

Wine and Halva

By Deniz Başar

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“Whatever the case, he saw now that it was a rare, difficult and improbable thing for two people from worlds apart to find themselves linked by a tie of pure sympathy, a feeling that owed nothing to the rules and expectations of others. He understood also that when such a bond comes into being, its truths and falsehoods, its obligations and privileges, exist only for the people who are linked by it, and then in such a way that only they can judge the honour and dishonour of how they conduct themselves in relation to each other.”

Amitav Ghosh. (2009). *Sea of poppies*. Picador. Pg 426-427.

Roles:

NARRATOR 1

NARRATOR 2

NARRATOR 3

- Performers can be two men and one woman, or two women and one man – the choice is left to the theatre company and the company’s resources. Inclusion of trans, non-binary and two-spirited people in the casting is highly encouraged and in that case you don’t have to follow this gender division.
- Performers can be of any race but ideally there would be two people of color and one white or white passing person. This play would also work well if the entire cast is people of color. Accented performers are more than welcome. To be clear: This play won’t work if only white or white passing people are cast because the writing of the play is set-up to resist white washing.
- Performers with disabilities are more than welcome. To be clear: All the design elements of the show are open to changes due to various needs, and what is provided here are mostly suggestions. For example, the set and the costumes can all be designed to suit the use of wheelchair-using performers.
- All of the performers take turns becoming DERYA and FARIAS throughout the play, which means there are three performers who take turns embodying two characters, but they all remain in their stage personas as the narrators when they are not playing one of the characters. NARRATORS has a Master of Ceremonies role and comment on the action.

Transformations of the three performers throughout the play:

	Act 1				Act 2			
	Prologue	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 5		Epilogue
						A (Prelude to Istanbul)	B	
Location:	“Changing Planes” ²	Berlin	“Changing Planes”	New Stockholm	New York	“Changing Planes”	Istanbul	“Changing Planes”
Narrator 1 (N1)	N1	N1	Farias	Derya	Farias	N1 (stands quiet)	N1	N1
Narrator 2 (N2)	N2	Derya	N2	Farias	N2	N2 (stands quiet)	Derya	N2
Narrator 3 (N3)	N3	Farias	Derya	N3	Derya	Farias	Farias	N3

² Name of these scenes comes from the title of Ursula Kroeber Le Guin’s book, *Changing Planes*. Among the other names that refer to places, “Changing Planes” refers to literature and writing as a space of interaction.

Stage and costume design notes:

All three performers enter wearing black tops and long skirts made of a material that can hide objects in them and look voluminous. The skirts are full of big visible pockets (and secret inner pockets) where props are hidden. Each performer's skirt is a different color (but monochromatic) and the pockets are spread differently (performers sometimes readjust their skirts to reach the back pockets, shed some of the pockets secured by Velcro, unzip some of them completely, pull them inside out to reveal different colors, unbutton some of them – again completely or partly). Their skirts are orange, green and purple; and even though the skirts may seem as if they are made of uniform material and color (for example: felt and orange) the inside of each pocket is either a different color or material. Unless stated otherwise the objects that come out of skirt pockets are left on stage, visible to the audience. Throughout the play the stage area slowly overflows with detached pockets and various props that come out of them.

The red framed glasses symbolize DERYA and the blue tie with small pink polka dots symbolize FARIAS; the performer wearing one of these items becomes that character.

There is a large projection screen upstage. Above the projection screen there is a small balcony, which is climbed onto through its center via a manhole ladder. On the balcony there is enough space for one person to sit in the middle and on the left side there is a tiny bookcase filled with books. On the top of the bookcase there is a picnic basket. On the right side of the balcony there is a papier-mâché vase holding a bouquet of origami flowers.

On both sides of the balcony there are five scene titles written in different colored neon lights over the stage. These names are: BERLIN, “CHANGING PLANES”³, NEW STOCKHOLM, NEW YORK, İSTANBUL. These neon lights are operated by the performers on stage with visible on-off switches. There is an old-school carousel projector downstage, which again is operated by the performers. Center stage there is a visible steel pipe hung above the performer's heads that crosses the stage parallel to the audience. This steel pipe holds two swings that face the audience on either side of the stage, as well as three subway straps.

The play would best work in the intimacy of a tiny blackbox space.

PS 1: FARIAS's pronoun is *he*, DERYA's pronoun is *she* and each NARRATOR's pronoun is (singular) *they*. In the text all stage directions are written in (singular) *they* and only the spoken lines are gendered according to the characters.

PS 2: FARIAS should not be acted as a mainstream gay stereotype or made into a joke. In the context of the play his sexual orientation is not the centerpiece of his character, it is only one of the components.

³ This title comes from the same named book by Ursula Kroeber Le Guin, therefore the neon sign should include the quotation marks.

List of props that come out of the skirt pockets:

- Turkish book: *Sakalsız bir oğlanın tragedyası* (Eng: *The tragedy of a beardless boy*) by Arkadaş Zekai Özger
- Red framed glasses in a case
- Blue tie with pink polka dots
- A paper fan
- Plastic toy coffee cup with saucer
- Clay bird whistle
- Microphone
- [Light, mini] Clapperboard
- Turkish book: *Zihin Kuşları* (Eng: *Birds of the Mind*) by Leyla Erbil
- Book: *If They Come in the Morning...*, edited by Angela Y. Davis
- Harmonica
- Two light bed sheets
- A quill pen
- Large gold colored earrings in the shape of the Hittite Sun.
- Book: *Madonna in a Fur Coat* by Sabahattin Ali
- A small dictionary
- A small pocket mirror
- An extending TV antenna
- A handkerchief
- A toy sail boat
- Book: *The Little Black Fish* by Samad Behrangi
- A file

List of books on the bookshelf that will be used in the play:

- *Dhalgren* by Samuel R. Delany
- *Lands of Glass* by Alessandro Baricco
- *Changing Planes* by Ursula Kroeber Le Guin

Other objects in the balcony

- A rope

Things that come out of the picnic basket:

- Red gingham table cloth
- Toy table utensils
- Food
- Two bed sheets

List of images projected through the carousel projector:

- Arkadaş Zekai Özger

- Berlin Metro Map
- Rainbow formed over 2015 Pride Parade in Taksim Square
- Sabahattin Ali
- New York Metro Map
- A series of images of İstanbul (the list of images below are subject to change depending on theatre group's choices, and what is provided here are only suggestions)

- 1) Maiden's Tower with the view of Salacak in the background
- 2) Galata Tower and the surrounding neighborhood seen from the Golden Horn
- 3) Head of Medusa from the Basilica Cistern
- 4) Hagia Sophia and Blue Mosque
- 5) Sarayburnu, seen from the Marmara Sea
- 6) Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Kabataş Campus) seen from the seaside
- 7) Ortaköy
- 8) İstiklal Avenue
- 9) Kadıköy sea front
- 10) Kuzguncuk
- 11) Grand Bazaar
- 12) Bosphorous Bridge and ferries
- 13) Gezi Park from July 2013
- 14) "Yalı" type of houses at the seafront of Arnavutköy
- 15) Skyscrapers of Mecidiyeköy seen from Bosphorous
- 16) Ruins of Tarlabası right after forced urban transformation
- 17) Ruins of Sulukule right after forced urban transformation
- 18) Old city walls of the Historical Peninsula
- 19) Süleymaniye Mosque
- 20) A delightful fish restaurant (meyhane) at night, photo shot from outside
- 21) Many street cats and kittens being fed by a couple of cat ladies in Moda neighbourhood
- 22) Sun setting over the red roofs and Bosphorous, shot from one of the balconies in Beşiktaş
- 23) Night of İstanbul, shot from the same balcony in Beşiktaş in image 22

List of music pieces/sounds played from the gramophone:

→ *These pieces are suggestions to set the moods of the scenes and are open to change.*

- "Sadaqah" [Eng: "Friendship" – from Arabic], Rahim AlHaj
- "Booty Swing", Parov Stelar
- "Havana Banana", Too Many Zooz
- "Dünya Kaleska", Gaye Su Akyol
- "Elbet Bir Gün Buluşacağız" [Eng: "Surely We Will Meet One Day" – from Turkish], Zeki Müren

Act 1 Prologue

*There is a pile of all the objects in the middle of the stage, which will be distributed into the pockets of the performers as the audience is coming in. All performers greet the audience as they are entering, and they talk amongst each other while sorting things out playfully. In the meantime Zeki Müren's song *Elbet Bir Gün Buluşacağız* [En: "Surely We Will Meet One Day"] plays from the gramophone lightly. NARRATOR 1 stops the music when performers are done with the distribution of objects, and the audience is seated.*

NARRATOR 1: *(Semi-improvised)* Hello our dear audience. Welcome, welcome, we are so happy to have you here. Please make yourselves as comfortable as possible, because we are about to make sure you don't feel as comfortable as you are now, until you leave.

NARRATOR 2: So we three are the narrators of this story.

NARRATOR 3: Like the three muses, or –

NARRATOR 1: Perhaps the three gorgons, or –

NARRATOR 2: Three sisters of faith; past, present and future – or –

NARRATOR 3: Who knows, maybe even the three Norns, since we pass through the freezing cold as much as the burning heat.

NARRATOR 1: My favorite is Macbeth's three witches though.

NARRATOR 2: Oh, god... Don't start with your Shakespeare again.

NARRATOR 1: What? I didn't say anything.

NARRATOR 3: Yeah, please, this is not one of those Shakespeare plays.

NARRATOR 1: Well it is not a Greek tragedy either!

NARRATOR 2: Whatever! – So, continuing –

NARRATOR 3: We are the narrators of this play.

NARRATOR 2: Which means, *(with a very untrustworthy smile, like a salesperson visibly overselling a problematic product)* you can trust us wholeheartedly and unconditionally.

NARRATOR 1: We are omnipresent.

NARRATOR 2: Almost.

NARRATOR 3: And we know everything.

NARRATOR 2: Kind of.

NARRATOR 1: So as we take you through this pop-up book-like journey,

NARRATOR 2: Which is the brief sketch of an intimate epic of friendship,

NARRATOR 1: Which is the daydream of a natural born anarchist or a child,

NARRATOR 3: We gift you with three tokens of wisdom.

NARRATOR 2: The first is a quote from Maya Angelou:

NARRATOR 1: “Courage is the most important of the virtues, because without it, no other virtue can be practiced consistently.”

NARRATOR 3: The second is the premise of the story called “Flyers of Gy”:

NARRATOR 2: In Ursula Kroeber Le Guin’s book, “Changing Planes” there is a story that takes place in a world very similar to ours, where people look just like us and act just like us with one major difference only: instead of hair, feathers grow out of their bodies. And oh, how dare I forget, there is also this unfortunate thing that happens to some Gyr People⁴, as rare as less than one in a thousand. Some of them grow wings in their late adolescence. Keep this in mind and we will get back to it later.

NARRATOR 1: And the last one is a poem from Arkadaş Zekai Özger.

NARRATOR 2 puts a record on the gramophone: Rahim AlHaj’s “Sadaqah”⁵.

NARRATOR 3: Arkadaş Zekai Özger was a queer communist poet in 1970’s Turkey, who died because of a concussion caused by the police raids in his university. He never saw his own book of poems published.

NARRATOR 2: Listen for the well worn-out sadness and the growing pains of desire in this poem. Hear the voice in it that even the translation couldn’t break.

NARRATOR 3 inserts a photo of Arkadaş Zekai Özger in the carousel projector.

⁴ In Le Guin’s story, the name of the place is Gy, name of the people is Gyr.

⁵ “Rahim AlHaj NPR Music Tiny Desk Concert” [starts at 10:10]:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osflgckzf70>

NARRATOR 1: And this is the poem, “Hello Darling”:

NARRATOR 3 moves down stage and gets out the Turkish book from their skirt pocket: “Sakalsız bir oğlanın tragedyası” (Eng: “The tragedy of a beardless boy”) by Arkadaş Zekai Özger and reads from a marked page (in English)⁶:

NARRATOR 3: i'm a person who speaks little, gets tired a lot
i like drinking wine with halva
i never performed salaah until now
i love my mom and allah a lot
my mom loves allah a lot too
our whole family loves
allah and cats a lot

life is a tragic homosexual
i think all homosexuals are adonists a little
because all drunkenness's are a little
delirias of the sober freud

you don't believe it, some day of course
the direction of the wind which worships the sun and the penis will change
because i kind of read it somewhere
that in some places people sell women to gods

ah my darling aristophanes
i never forget peace and wasps
and i keep death like a secret inside me
i keep death for the god

and someday you will never understand
my body, growing to sun and manhood
will fall from your hands and
of course some day
you will love zeki müren

(love zeki müren)

Act 1

Scene 1: Berlin

NARRATOR 3 turns off the “CHANGING PLANES” neon sign and turns on the BERLIN neon sign. NARRATOR 2 changes the record on the gramophone to Parov Stelar's “Booty Swing”. NARRATOR 1 removes the Arkadaş Zekai Özger slide.

NARRATOR 1: Their story begins in Berlin.

⁶ Translated by the playwright. Original poem is written only in small letters and it is kept that way in the English translation.

NARRATOR 2: In the city that one entered from the West, and the other from the East.

NARRATOR 3: Berlin is one of those few cities –

NARRATOR 1: Like İstanbul –

NARRATOR 2: That is historically defined as –

NARRATOR 3: (*Unzipping one of the pockets in their skirt*) Where East meets West.

NARRATOR 1: Or, (*pulling out a glasses case from the unzipped pocket of NARRATOR 3*) where West meets East.

NARRATOR 1 gives the case to NARRATOR 2, NARRATOR 2 takes out the red glasses, and holding the glasses they throw the empty case to the side of the stage.

NARRATOR 2: Actually, you know, the more you go East, the more you find East.

NARRATOR 2 unzips a pocket of NARRATOR 1 and pulls out the blue tie with pink polka dots, and ties it around NARRATOR 3's collar. NARRATOR 3 becomes FARIAS. In the meantime NARRATOR 2 puts on the red glasses and becomes DERYA. As this is happening NARRATOR 1 goes to one of the swings and sits in a position where they can see the two characters and the audience.

Pause. DERYA holds one of the subway straps. This is the cue: now DERYA and FARIAS are travelling in a tram.

FARIAS: How do you like my tie? I think it looks very masculine.

FARIAS strikes a clumsy pose and then loses their balance a little. DERYA holds them.

DERYA: (*Trying not to laugh*) I know, it looks very, very masculine.

FARIAS: (*Taking it seriously*) Thank you! I like it very much.

DERYA: Hold one of these (*pointing at a subway strap*), this tram has too much centripetal force when taking the turns.

FARIAS: Centripetal?

DERYA: Yeah. (*Very serious, committed to the sound effects*) It goes like shipidi shipidi shipidi and takes turns like fishi fishi fishi...

FARIAS: (*Giggling*) Oh I see what you mean. Shipidi shipidi fishi fishi. Wow, what a wild tram this is!

DERYA laughs.

NARRATOR 1: The tram is taking them to Checkpoint Charlie. They're about to see one of the most feared border control points in the world that destroyed many lives only a few of decades ago. It is a public monument that eternalizes how fast borders are built and how fast they crumble to dust for new ones to be built.

FARIAS: *(Pointing to something outside, towards the audience)* Oh wow, look at those doggos!

DERYA: *(Confused)* Doggos?

NARRATOR 1: *(To DERYA)* Hipster dogs. *(Beat)* It was the beginning of their journey when our dear protagonists barely knew each other. After a little more chit chat they realized they didn't remember each others' names.

FARIAS: *(Reaching out for a hand shake)* I'm Farias, by the way!

DERYA: *(Shaking hands)* And I'm Derya! Nice to meet you.

FARIAS: My name means lighthouse. Does your name mean something?

DERYA: *(Proud)* It means sea!

FARIAS: That's nice!

NARRATOR 1: And they were in Berlin with a select group of students from the prestigious University of Royal New Stockholm, which will be referred as URNS⁷ from here on. They flew all together, and landed all together, but couldn't pass customs all together since Derya didn't have a first world passport. After extra, extra security checks that she had to deal with alone as the group moved on without her, and to which she eventually caught up to a few hours later thanks to another connecting flight, they were finally in the European capital. Fully funded, from North America to Europe, crème de la crème of the young and promising first world intelligentsia. Both of them were there by different strokes of luck, since a working-class hero and a genius from *(air quotes)* "the developing world" do not naturally belong to these creamy groups – as you would know.

FARIAS: Having fun?

DERYA: *(Uneasy with the question)* I'm not sure actually. I guess...

