

THE VERY ERRONEOUSLY
NARRATED SHORT HISTORY
OF A MADHOUSE

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In a town on the Black Sea, **the keynote speaker Ülkü Birinci** is giving a lecture entitled *Love: Sacrifice? Or Protection of the Ego?* -it being 14 February St. Valentine's Day- in the three hundred and fifty seat conference hall on the top floor of the mental hospital that, because it was built with its back to the sea, creates a pointless feeling of resentment in those who see it.

Ülkü Bey who has chosen as the subject title a sentence that he has nicked from Nietzsche is associate professor of psychology and is employed at a lousy private university in Istanbul. He is speaking at the rostrum in the energetic style that he uses when he lectures to his students most of whom are blockheads of the thickest kind. The man's concentration is upset as the rostrum covered with inferior Formica, on which he presses his palms, rocks because one leg is shorter than the other. *I can't zero in on my speech because of this fucking rostrum!* he swears to himself. Ülkü Bey who has to tolerate this job despite the fact that he does not very much enjoy speaking from rostrums, does not like being distracted at all while he is speaking however much he has now become thoroughly indifferent to the content of the lectures he gives.

He has just begun to use the phrase *to zero in on*. He used to say *to get focused*. When he noticed that **Professor Altay Çamur** who returned home having crowned the psychotherapy studies that he carried out at Tulsa University in the USA with a book not worth a penny that he had written in English, kept saying *to zero in on*, he immediately adopted this phrase and now he too says *to zero in on*, regardless of the context.

Ülkü Bey loves acquiring new words like this and he has a rich repertoire; but he gets cross with himself for never being able to put rare words into circulation personally. At one point his room in the faculty was on the same floor as the political scientists and under the influence of their jargon he began to say *consensus* instead of *universal agreement* or *common consent*. Later he moved to the floor of the jurists and found that the word *concurrence* sounded much more dignified, more pleasing to the ear.

There are times too when he erases words or phrases from his repertoire with the justification that they have become commonplace and that they are being used inaccurately. One late afternoon when he heard the **faculty secretary Şenay Hanım** whose ability to go on her holidays abroad on her pittance of a salary was a mystery to him, say *I take great delight in these biscuits* while she was eating a fig biscuit with her tea he was revolted by the expression *take delight in* and since then this expression irks him, regardless of whoever may have uttered it. However he still has not been able to put anything in its place; he still feels the absence of this wretched little expression that has been worn out and chewed over and over.

In fact the speech of Şenay Hanım who loves being on intimate terms with the students who, with their third-rate English, have graduated from cheap colleges, is wrong from first to last. However many language mistakes there are, the woman makes them. What is worse is that she thinks this is a stylish way of speaking. For instance under the influence of the college bastards who are not just content to make her excessive kilos a standing joke amongst themselves but who also flirt with her for fun, she has literally transcribed the English word *feel* into Turkish. She adores asking, *How did you feel yourself?* like them. Ülkü Bey recently overheard her speaking with the canteen girl. When he heard the woman who wanted to quell the chagrin of being reprimanded by the dean with a generous tea, say, while

talking about the dean, *He made me feel myself bad!* he said to himself, *how I would love to punch her in the face!*

Of course he did not punch her, he did not go that far, but still he made a big mistake. In the private university canteen that offered a never ending variety to its spoiled pupils, to the woman thinking, *What shall I eat.. what shall I eat..* he said in an extremely roundabout way that the male students with gelled hair always at her door were pretending to flirt with her to easily settle their bureaucratic affairs related to the faculty and that this was a relationship of self-interest. Even if he were the only one who had understood what he meant, it was a completely unnecessary conversation. Later when he was thinking why he had felt the need to say this, he established that it was the happiness that the woman radiated around her, despite having been rebuked by the dean that irritated him.

Şenay Hanım completely misunderstood Ülkü Bey's words; in any case there was no one better to misunderstand insinuations of a sexual nature. When she heard the man say flirt or whatever, she thought that the associate professor who had got divorced from his wife three years ago and who had reached middle age but, by God, was still very handsome, was making advances to her and she became twice as happy. To the canteen girl filling espresso from the machine into paper cups she said, *he was the only one who hadn't made advances to me* with a smile full of pride. The canteen girl wanted to laugh but she turned her back to avoid quarrelling with this bitchy woman.

