

I.

THE FOUR HUMORS THAT PUMP THROUGH MY BODY DETERMINE my character, temperament, mood. Blood, phlegm, black bile, and choler. The excess or lack of these bodily fluids designates how a person should be.

I don't know what *choler* means, and when I google it, the internet leads me to a link asking whether *choler* is a Scrabble word.

What *is* choler? asks Cooper when I report my findings. We're at my grandmother's, where she is resting. She is tired from shopping for bargains on towels all day. The window's open and a breeze moves through the apartment, carrying cat, gull, and car sounds from the street into the room. Because my grandmother is napping, Cooper and I can lounge on her sofa together and even touch arms. We search bodily fluids online, and Hippocrates, who first worked this theory out. Hippocrates was born in Kos, a Greek island off the coast of Turkey, and Cooper and I soon learn that humorism was practiced primarily in this geographical region and became very popular in the Islamic golden age. Cooper and I have been in Istanbul for two weeks now. We're here for the summer. Me, to take care of my grandmother and to see my father's grave. Him, to see that I do these things.

Before we came to Turkey, my mother set some ground rules. I would stay at my grandmother's apartment in Levent, and Cooper would rent a room two neighborhoods over, at the top of Bebek's hill. No sharing a bed. No kissing in public, because the real Turks won't do that openly. We kiss, instead, when we are alone in the room Cooper is renting near the eye hospital, where he's working. I was supposed to volunteer at a hospital, too, until my headaches began.

Choler, it turns out, is yellow bile, and in excess can compel even the most calm and gentle person into a hot-tempered rage. Phlegm makes you sleepy and sluggish, but you are also known for your dependable nature. Black bile is melancholy, and blood is the best humor. Blood pumps you into a kind and optimistic person.

Wow, says Cooper. He hovers his finger over my computer screen to point out a warning that too much optimism can make you insensitive to those around you, apathetic even. We agree that many people suffer from this blood condition. We agree that although this topic is interesting, it may not explain my headaches. And we agree that my grandmother's Parkinson's cannot be explained away as phlegm.

The humors theory prevailed until the nineteenth century, when another man discovered germs: Louis Pasteur, who laid the framework for medical sterility and sanitation. But I believe in fluids more than germs, even though I am supposed to become a doctor. They say that Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, who was visited by Christ in a yearlong string of revelations in the 1670s, suffered from an excess of blood. She was his chosen instrument, Saint Margaret said, but she could not convince others to believe her. Christ asked her to initiate the feast of the Sacred Heart. Christ permitted her to lay her head on his radiant, torn-up chest. To cure her delusions, the priests decided to bleed her out once a

month. They would cut her white thigh and have her sit in a stone basin. But my understanding of Christianity is limited and mostly googled. I am unsure what they did with her blood.

WE'VE COME BACK TO THE OUTDOOR MARKET BECAUSE last week we couldn't decide on the right towel to buy for Cooper's family in California. The first time we pointed at towels and we touched them. We discussed absorbency. We shared our preferences on which pastel colors we believed to be the best pastel colors. We left the market with nothing.

It's crowded today and we're having trouble wedging through everyone. I think Cooper wants to be polite. He hates mowing people down. I take his hand and weave through women weighing fruit in their hands and children begging mothers for plastic toys but I step on the tail of a street cat and it snarls up at me, baring a mouthful of tiny white daggers.

Cooper wants this purchase to be perfect. We wave dozens of towels out and the shopkeeper has me wrap my handsome American husband, she calls him, in a big blue one to test the soft cotton, before Cooper finally settles on purchasing three towels.

Last winter, I invited Cooper to follow me to Istanbul for the summer. Then we coined it our adventure, and by spring, he found a job at the eye hospital near the university. He's a curious person and renowned among our friends for being kind. Like me, he thinks there are vast pools and caves of phenomena that cannot be explained by science, and he frequently admits his regret for having been raised without a religion. I summon and repeat the words *our adventure* in my head, an incantation, until the letters press against each other with so much speed and force they blur and break and I'm left here, in this

market, on no adventure at all, only a mixture of mutated letters in my head and a plastic bag of towels in my hand.

