia, as though he hadn't just condemned her to a lifetime of wanting what Tursim would never allow her to have.

"Sofia was very helpful today," Halil said, tearing bread. "She has a real eye for quality. She even noticed the asymmetry in the Kadem carpet—most adults miss that."

"Mm," Sevda said.

"I'm going to teach her dye-matching tomorrow. She's ready."

"Mm."



Halil glanced at her. She felt it, his attention shifting, his awareness that something was wrong. She kept her eyes on her plate. After a moment, he looked away.

This was how they argued now. In silences. In *mm's* that meant *I am not fighting with you in front of our daughter and I am tired of fighting when you never listen and I love you and I am so afraid and I cannot make you see.*

Sofia ate her bread, oblivious. Or perhaps not oblivious—children sensed more than adults believed—but unwilling to ask. She had her father's gift for ignoring what was inconvenient. She would look at the tension between her parents and see only what she wanted to see: that her father loved her, that her mother was tired, that tomorrow she would learn to match dyes.

She would not see Sevda's hands, trembling slightly as she reached for the olives.

She would not see the way Sevda watched her, memorizing the shape of her face in the evening light, the dust still caught in her hair, the small calluses forming on her palms from the paddle.

She would not see her mother thinking: *How many years do I have left with you? How long before you want something Tursim won't allow, and I have to watch you break yourself against it?*

The call to prayer faded. The light turned from amber to the soft purple of dusk. They ate in silence—not the comfortable silence of family, but the silence of three people carrying three different worlds inside them, none of which could touch.

Sofia finished first. "May I go read, Mama?"



"Yes," Sevda said. "But not too late. Morning comes early."

Sofia kissed her cheek—quick, careless, the kiss of a child who assumed her mother would always be there—and disappeared into the house.

Halil reached for more bread. "She's exceptional, Sevda. You must see that."

"I see it."

"Then why—"

"Because I see it." Sevda's voice cracked. She hadn't meant it to. She pressed her lips together, breathed through her nose, found the silence again. "I see exactly what she is, Halil. That's why I'm afraid."

He was quiet. She could feel him trying to understand, to bridge the gap between them, to find words that would reassure her without requiring him to change. He would not find them. There were no such words.

"I won't let her be hurt," he said finally. "I'll protect her."

Sevda almost laughed. It came out as a breath, a small sound that might have been anything.

You can't, she thought. You can't protect her from wanting. You can't protect her from Tursim. You can't even protect her from yourself—from the way you look at her like she could be anything, like the world is wide open, like wanting more is something to celebrate rather than something to survive.



And one day you won't be here at all. And she'll have all this hunger you've given her, and nowhere safe to put it, and I'll be the one who has to watch her burn.

But she didn't say any of this. She had used up her words years ago, spent them on arguments that changed nothing, and now all she had left was silence.

Silence, and the terrible knowledge that she was right.

"Come inside," she said, rising. "It's getting cold."

Halil caught her hand as she passed. His grip was warm, familiar, calloused from carpets and dye. She let him hold her for a moment. Let herself feel the shape of his hand around hers, the solidness of him, the way he still believed—after everything—that love was enough.

"She'll be alright," he said. "Sofia's strong."

Strong, Sevda thought. Yes. She'll be strong. She'll be brave. She'll want more, and believe it, and work for it, just like you taught her.

And Tursim will make her pay for every moment of it.

She squeezed his hand once, then let go.

"Come inside," she said again.

She didn't look back at him. She walked into the house, past the room where Sofia was already curled up with a book she shouldn't have, past the bedroom where Sevda would lie awake tonight staring at the ceiling, past all the small spaces of a life she had carefully made small enough to survive.



The dishes could wait until morning. Everything could wait until morning.

For now, there was only this: the dark, the silence, and somewhere beneath it—so deep she almost couldn't feel it anymore—the ghost of a girl who had also once wanted more.

Sevda closed her eyes.

She had learned not to cry years ago. It made the silence harder to keep.

But sometimes, in the space between waking and sleep, she let herself remember what it had felt like. The wanting. The brightness. The terrible, beautiful belief that she could be something more than what Tursim allowed.

She had buried that girl so deep even she couldn't find her anymore.

But tonight—watching Sofia's eyes catch fire, watching Halil smile like he'd given their daughter a gift instead of a sentence—tonight the grave felt shallow.

Tonight, Sevda almost remembered her own name.

She breathed in. She breathed out.

And in the morning, she would rise, and set the table, and say nothing, and the silence would close over her again like water over a stone.

This was her life. This was her daughter's future. This was what it meant to love someone in a world that punished women for wanting.

Sevda turned her face to the wall.

And did not weep.