This unnecessary conversation did have extremely negative consequences not on Ülkü Bey's career but from the point of view of his love life. In this private university circle that continually widened its boundaries on the subject of who should sleep with whom, the image of Ülkü Bey, known to form relationships usually with good-looking and, if possible, superior women suffered an ill-timed blow.

Just as he was about to take the young research assistant Selcen Akbaş who had newly come to the department and who in a short time had become known among the handsome, last year students as **generous Selcen**, out to dinner...

He had reserved a table in the trendiest restaurant of recent times that supposedly viewed Istanbul with an angle of 360 degrees and had sent the girl on *facebook* eggs, champagne, flowers and so forth that gushed out kisses, and because he was certain that he was going to lay the girl he had requested the cleaning lady to spread on the bed those very expensive sheets that he used only for such special nights.

The beautiful girl research assistant who kept on thinking, *Sleeping with which one would further my career?* supposed that Ülkü Bey whom she thought to be a distinguished associate professor was an old womaniser who slept with anybody who came along, and cancelled the rendezvous for dinner for which the man had been waiting for days, with a feeble excuse. Despite not being fussy when choosing one-night stands, on witnessing Şenay Hanım's merry laughter on the topic of Ülkü Bey, she went right off the man who put her down to the same level as this obese woman. She opted to sleep with Altay Çamur who along with being more powerful from the point of view of influence in the university was not as attractive as Ülkü Bey, in fact not at all attractive.

However, the night did not go too well. However much she had had a promise from Altay Çamur relating to his supporting her career, their meal eaten in an ordinary tavern in Beyoğlu had been boring and it had been an extremely short night from the sexual point of view. Because Selcen Akbaş did not know that Altay Çamur had said to his wife, *this evening I am going to play poker with our group, don't wait up for me go to bed, we'll be up all night*, she thought that like many men he too after making love would go home. One of the reasons why Selcen Akbaş was favoured in the circle was that she in no way stopped men who made it evident that they wanted to go after making love and she even encouraged them in an affectionate way. Believing that this would happen yet again she had gone into the shower

and after she came out, thinking, *but still, just in case, let the last image in the man's head be erotic*, she had put on her original silk kimono that she had bought during a trip to Japan and lit a cigarette, but when hearing Altay Çamur's snores that shook the walls and the shrill whistle that came from his nose, her world fell to pieces. The man had no intention of getting up and going. The poor girl closed her bedroom door and tossed and turned until morning on the sofa in the sitting room.

Actually Altay Çamur had not intended to spend the night in Selcen's bed. He had planned to join his poker-friends at a reasonable hour after making love to the girl. However, he was so tired from giving lessons all day and, on top of that, experiencing strenuous minutes with an energetic Selcan, that he had fallen asleep on the lacy pillow from which, digging his nose into it, he could catch a faint bad smell. The next morning he came home while his wife was hastily preparing breakfast, with an angry story about how badly he had been beaten at poker; he was going to take a quick shower and go to the faculty. His wife saw the mark of the pillow still on his cheek and it occurred to her for a moment to quarrel with her husband but she had a lot of work to do and did not have the energy to pick a fight and contented herself with thinking, *which slut did he have this time?*

The psychotherapist Altay Çamur who is certain that he has returned to his country with an invisible crown thinks that this crown gives him the right to look down on his colleagues. Since returning from America he has been rejecting the greetings of people whom he thinks unworthy from an academic point of view. However he had not been able to be sure of the merit of Ülkü Bey who despite deserving it had somehow not been able to reach the position of professor, and he was indecisive as to whether or not to greet him. Finally he found a solution that required a tolerable amount of skill which involved pretending to greet not Ülkü Bey but the person behind him or not the person behind but him, according to the situation. Each time, Ülkü Bey responds to Altay Bey's greeting but then feels uncomfortable overcome by the impression that this conceited professor has greeted the person behind him.

