7. The Strait

My parents were not waiting for me when, bewildered, I pushed through the glass doors from Customs. I had flown British Air, changing planes in London; every time flight attendants or captain mentioned our destination they mispronounced it. Even as the jet descended into Turkish air space I heard no announcements in my native language, only overheard it from an excited child some rows ahead and across the aisle. Then, in the airport named for the father of my country, within ten minutes I saw three portraits of Atatürk. The signs too I recognized with a start as if I'd never thought about it before – not simply the language, the alphabet, but the typefaces: unornamented, graceless, sans-serif styles that seemed to rebel against a perfumed memory of Arabic calligraphy. Turkish smells and sounds and voices overswept me. Even the air on my tongue (I stood openmouthed, breathless) tasted indefinably, indisputably Turkish.

My parents had not come to meet me. Shifting the weight of the flight bag on my shoulder, hefting my suitcase, I peered around the international terminal. Everywhere families reunited with glad cries and eager embraces. There were ornamental kiosks displaying huge backlit photos: Aya Sofya, Topkapı Sarayı, the Covered Bazaar, the Bosporus Bridge. There was music in the background, muffled, sappy electronic arabesk with an overwrought soprano vocalist. There

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were jandarmalar in uniform, the same uniform I had worn for my national service; men and women and children in stylish western attire and a few women in handsome long coats wearing scarves that hid their hair and pinned tightly under their chins, mustachioed men in drab, shiny suits, their collarless shirts buttoned to the neck, skullcaps clinging to cropped scalps. Nowhere was there a single member of my family. Stern Atatürk in fleecy black kalpak like a bandit or başıbozuk glowered at me unwelcomingly.

I followed the signs to a rank of telephones, then remembered I'd need a jeton and looked about for a vendor, then remembered I had only dollars and a few British pounds in my wallet. The project of dealing with currency exchange – discovering just how much value the currency had lost – was more than I could face. Then I heard my name, then I recognized a voice that made my throat ache with its familiarity, then his arms were around me, squeezing out my breath, then I was weeping on my brother's shoulder.

"I'm late," Mehmet was saying as he slapped my back with open palms, "I'm sorry, traffic's a nightmare, were you worried? What a welcome, to arrive and find nobody to greet you. Welcome back, Ziyacık, welcome home."

"Say all of that all over again," I said in English, unsteadily, "in Turkish."

Instead, holding me a little away and gazing into my eyes, he said, in Turkish, "Why are you crying?" – enough to set me off again.

Smiling through my tears, I clutched him harder. "Selamünaleyküm, kardeşim."

"Aleykümselam, sevgili kardeşim." Tender, he kissed my cheeks, licking up the tears, his mustache tickling. "I am very happy to see you."

I pounded his shoulder. My cheeks ached from smiling. "Mehmet," I said, "it's really you."

"Of course it's me. But who are you?" He cocked his chin. "I think you must be a tourist from America. May I show you a lovely carpet, efendi? Very cheap. Your grandmother will not like this at all." The edges of his thumbs scraped through my goatee, and then he pinched my ear lobes. The punctures were new, not fully healed, the gold posts heavy. I flinched. "Please tell me you

don't have ugly tattoos as well," he added.

I drew away, shrugged the strap of the flight bag off my shoulder, let it slide to the floor. "Not where Nine's likely to see them, anyway," I muttered sourly. "Where is everybody, Mehmet? I expected the whole family."

Mehmet bent to take up my bags and the leather knapsack he had set down before accosting me, bulky with books. "I had to come into town anyway, do some research at the university library this morning, so I told them not to bother. The women are all crazed anyway, preparing your welcome feast." He kept his face turned deliberately away. "Your little brothers were very angry, but I couldn't keep an eye on them all day and Sacide wouldn't hear of their coming all this way on their own."

I couldn't think why my sister should make that decision, should claim authority over Veli and İzzet. Sacide did tend toward bossiness, yet in my experience only exerted her will on Melek, too independent and tomboyish for her liking. The boys were boys, little men, and so far as Sacide had anything to do with them she indulged them. Her way of rebelling against our parents was to cultivate traditions and attitudes they scorned. The elder of my sisters, I had worried before I left for America, promised to become a woman I could not like. Shaking my head as if I were an American, I said, "Take me home, please, Mehmet."

§

The first two taxi drivers Mehmet asked to carry us to Emirgan politely refused him: it was too far, efendim, too late in the day, they would never find a fare back into the city. Before he could offer to pay double fare, I asked the third, "Eminönü?" The man agreed happily, tossed my bags into the trunk, beamed as I urged Mehmet into the back seat. "I want to take the ferry," I told my brother. "I want to stand out on deck drinking tea and watch the shore lights go by. I saw too many motorways and ring roads in Massachusetts."

"It will take much longer," Mehmet grumbled, "traffic through the city will be horrible," but he acceded to my whim.

Once we were clear of the airport, traffic into Stambul was not all that heavy. At the end of the working day, everyone was heading out, not in. The driver naturally chose the traditional touristic route, through the old land walls at the Cannon Gate and along Divan Yolu, the imperial way, toward Sarayı Burnu. After dark, I saw little to tell me this was İstanbul rather than any other city in the world, despite absence of high rises and proliferation of neon signs. Not that I knew so many cities. It was none of the lamp nights so the grand mosques were not illuminated, no strings of white bulbs netting together their minarets, nor was it high tourist season with son et lumière at Sultanahmet. I leaned against my brother, my head on his shoulder, holding his warm, solid hand against my thigh. "I'll call from Eminönü," he said. "İzzet and Veli can come down to the ferry landing, help carry your bags up the hill."

"Sacide will allow that?"

"She's not that bad."

"There's something you're not telling me, Mehmet."

His grip on my hand tightened for a moment but he said nothing. Along Divan Yolu we would pass below the hilltop campus of İstanbul University, which I might have attended in a different life, if I hadn't gone to Ege in İzmir, or Ankara, or Mehmet's own alma mater, Boğaziçi, on the heights above Bebek a little way up the Bosporus. But I had chosen to go, and our parents chose to send me, to the United States, where I was out of their sight and my family out of mine.

It seemed I was wide awake though very tired – I had been travelling for many hours. I could grasp no notion of the day or the hour. It seemed Mehmet and I had been riding in the back seat of an İstanbul taxi for as long as I could remember, as if I had never left. There was nothing we needed to say for we knew everything about each other, everything there was to know. Yawning, I leaned harder against my brother.

