



AUTHOR PROFILE

Sude Kurt**Level** B2**Genre** Fantasy

Missing Train 47

Lost Train 47

As Derin walked toward the entrance of the station, the faint clicking sounds made by the stones beneath her shoes echoed through the night, louder than they normally would in the silence. Being outside at this hour was already strange. Taking a train journey at such a time—even more so. But she had no other choice. She needed to reach her destination early in the morning, and this train was the only option she had found.

When she stepped into the station, she noticed it was far emptier than she had expected. Faded posters on the walls, lights that barely worked... And almost no people at all. While the wind blew outside, even the air inside felt strangely still.

Derin tightened her grip on the handle of her suitcase.

Was it always like this here? She wondered.

It felt as though she had entered a place no one had visited in years.

Just then, a crackling sound rose from the loudspeaker.

“Departure in... four minutes... Lost Train 47...”

Derin frowned slightly.

Lost train?

Train names usually weren't like that.

Still, she didn't dwell on it too much. Maybe it was an old model, or just a strange name. The rush of needing to be on the road suppressed her curiosity.

When the train by the tracks came into view, Derin's steps faltered for a brief moment.

The train didn't look like the others.

Its windows were dark, its lights dim, and its body looked as if it had emerged from the mist. Even its color was unclear—gray or black... or perhaps a shadow somewhere in between.

I've never seen this train before.

That was the only thought in her mind.

As she got closer, she noticed something even stranger:

There were no staff members anywhere on the train.

Normally, there would be at least one official—if not several. Here, there was no one.

There were a few people walking toward the train, but there was no expression on their faces. They weren't looking at one another, they weren't speaking, they weren't even paying attention to their surroundings. It was as if someone had dropped them here and simply told them, "Just get on."

Derin swallowed.

A small sense of unease stirred in her chest.

Don't exaggerate, she whispered to herself.

You're tired, that's all.

The train doors slowly opened. Even the soft hissing sound they made sent a shiver down Derin's spine. A cloud of steam rose from inside, which was strange—because the air wasn't cold.

Still, she reminded herself that she had no other choice.

Pulling her suitcase, Derin stepped inside.

The interior looked even older than the outside.

The ceiling was tall and slightly slanted, as if it hadn't been maintained in years. The fabric of the seats was worn, fraying in some places. The lights flickered in a dull yellow hue.

Derin took a deep breath.

I can still turn back... she thought.

But the train was leaving in two minutes.

And turning back meant being late to where she needed to go.

With that thought, she sat down on a seat. She pulled her suitcase in front of her knees and looked around.

The passengers were the same.

Silent.

Motionless.

Completely uninterested in one another.

Derin raised her eyebrows slightly.

Isn't it strange for a train to be this quiet?

At that moment, the train started moving with a slight jolt.

Derin flinched.

When she looked out the window, she saw the station beginning to slide away. A thin layer of mist gathered along the tracks and drifted behind them.

As the train picked up speed, the unease inside Derin slowly grew—not enough to overwhelm her, just enough to leave a mark.

Then the ceiling lights flickered twice.

Derin lifted her head.

The electrical system must be old, she thought.

But the voice inside her still whispered that something was wrong.

Slowly, she took a deep breath and began to look around the sides of the carriage.

She noticed a scratch carved into the edge of the seat.

At first, she didn't pay much attention to it.

Then her eyes made out the letters etched into the mark.

MIRA

Derin's hand froze instantly.

Her heart began to race—not with panic, but with shock.

How... was this possible?

Mira was her close friend.

And Mira had never been on this train.

She didn't even know this train existed.

Derin reached out and touched the writing with her finger.

It was real.

Carved into the fabric, as if it had been done years ago.

If it had been fresh, she might have said it was just a joke—but this scratch was faded... worn... old.

Derin's breathing quickened slightly.

Still, she tried to calm herself.

Maybe someone else had the same name...

A coincidence...

She wanted to believe it, but it didn't feel convincing.

As the train rattled along the tracks, Derin began to realize that the strange silence inside the carriage was no longer a normal kind of silence.

It felt less natural... and more deliberate.

As if someone had muted every sound.

The lights flickered again.

This time, longer.

Derin involuntarily looked up.

She could make out the faces of a few passengers seated at the front of the carriage in the dim light—but their eyes were fixed on a single point.

Without moving.

Without reacting.

For a moment, Derin felt as though her heart might stop.

What... did I get myself onto?

A cold air swept through the train.

It was impossible to tell where it came from.

At the same time, the hairs on Derin's arms stood on end.

And then, slowly but unmistakably, she realized:

Something on this train was not right.

In fact... nothing was right.

But it was already too late to turn back.

The train was moving deeper into the darkness.

And for the first time, Derin was beginning to understand that this journey was not a normal one at all.

When the train began to move, Derin couldn't stop herself from looking at her reflection in the window. As the station fell behind, the lights went out one by one—as if the city wasn't letting her go willingly, as if she were

being torn away by force. The sound of the rails was familiar at first, then it became muffled. After a while, it lost its rhythm and left an uneasy emptiness inside Derin.

The carriage was almost empty. Across from her, a man sat with his head buried inside his hood. His face wasn't clearly visible; it was as if the light refused to settle on his features. There was a woman dozing at the end of a seat, but Derin wasn't sure whether the woman was truly asleep. No one spoke. The silence felt heavier than the sound of the train itself.

Derin took her ticket out of her pocket. She noticed her fingers were trembling. The number 47 seemed darker somehow, as if it had deepened. The memory of the attendant's gaze came back to her. The questions she hadn't been able to ask at that moment now knotted in her throat.

