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BEGINNING OF THE END, 1915. Turkey had been at war for six months, having entered the war on Germany's side on October 29, 1914. My father's eldest brother, Minas, had already been conscripted into the army, as had his uncle Alexan.

This is what my father remembered of those terrible days. "One minute my friends and I were busy playing, jumping into Lake Iznik, and having fun, and then just like the snap of a finger, our lives changed. A messenger on horseback came galloping into our village from Constantinople and hurriedly posted a notice for all of us to read. The rumors proved to be true. It was signed by the minister of the interior, Talaat Pasha, notifying all of us to prepare for deportation for 'our own safety.' We were given two days to get our affairs in order. We would be going by train to areas away from the southern Marmara for the duration of the war. The train station was located at Mekece and was about thirty miles from the village.

All of the men of the village who were not working in the fields or in other areas gathered round the messenger as he nailed the notice onto the trunk of the tree high enough for all to read. Silence and then an unsettled murmuring, as if they couldn't quite comprehend what it was they had just read.

Somebody started yelling at the men nearby. 'Isn't it clear enough for you? You heard the rumors two weeks ago. They want to clean us out, kill us and take our property!' They stared at him in disbelief. 'I warned you,' he continued, 'that we needed to be prepared by stashing weapons! I knew this day would come. Now we have absolutely nothing with which to defend ourselves. We're going to be slaughtered like sheep. Well, don't just stand there, get your women and children ready!' He rushed off, disgusted.

The truth was there was no safe haven for us anywhere. The men went to their homes and told their families the news. The women en masse came pouring out of their homes from every direction to see the notice, and rushed over to the tree. Then, almost in unison, a great cry was heard from them that soon turned into a guttural wailing. In desperation, the women spoke to each other about how much time they had to get ready, as their first priority was the care of feeding of their families. What could they take, they screamed aloud, for such a journey? What bedding and food?

It wasn't just in Keremet, but similar occurrences were transpiring throughout the southern Marmara. Over all was a terrible specter like a cloud of poison. In the town of Bandirma near the Hellespont and close to the Sea of Marmara, a girl by the name of Elise Hagopian would write years later of the terrible experiences of her family in her memoirs *Rebirth*. They would also be transported by freight train away from their beloved Bandirma. What quicker way of disposing of people?

I think now that my father, Markar, realized he had to move as fast as possible, or else Turkish soldiers would be there soon and the killing would start: men would be separated from their families and killed in every way imaginable. Aghavni Manougian (born 1891) told me of the fate of the men of Keramet when we traveled back to the village a few years later. My mother and father worked as a team. There was no hysteria. They acted as if we were going on an outing. Mother supervised all of us

as we gathered our bedding. We were sent to the cellar to get food that she would wrap up, in a bundle, to take with us. Luckily the sheep and the dogs were penned up next to our home and would be safe. But, there would be no one to look after the silkworms once we left the village.

Father hired someone who owned an ox-driven cart, and we piled on with our tent, bedding, and food. I looked back at our beloved Keramet as the cart rumbled down the hill of our village toward the main road leading to Iznik and then on to Mekece. After some time traveling, my father realized that he had forgotten some of his money. There were forty gold liras back at our house in addition to the hundred gold liras he had on his person. He told the driver to stop the movement of the cart, as he would have to walk back. This was the only money we had for our trip.

After a time, thankfully, he returned. The cart lumbered on and the landscape we saw was unbelievably beautiful, surrounded as we were by tall mountains and verdant valleys. Then we arrived in Mekece.

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