

The Forget-Me-Not Building

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To Mrs. Necibe, Mr. Hadji
and all their children...



“Can I fine you as if I were without any sin at all?”

That accursed phrase kept going around and around my mind. As if it were the only thing left remaining from that recent weird conversation...

I didn't know what to do after I hung up. I felt like “a wet towel dropped on the floor.” Worn out, weary, sad... A large fist had settled itself in my throat, the words had gotten stuck right there. I was trying to choose between forgetting the last half an hour as if it had never happened and releasing loudly the voice I kept pouring back inside me like a waterfall, pounding the walls making the glass windows tremble, screaming and crying. Like a dream that has lost its way, I was nervously muttering between what had and what hadn't happened: “If there is a fire, we shall all burn!”

My ways of making life easier, my defence strategies were all gone, all that I knew was gone. There had been times in my life when I had lost control and had drifted here and there, but I was quite able to keep my reactions, even my emotions in check. Whereas now a single phone call had been enough to shroud me in doubt. How strange!

Never mind that I didn't know what to do, I didn't know how I felt. I just wrapped my arms around my knees and sat hunched on the carpet.

If there was a mirror in front of me, I wouldn't like what was reflected in it. My skin must have turned pale, my pupils dilated, and under my eyes must be darkened. I was pitying myself as I had done for the last few years. I wasn't always like this. I never liked pitying. I'd much rather be buried in the ground and rot amongst various disgusting creatures than see someone pitying me. Since my childhood I had many solid reasons for people to take pity on me. I could have taken refuge in these reasons which made my life difficult and make small profits from them. I could gain privileges, find solace in caring arms or have the best piece of the food put before me. But I didn't. Because pitying is looking at other people's misery and being thankful by seemingly mourning for them. Pitying is to distribute the unhappiness one has barely overcome as if it were a daring handout. And this handout is nothing more than two teardrops and a momentary heartache that is no good for no one. The one who pities tries to believe that he is a good hearted person of exalted feelings. Where in fact he is nothing more than a charlatan. Of course, he wouldn't even dare to face this. I hate being pitied. Do I ever pity? I am human after all. Certainly there are times when I need to feel good, to be thankful and to think of myself as a being with a conscience. I am not going to go to confession for this. Especially not tonight...

When I looked in my imaginary mirror with eyes borrowed from someone else, I pitied my reflection that was staring right back at me. It was more real and more pitiful than it had ever been. There wasn't any happiness in its eyes. Nor any anger. The only emotion that the phone call could evoke was not there. The only thing that I saw there

was whining pitifulness. Who would want to be in such a state? Especially me, me who had been the one most afraid of being pitiful or even just looking pitiful...

Of course fears have reasons. Humans are afraid not only of dangers from the outside but also of those from within, their own secret scars. In fact the latter scares them the most... This is like being afraid of standing naked displaying all the decay on your body, or of the revelation and spreading of a carefully kept secret. If I once thought that I was pitiful and then had hidden this little fact about me deep down, of course I would be afraid of someone digging it up. In fact, I'd be very afraid. That's why I didn't like anything I saw in my reflection. While I held the receiver in my hand, I would have rather been someone else, someone who was bathed in happiness to have heard a voice from long time ago. Or someone who could empty all the poison, the hatred that had been gathering inside for years to the person responsible for it... But I couldn't do any of it. After everything was over, I could only drop myself on the carpet hunched in the feeling of not knowing what to do, like a little bug about to die. My insides empty, I had never felt so tired before. I would love to drink nine tequila shots back to back and pass out on the floor, to sleep with nausea and head spinning taking over my mind. To wake up with a booming headache and not remember a single thing.

Once I had had nine shots of tequila in a row. I didn't have any reason to get drunk. I only had decided to get drunk and had knocked back the shots at a really shabby bar. I had then proceeded to dance in

front of an out of tune singer on the Istiklal Street waving my handbag. The following morning I just made all the embarrassing things a part of a bad dream. After all, it wasn't a nice thing to remember. Because that woman wasn't me.

I don't like being surprised, nor do I like surprising others. I am a straight-forward person, and I would recommend the same to those devastated by life's pointless math problems about filling swimming pools. The very rich, the very pretty, the very brave, all kinds of adventurers, geniuses, leisure lovers, depressive alcoholics, cheerful spendthrifts, weird characters, colourful lives do not attract me. I want to be a person living a plain and simple life, not being noticed or cared for by anyone. Drawing any kind of attention suffocates me. Whenever I notice anyone is taking an interest in me or observing me, I get nervous and my golden equilibrium becomes upset as does my usual rhythm. Maybe because I try to behave unlike myself. All my order, my peace turns upside down. I cannot afford this.

I am not only afraid of change, but also of wanting to change but failing miserably. Maybe that's why I became so pitiful after the phone call. That's right, it is most likely that nothing will ever be the same. Whereas I'm not ready to face anxious waitings, exciting novelties, sad evenings or happy mornings. I'm not someone who goes out one night and gets hammered, sings and dances in the streets. I'm not a person to become overjoyed or sad upon hearing the voice of her mother after many years and think that suddenly she has a mother. Am I not? Really, am I still the same person?

Suddenly my stomach felt queasy. And I haven't had nine shots of tequila, not even a drop of mint liqueur. I've been home all evening. I had some breakfast stuff for dinner; some old cheddar, a

few green olives, a bit of fig jam and some bread left over from yesterday. Then I sat in front of my computer and started typing. This time it was a murder novel. Something that was almost a romance novel suddenly had transformed into a murder novel. One of the outcomes of being too much around death. I'm almost unable to write anything not related to death. Actually I don't know if there's anything not related to death!

