

Victoria Hislop

The Sunrise



READING
GROUP
GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

In the summer of 1972, Famagusta in Cyprus is the most desirable resort in the Mediterranean, a city bathed in the glow of good fortune. An ambitious couple open the island's most spectacular hotel, where Greek and Turkish Cypriots work in harmony.

Two neighbouring families, the Georgious and the Özkans, are among many who moved to Famagusta to escape the years of unrest and ethnic violence elsewhere on the island. But beneath the city's façade of glamour and success, tension is building.

When a Greek coup plunges the island into chaos, Cyprus faces a disastrous conflict. Turkey invades to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority, and Famagusta is shelled. Forty thousand people seize their most precious possessions and flee from the advancing soldiers.

In the deserted city, just two families remain. This is their story.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The island of Cyprus has been the subject of a constant tug-of-war battle between Greece and Turkey for centuries. Until recently, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots had managed to coexist on the island – albeit not always peacefully.

But in August of 1974, the Turkish military seized the predominantly Greek Varosha quarter of Famagusta and changed the course of the island's history forever.

Residents – fearing being slaughtered by the advancing tanks – fled the city with only the clothes on their backs, leaving all possessions behind. Other sections of Varosha were bombed by the Turkish air force, destroying many buildings. Once the Turks had gained control of the area they fenced it off, and have since refused admittance to anyone.

Homes still have closets full of clothes, cabinets full of dishes, and there is even a car dealership still stocked with 'brand new' 1974 model-year cars. Dozens of hotels along the coastline sit empty with broken windows exposing fully furnished rooms to the elements. Countless cars sit collecting dust in garages. There is even a construction crane still towering above the skyline, the hotel it was constructing also frozen in time and never finished.

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INVASION OF CYPRUS

Sunday July 20, 2014 marked the 40th anniversary of the Turkish Invasion to Cyprus that still keeps the island divided. Cypriots still remember the unsettling wail of the sirens in the early morning hours, a stark reminder of the events of 1974. Memorial services were held across the government-controlled areas for those killed during the operation, dubbed Attila by Turkey. The July 1974 invasion cost 3,000 lives and injured thousands of others, while 1,619 people were reported missing.

Meanwhile, in the Turkish-occupied north, various celebrations were held to mark the Attila anniversary.

'Everything here has been frozen in time since 1974 – the year of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. The city of Nicosia is now the only divided capital city in the world – separated by a UN 'green line' buffer zone.'

Daily Mail

COUP, JULY 15

The National Guard – mainly led by Greek officers – and the EOKA B paramilitary organisation launched a coup, organised by Greece's military junta, to overthrow President Makarios. Makarios escaped and managed to flee overseas with the help of the British military. Nicos Sampson, newspaper publisher and member of the Greek Cypriot paramilitary forces, was installed as president.

INVASION, JULY 20

Turkish forces landed on the Kyrenia coast early in the morning of Saturday, July 20, while planes dropped paratroopers inland in what was dubbed the first invasion. Ankara said it had a right to do so under the Treaty of Guarantee, co-signed by Britain, Greece, and Turkey. Turkey had been poised to invade twice before in the 1960s but they were stopped by the Americans. A ceasefire was declared a couple of days later but was not really observed. Turkish troops expanded their foothold and advanced further during this time.

ON JULY 23

The Greek junta collapsed under the weight of developments in Cyprus. Sampson was removed and Glafkos Clerides took over. Talks were held in Geneva between July 25 and July 30 with a second round between August 8 and 14.

The second round of talks broke down when Clerides asked for 36 hours to consider Turkey's proposal for a federation to give Turkish Cypriots autonomy. Turkey refused and a couple of hours later it launched its second offensive. It more or less took over the territory – 37 per cent – it holds today, as was the initial plan, and declared a ceasefire on August 16.

Beyond the loss of life, well over 200,000 people from both communities lost their homes and properties as a result of the invasion. In the weeks and months that followed, virtually all Greek Cypriots living in the north were forced south, while the Turkish Cypriots in the south moved north.

