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## (Excerpt) Mahrem / (Excerpt from) The Private

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**Elif Shafak**  
**(Excerpt) Mahrem**

“Sevgilim, bu bir Nazar Sözlüğü,” demisti ekrani göstererek. Dünyada en sok sevdiği iki kisiyi nihayet tanistirabilmiş biri gibi, ta-nistirdiklarinin hemen kaynasmanant bekleyerek.

“Nereden cikti bu simdi? “ dedim.

“Nereden mi cikti? Vardi zaten. Hep vardi. Baksana, hayatimiz görmek ve görölmek üzerine kurulu. Bütün dertlerimiz, tasalarimiz, takintilarimiz, mutluluklarimiz ve hatiralanzimiz... hatta Su dünyadaki varligimiz... hatta ve hatta bizim askimiz... hepsi ama hepsi görmeye ve görölmeye dair. Iste Nazar Sözlüğü madde madde bunu göstere-cek. Maddeler ilk bakista birbirinden kopuk gibi görünecek ama as-Iinda, hepsi görmek ve görölmekle baglantili oldugu için, her bir madde alttan alta bir diğeriyle baglantili olacak. Yani aslmda hepsi aynı bütünün ayrı bir parçasini olusturacak. Böylece Nazar Sözlüğü kirk yamali tek iplikli saman kisvesi gibi olacak. Bu benzetmeyi de bu sabah buldum. E, ne diyorsun?”

Gülümsedim. Nasıl da seviyordu tumturakli laflar etmeyi. Mut-faga gidip, cayimin yaninda atisriracak bir seyler bakindim. Neyse ki, bir gün evvel pastaneden aldigim, icleri kayisi marmeladiyla doldu-rulmuş su küçük, yuvarlak keklerden biraz kalmisti. Tabagim elimde salona döndüğümde suraiini asmis beni bekliyordu.

“Göreceksin,” dedi incindigini saklamadan. “Nazar Sözlüğü’nün neden bu kadar önemli oldugum sana ispatlayacagim.”

**Abdal(dervis): Padisahlar sehr-i sehirin ylanravi sokaklannda tebdil ge-zerdi. Kimi zaman ihsanda bulunur, cogu zaman ceza keserlerdi. ihsan da ceza da amnda yerini bulsun diye, padisahlan pesi sira yürürdü tebdil hasekisi. Sik sik tebdil gezen Ücuncü Mustafa, dervis kiligina girmeyi pek severdi. Kans kans, sehri gezerdi; disi dervis, ici padisah. Bir gün, corum alaybeyi iken azledilip Istanbulfa geien Feyzullah, tebdil gezen padisaht tanidi. Ne kadar müskül durumda oldugunu anla-tip yardım istedi. Karsilik görmedi. Bir baska sefer, Feyzullah,**

Üskü-dar carysinm orta yerinde gene padisaha rastladi ve gene onu tamdi. Ve bu sefer kendini tutamayp bag~rdi: “Ya ekmegimi ver, ya beni kat-let!”

**Üçüncü Mustafa dikkatlice bakti Feyzullah’a. Dervisin icindeki pa-disahi gören göz sakmcah olabilirdi; hem de pek sakincali. Oracikta tercihini yapti. Ona ekmegini vermedi.**

Gönlünü almak, bana hisbir sey ispatlamak zorunda olmadigmi söylemek istedim ama hoyratca iteledi saslanni oksamaya calisan eli-mi. Kayisi marmeladli keklerin tadina bakmak da istemedi. Kirgindi. Ne zaman böyle baksa, aci cokolata karasi gözleri, incecik sulu-boya fircasiyla cizilmis gölgelere dönüsüveriyordu. O nazenin cizgi-leri bastan cizmekle yükümlüymüşüm gibi titriyordu ellerini. Su fazla gelir, boya dagilir da, gözleri silinir diye ödüm patliyordu. Böyle za-manlarda, gözlerinin acayipliginden alamiyordum gözlerimi.

Takip eden gunler birbirini andiriyordu. Sabahlari Be-Ce evde kaliyor, ben ise gidiyordum. Ben cikarken o hala uyuyor oluyordu. Dondugumde onu Nazar Sozlugu’nun basinda buluyordum. Beni. Gunune gore, kah asiri somurtkan, kah asiri kayitsiz, kah asiri neseli karsiliyordu. Bazen de gene oyle kapaniveriyordu gozleri, ne hissettiği anlasilmiyordu. Sadece onun ruh halini degil, gunumuzun geri kalanini da Nazar Sozlugu belirliyordu.