NARRATOR 1: She was the only second-language English speaker in the group and no

⁷ This acronym should be read by voicing each letter in U-R-N-S, which should clearly sound like 'you-are-an-ass'.

one had the patience to wait two seconds for her to articulate herself. And when she insisted and did manage to speak they all got too excited and attacked her with their curiosity. So no, she was not having fun.

DERYA: Are you having a good time?

FARIAS: Always!

DERYA: *(Laughing)* You know, we have a saying for this state of mind in Turkish...

FARIAS: What is it?

DERYA: Umm... Never mind, it is silly.

FARIAS: C'mon! You brought it up?

DERYA: Well, we say, "it is a celebration every day if you are crazy".

Intense silence.

FARIAS: *(Suddenly laughing)* It's funny.

DERYA: *(Relieved)* How do you like the group?

FARIAS: *(Bubbly)* I think it's exciting to be with such a group in Berlin, you know. Everyone is so interesting. Also it's fun to see people flirting with each other.

DERYA: Is there someone flirting with you?

FARIAS: Not really. Except the girl with the Frida Kahlo bag. Which is kind of sweet but slightly absurd: I think it's pretty obvious that I'm gay.

DERYA: I know, I realized that too. But you know –

At the same time with the NARRATOR 1:

DERYA + NARRATOR 1: Some girls have that.

FARIAS: Have what?

DERYA: You know –

NARRATOR 1: Some girls like testing their femininity. On impossible targets.

FARIAS continues to look puzzled.

DERYA: Like, you know the stereotype of – like –

NARRATOR 1: The girl who is So! So! So! Charming. (*Unzipping a pocket erotically, taking out a paper fan and starting to flirt with the audience coyly.*) She doesn't do anything at all – like God forbid, nothing at all! – but everyone – like everyone – just magically falls for her.

FARIAS: Umm? I don't get it...

DERYA: Oh okay, maybe this is more of a Middle Eastern stereotype...

FARIAS: (*Confused*) So what is it?

DERYA: Like, you know – the pose that goes like –

NARRATOR 1: (*Coyly*) Oh, I didn't even mean it at all... (*Playing with the fan, flirting with the audience*) But you just fell in love with me. Because I'm that kind of girl. You know, I strike a look into a mortal's eyes only once and they suffer eternally in the fires of desire... But I'm innocent, oh so, so innocent! I don't mean it at all! But, I can't help it. I'm just unstopably desirable! And now, you will desire me like the nightingale desires the rose every night, I will become the ache in your heart, and the tingle in your groin.

FARIAS: Um, I guess I don't know it...

DERYA: Whatever, I was just being mean.

NARRATOR 1: (*Gesturing to DERYA with the fan*) No, you were not, honey. Some see the truth, some say the truth.

Carefree, NARRATOR 1 throws the fan to the side of the stage and sits on the other swing, watching the two characters.

FARIAS: I mean, I didn't get it, but okay. So, umm, what were you studying in the university?

DERYA: At the moment, art sociology. Finished a second master's, leading to a PhD. Every diploma I have is from a different discipline. I meander a lot, it seems.

NARRATOR 1: She decided to leave out the centerpiece of what she does in life in this first introduction. She won one of the most important playwriting awards of her home country a few months before this conversation. But while she was surrounded by many New Stockholmers proudly claiming to be *artists*, which was just their socially acceptable way of saying *narcissists*; being a scholar has become a much more vital self-identification for her.

DERYA: What about you?

FARIAS lets go of the subway strap and strikes another clumsy pose.

FARIAS: I'm hoping to finish my undergrad next year –

NARRATOR 1: Which he didn't, at least not *that* next year –

FARIAS: And also I'm a comic!

DERYA: (*Compassionately*) What kind of comedy do you do?

FARIAS loses their balance slightly again, DERYA reacts to hold them but FARIAS holds the strap just in time. DERYA laughs.

FARIAS: Can you guess?

DERYA: I would go for clown.

FARIAS: (*Disappointed*) I'm a stand-up comic.

NARRATOR 1: Years later neither of them could remember why they had insisted on conversing and why their particular conversation never died off even though there were many other passionate conversations in that journey with others that felt like they would continue for eternity, yet eventually ended; abruptly.

FARIAS: (*Cheering up again*) And I'm planning to perform in Berlin too! There are English stand-up open mic nights here – like many of them! Did you know that?

DERYA: Sure. Expats. Only people of the East become immigrants and refugees, you know. Westerners become global citizens and expats and can make lives out of teaching their mother tongue. Chic, huh?

FARIAS: (*Missing the sarcasm*) Absolutely! And I have the opportunity to perform here now! Isn't that exciting?

DERYA: (*Compassionately*) Are you always so fluffy?

NARRATOR 1: Oh yes, he is.

DERYA: Whatever, I would love to see you perform. Please tell me too when you are going.

FARIAS: Really? Okay, sure.

NARRATOR 1: In the afternoon of the same day, close to Pergamon Museum, when

their group was having a lunch in a restaurant that tried really hard to hide that its owners were Turkish, Derya realized that despite their sincere efforts to pass as German, the menu still had Turkish coffee on it. She ordered it.

NARRATOR 1 snaps their fingers and points at DERYA and FARIAS. DERYA and FARIAS let go of subway straps and momentarily they are transferred to the restaurant.

DERYA: And let me show you a party trick in return for your kind invitation to me to observe your craft.

FARIAS: Okay. My craft? I like that.

FARIAS sits on one of the swings and DERYA stands by them. DERYA pulls out a plastic toy coffee cup and saucer from one of their skirt pockets, places the cup on the saucer and serves coffee to FARIAS like playing house. FARIAS takes the coffee.

DERYA: Here, drink it in small sips like espresso.

FARIAS: What is this?

NARRATOR 1: Turkish coffee. She will tell your fortune.

FARIAS sips it a couple of times, finishes it.

FARIAS: Now what?

DERYA: (*Showing*) Now you put the saucer on top of the cup like this and then flip both of them towards your heart.

FARIAS does as DERYA instructs. FARIAS takes a pause holding the cup.

FARIAS: The bottom of the cup has cooled. (*Giving DERYA the cup back*) What now?

DERYA sits on the floor next to the swing, takes the cup, opens it, looks inside and gives a very performative reaction of shock, playing with FARIAS's – and the audience's – expectations.

FARIAS: What? What have you seen?

DERYA: Are you sure?

FARIAS: Yeah?

DERYA: Okay then. I see a beautiful ship with seven sails for the seven seas. All seven

of them are filled with winds that come from seven corners of the world. You are destined to sail away and have incredible adventures. You will see the world, and the world will see you in return. Here (*giving the cup back*), wash your cup so your wish can come true.

FARIAS takes the cup and the saucer and puts them into one of their skirt pockets, zips it shut.

In the meantime NARRATOR 1 gets up and inserts a slide into the carousel projector: a metro map of Berlin is projected onto the screen background. DERYA and FARIAS hold the subway straps again and they are back in the tram.

NARRATOR 1: Years later, Derya could never pinpoint why she insisted on watching all of his performances, even though she rarely laughed, and why she ran around the city hopping from S-Bahn to U-Bahn, bumping into many Berliners in the Stra es and Platzen on the thresholds of dark purple Berlin nights, trying to find underground bars or fourth-rate cabaret stages in Kreuzberg, along the way asking for directions in Turkish from fourth-generation Turkish immigrants who are denied German citizenship eternally. Schei e!

DERYA: So, may I ask you something about your comedy? Like, since I watched your routine four times already.

FARIAS: Shoot! I'm ready!

DERYA: Why is it so personal? And why so self-deprecating?

FARIAS: Because it's the safest thing to do. You know. And it gets laughter, which is the most important thing.

NARRATOR 1: In the place that Farias grew up in, which is New Stockholm, mild people mildly liking you and agreeing upon your mild opinions is the essence of social life. Therefore, in stand-up, people mildly laugh at mild jokes. Belly laughs are strictly not allowed.

DERYA: Do you always play safe?

FARIAS: I guess. I have to.

NARRATOR 1: Farias has a point to be anxious about safety on a stand-up stage. A conventional stand-up stage is one of the most dangerous spaces ever imaginable in today's world for anyone who is a bit unconventional. No one has ever seen that many straight men in black shirts united in a single space under a shared worldview since Mussolini's rallies in fascist Italy. (*Beat*) You get the joke, right? Yes you do, you're a smart audience.

FARIAS: Don't you? *(Beat)* Play safe?

DERYA: *(Laughing and pointing to the Berlin map)* How do you think I got here? If I had played it safe, I would be married to a rich olive oil tradesman in my hometown and our second child would be on the way and my diplomas would have become the fanciest decoration in our petite bourgeois home.

FARIAS: You have a very dark sense of humor, I must say. It's kind of growing on me.

DERYA: I guess I come from slightly darker places than you, baby boy. *(Beat)* You know what my favorite joke of your routine is?

FARIAS: Please?

DERYA: When you go like –

DERYA rips the Velcro of one of their skirt pockets, takes out a microphone without letting go of the subway strap, and gives it to FARIAS. FARIAS lets go of the strap and starts acting the stage persona of FARIAS, using the microphone with the stereotypical mannerisms of a stand-up comic, momentarily being transferred to a stand-up stage.

FARIAS: Hi! I'm a stereotypical white boy: I only speak English, I'm born and raised in New Stockholm, and so on... I even had long hair once – so another check on the list. The only thing that slightly differentiates me is that I'm gay. And you know gay marriage is just legalized right now all over North America and gay rights are just becoming human rights – which is great of course – but I feel like – you know... *(Uneasily)* Like... How am I supposed to victimize myself now?!⁸

DERYA cheers for the joke. FARIAS holds the subway strap again. NARRATOR 1 takes the mic from FARIAS and puts it into one of the skirt pockets of DERYA.

FARIAS: Why that joke in particular?

DERYA: Because it is the only joke where you touch upon something that's bigger than yourself. It is something about the political and ideological psyche of your generation in North American capitals. And it is a twitchingly pathetic psyche of gaining social capital through self-victimization because of myopic liberal identity politics. *(Pointing at FARIAS)* That you managed to mock very well, in your *(air quotes)* “safe zone” of self-deprecation.

⁸ Loizou, Lucas. (Performer). (2015, May). *Stand Up*. Live performance in Berlin.
We are not Gemused – Du Beast Innstr. 4 12045 Neukölln
Freudian Slip – Lagari Pflügerstr 19, 12047 Neukölln
Comedy at Hamburger Mary's Lietzenburger Str. 13-15, 10789
Adorable Creatures KussKuss Küche & Gemeinderaum Nogatstraße 30, 12051
The Bloody Nose KIKI SOL Reinickendorferstr 96, 13347

Pause.

FARIAS: (*Bewildered*) That was harsh.

NARRATOR 1: Well Farias, her language has a proverb that says; “a friend is someone who speaks the bitter truth”.

DERYA: Look, I do think you are quite talented. I just don’t like this super personal material on stage in very pornographic and art-and-craft deprived (*air quotes*) “authentic” ways where at the end everyone seamlessly congratulates each other for their (*air quotes*) “courage”. That’s the North American way I guess, which I can’t understand because I’m a barbaric savage from the Eastern Muslim world. Like, why should I care about your step mother, or your coming out to your family, and ha-ha immigrant families who don’t get things – which creeps me out because it means that in the best case scenario in a couple of decades I will be the butt of the joke in my future children’s stand-up routines to feed the hunger of more white audiences for minstrelsy. And your sex stories or passive aggressive arguments with middle-aged sex-deprived chain shop managers in your part-time jobs and so on? Like, you are not my best friend just because you have a mic in your hand and I’m not legally obliged to listen to your petty problems or rants on stage – let alone laugh at them. Especially when you are bullying yourself. It only becomes interesting if you say something bigger than yourself, something about the world.

FARIAS: What is that bigger thing?

DERYA: Your entire routine is about neoliberalism. (*Worried*) Don’t you see that? It is about precarity.

NARRATOR 1: For years and years they continued this conversation that started in the meandering subway lines of Berlin, from train to train, never losing sight of each other. At the time this conversation didn’t totally land with Farias, although he was interested in this harsh girl.

NARRATOR 1 turns the BERLIN neon light off, turns on the NEW YORK neon light, and removes the Berlin metro map slide from the carousel projector.

NARRATOR 1 pulls the Velcro of one of DERYA’s pockets and takes out a mini clapperboard, writes “Scene 54, Take 61, Roll 56” on it, shows it to the audience. Gets in front of DERYA and FARIAS.

NARRATOR 1: For example, they would pick up from this very same thread in another time zone like this:

NARRATOR 1 opens the clapstick of the clapperboard, and loudly claps it shut. They let go of the subway straps.

DERYA: Contextualize, I would say. I like that word.

FARIAS: Contextualize what?

DERYA: Geography! Not everywhere is North America! And North America is not the norm!

FARIAS: I mean, I know that.

DERYA: No you don't! You have never crossed a border with humiliation or have been exposed to cultural products that do not reaffirm your reality on a daily basis. You are not even trained to read subtitles, which is a joke to me! And guess what? Anyone who is non-Western and particularly non-Anglophone has been there, done that.

FARIAS: But then I find comedy out of my ignorance and dumbness and you don't like it either?

DERYA: How am I supposed to laugh at a comedian that centers their ignorance as (*air quotes*) "normal", as the one and only (*air quotes*) "norm", when I am so forcefully deprived of the bliss of that ignorance? (*Beat. Offended.*) Or perhaps I am not your audience at all. Maybe I am just your killjoy because of the sheer fact that I exist.

Pause.

FARIAS: You know Sara Ahmed has a whole concept around the feminist killjoy. I'm happy that you are my feminist killjoy.

DERYA: (*Cuddling FARIAS from behind*) You are sweet.

FARIAS: I know.

DERYA: (*Laughing*) You are also very silly.

FARIAS: Guess what? I know that too!

DERYA: (*Tickling FARIAS*) Oh, look at you! My baby! He knows everything!

FARIAS: Okay, enough! Enough!

DERYA stops.

DERYA: (*Suddenly serious again*) You know, Sara Ahmed left her tenure track position at the university because of institutional discrimination too.

FARIAS: *(Sighs)* You are too smart for your own good.

DERYA: I actually think you are smarter than me.

FARIAS: Me? How so?

DERYA: You learn faster than anyone I've ever known. But guess what? *(Beat)* I'm wiser than you. *(Tapping to their own temple)* Xenon's paradox.

FARIAS: Then, you are too wise for your own good.

DERYA laughs. NARRATOR 1 turns off the NEW YORK neon light and turns the BERLIN neon light on. NARRATOR 1 gets in front of DERYA and FARIAS again and opens the clapstick.

NARRATOR 1: But back in Berlin the conversation is still less cuddly, more testing the waters.

NARRATOR 1 loudly claps the clapstick shut and puts the clapstick in one of the skirt pockets of FARIAS. FARIAS and DERYA hold the subway straps again.

FARIAS: So like, how are gay rights in Turkey? Is gay marriage allowed?

DERYA face palms themselves.

DERYA: *(Shocked and embarrassed at the same time)* Oh, god...

NARRATOR 1: It was such a level of naivety that she became anxious about how to tell this first world gay boy that fairies don't exist outside his New Stockholm bubble. A couple years later Farias gave an explanation for his naivety:

NARRATOR 1 snaps their finger looking at FARIAS as a sign for him to give his explanation. FARIAS lets go of the subway strap.

FARIAS: *(Playing dumb)* I didn't want to assume that the entire Middle East was completely devoid of gay rights. Surely this was an appropriate empathetic liberal mindset that would bridge two different worlds and be the foundation of future world peace.

DERYA lets go of the subway strap.

DERYA: We had a long way to go, baby.

Act 1
Scene 2: “Changing Planes”

NARRATOR 1 turns off the gramophone and the BERLIN neon light. Then NARRATOR 1 turns on the “CHANGING PLANES” neon light. DERYA takes off the red glasses and FARIAS takes off the blue tie, which makes them NARRATOR 2 and 3 consecutively. NARRATOR 2 gives the red glasses to NARRATOR 3, and NARRATOR 3 gives the blue tie to NARRATOR 1. NARRATOR 1 becomes FARIAS and NARRATOR 3 becomes DERYA.

DERYA and FARIAS go to the two swings and start swinging slowly. NARRATOR 2 goes to the carousel projector and places the image of the natural rainbow formed at 2015 Pride Parade in Taksim Square.

