

TUNCER CUCENOGLU

ACTORS

(Tiyatrocular)

(Men of Theatre)

(Play within a play)

Black comedy, 2 Acts

To my son Umut...

Translated into english by

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CAST :

TAŞKIN (Tashkın) A writer with just one play that had been staged years ago.Lost his job as a copywriter with an advertisement agency,unemployed since four months.About 50 .
NİHAL Taskın's landlady, a quite attractive widow who loves the theatre and actors.Her main income is the rent of her apartments.About 55.
SİBEL Taşkın's girlfriend.Was the public relations officer of a bank, but now unemployed.About 30.
YILDIRIM A succesful actor of a now closed theatre company. About45.
SAVAŞ (Savash) A public sector retiree, an amateur actor who is still dreaming of becoming professional. About 55.
HAKKI Retired actor. About 70.
ERDEM A drama and acting school graduate, who works at his father's drinking water delivery company.About 25.
FİLİZ Hakkı's girlfriend.A theatre enthusiast who looks like a fashion model. About 25.
LEYLA An attractive actress, unemployed.About 45.
SELİM A manufacterer from the countryside who is about to go bankrupt due to his son's gambling debts. About 50.

SETTING :

Taşkın's (quite spacious) living room of his rented appartment on the third floor .
Entrance is to right of the living, the bedroom and bathroom doors are invisible to the audience.
Open plan kitchen.
One window overlooking the street(street invisible), the other to the sea (sea view visible)
The living room is simply furnished.
Leather armchairs.
A desk with a computer.
A hi-fi set.
A low coffee table with a TV set on it.
On the walls framed pictures of Chekhov, Shakespeare,Brecht, Miller, Gorki, Gogol and Taskin.
Also scattered in between some framed theatre posters, masks and accesories.

TIME Present.
PLACE İstanbul.
SEASON September, end summer.

ACT 1

Taşkın sits in front of his computer. He is quite a handsome man. He is well shaved and groomed, smartly dressed; shirt and trousers. He is busy thinking and writing his play. With one last hit on the keyboard, he starts the printer and leans back on his chair. He collects the printout, reads, having obviously finished his work, he gets up. The phone rings.

TAŞKIN (lifts the phone) Hello. Sibel, good morning my dear. No, you did not wake me up, I was just about to call you. I finished the play, it's not bad at all. We should read it together, see if anything is missing. What have you been doing? Are you serious? Are you bringing it with you? Very good... Any news from the man? O.K. Now I am curious. No need for anything, I will start brewing the tea now. See you. Kiss you, too. (Puts the phone down, turns on the kettle. Looks at a small mirror, is not very pleased, splashes on some cologne) Getting old man, getting old. Time to accept facts.

(Tidies up a bit, turns on the T.V. Audience cannot see the screen)

THE VOICE OF THE TV.COMMENTATOR In an early morning explosion in Baghdad, 17 civilians and 3 American soldiers have been killed. The authorities estimate the number of wounded to be around one hundred. The hospitals...

TAŞKIN (Turns off the T.V with a frown. Fiddles with the radio stations, finds some classical music. Sits down, reads his play while listening to the music. Occasionally he makes hand gestures to express his pleasure. The door bell rings. Thinking it is Sibel, he opens the door after a final look at the mirror. He is surprised) Oh? Mrs. Nihal, it's you.

NİHAL (Well dressed, elegant, polite lady) I hope I am not disturbing..

TAŞKIN (Obviously edgy, tense) Not at all, please come in.

NİHAL I wanted to have a chat with you.

TAŞKIN Please come in.

NİHAL But I don't want to bother you.

TAŞKIN (Shy) Please, you won't bother me, on the contrary.

NİHAL (Enters) Thank you.

TAŞKIN Please, it's your home after all. As a matter of fact, I was planning to speak with you... But... Please, make yourself comfortable.

NİHAL (Sits down in an armchair) Thank you.

TAŞKIN May I offer you something to drink?

NİHAL Thank you but I just had my breakfast.
TAŞKIN But you can still have a cup of tea with me .
NİHAL If it won't be a bother.
TAŞKIN No, not at all, the tea is almost ready. Brewing the tea is so easy nowadays, with these tea bags! Anyhow, Sibel, my fiancée will be arriving shortly. You should meet her.
NİHAL I'd love to.. I have seen her before, she seems nice.
TAŞKIN She is.
NİHAL Marriage soon?
TAŞKIN Well, its a bit complicated now. But, in the future, why not?
NİHAL Then I hope you'll invite me to your wedding.
TAŞKIN But of course, you will be our guest of honor. Would you like your tea straight away?
NİHAL Shall we wait for your fiancée?
TAŞKIN As you wish.
NİHAL Like this we can talk while waiting.
TAŞKIN All right.
NİHAL (Looks at the pictures and posters on the walls) How nice. I just adore Chekhov, I have seen all his plays. I read all his stories, more than once even. I must say his sense of humour is the best.
TAŞKIN I like him too, thats why he is up on my wall.
NİHAL What is one say about Shakespeare? His plays are being staged since centuries... My departed husband Tahsin was a kind man but he was very jealous . I took him to see Othello many times, hoping he would get the message and change.. But it didn't work, he never stopped being a jealous man. Unlike me he didn't enjoy books or the theatre." All this nonsense" he used to say. "Loss of time" That kind of talk upset me a lot. "Rasim, if this is nonsense, then what are we?" He didn't care.
TAŞKIN So you did not know him well before you married?
NİHAL Not really, he told me he loved the theatre. We flirted for six months, we used to see at least two plays a week. That's why I didn't hesitate to accept his proposal.
TAŞKIN (Laughingly) How did he manage to trick you?
NİHAL He accompanied me to every play, never objected even for once. Sometimes we saw the same play again and again. He seemed happy, "I really like it a lot" he used to say. He used to applaud so feverishly that the grateful eyes of the actors were always searching him among the spectators.
TAŞKIN Wonderful! So you managed to get him to like theatre.
NİHAL No sir, not at all! He was just fooling me because he wanted to marry me. He knew this was the right way to please me. Unfortunately, I realized his game only after we married. Before, he used to observe and imitate me; laughed when I laughed, cried when I cried, applauded when I applauded. In those days, we're talking forty years ago, theatre was vey popular, unlike today, full houses, not a single empty seat. One had to reserve the tickets well in advance, sometimes even a month in advance. Every week he spent an almost full day just

trying to get seats. When he came home, he would happily and proudly show off the tickets. He knew this would make me so happy, he was such a man. Frankly, he lost his life in a que exactly thirty years ago. May god bless his soul...

(She is sad, becomes quiet. Dries her eyes)

TAŞKIN Condolences.

NIHAL It's so nice to talk about actors, theatre... Look, how the time has flown by...

TAŞKIN Theatre is an obsession Mrs. Nihal.

NIHAL May god bless everyone with such an obsession!

TAŞKIN Maybe then all the plays would be sold out!

NIHAL Oh, how I wish? I think your portrait looks good among all these great writers.

TAŞKIN Thank you.

NIHAL But its true! You deserved it with your one and only play that was staged 15 years ago. That is why, when you wanted to rent my apartment four years ago, I didn't hesitate at all. The critics were rather ruthless with you, sad, but then, you threw the towel so easily.. (laughingly) Look, the other writers have no objection.....

TAŞKIN Frankly, I knew they wouldn't object.. might have been different though if they were alive.

NIHAL I don't understand.

TAŞKIN Writers usually don't like each other.

NIHAL Why not? Look at you!

TAŞKIN These are dead writers. You know, the best writer is a dead writer. All the directors, actors, set decorators, even the composers say so. Simply because the dead cannot object to all the changes, even mutilations of their work.

NIHAL You are so funny.

TAŞKIN Thank you.

NIHAL Meanwhile, we should get back to our subject. It's better to talk privately before your fiancée arrives.

TAŞKIN Please. (Seeing the tea is ready) Shall we have our tea now?

NIHAL (looks like she has memorized her lines) As a tenant, you did not disapoint me since four years. You paid your guarantee when you signed your contract, deposited your rent regularly to the bank. You haven't been noisy. As much as you received quite a lot of friends from the opposite sex, and quite regularly too, you really did not bother your neighbors.

TAŞKIN Thank you.

NIHAL As you know, I have four apartments in this building. I live in one and rent the other three. One of my tenants is a lawyer, he uses the place as an office. My other tenant is an artist. Well he is not a theatre actor, but nevertheless an artist. Frankly, I was happy to rent to him because I heard he was doing stage decoration for a play. He also has been a good tenant. However, unfortunately I have to say that he hasn't been paying his rent since 3 months.

TAŞKIN (gives the cup of tea) I was just about to say, you grabbed the words from my mouth. Me too, I could not pay the rent last month, due to circumstances, of course.

NİHAL What is the reason?

TAŞKIN I lost my job four months ago.

NİHAL Four months ago? And you are telling me now?

So you are without a job since four months. But how did you pay the last 3 months rent?

TAŞKIN I had some savings, but now I am broke.

NİHAL Really, I would have expected an explanation from you, being such a considerate man.

TAŞKIN Few times I rang your bell, but you weren't home. Once I ran away, honestly I was a bit shy.

NİHAL You know I depend on my husband's tiny pension and the rents. But now my budget is all upset, believe me, I can't even go to the theatre nowadays!

TAŞKIN How sad, I am sorry. If you told me, I could have gotten you invitations, you know I have a lot of friends.

NİHAL Thank you but invitations will not solve my problems! When I warned my other tenant, he complained of the economic crises, it seems he cannot sell his pictures. He even had the guts to propose some of his work in exchange for rent.

TAŞKIN Art can be a good investment.

NİHAL But his work is not art, how can it be investment? I wouldn't like to put those pictures up on my walls if they were free, distorted noses, mouths! But, of course, I didn't say so to him, poor guy he is already down.

TAŞKIN Kind of you.

NİHAL Yes but he has to shape up, he should abandon his hopes of selling those weird things. He knows how to handle brushes, right? He can work as a painter and pay his rent.

TAŞKIN Mrs. Nihal, I sympathise with you but isn't it cruel to ask an artist to become a painter?

NİHAL Am I to be blamed for the economic crisis? Everyone must somehow manage! My idea is that people should capitalise on what they know best. Can you think of another way he can meet his rent and other living expenses?

TAŞKIN You might be right, but what about artistic integrity? You are after all sensitive on this issue. Won't his art suffer?

NİHAL We talked about it. He is not a real artist, just a guy who fiddles with a paintbrush. Of course, even that is something, to be able to hold a brush, I mean. Therefore, he can still apply his art on the walls, why not? Maybe even polishing shoes might be more profitable, he has to pay the rent and eat. For example, this water delivery boy.. You know, the young, handsome one?

TAŞKIN Of course I know him. He talks very well.

NİHAL Did you know he is a university graduate? My neighbor told me last night. Apparently, he couldn't find a job.

TAŞKIN Really?

NİHAL I am not surprised. Tens of thousands graduates are running after making a living. Even with a foreign language to their credit, you see them as petrol station attendants, shoe repairers.

(Door bell)

TAŞKIN (Opens the door thinking its Sibel. Stands still)

THE VOICE OF THE CONCIERGE (a mechanical voice) Rubbish! Rubbish!

TAŞKIN None.

(Closes the door and enters)

NİHAL Nowadays even the concierge is well educated, and their children, too.... But if they can't find another job, well, they follow in their fathers footsteps. Look, you are a good writer, you should be able to make a living with your writing and pay your rent.

TAŞKIN Now, Mrs. Nihal, I basically agree with you... Writing is the only profession I have. But do think I should make money by writing legal petitions for the masses that crowd the bankruptcy courts? What a miserable end? Better to die! Better to jump into the deep and cool waters of the Bosphorus, a more fitting end ...

NİHAL (Pities) Poor thing. You are a real writer. You can write new plays.. They can be staged and you can make money.

TAŞKIN I was just about to say the same. I applied to many ad agencies. As a copywriter, of course. But I didn't get a single positive result. That's why I decided to establish my own theatre company. As you also agree, everyone must do what they know best! Me and my friends would love to see you on our gala opening.

NİHAL Friends.. so you have your team?

TAŞKIN I don't want to name names, let it be a surprise. But I am sure, you already know most of them. And besides, don't worry about the rent, my fiancée will lend me some money. Please, don't ever forget; I might be an unemployed writer but I still have my dignity!

NİHAL Thank you. Forgive me if I upset you, but you know I really depend on these rents I collect.

(Door bell rings)

TAŞKIN This must be Sibel.

NİHAL Everything we discussed will stay between us!

TAŞKIN I appreciate your consideration. (Opens the door) Dearest. We have company.

(Sibel enters. A wrapped up sign in her hand)

NİHAL Welcome, my dear.

SİBEL You are also welcome.

TAŞKIN (to Sibel) Mrs. Nihal is my landlady, but she is a very special landlady, unlike others.

NİHAL Thank you.

TAŞKIN Because she is a die hard theatre lover, an almost extinct species.

SİBEL (Makes a real effort to smile) Taskin always talks about you, always full of praises for you.

NİHAL Thank you.

TAŞKIN Sibel, why don't you sit down? Mrs. Nihal wanted to get to know you. Sibel might be considered as an actress, she used to go on stage in the university.

NİHAL Is that so, how nice.. I used to see you coming and going, so we finally managed to meet today. (Gets up) I have a lot to do. The water delivery boy should be coming soon, if he doesn't find me home he might go back and you know tomorrow is a holiday... With your permission...

