

Life: Forty Years Through My Lens 1941-1964 (2011)

Ayşe Kulin (1941-)

OVERVIEW

In this work, Ayşe Kulin recounts her life from her earliest childhood memories up to her early twenties, when she ended her marriage to her first husband, Mehmet Sarper. While the narrative unfolds across Ankara, Istanbul, and London, it also renders visible the social and political atmosphere of Turkey during the transition to a multi-party system through the lens of the author's family environment. The work particularly addresses the political tensions of the Democrat Party era, especially through the position of Kulin's father, who served in a state office. At the same time, the familial and societal pressures she faced as a young woman in the environment in which she was raised reveal the patriarchal structure of everyday life. The control she encountered in areas such as clothing, education, and social relations emerges as one of the key factors shaping her search for individual freedom. In this context, marriage is positioned as a means of escape and independence for the young Ayşe Kulin. However, this choice leads to consequences such as the interruption of her education and early motherhood, ultimately transforming into a different form of dependency. Therefore, while the work presents a life narrative shaped by personal experiences, it also offers a broader framework concerning the social structure of the period, female identity, and the pursuit of freedom.

PEOPLE

<i>Ahmet Reşat Yediç</i>	Ayşe Kulin's maternal great-grandfather
<i>Behice Yediç</i>	Wife of Ahmet Reşat Yediç
<i>Leman</i>	Daughter of Ahmet Reşat and Behice Yediç; Ayşe Kulin's grandmother
<i>Mahir İhsan</i>	Leman's late husband
<i>Sabahat</i>	Daughter of Ahmet Reşat and Behice Yediç
<i>Bâlâ</i>	Sabahat's husband
<i>Suat</i>	Daughter of Ahmet Reşat and Behice Yediç
<i>Hilmi</i>	Suat's husband
<i>Sitare</i>	Daughter of Leman and Mahir İhsan; Ayşe Kulin's mother
<i>Muhittin Kulin</i>	Ayşe Kulin's father
<i>Mehmet Sarper</i>	Ayşe Kulin's husband

SYNOPSIS

Ayşe Kulin grows up surrounded by her large maternal family, at a time when even her grandmother's mother is still alive. Although she spends her childhood in Ankara due to her father's work as a state-employed engineer, she remains closely connected to her mother's family living in Nişantaşı, Istanbul. After primary school, she enrolls as a boarding student at Robert College and continues her youth moving between Ankara and Istanbul. During this period, she experiences her first romantic relationships and becomes interested in politics through the poetry of Nâzım Hikmet and protests against the Democrat Party. However, she faces pressure from her family on two fronts: patriarchal values and the anti-communist paranoia shaped by the Cold War climate. Under this pressure, she seeks to build her own life by marrying the first man who promises her independence and moves to London. There, she tries to continue her education but soon has two children. As time passes, incompatibilities in her marriage become increasingly apparent, and she drifts away from her educational goals. The marriage ultimately fails to provide the freedom it had promised. After having two children and returning to Turkey, she decides that the marriage is no longer sustainable and, taking her children with her, returns to Ankara with her father.

EVENTS

Father

Ayşe Kulin begins her story with a memory told by her aunt Suat. She tells how, when Ayşe was one week old, she placed her in her father's arms for the first time. Ayşe describes her father as if she remembers that very moment. His blue eyes are warm, yet his arched eyebrows give him a serious expression.

Her father supports her at important turning points in her life –when she wants to leave her wealthy husband at twenty-three, and later, at thirty-six, when she decides to separate from the father of her four children. But when Ayşe is forty, her father lies in a hospital bed. Not wanting to leave him, she squeezes onto a narrow hospital couch with her mother. There are no MRI machines yet, so the doctors operate based on assumptions. Still, neither his pain nor his vomiting improves.

Sitare secretly brings in a doctor from outside the hospital to examine him and run blood tests. Since they have just returned from London, she even suspects a tropical disease and has him tested for that as well. When nothing is found, Ayşe hangs a quote by Neyzen Tevfik on the wall, right where her father can see it: *“My fragile body could endure a thousand mule kicks –but sadly, it is not a mule; it is a doctor who has kicked my stomach.”* Her mother gets angry when she sees it, but her father simply smiles from his bed.

Three days before he falls ill, she goes to the airport to welcome them back from London. She replaced the old Anadol his father-in-law had given years ago with a Murat, using her own money. Ayşe imagines how pleased her father will be. As she whistles along to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, she suddenly sees a motorcycle crash into the barriers, the driver thrown violently into the air. She pulls over and gets out like the other drivers, but returns to her car because she must reach the airport. She plans to stop somewhere to call an ambulance, but feels relieved when she sees one already approaching from the opposite direction. At the airport, she does not want to tell her parents what happened, but her mother notices her mood and insists, so she has to explain. Her father says that Azerbaijanis call “accidents” “coincidence” and that life is full of them.

Her father spends most of his life working far from home. When she is a child and leaves the lights on in empty rooms, he tells her how difficult it is to build power plants and reminds her to respect nature, asking her to turn them off. At the time, she cannot understand the connection between electricity and nature. During summers on the island, when her father visits for a week, she feels embarrassed by his pale skin in front of her friends on the beach. One day in Ankara, while walking along a tree-lined road, she reaches to pick a flower. Her father stops her. When she asks why, he tells her that branches have life too. He is a hardworking man, careful about electricity, mindful of how much food is put on a plate, and aware that unused things may be needed by others.

Ayşe says that this upbringing made her an ordinary journalist –someone who fears hurting others, who cannot produce sensational interviews or striking headlines, and who settles for writing about culture and the arts. Her father calls her “Mâço,” a Bosnian word meaning “little cat,” yet he does not want her to be like a cat –feminine, clingy, ungrateful, or lazy. She lives with this quiet contradiction.

Narmanlı Apartment

Ayşe Kulin is born on September 7, 1941, in the Narmanlı Apartment in Nişantaşı. At that moment, her father is working at a construction site high in the Taurus Mountains. The entire country is under a wartime economy; almost everything can be found on the black market. Yet the Narmanlı Apartment stands out as a grand building, with a marble entrance that resembles a palace. Its entrance faces the Teşvikiye tram stop, and nearby stand the Berna, Vehbi Bey, Aziziye, Erhan, and Zeki Paşa apartments. The building belongs to Hacı Mustafa Efendi from Erzurum. When he refuses to give his daughter a share of his inheritance, his son-in-law Vehbi Bey has another building constructed: the Vehbi Bey Apartment. Ayşe later says that in those years, families from Anatolia also move to Istanbul –families who cannot find a way to spend what they earn in their hometowns. Instead of bringing their own food, smells, and customs, they try to become true Istanbulites.

Ahmet Reşat Yediç, the father of Ayşe's grandmother Leman, sells his mansion in Beyazıt after Leman loses her husband suddenly to a heart attack and his other daughter Sitare marries and moves to Ankara. He then rents a large, high-ceilinged, six-room flat in the Narmanlı Apartment in Nişantaşı.

The flat is found by his other daughter, Suat, who already lives in the area. But his liking for the place is not only because his daughter lives nearby; it is also because a man he once worked with in the last Ottoman cabinet, Ahmet Reşat—whose name is often confused with his— has a mansion in the same neighborhood. Still, despite the size of the flat, they have to squeeze their old mansion furniture into it. Even the dining table, which they had already been forced to place in the hall in their old home, ends up in the hall again here, since the apartment does not suit the newer dining-room culture that emerged in the early 1900s.

Although their home changes, one person never leaves their side: Mehpare, whom they call “Sütne.” A distant relative, she marries one of Ahmet Reşat’s nephews, but after losing her husband in the War of Independence, she remains under Ahmet Reşat’s protection until she remarries. When Behice cannot produce enough milk while breastfeeding Sabahat, Mehpare, who is pregnant at the same time, nurses the baby. That is how she comes to be called “Sütne,” a shortened form of “wet nurse.” When Behice and Mehpare are alone, one of the subjects they talk about is Sabahat’s forbidden love.

In the evenings, Suat’s husband Hilmi comes to visit Ahmet Reşat. One night, he says he has heard that Galanti Efendi, a member of parliament from Istanbul, and Baba Gomel, a representative of the Jews of İzmir, are talking about a possible tax on non-Muslims. He repeats Baba Gomel’s remark: “Instead of shearing the sheep, you are trying to slaughter it.” Ahmet Reşat Bey asks how a government under the threat of war is supposed to feed its army. Hilmi says that the person who told him this is a member of the army, and that he himself agrees. Muhittin Bey says it is not right to place this burden only on non-Muslims. Hilmi adds that his army friend claims non-Muslims have been able to build wealth because they are exempt from military service, and that what is now being asked of them cannot even equal the blood that has been shed. Muhittin disagrees. Ahmet Reşat, referring to İsmet İnönü, warns that if sacrifice is demanded only from non-Muslims, “one day, they will make him pay for it,” and then he leaves the room.

After he goes, Hilmi turns to Sabahat’s forbidden love. She refuses to marry anyone else because she remains devoted to Aram, an Armenian young man she fell in love with at school. Sabahat is sent to Cyprus for work, and Aram is exiled to Aşkale for military service, but their love does not end. At one point, Ahmet Reşat Bey seems ready to allow the marriage on the condition that Aram converts to Islam, but the issue closes after Mahir’s death. Now, encouraged by the joy brought into the house by Ayşe’s birth, Hilmi wants to raise the subject again. That evening, Hilmi, Suat, and Leman go to speak with Ahmet Reşat in his room.

Behice does not join them, as excitement triggers her asthma attacks. As she begins speaking with Mehpare, she mutters, “If the female dog did not wag its tail...” Meanwhile, Sitare stands up, imitates a dog wagging its tail, and hands Ayşe over to Muhittin. Shortly after, Suat comes out of the room with news: permission has been granted for the marriage, on the condition that Aram converts to Islam. Sitare jokes that “Aram” will now become “İbrahim.”

Ankara

As Ayşe Kulin lies down on the narrow couch in the hospital room, her mother and her Aunt Sabahat begin to speak in whispers. She drifts into her memories of Ankara. She sees their move from Istanbul to Ankara as a passage, from her grandfather’s house, filled with the fading sorrow of the collapsing Ottoman world, to the home of an engineer serving the ideals of a growing Republic.

Her mother, Sitare, goes to Ankara forty days after giving birth, accompanied by a German governess arranged by Muhittin’s brother. When Muhittin sees the governess at the station, he feels uneasy. Still, there is nothing he can do; his brother has already paid the woman’s three-month salary in advance, as she has raised his own children. The tall, imposing governess looks so out of place in their modest three-room flat that she leaves after three months.

The Wedding

After fifteen years, Ahmet Reşat’s stubbornness finally softens. Although he does not want his daughter Sabahat to marry a non-Muslim, he likes Aram. Aram is an honest, reliable, hardworking, and likeable man. He agrees to convert to Islam. However, Sabahat objects, fearing she might be blamed for this decision in the future. Aram, not being religious, says that changing his faith would make no difference to him—that what truly matters is being able to share a life with her.

They begin to search for a suitable name for him. Names like İbrahim and Armağan are considered, but Sabahat finally decides on "Bâlâ." Aram Balayan will become Bâlâ Bala.

After choosing his new name, Bâlâ goes to the mufti's office with Hilmi and converts to Islam. The subject of circumcision is mentioned jokingly among the women in the family, but it is never seriously discussed or carried out. When they apply for the marriage, a clerk makes a rude remark: "Out of ten million people, couldn't you find yourself a Muslim husband?" Sabahat becomes angry and says she will report him, but Bâlâ steps in and calms her down. After all, they already have to ignore the reluctance of their own families.

When Sabahat's parents say they will not attend the ceremony, the marriage takes place in the presence of only two witnesses. At the last moment, her sisters Leman and Suat surprise her with gifts—a pearl necklace for the bride and cufflinks for the groom. When they return to the Narmanlı Apartment, Behice takes off her diamond brooch shaped like a key and pins it onto Sabahat.

No dowry is prepared, no furniture is bought, and no special expenses are made for Sabahat. After arranging a wedding for his granddaughter Sitare, Ahmet Reşat no longer has the means to hold another. Beyond his own family, he is also trying to support the children of his late brother, the family of Mehpare, their wet nurse, and many old dependents. In truth, he is simply trying to keep up appearances. Sabahat, however, expects none of these things. After the wedding, they do not even go on a honeymoon.

Since long-distance phone calls between cities take hours, all these events are conveyed to Ankara through detailed letters. When Sitare hesitates about whether to attend the wedding, Muhittin tells her that it would not be appropriate to travel from Ankara to Istanbul when even her own parents are uncertain. He also adds that the train journey would likely trouble Ayşe because of the smell of coal. Sitare decides not to go.

Ayşe later notes that she has always loved the smell of coal. Even though Haydarpaşa Station does not carry that scent, Ankara Station always does, and she finds it deeply comforting. She believes that wherever a person spends the first years of their life, they remember that place with affection. For her, Ankara holds that meaning. It is also a city where the most educated people in the country live—not out of choice, but out of necessity. In that sense, it is not a city of elitists, but inevitably a city of the elite.

Soysal Apartment

From the windows of their home overlooking Kızılay Square, they watch history unfold. They see Atatürk's body being transferred to Anıtkabir, the official parade of King Paul and Queen Frederika of Greece, the visit of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, and the protests in which Adnan Menderes is manhandled. Their flat is in Block B of the Soysal Apartment. They live there until Ayşe starts middle school, and even then, they simply move to another block within the same complex.

The Soysal Apartment stretches across two streets, with four separate entrances. It has central heating and provides hot water once a week. Most of its residents are civil servants. The children who live there spend their days playing on the empty lot in front of the building and in the surrounding streets. In the basement of Ayşe's block is Madam Marga's Dance School, and on the ground floor there is the Süreyya Pavilion. All the girls in the building are students of Madam Marga.

Getting Pregnant

One of the children Ayşe plays with is Tahir, the son of Professor Hikmet Belbez and his wife, Bedia, three years older than her. After primary school, Tahir is sent to Germany. One day, when Ayşe visits their home with her mother and finds Tahir absent, she grows restless. To distract her, Bedia gives her a photo album. Ayşe secretly takes a photograph of Tahir in his scout uniform. At night, before going to sleep, she kisses the photo.

