

## Global Perspectives

### The Engraved Lighter / İşlemeli Çakmak

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#### Abstract

Nibel Genc has been held since 1994 as a political prisoner defending the freedom of Kurdish people and is presently imprisoned in the Bakirkoy Women's Prison in Istanbul. "The Engraved Lighter" is her fictional story as told by a young girl whose great-grandfather survived the 1938 Dersim massacre along with his son, whom he managed to rescue from the hands of the Turkish soldiers. While they were caught and waiting for their fate to unfold, another prisoner gave his engraved lighter to the great-grandfather just before the prisoner was shot.

*Keywords:* Dersim, Turkish, massacre, Kurdish

#### Author Note

The story of "The Engraved Lighter" was chosen to be published in the *Review of Disability Studies* by the author Nibel Genc from her story book *Misir Kocanlarini Kizartan Koku* [The Smell That Turns the Corn Cobs Red] (Genc, 2017) in which 15 fictional stories have been constructed to create the flow of a single novel.

## Foreword

**Ruken:** When I was first asked to find women's literary work for an edited volume, I immediately thought of the political prisoner Nibel Genc. I thought it would be so important to connect her with other women in the world through her literary work. Nibel has spent 26 years in Turkish prisons where the state sought to silence her, yet she has never given up and has resisted the oppressive politics of the Turkish state against her Kurdish identity and her woman's identity with writing. Writing itself has not been easy as she has lost many of her manuscripts in prison raids over the years. Her piece that is translated as a feminist solidarity work is so valuable in that regard and we hope that we will help connect the struggles of Kurdish women against patriarchy and state violence with the struggles of women in other parts of the world. We believe Kurdish women have strong voices and need more spaces like this to voice themselves and connect with women transnationally.

**Elif:** When Ruken initially approached me to help her with the translation of Nibel's story I was more than happy to participate in facilitating a Kurdish woman prisoner's story to an English-speaking audience. These days we hear testimonies or interviews from Kurdish women, but their fictional works remain largely a mystery. As I was translating Nibel's story I was struck by the beauty and haunting nature of her tale which was a reflection of her pain and struggle and her resistance and triumph against Turkish state oppression. In fact, the entire process of getting the story into our hands is a testament to Nibel and other Kurdish women prisoner's ongoing resistance from behind iron bars. Similar to other Kurdish imprisoned women such as Zehra Dogan who uses artwork as her medium, Nibel uses her poetic imaginative prose and her pen as her tools against authoritarianism and patriarchy. Therefore, it is our duty as Kurdish feminist activists/academics to materialize these stories of imprisoned Kurdish women, wrenching them from the hands of their oppressors and into that of the international community—we owe them that at the very least.

**Zeynep:** Nibel continues her struggle for freedom through many other forms. She has participated in numerous hunger strikes to abolish isolation and improve conditions in the prisons. She even engaged in a death fast, which ended once the prisoners' demands were met by the state.

JIN, JÏYAN AZADÏ! (WOMEN, LIFE, FREEDOM)

Ruken Isik, Elif Genc, & Zeynep Genc

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### İşlemeli Çakmak / The Engraved Lighter

Dedemin İvrayim'e hayatı boyunca şimdiki kadar yakın olduğu gün, sabahın erken saatlerinde eski bir konağın bitişiğindeki samanlığa benzer bir yerde başlamış. Tabii öncesi de varmış, her hikâyenin upuzun, dile gelmeyen bir öncesi hep olurmuş zaten. Bir de her hikâyenin ne zaman varılacağı belli olmayan bir sonu olurmuş. Samanlığa benzeyen yerde beş balya saman, iki orak, birkaç kürek, üç kazma, sol ayağı kırılmış boz bir at ve dedem İvrayim'le birlikte dokuz çocuk varmış. Dedem İvrayim'in beş balya samandan dolayı samanlığa benzettiği o yerin tavanındaki kirişlerden biri de çatlakmış.

Dedem İvrayim sonraki zamanlarda dönüp o haline baktığında birbirine sokularak uyuyan çocukların tek beden gibi görüldüğünü fark etmiş. Yamalı şalvar ve pantolonları üzerlerinde desenli tek parça örtü gibi duruyormuş. Birbirlerine dolanan kolları da ağaç dallarına benziyormuş. Dedem İvrayim onları nelerin beklediğini bilmesede ölümün hiç de uzak olmadığını farkındaymış. Bu onun için gökyüzünü kara bulutların kapladığı bir gün yağmuru beklemek kadar olağanmış. Her an yağabilirmiş de, bulutlar dağılıp kaybolabilirmiş de. Ölmeyeceğine dair içinde belli belirsiz, bazen parıl parıl parlayan bazen de kısıldıkça kısılan bir his de varmış. Hayat bu hissini iki ucu arasında kalmış, zorlukla nefes alan, her nefes alışta kuru kuru öksüren, öksürüğü duyulmasın diye yorganını başına çeken bir yaşlının Azrail'i bekleyişine benziyormuş. Dedem İvrayim ölümden hem korkuyormuş hem de sanki Nuh Nebi'den beri bu dünyada herkes onun yaşındayken ölüyormuş gibi kendini ölüme hiç de uzak hissetmiyormuş.

Uyumadan önce dokuz çocuk, kilitli kapının ardındaki sesleri anlamadan dinlerken kendilerine çeşit çeşit yarınlara kurgulamışlar. Çok ama çok uzaklara götürülebilirlermiş, büyüklerden dinledikleri böyle hikâyeler varmış. Burada kilitli de kalabilirlermiş, bu da olmayacak bir şey değilmiş. Askerler çekip gidebilirmiş. Hepsinin bildiği böyle hikâyeler de varmış. Askerler kimi zaman böyle kalabalık halde gelir, sonra günün birinde girdikleri cenkleri kaybedip çekip giderlermiş. Birileri, mesela mavzerleri olan Demenanlılar gelip onları kurtarabilirmiş. Askerler kapıyı açık unutursa ya da içlerinden biri kapıyı açarsa kaçabilirlermiş. Kar hiç durmadan yağıyormuş ama köylerine, evlerine gitmek çok da zor olmamış. Kurtlara yakalanmadan, çığın gelebileceği yerlerden uzak durarak yol alırlarsa dağları da vadileri de aşabilirlermiş. Tahminleri gibi soruları da çeşit çeşitmiş, uzak ne kadar uzakmış ki? İnsanlar neden başka başka dil konuşurmuş ki? Onları ne zaman anlayacaklarmış

ve de ölümün sonrası nasıl olabilirmiş? Varken yok olmak, konuşuyorken susuvermek, düşünürken gömülmek ne kadar da tuhafmış sorularına cevap aramaktan yorulduklarında içlerinden biri tilkilerin, cinlerin, yuvarlak memeli kadınların, ay yüzlü kızların ve birbirinden lezzetli yiyeceklerin olduğu masal âlemlerine götürmüş onları. Masalların içinde yorulduklarında da birbirlerine sokularak uyumuşlar.

