

Dyad

A Novel by
Willard Thurston

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PRÉCIS: A tale about the human yearning for salubrity and beauty. The modern study of genetics, given the resurgence of ‘eugenics’ (improving on the given product), suggests that mortality may be a dying art and health and beauty, even one day splendour, a mere gene selection. A more excruciating passion play is hard to imagine. The novel follows the lives of identical twins who, fatally separated at birth, grow up in very different settings. See also the graphic novel *Apsara*.

Sample Pages follow. Download options at end of Sample Pages.

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PROLOGUE

Queen Mary University graduate Aram Mir gazed out the window of the river barge at the tree rich embankment along the Volga river. Aspen, Birch, Elm and Maple fronted the taller evergreens behind, mainly Spruce and Pine. He was struck again by the presence of yet another solitary boy, one of several he had glimpsed that day on the pathway near the river’s edge, some accompanied by a small dog. It struck him as odd, given

the gregarious nature of most teens. At least those he was conversant with. Did some share his special dilemma, his guarded secret?... Or were they a symptom of how life in Russia remained a reclusive juggernaut, the Russian male leaving this ‘tearful vale’ earlier than his European cousins? The presence of the boys struck him as perhaps prophetic. The ‘long lapsed believers’ he imagined. In a country laden with beautiful cathedrals, attended now mainly by tourists.

The recent letter from one Brotherhood sheikh he also deemed augural. ‘Your status in the cell is already problematic. In part because your Arabic remains so poor. But you have been a sturdy help in the past and the council does not forbid what you propose. That is not the same as an endorsement. But you know best. We await the results with cautious curiosity.’ The sheikh, he knew, was likely sympathetic but prudent enough to sit on the side. A regnant Agami Salafi who learned what was proposed was incensed, and his English, when he chose to use it, emphatic. Are you sending in the clowns now? To wallow in the mawkishness that Jewish bluster has so shrewdly exploited? The sheikh had advised Aram to take a short break — see his stern ever restive mother who had returned to Yaroslavl, her birthplace, and assess the security at the lone Mosque there, then decide if his new tact was apposite as he first thought. He found his elderly widowed mother to be her usual cagey if not proudly dour self — his conversion to Islam a nebulous page in her memory — and the mosque ably functional and nearly whole once more, though the worshipers had dwindled somewhat since

the attack during Ramadan in 2008. As it had in the past, the classic structure with its finely arched windows and slender ivory minaret revived in him a sense of apprehension, the coming of valuation and judgement...where one stood alone.

The house of prayer. A fortress of the soul. So long and hard to build, to immaculately sustain — the truism that left him trusting that his novel plan, which perturbed if not dismayed the elders, adroit and timely. Indeed, as he recollected the sheikh's circumspect words he faintly smiled. A year ago a school fellow studying English called him a 'rebus' — a word or image puzzle, often the thing or person liable to misinterpretation he claimed. Even blame. As for the sardonic outlook of his mother — innate self-flattery he suspected — it may have sharpened his own sense of purpose, the understanding that pointed the way! Such that a duteous Muslim entranced by Rabelaisian posturing would be a singular rarity if not an oxymoron. Such a one finding in its blithe derision the means to abet his 'struggle', enhance his Da'wah, might incite a fatwa! It was going to be an interesting week. Perhaps that's why he liked to travel by water when feasible. The reassurance it imparted. One of God's first gifts. You speak mainly in a foreign tongue one dogmatic Egyptian student said. A moment of reckoning. To this critic he had pensively replied, "To understand your opponent you must know his language, his habit of thought. Then confront him with it." A precept Muhammad may have slighted — so heedful Aram mused. His Armenian father, who died two years before, was disgusted when he learned his son had become a

Muslim. “The biggest mistake of your life, so far.” Father did not believe democracy dissolute, nor Islam anything but a mug’s game. But for Aram, the Modernism Zeitgeist was not the ‘disambiguation’ it purported to be. There was a malaise in the West that was shortchanging it’s promise. Islam, he believed, had features that might prevent an unmitigated Fall. But he was not optimistic. Humans were a very ‘susceptible’ species. Still, he would proceed. Allāh was not an existentialist...not a ‘neutral’ investment advisor.