

H: NARIN: By the River Tigris, 2014

Narin resides in a dilapidated cinderblock house beside the River Tigris in 2014, a place of despair where her daily life is steeped in violence and suffering. The militant group surrounding her has just suffered a major defeat, and their frustration is palpable. Among the chaos, Narin serves the commanders and their fellow militants, performing menial tasks like scrubbing pots while a palpable sense of frustration hangs in the air. Her thoughts are interrupted by the abuse of two newly acquired Yazidi women, who are subjected to cruelty, with one of the women crying nonstop and the other, an older woman, attempting suicide in a desperate bid to escape. The commander's rage intensifies, and his harsh punishment of the older woman only deepens the sense of fear that permeates the air. Narin, tasked with bringing tea, enters the room, only to be grabbed by a militant and roughly spun around. In a swift act of intervention, the commander scolds the attacker and then dismisses Narin with a cold gesture, leaving her trembling and conflicted.

Days later, while Narin works in the kitchen, a conversation between the commander and his wife reveals a disturbing belief—the wife blames Narin for her husband's misfortune, claiming she is cursed and that her presence is responsible for his impending demise. Narin feels the weight of this hostility, yet she tries to keep her distance from the commander's wife, hoping to avoid any further conflict. Despite her best efforts, the encounters between them grow increasingly frequent and uncomfortable, filling Narin with a sense of dread. The commander's wife's accusations only add to the unbearable atmosphere, leaving Narin unable to escape the looming threat of violence. Eventually, the commander informs Narin that due to her so-called "bad luck," she will be sold to a new owner in Antep. Stricken with horror, Narin pleads with him for the chance to reunite with her friend Salma, but her request is brutally denied. The thought of being sold to a new master, someone who has a reputation for

abusing young girls, fills her with a deep sense of fear, and Narin sees no way out, knowing that resistance would mean certain punishment.

In the midst of her despair, Narin comes across an ancient clay tablet, a small object that brings a fleeting moment of connection to her past. She remembers her grandmother telling her stories about such artifacts, and for a moment, she allows herself to feel the comfort of nostalgia. But her moment of peace is shattered when the commander discovers her holding the tablet. In a fit of rage, he violently strikes Narin, knocking her to the ground, and kicks her while she lies incapacitated, the pain a sharp contrast to the fleeting hope she had found in the relic. After regaining consciousness, Narin finds herself face-to-face with a doctor and the commander, who now reveals his dark intentions. The commander, seeing an opportunity for profit, demands that Narin read the tablet, as it holds potential value in his ongoing scheme of looting and selling ancient antiquities. Narin realizes that these militants are not just committing violence—they are also profiting from the destruction of historical treasures, perpetuating a cycle of greed that will only continue to destroy more lives.

The commander presents her with a lapis lazuli tablet, demanding that she decipher its meaning for financial gain. Narin, now overwhelmed by the cruelty surrounding her, refuses to back down without a fight. In a rare moment of defiance, she extracts a promise from the commander that Salma will be spared from harm. The faint hope of this promise is the only thing keeping her going, though she knows the likelihood of the commander honoring his word is slim. As the reality of her situation sinks in, Narin feels numb, her emotional walls thickening as she prepares for the inevitable. The constant threat of violence, the abuse of power, and the unimaginable cruelty she faces daily weigh heavily on her. Even in the face of this horror, Narin understands that survival is the only option, even if it means sacrificing parts of herself along the way. She feels the sting of helplessness as she watches her friend suffer, knowing that the commander's viciousness will leave them both trapped in a world that sees them as nothing more than objects to be used and discarded.