

In this romantic cozy mystery, a New Orleans Detective Lieutenant, Land Parrish, finds himself everywhere but the 'Big Easy' in a chase to catch the killer of a Turkish carpet seller. He gets an education: Izmir. Most beautiful women.

To Istanbul With Love: A Land Parrish Mystery

By Gene J. Parola

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To Istanbul With Love

A Land Parrish Mystery

Gene J. Parola

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ONE:

The Pidgin has flown.

“If the Feds are so interested in this case, why don’t they send one of their guys to Istanbul? Why me?”

The question hung on the humid air of the New Orleans Homicide squad room.

“Yeah,” April chimed in with a worried look, “why him?”

“You both know damn well why,” Scottie persisted. “The hit was done on our turf. They want some of our skin in this game. If the perp is in Istanbul...”

Parrish nodded, dumbly.

The *City of New Orleans* arrived at 9:30 a.m. at Chicago’s Union Station.

Parrish hated airplanes and had fond memories of train trips with his parents before they and the trains began to disappear. Whenever possible, he indulged this nostalgia.

He had slept well, even in the cramped sleeper compartment, and eaten a hearty dining car breakfast. His connection to Ann Arbor would depart at 11:00. He slung the small backpack with a change of socks and skivvies over his shoulder.

He left Philadelphia a decade ago when a mayor had unleashed a rain of police brutality on the population it was being paid to protect. He had taken his skill, experience, standards, and family to New Orleans, arriving on the crest of one of the successive waves of police reform. His career had prospered; his family had been destroyed. But he tried not to think much about it.

He climbed the stairs to the street, and paused a moment in the May sunshine. While spring had definitely come to New Orleans, its arrival in the Windy City was somewhat delayed, and the cool breeze from the lake was perhaps a factor. It tempered the warmth that might have been expected from the bright sun, and Parrish zipped his windbreaker against it.

It felt good to stretch his legs after twelve hours on the train. He missed his early morning jog when something prevented it. It was a part of the therapy for the depression he had sunk into after the accident. After a few months of running there, he had changed from the paths in the neighborhood park. He realized that they reminded him of the reason he was running. Now he ran amid the blaze of blossoms in a Botanical Garden. The shift had been inspiring.

The loss of Heather and the boy had been devastating. He had left Philadelphia partly to keep them safe. But drunk driving knows no hometown. She had picked Troy up at his Junior High, and they were on the way to Karate class when the SUV crashed into the passenger side of her station wagon. Troy was killed instantly and the impact forced the smaller car into the path of an oncoming truck. Heather lingered in the ICU overnight, but never regained consciousness.

The loss of appetite and the start of regular exercise had trimmed his thirty-eight-year-old body. His blonde hair was threatening toward gray at his temples, but it was not thinning and his carefully trimmed mustache reinforced his ready smile.

April's quiet love had helped him to feel again. He was even sure he would live to draw a pension... on good days.

He had called Goodwin's Chicago customer the night before. It had been one of the few anomalies that emerged in Scottie's look into Goodwin's business dealings. All his other customers had been in cities on the arc of the Gulf Coast. This was his only Turkish customer, as well. The store was only a few blocks from the station.

It was on a busy street; its windows hung with expensive carpets. Inside, Parrish found it to be wider than the entry had suggested, with one wall dominated by a row of pivoted display arms that allowed carpets hung from them to be turned like the pages of a large, illuminated book. On the opposite wall, several huge carpets covered the cracked plaster behind them. Smaller carpets were stacked by size and type. In addition to *kilims*, some stacks were designated as *sumac*, and others had even more exotic-sounding labels. Two table-high stacks of room-sized carpets dominated the space in the middle. Lights were hung low from the high ceiling in an attempt to offer an accurate color rendering of the millions of dye batches spread out below them.

A sign over a doorway at the rear offered additional eye candy in the back room.

A dark, curly-haired young man approached Parrish when it was obvious that his visitor was not a browser. “Good morning.”