Glancing forward, I caught the eye of the driver in his rearview mirror, gazing back on us with disinterested approval or affection. A string of blue plastic prayer beads dangled from the mirror's stem. An American cabbie, I knew, seeing us cuddled together like kittens in his back

seat, would take us for a pair of homosexuals and be disgusted or enraged. He would be half wrong, but also half right. I had not told my brother this thing about myself. I didn't know how. I didn't know how he could understand me – I had not understood myself before I left Turkey, and here, back again, it seemed improbable, incomprehensible. There were no words, there was no precedent.

The driver turned his head and, in the mirror, I saw more of his face. In repose, his features fell into sternness but the signs of good humor were as clear as one could wish, the brackets around his wide mouth and wider mustache, the squint lines about his deeply set eyes. He had not shaved today and his stubble was salted with white, though the mustache was as black and glossy as if it had been doctored with shoe polish. The collar of his shirt was grubby and the knit watchcap pulled low made his ears stick out. He looked back to the mirror, found me observing him, and smiled quickly – as fast as if it were reflex but really, I thought, with calculation. "Where are you coming from, efendim?" he asked.

"From America. I'm at university there."

His broad grin said how fine it was that a young man should attend university – in the United States, no less – and I loved him for his thoughtless charity. "Ah," he said, "New York? Or California?"

"Boston. North of New York."

"Yes," he said, "I know Boston" – but clearly it was a pity I hadn't known enough to choose Manhattan or Los Angeles, as if I were to pick provincial Ankara over eternal İstanbul – although, really, it was the other way around, as far as I could tell. "I've driven many Americans. It must be very strange for you, efendim – they are a peculiar people."

Not nearly so peculiar as they find me, I might have said. "I am very happy to be home, amcam."

Shutting his eyes briefly, he dropped his chin in agreement and murmured, "Maşallah," closing our little conversation with natural grace. Still, when they opened again and after he had

checked the street, his eyes sought out my reflection again in the mirror. I smiled to show that, unlike an American, I was not offended or perturbed by his staring at me, and squeezed my dozy brother's hand. Mehmet grumbled unintelligibly.

The taxi swung left, dodging and honking, onto the avenue that would take us to the ferry terminal on the bank of the Golden Horn. Once the driver had regained mastery of steering wheel and clutch, he applied his authority to the accelerator and his eyes wandered to the mirror again. On the advice of one of my Harvard professors, an Iranian, I had lately been reading classical Arabic and Farsi poetry. The English translations of Abū Nuwās, Farid, Ghazzāli, 'Irāqī, and the others struck me as either overworked or underdone – I have not much patience for poetry in any case. Overall, I found it more rewarding to read around than in the poets' works, commentary rather than text. Still, some of their phrases, images, concepts stayed with me, and although I doubted the taxi driver was any kind of Sufi or mystic, there was in his gaze, the persistence of his gaze, something that made me think of the nazar of the poets: that gazing upon the face of the beloved, a stare more active than reactive although it was seldom carried further (in the poem, at any rate), that might stand in for – represent – witnessing the glory of God. Often enough, more often than not, the beloved so contemplated was a boy of perfect beauty.

I was no boy, if that short and small, nor beardless, nor were my eyes black and languishing but dangerously blue. In Turkish, nazar referred to the evil eye. Perhaps the driver was no more than perplexed by my earrings and goatee, western fashions not yet widely adopted by Turks however westernized. Perhaps I was fascinating by way of being ugly – perhaps he had no thought of wishing to fuck my tender, boyish ass.

The truth was I could not now look on his handsome, weathered face, the full lip below bushy mustache, the intent, liquid eyes, without imagining it. The truth was I relished the image of myself prone below him and his prick standing up big and proud and eager before he pushed it in, then the flexing of his buttocks and lean flanks as he took his pleasure. I sat back more firmly in my seat and gingerly moved Mehmet's hand from my thigh to his knee. The truth was,

however sympathetic he might seem, however gentled by lovesickness or exalted sentiment, I would not trust a Turk to fuck me. I would very happily suck him off or myself fuck him, for he was good looking, gave every evidence of being sweet tempered, and I could trust myself to keep his pleasure as much in mind as my own, but the contrary was not to be hoped for.

I lowered my eyes and for the rest of the short ride to Eminönü, though continuing to feel the driver's eyes on me, concentrated on imagining myself as Turkish and manly as could be. When the taxi pulled over to the curb I was ready, roused my brother from his stupor, fetched my bags from the trunk without the driver's aid. After Mehmet paid and tipped him, I added an American five-dollar bill, for which he thanked me effusively. Then my brother and I entered the terminal, where I begged a few thousand lira from him to buy tea at the café and he went to check the schedule, purchase our tickets, phone the house in its suburb up the strait.

Waiting, I gazed out the café windows over the Bosporus, busy with shipping even at night. The lights of tankers and freighters and ferries appeared as hasty cousins of the distant lamps of Üsküdar in Asia – as if the ships were an early, motile, individual, aquatic life stage of those great reefs of stone, concrete, steel, glass on either bank. In Boston, the Charles was a placid pond, enclosed, ruffled at most by racing sculls, while the town turned its back on the harbor that had given it birth, hiding the amniotic waters behind a screen of skyscrapers. My city lives and dies with the Bosporus; in Turkish we call it simply the Strait of İstanbul, but boğaz means also throat: sucking sustenance, life force. When Fatih Sultan Mehmet built his fortress at Rumeli Hisarı, twin and complement to his grandfather Beyazit Yıldırım's Anadolu Hisarı in Asia, he said he had with that stroke cut the throat of Byzantium.

§

"Ayfer will come by for tea tomorrow, I think, or the next day," Mehmet said, "to meet you." He leaned against the rail, leaning out and peering upstream into the head wind, toward the Black Sea. His words whipped past me, gone as soon as uttered.

"Your fiancée?" I could not get used to the idea he was to be married. My mother had

announced the engagement in a letter only a few weeks before. Mehmet himself, in his frequent e-mails, had said nothing until I asked. "Not tonight?"

"Tonight's just family."

"Uncles and aunts and cousins?"

"Possibly. Probably a few. İsmet and Rebekah and little Süleyman – İsmet never misses a party. Besides, you're his favorite nephew."

"He's my favorite uncle. He's like you, only not so serious." I squeezed my brother's shoulder, pulling him back from the brink. "I can't help but adore him."