Dedem İvrayim uyurken büyük dedem birkaç köyü, birinin bittiği yerde diğerinin başladığı vadileri, karlı dağları ve buz tutmuş nehirleri aşır eski konağın karşısına gelmiş. Nöbetçi askerlerin üşüyüp, sobaların gürül gürül yandığı odalardan birine gitme ihtimalinden umut yapıp beklemeye koyulmuş. Uykunun yumuşacık bir yorgan olup üşüyen bedenini ısıttığı zamanlarda bile nöbetçi askerlerden gözlerini bir an bile ayırmamış. Onlarla birlikte hem geldiği yolları hem de nasıl yaşanacağı belli olmayan günleri geçip çayırılıkların karşısında oturup gelen bahara bakmış. Ot kokularını içine çekip yaban ördeklerinin yüzüşünü, kuşların uçuşunu izlemiş. Meyman köyünü çevreleyen nehirde dedem İvrayim'le birlikte balık avlamış. Aşurenin içindeki cevizleri yiyip tarlaları sulamış. Büyük ninemle birlikte bir ateşin közlerine bakarken çayını yudumlamış. Hatta askerlerden biri üşüyen parmaklarını nefesiyle ısıtmaya çalıştığında, büyük dedem madem buraya kadar onları da getirdim bir bardak çay içip ısınsınlar diye ikramda da bulunmuş. Büyük ninemin çatık kaşlarının altında sakladığı hüznü görünce de geldiği yollardan ve günlerden bir daha geçmiş. Dönüş yolunda sise yakalanmış, acaba geri mi dönsen tereddüdünün içinde dolanmış ve oğlunun diğer çocuklarla beraber götürüldüğü söylenen köyün yolunu kaybetmiş. Yönünü kaybedince son günlerde yaşananları düşünmüş. Hayatın ritminin silah sesleriyle bozulmasına, gecenin ve gündüzün birbirine karışmasına kafa yormuş. Kar çarıklarında tepecik, omuzlarında ağaç dalına konan küçücük bir kuş olduğunda nöbetçi askerler bacalarından dumanların yükseldiği eski konağa doğru yürümüşler. Büyük dedem tam konağın bitişiğindeki depoya doğru adım atacakmış ki konağın kapısından yüzleri soba aleviyle kızarmış başka askerler çıkmış. Giden ve gelen askerlere uzun uzun baktıktan sonra nafile bekleyişine küfürler savurmuş. Saklandığı evin arkasından dolanarak konağın arkasına gelmiş. Karargâh olarak kullanılan konağın arkasında nöbetçi görmeyince yağın kara, üşüten soğuğa şükranla bakmış. Derin bir nefes alıp dedemlerin kilitli tutulduğu yere temkinli küçük adımlarla yaklaşmış.

Dedem İvrayim'in, içindeki beş balyadan dolayı samanlık dediği yerin penceresine çapraz çakılan ağaç dallarının çivilerini dişleriyle gevşetip, tırnaklarıyla milim milim hareket

ettirerek çıkarmış. Pencerenin tahta kepengini söküp içeriye baktığında ilk sol ayağı kırık boz atı görmüş. Küçük pencereden içeri girişi de çivin milim milim tahtadan ayrılması gibi zaman almış. Büyük dedem tüm o milimlik ince işleri yaparken sessizliğin içine öyle bir gömülmüş ki zamanla bağı kalmamış. İçeriye girdiğinde de sonrası zamanlarda da o esnada geçen zamanın ölçüsüne dair kafasında hiçbir fikir oluşmamış. Kısacık bir an da geçmiş olabilirmiş çok uzun bir zaman da.

Büyük dedem koyun koyuna yatan çocuklara bakarken zihninde taşların üzerinden akan küçük bir dere canlanmış. Yüzleri o taşlar gibi birbirine benziyormuş. Büyük dedem ilk ağlayışları bile birbirinden farklı olan bu çocukları hangi zaman taşlar gibi birbirine benzer yaptı diye düşündüğünde dönüp pencereye bakmış. Ya Hak nasıl bir zaman aştım diye sormuş. Yoksa zaman değil de aynı yere kapatıldıkları için mi birbirlerine bu kadar benzemişlerdi. Büyük dedem dokuz çocuğun yüzüne tek tek, uzun uzun bakmış ama ne kadar bakarsa baksın dedem İvrayim'i tanıyamamış. Hatıralarındaki oğluna bakmış, çenesindeki beni, ince üst dudağını, sarkık kulaklarını aklına getirmiş ama çocukların yüzüne baktığında görüntüyü de bilgileri de unutmuş. Ya Hak bana yol göster diye dua etmiş. Bir yol görünmemiş, gözlerini kapatmış, dedem İvrayim'i büyük ninemin kucağında hayal etmiş, canlı ve yakınmış hayali, aynadaki sureti kadar tanıdıkmiş. Gözlerini dualarla açtığında hayal kaybolmuş. Sanki İvrayim adında bir oğlu olmamış, olmadığı için de koyun koyuna yatan çocuklar içinde oğlunu tanıyamıyormuş.

