



AUTHOR PROFILE

Zeynep Aslan**Level** B1**Genre** Romance

INSIDE CELLO

CHAPTER 1: PROLOGUE

What would happen if the sounds that were quelled and suppressed came out one day and were echoed to me on a chord?

I moved the bow across the strings gently, like painting on a toile. Slowly, I took my hand from the top part to the main body of the cello. It was a huge, beautiful memory of my wife. She always went to this cello when she was sad, happy, or furious. She did this until that day. The music was not just about notes; it was a way to feel close to her. Now, the cello is a cherished relic that helps me remember everything.

We met her at exhibition. While I was gazing in amazement at each masterpiece hanging on the walls, I was lost in thought without even realizing it. The sudden sensation of a small form meeting my back caused me to start, and I wheeled around. I realized I've been bump on a small back and turned back.

At the same time that "small back" turned her back too. I was about to apologize and bent down in apology she stopped me.

"Don't need your apology, sir."

"Oh ma'am please, not at all. I'm sorry if i caused any trouble."

After saying that, i turned my face to left --- and there it was... wow. A piece of art appeared here and breathtaking that words feel short. Just for a moment, time seemed to pause. And all I could do was lose myself in its quiet beauty. that could sweep me away with the magic of the cello was hanging on the wall, perfectly in harmony with the grace of the woman beside me. That was like... she was an instrument and i need to know how to play with it. I should get to know her better. She was a muse for me, muse of cello, muse of my philosophy. In that moment, the calm of my life broke apart, I could no longer hold back myself, so I asked;

"Ma'am, I was wondering about uhm... May I ask?"

"Go ahead, I'm listening."

"Do you play cello?" she was shocked at this moment. Her face like "What's that got to do with it?" but I couldn't stop myself about this. I'm so curious. If I can't learn this info, I'LL DIE seriously.

“Yes sir, I do but... how did you know that?”

“That was just a guess -actually- you look a lot like the women on this toile, so maybe you can be muse of the artist’s art.” She giggled softly and didn’t stop keep the eye contact with me.

“I’m interested in cello too, I’m a cellist. Maybe we can get to know each other more?”

“Actually I’m not that too easy but, maybe we can huh?”

That's how everything had started

CHAPTER 2: BEGINNING

That day, we hung out together throughout the entire exhibition and exchanged numbers.

That's how I met my wife...

After that day, our life became a fragile symphony, each note tinged with longing, my wife Matryona—her name a velvety ache from a cello’s lowest string, and our home a music box spinning us endlessly, yet leaving a quiet sorrow between every turn. In our free time, sometimes I would stroke the strings as she sang;

sometimes she would hug the body of the cello while I gently watched her. A melody whispered in my ears at all times.

One evening, Matryona came home with a big, colorful poster in her hands. It was about a local music competition, and her eyes shone with a mix of hope and nervousness. "Shall we enter?" she asked softly and hesitation, I could hear the fear in her voice that I might refuse. But I did not say no. Instead, I smiled gently and thought, "Let our memories be a small gift from the past to the future." In that quiet moment, our hearts seemed to beat together, and I felt a warm happiness, knowing we could share something beautiful side by side. Her dedication to music was unbelievable. she would work late into the night, striving to perfect even the smallest details.

Finally, the day arrived. The hall was full to bursting, suffocating. The dim light of the wings made us even more excited. My Matryona — my soul, my sprout, my blossom, my home, my life and everything. I held his trembling hands and whispered,

"We will always support each other, no matter what mistakes we make, they will never be able to draw lines between us. We will never part." I felt anxious inside.

She turned and chuckled mockingly. Her lack of seriousness in response to my worries reassured me somewhat. "You're the one who exaggerates." But this time, her voice seemed a little distant.

After our names were announced, I walked towards the stage. The moment my feet touched the floor, the murmurs ceased, and everyone fell silent.

I sat down, embraced my cello, and my wife stood beside me, elegant as ever. She cleared her throat, and we were ready to perform.

We will play and sang Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky

We played our piece slowly, carefully — just as its name promised. Matryona floated like swans gliding across a quiet lake, every note soft and shimmering.

When the last sound faded, there was no applause. No sound at all. Only a heavy stillness. The audience sat frozen, their eyes fixed on us, as if caught in a spell.

I rose, bowed, and offered my greeting — but when I turned to her side, to where my wife should have been... she was gone.

Under the glow of the lights, I stood alone — my violin in hand, the memory of her beside me, graceful and full of life, lingering like a scent that refuses to fade.

A madness welled up inside me. My heart raced, wild and desperate, as if the silence itself were striking me again and again.

Where are you, my dear? Are you there watching me still?

After that disgrace on stage, I tried to pull myself together. Different habits, good or bad, seemed to drag me down.

Matryona, my dear wife, the meaning of my life... Haven't you always been by my side? Didn't we make promises to each other? Was everything just a lie?"

I cannot live without you, but I cannot live with you now either... The sin I committed against myself was too much. Your presence felt like a knife, a thorn. Even though I want you back, I don't know how to face you.