In *Yelpaze*, a magazine she reads in secret with Hanife, the woman who works in their house, she comes across a story: a girl named Gina becomes pregnant after kissing a boy named Bruno. After reading this, Ayşe becomes convinced that she, too, is pregnant.

She goes to the house of a distant relative, a girl named Yurdanur, about fifteen or sixteen years old. Learning that Yurdanur is at the grocery store, she heads there straight away. When she finds her, she

makes her swear not to tell anyone and then confesses that she is pregnant. Yurdanur immediately covers her mouth in shock. Ayşe bursts into tears. But once she explains what happened, Yurdanur breaks into laughter and explains, in detail, how a child is actually conceived.

Ayşe feels both embarrassed and disgusted by what she hears. That evening at dinner, she asks how one becomes pregnant. Her father tells her to ask her mother, since it is mothers who give birth. Her mother says that God places the baby in the mother's womb, and Ayşe chooses to believe that. Still, after this, she becomes more reserved when playing with boys.

Searching for Talent

At her mother's insistence, Ayşe begins taking piano lessons twice a week, one hour at a time. She does not like the piano at all. Eventually, her teacher gives up and says, "This child has no ear."

Her mother then starts looking for another talent. One day, while flipping through Ayşe's sketchbooks, she convinces herself that her daughter can draw. They invite Ferruh Başağa, the grandson of Muhittin's aunt, to give her art lessons. Ferruh places a vase in front of Ayşe and asks her to draw it. But Ayşe, as in her other drawings, sketches a house, with trees and people in front of it. He asks her again to draw the vase. She draws another house, trees, and people. A third time, he repeats the request. This time, she finally draws the vase. That is enough for him; he agrees to teach her and later tells Muhittin that Ayşe seems to long for a crowded family.

Ayşe Kulin notes that in those years her father earns just enough to take responsibility for one child, which is why they do not have more children. She adds that a "good life," as her father can afford it, means living in a good neighborhood, eating well, going out once a week, renting a summer house in Istanbul, and traveling to Europe every few years. She also admits, in the end, that she has no real talent for drawing either.

Aunts

Sitare is always surrounded by women who adore Ayşe. One of them is Aunt Sabiha, a relative on her father's side. She marries against her family's wishes, and after her divorce she stays in Ankara and becomes a seamstress. Over the years, she turns into one of the most well-known dressmakers in the city. Sitare has her dresses made by her, using fabrics she buys from the Ulus market. With the leftover fabric, Aunt Sabiha also makes clothes for Ayşe. One winter, she sews her a light green coat so beautiful that people wonder how the man Ayşe will one day marry will ever cope with a girl dressed like that at such a young age. Yet Sabiha never asks for money for anything she makes for her.

Another is Aunt Sacide, Sitare's old school friend. She is tall and slender, with eyes that always seem to be smiling. After her divorce, she begins to live on her own. Ayşe admires her deeply. When she stays at her house for a few weeks during middle school, she wears her clothes. For seven years at college, she uses a handbag Sacide gives her. When Sacide later returns to her family home after her divorce, her mother sees that she still uses the bag and tries to give it away to the cleaning woman. Ayşe refuses to let her. Sacide's brother, Akün Usta, is the first husband of Betül Mardin.

Another important figure is Mehpare Tökin. She, too, loves Ayşe dearly, perhaps because she has no children of her own. She lives with her older brother Hüsrev Tökin and her younger brother Firuzan. When Ayşe reaches fifth grade, she hears from her friends that Uncle Hüsrev has lost his job. Hanife, who works in their house, says it is because he is a "communis." Curious, Ayşe asks her friend Yüksel, whose father is the politician Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, what that means. Yüksel says it is something very bad, which only makes her more curious. He explains that "communists" share everything and are terrible people. That evening at dinner, Ayşe asks her father what "communis" means. He corrects her, saying the proper word is "communist," and explains that Uncle Hüsrev was once sent by the state to Moscow to study, and because the Russians are communists, people assume he is one too. He adds that such topics are not suitable for children to discuss. Eventually, Mehpare, Hüsrev, and Firuzan move to Istanbul. At the station, as they say goodbye, Aunt Mehpare hugs Ayşe and tells her that she is most saddened to be leaving her.

There is also Aunt Ruhiye. She lives with her husband in faculty housing at the law school and visits them in a carriage drawn by two horses. Sometimes she takes Ayşe along to the university, and Ayşe feels like a princess in a fairy tale. They eat together, and afterward Ayşe draws pictures with the paper and colored pencils Ruhiye piles in front of her. In the evening, they return home in the carriage.

After a while, however, Ruhiye begins to lose interest in her. When she visits, she cries while talking to Sitare, and Ayşe realizes she is about to divorce. Once, she overhears her mother say, "Are you exaggerating, dear Ruhiye? Sometimes even the devil whispers to me: take your child and go to Istanbul!" That evening, when her mother scolds her at dinner, Ayşe lets her know she has heard. After that, her mother becomes more careful when speaking with her friends.

After divorcing her husband, the dean of the law faculty, Ruhiye returns to Istanbul and marries a man who has a young son named Ahmet. When her second husband dies of cancer, she adopts her stepson and starts working as a seamstress in her home and workshop on İstiklal Avenue, opposite Narmanlı Han. She sends Ahmet to the German High School with her own means. In the summers, because Ahmet loves the sea, she rents a house in Caddebostan, leaves at seven in the morning, and goes to work on İstiklal Avenue. When Ayşe reaches marriageable age, she has her engagement dress made by her.

A Bad Experience

Muhittin Bey enrolls Ayşe in Ayşe Abla Primary School through their neighbor Neriman before she even turns six. Although children under six are not normally admitted, Neriman makes an exception for them. That summer, before school begins, Ayşe learns the Latin alphabet from her brother-in-law Bâlâ and the Arabic alphabet from her grandfather while spending time on the island.

She also studies with Ayten, the slightly older daughter of one of the helpers her grandmother and Aunt Suat bring to the house. Before returning to Ankara at the end of the summer, Ayşe shows Ayten her new school bag, notebooks, and pencils. Ayten decorates the edges of her freshly covered notebooks with small stars.

When school starts, Ayşe tells her teacher that she already knows how to write and does not want to write what she is told. The teacher asks her to write "Ali throws the ball." After she writes it, the teacher takes her notebook and begins flipping through it. On one of the back pages, she notices something written and asks Ayşe to read it aloud. Slowly, syllable by syllable, Ayşe reads, "Eat my poop." The teacher immediately slaps her.

Ashamed, Ayşe leaves the classroom. The teacher tells her not to return until the lesson is over and says they will go to the head teacher. Ayşe leaves all her things behind and goes straight home. When her parents learn what has happened, they go to the school and speak with the teacher, but Ayşe never returns. After that, her father warns her not to show off what she has to people who have fewer means than she does.

Birthday Present

The following September, they return from the island to her grandfather's flat in the Narmanlı Apartment. When he goes to visit his friend Ahmet Reşit, her grandmother dresses Ayşe and sends her along with him. On the way, if they happen to see a funeral passing in the opposite direction, they turn toward it, recite a short prayer, and walk seven steps together.

At Ahmet Reşit's house, Ayşe spends her time at the grand piano in his study. Her grandfather tells her not to make noise, but Ahmet Reşit, the father of Ekrem and Cemal Reşit Rey, says he is used to all kinds of music in the house.

Since her birthday falls in September, they celebrate it at her grandmother's home before returning to Ankara. During the celebration, the doorbell rings. Ayşe goes to the hall with her cousin Oya. Her uncle has bought her a desk with a compartment for books. She feels a sudden rush of joy, mixed with surprise, but because of what happened with Ayten, she does not want to make Oya jealous. Instead of showing her excitement, she asks how the desk will fit on the train. Her mother calls her ungrateful, and when her grandmother scolds her as well, Ayşe later has to explain the real reason behind her reaction.

Normally, Ayşe sleeps in her parents' room. When her grandmother comes to Ankara, the dining table and cabinet are moved into the hall, and a bed from the apartment storage is set up in the dining room, where Ayşe then sleeps with her. This time, however, when they return to Ankara, Ayşe finds that everything has been rearranged. The dining room has been moved into the hall, the bedroom into

the dining room, and her parents' room has been turned into her own. Her bed has been painted blue, and the chest of drawers from the hall has been painted the same color and placed beside it. She is overjoyed. That year, she starts primary school again, this time at a school run by the Turkish Education Association.

Other Children and Their Dramas

On her first day at school, her teacher Leman seats her next to a blonde girl with two braids like her own. The girl is Sevin Ölçmen. As they compliment each other's ribbons, Sevin suddenly says that her mother is dead. Ayşe cannot believe that people can die before growing old, so she thinks Sevin is lying. They argue, and both of them begin to cry. Their teacher comes over and explains that young people can die too, and that Sevin has a father and a brother who love her very much. The girls make peace.

The next day, Ayşe becomes friends with Alev, the daughter of the owner of Başkent Pharmacy, one of the first pharmacies in Ankara, and with Yüksel, the daughter of Hıfzı Oğuz Bekata, an important political figure. She and Yüksel sit side by side for five years and go to school together every day. One day, Yüksel tells her that her father is living with another woman in Kavaklıdere, and that this woman is her stepmother. When Ayşe does not understand, Yüksel explains that her parents are divorced. Wanting to avoid saying something wrong, Ayşe simply says how sorry she is.

When she gets home and tells Hanife what she has learned, Hanife frightens her by saying how terrible divorce is. With Hanife's help, Ayşe writes a note: "Mum and Dad, please don't ever get divorced. If you do, I will kill myself. Your daughter Ayşe Kolin." Hanife plans to "find" the note under her pillow.

The next day, when Ayşe leaves school, she sees her father waiting at the gate. Having forgotten about the note, she asks why he has come. As they walk together, he begins to explain that divorce can happen when couples cannot get along, and that there are people around them, like Ruhiye, who are divorced. Afraid that Yüksel might overhear, Ayşe tries to silence him. In the end, her father tears up the note she has written, corrects her surname to "Kulin," and points out the spelling mistakes in it.

A Crisis

Everything Ayşe eats is washed with soap, wiped with alcohol, and rinsed. Bread and simit are held over the gas flame for a few minutes to kill germs. Even so, she often falls ill. In second grade, she is diagnosed with typhoid, and her mother puts her on a strict diet. She strains fruit juice through cloth before giving it to her. During this time, her father stays home from work.

One morning, while her father is reading *The Adventures of the Little Rabbit* aloud, her mother comes in with her milk and notices that one of Ayşe's front teeth is missing. They shake out the sheets and search for it, but cannot find it. Her mother becomes very anxious, afraid that Ayşe may have swallowed the tooth, and asks her to use a chamber pot instead of the toilet. From then on, every morning, she searches through it with a stick, looking for the missing tooth.

Ayşe later understands why this matters when she overhears her mother speaking on the phone with Aunt Azra. Her mother fears that Ayşe's intestines, already weakened by typhoid, might be damaged by the tooth. Since Azra can drive, she comes to pick them up. Despite heavy snowfall, they bundle Ayşe up tightly in warm clothes and a blanket and take her to the hospital. The X-ray shows no sign of the tooth.

One morning, while her father is again reading aloud, her mother asks why he has not gone to work for days. He explains that he has argued with the minister after appointing men his team does not consider competent, and that he has resigned. Hearing this, her mother becomes furious. She questions what the team he has protected has ever done for him and begins cursing the minister, Nihat Erim. She is overwhelmed by fear of the future, of not being able to pay the rent, of having to move in with their parents, of sending their daughter to another school, and argues with him constantly.

Muhittin is a bureaucrat who has played a major role in dividing Anatolia into twelve water regions and in laying the foundations of the State Hydraulic Works. But after his dispute with Nihat Erim, it is uncertain whether he will be able to find a new position. It is unclear whether the minister has issued

instructions against him. At last, one day, he brings good news: he has been appointed deputy director at the Bank of Provinces. He tells Sitare that she can now stop cursing Nihat Erim.

The Democrat Party

Her father's new job marks a fresh start for the family, but on the night of 14 May 1950, the country also turns a new page as a twenty-seven-year rule comes to an end. Her mother, her father, and Hanife sit by the radio, listening anxiously for the results. The phone keeps ringing. If the caller is Fazilet, her mother's cousin, her father passes the phone to her. Fazilet's husband, Muhlis Ete, expects to become a minister if the Democrat Party comes to power. By the time Ayşe goes to bed, the result is not yet officially announced, but it is already more or less clear.

All night long, shouting, car horns, and fireworks can be heard from outside. The people of Ankara celebrate the Democrat Party's victory until morning. At the same time, in Çankaya, İsmet İnönü, the president of twenty-seven years, walks down from his upstairs study to the dining room and asks his wife, "From tomorrow on, are you ready to take the bus down from Çankaya into Ankara?" She replies, "We are ready, my Pasha, we are ready."

The Democrat Party expects to enter parliament with 150 seats but instead wins 408. Many different groups cast their votes for them: people from the provinces who have long been pushed aside by the ruling party, Istanbul's old elite circles, those who resent the abolition of the sultanate and the caliphate, those uncomfortable with women appearing unveiled and with the reforms of modernization, black market traders punished by heavy taxes, those affected by the Wealth Tax, villagers forced to work on the construction of village schools, religious leaders in the east, and large landowners in the south.

A week after the election, the new cabinet is announced, and Fazilet's husband, Muhlis Ete, is appointed Minister of Enterprises.

Grandfather's Illness

In the summer when Ayşe moves up to fourth grade, they do not go to their house on the island because her grandfather is in a clinic in Nişantaşı after prostate surgery. Since his daughters stay by his side, Ayşe goes to Büyükkada and stays in a house rented by her Aunt Suat's son Bülent, together with her aunt and her cousin Feryâl. Because Feryâl is six years younger, she does not want to play with her. In the mornings, her aunt takes them to the beach, and in the evenings she washes them in the bath outside the house. She is careless when she combs Ayşe's hair, so it always hurts. At night, while the others sleep together upstairs, Ayşe sleeps alone downstairs. Sometimes her mother and grandmother come to see her, and she begs them to take her to the hospital too, but they refuse.

One morning, her aunt suddenly takes her and Feryâl onto a ferry and brings them to the hospital. Her grandfather has grown very thin, and she is shocked to see, for the first time, that his beard, which he usually keeps shaved, is completely white. He tells her not to forget the prayers he has taught her and says that he will always be with her. After the hospital, they go to the Narmanlı Apartment. Her great-grandmother does not even seem pleased to see them; she sits silently on her bed. After this visit, they return to Büyükkada.