“Is Mr. Arslan in, please? I’m Landon Parrish. I spoke with him on the phone last night.”

“Which Mr. Arslan? Paul or his father?”

“Paul Arslan.”

“He’s in the office. This way, please.”

The youth’s dark skin and hair were in sharp contrast to the almost liquid blue eyes, graced further by long black lashes. Parrish imagined him fending off advances from both sexes.

The ‘office’ turned out to be a small area inside and to the left of the door, set apart from the rest of a larger, less well-appointed display area. The back room was larger than the front one, and the floor was covered with stacks of carpets yearning for hand and eye to examine them. A low railing surrounded the office area on three sides. File cabinets separated two desks set at a right angle to the wall. A solid wooden chair with carved arms crouched at the end of each desk. An

empty, worn chair was in front of one and a man sat at the other. He stood up when Parrish cleared the door from the front of the store.

“Mr. Parrish! Good morning,” he said, betraying his salesman’s vocation by the glib greeting, broad smile, and contrasting cool, evaluative gaze. “I hope you had a good trip up.” He beckoned toward the nearby chair. His English carried no hint of an accent. Parrish guessed that he was American born.

“Thank you, I did. The sleeper is a little tight for a six-footer, but I did rest well.” The penetrating gaze had not wavered as Parrish settled himself into the chair.

“I hope you won’t mind if I ask you for identification, Mr. Parrish--or do you prefer to be called Lieutenant Parrish?”

“I’m not particular,” Parrish replied, fishing his badge wallet from the inside pocket of the windbreaker. “My friends call me Land.” He passed the wallet to his host, who opened it and carefully studied the pictured ID card opposite the badge.

“Land!” The salesman pounced on the first name with relish. “That an old family name?” he asked, passing the wallet back.

“My grandfather’s,” he admitted. “It’s short for Landon.”

“Please call me Paul. Well, now, how can I help you, Land?”

“As I told you on the phone, we’re investigating Mr. Goodwin’s murder. It’s routine to investigate business contacts in such cases just to be sure that there is no motive from that sector of his life.” His host’s eyes narrowed momentarily, then softened.

“When you say ‘to be sure there is no motive,’ you suggest that your investigations lead elsewhere, and this query is just to knit up loose ends. I trust that you have spoken with all of Mr. Goodwin’s customers then--we are not singled out because of some suspicion?”

“Oh, no,” Parrish replied carefully. “We have no suspects yet. On the other hand, everyone is a suspect--if you know what I mean. Until each is looked into and eliminated.”

“Forgive me,” the salesman smiled, “I just thought it peculiar that you would travel so far to speak to someone who has, perhaps, one or two communications a year with Mr. Goodwin. It suggested that your visit was more purposeful than just routine.”

Parrish could not help noting that his host had all the stereotypical salesman’s instincts but had the vocabulary of a well-educated man. His own instincts were sharpened. Why was this man selling carpets?

“Actually, I’m on my way to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I’ve got a more solid lead, but I thought that since I was going to be here to change trains, it would be easy enough to stop by and ask you a few questions.” Parrish watched carefully to see if this information led to any relaxation of his host’s ever-watchful eyes. Seeing none, he continued.

“The only things special about you are that you are his only Turkish customer and the only one not located in a Gulf Coast city.” His host’s eyes flickered, and small muscles in his temples relaxed. Smile lines appeared. Relief, Parrish thought. The reaction of any innocent citizen, confronted with a nosy cop investigating a murder:

“Well, I can’t tell you much. I only met Goodwin once long ago. You see, his father and my father came to this country about the same time. He was a child then. I was not born yet. Each man went into the carpet business; my father did well, Goodwin’s father--not so well. I was about fifteen when the senior Goodwin--not his real name, you know--decided to leave retail and just do wholesale.” He paused to watch Parrish’s response.

“Was he in New Orleans then?”

“No, that’s when he moved. Both his and my dad’s places were on the south side in those days. We moved up here in the early seventies.” He seemed about to say more about that, then thought better of it. He appeared more relaxed in both manner and speech now.