Altay Bey who writes his surname as "Çamur" in his foreign correspondence and in his mail address is busy these days with the translation of his one and only book into his mother tongue, as well as with looking for a way to spend another night with Selcen Akbaş. However he manages it, he always meets with either the dean or the vice-president at lunch and talks to them at length about our country's lack of translators and editors.

As for Ülkü Bey, with the fear that someone will be aware that he has poached the word *zero in on* from this *chamur* professor crowned in the USA and will make fun of him – that really is a fear that is not uncalled for; he heard with his own ears that the students making fun of the man have nicknamed him *Zero Altay* – and therefore even if this phrase comes to the tip of his tongue he does not use it in his own surroundings but compensates for it on his trips.

Ülkü Birinci is a man who travels a lot albeit always in his own country. He very rarely goes abroad. The last time, when he was invited to Albania to a symposium at Tirana University he was overjoyed but three days before he was to go he had to have an emergency haemorrhoid operation, and he could not go. However Şenay Hanım has been everywhere, from Dubai to Mexico City, from Saint Petersburg to Venice. Every holiday she goes abroad, be it three days or five days, and on her return, not content with swapping her profile picture in *facebook* for one of the photographs for which she has posed in front of historical monuments, she sends them by e-mail to all and sundry. Ülkü Bey is amazed that she is continually able to go abroad. If she were a pretty woman he would understand, he would think, *there is somebody taking her*. He doesn't consider the woman something to be looked at. However much he guesses that there is a buyer for her libido appropriate to her body, he also thinks that these buyers would not go far enough to take the woman on holiday and he is

not wrong. The romantic relationships that Şenay Hanım desires to experience always end with the rising of the sun.

If he learns that it is only a matter of time for the banks that have given Şenay Hanım consumer credit for her to fill her bum bag with sultana and nut cakes and the butter and salami sandwiches that she swipes from the breakfast buffets of the bed and breakfast hotels in which she stays and wraps in serviettes to eat through the day; for her to wear XXL shorts that do not cover her cellulite legs and plump knees, and for her to don straw hats and take endless photos, to begin sequestration procedure, he might feel relieved but as yet he does not know.

Ülkü Bey is a man whose mind is full to overflowing. It is true that he realizes that most of his mental resources are trash and he is not one stupid enough to consider his shallow thoughts as being of great value. However for a long time he has felt no discomfort from this. At the beginning he used to be amazed that his shamefully dated views were received enthusiastically during the routine speeches that he had to make in return for a fee because he was unable to get by on the salary he got from the stingy university for which he works, as if they were completely new things, but now he has got used to it.

He has merely got used to it but he is not filled with admiration for himself due to the enthusiastic reception of his dated ideas. He is aware of everything: what he was, what he has become, where he wanted to go and where he has remained. But still, this enthusiastic reception gave him the courage to think impulsively and to fearlessly put forth ideas in his speeches that do not follow any logical sequence. Because no one any longer looks for logical sequence in the speeches they listen to, and if they find it they cannot be bothered to follow it, his speeches with their colourful narration, little anecdotes and simple pictures downloaded from the internet draw a wide interest and thus Ülkü Bey can continue to travel from town to town giving conferences in return for a fee. Ülkü Bey has to give these conferences. Otherwise there is no other way for him to pay the maintenance every month to his daughter who virtually became his wife's lawyer during the last two years when their incompatibility reached its peak and to his wife whom he regretted having married the moment he signed the register but with whom he lived for fifteen years and four months saying repeatedly oh well a child came along, oh well it isn't the right time for divorce, oh well my career should not suffer, and who ripped him off on their divorce.

The rostrum again shuddered violently. Ülkü Bey's blue-tipped Stabilo pen rolled slowly and fell on the ground. Had he not controlled himself he would have hurled a kick at the makeshift rostrum. He had gradually become a much more short-tempered man. However he had not flown into a rage for a long time and knew how to stop when he came to a point where he would harm himself. The last time he got into a rage was three years ago when he learnt that he would no longer be able to avoid using reading glasses. In that rage he had not stopped at the red lights and hit the car in front. Despite it being obvious that he was the guilty party, he attacked the driver of the car he had hit and when he gave the man a black eye, they had to be taken to the police station. *The price of rage* he thought while the police commissioner made him kiss and make up with the driver with whom he had quarrelled violently and who had eaten a dried bean and onion salad for lunch.

