

epigraph: "Who today still speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians?" She returns to this question in the conclusion to her Acknowledgments: "Most important of all, I must acknowledge the objective of Vergeen's own powerful words: *to immerse the reader in her story and to refute historical revisionists who deny and distort the facts of the Armenian holocaust.*"

The narrative begins in the voice of Vergeen who declares to the world, "I was THERE! I was an EYEWITNESS! I was a VICTIM!" (1). And what she witnessed and endured is beyond imagination. Vergeen takes the reader to the killing fields to hear the cries of pain, the supplication for mercy, "*Khentrem, khentrem*" (Please, I beg of you), and the helpless call, "*Allah nerdehseen?*" (God, where are you?). Vergeen lost her innocence, her spirit, and her faith to the atrocities: "My faith in religion destroyed, I hadn't prayed or gone to church since fleeing from my Arab captors; and my aversion to prayer has continued since then" (213).

Vergeen was thirteen years old when she started on the deportation route from her childhood home in Kayseri with her widowed mother, who had rejected the option of accepting conversion to Islam and being spared. They passed Qatma, then Aleppo, and finally reached Ras el-Ayn in the Syrian desert where the surviving refugees were crowded into a camp to die of starvation and disease. Four months later, soldiers raided the camp and rounded up the remaining refugees for liquidation. Vergeen was at death's door when a Bedouin offered to take her in. She agreed, on condition he also take her mother and a few other women, and for a while she was spared. Her name was changed to Noura and her face was tattooed. But the Bedouin had other plans. He killed