





**CUT!**

Kemal Ayata



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## **We've Come to a World**

I don't know why I started this book. Probably just so Winter would read it. She's 4.5 now. I don't know if she will be interested to read it one day.

I just wanted to write.

What kind of life I lived, why I lived such a life.

One of the things I believe in most is that life is built on our choices. Of course there are obligations and duties, but ultimately our choices determine the way we live life. Whatever we are doing now, we are doing it because we prefer it. There must be an alternative and we have not chosen it. In other words, whatever we are living is our choice, for better or worse.

I was born in 1957, the 24th of December. The same day as Jesus. My sister, who was born before me, didn't live. So I was the first child. It started with the fear that I would die too, making my mother drink fish oil while she was pregnant, putting protein powders in big flu pill boxes and swallowing them.

After my midwife, Prof. Dr. Naşit Erez (RIP), delivered me, my grandfather went to the baby room of the hospital and asked the nurses to show me. He looked at the baby brought by the nurses and said, "No, this cannot be my grandson." There was indeed a mistake and they found me and brought me to him.

I was brought up in a very careful way because my sister before me did not live. I was also a little overfed. Anyway, a year and a half later, my sister Leyla was born and the stress level decreased a little.

I don't remember much about my childhood. We lived with my grandparents in Mecidiyeköy for a long time. That house is gone now. There is a big apartment block in its place. However, it was a cosy house with three bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom, and a kitchen in a small garden. There was also a guest room. Even when guests came, they would not sit in it. Nobody used it and it wasn't even heated, though, it was spotlessly clean.

On bathing day, the cauldron would be lit, and everyone took turns taking a bath. There was a step up to the bath. I didn't know why for a long time. It turned out that the sewage pipes were hidden inside. We had a wire mesh cupboard in the kitchen. No sign of a fridge. So the

flies couldn't get to the food.

One day I stuck a blue bead in my ear. The more I tried to pull it out, the further it got in. I remember I was rushed to the hospital and I was severely reprimanded.

My dad built a sandpit in the house for me to play in. There was also Raybank back then. My father opened an account and got me a piggy bank from the bank. A locomotive made of tin. My father had also made rails. It was great, I loved it. One day he told me that the bank was closing down, we had to give the piggy bank back. Otherwise I wouldn't get the money I put in it. I was 7 years old. I didn't understand and I was very upset.

I was actually a good boy. My parents and I were travelling by train, probably to Ankara one day. There was a middle-aged man in the compartment besides us. He was reading his book. I, who was sitting quietly, wanted to open the window after 3-4 hours and when I got the answer no, I raised hell. Then the man raised his head from his book and said: "I am a pedagogue. I have been watching Kemal for hours. If he had behaved a little more like he has done, I would have decided that he was problematic and I would have spoken to you. Kemal can be anything, but he cannot be a bad person."

On Sundays, Mecidiyeköy Bazaar used to be set up in front of our house. My father would buy me a case of soda to sell it in the market. I believe that I don't have the salesmanship in my soul. I couldn't shout like the market vendors, I would try to get my friends to scream. Then I would fail still and sell most of the sodas to my elders at home. It didn't work out, so I couldn't be a salesman all my life. I suffered and also paid for it many times of course.

When the company my father worked for took a road construction job in Adapazarı, we left my grandparents for the first time and settled in Adapazarı. I did not witness it, but my grandmother was very upset and reacted. There was a serious family crisis, but it was overcome quickly.

We lived in an apartment in Adapazarı. We had neighbours upstairs and downstairs. My mother would sometimes send me to them and say, "If they are available, tell them we want to go to them in the evening." I would repeat it out loud a few times so I wouldn't forget it until I went upstairs. "If you are free in the evening, my parents will visit you." Much later, I learnt that my father and my mother would



send me up the stairs, observing and laughing as I climbed the stairs. Occasionally my mum would say: "Tell your Aunt Ayten to give you a distraction card." Being a naive city boy, I would go and tell her, and Aunt Ayten would say: "Let me see. Take this, do that. Okay, right away. I have some work to do. Have you seen these?" She would distract me with similar tactics. I guess the legend of the distraction paper ended with me.

Adapazarı didn't last long and then we moved to Gayrettepe, a small apartment. My two great fears that blossomed there affected me throughout my life. For a long time I thought that every time we returned home we would find our house on fire. My second fear was that my mum and/or dad would die. The first must have been from watching a burning ship in the Bosphorus for a long time. The second one was blown into my brain, I guess.

I didn't like walking even when I was little. When I was walking around the bazaar, I would go and sit on a curb and say "I'm not going anymore." One day, perhaps as a protest, I stuffed myself really badly into my pants. On the way home, any person sitting next to me on the bus would get up immediately and walk away. I travelled in comfort.

### **Why Iğdır?**

Then our Iğdır adventure began. I had just started primary school in Gayrettepe. My father took a break from his civil service in Istanbul and travelled to Iğdır with my mum's relatives to take part in the irrigation construction project of the Iğdır Plain on the most eastern border of Turkey. We followed him. My sister Leyla started primary school there. Erhan was only one year old.

We had a nice house in town. The toilet was outside. We were always scared. Mum was scared too. Sometimes we'd hear noises coming from the woodshed downstairs at night. It turned out our wood was being stolen.

Erhan would sometimes come to my mum with the scorpion he had caught and show it to her. My mum would scream. My father worked long hours.

Once Erhan put a piece of plastic bag in his mouth and it got stuck in his throat and he couldn't breathe. His eyes were dilated and bruised, my mother was wailing, my father was not at home. Somehow, when he opened his mouth with a reflex, I put my finger in with a

sudden movement and took the plastic out of his mouth. What a great achievement.

Leyla and I used to go to school together. My teacher thought I was very successful, and he put a plastic badge on my chest that he had bought when he went to Istanbul, with the words "Gift of Success" written on it. During maths class, he would divide the board into two; he would write division and multiplication questions on one side, telling Kemal to do it. Then on the other side, he would write addition and subtraction questions, and tell the others to do it.

This very wrong discrimination has caused a public outcry. My teacher left at the end of the year. Poor Leyla's teacher, in order to prove that he did not discriminate, gave Leyla bad grades on her next report card, which she did not deserve.

There was a cotton/ginning factory opposite our house. My father was interested in making films. He had an 8 mm camera and a player, which was fashionable at that time. Some evenings he would project Mickey films on the wall of the opposite factory from the balcony of the house. Mickey Mouse. Don't get me wrong. The children of the neighbourhood would gather and we would watch it all together.

My mum thought we were going to be kidnapped and always panicked. We were the Engineer's children.

I injured my head badly one day, by banging it on the door of the house across the street. I came home with a gutter of blood. My mother rushed me to a doctor in the town. Maybe he was a circumciser. While he was stitching my scalp without any anaesthetic, my mother could hardly keep herself from fainting. I walked around with a bandage on my head like a naughty child for a while.

There were big construction machines at the construction site. I used to love driving a grader with Adem. Of course he was the operator, but I was very careful too. Irrigation canals were opened in a V-shape, then concrete was poured on the sides. In other words, I contributed to the irrigation of the Iğdır plain.

One day the news came. My grandmother had fallen ill. She had a stroke and her right side was paralysed. There were only 3-4 private cars in the town. My father persuaded one of them, rented it and took us all to Kars in the middle of the night. From there we took the train. The train would take three days. It was sleeper.

Our Iğdır adventure ended like this and we settled in Ankara with my aunt for a while. Then my father alone collected our belongings in Iğdır and brought them back.

### **Now Ankara**

When I was at my aunt's house in Ankara, I started the 3rd grade of primary school. My aunt's husband was from Gemlik and was an olive grower. I loved going to the shop with him, watching him pick the worms out of the olives, and I loved the "Double Extra Duplicate Luxury" olives. There were also single extra, non-luxury and extra varieties of olives.

My uncles' shop was close by. They also did wholesale grocery business. I didn't see it, but according to a story told to me, when the porters were carrying sacks full of hazelnuts, they would throw a handful of hazelnuts from an open sack into their mouths. One day, my uncle Zeki placed the newborn mice he found in the shop on top of the sack just below the hazelnuts. When one of them put them in his mouth, all hell broke loose.

There was also the famous Uncle Nuri at the wholesale grocery. My mum's uncle. Uncle Nuri was an elderly man who loved to torment. His stories are endless. He took scissors and cut Leyla's hair at the root because it was too long. He got angry with my uncles and locked them in the bathroom and only allowed food to be spread under the door. He intervened in my grandmother's life mercilessly because she became a widow at a very early age. He got his second wife without a marriage, because his first wife, who was my mother's aunt, could not have children. Etc. But it was also said that he was a good businessman.

Once we went to Gemlik and we were going to swim on a stony beach. It's was my first time in the sea. I was scared to go in. My aunt's husband was mischievously trying to grab me and push me into the sea. I was struggling, "Do you want to kill me?" Many years later, we became sailors, but I never really liked swimming.

I went to 3rd grade in Ankara. Leyla and I would hold hands and walk to Maltepe Primary School. There was a grocery store near the school. I would buy things with my pocket money. My money was limited. I could either buy chewing gum, crackers or wafers. I was so indecisive. I couldn't choose. The grocer got impatient. He had other

customers, after all. Anyway, I eventually bought something and left. Soon after, I felt that it wasn't the right choice. So, after 10-15 steps, I turned back and asked for a change. The grocer said okay and changed it. This started to happen almost every day. One day, when I returned again and asked for a replacement, he approached me without saying anything and spat a handful of spit right in the middle of my face. I was very ashamed and disgusted and I never went to the grocer again. The moral of the story: Any decision is better than indecision.

### **Finally, Istanbul**

Our Ankara adventure lasted more than a year. Then Istanbul Gayrettepe Mobile Apartments. Second half of the 4th grade and the 5th grade I studied there. As they say, our neighbourhood was a mulberry bush. Yes, it was like that. It must have been 1967. We used to set traps and catch goldfinches, feed them and wait for them to sing. Not a single one of the bastards sang. We released them into the wild one by one.

Both my mum and dad tried very hard for me to play a musical instrument. They bought me a mandolin, a melodica, and an accordion. Teachers were coming to our house, supporting me in every possible way like I have an ear for music, like I can do it etc. But there was no progress. One day my father and mother took me to the famous musician Ergican Saydam. They wondered if he would take me as a student. The man put me through various little tests for about 15 minutes. He held the rhythm, pressed a few notes. He told me to repeat it. He chatted to me. Then he said to my parents in my presence: "He has a good ear for music, he's talented, but he has a monkey's appetite, temperamental. Nothing will come of it." I resented it, but he was damn right. Music was always in my life. But I couldn't become a performer.

Our circumcision took place in 1968 at our house in Gayrettepe. Erhan was 4 and I was 11. They made me wait for Erhan to grow up. Erhan had run away down the slope. They caught him and brought him back. Dursun Odyakmaz had cut him first and then me. It hurt a lot. In the afternoon, a circumcision celebration was held at the Taksim Municipality Casino. Snacks, music, lots of guests. Erhan and I were in bed, dejected, victims.

My father bought me a bicycle for the first time. I don't know

where he bought it, but it was a green, used girl's bicycle. The fork holding the front wheel was crooked. The handlebar always tried to turn to the left. My father wouldn't let me ride it when he wasn't home. He would unscrew the nuts on the front tyre so I wouldn't ride. I guess there were no bike locks then. Bikes hadn't started to be stolen yet.

One day I think we really pissed my mum off, Leyla and I. She took a jar of chilli powder. She put me on my back on the floor. After sitting on my stomach and preventing me from running away by putting her knees on my arms, she forced my mouth open and poured half of the jar into my mouth. Then with her forefinger she smeared it on the inside of my cheeks, under my tongue. It hurt so much. The other half of the jar of chilli pepper was given to Leyla in the same way.

My parents left Leyla and me alone at home for the first time and went to Uncle Vakkas' house one day. They gave us their phone number just in case. But there was no phone in our house. There was a public telephone under the complex. As a matter of fact, we were both scared and after a few hours we decided to go downstairs and phone my parents and tell them to come since we were scared. Yes, of course they came. Why do you ask?

My teacher in the last two grades of primary school was Nermin Köseoğlu. I used to visit her until a few years ago. Unfortunately, she passed away very recently. I loved this honourable woman very much. When we graduated, she said to her class: "Now you are all starting a new school and a new life. Please do not ever forget these words of mine. Even if you know you will be executed, do not lie and always tell the truth." These really stuck in my mind. For me, honesty and not lying became my number one life motto. I immediately built a barrier between me and the people who lied to me.

The year I entered the German High School, we moved to Akademiler Apartments in Zincirlikuyu. 1969 was the year. I attended a few private school entry exams and succeeded in most of them. But my father's teacher, Uncle Vakkas, wanted me to go to the German High School and convinced my parents. I didn't know whether it was because of the German education system or because he admired the Germans. This is how the German High School adventure began. The number 50 Levent - Tünel trolleybus took me to and from school for 8 years. It is true that I sometimes fell asleep and missed the Zincirlikuyu stop.

The German High School played an important role in my life and shaped my mind. In addition to a good education, the German way of thinking and the German mentality were embedded in my soul through German teachers. Many times I was criticised or praised for being German. Yes, there were both pros and cons. It is not a bad thing, don't worry.

### **We Became Teenagers**

The Akademiler Apartments was a very nice neighbourhood where I had many friends when I was a teenager. We did so many things with our friends. We had a field. We used to play basketball and mini field soccer. Since we played with my ball, I had a say in team building and matches. If I didn't have a ball, I probably wouldn't participate in the teams. We used to organise parties at homes, choose a dancing partner by spinning bottles. I had a Dual branded turntable. It always went to the party. In the evenings we used to sit outside and drink the cheapest Güzel Marmara wine from the bottle. One day it was rumoured that Tayfun peed a little in the white wine bottle. We never knew if anyone saw it or if he just showed it. I'll ask him one last time. But the flavour was just as bad.

We built a wooden shed at the back of the site. We used to gamble. King, poker, even bridge became gambling activity. We used to go to Tayfun's the most. He had the most tolerant parents. We had great times with Cat Stevens, Pink Floyd, Demis Roussos playing at Tayfun's turntable. We were never kicked out. Some of those good friendships are still going on 50 years later like the first day. I have become closer than siblings with some of them over the years.

I used to sit outside with friends in the evenings. My parents wouldn't call me to say enough is enough, they wouldn't tell me to come at this time. But the light in my father's bedroom never went out. I could see it from downstairs. I never saw it on, after I entered the house late night.

My dad bought me a new bike there. This time from a shop, a man's bike and brand new. We went to the shop together. My father asked, "How much per kilo, brother?" The salesman was surprised and said "Brother, these are by the piece." Later, I put gears on that bike, changed the hub of the rear wheel, lengthened the chain and carried the cable to the handlebar. How cool it was.

My friends used to go on long bike tours. From Zincirlikuyu, along the coastal road to Florya. They would swim and come back by the same route. My parents didn't let me go even once. Once I wanted to go on a school trip of the German High School. A trip to Edirne by bus on the weekend. We would stay one night. There were also teachers with us. My parents didn't let me go for fear of "losing my virginity."

We used to play billiards with our neighbourhood friends. There were only pool tables in cafes at that time. One Sunday, my grandparents were coming over for dinner, and I was playing pool at the café in Mecidiyeköy. I would return home close to dinner time. My father asked for me and when he found out that I was at the café, he came in a huff and took me away in front of everyone. I was very angry, upset and offended. I wasn't doing anything bad, and I wasn't late.

We had a summer house in Silivri with my aunts at this time.