In fact, he had flown into a rage to cover up the helplessness he felt at becoming old and not because of an enmity towards glasses. The reason for the fear of getting old that seized him was his having denied, despite it having struck his mind like lightning, and having very clearly understood that the time had passed for many of his dreams and that he had not done any of the things that he kept postponed saying, *I'll start tomorrow, I'll do it soon, there is still time, today, tomorrow*. The eyes of Ülkü Bey who in his youth had made the hearts of all woman jump with his good looks, were still on woman under thirty. Young women still looked at him but not because his striking handsomeness made their hearts jump as it had

before. He still has a side to be looked at, a powerful attraction, however he attracts the attention of women more because of his career and because he gives the impression of being an important man. Although he would not dispute this if he were aware of it, he insists in believing that he is just as irresistible as he was in his youth.

Not being able to read the newly published prospectus of a vitamin containing antioxidants however far away from his eye he held it, he convinced himself that the astigmatism for which he did not need to wear glasses had unfortunately got worse and went to the doctor and thus it was that day the lighting struck in his mind that in reality he was growing old, but he still does not want to accept this.

He was very angry with the **Ophthalmologist Berkay Özberk** who had hung on the walls of his surgery his great big diploma showing that he had graduated from Hacettepe Medical School - about which the former had dreamed throughout his high school years but at which he had not won a place -, his diploma of specialisation and the enlarged coloured photocopies of a variety of certificates that he had from *West Virginia University's School of Medicine*, for saying *the time has come, and passed even, for you to wear reading glasses*. Even though the young doctor had not formed this sentence with a mocking expression for the patient who had come complaining of astigmatism, he would not have made much of an issue had he said *it is not essential but still, would you not think about using reading glasses?* instead of *the time has come and passed even*. However he got very angry because this young doctor with the polished expression had reminded him in a derisive manner that he was getting old.

Actually Berkay Özberk was not in the habit of irritating his patients. But when Ülkü Bey whose thick hair in which the grey in his temples consisted of two or three strands and which undulated like a lion's mane mentioned the baldness fashion with a derisive smile on the edge of his lips, the doctor suddenly lost his temper. It is true that Ülkü Bey was not being spiteful; it was just that a poster on the wall had attracted his attention and he had made an inappropriate comment as he frequently did. And that is how all the tension began.

In the photograph that had been enlarged to gigantic proportions and made into a poster, the doctors of this newly opened, smart, expensive hospital's ophthalmology department, by coincidence all male and whose appearance, stance and looks resembled each other had posed lined up side by side with smiles that made their healthy teeth sparkle. Although the spry professor at their head was lot older than they, they were all very handsome and energetic, and self-confidence could be read oozing out of the face of each one of them. However, again the result of coincidence, all of them had shaven hair. The poster created by the lining up of the shaved heads of these young doctors, some of whose hair had gone grey early, some of whom had a bald patch in the middle and who had found the solution by having their heads shaved, gave an irritating feeling of authority and blue blood.

Ülkü Bey who had for some time been feeling lacking and incapable and who had been denying that he was getting old thought to himself as he looked at the poster that these young doctors about to burst with self-confidence had a baldness complex, and could not help smiling; at the same time he ran his hand through his thick hair. Berkay Özberk immediately saw this mocking smile and the movement that made what was passing through his mind apparent.

If Ülkü Bey had not felt the need to answer the questioning glances, the tension would not have grown, but he did not want to be crushed by the young doctor from whose thick neck muscles it was obvious that he spent at least three mornings a week in the sports salon, and said without feeling the need to hide his derisive smile, *since the shaven head fashion has become widespread, one cannot understand who is bald and who is not*. The young doctor in whose family all men suffered from baldness did not let this attack go unchallenged; not to be outdone in sarcasm he made the wretched man feel that his youth had long since gone and without taking any notice of his astigmatic complaint, reached straight for the lenses.