Mehmet snorted. "He's an idiot. Charming, I'll grant you, but a fool. What you and Rebekah see in him I don't understand. He just got fired again."

"Oh, dear."

Looking about for a place to set down his empty tea glass, Mehmet avoided my eyes. "Not to worry," he said. "Baba will save his ass again."

"He ought to stop fooling himself. Rebekah does a much better job of supporting them than he ever could. She enjoys her work."

Mehmet laughed, a little eruption in his unfathomable mood. Neither of us need bother saying İsmet would sooner castrate himself and feed his only son to rats than allow his wife – his American wife – so to shame herself. Shameful enough she worked at all. He had never dared admit to his parents that Rebekah had insisted Süleyman, son of a Jewish mother, born in the United States, was a Jew and must have a proper bris. The boy was seven now. Soon enough, his Turkish grandmother would start to lay plans for his sünnet, his Muslim circumcision ceremony, and what would İsmet say then? Süleyman's American grandparents called him Solly.

"Will I like her?" I asked abruptly.

"Who?" Mehmet flinched, still not looking at me. "Rebekah?"

"Ayfer. My future sister."

"Ziya, please, you have to decide that for yourself. Does it matter? It all happened so fast, I

don't know anymore how much I like her."

When I took the glass from him, Mehmet crossed his arms over his chest, hunched his shoulders. Both my hands were encumbered: I could not embrace my brother. "What's wrong, Mehmetciğim? Tell me what's bothering you. Is it Ayfer?"

"I'm cold." He shuddered elaborately. "It's going to rain – or snow. I'm cold and very tired, Ziya. Let's go in." He turned away.

I followed him. In the main cabin of the ferry were prosperous bureaucrats and businessmen going home for the evening, young people heading for expensive shoreline restaurants. They drank tea or rakı or water, nibbled at toasted nuts, smoked fragrant cigarettes, read their newspapers, magazines, books, listened to the music of their Walkmans, talked, talked, talked. We found seats that were not particularly private but not in the middle of anyone's conversation, arranged our baggage about us. Across the way, two business-suited men in adjacent seats argued politics. The one who despised the prime minister stroked his friend's hand, gentle, counting off his points on the other's fingers.

"I'm so tired," Mehmet said, leaning back and closing his eyes. "Aren't you tired, Ziya?" He spoke in English, as we tended to do in a crowd.

"I slept on the plane. Anyway, you're forgetting, I'm eight hours earlier than you, for me it's mid-morning."

"I don't think I've slept for a week. Baba wants to start work in March. I can't seem to pull it together and he can't apply for the permits till I finish."

"Mehmet," I said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

He sighed. "The Bodrum house."

"Oh. In March?" I had never brought myself to believe the possibility of his actually building the house he had been designing for so long – of the old house's being demolished to make way for it.

"He wants it finished by June."

That's not enough time, I wanted to say. "Why?"

Mehmet's lips tightened, his eyes began to widen, for an instant he appeared to be about to panic but covered his mouth and coughed thickly instead. I leaned forward. He waved me back, peremptory. "I'm getting married in June," he said after another moment. "Baba and Ana say they want to give us the house. There has to be a house for them to give." He pressed his skull against the back of the seat, lifting his chin. "Of course, we can't live there, I have to be based in the city, Ayfer's work is here, but they keep saying it."

A moment before, we had meant my brother and myself – or, stretched to its broadest compass, our family. I stared at my hands. "I thought you were working up a place for them to retire."

"I want a drink." Rising to his feet, Mehmet looked down at me. "Stay here, I'll be right back." As he edged behind, he paused to pat my head, ruffle my hair. "I'm going down for three or five days next week. Would you like to come with me?"

"Of course. I'd love to."

"Ziya." His two hands held my head still, rigid. He spoke in Turkish and I had somehow to translate the little sentence to make sense of it. "Ana's ill." Holding my head, still, he bent to press his cheek against my skull. "That's what's wrong. She wanted to tell you herself. I can't.… I am a poor actor."

"That's why you're getting married," I said dully, but he had released me and gone.

I stared for some minutes at my feet in their American black canvas sneakers, lolling unconsidered at the ends of legs clad in American blue denim. The jeans were Levi's, from San Francisco, a city people who had seen both told me resembled İstanbul. My coat, too, bore an American label, if it had been tailored in Hong Kong. I could not return to my home without carrying the United States on my back. Anyone who saw me would take me for a foreigner. In all my family only my mother and I had blue eyes. Even my undershorts were American – my stylized haircut, my facial hair, my earrings. The four words that ran through my mind were

English, pronounced in a broad Massachusetts accent: My mother is dying.

"What is it you're doing?"

I raised my eyes. The man peering at me held a cigarette between forefinger and thumb, squinted through its smoke. "What are you doing?" he asked again.

I thought I had never seen him before, but he used informal address as if we were friends. My hands, I realized, were fumbling at the post through my right ear lobe. I lowered them to my lap. I had not been able to remove the tight backing; the lobe would be inflamed, the gold shining more brightly in contrast, and I should swab it with disinfectant for who knew what agents of contagion my hands had encountered.

"You don't know me, do you, Ziya," the young man was saying. He took a long drag on his cigarette. "Well, I'm sure I've changed as much as you – I recognized your brother first." He smiled pleasantly as the smoke cleared from around his face. "Cem," he said, as if such a common name should distinguish himself from any other Cem I might have known.

In fact it did. "Cem from Robert College? Cem Arslanoğlu?" I asked and his smile broadened. He had been a boy when I knew him at school, as had I, though he was a year the elder, a year ahead. "You are well?" I asked, taking refuge in formality. I didn't know what to make of him, standing there and genially smiling, smoking. I noted that he was nicely dressed, affluent and informal, clean shaven and barbered. I noted that he wore a plain silver band on his left ring finger. In school he had tried to look like an American; now his models appeared to be European – French or Italian.

"Indeed, indeed. And yourself? I heard you had gone to the United States." Taking a last drag, he looked about for a place to stub out his cigarette. "May I join you for a moment?"

"Of course."

I looked away as he took a seat, twisting my hands in my lap. His parents and mine were acquainted. In school I had admired him, as small boys are prone to admire larger, for he was tall and broad and handsome, friendly as only those with no doubts at all can afford to be; he

was an athlete and, though not much of a scholar, academically competent. Literally translated, his surname meant son of the lion, as if a grandfather had expected just this descendant. One afternoon, inexplicably, Cem had invited me to his house to watch an American movie on his new VCR; his elder brother had brought the tape back from the States, he said, so it was neither dubbed nor subtitled and, he implied with naïve calculation, we might consider watching it an adjunct to our language studies.