That night, Ayşe dreams of her grandfather standing in a long corridor, dressed in a white nightgown. He tells her that she will work hard all her life. She wakes up crying and wants to go upstairs to her uncle and aunt, but falls asleep again in tears. When she wakes in the morning, they have already left. Apart from the woman who comes to do the laundry, no one is there with her and her cousin. In the evening, her mother arrives with her uncle and aunt and tells her that her grandfather has passed away. Ayşe tells her about the dream. Hearing this, her mother says she regrets having taken her to the hospital.

New Family Dynamics

The first summer they gather on the island after her grandfather's death feels completely different. Things that once passed quietly now turn into open conflict. When Bâlâ walks around the house in a swimsuit, something they used to ignore so the grandfather would not hear, it now becomes a source of argument. Disputes that used to be settled quietly between the servants of her grandmother and Aunt Suat now spread to the adults themselves. Bülent constantly argues with his brother Rasin, and when Rasin tries to discipline him, his mother takes Bülent's side and scolds Rasin.

Throughout the entire summer, they receive almost no visitors, except for her grandmother's friend Mari and her husband Sava. After that summer, they never gather on the island again. They decide to cover the cost of repairing the house by renting it out. The broken roof tiles are hard-to-find Marseille tiles, and although this becomes the official reason for postponing the repairs, in truth no one can afford the renovation.

As they prepare to leave the house for the last time, her grandmother calls Ayşe over. Standing in the middle of a room that was once prepared as a bridal suite, she tells her to look carefully at the walls and the ceiling, to memorize the paintings and the decorations, because she will never see them again.

Ayşe Kulin returns to the island for the first time after 1950 only in 1996, when she goes there to receive the Sait Faik Short Story Award.

The Chair Thrown from the Balcony

Ayşe returns to the hospital room and recounts a conversation she has with her father. In 1950, when the Democrat Party comes to power, her father welcomes the change with hope. Ten years later, he reaches the point of throwing a chair from the balcony. Lying in his hospital bed, he explains why.

When they are living in the Soysal Apartment, a large crowd gathers in Kızılay Square during Sukarno's visit. The moment Menderes steps out of his car, chaos breaks out. Shouts of "Resign!" rise from everywhere. As the police try to disperse the crowd, one of them roughly handles a woman holding a child. Her father first protests by shouting from the balcony, but then loses control and throws a chair at the policeman. The chair hits the side mirror of a car and falls to the ground. Hanife immediately runs downstairs, picks it up, and says it slipped from her hands.

After recalling this, they talk about what brings the Democrat Party to power. Her father explains that when İnönü attempts land reform, he faces strong opposition from Kurdish tribal leaders and Turkish landowners. He then turns to the forests in an effort to make agricultural land more productive. Ideally, about twenty percent of a country's land should be forest, but at that time only around ten percent of Turkey is forested, and part of that consists of scrubland. When the state tries to nationalize forest land and manage it, villagers who cut trees for timber or clear land for farming react with anger. In the end, the state fails against public resistance. "İnönü's plan to turn villagers from forest plunderers into forest workers and managers also fails," he says. The only project that succeeds is the irrigation project, where he himself works.

Telling on Her Mother

While they are talking, her mother comes into the room and asks what they are doing. Ayşe says that they are talking about her. In fact, this is not something she would normally do. When she is only seven, she once sees her mother cutting fabric with the scissors her father carefully keeps for his project papers. That evening, she immediately tells her father. He raises his hand and warns her that if she ever tells on her mother again, that slap will land on her face. From that day on, whenever she is about to report someone, she remembers that raised hand. Still, from time to time, she complains about her mother to Hanife.

School Life

When she moves up to fifth grade, the Democrat Party introduces a rule requiring girls to walk on the right side of the street and boys on the left. When Ayşe complains, her teacher tells her to follow instructions without asking questions. Since the apricot and plum trees are on the girls' side, she continues walking along, picking fruit as she goes.

That year, fifth-grade students take an oral exam before a board in order to receive their primary school diploma. When it is Ayşe's turn, she feels an urgent need to go to the bathroom and rushes out, but nothing happens. She comes back, feels the same urge again, yet has no choice but to enter the exam. When she is asked a question about the digestive system in her life sciences class, she answers easily. However, she cannot solve the arithmetic problem. Her teacher reminds her that she has answered a similar question before and even broken her chalk while doing it. With that hint, she quickly writes down the correct answer.

After this exam, the students also take an English test. Those who pass move on to the first year of middle school. Those who fail are placed in a preparatory class called "ihzari." Ayşe passes all the exams successfully. When her grandmother comes to Ankara, she brings a suitcase full of gifts, but no

matter how much Ayşe searches, she cannot find them. Her grandmother gives them to her only after the diploma ceremony.

The Bicycle

In the week she receives her diploma, Aunt Azra invites Ayşe to her home for lunch. After the meal, they go to Ulus and visit several bicycle shops. Azra chooses a James brand bicycle. They load it into the trunk of a taxi and go together to Ayşe's house.

Her father opens the door. Azra tells him that he now owes her one hundred lira for the bicycle and ten lira for the taxi. When he looks confused, she reminds him that they talked about this the previous evening at dinner. He replies that he was talking nonsense while drinking vodka and asks why she took it seriously. Irritated, he takes money out of his wallet and hands it to her.

A New Job

Unable to reconcile with the government, her father resigns from his position at the Bank of Provinces and leaves public service altogether. Together with a few friends, he sets up a construction company on Sümer Street. That same year, after a fire destroys the entire town of Gerze in Sinop, the state awards the contract to rebuild it to their firm. From then on, her father is constantly traveling between Gerze and Ankara, in both summer and winter. Because of this, they can hardly see each other anymore, even on public holidays.

College

Ayşe feels alone in her new school because most of her friends remain in the English preparatory class. At the same time, she attends Miss Appleyard's ballet course at the conservatory. One day, Miss Appleyard calls her mother and says that Ayşe has talent for ballet and could continue at the conservatory if she wishes. What she really means is that Ayşe should either commit seriously or stop coming altogether.

After this, Ayşe tells her mother that she is unhappy at school and that her grades are getting worse. Hearing this, her mother decides that she should attend a college, just as she once did.

Since her biology teacher, Alexandra Miller, is looking for a place to stay, her mother gives her a bed in Ayşe's room. In return, she asks her to prepare Ayşe for the college entrance exam. Ayşe shares her room with this teacher for four months. Although she resists her efforts, the teacher keeps teaching her patiently.

When they go to Istanbul in June for the exam, her Aunt Sabahat also studies with her for a week. On the day of the exam, when they arrive at the American College for Girls, her mother embraces the doorman, Artin, and asks him to pray that her daughter will be admitted. Shortly after, she runs into her old school friend Vedia and her son, Güven Osma. While they greet each other, Ayşe quietly observes Güven.

Inside, her mother shows her the Blue Hall and the Yellow Hall, one reserved for teachers and the other for senior students. She tells Ayşe that, unlike herself, she should study until she earns the right to sit in the Yellow Hall, since she married before reaching that point. However, when Ayşe says that she also wants to go to university, her mother objects. In fact, she hopes that after graduating from high school, Ayşe will marry a diplomat.

At the American College for Girls

As soon as the exam results are announced, Aunt Sabahat comes to the Narmanlı Apartment. After ringing the bell insistently for a long time, the door is finally opened by Ayşe. Her aunt brings the good news: Ayşe has passed the exam with third place and will start directly in the first year of middle school. They want to inform her father right away, but since they have not been able to get a telephone line in the apartment for twelve years, they cannot reach him. While everyone celebrates, Ayşe feels as if she is walking on air.

For two months, they buy everything on the school's list: underwear, nightgowns, socks, bed sheets, pillowcases, and towels. She is told to buy her uniform from Karlman Passage and her black shoes from a shop in Karaköy. While buying her shoes, she meets a girl named Mine, blue-eyed and from Eskişehir. When she learns they will be in the same class, she is surprised. Mine is taller and more

physically developed, and when Ayşe imagines that all the other girls will be like her, she feels intimidated.

When her grandmother hears that Ayşe will have a small cupboard next to her bed in the dormitory, she sews blue floral covers for the shelves. Preparations are completed by early September, and a week before school begins, her father arrives in Istanbul. As they sit alone in the living room, he closes the door, and Ayşe understands that he is about to speak seriously. He tells her that he is sending her to the best and most expensive school in the country, and that if she does not succeed, she will return to her old school in Ankara. When Ayşe expresses doubt about her English, he reassures her that he believes in her.

After this conversation, her excitement begins to turn into anxiety. Around the same time, they receive the news that Aunt Azra has leukemia. Before the family takes her abroad for treatment, they visit her at her mother's house in Göztepe. Seeing her pale face, Ayşe senses that she is going to die. When she goes out into the garden with her son Osman, he tells her, "You are my little sister." She replies, "I know."

The following Sunday, Ayşe goes to the school with her mother, grandmother, Aunt Suat, and Aunt Sabahat. She feels uncomfortable arriving with such a large group, but Sabahat works at the school and will guide them. Suat has already bought her school shoes and bag and has knitted colorful sweaters and a cardigan for her. Her mother and grandmother come as well, as expected.

As Sabahat shows them around, they learn that Ayşe's dormitory is on the top floor of a building called Sage Hall. From its wide windows, they can see the Bosphorus and the opposite shore. Ayşe's bed is somewhere in the middle of the room. While her mother and aunts arrange her bedding and organize her cupboard, a girl she knows from primary school, Şükriye, walks in. Ayşe is relieved to see a familiar face, and even more so because Şükriye, like her, is not physically developed. As the dormitory gradually fills up, girls who already know each other greet one another and share stories from their holidays. Ayşe and Şükriye watch them quietly, feeling a little left out.

After everything is arranged, Ayşe walks down the slope with her family and says goodbye. It is the first time she will be separated from them, and she feels completely alone. A deep sadness settles over her. Her grandmother tells her that if she has any trouble, she can go to Aunt Sabahat's room, but Sabahat explains that her office is in Marble Hall and that middle school students are not allowed there. Hearing this makes Ayşe even more upset, though she does not show it.

After hugging and kissing her many times, her family walks away down the hill. Ayşe watches them until they disappear from sight, holding back tears. There is still time before dinner at seven thirty, so she remembers the locked tin boxes in the basement, across from the dining hall, where students keep breakfast items like jam and honey. Thinking her grandmother must have left her some chocolate there, she goes to check. When she opens her box, she indeed finds chocolate and biscuits.

As she walks down the corridor eating her chocolate, she comes across a table tennis table. For a moment, she thinks this must be the same corridor where she saw her grandfather in her dream, and she shivers. Just then, a group of girls approaches. When one of them calls her name, she realizes that Alev, her friend of five years, is also there. Together, they go straight to the dormitory.

It is dark inside now. When Ayşe finds her bed, she is amazed by the view from the window. A few lights glow on the opposite shore, and the moon hangs in the sky. It is the most beautiful night view she has ever seen. At that moment, she is certain: no matter how confident or grown the other girls seem, she will stay and study here. For a whole year, she falls asleep to this view and wakes to the sunrise over the Bosphorus.

At seven thirty in the morning, the bell wakes them. The new students jump out of bed immediately, while the older ones stay where they are. Süreyya, in the bed next to hers, tells her to wait because the bathrooms will be crowded. But Ayşe is too excited to stay still. The bathrooms are crowded, but the line moves quickly. She ties her hair in a ponytail, puts on her navy uniform and burgundy jacket, and ties the laces of her black shoes. When she goes down to the dining hall, surrounded by the lively chatter of the other girls, she realizes she is pleased with her new identity.

The middle school classrooms are in a building called Bingham Hall. She follows the uniformed girls there, but when she asks which floor her classroom is on, everyone laughs, because each subject has its own classroom. Since they rush from one class to another between lessons, they hardly have time to go out into the yard during breaks. Still, in her first year, Ayşe becomes close friends with Süreyya Barutçu, Esin Sadıkoğlu, Gönül Gökdoğan, Işıl Erim, Sirel Savaşeri, Bilge Taşçıoğlu, Rengin Pakel, and İpek Erdem.

Talent

All her classes, except history, geography, and Turkish, were taught in English. Although Ayşe struggled with mathematics, she excelled in literature. Her Turkish and literature teachers believed that she would one day become a writer. Thanks to her teacher Halis Ergeneli, she developed a strong command of aruz meter, syllabic meter, and rhyme.

One day, in Miss Dean's class, they read George Eliot's *Silas Marner*. Miss Dean then asked the students to write an essay expressing their thoughts about the book. In the following lesson, she announced that, in a class of twenty, only one essay was worth reading aloud, and she began to read from a paper. Toward the end, Ayşe realized that the essay being read was her own. When the teacher asked the author to come forward, Ayşe remained frozen in her seat. Eventually, Miss Dean called her by name. Trembling, Ayşe walked up to her teacher. Miss Dean then asked the class to applaud her, and Ayşe felt a deep sense of pride.

At the end of the lesson, Marusya Ksido approached her. Among the students, Marusya was known as "HBB," short for "she knows everything," a nickname reflecting both her Russian origin and her top rank in the school entrance exam. She offered to teach Ayşe mathematics if Ayşe would teach her how to write essays. Ayşe replied that she could not teach anyone to write well because she simply wrote whatever came from within.

As she hurried to her next class, Ayşe felt a surge of excitement. If someone like Marusya had asked her such a thing, then perhaps she really was meant to become a writer.

The Rhythm of School

The sweetest hours at school began after classes ended. Until six o'clock, some students played volleyball, table tennis, or tennis, while Ayşe would go with her friends Sevgi, Nur, and İffet to watch the Bosphorus. On rainy days, they would spend time in the sitting room on the dining hall floor. At six, they gathered in the library to do the next day's homework. When the bell rang at seven, they returned to their dormitories, took off their uniforms, brushed their hair, and went down for dinner.

After dinner, most of the high school girls attended the "dancing" sessions in Marble Hall, where they danced to popular music such as swing, cha-cha-cha, and rock and roll. Since middle school students were only allowed to join on weekends, they watched them with admiration and a hint of envy. Because Ayşe's grandmother lived in Istanbul, she was sent to stay with her on weekends, even though she did not want to go. As a result, her mind was always on those dances she was missing.