We decide to take the bus to a café near the eye hospital because Cooper has two hours before he has to head into work. The bus windows are open and a breeze moves through. We take turns leaning against the pole because Cooper has given our seats to a woman with two children. Here, he'd said, gesturing, his smile as wide as an ocean across his face. They scrambled into the seats, and me, I got up, trying to be as kind as him.

He pulls out his towels from the plastic bag and holds up his purchases. I'll give my mom these two blue towels, he says, and my sister this purple one. What do you think?

I say, I think that's great. They will definitely love them. I am convinced of this because my family loves them, these thin towels. They are much more absorbent than people think.

Should I have bought my sister two towels, too? Do you think it's fair that she gets one but my mom gets two?

The light pours into the bus and we sway on its pole as it swerves through the hills. A city becomes hilled due to an eternity of earthquakes, and scientists predict that Istanbul will experience its next fatal earthquake sometime in the next ten years. The two children have their small hands in their laps and stare up at Cooper as if in a trance, and he beams back. My head has ached since May, more or less the same amount of time I've been in Istanbul. My brain is an earthquake or an ocean. Whichever I am more likely to survive.

THE CAFÉ WE LIKE HAS A FRENCH NAME AND ALWAYS serves strong gunky Turkish coffee. My head pounds and all I want to do after Cooper leaves is go back to my grandmother's and

watch soap operas. My grandmother would never tell my mother that I spend most of my days watching television, especially since we are committing this indulgent crime together. She would never tell Cooper, either. She likes cooking up ways to make it seem like I'm doing something productive this summer.

I think I am dehydrated, I announce. I order two teas and bottled water. We're sitting in the café's shady back garden, and Cooper's working on drawing faces.

Where do you start, Sibel? The temples? The forehead?

Maybe the temples, I say, but I can't draw people.

Two women are drinking coffee at the table next to us. The German woman has long tan legs, not a natural brown but orange. Her blond hair is so straight it looks like the ends could cut you. She tells her Turkish friend, in English, that she wanted to come to Istanbul because of the interesting political things going on, especially after Gezi Park last year. That's what she said, things were getting so interesting, and she nodded seriously, holding a ceramic cup of coffee in her hands. We're in a very residential area, with no tourist attractions, so I am surprised this German woman is here. Either her Turkish friend suggested this café, or this woman is the kind of tourist who likes to experience authentic local neighborhoods.

This is terrible, Cooper says. This will just have to be something else, like a building. He cocks his head and laughs. Look, he says, an ear, out of nowhere.

He begins to draw an eye, maybe my eye, into a crescent moon. On the television hammered to the wall the prime minister is giving a dramatic speech. The first anniversary of Gezi Park is coming up and the government has already banned large gatherings in Taksim Square.

It's not politics I am afraid of, I say to Cooper, but people.

Yes, Cooper says. Yes. That's who makes up politics, right? It's definitely my eye he's drawn, a dark oval that meets a moon at its lowermost crescent point. Cooper has sketched Istanbul, the mosques, and the Bosphorus. The moon and the stars are above the city, and tiny framed portraits hang from the crescent like hair.

I tell him about the news segment on ISIS that my grandmother and I watched yesterday. The anchor was a woman and the network made sure she looked beautiful. The first week we were in Istanbul, there was a bomb threat in Sultanahmet. The anchor reminded us of another bomb a few months earlier and the segment ended with a woman in a headscarf crying. She held her palms to the sky like bowls. *The bomb went off and my children were blown away like scraps of paper.*

Cooper asks if I can translate the report back into Turkish so he can learn. I translate, and he's nodding as I diligently report in both Turkish and English what the news anchor said. We must, she had urged, look for a drugged eye, a backpack, someone muttering to Allah under a big broom of a mustache. I add that I may look like this some days, a muttering person, and I do have a light mustache I wax off, but because I dress in some sort of Western fashion and have a generally polite look on my face, no one will suspect me.

But I'm not totally sure if that's what she said, I admit to Cooper. I was googling my headache at the same time, so I wasn't really watching.

Wow, Cooper says, scanning my clothes. Yeah, your tight jeans and sneakers. He reaches to touch my hair. What do they mean, he asks, by a drugged eye? Cooper is so curious about words. I

imagine he wants to take a magnifying glass to each person he meets, just to see how they speak. It's not enough to hear them.