TAŞKIN We can have some more tea.

SİBEL (unenthusiasticly) Why don't you stay?

NİHAL Another time inshallah! (Goes towards the door) Thanks for everything. I was very happy to meet you.

SİBEL Me too.

NİHAL Where are you going to hold your rehearsals?

TAŞKIN Here.

NİHAL I would love to watch them.

TAŞKIN Why not? You will be the guest of honor in our gala.

NİHAL Goodbye.

TAŞKIN Come again!

SİBEL Bye bye.

TAŞKIN (Closes the door) At the end, she came to ask for the rent.

SİBEL Not surprised. Look, they've prepared the sign.
(Opens the package, shows it from a distance) What do you think?

TAŞKIN Vey good. "Project Creation Center for the European Union's Funds". It was a very good idea to write it in English. A Turkish sign wouldn't have been that effective. Thank you so much.

SİBEL My friend in the bank says that Mr. Selim will be coming in few days. Apparently, he's trying to get the downpayment; one hundred twenty thousand euros he must pay us. I will be calling him now to see how are things.

TAŞKIN (Excitedly) Why didn't you give me the good news sooner?

SİBEL You are so enthusiastic, just like your name. You think its all so easy?. I have to see real money. Let me give you another interesting story. There is a new office in Ankara, its been formed for people to apply for grants from the European Union. Just like ours, you see..but of course, a tiny difference; that one is legal.

TAŞKIN Same good idea... Then we are on the right track . Lets inform our friends straight away. We have to start the rehearsals.. Can not afford a single mistake.

SİBEL We won't get into trouble, right?

TAŞKIN No, no... No need to fear, I took all the precautions. Can you get me some tea, too? (Dials the phone) Hello... Hellooo... Hello , dear Hakkı! Quickly bring Yıldırım, Savaş, Leyla, the

whole group to my place. (Laughs) Of course the lead role is yours! Your girlfriend? She will be the secretary, as we discussed. She just has to open the door, and ask "What would you like to drink?" She can handle this, right? No talent? Then why we should include her in our group? Well, now it makes sense. Of course she is in. As I remember. That's the new one? All right, I'm not gonna upset you.? All right. We are starting the rehearsals in the afternoon. As discussed... In my apartment. Yes yes... Bring her with you. (Looks at his watch) Around two o'clock. O.K? Just few accessories. O.K. O.K. Don't be late! Will you call me? All right. I will be waiting. (Puts the phone down. Thinking out loud) Look at the bastard! 70 years old, and one girlfriend after another. Me, like an idiot... (Cannot finish his sentence)

SİBEL Continue, don't stop. It looks like you are not pleased with yourself?

TAŞKIN Don't be crazy Sibel dearest. Its just a way of speaking.

SİBEL What do you mean?

TAŞKIN (Uneasy, awkward) Well. Me, just one woman.. Having the time of my life.. Seventy year old bastard..

SİBEL Shut up, you are sinking lower each time you open your mouth. Which one was Hakkı?

TAŞKIN Manservant Hakkı! Or Manservant Osip. From The Government Inspector. How come you don't know Hakkı, an important actor of his time. He was so famous as Hamlet's gravedigger that he came to be known as Gravedigger Hakkı.. In my opinion, his Osip performance was better.. Anyhow, he doesn't like being called Gravedigger Hakkı.

SİBEL We had dinner with him one night.. The seventy year old bastard with the twenty year old girlfriend?.

TAŞKIN Absolutely! That's the one.

SİBEL Quite a character. Even with his girlfriend around, he managed to give his mobile number to the woman on the next table. Unbelievable. (Gestures Taskin to be quiet and dials her mobile phone. With her sweetest manner) Hello. Mr. Selim? This is Sibel. How are you? I arranged all the details with the center. I am there right now. The project is yours as soon as you bring the one hundred twenty thousand euros. You're welcome. However, you have to hurry up. I can't hold it for you too long. (Lowers her voice) I am afraid you might lose your chance if you are late... I understand. All right. In two days. All right. Please call me before coming over. Because I will be accompanying you. You're welcome. See you soon. With my respects. (Turns off her phone) Well, he'll be coming in two days.

TAŞKIN (Happy, then suddenly worried) We have to start rehearsing straight away. The text is rather short but there is a lot to do. The board over there... The chairs from your place can go here. Please note it all.

SİBEL Don't worry, I can handle it. Worry your head with the play, dearest Taşkın. There is no more drinking water. (Looks at the paper stuck on the wall next to the fridge, reads the phone number. Dials the water delivery) Hello. Can you send us a demijohn? One hundred twentythree.

(Blackout. Doorbell rings)

TAŞKIN (Voice from the bedroom) Are you getting the door?

SİBEL (Preparing the tea cups) Yes.

(Goes to the entrance to open the door. First Hakkı enters, then Leyla, Savaş, Yıldırım and Filiz) Welcome!

HAKKI How are you?

SİBEL Thank you Mr. Hakkı. Please come in.

TAŞKIN (Comes in. Shakes hands with everyone) Friends, you are all welcome .

HAKKI Good to see you Master.

YILDIRIM Good to see you.

LEYLA Thank god for meeting again.

FİLİZ Good afternoon.

TAŞKIN I've missed you all. (Shows seats) Take a seat wherever you like gentlemen! You old fox, I've missed so much. Come, let me kiss you now.

(He hugs Hakkı)

HAKKI Is it my fault?

TAŞKIN You never call.

HAKKI Busy, busy.

TAŞKIN What, are you in a play or something?

HAKKI I wish! Occasionally a soap opera. Few episodes, nothing more.

YILDIRIM He can find a permanent job if only stops hitting on the director's girlfriends.

TAŞKIN What do you mean Proctor (To Sibel) You never met Yıldırım? He is the famous Proctor of Miller's The Crucible. Even Yves Montand was not as successful as him.

SİBEL Pleased to meet you.

TAŞKIN (To Hakkı) You are still recruiting the youth to the theatre?

(Laughter)

LEYLA A leopard doesn't change his spots.

YILDIRIM Old boy is still on his mission.

SAVAŞ But he is neglecting me!

HAKKI Evet I can't make you an actor! Hopeless case! Cause you're a guy.

TAŞKIN Lets meet the young lady.

HAKKI Say your name.

FİLİZ Filiz.

TAŞKIN Mashallah, such a slender beauty.

HAKKI Tell us about yourself.

FİLİZ (Like she's memorized her lines) My name is Filiz. I am 25 years old. My father is a retired civil servant. My mother is a housewife. I finished highschool. But I wasn't accepted at the Academy of Arts. It's my dream to be an actress.

TAŞKIN Memorization, good. Looks, even better. Come on, get up, lets see your silhouette. (Filiz gets up) Yes, but don't just stand there! Walk around a bit. (Filiz walks like a fashion model. He whispers to Hakkı so Sibel won't hear) How did you manage to get her?

HAKKI She fell into my lap. She was fooling around on the set. We've just started.

TAŞKIN Why can't I find such a girl! Should I also start acting in soap operas? What's the trick?

HAKKI Drop the subject!

TAŞKIN You must have taken some modelling courses.

FİLİZ (While still walking) Yes. At the time, I wanted to do modelling.

TAŞKIN Why did you change your mind?

FİLİZ (genuine and naive) I wanted acting more.

TAŞKIN Wish you became a model, it 's much easier to move on to acting then. Yes, definitely an acting job in a musical! Sit down. For god's sake, sit, you made me dizzy. I will consider utilizing you.

YILDIRIM If Hakkı will give you a chance..

TAŞKIN Good luck. What about you Leyla, how are you?(to Sibel) I think you haven't met Leyla. Desdemona Leyla. You know, Othello. What are you up to, Desdemona?

LEYLA Well, not much my dearest Taskin. Whats there for me to do outside the theatre? An occasional dubbing, thats all!

TAŞKIN Surely, a beautiful woman like you would get plenty of television offers?

LEYLA Of course! But somehow, its through the producers bedroom. Private playhouses don't exist anymore. As you also know well, now it is a one man company. The boss is the actor, director, set decorator, composer and the writer. At the same time, he is the manager, boxoffice attendant, and even the usher. Therefore, I can't find a descent company.

TAŞKIN And you, Proctor?

YILDIRIM I totally agree with Leyla on the subject. I do get offers for soap operas, and sometimes I act in some. Though, somehow, as soon as I start a series, it falls victim to the rating monster and is discontinued. Frankly, I have never liked soap operas.

TAŞKIN You Savaş? At the municipality you kept dreaming of the theatre, but never got the chance. Now you are retired but looks like nothing has changed. Therefore, no need to go on and on about these stories and waste time. Time is money, right?

HAKKI The young ones might not understand, master, time is as precious as money.

TAŞKIN More or less, but never mind.. Lets get down to work.

(The door bell rings. Sibel opens the door. Erdem enters with a demijohn on his back. While he is replacing the empty one on the water fountain)

TAŞKIN (To the others) Look now. Did you know this young guy is an university graduate? Just now my landlady told

me. Honestly, I just aged one more year. Now I am 52. (Seeing Erdem has finished his job) Was Mrs. Nihal right?

ERDEM Yes.

TAŞKIN What is your name?

ERDEM Erdem.

HAKKI How nice!

LEYLA What did you study?

ERDEM (Notices Hakkı'yı) Let me kiss your hand prof..

HAKKI What? Oh, its you Erdem. What's going on? (He hugs and kisses Erdem) Did you give up the theatre?

ERDEM Is such a thing possible sir? Since three years, I am waiting for entry competitions of the National Theatre. Meanwhile I'm helping out my dad.

HAKKI But of course. Your father had a water delivery company. You just can't give up lad! Because you've been bitten by the stage bug once. Your parents tried hard to direct you to football, but what did you do? You wasted two whole years to be accepted at the drama academy, as if it was worth the shit. You kept begging any actor you met for help.

ERDEM That's the way it happened sir..

HAKKI He used to come by everyday and beg me to coach him. I used to ask him to find out of print texts, hoping he will fail. Such dedication, he found each and everone from secondhand book shops. I asked him to memorize the most difficult pieces, and he did, the next day. I honestly tried every trick, but in vain! It's my duty to clear my consience today. I gave him Inspector Osip's oration as Hamlet's tirade for the exam. He immediately memorized it. I had really coached him well so he wouldn't notice my game.

ERDEM But you said there was a mixup. Why?

HAKKI Yes, I did it. For your own good. So you wouldn't become an actor. I didn't want to see you, such a good lad, to go to waste. Let me tell you a story, years ago, during an Anatolian tour, we refused to go on stage for the second act, we were not getting paid, you see. You know what happened then? The spectators started beating us up and then threw us on stage. Now, having such experiences, how could I wish you a career in acting? Your parents somehow got my adress, and came to see me. They wanted me to help them, the idea was for you to fail the exam. Your father even offered me free drinking water for a whole a year. How could I refuse such loving parents who only wanted the best for their kid!

ERDEM The professors of the exam commitee were about to beat me up because of that piece. First they laughed in a funny way, then they threw me out!

HAKKI But he didn't give up. He found me again. "I'll make it" he said. "No matter what, I'll make it". He grabbed me by the collar one day. Almost strangled me. He was crying and begging me to help him. It wasn't easy to free myself. But I am a human after all. I became quite mad. "Look man, I'm gonna get you into that damned place, just let me loose". And I coached

him, so well that he came in the first. So, are you happy now, you stupid bastard? You reached your sixth heaven? Are you enjoying being broke?

ERDEM Thank you master, I wanna kiss your blessed hand once more.

HAKKI Let go of my hand! So you finished your school? But, could you become an actor? But, I still appreciate you. You're not wasting yourself with soap operas or voice overs.

ERDEM Yes sir. Since years, I am patiently waiting for a real theatrical experience.

HAKKI And you still have to go on waiting.

TAŞKIN These guys don't like any old role! Just as cadets dream of becoming Chief of Staff, they dream of acting Hamlet.

ERDEM I might do Hamlet if I manage to enter. My chances are high for Van or Trabzon.

TAŞKIN Bravo! A real actor, waiting for the real chance. Since you are doing the delivery jobs for the moment, then you will accept any role with a private company.

ERDEM Of course, but only for the moment.

TAŞKIN Then come over here. Sit down. Yes. Do you have other deliveries? I don't want your father to be upset at you.

ERDEM When the subject is the theatre, I don't care!

TAŞKIN Bravo, waterboy Hamlet. You can stay and listen to us now! But first, I think you should call your father! Don't upset the thirsty neighbors! Our landlady was looking for you.

ERDEM (Phones his father) Dad! Listen. I am starting rehearsals. Yes, finally. No. Find someone else. If you like carry the demijohn yourself. I don't care. Bye!

TAŞKIN What does he say?

ERDEM That he has a bad back! That he can't lift the demijohn. Then why did he start this business? Was he counting on me?

HAKKI He obviously isn't intimidated by his father. Otherwise, he wouldn't have continued with the academy. Are you missing an actor?

TAŞKIN I can always use an actor. And this waterboy is a real actor. I just have to add few lines, here and now. All right, let's get moving. Friends, listen to me well. I finally decided to start my own company. Don't ever forget this: To unite is a beginnig, to continue the union is progress and to work together is success.

LEYLA (with joy) We were always eager but you always refused.

YILDIRIM So finally we will be working for ourselves!

ERDEM Why do I have to bother with details?

TAŞKIN Good! But still, you can please your father by taking the empty bottle back. I mean, after all, he's your father.

