

Mary Terzian also writes about her stepmother's mistreatment of her stepchildren, which was not unusual. A rather unattractive spinster, a remnant of the abuses of the deportation route, she had gladly accepted a prearranged marriage to Mary's widowed father, but once established in his household, she turned into a wicked stepmother. Mary's daring decision to take her fate in her own hands was one that not many in such circumstances were able to make. Her deliberations before she reached her decision are revealing: "Part of me has been buried, another part uprooted, a new self is sprouting. I need fresh soil to grow healthier roots away from the oppressive environment of home" (241). Whether or not she is capable of realizing her objective is immaterial. What is important for her is to be brave enough to take control of her own destiny.

In *Orphan in the Sands*, Virginia Haroutunian also writes about her father, Michael, another survivor who never talked about his past. However, in contrast to his wife, he tried hard to balance her strictness and rigidity toward their children and make things go smoother at home. Virginia discovered Michael's story much later in life when she and her parents visited his cousins in Soviet Armenia. At a dinner reception in their honor, when spirits were high, toasts were drunk, and glasses of *raki* upended, Michael and his cousin Nahzar began to reminisce about how they had escaped that dreadful night when Turkish soldiers had killed Nahzar's father and tried to capture the two of them.<sup>32</sup> What a surprise! Michael had never

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<sup>32</sup> Accounts of ordinary Turkish soldiers personally torturing and killing individual refugees crop up again and again throughout the present study as well as in the survivors' memoirs I have introduced and