



# The Word Not Spoken: a novel

*Ms. Laurie Fraser*

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## **The Word Not Spoken: a novel** Ms. Laurie Fraser

A romantic adventure set in Turkey addresses human rights, risk and the requirements for love.

Professionally edited.

A Canadian backpacker falls face-flat in love with a charismatic carpet salesman while on holiday in Turkey. Leigh feels an uncanny pull to Ahmet, who is Kurdish, and soon abandons her Western life and job to live with him in an unheated cave dwelling.

Leigh doesn't learn of Ahmet's work as a freedom fighter until after their three-day Islamic wedding, but she copes with violence as readily as she learns to live without an oven or hot water. Ahmet's missions mean that he is often absent, highlighting Leigh's comical and poignant struggles to learn the rules in her new life: never throw away old bread, don't smoke during Ramazan, open the door no matter who knocks, save nothing for tomorrow.

Leigh's gentle, naive curiosity is contrasted by the story of Jess, a different kind of white foreigner whose stubbornness and insolence forces the two women into desperate measures on several occasions.

Ultimately, it is Leigh and Ahmet's story that propels the most spine-tingling and emotional journey. From the beginning, they tell each other stories: he romanticizes revolution and she loves a fairy tale. After they meet a group of Kurdish refugees, they decide to formally write a book. Together, with the reader as witness, Leigh and Ahmet use the place between truth and lies to write the fiction of their own history.

They create a suspenseful and compelling story: Ahmet details the workings of a guerrilla training camp, Istanbul's underground and a torture centre, while Leigh records her experiences with Turkish baths and toilets, cooking from scratch, family formalities and holidays.

While their joint-narrative blossoms, reality is not as kind, and they soon face some difficult decisions.

Professional reviews:

The Word Not Spoken brought back much of what I observed during my stay in Turkey as a Kurdish refugee from Iran in the late 1980s: the wonders of Göreme, the breathtaking sites of Istanbul, the fear of the secret police throughout the country, and the hardship the Kurds had been enduring for decades. Reading it I remembered, sighed, cried, became upset and worried, but at the same time, laughed, and above all, hoped that one day truth, justice and freedom may prevail in Turkey. This is a brilliant novel that dives deep into the psyche of its characters and paints scene after scene of Turkey and Kurdistan's rich and distinctive identities. I've enjoyed it immensely.

- Jaffer Sheyholislami, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, School of Linguistics and Language Studies, Carleton University

The Word Not Spoken begins as a smart, lively introduction to Turkish custom, geography and human rights issues as threaded through a tender, carefully wrought love story. But that's only the beginning. As the plot thickens, the story evolves into a sophisticated and satisfying double-layered narrative that poses questions about human action, intention, and the requirements for honest love. This is one impressive book, made stunning by the fact that it is a debut novel. The people, places and conundrums of Turkey will lodge under your skin forever.

- Jean Lenihan, Los Angeles Times arts writer

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#### Patrice Lach:

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