It was a very tense examination. Ülkü Bey who had not been able to set foot in the USA despite all his efforts, even when he would have settled for an ordinary three-month seminary programme at the most trivial university in that continent, had been irritated by the young athletic doctor with the healthy teeth and certificates of various sizes, and the doctor by the lion's mane of hair of the former and his undeserved pride.

Ülkü Bey resisted using reading glasses for a long time and went to other doctors too. Finally, before the compulsory use of the chip pin, when he realized that he had signed a credit card slip that had had a nought added to by mistake, he gave up resisting and began to wear a permanent pair of glasses that only enabled him to see what was near. However much the attentive eyes of those of his own age realized that these glasses were only useful in seeing close up and were not astigmatic as he claimed, he believed that at least new acquaintances thought that he was still a young person who permanently wore glasses and not someone who was no longer young and used reading glasses. When looking in the mirror he would take off his glasses and because he could not see close up he would not notice the lines called crow's feet that resembled the footprints in the snow of a sparrow and the wrinkles that made his lips look as if they had been sewn to his face with a very fine thread. The sad part of it is that as time goes by the wrinkles increase but because his eyes become even more damaged, he thinks that the lines always remain the same.

He never prepares in great detail for the conferences that he gives at the request of pharmaceutical firms. Whereas formerly, when his dreams were fresh, he would work for days. Now he does not bother and just thinks about the money. He thinks that it is not at all imperative for him to make a tidy speech in a provincial town. For him it is enough that he holds the attention of the listener and in any case the pharmaceutical firms request nothing more. For this reason in his articles he places pictures of women's legs and large bosoms whose nipples cannot be seen, that for the provinces can be ranked as daring but that would not provoke the conservatives.

And now whenever he points with the light-stick in his hand to the woman's breast in the picture reflected in the curtain, the medical students who have come from the medical school at the other end of the town under the duress of their teachers and the neuropsychiatric patients who, while awaiting their turn for examination, have discovered the conference hall for sleeping, open their eyes. Ülkü Bey knows that the way to resurrect the dying interest of the audience passes through sex and uses this knowledge masterfully.

The rostrum with one leg shorter found in the conference hall of the mental health hospital with a long history of this Black Sea town, has been placed to the right of the stage in a way to stand slightly sideways. Thus he can easily see both the audience and the white curtain that covers the back wall from end to end and which **janitor earless Ziya** who is responsible for the cleanliness and maintenance of the hall loathes opening and closing every conference day.

The curtain is very important for Ülkü Birinci. This is because the already simple article that he writes in the form of items with the aim of reducing it to absolute simplicity and in *comic sans* characters, and the pictures that have no direct relation to the subject, are reflected on this curtain through *power point*. It is his custom to put the most clichéd signs on the paragraph headings of the articles. He also adores sending simple *smileys* in the form of winks and kisses to people using insinuating *nicknames* and of whose sex he can never be sure, whom he corresponds with in mysterious chatrooms, consuming plenty of erotic sentences the use of which excites him terrifically. He has grown proficient in the *chat* language. He is a member of many strange Internet groups. These *chat* friends with excessively erotic *nick names* who naturally send false photographs insist saying *let's meet in real life too*.

Since being divorced from his wife he has considered saying yes to at least a couple of these proposals. Even though he has missed Selcen Akbaş by a hair's breadth, actually the interest of women who are in his immediate surroundings has not diminished at all. He has no need of the sexual characters of uncertain nature of the mystical world of the Internet. However, the interest of the women around him still has not been able to pacify the fantasy devil that has entered him he knew not when. Although this devil that wakes up in him whenever he sits in front of the screen does tempt him, he shrinks from taking a step towards reality and prefers for these people to whom he chats unrestrictedly for hours at night, amazed at his own power of imagination, to remain in the virtual world. The virtual world where he has chosen the word *Zebb* as a *nickname* that for Ülkü Bey is not very creative but that enables him to introduce himself directly, is the mystical land where he has found a new Ülkü that he enters frequently on the nights that he writhes in the clutches of a mental loneliness and into which he recedes far from his own existence and is lost in the depths of suppressed desires. Sometimes during the day and particularly when he is with very serious people, he remembers these night sprees and thinks that the shame he feels at the worthless erotic conversations he has had in the chat rooms is reflected on his face, and he trembles all over.