My father built a small house on the land bought by my aunts, and we lived in that house for long periods of time in the summers, usually with my aunts and my paralysed grandmother. The concrete pavement around the house, the disposal of rubble, varnish painting works, etc. were done by my hands. The car chapters also started there. I learnt how to drive on the secluded dirt roads. Now my only concern was how and where I could drive.

When I returned to Akademiler Sitesi during school time, I used to look for an opportunity to see how I could steal my father's car. My father usually hung the key on the coat rack when he came home. I would wait for them to enter their bedroom, and then I would grab the key and go out. Whoever was out, we would get in the car and take the Bosphorus roads. When we came back, we would park the car at the same place, where we put the rubbish barrel in its place.

Uncle Mehmet was very interested in cars. It wasn't his main job, but he loved to buy and sell. He would phone my father and say, "Uncle, I sold your car, bring it tomorrow, here's a great Ford, it's yours." Once he bought us an Opel from Ankara which was brought from Germany, with temporary licence plates.

We drove it to Istanbul together. We put it at home. After a while, the temporary licence plate expired. We couldn't get a normal licence plate because of paperwork. The beautiful car was lying there and I was looking at it. Finally, I painted a letter T next to the letter G of the

temporary licence plate, thinking that a two-letter licence plate would not attract anyone's attention. One evening, my friends and I piled into the car and parked it in front of Kristal Hamburger in Şişli. One of us went to buy the hamburgers. While we were waiting, there was a knock on my window. A young man in his twenties said "Police." He showed me a commissar's ID card. "Driver's licence, registration," he said. I didn't have a driving licence. I was 16. The car had no registration. The licence plate was fake.

Ali, who was sitting next to the driver's seat, realised the strangeness of the situation and quickly grabbed the car keys from the ignition and threw them into his underpants. The young man who said he is a police commissioner insistently asked me to get out of the car. After a long quarrel, our "commissar" friend quickly slammed the car door and drove off.

As it turned out later, this arsehole's father was a police commissar. He used to take his father's old ID cards, paste his own photo and play commissar. That evening, while he was having a party at the old Mis Wedding Hall right above where we parked, he noticed us and the car with the fake number plate. He wanted to go down and have some fun, show off to his friends, take the car for a tour. We came back from the edge of a disaster that day.

The German High School was a private school and I used to get very depressed and upset when it came time for instalments. My father, in addition to his civil servant life, taught at the University and at night he used to draw projects. Economically, he never made us feel any economical difficulty. But I would realise how hard he worked and I would be very hesitant to tell him that it was time for instalments, but he would always say, "I would sell my jacket and send you to school."

Waiting for the driving licence was a pain. The day I turned 17, I applied. I passed the written exam the first time, but for the driving test I had to queue up and get a date. Appointment times were very long. But I learnt that women were given an appointment immediately. Somehow I convinced my mother, she queued instead of me and got me a shorter appointment.

Now I had a driving licence and I could take the appropriate one of our two cars. We used to get together with friends and go out to



chase up girls. We weren't very successful. But it was definitely the car. What else could it be?

Once I picked Selçuk up from Istanbul Boys' High School. He was with his two girlfriends. We were going for a drive. Selçuk and his friend were sitting at the back. The girl sitting next to me went far from me and huddled near the door. She won't open her mouth. While I was driving nervously, I made a wrong move in Zincirlikuyu, slipped in the rainy weather and hit a high median with the bottom of the car.

Silence after the crash. We hit our heads against the roof, but everyone's okay. I got out. There's no visible impact marks on the car. I looked underneath, there was no oil leaking. I started the car. Like clockwork. We said, "Wow!" and piled in the car. When I pushed the accelerator, the car couldn't decide where to go, it was limping and making strange noises.

We slowly pulled into a petrol station and lifted the car on the lift. We looked at it with a staff member. Yes, there is a small impact mark on the front running gear, a clamp is broken, it can be fixed quickly. Towards Levent Sanayi driving slowly. The mechanic looked at it and said, "You bent the chassis." A heavy, cumbersome American car, a Ford Malibu.

"How come, bro? What do we do?" He said: "Everything up to the windscreen will come down. The engine, gearbox, front running gear, bumpers, bonnet, mudguards will all be dismantled. Only two chassis bars will remain. Then we will fix them."

I was embarrassed and the cost was heavy. Through my uncle's friend Emre, the car was insured as undamaged. Nothing is obvious from the outside anyway. A few days later, the damage was reported. The car was repaired, but it never recovered fully. It was sold quickly.

In 1972, my father established a small company with Uncle Nuh Mehmet. Nuh Mehmet Özyıldız was my mother's uncle and was a fabric wholesaler. With the encouragement of my uncle Zeki, my father, who already had an entrepreneurial spirit, was ready to establish ÖZAY Plastik Limited company. ÖZ of Özyıldız, AY of Ayata.

My uncles had detergent factories. They also had plastic injection moulding machines that produce plastic detergent containers, but they said to my father: "Buy some plastic injection moulding machines, let's get you another job." With a simple calculation such

as “We provide the raw material and the moulds. It will produce this much per hour, you will make this much money per month.” My father took up this business in addition to his civil service. His idea was to share the workload in terms of both capital and labour with Uncle Nuh Mehmet.

They both put fifty percent of the initial investment. First one, then two more injection moulding machines were purchased, a workshop in Topkapı was rented and the business started. My father’s intention was to grow the company by producing different plastic products with his entrepreneurial spirit, and when the time came, to leave the civil service and become a company owner in the production sector.

But Uncle Nuh Mehmet’s labour support was very insufficient. Due to his other job, the time he could spare for Özay was not enough. After a short time, separation was on the agenda. It was impossible for my father to buy Uncle Nuh Mehmet’s 50 per cent shares. My uncles stepped in again and bought his shares.

### **Why Did I Become Adult?**

ÖZAY became a company producing detergent containers, and two more machines were purchased. Two years later, when the company made money, my uncles gave us the shares at the price they had bought them. Meanwhile, my father registered 47.5 per cent of the shares in my name.

I was almost half partner. But by the way, I was in the second year of high school. My school was until noon. After school, I came to the company around 2 pm and load trucks, unload empty sacks of detergent, make deliveries. When I was washing my hands and face at the end of work, I would foam all over myself without using soap. The detergent powder would rape my nostrils. I wasn’t on salary. I was a partner. I was still getting pocket money.

Then we started to produce plastic parts needed by factories such as Demir Döküm, Tofaş and Ak-Kardan. I started to work more intensively, including weekends. I was also working as an operator on the machines. Three people lost their hands or fingers while working on the same machines. At that time, safety precautions were very relaxed and employees were secretly disabling these precautions and producing.

One day I was delivering radiator caps to Demirdöküm. We had a 1963 Dodge Dart single door passenger car. The trunk was wide open, filled to the top with sacks and tied up. Not enough, the back seat and side seats of the car were also full of sacks. I was driving on the E5 motorway. There was a strange noise. I looked round and saw that one of the sacks had fallen on the road from behind, exploded and the plastic caps with a diameter of 3 cm were scattered on the road. They were rolling and being thrown left and right as the cars passed by. And they were quite fast. I pulled over and stopped. I thought what to do, there was no way to collect them. I reduced the amount on the delivery document and made the delivery that way. One full sack of caps disappeared.

We were making tractor back shaft housing for Ak-Kardan company. There were two funnel-like parts connected with telescoping PVC pipes. At that time, my uncle and his partner had an aluminium joinery workshop in Çağlayan. I did that job there, since our workshop was small for that. I was cutting the pipes according to size. One of the pipes needed to be heated and enlarged so that the funnel part can fit on it. Boiling water didn't help, there was a need to go above 100 degrees Celsius. A heating device was required for it. My father got the idea of car antifreeze solution. It should raise the boiling point of water. I was boiling antifreeze solution, immersing the PVC pipe in it, then enlarging the diameter with a steel mould. Then cold water to cool it down. It worked. A few screws and done. Mass production with one person. I worked for months. Years later, we found out that antifreeze vapour is causing lung cancer. At that time, seat belts were also like ornaments in cars.

I also took the accounting job. My father's wish was that my business life would start with Özay and continue with Özay. And so it was. I worked for 30 years with my father at ÖZAY.

However, I was very interested in chemistry and wanted to study chemistry. I had very high grades at the German High School. Uncle Mehmet used to call me "montafon." He meant "cow and nerd" because I was working hard. According to the policy of the German government and the German High School, the first few from each class were given scholarships in Germany for free. The aim was brain drain.

I never considered the alternative of studying abroad, both

because I was against this policy and because I chose to work in the family business with my father's desire. I did not apply for a scholarship. In 1977, I entered Boğaziçi University, Faculty of Business Administration, which was my first choice.

Although Leyla was one year younger than me, she had entered Boğaziçi University one year before me because she had graduated from Atatürk Girls' High School without prep class. One day, she brought her girlfriend from Eskişehir staying in the dormitory, whom she had been close friends in the preparatory class, to stay with us during the weekend, so that she wouldn't feel lonely and miss the home environment. Who was that girl? Yes, you guessed it, Nesrin. My 45-year life companion, my darling.

Leyla said, "Let's take Nesrin out tonight." "OK, where shall we go?" Hydromel, the favourite discotheque of the time. Leyla said: "Bring a boyfriend." My best friend, my best mate, my brother Selçuk. But he is a leftist and an activist. Discotheque was not in his book then. I went and begged him. "Look," I said, "For my sake, one time won't hurt, and no one there knows you are from the leftist community." Anyway, he didn't offend me, he said yes.

We gathered, we went. We sat in a corner. The music was blaring, everyone was dancing. We ordered our drinks. We started chatting. Oh no! Nesrin was also a leftist and activist. She used to put up posters at night. She and Selçuk started a deep conversation about the socialist revolution. Then they got up and danced. We danced with Leyla all night long. 45 years later, my dear brother still tells me, "I danced with your wife first."

That same year, my father bought a house in the Etiler Ulus neighbourhood and for the first time we got rid of rent and moved into our own house. I started going to Boğaziçi University from there. I had my own room now. It overlooked the apartment block, it was dark, small, but it was mine.

My grandmother, who was paralysed, started to stay with us longer. In fact, my mother and aunt took care of my grandmother by sharing the whole year. My 3 uncles never hosted my grandmother at their house for a long time. My grandmother was an extremely considerate and respectful person. After dinner, she would retire to her room and leave my mum and dad alone for an evening chat. She suffered

greatly from living in need of us. She was a brilliant person. She and her assistant lived in one room. One room belonged to my parents and the other room belonged to Leyla. Erhan stayed with my aunts who lived in Ankara for a while and attended TED Ankara College.

Since my aunts did not have any children, Erhan was adopted by my aunts' at the request of them, on the grounds that the inheritance would not go to others. He was traumatised when his surname was changed. He applied to the court and took the surname Ayata again. He returned to Istanbul. But the wound in his soul never healed.

### **I Fell In Love**

After I skipped English prep class and started my first year at university, Nesrin and I were meeting every day. One evening when we were together on campus, I gathered all my courage and asked her out with a magnificent view of the Bosphorus. Being together with someone was called "Going out" then. It was October 7, 1977.

She said, "Yes." I was over the moon. I didn't know what to do. I walked from Hisarustu to Ulus neighbourhood but without stepping on the ground. I never liked walking as you know.

Now our life was common. We planned and did everything together until the end of our lives. We never spent any time apart except for obligatory family trips, business trips and bicycle trips. We have always loved and been loved. We have always been respected and respected. We have always been happy to be together. I am using the past tense, but everything continues in the same way and will continue until eternity.

One evening Nesrin and I went to the cinema. I must have got home around 11 pm at night. There was a commotion in the house. My parents weren't home that night either. My grandmother took advantage of the fact that no one was home and attempted committing suicide with a box of sleeping pills. There were a lot of people in the house, my grandmother was in a coma. There was a mess. Ambulance, hospital, gastric lavage. It turned out that the medicine she drank was not poisonous. My grandmother slept soundly in the hospital for 3 days and returned home in good health.

## Family Matters

Mehmet, my middle uncle died of a heart attack at the age of 36. The whole family was terribly traumatised. Aunt Filiz was 31, Kayhan 11, Gülgün 9. Uncle Mehmet's untimely death caused the rapid decline of the Savaş family and their company Moderno Detergent. It turned out that Uncle Mehmet was balancing between the investor, entrepreneur, ambitious Zeki and Nuri, who did not take life too seriously and looked after the financial affairs, and restraining both of them.

Moderno Detergent went bankrupt one day because the return on investment made with huge debt was not sufficient. Uncle Zeki disappeared for 15 days. No one could find him. We thought he was murdered. He used to carry a rifle in the boot of his car and a pistol in the glove compartment. He probably escaped from the threats of the loan sharks he borrowed money from. Then he turned up, but I still don't know what happened.

The Savaş', whose income was cut off with the disappearance of the company, had very difficult days. Their houses, holiday cottages, everything was gone. They rented. Uncle Nuri and his family lived with us for a while. Then slowly their new life started to take shape. The one in the most difficult situation was Aunt Filiz, who lost her beloved love in the spring of her life and had to raise her two children alone. She lived a very difficult life but always standing upright.

Gülgün was studying at university in Cyprus. In the meantime, my uncle Zeki had re-established the same business, working alone on a much smaller scale and covering the school expenses of his niece Gülgün. In the last year, he suddenly said "I can't afford it" and Gülgün returned back without a university diploma, after studying for 3 years. Aunt Filiz did not ask for help from the family or anyone else for a sum of about three thousand dollars. I learnt this a few years ago, 30 years after the incident. I was devastated and I blame the whole family, especially myself, for not taking care of these people.

The traumas in Aunt Filiz's fate are astonishing. After a while, her son Kayhan unexpectedly lost his life when he was 25 years old. Then her daughter Gülgün developed thyroid cancer. She underwent treatment. Then she got married and Maya was born. Maya lost her father at the age of 18. Burhan, who was an example for people who are called the epitome of goodness, died of lung cancer. Five years

later, Maya lost her mother Gülgün. The cause was lung cancer again. Gülgün's death is very recent and has devastated us all. She suffered unbelievably in her last year.

Aunt Filiz's traumas in the last 45 years are the subject of a separate book: Her lover, her husband, the father of her children, the death of Uncle Mehmet, the bankruptcy of the company, the loss of all her assets and income, Gülgün's inability to finish school, Gülgün's thyroid cancer, Kayhan's unexpected departure, the death of her son-in-law Burhan, the father of her grandson, and now the loss of her only daughter Gülgün. She is standing upright without needing anyone. A great human being. I wish she could pick up a pen one day.

I started smoking at the age of 18 when my uncle Mehmet died. Selçuk was smoking then. I asked him for the first cigarette. He said: "Look, later you'll say that Selçuk started me smoking, I'm not giving it to you." I said: "Don't be ridiculous, give me one!" Yes, I confess, it was Selçuk who started me smoking. :) I smoked three packets a day for ten years. I had smoked three cigarettes at the same time without realising it. One was burning on the table next to the computer at work, the other was in my hand, and the third was in the ash tray on my desk. The story of quitting is later.

### **That Is Youth**

In those years, I took tourist groups abroad, 3 times. I worked at Duru Turizm. The first one was a bus tour. Melih Duru was the tour leader and I was the sidekick. It was a 3-week tour from Istanbul to London. I enjoyed it very much. Then I did two Paris-London-Amsterdam tours by plane. There were 11 people in the second plane group. 8 women and 3 men. When we were travelling by bus on the apron to board the plane in Istanbul, a stewardess distributed German Marks to these 8 ladies. There were no Euros then. In the seventies it was a criminal offence to carry foreign currency in Turkey, and if I remember correctly, there was a maximum limit of 100 USD when travelling abroad.