When the train entered a long tunnel, the lights flickered. For a brief instant, Derin thought everything had stopped. Her heart slammed hard against her chest. At that exact moment, the man across from her lifted his head.

"First time?" he said.

Derin flinched. His voice was closer than she had expected. "First... first time what?"

The man tilted his head slightly to the side. "This train."

Derin swallowed. "Yes."

The man's lips moved almost imperceptibly. She couldn't tell whether he was smiling or if it was just a habit. "It shows," he said. "First-time passengers look at themselves in the window more than anything else."

Derin instinctively pulled her face away from the glass. "You've been on it before." It wasn't a question.

Without answering, the man pulled an old, worn watch from his pocket. The glass was cracked. The hour and minute hands were frozen at the same point.

"Time doesn't work here," he said. "So there's no need to rush."

"Here?" Derin's voice trembled. "Where are we?"

For the first time, the man looked directly at her. His eyes glinted strangely in the darkness. "On the way."

That answer didn't comfort Derin. "Every train is on the way."

The man nodded. "But not every road leads somewhere."

A cold shiver ran down Derin's spine.

"Where is this train going?"

The man looked out the window. The darkness beyond the glass seemed to thicken. For a moment, it was as if a light flickered somewhere outside. "Not to the same place for everyone," he said. "Some people get off. Some people can't."

"Can't?" Derin's breathing quickened. "What does that mean?"

The man didn't answer. He simply slipped the watch back into his pocket. Silence wrapped around the carriage again, but this time it felt more threatening to Derin—as if the train itself had heard everything that was said.

Derin shifted in her seat. "What's your name?"

The man stayed quiet for a moment. The silence tested Derin's patience. Just as she was about to give up, he spoke.

"Aras."

"Is that your real name?"

Aras lifted his head. "Names don't lie here."

That sentence frightened Derin even more. "Why am I here?"

Aras's gaze hardened. "You don't want to hear that from me."

Derin felt her chest tighten. “Then why are you telling me any of this?”

Aras lowered his voice. “Because you’re asking questions. Most people don’t. Those who don’t ask disappear faster.”

Derin’s throat went dry. “Disappear?”

The train suddenly shuddered lightly. The lights flickered again. The sleeping woman lifted her head, but her eyes were still closed. The sight made Derin’s stomach churn.

“This train,” Aras said, “doesn’t take people without a reason. There’s something you’re running from.”

Derin shook her head. “I’m not running.”

“Then why did you buy a one-way ticket?”

Derin froze. She hadn’t told anyone that. “How do you know?”

This time, a clear expression appeared on Aras’s face. He was serious. “I know,” he said simply.

Derin pulled her knees up toward her stomach. The fear rising inside her mixed with curiosity. “Will this train stop?”

“It will,” Aras said. “But not everyone gets off as the same person.”

—Without Pause—

As the train continued forward, the sense of time completely lost its meaning. Derin could no longer tell how long she had been traveling. Had minutes passed, or hours? The darkness outside the window never changed, and the sound of the rails continued endlessly, with the same irregularity. It no longer sounded like movement—it felt like waiting.

Derin sat without taking her eyes off Aras. His presence was strange in a way that was both reassuring and unsettling. The fact that someone she had never met before knew so much about her created a heavy

pressure in her chest.

“How do you know me?” she finally asked. Her voice came out sharper than she had intended.

Aras answered without turning his gaze from the window. “I don’t.”

“Then,” Derin said, “why are you talking to me like this?”

Aras slowly turned his head. “Because this train likes those who don’t speak. Those who stay silent.”

Derin frowned. “What does that mean?”

“They’re easier to lose,” Aras said calmly.

The words sent a chill through Derin. She sat up straighter in her seat. “Is getting lost really something that happens here?”

Aras paused briefly before answering. That hesitation frightened Derin more than the answer itself. “It is,” he said at last. “But it goes unnoticed. People don’t realize they’ve been lost.”

Derin cleared her throat. “And you... have you been lost?”

For a brief moment, something crossed Aras’s face. Regret, or exhaustion—Derin couldn’t tell. “If I’m still here,” he said, “you can answer that yourself.”

The train jolted again—harder this time. The lights in the carriage went out. Darkness swallowed everything at once. Derin’s heart began to race. She pressed her hand against the edge of the seat.

“What’s happening?” she whispered.

Aras’s voice came from within the darkness. “Don’t panic. The dark is temporary.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because it’s always like this.”

When the lights came back on, the carriage was no longer the same. The sleeping woman was gone. The seat where she had been sitting was empty. Derin's eyes widened.

"The woman... where did she go?"

Aras looked at the seats, then back at Derin. "She got off."

"When?"

"When the lights went out."

Derin stood up. "But the train didn't stop!"

Aras stood as well, but didn't come closer. "Not every exit happens at a station."

That answer terrified Derin even more. "Then could I... disappear too?"

Aras's voice was serious now. "Yes. If you forget what you want."

Derin swallowed. "I don't know what I want."

"That," Aras said, "is the most dangerous thing of all."

At the far end of the carriage, a red light began to blink—something that hadn't been there before. Without realizing it, Derin took a step toward it.

"What is that?"

Aras extended his arm slightly and stopped her. The contact was brief, but a shiver ran through Derin. "Don't go there," he said.

"Why?"

"Because that's where decisions are made."

Derin lowered her eyes to Aras's hand. "Don't you want me to decide?"

Aras pulled his hand back. "What I want doesn't matter."

The train sped up. The sound of the rails became sharp, harsh—as if the train were trying to reach somewhere. Derin's head began to spin.

"Where is this train going?" she asked again.