Since around thirty of the students had families in Ankara, they would travel there together by train during holidays. They boarded the train at eight in the morning and traveled until six in the evening, with no one to supervise or restrain them. For this reason, those journeys held a special meaning for them.

During shorter holiday breaks, Ayşe's parents would come to Istanbul instead. Every holiday, her father, her uncle, and her cousins Semra and Orhan would first visit her aunt, who lived in a mansion in Sultanahmet, and then go to the Edirnekapi Martyrs' Cemetery to visit their deceased relatives. One day at the cemetery, Ayşe noticed how beautiful Semra's legs were and how slender her waist was. As they stood praying by the graves, she first prayed to become as beautiful as her cousin, and then for the souls of her grandparents.

Adolescence and Friendship

Ayşe's grandmother, Leman, reserved two dresses—one for summer, one for winter—and a pair of shoes for each, worn only when visiting the graves of her husband and her father. She would not allow anyone returning from a funeral to stop anywhere else before going home, nor would she let anyone speak of death in her presence. For this reason, she concealed Azra's death from Ayşe, using the

excuse that she should not fall behind in her studies. When Ayşe eventually found out, she was furious and, for the first time, had a serious argument with her. What angered her most was that she had not been able to offer her condolences to Osman in time. Osman, in fact, had been sent from Ankara to Istanbul as a boarder at Şişli Terakki High School, very close to Narmanlı Apartment.

One day, knowing how much he loved strawberries, Ayşe bought a strawberry cake from a pastry shop and went to his school. When the attendant at the entrance took her to the principal's office, she introduced herself as Osman Bayru's sister. The principal, clearly unconvinced, sent for Osman but allowed them to meet in an empty classroom. When Osman entered, Ayşe found herself facing an adolescent boy who had suddenly grown taller, with the first signs of hair on his chin, unsure of what to do with his arms. She wanted to hug him but could not bring herself to do it. Throughout their conversation, Osman answered timidly, so much so that Ayşe began to feel she had disturbed him by coming. In the end, although she longed to embrace him with affection, they parted with a formal handshake.

A Thrill

Twice a year, they attended formal dinners –once at the boys' school, Robert College, and once at the girls' school. On those evenings, the identity of the chaperone teacher made all the difference. Sometimes the chaperone was open-minded and cheerful, other times strict and elderly. No matter who it was, everyone looked forward to these dinners with excitement. When the girls went to the boys' school, a basket containing the boys' names was brought before them, and each girl spent the evening with the boy whose name she drew.

That evening, they got off the bus in the garden of Robert College and walked between rows of boys waiting in line. Once they were ushered into the salon of the headmaster's residence, a young boy entered carrying the basket. One by one, the girls drew slips of paper and read the names written on them. Each boy, upon hearing his name, came forward to introduce himself. Some girls were disappointed, while others beamed with delight. Most secretly hoped, at the very least, to be paired with someone of a similar height.

When it was Ayşe's turn, the boy holding the basket slipped a piece of paper into her hand before she could draw one herself. She did not know how to react. When her teacher asked her to read the name aloud, she did: "Aydın Ulusan." The moment she saw how handsome he was, she could not help but smile. As he introduced himself, he mentioned that he was the son of Aziz Ulusan. Aziz and his wife Nilüfer were close friends of Ayşe's parents in Ankara. Aydın admitted, with a hint of pride, that he was on the student council and had used his privilege to arrange this small trick. They spent the entire evening together. Ayşe wished the night would never end, but at ten o'clock they had to return.

Later, a friend brought her a copy of a magazine called *ECHO*, published at Robert College. On the cover, it read: "To Ayşe Kulin, with the compliments of the Editor." When she checked the masthead, she saw that Aydın was the editor. Afraid that something might happen to it, she pinned the magazine inside her locker.

They met a second time on a train journey to Ankara. Since they were not seated together, they spent most of the trip talking by the window in the narrow space between two carriages. Apart from occasional gatherings with mutual friends in Ankara, they did not have many opportunities to spend time together, as Aydın was sent to the United States the following year for his education. When they met again years later, both of them were married.

6-7 September

The summer after finishing her second year of middle school, Ayşe had to stay in the city because she had failed mathematics and needed to take a resit exam. Since the family mansion on the island had been rented to a French family, they spent the summer moving between three homes: that of Suat and her husband in Feneryolu, that of Sabahat and Bâlâ in Arnavutköy, and the Büyükağa house of her mother's friend Saliha. Ayşe liked the Arnavutköy house the most, where she could dive into the sea with her cousin Filiz. In August, as the exam approached, they returned to Narmanlı Apartment. Ayşe began taking private lessons from her mathematics teacher, Şirinyan, who lived in Bebek. Three days a week, she studied among his cats, her throat stinging from the smell of cat urine.

That same year, Meral, the daughter of a distant relative, came to stay at Narmanlı Apartment for the winter so she might find a suitable match outside Gebze. As Ayşe spent a great deal of time with her, her mother, Sitare, worried that her studies would suffer and sent Meral to stay with Suat's son Bülent, who lived with his family on the lower floor of their house in Feneryolu.

Since Ayşe's birthday fell on 7 September and her mother had gone shopping in Beyoğlu, she did not accompany her to her lesson on the 6th. Instead, Ayşe took the tram to Bebek with her grandmother and Mahmure; they got off at Arnavutköy to visit Sabahat, while Ayşe continued on. When her lesson ended at four, she took a shared taxi to Arnavutköy, hoping to have some of her aunt's walnut cake. As they were having tea, Bâlâ arrived home in haste and told them that it was no longer safe outside because Atatürk's house had been bombed; he insisted on taking them back immediately. Despite her grandmother's objections, he prevailed, and they quickly left the house and got into his Volkswagen.

As crowds outside shouted, "Cyprus is Turkish and will remain Turkish," Leman and Mahmure could not understand why people were chanting such slogans. Bâlâ explained that the island, once handed over to the British, had become a point of contention between Greeks and Turks after the British withdrawal. As he spoke, the crowd surrounded the car and began to shake it. At that moment, he told Ayşe to take off her T-shirt at once, explaining that its blue and white stripes resembled the Greek flag. Ayşe hesitated, as she wore nothing underneath. Leman asked Mahmure to give Ayşe her headscarf to cover it. Although Mahmure was not used to uncovering her head in public, when the car began to be pounded, she quickly removed it and handed it over.

The air inside the car grew stifling, but Bâlâ insisted that the windows remain shut. Along the way, they saw shop windows being smashed with wooden sticks and goods being looted. Leman, abandoning her prayers, began asking where the police were. On Teşvikiye Avenue, the front of a pastry shop was strewn with pastries and the candied apples Ayşe had coveted since childhood. Near Narmanlı Apartment, the shattered windows of a cologne shop filled the air with the scent of jasmine, rose, and lavender. When they arrived, they found the building door locked. Leman rang the bell and pounded on the door until the doorman, Mehmet, came running, let them in, and bolted it behind them. When she learned that Sitare had not yet returned, she nearly fainted.

Upstairs, Leman recounted what had happened to Behice, softening the details. Behice responded by recalling how the streets had looked the same when they fled Salonica years earlier. As she spoke, she remembered being pregnant at the time and then corrected herself, realizing that she had lost the baby during the journey.

Shortly afterward, Leman ordered Ayşe to burn the T-shirt. Instead, Ayşe hid it between her mattress and bed frame. Within half an hour, her mother returned home, describing how she had seen a young man addressing a crowd near the Atatürk statue in Taksim and had managed to get back only by taking side streets.

Later that evening, they received word through a neighbor's telephone that Ayşe's father had called from Ankara. After speaking with him, Sitare said that similar events had broken out in Ankara and İzmir as well. As the hours passed, neighbors visited one another, exchanging accounts of what was happening. Listening to the news on the radio, Leman grew anxious about the fate of their friends Mari and Sava. They considered going to fetch them but instead called and invited them to stay. The next morning, Mari and her son Niko arrived; Sava had refused to leave, as their building had been attacked and a neighbor injured.

The following day, when Ayşe saw the photographs in the newspapers, the full horror of the events struck her more deeply than the fear she had felt in the car. Pro-government papers blamed communists, but among neighbors a different interpretation prevailed: as tensions over Cyprus mounted, the government had sought to signal that the Turkish public would not remain silent. In districts such as Taksim, Kurtuluş, and Beyoğlu, where many non-Muslims lived, shops were looted, churches were burned or destroyed, and even those under police watch could not be protected.

The week Ayşe took her exam, Mari and Niko returned to their home. Although Ayşe learned that she had passed, she could not feel happy. What she had witnessed left her subdued and, in a way, older. She began her next school year quieter, a little taller, and more physically developed. Her mother had

already insisted on buying her a bra, whether she wanted it or not. It marked, unmistakably, the end of her childhood.

Funeral

That winter, her great-grandmother Behice passed away. On the evening of her death, since it was the weekend, Ayşe was also at home. Sensing something unusual in her mother's condition, her grandmother had called a doctor earlier in the evening. After dinner, they sat as usual on the couch opposite her bed, listening to the radio. Around ten o'clock, Ayşe fell asleep in the bed in her grandmother's room, but later woke up when Hacer, her grandmother's helper, knocked on the door. When her grandmother stood in the corridor and did not let her enter her great-grandmother's room, Ayşe understood that she had died. When Hacer said that she had passed away in her arms just moments before, Ayşe began to cry.

The next day, her mother and father flew to Istanbul. At the funeral, Ayşe was disappointed to see that, apart from the immediate family, people were chatting with one another and even joking. She felt that death was not being treated with enough respect.

Her mother returned to Ankara after the fortieth day had passed. After she left, her grandmother had the house repainted, turned the living room into her late mother's room, and moved her own room into the living room. The room with the balcony became Ayşe's. When her father bought her a stylish bedroom set, a matching wardrobe, bookcase, and dressing table were placed in the room. She now had a proper young girl's room.

Child-Young Girl

At the end of the year, Cemil, the son of Dr. Cemil Topuzlu, asks for Meral's hand in marriage. Sitare comes to Istanbul for the engagement, but the day before the ceremony, Ayşe's front tooth –half broken during a childhood game –has to be cut. Their Armenian dentist, Vartan, agrees to treat her on Sunday despite it being his day off. Because of this, Ayşe does not want to attend the engagement. Her mother insists that she can go with a missing tooth since she is still a child. Ayşe objects, pointing out that her mother treats her like a grown girl when it suits her and like a child when it does not.

Rebellious Girl

In the 1955–56 school year, her dormitory changes. Instead of a fourteen-person dorm, she moves into a two-person room in Mitchell Hall. Her roommate is İffet. Because the satin duvet covers are slippery, they push their beds together so they will not fall off while sleeping. The dorm supervisor, Enise Önüt, scolds them and orders them to separate the beds. They obey, but as soon as she leaves, they push them together again. The next morning, on their way to breakfast, Enise stops them and threatens to report them to the administration and have them expelled if they ever do it again. They cannot understand why such a small thing is such a serious issue, but they quietly swear to get back at her.

At fourteen, though still childlike in spirit, their bodies begin to change suddenly. They grow taller, and their breasts develop quickly. When Ayşe's mother sees her at New Year's, she jokes that if she had continued ballet, those breasts would have made her fall flat on her face the moment she rose onto pointe.

That summer, after finishing the second year of middle school, they rent the garden floor of a two-story house surrounded by palm trees in Fenerbahçe. Since it is very close to Suat's house in Feneryolu, they see each other often. Ayşe spends her days swimming in the Kalamış bay with Belkıs Aran's son Pınar, her cousin Erkan, her friends Erkut and Güneri Cıvaoğlu, and the brothers Bâli and Bülent. With Pınar's small motorboat, they go to Moda Bay and meet Emine, who spends her summers there. All summer long, they drift between Moda and Fenerbahçe, swimming, cycling in the afternoons, and laughing at everything.

When her cousin Üstün, the son of Fazilet, comes to stay, Ayşe has to give him her room and move into her mother's. After browsing through her books, Üstün tells her that since she is interested in poetry, he will introduce her to a real poet. Ayşe finds him arrogant and resists, but Üstün insists that the poet is someone whose name is forbidden in Turkey. When she questions this, he explains that the poet is a communist. Wanting to impress him, Ayşe mentions that she knows a communist and tells him about Hüsrev Tökin. Üstün then declares that she has earned the right to read the poems

and, that night, reads Nazım Hikmet's poetry to her. Ayşe is deeply affected. Learning that Nazım Hikmet had to flee to Russia after being released from prison because of his ideas makes him even more fascinating to her. She recalls how her primary school gymnastics teacher had described the harsh conditions in Russia and claimed that athletes who spoke of the freedoms they saw in Turkey would be shot at the border. To Ayşe, all of this now feels both dangerous and mysterious. She secretly copies Üstün's poems into her notebook by hand, staying up past midnight.

After Üstün leaves, Sacide comes to stay, and a cot is placed in her mother's room again. Sacide will stay for two weeks before undergoing a minor fibroid surgery at a clinic in Nişantaşı. Ayşe walks with her to Fenerbahçe Beach, lies on the sand, and asks her everything she is curious about regarding communism. Sacide confirms that communists are indeed treated unjustly. One day, while they are talking, a young man approaches and, with permission, takes photographs of Ayşe.

The next day, her mother's friend Melahat calls from Suadiye to say that Ayşe's photograph has appeared in the newspaper *Son Posta* under the headline "Beach Beauties," alongside other young girls. Melahat's daughter Aysim is chosen as the beauty of Suadiye, and Ayşe as the beauty of Fenerbahçe. Her mother is furious when she hears this, while Ayşe secretly takes pleasure in her reaction. However, when she later looks at the newspaper her grandmother has quietly bought, she realizes that because of the hat she is wearing, it is nearly impossible to recognize her. Moreover, her name is printed incorrectly as "Ayşe Kalın."

Two nights before Sacide's surgery, they spend an evening at Todor in Kalamış, enjoying themselves until midnight. On the night of the operation, her mother stays with Sacide and returns home the following evening. That night, Ayşe wakes before dawn to the sound of a scream. Her grandmother is in her room, holding the telephone and crying. When Ayşe asks what has happened, her grandmother tells her that Sacide has died. For the first time in her life, Ayşe feels the full weight of grief. She returns to school carrying the pain of losing the only adult with whom she could speak freely about forbidden subjects.