Later it was realised that especially the ladies participated in this tour for shopping purposes. At that time European goods were very popular but hard to find in Turkey. It was very cool to own Levi's jeans and Adidas shoes.

We landed in Paris. There was a city tour, with local guides, included in the price. More than half of the group didn't join. There were extra tours with extra charge. There was no demand for them either. We went to London. Same situation again. We gathered at the hotel in the evening. Everyone was telling each other where they went and what they bought. The next evening, the others bought what the others did not buy, and the others were talking about where they would go and what they would buy the next day.

It was the same in Amsterdam, last stop. On the last evening I looked and found out that the luggage had doubled, even tripled. I gathered everyone. I said: "We have a lot of luggage, normally we will have to pay excess baggage fees. However, if we check in as a group as we did before, airlines usually tolerate excess baggage. But if we encounter a different approach and we are faced with an excess baggage fee, we cannot calculate and divide who has how much excess. There is no choice but to share what we pay equally. If you don't accept this, everyone will check in separately and pay their own excess baggage fees." They argued for about 15 minutes. Decision: Everyone checked in separately and everyone paid a hefty excess baggage fee. How would you decide?

When I got back to Istanbul, all hell broke loose. I was left holding the excess baggage bill. They complained to the company. I didn't know anything, I didn't even take them on city tours. I didn't answer the questions and made them pay a lot of money for individual check-in instead of group check-in. I was fired. It was my last tour.

## **Ulus Neighbourhood**

Some time after we moved to Ulus neighbourhood, my aunts husband Süreyya handed over the olive dealership of Marmara Birlik to his employee and retired. Together with my Aunt Sevim, they closed their house in Ankara and moved to Istanbul, to the Ulus Neighbourhood, 5 minutes walking distance from us. We were all very happy, and my grandmother was no longer travelling back and forth between Ankara and Istanbul. Süreyya was a very mischievous, cheerful, sweet person who never had a bad thought in his mind. He has a lot of stories, which burst out people laughing.

Eid al-Adha. Sheep for sacrifice will be bought. It will be



slaughtered, and on the second day they will go to Ankara by train and take the sacrificial meat with them. There was an animal market in Çağlayan. Süreyya went and looked at it, but then he decided that it is difficult to slaughter. We had a family butcher nearby. He went to him. “Do you have a whole sheep that hasn’t been slaughtered and gutted?” “What are you going to do, brother?” said the butcher. “I’m buying a slaughtered sacrifice for Eid-al-Adha. Don’t interfere,” he said, and came home with the whole animal on his back. My aunt was furious. “No way!” Legends, the Holy Quran, etc. did not help. The next day the animal was going to Ankara by train. But it couldn’t be put in the luggage compartment, it couldn’t be taken as hand luggage. They searched the fridge of the train. No one was used to carrying a headless, lifeless, skinned and cleaned animal in a big sack. Anyway, they found a cold place just behind the locomotive.

The sleeper train leaves at night. Should be in Ankara the next morning. The train stopped in the middle of the night. It didn’t move for a long time. Then it turned out that a few hours away from Ankara, the railway was unusable due to heavy snowfall. The train would wait, but it was not clear how long it would take. No mobile phones then.

In the morning, Nevzat, Süreyya’s brother who lived in Ankara, saw that they didn’t come and learnt about the situation, searched for the exact location of the train, jumped into his pickup truck so that they wouldn’t freeze in the snow, got as close to the train as possible and parked it. After walking for 10-15 minutes, he reached the train and started walking past the carriages shouting Süreyya. When my aunts heard the voice, they were very surprised and very happy. They got out of the carriage and said, “There is also a sheep.” “What do you mean?” said Nevzat. Even though he knew his own brother, he could not think that he would carry a ready slaughtered sacrifice by train, just like the murderer carries the corpse of the victim. But he found the sack, slapped it on his back and brought them all safely to Ankara.

Nesrin and I started dating, but I was hiding it from my parents. Meanwhile Leyla and Hıfı were also dating, my parents know about it, but they wouldn’t approve it. I was writing all kinds of harmless stories every night when I’m late, just in case they won’t approve Nesrin too. Maybe they sensed it, but they never questioned me.

On the weekends when my parents were going to Silivri in the summer, I made up a reason and stayed at home. A few times I took our second car, Dodge Dart, and went to Eskisehir to meet Nesrin. I would go on Saturday and return on Sunday. It's not possible in today's cars, but back then, if you reached the cable behind the odometer and removed it, the car wouldn't write the mileage. When I got back, I'd put the cable back in place, and I'd fill the tank close to the previous level. These trips were never discovered.

Nesrin was hiding our dating from her parents too. What a shame it was. "The daughter of the Dobrucali's? Oh my God." Sometimes Nesrin would write stories about her friends and come to Istanbul for a few days. Alpay's song "Come in September" became our song. We were separated a lot, but then we never left each other and walked a lifetime together.

Erhan was 15 then. He was stealing cars too, but always the Chevrolet Nova. The first car. He didn't have a driving licence. I was aware, but he was by-passing me too. I set up traps from time to time. Once I asked and he said, "No, I didn't take it." I said: "I put a small stone on one of the wheels of Nova, invisible. Then I looked and it was gone." And he admitted "Yes, I did." There wasn't any rock in reality.

I was away for a weekend. Sunday morning, my dad went out and could not see Nova. Erhan had driven to the house of Levent, a close friend of mine from the University to take private math lessons. Dad immediately guessed and called Levent's house and asked. Erhan said no, but he panicked. He came up with a very clever plan. He parked the car on the road to Hasan Ali Yücel High School. It's close to the Etiler Police Station. My father would go to the police station and report it stolen. On the way there, the car would catch his eye on the side road and he would take it. If he would miss it, the police would find it immediately. He put the key under the seat and locked the door. You know all car thieves use the same method.

But my father called a family friend, a police chief, and reported the theft. Erhan panicked again when he found out. He couldn't change the plan. The car was locked, with the key inside. He couldn't confess, it was impossible. He came up with a brilliant idea again. He entered the neighbourhood grocery store on his way home. He said: "I parked the car on Bahtiyar Street, left the key inside and locked the door

accidentally. I can't tell my father. Can you phone him and say 'I saw your car on Bahtiyar Street?'" The man nodded and made the phone call. This phone call didn't make sense to my father. In the meantime, when I came home and questioned Erhan, the story was clear and we got the car with the spare key.

## University Years

My university life was very good. In fact, before the 80s, there were protests at universities, the police used to come, boycotts were organised. But at Boğaziçi University, only a few times when we came to school in the morning, we learnt that there was a boycott. "Ohh, there are no classes." We were happy. I never made a political effort. The campus was on the slope of the Bosphorus, above Aşiyân. Green bush and sea, old buildings, beautiful people, clubs. We studied in a wonderful environment.

We met with the Speleology Club. We made very nice trips with tents. We camped, explored caves and drew maps of them. We made weekend trips and long-term trips in summer. Material works, especially carbide lamps were my responsibility. I loved the smell of carbide, and I still do. There were no head torches back then, and batteries were very expensive.

It's impossible to forget the cheddar filled bagels and club room chats. A team of 40 people are still in touch. Our WhatsApp group is called Karpit (Carbide). We are also Karpit friends. Whenever possible, we meet at Fenerbahçe Todorî and refresh ourselves.

Nesrin and I were in a caving camp on a slope overlooking the Black Sea in Şile. If I'm not mistaken, there were 15-20 of us. The girls were taking turns to do the cooking. That day Aida was making pasta. She needed water. There was a fresh water stream 5 minutes away. She asked the boys to bring water. No one paid any attention. So Aida, who was furious, filled the pot from the sea and made the pasta. "What's all that salt?" She answered: "You should have brought fresh water. With the SS formula, you will be happy to eat it."

Can we forget how we used to go to the Bosphorus with a total of 13 people in our 1963 Dodge Dart car, 5 in front, 5 in the back and 3 in the trunk, and when we saw the police, we gave the message to close the open trunk lid by hitting the car door with force from the outside.

While I was studying at the university, my working life became more intense. Depending on the distribution of the classes, some days I would not go to school at all and got the lecture notes later. Güngör, who was in charge of our accounting job at the time, would say with surprise, “When do you go to school and when do you study?”

I was a good student. My grades were always near the top. The night before one of the final exams, there was a work accident at the workshop. I was awake all night rushing around the emergency services and the surgery rooms to save the injured fingers of our colleague. I failed the final exam in the morning.

Leyla and Hıfı got engaged and got married on 20 December 1979. They started a new life in Ankara. I couldn't bear to wait any longer and one night, probably a week after their wedding, when my parents went to bed, I knocked on their door, went in and said in one breath: “I want to marry Nesrin.” They couldn't say anything. They mumbled something like we had just set up a house or something like that. But when I promised, “OK, we'll be careful.” they didn't have much to say. But I hadn't yet proposed to Nesrin by kneeling down and giving her a ring. It was as if everything had spontaneously progressed on the path of marriage with the “dating proposal.” I am thinking from time to time that it would be great to make this missing marriage proposal ceremony. I reached the age of 65. One day, God willing.

On 12 January 1980, we went to Eskişehir to ask Nesrin's family for the approval of our marriage. It was decided that 15 days later the engagement would take place at Nesrin's house and that we would go to Ankara together to do some engagement shopping. On 26 January 1980, we got engaged with a simple ceremony at Nesrin's house in the family. No one in the family has forgotten that, we swallowed a full tray of the baklava which was made by my mother in law Müzeyyen, in our rooms at Has Hotel Termal. We woke up in the morning and there was snow and ice everywhere. My father in law Hasan had found us some skid chains, and we set off slowly towards Istanbul.

Our wedding was held on 2 July 1980 at the 4th Levent Tennis Club. The wedding night we stayed at Istanbul Hilton, then a few days at Izmir Efes Hotel, then a week at Efem Holiday Village in Ören, which my uncles had just bought. This was the honeymoon programme.

Efem Holiday Village had not opened yet, a guard, a cleaner,

a switchboard operator and us. One evening, we were sitting in the reception area with the guard. Nesrin saw a mouse passing from one of the dark rooms in the back to the other. The guard immediately took matters into his own hands. He said, "I'll take care of it." He went inside and came back with his shotgun. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm going to shoot it." We ran away immediately.

We would settle in the house we bought in 1978 and was rented at that time. It's in Beşiktaş Istanbul. We bought our furniture from Maltepe Furniture. My father told our tenant: "My son is getting married, please get out." Our tenant said, "OK." But on the wedding day, he still hadn't vacated the house. We went on honeymoon. After the wedding, both of our mothers settled our house and cleaned it, put everything together, even filled our fridge. When we got back, they welcomed us in our new home with the song having the lyrics: 'Welcome to my heart garden, welcome to my spring face' It was very emotional.

Our house is renovated three times afterwards, but we have been living in the same house with the same furniture for 43 years. It is our nest.

I did my last year of university when I was married. We studied a lot at our house together with our trio gang at university, Mağara and Mehdi (Çetin Böke). We all graduated together in 1981. We went our separate ways, but we still get together from time to time and share our experiences.

## **ÖZAY Limited Co**

At the end of 1978, my mother inherited a property in Kayseri from her family and we bought a 217 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land in 4. Levent with our share. My father built a 4-storey 1000 m<sup>2</sup> building there. On the back of the building, on Büyükdere Street, there was a hotel. But we were seeing a lot of girls going in and out. The customers are mostly men. Every now and then there was a police raid, they round everyone up and take them away. It was none of our business.

One day, while the concrete for the third floor of the building was being poured, Mr Mümin, the owner of the hotel, came with his jacket slung over one shoulder, two men with him, found my father and said, "This is mine!" At that time, there was no title deed in that area. At the time, the lands were given to the immigrants who came with the exchange and no title deeds were issued. Properties were changing hands

with a mukhtar's deed. When my father said "mukhtar's deed," he swore and went. Then Mr Mümin kept pushing us during the construction. He had the windows we opened at the back completely closed with plaques from the outside. Years later, when we got our title deed, my father added two more floors on top of the construction. The iron sprouts were already there. Those two floors were always illegal. Anyway, it was never demolished. It was legalised in the first zoning amnesty.

In 1980, we moved from Topkapı to 4. Levent. I started to go to work with Sarıyer minibuses. The fare was 10 Liras. Don't ask me what kind of money it was, go online. The number of our machines increased and new products and new customers started to be added. Now my father had a separate room. I, accounting and production also had separate rooms. We had moved the mould maker, Master İsmet, to the basement floor. From then on, our moulds would be made at the same address and under our control. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Master İsmet would open his raki and drink it mixed with a bottle of cola. Three slices of dried pastrami on the side. I have never met anyone else who mixed cola with raki.

He was a very artistic moulder who made moulds with a file in his hand. He used to come and sit opposite to me every Friday.

"Yes, Master İsmet?"

"It's payday."

"Well, you don't have any receivables. You're making those moulds, they've already been prepaid?"

"I only work for you. Can't I take money home?"

He would take something from me every Friday with these kinds of conversations. We never owed him anything. Mould technology advanced, but Master İsmet couldn't keep up. Our co-operation did not last long, he moved out.

Again on Eid al-Adha, Master İsmet, a few other friends and we all "entered" a cow together. The cow was bought. On the morning of the feast we gathered, my father, me, İsmet, Hıfıslı, Erhan, our employees. We were going to slaughter the sacrifice, cut it into pieces and distribute the meat on the spot. No one agreed to do the job of slaughtering it. We found a man who introduced himself as a butcher. We laid the cow down together. When our "professional" butcher started cutting the throat with his knife, blood started to flow. The cow

was struggling and we were trying to restrain it. The poor cow first covered its tail in blood, then in dust. Then it hit Erhan in the face. He jumped up and started running towards the Sanayi Neighbourhood on the main road. The whole team followed him. They didn't have mobile phones that took videos then.

In those years, we started to work on producing and selling our own products, rather than contract manufacturing. I was researching about the international plastic and hotel materials exhibitions and tried to select the ones with close dates to each other.

There was no internet then. Communication was via landlines, fax machine and telex. In order to research the fairs, we had to obtain a list of exhibitions by applying to the trade attachés of European countries in Istanbul. Together with my father, we made several exhibition trips with our car.

At that stage, University was over, I was married, working until 9 in the evening. I was thinking about how to postpone the military service and get away with it. I found out that if you are 20 kg more than your height, you can get dismissed. So I was 1.75 m tall and 95 kg, I could do it. I applied. They gave a one-year postponement. "Loose some weight and come next year." they said. I did the opposite. I ate everything, I did not move. I went up to 110 kg. The following year, I received the dismissed report from the Gümüşsuyu Military Hospital committee. We would go to another exhibition trip again that year with my father. For the passport application I needed a document saying that I have no obligation about military service. A fear came over me. I said to my father: "If I go to get this document, just in case, will they take me and send to the army? Would you please go to them and apply for me?" Turned out that I was right to have this fear. The General Staff did not approve my report and postponed it for another year. I couldn't go to the trip that year. I ate and drank like a stallion for another year. The report was approved the following year.

At one of the fairs, we took a plastic glass produced by Cambro as a sample. We had printed a card for ourselves as owner of Otel Özey. We were telling the companies "We will be your customers. But we need a sample." My father took the sample glass to the Sheraton Hotel with the intention of making a mould, producing and selling it to them. The purchasing manager, Mrs Nükhet said: "Mr İlhan, if you make this

glass, not that one, we will buy this amount from you.” Afterwards, my mother and father put as many glasses as they could in the back of the car and went on marketing trips to hotels in the Southern Regions of Turkey many times.