“Were the families close?”

“Not really. Unusual, in a way, because we were a small ethnic community. I only remember meeting him a time or two before they moved.”

“Oh, I misunderstood. I thought you said you had only met him once.”

“No, I meant that I only met him once since he grew up and became a part of the business. It must have been in ‘69 or ‘70. It was before we moved up here. My dad had always bought a few things from them, I think more for old time’s sake than anything else--still does--and when Goodwin took over after his dad died, he made a trip up here to sort of reintroduce himself to us. Last time I saw him. Thirty years ago or thereabouts.”

“You said Goodwin was not his real name. Do you know what it was?” Parrish asked innocently.

“It was Gültekin,” a voice behind Parrish interjected. He had been facing away from the doorway and had not heard the newcomer enter, nor did he know how long the man had been listening. Paul had given no sign that anyone was there. Perhaps the eavesdropper had even stood on the other side of the open doorway.

Parrish turned to see a very elderly man, well over six feet tall, ramrod straight. His thin body and deeply lined face declared his age, but a robust head of black hair, piercing black eyes and a full, coarse black mustache seemed to stand in defiance of it. He strode easily to his chair at the other desk, passing the standing Parrish. He did not appear eager to shake hands.

“Father, this is Detective Land Parrish.” Paul was on his feet now, too. “He has come up from New Orleans as part of his investigation of the murder of George Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin was killed in his office a couple of days ago.”

“I’m sorry,” the old man said, not really meaning it. Then went on. “I did not know him vell. He was only a boy back in de old dace. Ven

Paul told me last night, I taut at virst that it was his vader. But, den I remember, he vas ded bevor.”

The old man hooked the arm of the desk chair with his cane, which he carried for show rather than need, and pivoted it around so that he could sit.

During his walk back to the station, Parrish tried to decide what about the old man gave him such a military bearing. He was still puzzling over it when he suddenly remembered that he hadn’t checked in earlier. He sought out the row of phones on a waiting room wall and dialed April’s cell.

It was against regs to carry a personal cell phone, but on at least two occasions, they had gotten cops out of very difficult situations. As a result, almost all teams kept one in the prowl car but didn’t carry it on their person.

It was 10:40. She and Scottie might be on a break somewhere, out of the car.

“If this is you, Land, your butt is in trouble,” April chirped when the ringing stopped.

“Correct on both counts,” Parrish replied. “Sorry, I didn’t call when I got off the train, but I only had about an hour to make it to the meeting with this guy and get back to the train. I was preoccupied with that and just rushed off. Am I forgiven?”

“Yeah, you’re forgiven,” she purred. “But there may be certain assessments that are payable later.” Then, after listening to his reply: “Don’t get too sweet here, some of us are on duty. Some of us have to keep things going while others, who will remain nameless, go goofing off,” she teased. But he repeated what he had said and her complexion warmed noticeably, as did other parts. “I think you’d better give me a report. Scottie looks like he may be sick any minute.”

He told her what little he had learned, asked if Scottie had anything new to tell him, promised to catch up with her tonight before bedtime, then hung up and ran to catch his train.

SEVENTEEN:

One of 'the most beautiful women in the world.'

Parrish took his time retrieving his single bag so he could search the crowd of greeters. Finally, as the arriving throng thinned, he saw Çem leaning against a column, lighting a cigarette. The next moment, Parrish had his small suitcase, and the Turkish cop was gone. But not far away, the visitor assumed.

A twenty-minute taxi ride brought him to the hotel, where he paid the driver and walked in to register. His room was halfway up the towering structure with windows that gave a view of the Gulf of Izmir and the Aegean beyond.

He quickly tipped the bellhop and began to carefully search the room. He found what he was looking for tucked behind the fire exit map. A few minutes later, he turned the numbers on the safe in the hanging closet. He took out a huge handful of money and a thin pad with notes from Ekrem.

Selecting a variety of different denominations totaling five hundred dollars, he put the rest of the *lira* back in the safe and turned the combination.