Cem's family lived in a luxurious, western-style apartment on the heights above the Asian shore, near the bridge. The brothers – they were the only children – each had his own room, his own TV and VCR. There was nowhere to sit in Cem's bedroom except on his big bed, reclining side by side in a mound of soft pillows. The movie was inane, slow moving, unexciting. I did not notice at what point Cem's arm lodged in my lower back, when he urged me to lean against his shoulder. I must have dozed off, because it was dim in the room after he closed the blinds and climbed back onto the bed, rocking it. Helping me to sit up and lean against him again, Cem said, "Perhaps this one won't put you to sleep." He lit a cigarette and turned his attention to the screen. I did not notice all at once that he had removed all his clothing except his underpants.

"What was it you were doing?" the grown-up Cem asked again, startling me when I looked to find him fully clothed, lighting another cigarette, ourselves sitting at our ease in the upper lounge of a Bosporus ferry. The second video had been an American pornographic production – heterosexual, needless to say, if featuring a preliminary lesbian entanglement that puzzled and then revolted me. Before I made out much more about the male performer than that he found the women's antics exciting, I had been coaxed out of my own clothes and was unable to see the screen. Cem did not remove his underpants to fuck me, only pulled the elastic down under his balls, as if baring his buttocks might open the possibility of my using them as he used mine.

"I was trying to take out my earrings," I muttered. My reasons had become confused.

Cem smiled amiably. He indicated my luggage and asked, "You're returning from the States?"

"Just for the winter vacation."

"And how long till you come home for good?"

"Three and a half years more as an undergraduate." I shook my head, a gesture that felt immediately wrong, for we were speaking Turkish. "Then I might stay on for a graduate degree." The possibility had not before occurred to me.

"Here's your brother," Cem said, rising to his feet.

Bearing a small tray, Mehmet made his way toward us. On the tray were two glasses of water-clear liquid over ice, a plastic bottle of water, a dish on which four grape-leaf dolmalar floated in a puddle of green oil, a bowl of shelled nuts. I rose to take it from him, saying, "Mehmet, do you remember my school friend Cem?" I set it down on the table.

"Not very well, I'm afraid," Mehmet allowed with an apologetic grimace. He shook the hand offered him, politely murmuring, "Merhaba."

Graceful, Cem indicated we should sit. "Why don't we get together one evening while you're home, Ziya?" he said. "I'll give you a call. When do you go back to the States?"

"Mid-January."

"I'll give you a call," he said again. Then, as he turned to leave us, he added, "The earrings suit you. Keep them."

"What was that about?" asked Mehmet. He had poured a little water into one of the glasses, clouding the rakı; as he swirled the glass, the fluid became opaque, milky, the pearly color of a dense Bosporus fog.

I looked after Cem. Already he had disappeared, submerged himself in a group of similarly well turned-out young men. "I was trying to take out my earrings."

"Well, that might be best." Mehmet's tone was thoughtful, judicious. He took a small sip of his rakı. "Baba's likely to think America's turned you effeminate. Sit down, Ziya. Drink. Eat. We'll be home soon."

I sat. I poured water into the rakı Mehmet had brought me, ate a dolma that seemed not as good as those I could get at either of the Turkish restaurants in Boston or any of the Greek.

"They're not healed yet. I can't take them out, they'd infect."

"Whatever you say." Mehmet blinked mildly. "Why are we speaking Turkish?" he asked, returning to our second language. "I didn't like the way he looked at you."

"Cem?"

"As if he wanted – you know, as if you were a woman in a short skirt, a tourist woman from America or Europe."

"As if he wanted to fuck me?" I took a breath, held it for a moment. "He did once."

Mehmet waved my confession away. "He was the one? But that was long ago, boys fooling around." We were grown up now, he was saying, Cem and I – I was a man, I had hair on my face, it was inappropriate, perverse, for Cem to find me desirable. Still, Mehmet eyed me narrowly a moment longer, taking in again and reconsidering his younger brother's earrings and club-goer's goatee. It is practically an article of faith in Turkey that a man should want his ass never to be penetrated simply because he will find the experience too pleasurable to resist again. Like the needle in the vein, the prick in the rectum – that first sublime rush – leads to abject addiction. Not that ultimate consequences were likely to dissuade the average Turk from taking his opportunity: it wasn't his ass, his manhood, in question – though it might well be his cousin's, his nephew's, his brother's. No eldest son, naturally, would ever submit, though it was very nearly expected of the younger. I wondered suddenly, appallingly, if Mehmet had yet had Ayfer, or anybody else, woman or boy or prostitute – if he were a virgin.

"Tell me about Ana," I said.

§

Ours was a proper Ottoman house, living quarters above, arranged around the başoda, or reception room. My mother rose from the divan under the shuttered windows when, trailing my three brothers, I came up the stairs. Crossing the başoda, house slippers silent on carpet, I stepped up into the wide, shallow, windowed alcove, low divans hugging its three walls. She was not alone – several other women sat at their ease with glasses of tea or wine, and I was aware of having

bypassed my father, uncles, men I could not be bothered to recognize – but it was to my mother alone I went and my mother who held out her hands, saying, "Merhaba, Ziya. Welcome home."

She did not appear as frail as Mehmet had led me to fear. When I stepped back from kissing her hands, the startling beauty of her hairstyle might have brought me to comment if I were greeting her after a separation of a few hours only – a trip to the beauty parlor in Nişantaşı. There was no mistaking it for her own hair, nor had I known her to be so expert with cosmetics. "Ana," I said, my voice rough. "Anacığım."

Calmly, she kissed my cheeks. "Say hello to your grandmother, dear."

I turned to my father's mother, who, legs precisely crossed, sat erect on the edge of the divan and did not rise. Her black suit and the pearls at her throat displayed how well she valued her grandson, while a severe expression revealed her disapproval. Kneeling, I took the tiny hand she offered. She flinched a little ostentatiously when my mustache brushed the papery skin, but after I touched her hand to my brow she pushed the fingers into my hair, stroked it. "It is good to see you, torunum. Please, to please an old lady, will you shave in the morning?"

"Of course, Nine, whatever you wish." I looked up. She smiled. "May I keep the mustache?"