ERDEM (He attacks the empty demijohn. About to kick, Taskın stops him. Gestures to Erdem that he's being rude.) Fuck his bloody demijohn!

(Taşkın shows his disapproval, gestures putting hot pepper on his lips)

SAVAŞ Thank you god! My prayers have finally been answered.

TAŞKIN You'll all take part. Even this model. For my good friend Hakkı's sake, I wrote a part for her, well a part with almost no lines.

FİLİZ Am I to be dumb?

TAŞKIN Don't ask stupid questions ,girl! You will be using your body language. For example,you will carry a tray. Maybe you will give a cup of tea to the characters on the stage. You will always be present on the stage.I hope you can manage not to spill the tea!

FİLİZ At home,I serve the tea, coffee,etc.

TAŞKIN There now, you can help Miss Sibel.

FİLİZ Who is Miss Sibel?

TAŞKIN That lady over there. (Filiz helps Sibel to serve the tea.They offer cookies in little plates.) This is our text.(He distributes everyone the short text)Don't be fooled by its size.It is a master piece. (Seeing the admiration, he starts overacting) It's gonna grow with our experiences and surely become a real important play! And it is a comedy! Why a comedy? Because people are miserable! Unemployment has hit the ceiling! Young graduates are wasting away at the cafés, hopeless to find even a low paying job! (Points at Erdem) Let this handsome boy's situation be an example to us all. A university graduate, but he is busy delivering homes a liquid, whether clean or dirty, who knows ! Why, because he can not find employment.Was I to write about the realities of life? People don't wanna cry anymore! They hate to be faced with their problems! Are they stupid enough to spend money on tickets to witness their own miseries? That's why I wrote a play. Have I made myself clear?

(Everyone listens with admiration)

LEYLA What is the name of the play?

TAŞKIN "Actors " Also, "Everything's permissible in order to make theatre!"

YILDIRIM Two titles? No. It wouldn't be commercially acceptable!

TAŞKIN Do we have to call it "The Market" for commercial success? Or "Who stole my dollars?" You should criticize intelligently, friends. Right, waterboy ?

ERDEM One of our courses at the academy was "Writing a Play". I think the title of a play is very important.It should explain all on the spot. It should say to the spectator "Come! Don't hesitate! Buy a ticket!"But we shouldn't argue about the title when we know nothing of the content.

TAŞKIN What do you think ,my friend?

HAKKI The content is important, not the title.Take Hamlet.What does Hamlet mean? A stupid paranoid !But the story is so impressive that the whole world knows it.And as the copy rights not a problem, well, its staged all over the world.Africa, Asia, Latin America, even the poles.In short, the title shouldn't give away the story. You can even put a misleading title.Don't underestimate curiosity.You know where

it can lead sometimes...Our people are particularly curious.They even change governments nonstop out of curiosity.Am I being clear?

TAŞKIN I think we started a totally unnecessary argument.Lets first read the text,if you like we can change the title.The story takes place in the present time.One of the characters is a businessman from the countryside.But he is in trouble.Because he has a 30 years old son who is a gambler.All he does is to go to his father, or rather to his father's accountant and empty the safe and gamble. It looks like now he has exhausted this tap. Apperantly he lost a lot of cash in Cyprus, and elsewhere. But he just doesn't give up. Recently, he gambled against his fathers factory and lost a lot.This turned out to be dangerous. The owners of the casino contacted the mafia and they came to pay a visit to the old man."Gambling debt is a debt of honor. If you don't pay it, we will first shoot your one and only son in the leg, then cut his ear, and finally kill him" Well enough, they shot him in the leg. The guy panics and tries to borrow from the bank. But no bank is willing to extend him credit.The guy goes into a depression.Cause they sort of slice a piece of his son's ear.Don't say the the bastard deserves it! Cause the poor guy's wife leaves him, saying" I don't care how, just find the money". All clear until here?

HAKKI A real tragedy.

LEYLA Welcome to the real world. But its not a comedy?

YILDIRIM I think it is a real tragedy.

ERDEM Me ,too.

TAŞKIN You're mistaken friends. The real story is just starting. I mean the comedy. There are actors like us, pay attention, real actors like us desperate for some good theatre.But they, I mean us, are broke. How sad..We immediately start up an imaginary company. We even have the sign. Do you know what it says? As none of you speak English, let me translate: "Project Coordination Center for the European Union Funds". And they act this play, which we shall shortly start practising, to our guy, and convince him to pay up the onehundred twenty thousand euros deposit he has brought with him. And afterwards, we do a real good deed and start up our own private playhouse.

YILDIRIM What I don't understand, for the actors, you use "us" and "them". But, then you say we start up the company.

TAŞKIN Well, I am just trying to identify with them. So you can grab the story easily. Is it clear now?

HAKKI So, I suppose I am the gambler's father?

TAŞKIN What makes you think that?

HAKKI (Points to the suitcase) Didn't you ask me to bring a boss costume?

TAŞKIN Not just for you, also for Yıldırım. Yes, I asked, but for the other one.A guy who supposedly received money from the fund.The other guy is coming in to ask for funds. Your part is the boss who supposedly comes in to thank for the money he

received from the fund. That's your character! It's a colorful part!

HAKKI What about the girl?

TAŞKIN The model? She will..be Leyla's secretary.

HAKKI She has to have a real part!

TAŞKIN Relax! She will be visible a lot.

LEYLA And me? I have to have the lead role.I am an actress with an award, and my comeback must be magnificent.

TAŞKIN Don't worry! The boss of this fake company must be a woman, it's more convincing. You have the part.Where is your outfit?

LEYLA In Hakkı's suitcase.

TAŞKIN What kind of a costume?

LEYLA Desdemona's dress.

TAŞKIN For heavens sake. In modern times? I hope Hakkı didn't bring his gravediggers costume!

HAKKI No, I brought Manservant Osip's outfit. Just joking!

TAŞKIN This is no time for jokes. Lets be serious! Savaş will be clerk of the company. He just has to pretend to be taking notes. Yıldırım, he will be another guy applying for funds. The waterboy will be your driver. Sibel will be Sibel. As you see, everone gets a part in my play.

YILDIRIM So we all have a part. But then, who will be the businessman?

TAŞKIN (explains with unease) Selim, the boss,is the businessman who is trying to pay off his son's gambling debt.

YILDIRIM I would have liked that part.

TAŞKIN Not possible! Because the real guy will be acting the part!

YILDIRIM What do you mean?

HAKKI Lets not bring in outsiders among us. You know well, the harmony in the team is necessary for success!

TAŞKIN I wouldn't allow any thing to disturb our harmony. But this is a special case. I'll explain in a little while.

LEYLA What about the rehearsals?

TAŞKIN Here. At home.

HAKKI And the first show?

TAŞKIN Naturally, here. This play will be staged only once. (Whisperes to Hakkı) Send Savaş and the model to the other room. They musn't hear our private conversation.

HAKKI How can I?

TAŞKIN Wait, I'll think of something.All right now. Go and start reading in the next room. I've used your real names for your part,O.K.? (To Filiz) You're the secratery, understood?

(They obediantly go next door)

YILDIRIM (Quietly) Why didn't you send away the waterboy?

TAŞKIN Look at him, he is daydreaming . He is harmless now. Because he found his first acting job.Guys,let me be frank. We have to do this job to get money for our theatre! (Silence. The others don't comrehend the situation) We will accomplish greatness! This will be the most consructive success of our

long cooperation! And our new friend, the driver will fit in the team beautifully!

ERDEM (Reaction) I'm not a driver!

TAŞKIN But that's your role. You are a very promising actor. I thought you would be pleased if I called by your character. I mean, I can't call you Hamlet, right? You understand? All right, lets move on.

(Erdem goes back to the text)

YILDIRIM About our long lasting cooperation?

TAŞKIN Yes. We will achieve success as a team. And the adversary is a fox. A businessman. That means, he has been grinded by life, knows the order of things, who can be swindled and how, how to get his hands on state lands, avoid taxes, with ways and means you just can't comprehend, in short, how to abuse mankind, how far to go and where to stop, he knows it better than all of us. His only drawback is to be provencial. Even this proves he is foxier than others. In short, a clever, practical and merciless money bag. Think about it, with this master plan we are gonna swindle such a guy. We can all be proud to be a part of this achievement. And we can establish our theatre with the funds we shall grab from this unwilling sponsor!

LEYLA So, if I understand correctly, we shall rob someone.

HAKKI In other words, we will defraud!

TAŞKIN Waterboy, take your text and go the next room. Those guys are untrained. Train them a bit. Improve their manners. Help them to become stage conscious. You will be my assistant. Don't ever forget this!

ERDEM (Joyful) All right.

(Moves inside with his eyes still on the text)

TAŞKIN These three don't have to hear all the details. Lets keep certain things between us. Yes. To start up our own company, using our knowhow and experiences, we will stage a play within a play and we will swindle this scoundrel of his money. Furthermore, we will even give an acting role to this undeserving swine. That's all! (Silence)

LEYLA (Is afraid. Mumbles.) They should be ashamed of this misery we are in!

TAŞKIN No one will be ashamed Leyla!

LEYLA So, it looks like we will cheat a helpless provincial who doesn't fit the tough businessman type you described!

TAŞKIN My dearest Leyla, are we up to robbing the CEO of a multinational company? Because if we attempt such a thing, we might lose everything, even these pictures on the walls. And these chairs. Our last coins. Our watches. Our mobile phones.

LEYLA But that's exactly what I'm trying say. If we could swindle a real lowdown, say someone who cheats the banks, then I wouldn't feel bad and consider it a glory. But, now, what are we trying to do? We are trying to wipe clean a poor guy who is trying to find some money from the E.U. funds to pay his son's gambling debts.

TAŞKIN Don't ever forget something Leyla. This man you pity is turning global; when he can't find means of cheating here, he's extending his tentacles to Europe. (A foxy smile) Don't worry about him, he'll manage to land on feet again. Let's worry about ourselves. Won't this woman throw me out if I cannot come up with the rent? How the hell will I eat? Raid the garbage bins?? Will I drink water from the public fountains and wash myself in the public ponds? Even in the public toilets are privatised, ,where the hell will I piss? Like dogs, up a tree? Or the walls of a mosque? Am I stupid enough to court death? Please pity me, not that man! And god forbid, what if I was to fall sick? Let's try to take care of ourselves for heavens sake. Are you in a better situation than me? You, Desdemona? Since years, you've taken on any role, big or small..At times, during tours, you were pawned in the hotel room for the unpaid bills! You spent nights in the police station! Your life was hard to say the least. One season you even received the best actress prize. Well, there were rumours you had an affair with one of the judges but, still you received that prize. You put it up on the wall of your sixth floor apartment you inherited from your father, no elevator may I add. Could you make a good living with that?

LEYLA On the contrary, with all the jealousy it caused, I couldn't find work for two seasons!

TAŞKIN So, you agree with me. Today you are forty six years old.

LEYLA (Angry) Forty five.

TAŞKIN What difference does it make?

LEYLA It makes a difference. Because I am still forty five.

TAŞKIN Well let it be forty five, so what?

LEYLA Why are you making me older than I am?

TAŞKIN Will it please you if I say thirty? I can even say twenty if you like. Just so you can find work! Also, don't ever forget this; old people think that they get older as they live, but they really get old when they don't live.(Leyla is trying to decipher the last part) But, what is the reality? Look at yourself in the mirror. You are worried about your future, it's visible on your face. How can one lead a healthy life with fear and worries? How can one memorize all the lines of a long part? Can anybody become Desdemona? How can one sweep aside the blows of insatiable female critics? Can one talk of economic stability unless the dollar hits the bottom? All the institutions are being privatized. Yet no one is helping the theatre companies when they hit trouble. Where are we heading?

LEYLA What have I got to do with all this?

TAŞKIN It's got to do with everything! You, you should thank your lucky stars! At least you have a roof over your head, your father left you an attic. But don't smile so quickly! Are you gonna use candles for light when you cannot pay your electricity bills? And how are you gonna pay for those candles? How can you call your home a home if one day you don't have

running water? Fine, these days the weather is nice and warm! But how are you gonna heat your home once the winter starts? I wouldn't count on global warming if I were you! Most important of all, what are you gonna eat in that ice cold apartment of yours?

HAKKI Master, you speak words of wisdom!

YILDIRIM The destiny of actors.

TAŞKIN And you, Yildirim?

YILDIRIM The same goes for me. Anyhow, I can't do another job or business. I really am a real actor!

TAŞKIN My friend, I was sure of your support. Thanks! You, Hakki? What do you say?

HAKKI I must be the luckiest among you. Cause I am one few actors who managed to retire with a pension. But alas, I can hardly pay my cellphone bills with this money. I don't have much time. I was lucky to meet Filiz. And now, I have to grab this chance and live the rest of my life without worrying about money. Master, I especially thank you for including me in this setup.

TAŞKIN It's up to you now Desdemona.

LEYLA Well, you are quite right! After all, we are doing theatre! So, why not!

(They applaud Leyla. She takes a bow as if on stage)

TAŞKIN (Joyously) Bravo! We have to grab any chance we can. Because now our country is becoming a land of oppotunities. So, lets start working! My dearest Hakki, take your businessman outfit to the other room. Leyla, you too!

HAKKI What about the girl, Erdem and Savas?

TAŞKIN Call them.

HAKKI What are they supposed to wear?

