

brothers, the rape of her mother and aunts, and the ferocious mutilation of their bodies right there in front of their house in Van. From her hiding place in a stone furnace, the little girl sees how those beasts cut off the nipples of their victims, pass them onto wooden skewers, and brandish them on a wooden cross. She remains in a state of stupor and lethargy for three days. When she finally crawls out, nearly starving to death, the city is covered with bodies of the dead. She survives the carnage but suffers amnesia of the past as a defense mechanism to protect her from going insane under the pressure of the horrifying images she has witnessed.<sup>10</sup>

Hermine/Filor's life is shrouded in deprivation and misery, first in an orphanage in Constantinople, then as a maid to a wealthy Greek family, whence, sexually assaulted and pregnant, she runs away to the only address she knows from her days in the orphanage. A French Madame had visited the girls in the orphanage and invited them to her house, promising "a comfortable life." The Madame now helps her abort the baby and cares for her for a while. But she also has a plan for the girl. And gradually and unknowingly, Hermine/Filor becomes the treasure of that bordello. There, she is able to amass some money and briefly moves to

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<sup>10</sup> Sevan, *Rodosto* (1989), pp. 91-3. Hermine is the girl's Armenian name, which she cannot remember, and Filor is the name given to her by the wife of the French consul when two French reporters find her sleeping under a half-burned tree and take her to the French consulate. Filor is of course the Turkish mispronunciation of the French name Fleur, meaning flower. The French lady chooses this name for her because in her eye the little girl is as beautiful as a wildflower. Filor is then entrusted to an Armenian orphanage in Constantinople.