Çocukları saymış, dokuzmuş. Değil hepsini oğlundan başka tek bir çocuk bile götüremezmiş. Dağ taş her yer asker ve onlara haber uçuranlarla doluymuş. Oğlunu bile götürüp götüremeyeceği tesadüflere bağlıyken dokuz çocukla nereye, nasıl gidermiş? Bir mavzeri de yokmuş, olsa da doğru dürüst kullanmayı bile bilmiyormuş. Dokuz çocukla saklanılmaz, izler kaybedilmezmiş. Belki oğlunu da yarı yolda yine kaybedermiş. Ya da oğlunu kırım günlerinde iyice zayıflayan bedeni taşıyamayıp dağdan yuvarlanıp düşebilirmiş. Bir askerin mermisiyle o da ölebilirmiş. O zaman da büyük ninemin karşısına ölü haliyle çıkar “Bak ben öldüm ama İvrayim'i, en çok sevdiğin oğlunu sana getirdim,” dermiş. “Tabii dokuz çocuk vardı, baktım baktım da ilkin İvrayim'i tanıyamadım,” demezmiş, böyle bir şey büyük nineme söylenmezmiş.

Ellerini göğe kaldırıp “Günahım nedir ki bana oğlumun yüzünü unutturursun,” diye sormuş. Sırtını çocuklara dönünce oğlunun yüzünü duvarlarda, saman balyalarında, hatta boz

atın tımarlı gövdesinde görür gibi olmuş. Yorgunluktandır demiş, kendini dostça teselli ederken. Her biri ayrı ana babadan olan çocuklar hiç birbirinin aynısı olabilir mi? El parmaklarına bakmış, sorusuna cevap bulmak için hepsi de birbirinden farklıymış ama soğğun sızısını da her parmağında aynı hissediyormuş. Bu mu cevap diye sormuş. Bu çocuklar korkuları, sızılılarıyla birbirlerine benzemişse o zaman bu topraklarda yaşayan herkes önce birbirine sonra Kerbela'dakilere mi benzeyecekti? Günlerdir yaşadıkları zulüm, uğradıkları kırım, ruhlarını ezen korku, midelerini kazıyan açlık bunun için miydi? Acı onları birbirine benzetsin, hiçbir farkları kalmasin diye miydi? Büyük dedem sorularını peş peşe dizip düşününce, tepeden tırnağa tedirginlik olmuş. Hayatı boyunca gördüğü yüzlere hatıralarını aralayarak tek tek bakmış. Hiçbiri diğerine benzemiyormuş. Derin bir nefes alıp sızlayan parmaklarının uçlarını ısırmış. Bu dünyadan sayısız insan gelip geçmiş, ölenin yüzü bile yeni doğana verilmemişken, bunlar uzakta birbirlerini hiç görmeden yaşayacaklar aynı yüzü kullansınlar denmemişken neden bu çocukların yüzü aynı oldu diye düşünmüş. Sonra da kendi kendine bundan emin olamam ki belki de ömürleri boyunca birbirlerini görmeyecekler aynı yüz veriliyordur demiş. Dünyanın bir ucunda ölenin yüzü öbür ucunda doğana belki de bir süre sonra veriliyor olabilir demiş. Büyük dedem kendine böyle daha önce söylemediklerini söyleye söyleye düşünürken belki de herkes aynı yüzle doğuyordur fikrine kapılmış. Fikrini inandırıcı kılmak için de huylar edindikçe yüzler farklılaşıyor diye düşünmüş.

“Ya Ali” demiş çaresiz, biraz da kırgın bir sesle... Sanki Hazreti Ali yanı başında uyuyor, bir türlü uyanmıyormuş. “Bilirim, yanılan gözlerimdir, karanlık gecede yolunu kaybedenler gibiyim, bana bir yol göster,” diye yakarınca bir yol görünür gibi olmuş. Güneşin kızılığının kocaman siyah bir taş vuruğu bir güne benziyormuş yol, buna bir anlam verememiş. Nöbetçi askerlerin sesini duyunca kapıya doğru birkaç adım atmış, nefesini tutarak sesleri dinlemiş, kar tanelerinin samanlığın damına düşme sesi, sac ekmeğin ısırlma sesi gibi incecik seslermiş bunlar. Nasıl oluyor da bu sesleri duyuyorum demiş, buna da bir anlam verememiş.

Çocukların birini alıp gideyim demiş. Bu olacak şey değilmiş. O tanımasa bile büyük ninem oğlunu mutlaka tanırmış. Hiç kimse tanımasa bile kız kardeşi Ezima abisini tanırmış. Yanı başındaki çocuğa tam dokunacakken vazgeçmiş. Uyuyan çocuğu bırakıp gitmek kolaymış ama uyanan çocuğa sen uyu, ben oğlumu alıp gideceğim diyemezmiş ki... Ölüm çemberinde bile olsa, yüzüne bakan çocuğu bırakıp gidemezmişsin.

Büyük dedem bulunduğu zamandan birkaç adım geriye doğru gitmiş ama dedem İvrayim'i yine tanıyamamış. Bulduğu zamandan birkaç adım ileri gitmiş yine değişen bir şey olmamış. Dualar edip çaresizliğine bir çobanın kepeneğine sarıldığı gibi sarılmış. Demek ki oğlum burada değilmiş... Tabii ya demiş, ben yaşarken oğlum İvrayim niye babası ölmüş yetim çocuklarla birlikte bir yere kapatılsın ki. Demek ki bir altın için yalan söylemişler. Bazı insanlar değil bir altın, iki avuç un için bile yalan söylerler diye düşününce üzerinden ağır bir yük kalkar gibi olmuş. İvrayim nerede sorusu daha ağır bir yük olup omuzlarına konduğunda dizlerinin üzerine çöküp öylece kalakalmış. İçinden bir ses kal ve bu çocukların kaderi neyse onu yaşa demiş, başka bir ses de başka bir şey demiş ve büyük dedem içindeki sesler arasında debelenip durmuş.

Büyük dedem seslerden birini dinlemek istediği sırada dedem İvrayim rüyasında koşuyormuş. Nefes nefese kaldığı için yavaşladığı esnada büyük dedem nöbetçi askerlerin yükselen sesleriyle bir karara vardığından pencerenin önünde duruyormuş. Dedem İvrayim babasını ona dönük sırtından tanımış, büyük dedem oğlunu ve sesini aynı anda kucaklamış. Dedem İvrayim'e hayatı boyunca şimdiki kadar yakın olan o batımsız gün de o kucaklayıştan sonra bir gölgeye benzemiş.