Look at the beautiful city and its beautiful women for two days. Ekrem's words were blunt: *The third will be filled with work.* He went on to list places Parrish was to visit. If all went well, Çem would pick him up early Wednesday and take him to a rendezvous. Last minute instructions via e-mail came in a late-night transmission--as they had in Istanbul.

He was to be watchful as he attended the various locations for one or more people who might be Skender's agents. Parrish studied the candid photos of them on his laptop screen for a long time. One of them would probably approach him sometime on Tuesday, he was told.

He showered quickly, changed into slacks and a polo shirt and was able to have a quick lunch before a departing bus took him on a guided tour of the city. His book touted Izmir's 5000-year history, its heavy European influence, its port-of-entry to trade going back centuries before Alexander the Great revitalized the sleeping village.

Parrish noted places on the tour map that either the guide or the book recommended for further exploration. And he returned to two of them later in the day.

On one excursion, Parrish walked past an imposing building with the name *Izmir Ekonomi Universitesi* over its broad entry, and for a fleeting moment he wondered if that was where Yesim Clark's husband taught. He also wondered what Benjamin Clark might look like. Was he as handsome as his wife was beautiful?

But a man buying a newspaper nearby immediately distracted him. The fellow was looking so intently at Parrish that he fumbled his change. When the cop got back to his hotel, he looked again at the computer photos and picked the man out of the group of Skender's possible agents.

Later, Çem joined him on the terrace, and Parrish found that the Turkish cop had been near enough to see the man as well.

April would have been happy to know that his 'ass was covered'. But Parrish could not tell her that directly, so later in his phone call, he made generous remarks about the polite policemen who so eagerly help visitors find their way.

On Tuesday, Parrish was up early. The hotel travel desk had prepared all the tour information and tickets he had requested the night

before, and he was soon off on a tour of what remained of the ‘Old Town,’ and on to a boat tour of the harbor.

Coming ashore, he paused for lunch in a small café on the edge of a university campus. Students came and went in throngs. One girl, eager to practice her English when she heard Parrish order a second beer, engaged him.

After the general formalities of name and hometown, his reactions to Turkey and careful questions about American Foreign Policy, Parrish asked her what she was studying.

“I’m specializing in economics, but I’m really committed to politics,” she added quickly.

“That’s interesting,” Parrish responded. “Yesterday, I noticed an entire university dedicated to economics.”

The girl nodded between bites and a sip of her cola. “Yes, all the politicians are pushing it because they want Turkey to get into the European Union.”

“I have a Turkish friend whose American husband is teaching economics here in Izmir at one of the universities. I don’t know which one.”

“What’s his name? Our department is small. I think I know all the instructors.”

She confirmed that Ben Clark was not at her school, but she put down her sandwich and stirred about in a huge tote for a bulletin listing graduate schools of economics.

“I got to make an application for the fall and I’m trying to decide which one to go to,” she said, thumbing the pages with a greasy finger.

Each school had a list of programs, faculty, and courses. Clark’s name was under a special program at *Izmir Ekonomi* titled: *Certificate in International Economics*. On an impulse, Parrish wrote down the phone number of the Dean of Faculties’ office.

His lunch companion suddenly looked at her watch, stuffed the book in her bag, excused herself, and fled out the door to class. Parrish thumbed the number into his cell phone.

Unfortunately, Professor Clark was not on campus.

“May I have his home phone number--I’m a friend from Ann Arbor, Michigan.”

“That’s where Professor Clark is--in Ann Arbor.” The Secretary continued, “He had to make a quick trip home, but we expect him to return in time for the fall semester.” Her English was perfect.

Parrish was about to hang up when the secretary added in a low voice, “I could have Mrs. Clark call you, Mr. Parrish, if you’ll leave a number.”

He was speechless for a moment. Yesim Clark was in Izmir? The secretary had to ask again if he wanted to have her call him.

He quickly fished out the hotel phone number. He would be there just after five, he told the secretary.

