

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

THE MISSING ROSE



'If you like books such as
The Alchemist or *The Little Prince*
you will LOVE *The Missing Rose*.'

Time Out

Serdar Ozkan

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About the Book

This is the story of Diana, a wilful young woman who, following the death of her mother, sets out on a quest to find the twin she never knew she had. Although she is both beautiful and wealthy, Diana is confused and angry with life. Her overwhelming desire for approval has caused her to let go of her dreams, and now she does not know who she really is.

Diana's search for her twin, Maria, leads her to a magical garden in Istanbul, where she learns the philosophy of roses. At home, by the sea in Rio, she meets the enigmatic artist Matthias, who also challenges her understanding of the world.

An enchanting yet multi-layered tale of chance encounters, magical gardens and vibrant cityscapes, *The Missing Rose* is a profound modern-day fable about the wisdom of the heart.

About the Author

Born in 1975, Serdar Ozkan attended Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey. He completed his university education in the United States and currently lives in Istanbul. His first novel, *The Missing Rose*, has been translated into 44 languages worldwide. For more information, please see: www.serdarozkan.com

'[Ozkan's] book is a modern fable, profound and wise - similar to the masterpiece *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry' Deutsche Presse-Agentur, Germany

'What this novel does is so magnificent. One could say that this book has the power to unite us' TVA Television, Canada

'His name is already being mentioned together with Paulo Coelho, Richard Bach and even Saint Exupéry...' *Corriere della Sera*, Italy

'Turks' Little Prince charms the whole world' *Helsinki Sanomat*, Finland

'A major global success. Compulsory reading for all who are thrilled by *The Alchemist*, *The Little Prince* and *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*' Air Beletrina, Slovenia

'*The Missing Rose* is a bridge between East and West' *Vijesti*, Serbia

THE
MISSING ROSE



Serdar Ozkan

Translated by Angela Roome



LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND • JOHANNESBURG

*For Ursula
without whom The Missing Rose
would never have been found...*

Special Thanks

If anyone thinks dreams don't come true or miracles don't happen, the storyteller I'd like to acknowledge here is responsible for proving them wrong. First, his book *Veronika Decides to Die* made me quit my job to pursue my dream of being a writer.

Then *The Alchemist* made me believe in the crazy idea that 'when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it'.

Now here is my book, *The Missing Rose*, a debut novel translated into 44 languages, read by readers in more than 100 countries worldwide. And the whole universe has conspired such that the source of that initial spark, Paulo Coelho, too, has read and loved *The Missing Rose*.

Having witnessed the unimaginable journey of my book all around the globe, I must confirm that miracles do happen. Indeed, when you want something, the whole universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.

Thank you, Paulo: unknowingly, you lit the fire of my dream.

Serdar Ozkan

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

William Blake

Thou shouldst enter a garden
Thou shouldst journey through it
Thou shouldst smell a fresh rose
A rose that never fades ...

Yunus Emre

PROLOGUE

Ephesus! City of duality. Home to both the Temple of Artemis and the holy House of Mother Mary. The city that embodies both the ego and the soul. The epitome of vanity and humility; the personification of enslavement and yet of freedom. Ephesus! The city in which opposites intertwine. The city that is as human as every living soul.

One October evening, two people were sitting on the banks of the river Meles near that city - the ancient city of Ephesus. The sun was about to hide itself behind Mount Bulbul, dyed crimson by its rays. Those who understood the language of the skies had brought them the glad tidings of the approaching rain.

‘Saint Paul is preaching to the people about Mother Mary,’ the young woman said. ‘Can you hear the crowd yelling, protesting and cursing him in anger? Thousands are rebelling against the new religion, which forbids them to worship their own goddess. Listen to them stamping their feet and shouting, “We don’t want Mary! We worship Artemis!”’

‘Artemis?’ the young man asked. ‘The goddess who the Romans call Diana?’

‘Yes, but don’t worry about her,’ the young woman said. ‘She’s nothing but an illusion, shaped and worshipped by others.’

‘You seem to know a lot about her.’

‘I know her like I know myself.’

‘Well then, why don’t you tell me about her?’

'She is the goddess of the hunt,' she began. 'A true huntress who uses her arrow to offer a sudden, sweet death to her enemy. Free-spirited yet enslaved; dependent yet proud. Supported by an olive tree, her mother Leto gave birth to her and to, to...'

After taking a deep breath, she added, 'And to her twin...'

PART ONE

1

Two are one ...

Only one. Yes, of course! Of course, there is only one bottle.

No, that's not true - I can see two bottles.

But maybe, maybe I'm seeing double, maybe there's still a chance there's only the one bottle ...

No, I can't be that drunk; I can't be seeing double. There must really be two bottles.

Yes, okay, there are two bottles. But why are there two? Why two?

Oh God, they look exactly the same. Their size, shape, colour are exactly the same. Even their goddamned production date is the same! They're ... yes, they're twin bottles!

But how? How could one bottle suddenly become two? How could this happen?

And why?

It's not fair ...

IN ONE OF Rio de Janeiro's most spacious and beautiful homes, set on a hill overlooking the bay, the scene that had been played out almost every night for the last month was now being repeated again. Buried among the cushions of the black sofa in the narrowest corner of the huge living room, Diana, with her wine bottles, lay trying to

understand how her life had turned upside down so suddenly.