TAŞKIN What they have on is good enough. Only the businessmen and Leyla should put on a costume. Don't forget we are real actors and we'll act the part of real actors. And real actors dress just like us. Anyhow, nobody need to put on costumes now. This is just a reading session.

(Savas, Erdem and Filiz enter and sit down)

TAŞKIN Friends, good luck. We're starting our rehearsal now. I'm at the same time the director of this play. Attention please, it is me who's gonna read the lines between paranthesis. Since everyone knows what role to play, let's start. Good luck. (changes his voice) Actors... Comedy, two acts.. The living room of an apartment. A room divider seperates the right side of the stage. That's where the secretary is sitting. Entry and the kitchen is also there. The rest is supposedly the office. Pithy quotations on the walls. A businessman is expected; in order to pay his son's gambling debts, he comes to this fake company hoping to get funds from the European Union. However, the employees of this imaginary company are actors and they have to convince the businessman Selim. Taskin's mobile phone rings. (Supposedly answers) Yes..All right Sibel... Thanks (Pretends to put down the

phone) Friends, they are coming. They are down at the door. Everyone is agitated but they wait without a sound. The doorbell rings. (He imitates the doorbell ring) The secretary answers the door. First Selim, then Sibel enters. (There is silence. Taskin gets angry.) Well... Model, why aren't you reading?

FİLİZ But I am not a model.

TAŞKIN Yeah, you're the secretary, read!

FİLİZ (Reads with an effort) Welcome, please take a seat.

SİBEL Please sit down Mr. Selim. Let me announce your arrival.

TAŞKIN Selim joins the others who are sitting in the secretary's office. Sibel moves to the other side:

SİBEL Mr. Selim is here, too. Miss Leyla, shall I send in the people who are waiting?

LEYLA Yes, we're already late.

TAŞKIN (Taşkın looks over to the secretary's office.) Who's first?

HAKKI I came over to convey my thanks. I would be happy if I can go in first.

TAŞKIN All right. Go in. We are overloaded with work. Please keep it short. Hakki goes inside. Mr. Mahmut came here to give his thanks.

LEYLA Welcome. Please have a seat.

HAKKI Thank you madam. I am not going to take too much of your time. The European Union funds arrived. And I deposited the money I owe you. These are the receipts.

TAŞKIN Leyla takes the receipts.

LEYLA What was your project?

HAKKI "Bee keeping".

LEYLA Oh, that small project.

TAŞKIN Taşkın places a file on her desk. A project for fortytwo thousand euros.

LEYLA Yes, I remember. Lets see.. Yes... Hm.. At first you gave us four thousand two hundred euros as an advance.

HAKKI Yes, ma'am. And, now...

LEYLA Today you have deposited the rest. You had to deposit eight thousand four hundred euros. But, this is not right!

TAŞKIN Pretends to be surprised:

HAKKI It seems I have deposited nine thousand four hundred euros!

LEYLA But this is not to be! We are a serious company. You have overpaid by one thousand euros. I can not allow this.

HAKKI No problem ma'am. We are going to do business again. We can settle our account then.

LEYLA No, no! We have to close the bee file, I don't want confusion later on. We can only accept what was agreed. Please pay the gentleman one thousand euros.

TAŞKIN Yes ma'am. While he opens the safe with the supposedly accountant Savas...

HAKKI Thank you for everything. I wish I listened to your advice about a bigger project. Then I wouldn't had to settle for this meager amount.

LEYLA Sir, I told you so. If you accepted the "New Methods for Typewriting with Ten Fingers" project, you would have been eligible for at least thirty thousand euros.

HAKKI But I couldn't pay you the required advance. Because I had limited funds. You know very well how difficult it was for me to find the four thousand two hundred euros. But I can give you all the money I received for the next project.

LEYLA No, you missed your chance. We cannot submit another proposal in your name for a full year.

TAŞKIN Hakkı takes the thousand euros.

HAKKI Thank you very much. If that is all, can I leave now?

LEYLA You may leave..

HAKKI Thank you very much.

LEYLA If you come back next year, we can submit a new proposal to the E.U. based on the amount of money you have in your pocket.

HAKKI Thank you.

LEYLA Enjoy your money. You know, there is no repayment. Donation...

HAKKI Thank you ma'am.

TAŞKIN Hakkı places the one thousand euros into his wallet while walking to the secretary's office. He addresses the people who are waiting, especially Selim:

HAKKI What an honest establishment. They even repayed the thousand euros I had deposited by mistake.

TAŞKIN Hakkı makes a fake departure sound by opening and closing the door and goes to the room in the entry without being seen by Selim.

TAŞKIN Come in. Yıldırım goes in... He is obviously uneasy.

YILDIRIM You have asked for me?

LEYLA You? Please sit down. What was the name of your project?

TAŞKIN Well... The one...Well..He extends a file. He whispers into Leyla' ear.

LEYLA Aha...That one! Let's take a look at your file. "Atatürk, the biggest obstacle for Turkey on the path for modernisation". That's the one, right?

YILDIRIM Yes, ma'am.

LEYLA Big project. Last week it was sent to Brussels. Let's see what was your advance payment to us. One hundred twenty thousand euros. If the project had been approved, you were entitled to receive one million two hundred thousand euros.

YILDIRIM If? Then it wasn't approved? Was there a hitch in Brussels?

LEYLA No sir. There was no hitch over there. Thanks god, we asked for the file to be returned to us early enough.

YILDIRIM Maybe the file was not properly prepared here?

LEYLA No, everything was in order. In this center we are always very meticulous with the paperwork.

YILDIRIM What is it then? I won't be able to collect the money?

LEYLA No. Because we have recalled the file. You will only collect one hundred twenty thousand euros. That is the advance you deposited with us. Because you lied to us. You gave us your driver's name as yours. Like all businessmen, you used someone else for your hanky panky affairs. Prepare this man's payment...

TAŞKIN Already done. Takes out a black briefcase. It's here.

YILDIRIM But...

LEYLA Well? Or are we mistaken? Maybe your name is really Erdem Çalışkan? Why don't you tell us!

YILDIRIM Erdem... Well, he is.. He is my driver..

TAŞKIN Hearing his name, Erdem comes in running.

ERDEM Sir, you called me?

TAŞKIN No! Erdem returns to the secretary's office.

LEYLA Well, you have to bear the consequences of your lies. What if they investigated you in Brussels? Wouldn't we have lost our credibility as a center?

TAŞKIN A long period of silence.

LEYLA Pay his money so he can leave immediately.

TAŞKIN The man throws himself down on the floor.

YILDIRIM Kill me first! Don't return the money to me. Correct my name and send the file again. I beg you. Ma'am, I'm ready to kiss your feet. Please forgive me.

TAŞKIN While trying to disengage herself from the man:

LEYLA You should have thought about this earlier. Alas! Now it's too late.

YILDIRIM Forgive me! I beg you!

LEYLA You can't build over lies! How can we trust you now? Take your money and leave!

YILDIRIM I was planning to take my kid to the United States and China for an operation. I call on your conscience...

TAŞKIN Getting very nervous: I wasn't going to mention it but now you deserve it. You fooled us with the story of your sick child. But you were planning to buy a waterside mansion on the Bosphorus for your mistress. Let everyone hear the truth! Leyla is shocked:

LEYLA What! Impossible! This man is an outrageous liar! I don't want to see him here, throw him out! It's an ordeal for me to be in the same room with him...

TAŞKIN Leyla is about to faint... They lift the man up... Erdem! Come here. They hand him the briefcase.. They rough up the guy a bit while throwing him out. "He was forewarned but he still tried to play clever." Miss, bring a glass of water here. Put some sugar in it. They help Leyla to drink the sugared water. How are you? Are you feeling better now? Shall we bring in the other guy who is waiting?

LEYLA I'm a bit better now.

TAŞKIN Taşkın goes near Selim. We have to hurry up with your project. If we miss tonight's plane to Brussels we lose a whole week. Do you have all the required documents? Selim opens his briefcase to show all the papers. Taskın looks at the documents: Lets see now. Certificate of residence, copy of the identity card, and all the others...Please.. Selim goes inside. He is a bit uneasy because of the scenes he had witnessed. You can sit over here. Selim sits down across Leyla. Leyla is still angry and sad.

TAŞKIN This gentleman is Selim Yanılmaz. The businessman. He hands her the file. Leyla starts glancing at the file:

LEYLA You must have witnessed what happened here, even unwillingly...The man is a real liar..Can you build anything over lies? Can it ever last?

TAŞKIN Leyla is answering her own questions without giving him a chance to speak.

LEYLA Now, lets see about you. Lets not loose time by talking. Your son is trouble. He unfortunately put you in a difficult situation, losing money gambling, pawning your name, taking money from the safe.. On top of it all, the Mafia is involved. If you don't pay his debt, the Mafia will cut his ear. If you still don't pay the money, then they will kill your son. So, you have to come up with the money. Lets see what projects we have at hand. For example; " Human Rights Training for the Police in Ten Lessons", ", "How to save the Geronticus Eremita from Extinction", "Important Precautions For The Bird Flu"..About twenty similar small projects. But Brussels doesn't pay well for these. Maximum twenty or thirty thousand euros. This won't be enough for you. But we can use the project that was intended for the guy , that liar. Lets cut it short. You will be the bookkeeper of the "Higher Democracy Association", which is already formed. After one month and two days, you shall receive one million twohundred thousand euros in your bank account. Now, you will ask me how much of it is yours? Pay attention...One million two hundred thousand euros. What do you have to pay us? Only two hundred forty thousand euros. What's left for you? Nine hundred sixty thousand euros. This should be enough to solve your problems. All you have to do is sign two copies of this document, with your bank account number clearly marked, and hand it to us. What are we gonna do with it? We are gonna speed it to the last plane to Brussels tonight,so as not to miss tomorrow's evaluation meeting! What if we are late? Well, we have to wait for a full week then. Now, you might still think what if Brussels doesn't approve the project? You just have to come back and your advance of one hundred twenty thousand euros will be returned to you, down to the last cent. The decision is yours. However, you have to decide right now.

TAŞKIN A period of silence. Leyla hands him the papers. She then gives him a pen.

LEYLA Over here.

TAŞKIN Selim signs the documents.

LEYLA Good luck. Let's get the advance payment from Mr. Selim.

TAŞKIN Selim hands over the briefcase.

LEYLA How much do you have here?

TAŞKIN (As if he is Selim) One hundred twenty thousand euros.

LEYLA Let's give it to our accountant.

TAŞKIN Leyla gives the case to the accountant.

LEYLA First count the money, then prepare the receipt for Mr. Selim. No, don't count the bills one by one. Time is money. Count the packs. Does Mr. Selim look like a liar?

TAŞKIN A period of quiet waiting.

SAVAŞ All in order. This is your receipt.

LEYLA Please see the gentleman out.

TAŞKIN Selim goes out. They close the door after him. And they start laughing silently. Curtain!!!! Thanks friends. Lets have some tea and discuss the details. What do you think of the text?

YILDIRIM Good.

HAKKI Well done.

ERDEM Well, good plot. But my part is too small.

TAŞKIN No part is ever too small.

YILDIRIM My only objection is the fact that you haven't written enough lines for Selim.

TAŞKIN We'll try our best so he doesn't speak. We're in deep shit if he talks.

YILDIRIM What if the unexpected happens?

TAŞKIN Then I shall enter the scene. After all, I am supposedly Leyla's assistant. And you know well, I am excellent in improvisation. Just don't bother your head with this now. In my opinion, we should practice a bit more. I feel as if Selim is too quickly convinced. What do you think?

YILDIRIM I agree.

HAKKI Right!

LEYLA A businessman after all. He can't be this naive?

HAKKI No, he should be full of tricks!

TAŞKIN Don't forget, he is helpless! His son's life is in question... Well, again I have to save the day. Another sleepless night for me. You know, we have to present this play in two days. (While they are drinking the tea served by Sibel and Filiz, the door bell rings. Worried looks...) Don't be silly. Must be the concierge. Open the door.

(Filiz opens the door. It is Nihal. She is trying to hide a package behind her. Enters.)

NİHAL I came to wish good luck with your rehearsals!

TAŞKIN How did you know we started rehearsals?

NİHAL Mr. Hakkı, Mr. Yıldırım, Miss Leyla.. I have seen them so many times on stage. When I saw them from my window, I quickly went to the nearest pizzeria. I would be delighted if you accept the pittas. You must be hungry.

TAŞKIN Why did you trouble yourself?

NİHAL Not at all. It's an honor and pleasure for me.

TAŞKIN Friends. Madam Nihal is my landlady. She is a real theatre lover and follower. She knows you all.

HAKKI (Kisses her hand) How kind of you!

NIHAL I still remember The Gravedigger and The Servant, Mr.Hakkı.

HAKKI (Tears in his eyes. Looking at her legs) Wish she was younger. But still in good shape.

NIHAL (To Yıldırım) Hello Proctor.

YILDIRIM (Kisses her hand) Thank you madam. You are very kind.

NIHAL Not at all. (To Leyla) You charmed me as Desdemona.

LEYLA How well you remember everthing Madam. You made me so happy.

NIHAL It is impossible not to remember. Because I cannot forget your acting. Even my dear departed Rasim was impressed.

LEYLA How I wish he was still alive so I could hear these words from his mouth.

NIHAL (To Savas) I do not know this gentleman's name but he seems familiar. Unfortunately, I cannot figure out how.