Birbirlerine sarıldıklarında o an bakışlarıyla uzamış, uzayan an devam ederken arkalarına bakmadan pencereden çıkmışlar, yürümüşler, koşmuşlar, eğilmişler, saklanmışlar bazı yerleri hızla bazı yerleri sürünerek geçmişler. Dedem İvrayim yere düşüp ayağındaki ayakkabısı çıktığında uzayan an bitivermiş. Dedem yere düşen oğlunu kaldırmış, ayakkabısını giydirmiş sonra da sırtına almış. Saklanacakları bir yer bulana kadar baba oğul karın altında iki kafalı bir adam gibi yürümüş.

Büyük dedem mağaraya süzülen ışıktaki dedem İvrayim'in yüzüne bir daha unutmamak için uzun uzun bakmış. Dedem İvrayim'in gözlerinin mavisinde ve gülüşünde de onu dokuz çocuk arasında tanıyamayışını unutmuş. Ama bu unutuş hiç de uzun sürmemiş, dedem İvrayim'in yorgunluğundan sıyrılır sıyrılmaz çocukları soracağını düşünüp endişelenmiş. Yüreğine öyle bir endişe çökmüş ki büyük dedem devletin askerleriyle ve memurlarıyla bu topraklara onu günahkâr yapmak için geldiklerini düşünmüş. Böyle düşününce de tek bir damla gözyaşı dökmeden hüngür hüngür ağlamış.

Güneşin ışıkları mağaranın ağzından içeri süzülürken su damlalarının parıltısına elbiselerinden çıkan buharlar karışmış. Büyük dedem kazağının içinden beze sarılmış bir



parça ekmek çıkarıp dedem İvrayim'e uzatmış. Ekmek ıslakmış. Dedem İvrayim ıslak ekmeğin bir parçasını büyük dedeme uzatmış. Kendine ayırdığı küçük parçayı üç lokma yaparak yemiş. Sonra da kafasını büyük dedemin dizlerine koymuş, uyumak istese de uyuyamamış, sadece rüyaya benzer hayaller kurmuş.

Silahların ve bombaların seslerini duyduklarında mağaranın iç tarafındaki kayanın arkasına saklanmışlar. Kaya sanki yıllardır o günler için hazırlık yapmış gibi iki deliğiyle onlara karşı yamaçta olanları gösteriyormuş. Büyük dedem o iki delikten karşı dağda mevzilenen askerlere, mağaranın girişindeki buz sarkıtlarına bakmış. Dedem İvrayim ise sırtını bir kayaya yaslamış avucunun içindeki çizgilere bakıyormuş.

Askerler mevzilerinden çıkıp uzaklaştıklarında büyük dedem ve dedem İvrayim mağaranın ağzına gidip sesleri dinlemişler. Mağaradan çıkıp yola koyulduklarında dedem İvrayim yaylalara giderken geçtikleri vadiyi, vadinin sonundaki köyü tanıyamamış. Sanki yabancı insanlar uzaklardan gelmemişler de dedem İvrayim babasıyla birlikte hiç bilmediği, tanımadığı yerlere götürülmüş gibi hissetmiş kendini. Büyük dedem vadiyi kar kaplamış, köyü de yaktılar o yüzden tanıyamıyorsun dediğinde dedem İvrayim başını sallamış ama bu bilgi ona yabancılaşmasını unutturamamış. Karın üzerinde bata çıka ilerlerken dedem İvrayim dalları karla sarkan ağaçlara, karla kapanan yollara bir de baharın gözüyle bakmış. Büyük dedem işaret parmağıyla geçecekleri yolları gösterip hava kararmadan önce büyük ninem ve diğerlerinin saklandıkları yere varacaklarını söylemiş. Yorgunmuş dedem İvrayim, karnı da açmış. Tepelerindeki güneşe ve güneşin bulutların arsından geçeceği yola bakınca adımlarını hızlandırmış. Büyük dedem de adımlarını hızlandırmış. Kilitli kalan çocukları hatırlamış. Mağaradayken bir kurşun yakınlarındaki kayaya çarptığında büyük dedem o çocukları orada bıraktığı için sevinmiş, kendi oğlunu ölüme getirdiği için kahırlanmış. Ama adımlarını hızlandırdıkları sırada oğluyla güvenli bir yere gittikleri için utanmış. Utancını oğlu görmesin diye ona eski zaman masalları anlatmış.

Sonraları ve tabii bu hikâyeyi anlatırken de nasıl olup da askerlerin sesini duymadıklarını, korkuyu hangi adımlarının altında ezip öyle sakınmasız davrandıklarını ne büyük dedem ne de dedem İvrayim hatırlamış. Askerlerin çemberinde diğerleriyle birlikte yürürken uzadıkça uzayan zaman içinde sıkışıp kaldıklarında köylülerinin saklandığı yere yaklaşmanın sevinciyle, bir askerın bağırsı ve silahının dipçığıyle geri dönen korku

arasında yaşadıklarını hatırlayamamalarının nedeni belki de dedem İvrayim'in hasta yatağında hikâyesini anlatırken dediği gibi, arada hiçbir şeyin olmamasındanmış.

Dedem İvrayim'in askerlerin çemberinde diğerleriyle birlikte yürürken elleri bağlıymış. Büyük dedemin ve diğerlerinin de elleri bağlıymış. Meyman'dan onlarla birlikte birkaç kişi daha varmış. Bazıları komşu köylerdenmiş. Ama dedem İvrayim çoğunu tanımıyormuş. Dünden beri yaşadıklarını düşününce yine büyük dedemden ayrılacağını düşünüp korkmuş. Nereye gittiklerini bilmeden yürümüşler. Elleri iple birbirine bağlı olduğundan ayakları da aynı anda kalkıp aynı anda iniyormuş bazen bu uyum bozuluyor düşüp kalkanlar oluyormuş.

İnce bir çayın aktığı düzlüğe vardıklarında durdurulmuşlar. Adımlarıyla birlikte fısıltılı konuşmaları da durmuş. Askerler kâh bağırarak konuşuyor kâh sessizce bekliyorlarmış. Askerlerin komutanı konuşunca dedem İvrayim ne söylediğini anlamamış ama herkes oturunca o da oturmuş.