The busy whirl of places to see and the hasty taxi rides between them ate up the afternoon and for the most part prevented Parrish from thinking about the prospect of a second meeting with Yesim.

However, he couldn’t deny his excitement when he arrived at the Hilton a little after four thirty. The desk clerk handed him the note along with his key card, and he stopped before he reached the elevator bank.

I’M IN THE COCKTAIL LOUNGE. I’M SO HAPPY TO HEAR FROM YOU, the note said boldly. It was signed with the letter Y.

All thoughts of a shower were immediately erased, and only the image of beautiful Yesim crowded his mind.

The lounge was on the sixth floor. Yesim sat with her back to the entrance--almost a lonely figure on the terrace that flung open the scenery to anyone who cared to look.

In a far corner, the bar was crowded and noisy with an end-of-workday buzz, but only one other lounge chair was occupied on the other end of the terrace.

When Parrish came around the tiny table next to her chair, he was surprised to see a frown on Yesim's face, but when she looked up, it was replaced by that million-kilowatt smile he remembered.

She bounded out of the chair, and standing on tiptoes, flung her arms around his neck and hugged him tightly before backing off with the traditional two-cheek greeting.

"Naseilsiniz," she cried.

All Parrish's testosterone had kicked in during the few seconds that her body had pressed against him, and he was so befuddled that he could hardly sputter, "Fine--I'm fine," before he untangled himself and indicated that she should sit.

"This is such a terrific surprise," she almost shouted. "What brings you to Izmir, for goodness sake?"

Having settled in the opposite chair, Parrish took a moment to get hold of himself by balancing his bag of souvenir purchases on the tiny table.

"Because you told me that the most beautiful women in the world came from here," he said, smiling valiantly, but blushing furiously.

"So, you came to see the most beautiful girls?" she said almost mockingly. When he nodded dumbly, she went on with a twinkle in her gorgeous eyes. "But how did you know I was here?" Then she laughed at her joke and at his red face, and he finally relaxed and laughed too.

"Well, it's true. My visit with you and the several other Turks I met on the trip to Ann Arbor triggered my interest in visiting. And I must admit that your quip, and that of the young girl in Zeynep's coffee shop, made me want to confirm Izmir's claim."

"Well, yes. You are a handsome young man. Why wouldn't you want to find someone equally beautiful to be with?" She paused,

“Particularly an unmarried, handsome young man. You’re not married, are you?” She paused and her smile faded. “It’s part of the American way, isn’t it?”

Yesim suddenly frowned, turned away, and Parrish thought he heard a snuffle. However, when she turned back, the smile was intact, and the rapid questions and answers typical of visitor and host crackled in good humor. The waiter came, and Parrish ordered; she took a last sip of her drink and asked for a refill.

When he lied to Yesim that he was booked to go to Antalya the next morning, she could not hide her disappointment. She wanted to be his personal guide and show him all the special places that only a native knew about.

“Well, you’ll have to do all of that tonight,” he said, smiling, “I have to go in the morning.” Besides, he said, he could not impose on her time and generous hospitality.

He cursed the fact that tomorrow he would probably meet the dour Skender instead of spending it with the lovely Yesim.

“Well, come on then,” she said, bounding to her feet, almost upsetting the arriving waiter’s tray. “We need to get started.”

Parrish was on his feet, too. “No. Finish your drink, I have to run upstairs, shower, and change. Give me twenty minutes.”

With that, he snatched the tall cooler from the waiter’s tray, swigged enough so he wouldn’t spill it on the way to the elevator, and rushed off like a schoolboy on the way to the circus.

Parrish was as good as his word, and in twenty minutes, he was at her elbow in slacks and a light sports coat. She finished the last of her drink and began to search her purse for money. Parrish intercepted the check, signed it, and stuffed the receipt in his pocket.

At the door downstairs, she indicated they needed a taxi, and Parrish strode outside to tell the doorman. He was turning back inside when he caught a glimpse of Çem looking at him. The Turkish cop was

nearer than he had ever been in public, and he placed his forefinger momentarily on the tip of his nose in what appeared to be a warning gesture. But his face showed no concern.

