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### **Constantinople**

My name is Fatma, (it is a traditional Turkish name), and was the name of one of Mohammed's daughters. It means a woman who weans her children with love. I am 46 years old and was born in a very small village, Azdavay, Kastamonu. Azdavay is in the northern part of Turkey. Now I have been American citizen for thirteen years and lived here for twenty two years. Although I feel and act like an American, like Doug in *Prince of the Thieves*, I am still a product of the city where I grew up.

I am the first born and I was born into a very loving family. My parents lost their first child when he was four months old, so when I was born my family rejoiced. In Turkey, it is not only your parents who raise you, it also includes your grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Four years after my birth my sister Azize was born.

I remember a turning point in my childhood happened when I was in second grade. My mother was pregnant again and gave birth to my brother, Aydin . In that same year we also moved from our small village and our close knit family to a big city called "Istanbul". Istanbul is the largest city in Turkey; it houses ten million people.

I remember the excitement we felt riding a big bus to get there. I can still remember the smell of the ocean as we crossed from the Asian side of Turkey to the European side on the ferry to get to Istanbul. I also remember thinking how strange it was that people were selling and cooking food along the busy streets of the harbor.

I have very warm memories of my childhood; for instance we played on the street until dark, and never feared anyone or anything. Growing up in the big city teaches you how to get

around well on public transportation. When I was twelve years old I took the bus to the harbor alone, and then took a ferry boat to the other side. As I grew older I would take the bus, ferry and train to all sorts of places in Istanbul and beyond. You might think this doesn't have anything to do with a city influencing my life, but I know it did.

I was twenty four years old when I left Turkey to come to the United States. I didn't speak any English and had no family. I first came to Boston as a baby-sitter for a Turkish family. I was extremely excited and hopeful for my future. Living in Istanbul, being an independent person, and having such a supportive and loving family, I feel gave me the confidence to travel on my own at such a young age even without speaking any English. I remember my flight to the United States was unique as I took a plane from Istanbul to Athens, Greece, then a plane to New York. In New York, it was difficult to communicate, so I was sent along to Boston without a visa. I obtained my visa from the Boston Immigration office shortly after I arrived in Boston.

Growing up in Istanbul also helped me to appreciate and respect people from other cultures. Istanbul itself is a place where the majority of people are Muslim, but there are also Christians and Jews. We all live and work together peacefully.

Growing up in Istanbul also exposed me to many tourists from all over the world, since Istanbul is a city rich in history. If you take a boat trip on the Bosphorus up and down the ocean you will hear all kinds of languages being spoken, you can hear Japanese, Chinese, English, French, German, and many more as well. When you look around you see tourists excited about the number of historical castles and palaces. In the boats, waiters circle around selling tea and cold beverages, and there is nothing like a hot glass of tea on a beautiful sunny day in a boat ride on the Bosphorus:

Istanbul, once known as the capital of capital cities, has many unique features. It is the only city in the world to straddle two continents, and the only one to have been a capital during two consecutive empires - Christian and Islamic. Once capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul still remains the commercial, historical and cultural pulse of Turkey, and its beauty lies in its ability to embrace its contradictions. Ancient and modern, religious and secular, Asia and Europe, mystical and earthly all co-exist here (Istanbul Guide).

Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city that has culture within culture, it brings to itself people from all over Turkey. Living in Istanbul helped me to learn different customs that are an important parts of peoples' lives. People from the east, west, north and south all have different foods and traditions, but one thing never changes. People are always very hospitable. It is not formally taught, but we know that when anyone is visiting, you bring out your best. If you move to a new neighborhood, people will come to welcome you. Then it is customary to return the visit, and this helps people to get to know each other and become friendlier.

There is also a lot from our own culture that still has an influence on me, and that has helped me become a person of conscience. For example people at home would say. "Don't take anything that does not belong to you; God knows everything," or "Stand up when an adult comes to the room to give a proper welcome and sit straight and respectful". Learning from a diverse cultural influences did not stop after I came to the United States. When I made friends here I continued to learn about their costumes and traditions. A friend of mine from the central part of Turkey, for example planned to have a celebration of an occasion, but postponed it for a year, because of the death of her brother. It would have been disrespectful to her family if she went ahead with the plan.

I do believe we are all product of our families and environment. Like “Doug” who grew up in a town known as all of it bank robbers, and who became a better bank robber than any others, I am a product of my family and the city where I grew up. My grandfather was a transporter, my father was a nursing assistant and I became a nurse. Growing up in a big city however, is not always enough to get ahead, I am forty six years old, a mother of two and a student, still trying to get ahead and still continuing to move toward a better position. The one thing that persists is that we all try to do better than the last generation. I hope it will continue so with my own children (Hogan).

## Works Cited

Hogan, Chuck. Prince of Thieves. New York: Pocket Books, 2005.

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