The more I write the less I speak. As the ink is absorbed by the paper, what I know disappears as well. I need to forget all that I know to find my path anyway. But today I learned more than I thought I would... Can I forget them by writing?

I'm using all the clichés. I don't like saying unexpected things as much as I don't like hearing them. The characters that I create in the novel prefer to be predictable, without any surprise, even boring rather than look like a fool trying to say something new. This time, I haven't even named them. I entrusted them to the safety of being ordinary. I ordered them to suffice with one letter; I tested my unconditional power over them and felt good. I can't even begin to tell how much I love to have the power to define their ordinary destinies. If my existence wasn't attached to their being, this would have made me creative. This little game I play is the only thing I possess. This deprivation makes me need the things I believe I create and control. Perhaps all gods are bound to those they create, I don't know.

The greatest madness of my life is to create heroes and kill them. If it could have, this could have made me interesting but it didn't. Nobody knows that it is I who has written those mad, cheap novels. Everyone believes that they are written by that girl who won't be anything because she's trying to be everything. I don't care a single bit. As I don't take responsibility for any of the things I put down on

paper, I write freely, without the fear of being observed and criticised. I pocket my well earned money. What could possibly be better?

I'd been working for two hours straight. I was lost among my nameless characters when I was startled by the phone ringing. My telephone has never been a busy gadget in any period of my life. Nor I nor those I know bother it too much. Its workload is to ring once or twice a week. And more than often it turns out to be a wrong number. Once in a while NY calls. She speaks in her confident voice and her diction she perfected through many classes. She asks about me when she's actually trying to learn about the state of the book I'm on.

The deal we had made became a secret between us. I never said a word of it to anyone, I won't. What I know is none of my business. And she cares too much about this secret that she can't share it with even those closest to her. Because she has created a lie from this secret, and a world from that lie. Like everyone else, she exists harmlessly in her own lie. However much she pays me, I let her feel indebted to me for my silence. I think she would keep on paying me even if I tell her I would no longer write a single word. She is afraid that I might become poor, indigent. She worries that I would drink too much and lose myself. She wants her secret kept well, thus she wants me to be pleased. She'd give me the money even if I didn't write anymore. She is terrified that her world that she loves and within which she is loved would come crumbling down. She knows that her peace is attached to a thin piece of string stretched across my lips. Of course she does think that if some bum came out and said "I've been writing those books for

years” no one would believe her. She would be sure that no one would. But she can’t dare imagine herself in such a commotion. I guess these thoughts must penetrate her dreams for many nights. She would not want to see my face in her dreams and she doesn’t really like me, I’m sure. Who likes their confidants anyway? How could someone like a person who goes around like a time bomb that could go off any minute and spill the beans? I question the sanity of those who share their secrets.

When the phone call came, I was working overtime to have the novel ready by October. For some time there hadn’t been anything in my life that surprised me. I was not treading waters where I would come across unexpected situations. Therefore I wasn’t prepared for the surprise I was about to get when I answered the phone. After I flatly said “hello” I had to wait a couple of seconds. After a short moment of silence there was a shaky voice:

“Sureyya?”

Apparently we were familiar with the owner of the voice. She had called me by my first name. She seemed to be trying to ascertain that she had the right person, that I was Sureyya. There was no doubt she wanted to talk to Sureyya but she was not sure that the number was right or if she was speaking to Sureyya. She must have not dialed this number often. And she couldn’t recognize the voice either. But she knew her well enough to call her by her first name. She had dialed the right number, that was for sure. If there wasn’t a coincidence in phone numbers and names I was the Sureyya she was looking for.

“Yes, it is I” I said.

I waited for her to continue. She was the caller. She was the one who should speak. Also I was not in the mood to ask myself questions and look for the answers at this time of the night.

Time slows down in situations like these. Waiting slows time down. The value of this slowing down is related to the value of that which is being awaited. All the gadgets invented to measure time have always seemed untrustworthy to me. By what is an hour an hour? Why isn't an hour hundred and twenty minutes, why isn't a day twelve hours? I become aware of time especially during situations like this.

It was her turn to speak. I didn't think she'd hang up when she'd found out if my name was Sureyya or not. I could hear breathing. Her mouth must have been very close to the receiver. Still, I didn't think that it was some pervert. After all, there are such people too. They call and breathe heavily, disgustingly. Possibly they believe it to be erotic or horrific. They threaten rape with their presence. These demons who consider it to be manly to scare or to inflict pain get a destructive pleasure from attacking the silence of a moment they haven't been invited to. The breathing I was hearing didn't resemble those. It must have been the mouth too near the receiver, involuntarily.

She whispered as if speaking with difficulty, "So, it is you!" Was it me she had spoken to or was it herself, I couldn't tell. It was a gruff voice belonging to an old woman. I can't say that I have a good memory but I don't think that I recognized the voice.

"Excuse me, but who are you?"

There was no reply. Tired of this phone call going nowhere, I repeated my question. I was annoyed.

"It's me" she began. Then she cleared her throat. "Mesude."

Although I heard it clearly I couldn't understand it.

“Who?”

As I waited for the reply time had gotten a little slower. For me, that was the sign that things were becoming more serious. When the voice spoke again hours had gone by. It was about to give me the answer I least expected to hear. I wasn't going to believe what I was about to hear, I was going to be sure that I hadn't misheard, I was going to be unable to stop the violent tremors in my mind.

“Mesude... Your mother.”