NARRATOR 2: After the Berlin trip Derya returned to her beloved İstanbul for the summer and Farias returned to rigidly mild New Stockholm. Derya was at the 2015 Pride Parade when the police tear-gassed, shot high-pressured water and rubber bullets at the community.

DERYA: The banner in our hands said: “you don’t believe it, some day of course / the direction of the wind which worships the sun and the penis will change”.⁹

NARRATOR 2: One of the most iconic photos of İstanbul pride parades is from that year: under the high-pressured water, shot from an anti-riot water cannon vehicle in the famous Taksim Square, a beautiful rainbow formed over the crowd, under the bright summer sun. Nature, it turns out, has its own way of intervening with authority.

DERYA: *(To Farias)* LGBTI¹⁰ rights in Turkey? The sugar coated answer I gave you in Berlin was “well, it is more about survival in Turkey”. I couldn’t bring myself to give a full answer out of the embarrassment I felt, both about your ignorance and over the state of my own country. The bitter answer forced itself upon me. Two people *casually* lost their eyes because of the rubber bullets in that pride parade. Hande Kader, a trans activist and survival sex worker, was at the front lines of the resistance. Nearly a year later she was killed and her corpse was set on fire by one of her clients.

NARRATOR 2 removes the photo from the carousel projector. NARRATOR 2 gets on the balcony. Until the end of this scene each time NARRATOR 2 speaks they rip up one of the origami flowers from the papier-mâché vase and sprinkle the pieces onto to the stage.

FARIAS: How are you? When will you return?

⁹ Quote from Arkadaş Zekai Özger’s poem “Hello Darling”.

¹⁰ This is the acronym that is used by activists in Turkey.

DERYA: I don't know either. My visa is not yet renewed.

NARRATOR 2: At the end of 2015 there was a government-regulated genocide in Turkey. In the Kurdish regions children were burned alive in basements of buildings. There were a handful of academics who signed a petition to stop the government that they were obliged to pay taxes to as citizens, and therefore put in a position of directly funding the genocide. The academics were imprisoned, their passports and working rights were taken, the few who managed to cross the borders to become refugees in first world countries got the chance to enjoy their permanent loss of income and status. The rest who couldn't or wouldn't escape, experienced their home country as an open-air prison from then on. One of the young academics, Mehmet Fatih Tıraş, committed suicide. Nuriye Gülmen lost her health permanently in the hunger strike she committed. Derya witnessed it all. She saw the academic refugees coming to New Stockholm, and slowly losing their minds in this ugly city. She saw it all.

FARIAS: You make me feel so helpless sometimes.

NARRATOR 2: That summer, a three year old child's, Alan Kurdi's, dead body was washed to the shores of the Aegean coast of Turkey. The family was trying to pass to Greece. And from there, to New Stockholm. Government of New Stockholm have rejected the family prior to the widely distributed devastating picture. They have tried to accept them later to mend their public image. This time, *they* were rejected by the only surviving member of the family: the father of the boy.

DERYA: Why do you pretend to care, then?

FARIAS: *(Confused)* What do you mean? I do care.

NARRATOR 2: *(Threateningly, to DERYA)* You see my dear Derya, like Cronus, your country eats her own children every couple of decades.

DERYA: At my home, or at the place that I used to call home, everyone in unison imagines that I'm having a great life now in New Stockholm; as they carefully nurture a meaningless and dark envy, never letting my lived experience intervene with their fantasy.

FARIAS: That's so sad. Sometimes you remind me of the old ladies that I constantly needed to distract and entertain in the retirement house I was working in.

DERYA laughs.

FARIAS: Otherwise they got too sad.

DERYA: That's another fear I have. To get old here and get dementia and forget English

and just be stuck till I rot and die because no one would be able to communicate with me, because they won't know my mother tongue, which will be the only tongue that I'll be left with when everything else melts away.

FARIAS: Yikes! Stop it!

NARRATOR 2: A year later, New Stockholm's 2016 Pride became the year that Black Lives Matter protested the parade. This erupted in the rage of the white gay community, which declared that (*air quotes*) "their Pride" was hijacked. Unsurprisingly, the poor victims of this hijacking defined (*air quotes*) "their Pride" as an apolitical festival that was sponsored by the banks, and something that had nothing to do with a long history of protests. The very basic demand of removing police floats seemed too much. Since, while – you know – this particular state organization has a long history of brutally oppressing the LGBTQ community. And their dutiful witch-hunt is exclusively continuing for the Black and brown members of the community.

DERYA: It had been said before: evil lives in broad daylight in truly banal things¹¹. After taking part in an urban uprising in 2013, I'm eternally scared of police now. And I'm also scared of people who are not scared of police. I'm also scared of people who can walk in tune with military steps. I'm scared of people who like uniforms. Many people in New Stockholm think I'm so brave, but my greatest fears lie in such mundane things. I'm terrorized by people who laugh at others' pain.

NARRATOR 2: New Stockholm, the brave new world of twenty first century, had no place to hold human pain.

DERYA: It turns out that life has crafted a major joke for me: I have immigrated from George Orwell's *1984*¹² to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*¹³.

NARRATOR 2: A few years later a heavily targeted Egyptian lesbian activist, Sarah Hegazi, who came to New Stockholm to find a place for herself in this cruel world, committed suicide in this inhumane city where pain is treated like a contagious disease.

FARIAS: I'll never forget how you defined the feeling of revolution to me once: it is an entire city rioting against the police. A passing chronotope¹⁴ where pain and hope is distributed *justly*. That's what a revolution is.

NARRATOR 2: In that same summer of 2016 there was a military coup attempt in

¹¹ Arendt, Hannah. (2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*. Penguin Books.

¹² Orwell, George. (2006). *1984*. Signet Classics, Penguin Press.

¹³ Huxley, Aldous. (2012). *Brave New World*. Turtleback Books.

¹⁴ Bakhtin, Michail. (2000). "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel". In Michael Holquist (Ed. & Trans.) & Caryl Emerson (Trans.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (12th ed.). University of Texas Press.

Turkey. A 19-year-old boy, Murat Tekin, doing his mandatory military service was killed with ISIS-like methods on the Bosphorus bridge by the so-called *democracy defenders*, who were actually radical Islamists that went out to lynch anyone that the government targeted. And it was erased from the official history immediately, the picture of the lynched boy was deleted from all public sources.

DERYA: So many New Stockholmers text and call me to see if I'm fine while I'm in Turkey and shit hits the fan. First I naively feel happy that they care enough to ask. But then a malign feeling crawls in and I see what they are doing for what it actually is: they want to make sure only *I* am doing well so that *they* won't be traumatized themselves, because of the brutal loss of someone who briefly touched their lives. Since this would be too much of an invasion for their sterile safety bubble. They think they love me but they don't. How can you love someone without understanding them?

FARIAS: Do you think that is why I ask too?

DERYA: I don't know. *(Beat)* I'm sorry.

NARRATOR 2: But the human memory holds onto things, just like a grudge.

FARIAS: You made me an angrier person. My family doesn't like it.

DERYA: I know. I am a bad influence. Soon you will get tattoos and piercings all over and start getting really uneasy with the bullshit North American liberalism that supports fundamentalism in countries like mine.

NARRATOR 2 finishes tearing origami flowers in the balcony and takes out a quill pen from one of their pockets and starts playing with it.

NARRATOR 2: In letters that Derya and Farias exchanged in the summer of 2016, Derya described how the crisis spiraled into insanity.

DERYA: At first it was terrifying, moving into madness, then a state of hopelessness came, and eventually hysterical laughter. These emotions would come and go like a carousel, in circuits, until the aftermath dissipated into a collective memory loss.

NARRATOR 2: You know, some states are grounded in black holes of memory.
(Beat) Actually no. All of the states are grounded in black holes of memory.

NARRATOR 2 comes down from the balcony carrying the quill pen. NARRATOR 2 first places the quill pen in one of FARIAS' pockets and then goes to the carousel projector.

FARIAS: Can't we just stay in the state of laughter always?

DERYA: No. You don't get it. Just as too much happiness can make a person cry, too much sadness can make a person laugh: precisely because the world around her shatters and she suddenly sees the absurdity of it all. This is why I laugh so often when nothing is funny.

NARRATOR 2 puts the slide of Sabahattin Ali in the carousel.

FARIAS: I had just finished reading the book that you gave me, *Madonna in a Fur Coat*. A state of emergency was declared in Turkey on the day I finished the book. I really liked how the queerness of the story was buried under what seems to be heterosexual love. I found it poetic. The way Raif, as a young and shy Turkish man, fell in love so fearlessly with the poised and independent German-Jewish painter Maria.

DERYA: Do you think it needs courage to fall in love? I never would have thought that even to fall, one must have courage.

NARRATOR 2: The writer of that book, Sabahattin Ali, has served his fair share in prison like all the real intellectuals of Derya's home country. He was assassinated by the state when he was trying to cross the Turkish-Bulgarian border in 1948.

NARRATOR 2 takes off Sabahattin Ali's slide from the carousel projector.

FARIAS: I get excited by all the ideas we exchange and I try to share them with friends that I grew up with and my family. *(Beat)* It is so interesting, either they don't want to listen or they get annoyed, which makes me feel weird.

DERYA: People, especially in New Stockholm, would do anything to keep their comfort Farias. That's why they don't want to listen to you.

FARIAS: And they say things like "oh so sad" or "but what can I do?" and then just move on, which frustrates me.

NARRATOR 2: Around this time, Derya slowly started realizing that this little fluffy boy was not an ordinary New Stockholm queen, but someone who could carry the burdens of witnessing with her, without blaming her for bringing painful realities into his life; someone who was strong enough to fight beside her, and with her, whenever she was losing it.

DERYA: And I beg you Farias, please don't bring these toxic North American *(air quotes)* "common senses" into my life and poison the little bit of restorative time we steal for ourselves. What mildly distresses you in those discourses would straightforward suffocate me. Don't do it to me. Please don't.

FARIAS: I will try not to.

Act 1:
Scene 3: New Stockholm

DERYA and FARIAS get off the swings and NARRATOR 2 begins to come down from the balcony. DERYA and FARIAS remove the red glasses and the blue tie, which turns them into NARRATOR 3 and NARRATOR 1 consecutively. NARRATOR 1 turns on the NEW STOCKHOLM neon light.

NARRATOR 2: *(Coming down from the balcony, acting an over-excited tour guide)* As you might have noticed, unlike other cities you see here *(pointing to the city neon signs)*, there is no such city as New Stockholm. Because it doesn't *really* exist, it holds no space in anyone's memory. This nowhere could have been called anything, from Bellona¹⁵ to Stepford¹⁶, and it can be anywhere in the endless bland that is Anglophone North America. But to ground it a bit in your minds, we can say that it is the capital of tokenism. Insincerity is the base of the culture of New Stockholm. Starting from nursery school all children are educated to hide their emotions and get trained in the passive aggressive but politically correct discourse of the city approved by their government. The locals of New Stockholm insist that New Stockholm is a *(winking at the audience)* great city. They repeat this to each other at least *(making the sign of the cross over their body)* five times a day, just like a ritual act.

NARRATOR 3 gives the glasses to NARRATOR 1, and NARRATOR 1 gives the tie to NARRATOR 2, which turns NARRATOR 1 and 2 into DERYA and FARIAS consecutively. NARRATOR 3 goes up the balcony.

NARRATOR 3: Now they are surrounded by people who collectively have a very distorted sense of reality because of Stockholm Syndrome. *(Beat. Transforms into the stereotype of an elderly and well-established Emeritus Professor giving a key note lecture)* That was around when our protagonists started thinking and theorizing about friendship. Their research question was this: How do you become friends when you inherently can't do justice to each other's realities? Their interstitchual methodology, their praxis, was life itself.

NARRATOR 3 takes off a book from the shelf, "If They Come in the Morning...", and reads from a marked page:

NARRATOR 3: *(Continuing the character of the Emeritus Professor)* In 1951, in his own trial, Dr. Du Bois said: "What turns me cold in all this experience is the certainty that thousands of innocent victims are in jail today because they had neither money, experience nor friends to help them."¹⁷ *(Beat)* Hear it well friends, Romans, countrymen and women; it is not just money and experience that does the work to beat a what-is-presented-to-be an omnipresent system. Pay attention

¹⁵ *Dhalgren*, Samuel R. Delany.

¹⁶ *Stepford Wives*, Ira Levin.

¹⁷ *If They Come in the Morning...*, edited by Angela Y. Davis, pg xi.

to the word *friends*, how it is not kin, not relatives, not lovers or partners, not family.

FARIAS: I didn't use to think of it that way.

DERYA: You mean friendship as a central mobilizing force against injustice?

NARRATOR 3: *(Still continuing the character of Emeritus Professor)* One of those friends that helped Dr. Du Bois was Albert Einstein, who was a Jew that escaped Nazi Germany. He offered to be a character witness for Du Bois in his trial. The judge, hearing Einstein's name, realized that it would be scandalous even for American justice to be against an American icon, and dropped the case shortly after. You see, there is a reason why Einstein's committed investment in anti-racist struggles is written out of history. North Americans likes their icons *(air quotes)* "politics-free", because at the end it is way easier for the *(air quotes)* "democratic" majority to like Einstein on the beach¹⁸, rather than Einstein against a white court of devoted McCarthyists.¹⁹

NARRATOR 3 gets out of the Emeritus Professor character and puts the book "If They Come In The Morning..." back to the shelf.

FARIAS: I sometimes feel like I'm not good enough when I'm with you, because you deserve to be with people who understand you effortlessly, and it is not like that between you and me.

DERYA: It is not a matter of effortlessness, it is a matter of principle. You are the only person I met in New Stockholm who *chooses* to stay with trouble and allows the trouble to change them.

FARIAS: You are not trouble. You just honest.

NARRATOR 3: In the meantime, Derya was slowly but surely getting stigmatized in New Stockholm. One afternoon she called Farias when he was having a busy shift. There were too many New Stockholmers waiting for their avocado toasts, soy-lattes, chai puddings and acai ice-creams. *(Beat)* He can't answer her call.

FARIAS: *(Like a machine, with a fake and forced smile)* Hi! What can I get for you? Is everything good here? Would you like something else? Just the check? I'll be right back with your bill! Have a great day! Hi! What can I get for you? Is everything good here? Would you like something else? Just the check? I'll be right back with your bill! Have a great day! Hi! What can I get for you?

NARRATOR 3: It is his eighth hour of work, he has this app on his phone that counts

¹⁸ Wilson, Robert. (Director), & Glass, Philip. (Composer). *Einstein on the Beach*. First performed on 25th of July, 1976 in Avignon Festival.

¹⁹ Fred Jerome and Rodger Taylor, *Einstein on Race and Racism*, 119-121.

the steps that he has walked. He has walked enough in his work that day to have walked across the border of the city and escape forever. The majority of New Stockholmers spend their twenties walking to the border of the city and then returning – again on foot – every single day. Neoliberalism, a market economy lab experiment that went awry and created a monster, is known for refining its methods of torture and abuse, and elaborating them to their limits to keep them invisible.

NARRATOR 3 pulls out a clay bird whistle from one of their skirt pockets and blows it.

NARRATOR 3: She texts him.

NARRATOR 3 blows the clay bird whistle.

DERYA: *(Dead pan face)* I am quitting.

FARIAS: What? No, you aren't! Just take a nap, okay? Just sleep.

NARRATOR 3: And Farias thinks:

FARIAS: Should I be worried?

NARRATOR 3 blows the clay bird whistle.

DERYA: You know me enough now Farias. I don't say things that I won't do.

FARIAS: My shift finishes in half an hour. I will come to your home, okay?

NARRATOR 3 blows the clay bird whistle.

DERYA: Okay. I will cook for you.

NARRATOR 3: People who come from cultures that still remember hunger do not say "I love you" or *(mocking)* "I see you". They cook for you.

FARIAS: Yum-yum!

NARRATOR 3: Unlike marriage, friendship has no institutional clout and legitimacy that could protect the people threatened with deportation. So, the question becomes; to what extent could friendship yield between people from different histories, and then endure a hostile world?

NARRATOR 3 ties the picnic basket to a rope and lowers the basket to the stage. FARIAS takes it.

FARIAS and DERYA set a picnic from things that come out of the basket: a red gingham tablecloth to sit on and some food and chocolate and toy table utensils. They eat as they talk.

FARIAS: Bonkers! You prepared so much food!

DERYA: (*Teasing*) I'll do everything for my baby!

FARIAS: (*Pretending to be hurt*) You're always infantilizing me. I'm an adult okay?!
(*Beat*) Almost I mean.