SAVAŞ My name is Savaş. I took part in almost all of the large cast plays. Guard, silent soldier, a peddler, the man on the street. Countless characters. But I do recognize you Madam.

NIHAL Really, how come?

SAVAŞ Standing silently on the stage gives one a good advantage to observe the audience.

NIHAL Wonderful, wonderful! I do not recognize the young actors but I hope they will one day be stars. Just like you all.

ALL TOGETHER Thank you.

NIHAL I have a request. If it will not disturb you.

ALL TOGETHER Please. Your request is our command.

NIHAL Quietly. Without any interference. Can I watch your rehearsal?(She sees Erdem) But I know this young man. (Surprised, can't understand why he is there) Oh, isn't he our boy? I am waiting for water delivery since two hours!

TAŞKIN (Smiles) I am afraid you'll have to go on waiting. Because now he is an actor!

End of part 1

ACT 2

After two days. Same place. The living room is separated into two rooms by a room divider. Right hand side is to serve as the secretary's office. A small desk. A desk telephone. Sufficient number of chairs. The sign in English, hung on a suitable place. The left hand side is the real office. Desk, the old armchairs and the other furniture have been arranged to give an impression of a company. The pictures of the writers on the walls have been placed by frames containing messages " Our Path is the E.U. Path...", "E.U. membership is our right, we shall fight ", "Privatisation is Beautiful", etc. Everyone is dressed, ready and waiting. They all look excited. Taşkın walks around impatiently.

TAŞKIN (His mobile phone rings) Yes, Sibel. Where are you? All right. O.K! O.K! (Shuts the phone. Tries to disguise his excitement) They are downstairs. They will be coming any moment now! You all know what to do. Comrades, remember! Your success means our very own playhouse!

(All very excited)

HAKKI We know!

LEYLA It's only natural if we are a bit excited.

YILDIRIM Don't you worry!

TAŞKIN Take your places. Model, sit at your desk! Yıldırım, Hakkı, Erdem , to the secretary's office. Quick! Savaş , you too, sit down. Do hurry up Leyla. (All take their places) Friends, don't forget the tempo.. Tempo... Tempo...

HAKKI Yes master!

TAŞKIN (Dials a number) Now lets scare Selim for the last time. He'll be easier to handle. Quiet!

(Passes the phone to Hakkı)

HAKKI (With a different voice) Hellooooo... Helloooo Selim... Debt of gambling, debt of honor. You don't pay, you don't live. Hurry up now. No use for regrets afterwards.

TAŞKIN (Takes the phone and shuts it down) I said shake the guy a bit, you wanna kill him? You were about to give a heart attack to our goose with the golden eggs. (To Savaş) Don't sleep over there! Make yourself busy!

SAVAŞ No fear! I won't sleep. I just napped a while ago.

(Silence. The doorbell rings. Filiz is surprised, waits)

FİLİZ (To everyone) Come in. Please take a seat.

TAŞKIN You're gonna say your lines after opening the door! (Filiz slowly moves to the door) Come on my fashion model! Lets see you in action! Don't disappoint us!

YILDIRIM Shit! She'll blunder.

TAŞKIN No problem. She is newly hired. It's an advantage for her to be an inexperienced secretary. Hurry. Open the door!

(Filiz opens the door..It's Nihal)

FİLİZ Please come in. Take a seat.

(Everyone is surprised)

TAŞKIN Aaaaa?

NİHAL May I watch? Please !..

TAŞKIN (Doesn't know what to do) Hm hmm... bla... Uugh...

(The door is still open, Selim enters, holding a briefcase, followed by Sibel)

FİLİZ (To both of them) Welcome. Please sit down.

TAŞKIN (Grabs Nihal by the arm and leads her to the living room) You can watch here. But don't ever interrupt. Maybe as the mother of Leyla...

NİHAL I apoligize. I know rehearsals are a serious business.

(Nihal is a little ashamed but sits down happily)

SİBEL Please sit down Mr.Selim. Let me announce you.

(Selim sits in the secreatry's office with the other guys who are supposedly waiting for their turn)

SİBEL (Goes inside) Mr.Selim has arrived, too. Miss Leyla, shall I send in the people who are waiting?

LEYLA Yes. We are already late .

TAŞKIN (Looks to the secretary's office) Who's first?

HAKKI I just came to convey my thanks. I would be happy to go in first.

TAŞKIN Allright. Go in.We are overloaded with work.Please keep it short.(As Hakkı goes in) Mr.Mahmut came to thank you.

LEYLA Welcome. Please have a seat.

HAKKI Thank you Madam.I am not going to take too much of your time. I received the funds from the E.U. About two hours ago. I deposited the money I owe you. Here are your receipts.

(Leyla takes the receipts)

LEYLA Which one was your project?

HAKKI "Bee Keeping"

LEYLA Yes, that small project!

TAŞKIN (Places a file on her desk) The fortytwo thousand euro project.

LEYLA Yes, I remember. (Studies the file) Let's see.

(Doorbell rings)

FİLİZ (Opens the door) Welcome. Please take a seat.

THE VOICE OF THE CONCIERGE (a mechanical voice) Rubbish...

FİLİZ Welcome. Please take a seat.

THE VOICE OF THE CONCIERGE Rubbish... rubbish!

TAŞKIN (Comes running) None. Thanks. (Closes the door) If in a little while the postman comes, seat him! And, don't neglect the milkman too, O.K.?(To the others) Patience, patience.. She is inexperienced. (Holds his ear) My ear... Oh, my ear! My ear keeps ringing! (He notices how Selim is startled at the mention of ear) There must be an explanation for it!

SİBEL (Lowering her voice) You might receive good news.

TAŞKIN Since weeks it's been ringing. I hope it's nothing serious.After all, one should not underestimate the ear!

(Goes near Leyla)

LEYLA You had given us four thousand twohundred euros as advance.

HAKKI Yes ma'am. And now..

LEYLA It looks like you have deposited the rest today. You had to pay eight thousand four hundred euros. But this is not right!

HAKKI (Pretends to look surprised) Have I underpaid?

LEYLA No sir, no. Ours is a serious establishment. You have overpaid us by one thousand euros. I can not allow this.

SİBEL (to Selim) They seem to be so honest?

HAKKI No problem, ma'am... We are bound to do business again. We can always settle our account later.

LEYLA No, no. We have to close this bee file account. Otherwise the bees might sting us! (Laughs in a weird way) We can only accept what was previously agreed. Please pay the gentleman his one thousand euros immediately.

TAŞKIN Right away ma'am!

(While he is opening the safe together with accountant Savaş)

HAKKI I thank you for everything you've done. But I really wish I had taken your advice to submit a bigger project. Then I wouldn't be settling for such peanuts today.

LEYLA Mr. Mahmut, I told you so. "New Methods For Typing With Ten Fingers" project was worth at least thirty thousand euros!

HAKKI But I couldn't come up with the required advance.You know how hard it was for me to find the money. But, for the next project I can now pay you all I have in my hand.

LEYLA No, you missed your chance. We can not submit another proposal in you name for at least a year.

HAKKI What about my son?

LEYLA No, not possible. Because you have the same surname.

HAKKI If I find someone else?

LEYLA No, it won't be acceptable. We absolutely avoid such practises. This is a respectable center.

HAKKI (Takes the money) Thank you very much. If there's nothing else, can I leave?

LEYLA Yes, for the moment that's all. If the E.U publishes your project as a book, and normally that takes three months, then you will benefit from the copyrights. While that's not a fortune, still it should be between five to ten thousand euros. Please inform us as soon as you receive the bank transfer from Brussels. We deserve our commision.

HAKKI Don't you worry Ma'am...

LEYLA If you come back after a year, we'll find you a project according to the money you will have in your pocket.

HAKKI Thank you.

LEYLA Enjoy your lovely euros. You know there is no repayment. A gift!

HAKKI Thank you Ma'am. I know.

HAKKI (Waving the euros, he goes the the secretary's office, places the money in his wallet. He quietly addresses the people who are sitting, in particular Selim) They even reimbursed the one thousand euros I had overpaid by mistake.

(Hakki makes a fake departure sound by opening and closing the door and goes to the room in the entry without being seen by Selim)

TAŞKIN You can come in.

(Yıldırım goes in. He is obviously uneasy)

SELİM (to Sibel) I seem to recognize this gentleman and the previous one.

SİBEL (A little disturbed) It is possible. Sometimes people look alike, right?

SELİM But they seem to be so familiar. Where did I see them before?

YILDIRIM You have asked for me?

LEYLA You? Please sit down. What was the name of your project?

TAŞKIN Well... The one... Well that one...

(He extends a file. He whispers into Leyla's ear)

LEYLA Ahaa... That one... Now, lets look into your file.

"Atatürk, The biggest Obstacle For Turkey On The Path For Modernisation!" This was the project that was presented in your name? I want to make sure!

YILDIRIM That's right ma'am.

LEYLA Prof. Dr. Atilla Ova had prepared this project. It was sent to Brussels last week. Lets see what was the advance payment to us. One hundred twenty thousand euros. If the project had been approved, you were entitled to receive one million two hundred thousand euros.

YILDIRIM If? Then there was no approval? Was there a hitch?

LEYLA Something worse than misfortune. Thanks God Brussels was not aware of it!

YILDIRIM Maybe the procedure was not in order?

LEYLA This center never hands a file that is incorrect or incomplete!

YILDIRIM What is it then? Who sabotaged it? Then I won't be able to pocket the one million two hundred thousand euros?

LEYLA No, you won't! Because we have recalled the file! You will only get one hundred thousand euros. The advance you had paid us! Because you lied to us! You wrote your driver's name as yours! Prepare this man's money!

TAŞKIN Already done. (Shows the briefcase he takes from Savaş) Here.

YILDIRIM But...

LEYLA (With ridicule) Or are we mistaken? Maybe your name is really Erdem Çalışkan? Why don't you tell us...

(Hearing his name, Erdem comes running)

YILDIRIM Erdem... Well, he is... My driver.

ERDEM Sir, you called me?

TAŞKIN The type that comes running to any old thing. Go back.

(Erdem returns to the secretary's office)

LEYLA Why did you do it?

YILDIRIM Some of my friends from the business circles warned me. They said, "Even though you are going to make good money, you won't be able to enjoy it. You will get into trouble. Prof. Dr. Atilla Ova prepared this project and he is a marked man. He had previously prepared another project against Atatürk and pocketed a generous amount of money but then he was sacked from the university. Give it up."

LEYLA You should have given up. But you couldn't give up. Because the money is huge. You told me right from the beginning that it was preferable to do the file with someone apart from Atilla Ova. And what did I tell you? "Brussels is handing out such big money because of this man". You have to take such a guy's project if you want big money.

YILDIRIM Exactly.

LEYLA And you... You chose to submit your driver's name. If there was any problem after the project, your driver would have gotten into trouble.

TAŞKIN You clever man!

YILDIRIM Yes...

LEYLA But you didn't tell us.

TAŞKIN As if we were fooled!

LEYLA Naturally you have to bear the consequences. What if they investigated you in Brussels, what the hell we were gonna do? What deep hole we were gonna be in? Wouldn't we have lost all our credibility as a center?

(A long period of silence)

LEYLA Pay his money and let him leave immediately!

(Yıldırım throws himself in front of Leyla)

YILDIRIM Better kill me first! Don't return the money to me! Write my own name and send the file again! I beg you! Madam, I am ready to kiss your feet! Please forgive me. Everyone can make a mistake.

LEYLA (Trying to disengage herself from the man) You should have thought about this earlier! Alas! Now it is too late!

YILDIRIM Tomorrow is another day! Forgive me! I beg you!

LEYLA You can't build over lies! You broke our trust now. Take your money and leave!

YILDIRIM I was planning to take my kid to the United States and China for an operation. I call on your conscience..

TAŞKIN (Very nervously) I wasn't going tell but now you deserve it! You also fooled us with lies about your sick child! You embarked on this project to buy a waterside mansion on the Bosphorus for your mistress!

LEYLA (Is in shock) No, it is impossible! Such an outrageous lie. I don't want to see this man here any longer. Throw him out. It is an ordeal to be in the same room with such a dishonest guy!

(About to faint)

TAŞKIN Erdem! Come here! (Gives the briefcase to Erdem. He roughly throws them out) If you are forwarned and still try to play clever, this is what you deserve.

YILDIRIM (He had put his foot under the door from outside. Forces the door and enters.) You gave me the best lesson of my life. Even small mistakes can follow us all our life. I thank you for this lesson. They say a liar's candle will burn until bed time. How true.

(Goes out, supposedly. Enters and goes to the other room without being seen)

TAŞKIN Miss, quickly bring a glass of water for Miss Leyla. Wait, lets put sugar in it. (They make Leyla drink the sugared water) How are you? Better? Are you fine now? Shall we bring in the other guy who is waiting?

(Nihal, seeing she is not still fine, takes out a bottle of cologne from her purse and splashes Leyla's face)

TAŞKIN (Quietly) Mrs. Nihal, what are you doing?

NIHAL (Quietly) How can you wake someone who fainted with just water?

TAŞKIN Bravo Mrs. Nihal!

NIHAL On top of it, she is my daughter? How can a mother sit by idly in such a situation?

TAŞKIN I have to add it to the text.

NIHAL (Is really in the mood and starts acting) Baby, baby! My pretty daughter! My baby! Wake up! How can I live without you?

TAŞKIN (Makes a hand gesture to Nihal to say it's good) Wonderful!

