

Baghdoyan describes the enormous, insurmountable grief of another Armenian woman in Tel-Afar. He met her as he and a few Armenian survivors were passing through on their way to Mosul after the war. Apparently, many deportees in the caravans of death toward Mosul or Der-El-Zor had been able to lag behind, slip away, and escape to Tel-Afar. The Turks there had taken them in as servants and Turkified them. Now, five years later, they could not, they did not dare to leave everything behind, return to their people, return to Christianity, and fly to freedom. A young woman from Kharbert was one of those converted Armenians who lived in Tel-Afar. On the pretext of selling bread, she came to see this group of Armenian survivors passing through town. She tearfully answered the pleas of the women in the group to leave her Turkish husband and go with them. She had three sons that she loved more than her own life. How could she leave them and go?⁵

This Kharbertsi woman's story, akin to that of Maro, is the story of many Armenian girls in Muslim houses. Some escaped, leaving behind an orphaned child, the fruit of a forced conjugal life. Levent Kazancı in Elif Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul* is a typical personification of all the Nourhans and all the children of Armenian women who escaped. His mother, Shermin, or the Armenian Shushan, had left him behind and run away with her elder brother, himself a survivor of the Genocide, who had returned all the way from the United States to retrieve his little sister. Levent grew up full of psychotic hang-ups. A kind, honest, and dependable man to his friends, he was the cruelest father to his children.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 540–2.