DERYA: (*Giggling*) But this is how I learned to love. We have our own words of endearment in Turkish. My baby, my source of life, my little lamb, my love, my liver...

FARIAS: My liver?

DERYA: Yep. So it's good that I've settled for *my baby*. (*Beat*) How was your day?

FARIAS: It was okay. They have passed me again for the barista position. As if it's way more responsibility than I can handle.

DERYA: Do they tell you why?

FARIAS: Supposedly I'm always a bit spacey. How is that even possible? I'm the only person there not doing drugs!

NARRATOR 3: New Stockholm has a very narcotically infused culture. This helps people to continue believing that New Stockholm (*winks to the audience*) is a great city.

FARIAS: (*Cheering up*) But I have a new tactic now and I think it will work! So remember the middle aged Dolores Umbridge-like manager I had?

DERYA: The one who systematically abuses the labour of young waiters like you?

FARIAS: Yeah, so I will just call her mommy, make her stick figure drawings of us holding hands, write her acrostic poems about what a great mommy she is; and just when she finally accepts me as her long awaited son, I will get her to sign a new will that would officially declare me as the singular inheritor of her entire wealth, and then I will just like kill her.²⁰

DERYA applauds enthusiastically.

²⁰ Lucas Loizou. (2016, November 21). Five easy ways to make your employer your mommy! Retrieved October 27, 2019, from the Strand website: <https://thestrand.ca/five-easy-ways-to-make-your-employer-your-mommy/>

DERYA: Great plan. I'll help you to get rid of the body.

FARIAS: Ugh! Derya... Words are not enough to explain how much I hate this job! I think I will find myself turned into a gigantic bug in my bed one morning so I can finally have a substantial excuse not to go. I'm watching creepy bug documentaries before I go to sleep every night to get ready for my majestic metamorphosis²¹.

DERYA: Can't you quit?

FARIAS: No. I have to work. And nowhere would be better.

DERYA: I know I don't know your situation better than you do, but there are always better options. Nothing is worthy enough to negotiate on your dignity. *(Beat)* Unless it is purely about survival. But thankfully, I don't think we are currently there.

FARIAS: But I'm there Derya. Look, what I will say now is not to gain some victim credits but I have to make money to be able to have a life. I can't rely on my parents for anything, they are in debt and if I ever make the mistake of asking for money, it will return to me with a higher price than the money itself. I got sick working many times, and had to keep working. I'm twenty three and I'm always tired like an old man. I work in a place where no one respects me and I'm constantly scolded for things I'm not responsible for. And if I leave this shitty job and make no money for myself I won't be able to imagine a future. No one will support me. Like absolutely no one.

DERYA: But don't you see the paradox? You have to make money to imagine a future and to make money you have to work. But work consumes all your time, takes away your health, degrades your personhood and erodes your imagination. So you can't imagine a future beyond work once again.

Pause.

FARIAS: Yeah...

DERYA: What?

FARIAS: Nothing.

DERYA: What?

FARIAS: Nothing. I don't want to talk about it.

²¹ Kafka, Franz. (2008). *Metamorphosis and Other Stories* (M. Hofmann, Trans.; Penguin (USA) ed.). Penguin Books.

DERYA: Can you please tell me what you are thinking?

FARIAS: It's okay!

Pause.

FARIAS: I can't quit. Not now at least. You have to understand. I have tuition fees to pay. Education isn't free here like it's in Turkey.

Derya laughs.

FARIAS: No, not like that. Free of charge I mean.

DERYA: It's okay. I get it.

NARRATOR 3: (*Emeritus Professor comes back*) What a tragic situation we have here. Because tragedies can only occur when everyone is right in their own ways while contradicting each other. All tragic heroes are restricted by the nature and the state, but also possess a free will which makes them agents and victims all at once. That very same day the conservative local government of New Stockholm passed a bill to increase student tuitions by taxing universities as private companies. Meanwhile, a close friend of Derya, a Peace Academic, decided to join the hunger strike to get their rights back from the Turkish universities they were fired through governmental decrees under the makeshift laws of the State of Emergency. Therefore the question remained: Is it ever possible to leave friendship's ambiguous and obscure nature in relation to the state untouched; and therefore, free from bureaucracy?

FARIAS: But that is enough with me. What happened with you? Why did you suddenly decide to quit?

DERYA: (*Mocking, pretending to act like FARIAS*) It's okay. I don't want to talk about it.

FARIAS: Oh, come 'on! That's not how I do it!

DERYA: (*Serious*) I received an email from my supervisor. She said, she (*air quotes*) "painstakingly" edited my thesis proposal but she won't do it again, because I should learn that she is not my editor or co-writer. My English, supposedly, wasn't good enough.

FARIAS: What-the-fuck? Your English is better than majority of the people who only speak English!

DERYA: There is more to it. I looked at the stuff she edited. She has (*air quotes*)

“corrected” the sentence structures that I have adopted from the example proposal she has send us. She even corrected the things she has previously edited herself as if it was completely wrong. This cannot be fixed with me improving my grammar and vocabulary. This is not about my English.

FARIAS: Can't you change your supervisor?

DERYA: No. No one there would be better. This was the last drop; that department has always been extremely hostile to me. There is no breathing room inside it and I'm tired of holding my breath.

FARIAS: You will find a way out.

DERYA: Inshallah. I will try.

Pause.

FARIAS: Would you like to come to a stand up show tomorrow? To cheer up? I will do a five minute routine too.

DERYA: Will you do your ukulele joke?

FARIAS: No, I cut that one out.

DERYA: Why Farias? I thought it was your funniest joke.

FARIAS: No, I can't deal with a bar-load of people looking at me with dead fish eyes for thirty seconds again.

DERYA: I laughed at it.

FARIAS: You were the only person.

DERYA: Okay tell it to me then, I like it.

FARIAS: Okay, so it goes like this:

DERYA giggles through the joke.

FARIAS: *(Takes out the mic from their skirt pocket, acting FARIAS' stage persona)* So, you know, in New Stockholm we have these lovely people who think that the extreme-right wing can be lulled to sleep if you just be nice to them and listen to them and try to understand their point of view and – like – negotiate on other people's rights with them since those other people can't be in that room with you because – you know – they are either killed, or in jail, or couldn't pass the border. And we all know giving an empathetic ear to the extreme-right has always been a

historically successful tactic that worked to solve systemic injustices. So, a couple of days ago I just happened to be talking to a lovely person like that, who had a ukulele in their hands and I asked if they were playing somewhere. And they told me that they were going to this free-speech debate organized by the alt-right, which is the new hot brand of fascism, so that they could voice their liberal opinions in a civilized manner and sing love songs with their ukulele and spread the love that's so missing in the world. By the way each ticket to the event cost \$150. I was like "so um, do you get that fascism is when an extreme right wing group hijacks democracy to kill many people?". And they are like, "this is why I'm going to spread love, not hate". *(Beat)* Like, I was scared for this person's well-being. Because I think if you have a ukulele in your hands and you need to deal with a fascist there is only one way to do it: to hit them with the ukulele!²²

NARRATOR 3 takes the mic from FARIAS. NARRATOR 3 puts it in their own pocket.

DERYA: *(Laughing)* I love that!

FARIAS: Well, I can't do it anymore, people don't receive it well.

DERYA: In New Stockholm. You don't know about other places. I think my friends at home would laugh for days at this joke.

NARRATOR 3: *(Emeritus Professor comes back for a moment)* Space holds the identity, identities do not exist prior to spaces that define the meaning of the bodies. This becomes particularly clear in a medium like stand-up. Farias, as a kind, whimsy and slightly naïve queer boy, does not naturally fit into the space of the black shirts. And he perceives himself as an overall failure whenever he *(air quotes)* "bombs". He feels like the audience have seen behind the façade and found a phony.

FARIAS: I don't know. It doesn't work here.

NARRATOR 3: On the other hand Derya have seen behind the façade, and though that the real deal was funnier than the pose. If New Stockholm couldn't take it, it was because the city was phony.

DERYA: How did you write this joke anyways? When you obviously knew it wouldn't work well with the self-righteous culture here?

FARIAS: I wrote it after the Charlottesville march of the white nationalists, based on a real encounter I had. It got mild laughter in the first few trials. But then the rise of the ultra-right as a reality was somehow completely forgotten, or worse, people got used to it and got back to their business of spreading *love*.

²² Loizou, Lucas. (Performer). (2017, January 2). *Stand Up, Up And Comers 2*. Live performance in The Rivoli 334 Queen Street West, Toronto.

NARRATOR 3: (*Overblown, enthusiastic advertising voice*) Fascism is the legitimate child of capitalism and democracy. Capitalism allows people to get extremely atomized and then democracy allows the atomized majority to unite under the crafted propaganda of a fictional victimhood. Blackshirts rallying the streets with torches do it with a motivation worse than hate. They do it to feel connected to a group that devours the burdens of their free will and frees them from all the responsibilities of citizenship through collective obedience. It is a religious ecstasy. You can try it by choice at the front rows of the movement! Or we can force you into it once it gains enough momentum!

DERYA: I don't understand the need of getting constant audience approval through laughter. I think keeping the collective curiosity of the audience is a good enough approval.

FARIAS: But does that apply to stand-up?

DERYA: Yeah, why not? In Turkey some really good stand-up comics take their time with storytelling and then they just start juggling punchlines. I think it comes from the meddah tradition.

FARIAS: Meddah?

DERYA: Yeah... A traditional one-man show.

FARIAS: I'm intrigued?

DERYA: Well, until a century ago there were these performers who went to coffee shops and performed elaborate comedic stories for the male clientele. The key was to always keep the audience curious. They would use a stick and a handkerchief as props, and tell a story through embodying a variety of characters. And you know, when a punchline comes after so much build-up and then really lands, it holds the power of a cathartic roar of laughter. When modern comics land like this, people in Turkey would actually start using their lines like idioms to refer to the entire patterns of absurdity described in their stories.

FARIAS: I wish I could coin an idiom too.

DERYA: But you just did! That is my point! "Hit them with the ukulele" is a great idiom and I think I will use it from now on.

FARIAS: (*Giggling*) I must say, you're an academic to your teeth.

DERYA laughs.

DERYA: Did I tell you that through my entire first year in New Stockholm the one thing

that I missed most was the jokes. When I lost the common ground of language and personal history, and because of that couldn't land a joke anymore, I realized what a funny person I used to be.

FARIAS: You're still funny. You tell stories like my grandmother.

DERYA: That is such a Farias compliment.

FARIAS: Why? She is by far the funniest person I know and she speaks with a thick accent and very limited vocabulary.

DERYA: Oh Farias... How is that supposed to make me feel good in a day like this?

FARIAS: No, that's not how I meant it! I just –

DERYA: Okay, okay... I do accept it as a compliment my lovely little boy. *(Beat)* Oh, speaking of little boys, I just remembered, I've got something for you. I found my favorite children's book, *The Little Black Fish*, in a bookshop today while I was trying to hide from life.

DERYA takes out the book The Little Black Fish by Samad Behrangi²³ from their skirt pocket and gives it to FARIAS.

FARIAS: Ah wow! This looks so beautiful.

DERYA: It is a great book. I grew up with it.

FARIAS: I love that. *(Beat)* You know what? We should write a children's book together.

DERYA: Yes! And we can make ourselves into animals so it would be the friendship between two unlikely animals! What animal would you like to be?

FARIAS: Hmm... I always liked the platypus a lot!

DERYA: *(Super excited)* You won't believe it but I was thinking that for you just now. I bite my tongue not to shout it out because I feel like I always ask questions to you and then answer them myself.

FARIAS: *(Giggling uncontrollably)* That is so true!

DERYA: What animal do you think I would be?

FARIAS: A raven.

²³ Behrangi, Samad. (2019). *The Little Black Fish* (F. Mesqali, Trans., A. Rassi, Illus.). Tiny Owl Publishing.

DERYA: I like that. It is a black and uncanny bird.

FARIAS: Yes, and it flies, lives strong and shines blue under the sun. Friendship of a platypus and a raven!

DERYA : And the surtitle would be: “the only common thing they had, was their beaks”.

FARIAS: *(Laughing)* That’s beautiful! Oh that brings another thing to my mind. I’ve got something for you too, on my way here. To cheer you up.

FARIAS unzips a pocket and takes out a toy sail boat and gives it to DERYA. At the same time NARRATOR 3 takes a harmonica from their pocket and plays along with the dialogue’s pace and cheekiness, except the bits where they intervene in the dialogue.

DERYA: *(Taking the toy sail boat)* A boat? For me? From the prettiest boy on the planet?

FARIAS: *(Touched)* Thank you, that’s so sweet of you.

DERYA: *(Playing hurt)* You are not believing me. You never believe me when I tell the truth. It is so mean. You are being so mean to me.

FARIAS: I’m not, you are just biased.

DERYA: My heart goes kip kip kip bup when you do like this.

FARIAS: *(Giggling)* Oh, I’m so sorry missy for the bup part. But really, you always overestimate me.

DERYA: *(Protesting, exaggerated)* No. You are the one underestimating yourself! I’m objective. I’m as objective as a straight, able-bodied, upper-middle class 19th century European white man. You know, like the ones we still study objectively in objective academia.

FARIAS: That was before the post-modern turn!

DERYA: Oh yeah, okay. So I’m as objective as a white, upper middle class, North American, Anglophone woman studying performance in New York at the dawn of the magnificent 21st century. How is that? You know the kind who is like:

NARRATOR 3: *(Acting a Becky type)* My opinions are facts because that’s what feminism is for me. Because what is feminism if it is not all about me? And my emotions deserve to be published by big academic publishers because I kissed a girl once and therefore I’m queer and marginalized. I voted for Hillary because

she's a woman just like Thatcher, and because feminism is all about bombing the Middle East.

FARIAS: (*Whistling*) Wow! But also, yikes! I want to see you on a stage sometimes.

NARRATOR 3: Oh, she won't be allowed on stage here, she has an accent. No theatre would ever accept her under the iron rule of mid-Atlantic English in New Stockholm.

DERYA: Stage? No, thanks. But I can't stop now, I'm sorry:

NARRATOR 3: (*Continuing the act*) I also feel very entitled to appropriating mental health discourse to keep me immune to criticism. For example as a feminist I get very uncomfortable when a non-white woman starts talking about things beyond what I can grasp with my immediate life experiences and therefore makes me feel ignorant. This is exactly what I call being triggered and that's why I can't talk to immigrants or people of color who don't constantly reassure me that I'm doing well. If they fail to reassure me every single second, I alienate them from all the university spaces that *I* control, and it is *definitely not* because I'm a racist since I'm not a white man. Also how can *I* be a racist, I'm vegan! I actually really like diversity when it is all there to pamper me. But I just don't like conflict, you know, so I like spaces that are conflict-free which coincidentally happen to be more white: like myself. Because as a white lady *my* claim to *my* victimhood is *my* most powerful weapon against non-white people and I find it very *empowering* to exercise my abilities.

DERYA: Now that is objective, don't you think? People get objective diplomas and awards like that.

FARIAS starts an exaggerated applause in slow-motion.

FARIAS: Brava! Brava! I love the way you bite.

DERYA: Therefore, my pretty boy... Are you denying my objectivity? Oh my god! That is so racist! And sexist! You are objectively the prettiest boy who ever lived and will ever live because I say so!

Pause. NARRATOR 3 puts away the harmonica.

FARIAS: You've become so versatile about reading the social codes of New Stockholm over the years.

DERYA: I was bullied by these people and their clean and ironed rhetoric until I learned to mock them. But it was a rough education.

FARIAS: You should have spoken to the racists who bullied you in the URNS like this.

That would have shut them up.

NARRATOR 3: Derya smiled and let this ignorant comment pass because she knew that Farias was going to grow up and mature, and become an intellectual who can read life like an open book; and then, she knew he would understand.

DERYA: Well, it took time for me to learn the posture and the vocabulary that goes with it, remember? Let alone the labour of becoming fluent enough in it to subvert it from within.

NARRATOR 3: You see, she didn't even know that she was dealing with institutional racism for so long. For many years she thought there was just a pile of unlucky coincidences and weird interactions finding her. It took years to read the pattern. Despite her tough looks, she was naïve enough to think that she was a human being, and the university was a place to discuss and develop ideas for a better world.

FARIAS: What will you do now?

DERYA: (*Losing all the previous playfulness*) I don't know. I'm questioning all my life choices. I never felt so isolated, so attacked from every direction.

FARIAS: You're not isolated. You have me.