Her chin moved slightly. "If you must."

I lowered my eyes. "And your husband's mother, Nine?"

"She is well – very old, but well. Asleep now. You may greet her tomorrow."

Then there was no help for it but to stand and face my father's sister and his brothers' wives, then my mother's sisters-in-law, each exclaiming falsely I was the handsomest, cleverest boy in the family and how had I found America and was it a shock to come home and (I had reached Rebekah and, beside her, small and sleepy and well behaved, Süleyman) did I even recognize my handsome little cousin, how he had grown up in my absence! Grinning fondly, Rebekah would not allow me to kiss her hands but insisted on embracing me, saying, "We have so much to talk about." Süleyman stared at me wide eyed, shook my hand with unnerving dignity that splintered into laughter when I took him around the waist and hoisted him over my shoulder. He was

heavier than I remembered.

Carrying him, I stepped down into the main area of the başoda and across the richly figured carpets to the end of the room that the men had claimed – that stood in now for the selamlık of a still more traditional house. Nevertheless, all the men being related to all the women, they should have been welcomed into the haremlik, where they would recline on divans and the women serve them. I handed still giggling Süleyman off to his father and turned to my own.

It was my little brothers who had grown up – they were nearly as tall as I, no great feat, and though I recognized them at a distance, identical twins being unusual, up close they seemed nearly to have become men – and my father who had changed. It was he you would take, on first impression, to be ill. His hair had gone completely grey and the new, short, youthful cut did not flatter. He had lost weight. When he smiled the pouchy skin under his eyes wrinkled, when he lowered his chin the slack flesh under his jaw showed how loose it was. "Babam," I murmured, prepared to salute him with proper filial respect, but he threw his arms around me and simply held me for a long moment. A tear fell from his cheek to my neck and slid coolly past my collarbone. He smelled of the lemon cologne bus conductors sprinkle on passengers' hands.

Holding me still about the shoulders, he displayed me to my uncles and male cousins, saying, "Look at my son the American!" The complex pride in his voice distressed me so I could only mumble, "Merhaba," in the face of all these smiles, affectionate or considering or mocking. Süleyman's father, my mother's brother, who had spent far more time in the United States than I and picked up the mannerism there, winked at me.

"Sacide!" my father called. "Bring your brother something to drink. What will you have, Ziya? Bourbon? Vodka?"

I had been to parties in Cambridge and Boston where men and women mingled easily and the young felt free to argue with their elders. This was Turkey, a Turkish family gathering, and the younger women, my sisters and their cousins, were on the far side of the room, together, apart. Sacide broke free of the group and came toward us across the great expanse of carpet. Her hands

were empty, her eyes lowered behind severe spectacles. She wore a plain blouse, a plainer skirt, her beautiful chestnut hair was drawn tightly back into a schoolgirl's braid – she looked at once younger and older than nineteen, and I imagined her leaving the house to go to classes, scrubbed face framed as stiffly by a scarf as any Catholic nun's by her starched coif. Behind her, peering across the room from among her cousins and smiling happily for me, Melek in t-shirt and dungarees looked more as I thought a teenage girl should.

"Kardeşim," Sacide said in a low voice without raising her eyes, "what may I do for you?"

"You may kiss your brother," my father said, impatient, "and say hello and welcome home, and get him something to drink."

Flushing a little, Sacide lifted her eyes to my face for only a moment.

"Sacide," I said – it seemed suddenly impossible to call her in turn kardeş, sibling. "It's good to see you. You have been well?" Formal, I kissed her warm cheeks without touching her in any other way. "How is your first year of college going?" Without the masculine obligation of national service, my sister had begun college in the same month as I. Sacide had expressed no desire to go abroad or even so far away as Ankara or İzmir, likewise scorned Boğaziçi, an American school before it was nationalized. Although it was a third-rate degree factory, conservative and restless, İstanbul University was where the friends from her Koran study group were going. "There is food, I believe," I went on in the face of her disapproving silence, "as well as drink?"

"I will bring it."

"I will come with you – you needn't serve me, Sacide."

After I had greeted my other sister and my girl cousins, when I had a plate of little delicacies and a glass of sour-cherry juice in hand, I was compelled to sit in state as if I were a vezir granting audience to supplicants, in the honored corner of the enclosed balcony above the garden. The men came to me a few at a time and I have no recollection of what I might have said to any of them. I never had a chance to speak with my mother. Little Süleyman with his own glass of juice sat beside me, eating from my plate, until İsmet and Rebekah came to say it was past his

bedtime and they must leave. My little brothers, too, said good night, and soon after, glancing across the width of the başoda, I saw that my mother and grandmother both had vanished. My father and his brothers were arguing cheerfully. Dayı Mustafa, İsmet's elder brother, talked to me about the hac he had planned for himself and his wife for the upcoming pilgrimage season. It seemed I was to add my voice to the chorus attempting to persuade his sister and her husband also to go to Mekke and Medine. The words were not spoken but I understood it would be my mother's last chance to visit the holy places.

Mehmet had been at my side for some time, quiet. When he slumped against me and uttered a small snore, Mustafa frowned and I looked at my watch. It said four o'clock – Boston time. I could not somehow work out whether it was PM or AM, but I knew it was not, in Emirgan, noon, and I yawned.

Mustafa shook Mehmet's knee, rousing him, said, "Show your brother to his bed, nephew. He's tired."

§

For a very long while I couldn't fall asleep, though my brothers' slow breathing and their warmth nearby comforted me. Before sleeping themselves, Veli and İzzet had set out fresh pyjamas for Mehmet and me, taken our quilts from the cupboard inset above the bed platform and spread them out. The boys did not stir at all when we came in. Mehmet was so groggy he could hardly unbutton his shirt. I helped him to undress, but when I tried to help him with his underpants he became sleepily petulant, pushed me aside, and, forgetting his pyjamas, clambered onto the platform, burrowed into his quilts.

After putting on my own pyjamas, I tidied our clothes away, then for a few moments simply gazed at my three brothers. Under his quilts, Mehmet was no more than a long hump, not even his head showing. The twins lay on their sides, close together, back to back, sleeping sweetly. Between them and our elder brother on the broad platform lay my own bedding, and I wondered how long it had taken them to become accustomed to my absence, to fill that space. In my dorm

at Harvard the very presence of my roommate unnerved me, and there we had separate beds: I wondered how long it would take me to become accustomed again to sleeping among my brothers.