He is afraid.

He is frightened to distraction of not being able to stuff the suppressed desires into the place from whence they came and of not being able to return again to his real being, his serious trustworthy academic identity, if he were to meet in the real world –which they call *reel*–, face to face, these professional chat friends whose pictures they send he is sure do not belong to them and whose identities he cannot even guess.

The stage, where apart from the swaying rostrum there is a dusty old loudspeaker, the pennant blackened with long standing of this hospital that has totally turned its back on the sea, the makeshift cloth banners of local sponsor firms that have no real social value to any institution, and the Turkish flag worn out from being washed before every official holiday, is exactly opposite after entering the door. The floorboards that have rotted in places are covered with inferior linoleum of a knotted wood, parquet design. The ends of the broken boards have even begun to pierce the linoleum and the floor has become full of small protuberances. The janitor earless Ziya hates wiping this linoleum, laid by order of **Medical Superintendent Demir Demir** when it was understood that it would be expensive to change the floorboards. This is because the detergent water does not dry at all on the linoleum that he remembers to wipe always five minutes before the conference, and from time to time the Medical Superintendent and keynote speakers get in danger of falling. Furthermore, the **Mayor Tacettin Başusta** and the **Deputy Governor Hikmet Keleşoğlu** competing to patronize the conferences ever since the town's local television has begun to record every activity have been in danger of falling and a few people have indeed fallen.

Once the keynote speaker was **Erdem Bakırcıoğlu, boarding school friend of the Medical Superintendent**. During the years they studied at Galatasaray Lycée they slept in bunks one on the bottom and the other on top in the same dormitory and at night they would escape from school and would turn Beyoğlu from top to bottom.

Whenever Medical Superintendent Demir Demir spoke about those years he could not help using the cliché *one could not go out in Beyoğlu without wearing a hat*. Everyone in this town hundreds of kilometres away from Istanbul who had listened to the Medical Superintendent's memories of his youth now know that in those years one could not go to Beyoğlu without wearing a hat, that important people who had directed the cultural art life of the period had art conversations in the two patisseries Löbon and Markiz, each more famous than the other, and furthermore, that once the Medical Superintendent and his boarding school friend had attained the honour of shaking the hand of the master Yahya Kemal, and the same day had seen Sait Faik coming out of the *Elhamra Cinema*; and that Ayhan Işık whom they

had followed another day step by step as he walked along the street really was a very *gentille* man, but this information did not mean anything to anyone.

In fact it is not true either; the Medical Superintendent is making it up. Actually, it is true that he did sort of see Ayhan Işık from a distance. However during the years when he was a student at Galatasaray he did not know anything about Sait Faik or Yahya Kemal's place in the history of literature and it was even doubtful that he knew the origins of the fame of these people. The Medical Superintendent who thought that both were alive until recently, was studying in a primary school in Antakya -that he called Anteke- during the years that Sait Faik and Yahya Kemal were cutting a figure in Beyoğlu.

Erdem Bey, the Medical Superintendent's boarding school friend, was a retired bureaucrat who had been the General Director of the TCDD, the Turkish State Railways, for many years. He had been invited by the Medical Superintendent himself to talk about a totally absurd subject like *the Benefits of Train Journeys on Mental Health*. It had not even occurred to Medical Superintendent Demir Bey that train journeys could be beneficial to mental health but it had been he himself who had proposed this subject to his friend. This was because he wanted to make a nice gesture to this faithful boarding school friend who never neglected sending him a card every new year, who frequently called and asked after him and who was a wonderful host whenever he happened to be in Istanbul, for them to recall the old days with the line *Those were the days, my dear friend, one could not go to Beyoğlu without a hat*, meeting the expenses with the hospital's revolving funds. When he had to find a conference subject no other subject that a railwayman could talk about in a mental health hospital occurred to him.

