



Kay Mouradian

# My myrig

by Kay Mouradian

My myrig and I had an endearing relationship. She never interfered with my life, never held me back from exploring or living in many parts of this glorious planet. And I *always* returned home. My myrig lived by a philosophy that you *hold by letting go*. Pretty remarkable for this small 5-foot woman who survived the Armenian Genocide, whose life had been colored by the horrors of the past, and who dwelled on the loss of her family members who had perished at the hands of the Turks. Then one day that dark shadow was *gone* and her transformation is quite a story.

In 1988 I had gone to Aleppo, Syria, to search for the family that had given my myrig refuge from the Turks. Incredibly, I found the one remaining descendant. Born after my mother had left Aleppo, the handsome woman knew all about the 14-year-old Armenian girl, Flora, who had cared for her two sisters. Delighted to meet me, she gave me a gift I still cherish today – photos of her sisters, her mother and of her father, a kind man who treated my mother as one of his own.

The day after our extraordinary meeting, I received a call from home. Myrig was back in the hospital. I left for Los Angeles.

Myrig had already had three previous trips to death's door and to the amazement of all, including her doctor, she managed to survive those precarious episodes. But this time, when I saw my mother on that hospital bed, I was sure her time had come. She was deathly frail.

When she saw me she tried to smile, but was far too weak. "I don't know why I didn't die," she said, her voice barely audible.



Kay Mouradian's mother, who said, "Hunger is a pain that never sleeps."

I, too, wondered. I would have expected her to embrace the release of her worn-down body, especially after having been so close three times in the previous four years. Or did she know something I didn't? I leaned in close and said, "Mom, do you think you will die now?"

"It doesn't look like it," she said, her voice cracking and her face reflecting her own disbelief.

Somehow she knew.

Two days later, when I entered the cardiac care unit I was surprised to see Myrig sitting up in bed, unattended. The day before, she couldn't turn her head without help. But when she saw me approaching she shouted something in Turkish, a language she hadn't spoken in more than fifty years.

I was startled. She was filled with energy. And why was she speaking Turkish, the language of those she hated? "Mom, I don't understand you," I said, trying to calm her. "Speak to me in English or Armenian."

She kept shouting in Turkish, and I began to panic. What if she continued to speak only Turkish? Would I lose contact with her for-

ever? Could I retrain her brain to think in English?

"Mom," I said firmly, "repeat everything I say." I went through the entire English alphabet. She repeated each letter dutifully, as if she were in school following a teacher's instructions. We counted numbers and she repeated those in English. But she started to shout in Turkish again with an English or Armenian word in the mix. I struggled to understand. The best I could comprehend was:

"They took my education," she yelled.

"They took my family!"

"Do you know what it was like?"

"I went crazy!"

She looked straight into my eyes, said loud, and clear in English.

"The bastards!"

Even though there were moments when I felt panic, other moments like this one were just plain comical. I couldn't hold back a laugh. I had never before heard her use this crude word. And throughout this wild scenario, even though she was shouting in Turkish, she appeared to be joyful.

"Mom, are you happy?" I asked trying to understand this phenomenon.

"Yes," came her emphatic reply.

"Why?"

"Because I'm awake!" she said with authority.

I found her choice of word intriguing. I would have expected her to say, "Because I'm alive." But I had a suspicion of what might have happened.

With my keen interest and years of study in eastern philosophy, I wondered if she had crossed over into another plane and witnessed the Armenian Genocide from a higher, impersonal view. Had she gained an understanding of the horrific karmic debt the perpetrators have to pay? And had

story

she been given an opportunity to release her own intense hatred of the Turk? Was that hatred released with the strong expulsion of her anger as she shouted, “*the bastards*,” a word not in my old-fashioned mother’s vocabulary? I’ll never know for sure, but I can state for a fact that my myrig was so loving after this fourth brush with death that she couldn’t harbor hatred, not even toward the Turks. Love poured out of her heart, like a flower releasing its perfume. Everyone around her felt it.

But this was not the only bizarre incident during my mother’s long illness. Her second bout with congestive heart failure in 1986 was also a stunner. With her heart laboring in cardiac care, her doctor didn’t expect her to survive the night. Three of us sat at her bedside, waiting. Myrig had been unresponsive. Then she started to speak.

“Do you know why I’m still here?” she asked, sounding as if she knew a great truth. She looked at my cousin and said, “because you don’t have any children.” She turned toward me and again said, “because you don’t have any children.” Then to my nephew sitting nearby she said, “And you don’t have any children. If I died no one would know.”

“They showed me a lot of pictures,” she continued.

I wondered who the “they” were. I knew people with near-death experiences claimed to view their lives at the moment of death. Was my mother sharing the same kind of vision with whoever the “they” were?

She looked at my cousin and said, “Your mother was there.” His mother had died thirty years earlier. She mentioned seeing an Armenian family who was a karmic mirror of her family and told us prophetic things that would happen to members of our own family. Two of them have already come to pass.

“They showed the afghans,” she said. She had made afghans over the years for everyone: relatives, neighbors, my friends, her friends, and my sister’s friends. Interestingly, after this vision she made them specifically for disabled veterans.

She turned her gaze to me. “You’re going to write a book about my life.”

“No, mom, not me,” I said. “Maybe your other daughter will. She’s the real Armenian in the family.”

“No! You are! And you’re going to be on the Donahue show!”

*The Donahue Show!* In 1986 Donahue was the king of talk shows, and she never, but never, watched that program, and I immediately dismissed that statement as delusion.

Then she ended her little speech with, “They said it was my choice.”

Now, that sentence gripped my attention. I’ve spent my adult life trying to make right choices, and it is not ever an easy thing and now my mother had made the choice to stay on in defiance of her body’s fragile and deathly state. She had more to do before she could let go. I just didn’t know it at the time.

Against the odds she rallied and a few days later was released from the hospital. In the middle of her first night home I heard her stir. I rushed into her bedroom and turned on the light. There she sat in bed, her face absolutely radiant. She gave me a huge smile. “*Do you know what life is all about?*” she asked, not waiting for a reply. “*It’s all about love and understanding, but everyone’s brain is not the same, so you help when you can. That’s what life’s all about.*” She smiled, laid herself down and went back to sleep. I will never forget that night.

The next day she again couldn’t move without help.

I had dismissed much of her vision on that hospital bed as delusion. I certainly had no plans to write a book about her or the Armenian tragedy. My mind was fo-



Kay Mouradian’s mother crocheting an afghan.

cused on researching materials for exercises that stimulate the body’s “chi,” and I had been accepted to study at the Acupuncture International Training Center in Beijing. But what was happening to my myrig was remarkable. I began to read about events that happened in the Ottoman Empire during World War I and became overwhelmed. I had not known the depth of the Armenian tragedy, and I began to understand my mother’s heart-breaking scars and those of Armenian survivors everywhere. Now I knew my mother’s story needed to be told, the whole of it, including the blessing that was granted her in her last years.

I set aside my plans to study in China to write my mother’s story as a fictionalized memoir. Not realizing the depth of the necessary research, the nuances of writing fiction, or how many years it would take, I *had* to write about this little woman who kept escaping death and instead became more alert and more loving each time. My myrig taught me that when negative matrices like hatred and anger no longer rule the heart, streams of fragrant love pour out of every cell in the body. She shined like a thousand suns. ☸

Kay Mouradian’s fictionalized memoir of her mother is called *A Gift in the Sunlight: An Armenian Story* and can be ordered from [www.garodbooks.com](http://www.garodbooks.com)