Although her mother returns to Ankara, Ayşe continues to stay in that house with her grandmother until November. On the last weekend there, when she comes home from school, her grandmother confronts her, waving the notebook filled with Nazım Hikmet's poems and demanding to know where she found them and the names of all her communist acquaintances. Ayşe resists, warning that if her grandmother ever goes through her belongings again, she will never speak to her.

That evening, her uncle visits. He explains that in his youth he too had recited Nazım Hikmet's poems almost like prayers, but that with age and experience he had abandoned such ideas. He describes communism as a kind of utopia that only young people can believe in and warns that keeping such writings could harm both her and her family. Ayşe claims she has torn up the poems, but in reality she hides her notebook at the bottom of her laundry basket.

In this way, she slowly begins to realize that her country is living under the shadow of a growing paranoia.

Homeland Front

When she goes to Ankara during the school holidays, Ayşe finds her father deeply troubled. Whenever she gets up at night to go to the bathroom, she sees him sitting in the living room, his head in his hands, lost in thought. She eventually learns the reason from her grandmother. The government has asked her father to open a Homeland Front branch at the construction site in Gerze. In those years, in an effort to bolster popular support against the opposition, the Democrat Party had the names of those who joined the Homeland Front read out on the radio after the morning, noon, afternoon, and evening news broadcasts. The situation becomes so absurd that the governor of Istanbul, Ethem Yetkiner, establishes an association called the "Society of Those Who Do Not Listen to Agency News and Partisan Broadcasts."

Worried about her father's situation, Ayşe asks her grandmother whether she might have to leave the college. Her grandmother tells her that she will support her education but that, if necessary, she must be good enough to earn a scholarship. Ayşe reflects that scholarship students never get into trouble, whereas she herself commits such "serious offenses" as not turning off the lights on time, singing loudly, and chatting with Emine late into the night. She concludes that becoming a scholarship student is out of the question.

When she learns that her mother has begun selling family heirlooms, she writes to her father, saying that she can earn her own pocket money by giving private lessons if needed. Her father responds sharply: "Do not interfere in matters that do not concern you. It is my duty to educate you; it is your duty to be a good student. Let us not mix our responsibilities," effectively silencing her.

The Prank

Through relatives and friends working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ayşe's parents come to know many diplomats. Her mother, in particular, befriends the wives of the ambassadors of Sweden, Egypt, Spain, and Germany. When Ayşe is in Ankara, she is sometimes picked up on weekends in a limousine sent by the Egyptian ambassador so she can play with his daughter at the embassy. Whenever relations between Turkey and Egypt deteriorate, the ambassador distances himself from them, and Ayşe is secretly relieved to be spared these tedious visits. Bored by the formal and often dull world of diplomats, she frequently teases her cousin Orhan, who studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences and hopes to join the Foreign Ministry. Orhan often has dinner at their house before returning to the place he shares with fellow students.

One day, Orhan wants to take Ayşe to a party hosted by the Swedish ambassador's wife for her visiting niece. He insists that Ayşe must wear a black dress and advises her not to put on makeup. Her mother suggests a plaid dress sewn by her aunt, but Orhan firmly rejects the idea, saying it would be entirely inappropriate.

On the day of the party, the ambassador's wife calls Ayşe's mother to say that her niece is ill and the party has been canceled. At that moment, Ayşe and her mother decide to keep this from Orhan and turn it into a prank. That evening, Ayşe dresses in her mother's black skirt and blouse, puts on bright red lipstick, and tucks red roses between her breasts and behind one ear. When her father sees her, he is stunned, but once he learns about the joke, he eagerly joins in.

When Orhan arrives and sees Ayşe, he is horrified and says he cannot possibly take her to the party dressed like that. Her father counters that since she has made such an effort, he will take her himself if necessary. Faced with this, Orhan declares that he would rather not go to the party at all. Just as he is heading for the door, Ayşe and her parents burst into laughter, revealing the prank.

A Bride Sought for the Shah of Iran When Ayşe is in her final year of middle school or her first year of high school, she goes to Ankara for New Year's and her family hosts a reception at their home. During the evening, Feruz Şemsî, the First Secretary of the Iranian Embassy, shows her particular attention. He speaks with her at length and even sends his driver to the embassy to fetch a file, which he then asks her to examine. Inside are photographs of the Shah of Iran, both alone and with his former wife, Soraya, along with brochures about Iran. As Ayşe carries the file to her room, she notices her parents arguing in the corridor. Her father tells her to stop wandering about and go straight to her room.

After the guests leave, Ayşe asks her mother what has happened. She notices that her framed photograph is no longer in its usual place in the sitting room. When her father asks where that day's newspaper is and goes into the bedroom, her mother explains that Feruz had been looking for a suitable wife for the Shah of Iran, who had separated from his spouse, and had asked her father for Ayşe's photograph. Knowing that her mother hopes she will marry a diplomat, Ayşe jokingly asks whether she would approve of her going to Iran in this way. Her mother replies that she wants her to marry someone of equal standing. This surprises Ayşe, and for once, instead of resisting her, she feels a sense of tenderness toward her mother. The next day, her mother quietly asks for the photograph back and returns it to its place without her father's knowledge.

When Ayşe returns to school, Enise Önüt immediately questions her about what has happened. Surprised, Ayşe learns that she has been investigated by the Iranian Embassy and that the school has provided a very favorable report about her. In exchange for telling the story, she asks Enise not to share it with anyone. From then on, Enise grows closer to her and becomes more tolerant of some of her later mischief.

That winter, however, Ankara newspapers publish a piece, using the initials "A.K.," claiming that a girl studying at the college is among the prospective brides for the Shah of Iran. Later, Ayşe learns that after separating from his wife, the Shah had instructed all Foreign Ministry staff to find him a suitable spouse, and that hundreds of photographs of young women had been sent to the palace.

Being a “Collegiate Girl”

Those who are not in high school are not considered “collegiate.” Becoming one starts with being a *freshman*. However, since graduating from middle school is difficult, dozens of students fail to do so every year. Both in middle school and high school, everyone has the right to repeat a year once. In high school, some students leave not only because they fail but also because they get engaged, married, or go abroad.

As soon as Ayşe receives her middle school diploma, she takes off and throws away her navy-blue uniform, shirts, jacket, and shoes.

When she becomes a *freshman*, students from other schools join them. One of them is Tomris Gedik (Uyar). This way, she becomes classmates with Betin, whom she knows from Sosyal Apartment, and Betin’s close friends Kler and Feride. Just as Ayşe and İffet live almost like extensions of one another, this trio does the same. After spending two years in rooms for two or three people, they return to sleeping in the dormitory. This time, it does not have a view, but since she and İffet sleep side by side, they can chat at night.

For the foreign language course, Ayşe initially chooses German since she already knows it, but because İffet chooses French and insists that she do the same, Ayşe switches to French. Therefore, when her father praises her for not taking the easy route, she feels slightly embarrassed.

Now that they are “collegiate girls,” İffet buys herself a lipstick. Since wearing lipstick makes her lips stand out even more, Ayşe prefers to use her grandmother’s blush and mascara instead. The biggest offense at school is smoking. If a student is caught smoking, she receives a warning; the second time, her family is informed; the third time, she is expelled. Sometimes, non-smoking students take the blame to protect their friends who have been warned for smoking. When Ayşe and İffet share a room with Rengigül, they sometimes claim responsibility for the smoke in the room to protect her. When Ayşe herself attempts to smoke, she burns her eyelashes with a lighter, decides she is too clumsy, and gives up this curiosity altogether.

Friendship Over the Years

Everyone remains very close friends until graduation and begins attending reunion gatherings starting from the tenth year after graduating. By that time, most of them are married and have children. At the twentieth-year reunion, Ayşe is thirty-nine years old. While her friends proudly speak of their spouses and their children’s achievements, she is struggling with serious difficulties. Still, she does not reveal anything to anyone.

At the fortieth-year reunion, everyone attends except Tomris Gedik. By then, they treat one another with a much deeper care than ever before. That year, they stay together in the same rooms at a hotel in Polonezköy, go on a trip to Eastern Anatolia as a group, and meet frequently in an effort to make up for all the things they feel they failed to appreciate in the past.

Becoming a Young Woman

When there are 77 days left until graduation, the senior students organize an event called “77 Night.” On that day, students are allowed to do almost anything they want to the teachers—including spraying them with hoses. The senior girls are the natural guests of the 77 Night, though sometimes students from other classes are invited as well. Even though Ayşe is only a freshman, she is thrilled to see her name on the guest list.

Although she attends parties held at her friends’ homes between three in the afternoon and seven in the evening, these gatherings must be in places her grandmother approves of. For instance, she can easily go to parties at Mine (Koyuncuoğlu)’s apartment next to Narmanlı Apartment, because her grandmother can lean out of the kitchen window and see directly into their living room. At another party at Bilge Taşçıoğlu’s house, just two minutes away, she meets Çetin Emeç and Ercan Arıklı. Bilge and Çetin, as well as Mine and Şener Koyuncuoğlu, have been dating for nearly a year. In those days, “dating” means attending school events together, watching films at Yeni Melek Cinema, eating cake at Tilla, dancing cheek to cheek at weekend parties, and talking on the phone for hours. Ayşe, however, is not yet seeing anyone.

Since the theme of the 77 Night is “Dance at the Farm,” hay and logs are scattered around the party area, and the boys dress like cowboys. While Ayşe and İffet sit on the hay waiting to be asked to dance, Güven Osma –whom they met on the day Ayşe enrolled– comes over to greet her and sits with them. Soon his friends join them, and they all laugh together as they recount their mischief at school, such as how they once brought a donkey into the biology classroom.

The following week, when Ayşe and İffet are invited to a costume ball, Ayşe’s grandmother makes her a Hawaiian girl costume using a *peştemal* she has kept for years. However, while dancing with Güven, Ayşe realizes that her outfit keeps slipping down as she moves, which ruins her mood. As a result, she cannot dance freely that night. Still, after that evening, she and Güven begin to date. Since the chaperone requirement is lifted in high school, they attend all events together.

When Ayşe’s classmate Işıl Erim gets engaged to her boyfriend Akın Önalp at a nightclub called Süreyya, located on the ground floor of the apartment where Ayşe’s family lives in Ankara, Ayşe’s grandmother buys fabric and has a dress made for her. However, when Ayşe goes to Ankara, her mother refuses to let her attend the engagement party. After tearful arguments, Ayşe convinces her mother that it would be very rude not to attend her classmate’s engagement. As she is leaving the house that evening, her father tells her to be home by ten. Ayşe insists on returning at midnight. After a brief argument, her mother allows her to stay out until eleven. While dancing with Güven, he reminds her not to be late. They leave the engagement at ten past eleven. When Ayşe looks up on the street, she sees her parents waiting for her at the window. She immediately tells Güven not to stand too close to her. As they enter the building, they hear her father coming down the stairs to meet her.

Ayşe feels freer in Istanbul than in Ankara because her grandmother is extremely meticulous, and their arguments are usually about cleanliness. To trick her, Ayşe sometimes presses three fingers together and leaves cat paw-like marks on the bedspread at their summer house in Fenerbahçe. Each time, her grandmother thinks a cat has gotten in and washes the bedspread. Convinced that her belongings are being searched, Ayşe sometimes leaves notes in her books for her grandmother and mother to read. When she returns home and sees their gloomy faces, she knows they have read them. When she corresponds with her father, her mother insists on reading his letters to Ayşe. Sometimes Ayşe tears these letters up and throws them into the toilet.

Because of her family’s intrusive and controlling behavior, Ayşe misses the opportunity to go to the United States for a year on a Fulbright scholarship when she graduates from middle school. When she is nominated, her father calls the father of a cousin who had gone to America on the same scholarship two years earlier. The man says he deeply regrets sending his daughter because he misses her so much, and Ayşe’s father immediately withdraws her application. Ayşe, however, attributes this to jealousy.

Plane Crash

Around this time, the plane carrying Prime Minister Adnan Menderes to London for the Cyprus talks crashes. Menderes survives by clinging to a tree branch and is rescued by a farmer. Following the accident, the Republic of Cyprus is established with the London Agreement. However, since Menderes’s survival is attributed a divine meaning, his return to the country is celebrated with great fanfare.

Generational Conflict

In the summer of 1959, Ayşe moves their belongings once again to the house in Fenerbahçe with her grandmother and Hacer. Her mother joins them after they have settled in. During this period, her father no longer writes to her as often as he used to. Her grandmother frequently implies that they are experiencing financial difficulties because her father has refused to establish a “Vatan Cephesi” branch.

When her father visits one weekend, Ayşe asks him about this. He replies that he would rather be a man who is not wealthy but holds his head high than a rich man who lacks self-respect. During this conversation, he also tells Ayşe that he does not want her to be a girl who wanders the streets with boys. Ayşe objects, explaining that Güven is the son of her mother’s college friend Vedia and is a law student in Ankara.

After this conversation, she goes to her mother and scolds her for turning her father against her, asking why she was sent to a boarding school if she was expected to sit at home all the time. Her mother responds that she herself also attended such a school but was always accompanied by her father. Ayşe counters that this was twenty-five years ago and that times have changed.

When school begins, Ayşe and İffet –who are in a similar situation– skip school one day when classes end early and walk to Bebek. At Özsüt, since they do not have enough money, they order a single tea and share it. When they return, they pass by the guard pretending to be discussing something very important, and thus their act of skipping school goes unnoticed.

Becoming Political

During the 1959–1960 school year, while staying in a three-person room in Sage Hall, Rengigül stops attending school. Although the school calls her parents, who live in different cities, neither of them comes. As a result, Ayşe and İffet are left alone in the room again. They even use Rengigül's bed like a divan. But this is not their only privilege that year. Dr. Suna Kili begins teaching their Political Science class. Concepts such as fascism, communism, and liberalism take on real meaning in her lessons. Even if they are bedridden with a fever of forty degrees, they still attend her class.

Since both of them grew up in Ankara, they are already familiar with politics, but now they begin to engage with it consciously. They are aware that the government is performing poorly. Since the 1954 elections, the Democrat Party has acted contrary to its promises. Because Kırşehir voted for Osman Bölükbaşı's party in the 1954 elections, it was downgraded from a province to a district, while Nevşehir, which supported the Democrat Party, was upgraded from a district to a province. Opposition meetings and demonstrations are banned. High-ranking judges and civil servants are arbitrarily dismissed.