In 1982, my father in law Hasan passed away suddenly. His heart decided to throw a blood clot. First to the brain, then to the bowel. Coma, surgery, but he couldn't be saved. He was 56 years old. It traumatised Nesrin's family. Nesrin's uncle was living in the upper floor in Eskişehir. Two brothers had worked and earned together all their lives. They bought their house together. When my father in law died, they were making a living from the 3 shops they ran together in Bus Terminal. A confectioner, a fruit seller and a newspaper and liquor dealer.

The shops were open 24 hours a day. They worked in shifts. The burial ceremony was over, prayers were gathered at home in the evening. Uncle came and said: “I can't be nagged by women. The partnership is over.” Then he offered an unfair separation of the businesses. He was never forgiven by any of us.

## **Pınar**

In 1983, our wish for a child was granted and Nesrin became pregnant. I had given the news to our friends when we gathered at Savaş's house and sat in their imposing single-seater Berger armchair, saying, “Today it is my right to sit in the father's chair.” Pınar was going to be the first child of our circle of friends. We were very cool and happy. At that time, we had an Anadol pickup truck in the company. I used to take it on weekends. Nesrin and I would go out in it, but the suspension was so bad that we were scared that Nesrin will give an early birth because of the bounces.

On 12 August, we went to Vatan Hospital to see our doctor. He said, “The birth has started, come back tomorrow morning to the hospital.” We told my parents the good news. Their reaction: “Okay, fine. We are going to our summer house in Silivri. Let us know when it is born.” We were very sad, upset and heart broken.

On 13 August 1983, around 10 pm, our daughter Pınar, the sun of our life, was born. We both had our hearts set on a girl and she was a gift for us. A son is more favoured in Turkish society. Those



who came to congratulate were saying: “May the second one be a boy.” “A man will have a male son-in-law,” Stupid comments. I resented it badly. “Brother, we wanted a girl, we got a girl. Okay?” I couldn’t convince them. Our friend Savaş, an ophthalmologist working in the same hospital, said the best thing when he watched these. “A daughter is easier. The worst thing would be a prostitute. You can rent a house and she’ll live.”

Life with a child was completely different now. All the dynamics changed. The population of our house had increased by 50 per cent. Mum Müzeyyen stayed with us for about three weeks. After she left, all the responsibility of Pınar was on Nesrin’s shoulders. When Pınar cried at night, I didn’t wake up once and take care of her. I didn’t change her diaper even once. Knowing this wound in me very well, Pınar made me change Winter’s diaper the first thing after her baby was born.

At that time, I used to go to work at 8 a.m. and come home between 8-9 p.m. Although our habits at that time may approve of fathers acting in a similar way, I do not find it right to hide behind them. As I mentioned before, life is built on choices. After feeling this pain, my advice to fathers who have a new child: “Try to live every minute of your child to the fullest. I missed Pınar’s infancy and childhood, don’t make the same mistake.” In my opinion, there are very few things in this world as important as watching your child grow up slowly and walking together.

Nesrin was in favour of having a second child, but if we did, she wanted the age difference not to be too big. I did not want a second child because I was afraid that I could not treat two or more children fairly. For me, equality does not mean to be fair. Justice is a very lofty concept. Equality is simple.

Of course, the issue of how many children was discussed a lot among our friends. There should be siblings, they will become friends, they learn to share. An single child would be problematic, etc. Standard statements. During a heated discussion, Selçuk said: “Show me a book that supports having only one child.”

I went in and brought a book called “*There are no problematic children, there are problematic parents.*” The argument ended instantly. My dear brother and sister now have only one child.

## **New Partners Are Coming to the Company**

In the same year, the Leyla's decided to move from Ankara to Istanbul due to the deterioration of Hıfı's business of selling steel furniture, which was inherited from his father. They lived with my parents for a while until they moved to their own house. Hıfı joined our growing company and started to work. After a while, Erhan, who went to military service instead of university, finished his military service and came to Özyay. We became a family company. I said to my father: "These people are my brothers and your sons. When you leave, they will become partners in the company as your heirs. Let's create this partnership in equal proportions now. Everyone's motivation will increase." My father said "OK." My share of 47.5% was reduced to 20%. 20% Erhan, 20% Hıfı-Leyla, 20% my father, 20% my mother. My father was the Chairman of the Board of Directors, my job was general administration, accounting-finance, administrative and official relations, human resources, export, purchasing, foreign relations. Erhan took care of domestic sales. And Hıfı was in charge of production and dispatch.

My father's attitude was that no one should receive a salary, everyone should withdraw as much money as they needed. There is a pot boiling in the middle, everyone should take enough to satisfy their hunger. The remaining money should be spent on new investments of the company. My suggestion was that an old model approach would not work in a multi-partner family company. Instead everyone should get a salary according to their work, and that the hierarchical structure of the company management should be clearly determined. These were ignored for years.

There were serious problems in the administration. We were meeting on any issue. Everyone had an opinion and was expressing it. For example, should we give a dealership to this company or not? Then our products had started to diversify and we had become the leading company producing materials for hotels in the market. Reseller companies wanted to get dealership and discounts on the price list. Sometimes we decided, not to give dealership to that company. The next day Erhan was coming and saying:

"I'm not comfortable with this decision."

"So, has there been any changes in the terms we discussed yesterday?"

“No.”

“So, any other new information? ”

”No.”

“Is there anything you forgot or couldn't say yesterday? ”

”No, but I didn't like it.”

This and many similar things happened between Erhan and me. There was a lot of shouting and slamming doors. But there were no broken bones and no blood.

At the same time, we bought the first computer for the company. I had taken a computer programming course at university. At the same time, my friends were also the owners of Link Software, a newly established company to produce accounting software. We bought accounting software from them, but our agreement was to develop the software together. There were no hard discs in computers at that time. There were two floppy disc drives. A software floppy disc on the top and a data floppy disc at the bottom. I was using the software as intensively as possible during the day, taking notes of the problems and going to Link in the evening. We were working together until 10-11 pm at night. I was taking the new version of the software disc and going home, then to work in the morning. The same scenario again the next day.

Güngör is in charge of our accounting. He is retired and veteran of my uncles. “I can't learn computers at my age,” he said. “Computer in, me out.” “Don't do it, look, things will speed up, there will be no efforts to do zero mistake balance sheet. etc.” It didn't help. He left soon after.

We needed someone to enter information into the computer, to issue invoices. We hired a person called Celal for the computer accounting department. There was an additional screen on my desk, but without a keyboard. I could only see what was being done. Celal was going to make an invoice, and I was watching from my desk. He found the first item of the goods and came to the second. He kept waiting and waiting. I was waiting, and saying silently: “Come on, Celal, you can do it.” Celal was waiting. At that moment, someone (I forget who) was standing at my door and saw both of us. It turned out that Celal is aiming at the F2 key with his index finger, he would press it if he had more confidence, but he is waiting. It must be inspiration, he's waiting for.

It didn't work out, so we transferred Celal to office boy duty. On a Friday, customer cheques had to be cashed. Cheques often bounced back then. There were couple of cheques of two or three different banks. No online transactions then. Provisions were taken from the other branch by phone. Long waiting times. I told him. "Deliver the checks to the banks first. Let them phone and get the provision.

Then go back to them one by one and collect the cash. If anything goes wrong, get those checks back that belong to our dealers. If the others cannot be cashed, let the bank stamp on the back of the check that the balance is not enough." Stamping the back of the check was a significant loss of reputation for the company. To avoid any mistake, I repeated what to do if it bounces. He got more confused and said: "What will I do if I will cash them?"

It didn't work out again, we made him the warehouse manager. One day we gave up altogether on him and he left. 10-15 days later he called me. "I got a new job as a human resources officer. What does a human resources officer do?"

## **Fair Trips**

We made a few of our annual European fair trips by car. We had a station wagon Fiat. We were filling the back of the car with food. My uncle borrowed his car fridge. Stuffed vegetables, meatballs, dried meatballs, boiled eggs, salad ingredients, fruit, etc. While crossing Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, which still existed at that time, we slept in the car at petrol stations and then wherever possible on the road. We were reclining the front seats, were pulling the blankets over us and sleep. How cold it could be inside the car. That was the first time I learnt this. On fair days we were finding a hotel so that we looked clean and rested.

The fairs were so big that it was not possible to visit them in one day. We were usually allocating two or three days, but we wanted to visit the whole fair on the first day in case we would have long meetings with some companies. My father was walking along one corridor and I along the other. We were meeting at the other end. "Is there anything interesting for us?" If not we would continue to the other corridors. My father loved our travels. "We are the marvellous duo," he used to say at every opportunity.

One day we left the fair in the evening, tired. We came to the car park. Car, ignition, nothing. What's the matter? I left the fridge on. There was no voltage protection switch back then. It drain the battery. We pushed the car, give it a knock to start. The car park was flat, it was big. We both pushed it with all our power. The driver's door was open, when it accelerated, I jumped in, second gear, knock, knock, knock. Nothing and nothing. We realised that the battery's voltage had dropped to zero. It was absolutely necessary to start it with a jumper cable from another car. We probably spent a few hours until we found a car with a jumper cable. Then we wandered around at night trying to charge the battery.

Overnight stays in the car and filling the car with food were to save money. In the second half of the 3-week journey, those meals would start to become unpleasant, slight odours would rise, but we would still take a bite and test whether it was edible. I am not sure if it was necessary or if it was the culture of the generation that had seen wars.

As much as we missed freshly cooked home-cooked meals, once we entered Kapıkule, we called my mother from a payphone and said, "We are coming in the evening, please make us rice with chickpeas."

Now it was time to visit fairs in America and discover new worlds. In 1986, we planned a fair trip Frankfurt - Chicago - Paris. My father was 55 years old. My father was healthy. But he had a heart problem that perhaps no one was aware of. At that time, the treatment of heart diseases was not easy in Turkey. Open heart surgeries were performed in a few centres and were very risky. Ataturk's saying "Entrust me to Turkish doctors" is now 100% true. We endeavour to solve all our medical problems in Turkey. But at that time, Europe and America were preferred for heart problems. The following year, Turgut Özal was to have his heart surgery in Houston.

At that time, a Turkish doctor my parents knew was working in a hospital in Cleveland. The Cleveland hospital was very popular in the treatment of heart diseases. Moreover, it was very close to Chicago. My mum insisted. "Let's make an appointment, let them examine your father." I said okay and we made an appointment for my father. We planned to go to Cleveland from Chicago to have a heart check-up for my father. My mum said to me on the way: "If they say surgery, don't do it." I said, "OK, OK," and we went.

Frankfurt, then Chicago, then Cleveland. We had our appointment the next morning. In the meantime, we checked into the hotel next door to the hospital. Blood tests, echo, EKG, stress test. All finished. They said we need an angiography. Fine, fine. Tomorrow morning. OK. The next day after the angiography, the cardiologist doctor called us to his room. My father's English was poor. I was the interpreter. He said, "You had an infarction in the past without realising it. Now you have 3 blocked coronary arteries. You are at great risk. You need by-pass surgery immediately. If you would have an attack in front of me right now, I couldn't save you."

We were both shocked. Dad said: "Absolutely not." The doctor said, "I can't let you go." My father said, "We have no money anyway." Confused about what to do, I said to my father: "If something happens to you on the way, I will not be able to get rid of the remorse, come and have the operation here." I couldn't get him to agree. My father said: "Your mum doesn't want me to have the surgery here either. London is very popular for heart surgeries. Change the tickets. Let's go there. Let me have the operation there. I will give you a signature on a paper stating that this is my wish." He later said that this was the most ridiculous statement of his life.

I convinced the doctor about London. We would give him a written statement that we were going voluntarily. He would give us all the test results, angiography film etc. We skipped the fair in Chicago. I changed the tickets to London. No one in Turkey knew yet. We didn't know where we would go in London. I couldn't sleep at night, I was very restless. I said to my father, "Come, don't be stubborn, look, everything is ready here, everything is handy. There can't be a better place. Yes, we have no money. 30.000 dollars is a lot. But look, they said we can pay when we return home. Come and say yes." I finally managed to convince him.

There was a lady in the hospital who coordinates patients from Turkey. I called her at night. I said, "We have decided to have the operation, but on one condition. The operation should be tomorrow. I know, you usually make appointments in a week or two. If not tomorrow, we are leaving. Everything is ready for London." I hung up the phone. I called my mum. I told her the situation. She started crying. "Hang up the phone and I'll call you back in 20 minutes." When I called again, she calmed down. "I must have had a premonition. Okay, I'll pray from here."

The patient coordinator lady called afterwards. "Tomorrow we have scheduled your surgery in addition to the normal daily programme. He will undergo surgery around 4-5 pm in the afternoon. We will admit you to the hospital in the morning. Good night." Sleep was comfortable then.

The next day, during the formalities of hospitalisation and surgery, no one asked us for a cent. We had paid the previous expenses. Our passports were not checked. They took our signature that we would send the money later. Done. But your question is wrong. Of course we sent it.

They took my father away in the afternoon. They sent me to a big hall. The relatives of the patients undergoing surgery were waiting there. From time to time, they were announcing the progress or the end of the operation by naming the patients. If it was not announced, you could go and ask. Wait, wait, people were getting fewer and fewer. Finally there was no one left. It was 9 p.m. The staff had left too. The lights went out. I was left like shit. I got the phone number of the surgery room. I called from the internal line every now and then. At some point in the night, I finally got the news, "It's over, it's successful, he's been admitted to intensive care unit."

I went to the intensive care unit, fell asleep on a bench. In the morning I said: "I have to see my dad." They said: "No, no visitors are allowed in the intensive care unit." "But I'm an interpreter. My father doesn't speak English." I did it. When I entered, I counted around 20 cables and pipes attached to his body. Screens, nurses, doctors. My father's first words were: "We got it, Kemal." The next day he was transferred to the room. I was the accompanying person.

The next day a huge black woman patient carer came in. "Mr İlhan, get up." My father glared at me, wondering how he could get up. The woman forced him to get up, took him to the toilet, sat him in front of the mirror. She gave him shaving soap and a razor. She insisted that he shaves himself. My father complained saying: "She's crazy." She insisted. My father started shouting. "Dad, come on. Look, it's rude. I'll help you." She says no. "He'll do it himself." We understood that it was a procedure for a quick return to normal life and getting rid of patient psychology.

After 4-5 days in the hospital, we moved to the hotel room next door. We would stay there for 10 days and then go to Turkey. The wound on my father's chest got infected. It needed to be dressed every day. "You

stay in the hotel and come back from there every day. This will take a long time. We will teach you. You will do it then. You can continue doing it in Turkey.” They gave us all kinds of medicines and materials. After a few days in Turkey, I handed over the task to my mother.

Before leaving the hospital, patients were given a briefing on how they will live their lives from now on. I attended and translated it for my father. Among many details from climbing stairs to diet and sleep, they said that they should not even be in a smoking allowed place. The alternative of smoking wasn't something to discuss. This statement caused me and Nesrin to quit smoking. Although my father later developed COPD, he continued to smoke for 30 years until he died.

I was smoking three packs a day and Nesrin tried to stay with me at least in the evenings. Especially when we were with our friends, after 10 p.m. the smoke layer on the ceiling of the house would reach one metre thickness. A few attempts to quit had already ended in failure. There were also some attempts swapping with a pipe. When I thought that I could smoke a pipe by inhaling it like a cigarette, the colour of my tongue turned to the pitch colour and hardened like wood.

I said, let's approach it differently this time. Nesrin and I convinced ourselves on the following points.