Medical Superintendent Demir Demir could choose not to condescend to the hospital's revolving funds and could have certainly invited his boarding school friend and his dear wife directly to his house, but his wife **Sevim Demir** did not want guests to stay in her house. Sevim Hanım who had married Demir Bey while still a student at the college of nursing and left the profession before she had even begun, suffered from obsessive-compulsive personality disorder. At home, because she did not feel comfortable unless she wiped everywhere that had been touched by strangers with bleach that she called ozonic water, because she was from Ankara, not only did she not want overnight guests but daytime guests too. However both because of the Medical Superintendent's position and because of Sevim Hanım's circle of acquaintances there were times when they had to receive guests. Then, knowing full well that it was completely contrary to the customs and traditions of the town, they entertained their important guests at the Sultan Restaurant, the pride and joy of the five-star Diamond Hotel on the seafront, and the unimportant ones at the Three-brothers Pastry Shop famous for its rice-flour pudding sprinkled with coconut and rose water, the most fashionable place on Atatürk Boulevard that extended the length of the seafront.

Sevim Hanım's situation is grave and her obsession with cleanliness has gradually got worse. Every evening when the medical Superintendent comes home, while still at the entrance hall he takes everything off and remaining in his underwear, goes straight to the bathroom. He has become so accustomed to this that even when his wife is not at home, this habit prevents him from taking even one step inside without stripping off let alone entering the bedroom with his clothes on. Unfortunately he too is unaware of the seriousness of the situation. However much he does not experience a problem with cleanliness while he is outside, the moment he steps inside his home he behaves just like his wife. Because he does not see this as a problem he does not suggest treatment and so forth to his wife.

A few years ago, as the top-level administrator of one of the few mental health hospitals in the country, he participated with his wife in a psychiatric conference arranged in Istanbul. Within the three-day period of the congress, Sevim Hanım combed Istanbul. The woman who constantly kept a cologne towelette in her hand went everywhere from the Grand

Bazaar to Ulus Market. Even though Sevim Hanım had felt an unbearable desire to wash her hands after every object she touched, her passion for shopping had taken over her being and she bought a load of clothes each one of which she threw into the machine holding them by the tips of her fingers, a load of shoes, bags, belts, cheap jewellery and so on that she distributed to all and sundry when her interest had waned. As for Medical Superintendent Demir Bey, he dozed during the meetings, chatted with old friends during the breaks and amused himself like this. He set aside the third day of the conference that Sevim Hanım preferred for going and buying a fake Louis Vuitton bag from a shop in Pearl Passage in Pangaltı, for his boarding school friend.

The Medical Superintendent's boarding school friend picked him up from the door of the Lütüfi Kırdar Congress Centre, he apologised for his wife not joining them because of a health problem and they walked off to one of the smart restaurants in the Hilton Hotel. While the man was entertaining his guest extremely well as always, the respect shown at the hotel to the retired bureaucrat did not escape the Medical Superintendent's notice. For this reason he had wanted to show his friend a little of his own influence and courtesy and had reserved a suite at the Diamond Hotel paying the difference in price between an ordinary room out of his own pocket and had sent a return air ticket to which he had pinned a note on which he wrote the line, *to my dear friend, informing you that I can't wait to see you* with his black-inked fountain pen.

Erdem Bakırcıoğlu's wife Bedia Hanım although invited had been unable to come. The woman was very old, sixteen years older than her husband, seventy-five years old and her greatest fear was to die on the road. For this reason she was not able to leave Tarabya where they had lived for twenty years or more and go across to the other side and was not even able to go to that darling Kanlıca where she had spent her childhood or Bülbülderesi where she had spent the most dramatic moments of her life. She went out very seldom. For this reason she did not accompany her husband. She was content to convey her love and best wishes to Medical Superintendent Demir Bey and his gracious wife Sevim Hanım and send a present requesting their acceptance.

Medical Superintendent Demir Demir fetched his friend from the airport with the official car that he had had his caretaker squeakily clean and brought him to his hotel and settled him in his room. The retired bureaucrat presented the present that his wife had sent to Sevim Hanım during the dinner eaten at the Sultan Restaurant and which, naturally, was invoiced to the revolving funds. Sevim Hanım looking at the size of the present and thinking to herself that a silver picture frame would appear was not at all pleased when a faded, frameless icon of Mother Mary carrying baby Jesus in her arms emerged from the parcel that she opened with joy, but out of courtesy she did not let it show.