NARRATOR 3: For a long time she was actually stupid enough to think that maybe it was all going weird, if not just simply wrong, because of the faculty's and graduate students' sincere and innocent incapability and ignorance; and she thought she could educate them. She continued thinking that even when she had witnessed many international students *choosing* to quit before graduating in her short years in the URNS. But there is a hard lesson every educator learns at a certain point in their career: *people who choose not to learn cannot be educated*.

DERYA: (*Playing with the toy boat*) Some people walk away even from Omelas²⁴, you know. If they are not eternally trapped. I'm so scared of getting trapped here, in this liberally disengaged mindset that full-frontally pathologizes who I am. They pressure me in every imaginable way to make me assimilate completely. And I won't. Full stop.

FARIAS: I know what you are saying is all true...

DERYA stops playing with the toy boat.

DERYA: But?

FARIAS: But – like... Everyone appreciates you so much and looks up to you, Derya.

²⁴ Le Guin, Ursula Kroeber. (1993). *The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas*. Creative Education.

Like you know, there are all these people who constantly tell you how much they have learned from you and how they find you so smart and inspiring and interesting and –

DERYA: (*Exploding*) Interesting! Fuck interesting! Have they all been waiting for me to learn this shit when they could access the entire world's libraries with their finger tips like no one in my country? And how many rounds does it take to learn something? Why am I constantly put in situations where I have to explain the same shit again and again to the same people in a Fucking Prestigious Western University, where people are supposed to be invested in deep thinking? They didn't learn anything from me.

FARIAS: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

NARRATOR 3: (*To Farias*) There are tenure track professors who are scared of her, Farias. As if she is a wild animal. Professors you know. Professors who love you. Professors you will get recommendation letters from. (*Beat*) And eventually Farias, when it is not cool to quote her anymore in intellectual conversations to pass as well read and well lived, you will come to terms with the fact that you were scared of her all along too. Perhaps you will even accuse her of bullying you, because of the discomfort she causes, which will soon get beyond digestion. Only then, her demand for a fundamental paradigm shift will be visible to you; like a tsunami wave. But we are not there yet.

DERYA: (*Suddenly softer*) You don't even understand why I love you so much, do you? Like why not anyone else but you? Even when my exotic love is in high demand?

FARIAS: I don't know...

DERYA: Because you are *the only* person who is actually learning, Farias. I have never repeated anything I told you a *second* time.

FARIAS: That's so nice...

DERYA: You are not believing me again. (*Playing hurt*) So mean.

NARRATOR 3: Kip kip kip bup.

FARIAS: I know it means nothing, but I'm really sorry. I just don't want you to feel defeated. Because you are not. Objectively not. White man objectivity.

DERYA: (*Laughing*) My silly boy.

FARIAS: I still wish it wasn't like this.

DERYA: I know, but I can't anymore... They are all collectively trying to distort my

reality, Farias. Like, they are trying to make me into things that I'm not by forcing narratives onto me. I'm not the exiled intellectual welcomed into the loving embrace of the colonial first world, I'm not the emancipated third world woman with the magical touch of first world feminism, I'm not the closeted lesbian who comes out through the awakening that blossoms from stepping into the sacred lands of the enlightened West, I'm not the hardworking immigrant who will eventually achieve the North American suburban dream, I'm not the eternally grateful refugee, I'm not the queen prophet from the magnificent and sensual East who will guide these materialistic lost souls into their spiritual enlightenment, I'm not - I'm not - I'm not - anything they want me to be. And I can't deal with it anymore. Especially not in the university, the place that I fought so hard to come to... so that I could stay critical...

NARRATOR 3 pulls a book off the shelf, "Dhalgren", opens a marked page and reads:

NARRATOR 3: Quote from a book read years later:

"I'm not a poet.

I'm not a hero.

But sometimes I think these people will distort reality in any way to make me one.

And sometimes I think reality will distort me any way to make me appear one – but that's insanity, isn't it? And I don't want to be crazy again.

I don't." ²⁵

FARIAS: Where would you go?

DERYA: I don't know yet. I want New York, maybe Montreal for a little while. At this point, anything but New Stockholm. They opened a cavity in my heart here. If I stay it will grow and I will die.

FARIAS: Then what?

DERYA: Time will tell.

NARRATOR 3 pulls another book out of the shelf, "Lands of Glass", opens a marked page and reads:

NARRATOR 3: Quote from a book read years before:

"Some things happen like questions. A minute goes by, or years, and then life replies." ²⁶

FARIAS: I will miss you, but it will be okay. And you will be better.

DERYA: Stay with me. I will make a clean bed for you.

²⁵ *Dhalgren*, Samuel R. Delany pg. 712-713.

²⁶ *Lands of Glass*, Alessandro Baricco pg 204.

DERYA takes off two bed sheets from the picnic basket, spreads it down, sends a kiss to FARIAS and lies down on one of them.

FARIAS: Have sweet dreams! And don't let the bed bugs bite!

DERYA laughs. FARIAS sits on the other bed, watching DERYA.

NARRATOR 3: How many such sleeps they went through like this. Farias towering over Derya, keeping her nightmares away.

FARIAS: Do you want me to sing your lullaby about the little sail boat and the fisherman?

DERYA: Yes.

FARIAS takes the toy sail boat from DERYA's side and starts playing with it.

NARRATOR 3: She was dealing with endless housing problems in the most bullshit expensive city in the world with landlords racially profiling their tenants and so on... Finally two weeks after another emergency move out, her body gave up and she collapsed. An all-night-long emergency.

FARIAS: I only remember the wave sounds of the melody: fishi fishi fishi fish....

DERYA: Fhish fhish the fisherman goes -

FARIAS: Ah! Yes!

*Fhish fhish the fisherman goes
Hop hop the fisherman's heart goes
He has a cup full of pastries at home
My baby will eat it and grow
Tipish tipish she will walk
Fhish fhish the fisherman goes*

*Let's go to the fisherman
Let's ride in his boat
Let's journey through the seas
Let's then come back home
And eat the fish we got
Aaay aaay aaay ay!
Pish pish pish pish²⁷*

NARRATOR 3: She vomited all night and begged for water even though nurses told her

²⁷ Translated from a real Turkish lullaby named "Fış Fış Kayıkçı".

that she shouldn't be given water. Her lips turned purple and her hands turned into stone.

FARIAS: (*Murmuring*) Fishi fishi fishi... Kip kip kip bup...

DERYA slowly sits up.

NARRATOR 3: He wasn't there. She told him later.

DERYA: And what would you do with this knowledge, Farias?

FARIAS: What knowledge?

DERYA: The knowledge that the people who listen to you, do not listen to me; the people who engage with you, do not engage with me; and the people who can let you be, can't let me be.

FARIAS: I don't know. I guess I will try to speak to those people. I will try to make space. I will hold space for you.

DERYA laughs.

FARIAS: What?

DERYA : So you will save me? Oh, that is very sweet.

FARIAS: I didn't say that.

DERYA: Oh really? So what did you say?

FARIAS: I don't know, I just...

DERYA: You just?

FARIAS: Why are you attacking me?!

DERYA: How am I attacking you?

FARIAS: Like, what do you want me to do? I don't get it.

DERYA: Nothing. You already did a lot. More than anyone else.

FARIAS: But obviously it's not enough.

DERYA: No. It is not enough.

FARIAS: I'm doing my best, Derya.

DERYA: *(Calmly)* I did more than my best to be this intimate with your life, Farias. I learned your language, I crossed borders in humiliation, dealt with horrible living conditions and took fights with institutions way bigger than me so that I could be here and speak to you.

FARIAS: Well, obviously I can't live up to that!

DERYA: Stop this sass! I'm not attacking you. But yes, I'm angry. And yes again, you have the potential to live up to that, Farias. I know it. But you can't do it by *holding space for me* in a hostile environment if you don't question why that environment is hostile to my presence to begin with.

FARIAS: So I should fight alongside you?

DERYA: Well, if you define your fight within the limits of New Stockholm, I can't be by your side. I genuinely don't care about New Stockholm, just the way they don't care about me.

FARIAS: This is the only place I know.

DERYA: And you are scared of the rest of world?

FARIAS: Maybe.

DERYA: Are you scared of me?

FARIAS: No, of course not.

A painfully stretched pause.

DERYA: But I'm from what you don't know. So maybe you are scared of me too?

FARIAS: Don't bend my words. I said no.

DERYA: Why don't you just leave me? I make life difficult for you. And life is supposed to be easy, right? That's what they teach you here.

FARIAS: I won't leave you.

DERYA: Why?

FARIAS: Why do you say things like this?

DERYA: *(Softly)* Because I'm better at handling pain alone.

NARRATOR 3: “I think, therefore I am” once wrote Descartes. Oh, so very Western.
The lands that Derya came from have taught her differently: “I feel pain, therefore I am”.

Pause.

FARIAS: I’m worried about you, Derya.

DERYA: Why?

FARIAS: You are just so full of rage all the time, and it makes you more proud, and you shut yourself away.

DERYA: (*Disgusted*) And you think I should negotiate on my pride to exist?

FARIAS: I said no such thing.

DERYA: What did you say then Farias? You never say anything you think or feel so I’m left to guess or fill in the gaps.

FARIAS: I never say anything I feel?

DERYA: Unless if it is mild and pleasant, no.

FARIAS: Wow, such a New Stockholmer I am.

DERYA: Yes. It is exactly this passive aggression that gets me.

FARIAS: Okay, stop! I know I’m not perfect, but I’m not your enemy.

NARRATOR 3: At this point it is important to explain something. You might have been watching this play identifying with Farias, believing that you are *exactly* like him, which is perhaps a comfortable lie to cling to. To make it unapologetically clear: no, you can’t be Farias if up to this point in the play you thought you were better than him.

DERYA: (*Suddenly sad*) I do injustice to you, don’t I? You are not like them (*showing the audience*), but I treat you like one.

FARIAS: Sometimes I just feel like you are so condescending to me.

DERYA is genuinely surprised for a moment and then they recollect themselves.

Pause.

DERYA: That; I don't do, Farias. That is the hegemonic voice of New Stockholm talking to you from the back of your mind and telling you that no one can ever break free from this post-apocalyptic city and a person like me can at best only be tolerated and held space for when they are nice. *(Getting angry)* And what if I can't be nice, Farias? What happens then in your plan of holding space for me? Everyone likes it when they offer space to me but there is suddenly a problem when I claim that space.

FARIAS: *(Getting angry)* This is what I mean. There is a lot of grudge there that has been stewing, eh? This is who I am, Derya.

DERYA: No. This is how you have been conditioned. Look Farias, I don't want you to stay here either. They will never appreciate you here. This city is not built for open-hearted people like you. You will be wasted here. And I'm the only person who can tell you that. Because, fuck yeah, I know better.

NARRATOR 3 pulls another book out of the shelf, "Changing Planes", and talks to the audience while flipping through the pages, sometimes addressing the audience directly:

NARRATOR 3: In the land of Gy and among its people, Gyr, winged individuals are seen as cursed in the worst-case scenario and are killed in ritual sacrifice, or seen as crippled and ill in the best-case scenario. If they are not killed, they are left to make a choice. If they choose to fly, they have to risk death in each and every flight. If they choose not to fly, they tie their wings with something like a straightjacket. Then they can have families and careers and safety and their society will tolerate them *politely*.

DERYA unzips a pocket and takes out the quill pen from the previous scene from one of their skirt pockets. DERYA gives the quill pen to FARIAS. DERYA and FARIAS put the picnic basket and the bed sheets to side of the stage.

Act 2 Scene 4: New York

NARRATOR 3 comes down from the balcony carrying the book "Changing Planes". FARIAS takes off the tie and DERYA takes off the red glasses, which turns them into NARRATOR 2 and 1 consecutively. NARRATOR 3 puts the book, "Changing Planes", in one of NARRATOR 2's pockets. NARRATOR 2 gives the tie to NARRATOR 1, which makes them FARIAS; and NARRATOR 1 gives the glasses to NARRATOR 3, which makes them DERYA. NARRATOR 3 turns off the NEW STOCKHOLM neon light and turns on the NEW YORK neon light and then puts Too Many Zooz's "Havana Banana" on the gramophone. NARRATOR 2 takes out a file from their skirt pockets and hands it to FARIAS.

NARRATOR 2: They are in New York now, cat-sitting for a common friend they know

from the Berlin trip. The cat's name is Marcel, an obese fluff ball that likes flopping around. His name is understood by Marcel's friends as either referring to Marcel Proust or Marcel Marceau, depending on what kind of person they are.

NARRATOR 2 puts a slide in the projector: it is the New York subway map. They all hold the subway straps therefore they are in a subway train together. DERYA takes out "Zihin Kuşları" (Eng: Birds of the Mind) by Leyla Erbil and flips through it absent-mindedly.

FARIAS: *(Checking the file)* Wait! Do we have the scan of my BA transcript?

DERYA closes the file FARIAS is going through.

DERYA: Yes-we-do! We checked it four times. We will post the application from here again now. We found a post office that works for late hours, managed to print all the documents, and double checked the application fee with the international money transfer office. It is all fine!

FARIAS: It was wise of you not to delete all the documents from your USB. *(Beat)* I just can't believe we've done this back at home a week ago and here and I'm suddenly informed that because of this minor –minor! – problem we now have to do everything again!

DERYA: It-is-o-kay. I'm just glad we found out about this before the deadline. It will all be done soon.

FARIAS: I'm sorry, I've been frantic all morning.

DERYA: *(Compassionately)* Don't worry about it. I had a breakdown the day before I left to study in New Stockholm.

FARIAS: You never told me that.

DERYA: I didn't want to leave İstanbul. Despite all the damage, I'm still grateful to my past self that I did take that plane and come to this side of the world and found you. You will find people just the way I found you when you hit the road. This is a chain reaction. One by one we will find the right people to change the world.

FARIAS: Thank you, friend.

DERYA: But?

FARIAS: But I'm too scared.

DERYA: I was scared too! Why don't you believe it?

FARIAS: Yeah... Okay... (*Picking hair off themselves, disgusted*) Yikes! We have Marcel's hair all over us. He is too affectionate, there are literally performative remains of his acts of love everywhere now.

DERYA: (*Closing the book*) Yaaa! But isn't he cute? Such a sweet giant baby.

FARIAS: Don't get so soft. He emotionally manipulates his humans with his topsy-turvy behavior to be fed more. Like what is that cry-moan sound that he does?

DERYA: (*In love*) I know... And he tries to catch the ants on the counter (*mimicking Marcel*) like piti piti piti! And then when he gets frustrated it becomes like Pit! Pit!

FARIAS shakes their head as to say "it's hopeless".

FARIAS: You should write an academic paper about how Marcel's interactions with ants situates new fields of belonging as a site of resistance.

DERYA: I don't think anyone needs that trivia other than white North American academics themselves.

FARIAS: Did I tell you that I actually listened to a twenty minute presentation in a graduate conference in URNS about queering the dramaturgies of peekaboo?

DERYA: What is peekaboo?

FARIAS does the peekaboo. DERYA bursts out laughing.

DERYA: See! It is a proof that you will be better than most of the graduate students! (*Beat*) My baby, I love you so much.

FARIAS: Thank you, I'm fond of you too.

DERYA punches FARIAS lightly.

FARIAS: Aw! Why are you hurting me?

*DERYA shakes their head as to say "it's hopeless".
DERYA goes back to the book.*

FARIAS: What's the book that you have?

DERYA: Leyla Erbil's essays. It's called something like "Birds of the Mind" in Turkish. She cuts so deep.

NARRATOR 2: Leyla Erbil was a Marxist who got into serious debates with the

orthodoxy of Marxism in Turkey in the second half of 20th century. And she was there in 1977 when the bloody First of May happened at Taksim Square.

DERYA: She died in 2013, a month after the Gezi Uprising started at Taksim Square, at the end of a long illness and an even longer journey of life. I feel like she lived to see it, almost as if she knew it was coming. *(Beat)* One of her essays here actually has a passage that reminds me of our cat host Marcel.

FARIAS: Yeah? How so?

DERYA: In this particular piece she tells the story of how she looked for the Vinteuil's Sonata Andante for decades in music shops all around Europe whenever she travelled.

NARRATOR 2: Vinteuil's Sonata is a ghost music piece that appears in *In Search of Lost Time*, accompanying the love story of Odette and Swann.

DERYA: She poetically elaborates on what Proust has done to her as a writer: how he managed to make the desire of his character, which is Swann's desire to find the Vinteuil's Sonata, the decades long desire of his reader: Leyla Erbil. This exchange of desire happened over the barriers of lifetimes, languages and geographies. Now if this is not magic, I don't know what it is.

