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AYŞE KULİN

After graduating from the American College (ACG) of Istanbul, Ayşe Kulin worked many years as editor and writer for newspapers and magazines and also in the cinema industry.

Her first story book won two prestigious literary awards (Haldun Taner & Sait Faik) and her first novel became a best seller. Kulin also holds other literary awards and has been selected the author of the year numerous times. Some of her stories and novels became TV series and motion pictures. Her works have been translated into German, French, Italian, Dutch, Greek, Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, Georgian, Latvian, Portuguese and Serbian. She is the Goodwill Ambassador of UNICEF since 2007. Her major novels translated so far:

Face to Face

Farewell

Books in Turkish

1. *Güneşe Dön Yüzünü*
2. *Bir Tath Huzur*
3. *Foto Sabah Resimleri*
4. *Adı: Aylin*
5. *Geniş Zamanlar*
6. *Sevdalinka* (Love Song of Bosnia)
7. *Füreye*
8. *Köprü*
9. *İçimde Kızıl Bir Gül Gibi*
10. *Babama*
11. *Nefes Nefese*
12. *Kardelenler*
13. *Gece Sesleri*
14. *Bir Gün*
15. *Bir Varmış Bir Yokmuş*
16. *Veda*
17. *Sit Nene'nin Masalları*
18. *Umut*
19. *Taş Duvar Açık Pencere*
20. *Türkan-Tek ve Tek Başına*
21. *Veda* (Graphic Novel)
22. *Hayat-Dürbünümde Kırk Sene*
23. *Hüzün-Dürbünümde Kırk Sene*
24. *Gizli Anların Yolcusu*
25. *Saklı Şiirler*
26. *Sessiz Öyküler*
27. *Bora'nın Kitabı*

Ayşe Kulin
FACE TO FACE

Translated by John W. Baker

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*The master craved for the love of the sage
The sage for the love of master craved
Quite different were their ways
Yet for wholeness and unity they prayed.*

Mevlana

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TURKISH SAYINGS

Ağa	: landlord, tribe chief, influential village person.
Ana	: mother
Ayran	: a drink made of yoghurt
Bayram	: religious holiday
Bey	: Mr.
Dede	: grandfather
Dolma	: vegetable, fowl, lamb, mussel, etc. filled with stuffing / dressing.
Efendi	: sir, lord, master
Hanım	: Miss, Mrs.
Kaymakam	: official charged with governing a provincial district.
Kızılbaş	: who is member of an order of Shiite.
Kuma	: unwedded second, third, fourth wife.
Muhtar	: the elected head of a village or of a neighbourhood within a town or city.
Selamlık	: part of the house where only male guests are accepted.
Vallahi Billahi	: Islamic swear

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

a as in father

c as in jam

ç as in chicken

e as in bed

ğ (soft g) elongates the vowel preceding it

ı as in nation

i as in piano

j as in the French “j” or the “z” in “azure”

o as in more

ö as eu in the French fleur

r somewhere between the English and the Spanish r (right and pero)

ş as in ship

u as in cool

FACE TO FACE

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NEVRA TUNA – ZELİHA BORA



It is quite hot in the car but it seems as if the cold, dry air outside has gone right through my body and chilled me to the marrow. My hands and feet are frozen. I am sitting upright looking at the road ahead but nothing that I see registers, I am motionless. Both of us are as tight as bow-strings. We are travelling in silence. He is the first one to break that silence:

“We’re almost there; you’d better start getting ready.”

I cover my head with a large black shawl and pull the front down to my eye-brows, and then I pinch the two sides and join them tightly under my nose fastening them together with a safety pin. Hasan Bey starts laughing:

“Pull it back a bit so that at least you can see.”

I awkwardly push it up a bit.

“Yeah, that’s it. That’s better. It suits you if I may say so; it highlights your beautiful eyes.”

“I can’t imagine anyone looking good in this outfit.”

“You’re wrong. It certainly suits women with beautiful eyes even if they have ugly noses.”

“That’s some compliment, thank you.”

“Don’t fish for compliments. You know as well as I do that you haven’t got an ugly nose.”

I’m getting annoyed but I can’t be bothered to argue with a man old enough to be my father, especially as he is trying to help me, so I keep silent. It’s very early in the morning and the dense mist is only just beginning to lift here and there. I wipe the condensation from my side window with the edge of my shawl as we continue driving ahead.

“I’m suffocating, I can’t breathe.”

“Why not? You haven’t covered your nose have you?”