I looked around the room. While I was away İzzet or Veli had tacked up a new poster celebrating Galatasaray's Tanju Çolak, resplendent in yellow and red, driving in one of the immaculate goals that had won him Europe's Golden Boot the previous season. I thought a few of Mehmet's renderings pinned to the walls were new, but otherwise everything was the same. I glanced at the computer on the long counter: the keyboard was laid out in Turkish fashion, including the letters my American computer lacked but lacking q, w, and x – although I recalled (a physical memory in the tendons of my hands) the sequences of keystrokes that would call up the foreign characters. Still, I doubted I could touch-type on it. There was a lush volume on Turkish interior design, the text in English and French; there were my younger brothers' mathematics and science and history textbooks and flashy soccer magazines, a volume of The Lord of the Rings, in English, purloined from my bookcase, a slim volume, in Turkish, of Koranic exegesis for youngsters.

There was a floorplan spread out on the inclined part of the desk, its curling ends anchored with scraps of masking tape, annotated with corrections and recalculations in Mehmet's hand. It took me a few minutes' peering to work out that it represented the main floor of the new Bodrum house, an odd melding of western and traditional Ottoman conventions I could not bring together in my head, make three dimensional, raise walls from, walk through. I turned out the lamp.

In darkness, I looked out through a chink in the shutters. The narrow, cobbled street below was palely lit by the moon – the earlier clouds had fled across the strait into Anatolia. In the face of the house across the way a tall, shuttered window showed a horizontal grid of flickering blue light where someone was watching TV. Down the hill where streets were wider and not closed to traffic, doubtless there was traffic, waterside and meydanı cafés and bars and clubs surely did

a certain amount of late-night business even in winter. Turning away, I walked across the room, snuggled into bed between Mehmet and – was it İzzet or Veli? In the dark, I couldn't tell.

§

"Don't," I said, waking, but didn't at once pull away from my brother's grasp, the defining fact of his hard-on pressed against my pyjama-clad buttocks, the rocking motion of his hips as he rubbed it up and back, up and back. His hot breath smelled of stale rakı and the bristles of his mustache tickled my neck. My own prick, too, was hard – it was morning, I was waking up. "Don't."

"What?" he mumbled sleepily, continuing, not stopping. "It's good. It feels good, doesn't it? I've never hurt you."

"Mehmet!" Shouldering him away, I rolled over, leaned above him, held him down. "Mehmet," I whispered, my voice hard in my throat, "do you do that to my brothers?"

He blinked, coming awake, saw who it was holding him down. "Ziya?"

I pressed my weight into my forearm, into his chest, near his throat. "Do you fuck my brothers, Mehmet?" I wanted to shout, to hit him. "I've never hurt you, you said – you've never touched me. Was it my brothers?"

"You're hurting me, Ziya," he said, puzzled.

"I'll do more than hurt you –" Enraged, I reached down with my free hand, past the stiff cylinder of the prick trapped against his belly by tight underpants, and tightly grasped his balls, squeezed them together. A shudder rolled through him, and from the abject horror of his expression I knew no-one had ever knowingly touched him there.

"Ziya, please!"

"Quietly." I pulled at his testicles, pushing them down between thighs that moved insensibly apart, knowing that and the slow friction of my arm against his penis would terrify him. "Quietly, Mehmet, they're still sleeping. Is that what you do when I'm gone, pig, fuck my brothers?"

"No!" He tried to take a breath but I pushed more weight into his chest. "No, of course not,

I've never put it in, that might hurt them – just what – Ziya, please.…"

His cheeks were blotchy, his eyes staring, tearing. When I let up a little, he gasped, then snorted, and mucus came from his nose. "You've never put it in them yet," I said, maintaining enough pressure on his chest that he couldn't get up without a struggle and continuing to tug at his balls and rub my forearm against his prick. "You will never touch them again at all, do you understand?"

"They didn't ask me to stop," he protested faintly. "I didn't hurt them."

I gave him a particularly sharp tug. "Do you understand what I'll do to you?"

"Don't!"

"How could they ask you to stop? Did you ask to start? They're just children, they knew nothing – you're their big brother, they love you, how could they ask you to stop?"

Weary and despairing of the argument, for he was my big brother too and I loved him – of the threats and the violence, I took my arm from his chest and pushed his underpants down and put my mouth on his cock. It was a good size. I had never seen Mehmet's penis hard and didn't look at it now, only licked it and sucked at it, fondled it with one hand while the other played more gently with his balls. I brought him off quickly, and after my brother's bitter semen had flooded into my mouth, down my throat, I sat up, gazed down into his scared eyes, and deliberately licked my lips. "The next time you need that," I said, "go looking for someone who can say yes as well as no, or take care of yourself."

Veli and İzzet were still sleeping innocently. I got down from the bed platform and went to the bathroom, where, despising myself, I took care of myself, then showered and, using Mehmet's razor and a steady hand, shaved off my mustache and goatee. When I returned to the bedroom he had gone without putting away his bedding.

The boys woke while I was dressing, both at once as they always had. İzzet said, "Ziya!"

"You're really here!" shouted Veli.

"We didn't dream it!"

Tousled and frisky as puppies – big puppies with no notion of the damage they could cause – they leapt on me, and I hugged them to me as if I'd never let them go.

§

My mother stayed late in bed, and when my father left for the office he said she'd asked for me to come say good morning. "Where's Mehmet?" he asked.

The boys and Melek and I were breakfasting in the gallery off the başoda, shutters open wide and the frost-burned garden below us. Melek had been shocked, pleased when I came down to the kitchen to help. Now she hovered over the cezve on a small brazier and was able to hand our father a little cup of sweet coffee as we spoke.

"He went out early, didn't say where, or when he'd be back."

"Far too early to be visiting Ayfer – I hope!" My father grinned and tossed his chin. "Well, if you see him, tell him I need something to show the permit board by Wednesday next. Good-bye, my dears, till this evening." He turned to leave, but then turned back. "Ziya, you look much better without the fuzz on your face, thank you. Now, about these –" He tugged at one ear lobe.

"Babacığım," said Melek, "he's a grown man, let him be. I've seen pictures – in America everyone has earrings, respectable fathers your age, boys as young as the twins…."

Veli hooted with delight.

"Not a thought of it, either of you," my father said sternly, waving as he went down the stairs.

"Thank you, Melek."

Flushed with pleasure at what passed for a victory, Melek grinned. "Sacide Hanım would <u>not</u> stop talking about how America had corrupted you. I wish you'd kept the beard too."

