

A Recipe for Daphne

Nektaria Anastasiadou

Hoopoe Press (Feb 2, 2021)

Softcover \$16.95 (304pp)

978-977-416979-3

In Nektaria Anastasiadou's Istanbul-set romance *A Recipe for Daphne*, history and culture influence three people brought together by their shared identities.

At seventy-six, armed with Viagra and his irrepressible desire for love, Fanis is still a ladies' man. He has a seat "in the tea garden like a pasha while women of all ages came to kiss his cheeks and forehead." Kosmas, a much younger man, envies Fanis's time-tested success with women; although Kosmas is a decorated pastry chef, he has resorted to the services of a matchmaker to make up for his lack of charm.

Both men's heads are turned by Daphne, a beautiful American visitor. Although Daphne has a boyfriend, he's *American American*, a "languageless" man who's disconnected from his heritage. During Daphne's five weeks in Istanbul, her Rum (Greek Orthodox Christian) roots lead her to a reconnection with her self.

Even within the guarded Rum culture, love can fold time, and this rich, satisfying romance is as much about Turkey's Rum history as it is about the unique attraction between its main characters. Istanbul's charming presence is felt in every scene, fleshed out with generous depictions of all who populate it, from cashiers to street cats. The city's past and present tie together because of meaningful details that represent the significance of the choices that Daphne must make.

Told from the perspectives of Daphne, Kosmas, and Fanis, the novel is gentle as it guides the lovers toward one another through Rum traditions, churches, and superstitions. If what Daphne represents to her romantic partners sometimes seems more important than who she herself is, she finally asserts her independence, helping the text to sparkle. *A Recipe for Daphne* is a delightful novel about finding home in foreign places.

CLAIRE FOSTER (January / February 2021)

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