Aras took a deep breath. "Not everyone who asks that question is ready to hear the answer."

"I'm ready," Derin said, but her voice wavered.

Aras looked at her for a long moment. "Then you should know this," he said. "This train is the line between running away and facing what you're running from."

Derin shook her head. "I don't understand."

"You don't have to understand," Aras said. "Just feel it."

A sound came from the other end of the carriage. Footsteps. Derin flinched. "Is there someone else?"

Aras's face tightened. "There shouldn't be."

A silhouette emerged from the shadows. Its face was indistinguishable. It was approaching slowly. The train shook once more.

Derin's breathing quickened. "Who is that?"

For the first time, Aras showed clear fear. "Sometimes," he said, "there are those who want to go back."

The silhouette stopped. The train suddenly slowed. The doors creaked.

Derin felt as though her heart was about to tear out of her chest. "I don't want to get off," she whispered.

Aras looked at her. This time, his voice was gentle. "Not yet."

The doors did not open. The train accelerated again. The silhouette vanished into the darkness.

Derin sank to her knees. She covered her face with her hands. "Why did you bring me here?"

Aras slowly crouched beside her. "We didn't," he said. "You got on."

Derin lifted her head. Her eyes were full. "I just... wanted to stop for a moment."

Aras's gaze softened. "Everyone says that."

The train kept moving. The darkness beyond the window remained the same.

But Derin knew this now: this journey was not just a train ride.

And Lost Train 47 continued on its way—without offering Derin a choice for the first time...

Aras

Aras and Derin sat side by side, thinking about everything that had happened. For the first time, Derin looked absent-minded, expressionless. Suddenly, she remembered her phone. She searched her pockets with her hands—but it wasn't there. Aras must have realized what she was doing, because he spoke.

"Are you looking for your phone?"

Derin stopped and looked at him.

"Yes, but it's gone. It was here, in my pocket—I'm sure of it."

Aras understood the situation.

"There are two things they don't allow," he said. "One is a watch. The other is a phone. They took it too."

Derin stared at him in shock.

“What do you mean they don’t allow it? And how did they take it? It was in my pocket—I would have noticed if someone took it.”

Aras turned toward Derin for a moment, then looked forward again and rested his head against the window.

“You didn’t notice. That’s the point.”

Derin could no longer stay calm. The inside of the train was growing hotter, and the train wasn’t stopping at all.

She took off her jacket, bent down, and pulled a black cardigan out of her suitcase, then put it on. Aras was still sitting there with his eyes closed. Derin zipped up the cardigan, closed the suitcase, and placed it in the corner. The train was moving so fast that if it weren’t for the metal rails to hold onto, Derin would have lost her balance and fallen long ago. She sat down at the very end and looked at Aras. Using the hair tie around her wrist, she tied back her loose hair. Her bangs fell forward. Normally it would have bothered her, but there were so many disturbing things happening that her hair was the least of her worries.

“What do we do now?”

Aras was silent.

“I’m talking to you, Aras. Answer me. You clearly know this train—so you must know what we’re supposed to do.”

Without moving, Aras opened his eyes and replied.

“I don’t know. But there’s one thing I do know: this train won’t stop.”

“What do you mean it won’t stop? What does that even mean?”

Aras pulled the hood off his head, clasped his hands over his knees, and looked at Derin.

“Do you really think the train will just go straight?”

“Speak clearly, Aras.”

Aras took a deep breath.

“Every time, it sets up a different game. While this train runs along the tracks, you have to try to survive inside it.”

Suddenly, the train stopped. Derin looked at the lights, then at Aras. Aras straightened up and tried to look outside, but nothing was visible through the train’s mist. Both of them stood up. All at once, fog spread inside their carriage. Aras grabbed Derin’s hand and pulled her close.

“What’s happening? What is this fog?”

Aras positioned Derin behind him and looked at her.

“Cover your nose, Derin,” he said—but it was too late. Derin lost consciousness and fainted. Aras caught her, but after that... everything vanished.

When Derin came to, she was sitting in one of the seats—but something was missing.

Aras was gone.

She stood up, and only then did she realize: the carriage had changed. The doors were closed. Derin’s hands turned ice-cold with fear. She didn’t know what had happened or how she had gotten there. The only thing on her mind was where Aras was.

“ARAS, WHERE ARE YOU?!”

“ARAS, HELP ME—WHERE ARE YOU, SAY SOMETHING!”

She shouted, but it was useless. She could neither see nor hear Aras. Just as she was about to sit down, she heard a sound. One of the carriage doors opened, and someone stepped inside. His face wasn’t visible, but he was tall. Derin flinched and stepped backward. When her back hit the wall, she realized she had nowhere left to go.

“Who are you? What do you want?”

As the man started walking toward her, Derin shrank back in fear.

“Don’t come any closer. Who are you? Answer me!”

The man stopped.

“Didn’t Aras tell you?” he said, a nasty grin forming on his face.

“You’ll learn. I’ll teach you, Derin.”

Derin felt frozen in shock. How did he know her name? What was Aras hiding from her? As these thoughts raced through her mind, the man began to approach again.

“I said don’t come near me!”

He didn’t stop. He kept coming closer. Derin searched around desperately, but there was nothing that could protect her. The man was very close now. Derin had no choice but to close her eyes. Suddenly, she heard a sound and opened them.

The man was gone.

Aras was there.

Seeing Aras in front of her, she didn’t know what to do—she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Are you okay?”

When Derin looked down, she saw the man writhing on the floor.

“I’m fine,” she said, pulling away from Aras. She shouldn’t trust him—the man’s words echoed in her mind.