Oturmalarını isteyen komutanın elinde bazı isimlerin yazıldığı kâğıtlar, elleri bağlı adamların bazılarının ceplerinde belgeler, izin ya da kafa kâğıtları varmış. Komutan yazılı olan her şeye uzun uzun baktıktan sonra işaret parmağıyla içlerinden birini işaret etmiş. O kişinin ellerinin bağı açılmış, iki asker koluna girip uzaklaştırmışlar. Bazıları başlarını çevirip işaret parmağıyla seçilen adamın gidişine bakmış. Dedem İvrayim de bakmış. Birkaç silah sesi duyulmuş. Dedem İvrayim gözlerini kapamış. Saniyeler içinde rüyalar kadar inandırıcı bir kâbus görmüş. Yan yana uzanmış cesetler ve komutanın onu gösteren işaret parmağı... Dedem İvrayim korkarak gözlerini açtığı anda yüzüne gülümseyerek bakan bir çift kara göz görmüş, gözlerin upuzun kirpikleri varmış. Sanki ölümü değil de baharı bekliyormuş gibiymiş. Duruşu uzun kış gecelerine benziyormuş. Elindeki ipi gevşetip cebinden bir çakmak çıkarmış ve dedem İvrayim'e bu sende kalsın demiş. Dedem İvrayim çakmağı cebine zorlukla yerleştirmiş.

İçlerinden biri ya hepimizi aynı anda şu çayın kenarında öldürecekler ya da bazılarımızı öldürüp bazılarımızı nahiyeye götürecekler demiş. Bu kişi tüm bunları iki komutanın konuşmasından anlamış. Dedem İvrayim'e çakmağı veren adam "Ben bugün kesin öleceğim, belki siz kurtulursunuz ama eğer hepimizi aynı anda öldürürlerse bu çocuğu aramıza alalım, yaşayacak günleri vardır, belki kurtulur," demiş.

Askerler namluları üzerlerine doğrulttuğunda bağırانlar, dua edenler, bildikleri birkaç kelimeyle yalvarıp affedilmeyi isteyenler olmuş. Komutan hâlâ elindeki kâğıtları inceliyormuş. Dedem İvrayim önce bir süre silahların namlusuna bakmış sonra büyük dedeme bakmış. Kara gözlü adam upuzun, iri yarı bir adammış ve dedeme “Korkma kurşunların sana gelmesini engelleyeceğim,” demiş. Askerlerin namlularının çemberinde ölümü bekledikleri zaman uzamış da uzamış.

Başını kâğıtlardan kaldıran komutan işaret parmağının bir hareketi ve ağzından çıkan sözlerle namluları indirtmiş ve yine bir el hareketiyle onları öldürülecekler ve bağışlanacaklar olarak ikiye ayırmış. Dedem İvrayim ve büyük dedem bağışlananlardanmış. Ben bugün kesinlikle öleceğim diyen adam ise öldürülecekler arasındaymış. Dedem İvrayim onun adını, katıldığı savaş ve isyanları sonradan öğrenmiş. Ona tüm bunları sürgün yıllarında büyük dedem anlatmış. Ama geride kalan çocukların hikâyesini hiçbir zaman öğrenememişler, bazen bazı şeyler kulaklarına geliyormuş ama emin olamıyorlarmış. Hatta çok sonraki yılların birinde büyük dedem, dedem İvrayim’e öyle bir şey yok, “Ben ardımda çocuk bırakacak adam değilim,” demiş.

Arkalarında ölenleri ve silah seslerini bırakıp yola koyulmuşlar. Dedem İvrayim yol boyunca her yerde komutanın işaret parmağını görmüş. Devletin nahiye müdürü olduğunu söyleyen takım elbiseli bir adamın karşısına çıkarılmışlar. O da tıpkı komutan gibi sizleri bağışladık demiş. Dedem İvrayim o yıllarda Türkçe bilmiyormuş, adamın konuşması tercüme edilince de yarım kulakla dinlemiş. Devletin büyüklüğünden de bahsetmiş, nahiye müdürü olmak için yaptıklarından da. Hem yapmamaları gerekenleri söylemiş hem de razı olmaları gerekenleri.

Dedem İvrayim bağışlanan hayatını bir giysi gibi üstüne giydiğinde, kendi kendine “Sahiden bizi öldürecekler miydi?” diye sormuş. “Peki niye bizi öldüreceklerdi, niye bağışladılar?” diye de sormuş. On iki yaş buzlara bir cevap bulamamış. Silahların namluları, bekleyişleri gelmiş gözünün önüne. Ölüm bir el hareketiyle yanı başlarına gelmiş, bir el hareketiyle de gitmiş. Bazılarını yanında götürmüş bazılarını da ardında bırakmış, her şey dedem İvrayim’e çok tuhaf görünmüş. Büyük dedemle birlikte oradan uzaklaşırlarken kendi kendine “Şimdi tüm bunları ben bir günde mi yaşadım?” diye sormuş. Emanet çakmağı cebinden çıkarıp gümüş rengine ve üzerindeki işlemelere bakmış. Gün bitmek üzereymiş ama dedem İvrayim’in o günü hiçbir zaman bitmeyen, akşam çöktüğünde bile batmayan bir günmüş ve


ona hep ŐimdiŐi kadar yakın olmuŐ. Hikâyesini anlattıktan sonra bana “Canım Ezima’m” dedi, “bazı günlerin bir batımı yoktur, bir gölge olup ömrün diđer günleri üzerinde dolaŐırlar. Bırak dolaŐsınlar kızım, hayat onlara rađmen de yaŐanır.” Sonra da kuru kuru öksürdü ve “Bak 73 yaŐındayım,” deyip hüznü bir tebessümle göz kırptı

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**İşlemeli Çakmak / The Engraved Lighter**

My grandfather Ivrayim's day would start in the early hours of morning, as it had any other day leading up to today, in a place resembling a hayloft beside an old manor. Of course, there were stories like this before, similar to every story where an unspoken precedent is set. In the same way, how it is unclear how a story will conclude in the end. In a place that resembled a hayloft, were five bales of hay, two sickles, a few shovels, three pickaxes, a grey horse with a broken left leg and my grandfather Ivrayim with nine other children. And in the ceiling of this place with five bales of hay, that my grandfather Ivrayim likened to a hayloft, one of the beams of the ceiling were cracked.