When Ayşe goes home on weekends, she spends hours reading the daily newspapers she has asked her grandmother to save for her, telling her that she is doing her politics homework. The moment her grandmother hears the word "politics," she warns Ayşe to stay away from it, saying that in this country those who get involved in politics lose their heads. After finishing her reading, Ayşe writes letters to her father and to Güven –telling her father about what she has learned in class and Güven about her daily life.

Although her father is cheerful and lively in conversation, his letters are usually plain and full of advice. However, ever since they began corresponding about national affairs, he writes as if he is truly conversing with her. For example, he talks about the political atmosphere in Ankara, the Tortum Hydroelectric Power Plant, and the Hirfanlı Dam. He recounts how, at the opening of the Hirfanlı Dam, unlike the engineers who finished their meals and left without waiting for the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, he remained at the table alone out of respect for the office of the prime minister.

On one of those politically turbulent days, Dr. Suna Kili enters the classroom and says that the topic of the day is liberalism, but she cannot continue. Her voice trembling, she says that one cannot speak of democracy in a country where an Investigation Commission exists. She explains that she cannot teach the lesson and asks the students to open their books and read the relevant pages silently. Since this is exactly the kind of incident Ayşe would want to tell her father, she decides to write to him about it over the weekend.

The Days Leading to the Coup

During the Easter holiday of 1960, as Ayşe spends time in Ankara with her parents, she realizes for the first time that she prefers being with her family over her friends. Almost every evening, they visit Aunt Sabiha, who works in the women's branch of the CHP, where they first discuss literature and poetry, and then politics. Around six o'clock, Hasan Âli Yücel also joins their conversations. During those same days, student protests erupt in both Ankara and Istanbul, leading to the declaration of martial law in both cities. Ayşe's school friend Ekin Kardam has her arm broken by the police while participating in these protests.

When Ayşe returns to school, one day as she leaves the library, an upperclassman named Efsa informs her that they will march from Harbiye to Taksim on Saturday to protest the Investigation Commission. She tells Ayşe to be in Harbiye at two o'clock if she wants to join and to bring Atatürk's *Nutuk* with her. The Investigation Commission consists of fifteen members from the Democrat Party and holds nearly unlimited authority.

That weekend, Ayşe goes, as usual, to her grandmother's house in Narmanlı Apartment. Since she has earned the right to attend the 2:30 matinee alone at the Yeni Melek Cinema on Saturdays, her grandmother assumes she will go to the movies again and offers to accompany her to Beyoğlu, saying she has errands there. Ayşe says she will not go to the cinema but will instead visit her newly married friend Rengin at her home in Bebek. Although her grandmother presses her with detailed questions, she is eventually convinced.

Soon after, however, there is a knock at the door. Their neighbor, Sabiha Hanım, warns them that trouble is expected around the cinema area and advises that Ayşe should not leave the house. As soon as Ayşe hears this, she rushes to her room and places pages she has torn from her Civics textbook, sections from *Nutuk*, into her bag. At that moment, her grandmother enters the room. After a brief argument, Ayşe escapes through the kitchen door.

As she walks toward Harbiye, she notices a large crowd moving forward while singing. She joins them. She takes the *Nutuk* pages from her bag and hands them to one of the young speakers; another person places a flag in her hand. Soon after, however, the police attack and chaos erupts. The flag slips from Ayşe's hand, her hair becomes disheveled, and the left sleeve of her leather coat is torn. After managing to get away from the crowd, she runs toward Nişantaşı and returns home around five o'clock.

Her grandmother is lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, saying that her father will call and that they will take her to Ankara. At that moment, their helper Hacer announces that her uncle has arrived. At first, Ayşe thinks her grandmother must have called him, but her uncle says he saw her among the protesters and insists she must have nothing to do with communists. He even threatens to report her to her father. Ayşe unexpectedly stands up to her uncle, who supports the Democrat Party, telling him that if he joins the party that rewards its supporters, he too would be rewarded. After recovering from his surprise, her uncle says he will not tell her father if she promises never to attend another protest. Just then, her grandmother enters and says Ayşe will surely realize her mistake within a couple of days. Ayşe continues to defy them both, declaring that she will personally write to her father about attending the march. And she does, describing everything in detail in a letter. Her father does not scold her in his reply; instead, he even announces that they will go on a family trip to Europe.

At this point, Ayşe Kulin returns to the hospital room where she had been waiting by her father's side. After leaving the hospital, they decide to go to Bodrum, but she recalls that whenever they plan such trips, they never actually happen. Indeed, the European trip never takes place; however, because of that plan, their house in Fenerbahçe is not rented out as it usually is. As a result, Ayşe meets Mehmet –whom she will later regret marrying –while vacationing in Büyükdada with her mother.

May 27

Although the sun has already risen, Ayşe and İffet are still asleep in their room when someone knocks on their door. When they both rush to open it, a girl who had woken up early to study for a chemistry exam says, "There's been a coup," and tells them to turn on their radios. Since they do not have one, they go to Mine Atafirat's room. On the radio, a firm voice is stating that Turkey remains committed to NATO and CENTO. Realizing that the military has taken over, they kiss each other in excitement.

Ayşe immediately runs to Gould Hall to find Suna Kili's room. Not knowing which door it is, she wanders the corridor until her physics teacher, Somerson, steps out and asks what she is doing there. Ayşe says she is looking for Dr. Kili to give her very important news. When the teacher shows her the room, Suna Kili opens the door with curlers in her hair. Ayşe expects her to be pleased when she delivers the news of the coup, but Suna Kili responds that coups are not good things. Ayşe is taken aback. As she returns to her room, convinced that everyone should be happy about the coup, she knocks on doors to share the news with the other girls. Yet, apart from a few friends from Ankara, almost no one shows much interest.

During the coup, her maternal cousin Necdet, who is in Geneva, does not return to Turkey. He first works at a law office in Switzerland and later moves to Nigeria. When they meet again years later, he is old, and Ayşe is approaching middle age.

In addition, Robert College's Field Day events, held annually since 1955, are canceled due to the coup. As a result, the tradition of selecting a "king" among the top-performing athletes cannot take

place. Ayşe had been chosen as queen of the spring of 1960 by that year's king, even though they were not romantically involved. However, since the customary ceremony at the Hilton Hotel cannot be held, this too never materializes.

The Road to Mehmet

While Ayşe spends June in Ankara, Hüviyet, the sister of her aunt Fazilet, stays with them for a few weeks. Hüviyet, who is the translator of the Brothers Grimm's Fairy Tales, is one of the rare people with whom Ayşe feels like an adult while conversing. She reminds Ayşe that there are people who have fallen into difficult circumstances as a result of the coup. When Ayşe asks her father the next morning what he thinks, he replies that he feels a deep sadness. This is a subject she can discuss at length with her father, but never with her mother. Indeed, her mother disapproves of almost everything about her and objects to nearly everything she does. Their relationship is so strained that when Ayşe hears her mother say, "If my daughter has kissed someone, I would throw myself out of this window," she retorts, "Then do it, mother."

In the summer, Istanbul families consider swimming in the sea and even tanning a necessity, often asking one another, "How many baths has your child had this summer?" by which they mean how many times they have gone swimming. After spending half of July at her uncle's and the other half at her aunt Sabahat's house, Ayşe goes with her mother to the Anadolu Club in Büyükdada in August. As soon as they arrive, they run into Ayşe's friends Alev and Ertem. While they are talking, Ertem's friends arrive, and he introduces them to Ayşe. One of them is Mehmet and the other is Yılmaz. They agree to meet at a table in the garden that evening, but Ayşe's mother is not pleased. After Yılmaz carries their luggage to their room and addresses her as "aunt," she is further annoyed by what she considers his crude manner of speaking.

After that evening, Ayşe frequently goes swimming with this group of friends. Eight days later, they decide to go for a drive, planning to split into groups of four, but Ayşe and Mehmet end up alone in the car. As she gets out of the car on the way back, she and Mehmet hold hands. The moment her mother sees this, she is furious. When they go up to their room, she calls Mehmet "a rich scoundrel" and says Ayşe will regret it in the future. She begins packing their belongings to leave. At that moment, Aunt Saliha knocks on the door, saying their voices can be heard downstairs and reminding Ayşe's mother that they have dinner plans at their friend Mualla's house. Sitare Hanım calms down briefly, points her finger at Ayşe in warning, and leaves the room.

The next day, they return to Istanbul. However, since Mehmet lives in Şişli, he shows up in front of the Narmanlı Apartment in his yellow convertible. Ayşe goes out to dinner with him, but feels uncomfortable when they run into Betül Mardin, the daughter in law of Aunt Sacide. While greeting her, Ayşe quickly says she did not know her mother was there, hoping she will not mention seeing her. Amid all this, she has forgotten about Güven. One day, when İffet invites both of them for tea while her parents are out and leaves them alone, Ayşe shyly admits that she has met Mehmet. Güven says he understands the essence of the matter and leaves. Ayşe stays behind for another hour, crying. When she leaves the house, a car pulls up. It is Güven. He tells her to get in. Once she does, he drives recklessly, as if he might crash. Ayşe closes her eyes in fear. They barely speak along the way. When they arrive in front of the Narmanlı Apartment, he stops the car. As Ayşe gets out, she warns him not to crash and says, "Nothing is worth dying or getting hurt for. I am not worth it." Güven replies, "Apparently not."

After spending her days trying to prevent Ayşe from meeting Mehmet, Sitare Hanım returns to Ankara. Since Ayşe is now in her final year, she is no longer a boarding student and comes home every day after school. Although she is supposed to use the school bus, Mehmet waits for her after classes. Meanwhile, Ayşe learns that Yılmaz is actually Mehmet's driver and has been transferred to the accounting department because of their friendship. Yet since he is always in the car with them, she cannot understand when he works or how he gets permission.

Ayşe also realizes that her grandmother, who was born into a wealthy family during the Ottoman era, accepted a modest life during the republic, and is now struggling financially, is more lenient toward Mehmet, whose father owns a sock factory. For this reason, she allows Ayşe to go to dinner with him at the Hilton one evening. That night, Mehmet arrives with a corsage for Ayşe and a box of chocolates for her grandmother. Her grandmother concludes that he is a well mannered young man.

Marriage

After a while, Mehmet's mother, aunt, and his sister Tomris come to Narmanlı Apartment to ask for Ayşe's hand in marriage. The moment Sitare Hanım sees them getting out of the car, she throws herself onto the bed. Ayşe had actually met Mehmet's mother two weeks earlier when Mehmet had forgotten his wallet at home and she came down to the car for a brief conversation. Eventually, her mother reluctantly gets up, drinks a bit of whisky, and joins them. Throughout the evening, they talk about mutual acquaintances and even engage in some gossip. That night, Sitare Hanım gives her consent for her daughter's marriage.

Although Mehmet is only twenty-two and not attending university, they decide that both of them will pursue higher education after getting married. Ayşe dreams of studying in America, believing she might secure a scholarship there. Her main motivation for marrying Mehmet is to live independently, free from her family's constant supervision.

Two weeks later, Mehmet's mother goes to Ankara to formally ask for Ayşe's hand from her father. At the time, her father is overseeing the construction of the Middle East Technical University and has left behind his difficult days. The family has moved from Soysal Apartment to the upper floor of a two-story house with a garden in Kavaklıdere. On the ground floor lives the landlady, Nazlı Başan, who is a friend of Ayşe's mother. Although Ayşe is not in Ankara at the time, she takes comfort in knowing that her mother has arranged the house exactly as she likes and can host guests there freely.

After that evening, her father writes her a letter saying he intends to conduct a background check on Mehmet and asks, "Why Mehmet?" Ayşe finds this humiliating and asks him not to proceed with such an investigation. She also avoids answering his question. In February, their engagement ceremony is held in the Kavaklıdere house on Mehmet's birthday. After the ceremony, as they head to Süreyya to dance, Ayşe turns to her father and asks what time she should return home, but her father tells her that she is now an engaged young woman. Ayşe thinks to herself, "That's exactly why, father."

At that time, Mehmet's uncle is serving as the foreign minister, and together they attend the trials held on Yassıada. However, seeing the defendants makes Ayşe question her presence there. Adnan Menderes appears exhausted and broken, while Celal Bayar looks upright and arrogant. Considering the state of the country, Ayşe's father suggests having a modest wedding, but Mehmet's mother insists on organizing a grand ceremony worthy of her only son and future daughter-in-law.

That year, Ayşe manages both to attend almost all social events with Mehmet's family and to graduate. Although she is allowed to invite only five or six people to her graduation ceremony, she arranges fifteen invitations to include both her own relatives and Mehmet's family. As a result, when she goes on stage to receive her diploma, a tremendous applause erupts. Everyone she loves stands up and cheers for her. Afterwards, her grandmother gifts her a bee-shaped brooch made from a piece of old jewelry, and her mother gives her an amethyst cat-shaped brooch purchased from Adler, demonstrating how much they value her education.

Meanwhile, her family prepares an elaborate trousseau, from tablecloths to bedspreads, and sends everything to Mehmet's house in a suitcase brought from America for display. Later, Ayşe learns that her family financed all of this by selling a plot of land they owned in Kavaklıdere.

Finally, the wedding takes place at the Hilton with 750 guests. Ayşe descends the stairs on her father's arm, passing between burning torches to the poolside, where Mehmet joins her. Not knowing what else to do, they begin to dance. Afterwards, they go around greeting each guest one by one. The next day, when they arrive at the airport to fly to Rome, they find both families there. Her father whispers in her ear a sentence in German from a book he used to read to her as a child: "The little rabbit has gone far away on its own." It is at that moment that Ayşe sees her father cry for the first time.

Letters from London

After their honeymoon, Ayşe and Mehmet go to London. From there, Ayşe sends letters to her mother and father. In her first letter, she describes the shock she experiences upon learning that her high school diploma is not recognized there. She explains that in order to obtain a valid diploma, she must take exams covering both middle school and high school subjects at two levels, "ordinary" and "advanced." For this, she needs to enroll in a "Davies School," which has branches everywhere.

She sends her second letter only to her father. She writes about her sorrow over the execution of Adnan Menderes. Moreover, when she goes to Midland Bank to withdraw money, a young clerk reacts unpleasantly upon learning that she is Turkish, muttering something under his breath. When Ayşe asks what he said, the clerk asks, "You killed your prime minister, how do you feel?" Furious, Ayşe replies that she did not kill the prime minister, that she is there as a customer, and that his job is not to express opinions but to do his work.