NIHAL (Is really in the game now) I can't bear losing a child! Am I fainting? Ooooooh! (Falls down)

TAŞKIN (Runs inside to Filiz) Miss Leyla's mother fainted. Bring a glass of water for her.

FILİZ Which mother?

TAŞKIN How many mothers she has, you stupid secretary? (As Filiz is running inside) She started work yesterday. She is

turning everything upside down. Mr.Selim, I beg your pardon for whatever blunders she might make.

SELİM Our secretaries are the same...

(Taşkın goes near Leyla)

LEYLA What happened to me? Did I faint? (Gets up. Sees Nihal) Mother, what happened to my mother?

TAŞKIN (Quietly) Well done Leyla. Now you wake up too. Don't exaggerate.

NIHAL (Wakes up) Oh my daughter... God spared you to me. (Hugs and kisses her) I was so scared...

TAŞKIN All right Mother of Leyla. Quiet. Please sit silently here . We are overloaded with work. How are you Miss Leyla?

LEYLA I am much better now. Work is the best therapy. I should meet the new guy in order to forget that unpleasant man.

TAŞKIN Shall I bring Mr.Selim?

LEYLA Yes. Let him come...

TAŞKIN O.K. (Goes near Selim) This way. (Pretends to be joking) She wants to size you up. Model, bring me a measuring tape. (Selim goes in, a little battered. He is obviously worried by what he has witnessed) You can sit over here.

(Selim sits down right across Leyla. Leyla is pretending to shake all over. Taşkın is rubbing her face, nose and arms with a cotton pad that is soaked with cologne)

SELİM (Fearfully, to Taşkın) If you like I can wait in the secretary's office. I'll come back when she is feeling better.

TAŞKIN No. We have to sort out your business immediately. If we cannot make it on time for tonight's plane to Brussels, we lose at least a week. Then your son would lose an ear. By the way, did you bring the advance money?

SELİM Yes, I did.

TAŞKIN You don't have a big enough bag. How can one hundred twenty thousand euros fit into a wallet? What do you have in this briefcase? Do you have all the required documents?

SELİM (Opens his case to show)All complete.

TAŞKIN Certificate of residence, copy of the identity card,and the others;all complete. Furthermore, more photocopies than really needed. Probably you were thinking "What if. Maybe something will be missing. Then my son's ear would pay the price." Bravo. The fact that you are meticulous and prudent pleases me.

LEYLA (Is back to herself) Yes, we can start. Mother, please don't ever interfere.

NIHAL Yes my dear.

TAŞKIN (to Leyla) This gentleman is Selim Yanılmaz. The businessman. The businessman whose son is a gambler. (He hands her a file with all the information) All the facts are here.

LEYLA (Glances) You must have witnessed what happened here, even unwillingly. The man is a reala! Can you build anything over lies? How long can it last? If we are in a commercial transaction, then we have to trust each other and never tell lies? Now, you can say that commerce and business world thrives

with lies. I have no objection! But you should only lie to the public! Those who are in the commerce, should never lie to each other. This is the biggest imorality. (She is answering her own questions without giving him a chance to speak) Now lets see about you. Lets not lose time by talking endlessly. Let me summarize and correct me if I am wrong. Your son is a gambler. He unfortunately put you in a difficult situation, losing money gambling, pawning your name, taking money from the safe. The real trouble is the involvement of the Mafia. If you don't pay the money, they will cut your son's ear.

TAŞKIN (Supposedly to comfort) Don't worry. He can still hear. But I agree with you, an earless face is not pleasant to look at. But there is always a solution. He can let his hair grow long to cover the missing ear.

SELİM (Almost crying) But it is not just the ear. Then they will shoot and bury him. They already shot him in the leg.

TAŞKIN How is he now? Can he walk?

SELİM He is a little lame. Generally he rests at home.

TAŞKIN How can he bear not gambling?

SELİM Sometimes, when he's had enough, he goes out with the little pocket money he takes from his mother. He takes bets with people in the street as to whether the cars coming in from the avenue have odd or even licence plate numbers... Well, anyone he can convince. The municipality was doing roadworks, they closed the street. Without cars, he couldn't bet for about ten days. Just when we were happy, he started betting on the people turning the corner, whether they were man or woman. My son is an incorrigable gambler. May God bless people with children who don't gamble! If you only know what we suffer?

TAŞKIN Ask one question, hear one thousand complaints !

LEYLA The reality is you have to find this money. I have to tell you that you are a lucky man. What if you got the credit from that bank which has a Greek majority partner? They were going to be reimbursed by hook or crook. And with outrageous interest. But now there is no such danger. Brussels pays the money as a donation, and never asks for repayment. Furthermore, our Ministry of Finance is not able to audit the transfers. You can spend the money for the gambling debt or a mansion on the Bosphorus for your mistress. It is a good thing you are dealing with us, thank your lucky stars. Lets see what projects we have at hand. For example; "Human Rights Training For The Police in Ten Lessons", "How To Save The Geronticus Eremita From Extinction", "New Methods in Writing for Lefthanded People", "Important Precautions For The Bird Flu". About twenty similar small projects. But Brussels doesn't pay well for these. At best twenty or thirty thousand euros. In short, none of these can solve your problem. In short, your son's ear will go! Then... (Taşkın mimes the burial of the son) In short you have to take a project that attacks the nation , ethnic differences, the Republic, the social state, especially Atatürk and the Army.

Upon receiving your application through Miss Sibel, we looked at your needs. We can use the project that was intended for that man, the liar. I can say one thing for you. You shouldn't be scared by the name of Atatürk on the file.

TAŞKIN It wouldn't be surprising if these days the Parlement approves a bill that will punish people for praising Atatürk. That seems to be the trend! Those who curse him are being rewarded! Can't you see? No need to fear!

LEYLA Yes, to get to the point. You will be appointed as the bookkeeper of "The Higher Democracy Association" which is already formed. Just to pretend, you understand? The funds will be arriving to the account number you have specified here. This money shall be sufficient for all the debt plus a considerable amount for your son to gamble again. That is a joke of course. All your documents are in order. Now you just have to pay your advance, sign the documents and leave our center with a peace of mind... After one month and two days, you shall receive from Brussels one million two hundred thousand euros to your account. Now, you will ask me how much of it is yours? Let's do the calculation. How much will you pay us? Only two hundred forty thousand euros! How many euros are left in your hand? Nine hundred sixty thousand euros. Two thirds of this money is more than enough to close the debt and save your son's ear and you can enjoy spending the rest. You can think how can I give you a guaranty? Will Brussels really send the money? Let me answer so you have no more questions left to nag you! The people there too have needs, children, wives, and desire a car, a house. In short, they know how to live better than us. Frankly, the bribery mechanism is much better institutionalized over there. After all, they are Europeans! I think I made myself clear... All you have to do is sign the two copies of this document, without forgetting to write your bank account number and deposit it with us. As you can see, the files are in Turkish and English, together with the signed document we shall speed it to the last plane to Brussels tonight, so as not to miss the evaluation meeting tomorrow afternoon. What happens otherwise? We would have to wait for next week and I don't know what the Mafia guys will say about that. Oh, you might still worry? What if the project is not approved in Brussels after all? Well, with a chance of one percent in one thousand... You are coming back to us and your advance of one hundred twenty thousand euros will be returned to you, down to the last cent. If you like, another project can be submitted in your name. The decision is yours. However, you have to decide right now! Otherwise it will be too late! We trust you and you trust us and pay your advance. I have one last advice for you, you should put your son in a rehabilitation center so he can be cured. Without doubt, it is a difficult ordeal. But don't despair, the doctors have a cure for everything except death nowadays.

TAŞKIN We will try our best to direct you for your son's treatment at no extra cost, please be sure of that.

(A period of silence)

LEYLA (Hands the papers to the man. She then gives him a pen) Over here... May everything go smoothly.

TAŞKIN What good is the factory if your son loses his ear?

(Again mimes the burial scene)

LEYLA But I have to know one thing. You're not signing it in your driver's name, right?

SELİM No way! I just witnessed the stupidity with my own eyes!

(Signs the documents)

LEYLA Just joking. Congratulations for the euros already. Meanwhile, lets get the advance from Mr.Selim .

TAŞKIN Would you grudge a chicken when you can get a goose Mr. Selim?

SELİM Can I telephone my bodyguard?

LEYLA (Afraid for a moment) What bodyguard? Why?

TAŞKIN So he can bring the money.

SELİM (Calls with his cellphone) Hello. All right my boy. You can bring it. Third floor.

(Puts the phone down.For a while, they wait quietly. The doorbell rings. Sibel gestures Filiz to open the door)

FİLİZ (Opens the door. The Bodyguard enters with a black Bond type case) Welcome. Please have a seat..

(The Bodyguard sits down)

TAŞKIN Why are you sitting? Hurry up, give the money! Or don't you care for your boss's son? Come in here.

SELİM (Takes the case from the Bodyguard) Wait over there.

LEYLA How much you have here?

SELİM One hundred twenty thousand euros. You can count.

LEYLA Our accountant deals with such things. (Gives the case to Savaş) First count, then prepare the receipt for Mr. Selim. Don't count the bills one by one! Time is money! Count the packs! Does Mr.Selim look like a liar?

(A period of quiet waiting)

SAVAŞ All in order. This is your receipt.

LEYLA Congratulations. Now you have to go and talk to the guys that blackmail your son and ask them to wait about one month and two days. Please see the gentleman to the door.

SELİM Madam, I have confidence in you.

LEYLA We also have confidence in you. Once the money comes, you will do the necessary transfer. One hundred twenty thousand euros more! We'll be upset at any delay!

(Selim leaves. They close the door after him)

TAŞKIN (Calls the others) Guys! Come here.

(Hakkı, Yıldırım and Erdem come)

YILDIRIM All right?

HAKKI O.K.?

TAŞKIN (Quietly) Let's wait a bit longer. (They seem to have forgotten Nihal. Thinking the reharsal is still not

finished, Nihal continues sitting quietly in her corner. Taşkın opens the case. He stares at the money) Did you count well, civil servant?

SAVAŞ What do you think? It's complete.

(Taşkın waits a little longer. Then he starts laughing loudly. The others join in. Amid the joyous celebration, Taşkın notices Nihal)

TAŞKIN (To save the situation) Curtaiinnnn...

NIHAL (Gets up and applauds) I congratulate you all. Bravo.. Bravo... Congratulations, congratulations!

TAŞKIN Thank you Mrs. Nihal. I am glad you liked it. It means our play will be popular. But, really, you should be congratulated. What a mother performance! You surprised us with your acting talent. (To the spectators) If we think about the early events, then Mrs. Nihal should definitely be included in the play.

NIHAL The performances were absolutely perfect.

TAŞKIN Then it means we shouldn't have any difficulty selling tickets?

NIHAL I can firmly say, with my years of experience, that the play will be a success.

TAŞKIN Hear, hear friends! Experience is talking! Who is your favorite?

NIHAL I liked everyone. You all..

TAŞKIN Yes, we know it but still you must have a favorite. Please.

NIHAL (Hesitates) The most successful. Definitely all of you but... Mr. Selim character was very good.. He portrayed fear and sacrifice very convincingly. But I haven't ever seen him in a play before. And he's not here now?

TAŞKIN Well, he went somewhere.. He'll bring something.. We shall tell him that you liked him the best. He's gonna be very happy.

NIHAL He's not from İstanbul?

TAŞKIN No, he is not..

HAKKI Shame on you Mrs. Nihal, was I that bad?

YILDIRIM What about me?

LEYLA Well, I am disappointed. Mr. Taşkın told us you knew about theatre!

NIHAL I beg you.. Please.

TAŞKIN Lets not go into unnecessary emotional drama please! You were all very good (points to the briefcase) The result is here. Mrs. Nihal, we thank you a lot. You gave us good morale. However, we have to take the decor out as soon as possible. Book the truck Sibel. Immediately. Let's move them to that free warehouse we found.

SİBEL (Telephones the shipping company) Yes.. It's Sibel. We can do the moving now. Yes, we are ready. The address... O.K. When? We'll be waiting. As discussed. Thank you. (Puts the phone down) The truck will be here in half an hour.

TAŞKIN (To Nihal) If you kindly leave now, we can get on with the packing. I hope you won't be hurt.

NIHAL Not at all. Good luck. (As she is leaving) Oh, the theatre is so wonderful. Especially acting, oh the acting..

(Goes out. They close the door after her)

TAŞKIN Friends, I am absolutely delighted with this happy ending. I offer my respect and admiration to everyone for their contribution and effort. I deeply congratulate all the actors.

HAKKI (Like reciting an aphorism) To deny artists appreciation is to bury them in disappointment.

TAŞKIN Come on now! What are you going on about? Didn't I just congratulate all the actors?

HAKKI (Pretends to be hurt) A celebration with just empty words?

TAŞKIN What do you want? Champagne? (To Sibel) Duty calls!

SİBEL (She takes out two bottles of champagne from the desk drawer. Taşkın takes one. Gives it a good shake before opening. The others applaud Taşkın. Sibel, while pouring the drink into glasses) Filiz, help me.

(They hand a glass of champagne to everyone)

TAŞKIN Friends, yes! (Gets up. When all get up) Cheers!

YILDIRIM Cheers.

LEYLA To your health.

HAKKI Enjoy.