Now the prime minister is reminding people of all the looting from last year's protests. He screams and screams about what Allah requires of us.

Want to go? Cooper says, still drawing. To the anniversary protest?

Maybe, I say. But you should talk to my uncle.

Cooper looks up at me and smiles. Sometimes I think Cooper is so optimistic that he believes nothing could be wrong with me. When we began dating in the spring of freshman year, he told me in his dorm room on his twin bed that he was amazed at how in the time he had known me I had not been sad once. Two years later, after Baba died in the kitchen while boiling water for tea, Cooper repeated this statement. And I still laugh and smile easily, but if you took a scalpel and dug into me with a tender wrist you would see that I am no longer like this. And it terrifies me that Cooper will soon realize this, because we have not yet acknowledged that I build walls against others. It is the strongest thing I have built thus far.

It's you I'm worried about, I say. They can see your head of hair from miles away.

Cooper thinks about this. Many Americans have warned him about Turkish prisons. He pencils faces into the portraits he's framed. He wonders whether this bomb segment was racist, as it would be in America. I mention that the American news would never mention the dead Turks, or whether they could have been dead Kurds or dead refugees. They only mention white tourists when covering bombs abroad. Cooper gently suggests that the ISIS-specific actions have thus far focused on kidnapping West-

ern citizens, and I know this, that's why I'm worried about his blond head, but then I ask him if the U.S. news has ever—just once—mentioned the exact number of Middle Easterners the U.S. government kills daily? In the very middle of his sketch of Istanbul, what I thought was the water has become a cemetery. The internet continues to tell me the sharp ache in my head could be dehydration, aneurism, stroke, brain tumor, or a hair tie wound too tight and pulling my scalp back.

I CONVINCED MY GRANDMOTHER TO TAKE A TAXI TO THE Bosphorus with me. The taxi hunkers through traffic on Nispetiye before we merge onto a winding two-lane road and drive down the steep hill in a slow, quiet procession. I tell my grandmother that it is funny that this hill is named “Baby Hill,” and she laughs. My grandmother wears a blue cardigan and a matching knit shirt. She holds on to the grab handle in the car to hide her hand tremor. When we get to the shore and climb out of the taxi I tell her she looks like a movie star, and she flashes me a mysterious smile. It's not the smile I remember from her. Her face is less expressive and sometimes stony because of Parkinson's, but it is still trying, very hard.

We walk along the water, an alarming electric blue, for as long as she wants and stop at a café with seats on the shore when she gets tired. In the distance, we can make out the Marmara and the cargo ships multiplying in the horizon.

Look at the Boğaz, my grandmother says. It's the widest river in the world.

I think it's actually the narrowest, I say, or a very narrow strait.

I'll die before I ever leave Turkey again. Even to visit you and your sister. Your mother.

We can always come here, I tell her.

Sure, she says. You can stay with me. She gestures again to the water, as if the Boğaz alone is where she lives.

I already am, I point out.

That's true, she says. Allah'a şükür.

A few days ago, I finally told her about my headaches. I had been hiding it well, but she tracks my every movement, meal, and even temperature on an hourly basis, so my secret came out when I thought she was in the shower and I had lain on the couch with a frozen lamb on my forehead. I felt so relaxed, maybe dead, until I found her in her bathrobe, peering at me from under the lamb's shoulder. She'd demanded some answers. Well, I'd explained, it's a chronic headache located at the very back of my head, not the kind behind my eyes. Not the kind that can make a person nauseous. My grandmother, in great distress, insisted we go to the hospital, and I, wanting to make her happy, agreed. At the hospital, they popped me right into an MRI after asking a few questions about my brain, mood, and mind. But I didn't stay in the machine as planned. The thumping noise in the white tunnel fascinated then terrified me. And I'm unfamiliar with spending even ten minutes entirely alone, without even a screen to look at. I pressed the panic button, and the man reading my brain released me. You can pay when you come again, he'd said kindly, as if holding my brain on a petri dish. Take care. And I am trying to, to take care. I google my symptoms whenever I can connect to Wi-Fi. The first time I searched I was led to the page on humorism. Any imbalance of the four humors means you are diseased. The ancient doctors focused not just on physical ailments, but

temperaments, too. An excess of choler or black bile means you are emotionally unstable. Blood and phlegm, very stable. Generally kind. This was before science.