She turned to Aras.

“Who is that man? What are you hiding from me?”

Aras looked at Derin, then at the floor. In that moment, he couldn't hide his confusion. When Derin followed his gaze and looked down, she saw that the man was gone.

She was stunned.

“Where did he disappear to?” Aras said, looking around.

Derin also glanced around, then stepped toward the door.

“I don't know. All I know is that you're hiding something from me.”

Without even looking back, she continued walking through the train. She stopped in another carriage; its door was closed. There was nowhere else to go, and no matter what, she wanted to get out of here. Aras followed her and stood in front of her.

“I'm not hiding anything from you. Whatever he told you, he's lying.”

Derin looked at Aras angrily.

“You're the one lying. That man knew you—and me. Or are you one of them too?”

Aras answered calmly.

“If I were one of them, I wouldn't have saved you. Believe me.”

“Maybe that's part of the game too. You were already on the train anyway—you know everything. You've been here before, or you're one of them, aren't you?”

Finally fed up, Aras let out a breath and sat down on one of the seats.

“I was young. My father and I got on this train to run away. Our ticket was for this train too.

Then... that man whose face you never see started his games. My father was the first to realize something was wrong. This train wasn't normal. We wanted to get off. We wanted to escape. But we couldn't.

Because this train doesn't let its passengers off wherever they want. It leaves them where it chooses.

My father put his own life on the line to save me. I don't know how it happened... When I opened my eyes, I was at a station—the same place where we had boarded this train. Everything was as if it had never happened.

After that... I never saw this train again. Not until the night you got on. That night, I was there too. I boarded this train with you. Now I'm following my father.

If he's alive, I'll get him out of here.

If he isn't... I'll take revenge for him.

Now the decision is yours, Derin. You can come with me. I'll help you survive. Or you can choose not to.

But no one gets out of this train alone.”

Time to Decide

The two of them sat side by side, thinking about a way out of this place. They were hungry—but compared to the weight of the situation they were in, hunger felt almost insignificant. Their minds were far more exhausted than their bodies.

Every now and then, Derin turned toward Aras.

“So... what do we do now?” she finally asked. Her voice was impatient, but beneath it lay a suppressed desperation.

Aras didn't look at her. His eyes were still fixed on the floor, as if an answer were hidden somewhere between the rails. Just then, the train came to a sudden, violent stop. A sound like screaming metal filled the carriage.

Aras lifted his head and looked around in panic. Derin, reacting instinctively, jumped to her feet. She was

trying to understand what was happening when the doors opened with a heavy hiss.

Without thinking, Derin ran toward the doors. But Aras instantly grabbed her arm and pulled her back.

“Aras! The doors are open—what are you doing? Let go, let’s get off!” she said, her voice sharp and filled with panic.

“Are you going to get off here, Derin?” Aras said, not letting go.

Beyond the windows, almost nothing was visible. Thick dust covered everything. Derin hesitated at Aras’s words and looked outside. A barren emptiness... dust clouds swallowing the sky... a harsh wind sweeping away everything in its path.

Derin stepped back.

“This train stops at the wrong and dangerous routes,” Aras said. “And we can’t just believe every stop it makes. But when I look at you... you jump at whatever appears in front of you, without thinking about what comes next.”

He was right. Derin only wanted to get out of here. But every decision she made in haste pushed them deeper into a dead end.

A tear slipped from her eye.

“I can’t think anymore, Aras,” she said. “I just want to get out of here...”

With her words, the tears broke free. This time, Aras moved the hand that had been holding her to her face and wiped her tear away with his thumb.

“I know,” he said quietly. “I want that too. But if we let this train take control of us, we’ll be prisoners here for the rest of our lives.”

Derin’s crying grew stronger.

“Mira...” she suddenly said.

Aras looked at her in surprise. Derin couldn't hold it in anymore—she collapsed to the floor and buried her face in her hands. Aras crouched down beside her.

“Who is Mira?” he asked.

Derin lifted her head and leaned back.

“How could I not think of this...” she said to herself, her tone accusatory.

“Think of what?”

“Mira was my best friend,” she said. “She bought a train ticket for a job. I was the one who dropped her off at the station, but then...”

“Then what?” Aras asked.

“I never saw her again,” Derin said. “I couldn't reach her phone. I kept coming to the station, asking around, searching... but there was no trace of her. The only thing left was the date she bought the ticket.”

“Maybe she didn't get on this train,” Aras said. “Maybe she ran away. Isn't that possible?”

Derin looked at him.

“I don't know,” she said. “I don't know anything anymore...”

She stood up. By then, the train had already closed its doors and started moving again. They both stood up silently and began walking down the carriage. Nothing could be heard except the echo of their footsteps and the rusted sound of the rails.

They entered a compartment. Inside, there was a small table and two bunk beds, one above the other. The table was covered with food, as if someone had been waiting for them—everything from water to wine had been considered. A note was hanging from the edge of the bed.

Aras was the first to notice it. He picked it up and skimmed it. His brows furrowed slightly.

Derin couldn't hold back.

"What does it say?"

Aras handed her the note. Derin took the paper and read:

"Touch it if you want. Or starve.

I wonder how long you'll last in this state."

For a moment, there was silence. Derin placed the note on the table and looked around.

"What is all this?" she said. "First they trap us here, and now they're playing with us?"

Aras looked at the table, the food, and the note.

"No," he said. "This is a challenge. They're testing us. Our endurance... maybe our minds."

Derin sank onto the bed and tried to loosen her neck with small movements.

"If you're hungry, eat," Aras said. "I won't."

Derin rolled her eyes and sat at the table.