When my grandfather Ivrayim recounts that day, he remembers that the children were sleeping together, huddled as if they were one body. The patchwork baggy trousers they were wearing seemed to blanket them as one cover. Their arms were wrapped around each other like tree branches. Without my grandfather Ivrayim knowing what awaited them, he was aware however that death was not far away. As if he was just waiting for the rain any other day when dark clouds would cover the sky. Where it could rain at any moment, but just as easily the clouds could disappear and dissipate. At the same time, he had the feeling of not dying, that came to him shining brightly but would just as quickly fade away. Caught between these two feelings is life itself like that of an elderly man gasping for breath and stifling the noise of his dry cough by pulling his quilt over his head, awaiting the angel of death, *Azrail* (Israel). Grandfather Ivrayim was afraid of death like that of anyone his age on this earth since the ages of Noah, who understands that death is not far off.

Behind a locked door, listening without understanding the noises beyond it, the nine children before falling into slumber, imagined for themselves, plan upon plan for the days of tomorrow. Plans that could take them to far away places, where the stories of adults are told and listened to. Where they could stay behind a locked door, as if nothing was about to happen. As if the soldiers could just walk away. They all knew of stories like this. Where soldiers in a crowd, could accept their defeat and leave. Where perhaps the peoples of Demanin armed with Mauser rifles, could come and rescue them. That they are able to escape, should the soldiers forget to lock the door or one of them manages to unlock it from inside. It would be snowing but it shouldn't be that hard for them to find the homes of their villages. Without being caught by wolves or avoiding being swallowed up by avalanches they

would transverse valleys and mountains. They would have various predictions of questions of: “how far is far away? How come people speak another language? When would they understand, and how would it be after death? How strange it was to disappear while living and to be buried while talking?” When they got tired of searching for answers to their questions, one of them would take them to the realm of fairytales, where there are foxes, jinns, round-breasted women, beautiful faced girls and one delicious food after the other. And once they got tired of these fairytales, they snuggled up together and slept.

While my grandfather Ivrayim slept, my great-grandfather after crossing several villages and valleys where one ends and the other begins, snow-capped mountains and frozen rivers, arrived at the old manor. He sat there waiting in anticipation and hope for the soldiers on duty, to fall asleep and go to one of the rooms nearby, in front of the warm crackling wood stove. Even when he began to feel sleep coming over his cold body like a warm blanket, he did not for one moment take his eyes off of the soldiers on duty. Across the meadows he sat thinking about the roads that he had come from and the days he had yet to live, while awaiting the arrival of spring. He breathed in the smell of fresh grass, watched the wild ducks swim and the birds take off in flight. He was taken back to a time when he would fish with my grandpa Ivrayim around the village, Meyman. He imagined eating the walnuts in the *Aşure* pudding and watering the fields. Sipping his tea with my great-grandmother while staring into the embers of a fire. To the point, where when he saw one of the soldiers trying to warm his cold fingers by blowing on them, he thought to offer a cup of tea to the soldier to warm himself up. Then he saw the sadness my great-grandmother was hiding behind her scowling eyes and returned to the roads and days that he had come from. On the road he came from he had gotten caught in the fog, and thought to turn back while wondering in hesitation and how he lost his way to the village where he had been told his son with the other children had been taken. When he lost his way he thought of all that he had lived in the last couple days. He pondered the rhythm of life that had been disturbed by the sound of guns, how what was day and night had become unclear. And once the snow became a hill on their shoes and the snowflakes like a tiny bird on a tree branch on their shoulders, the soldiers on duty walked towards the old mansion where smoke was rising from its chimneys. And just as my great-grandfather was about to step towards the warehouse next to the mansion, other soldiers came out, their faces flushed from the warmth of the stove flames. While he stared at the coming and going soldiers, he cursed his uselessly waiting. He came around the back of

the mansion from where he had been hiding. In the chilling cold and falling snow he did not see any guards behind the mansion which was being used as their headquarters. He took a deep breath and cautiously step by step, approached the place where my grandfather and the other children were locked up. From the branches of a crisscrossed tree, my great-grandfather loosened the nails of the window of the place which my grandfather Ivrayim called a hayloft because of the five bales of hay in it with his teeth, and millimeter by millimeter removed them with his nails. When he removed the wooden shutter of the window and looked inside, he saw the grey horse with his left leg broken. It took some time to get through the tiny window, like it had when he removed the nails from the wood millimeter by millimeter. In the silence he was so buried in this intricate work that he lost all connection with time. He had no idea in his mind how long had passed at that moment once he entered and followed it. For all he knew it could have been a brief moment or a very long time.

While he looked at the children sleeping cuddled together it was as if he was looking at a small stream flowing over stones. Each of the children's faces, similar to those stones, looked like each other. My great-grandfather turning to the window, wondered when did these children whose first cries had even been different, become similar to each other like stones. He asked "How God has this come to pass? Or is it not a result of time but that of being locked up together which has made these children look like one another?" My great-grandfather looked at the faces of the nine children one by one, but no matter how much he looked, he could not recognize my grandfather Ivrayim. He seemed to remember his son in his memories—the mole on his chin, his thin upper lip and drooping ears but as he looked at the children's faces it was as if he forgot all of these images and facts about his son. He prayed to God to show him the way. No road appeared though, he closed his eyes and tried to imagine my grandfather Ivrayim in my great-grandmother's lap, a real and familiar dream as familiar to him as his own reflection in the mirror. As soon as he opened his eyes from his prayers the dream disappeared, as if he had never had a son named Ivrayim, and therefore could not recognize his son among the children curled up together sleeping.

He counted the children, there were nine. Never mind all of them, he knew he couldn't even take one child more aside from his son. Everywhere, the mountains and rocks were full of soldiers and informants. When whether he would be able to take his son or not was all left up to chance, where could he possibly go with nine children? He didn't have a Mauser rifle, even if he did he didn't even know how to use it properly. It would be



impossible to hide nine children, their tracks wouldn't be hard to find. Maybe he would lose his son again halfway. Or similar to the days of the massacre, he wouldn't be able to carry his son's weakened body and he would fall down the mountain. Or he could be killed by a soldier's bullet. In which case he would appear as a spirit in front of my great-grandmother. He would say: "Look, I am dead, but I brought you Ivrayim, your favorite son." Of course, he wouldn't say "There were nine children, and at first I could not recognize Ivrayim." He wouldn't say that; that was not the kind of thing you would say to my great-grandmother.