Bedia Hanım who sent this refined present to the Medical Superintendent's dear wife is a woman with a passion for antiques, and auction catalogues come regularly to their home. She has an extensive knowledge on antiques and waterside mansions that she had knitted stitch by stitch.

She had begun to obtain this information at an early age. Her father was one of Kanlıca's most famous yogurt makers, **dairyman Hulki**. Dairyman Hulki who had a shed of fifteen cows on the slopes of Kanlıca and a small yogurt and cheese factory on one of the streets that descended to the sea, began this work when he was still a child, during the English occupation. Even while Anatolia was burning in flames, he had supplied in full the milk, yogurt and cheese necessities of the Ottoman families who if their noses fell to the ground would not stoop to pick them up; he had earned a considerable amount of money; he had succeeded in snatching away the small but pretty waterside mansion of the Sephardic Jew **Rifat Mustaki** who was a member of one of the ethnic minorities that auctioned off their goods when, during the tax on wealth and earnings, they could not pay their debt to the state,

and who used to import every type of unnoticeable merchandise, from mastic gum to door hinges and from agricultural chemical preparations to balls of lace, in the one room looking out onto the courtyard of the *Nemlizade office building* in Sirkeci.

Mr. Mustaki was a thrifty man; he could even be said to be mean. The house known by the locals as *the Posh Mansion* was one of those rare waterside mansions with a central heating system; however in winter even if there was snow knee-deep, he would not turn on the central heating claiming that the unused rooms were heated unnecessarily and the family of five spent the whole winter in a tiny room in which a wood burning stove was erected; and in the summer, if the tiny stone place in front of the mansion were to be accidentally watered with a little bit of tap water instead of sea water, he would raise hell. He was not in a position of not being able to pay his debt but, through a very old habit remaining from his ancestors, he regularly took his money abroad and kept very little cash available to hand. Because he believed that this grave, unjust tax known as wealth and earnings tax would be abandoned and that wrongs would certainly be righted, he had taken no precaution and had waited until the last minute. However when the day came round at last, he had to find a solution without delay. He would either have to go to Aşkale and work on the railway or pay his debt.

When it was not possible in a short time for him to fetch the money from abroad, he sold the waterside mansion to Bedia Hanım's father on the condition of buying it back. According to their agreement Mr Mustaki would continue to live with his family at the mansion and for this he would pay a reasonable rent every month and when he bought back the mansion he would also pay a reasonable sum of interest. A few months later he had his money that was sweetly deposited in the trustworthiest bank in Switzerland fetched but when dairyman Hulki not only did not agree to give the waterside mansion back but threatened to take him to court if he did not vacate the building within a month, the poor man was too dazed to understand what had struck him. The family left the waterside mansion in a panic in tears. Hulki and his family who lived in a two-storey stone house immediately behind the cheese factory quickly moved to the mansion. Rifat Mustaki could not stomach being badly conned by his yogurt seller of so many years and he sold all that he had, and collecting his entire household migrated to Haifa, to his relations.

Bedia was nine years old. She spent the first night not believing that from now on she would be living in a waterside mansion, but gradually got used to both the waterside mansion and to life in a mansion. She became so accustomed that she could not remember that she was not born in this small but endearing waterside mansion against whose windows sea spray drove when the wind blew from the south, but in a dilapidated wooden house with gas cans hammered to the edges of the windows and that at every step continually squeaked and groaned, and that she had considered the two-storey stone house to which they had moved when she was six a palace, and furthermore she came not to believe this past.

However, their situation was strange. Despite living in the waterside mansion, every evening her father came home smelling pungently of cheese and he sent his daughter to distribute milk and yoghurt to the halls and mansions that carelessly and vigorously perpetuated the duchy of Istanbul with regard to political, economical and social matters in spite of the new life on the rise in Ankara, the capital of the young republic. Bedia who knew that she was not yet a member of the class of those living in waterside mansions, made friends from the upper class with her silver tongue and sharp wit; from them she learned courtesy, good manners, and at the Notre Dame de Sion Lycée that she attended by rushing hither and thither persuading her father, French.

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