Can we go again, to the hospital, I ask my grandmother.

Of course. She orders us tea. Her hand shakes as she hands the menu to the waiter. My grandmother's Parkinson's always gets better when someone from our family is staying with her, and I'm supposed to be caring for her, but she wants to care for me. We have this argument about care often. She looks up at me and tells me to fix my eyebrows, so I push my eyebrows up and feel with my fingers to make sure the hairs are in the right place.

It's a weird headache, I say. I can still study. Not that I have been studying much, I admit.

That's okay, baby. She gives me a cautious look. Do you want me to come with you to the cemetery?

That's okay, I say.

I bought flowers, she says. Did you see them?

No.

I left them by the entrance. You should take them to the grave.

Okay.

When are you going?

Maybe after my head feels better.

Is he coming with you?

I'm not sure.

The graveyard is a ten-minute walk from my grandmother's apartment. It rests in the middle of the modern city, which makes its presence not an ominous, suburban haunt, but one determined to be at the center of everyday life. From the cemetery, you can see steel high-rise buildings in the distance, straight spines working into sky. I've been to the cemetery only once, last winter, days

after Baba died in the kitchen while boiling water for tea. It had snowed the night before, so the cemetery was white.

MOST DAYS I WATCH SOAP OPERAS WITH MY GRANDMOTHER and take calls from my sister until Cooper gets out of work. We like meeting up in his neighborhood, walking around, then returning to my grandmother's for dinner or tea. Today is a hot evening, and Cooper and I take the elevator up to my grandmother's apartment on the third floor. It's the same elevator my mother first took to meet my grandmother, months before my parents married and my father fled to New York, I tell Cooper. She was younger than me and went to Ankara then came to Istanbul, from Ömerler, a village near Bolu, for college. I love telling Cooper this because it reminds me that I can do anything, being this age and without children.

Really, it is the man who is required to pay a visit to the woman's family before he proclaims his wish to marry her. My mother has always liked to do things differently. At my age she was already organizing demonstrations in Istanbul before the 1980 coup.

Really, I don't do anything, but I like knowing that I can do anything.

Each time Cooper comes to my grandmother's apartment, he waits at the entrance. He's learned that my grandmother wants to greet him, even when I'm there with the key, so we ring the doorbell and, moments later, my tiny grandmother opens the door and gestures towards her apartment. Then my grandmother and Cooper grasp each other's hands. They cannot speak the same language, but they make it a point to communicate. This can make me jealous.

My grandmother keeps a very clean house. She must strip a

guest of their coat and brush the lint off the sleeves before she can transform into a proper host. She performs this arduous and anal task now with Cooper, who she helps out of his windbreaker. Her apartment has remained unchanged since the late '60s. There's a lacework tablecloth on every surface: the coffee table, each end table, and the dining table. Framed family photographs stand on this lace like small armies. My grandmother brews tea and brings out a plate of banana cakes from our favorite bakery. Then she sinks into her ancient green armchair, her throne, and on television they show the beige wreck of a city after a bomb.

My grandmother tells me that America has learned how to fight the new world war silently, killing Muslims from the sky with a needle-focused laser. She looks at Cooper to make sure he is eating the cakes. She tells me to tell him what she just said, to translate what she thinks about his president, and about her prime minister, who is expected to be nominated as a presidential candidate in a few weeks. The election is in August, and my grandmother has the news on every day.

Cooper is so beautiful. His lips are pink and wide like a flattened heart. They open and close, this beating heart—his mouth—as he listens to my translation, as he listens to what she thinks of those who run her country.

THE SECOND TIME WE GO TO THE HOSPITAL, A WOMAN ENTERS the exam room and motions for my grandmother to sit down. I smile graciously at her. Her eyes are a rare blue for a Turk. She is a doctor.

My grandmother resists. Oh, but I am not seeing you today. She is.

I am not sick, I say.

What? asks my grandmother.

Who is sick? asks the doctor. She looks at her clipboard.

I have Parkinson's, says my grandmother, but I am taking my medication.

Okay, I announce, maybe I am sick. I don't know with what.