After leaving the stage, I walked slowly with my cello. I no longer had the strength to ride in a carriage or even walk far. At home, I looked at our photos. You were still there. Isn't that proof you are real, Matryona? I wasn't a religious man, but now I prayed for your presence.

“Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? Madua tnesseni behesron aḥuvi? Hazot hayetha na'vah li?”

I felt the cold blood in my veins, each drop bursting. Suddenly, I jumped up and began taking down all the photos. I wanted to erase our memories, but could I erase them from my heart?

This is how Charles Braun turned 40.

CHAPTER 3 — DUSTY PAGES OF CHARLES

Year 1793, the streets of Paris.

The city had begun to resemble a restless creature, worn down by its own heartbeat, staggering beneath the weight of its endless motion. Dust clung to every stone, every shutter, every forgotten corner, as though the air itself had grown tired of carrying so many unspoken grievances.

Paris was becoming harder to live in—

not because of its noise,

nor its hunger,

but because of the strange heaviness that seeped into one's bones merely by walking its streets.

High-society injustices spilled over like wine from cracked crystal goblets:

the nobility barricaded behind gilded doors, trembling at rumors they pretended not to hear;

the poor queuing for scraps, their silhouettes bending like thin reeds in the wind;

children weaving between legs and carriages with laughter that sounded too fragile to belong to real joy.

Everywhere hovered a faint scent of smoke—

from burnt pamphlets, from shattered furniture,

or perhaps from the dreams people sacrificed in order to survive.

Street vendors shouted half-heartedly, their cries drifting like tattered flags.

Women clutched their baskets tight against their ribs, as if protecting the little they still possessed.

And soldiers patrolled with hollow eyes, their shadows stretching longer each day, darkening the alleys before the sun could reach them.

I walked through all this as though I were drifting through another man's life.

Faces passed by me without truly seeing me;

I moved like a ghost among the living,

carrying a silence so heavy it felt almost sacred.

Paris breathed in unrest and exhaled sorrow.

Yet it never slept.

It watched, and trembled, and endured.

And in the middle of all that turmoil, I thought only of her—

of Matryona,

of her absence,

or perhaps of the unbearable possibility that she had never truly stood beside me at all.

My heart faltered with each step, stumbling over memories that now seemed like half-faded silhouettes.

The city roared around me, but I heard only a single whisper rising from the depths of my own mind:

What if she was only a dream I forced into flesh?

Only when I reached my small wooden room above the street did the world finally fall into a hush, as though the chaos hesitated to cross the threshold and disturb my solitude.

And there—

beneath the open window, with the cold air sweeping in like a forgotten voice—

my cello waited for me.

I lifted the bow, brushing it softly across the strings.

The sound was fragile, trembling, like a sigh escaping from the deepest part of my chest.

“Do you remember this, Matryona?” I whispered.

And for a fleeting moment, I thought I heard a reply.

A small voice outside made me jump.

“Talking to it again, monsieur?”

I turned sharply. There he was—Vince, the neighborhood boy, his eyes bright with mischief and curiosity, his small hands stuffed into the pockets of his coat.

“Go away, Vince. This is not a game,” I said, my voice trembling more than I wished.

“Maybe not a game... but still strange, no? To talk to a cello as if it were someone else.”

“It is not a cello,” I barked.

“This... is Matryona. My wife.”

He tilted his head, squinting.

“She’s... gone, isn’t she?”

My chest constricted.

“She... she left.”

“And no one else remembers her?” Vince pressed, leaning closer.

I remained silent, unable to speak the truth.

"You might... she might never have existed," Vince said gently, almost like a priest revealing a terrible confession.

I staggered back, clutching the cello to me as if it could anchor me to reality.

"No... no! I've known her, I've touched her, played beside her—how could she not have existed?"

Vince shook his head slowly, his young face grave.

"Sometimes... we invent what we cannot bear to lose. Perhaps Matryona is the echo of your music, the shape of your loneliness made flesh."

I pressed my forehead to the cello, tears spilling onto the wood.

"No... no... it cannot be true..."

But a seed of doubt had taken root.

A terrible, creeping awareness that all my memories—every whispered word, every smile, every note—might have been born from the emptiness inside me.

Vince reached out, placing a small, warm hand on mine.

"Let her go, monsieur. Or you will lose yourself as well."

And in that moment, I felt a fracture deep within me.

Could the raw love inside me be destroyed with a single word ? I don't know.

CHAPTER 4 — CHERISHED

The night was heavy with silence, thick as wet velvet, pressing against the walls of my small room. The candle flickered, casting trembling shadows that danced like restless ghosts along the furniture. I felt her presence before I saw it—or perhaps I imagined it.

“Matryona... are you there?” I whispered, my voice barely audible, as if speaking too loudly might shatter the fragile illusion.

No answer came. The room was still, save for the occasional creak of wood and the faint sigh of wind brushing against the shutters. Yet in the stillness, I heard her voice—the voice I had carved into my memory, worn smooth like the strings of my cello.