TAŞKIN Friends, one minute. (Opens the briefcase. Takes out a pack of ten thousand. Starts counting) This ten thousand is our money. One thousand five hundred euros. Here, Yıldırım, take, it's yours. One thousand five hundred for you Hakkı. Leyla, you also get one thousand five hundred.. Sibel will receive the same amount too. I estimated her contribution to be equally valuable. As you see, I am taking two thousand euros. Don't forget, I have organized this whole affair! Furthermore, I really am not demanding much for writing and directing. Now, we're left with two thousand. Seven hundred fifty is for Savaş. The other seven hundred fifty for Erdem. That leaves five hundred. That's your share Model. Enjoy spending your money. Now friends, with your permission, I want to make a short speech.

YILDIRIM Make a long one, if you like.

SAVAŞ Why short?

HAKKI Master, we have all the time for you.

LEYLA Listening to you is relaxing.

SİBEL Anyhow, we have to wait for the truck.

TAŞKIN Again I thank you all. Especially for the acting. You were all very good. Otherwise, how could we catch the bird?

YILDIRIM Thanks.

LEYLA To believe is to succeed.

HAKKI Our duty.

TAŞKIN It wasn't just duty! You interpreted your roles! Attention; I repeat the word! You interpreted your roles!

HAKKI Only interpretation?

TAŞKIN Allow me, Hakkı! Let me start my analysis with Savaş, who had what you might consider the smallest part. You are not an experienced actor like Hakkı or Yıldırım. You are a small retired townhall employee. All your life you prepared receipts for payments. Some might say your employment experience helped with your role. It might be seen as if your acting is really the general habits of all civil servants. But this is all together different! Working in a townhall and an imaginary company are mountains apart. In the town hall, one poor citizen will come in and pay his garbage collection tax with shaky hands. And here? This provincial bastard, whom you tagged "the helpless soul" hands you thousands of euros without moving an eyelid. What do you do? Naturally, you are startled. And the euros are not really given for your safekeeping! This startle is an important interpretation, gentlemen. The only fault was acting indecisively with the receipt. Even that was rather convincing. Because the money was real and your hands were shaking. Believe me, on stage your hands will never shake. Because you will not count real money. And don't be unhappy about your small part. One can not ignore the function of spear carriers in theatre. There are ways and ways of carrying the spear. (Stands up to demonstrate) You can't carry a spear grinning stupidly, as if it is a broom! So, what did Savaş do? He spoke few words, but wisely. Perhaps not brightly, but naively and calmly he performed his duty in a smooth manner without a hitch. He didn't try to steal the role! He didn't disgrace himself. He didn't aim for the limelight! He was the perfect footsoldier. Friends, there is a real need for such plain actors on stage. They are the touchstones for the success of good actors. One needs the bad in order to appreciate the good. Therefore, I can say that such a troupe of powerful actors will sign on to immortal works.

(They all are in admiration of Taşkın)

HAKKI (With a snap) Beautiful words. In short, we achieved this success all together and can be proud of it. You keep saying that me and my friends were successful. I ask you, did I have another choice? Because I need money desperately. To spend the rest of my life like a miserable bum or a dandy! So, I did the right thing and performed brilliantly as usual. The others, too! I think it's more realistic to say our success was motivated by poverty rather than talent. (Exuberantly) Since years I have been acting on real stages. As my master pointed out, I have always interpreted my roles well. I was always well received. I encouraged a lot of young girls to this profession. And the result, now that I became old? Always broke, hardly can afford a box of.. well.. the ...from the pharmacy, all the theatre doors closed to my face..and no other choice but to join this gang!

TAŞKIN I understand your feelings. And your hurt, too. But don't you think it's wrong to say we are a gang? Aren't we just a group of people coming together to make money? Just like the

rest of mankind? Are we worse than a manufacturer? Is it more honorable to force thousands of workers to slave off for pennies ?

YILDIRIM (To Taşkın) I thought you gave up these dangerous thoughts. I'm afraid, you're gonna get us in trouble! We're turning global, can't you see? No more labourers, or workers.

HAKKI (Self absorbed)Undoubtedly I gave my best performance. Was I supposed to act my best part as a poor beggar on the streets, just like other old actors! But now I can go to any drugstore and buy boxes and boxes of medication. For these reasons, I didn't give just one interpretaion to my role. I gave twice, thrice the depth to my role. Underline my words.

TAŞKIN Stop saying medication old man. Call it by its name. We're between friends here! (They all laugh)

YILDIRIM Isn't it unfair to say only the actors are responsible for the success ? Undoubtedly we all did our share. (With admiration) But what about our friend Taşkın, who wrote and directed the play? Isn't it unfair to ignore the importance of the clockwork precision that was so essential for this success ? I have to particularly add the text is up to the standards of a Gogol classic. You are the representative of Gogol in our country.

TAŞKIN You are spoiling me. Gogol and I! Still, the comparison makes me proud. But I pray God hasn't written Gogol's fate for me.

LEYLA Why? He is alive since centuries with his writings. For great writers, death is but a begining.

TAŞKIN First he became mad, then he ended up leaving this world at a young age.

YILDIRIM Don't interrupt my lines friends. Allow me! For sure, the actors have very important duties.With untalented actors on stage, even the most powerful text will fall flat. Think of it; an intelligent commander makes all his preparations for the war, tactical planning to minute details, the hardware of the soldiers are complete, but what if the soldiers are weak? Can he win the battle? I can hear you say "yes but the soldiers are indispensable". I agree with you. But again think about it, a bad text will never give you good results even with powerful actors! Therefore, lets raise our glasses for our friend, old but now a new playwright, unreachable master,the Gogol of Turkey. Cheers my friend!

TAŞKIN I must raise my glass to this finesse! Cheers!

LEYLA My writer!

TAŞKIN (To Sibel) Cheers darling.Thanks to your efforts we are here.

SİBEL (Anxious) I hope we won't get into trouble.

TAŞKIN What can go wrong? We'll change our home and address!We'll start our long overdue union. Once we take the necessary precautions and fly to Dalaman for a week, who can find us?..

YILDIRIM Why don't we go to Bodrum? We can see lots of friends over there. Have a good time.

TAŞKIN Bodrum is overcrowded even in september. We can run into unexpected people. Who knows, even Selim might end up there, just to get over his grief. However, Dalaman is still an undiscovered paradise... We can go to thermal baths in Köyceğiz, take the tours in Göcek', and dance with karettas in Dalyan. What can we lose by seeing Fethiye and the Dead Sea one more time? Those coves, the lovely nature! As soon as we move the furniture, we're hitting the road friends. We'll rent a minibus. Just like going on a tour. But, if you say the road is long, you will be tired, well, we can fly. If you ask me, I say let's not waste our precious euros on plane tickets. It can draw attention on us. These days we should be careful with our expenses.

(All this time, he is careful to keep the briefcase between his legs. For a while, everyone starts daydreaming.)

LEYLA Let's all go home now. We have to pack our suitcases, right? Start choosing a swimsuit.

TAŞKIN Relax, there is plenty of time. First, we have to move! Everyone can carry a piece of furniture. Once the truck is here, the rest is easy. (Pointing Yıldırım) Frankly, I was excited by the beautiful message our friend gave about me.

YILDIRIM No, no! It would have been unfair to ignore this reality. Our cooperation and friendship is now twenty years old. I've always been impressed by you. The credit for our success is yours.

TAŞKIN Thank you.

HAKKI What about the birds in the bag? Let's cook and eat them immediately.

TAŞKIN For heavens sake! What a thing to say? Friends, why did we catch these birds? But now, situation is slightly different. I have a new idea. We are dreaming but who has ever made money from theatre up till now?

HAKKI (With excitement and joy) Are you going to propose to share what's left? In my opinion that's the best idea! At my age

...

TAŞKIN You never know friends. Maybe we will live to be hundred. We mustn't be pessimistic about living a long life! And dear friends, let's not forget one thing, it is poverty that kills people.

HAKKI You talk as if poverty has killed you a couple of times!

TAŞKIN (Ignores the last comment) Why do you keep on talking of death? Are you in such a rush to go to the other side, does anyone ever come back? Osip, you shall serve our new playhouse for years to come. Who knows, we might include The Inspector in our repertoire. As you know, the inspectors are very active in our country these days. (Noticing him soften) What do you mean share the money? The question to answer is how long cash money would last?"

HAKKI Yeah?

TAŞKIN Lets invest our money so it would work for us. Like this we can live a descent life and make theatre for the pleasure of it. Anyone against this idea?

YILDIRIM How can anyone be against?

LEYLA It is the best idea.

ERDEM Perfect idea!

HAKKI I agree with all clever ideas.

TAŞKIN Savaş, you're sleeping again!

SAVAŞ No. I am just resting my eyes.

TAŞKIN What do you have to say on this issue?

SAVAŞ What can I say? I agree with the majority. Because now I realize that I cannot make it on my own. I couldn't come up with such a plan in forty years.

TAŞKIN Who ever says "collective consciousness" is dead, is a liar. Here is the example!

YILDIRIM Gooood!

TAŞKIN This harmony brings tears to my eyes! Lets get to the essence! What do you say friends? Just pick any newspaper and you 'll see immediately. There are lots of productive companies being transferred as a going concern.

HAKKI I am an old man. In my opinion, it's wrong to invest our very own precious money into a business we don't know and will never understand.

YILDIRIM I agree with him. If the company is profitable why would the owner think of selling? Who would kill a hen that is still laying eggs?

TAŞKIN I withdraw my suggestion. Even I was not really convinced. Lets do what we know best! Honest people like us should do honest business. Frankly, it's not easy to deal with workers in a business venture! Once I was naive enough to take a stand for the workers, but now I can clearly see it was a stupid and shallow idea..

YILDIRIM It's nice to hear you talk like this!

TAŞKIN (Enthusiastic) No more workers, labour, added value and all that crap! The only thing that exists is money! The country is shifting! The whole world is moving .. Ideas like that are already in the garbage dumps of history. Don't the clever ones side with new ideas? Or should we give our money to an employers union? Shouldn't we support them in their quest for establishing their order rather than resist, isn't it the right course of action? (Stands up, takes the briefcase) How come I never thought of it before? How long we have to carry on our back these workers who can't establish their own order? Best to immediately hand over the money to the employers union !

(All have taken him seriously. They worry)

HAKKI Have you gone mad?

YILDIRIM Come on now!

LEYLA What about our dreams!

HAKKI Look how he changed! A real turncoat!

YILDIRIM And we thought you were clever!

SAVAŞ (Even) Hey man, whose money you're giving to whom!

TAŞKIN Don't panic friends!.. Let go of me! You don't appreciate a joke.

LEYLA For a moment I thought you were serious.

YILDIRIM He always loves to surprise.

TAŞKIN Come on! Cut it short! Can't I joke with you?Should we invest the money in the stock market ?

HAKKI No way. Can't you see the markets? The foreigners are in control, like everthing else.

TAŞKIN But we have to safely tuck this money somewhere.Who can guarantee that the door won't be forced open by a few armed men right this moment? There is no security in İstanbul these days..

(They are affected. Everyone turns serious)

SAVAŞ Really, what you say is true!

LEYLA He is not exaggerating! The other day my neighbour was dragged by a motorcycle for refusing to give her handbag.

ERDEM Two weeks ago my dad was stopped on the road by two youngsters. They were smiling at him. Apperantly they had such clean, innocent faces that my dad thought they were my friends. Then one moves behind my father to hold his arms, and the other takes his wallet. Then they flee.

YILDIRIM Last sunday, there was a similar incident in my building. The tieves entered the ground floor appartment of an old lady pretending to be salesmen and they robbed her jewelry. I didn't see it but the neighbours say they cut her hand when they couldn't pull her bracelets off .

TAŞKIN Purse snatching, swindling, peculiar..

YILDIRIM That's the way it is nowadays Master!

LEYLA Does it mean he was gonna cut her head off if he couldn't remove her necklace? (Shudders) Oh, my god!

HAKKI Best precaution is not to wear gold. (to Leyla) Take off your ring. I swear, if they cannot remove it, they would cut your finger off! (He sees that she removes her ring to put into her handbag) And don't put it in your handbag! Then they would drag you with your purse!

LEYLA I'll just let go of the purse!

YILDIRIM Look at the situation in the country? Everywhere dishonesty ... In our neighborhood, a cash collection center for electicity bill payments was opened. The whole month, everyone paid their bills over there.After a month, presto, the center just dissapears. Apperantly, it was a scam to steal people's money.

ERDEM If you see a taxi waiting in odd places, or in front of buildings, don't ask if he is free. The client asks the taxi driver to wait while he gets something from his home.But, he has already dissapeared in order not to pay the fare.

HAKKI Forget these stories, how are we gonna protect our euros? It's best if you give us our share and we will be responsible for our money! As the saying goes, don't put all your eggs in one basket.

HAKKI (As if they didn't cheat someone) No more morality man.

LEYLA Really.

(A bit of pessimism)

TAŞKIN Stop the doom and gloom! Lets all look forward now! Listen to me! Hey Savaş! Shake off your groundless fears! Has he fallen asleep again! Is it easy to carry life's burden as a poor retired civil servant? On top of it all, now he's been touched by the theatre! Sleep, sleep, rest ! And you Yıldırım? Relax! What a beautiful future awaits us! You too, Erdem! You are sailing towards a bright future now! What about you Leyla? Who would dare to cut off your beautiful finger? And you, great Hakkı! (Raises his glass) Cheers all!

(Glasses are raised. A new bottle is opened)

ALL TOGETHER Cheers!

TAŞKIN Now, listen to me well! I am telling you guys. Trust me!