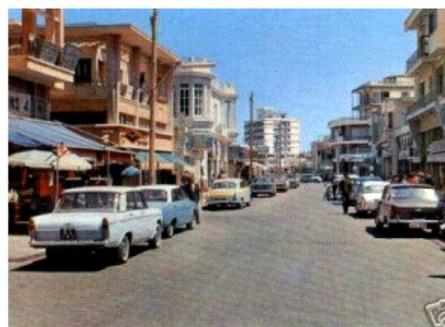
On February 13, 1975, Turkey declared the occupied northern part as the Turkish state of Cyprus. Eight years later, on November 15, 1983, the Turkish Cypriots unilaterally declared independence under the name of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This was rejected by the UN and the Republic of Cyprus.

The breakaway state is only recognized by Turkey.

FAMAGUSTA, THE DESERTED CITY

In the early 1970s the Varosha quarter in Famagusta was one of the Mediterranean's most glamorous and popular tourist destinations. The bright blue waters and beautiful sandy beaches were draws for such celebrities as Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Raquel Welch and Brigitte Bardot among others. The population grew to about 40,000, but by the end of 1974 the town would be conquered by Turkish troops, fenced off completely, and have a population of zero.

Today the former millionaires' playground resort still stands vacant and fenced off, guarded by Turkish soldiers and unlikely to re-open anytime soon.



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These historic photographs show Varosha in its heyday, boasting crowded beaches, seaside bars and swimmers enjoying the pleasant temperatures of the eastern Mediterranean. The scene is a far cry from the 'ghost city' of today.

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Once the main airport serving the island of Cyprus, Nicosia International Airport has also been abandoned since the 1974 Turkish invasion. Principally the headquarters of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the commercial flight terminal and solitary passenger jet have suffered almost 40 years of decay



READING GROUP QUESTIONS

The Sunrise

1. *The Sunrise* features fictional characters set against a very real historical conflict. How does Victoria Hislop bring out the action and danger of the real-life events while bringing to life the personal drama of the people she creates?
2. If you had five minutes to flee your home, what would you take?
3. The title of the novel has real meaning throughout the book – both as a tangible place and as a promise of a new beginning. Did you feel the novel ends with a sense of hope for the future and how does each of the characters manage to move forward after losing so much?
4. Victoria Hislop is admired for shining a light on ignored or forgotten parts of Mediterranean history. Do you feel you have learned something new about the war in Cyprus, and has *The Sunrise* given you a new insight into the actions and intentions of the different sides involved in conflict?
5. The deserted city of Famagusta is a haunting image, and it's hard to believe that it's a real place, still waiting behind the barbed wire put up in 1974. How do you think Victoria Hislop creates this powerful sense of a place in to which she could not step?
6. What do you think Markos' motivations are? Is he an opportunist or a sociopath?
7. 'All these years on, she remained like one of the broken caryatids that now lay shattered in the ballroom of The Sunrise.' Do you think that this is an apt description of Aphroditis? What do you think about her relationships in the book, and did she ever have the capacity for true happiness?
8. How does Victoria Hislop contrast the traditional Cypriot way of life against the cosmopolitan bubble of Famagusta in 1972?
9. Mothers can have a wilful blindness towards their sons' flaws. From Irini and Markos and Emine and Ali, to Artemis and Dimitris, how do the mother-son relationships in *The Sunrise* drive the narrative and cause some of the key events in the book?
10. Do you agree that some of the most poignant moments in *The Sunrise* arise from the friendships and loyalty between the characters, in some cases developing despite the strongest of antipathy? Which friendships surprised or engaged you the most? Which character or characters have stayed with you?

MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Inspired by a visit to Spinalonga, the abandoned Greek leprosy colony, Victoria Hislop wrote *The Island* in 2005. It became an international bestseller, published in thirty languages with over 3 million copies sold worldwide, and was turned into a 26 part Greek TV series. She was named Newcomer of the Year at the British Book Awards and is now an ambassador for Lepra. Her affection for the Mediterranean then took her to Spain, and in *The Return* (also a number one bestseller) she wrote about the painful secrets of its civil war.

In her third novel, *The Thread*, Victoria returned to Greece to tell the extraordinary, turbulent tale of Thessaloniki and its people across the 20th century. Published in 2011 to widespread acclaim, it confirmed her reputation as an inspirational storyteller and was shortlisted for a British Book Award. It was followed by her much-admired collection of Greece-set short stories, *The Last Dance and Other Stories*.