"Don't be ridiculous. If you collapse from hunger, you won't be able to do anything. And I don't think there's anything in these. Sit down and eat. Remember—we don't need pride, we need strength."

She started eating, choosing the most filling options. She didn't want to lose to this train. Aras was surprised at first, but then he agreed. He sat down and began to eat as well.

Neither of them spoke. There was only the sound of forks and the endless hum of the train.

When they were full, they lay down on the beds. For the moment, they stopped thinking. Questions, fears, and uncertainty fell silent—just for a while.

As the train carried them toward the unknown, both of them drifted into a deep sleep...

REMEMBERING

When Derin opened her eyes, the first thing she noticed was the silence.

But this wasn't the kind of silence she knew.

There was no hum of night, no hurried noise of day. It was as if the silence itself had been deliberately enforced—something had been muted on purpose.

The ceiling...

It was metal.

Cold, dull, etched with fine scratches.

When Derin slightly turned her head, her heartbeat quickened. Someone was sitting across from her.

Aras.

His eyes were closed, but his face wasn't peaceful. His brows were faintly furrowed, his lips slightly parted—as if he wasn't sleeping, but struggling with something.

Derin tried to sit up. The seat was hard, the carriage narrow and elongated. There were windows, but seeing outside was impossible. Either the glass was blackened, or beyond it there was truly nothing at all.

"Aras..."

Her voice echoed.

That was a bad sign.

They were in a train car. But there was no sense of motion. No shaking. No sound of rails.

Derin's throat went dry.

"Aras," she said louder.

Aras's eyes snapped open. He straightened instantly, scanning the surroundings. For a few seconds, his gaze couldn't settle on anything.

"Derin?"

"I'm here."

Aras took a deep breath, ran a hand over his face.

"This... isn't a dream," he said with certainty.

Derin swallowed.

"Yes. I felt it too."

At that exact moment, something appeared on the small metal table in the center of the carriage.

Derin couldn't tell whether it had already been there or had just materialized.

A bracelet.

Mira's bracelet.

Derin's chest tightened. She stood up and approached the table. She didn't pick it up—only stared at it.

"Mira..." she whispered.

Aras had also stood, but his expression was different. There was no panic. Instead... calculation.

"No," he said.

“What do you mean, no?”

“I mean... she’s not here. This is a trace.”

Derin lifted her head.

“So?”

Aras stepped closer to the table.

“They’re not making us chase her. That would be easy.”

“Then what are they doing?”

“They’re reminding us.”

At that moment, a voice came from the ceiling of the carriage. Neither male nor female. Neither warm nor cold.

“First trial: Remembering.”

Derin’s knees nearly gave out.

“What trial?”

“Wait,” Aras said, raising his hand to stop her. “Listen.”

The voice continued.

“This train is not a road. It is a choice.

Those who forget cannot move forward.

Those who remember must carry weight.”

A clicking sound echoed.

The door at the far end of the carriage slowly opened.

Another dark carriage.

“Is that the way out?” Derin asked.

“Probably not,” Aras said. “But if we don’t go, we stay here.”

Derin picked up the bracelet. It was cold.

“Mira wore this,” she said. “Always. She never took it off.”

“That’s why it’s here,” Aras said. “But not her.”

They stepped out of the first carriage.

The second was different. Words were carved into the walls—as if scratched by hand. Some were erased, some unfinished.

Derin approached one.

“They forgot me here.”

Another read:

“Remembering hurts.”

“This place...”

“Is what people leave behind,” Aras said. “Or what they can’t.”

Suddenly, the floor trembled.

The carriage shook.

Derin instinctively grabbed Aras's arm.

"The train is moving!"

"No," Aras said. "We're late."

The door to the third carriage slammed shut.

The voice returned.

"Choose what you remember."

Two doors appeared in the center of the wall.

One read: DERIN

The other: ARAS

Derin's breath caught.

"This is ridiculous," she said.

"No," Aras replied calmly but firmly. "This train does exactly this."

"We're not separating," Derin said.

"No one said anything about separating."

Words appeared beneath the doors.

DERIN - Remembering: Fear

ARAS - Remembering: Guilt

Derin stepped back.

"I'm not a coward."

Aras turned to her.

"That's not an insult. It's a burden."

"And you?"

"I guessed mine."

The ground trembled again. The doors began to close slowly.

"We have to choose one!" Derin shouted.

"No," Aras said. "We have to remember."

Aras closed his eyes.

"Derin," he said. "Remember the moment you were afraid. Not the moment you ran. The moment you stayed."

Derin's eyes filled with tears.

A dark room.

Silence.

But she hadn't left.

The door suddenly stopped.

Derin's name faded.

The voice fell silent.

The doors opened.

A new carriage.

"Did we pass?" Derin whispered.

"For now," Aras said. "But this train isn't finished."

When they reached the last carriage, they noticed something.

This one had windows—and outside could be seen.

A station.

But the doors were locked.

The voice spoke one final time.

"An exit is not found.

An exit is earned."

The train started moving again.

Derin clenched the bracelet.

"Mira may have lost," she said.

"But we haven't,"

"Not yet," Aras muttered through clenched teeth. "But something is coming."

Derin looked around. The walls of the carriage weren't the same as before. The metal surfaces rippled, as if the train were breathing. The ceiling lights went out one by one. When the last one died, the carriage plunged into darkness.

Then the floor gave way.

Not suddenly. Slowly. As if warning them.

Derin instinctively jumped back—but too late. The metal panel beneath her feet slid downward, opening into emptiness.

“DERIN!” Aras shouted.