1. We have convinced ourselves that nicotine is not addictive. There is a debate about it, but we don't believe it. It's just a hand habit. We will not solve this hand habit with rosaries, chewing gum or nuts.

2. Quitting smoking is easy. Anyone can quit. If we take refuge behind quitting smoking, we tolerate nervousness and overeating. First we start counting hours, then days, then months. What a great job we have done by quitting smoking hangs in our brains. And in a moment of weakness we are defeated.

3. You usually quit smoking on Monday and start again on Wednesday. We quit smoking on Saturday evening just before dinner.

4. Smoking after a meal, smoking with raki, smoking after sex, smoking with tea and coffee are all learned habits.

5. Until the evening of the Saturday we decided to quit, we smoked all the cigarettes we had at home, didn't like, received as gifts or bought for guests, until we choked, sneezed and gagged. We made ourselves hate cigarettes.



All of these methods together were effective for us. In the first week we thought of cigarettes several times a day, then once a day, two months later twice a week, four months later three times a month, six months later never again. But for the rest of my life, I was always afraid to touch a cigarette, fearing that if I smoked even one, it would take me a week to put the pack back in my pocket. Except for the weed in Amsterdam.

### **ÖZAY Distribution Co.**

Erhan and I continued to argue. He was constantly asking us to accept the price reduction demands of the customers. When I said “But there is no end to this,” this time he was complaining about production delays. He created the image that we were a company that can never make its customers smile, and blamed the management. I don’t remember him coming to me one day saying: “I made such a good sale, hurray.”

Zeki Gürcan was a customer of ours who had his own company and he was trying to attract us to the production and sale of Christmas promotional materials. I suggested that we should establish a marketing company together. We established Özey Dağıtım A.Ş. Existing Özey Limited would produce and sell to Özey Dağıtım at fixed prices. Distribution company would sell to the hotel supplies market and promotion market. Erhan would have no management relationship with the production company.

I wanted to sell our products to markets such as Metro and Migros. Erhan opposed and said: “Our customers are their customers too. It would be a problem.” When we established Özey Distribution, I said: “The production company should also sell directly to the markets. But let’s determine the price policies together.” With this structure, we would both step into new markets and our arguments with Erhan would decrease. It seemed like a good plan.

It wasn’t. After a year or two, Zeki left. Özey Distribution and Limited became like the same company. Promotion didn’t work out. Erhan was in charge of sales to hotels and dealers, and I was in charge of sales to markets and exports. The discussions continued.

One day, McDonald’s officials from Turkey came to visit. Inspired by our products in the markets, they wanted to investigate the alternative of having us produce the plastic materials they use.

We talked, they visited the production facility. Then they criticised us, saying that our production site was insufficient and that we would have difficulty in complying with international standards. They were right, but their attitude upset me. I said: "In your marketing efforts, you have small plastic toys as gifts for children, and you give them to customers with children." They said: "Yes." "These are all made from plastic products collected from the garbage, cheap plastic raw materials obtained through recycling. It's very easy to tell by the colour and general appearance. No tests are even necessary. We all know that these toys can endanger the health of children who are very likely to put them in their mouths. How can you allow such a thing to happen?" I think they left without saying goodbye. We never saw McDonald's again.

We decided to manufacture a glass washing appliance similar to a sample we got from the fair. It had two plastic reservoirs. You dip the glass into one of them. It is washed with soapy water and brushes. You take it out and put it in the other one. When you press, water gushes out from inside and outside and the glass is rinsed. There were many parts. Plastic buckets, brushes, copper pipes with drilled holes, hoses, fittings, etc. I was in charge of the assembly. I was personally doing and checking them one by one, probably because we named it "Pınar Glass Washing Machine." There should not have been a mistake in any of them.

In 1988, Levent Plastics Co-operative was established. We became a member of that co-operative together with the friends of my father, whom we knew because of our business. A suitable industrial land was searched for a year or two. After various alternatives, a plot of land was found in Gebze. Next to Gebze Organised Industrial Area. It would be divided into 3000 m<sup>2</sup> parcels, it was asked from each member how many parcels they would like to buy. My father said: "We are working on 1000 m<sup>2</sup>, one parcel is enough for us." I said: "No, let's think ahead, let's buy 4 parcels."

Meanwhile, the gulf crisis of 1990 broke out, and there was no sound of machinery coming from the lower floors. In the meeting room, we were doing the boxing and assembly work of the hotel room consumables, which was done before by the families living around. Not 1 TL of sales. I'm glad we didn't fire anyone. Staff was on paid leave. I still managed to convince everyone by insisting on 4 parcels. After 20

years, 4 parcels would not be enough for us.

The Gulf crisis was over, our turnover started to rise. We paid our instalments without any problems. In the meantime, we could not fit in our building any longer, we needed space. We rented a ground floor in a back street. We moved the paper impregnation production of laminate trays there, but it was not enough either. Then we started to work on how we can build a building in Gebze as soon as possible. Our business was doing marvellous.

One day I called all the partners to a meeting. With urgent and important code. When we got together, I said: “We’re going bankrupt soon.” They looked at me naively. “What do you mean?” I showed them the graphics. I said: “We are at the highest turnover we have ever reached. Our export figures are also at the top of our scale.” Everyone looked at me in astonishment. We had become the leading company in our field in Turkey. We had small competitors. They were copying our products and imitating us, which was an indication of our success. I said: “We need to do something. We are going down.”

As they went from “He must have gone mad” to the level of “What the hell are you talking about,” I said: “We’re right at the top of the bell curve. If we continue in the same way, the decline will start after this. We need to jump to a new bell curve higher up and start climbing again.” It was still not very clear and the reaction I had seen had come to such a point that it was as if I wanted to damage Özay and his image, as if I was saying incomprehensible nonsense, as if I was walking on clouds.

I continued. “Our future is in exports. We need to establish sales organisations abroad, but our product range is not enough for this. Like our competitors abroad, we need to add new products. We need capital for all this.” It was now clear. “Since we have no capital, we need a foreign partner. We cannot walk this path alone.”

Was an agreement reached? I don’t think so. Although it was not expressed, I think it was thought that I was dreaming. From that point on, my efforts were concentrated on starting our building in the new site that had become the Gebze Plastics Organised Industrial Zone and increasing our participation in international fairs. The first goal was to introduce ourselves and our unique products more to our competitors. The second was to be able to show them a modern factory

in the Organised Industrial Zone when they come to visit us, instead of a company that produces in cramped, overlapping, alleyways.

### **Pınar Is Growing**

Pınar is growing up before I can enjoy her childhood to my wish. Cem and Tijen were very keen on dancing. They danced well too. One day, while we were sitting at our house, Cem's dance suddenly came to him and he wanted to try a dance figure with Pınar that he couldn't do with Tijen. We were watching. While Pınar was behind Cem, Cem reached back between his legs, grabbed Pınar's ankles, pulled her quickly, and then he would pass her between his legs as if she is flying and continued with the dance figures we were accustomed to. While he was trying to figure out what to do, there was a sound between the boom and the crash that froze us all. Yes, Pınar hit her head on the ground while flying between Cem's legs. That sound echoed and echoed and echoed in our brains. We were very scared. But Pınar hadn't made a sound. Had she fainted? Or was she having a brain haemorrhage? None of that, nothing had happened to Pınar. What happened was just some years were taken out from all of our lives.

Nişantaşı Işık High School's Kindergarten class was admitted by lottery. Nesrin registered and Pınar won. Parent-teacher meetings were also under Nesrin's responsibility. One day, one of the mothers said to the teachers: "Why don't you tell them what fruit to bring the day before so that everyone brings the same fruit and no one envies the other?" The Deputy Director said: "These children need to know that there are differences in life. If they don't know, they will learn here." Nesrin was very impressed.

A year later, Pınar started first grade at Işık High School in Maslak. Her teacher was Mrs Şadan. She was an extremely ambitious and tough teacher. She wanted to raise successful students, to ensure that they get high grades in the secondary school entrance exam and get into good schools, and to shape her own career accordingly. Pınar was a good student. Her grades were high. One day Pınar forgot her notebook at home. When Nesrin saw it, she took it to school so that she would not be scolded. When she came to the door of the classroom, she couldn't go in, she was scared. Mrs Şadan was thundering inside. She wouldn't stop, she wouldn't calm down. Anyway, the bell rang.

Mrs Şadan stormed out. Nesrin looked round and saw that 5-6 of the most hardworking students in the class, including Pınar, were crying next to the board. "What happened, girl?" Mrs. Şadan was scolding and shouting at the successful students who could not do the difficult questions she asked. "You have to do these. Otherwise, what will my career be like?" Anyway, Mrs Şadan left the following year and Pınar's mental health remained intact.

I remember that I bought Pınar a bicycle without she asked for it, one with two auxiliary wheels. She wasn't very interested, but she occasionally rode it in the schoolyard in front of our house. One day I said, "Let's take these auxiliary wheels off." She said, "No." At first I insisted, then I persuaded her. Or so I thought. She was struggling, I was pushing her. Holding her from behind, we went round and round in the school yard. It was no use, she was crying her eyes out. I was very determined. I'm a father. My daughter will ride that bike. That's it.

In the meantime, I became a Freemason. Fahrettin, a friend of my father, proposed first my father and then me into the community. I entered on 29.5.1986. An important page opened in my life. There were significant changes and developments in my personality and perspectives on life. With the new lodge we established in 1993, Brother Tanju and his friends, our brothers and sisters, joined our family. We became a bigger family. We shared many beautiful moments, ate, drank, listened to very valuable conversations and made unforgettable trips. We lived a very important part of our lives in a different dimension.

One evening a group of brothers and sisters came to us for dinner. After dinner Pınar went to bed. I think it was weekend. Our conversation went on and on. Close to sunrise they said : "We would not leave without having breakfast." Nesrin set the table. We were having breakfast. Pınar woke up and said: "Did they come again?"

One day Pınar was with us during a talk on genes and DNA given by Prof. Demir Tiryaki. Years later, she told us: "I was so mesmerised that evening that I knew from that day on what I would be dealing with for the rest of my life." And so it was.

## **Deno**

When Nesrin and I used to walk along the Bebek coast during our university years, we used to look at the boats lined up on the docks

with a sigh and dream about “Will we one day have a boat?” When we went on summer holidays to the southern coast, we used to rent small laser-type sailboats. When I became interested in sailing, I joined the sailing courses organised by the Fenerbahçe Sailing Club. Then the itching started. I wondered what kind of sailboat we can own, how can we buy the most economical sailboat?

In 1990, we bought Deno, the boat of Selçuk’s colleague Deniz. Deno was a 6 metre long polyester sailboat, a bit bigger than the size of a bathtub. When the three of us were lying inside, there was nowhere else to move, it was a boat with only a 12V lamp as electrically powered equipment and a 9 horsepower inboard diesel engine. A small portable gas bottle and a 40 litre water tank and a sink took care of cooking and washing up. There were two beds opposite each other in the cabin. When wooden pieces were placed between the two, Pınar, Nesrin and me could sleep. There was only a magnetic compass as a navigation device. Haa! There was also a toilet. I had to put Vaseline to the walls to get in, but getting out was more difficult. Nesrin had to help me with a corkscrew.

We travelled a lot in Marmara Sea with Deno. One day we sailed from Marmara Island to Marmara Ereğlisi. 7-8 hours of open sea sailing. Somewhere in the middle, I saw a wetness on the floor inside the cabin. I got worried, of course. Fresh water or sea water? I fingered it, I smelled it. It was piss and shit water. Oh, no! When we were going out to open sea, we used to open the valve of the sewage tank. It was draining by itself. This time it was blocked and didn’t empty itself. When it filled up, it overflowed. I grabbed a long wire. I jumped in the water. I dove under the boat and poked the pipe. One, two, three times! And it flushed on my head first since I was unprepared. The colour was brown-yellow. That day I achieved the fastest swim of my life.

One day we would go to the Bosphorus. Erhan, his wife Özlen, Leyla, Hıfı, Murathan, Yasemin, and us three. We were approaching Sarayburnu. Erhan asked. “Brother, what mosque is this?” “Blue Mosque.” The wind is blowing from the head, the sails were closed, we were motoring. After a while he asked again. “And what mosque is that one?” “Sultanahmet. Blue Mosque.” When he asked again after 10-15 minutes, I realised that we were pretending to go but not literally going. The boat with a 9 horsepower engine and 9 people on it could not beat the Sarayburnu current. Sarayburnu was impassable.

Sivriada had become the popular destination of our weekends. It was December, we were sitting at my aunt's house. My parents were there too. "We're going to Sivriada tomorrow. Why don't you come along?" I said. "Sure," they said in a melodic voice. The next day we met at Ataköy Marina. We set off. The weather was hazy. After half an hour, the land became invisible. We couldn't see the island either. My aunt said in a worried voice: "Kemal, where is closer? Marina or Sivriada?" "Marina, aunty." 15 minutes later, when she asked again, I realised that she was afraid we would sink. "Where should I swim towards?" she was asking.

After a while, water started to rise in the cockpit. I was looking in the cabin, nothing. We can't be taking on water. The cockpit is outside. Sea or rain water is flowing down the drain. While I was looking left and right with a question mark, my aunt said: "What happened, what is it? Why is the water rising?" "Nothing, aunt, nothing." I said, but there was no answer for me either. Only after a while I realised what happened. When 7 people sat in the cockpit, we were heavy and the stern of the boat sank too much and the drain hole was below the water level. The sea water would recoil from there. Then it would go out again. There were too many big people on Deno.

We continued, and suddenly white smoke started coming out of the exhaust. As if street meatballs made of fatty minced meat were being grilled. My aunt was nervous again. "No, aunty, it's normal," I said, but I didn't know why either. Then I learnt that if there is water in the diesel, it comes out as white vapour. When we landed on the island, my aunt kissed the land. Then she looked at me with eyes full of questions about how we would get back. After returning home, for a few years my aunt did not get on any sea vessels including the City Lines.

During the Sivriada days, our biggest entertainment with Pınar was "Adventurous Journey." The breakwater of the fishing harbour was made of rocks piled on top of each other. Father and daughter would jump on those rocks, jumping and jumping, we would go to the very end and come back. With laughter. Pınar's words: "Dad, shall we go on an adventurous journey?" are still in my ears. My lovely girl.

On Fridays, when we got off work, we would take the food Nesrin had cooked, go to Ataköy Marina, eat and sleep on the boat, and if the weather was good, we would sail the next day, go to Sivriada, spend

the night there, and return home on Sunday evening. Senior year at the primary school. Pınar was going to attend preparatory courses for the secondary school exam. We said: “We are on the boat on weekends. You go to the courses during the week.” “But all my friends go on weekends.” “No, you go during the week.” Years later we learnt that Pınar resented this very much. The reason was our selfishness and trust in Pınar.

Pınar attended courses during the week and qualified for the Austrian High School, Galatasaray High School and Üsküdar American High School. Nesrin wanted Üsküdar American because of English language. I had many friends from Galatasaray High School. Their friendship and loyalty to each other impressed me a lot. I wanted her to go there. Pınar, on the other hand, wanted to go to the Austrian High School, probably thinking that I will get support because I am from German High School. Who do you think won? Of course Pınar.

Towards the end of the preparatory year of the Austrian High School, Pınar participated in a trip organised by the school. They would go to Austria, spend a week, various activities, get to know the life there, etc. They would stay with a family on a farm for a few days to get to know the rural life. They were placing each of the children with a different family. They took Pınar to a farm in the evening, probably around 6 pm. The family was very nice, she met their daughter of a similar age, and she would stay in her room. It was 7:30 - 8:00 pm, everyone said good night and went to bed. My daughter was ravenous. The hosts were farmers. They had already eaten and will get up at 5:00 am in the morning. Pınar couldn't say she was hungry and she could hardly sleep with an empty stomach and a broken heart. She would call us, but we were at sea that week. An example of an irresponsible parents.