Q&A WITH VICTORIA HISLOP

When I was a child I wanted to be ...

A tennis player at Wimbledon. I spent hours and hours hitting a ball against the wooden garage doors. As I saw on a nostalgia visit, those doors have been replaced with something more modern. That made me sad.

The moment that changed me for ever ...

Was having my first child. This is where my life divides into the 'before' and 'after'.

My greatest inspiration ...

Comes from visiting unfamiliar foreign cities, sitting in cafés and wondering what goes on in the lives of the people there – and eavesdropping.

At night I dream of ...

Very little. When my head touches the pillow I am gone in seconds, and awake eight hours later from a seemingly dreamless sleep. When I do remember, it's usually been a nightmare.

My style icon ...

The simple elegance of Jackie Kennedy. I love the way she dressed – and in *The Sunrise* I have made her the icon of the character of Aphroditis. Most days, when I get up I put on jeans – but when I go out, JK is the person I would most like to emulate (though never with a hat).

The shop I can't walk past ...

Any stationers. Perfect for anyone who works at home and needs something to cheer up a desk.

The best invention ever ...

The printing press. Civilisation would stand still without it.

A book that changed me ...

Wuthering Heights. It's full of literary depth – but intensely exciting too. It woke me up to reading and was the first proper adult book I enjoyed.

My favourite work of art ...

Picasso's *Guernica*. It captures, on a single canvas, the cruelty and violence that characterised the Spanish civil war. Standing in front of it is like watching a film, complete with a soundtrack – you can hear the squeals of dying animals.

All my money goes on ...

Greek lessons. I have one-to-one tuition every week and I am addicted. It's like a code that I am cracking, slowly but surely. And it's wonderful to express myself in a completely new language.

If I have time to myself ...

I read.

My house is ...

Full of bookshelves – but somehow there is never enough space!

My most valuable possession is ...

A line-drawing of our children. It captures their essence in a way that photographs never do.

My favourite building ...

An old café in Nicosia – where the back wall is in the dead zone – it is the most atmospheric place I know.

My favourite children's book is ...

I am David by Anne Holm

My favourite film is ...

Melancholia

Pen or paper?

Pen

In 10 years' time, I hope to ...

Write something in Greek – and then translate it back into English.

My life in six words...

Privileged, lucky, one I love living

REVIEWS OF *THE SUNRISE*

‘An imaginative tour de force,
and a great read’

Daily Mail

‘After the success of *The Island*, Victoria Hislop finds inspiration in another overlooked part of Mediterranean history. It is summer 1974 in Famagusta, Cyprus. A Greek coup plunges the island into chaos, Famagusta is abandoned and only two families are left to survey the wreckage’

Red

‘In 1972, Famagusta in Cyprus is the place to be seen. Savvas Papacosta is opening his glamorous new hotel, which is set to be a worldwide favourite. But after the Turkish army invades, 40,000 people flee the city’s walls. This heartbreaking story follows two families that are forced to remain. A fascinating insight into a part of history that isn’t often explored’

Essentials

‘Hislop’s books have a serious edge, fiction deftly interwoven with real history’

The Times

‘Hislop brings her consummate storytelling skills to this enthralling tale of love, marriage and a community all put to the test’

Woman & Home

‘One of the best things about this novel is the way Hislop depicts the growing teamwork, love, respect, and trust which two families of opposite persuasions manage to establish... Hislop hasn’t of course been into Famagusta – no one may, even now – but has stood near the barbed wire and imagined what life was like there, then and now, with her usual gift for presenting bits of history most of us are unfamiliar with from a fictional point of view’

Independent on Sunday

‘Fascinating’

Sunday Mirror

‘Another slice of Mediterranean life from the bestselling author of *The Island*. Set in Cyprus during the Turkish invasion of 1974, this vibrant novel tells the story of two families left behind in Famagusta, whose population of 40,000 fled from the advancing Turkish soldiers. Hislop brings history to life in this compelling tale of social upheaval. Famagusta had once been golden - the beach, the bodies of sunbathers and the lives of those who dwelt there.