**Basilisk: Bakislari zehirli, zehiri oldurucu hayvan. Basilisk bilinmeyen diyarlara yelken acan seyyahlarin korkulu ruyasiydi. Seyyahlar, onun zehirli bakislarindan kurtulmak icin envai cesit koruyucu nesne tasirdi. Ama en zeki olanlar, aynadan baska bir seye gerek duymazdi. Su hayatta, Basilsik’I kendi goruntusunden baska ne durdurabilirdi ki?**

Ama hayatimizda Nazar Sözlüğü’nün belirleyemedigi seyler de vardi. Kirayi ödemek gibi. Be-Ce bu meseleyi önemsemiyor görünüyordu. Yaptigi bütün isleri birakmis, tüm zamanini sözlüğüne ada-misti. Bu durum en cok resim atölyesinin sahibini etkilemise benzi-yordu. Anlasilan adam, tam da Be-Ce’ye sadece pazartesileri degil her akşam modellik yapmasi isin teklif

geirecegi bir anda, onun isi biraktgini öğrenmisti. O andan iibaren de üst üste telefonlar asip, öğrencilerinin bilhassa Be-Ce'yle salymasim arzuladigini, hem zaten bu isin sok fazla vakit almadigini, bu saatten sonra onun gibi herkesin ilgisini seken bir model bulmakia zorlanacagini ve gerekirse ücreti yükselibileceğini iekrar iekrar anlaimisii. Faydasizdi. Be-Ce artik sözlüğünden baska bir seyle ugrasmak istemiyordu.

**Cemal: Tasavvufta, Tanrının iyilik ve guzellik seklindeki tecellisi.**

Eve dondugumde Be-Ce'yi sinirli sinirli arsinlarken buldum evi. Bir iki tatli soz soyledi ama belli ki akli baska yerdeydi. Daha once onu hic bu kadar sikkin gormemistim.

“Hadi gel” diye bagirdi birden. “Bu gece eve kapanmayalim. Disari cikalim.”

Cildirmis olmalıydı. Disari mi cikacagiz? Yoksa artik baskalannin gözlerinden sa-kinmiyor muyuz? Ne degisti söyler misin?” ki ben... Sadece enlemesine degil, boylamastna da normalin cok üye-rinde oldugum icin, Be-Ce ile yan yana durdugumuzda, hem kilolar, hem de boylar baktmtndan dehsetengiz bir tezat cikiyordu ortaya. Yan yana iken öylesine igreti duruyorduk ki, drara birlikte cikmamtz söz konusu bile olamazdi. Eskaza öteki sevgililer gibi sokaklarda ele-le dolasmaya tesebbüs etsek, bizi her gören gülmekten fenahk ge~irir-di herhalde. Yüzotuziki kiloluk gövdemin adtmlanna ayak uydunna-ya ~ah~trken seksen santimlik sevgilim, insanlar birbirlerine bizi gös-terip, bizi seyredeceklerdi. Dudaklanndaki alayct tebessümleri basttr-ma geregi duymadan, sevisip sevismedigimizi gecireceklerdi aktlla-rtndan. Bir an bile gözlerini aytramayacaklardt gözlerinin önündeki götüntünün gülünlüğünden. Sisko ile cücenin seyirlik tezatnt belki de günlerce düşünmeyeceklerdi dillerinden.

**Ceviz agaci: Gordugu her seyi kabuklarına resmedermis ceviz agaci. Kimse bu agacin altında sevismek istemezmiş bu yuzden.**

Be-Ce de ben de, zaten öteden beri seyirliktik insanlann gözün-de. Ama ~imdi bir araya geldigimizde, hele bir de elele

tutusmaya kalhgmtzda, Sadece seyirlik olmakla kalmtyor, eglencelik de oluyor-duk. Ayn ayn iken acayip, yan yana durdugumuzda ise hem acayip hem de gülünc görünüyorduk. Biz, göze hitap etmiyorduk. Bu yuzden iste Hayalifener Apartmani gibisi yoktu. Burada sakliydı yasam, baskalarinin bakislarindan muaf.

rüya: 16. yüzyıl İstanbul’unda bir gece Sair Bali Efendi, genc yasta ölen arkadası Piruza Ali’yi görür rüyasında. Piruza Ali bir kagida biraz top-rak sararak uzatır. Sair Bali Efendi kagidi sariginin kıvrımına yerleştirir ve uyandır. Ertesi gün rüyasını etrafındakilere anlatırken gayri ihtiya-ri sarigina uzandır. İci toprak dolu kâğıt parçası oradadır.