Her scream merged with the sound of rails. There was nothing to grab. A moment of weightlessness—then she fell hard.

Aras didn't hesitate. He threw himself into the void after her.

They crashed together into another carriage.

This one wasn't narrow. On the contrary, it was excessively wide—stretching like a long corridor. Doors lined both sides, none with windows. Numbers were etched into the floor—erased, scratched out, crossed over.

Derin coughed as she pushed herself up.

“This... is another carriage.”

“Yes,” Aras said breathlessly. “And this one is optional.”

“What do you mean, optional?”

Aras gestured at the doors. Above each was a single word.

MOVE

WAIT

RETURN

FORGET

Derin swallowed.

“Which one is the exit?”

Aras let out a short laugh—but there was no humor in it.

“If this is truly the train... the door labeled ‘exit’ is never the right one.”

At that moment, the metal door at the end of the corridor opened by itself.

A sound rushed out—not the sound of rails, but something being dragged.

Above the door, one word flashed:

CHOOSE

Derin looked at Aras.

“What if we don’t?”

The train answered.

The corridor floor cracked. Some doors caved inward. One collapsed entirely, revealing a dark void behind it.

“If we don’t,” Aras said calmly but firmly, “the train will choose for us.”

Derin clenched her teeth.

“This is a game.”

“No,” Aras said. “It’s an elimination.”

The corridor suddenly tilted. Standing became difficult. One door exploded open, a metal arm shooting out, slicing the air beside Derin.

Aras grabbed her arm.

“Run.”

They ran without knowing where. Doors opened, closed, shifted places. The train was no longer hiding.

The trial had begun.

And this time, it wouldn’t be paid with the mind alone—but with the body.

They were running.

Footsteps echoed against metal. With every step, the train seemed to deliberately disrupt their balance. The floor tilted left and right; doors vanished or reappeared.

Derin was gasping.

“Is this... going to last forever?”

“No,” Aras said without turning. “It always stops somewhere. And that place is usually the worst.”

At that moment, the floor split in two.

The corridor tore apart, a widening chasm opening between them. Derin stopped instinctively—but Aras had taken one step too far.

“ARAS!”

The gap widened.

Aras lunged forward, catching the metal edge. His fingers slipped; pain shot beneath his nails. Derin dropped to her knees, reaching out.

“Hold on!” she screamed.

“Don’t come closer,” Aras gritted. “The floor—”

Before he could finish, the ground beneath Derin cracked too. The metal panel collapsed downward.

A second of silence.

Then the train decided.

Derin fell.

But the fall didn’t last long. Something caught her—hard, but flexible. She rolled to a stop, breath knocked out of her. As her eyes adjusted to the dark, she heard Aras’s voice from above.

“Derin! Answer me!”

“I’m here!” she shouted. “I’m below!”

“Don’t move.”

“Too late,” Derin said with a bitter smile.

She was in a narrow carriage. The walls were close, the ceiling low. A single red light blinked overhead. There was no door—only a metal panel on the opposite wall, with a sentence carved into it:

You cannot leave without choosing someone.

As soon as she read it, the panel opened.

Inside were two objects.

First: Mira's bracelet.

Second: an exact copy of Aras's watch.

Derin's heart raced.

"No... no."

Above, metal creaked. Aras realized his situation wasn't any better. In his carriage, there was also a message on the wall.

Remember, or give up?

He checked his pocket. His watch was still there—but the slot in the wall was empty.

"This is a stalling game," he muttered. "To divide us."

Derin stared at the two objects. Her hands trembled. When she picked up the bracelet, it was cold—but familiar. As if Mira were still there.

"If I choose this..." she whispered. "Aras..."

The carriage shook.

The red light blinked faster.

The text changed.

If you don't choose, the train will.

Above, Aras's voice came again.

"Derin! Do you see anything?"

She swallowed.

“Yes.”

“What?”

“Something trying to make us choose against each other.”

A brief silence.

Then Aras spoke—clear, calm.

“Whatever you see... don’t save me. Save yourself.”

“I won’t,” Derin said firmly.

“That’s not an order,” Aras replied. “It’s reality. This train wants sacrifice—but not yet.”

Derin closed her eyes. She placed the bracelet down. Looked at the watch.

The train suddenly slammed its brakes.

Both carriages shook violently. Panels closed. The objects vanished.

Doors opened.

But they both knew:

This was only a test.

And the train had learned what they could choose.

The corridor stretched ahead again—darker, narrower.

They moved forward.

Neither of them said “it’s over.”

Because both felt it—

the train hadn’t asked its hardest question yet.

The light of the door grew a little stronger.

The train accelerated.

And they realized—at the exact same moment—that

this hope, just as they were closer to the exit than ever before,

would be the most painful test of all.

The light of the door intensified, but it did not open.

They stood there for a while.

The train neither sped up nor shook.

It was as if, for the first time, the train was holding its breath.

Aras looked at the watch; the glass was cracked, and the hand was not moving.

Derin was squeezing the bracelet in her palm.

The metal had absorbed the warmth of her skin.

The door slowly slid to the side.

What opened was not a corridor.

It led into another carriage.

But this carriage... was different.

The floor was wooden.

The walls were not metal; they were covered with old, dark panels.

A single lamp hung from the ceiling, its yellow light steady, not flickering.

There were windows, but they showed nothing; beyond the glass was a blur, as if the train were suspended in emptiness.

Derin stepped inside.

"This place..."

"Quiet," Aras said. "Dangerously quiet."

The door closed behind them, but there was no sound of a lock.

This time, there was no feeling of being chased.

The carriage was not driving them away.

It was waiting.

There were two seats ahead.