I also have palpitations, my grandmother confesses.

The doctor is confused. Who is sick? she repeats, suddenly very stern.

Me, I say, we're here for me. I have a chronic headache.

The doctor brings me to a small changing room and hands me a white gown and slippers. My grandmother is behind the door. She asks me if I want her to come in.

That's okay, I say. Thank you.

I am told to remove my necklace before climbing onto the flat bed and entering the white tube. The necklace belonged to my mother, and from its gold chain hangs an Arabic prayer, the one Baba taught me. The necklace was given to my mother by her mother, a woman who has been dead for years. I never met this mother, but I've been told she was fat and fond of discipline. I dip this chain under my shirt's neckline each time I'm at an airport, but in New York bodegas, the men behind the counters read the prayer I carry and nod. When American friends or strangers reach out and touch it, I can always feel their hand on my chest, near my neck, as they ask me what it means.

I have to stay in the MRI this time, because I had to pay up-front and drain my savings, and I don't want to further disappoint my grandmother. She's the one who is sick, after all. Certain neurons in my grandmother's brain are breaking down and dying—the same neurons that are responsible for producing dopamine,

which makes you happy. This slow drop in dopamine makes my grandmother's hand shake. Her movements are slow. Her back is beginning to hunch. Despite these symptoms, she has managed to convince me she is okay. She is okay, despite having buried her son. I am not sure how to believe her.

I will myself to feel calm as the white steel tube reads me. I think of ways to distract myself. I make up stories of me dispelling black bile from my body by taking laxatives, but an image of Cooper floats in, and he is worried about my well-being. I get bored. I begin counting the seconds on my hands with my fingers in groups of ten, because this is the only way to get your brain read without having your brain walk out on you.

WHEN I GO TO PICK UP MY GRANDMOTHER'S NEW MEDICINE at the pharmacy the next day, I also buy lavender-scented hand lotion and, on the street, more cigarettes. The man running the newsstand comments on my preference for menthols as well as my strange accent. I tell him I grew up in America, but not to worry, I am still Turkish. He nods in approval. On the walk from the newsstand to my grandmother's, I always pass a mother and her three children. Sometimes she's sitting peacefully on their big quilt on the street in front of a washing machine store while her children go up to people to ask for money or food. Other times her children are asleep in her lap as she holds a cup out and people storm past her looking guilty or disgusted. This woman and I always make eye contact, and then I give her pieces of bread or pastries that my grandmother baked earlier that day, or sometimes sloppy eggplant or meat dishes in glass bowls that I've smuggled from her kitchen, and this woman thanks me and then thanks

Allah. Based on her accent I think she's a Syrian refugee, but I am not certain, and I'm not the kind of person who would ever ask. Today I'm walking slowly and smoking my cigarette with my smoker's glove, which I wear so the smell won't linger on my fingers and betray me to my grandmother. The mother is holding out her cup, but her children aren't around. I hand her a tinfoil package of börek, and she thanks me and then thanks Allah, as usual. I smile and walk away quickly, as usual.

Now I have to make sure my grandmother takes her medicine. She must take these pills four times a day, every day, despite the nausea that they cause. Occasionally, when her daily pills don't prove powerful enough or she reveals to me that she hasn't taken them in a few days, I administer a shot of clear liquid dopamine into her bloodstream. My great-aunt, who is afraid of blood, often comes over to make sure I inject my grandmother's thigh correctly. Earlier today, my grandmother went on another cleaning purge. She wore yellow latex gloves to scrub the wooden floors with soap. I thought of her as Saint Margaret, single-minded in her vision, her Allah-given mission for cleanliness. What? she asked when she noticed me staring. I have to make sure the floors are clean before guests come over. Why? I asked, it's just your sister. She laughed. It has to be clean, she repeated, and when I asked if I could help her, she said no. My great-aunt wants me to put the needle in now that I'm here, and I imagine myself as the only well-meaning, pious man in the mob of villains who bled out Saint Margaret. I'm not entirely sure why my grandmother's doctor prescribed this syringe, which is given only as needed and in extreme cases of Parkinson's when a person feels particularly stiff. My grandmother and I agree that she is still reasonably agile and can clean the floors just fine. But her doctor likely knows she

loves to skip pills, and my grandmother cannot be Saint Margaret. Those who suffer from excess blood are sensuous and prone to sexual abandon, and my grandmother is too old for passion. She suffers from old age, an excess of phlegm, which makes her cold and dry, but also dependable and kind.