Tonight, like every other night, the things she'd suppressed during the day weighed on her like a ton of bricks. Her body was as numb as it had been on those other nights, her chestnut hair as tousled and her green eyes as bloodshot. Those bloodshot eyes looked from the two bottles on the coffee table to her mother's photograph on the mantelpiece and then back again.

The only apparent difference from the other nights was the fire she'd lit especially to burn two letters. The shadows of the flames flickering on Diana's face this warm May night fanned the fire within her.

She drank down the last sip from the wine glass in her hand and dropped it on the rug. Before gathering her strength to reach for the second bottle, she turned her eyes for a moment towards the bottle she'd just finished.

'You know,' she said to the bottle, 'you're just like me; even though you're finished, you're still standing up shamelessly.' She smiled wryly. 'After all, we're goddesses, aren't we? What can knock us down?'

Then she turned to the second bottle. 'As for you, you mother thief!' she said. 'Mum says you and I are twins. But you're nothing to me, nothing but an illusion.'

Diana raised herself up from the cushions on the sofa and leaned towards the coffee table, but instead of reaching for the bottle, she picked up her mother's letter which lay next to it. The very same letter that, in a matter of minutes, had made one bottle become two.

Her mother had given this letter to her a month ago, the day before she passed away. She'd told Diana to read it only after her death, saying, 'This is my last wish, darling. I want you to promise me you'll carry it out.'

Diana had asked what it was her mother wanted her to do, but her mother had not answered the question. Instead, she'd fixed her deep blue eyes on Diana, patiently waiting

for her daughter's promise. It had been as if those eyes would never yield; so in the end, no longer able to withstand her mother's pleading gaze, Diana had given her word.

On hearing her promise, her mother's eyes had regained their old sparkle, and her pale face had come alive for a moment. She'd placed Diana's hand within her own and said, 'I knew I could depend on you, darling. Please look after her, please take care of her. She's unique.'

Bending towards her mother, Diana had asked, 'She? Who's *she*? Who are you talking about, Mum?' But her question had remained unanswered until after her mother's final departure from her the following day.

When Diana had opened and read the letter, she felt as if the ground had slipped from beneath her feet. Sinking slowly to her knees, she'd read the letter over and over again, feeling all her remaining strength drain from her.

Since then, little had changed.

Before placing her mother's letter into the fire, Diana read it one last time:

2 April

My dearest Diana,

I hope you're well, my darling. You must keep well. You mustn't ever believe you've lost me. I know it's not easy, but I beg you to try.

Please don't forget to let me know how you're doing once in a while. Scribble something to me in your diary, talk to my photograph, write stories to me

...

As soon as the date of your graduation is fixed, let me know. And please don't give up your evening walks. You *are* going to your classes, aren't you? Any

news from your job applications? Above all, please tell me as soon as you start writing beautiful stories again like you used to. Who knows, perhaps very soon you'll surprise me with the wonderful news that you've finally decided to become a writer. What is it really, darling, that's preventing you from pursuing your greatest dream? But, as always, it's for you to choose. All I want is your happiness.

I say 'your happiness', Diana, but what I have to tell you in this letter may cause you some despair. Please know that this isn't my intention. But I'm afraid I have no other choice. Forgive me ...

I really wish I could discuss with you face to face what I'm about to tell you. But, as you can see from my scrawled handwriting, I no longer have the strength to confront you with this news, nor to give you all the details. My only hope now is that God will help me get to the end of this letter.

I don't know quite where to begin ... And even if I did, I couldn't. Because in order to begin, I have to go back twenty-four years, to the day when you were one year old, the day on which you last saw your father.

Diana, my darling, the truth is, your father never died. But he left us. And he left us taking your twin sister, Mary, with him.

So that you wouldn't feel the pain that I felt and wouldn't grow up feeling like a child abandoned by her father, for all these years I've let you believe that he was dead. I even put up that gravestone which, while we were living in São Paulo, you visited every month thinking it was your father's. But, in any case, he was as good as dead to both of us.

When we moved to Rio, it was as if we'd left the past behind us. I never told anyone here that your father was alive, nor mentioned anything about Mary.

I knew that your father, who'd separated us from Mary, would never let us see her again. He must have told her a story similar to the one I told you.

You must be asking, quite rightly, why I'm telling you all this now. Let me explain ...

About a month and a half ago, your father was informed of my illness by a mutual friend and must have wanted to clear himself of blame by giving Mary my address. But I know he didn't tell her about you or about my illness.

From then on, I received a letter from Mary once a week - four letters in all - but never with a return address. She wrote that she was looking forward to coming to see me soon. A week ago, however, I got this note from her: *'Mother, I can't bear being without you any longer. If I can't be reunited with you, there's no point in living. Oh, Mum, I want to kill myself ... Mary, 23 March.'*

As far as I could tell from her letters, your sister seemed so full of life that I still can't believe she'd write such a thing. And since she has my address, I can't understand why she didn't come to see me.

As if that note weren't enough, yesterday your father phoned. It was the first time he'd called in twenty-four years. As soon as I heard his voice, I knew he was calling about Mary. Indeed his first words were, 'Do you know where Mary is?' He went on to say that about two weeks earlier Mary had gone missing, leaving a farewell letter behind; you'll find it attached to this letter - your father faxed it after our conversation. He told me they'd searched everywhere for Mary and spoken to all her friends, but had found no clue as to where she might be.

Oh Diana, in the little time I have left there's nothing I can do now. I'm so afraid ... you are my only