“I remember... the first time we met,” I murmured, drawing my hand across the polished wood of the instrument. “You... so small, so fragile, and yet... a flame that could ignite the coldest night.”

Her laughter, soft and distant, echoed somewhere between memory and dream. I closed my eyes, letting the sound wrap around me, holding me, mocking me.

"You left me, Matryona. Why?" I pressed, my knuckles white against the cello. "Was it my fault? Did I not... deserve your presence?"

The silence answered in the way that only absence can: it pressed against my chest, heavy and unforgiving. I could almost feel her breath on my neck, the warmth of her hand on the bow, guiding it as if I were a child learning to draw a line between notes and life itself.

"I played... I played for you," I whispered, tears falling, warm against the cold wood. "Every note... every pause... every trembling vibration... it was you."

A shadow shifted in the corner, tall and insubstantial. For a heartbeat, I believed she was there. For a heartbeat, hope bloomed with the sweet scent of lilacs and candle wax.

"But are you real, Matryona? Or just the ghost of a desire too fragile to survive daylight?" I asked, my voice cracking. "You haunt me... yet... perhaps I am the one haunting myself."

The room seemed to breathe with me, and the cello hummed a quiet reply, the strings vibrating under my trembling touch. It answered where she could not. It always had.

I sank to the floor, cradling the instrument, letting the notes fall through me like rain on stone. The air grew colder, and I realized the shadows were retreating, drawing back into corners where reality had begun to reclaim its space.

“You must be gone,” I admitted quietly, the words tasting bitter on my tongue. “I cannot see you... yet I cannot let you go.”

A single candle flickered and died, leaving the room in a gray, trembling twilight. The fantasy wavered and faltered, the edges of the dream fraying. And in that moment, I felt it—the slow, reluctant return of the real: the draft from the window, the faint smell of the streets below, the weight of my own body against the wooden floor.

I lifted my head, the echo of her presence fading, leaving only the cello’s soft resonance. The night had been a confession, a dialogue with a shadow, a desperate attempt to hear her voice one last time.

Yet the world awaited beyond the glass, indifferent, noisy, and unsparing.

And I knew, somewhere deep inside, that I would have to step into it again—alone, carrying the weight of what might never have been.

CHAPTER 5— REALITY?

That night, I did not sleep.

Shadows of my own imagination danced along the walls of my empty room.

The echoes of Paris seeped through the open window, cold and indifferent.

“Perhaps she never existed...”

“Perhaps it was all me...”

“Perhaps Matryona was only the voice of the cello...”

I wandered the corners of my home.

The photographs still hung, but their faces seemed hollow, mere shadows of the figures I had imagined.

I touched each frame, hoping to see the truth.

But the truth was a void.

Even the eyes that had once stared at me warmly now appeared as empty, cruel mirrors.

I tried to make coffee, letting drops fall on my hands.

No pain registered.

No warmth.

Only the mechanical motions of a man learning to exist without his anchor.

I faced the mirror and asked the reflection:

“Who are you, Charles? A cellist? A husband? Or merely a madman clinging to echoes?”

The eyes stared back without answer.

And then, the familiar sound—Vince’s small steps outside the window.

I did not call him. Yet he was there.

“You look different today,” he said softly.

“Different... how?”

“Lighter. Sometimes people carry burdens without noticing. And when they let them go, they feel the weight lift. You... look as though you are beginning to release something.”

“I have released nothing,” I whispered.

“You will,” he said simply.

“Because now, you face reality.”

Tears fell onto the cello, soaking into its polished wood.

These were not Matryona's tears—they were mine.

The grief, the obsession, the fantasy... spilling out in one long, suffocating river.

I knew then: I had to bury Matryona.

Not the cello itself, but the illusion of her.

The love I had conjured, the life I had imagined.

CHAPTER 6 — GOODBYE BELLA!

At dawn, my decision was final.

Paris lay under a veil of mist.

Even the revolutionary roar of the streets seemed muted, softened, as though the city itself were aware of the quiet tragedy unfolding.

I carried the cello carefully, as if it were the body of the woman I had dreamed.

Vince followed silently, small and patient.

We walked beyond the ruins of the old city, past the shattered stones of abandoned buildings and silent gardens.

The revolution's scars were everywhere.

Yet my mind was fixed on a single, living thing: a great, ancient plane tree.

Its trunk swallowed the light, its branches stretched toward the sky like hands seeking mercy.

I sank to my knees beneath it, cradling the cello one last time.

I dug with trembling hands. Blood, sweat, and soil mingled as if the earth itself demanded a toll.

Vince joined me, his small hands helping, quiet and steady.

At last, I laid the cello into the grave.

I covered it slowly, reverently.

A final farewell—not just to the wood and strings, but to the illusion, the fantasy, the life I had built around a ghost.

I pressed my forehead to the soil, whispering,

“From the tree you came...”

My voice caught.

“...to the tree you shall return, Matryona.”

And now the thing called us had completely disappeared.

Completely.