“Ben durumumuza bir çözüm buldum,” dedi sesini alsaltıp, acı sikolaia karası incecik gözlerini cocuksu bir sevinse kisarak. Sırf merakımı körüklemek isin birkac dakika susup bekledi ve ardından gülümseyerek ekledi: “Sen ve ben bu gece tebdil gezeceğiz!”

Bir yandan hazırlanıyor, bir yandan da durmadan anlatıyordu. Tebdil gezmek, görünüsü degistirmektir. Hemen hemen bütün padi-sahlar, sarayın disından bakınca saltanatarinin neye benzedigini biz-zat görebilmek isin bu yola basvurmustu. Simdi biz de bu hüsrevane gelenege ayak uydurup, görünüşümüzü degisiirecektik. Biz, biz gibi görünmedigimiz müddetce, disarida beraber dolasabilecektik.

**Gozbebegi:** İnsanlarda yuvarlak, hayvanların cogunda ise dikine elips biciminde olan gozbebeginin capı, irise gelen isigin miktarına gore degisir. Karanlık ve uzaklık buyutur gozbebegini, aydınlık ve yakınlık kucultur. Yani bu kararsız cember, isik varsa kuculur, isik yoksa buyur. Yakına bakarken de kuculdugune gore, yakın olan aydınlıktır, aydınlıktadır. Uzagin payına karanlık duser. Asik olunca da buyur gozbebegi, demek ki asik olunan hep uzaktadır. Aradki mesafenin verdigi aciı azaltmak icin, masuka “gozbebegim!” diye hitap edilir.

(Excerpt from) **The Private**  
Translated from Turkish by Erdag Goknar

"It's what I call the Dictionary of Gazes, Sweetheart," B-J said gesturing to the computer screen like someone who'd finally introduced his two most cherished friends to each other, expecting them to hit it off right away.

"Where d'you get this idea?" I asked.

"Where? It was there anyway. It'd always been there. Just think, all of our troubles, plans, passions, pleasures, and memories...even our place in this world...and even, yes even, our love...all of it, every last bit has to do with seeing and being seen. Listen, this is exactly what the Dictionary of Gazes will show entry-by-entry. At first, the definitions might seem unrelated, but actually, all have to do with looking and being looked at, and so, each slyly relates to the others. I mean, essentially, each entry will be a part of the same whole. In this way, the Dictionary of Gazes will be a patchwork shaman's robe woven of a single thread. So, whaddaya think?"

I smiled. Oh how B-J, a dwarf no less, loved to make pompous statements. I entered the kitchen and sought out a snack to have with my tea. Thank goodness some of the small, round, apricot-marmalade cakes I bought at the pastry shop yesterday were still there. When I returned to the living room carrying my plate, I was met with a long face.

"You'll see," he said without hiding his hurt, "I'll prove to you why the Dictionary of Gazes is significant."

**abdal (dervish):** *Sultans would often wander through the serpentine streets of the city of cities Istanbul in disguise. Sometimes they'd bestow favors, most times they'd mete out punishment.*

*Mustafa the Third was quite fond of dressing up like a dervish. He'd roam over every inch of the city; a dervish on the outside, a sultan within.*

*One day, Feyzullah, wrongly dismissed from his office in the province of Çorum, came to Istanbul and recognized the sultan who was roaming in disguise in the middle of the Üsküdar bazaar. He explained to the sultan how he'd run into hard times and asked for help, shouting, "Either give me the bread I'm due or kill me!"*

*Mustafa the Third gazed carefully at Feyzullah. The eye that could see the sultan-within-the-dervish*

*might be a nuisance, quite a nuisance. He made his decision then and there. He withheld the bread.*

To make up to him, I wanted to say that he didn't have to prove anything to me, but he roughly shoved away my hand as I tried to stroke his hair. Neither did he want to taste the apricot-marmalade cakes. When he looked at me like this, his dark bitter-chocolate eyes became shadows drawn with a thin watercolor brush. My hands trembled as if I were the one responsible for drawing his delicate facial lines over again. I was petrified that I'd use too much water, that the paint would run, and his eyes would be wiped away. At such times, I couldn't stop staring at the peculiarity of his eyes.