Impulsively, Parrish took out his cell phone and punched number two. Cem took his phone out, but shaking his head, he simply broke the connection and replaced it. However, he continued to look at Parrish until he, too, had put the phone back in his jacket pocket. Then he turned away.

Parrish strode back toward Yesim, only momentarily distracted. She could not possibly be part of any of the ugly business he was here for.

Tomorrow would be soon enough to deal with that.

Only a little corner of his cop's subconscious mind seemed to question that decision. But it was swept away by the vision of Yesim as she waited for him to return.

It was the first time he had noticed what she was wearing. She had obviously planned her strategy to show him a good time. Coco Chanel designed the 'little black cocktail dress' with Yesim in mind.

It's narrow straps crossed her bare golden shoulders and crisscrossed an equally bare back; it revealed her lovely breasts and clung to her every curve before stopping abruptly halfway between her hip and knee. A narrow white 'wrap' circled the small of her back, and both ends of it fell from her forearms in front. She carried a tiny spangled black evening clutch.

Her hair hung in long wavelets of glistening ebony, and her careful makeup emphasized her almond eyes.

Every man in the world would envy the one lucky enough to hold her elbow as she was guided to the waiting taxi.

She rattled off instructions in Turkish to the driver and then sat back so near to Parrish that he had trouble concentrating on her question.

“Yes,” he finally managed. “I’m very hungry. I know you folks never eat this early, but I’m famished.”

“It will be a while, but we’ll deal with that hunger first. Then we’ll consider the hunger for some music and perhaps some dancing,” she said, snuggling even closer.

“The university secretary said Ben was back in A-2.” Parrish clutched at that straw to help turn their attention away from music and dancing--and snuggling. He wasn’t sure about the first two, but it did nothing to move her warm body away.

She was silent a few moments, then said simply. “Ben had to go back because there is some doubt that he has completed all his Ph.D. requirements--properly.”

She had lingered before she said the final word. “Ben may have screwed up again.” There was a heavy pause. “We are separated,” she finally said, squeezing Parrish’s forearm so hard he almost pulled it away. This time there was no mistaking the snuffle he heard.

“The secretary said he would be back for the fall semester.”

“No. That is a part of the lie he has been trying to live for the past year. He will not be back to the U. or to me. Neither of us wants him.”

She suddenly sat up, leaned forward, and urged the cabbie to drive faster. “We don’t want to miss the boat,” she said calmly, as she settled back.

Parrish caught the fleeting flicker of tears in those beautiful eyes and, for a moment, his own clouded in sympathy.

“We’re having dinner on a lovely boat that cruises up the river. It is beautiful and calm, and there is the promise of a full moon. I don’t want to think of anything other than what I’ll choose from the menu.” When she finished, she snuggled against Parrish again, and he relaxed and simply enjoyed her closeness.

“What should I choose to eat?” he asked by way of keeping the conversation light.

“Well, we will have a great selection. Some will be of French cuisine, some of Greek origin--though no one would admit it in the galley--certainly a lot of Turkish traditional dishes. Remember, four centuries of food for Sultans, and on certain days, sushi and sake.”

“Sushi? You’re kidding.”

“No. Turks have a long love affair with rice. It wasn’t hard to get them to try pickled rice. Its taste is not so far from one of our many rice soups with a predominant lemon flavor.”

“Will they serve soon after we board? I had a light lunch.”

“Yes, and there will be traditional *mezes* which we can choose before we sit down. They will tide us over until dinner is served.”

She went on to describe the multitude of *mezes* and their merits. She also let it be known that she was terribly happy to be back in Turkey.

With careful questions, Parrish learned that she, like many Turkish students, went to the magnet of America to study. Practical stuff, their parents demanded. But there were many like her and her friend Zeynep who fell in love with fair, blonde American men and out of love with “practical stuff.”

Parrish understood the preference. He had seen very few men today who were not dark-skinned, dark-eyed, and dark-haired. His fairness in such a society would indeed attract attention.