### **Gebze Adventure**

Locations in Gebze Plastikçiler would be determined by drawing lots. Pınar drew the lot. We were happy with our place, we would build our building. My father and I couldn't agree. I wanted a single floor production building with high ceilings and an administrative building. He wanted smaller square metres and one building with two or more floors. I was explaining our vision, I was saying that the doors should be wide and high to let the trucks come in. Let the lorries with cranes carrying the machines place the machines in the right place. My father



was saying no, there is no need. I was saying: “Let’s erect 13 flagpoles in front of the building. There are 13 members of our family. The one in the middle should be a little high. Let’s hang the Turkish flag on it. And on the others, the flags of the countries we export to.” No, to that too! The reason was unnecessary expense.

After unnecessary, energy- and time-consuming discussions, we planned our building, which sits on 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, half of which is 8 metres high, half of which is two storeys. The doors will be suitable for truck entry. There will be 13 flag poles. It would be prefabricated construction. We needed it in a hurry. But we had no money. We needed a loan. I was talking to banks. Leasing was popular then. In addition, according to the law, leasing repayments were not subject to depreciation even if they were for fixed assets, they were recorded as expenses. It was a great tax advantage. Two birds with one stone. Come on, bird!

Banks were reluctant because in order to open a lease file for a real estate, a land title deed was required. However, there was an annotation from the Directorate of Forestry on part of the title deed of Gebze Organised. Some parts of the land were once forested. Therefore, with a joint decision, no one was given a personal title deed until this situation will be resolved. In other words, the title deed was on Gebze Plastikçiler and was annotated.

So we were going to build there. We want a loan with leasing procedure. Banks wouldn’t or couldn’t. İşbank was willing, but they have difficulties with legislation, risk, guarantee, etc. Then a brilliant idea came to my mind. I said: “This is a prefabricated building. The columns will be produced outside, and they will be placed in their places according to the project with cranes, just like building a house out of matchboxes. Then the second floor concrete slabs of the storeyed part will arrive and be placed. The concrete of the basement floor will be poured on site. Then the outer walls will be done with two layer steel plaques insulated with polyurethane in between. The roof will be the same. So let’s do the leasing at the bank piece by piece.”

I told İşbank, “This building is prefabricated. In other words, theoretically, it can be dismantled, moved to another place and rebuilt there. Therefore, it has nothing to do with the title deed. It is not real estate, it is movable. Like a car, like a container, like a boat, etc.” At first they didn’t consider it seriously. I said: “It is not against the legislation.

Anyway, leasing instalments will be spread over a few years, they will not last long. Come on, please.” I tried hard to convince them.

As a result, with a separate leasing file for the columns, a separate leasing file for the concrete slabs, and a separate leasing file for the polyurethane steel plates, the financing problem of the building was solved and there was a great tax gain for us.

I explained the situation to our legal financial advisor. I said: “In addition, I had the concrete slabs file include the ground concrete poured on site, and as a justification, I stated that these would be poured piece by piece and could be transported if necessary.” He said: “No such thing.” I said: “There is nothing against the law. The advantages are great. There can’t be any problem with you. Look into it, but don’t talk to the bank.” Two days later, he was convinced. And the leasing files were opened without any problems. We received our loan. Leasing instalments were paid on time. The matter was closed. There must have been other people who did this too, because the law was revised within a year or two and these opportunities disappeared.

The construction of our building was completed without any problems. In 1996, we moved to Gebze. We started construction as the second company in Plastikçiler and started production as the first company in the region with around 200 members. The roads were not built. Our cars would get stuck in the mud during winter, we would walk the last 300-500 metres. Water was supplied by tanker, electricity by generator. Mobile phones were still in their infancy. From the entrance of the region, we laid our own private telephone cable, probably around two kilometres, with two lines. We buried it in the ground where necessary. In most places it was just lying on the ground. We were coming in the morning and the phone line was cut. A colleague would go out and walk by following the telephone wire, find the problem and solve it.

Meanwhile, Nesrin and Leyla, two partners, had started a textile business in 4. Levent. The project was to produce kitchen textiles with the fabric of the fabric-covered trays we were selling to chain markets at that time. Selling sets with the trays was a good idea. At the same time, we started to produce trays for IKEA. These two moves brought a new dimension to Özay. My father wanted only tray production to be

moved to Gebze, the company's headquarters to remain in 4. Levent, and the girls to work together. This did not fit my vision in particular. Since the target was a foreign partner, it was right to move the centre and all production to Gebze and leave only the domestic sales and Erhan, who was in charge of it, in 4. Levent. And so it was, but my father was not happy about it for a long time. This time he said, "Let's get together in the morning and go to Gebze in one car. Less expense, let's be together." But the working hours were different, the houses were different. That didn't work either.

Nesrin and I invented Happy Night to help my father's desire to be together as a family. Every month we were gathering at the home of one of the 4 families. We were eating, drinking, singing, dancing. I had an organ and I played it. Nesrin wrote an "Ayata Anthem." I made up a melody for it. It would be a shame to say I composed it. We were singing it with everyone, we were spending joyful time together.

As it turned out, we thought so. In time, when my playing the organ was combined with the pianist chanteuse type and the mood turned into "Mr. Ahmet and his family are here too." and the desire to participate decreased significantly, the Happy Nights came to an end before a year had passed. Much later I learnt that for some of us this was a very unattractive thing.

A few years later I made another attempt. My parents are from Kayseri. I was born and raised in Istanbul, but I say I am from Kayseri when I think it is favourable. I have heard a little about the life in Kayseri and its highlands through the stories of my elders. But the generation after us has no knowledge. Kayseri also has many local dishes. Everyone knows mantı, but no one knows dishes such as fried dishes, kete, yağlama, arabasi. I said: "Let's organise a Kayseri night once a month. My aunts should also attend. Let's gather at one of our houses every month. Let the host cook a single, predetermined Kayseri dish. Our elders should tell what they have experienced and heard. For example: The wells in the highlands are filled with snow in winter and drunk as cold water in summer when the snow melts; men go on donkeys from the highlands to the city to work, and on the way back they sleep on the donkey, but the donkey knows the way and finds the house and comes back; the concept of chamber woman; the meaning of gada"

Everyone said okay. The days and the meals were fixed. We organised the first night. We made Kayseri style dumplings called fried mantı. Nesrin said it couldn't be just one dish. She served olive oil dishes, salads and desserts. However, it didn't fit the essence of the idea. We gathered together, and when we ate the Kayseri dumplings fried in hot oil and filled with minced meat, and the other dishes on top of it, a heaviness fell on everyone. I said: "Come on, let's listen to Kayseri life." My parents and aunts looked at each other. None of them found the subject interesting and thought, that I would tell about it. They said: "What should we talk about? It is all in the past." And then they said: "It's not healthy to eat like this, etc. "OK," I said. "Let this be the first and last time." It was over as soon as it started. I never tried it again.

One day we learnt that Nesrin's grandmother was ill. Dementia was just beginning at that time. In a way that the doctors could not determine the cause, grandmother did not eat and became weak. She couldn't get out of bed. They probably thought it was her last days, so they called us to Bozüyük. Nesrin said: "My cotton Grandma loves watermelon and ice cream. Let's take some to there." It wasn't like now, in the early 90s. Where are we going to find watermelon and ice cream in winter? We found watermelon from a high society greengrocer in Nişantaşı. We had to visit a few places for ice cream. The scene when we arrived in Bozüyük was as follows: The grandma was lying in bed, her consciousness was half-open, the hodja was reading verses from Qur'an. People's eyes were moist. Nesrin placed a kiss on her cheek and said: "Would you like watermelon?" At first she was not interested. Then when the watermelon touched her lips, she started to eat it little by little. Ice cream followed. The next day she recovered and got up. It turned out that she had been deprived of food. With Nesrin's marvellous gesture and help, she lived another 5-6 years afterwards.

One day I had a pain in my back. Nothing serious, but it bothered me a lot. Nesrin massaged it with cologne. But it was useless. Then she remembered and said: "My grandmother used to have similar pains. She used to apply an ointment. It both warmed and relieved the pain. I'll get it from the pharmacy downstairs."

I was naive. I said, "Okay." She bought it. It was called Capsolin. She put it on my back nicely. My skin, which the cologne turned pink and opened its pores, started to burn when it absorbed the ointment. But what a pain! The wet towel made it worse. I took a shower and

it got worse. It was as if my back is sizzling in a pan full of hot oil. I started galloping around the coffee table in the living room. I took deep breaths, I thought if I concentrate, I'll beat this pain. It lasted an hour. Did I swear? No. Is it believable? No.

Once Nesrin was visiting her family in Eskişehir, I was staying with my parents and we were going to work with my father. We had breakfast and we were about to leave. My father said: "Oh no!" "What happened, Dad?" My mother used to put the medicines my father would take in the morning in a small medicine box and he would swallow them with a glass of water. That day my father accidentally emptied the next medicine box into his mouth. There were 8-10 blood thinners in it. What should we do? We have a doctor, our neighbour Mahmut, upstairs. I immediately went to him and explained the situation. He said: "It will cause internal bleeding. You have to induce vomiting." "Come on dad, come to the toilet, try to get it out." It didn't work. It was hopeless. "Dr. Mahmut, what should we do?" "I'll give him an injection, it will make him vomit. We have to hurry, so the medicine doesn't get into the blood." Dad, hip, injection, toilet. Nothing. We were all waiting in the toilet to see if he would vomit. Dad's eyes rolled back. He collapsed on the floor, gone. Cries of agony, "Dad!" "Dr. Mahmut, come quick!" He said: "He's breathing, he's fainted. But we shouldn't move him for 24 hours. Don't let him bleed internally." We gently transferred my father onto a blanket on the floor of the toilet. We laid him on the blanket and a quilt on the living room floor, with a pillow under his head. He slept on the floor in the living room until the next morning. Nothing happened, thank God. Later we learnt that the injection given by Dr. Mahmut was a drug that should be used in the treatment of liver diseases and in a hospital environment only. The side effects were vomiting and sudden drop in blood pressure. Dr. Mahmut then examined Erhan for abdominal pain and recommended a hot water bag. It turned out to be appendicitis. The appendicitis burst with the hot application and Erhan was rushed into surgery and saved.

## **Sea Life**

In 1990, when we bought Deno, we had a dream of travelling the world. We would be going to travel the world by boat. But this had to be more than a wish ending with "Someday, God willing!" Otherwise

it would remain a dream. But it would be a goal for us. And for it to be a goal, it had to have a date. We set our dream for 2005. Exactly 15 years later. It is easy to say and easy to write. But think about it; how far away is 2038 from today. Isn't it difficult to imagine? I think that everyone should have near, medium and far goals in life. While walking towards the goal, the date may change or the goal itself. But we should have at least one goal and walk towards it.

We needed to make our boat bigger, we were 'itching'. There was a Pala 9.20 two pontoons away. Ali, the owner, and I became friends. We even did a trip to Marmara Island together once. One day he said, "I'm selling Morning Star." I don't remember how much he wanted. I made an offer to negotiate. He said to me: "Look, there is a 9.20 sign on the hull of the boat, for that money you can only buy the part of the boat up to there." I was very offended. Over time, we agreed on the price, and we sold Deno in between.

We love our new boat, and the name is very romantic. Morning Star. We were settling in the boat, we saw the name Necmettin Sabah on the plywood under the cushion. I asked Ali, "Who is this?" He was the first owner. Necm means star in Arabic. Sabah is morning in Turkish. So the man named the boat after himself. All the romance went down the drain.

With Morning Star, our range extended and the Aegean and the Mediterranean Sea became accessible. We had travelled south a couple of times and twice participated in EMYR, the Eastern Mediterranean Yacht Rally. It started from Istanbul, followed our Aegean coasts and Cyprus, Haifa-Israel and ending in Alexandria. In our first participation, Gökçeada was also on the route. We were going down the Dardanelles. There was a 3-4 knot southerly current. The wind was blowing 20 knots from the stern. Our speed was 9 knots. We were in a great mood. We saluted the Gallipoli War Memorial. We left the strait and set course to starboard. Northwards, against the wind. We were surprised. The wind was blowing 30-35. The waves were breaking over the boat. I was going down to the cabin when I got buckets of water over my head, I couldn't breathe, I thought I had fallen into the sea. We immediately lowered the sails and closed everything. We were going motoring, but there was not enough power in the engine. The speed was 1-2 knots. In the middle of the night, we arrived in Gökçeada after everyone else. Later we learnt that some boats evaluated the weather and sea conditions and continued to Bozcaada instead of Gökçeada.

We were in Cesme, Altinyunus Marina. We would go out the next morning, but the weather is rough. The waves break over the breakwater and come to our boat. At night I said: "No one will go out in this weather. Go to sleep." In the morning we woke up to the noise. We saw that everyone was preparing to go out in turns. We saw the Israeli-flagged boat next to us getting ready to leave. I made a move to help, but I was too late. As the helmsman lost the steering because of the strong head wind, the boats anchor caught the railings of Morning Star one by one and broke them all. All the wires on the port side of the boat were gone. There was serious damage. They were very upset, they compensated, but we spent a lot for the repairs too.

We also took part in a few races with Morning Star. One of them was the sausage course, right in front of Ataköy Marina. Nesrin was not with us. It was me, Pınar, Hüseyin and Serdar. The weather was rough. The boat was leaning too much on one side, when going against the wind. I couldn't make an effort to keep it, more upright, otherwise we would slow down. We were not a racing boat, we were not a racing team. We didn't have any expectations, but we had our eye on one boat and wanted to beat her. We were pushing the conditions to overtake her. Pınar started to get scared. "Girl, don't do it, it'll be fine." The wind gusts were increasing. Pınar started crying. She was 10 or 11 years old. I shouted, scolded and roared, but it still didn't work and we quit the race. I apologised immediately, of course, but Pınar didn't come on the boat for the next few years. Even if she did, she was incredibly scared of the sea and the waves. It was one of the biggest mistakes of my life. Regret is worthless. I wish life had a "delete" button. Sometimes "escape" can work too.

Pala 9.20 was a boat with design and construction faults. In strong winds, when sailing, the mast would bend more than it should and the rigging wires would become too loose and the rigging hardware would lie on the deck. I was afraid that the mast would break. When we went ashore, while the boat was on the lift, I realised that there was a one centimetre gap between the keel and the hull. The keel was shaking. If it would break when sailing, the boat will capsize. I was horrified. I called Polimarin, told them about the problems. "Oooo," they said, "You should see the other boats." It was up to me. With the help of Mustafa and Yavuz, we managed to fix the keel, but we couldn't do anything about the rigging. We got fed up and sold it.

Now we needed to buy a boat that can fit for world travelling goal. Centre cockpit boats were popular for long term travels. We were liking the British made Moody very much. We heard that the yacht broker company in Ataköy Marina wanted to take the distributorship of Moody. It didn't take us long to meet Cüneyt and decide on the Moody 36. Actually 36 feet is a borderline length for us, for ocean crossing. Let's equip it for long voyages, but we still have 9 years to go. Maybe we'll change it.

Finally, our boat PANK arrived in Istanbul port in January 1996 to be exhibited at the fair. I was at the harbour and on top of the container ship, admiring our lovely boat from below.

