

O: ARTHUR: By the River Tigris, 1872

In the chapter titled "By the River Tigris, 1872," the narrative unfolds during the Yazidi festival "Çar?ema Sor," known as 'Red Wednesday,' marking the arrival of spring and new beginnings. The villagers of Zêrav engage in traditional celebrations by painting eggs, cleaning homes, and making candles from sheep fat. The atmosphere is festive, yet Arthur, an outsider from England, finds himself in a cultural juxtaposition, as he explains that his New Year comes in the dead of winter, eliciting polite curiosity from the local children.

As the celebration reaches its peak on the seventh sunset, Arthur is invited to the sheikh's house, an unusual honor for an outsider. He observes as the villagers lay out food, and the scent of rosemary and sage fills the air. Among the attendees is Leila, a faqra, who begins to perform ritualistic divination with her daf. The scene escalates when Leila enters a trance and sings a haunting melody that transcends time. Arthur is captivated yet deeply unsettled when she starts uttering ominous prophecies that predict a massacre of the Yazidi people.

Her intense behavior shifts to despair as she cries out "Firman," which not only signifies permission but ominously conveys a license for violence against her community. The chilling specifics of the prophecy detail impending destruction and loss, including the obliteration of sacred sites and a warning to escape to the mountains when the dangerous forces arrive.

As the moment lingers in silence, the children return to the joy of the festivities, unaware of the darkness shared in their brief absence. Arthur, unable to sleep that night, grapples with a heavy sense of foreboding and the burdens of history that weigh upon the Yazidis. The remnants of Nineveh haunt him as he considers the painful truth of prophetic knowledge. He wonders whether it is better to remain in blissful ignorance rather than face the grim realities of their doomed future. The chapter closes with an eerie feeling of impending change, mirrored in nature around him, suggesting a looming catastrophe on the horizon.