“Zeynep wanted to study art from the outset; it was only after she married Ernie Johnson and started the business that she felt free of her parents’ demands.”

Parrish wondered what Yesim would do to make a living now that she was home, but he thought it was too close to the reason for her upset, so he settled for her commentary about what they were seeing as the taxi plowed north through the rush hour traffic.

Parrish remembered that she had confirmed he was not married early in the conversation on the hotel terrace. That he was free to be

entertained by a female friend while on vacation. Now, as she nestled next to him, he knew why.

But, free to be entertained by a female friend could take some careful explanation to a certain lonely woman in New Orleans.

Yesim had chosen well. The boat was broad-beamed, comfortable, and plied the gentle harbor wavelets with no distress to its patrons. Then, into the delta of the Gediz River it glided, amid the myriad wildlife, leaving the city's famed Clock Tower to fade in the twilight.

Upon arriving aboard, Yesim pointed out the *mezes* she thought Parrish would enjoy from the huge variety spread on the after deck. Then almost immediately after they departed the dock, their orders were taken, and in an amazingly short time, the food arrived.

The boat's owners had carefully planned their patron's evening. The cocktail lounge on the upper deck was open to the sky, and upon completion of their meal, almost all the diners migrated up to sip drinks and watch as the boat turned around and raced the sun to arrive at the bay just as the fiery orb set behind the sea on the other side.

At one point, Parrish had excused himself for a restroom stop, and in the process, the wrinkled drink receipt from the hotel drew his attention. He pulled it out of his pocket, intending to store it with the others in his wallet.

Yesim had had three drinks before he arrived on the terrace and had finished the fourth moments before they left for the boat. Parrish marveled at her ability to hold her liquor. In her emotional state, she might have gotten tipsy and used it as an excuse to burden him with all her domestic problems.

She had had wine with her dinner and was nursing her brandy, staring moodily at the passing harbor lights as the boat traveled quietly to regain its departure dock. But the radiant smile burst forth when Parrish joined her at the rail.

She immediately nestled against him. He thought that she might be chilly. She had pulled the wrap up over her bare shoulders. He put his sports coat around her. She nestled again.

The band played, and they danced. The moon rose, and they talked of traveling, art, and art history. Universities and business. They did not talk about her problems.

After having abandoned Ben's cramped bachelor's quarters, she was living in an apartment that her merchant father kept in the city.

"I'm looking for a job. I'll never go back to A-2 to finish the Art History degree. My father has many business acquaintances. Maybe one will hire me for my abilities rather than for my connections."

"Or your good looks," Parrish added playfully.

It was a wan smile that acknowledged his attempt to lighten the seriousness the discussion had taken as the taxi carried them toward a reluctant end of their evening.

"I'll delay the divorce because it will help me fend off Papa's efforts to match me with one of the lazy sons of his friends."

"Nothing wrong with that. Cooling off periods work wonders," Parrish said as the cab turned off the busy avenue and climbed a hill with apartment blocks on one side and a small neighborhood park on the other.

Halfway up, Yesim guided the cabbie into a driveway. Parrish quickly went around to open the door for her, but before he could prevent it, she had paid the fare and fled up the steps to the entry.

Parrish followed slowly. She had stopped on the stoop with the outer door to the foyer open. The cab backed out and drove downhill. It was obvious she wanted it to leave without him.

He gained the top step, and they were eye to eye. Hers filled with hurt, his filled with questions.

"You are what so many Turkish girls dream of," she began, touching his cheek. "Tall, fair and blonde." Blood surged through

Parrish's body--every part of his body. "I want you terribly. I want you selfishly. I want someone to want me--and I think you do."

"Oh, I want you, my little Izmiri," Parrish said, reaching out to touch her bare arm. "But I think you are too vulnerable right now. And," he paused, "maybe a little drunk. Maybe you wouldn't do this if you were sober."