And then the war arrived. Blood, sweat and tears.’

Tatler Magazine

‘Fascinating and moving... Hislop writes unforgettably about Cyprus and its people’

The Times

REVIEWS OF *THE SUNRISE*

‘Intelligent and immersive... Hislop’s incisive narrative weaves a vast array of fact through a poignant, compelling family saga’

The Sunday Times

‘Adroitly plotted and deftly characterised, Hislop’s gripping novel tells the stories of ordinary Greek and Turkish families trying to preserve their humanity in a maelstrom of deception, betrayal and ethnic hatred’

Mail on Sunday

My teenage DIARY

When researching the dramatic events of 1974 in Cyprus for her new novel, best-selling author Victoria Hislop also revisited her teen self through her diary from the same period

My novel, *The Sunrise*, is set 40 years ago in Famagusta, then a chic and sophisticated resort in northern Cyprus. It had the best beach, the most modern hotels in the Mediterranean and was so stylish that Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor holidayed there.

• In 1974, all that changed. Following a coup carried out by the Greek army, Turkey invaded to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority, carving the island

into two regions, north and south. Immediately, almost half the island’s population became refugees.

As Turkish tanks rumbled towards Famagusta, the 40,000 mostly Greek Cypriot inhabitants fled, abandoning their homes and leaving hotels, restaurants, cafés and shops empty. The city was then cordoned off with barbed wire and this is how it remains today. Empty. A ghost town.

Researching the events of 1974 for my novel, I realised how vivid that year still was in my mind. For the first time, I have written a story set in a period that I lived it.

First pay packet

I was 14 and 1974 was the first year that I kept a diary. It was pocket size with a green plastic cover. In the back is a little pocket, still stuffed with ticket stubs from concerts, plays and bus journeys.

My diary tells me that this was a year of firsts. It was as if I woke up on 1 January and someone fired a starting gun. I was baptized (my parents had not done this when I was a baby), and a week later, a dozen of us were given a long talk about our spiritual lives from the local bishop and then we were confirmed. I took it very



READER PRAISE FOR VICTORIA

‘An exciting, interesting book about a dramatic time in Cypriot history. Constant tension throughout makes *The Sunrise* difficult to put down and hard to forget.’

Sarah Musk, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘Another great story from Victoria Hislop...
One of the best books I’ve read this year.’

Berwyn Peet, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘A story of love and loss set in Famagusta, Cyprus in the early 70s... A really fantastic read with brilliant characters. Highly recommend.’

Sandra Robinson, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘An unforgettable and inspiring story that will stay with me
for a long while.’

Helen Clark, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘An enjoyable, fascinating and compelling story about families, friendship, loyalty and betrayal, which gives a good insight into the terrible events that occurred in Cyprus in the 1970s.’

Vanessa Wild, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘This book provides an excellent read, it is emotionally resonant throughout, demonstrating a sensitivity within a sometimes brutal environment.’

Maggie Crane, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member

‘This novel is excellent. It is a period of history about which I know nothing, and Victoria Hislop brings the period alive.’

Janet Gilliard, a Lovereading.co.uk Reader Review Panel member



FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

There are many books written on the Cyprus situation,
but in Victoria's view these are among the best:

Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict
Volkan and Itzkowitz

The Greek Gift: Politics in a Cypriot Village
Loizos

The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees
Loizos

Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict
ed. Bryant and Papadakis

The Past in Pieces: Belonging in the New Cyprus
Bryant

Cyprus and its Places of Desire: Cultures of Displacement among Greek and Turkish Cypriot Refugees
Dikomitis

Cyprus: Conflict and Negotiation, 1960–1980
Polyviou

Glaḗkos Clerides: The Path of a Country
Kizilyurek

Divided Cyprus: Modernity, History and an Island in Conflict
ed. Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz

Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict during the 1974 Crisis
Asmussen

The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict
Dodd

WATCH VICTORIA HISLOP INTRODUCE THE BOOK
WATCH VICTORIA HISLOP INTRODUCE THE CHARACTERS

To find out more, find Victoria on Facebook
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follow her on Twitter  @VicHislop
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