SAVAŞ We owe everything to you!

ERDEM Yes!

LEYLA We wouldn't be here if we didn't trust you?

YILDIRIM I always trusted you Gogol! Because you are a genius!

SAVAŞ I will try my best to deliver any duty you'll give. You are my cherished commander!

TAŞKIN (to Hakkı) You didn't respond Father Hakkı?

HAKKI (After contemplating a bit, jokingly) Do we have another choice?

TAŞKIN (Rides with the joke) What's that now? You mean you would grab a snake for support if you were drowning in the sea? Look Gravedigger! Don't take it as a writer's sensitivity, but I think you are being rude to me. Am I a snake? Or a centipede? Let me pay your money and you would happily fuckoff! I don't want you to leave because who else can act the part of Mahmut? Think old man, the curtain rises. Lights.. And you go on stage, almost near your end! You act Mahmut, giving your best. But what a performance!.. Unbelievable! The play ends. Applause. "This is Hakkı " they say! "Hakkı's rebirth!" "Great talent!", "Deathbed talent!" No, this doesn't work. "Great master!" (They all are caught up. Especially Hakkı. Seeing he starts crying from emotion) Eighteen year old chicks want your autograph! But dear friend, don't ignore the squat hens! Because they are forever chicks. You are surrounded by beauties, blond, brunette! Even the critics with vicious pens are pleasant now! You become respectable overnight. You cruise Beyoglu, Bagdat Avenue and looks of admiration on everyone's face. Think Hakkı, think!

HAKKI (Really emotional now) I don't want to think!

TAŞKIN (Suddenly serious) And one day again the play ends. Wild applause from the audience! Fifty times the curtain call! And you. You give your last breath on stage!

HAKKI (Crying) And I die on stage?

TAŞKIN But what a death! May God bless every actor with such a death! Why did you twist like that? Or you prefer not to die on stage? But remember, we always talked about it! Didn't you

always say "I'd rather go like this gloriously than die between the legs of a whore in a bordello!"? What an extraordinary end. You would easily take your place in the history of theatre!

(Sibel's phone)

SİBEL Hello... Yes... All right... Thanks. (to Taşkın) The truck is here.

TAŞKIN All right then! No time to loose. Lets start with the chairs. Lets be careful with the furniture. As you all know, three moves equal a fire in furniture damage.

(Yıldırım, Hakkı, Savaş and Erdem grab a chair and put it over their heads while moving towards the door. Filiz opens the door for them. A calm and smiling Selim enters. All in shock)

SELİM Deceit gallops, truth crawls but eventually will catch up. And one can not dissipate fog with a fan. So, you were bolting? (The bodyguard enters too, with a gun) Lets cut this farce! I know you crooked me. Even from the beginning, I was a bit suspicious! But your fine acting worked. You convinced even me. No doubt, the smiling face and sweet talking of Miss Sibel was very effective. But going back, when I left you, in the car, I kept thinking how come I recognized the two of you. After crossing the Bosphores Bridge, almost half way to Izmit, what did I tell you?

THE BODY GUARD (As if acting) "Yes, I've got it! Pull to the right and stop the car! I've seen them on tv , soap operas. We've been cheated!"

SELİM Immediately we turned back. We were caught twice by the radar while speeding, then when we reached your building I saw a big truck and asked the driver : "Whose furniture you are moving?" What did the driver tell me?

THE BODYGUARD (Pretending to be the driver) "The actors, sir. They are in a hurry. Apparently they are going on a tour."

SELİM As we were entering, we bumped into Mrs. Nihal. What did she say when she saw me?

THE BODYGUARD (Imitates) "You were the best actor among them. It is a great loss for me that I haven't seen you on stage before. Where were you all this time?"

SELİM (As if answering her) I came from Afyon. I am an amateur actor with Afyon Art Theatre. (to Taşkın) As you see, thanks to you, I too learned to act. But I want you to know that Mrs. Nihal doesn't know. She thinks I came back for rehearsals. And she will never know. Nobody will ever know. But, of course, you shall return my euros back to me. You can swallow someone's rightful due but can't digest it. (Seeing the bodyguard smile at Hakkı and Yıldırım) You also recognize them, right?

THE BODYGUARD (With admiration) Hakkı Şentürk... Yıldırım Yalabık. My kids laugh a lot watching them. Now that I found them here, I should get an autograph for the kids, they will be happy.

SELİM (Angry, ridicules) What good is a plain signature? While you're at it, get them to sign their pictures.

HAKKI (First, he puts down the chair he was holding over his head. Takes out a photograph from his pocket) What are their names?

THE BODYGUARD Gülfidan and Güldane.

HAKKI To two roses... May god bless you. Love. (Hands it to the bodyguard) Well, its'just a passport photo, but I hope it will make them happy.

THE BODYGUARD But it doesn't look like you?

HAKKI A picture taken forty years ago. Everytime it is about to finish, I just get more copies done, cheaper this way...

SELİM (Gets angry) As if this is our only worry now! Why don't you also autograph a picture. Shut up! (Calms) Porters, aren't you tired? Put down the chairs, rest your arms. (Erdem and Savaş lower their chairs on the floor) It looks like you didn't understand me? Give me the briefcase... Or the police will be involved. (Erdem suddenly grabs the case from Taşkın)

SELİM What's going on?

ERDEM You don't really expect that I would kick off my chance of making theatre? I will not return the money at any cost. Shoot me Bodyguard. You have to walk over my dead body to get the bag.

(Silence)

TAŞKIN (To the bodyguard) Are you married?

THE BODYGUARD Yes.

TAŞKIN Have pity on yourself. What's gonna happen when you kill this young Hamlet? Already his uncle poisoned his father to get his mother. Now it is gonna be a real tragedy. You'll go to prison. Police will be involved. You are all gonna get into trouble. Lets find a solution for a happy ending.

SELİM You can not find a solution! You were stupid to crook me.

YILDIRIM Reprove yourself as if you are rebuking others, pardon others as if you are forgiving yourself.

TAŞKIN What's done is done. The vase is broken. You know we came up with this scam for the sake of our playhouse... Be our sponsor, that's the only solution.. .

SELİM I took this money from a loanshark! What about my son? Bodyguard, do your duty...

TAŞKIN Wait, we're not going to take all the money...Give us a tiny part, say ten thousand euros, that's all. Keep the rest. Ten thousand more or ten thousand less, does it matter to you Mr. Selim? And you really will be doing a charitable deed. Donations for art are tax deductible.We'll put your name on the brochure. So, with this good publicity you can increase your sales and pay your son's gambling debt without cheating the European Union.Say yes, let's shake hands on it. This is the right course of action for an honest businessman like you.

YILDIRIM Yes, that's right.

TAŞKIN Bad luck that comes quickly is better than good luck that comes late. Say yes and use your chance.

HAKKI Say yes Boss.

LEYLA You'll take your place in the history of theatre.

ERDEM Don't look at me. I am determined to go till the end.

TAŞKIN This murder is really going to make matters worse. You'll be tangled in the courts. Your clean name will be ruined as a murderer boss. Don't forget that even nowadays, the enemies of wealth are in the waiting. With all the publicity, they 'll just attack you.

SELİM (Contemplates a while) Yes, maybe this is the best. Bodyguard, put away your gun. Lets not ruin your family too.

TAŞKIN (Takes the case from Erdem. Pulls a pile and puts it in his pocket. Gives the case to Selim) May God bless you.

LEYLA We will never forget this kindness.

HAKKI People who say all bosses are explosive should be ashamed..

YILDIRIM There are exemplary bosses like him in the world.

SELİM But you must invite me to your gala opening.

TAŞKIN Come on boss...We'll even put your name on one of the seats. It can be your reserved seat. But we can book the seat when you're not coming. Meanwhile, we heard that in Ankara an office for commissioning European Funds has opened.

SİBEL Here is the adress and the phone number. You can apply over there. And, they are a legitimate firm, not like us.

SELİM Thank you.

TAŞKIN We have to thank you. What did we take from you? Earlier I had paid ten thousand euros to my friends for their essential expenses, that's all. I particularly want to thank for not calling the police.

SELİM You already took ten thousand? Now, that is not right! Money for what?

TAŞKIN They rehearsed. Was I to deny them their dues?

YILDIRIM We were indebted already.

HAKKI Would you believe Mr. Selim Bey that we haven't eaten since days?

SAVAŞ I have my pension but you will symphatise with me...

SELİM (To the Guard) Idiot, why didn't you count?

TAŞKIN You see, we are honest! In order to avoid trouble in the future, I am informing you now even though you didn't notice a thing!

SELİM Is this right? I am trying to save my son's ear. And here you go and risk the other ear?

TAŞKIN There are things in life much more important than an ear. An ear gone, so what? He can still hear. (Pointing Leyla) You must know the story of Desdemona. This unlucky woman is strangled between the jealous claws of her husband. (Points Yıldırım) Or you don't even pity Proctor who was grilled like a kebab by zealouts in the dark middle ages? (Points Hakkı) As far as Osip... Won't it sadden you that an actor is to go on acting for the rest of his life the role of a servant to a swindler? Isn't it necessary to give them another chance? What kind of thinking would deny these poor little people their payment for rehearsals? Despair is a poisonous sherbet one must

never give to the artists. The primary duty of the rich is to inject hope to these poor creatures, isn't it so? Well, you can always say "What do I care? I already gave ten thousand, that's enough" Then I shall ask you, "What did the great Master Shakespeare say about the actors tribe?" "It's better to fall in a sewer rather than fall victim to actor's gossip!" Especially if they gang up with the media to take a stand against you.

(The others frozen like a still photograph)

TAŞKIN (Walkes towards the spectators. Is really acting) To be applauded, or to be jeered? That is the question. To be jeered! Hated, despised, ignored. To be acclaimed!..Supported, admired, included. So, don't bother booing! Doesn't work. Won't set straight this man. But, what a beautiful feeling it is to be applauded. How can you ever know the feeling of joy and excitement, the goose bumps one gets from applause if you've never tasted it? If the applause was not so exhilarating, do you think so many people would ever become actors and suffer the hardship, pain, belittling, being pushed around, poverty and jealousy? So, isn't it worth applauding in order to incite his generosity?

(First himself, then others start applauding Selim. Maybe the audience will join.)

SELİM (His sad face becomes a picture a happiness) All right, all right... It's serves no one to carry on and on.

TAŞKIN You could have lost all the money. Let this be a consolation.

HAKKI He looks just like Hulusi Kentmen. He always acted the part of a kind boss.

LEYLA I always said we should not give up hope from the bosses and you never believed me. Here's the proof.

YILDIRIM In my opinion, he did well by choosing the sewer. He is a clever guy after all.

(They accompany him till the door. As he leaves)

LEYLA Bye bye..

YILDIRIM Come to the gala.

HAKKI Bring that naughty gambler with you. He might give up this nasty habit if he falls for the theatre.

TAŞKIN If we get him hooked, he will forget gambling. Because theatre is a worse addiction than gambling!

SİBEL We shall never forget your kindness.

(They close the door. Selim and the Bodyguard come to the first row of the salon, next to the real spectators. They watch the play standing up)

TAŞKIN Well done Waterboy. You were very clever. Otherwise, the money was gone.

ERDEM Anyhow, my part was very small. Like this, I became the finalizer of the play.

TAŞKIN Tell the movers not to wait. We're staying here. Let's pay the rent straight away.

YILDIRIM Is the money enough for staging the play?

TAŞKIN Why not? We can easily complete whatever we're missing. Again it is up to me now. (To the spectators) Once I add all you've been watching to the text, there, a perfect black comedy.

(Doorbell rings. Filiz opens the door. It is Nihal)

FİLİZ (Still with her role) Welcome, please take a seat.

NİHAL (Enters with a big package) I am a little bit late. You must be hungry. The pittas!

TAŞKIN They say God helps those building a home and establishing a playhouse. There! Again our hunger is to be satisfied. A ray of hope is always to be found for us actors, even at the most unexpected times! Because the genie of theatre is by outside. Mrs. Nihal, I have a proposal for you. Mrs. Nihal, would you accept the part of Mrs. Nihal in our play?

NİHAL (Happily) Are you proposing acting to me? Frankly, I always dreamt of acting in a theatre. Of course I will accept.

TAŞKIN (To Hakkı, quietly) Give up the chicks. One day you'll collapse. When will you learn that the heart cannot go on forever? (Points Erdem and Filiz) Look at them, they make a nice couple. This Mrs. Nihal is a perfect match for you. She has income. And no kids, she is a thornless rose. You're living miserably in the bachelor studios. You can move in with her and be comfortable. And make sure that my rent is not to be raised ever, O.K. ?

HAKKI Will she accept me?

TAŞKIN Why not? I swear, she would even scrub your back. Especially as you will be able to afford plenty of medication.

YILDIRIM Friends, all is fine but who will act Mr. Selim?

TAŞKIN And you worry about this . There are lots of unemployed actors around. We will discuss all the details when we start the new project. October is almost upon us. As a new company, we must raise the curtain on time. (Shouts) Hurry up! The genie does not like those who are idle. Put some order! All these chairs, the chaos! I can feel my muse coming. (Goes to his computer) You know, the genie and the muse doesn't like to be kept waiting.

(Feverish activity starts, the curtain comes down... Raises. For a while, Selim and the Bodyguard join the real spectators who are applauding the actors. Then they go on the stage and take their bows with the other actors.)

END

1st of March, 2007, İstanbul.