We drink tea in the living room as my grandmother prepares a plate of food. She's wearing another sweater set, this time forest green, and is avoiding me and the syringe in my hand. The news is on, and one of the deputy prime ministers sits with his colleagues. The deputy prime minister's wife sits at a table in the same restaurant but across the room. She eats alone, her face to her food. She stabs an eggplant with her fork, then glides the eggplant around her plate to soak up the red tomato oil. She eats slowly. The camera zooms in on her face as the news anchor tells us about her, and about the fact that she does not eat at the same table as her husband and the people with whom he runs the country.

My great-aunt frowns at the screen. We didn't grow up like this, she says, especially not in Istanbul. We grew up wearing miniskirts. We didn't even wear long socks.

And now, I say, it's not like you wear your miniskirts anymore.

Nobody needs to see my legs now, she says, it's true. It's the men who need to cover their heads—maybe that will open their brains.

My great-aunt Pinar is my grandmother's younger sister. You only have to cross the street, pass the taxi stand on the corner, and walk down a steep hill with crumbly stone steps to get from my grandmother's to my great-aunt's apartment, which looks identical on the outside: a six-story building painted pale green with a small balcony for each unit. Aunt Pinar moved to Levent in the 1960s, after my grandmother lost her husband at the same

age my mother met hers: seventeen. The little I know is that her husband died in an earthquake. I have no proof, but I have come to believe that they had an arranged marriage. I think she never loved him.

Aunt Pinar calls Cooper my fiancé. She inspires our entire family to do the same. It's unclear whether they know he is not my fiancé, that dating does not always work that way in this country or the one I am really from.

What kind of dress will you wear at the wedding? Aunt Pinar asks. She pours me more tea, and I hold the glass by its thin waist. What shape will the neckline be?

I don't know, I say. But I do like the kind that illuminates the collarbone.

Yes, she says. Did you know mine was like that? My collarbone, we put eyeshadow on it so it sparkled.

I've seen the pictures framed in my family's living room in Brooklyn, on the shrine of people my parents left behind in Turkey. There are photographs of each relative, because we have to make sure they feel represented if they visit us. Aunt Pinar came to America once, when my younger sister Alara was born, but she hated our photograph of her graduating from middle school, and so the next time we came to Turkey for the summer, she gave my mother her wedding photo as a replacement.

She suddenly looks worried. Is he attached, very strongly, to any family names?

Maybe, I say. His middle name is Bartholomew, after his great-grandfather.

What kind of name is that? You have to make sure your own names are given priority.

I say nothing. I do want those names, and to brand my chil-

dren with a name like my own, one my family can pronounce. But I do not want to give my child an alien name, an easily mispronounced name, a dead name, a name that other people—strangers, teachers, lovers—bury alive upon speaking. Americans think my own name, Sibel, refers to a Greek prophet of doom, but the Turks think the name comes from Arabic, meaning a single raindrop between earth and sky. It may also be the Turkic name for an Anatolian goddess of mothers.

At least the child could have blue eyes, Aunt Pinar mentions after a while.

I think of my sister, who wears purple eyeliner to summon the green shards in her brown iris. She shaved off the first syllable of her name and now goes by Lara with Americans. She's a year younger than me, and we have matching wide shoulders and cheekbones like slabs of yellow marble. Only Alara's frame has shrunk. She's not eating.

It won't work, I say.

You're right. The Turkish gene is too strong.

My grandmother walks in with a tray stacked with tiny desert plates and baklava and fresh cherries. Piles of fruit and fat.

I wouldn't trade all of my grandchildren for one blue-eyed child, she announces. My grandmother has only two grandchildren, me and my sister, but I don't want to remind her.

Aunt Pinar is appalled. I never said that's what she should do. I'm only saying maybe something good will come out of it.

She doesn't have much to choose there, you know. My grandmother turns to me and says, We knew long ago that the boys over there would be foreigners. She uses a flat cake knife to lift a baklava from its box and pushes it onto a plate with her thumb.