

Chapter 1

**“Mr. T -The man I will marry...but
he doesn't know yet”**

PART ONE

I live in the most prestigious building in the city, on the 6th floor, which is the last but also the first one from the sky. I don't have to work, but since I chose what to do with my life when I was nine years old, my job has become my passion. I wake up every morning at 5:05, and the first thing I do is clean my apartment. Afterward, I put on my training outfit, which I prepared the night before, apply some Chanel No. 5 body lotion, and head to the gym, which is four floors beneath me. The training session is followed by a twenty-minute sauna and a five-minute cold shower. Those five minutes are the engine of my physical and mental strength. Immediately after the shower, I rest in the relaxing area. I close my eyes, and my head spins. This is when I have visions of things that might happen. Most of the time, they become reality.

Thanks to my strict discipline from ballet school, where we were required to shower and change in seven minutes, I now only need seventeen minutes to get ready with makeup and hair.

Every day at 10:00, I leave my apartment to take care of small tasks around the city, as I live alone and must do everything myself. Every Friday, I buy flowers for myself, mostly white roses. Everybody in the city knows this. When they see me holding the flowers, they often assume there's no one to buy them for me, and sometimes, they're right. Many people know me, but they don't usually get the chance to get closer. A simple smile or a playful look from my usually unapproachable face is enough luxury to please them.

Miss G

I am Miss G, born in 1996 into a wealthy family where nothing was missing—except home. For the past ten years, my journey has taken me from Albania to Moscow, then to Berlin and London, all in search of home. I never truly found it until I moved to the city of Men’s Home, which is now mine, too.

In 2018, when I moved from London to the small, charming city of Men’s Home, Mr. T was already in a relationship. At that time, we didn’t know each other. We often crossed paths, and each time, I disliked him even more. If Mr. T were a word, it would be “*unlikable*.” He’s the kind of man everyone notices, but nobody approaches. He wakes up every day at 6:00 and starts his day with training at the fitness studio beneath my apartment. After lifting weights and doing cardio, he joins the sauna for twenty minutes and takes a five-minute cold shower. At 9:49, he leaves to drive to his office, which is four minutes away from the fitness studio. At 10:00, he’s inside his office. For five days a week, he wears a suit; the other two days, he wears black pants and a simple black or white T-shirt. His confident walk, his trained chest and arms slightly more defined under a light blue shirt—not overdone—are just enough to catch your attention. He’s not that handsome, but he carries a certain nobility, a mysterious one. His dark, slightly curly hair and caramel-toned skin accentuate his Turkish features perfectly, though they’re not quite the typical ones.

I wish you could see him. If you could, you’d mostly see him serious, giving the impression of an arrogant man. But for me, that’s exactly what’s attractive, because seeing him laugh feels so special.

When you make him laugh, it means you've melted a piece of his ice. And those eyes, oh, those eyes. Not much catches his attention, but if he looks at you, it's because you are special, like you mean something. But even then, he will not approach you and start a conversation. He is everywhere around the city, alone or with business associates. You would never see him with women. There are days when I don't see him, but I see his matte black G-Wagon parked in front of his office, or his hotel, or at any other building that could be his.

May 22, 2024

It was a warm May evening when everything shifted for Mr. T and me. My mother came from Albania to visit me, and a few hours after her arrival, we had dinner at our favorite Italian restaurant across from my apartment. Since she speaks only Albanian, I invited my friend Nikolla, whom my mom also knows. Nikolla is Albanian too, and we've been friends for five years—easygoing and always up for a drink, even on a random Tuesday night.

Four years ago, at this very same place, Nikolla had introduced me to the owner of the restaurant, Elio, a typical, loud Italian. Mr. T was there too that night. I only realized, years later, that he had been sitting just a few tables away—visible to me then, but I hadn't noticed him. The restaurant is a slice of Italy in the middle of the city's hustle, on a narrow street where only pedestrians are allowed. Inside, there's a cozy space with wooden tables, wine shelves, and a full kitchen view separated by glass. My favorite place to sit is outside, especially during

the summer. It makes me feel nostalgic for all the times I spent in Italy during ballet tournaments.