He raised his hands to the sky and asked God, "What sin have I committed for you to make me forget the face of my son?" Turning his back on the children, he seemed to see his son's face on the walls, the haybales, even the groomed body of the gray horse. He tried to comfort himself by saying it was because of fatigue. Is it even possible that children that come from different parents could possibly look alike? He looked at his fingers as if to answer his question; they were all different from each other, but he could feel the same ache of cold on each finger. Is that the answer? he asked. If these children were similar to each other in their pain and fears, then did that mean that everyone living in these lands resembled each other first and then those of Karbala? Was this the reason for the cruelty they experienced for days, the massacre they suffered from, the fear that crushed their souls, the hunger that scraped their stomachs? Was it so the pain would make them resemble each other, so that there wouldn't be any difference between them? As my great-grandfather stood there asking question after question, an uneasiness completely overcame him. One by one he searched his memories for the faces he had seen throughout his life. Not one of them looked like the other. He took a deep breath and bit the tips of his aching fingers. Countless people have come and gone from this world where even the face of the deceased is not given to a newborn, so how is it possible that these children who have lived far from each other without seeing each other have the same face when they were never made aware of this? Then he said to himself "I cannot be sure of that, maybe those who were never meant to see each other their whole lives were given the same face. He said that "perhaps the face of the dead on one end of the world after a while is the same face given to someone born on the other side of the world. He became consumed with the idea that everyone has the same face which he had never told himself before. He thought to make his idea more believable than it was, like as if when habits are acquired, faces begin to change.



“Ah Ali” he said in a desperate, slightly resentful voice... as if Prophet Muhammed Ali was sleeping next to him and just couldn’t wake up. “I am aware that my eyes are not seeing properly. I am like those who lose their way in the dark night; please show me the way.” And as he prayed it was as if a way became visible. This way resembled a day when the redness of the sun hits a large black stone, it had no meaning for him. When he heard the voices of the soldiers on duty, he took a few steps towards the door, holding his breath he listened to the soft sounds of snowflakes falling on the roof of the hayloft and the sound of sliced bread being bitten into. “How is it possible that I hear these voices?” he said, not understanding why.

He said to himself, “let me take one of the children and go”. This of course was not even an option. Even if he didn’t recognize his son, my great-grandmother certainly would. Even if she couldn’t recognize anyone, certainly my great-grandmother’s older brother would. He was just about to touch the child next to him when he gave up. It would be easy to just leave behind a sleeping child and go but to a woken child he certainly couldn’t say “sleep child, I will just grab my son and go.” Even in the face of death, you can’t leave a child staring behind you.

My great-grandfather took a few steps back from where he had been, but he still could not recognize his son. He took a few steps forward, but nothing changed. He prayed and clung to his despair like a shepherd would to their protective felt clothing (*kepenek*). This must mean my son is not here...” “Of course,” he said, “why would my son Ivrayim be confined somewhere with the orphans whose fathers had died while I’m living. So, it seems they lied for gold coins.” When he realized that some people would lie not just for gold but for even two handfuls of flour, it was as if a heavy burden was lifted from his shoulders. When the question returned to then, where was Ivrayim, it was an even heavier burden on his shoulders, and he fell to his knees and stayed like that. A voice from inside him said stay and live whatever the fate of these children is. Another voice said something else, and my great-grandfather struggled between these voices inside him.

When my great-grandfather wanted to listen to one of the voices, there was my grandfather Ivrayim running in his dream. As Ivrayim slowed down because he was out of breath, my great-grandfather was standing in front of the window when a decision was made for him as he listened to the voices of the soldiers on duty. At that moment my grandfather

Ivrayim recognized his father from his back which was turned towards him, and then my great-grandfather heard his son's voice and embraced him at the same time. After he embraced him, that day without a sunset—which for the rest of my grandfather Ivrayim's life would be as close as it is now—would become like his shadow.

In that prolonged moment as they hugged, gazing at each other, without looking back they escaped out the window, walked, ran, bent down, and sometimes hid and crawled past places quickly. The prolonged moment ended when my grandfather Ivrayim fell to the ground out of exhaustion and his shoes came off. My great-grandfather lifted his son from the place he had fallen, put his shoes back on and carried him on his back. Father and son walked in the snow like a man with two heads until they found a place to hide.

In the light that filtered through a cave, my great-grandfather looked intently at my grandfather Ivrayim for fear of forgetting his face again. In the blue eyes and smile of my grandfather Ivrayim though, my great-grandfather forgot that he had ever not recognized his son among the nine children. But this moment of respite did not last long; he worried that once my grandfather Ivrayim's fatigue subsided he would inquire about the other children. This anxiety he felt so deeply in his heart that my great-grandfather thought it was as if they had come to this land full of soldiers and officials to make him sinful. As he thought like this without shedding a single tear, he bawled his eyes out.

As the sun's rays filtered through the mouth of the cave, the glow of the water drops mixed with the vapor coming off their clothes. My great-grandfather took out a piece of bread from his sweater, wrapped in cloth and offered it to my grandfather Ivrayim. The bread had become wet. My grandfather Ivrayim handed a piece of the wet bread to my great-grandfather. In three bites he ate the small piece that he had kept for himself. Then he laid his head on my great-grandfather's knees. Despite wanting to he couldn't sleep and was between something like daydreaming and dreaming.

As soon as they heard the sound of warring gunfights, they hid behind the rock inside the cave. Through two holes on that rock, you could see what was happening on the other slope as if it [the rock] had been preparing for those days to come for years. Through those two holes and the icicles at the entrance of the cave my grandfather watched the soldiers stationed on the opposite mountain. My grandfather Ivrayim, on the other hand, leaned against a rock and was looking at the lines in his palm.

From the mouth of the cave my great-grandfather and grandfather Ivrayim listened to the sound of the soldiers leaving their positions and fleeing. When they set out from the cave, my grandfather Ivrayim could not recognize the valley they passed through on their way to the plateaus nor the village at the end of the valley. He felt it was not as if they were strangers that had come from far away but that with his father together, my grandfather Ivrayim was being taken to places he had never heard or known of. When my great-grandfather said that the valley is covered in snow and that they burned down the village that's why he didn't recognize these places, my grandfather Ivrayim nodded in agreement, but this new information did not make him forget the alienation he felt from those places. As they continued on their way in the snow, my grandfather Ivrayim, through the eyes of spring, gazed at the trees weighed down by snow and the roads covered with snow. With his index finger, my great-grandfather pointed out the roads they were passing, and said that before dark they would arrive at the place where my great-grandmother and the others were hiding. My grandfather Ivrayim was tired and hungry. When he looked at the sun above them and how it would pass through the clouds, he picked up his pace. My great-grandfather also picked up his pace. He remembered the children who were still locked up. While they were in the cave, when a bullet hit a rock nearby, my great-grandfather was happy to have left those children behind and was distraught for bringing his own son so close to death. But as they stepped up their pace, he became embarrassed that he had taken his son somewhere safe and left the other children behind. To avoid his son from seeing his shame he told him old tales.