However, her discomfort is not limited to this. Mehmet, during his years in England, has not obtained either a middle school or high school diploma. He also has no real interest in attending university and claims that as long as his father owns a factory, he will not need one. Ayşe feels deep regret for marrying a man who sees a diploma as nothing more than a piece of paper. Still, following her father's usual advice, she says she will try to accept him as he is. She then turns again to politics, predicting that the executions, even if not directly the responsibility of the Republican People's Party, will harm it in the long run.

In the letter she sends to her mother, she describes the tiny two-story house they have rented on Seymour Street. One of the things that surprises her most is that there is no tap in the toilet, while there is one beside the bed. They will wash themselves and brush their teeth there, since apart from the kitchen sink, this is the only tap in the house. The bathroom contains only a bathtub, meaning they will have to wash their hair and bodies in still water. When the landlord tries to explain the flushing system to them because they are Turkish, Ayşe cannot resist pointing out that while Europeans used commodes, the Ottoman Empire already had its own system, revealing, for the first time to Mehmet, her somewhat arrogant side.

On the other hand, the house is heated by central heating rather than coin-operated systems, which makes it especially comfortable in winter. They have purchased all their belongings from Selfridges, a five-story department store much larger than the Lion store in Istanbul, with different goods on each floor. When they discover that one of the sales staff is a Turkish man named Atilla, they invite him and his wife Barbara, who works as a secretary, to their home. Ayşe subtly remarks that middle-class women there work while upper-class women engage in association activities, intending to provoke her mother. She also mentions that she has sent wool blouses she bought from Marks & Spencer to her grandmother's address. She ends the letter by saying that Mehmet has called to pick her up so they can go watch Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

In a later letter to her father, she writes that she is pleased about the formation of a coalition government under İnönü. She says she has cooked her first meal, though she burns the bottom of the pot every time. Since it is difficult to employ a live-in maid in such a small house, they only hire someone to do ironing, so she will not burn Mehmet's shirts and ties again. She admits, with some regret, that she prevented her father from investigating Mehmet before the marriage but says she is beginning to accept the situation. Indeed, Mehmet has enrolled in a Business Administration and Finance program at a Technical College, while she has started attending a Davies School to obtain her diploma.

On a New Life

While living in flat London, Ayşe finds herself longing for Istanbul's hills, its narrow stairways, the sudden glimpse of the sea at unexpected corners, the seagulls, boiled corn sold from large cauldrons, wafer halva, and simit. She feels like a stranger among the girls at her school, all packed into a single building, with their short skirts and the Cockney accent they speak. At the same time, she feels a quiet sadness seeing Mehmet, who enrolled in school at her insistence, studying every evening. It is the first time she realizes that he is someone who adapts himself to the person he is with.

Yet over time, she begins to grow accustomed both to London and to Mehmet. The warmth she receives from many people makes the transition easier. For instance, when she enters a bar, she is greeted with a casual "hello love." She feels sympathy for these people who are only just becoming familiar with American-origin conveniences such as showers, ice machines, and central heating, whose water pipes run outside buildings and freeze, and who struggle even to mix hot and cold water while bathing. She admires the fact that, despite severe shortages during the Second World War, they did not resort to black markets. She comes to believe that the English are a nation with a distinct character and never regrets moving to London.

However, London's fog can sometimes be frightening. One Sunday, when she stretches her arm out of the window and sees it disappear into the fog, she ignores the warning that pregnant women should not go outside and steps out with Mehmet. Within seconds, they lose their way in the fog. Only after accidentally bumping into two policemen are they able to find their way back home with their help. After months filled with such new experiences, they welcome the New Year in Copenhagen with their friends, celebrating in a seafood restaurant.

The First Birth

Her first son, Mete, is born on a snowy day in London. The moment Ayşe sees him, she is captivated by his bright blond hair. During the birth, her parents are in Ankara, while her mother-in-law and father-in-law are in Switzerland, having stopped there on their way to attend the delivery. The doctor asks Ayşe whether she wants to breastfeed and recommends baby formula. Since Ayşe knows nothing about the importance of breast milk, she agrees to use formula. As a result, she is given an injection to stop her milk production.

However, when her mother-in-law arrives and learns of this, she immediately begins to explain the benefits of breastfeeding. She even offers Ayşe a diamond ring as an incentive, saying she will give it to her if she breastfeeds the baby. Ayşe replies that she does not need a bribe to nurse her child. When her mother-in-law finds out that Mete will be circumcised, she objects to this as well. This time, however, Ayşe does not change her mind. When her mother-in-law again offers a bribe to dissuade her, Ayşe recounts a story: an engineer working with her father had once been transferred to Ankara for the sake of his two young children, and the engineer's wife had brought a silver tray as a gift. Her father had the tray returned. Later, the woman personally brought two coffee cups and asked only for permission to express her gratitude. When her mother-in-law remarks that those who accept such gifts become wealthy and that one should not be so proud, Ayşe emphasizes that she is her father's daughter. She goes ahead with Mete's circumcision.

After another injection intended to restore her milk supply, her breasts fill with milk, but Mete refuses to nurse. The nurse explains that he has become accustomed to the bottle. They try a few more times, but during this period Ayşe suffers greatly from the pain of engorgement. Eventually, they abandon the idea of breastfeeding, and she is given another injection to stop the milk once again.

They return home from the hospital with an Irish nurse whom her mother-in-law has arranged for three weeks. The nurse stays in the basement with the baby. On a weekend when the nurse is off duty, Ayşe falls asleep in the living room with her baby. Since the heating system shuts off at night, she wakes up stiff from the cold. She spends the night going up and down the stairs repeatedly to wash the baby and change diapers as he vomits, all without waking Mehmet. In the morning, her in-laws arrive, and since she has not even managed to change her clothes, her mother-in-law scolds her. At that moment, Ayşe goes into the bedroom under the pretense of getting dressed and quietly cries on the bed.

After the nurse leaves, her own mother comes to help and takes her place in the basement. Ayşe's mother has come to London amid rumors of a coup in Turkey. Indeed, on February 22, an attempted coup is carried out in Ankara by Military Academy Commander Talat Aydemir and his associates. Although the attempt is suppressed, it leaves everyone unsettled, especially those connected to politics.

While Her Mother Is in London

While Sitare Hanım is in London, her friends from Ankara, the famous soprano Leyla Gencer and Cenap And, the owner of Kavaklıdere wines, are also in the city, so they arrange to meet for dinner one evening at the Savoy Hotel. Mehmet drives Sitare Hanım, elegantly dressed for the night, to the hotel. Hours later, as Ayşe is awake to give Mete his night feeding, her mother returns. When Ayşe asks how the evening went, her mother says she was utterly embarrassed.

Because Leyla Gencer has put herself on vocal rest ahead of her concert the next day, Sitare Hanım is left alone with Cenap Bey. Cenap Bey, who lost his wife in a traffic accident and has fallen out with his son Metin, begins to recount his troubles in tears. As he cries, Sitare Hanım grows increasingly anxious that others will think she has made him cry out of love, and the more he cries, the more convinced she becomes that she has made a fool of herself.

Seeing how much her mother cares about what others think –even to the point of ruining her own evening– Ayşe feels relieved that she chose to marry and live apart from her rather than continue living with her after high school. She resists placing such importance on the opinions of strangers.

Years later, during a conversation with Güneri Civaoglu, she learns that in her youth, when her mother walked in high heels, young men would line up along the walls to watch her. She can never quite understand the source of this conservatism, which seems so at odds with her mother's lively personality and appearance.

Even though more than forty days have passed since the birth, Sitare Hanım does not allow Ayşe to do any housework. She takes care of the shopping, cleaning, cooking, and even looks after Mete at night. In the mornings, Ayşe takes Mete for walks in Hyde Park. In the evenings, while Mehmet watches television, mother and daughter sit together in the kitchen or in the basement where Mete stays, talking. Mehmet has declared Wednesdays his whisky night, and every week he settles in front of the television and drinks until he is drunk. Sitare Hanım finds this odd and questions why he sits at home drinking alone.

One Wednesday evening, Mehmet carries his whisky, water, and glass on a tray to the television room, while Ayşe is in the kitchen with her mother. When her mother goes downstairs to check on Mete, Ayşe notices that the kitchen trash bin is full. As her mother goes down, Ayşe follows with the garbage bag. A moment later, she slips and tumbles down the stairs with the bag. The contents scatter everywhere and spill all over her. At that moment, her mother says, "Is taking out the trash your job when your grown husband is around?" Mehmet, standing at the top of the stairs, responds, "What would happen if she did it just once? Would it stick to her hand?" When Ayşe tells him to go watch his match, Mehmet retorts, "So I should go and let your mother keep criticizing me?" and shouts at Sitare Hanım, "You've never liked me from the beginning."

Ayşe immediately asks him to apologize to her mother. When he refuses, she rushes into the bedroom and begins packing her belongings. Shortly after, while she is stuffing her things into a suitcase, her mother and Mehmet appear at the door. When her mother asks what she will do about Mete, Ayşe suddenly realizes in her anger that she has momentarily forgotten her own child. She bursts into tears. Her mother says that Mehmet has apologized and starts taking her belongings out of the suitcase. After Mehmet leaves, she scolds Ayşe, saying, "You almost turned me into a mother-in-law who breaks up a home." The next day, toward evening, she announces that she will spend her final week in London at the Cumberland Hotel and moves there. Knowing it is impossible to change her mother's mind, Ayşe does not insist that she stay after everything that has happened.

The next morning, her mother returns, cooks, takes care of Mete, and later the two of them go together with the baby to the hotel lobby. While having afternoon tea, they eat so much cake that her mother says she does not want dinner and goes up to her room. The next morning, after Mehmet leaves the house, the phone rings. In an excited voice, Sitare Hanım asks, "Do you know what happened last night?" and begins to explain. After Ayşe left, an English man from Manchester approached her, invited her to dinner, and when she refused, followed her into the elevator and all the way to her room. Frightened, Sitare Hanım went down to reception and asked to be escorted to her room. With a bellboy accompanying her, she returned to her room but could not sleep until three in the morning out of fear. She concludes that if they harass even a woman of her age, the English must be perverse –though she is only forty-three. Ayşe bursts into laughter while listening. When her mother tells her not to mention this to Mehmet, Ayşe asks what would happen if he knew. Her mother replies that she does not want to be embarrassed.

After a few uneasy days, Sitare Hanım returns to Ankara, leaving all the money in her pocket to Ayşe.

Alone with Mete

After her mother leaves, Ayşe spends all her time with Mete. During the day, when they go to Hyde Park, her son watches the leaves on the trees while she watches him. Although she often sees Peter O'Toole, who starred in *Lawrence of Arabia*, in the park with his wife and children, she never greets him. She is disturbed by the way Turks are portrayed in the film and hesitates to approach him for fear of saying something negative.

At night, she stays awake with Mete in the living room so she can put him to sleep without waking Mehmet. She can only sleep after Mete falls asleep, but because she hardly moves so as not to

disturb him, her whole body becomes stiff and sore. During the day, she studies while Mete is asleep. After hiring a Swedish nanny named Miss Linne, she is finally able to attend her university classes regularly. However, the nanny scolds Mehmet for smoking, claiming he might carry germs from outside, and even refuses to let either of them touch Mete. Eventually, Ayşe decides they can no longer work with her, though she worries that the woman might try to take the baby. When Mehmet tells the nanny she is dismissed, the woman rushes to the basement, grabs Mete, carries him upstairs to their room, and locks the door. But once she realizes she has truly been fired, she leaves abruptly without even looking back at the baby.

Friends

Within a year, Ayşe grows fond of London with its changeable weather, parks, and wide streets. She especially loves Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, where every Sunday people can stand on a stool and speak freely about anything from communism to atheism. At university, she forms a group of five friends, four men and one woman, but she never invites them home. In fact, when they once invite Mehmet's Chinese friend Ho over, they are bored out of their minds.

During a trip to Portugal, a young man who hosts them in his home gives them a firsthand view of how oppressive the Salazar regime is. At dinner, they talk about nothing but the regime. The young man's father asks them to share everything they have heard with those who are unaware of the situation. After leaving, Ayşe wonders whether Menderes might have turned into a dictator like Salazar if the coup had not occurred, but Mehmet, who dislikes political discussions, brushes it off with jokes.

They also spend time with Turkish friends living in London. Ayşe's childhood friend Ömer Çavuşoğlu and her high school classmate Orhan Taylan Mete are there as well. Meanwhile, Mehmet becomes friends with Eren, one of Ayşe's acquaintances studying mining engineering in Birmingham. Through a gallery owner known to Eren, Mehmet buys a Sunbeam sports car. On weekends, Eren and his girlfriend often stay with them. They also frequently meet Mehmet Konuralp, Zeynep Tarzi, Nur Vergin, and Günerman, who amusingly introduces himself to English girls as "Philip from France." Mehmet and Ayşe also spend time with Atilla, whom they met at Selfridge, often going to horse races together. When Mehmet's school friend Yücel Lugal returns from Oxford and the United States and begins working as a chief architect in Oxford's city planning office, they start spending weekends with him and his wife Dinah. On Friday and Saturday nights, they go out dancing in large groups. Even when Ayşe becomes pregnant again, she does not give up dancing.

Holiday in Turkey

In the summer, they send Mete to Turkey with the nanny. Ayşe and Mehmet then set off by car, traveling along the French coast before eventually arriving in Istanbul. When her family learns that she is pregnant again, they are not particularly pleased. Her grandmother, especially, questions her all summer about why she is having a second child. Through this, Ayşe learns that when her grandmother's sister Suat was born, her grandmother had been so jealous that she was sent away for a few months to her grandfather's mansion in Eyüp.

While Ayşe and Mehmet stay at Mehmet's family home in Büyükkada, her parents stay at the Anadolu Club. Still, Ayşe makes sure to have dinner with them every evening, and for the first time, she spends a summer seeing her father this frequently. At night, however, they gather with friends and go dancing at various nightclubs around Istanbul.

One day, when they visit Eren's house in Yeniköy, his grandmother, impressed by Ayşe, asks whether she has French ancestry. Although Ayşe insists she does not, the woman remains unconvinced. Finally, thinking of Günerman, she jokingly claims they have a distant relative named Philip, which satisfies her. Later, when Eren's English girlfriend moves to her uncle's house in Suadiye due to problems with her family, they begin visiting Suadiye frequently as well.