Old train seats. Side by side.

Between them, a small table.

On the table stood a bottle of water and two pieces of cloth.

Derin noticed her knees trembling. She staggered as she walked.

Aras immediately took her arm.

“Sit,” he said. “This is permission. But a brief one.”

Derin collapsed into the seat.

She looked at her palms; the skin was scraped, thin lines of dried blood.

Her knees burned. She tried to steady her breathing.

Aras sat beside her but did not lean back.

He was holding his shoulder. Every movement tightened his face.

“Your shoulder,” Derin said.

“It’s in place,” Aras replied. “But the train... left a mark.”

He took one of the cloths, wet it with water, and began cleaning Derin’s hands.

Neither of them spoke.

This silence was unlike the others.

It wasn’t frightening.

It was tired.

After a while, Derin lifted her head.

“What we thought was the exit...”

"...was a break," Aras finished. "The train gives this rarely."

"Why?"

Aras looked at the windows.

"Because hope is best broken here."

Derin swallowed.

"So the door—"

"The door was real," Aras said. "But it wasn't letting us out. It was preparing us."

A thin line appeared in the middle of the wooden floor.

Barely visible.

Then it widened, and a small hatch opened.

A card emerged.

Like an old train ticket.

Aras picked it up and turned it over.

There was a single sentence written on it:

The next stop is irreversible.

Derin gripped the edge of the seat.

"Irreversible... as in leaving the train?"

Aras shook his head.

“No. From ourselves.”

The carriage swayed slightly.

Not an attack—more like a warning.

The lamp dimmed for a moment, then steadied again.

Derin took a deep breath.

“It lets us rest, but—”

“—not for free,” Aras finished.

He took the water and drank. Then handed the bottle to Derin.

“Drink. Because we won’t be able to run in a moment.”

Derin drank. The water was real. Cold.

It burned as it went down, but it felt good.

After a while, Aras leaned back.

He closed his eyes but did not sleep.

Derin noticed.

“You’re not sleeping.”

“If I sleep,” Aras said, “the train enters my dreams.”

Derin looked at the bracelet.

“Mira ended here,” she said quietly. “But I don’t have to leave her here.”

Aras opened his eyes.

“The train knows that.”

At the far end of the carriage, a second door appeared—one they hadn’t noticed before.

It wasn’t plain.

It was scratched. Like claw marks.

Next to it, carved into the wall, was a symbol.

An arrow.

No words beneath it.

But the floor slanted slightly toward that door.

Derin stood up. Her knees ached, but she remained upright.

“This isn’t the exit.”

“No,” Aras said. “This is a threshold.”

They took a few steps toward it.

Someone had carved a sentence into the wall beside the door.

Old. Rushed.

Beyond this point, the train will not recognize you.

Derin looked at Aras.

“Is that a good thing?”

Aras tested his shoulder. Pain flashed across his face, but he smiled.

“I don’t know. But for the first time, the train isn’t watching us.

It’s waiting.”

A very faint sound came from behind the door.

Not the sound of rails.

Not a human voice.

Like something breathing.

Derin placed her hand on the metal of the door.

Cold, but not trembling.

“Are we ready?”

Aras put the watch in his pocket.

It didn’t work, but he couldn’t leave it.

“We’re not ready,” he said. “But we don’t need to be.”

They both knew:

Once they passed through this door,

the train would stop playing games.

And that was the most dangerous stage.

Light leaked from the door.

But it did not open.

The train wanted to see their decision.

And that decision, in the next chapter,

would take them somewhere irreversible.

The door did not open.

But the air in the carriage changed.

The yellow light softened slightly; it lost its sharpness.

This wasn't the train retreating.

It was more like adjusting its distance while watching its prey.

Derin pulled her hand away from the door.

Her fingers were numb from the cold.

"It's stalling us."

Aras nodded.

"Yes. Because it wants to see what we'll do."

They returned to the seats.

This time, they sat differently.

They weren't ready to flee; they were ready to think.

Aras took off his jacket and laid it on the floor, carefully resting his shoulder on it.

Derin wet the cloths again and cleaned the scrape on her knee.

It hurt, but she made no sound.

For a long moment, the train said nothing.

As the silence stretched, the tension inside Derin grew.

She felt that silence wasn't safety—it was accumulation.

"You know," she said finally,

"this carriage reminds me of the station."

"Which one?" Aras asked, not taking his eyes off the window.

"The day I left Mira."

Derin set the bracelet on the table.

"Everything was too calm. Excessively so."

"The train knows that day," Aras said.

Derin bit her lip.

"It's still testing me with her."

"No," Aras said. "Not with her anymore. With you."

The card on the table moved on its own.

No one touched it.

It slowly flipped over.

New words appeared:

Remembering is over. Can you carry it now?

Derin picked up the card.

“Carrying...”

Aras stood and walked slowly to the door.

His shoulder still hurt, but his steps were firm.

He touched the scratches. Up close, they were clearer.

Not human fingernails—deeper, more uncontrolled.

“This,” Aras said, “is the panic door.”

“So?” Derin asked, joining him.

“People made it this far,” Aras said. “But they rushed to leave.

And the train was waiting for that.”

The breathing sound behind the door grew slightly stronger, then slowed again.

As if letting them know it heard them.

Derin looked at the wall opposite the door.

There was a drawing she hadn't noticed before.

Small, faded, but clear.

A train.

And inside it, two figures.

One ahead, one behind.

The front figure had no arm.

Derin's throat tightened.

"The ones who leave incomplete..."

Aras stared at the drawing for a long time.

"So that's why it gave us a break," he said.

"Those who flee start thinking about the price here."