Afterwards, and of course while telling this story, neither my great-grandfather nor my grandfather Ivrayim, could remember at what point they started acting so carelessly in the face of death, and how they did not hear the voices of the soldiers. From his sickbed my grandfather Ivrayim as he retold the story, imagined that perhaps the reason they couldn't remember is because as they walked with the others together in the circle of soldiers stuck in what seemed an increasing amount of time, they simultaneously were overjoyed by the fact that they were getting closer to the place where the other villagers were hiding. But between the shouting of a soldier, the butt of their gun, and the returning fear, the reason they couldn't remember what happened to them is perhaps because comparatively up to that point nothing had occurred.

My grandfather Ivrayim's hands were tied together, as he walked with the others in the circle of soldiers. My great-grandfather's hands and the others were also tied. Together

with them, there were a few more people from Meymen. Some of them were from neighboring villages. But my grandfather Ivrayim didn't know most of them. When he considered what he had been through since yesterday he feared that he would be separated from my great-grandfather again. They walked without knowing where they were going. Since their hands were tied to each other by rope, they each had to raise their foot and put it down at the same time, when this harmony was broken there would be those that would lose their balance, fall and have to get back up.

When they reached a plain where a fine stream flowed, they stopped. Their whispers along with their footsteps were silenced. The soldiers oscillated between talking loudly and waiting silently. The commander of the soldiers spoke; even though my grandfather Ivrayim did not understand what he was saying, when everyone sat down, he also sat down.

The commander, who asked them to sit, had papers with some names written on them. Some of the men with their hands tied had documents, permits or identification in their pockets. After the commander took a long look at everything that was written on the papers, he pointed to someone among them. That person's hands were untied, and two soldiers grabbed him by his arm and took him away. Some of them turned their heads and looked where the man who had been pointed at was taken away. My grandfather Ivrayim also looked. Then the sound of a few gunshots was heard. My grandfather Ivrayim closed his eyes. Within seconds he had a nightmare as convincing as any dream. Dead bodies lying side by side and the commander's index finger pointing at him... When out of fear my great-grandfather opened his eyes, he was met with a pair of black eyes with long eyelashes, smiling at him. It seemed as if the owner of those eyes was waiting for spring instead of death. They were standing as if it was a long winter's night. The black-eyed stranger loosened the rope tied to his hands, and took out of his pocket, an engraved lighter and said to my grandfather Ivrayim to keep it. With some difficulty my grandfather Ivrayim managed to put the engraved lighter in his pocket.

"They will either kill us all at the same time at the edge of this stream, or they will kill some of us and take some of us to the township." said someone among them. The person who called out seemed to have understood all this from the speech of the two commanders. The man who gave the engraved lighter to my grandfather Ivrayim said, "I will die today for

sure; maybe you will survive, but if they kill us all at the same time, let's take this child among us. He has many more days to live; he may survive."

When the soldiers pointed their barrels at them, there were people who shouted, prayed, pleaded with the few words they knew and asked for forgiveness. The commander was still examining the papers in his hand. My grandfather Ivrayim first looked for awhile at the barrels of the guns and then looked at my great-grandfather. "Don't be afraid, I will stop the bullets from hitting you" said the tall and burly black-eyed man to my grandfather. As they awaited death from the barrels of the guns of the circle of soldiers, it was as if time had stopped.

Raising his head from the papers, the commander with unknown words coming out of his mouth, gestured with his index finger for the barrels to be lowered and then signaled for everyone to be divided into those who were to be killed and those to be forgiven. My grandfather Ivrayim and my great-grandfather were among those who were chosen to be forgiven. The man who said that "I will definitely die today" was among those who were to be killed. My grandfather Ivrayim would come to learn later the man's name, and the wars and rebellions he participated in. My great-grandfather would talk of him throughout the years of their exile. But they never learned of the story of the children who were left behind. Sometimes they would hear of things, but they could never be sure. To the point where, in one of those following years, my great-grandfather denied that such a thing had occurred to my grandfather Ivrayim, "I am not the type of man to leave a child behind," he would say.

That day, leaving behind them the sound of gunshots and bodies dropping, they set off towards the town. The whole way my grandfather Ivrayim kept seeing the commander's index finger as if it were everywhere. They were then taken to a man in a suit who said he was the district director of the state. Exactly like the commander, he said "We forgive you." At the time my grandfather Ivrayim did not speak Turkish, and when the man's speech was translated, he listened with only half an ear. The man raved about the greatness of the state, and what he had done to become the town manager. He outlined for them what they shouldn't do and what they should consent to doing.

My grandfather Ivrayim who wore his newly granted life like a garment of clothing asked himself, "Were they really going to kill us? In that case, why were they going to kill us and why did they spare us?" At the age of twelve he could not find an answer to these

questions. The barrels of those guns and the time they waited came to his mind. With a simple hand gesture death had come and gone. It had taken some of them with it, and it had left some behind. All this seemed very strange to my grandfather Ivrayim. With my great-grandfather as they walked away together, he asked himself, “Did I just live all of this in one day?” He took the lighter bestowed to him out of his pocket and looked at the silver color and engravings on it. The day was about to end, but that day for my grandfather will never end. The sun will never set even when evening falls, and it will always be as close to him as it has been up to now.

Once he finished telling his story he said to me, “My dear Ezima, there are some days that do not have sunsets, and they become like your shadow and wander around with you for the rest of the days of your life. Let them wander, my daughter, in spite of them life can go on.” Then he dryly coughed and said, “See look, I’m 73,” and winked with a sad smile.

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She was awarded the first prize for story writing by the Aix-Marseilles Mediterranean Forum 2005 in which the theme was Violence Against Women. Her stories have been published in various literary magazines such as Siya, Mahsus Mahal, and Notus Publishing in Turkey.

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