NARRATOR 2: Leyla Erbil also named her cat after Vinteuil too²⁸.

FARIAS: And that is what you want to do, right? In your art I mean. You want your desire to pass through and get to other people and become their desire.

DERYA: Yes. That is what I want.

NARRATOR 2: On good days she believes that this can happen. That she can be read like Proust all around the world and speak to the hearts of people like him and implant seeds of her own desire. On bad days she realizes that Leyla Erbil is not read all around the world like Proust because of the language that she wrote in, because of the country she was born in, and because she was a woman; and then she calculates this constructed reality of her circumstances and concludes that she won't ever be heard.

FARIAS: What do you want to tell them? The world I mean?

DERYA: I want to say that beauty is sometimes a violent and difficult experience that would crack you open. And from those cracks light will come in. And I want to tell them beauty can never contradict freedom or justice and if it does it can't be beautiful. It can at most be decoration or obsession or hunger for structure. But

²⁸ *Zihin Kuşları*, Leyla Erbil, pg 36.

sometimes I feel like there are too many layers of power structures that won't let me speak to people who might listen.

FARIAS: It is of utmost importance that you continue trying. You said it yourself once, remember? You owe it to the young women that you grew up with in Turkey who entrusted their voices and stories to you. You can make the world listen.

DERYA: I wish I could believe that too.

FARIAS: Well, you have an impact on people that I haven't seen anyone have.

DERYA: Yeah, I can scare the authorities. I learned how to do it on the way. But that's not really a skill that opens doors. It's just a survival thing, it reminds me that my dignity is not negotiable.

FARIAS: No, not just that. Like, people respect you and remember you. Even the people who just passed through your life for a brief time.

DERYA: *(Jokingly)* Oh, yeah? Like who?

DERYA puts the book "Zihin Kuşları" back to their skirt pocket.

FARIAS: Like my friends and the people who met you in the URNS or... *(Suddenly remembering something)* or your brief flirts; like David.

DERYA: *(Confused)* David who?

FARIAS: The himbo-demic.

DERYA: What?

FARIAS: Oh, don't you know? It means the privileged white boy in a Prestigious Western University who easily gets good grades and speaks in ambiguous terms and constantly feels the need of playing devil's advocate²⁹. You know, just for the sake of debate. A himbo-demic. *(Exhausting the explanation)* Some synonyms of himbo-demic include but are not limited to Philansopher, Fuckboi Laureate, and Thirst-trapographer.

DERYA: I'm overdosed with the accuracy of this definition. And I definetly know that type!

FARIAS: Ditto! So it's the himbo-demic David.

²⁹ Lucas Loizou. (2016, September 9). Stranded's Frosh Guide to the Fuckboi-demic in First-Year Lectures. Retrieved October 27, 2019, from the Strand website: <https://thestrand.ca/strandeds-frosh-guide-to-the-fuckboi-demic-in-first-year-lectures/>

DERYA: (*Remembering*) Oh, wow. I haven't seen him for a while.

FARIAS: Well I saw him at an event.

DERYA: And?

FARIAS: Hmm, I thought you weren't interested.

DERYA starts a tickling attack on FARIAS.

FARIAS: Okay! Okay! (*Derya stops*) So, we were talking and he just got awkward when your name came up and then told me to say hi to you.

DERYA: Wow... I thought he never wanted to see me again after his fragile ego was bruised.

FARIAS: You know what? If you ever want to do a stand up routine, you totally have all the material in the world. And the sense of humor to go with it.

DERYA: Yeah, only thing I need now is an audience who can relate to me, but we both know that is impossible.

FARIAS: What are you talking about? I relate to you.

DERYA: Good to know that I have a crowd.

FARIAS: Well, I contain multitudes.³⁰ (*Beat*) But you always say that the essence of any performance lies in having one person who is consciously performing and one person watching that performance.

DERYA: Damn! (*Beat.*) Mashallah! (*Beat*) Why do you always remember everything I say?

FARIAS: So would you perform a stand up joke for me?

DERYA: No.

NARRATOR 2: But she did.

*NARRATOR 2 snaps their fingers and points at DERYA.
DERYA hesitates but then takes out a mic from their skirt pocket, and performs to FARIAS. FARIAS cheers through the joke by miming playing a drum roll, and highlights the punchlines by hitting an imaginary crash cymbal.*

³⁰ “(I am large, I contain multitudes.)”

Source: Whitman, Walt. (2020). “Song Of Myself”. In *Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, The Original 1855 Edition*. Independently published. Pg 44.

DERYA: Hello people! Are we having fun? Yes? No? Good good, I love it when people are super scared to answer when I try to engage with them. I got to learn about this silent treatment audience attitude when I got here. Along with many weird things I learned about you, I also discovered some very weird things about myself. For example when I first came to New Stockholm, I developed this perverse fetish for these white, skinny, flat-assed, blond men who have an eternal claim to innocence. I know, I know, it is bad. But I couldn't stop it; mediocrity is just so exotic to me, you know? I don't know, maybe it is because I was exposed to this type without anyone else around to reality-check with, since I'm an academic and university is their man-cave. I swear, I've caught one peeing in the corners of his cubicle in the library to mark his territories. I think I was enamored because this was just a very different kind of toxic masculinity from what I was used to; they read Shakespeare to you, cry to you about their mommy issues that are the root of their casual misogyny, and they try to substitute you - the Oriental goddess - for the substances that they outsource their confidence with. If you give them any attention, they think you're their salvation. But what anyone from here would immediately know, I had to learn: in the end these cold-blooded lizards settle with other skinny blondes to have more Aryan kids. Which is also pretty convenient: since there's no salvation, I don't want the responsibility of accidentally crushing someone's souls.

FARIAS whistles for DERYA.

DERYA gives the mic to FARIAS. FARIAS puts it in one of their skirt pockets.

FARIAS: You know what? I just think that you should try women because I don't think any man is good enough for you.

DERYA: Oh yeah, because my interactions with white women were amazing.

FARIAS: There are women of color.

DERYA: I don't like running with identity categories. You know that some of my interactions with second generation queer women of color were pretty bad too.

FARIAS: Oh, come on!

DERYA: *(Playful)* Who is this beautiful queer woman of color you're imagining for me? Is it the one who tried to help me get integrated into the *(air quotes)* "civilized" world throughout our friendship?

FARIAS: No! I was just saying that there are other people who have been through similar experiences, and therefore they can understand.

DERYA: No one is a *(air quotes)* "natural" ally to anyone if they are not critically

thinking. Even some of the most marginalized people function with a deep belief in the meritocracy myth of capitalism, and therefore internalize white supremacy.

FARIAS: (*Teasing*) To play devil's advocate, I must ask, how so?

DERYA: Oh, you want an example? Condoleeza Rice, the first black woman to become US Secretary of State, shamelessly lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and approved crimes against humanity committed by the US army³¹.

FARIAS: Come on! That's extreme. (*Posey, knowing all*) You know, it is an intellectual fallacy to pull out the Nazi card.

DERYA: Never imagine fascism as a far away entity as long as we live under capitalism. As a wise man once said, you should always have your ukulele to hit them with.

FARIAS laughs.

FARIAS: But I'm talking about New Stockholm, and about our lives and people we know. Small scale, you know?

DERYA: Okay, you want daily examples from my New Stockholm life? How about the time when a queer woman of color lectured me about people's right to practice their faith after I told her about the Sivas massacre where thirty-three artists were burned to death in the hotel they were staying in 1993? And the violence was carried out by agitated crowds of men after the Friday prayer! So, she clearly thought that lynching was a practice of faith in Islam, and didn't even realize how degrading that comment was to the religion that she claimed to be defending. And again she wasn't even aware of the fact that she was giving up on *the right of people to live* who didn't confirm to the state-approved culture. Again, without realizing she would have been killed under those circumstances too. All I'm saying is there is an overall problem with the culture here and there is no one untouched by it. And I'm just exhausted of explaining things to be able to exist.

FARIAS: You do have friends who are not like that, like people who are intellectuals. (*Beat*) Even sexy intellectuals!

DERYA facepalms FARIAS.

DERYA: (*Rolling eyes*) Yeah, *even* in New Stockholm there were some people that I could get along with. And I'm so happy I got to know them. But they are too little in number and too scattered. Thankfully, I will be leaving soon.

FARIAS: (*Serious*) I'm so happy that this PhD transfer has worked out.

DERYA: Me too. I just want to get over with PhD.

³¹ Coco Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, pg 19.

NARRATOR 2: PhD is like the teenagehood of academia. You are not a student but you are not an academic yet either; like a teenager who is not a child but also not an adult. Both get disgusting if they stretch too long.

FARIAS: New Stockholm truly hurt you.

DERYA: It damaged my faith in humanity, you know? My own country couldn't do that.

FARIAS: I still think you should try women though.

DERYA: (*Tickling FARIAS*) On the other hand, I think that you should just confess that you don't want to share me with any other man and that's where this obsession of yours comes from.

FARIAS: Me? Jealousy? Impossible! I'm an open-minded gay man in a respectful polyamorous relationship. Me and my polycule are way over human defects like jealousy.

DERYA: I don't know what that is, but just to refresh your memory, you were upset at me for a year after I showed another man a tiny bit of interest in your mighty presence.

FARIAS does the hang-loose gesture (also known as the shaka sign) while sticking their tongue. DERYA lightly slaps FARIAS' hand.

DERYA: (*Smiling*) So annoying.

FARIAS: Why, I thought you liked this joke in my routine.

DERYA: Which joke?

FARIAS takes out the mic from their skirt pocket. Now they are in their stand-up routine.

FARIAS: You know I had been working in the service industry part-time in winters and full-time in summers since I was fourteen. And over the years I needed to create certain strategies to get through conversations that I can't really handle but need to look like I'm interested in. So, the major problem I have in the work is in communicating with straight men and it is a lose-lose situation because it is bad if they assume that I'm straight and it is worse if they know that I'm gay. So in general it was pretty bad until I found this magic trick. So now whenever they are talking *at* me I tune down their voice in my head and look at them as if I'm listening and then go like: (*does the hang-loose gesture with an obnoxious grin accompanied with an eye roll*).³²

³² Loizou, Lucas. (Performer). (2017, January 2). *Stand Up, Up And Comers 2*. Live performance in The Rivoli 334 Queen Street West, Toronto.

FARIAS gives the mic back to DERYA. DERYA puts the mic in one of their skirt pockets. FARIAS holds the subway strap again.

DERYA: *(Laughing)* Oh yeah... I like that one. I like your service industry jokes.

PAUSE.

Derya goes back to their book, "Birds of the Mind".

FARIAS: *(Staring out of the windows)* You know, I really like this city.

DERYA: *(Without looking up)* You are made for cities like this.

FARIAS: What do you mean?

DERYA: *(Closing the book and patting their back lovingly)* You are not a small city – suburban person. You can't fit into New Stockholm.

FARIAS: *(Distanced and uneasy, shying from DERYA's patting)* Okay, okay...

DERYA stops and puts the book "Birds of the Mind" in their skirt pocket.

NARRATOR 2: Obviously not okay. The little voice of New Stockholm in the back of Farias's mind says *(seductively)*: "You will never be able to leave. How can you? You love me. I'm cozy and comfortable. Don't you want to repeat what you know everyday, till you die? You know refugees die on the way to reach my suburban shores. So how can you leave me, Farias?"

DERYA: What? What is this thing with your "okays"?

FARIAS: *(Playing dumb, matter-of-factly)* Okay is a word in English.

DERYA looks at him in exaggerated disbelief, not immediately buying the joke. FARIAS stretches the joke with the same act of dumbness:

FARIAS: You might not know this because many people don't; but the English language is so *alive* and *fluid* and *open to interpretations*, you know?

DERYA: Did I ever tell you how adorable you are when you try to mansplain things to me? *(Beat)* So, what is the deal?

FARIAS: *(Still playing dumb)* I don't know, I'm just – like – insecure and I feel like over yonder *(pointing at the audience)* everyone on the train is looking at us and then judging me like, "Oh, he's gay but he doesn't know it", and it is all because of you, because you are so cuddly!

DERYA: (*Giggling*) Over yonder? I love your cute hipster vocabulary.

FARIAS: (*Coyly*) Thank you. (*Pretending to be embarrassed, flirting with the audience*)
But they're still looking.

DERYA: (*Pulls them harshly but playfully, tickling and kissing*) What a delicate little princess you are! Oh, my baby cares so much about what everyone thinks!

FARIAS: (*Laughing*) Hey, enough, enough.

DERYA stops. Then DERYA makes another move to tickle FARIAS. FARIAS makes a "stop" gesture but smiles anyways.

FARIAS: You are too much.

DERYA : Yes, I am.

NARRATOR 2: Yes, she is. She's your manic pixie dream girl. The rumor is that every male artist needs one, even the gay ones.

DERYA: Don't escape the question, my love. Why do you get so uneasy when I say you don't belong to New Stockholm?

FARIAS: (*Serious*) I don't know. You are telling me things that no one really says in my life, and I don't know what to do with them. Like, I can't enjoy the comedy I enjoyed for so long because of you, because I see it in a different light now. I'm more aware of whose expense we are laughing at. (*Beat*) And then you say things like "Go! Leave your home and fly away and never return!". And I'm like: (*Ironic*) "Okay, I guess I have to leave my home, friends and family behind now, even though I don't want to..."

DERYA: I'm a supervillain coming from the hot barbaric seas, baby boy! And I feed on first world people's joy! (*Beat*) Look, I feel like you are underestimating your influence on me.

FARIAS: (*Acting delicate*) What influence? You never listen to me and then you shout at me.

DERYA: (*Laughing*) Come on! (*Softer – playing into FARIAS's delicacy*) Come on! I am consuming so much North American kitsch for you to keep up with your interests. I have queens I support in RuPaul's drag race now – I didn't know the concept just a year ago.

NARRATOR 2: You see in New Stockholm, particularly among its academia and arts, it

is very, very important to be linguistically and semiotically fluent to be a part of its inner culture. In a city that prides itself for its *iron-fisted multiculturalism*, if you don't speak right and act right, it is made sure that you understand you have no right to be there. Therefore, everything seemingly trivial that Farias taught to Derya and that she learned out of her love for him, got encoded in her survival codes of functioning in this very *precise* social life. Including RuPaul's drag race.

FARIAS: (*Continuing the act, not looking at DERYA*) And then you never let me go out and play and always make me study at home.

DERYA: (*Laughing and caressing FARIAS*) Why – are – you – so – silly? Oh my god! How am I forcing you? I thought you wanted to do these master's applications for the next year in Berlin. I'm just helping.

FARIAS: (*With the same act*) And then you cook all these yummy things for me so that I can't even take a break to get groceries.

DERYA: (*Laughing*) You happily eat everything I cook! And yes, you can spend that time to work on an application!

FARIAS: (*Serious*) Why do you love me so much?

DERYA takes out the mic from their skirt pocket, performs another joke for FARIAS.

DERYA: Hi again! Any couples in the house tonight? What's the deal with love, am I right? It's just so deliciously... self-serving. No, but really, no love can ever be completely selfless. From what I've seen, and I've seen far too much, every good intention you have for someone else, comes with a secret proposal about what's in it for you. (*Pointing at FARIAS*) This guy knows what I'm talking about! Sometimes our motivations are long-term and not just interpersonal, which might make them seem invisible, but they're always there. For example, recently with a small group of friends celebrating my birthday in a pub, we came up with a game: making toasts with twists. (*Toasting*) "To your amazing new five figure job as the artistic director of this established theatre company (*Beat*) that had multiple court cases of sexual assault! What an honour to be chosen as their scapegoat!" Or, "Congratulations for using your voice (*Beat*) to take up the space that doesn't belong to you while promoting yourself as an *ally!*" As it was getting closer to my turn – out of the panic of peer pressure – I examined myself to find a twist in me. I realized when I encourage my friends to continue their higher education; I do it out of *love*... by which I mean I do it out of the fear of loneliness. I don't want to live with the stigma of being a misfit behind the high walls of the university or in a prison all by myself. I want other people, many people, to be there, to be persecuted with me. Therefore when I help a friend with MA applications, I also help myself. So this is my toast with a twist: "To your Masters! (*Beat*) But also your PhD!"

FARIAS: You're so amazing! I love you... You will go far. Full stop. We will find other people and then we will work like a global mafia organization to take down the system³³. You go my kidney!

DERYA: Kidney?

FARIAS: Isn't *my kidney* a term of endearment in Turkish?

DERYA: (*Bursting out with laughter*) That's liver!

FARIAS: I was going to say liver! Shucks!