The carriage swayed once more.

The light from the door shifted—cooler, colder.

Der identical breath.

"Listen to me," she said, turning to Aras. "If something happens—"

"No," Aras cut her off. "Leave the sentence there."

Derin closed her eyes, then opened them.

“Okay.”

The door opened silently.

There was no corridor behind it.

There was a platform.

Wide. Flat. Surrounded by metal railings.

Rails flowed beneath it, but the train had slowed.

At the far end of the platform stood a sign.

Unlit. No writing.

Just an arrow.

And where the arrow pointed... another train carriage.

But this one wasn't like theirs.

It was newer.

More orderly.

Derin took an instinctive step forward.

The platform was solid.

It didn't collapse. It didn't slip.

“This is real,” she whispered.

“It doesn't have to be real,” Aras said.

"It just has to be convincing enough."

When they reached the center of the platform, the door behind them closed.

This time, there was no lock sound.

More like the sound of giving up.

The new carriage door opened by itself.

Inside, it was empty.

No scratches on the walls. No table. No test inscriptions.

Only a control panel.

On it, a single lever.

Beneath it, a short, clear sentence:

Change direction.

Derin looked at Aras.

"This... the train?"

"Yes," Aras said.

"This is the exit," Derin said. "A real one."

Aras shook his head.

"This isn't escape," he said. "This is control."

Beside the panel, a small additional line was etched—barely visible:

Single use only.

Derin's heart raced.

"Single..."

Aras grabbed the lever but did not pull it.

"This is why the train brought us here," he said.

Derin swallowed.

"If we change direction—"

"The train lets us go," Aras said.

"But it takes a price. A heavy one."

The sound of the rails beneath the platform changed.

They were shifting onto another line.

The train was still moving—but hesitating.

Derin placed her hand on the lever.

Aras's hand was still on it.

Neither of them pulled.

Because they both felt the same thing:

The moment that lever was pulled,

the story would go somewhere else entirely.

And for the first time—

the train was afraid of losing control.

Aras lifted his arm.

Derin's breath caught in her throat.

Until that moment—the train's trials, the dark carriages, the wounds, the fear—

all of it vanished at once.

There was only Aras.

A raised arm.

And an invisible, unbridgeable distance between them.

Aras's fingers trembled in the air.

For a moment—just a moment—

Derin thought he would touch her.

Her shoulder. Her face.

Maybe just to prove she was real.

But Aras lowered his arm.

Slowly.

Decisively.

With a movement that could not be taken back.

At that moment, fog began to rise.

First from the ground.

A gray wave seeping up between the rails.

Derin tried to step forward, but her feet wouldn't move.

Aras spoke.

His voice came from within the fog—clear, but distant.

“This is the choice.”

Derin shook her head, as if to say no.

Her lips moved, but no sound came out.

Something collapsed inside her chest.

Aras looked at her one last time.

There was no regret in his eyes.

There was pain.

And something he was trying to protect.

Derin.

The fog thickened.

The air grew heavy.

Derin's knees gave out.

Her eyes never left Aras, but the image blurred.

The last thing she saw was Aras standing completely still.

Then darkness.

—

When Derin opened her eyes, something hard pressed into her back.

Cold.

Stone.

She turned her head slightly.

A station bench.

Long. Old. With metal legs.

The ceiling was high.

The lights were yellow.

Silent.

Too silent.

She breathed in.

The breath burned her chest.

She moved her arm and felt weight in her hand.

She looked down.

A watch.

Aras's watch.

It lay in her palm.

The glass was scratched.

The strap looser than before.

Her fingers closed around it instinctively.

Her heart raced.

Then she noticed her other hand.

The bracelet.

Mira's bracelet.

She was holding both.

Derin sat up. Ignored the dizziness.

Her body ached.

A burning pain in her shoulder.

A sharp sting in her knee.

She touched her knee.

The blood had dried.

It was real.

All of it was real.

She lifted her head.

Someone was standing in front of her.

Aras.

He stood a few steps ahead of the bench.

His hands were not in his pockets.

He was just standing there.

His face was pale, but his eyes were on Derin.

Watching her.

Derin forgot how to breathe.

Time froze.

"Aras..." she said, but her voice sounded foreign even to her.

Aras said nothing.

Derin tried to stand.

She used the bench for support.

Her knees trembled, but she stood.

The watch and bracelet clinked together.

A thin sound.

Aras tilted his head slightly.

He raised that arm again.

But this time, it was different.

Not fast.

Not hesitant.

As if trying to correct something.

Derin took an instinctive step forward.

Aras lowered his arm.

The same movement.

The same ending.

Derin's eyes filled with tears.

She didn't say "don't go."

Because she knew.

That movement was clearer than words.

A rumble rose from the end of the station.

The rails trembled.

Derin turned her head.

A train was coming.

Its lights were on.

It was approaching.

The wind swept her hair back.

She looked at Aras again.

He was still there.

The train entered the station.

The noise rose.

Metal drowned everything.

Derin did not close her eyes.

She kept looking.

The train passed.

And as it did—

Aras was gone.

As if he had never been there.

Derin took a step.

Then another.

She was looking at emptiness now.

At the rails.

At the silence.

Tears streamed down her face.

This time, she didn't hide them.

Her shoulders shook.

She looked at the watch in her hand.

Then at the bracelet.

She closed her fists around them.

When she finally stood fully upright, the station was silent again.

The train was long gone.

Only the wind remained on the rails.

Derin stood there.

Wounded.

Alone.

But with what remained in her hands.

And she understood:

This was not an ending.

It was only a chosen beginning.

THE END