"Who are you, what are you doing here?" asked someone who I later learnt was the captain. I proudly said: "My boat!" He said: "This is the international zone. Your boat has not entered Turkey yet. You can't go on board without my permission." I mumbled something like, "Well, but" and clambered off the ship.

The next evening they would take it off the ship with cranes. I said to Pınar: "Shall we go and watch?" Her eyes lit up. What awful weather. Rain, wind, cold. We left the car in the car park. There was no way to stay outside. The port employees invited us to the driver's seat of a truck on duty. We watched with excitement as our boat was landed and loaded on the lorry without any accidents. The truck set off and we followed. The truck stopped at a petrol station in Küçükçekmece. "What happened?" Cüneyt said: "Traffic authorities allow us only around 3 a.m., the best time, to transport high boats." "So, what are we going to do?" "The truck will stay here and wait. We will go home. We will come back around 3 am and take the boat to the fair. You come to the fair in the morning." We said okay, we went back home with our eyes behind our backs.

Cüneyt tells the story. "A few days ago we measured all the bridges to be crossed. It was a close call. A car in front of the lorry, a car behind, we crossed the bridges very slowly, observing carefully and communicating by radio. As we were travelling on the E5 near Florya, it suddenly lit up like daylight. We thought it was a firework, but even that couldn't produce this much light. Then everything went dark. We realised that we had hooked the boat to the high-voltage power lines and we broke them all. We didn't think to measure the heights of the



power lines. Florya, Ataköy were completely dark. We reported the situation and quickly went to CNR exhibition centre. A damage control: The starboard railings of the boat were broken, the railing wires were melted by electric current, the stainless steel pulpit on the bow was bent and warped. At night, we got our stainless work master out of bed. He came, dismantled the pulpit, took it away, straightened it, cleaned the burns and brought it back and reinstalled it. We dismantled and discarded the bolts and wires, and ordered new ones from England. We also cleaned the marks on the hull with a paste polish.”

When we arrived in the morning, everything was finished. There was no starboard railings, but the boat was on display on land. We probably thought that it hadn't been installed yet. Then Cüneyt slowly started to explain without scaring us. Apologies and so on. He said: “If you want, we can order a new pulpit under the transport insurance.” I took a look. “You can't see the damage. It's very nicely done. Even if the insurance pays, it's unnecessary work and waste of time and money for everyone.” I didn't want it.

Our brand new boat, named PANK (Pınar-Ayata-Nesrin-Kemal), was on display at the fair. We couldn't leave. We were there every morning. We had notified our friends, and they were coming and visiting our boat one by one. We were telling stories with pride and joy. Other people were also visiting. They also were touching everything. It did not make us feel good. “This is new boat. It's ours. A little kindly, please.” The second day Cüneyt came and said: “This boat is still ours. We haven't delivered it to you yet. After the fair, we'll launch it, put the mast and sails on it. Then we will deliver it to you. You are hindering our relationship with our potential customers. Wait until the fair is over.” So he kicked us out. But gently. Nesrin was deeply offended.

One time we were in Eskisehir as a family. Nesrin's side of the family were all together. It must have been Eid or something. The children went upstairs to Nesrin's uncle's house. They were hanging out there. I thought I'd go up and take a look. They were sitting around the dinner table. Pınar had a book in front of her. I sat down too. I took the book in my hand, opened it, and there was a single cigarette in it. I closed it without saying anything. Then I never asked , what that was. Years later Pınar approached me and said “Why didn't you say anything? Why didn't you get angry? It hurt me so much.” As far as I know, Pınar never smoked.

One day Pinar came and said: "Dad, we want to go to the Rolling Stones - Mick Jagger concert with my school mates." "Of course, my daughter." At that time there was Ali Sami Yen stadium in Gayrettepe. The concert was there. But Pinar said: "There will be five or six of us. My friends' parents want us to have an adult with us. Will you come with us?" "With pleasure, my child." "We don't want to go to the spectator seats, we want to watch on the field and standing close to the stage. That's why we'll leave early. But we don't want you to be with us. You'll watch us from a distance of 10 to 15 metres." My daughter, the fruit of our love, requested it. What could I say. And it was an attractive concert for me too. It was great.

It wasn't. The concert was at night. In the afternoon of a beautiful day in September, we entered the stadium with the first batch of spectators. I didn't even have eye contact with Pinar and her friends. Just remote observation. The stage was set up on one side of the field. In front of it there was a platform extending forward. The girls were stationed somewhere near. There were still not many people around. We all were standing. Gradually the audience started to increase. The average age was between 20-25 on the field. There was me in the middle, a man in his 40s. Alone. Everyone was smoking and drinking beer. I couldn't breathe in the open air because of the smell of cigarettes and sweat. Someone from a group of people pointed at me: "Who the hell is that?" they said. They didn't realise I was in charge of the girls. They were far ahead. I could see them by stepping on the tips of my toes. One of them said: "Oh, that one? He is the one at the bottom of the Town Musicians of Bremen." He called me a donkey, literally and publicly. So I turned round, right on his nose.... Come on, it's a joke. How could I do that? I puffed, I swallowed it.

We were standing. I was tired. When time passed and it got crowded, everyone was touching each other. Mick Jagger came on stage with a light show. He started the first song with all that energy. What a loud sound. What a light show. What energy. Everyone started jumping. There was technically no way for me to stand still when everyone around me was jumping. The coefficient of friction would be too much for all of us. So I started jumping too. They made me jump the whole concert, the bastards. We should've watched it on spectator seats of the stadium. I was probably 80 per cent deaf for the next two days.

## Sivriada Party

With the arrival of PANK, we started to spend more time in Ataköy Marina. Our Marina friends circle started to increase. We were also going and staying there on weekdays. We were going to work from there in the morning. We were gathering on one of the boats, having meals and chatting. At weekends we were sailing to Sivriada as a group. The island had a small fishing harbour. No one lived on the island permanently. When the boats dock, everyone took out whatever they had to eat. Tables were set up, we were eating and drinking together.

Around the same time we listened to Mrs Gilda, who played the violin in the Istanbul Symphony Orchestra a few times and we liked her very much. I dreamt of listening to Mrs Gilda and her team (two violins, one bass, one accordion) at Sivriada on a full moon. Many people around us didn't even know that Sivriada exists. Of those who knew, those who did not have a boat did not have the opportunity to go there. We wanted to experience this beauty together with our spouses, friends, relatives, friends and their friends. It is 1997; I was turning 40 and it is also the 20th anniversary of Nesrin and I starting to walk together. How nice a Sivriada party would be.

We talked to our marina friends, especially Haluk, and said, "Can we do it?" "Yes," they said, "We'll do it." "No professional hospitality, no catering, we will do everything, okay?" They said, "Go ahead, we are behind you." First I spoke to the big boats that depart from Eminönü and tour the Bosphorus. They have a capacity of 250-300 people. I agreed with one of them. The captain asked, "Where is Sivriada?" I said: "Right next to Yassiada. You can sail there in an hour." "So where will we dock?" I said: "There is a fishing harbour. We will be there to prepare your place and meet the the boat. You will stay there with us. And return after midnight."

It should be before the summer comes, before the schools close, before everyone goes to the summer cottages. The island was usually crowded at the weekends. It should be on Friday. There shouldn't be going to work the next day. There should be a full moon. There should be no rain no wind. It was hard to find a day. We chose the 5th of June 1998. We asked Mrs Gilda first. She said it was fine. We said: "You will come with the big boat, because we will go the night before and clean the island." Everything went as we wanted, thank God.

We made an invitation titled “Our party’s here!” It will be fun. Sivriada, boat ride, day, time, clothes, etc. There were all the details on it. We invited friends, family, their friends, all the sailors in the marina we knew, all the sailors we didn’t know, our brothers and sisters from the masonic community, everyone we could invite. It was going to be an unprecedented experience for everyone. For the outfit, we said a sweater and rubber shoes.

There was a concrete floor on the dock in Sivriada harbour, but it was not enough for the approximately 350 people we invited. We definitely needed the dirt floor too. So where should we go to seat people? Yıldırım had a foam factory. He said: “I can make foam cushions, cut like daisies for everyone. I’ll print your logo on it. It’ll be a souvenir. I also produce keyrings. I can make them with your logo printed on them too.” My friend Atilla had a textile business. He also made bandanas with our logo for everyone. He made also big signs to be put on the big boat and the island. So where would we seat the elderly? Our boat was Kırçiloğlu-1. I told captain Idris: “Can we take the plastic tables and chairs inside the motorboat to the dock and allocate them to those who can’t sit on the ground?” “Sure, brother.”

Since we didn’t have a catering company, we had to organise the meal in such a way that no one has to deal with cooking, serving and washing up. Everyone should have fun. My brother Haluk took about 1 tonne of firewood to the island with his boat Waterjoke. We would light two big bonfires. Everyone would cook their own meat on the fire. I bought 40 kg of sausage and 20 kg of sucuk so that it could be cooked easily and can be eaten even if it is not cooked enough.

My father knew a blacksmith to make iron skewers 120 cm long so that our guests could cook themselves on the big bonfire. Two big bonfires would be enough for lighting. There was also a full moon, but my friend Tayfun, who had a candle making business, offered me long torch candles. It would be difficult to stick them into the hard ground. Let’s make iron cradles . My father took care of that too.

Nesrin made a huge pot of Turkish rice. Nuts, chips, apricots, cherries, bread, salt, water, a pot of salad, a surprise big tray of baklava from our friends, ice, hot water, dustbin, plastic forks, knives, spoons, glasses, napkins, bottles of raki, cans of beer, barrels of wine, coke, fanta, soda, nescafe. This was the menu.

Haluk, Yıldırım and we, three boats, went a day in advance. We swept and cleaned the quay and a large area thoroughly. We carried the wood to two different places and prepared the bonfires. We set up the picnic tables and arranged them so that a few tables were for the food and one table was for drinks. We peeled, cut and prepared 20 kg of sucuk. We placed the candle torches. There were two fishing boats on the quay. We explained the situation to them and told them that if possible, they could take their boats to the far end of the quay and join us for dinner and entertainment at night. They agreed immediately and cleared the place for the big motorboat. They said, "We will help him dock."

In the meantime, Özlen had decorated the motorboat and Erhan and I were talking on the phone about the situation onboard. Our friends from the Marina arrived with around 10-12 boats. Banners, bonfires, torches, gifts, food, drinks were ready. The weather was perfect. The motorboat was on its way. We would be over 200 people in total. As the big boat was approaching, Haluk's dinghy and a small welcoming team met our guests outside the harbour. Applause, screams and excitement. The motorboat arrived, docked. Everyone was silent then. Everyone who gets off looked around. "Where have we come? Where will we sit, what will we do for 4-5 hours?" We were hosting them. We gave them their gifts, sitting foams. We suggested a place for everyone. "The music will be over here. You'll be comfortable over there. These are our meals. Our drinks are here. You'll cook your own sausages and sucuk on the bonfire." Some people said, "I can't do it." "OK, me and my mates will do it for you then."

After some food was eaten and the first drinks were consumed, people relaxed. When Mrs Gilda started her classical music, and when the full moon rose in cloudless weather, when a few couples started to dance, and when our friends started to sing along to the well-known songs, we experienced the wonderful atmosphere and pleasure we all desired. Our Marina friends took care of everything and everyone during the party. There were even some people who mistook our friend who was helping at the drinks table for a waiter and said, "Give me a beer from there." No one believed that there was no professional team. We could hardly fill the motorboat at midnight and send it off. Later we learnt that everyone had a lot of fun on the way back, singing folk songs altogether.

We and our marina mates stayed in Sivriada for the night. The next morning, we cleaned and swept the whole area. We took everything

we brought and the leftovers of the food and drinks and returned to the Marina. When we left, Sivriada was as clean as ever. Orhan was very angry afterwards. He said that I was a very bad example for the men of Ataköy Marina. As far as I know, nothing similar happened there again.

In 1998, we participated in KAYRA (Black Sea Yacht Rally) with PANK. Ataköy Marina Yacht Club organised it, Teoman was our commodore with his boat MAT. There were also foreign participants. We were probably around 30 boats. The route was Bulgaria, Romanian coasts, Ukraine, Russia and Trabzon with a three-day Black Sea passage, then Istanbul following the Turkish coasts. I think it was around 4 weeks. Teoman divided the participating boats into 3-4 groups and gave me the leadership of a group. I was very proud. We spent wonderful days, we sailed, we met nice people, we gained experience.

Yalta - Trabzon passage was the longest cruise. It would take 2-3 days. The day before we left Nesrin said: "There is a rat on the boat!" After meaningless questions like "How come, why, how did you realise?" we came to the question of what to do. Murat said: "Last night there was a fireworks show on the shore. The rats got scared and ran into the boats." Then he untied the rope attached to PANK, so that it wouldn't go to their boat. "I have a trap. Set it up, it's the best solution." A rat is a dangerous creature on a boat. It can gnaw the cables and start a fire, it can gnaw the hoses and cause the boat to sink. Also, it is impossible to find and destroy it in the bilge of the boat, where it is impossible to reach. We set the trap, and the next morning we would start the long passage. We looked in the morning, our mouse was in the trap. And then into the rubbish bin with the trap. I was wondering if there were other rats. "Should we wait a bit? It is not clear how long we will wait, and we have dozens of sailor friends who will help us if there is a problem during the crossing. And I'm the group leader. Isn't it a shame?" Anyway, we set off, but we were nervous. We learnt through a radio announcement that Murat caught one on the way and sent it to the bottom of the Black Sea. We were going to import rats from Russia to Turkey. It didn't work out.

### **Gebze Days**

I was going to Gebze every day. The commute took between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, and the trip back home usually took even

longer. One of my biggest goals when we built our Gebze factory was to have a production facility that we could show our foreign customers around with pride. I was very happy with the result under the conditions of those days. Our fair visits and foreign contacts were continuing. We met Ernst Gast, an Austrian with German mentality like me. We started to work together to improve our sales in Europe. We made customer visits together. Our potential customers visited us. Secret competitors were also among them. We were letting them all visit the factory. My father and brothers were saying: "If they are competitors, don't show them the production." "I understand, but they will see presses, moulds, raw materials. They already have these. They cannot reach our production techniques and secrets just by walking inside the factory. They can only estimate our capacity. We don't hide that either. Capacity increase is a matter of a few months. As long as we see the order."

But our competitors did not think in the same way. Our German competitor Presswerk Köngen said one day: "Our capacity is not sufficient and our costs are high. Let us give you some moulds and make you contractor for manufacturing on our behalf." "Of course, sure. But first we need to see if your moulds are suitable for our presses." Okay, they invited me to visit their factory. After a preliminary meeting with General Manager Gabriela, she first sent Production Manager Pietro to the factory and stopped all the presses. After that, we went through the factory at a fast pace and passed by 15-20 presses and came to the moulds they thought to give us. When we were done, they didn't make me walk the same way back again. We went out the back door and returned to the administrative building from outside. It was very offending. After 3-4 years Gabriela left and I became General Manager of Presswerk Köngen. The story is later.

In Gebze, we gave our presses flower names instead of numbers. This practice attracted a lot of attention, especially from foreigner customers. Even though the presses looked the same, they all had different characteristics. They were all our production tools that should be respected individually. For example, some presses could only work with a certain type of moulds. Lily, hyacinth, tulip, rose; they were all beautiful.

Our goal was to enter the top 5 among the tray manufacturers in the world. In addition to production quantity, product variety, number of customers, sales figures, developing new products would also cause

our name to be heard in the world catering market. We worked hard, we worked day and night, and I am grateful to our colleagues, especially Abuzer, who contributed so enthusiastically. We finally succeeded and we created laminate trays from impregnated kraft paper with rubber-coated resin, which we called Rubberform. For the first time in the world, we produced advanced technology trays in unusual bright colours, with rubber surfaces, in various combinations, which do not slip even when wet. We exhibited these for the first time at a fair we attended in Chicago. They attracted great interest. It did not exist in the world. Even the idea did not exist.