One August morning, as Ayşe and Mehmet sit down for breakfast on the balcony, Mehmet places the radio on the table. However, his father asks him to turn it off, saying that he is observing a day of mourning. Curious about who has died, Ayşe listens as he explains that Marilyn Monroe has committed suicide, calling her a victim of her own beauty.

Back to London

At the end of the summer, they return to London and move from Seymour Street to Seymour Place. This time, they live in a larger flat with two bedrooms and a spacious living room. After their nanny leaves due to old age, they hire a young girl named Jean. In November, when Yücel and Dihan visit with their child Cengiz, Ayşe and Mehmet leave the children with Jean and go out. When they come out of the cinema, the city is covered in dense fog. Since Ayşe is pregnant again, what might have been an amusing experience turns into a dangerous one. Passersby bump into her without noticing. After finding a police officer, they take the metro with his help. When they get off, they wait in line for officers who escort people home, and eventually reach their house safely with assistance.

Following this period, the British government passes a law requiring filtration systems and banning coal use. This fog becomes the last one Ayşe witnesses in London.

On November 22, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas shocks everyone, followed by the killing of his assassin by another man. That week, when they attend the theater, the actors hold a minute of silence in Kennedy's honor. Developments in the United States in fashion, music, art, literature, lifestyle, and politics begin to spread rapidly across other parts of the world as well.

Ali

Ayşe gives birth to her second son, Ali, on a winter day. This time, the birth happens during the day while she is fully awake, and when the baby is placed in her arms immediately after being born, she can hardly believe her eyes. He has thick, jet-black hair standing upright like a brush and dark eyes, unlike Mete, who is blond. She is also startled by the fluid covering his body, and the nurse quickly takes him away to be cleaned.

Since everyone had devoted all their energy to the first baby the previous year, neither her mother nor Mehmet's family comes for this birth. Ayşe is left on her own at home, free to act as she wishes without anyone interfering. At times, she deliberately wears her blouse inside out or buttons her cardigan incorrectly. Her only regret is that she can no longer attend university. Because Jean cannot manage two babies, including a newborn, on her own, she handles the laundry and ironing while Ayşe takes care of Ali.

Unlike Mete, Ali is a very calm baby. His sleep is regular, and he rarely cries during the day. Throughout his life, he continues to be the calmest among his siblings.

News from Home

Ayşe receives news about Turkey through letters from her family. Her grandmother writes about the fire that destroyed the Kefeli Hotel in Sarıyer and laments that the world she once knew is disappearing day by day. Ayşe, whose own homes are all still intact, finds this somewhat exaggerated. Her mother describes how frightened she was by a plane crash in Ankara. That day, Muhtittin Bey leaves home saying he is going to Ulus. Shortly afterward, a plane crashes in Ulus Square, killing 91 people. Not knowing her husband's fate, Sitare Hanım is overwhelmed with fear. When Muhtittin Bey returns home later that evening, she learns that he had gone to the university instead of Ulus.

In his letter, her father criticizes the declaration of May 27 as the Day of Freedom and Constitution, complaining that there are already too many public holidays. He also recounts how four commanders, dissatisfied with the country's direction, visit İnönü, who responds by asking, "I see that you are here – but who, then, is in command of the armies?" In a later letter, he writes that Talat Aydemir and his associates seized the radio station, but that İnönü ultimately had all the soldiers involved in the uprising arrested.

Back to Turkey Again

They spend the summer of 1963 in Büyükada, much like the previous year. This time, however, Ayşe sees her father very little because he is busy with the university construction. The most striking event of that summer is that their nanny, Jean, falls in love with the cook of Mehmet's sister Tomris. The fact that the cook already has a religious wife does not discourage her. The entire household cooperates to prevent them from meeting, and when they return to London, Jean is dismissed.

Modeling

Back in London, Ayşe begins to question whether she is truly happy whenever she is alone at home. She cannot decide whether she is happy or unhappy. She does not even know where Mehmet goes

every morning, despite the way he dresses carefully before leaving, yet she chooses not to pursue her suspicions. Around this time, her cousin Semra comes to London for a month. Mehmet convinces Ayşe to let Semra use the bedroom while he sleeps in the living room, and he arranges for a live-in woman so Ayşe can go out more freely.

One day, while walking along Regent Street, Ayşe and Semra notice a group of attractive girls coming out of a building. Seeing the sign for the Lucy Clayton Modeling School, Semra suggests going in for fun. Inside, a woman approaches them, and when Semra asks whether they could become models, the woman asks if they want to be runway models or photographic models. Semra replies that either would be fine. The woman asks them to stand and says that runway modeling requires a minimum height of 1.72 meters, meaning they are just on the borderline. She then takes them to the director's office.

The director explains that modeling usually starts at seventeen and ends in the late twenties, telling Semra she is too old at thirty. Ayşe, however, is of suitable age. When he comments that Eastern women are more flexible, Ayşe objects, saying they are not Eastern. He hands her some brochures and tells her she can enroll in the next course.

After leaving, they buy two identical dresses at Fenwicks; both of them would be considered size zero by today's standards.

After Semra returns to Turkey, Ayşe decides, with Mehmet's approval, to attend the modeling course. There, she receives training in manicure, makeup, and graceful walking, and even earns a scholarship for photographic modeling. However, she misses her first class because she takes a job at a fur shop, presenting furs to customers from out of town. She puts the fur on and takes it off, carries it over her shoulder, and lets it trail on the ground. In the end, although she is paid ten pounds, she feels embarrassed. After signing the receipt and taking the money, she decides never to do such work again.

That evening, she tells Mehmet that she had joined the modeling course just to pass the time. Being at home with two children makes her wonder constantly where he goes and what he does. Since she is no longer attending school either, she feels there is no real reason for them to stay in London. Eventually, she suggests that it would be better to return to Turkey. Mehmet agrees and proposes that they go in the summer and not come back.

Return

At the end of the summer of 1964, they do not go back to London. Instead, they rent an apartment in Maçka, across from the park, and begin furnishing it. Around this time, a crisis erupts between their nanny Laura, Ayşe's mother, and her mother-in-law. Laura is a large, headstrong woman who smokes heavily. While staying at Mehmet's family home in Büyükdada, she returns late one evening, past her permitted hour, and gets into an argument with Mehmet's mother. Mehmet's mother scolds her in French, while Laura responds in English. Unable to understand each other, they call Ayşe's mother to act as a translator.

Because they want Laura to sign a document stating that she has no financial claims against them, they lock her in the bathroom until Ayşe's mother arrives. About half an hour later, when the door is opened and the situation is explained, Laura reacts aggressively, first attacking Ayşe's mother and then Mehmet's mother. Ayşe and Mehmet only learn about the incident later, when they go to Büyükdada and hear it from Tomris. As they listen to the story, they both burst into laughter. It becomes the last moment they genuinely enjoy together.

Resignation Again

Her father assigns certain technical aspects of the university construction to an engineer named Süleyman Demirel, who had previously worked under him and later been appointed Director of the State Hydraulic Works in his place. However, when Demirel requests a tax privilege granted to municipalities for his own company, her father refuses. Demirel then takes the matter to the rector and persuades Kemal Kurdaş to approve his request. Unable to accept this infringement on his authority, her father resigns again.

Separation

They had their home furnished by interior designer Yıldırım Koçaklıoğlu's company, İnterno. The first wall-to-wall carpet produced in Turkey had been woven for a hotel; the second was made for their house. However, they spent most of their time outside. On Friday nights, they would go out to dinner with friends and then go dancing at a place called Reşat. They would return home in the morning after having breakfast at the Hilton. In the afternoon, they would gather again at someone's house, and the entertainment would continue until Sunday afternoon. Since Mehmet played poker, weekends were almost always spent playing. Moreover, their social circle in Istanbul was very different from the one in London. Ayşe found it strange that her friendship with Abdi İpekçi seemed to bother his wife. When she said they had been happier in London, Mehmet replied, "This isn't your father's civil servant city, Ankara."

By October, Ayşe became convinced that the marriage would not work. One morning, while the nanny was off, she prepared breakfast for her children and realized she was unhappy. Outside, it had begun to snow lightly. When she turned on the tape recorder, the song *Tombe La Neige* started playing. This was the same song to which Mehmet had once asked another woman to dance.

One morning at six, she called her father, knowing he would be awake, and told him she was coming to Ankara. At ten, Mehmet left the house as usual. Ayşe dressed the children and gave the nanny the day off. While reading the newspaper, the doorbell rang. It was her father. After talking with her, he had immediately taken a plane and come. Ayşe told him how unhappy she was, and he said he was already aware. However, he wanted to speak with Mehmet's family to ensure things ended properly. While her father went to see them, Ayşe called Mehmet. When he arrived, she told him her decision. Deep down, she wanted him to ask for a second chance, but he said nothing. Instead, he got angry, assuming she had called her father. Ayşe did not explain that her father had come on his own. When Mehmet said, "This is my house! I pay for it!" Ayşe was freed from any sense of guilt about her decision. They embraced at the door, and after he left, Ayşe looked around the house that was no longer hers.

When her father called to say he had spoken with Mehmet's family, Ayşe said she wanted to visit them before leaving Istanbul. When she went, her mother-in-law accused her of being spoiled and said she lacked nothing. She also criticized Ayşe's father for trying to separate them instead of bringing them together. Ayşe replied that her father understood the situation better. Her father-in-law, meanwhile, sat silently and cried. Ayşe bent down, embraced him, and as his tears increased, she felt even more sorrow, realizing he was the one in that family who loved her most. After leaving, she sat on the dark staircase and cried uncontrollably.

Her father left them alone at dinner, thinking they might talk, but Mehmet hurried to keep his evening plans. After dinner, he took Ayşe and the children by car ferry to Haydarpaşa, where they met her father at the station. They settled into two connected compartments. The children slept on the beds, while Ayşe and her father took the bunks. The children were delighted by their first train journey. But Ayşe felt pain at leading them into a life without both parents together.

Towards morning, her father murmured, "I am so, so sorry, my daughter. I am sorry I couldn't protect you. From now on, let's be very careful. Never be sad again." Ayşe replied, "It's not your fault, father. That's just how life is."

THEMES

SOCIETY

Ethnic Identity In Ayşe Kulin's family, ethnic identity is a decisive factor. Her great-aunt Sabahat is unable to marry the Armenian man she loves for many years. This only becomes possible after the family patriarch, Ahmet Reşat Bey, has grown old and lost his authority, and even then on the condition that Aram converts to Islam and becomes Bâlâ. Despite this, their marriage is not celebrated by the family. However, although such rigidity exists regarding marriage, non-Muslims are still present among family friends. For instance, during the September 6–7 events, the family considers visiting their friends Mari and Sava out of concern, and since Sava refuses to leave his home, they host only Mari and her son Niko.

Class Ahmet Reşat Yediç, once an influential and distinguished statesman in the Ottoman period, becomes the head of a household trying to fit the belongings moved from a mansion into an apartment during the Republican era. As his power and influence decline, his economic situation also weakens. Although Sabahat's marriage is not celebrated ostensibly because she marries an Armenian man, the family's diminished financial means also play a significant role. Thus, the Republican period can be seen as a time when formerly prominent Ottoman elites, despite their Western education, experienced downward class mobility.

Gender As a girl, Ayşe Kulin is constantly under surveillance in every aspect of her life. For example, even attending a friend's engagement held in the venue beneath their Ankara home requires considerable effort to gain permission. As a result of these pressures, she seeks freedom through early marriage and chooses Mehmet Sarper, whom her family barely knows, over Güven Osma, the son of her mother's friend. In this sense, the entire work can be read as a depiction of the everyday life that pushes Ayşe Kulin toward this marriage.

Generational Conflict Ayşe Kulin's mother, Sitare, is also an educated woman and a graduate of Robert College, yet she is in constant conflict with her daughter because the norms of Ayşe's time differ from her own youth. For instance, she claims that her father used to escort her everywhere, opposing Ayşe's desire to go out alone. This clashes with Ayşe's wish to enter the adult world. Similarly, as Ayşe develops a political identity through Nâzım Hikmet's poetry and Dr. Suna Kili's classes, she conflicts with her uncle and grandmother. While her grandmother believes anyone involved in politics will pay a price and her uncle thinks she is too young to hold political views, Ayşe resists them. This conflict evolves further with the introduction of the idea of marriage.

Education Ayşe Kulin's family consistently demonstrates the importance they place on her education. For example, after her graduation ceremony, they gift her jewelry almost as if it were a wedding present. Kulin is on the verge of reaping the benefits of this investment by entering the London School of Economics during her time in London, yet her pregnancy prevents her from transforming this material and emotional investment into a sustained academic or professional trajectory, at least in her early twenties.

POLITICS

Conflict Ayşe Kulin's father, Muhittin Kulin, is an engineer working in state institutions and does not hesitate to confront even ministers when faced with actions that violate merit. For this reason, he resigns frequently. Particularly during the Democratic Party era, while working as a contractor, he faces political pressure for refusing to open a "Vatan Cephesi" branch at his construction site, yet he does not abandon his principles. Ayşe Kulin deeply respects this stance. Indeed, when her mother-in-law offers her a bribe to breastfeed her baby after her first childbirth, she recounts a story illustrating her father's opposition to such practices. When her mother-in-law argues that officials without principles become wealthy, Ayşe identifies herself as her father's daughter. Thus, her father's political struggles instill in her a strong sense of idealism.

RELATIONSHIPS

Betrayal When Ayşe Kulin marries, she imagines a life in which she will study at a university away from her family. However, upon arriving in London, she learns that her husband, despite having lived in England for years, has failed to obtain even a basic school diploma. His dismissive attitude toward education deeply disappoints her. This constitutes her first sense of betrayal. Over time, she realizes that he does not attend the school he promised to enroll in, and after returning to Istanbul, she witnesses his interest in other women. Even on the day she declares her decision to leave him, Mehmet appears more concerned with keeping up with his evening plans than with the gravity of their separation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Young Ayşe Kulin learns and experiences nearly everything in a Turkey that has transitioned to a multi-party system during a period when the Democratic Party is increasing its political pressure. In this context, how might the multi-party system have influenced the generational conflict within her family?

2. How does Ayşe Kulin's experience at Robert College shape her in terms of her relationship to local culture, social distance, and gender roles? How can this be evaluated within the context of Cold War Turkey, which strongly aligned itself with the Western bloc?
3. What does this work suggest about the role of gender norms and patriarchal codes in shaping everyday life?

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