The days that followed resembled each other. B-J stayed home in the mornings and I went to work. When I left, he'd still be asleep. When I returned, I'd find him laboring over the Dictionary of Gazes. Depending on the day, he greeted me either with an excessive show of sulkiness, indifference, or enthusiasm. And at times, his eyes would close in that way, and I wouldn't know what he felt. The Dictionary of Gazes not only determined his mood, but the shape of the rest of the day.

***Basilisk:*** A reptile whose look is poisonous and venom is deadly. The Basilisk was the nightmare of adventurers who set sail for unknown regions. They would carry all variety of protective objects to shield themselves from its poisonous glances, though the smartest of them needed nothing but a mirror. In this life, what else could stop the Basilisk except for its own reflection?

Yet there were also aspects of our life that the Dictionary of Gazes couldn't influence. Like paying the rent. B-J seemed to consider this unimportant. He'd stopped doing everything else and devoted all his time to his dictionary. This situation seemed to affect the owner of the artists' studio the most. It appeared that just when he was about to have B-J model not only Mondays, but each night, B-J quit. Afterward, the owner made back-to-back phone calls explaining again and again how his students wanted to work specifically with B-J, that modeling didn't take up much time anyway, how the owner would be hard-pressed, at such a late date, to find a model like him who interested everybody, and if necessary, how he could give B-J a

raise. It was of no use. B-J would do nothing but work on his dictionary.

***cemal (beauty)***: In Sufism, a beautiful face is God's manifestation as goodness and grace.

When I returned I found B-J pacing angrily through the apartment. He said a few sweet things to me, but it was clear that his thoughts were elsewhere. I'd never seen him this tense before.

"Let's get outta here then!" he shouted suddenly. "I don't wanna be cooped-up here tonight. Let's go out."

Was he out of his mind? How could we go out? We weren't an appropriate match. And I wasn't one of these women who just looked petite and chubby despite all of her pounds because she was short....Not only my girth, but my height was far above average, such that, B-J and I standing side-by-side were a shocking contradiction in size. When we were beside each other we clashed so much so that we couldn't even think about going outside together. If we tried to walk down the streets hand-in-hand like other lovers, everyone who saw us would probably die of laughter. As my three-and-a-half-foot lover tried to keep up with the strides of my two-hundred-ninety-pound body, they'd point us out and stare, and without feeling the need to suppress the sarcastic smiles on their faces, they'd think about whether and how we made love. They wouldn't be able to take their eyes off the hilarious scene before them for even a second. Maybe they'd talk about the visual contradiction of a fat woman and a dwarf for days.

***ceviz adacı (walnut tree)***: The walnut tree etched what it saw onto the shells of its walnuts. For this reason, no one wanted to make love under this tree.

Separately, B-J and I had been a spectacle for people's eyes for some time. But now, when we came together, especially when we tried to hold hands, we were not only a spectacle, but also a source of amusement. Alone we looked odd, side-by-side we looked both odd and funny. We were unsightly. For this reason, you see, there was no place like the Shadowplay Apartments. Here, life was hidden, immune from the people's gazes and from the harassment of their eyes.

**düþ (dream):** In sixteenth century, in Istanbul, one night the Poet Bâly Effendi dreamed of his friend Piruza Ali, who had died at a young age. Piruza Ali handed a scrap of paper to the poet, who then slid it into one of the folds of his turban and woke up. The next day, as he told his dream to those around him, he involuntarily reached for his turban to find the scrap of paper.

“I’ve found a way outta our dilemma,” he said lowering his voice and squinting his small bitter-chocolate-brown eyes with childlike glee. He waited in silence for a while just to heighten my curiosity before saying, “You and I are gonna go out tonight – in disguise!”

As he was getting ready, he continued talking. Almost all Ottoman sultans resorted to this method in order to personally see what their empires were like when observed from outside the palace walls. And now, we would conform to this royal tradition and change our appearances. We could go out together as long as we didn’t look like ourselves.

**gözbebeði (pupil):** Darkness and distance cause the pupil to expand, light and proximity to contract; that is, this fickle ring shrinks in light and grows in its absence. And since it contracts when focusing on what’s nearby, what’s close is illumination and rests in light. Whatever’s in the distance remains in darkness. When we’re in love, as well, the pupil expands; which means the object of our love is always in the distance. To diminish the pain of this distance, the beloved is endearingly called “the apple of my eye!”