

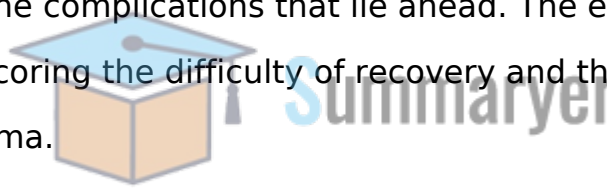
H2O: NARIN, ZALEEKHAH, ARTHUR: By the River Tigris, 2018

H2O plays a significant role in the shifting landscapes of human history, as illustrated by the looming flood of the Tigris River in 2018. The river's floodgates are set to open, bringing with it the inundation of the once-dry, barren land that is about to be submerged. The rising water level will eventually cover Castrum Kefa, an ancient city with a rich history, causing it to be lost beneath the swelling reservoir. Zaleekhah, one of the central figures in the story, reflects on the sorrowful fate of the city. She contemplates how this tragedy symbolizes the constant ebb and flow of time, where civilizations rise and fall with the water. As the flood approaches, the impending loss feels symbolic of the broader forces of nature that shape human history, often without mercy or regard for what has come before.

As Zaleekhah and her companion Nen discuss the changes happening around them, the conversation turns towards environmental issues, such as the destruction of habitats for soft-shelled turtles. Zaleekhah, deeply connected to the natural world, shares her concerns about how the changing landscape impacts not just the animals, but people as well. She reflects on her strained relationship with her family, particularly her uncle and aunt, after making the difficult decision to support her friend Helen's need for an organ donation. Despite the emotional toll and the estrangement she now faces from her relatives, Zaleekhah remains committed to finding another donor for Helen, underscoring her dedication to helping those she loves. This inner conflict emphasizes the complex emotions Zaleekhah grapples with, balancing her responsibility to others with the personal sacrifices she must make.

The journey continues as Zaleekhah and Nen visit an old cemetery, where they find a young girl named Narin mourning her ancestors. Narin, who was tragically bought from

a dealer with ties to ISIS for \$3,200, represents the deep scars left on the Yazidi people due to the violence and displacement they've endured. As Zaleekhah and Nen watch from a distance, they feel a mix of compassion and helplessness, knowing that Narin's pain is not just rooted in loss but also in the cultural genocide her people have suffered. Narin is left with the absence of her beloved Grandma Besma, and she struggles with uncertainty about her father's fate. Still, there's a flicker of hope within her as she looks forward to a potential reunion with her relatives in Germany, though she is unaware of the complications that lie ahead. The emotional weight of this scene is palpable, underscoring the difficulty of recovery and the challenge of healing from such profound trauma.



As the trio approaches Narin, a faint trust is sparked within her when she notices Zaleekhah's wrist tattoo, which resembles one her grandmother used to wear. This subtle connection marks a small but significant moment in the story, hinting at the possibility of a shared understanding between these two women from different walks of life. The three women then head back to their hotel, where they encounter a strange tombstone inscription that further deepens the sense of mystery and intrigue that surrounds their journey. This unexpected discovery serves as a reminder that history, even in its final moments, often leaves behind clues and symbols that challenge us to consider what has been lost and what may still remain.

The narrative concludes with a reflective meditation on the impermanence of time and cultural identity. As the waters of the Tigris prepare to flood Mesopotamia, tomorrow will witness the submersion of ancient lands and civilizations. Yet, even in the face of such loss, there is an undercurrent of hope—suggesting that rebirth may arise from destruction. The symbolism of the snowflake falling on an innocent child in London, representing an eternal connection to the rivers that flow through history, reinforces this theme of continuity. It suggests that, despite the cycles of loss and regeneration, human connections and memories endure, carried through time by the very waters that shape the world.