That's where my mom, Nikolla, and I sat that evening—drinking wine, sharing stories, and enjoying the warm weather. A few minutes later, I saw Mr. T enter the restaurant, and when he greeted Nikolla, I leaned in and asked,

“Who is this guy I keep seeing everywhere? I can't stand him just from his arrogant look.”

Nikolla laughed and said, “He owns half of the city.”

The owner of the city—and who knew? Soon enough, he'd be the owner of my heart. It turns out, Mr. T was always around because he's Elio's best friend.

That night, nothing really happened, except for our eyes meeting for the first time, exchanging silent conversations from a distance. But it was the next day, May 23, when he truly took my heart... because he didn't have one of his own.

May 23

Elio often hosted “wine tasting” parties at the restaurant, filled with great food and, of course, endless wine, especially during the spring and summer. The day before, while dining, he had invited us to the party, so here we were again—me, my mom, and Nikolla. From where we were sitting, at a table close to the glass window, I could easily see through, and that's when I noticed Mr. T inside, talking with Elio and another man. Our eyes met again, and for the next few hours,

we continued our wordless communication until they finally sat outside at the table just behind mine.

One of my favorite moments happened before we even spoke. I opened my mini makeup mirror to apply lipstick, and as I caught my reflection, I also caught him behind me, looking at me through the mirror.

Our tables were so close, and at one point, Elio pulled me into their conversation, asking about my life—even though Elio knew me well enough to skip the basic questions. He asked if I was single, if I lived alone. I smiled and replied, “Yes, I’m single, and I do live alone... thank God.”

They all laughed, including Mr. T, who had up until then only been observing me. Nikolla and my mom were caught up in their own conversation, but I knew my mom was aware of ours too. She’s known for multitasking, and she was very curious to observe Mr. T.

Curious, I asked Mr. T if he also trained at the same fitness studio, as I’d seen him a few times in the mornings. Elio, teasing, jumped in with,

“So, you’ve been observing him, huh? And he’s single too!”

Laughing, I playfully asked, “Do you have a German passport?” and Mr. T replied with a smirk,

“I have everything.”

It was the first time he really spoke. His voice was calm yet sure. He told me he lived alone as well, and though he was 38, he had never

married or had children. Elio continued teasing us, making light of everything we said.

By the time we raised our glasses for another toast, I asked for Mr. T's name. After he pronounced it, I repeated after him to make sure I got it right. The way I said his name—apparently with a slight French accent—made everyone laugh, but Mr. T just stared at my lips and asked,

“Can you say my name one more time, please?”

From that moment on, the way I pronounced his name became their favorite thing to hear whenever they saw me.

During our conversations, the other man who was with them turned out to be Mr. T's brother, but he was very quiet, just listening and laughing with us when we joked. Mr. T asked when my mom would be flying back to Albania. I couldn't resist teasing him, so I turned to my mom and said,

“Mom, Mr. T wants to know when you're leaving.”

My mom, always quick with sassy answers, replied,

“Why is he so concerned about it?”

Everyone laughed, assuming he was eagerly waiting for me to be alone.

I then mentioned that the next day, my mom and I were about to go on a girls' trip across Europe. It seemed Mr. T didn't like that I would be away for a while, but still, he kept his thoughts to himself.

As we were about to leave, I shook hands with him, and this was when we touched for the first time. He looked at me, his eyes intense, and with a smirk, he simply said,

“Until soon.”

PART TWO

“My Uncle” 2008

During my school years, I spent my favorite summer days at my grandparents’ villa in the countryside. Their home had a large garden that seemed even bigger than the house itself. My grandpa always took care of the trees, fruits, vegetables, and the grapes he used to make Cognac during the winter. What I loved most were the animals. Among the chickens, cows, and ducks, the little lambs and the horse were my favorites. Until I turned 15, part of my summer holidays was spent in that peaceful place. The other part was filled with training and traveling across Europe for tournaments.