“All the same I feel as if I am being stifled. Maybe it’s psychological. Would you mind opening the window to let in some fresh air?”

He presses the button and lowers the window half way down. The morning frost makes us both shiver.

“Shall we go through the whole thing one more time?” Hasan Bey asks.

“OK. I’ll ask all of my questions as quickly as possible without diverting from the subject. I’ll make brief notes and those that I can’t write down I’ll keep in my head and make sure to jot them down as soon as I can. If we feel peckish we’ll have the biscuits I have with me. The interview must finish by five. If there are any problems I shouldn’t tackle them but call you on my mobile.”

“I’m sorry to have to tell you that they won’t allow mobile phones.”

“What if I have a problem?”

“If there is you should ask to see Dilaver Bey.”

“And who’s he?”

“He’s an old friend of mine. He’ll be there. I’ll leave you in his care.”

“Can he be trusted?”

“Of course.”

“Fine then.”

“You seem to have forgotten the most important thing young lady.”

“Rest assured I haven’t forgotten anything. No one is to know about this meeting except you and... what was his name? Dilaver Bey.”

“Well done.”

“Hasan Bey, I shall never forget this. Really... I just can’t thank you enough.”

“Just pray to God, we don’t get into any trouble.”

“How could we? Nobody knows about it... apart from us.”

“Even walls have ears,” he said anxiously. “If anyone should get to hear of this, the prison governor will be in trouble.”

“No one will know,” I assured him, hoping that I didn’t show the anxiety in my voice. “Trust me this job will be finished today. It will be over and done with without anyone knowing about it.”

“*Inshallah.*”

“The tape recorder...”

“You’d better give it to me. It mustn’t be found on you. I’ll try and sort something out for you.”

“It’s in that small bag on the back seat... What a shame I can’t have it, writing notes wastes time and it’s not easy remembering everything.”

“Thank your lucky stars for what we have got.”

“Of course I do! I really appreciate what you have done for me... I can’t thank you enough...” I must have thanked him a hundred times already and it was becoming a bit monotonous so I decided not to continue.

Hasan Bey turns right at the next cross-roads. We continue on our journey in silence for quite a while. We are both buried in our thoughts. Then we swerve to the left and a short while later the concrete prison wall with barbed wire on the top looms up before us. I feel as though I am gasping for air. I reach out for my bag, put it on my lap and rummage through it. I hate such deep bags they’re like bottomless pits; you can never find what you’re looking for in them especially when you’re in a hurry. I fumble through the contents until I find my asthma medicine. I grab the inhaler and hold it tightly in my hand.

“What’s up?” asks Hasan Bey.

“It must be the excitement. I feel as though I lack of breathe.”

“I didn’t know that you suffer from asthma. Is it an allergy? Are you sensitive to the dust in the air?”

“No, it’s not the dust. The humidity affects me.”

“But there’s no humidity in the car... You look a bit nervous. Do you want to change your mind?”

“Absolutely not!”

The car slows down and then stops in front of an iron gate. Hasan Bey gets out and walks towards the gate. I quickly take a couple of puffs from my inhaler before he returns.

“Get out and wait for me here,” he says, “I’ll park the car and come back.”

I get out of the car and wait on the pavement. I'm standing motionless like a statue. The black shawl on my head covers me to the waist and I'm wearing a long grey coat down to my ankles. What a frightening feeling this is, it's like being imprisoned in a tower. How can one accept being caged in such clothes of their own free will? How can the women of my religion be so passive? I slowly take a step forward... then one more, and another. At least I can walk... I walk faster and faster... twenty steps to and fro along the prison wall wearing this strange new outfit. The guard standing in front of the gate is watching me with astonishment. Hasan Bey, who has parked the car and returned, must have informed someone on his mobile phone of our arrival because a man wearing a dark blue suit comes out of the iron gate to meet us. I have never completely understood why all clerks in dark blue suits look alike. Neither have I ever been able to understand why religious merchants with long beards or MPs with bushy moustaches, all look alike. This frail and pale faced man appears to be fed up with life, possibly because he is one of the subordinates who earns a low salary. He is showing a piece of paper to the guards at the checkpoint next to the iron gate with a sad expression on his face. The guard sticks his hand through his small window and asks for our identity cards and then hands us collar badges. The other guard waiting outside opens the gate nonchalantly and we go inside. There is a large courtyard with no trees at all. There are no people either. A totally empty, open space. I am looking around me, bemused. Hasan Bey pulls me by the arm.

“Let's go young lady.”