İzzet was stroking his chin, reached to feel his brother's. "We'll grow them –"

"– as soon as we can!"

"But no earrings till you're twenty-one," I warned.

"Didn't it hurt," they asked together, "when the needle went in?"

"Of course not." Melek's ears, too, were pierced.

"Whose bodies are covered with soccer bruises? But I'll tell you what did hurt." I leaned in conspiratorially. "Do you want to see my tattoo?"

All three gasped with gratifying shock.

"Promise not to tell any of the grown ups." Unbuttoning my shirt, I pulled it open at the collar and turned in my seat to show them. The tattoo was innocuous, really, scarcely six centimeters across in blue and black inks on my right shoulder blade, the tuğra of Sultan Mahmut II, the great reformer and a man I admired nearly as much for the blazing masculine beauty revealed in official portraits as for his attempting to turn the flow of history. The needles had been sharp, the work delicate at that scale, and the artist had said afterward that of course there were more nerve endings close to the bone than in muscle, if she'd put it on my biceps or chest it would have hurt considerably less, and I could have looked at it myself without a pair of mirrors.

İzzet and Veli naturally wanted to touch it and I let them, shivering under their cool fingertips – the memory of the tattooist's hands was too recent – but Melek sobered. "You should go see Ana," she said. "Ask her if she'd like me to bring her some breakfast."

"You're right, okay." Standing up, I buttoned my shirt and tugged it straight on my shoulders. I pulled Veli's head against my thigh because he was close enough, and then I went upstairs.

My parents' rooms were on the third floor. They were not the grandest in the house – those had been the domain of my great-grandfather, who had bought the property in the last inglorious days of the empire, and were divided now between his widow and daughter-in-law. My mother's room overlooked the street, not the garden, but it was just high enough one could almost imagine seeing over the roof of the house opposite and down the hill to a gunmetal dazzle off the Bosporus. I knocked on the door. My mother's voice invited me to enter.

The shutters were closed, heavy drapes pulled across as well, and only one lamp was on, a dim standard some distance from the big western-style bed. I could make out that she was there, leaning up against pillows at the headboard, and I saw that someone was with her. "Ana?

Günaydın, Ana."

"Good morning, Ziya dear," she said in English, her voice quite strong, the precise accents of her London girls' school clearer than I remembered. "Go along now, Sacide, your brother and I have much to talk about. Thank you, we'll be fine."

"Ana," I ventured, "Melek asked if you'd like her to bring you breakfast."

In Turkish, stubborn, Sacide said, "I'll go right down and bring it up."

"You will not, daughter, and you will please me by exercising the language I have tried very hard to teach you. Quite soon I will get out of bed, come downstairs, and then we can discuss breakfast."

"Yes, Mother," said Sacide submissively enough, but as we approached each other, one going, one coming, her lips were tight and she glared at me as if I were one of Şeytan's trickiest and most loathsome minions. I could not imagine what I had ever done – what I could ever do – to inspire such a look from anyone. It made me feel ill and very small. Smaller when I thought that Mehmet, whom I loved and admired, caught out at something not much out of the ordinary, might have seen such hatred in my eyes. I missed part of what my mother was saying.

"– so kind to me, and yet she makes me impatient. I fear I don't like your sister very much, Ziya."

"She's grown more rigid, more stubborn." I felt uneasy saying this.

"She has. She has persuasive friends whose ideas I don't approve of at all. But it would go against everything I believe to forbid her to see them. If I could."

"If you were <u>your</u> mother you could have sent her to a British boarding school."

My mother laughed for me, a gift, and now I had come close enough to see her in the dusk. She had set aside the hairstyle of the night before, and, it seemed, the hair, wore a kind of turban that appeared to be a blue that would set off her – or my – eyes. Her skin was pale, chalky, but the cheeks flushed. "We have nothing more to say about your sister, a righteous zealot someone must be proud of, I'm sure. Let me look at you." She paused, blinked. Her eyes were very large, liquid,

the pupils dilated. "Oh, bloody hell. This coddling is making me blind. Ziya, please open the curtains and let in some light. If it's too bright for my wretched eyes –" she laughed again, shortly – "I shall simply put on my extremely expensive sunglasses and imagine I'm Princess Grace of Monaco."

"Ana," I said before I went to the windows, "Mehmet told me."

She sighed gently. "I counted on it. It was cowardly of me not to meet your plane, and vain, but I wanted to welcome you with the serenity and composure of – of Princess Grace, to be at my best such as it is, and I'm afraid I can't manage it in a crowd."

"You were splendid –"

"I was a mask on a stick. Imagine if you hadn't been warned. Go! Open the curtains!"

As I went, reluctant, she said, "We will dispose of the whole subject now. I'm bored with it. You know, considering how much I smoked, I would have expected it to be the lungs, but it's one of those completely pointless female reproductive cancers." Her voice was brisk, dispassionate, horrifying. "Genetic, apparently – it killed my grandmother and two of my aunts. Your sisters will have to be wary. It's in Rebekah's family too – God grant she bears no daughters. At any rate, it was caught too late, they cut out of me all those parts a son doesn't care to know about, but the wretched thing had already metastasized. . . . Such a beautiful word, metastasize." She pronounced it with relish, repeated it. "Spread: short and to the point."

"Ana," I said, heartsick, unable to look back at her. "When did you know? Before I left?"

"It's not interesting, Ziya. I wish to talk about you."

The curtains smelled of many years' dust. I drew them wide and pulled open the window sashes to push out the jigsawed shutters. Thin winter sunlight dazed me, though it was all reflection, no substance, the sun being above the wide eaves.

Behind me, my mother said, "One of the drugs makes me sensitive to light, but really there's no substitute. Come here. Let me look at you."

Scared of what she would see, I hesitated, crimping the fabric of one curtain in my fist, until

she said again, "Come."

I could not be as courageous as my mother, whose given name, Alev, means flame and who had always dyed her hair to rival her name, who lay there burning so that I could nearly see the heat. The flame would consume all, burn out, leave ash but no coal. I couldn't weep, so I made my lips smile and went to her.

"You did listen to that silly woman," she said lightly, squinting at me. "I was afraid you would. Well, you're still my handsome son and I suppose you can grow it back any time. You must remember, Ziya, that your grandmother is made happy when her men defy her in small things. Now –" she let the tension around her eyes slip, let her weight settle into the pillows – "tell me about America, about Harvard. How it must have changed since I lived in Radcliffe Quad."