DERYA goes for another tickle attack on FARIAS.

NARRATOR 2: She was suicidal throughout the past year and he was always there. And that was exactly why she wanted him to leave and live in places where people can appreciate him for who he was instead of making him feel like he wasn't good enough, when in reality, he was just better than anyone else. And she knew it well, because she had been there and seen it more than once.

DERYA: (*Pointing to the audience*) Look at this city! You belong in places like these where people are truly allowed to be eccentric. Not to New Stockholm where Victorian values and essentialist racisms are inbreeding with the 21st century political correctness, and people are just bad drafts of Chekhov characters who can never move to a bigger city like *The Three Sisters* or watch their lives decay because of their own lack of agency like the rotting aristocrats of *The Cherry Orchard* or the mediocre artists whose lives are fully devoted to showing off to each other like the pathetic rural petite bourgeoisie of *The Seagull*.

FARIAS: That's genius! It almost makes sense now why Chekhov has become the only non-Anglophone person who is included in the Anglophone theatre canon.

DERYA: Along with Ibsen! Oh god! I dealt with so many Hedda Gablers in the theatre field of New Stockholm, it makes me sick to remember!

³³ Inspiration for this line came from an interview of Guillermo Gomez Pena:

Tess Thackara: What does La Pocha Nostra mean?

Guillermo Gómez-Peña: It's essentially a neologism. "Pocho/a" means a cultural traitor, or a cultural bastard. It's a term coined by Mexicans who never left Mexico to articulate the post-national Mexican experience. It's slightly derogative, but we have expropriated it as an act of empowerment. And "Nostra" comes from La Cosa Nostra, the Italian mafia. So you can translate it loosely as the cartel of the cultural traitors, or there is another more poetic translation that essentially means "our impurities."

Source: Gomez-Pena, Guillermo. (2011, April 13). *Interview with Guillermo Gomez-Pena* (Interview by Tess Thackara) [Transcript]. Art Practical. Retrieved August 6, 2020, from https://www.artpractical.com/feature/interview_with_guillermo_gomez-pena/

FARIAS: Another seamless and perfect explanation of a previously unexplainable North American social phenomena from the one and only remarkable Derya Göktuna!

DERYA pulls the mic from their skirt pockets and starts performing as a National Geographic-type reporter with an annoying nasal-voice.

DERYA: Of course, I'm a master class occidentalist. I can break down any kind of occidental habit for you. I know their language and I have lived among them even though it is dangerous since they are economically quite uncivilized and don't have the mental capacity to grasp ideas like social democracy, let alone higher concepts like communism or anarchism. North Americans are a primitive and peculiar species, and they generally lack the level of comprehension to understand that the world doesn't revolve around them, and politics is not a bunch of men in suits in a place called the parliament; but, some of them (*looking at FARIAS*) can still be promising. It is our duty as civilized Easterners to save them. (*Breaking the character, tickling FARIAS*) You just have to look for them with the skills that you made sharp in the East Mediterranean's salt and breeze.

DERYA puts the mic back in their pocket. Pause. DERYA stares out the windows of the subway train (towards the audience).

NARRATOR 2 takes out a book from their skirt pockets, "Changing Planes", opens a marked page and reads:

NARRATOR 2: Quote from a book read years before, and gifted to a friend years later:
"I don't understand the people who have wings and don't use them. [...] Wanting to stay down. Choosing not to fly. Wingless people can't help it, it's not their fault they're grounded. But if you have wings... Of course they may be afraid of wing failure. Wing failure doesn't happen if you don't fly. How can it? How can something fail that never worked? I suppose being safe is important to some people. [...] I don't know. You'd have to talk to one of them. I'm a flier."³⁴

NARRATOR 2 places the book "Changing Planes" at the front stage.

DERYA: I want to live here with you one day.

FARIAS: I would like that very much.

Act 2

Scene 5 A: "Changing Planes"

FARIAS takes of the tie and DERYA takes of the glasses, which make them NARRATOR 1 and 3 respectively. NARRATOR 1 gives the tie to NARRATOR 3, and NARRATOR 3 gives the glasses to NARRATOR 2. NARRATOR 3 puts on the

³⁴ Ursula Kroeber Le Guin, "Flyers of Gy" in *Changing Planes*, pg 209.

tie and becomes FARIAS. Throughout FARIAS' meddah performance NARRATOR 2 stands at the side holding the red glasses, without wearing them.

NARRATOR 1 turns off the NEW YORK light and turns on the "CHANGING PLANES" light.

FARIAS takes out an extending TV antenna and a handkerchief from one of their skirt pockets. They take their time extending the antenna as they walk between the audience seats. The following section is performed in maximum proximity to the audience.

FARIAS:

Once upon a time
Continents and oceans
Springs and winters away (*shows ocean – spring – winter with the movements of the handkerchief*)
Under the dome of the blue sky (*uses the stick to draw the dome upon the stage*)
A happy baby was born (*mimes holding the baby*)
Who was destined
To join the labour army (*military steps*)
At age fourteen
And damage his spine before twenty (*mimes an old man, the stick becomes a walking stick*)
So this is the story of a little boy (*mimes squeezing the cheek of a child*)
Called Farias.
His was a world where everything could be bought and sold
Where appearances consumed everything
He fell tired early in life
But he insisted to go through the motions
And trying to make the best with what he had going on in his life

The place he lived was zoned out by highways and suburbs
And everyone acted like empty shells of long dead humans (*mimes a zombie*)
But all of them kept going to work day in, day out (*as a zombie starts miming aggressive walking, checking his watch, cleaning his forehead with the handkerchief, trying to open the stick like an umbrella; and when they fail, starting to swear silently*)
Forgetting to live (*lies on the floor*)
Forgetting to die (*covers their own face with the handkerchief, lies dead*)

But one day (*raising from the floor*)
(*knots the handkerchief to the end of the stick*)
A princess walked into his life
From overseas (*uses the handkerchief to show a sailboat*)
To hold his hand

Through the stormy seas

From this point on the handkerchief becomes the puppet of the princess in the story.

In Berlin they met

And in Pergamon Museum she said

“This is all stolen from my father’s town”

And with a move of her hands,

Zeus Temple shook to its core,

The ground cracked open,

And the magma of the world was seen

Under the marble floor

She told him

“I will grant you your three wishes

And take something in return from you

But you won’t notice what it is

Until you lose it, and I tell you”

And “yes” said Farias

“I want my three wishes”

“I want to get out of where I was born”

“I want to see change”

“I want to be free of my insecurities and anxieties”

And the princess said

“I grant you your wishes”

“In five years I will find you again”

“And tell you what I have taken from you in return”

So the Zeus Temple stopped shaking

And the magma under the marble tiles disappeared

And she turned into the girl he knew

A friend with long black hair

That covers her waist like a cloak

And thought that it was all nothing but a daydream

And they have stayed friends

Over the mundane and not so mundane days

His life changed day after day

He crawled out of his old life

Left his insecurities and anxieties behind

Like old clothes that do not fit him anymore

And he has seen the change,

The kind that comes like tsunami waves

And withdraws like bitter tears

Five years have passed like this

Then the princess said
“Have you noticed what I have taken from you?”
“No” he said, “everything about me is where it’s supposed to be”
“I feel different, but nothing is missing”
And the Princess said,
“I took your innocence,”
Then she took a deep breath and said
“I will hold the memory of your innocence for you”
“In my heart”
“As you grow and mature”
“As silver dust covers your hair”
“You will have me as your origin”
“The keeper of your story”
“From where you came from”
“To where you’re going”
“Your journey.”

Act 2 Scene 5 B: İstanbul

NARRATOR 2 wears the red glasses and becomes DERYA.

NARRATOR 1 turns off the “CHANGING PLANES” light and turns on the İSTANBUL light.

NARRATOR 1: Some journeys change lives. And some say that each journey is actually an act of translation, since translation is the only path towards communication. This is why when Farias goes to İstanbul, he is greeted like a prince. Derya’s family and friends see exactly what Derya sees in him: a kind, respectful spirit who is potent enough to keep the darkest nightmares away. *(Beat)* At the moment they are crossing from Karaköy to Kadıköy on a ferry. It is a twenty-five-minute sea ride on the Bosphorus between Europe and Asia. Most İstanbulers do this cross-continental trip at least twice, every single day.

NARRATOR 1 moves the two swings from each side of the stage to center stage and then puts another record on the gramophone. Gaye Su Akyol’s song “Dünya Kaleska” [En: “World is a Calash”] starts playing³⁵. FARIAS and DERYA sit on the swings as NARRATOR 1 projects the first İstanbul photo on them: Maiden’s Tower with the view of Salacak at the background.

FARIAS: One of your friends was telling me that it is quite open-minded of your dad to allow me to stay at your family home. I wasn’t sure what to say.

³⁵Gaye Su Akyol – “Dünya Kaleska” [En: “World is a Calash”]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZS_jp4hZB4&list=RDbZS_jp4hZB4&start_radio=1

DERYA: (*Upset*) Who said that?

FARIAS gives a pause not wanting to say the person's name.

DERYA: That's quite inappropriate of that person, really. (*Beat*) Next time someone says something like that to you, you should tell them that my dad knows that I'm an *honorable* Turkish girl and therefore I only sleep with gay guys before marriage.

FARIAS looks at them in amusement for a few seconds and then bursts out laughing.

DERYA: (*Smiling*) You wouldn't have understood this joke when we first met.

FARIAS: Do you sometimes fear that I know you too well now?

DERYA: Sometimes.

FARIAS: So many of your friends were telling me stories of little things that you have done for them in moments of need.

DERYA: Yeah, your caring presence in my moment of need is something like karma I guess.

FARIAS: I mean, if being around to watch silly videos together is help, call me anytime.

DERYA kisses FARIAS.

NARRATOR 1: Decades ago, after years of friendship and letter exchanges across the Atlantic, perhaps similar conversations took place between James Baldwin and Engin Cezzar too; in a ferry, between two continents again, between two worlds again, in İstanbul.³⁶

DERYA: I had a good life here once. I had a nice home, a family that worshipped me, a gang of super cool friends and enough support to spend money on books, theatre, coffee, chocolate and beer. You know, the essentials. I had a good life as a *flaneuse* in this city.

FARIAS: It sounds like a dream.

DERYA: (*Sigh.*) It was.

Pause. They hold hands looking at the audience.

FARIAS: What are you thinking?

³⁶ Zaborowska, M. J. (2009). *James Baldwin's Turkish decade: Erotics of exile*. Durham: Duke University Press.

DERYA: A quote. “Going on means going for, and going for means turning back.”³⁷

FARIAS: It’s from Lao Tzu, right? I used to read him in my breaks when I was working at an amusement park years ago. *(Beat)* Oh God! It was my first job, and I was so anxious, like words are not enough to explain. I recently found a notebook from that time in my room, I have written down the questions that I had to ask customers in the check-out counter. *(Spelling the rest out like a first grader)* Do you need a bag? Do you need your receipt? Would you like to donate to this global capitalist charity that our company is supporting to get tax reductions?

DERYA: *(Stroking Farias’ hair compassionately)* My working class hero.

DERYA kisses FARIAS’s eyes.

Pause. They continue holding hands looking at the audience.

DERYA: You know a Turkish poet, Ece Ayhan, once wrote something along those lines. “One that goes too far East, because of geography, falls to West. The opposite of that, is also true...”³⁸

FARIAS: I love that...

Pause.

FARIAS: Did I tell you that I cried when I first read *The Little Black Fish*? He goes off to see the world. A lizard just gives him a dagger to fight the heron. Who does that, right? And then the little black fish stays behind and kills the heron but dies himself too. I read it to my little brother and my step mom was like “that’s too dark for a kid’s book”.

DERYA: It was a political allegory, to teach kids about the labour of rebellion in an unjust world. I just think it is one of the best works of contemporary Iranian literature. Did you know it was banned when it was first published?

FARIAS: I wonder what it does to you to grow up with children’s literature that does not just preach you to be obedient, to get married, or dictate how bad violence is even if it is a reaction to greater systemic injustice.

DERYA: It makes you stronger.

Pause.

FARIAS suddenly smiles as to themselves.

³⁷ Lao Tzu, *Tao te ching*, 30.

³⁸ Ece Ayhan, *Bütün Yort Savul’lar*, 151.

FARIAS: Can you please perform your newest composition named “the ferry approaching the pier followed by seagulls” again?

DERYA: (*Serious*) Gibi gibi gibi pata pata pata fishi fishi gibi gibi hop hop...

FARIAS almost chokes laughing and then slowly recollects themselves.

DERYA: (*Smiling*) What? You have something in your mind, I can see it.

FARIAS: Actually, I’m kind of upset that you haven’t written a play for me yet, actually. I actually also think our conversations are a bit delirious and I think it’s lovely.

DERYA: Actually? You want a play?

NARRATOR I projects the third Istanbul photo on them: Head of Medusa from the Basilica Cistern.

FARIAS: Like you wrote plays that included (*air quotes*) “real life inspired” characters who were all people who did wrong to you or generated feelings like anger or heartbreak in you. Don’t you think that it is weird that friendship hasn’t been as inspiring as anger or heartbreak to you as a playwright?

DERYA: Oh! Wow. (*Thinking*) You are right actually.

Pause.

FARIAS: (*Grinning*) So I guess you just won’t write a play for me, and just – like – contradict your own notion of love as a creative craft.

DERYA: Are you quoting me from our discussion on Hegel’s notion of love?

FARIAS: Yep. What was it? Something along the lines of love not being the wanting of a person, but the wanting of what that person wants. So yeah, coming back to the topic of the yet-to-be-written play...

DERYA does the hang-loose gesture while sticking their tongue out.

FARIAS: I mean, we do self-contradicting things in North America all the time, so who am I to blame you, I guess you just assimilated into our enlightened notions of effortless and shallow (*air quotes*) “love”.

NARRATOR I projects the fourth Istanbul photo on them: Hagia Sophia and Blue Mosque.

DERYA: You are princressing me too much.

NARRATOR 1 takes out a small dictionary from their pocket, finds a page and reads:

NARRATOR 1: (*Posing as a primary school teacher*) To princess. Verb. Etymological origin: Coming from the noun in Old French, which means the daughter of a high-ranking aristocrat, such as a king. The word has entered Middle English and was used in the same meaning. In around the second decade of 21st century the verb form has entered the colloquial urban North American English. Simply put, it means to expect someone to do irrational heroic gestures to prove their love for their love interest, such as digging tunnels in mountains to change river paths to bring water to their love interest's village as a dowry; or fighting three-headed monsters that breed more blood hungry heads as one slashes them. Usage in a sentence: "He princessed her so hard that she quit her full-time job to cook and clean and make and raise children for him for a lifetime."

FARIAS: (*Acting princessing*) But oh! I'm So! So! So! Innocent. I haven't done anything at all! God forbid, nothing at all! But you just fell for me! What can a pretty boy like me do in a cruel world like this?

DERYA: (*Unimpressed*) I truly spoiled you too much.

NARRATOR 1: Yes, you did. He is your breezy unicorn gay friend. The rumor is that every female intellectual needs one, even the ones who have locked their heart and swallowed the key long ago.

NARRATOR 1 projects the fifth İstanbul photo on them: Sarayburnu, seen from the Marmara Sea.

FARIAS: (*Pretending to be hurt*) Whatever, I guess a play is too much to ask.

DERYA: Oh, look at my baby, he wants to be my muse so bad.

FARIAS: Well we're queering everything in this relationship, missy, so I think gender stereotypes of artist-muse relationships should be subverted too.

DERYA: Now you got me. Wow, look at you, I trained you so well. Your past self would have said "what a co winky dinky"! You have started playing with me with my own tricks.

FARIAS: I mean, you know, there is a Turkish saying that a friend of mine taught me a little while ago: "One can even eat raw chicken for a friend".

Derya facepalms Farias.

Pause. They stare at the audience as if watching İstanbul.

NARRATOR 1 projects the sixth İstanbul photo on them: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Kabataş Campus) seen from seaside.

FARIAS: *(Serious)* This place is too beautiful.

DERYA: I know. I regret leaving each time I return. Why would anyone leave the most beautiful place on the planet? Right?

FARIAS: Because of fascism?

DERYA: Yes, I got tired of the version we had here so I wanted to experience other forms of fascism elsewhere.

FARIAS: You should always be careful about what you wish for.

DERYA: Yep! But we will eventually smash all of them *(Beat)* with a ukulele.

FARIAS smiles. Pause.