One afternoon, when I was just 12 years old, my grandma’s phone rang. She didn’t say anything except,

“I am coming.”

After she hung up, she told me we needed to go to my uncle's house. When we arrived, his wife—who had called earlier—opened the door, looking worried. Inside, I saw my uncle sitting on the side of the bed, staring out the window. When he noticed me, he seemed so

Miss G

happy to see me and invited me to sit on his lap, and I did. Every time I met him, even though it was rare, he always talked about books, and this time, he started talking about one with a particularly interesting story.

While he spoke, my grandma and his wife sat on the couch nearby, whispering about his condition. My uncle got annoyed and asked them to be quiet. He kept telling me the story of the book but was again disturbed by their whispers, and this time, he yelled at them to be silent. He didn't want to hear them complaining about his drinking. When he shouted, I got scared and started to cry, asking my grandma to please be quiet.

I had never seen a drunk person before. My uncle wiped away my tears and recited a poem he'd written long ago, which was also in his journal. I would go on to read that journal years later, just after I met Mr. T. Surprisingly, the poem he recited to me that day was written on May 22—the same date, 28 years later, that I met Mr. T, and in the year I was born, 1996.

22.05.1996

What God created that's better for me, I had to meet you to understand.

That feeling I thought I forgot,

You became the reason for me to believe in love again.

Miss G

I want to remember it always, and I will give you my soul so please don't let it fade away.

Accept it! Accept it in silence without any fear so you can hold me forever!

My uncle loved books, movies, literature, writing, poetry—anything about beauty. Deep down, he was an artist, but he was obligated to work as a chef. In 1980s Albania, under the communist regime, society was closed-minded. My grandparents never allowed my uncle or my mom to attend university. Instead, my uncle opened a restaurant, cooking as my grandma had, following her life as a chef. They believed a practical skill mattered more than an education. They even found him a wife, Egla, from a “good family,” and insisted he marry her. But my uncle was already in love with Anna, his married neighbor, and they were having an affair. His parents rushed to find him a wife to end that romance, but he never stopped loving Anna.

On the day of his wedding to Egla, he asked my mom, his sister, to bring a bottle of Cognac. He told her, “Let’s get drunk because sober, I could never marry Egla.” That’s when he began drinking heavily. Though he married and had two children, he was never happy. Egla treated him poorly, and he still loved Anna and wrote poems about her every day. Eventually, he left Albania, never divorcing Egla but leaving her the house and the kids. At first, he visited occasionally, but she eventually stopped him from coming back due to his drinking.

While living in Kosovo, he opened another restaurant and met Sara. They fell in love, and he quit drinking. She even met his parents,

Miss G

but my grandfather was furious, still angry about my uncle's choices. For my grandparents, happiness was less important than maintaining family honor, and this judgment gradually diminished my uncle over the years. One day, he called my mom, thrilled to share that Sara was pregnant with a son. Tragically, the baby died before birth.

Heartbroken, they returned to Albania to try again, opening a new restaurant. But the pain—the missed dreams of his youth, lost love, his father's rejection, and the death of a child—sent him back to drinking. He drank until alcohol consumed him completely, finding peace only in the end.

“Dear Uncle,

I hope that somewhere beyond, you went to university, read thousands of books, and wrote thousands of poems. I hope you found a love even greater than Anna, and that you have the son you always wanted. I don't have many memories of you, and I never really got to know you, but I wish you were here so we could talk about love and all the beautiful things in life. Now I know where my love for literature, poetry, film, and art comes from—it's from you. The only thing I have of yours are those two journals, and I will always keep them sacred. Thank you for telling me the poem from May 22, 1996, on that day, which inspired me to start writing this book.

Love,

Your niece