"There are men there now, too, it's just two of the Houses, nobody really wants to live there because it's so far away. Radcliffe doesn't really exist anymore. They call it the Invisible College."

"And yet every year they ask me for money. You know, it's strange, but I truly think, back then, İstanbul was a better place to be a woman. It was much less terrible here for me to want to become a doctor."

I sank down by the bed, resting my arm on the mattress, my head on my arm. "That's why you came back," I said, wanting her to tell me a story.

"Oh, no. I'm sure I should have got a better medical education in Boston. I was set on Harvard Medical."

"Then why?"

Her hand touched my hair. "You know why, Ziya."

"Tell me."

She was silent a moment, then expelled the breath in her throat with a small sound. "My mother and your father are making inquiries about a suitable girl for you, Ziya, now your elder brother's future is settled. Your father especially needs to feel certain you'll return from America. For myself, I'm not at all sure you should. I think I've raised – what did they call it in those

English fairy tales you used to love? A changeling. That's where we're different, you see, dear. I could be content after leaving the American I thought I loved, could come home and marry your father and grow fond of him." Her hand found mine, patted it. "Poor Harry. He said once that he would convert to Islam if it would please my family, learn Turkish and bring me home. We could never have been happy." Continuing to stroke my hand, she turned it over and grasped it firmly, nearly enough to cause me pain. Her voice was low. "You see, Ziya, I came to understand Harry later. He could not have been happy with any woman."

§

It was late. Mehmet had not come home all day, but he had called and told Melek he was at the university, would not return for dinner. In the early afternoon my little brothers and I went out for a walk through the streets of Emirgan and down to the waterfront; as we climbed back up the hill, flurries of snow began to fall. Veli and İzzet walked at my sides, each holding one of my hands. When they happened to mention Mehmet there was no horror in their voices, no overtones but admiration, affection. Back at the house, we found all the women, even my nodding, benign great-grandmother, drinking tea and talking with a young woman I didn't know: Ayfer, my brother's fiancée.

It was late. Everyone had gone to bed, but I had stayed up with a book, saying I was still on Boston time – I would only lie awake and restless, disturbing the boys. I had found a bottle of white wine, domestic but drinkable. If I leaned back against the shuttered windows I felt the cold from outside, but inside it was warm and I sat in the corner of the divan, legs outstretched and my feet bare. The book did not hold my attention and I set it aside gratefully when I heard a noise from below – a key in the lock, the street door opening and closing, winter boots on the stone floor of the entryway as Mehmet crossed it to the bench where he would sit to take them off.

"Is it still snowing?" I asked as he came up the stairs.

He looked up, startled, eyes wide and smile forced, almost hidden under his mustache.

"Snow? Did it snow? It rained a little, I think."

"I thought you'd go to the apartment, stay in the city tonight." Reaching down to the floor beside the divan, I grasped the bottle of Çankaya white by the neck and held it up. "Get yourself a glass," I said.

Soon he was seated not very near me on the divan and I had poured wine into his glass and more into mine. I smelled cigarette smoke on his clothes, on his breath. He drank half the wine in his glass at one go, then held it in one hand, stem between his fingers, globe cradled in his palm. "I went to Galata," he said, his voice slow, thick. "I got drunk first. It was a terrible place. It was dirty and it smelled. There were Germans and Japanese, very happy and excited. The Germans argued over the blonde woman, was she really blonde, really a woman, but the youngest of them went with her. The woman I went with called herself Sevinç – I didn't ask her, she told me. She was pretty. The room stank of perfume. There were stains on the bed, I didn't like to think what they were. She seemed shy of taking off her clothes but I suppose she was just acting. I told her I didn't want to fuck her and she said what did I want, then. Your mouth, I said – I didn't know the words. Well, then, lie back, open your trousers, she said, let me try. It was horrible. It scared me. You scared me, Ziya. She – Sevinç – she apologized, said it wasn't her special skill, men who wanted that usually asked for one of the queens, didn't I want to fuck her instead. How could you do that to me, Ziya?" Raising eyes that were black with moisture, unhappy, puzzled, Mehmet swallowed. "You're not like that."

I hardened my heart – not a figure of speech available to me in the language we were using, but still I felt the chill, solid lump in my chest. "I'm exactly like that, Mehmet, except I want the other man to make love to me as well."

He dropped his head again, unready to be forgiven if I were ready to do it.

"You're not a man who'd screw his twelve-year-old brothers, I thought."

"It's not that way," he muttered. He gulped at his wine. "It's play. They play like that together, İzzet and Veli. That's how it started. I woke up one morning, they were doing that, Veli humping

İzzet – it made me excited. They didn't mind when I joined in. But I didn't – I would never hurt them, Ziya."

I took a sip of my own wine, astringent as semen. I could imagine it all too easily. Continuing to stare implacably at Mehmet, his head still bent, I said nothing. Ripples ran through the wine in his glass with the trembling of his hand.

"Even when they asked, I didn't even want them to see it … my prick." He lifted his glass as if to drink, but only gazed into it.

"Who did this to you?" he asked abruptly. "Who made you like this, Ziya? What you did – it was horrible."

"What if I hadn't wanted to hurt you and scare you and make you stop? If it was a man I wanted, who wanted me, it could be splendid." I wanted him to understand. "It's not that what you did might make them effeminate, make them crave being fucked so they grow up stunted. It's that they have no say. It's that you're fourteen years older and they're just kids."

Turning his face away, Mehmet drank from his glass.

"Mehmet, kardeşim, I haven't changed." Suddenly I had understood what it was I had done. My hands trembled and I wanted to snap the stem of my glass between them, to strike out with the sharp, slivery fragments – to cut something. I couldn't balance it out: had I preserved my little brothers, those big, happy boys, from abuse, or had I poisoned my elder brother's regard for me when I made him come in my mouth, when I swallowed it? Careful, I reached out and set the glass on the low table before me; glass rang against hammered brass. I stood up. "I'm going to bed."

"Wait." The one short English word. I remembered that I had read that word before I ever had to say it, when I was five or six. Somehow I already knew its homonym, weight, and it never occurred to me they might be pronounced the same: I had made it rhyme with white. "Wight!" I called to my big brother, showing off, chasing after him as fast as I could on my little-boy legs, "wight for me, Mehmet, I want to play." Wait, he said. Weight.