NARRATOR 1: While in this shared silence Farias realized how deep he was touched by the spleen of İstanbul, in the nowhereness and everywhere-ness of a ferry crossing from Europe to Asia.

FARIAS: Do you think we will be late?

DERYA: We are already late. My friends would be half drunk by the time we get there.

FARIAS: They are your university friends, right?

DERYA: Yep.

FARIAS: I wonder how you were back then.

DERYA: I was a better person. I used to be fierce.

FARIAS: Used to be?

DERYA: Yes. Now I'm too tired to be fierce.

FARIAS: Even your most exhausted version can take down an entire graduate class, including the professor.

DERYA: No.

FARIAS: Yes! *(Beat)* Like, what did you say in that class?

DERYA: Which class?

FARIAS: The class in your last semester there. The one where one of the many moronic students of the URNS tried to cut your criticism short about North America. They told you to be silent and thankful. One even said you might have been jailed in your country for speaking your mind. And then you gave them an answer and one of them started shouting at you... All these racist slurs... And the professor did nothing.

DERYA: And all the silent white girls later politely told me that I create tension, implying that it is essentially because I'm a bad person, and I (*air quotes*) "triggered" them so I should maybe apologize to them and give them a hug. Yeah, I remember.

FARIAS: What was the answer?

DERYA: You really want to know?

FARIAS: Yes, please.

NARRATOR 1 turns off the İSTANBUL neon light and turns on the NEW STOCKHOLM neon light. NARRATOR 1 takes of the clapper board from FARIAS's skirt pocket, writes "Scene 106, Take 82, Roll 31" on it, shows it to the audience. Then they get to the front stage and open the clapperboard.

NARRATOR 1: She said exactly this, without skipping a beat:

NARRATOR 1 shuts down the clapperboard.

DERYA goes front stage to address the audience.

DERYA: Don't you dare sell me being able to criticize *other* countries as an academic freedom! This country has made its citizens internalize the state and censor so successfully, that it's unimaginable for you to even grasp the concept of resistance. So before you masturbate on us (*air quotes*) "third worlders", thinking that you are doing ultra-inter-galactic scale magnificent over here, let me *precisely* explain to you what the Academics for Peace have done. Do you remember the Iraq War, or as *we* know it, the colonial occupation of Iraq in 2003? Or, a closer and more domestic example: do you remember the pipeline protests of indigenous peoples in 2016? Or do you even know about the ongoing selling of arms to so-called third-world countries to spark or continue their (*air quotes*) "regional" wars; which again your country prospers from by both selling the arms, and then taking the natural resources of the indebted and war-torn country, like picking flowers, while using its locals for cheap labor? Well, imagine that a large group of academics, more than two thousand people in total, signed a

petition directly against *their own* government, which not only permits but supports these atrocities. And let's say that they also ***asked for their taxes back to not to fund these human rights abuses***; while setting a ***mobilizing example*** for the rest of the critical citizens. Do you think that your precious (*air quotes*) "democracy" would have allowed those academics to stay in their positions and prosper? Or do you think that suddenly a pile of (*air quotes*) "unfortunate events", a series of (*air quotes*) "inconvenient coincidences", would start finding them *all*? Until almost all of them are silenced though a sudden and intense economic precarization. And of course, the rest would be marginalized enough to never be able gather an audience again. Now multiply these consequences by ten, and try to grasp in your limited and ideologically crippled imagination that this is what Academics for Peace have dared. Don't try to sell me your own cowardice and self-censorship as democracy or freedom, okay? Thanks.³⁹

NARRATOR 1 turns off the NEW STOCKHOLM neon light, turns on the İSTANBUL neon light, then goes to front stage and opens the clapperboard and closes it shut loudly.

FARIAS: Noooo! Confrontation always makes things worse with these people.

DERYA: Well, I actually said it more diplomatically, but this was the essence of it. And they all hold a grudge against me in their disengaged passive aggression. It became so, that my very presence in that space was a demonstration of their chosen ignorance. So they did ostracize me, slowly but surely, gnawing on my bones, hoping to get inspired, pretending to be my saviors while expecting me to save them. (*Beat*) I was feeling like the Prince Myshkin of that world. (*Beat*) Have you read *The Idiot*, by Dostoyevsky⁴⁰ by any chance?

NARRATOR 1: Democracy works in very similar ways to a muscle. Because it

³⁹ For real life examples of academic ostracization from North America whenever academics acted out for causes of social justice within the past decade, check out the cases of David Graeber, Steve Salaita and Garrett Felber. And please keep in mind that this is not limited to these three examples.

Case of David Graeber:

1) Nader, Laura. (2019). Unravelling the Politics of Silencing. *Public Anthropologist*, 1(1), 81-95. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25891715-00101006>

2) Graeber, David. (2019). It Wasn't a Tenure Case – a Personal Testimony, with Reflections. *Public Anthropologist*, 1(1), 96-104. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25891715-00201009>

Case of Steve Salaita:

Salaita, Steve. (2019, August 7). *The Inhumanity of Academic Freedom*. Steve Salaita. Retrieved December 31, 2020, from <https://stevesalaita.com/the-inhumanity-of-academic-freedom/?fbclid=IwAR2oxSuvFAxppQjZDe4vFzD8r6Nv0Xu5k3z-21obKuHwHzNG2c5KAvIaazU>

Case of Garrett Felber:

Middleton, Christian. (2020, December 15). *UM Fires History Professor Who Criticizes 'Powerful, Racist Donors' and 'Carceral State'*. Mississippi Free Press. Retrieved December 31, 2020, from <https://www.mississippifreepress.org/7518/um-fires-history-professor-who-criticizes-powerful-racist-donors-and-carceral-state/>

⁴⁰ Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. (1980). *The Idiot*. Penguin Books.

actually is a muscle: it is the eye that you read with, it is the ear that you listen with, it is the brain that you think with, it is the hand that you write with, and it is the mouth that you speak with. If you don't use these muscles regularly, you will eventually lose the capacity to use them ever again. And you won't even notice it until the day that you open your mouth, which you trained for years for nothing but small talk, to scream for help: just to realize in catatonic fear that *you have no voice left to shout.*

NARRATOR I projects the seventh İstanbul photo on them: Ortaköy.

DERYA: I have a gift for you.

DERYA unzips a pocket and gets out a pair of large golden colored earrings, in the shape of the Hittite Sun.

FARIAS: These are beautiful. Wow!

FARIAS takes out a mirror from a skirt pocket and holds them up to his ear.

FARIAS: But how am I supposed to wear these, my ears are not pierced.

DERYA looks at him intensely, not speaking, just smiling.

NARRATOR I projects the eighth İstanbul photo on them: İstiklal Avenue.

FARIAS: Oh, you want to get my ears pierced. *(Beat)* Why do you want to hurt me?

DERYA continues staring.

FARIAS: My family won't like it.

DERYA: *(Still smiling)* Oh, so you don't want them? I can take them back if you like.

FARIAS: I want them.

DERYA: Then take them. And we will get your ears pierced. It is a blood sacrifice to İstanbul. Otherwise, this city will haunt your dreams.

FARIAS puts the earrings and the mirror in one of their skirt pockets and buttons it close.

DERYA comes close to FARIAS, lies in their lap, FARIAS holds them. After a little while FARIAS starts playing with DERYA's face, poking their cheeks, nose and ears, squeezing their face gently.

FARIAS: You are so squishy.

NARRATOR I projects the ninth İstanbul photo on them: Kadıköy seafront.

DERYA: *(Giggling)* I know. But don't tell anyone. It is a secret.

Pause.

FARIAS: *(Staring at the audience)* I understand you differently now.

DERYA: Explain it to me. It soothes my pain to hear how you understand me.

FARIAS: This is such a sad place. It's so sad it hurts.

DERYA: *(Smiling)* You are probably the only person who would understand this coming from New Stockholm.

NARRATOR I projects the tenth İstanbul photo on them: Kuzguncuk.

FARIAS: But it's so beautiful. It's unfair to be so sad and so beautiful.

DERYA: You are so right, you can't believe it. This city is made out of poetry. That is why it is so soulful and dark. She can't stop it. No one can stop it. İstanbul is İstanbul.

FARIAS: Why did you bring me here?

DERYA: Why did you come?

FARIAS: Because I wanted to.

NARRATOR I projects the eleventh İstanbul photo on them: Grand Bazaar.

DERYA sits up.

DERYA: *(Distanced, not looking at FARIAS)* I wanted you to witness who I am. This is who I am. Exactly as you see me now. I belong to this city. My ears are washed with its soundscape, my eyes in its light, and I'm named by this sea. *(Gesturing everything around with a hand wave)* This is the poetry that I'm made of. And you are my lighthouse.

NARRATOR I projects the twelfth İstanbul photo on them: Bosphorous Bridge and ferries.

FARIAS: And you are my tsunami. *(Beat)* I feel like it will take years to understand what this journey will mean for me.

DERYA lies in FARIAS's lap again, FARIAS holds them.

DERYA: It will take a lifetime to understand for me. I have growing pains in my heart, like I used to have in my bones in my teens, because of you. But I don't want to let go of my anger. Anger has been my ethical compass since I was fourteen.

NARRATOR I projects the thirteenth İstanbul photo on them: Gezi Park from July 2013⁴¹.

FARIAS: Don't let it go if you don't want to. I have never liked the anger shaming culture of New Stockholm. There is something wrong about it. Even if I can't put it into words now, I know it.

DERYA: You will eventually find the words to explain your uneasiness. Especially after you hit the road and leave New Stockholm forever. I'm so endlessly, bottomlessly, tremendously happy that you will be leaving soon for your master's degree in Berlin.

NARRATOR I projects the fourteenth İstanbul photo on them: "Yalı" type of houses at the seafront of Arnavutköy.

FARIAS: You're a wordsmith, your magic lies in words. I don't know where mine is. Or if there is one.

DERYA: You will find your medium of expression on the way. And then everything will be soothed when you filter the world through your own medium. Literature is my method to my madness. Even then, see how I say things to you: so broken and wounded in translation. But you understand me, right?

FARIAS: I think I do.

NARRATOR I projects the fifteenth İstanbul photo on them: skyscrapers of Mecidiyeköy seen from Bosphorous.

DERYA: I know. But you became my vulnerability, my Achilles' heel and I'm not fond of weakness. I'm scared that you understand me even though I have been looking for someone who would understand for so long. *(Beat)* The world is so big, but I still suffocate.

Pause.

FARIAS starts to fidget and DERYA sits up. FARIAS takes out the same coffee cup and saucer from the BERLIN scene from their skirt pocket, places the cup on the saucer and serves coffee to DERYA like playing house.

⁴¹ From the Gezi Park Uprising.

NARRATOR 1 projects the sixteenth İstanbul photo on them: ruins of Tarlabası right after forced urban transformation.

FARIAS: Let me read your fortune this time.

NARRATOR 1 projects the seventeenth İstanbul photo on them: ruins of Sulukule right after forced urban transformation.

DERYA takes the coffee, smiling. DERYA sips it a couple of times, finishes it, closes the cup on the saucer, flips it towards her heart. Takes a pause, holding the cup, and gives it back to FARIAS. FARIAS takes the cup, opens it, looks inside and gives a very performative reaction of shock, placing their hand on their own chest with open eyes and mouth, playing with DERYA's – and the audience's – expectations.

DERYA: *(Smiling, pretending to be nervous)* What? What do you see?

FARIAS: *(Mysteriously)* Are you sure you want to hear?

NARRATOR 1 projects the eighteenth İstanbul photo on them: old city walls of the Historical Peninsula.

DERYA: One hundred percent.

FARIAS: Okay then. *(Turning the cup in their hand)* Hmm... You are so crafty that art historians who will work on your biography will be baffled with this phenomenon. *(Pointing inside the cup, showing to DERYA)* See, here they are in their bewilderment. Like, see, their faces are like *(making a shock face)*, yeah, they are like that. You will find a way to escape every time you feel squeezed. You will become the academic and the playwright that you want to become. You will find soulful cities and soulful cities will find you. You will make friends all around the world, and cook and dine and drink and imagine better futures with them. But most importantly you will continue writing. Until your last day.

NARRATOR 1 projects the nineteenth İstanbul photo on them: Süleymaniye Mosque.

DERYA: That was beautiful. Thank you.

FARIAS: *(Giving the cup to DERYA)* Wash your cup so your wish can come true.

DERYA takes the cup and puts it in their skirt pocket, zips it closed.

Pause.

NARRATOR I projects the twentieth İstanbul photo on them: a delightful fish restaurant (meyhane) at night, photo shot from outside.

FARIAS looks at the audience. DERYA stares at FARIAS and speaks:

DERYA: Sometimes I feel like I'm stealing your innocence. I feel like I'm hurting the only person who truly cares and I could love wholeheartedly in the last five years after I had left İstanbul.

FARIAS: *(Without looking at DERYA)* It's fine.

NARRATOR I projects the twenty-first İstanbul photo on them: many street cats and kittens being fed by a couple of cat ladies in Moda neighbourhood.

DERYA: What is fine?

FARIAS: Hurting the person you love.

DERYA: *(Laughing)* Oh, really?

FARIAS: Yeah.

DERYA: But then I feel so much shame and guilt. Then I want to leave you forever. I attempted it. *(They start fidgeting with their skirt)* I couldn't do it.

FARIAS: I don't want you to leave me.

NARRATOR I projects the twenty-second İstanbul photo on them: Sun setting over the red roofs and Bosphorous, shot from one of the balconies in Beşiktaş.

DERYA: I don't want to leave you either. But it doesn't mean anything. I didn't want to leave İstanbul too.

FARIAS: But look, you came back to her. And she accepted you. Why are you always talking as if tomorrow is the doomsday?

DERYA: I don't know, Farias. I'm dramatic like this city I guess. And I'm constantly in fear because in my country honest and brave people die early.

FARIAS: I know you hate universalizing localities, but I feel like that might be true for everywhere.

NARRATOR I projects the twenty-third İstanbul photo on them: night of İstanbul as it is seen from the same view in the previous picture.

Lights turn to orange like it does in the sunsets of İstanbul. They stare at the audience. Not talking, just thinking. NARRATOR 1 slowly takes out the English translation of “Madonna in a Fur Coat” from a skirt pocket and reads from a marked page.

NARRATOR 1: As they share the intimacy of a peaceful silence, let’s finish by a quote picked by Farias from *Madonna in a Fur Coat*: “[let’s] allow our friendship to take its natural course. Let’s not try to set it on the false path or tie it up with decisions made in advance.”⁴²

NARRATOR 1 places the book “Madonna in a Fur Coat” on front stage.

Act 2: Epilogue

NARRATOR 1 turns off the carousel projector and İSTANBUL neon light, and turns on the “CHANGING PLANES” neon light. Meanwhile DERYA and FARIAS take off the glasses and tie and the stage is left to the NARRATORS only. NARRATOR 3 changes the record on the gramophone. Zeki Müren’s song “Elbet Bir Gün Buluşacağız” [Eng: “Surely We Will Meet One Day”] starts softly playing in the background.

NARRATOR 1: If their story was to be a film –

NARRATOR 2: It would have been directed by Fatih Akın.

NARRATOR 3: If their story was to be a novel –

NARRATOR 2: It would have been written by Ursula Kroeber Le Guin.

NARRATOR 1: If their relationship was to be music –

NARRATOR 3: It would have been sung by Zeki Müren. Like the one we are hearing.

NARRATOR 1: And if their song had been tied to a myth –

NARRATOR 2: It would be of Orpheus and Eurydice.

NARRATOR 1: Or perhaps of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

NARRATOR 3: Or perhaps of Adonis and Aphrodite.

NARRATOR 1: If their relationship had been an ideology –

⁴² “Madonna in a Fur Coat”, Sabahattin Ali, pg 104.

NARRATOR 2: It would have been anarchism.

NARRATOR 3: If their love had been a dance –

NARRATOR 2: – and since it can't be their revolution if they can't dance to it ⁴³ –

NARRATOR 3: It would have been the last dance at a wedding –

NARRATOR 1: When everyone crowds the dance floor –

NARRATOR 2: Not caring at all if they can or can't dance –

NARRATOR 3: Because the dance floor becomes the place of a ritual performance –

NARRATOR 2: Where the married couple is blessed in a collective ecstasy –

NARRATOR 1: Into their first night.

NARRATOR 3: And if their relationship had been a play –

NARRATOR 1: It would start in Berlin.

NARRATOR 1 turns off the "CHANGING PLANES" neon light and turns on the BERLIN neon light.

THE END

⁴³ Reference to the quote attributed to famous anarchist Emma Goldman: "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution".

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