"Drunk? Maybe. I tried hard enough to be. I didn't want a lot of logic to interfere here on the stoop." She leaned forward and pressed herself to him, and whatever logic Parrish tried to cling to was ebbing fast. He folded her delicate body to him and kissed her. She returned the kiss with embarrassing hunger.

When they finally parted, she whirled to open the door wide. She stepped in and turned to look at Parrish. Her eyes burned with desire, and her hand was extended.

He stepped over the sill into the brightly lit foyer, and was suddenly overwhelmed with the reality of what he was about to do. Yesim saw him falter and let the door close. She stepped forward again, pressed herself to him, and kissed him intently. Then she whirled away toward the elevator.

"Make up your mind!" she flung over her shoulder.

Parrish was at her heels, all but one thought aimed toward the coming event, — the realization that Yesim's shoulders were bare. She had shrugged off his jacket in the taxi.

His cell phone with all the speed dials was in its pocket.

EPILOGUE

The US embassy agreed to handle Toomie's extradition. The Turks cut off Parrish's per diem. Responsibilities called him back to the Big Easy, and on the first day of July, Land Parrish stood at a mirror in the men's room at JFK.

He was freshening up, waiting for his connecting flight home.

He shaved off the mustache with its distracting aroma.

April had reported in his earlier call to her that she and Scottie had opened a new case. "A cop was shot while he and his partner were working," she said. "His female partner popped him and got away."

COMING SOON

“THE COLLECTORS”

A NEW LAND PARRISH MYSTERY

No good deed goes unpunished.

“One—Carl Balducci gets whacked at a truck stop not in my jurisdiction,

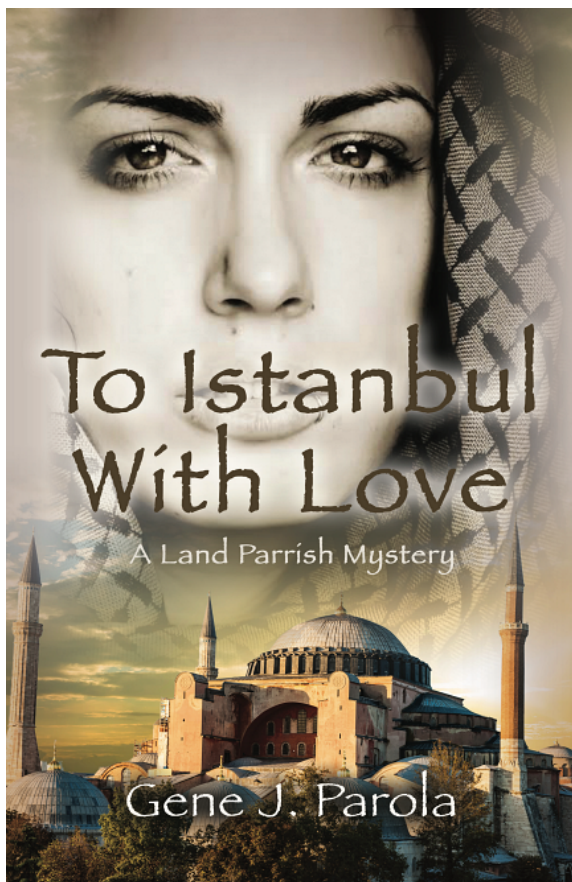
Two—his daughter died in a train wreck fifty years ago in Italy.

Three—four foreigners die in a shootout—

How does that add up that I have to go to Istanbul? Again??”

Scottie just looked at his partner. He let the question hang in the humid air of the New Orleans squad room before he answered.

*“Because the shoot-out **was in our** jurisdiction and it’s our responsibility to nail the two shooters who survived, Lieutenant Parrish.” He waited, then went on. “Besides, maybe a return trip will clear your head. You haven’t been worth a five-dollar fuck ever since you came back.”*



In this romantic cozy mystery, a New Orleans Detective Lieutenant, Land Parrish, finds himself everywhere but the 'Big Easy' in a chase to catch the killer of a Turkish carpet seller. He gets an education: Izmir. Most beautiful women.

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