Our two biggest American competitors were very interested in collaboration with us for the first time. The sales director of Carlisle came and said: "The colours of these will fade." I said: "Ultraviolet ageing tests were conducted. They passed them all." He said: "They can't go into the dishwasher." I said: "Accelerated wash tests were also done. It is above the standards." When our guest sneered, I gave him a sample under his arm and said: "Have the tests done again and let me know about the results." He looked at me and the tray. He couldn't believe it. While thinking about how to take a sample, analyse it and imitate it, he couldn't believe that he could take a sample of a product which is recently innovated. No sane company owner would do. As he was leaving, I said: "We have a patent application in process in USA. It would be good to get feedback before too much time passes." When he left, he still had not realised what had happened.

We were entering the 21st century. Our expectations were increasing. Our number of presses was increasing. Our moulds were diversifying. Our own design SMC machine had been successful. We were producing our own polyester tray compounds in sheets. Our competitors in the world were buying their SMC from other polyester manufacturers. However, we had our specialised formula. Our quality was becoming more competitive every day.

Our chain market sales in Turkey were also increasing. Our large turnover customers in this group were calling the manufacturing companies to a meeting every now and then to discuss how we could improve our co-operation for the next period. In fact, they were always asking for something extra from their suppliers. Additional discounts, special campaign prices, one-time large sums of money to display our products on the shelves, etc. I was going to every meeting with



the question, “What will they ask for this time?” In a meeting with Carrefour, I asked them after encountering a lot of demands again: Our companies are in a trading relationship. Trading means: to give and receive in return, and to receive and give in return. You are always demanding. What will you give in return?”

The lady glared at me, gathered her files and said: “We won’t work with you anymore!” and left the meeting.

I was stuck like shit. I didn’t know what to do. I’d love to be the sole owner of the firm and give her the middle finger upwards and say: “We’re not going to work with you anymore.” But I had responsibility to the other partners. I left the place feeling upset and offended. We responded positively to their demands in the following weeks and continued our relationship. I was very hurt.

On the other hand, IKEA was our loyal customer. They accelerated our growth by encouraging us to produce new items and supporting us with new technology and orders. By supporting and supervising our production to be according to international standards, they helped us to reach the dream of a world class company. They were very satisfied with us. Nesrin and Leyla’s textile company had also started to get orders. They encouraged them to make new productions like pillows and cushion covers with their design. One day they came and said: “Make us lighting products.” “What do we know about lighting products?” “We will help you. You will start with a simple product. You need aluminium sheet. You can get it from the following sources in Turkey. The prices are in this range. The aluminium sheets need to be cut and shaped. Find a subcontractor for this. Then the inside will be painted white and the outside will be varnished. Have a painting cabin made, and the painting work will be done by you. Now for the electrical equipment. Cables, lamp holders, switches, etc. These must be bought from the companies that IKEA buys in bulk for all manufacturers. It’s a standard. The supplier company is in Germany. These are the prices you will use. This is your selling price to us. Have a look and let’s talk.” Just don’t ask please. Özyay Lighting Co. was established afterwards. They wanted to get us into the candle business too, but the quality of paraffin in Turkey was not suitable. The prices didn’t match, it didn’t work.

Erhan is the head of the sales team for hotels and dealers in 4th Levent. I thought there would be less unnecessary conflicts since we

were not in the same environment. I was wrong. Although not very often, we had harsh arguments on the phone. In one of them, he said, “You are where you are because you were born seven years before me.” Then he slammed the phone, expressing that he would leave the company and the partnership. He was demanding that his share should be calculated and given to him. I didn’t take it seriously, I thought it was said in a moment of anger and hate. It turned out he was serious. He disappeared afterwards. He had also separated from his wife Özlen before. My mother and I were very worried and started looking for him. We went round his friends that we knew. No success.

A few days later, on 6 May 2002, he sent me a 17-page letter, spewing hatred, listing the following adjectives for me. SHAMMER, HENCHMAN, LIAR, UNPROFESSIONAL, PSYCHOLOGIC DISORDER, COWARD, FAMILY DESTROYER, AMBITIOUS, LOST HUMAN VALUES, CONSPIRATOR, DISRESPECTFUL, HIDDEN INTENTIONS, TWO-FACEED, SHAMELESS and THIEF!

I didn’t answer. I didn’t do anything. Not then, not since. I never developed a sense of revenge. What really hurt my heart was when I went to tell my parents about this letter. As I was trying to tell them, it devastated me to realise that they both already knew about it and had given their approval.

In our family, no one asks for forgiveness or apologises. Because nobody makes mistakes. If something happens, that is always others’ fault. In fact, only others are guilty. Later on, Erhan said a few times: “You hurt me, I hurt you, let’s forget them. We are brothers. Let’s turn over a new leaf. Let’s hug again.” I replied, “I can’t hug you because I don’t have arms.” I never sulked. I continued to help him. Erhan is still the person I helped the most in life. But our friendship is long over.

### **Pınar Is Now a Young Girl**

I was elected Worshipful Master in the last months of 1999. We entered the 21st century in our Lodge under my leadership. We spent very nice and special times with our Geometry Family. The Geometry anthem, of which Nesrin wrote the lyrics, is still played at the meetings. We travelled to Denizli-Pamukkale by train, a trip that is etched in our memories. We owe this beauty to the hospitality and contributions of my brother Selçuk, who was living in Denizli at the time and who is

one of the very well known people of Turkish carpet industry.

In the early 21st century, Pınar came one day and said: “Dad, I want to play flute.” I knew that she was interested in music and talented, and it was great that she could play an instrument, but why the flute? I said: “Daughter, that’s a great idea, but the flute is an orchestral instrument. Wouldn’t it be more attractive to play the guitar?” This ridiculous discussion went on for quite a long time thanks to me. Pınar said:

“But I applied to Pera Fine Arts High School and passed the side flute exam.”

“What test is this?”

“Oral structure and lung capacity and susceptibility to side flute test”

“OK, fine, but that doesn’t stop you from choosing a guitar course. Besides, guitar is a very social instrument. It makes a great atmosphere with friends gatherings besides a bonfire.”

I pushed and pushed, because I knew everything and, like all parents, we wanted “the best” for my child. In the end, I convinced Pınar, or so I thought.

I immediately bought a guitar. It was time to enrol at Pera Fine Arts High School. When it was our turn, we sat in front of the teacher. After asking Pınar’s name, he said, “Oh, our flute student!” I immediately jumped in: “We changed our minds, we want to enrol in the guitar classes.” The teacher was surprised and turned to Pınar: “Congratulations on passing the flute exam. Which department do you want really to enrol in?” Pınar immediately stood up and answered “Flute!” with joy.

It must have taken me a few weeks to realise my mistake. Pınar finished the course without fail. She had a good music life. She formed a band with her friends. She played the flute and sang. She never touched the guitar.

In 2001 Pınar wanted to have a dog. A chocolate-coloured labrador. Taking care of a pet at home is a big responsibility. We were scared that it’ll fall on us later. Pınar made promises. I said: “It has to be in writing and signed.” I wrote: “I, the undersigned Pınar Ayata, hereby agree to accept all kinds of responsibilities regarding the food, taking out, and training of the pet animal to be kept in our house. If I am unable to fulfil these responsibilities, I declare that I will consent

to the sale of my pet or to give it to someone who can take care of it.”

When she signed the petition, we started to look through mates, friends, veterinarians, newspapers and adverts. We found a few alternatives. But our brother Haluk convinced us all that our house and lifestyle were not suitable for a dog and that we would pity the animal. He said: “Get a cat.” When Pınar agreed, a Persian kitten moved into our house in the spring of 2001. Pınar named her ‘Gemini’.

We all loved her, especially Pınar. Gemini also loved our boat at Ataköy Marina. There were so many places to go in and out. She came and walked around the marina. Months later, one day when I was out of the marina, Yıldırım phoned me and said, “Gemini was run over by a car when it was reversing. The driver was not guilty. But unfortunately Gemini died. I buried him in a safe place.” I was stunned. The whole family was devastated. Gemini had become a member of our family. I must have been the most upset, because a week or so later Pınar said to me: “Dad, come on now. It is a natural process to experience the loss of a pet. If it happens the other way round, i.e. for her to see you die, it’s bad.”

A few months later, at the beginning of 2002, we got another Persian cat exactly like Gemini from the same vet. This time Pınar named her ‘Badem’, meaning almond, inspired by her eyes. Badem also loved sea life. She enjoyed sailing very much. We saw her vomit a few times when the sea was rough. But she was always afraid of the engine noise. As soon as the engine started, she would hide behind the kitchen oven, which was the safest place, and stay there for hours without moving. We were always together with Badem for about 4-5 years. Then what happened? Let’s wait a bit.

Pınar wanted to get her driving licence when she was old enough. Course, test and driving licence, it was quick. But she was timid to go out on the road. As a father, it is my duty to help her. “Come, my daughter, I’ll sit next to you, let’s drive around the city.” “OK, dad.” The first time she made a mistake, I scolded her, shouted at her. Immediately Pınar got out the car and never touched the steering wheel of the car again in Turkey. I had done one more bad mistake.

In 2001, Pınar and İhsan started dating. Pınar was in her last year of high school and preparations for university had started. I wanted Pınar to go to university abroad and she agreed with me, so she did not go to

university preparatory courses and did her matura at the Austrian High School. Her goal was to study biology in Austria. When she successfully passed the Matura exam, she won the right to enrol at the University of Vienna with a scholarship. During a visit to the University with the school, a lecturer they met, told Pınar that as a woman and a Turk, she would not be able to go beyond being an ordinary biology technician in the future. She was upset but became ambitious.

In the meantime, Pınar had to take the University entrance Exam anyway in order to be able to study abroad. And she did, without any preparation. A few days after the results were announced:

“Dad, my score is enough to get into Sabancı University. Can we go and have a look with you?”

“Girl, Sabancı University has just been established. Nobody graduated yet. It is not yet clear what it will be. Vienna University is a well-established university. Graduating from there will play an important role in your career. Besides, we also paid for the dormitory in Vienna. Where did this Sabancı University come from?”

“No, we’ll just look, Dad.”

Yes, we did. The gleaming buildings, a young biology assistant we met in a wonderful new laboratory, made Pınar change her mind. Now it was my turn to change my mind. She did many attractions in front of me. The University was close to Gebze. We would go and sometimes come together. There was an artificial lake on the campus. She would sail there too. Pınar had once again made her own decision. Like the previous ones, this one was again the right one for her.

When I graduated from Boğaziçi University, I wanted to buy a souvenir graduation ring, but it was expensive. I must have told this to Pınar or somehow she heard about it. She went to Boğaziçi one graduation time and found the people who organise the ring business. Ordered them a 24 carat gold ring with a huge navy blue stone and the year of my graduation, Boğaziçi University, 1981. Then gave it to me as a present on my birthday. I never took it off my finger. And I never will.

2002 was the first year we met the Atlantic Ocean by sea. Firstly, we flew to Saint Lucia in the Caribbean to be guests of Seda and Cüneyt onboard Little Aries and spent two wonderful weeks together. Then we crossed the Atlantic with the boat MAT of our commodore Teoman from Ataköy Yacht Club. We flew from Istanbul to Tenerife in the

Canary Islands. With a total crew of 6 people, we sailed first to Mindelo in the Capo Verde Islands and then to Barbados in the Caribbean. Our first Atlantic crossing being on watch.

### **Company Sales Story**

2003 was the year when the search for a foreign partner accelerated for Özay. The inconvenience we caused to our competitors had increased considerably due to the international fairs we participated in, our new technology products for which we applied for a patent in the USA and our more favourable prices. Our overseas connections became quite intense. We were often receiving guests. On weekends, we were taking them on a Bosphorus cruise with our boat. We used to feel like a tour operator for a while. The same itinerary, Nesrin's wonderful food, the same places, the same jokes.

Once we were returning to Atakoy Marina. There were two Italian customers, Ernst Gast and us onboard PANK. Genoa (foresail) was open, Pınar was playing the flute. We were in front of Zeytinburnu. Suddenly there was a thud. We hit something, but we couldn't see the bow because of the genoa. A man we didn't recognise was running towards us from the bow shouting: "He can't swim, he can't swim."

Questions in my head:

What happened?

Who's this guy?

How did he get on the boat in the middle of the sea?

Why is he running?

Who can't swim? What do we care?

Who are we and where are we?

We saw a half submerged boat, passing by Pank. A man was clinging to the side, paralysed and staring blankly.

We realised that two men were in a wooden boat, fishing near the shore. They had a stern-mounted 2 horsepower motor. They didn't know to swim. Nevertheless, they had no life vest, even not an empty jerry can to hold on to. They saw that we were heading towards them, but they thought that we would see them and change course. They have

also the right of way according to the maritime law. We, in the midst of the pleasure with the open genoa and Pınar's flute concert, did not see them and hit the boat in the middle and smashed it. One of them jumped to our boat by holding on to the pulpit at the moment of impact and started to run.

We were shouting at the man in the half-submerged boat, we were going to throw him a lifebuoy. But he was in shock, looking at a fixed point. No reaction. While we were furling the sail, Pınar jumped into the water and took a lifebuoy tied to the end of a rope to the man in the boat. Helping him, she brought him to our boat. We took him in with all our might. My hero girl. Our foreign guests were looking at us with big eyes. Both survivors were wet, shivering and still in shock. We gave them each a blanket. Some time passed. "Do you have a cigarette?" they asked. "OK, they're out of shock, thank God."

The boat was full of water, but it wouldn't sink. It was wooden. We couldn't leave it. But it was hard to pull it. We immediately called Haluk. He's always ready to help if he can. He was at Ataköy Marina. It was the weekend and there was a cocktail party and a conference organised by the Ataköy Marina Yacht Club. Everyone was there. Haluk arrived with his big dinghy, towed the boat to Ataköy Marina. We docked at Ataköy Marina with the survivors. There was a lot of damage on the boat. We met the carpenter at the marina. He said, "Brother, we'll fix it in a week, don't worry." I told the men: "I will pay for the repair, but you will do the painting." "OK, brother. But we don't have a livar onboard. Can you build also a livar for the boat?"

Livar, as you know, is a compartment in the boat full of water, to keep the caught fish alive. They didn't have one. "OK," I said, "let's build it too." I asked for their names and phone numbers, to keep in touch. I realised they didn't know each other's surnames. Two people who don't know each other very well go fishing in a boat without oars, without any safety precautions, without knowing how to swim. If the engine would fail, they would be drifting in the strong wind, who knows when and who would find them.

The boat was fixed, a fish tank was added, and we never met the survivors again. But it was not very clever to cause this accident happen at a time when everyone was at Ataköy Marina. We became known as the "Boat Sinker." It is rumoured that on the days when PANK went out

to sea, the boats in Zeytinburnu used to scatter like a bunch of children and return to their shelters.

We were now making cooperation and partnership negotiations with the world's first and second companies in the catering equipment production sector. After Carlisle officials, this time Cambro's owner, his assistants and consultants were coming to visit us. I booked a hotel in Sultanahmet, and the next morning we were travelling to Gebze. As we were crossing the Bosphorus Bridge, I said: "We are travelling between continents. We are travelling to Asia." They said, "Do you need a passport?" "Why?" "Because it's a different continent." "Same country, same city. No need for a passport." Second question: "Well, is there a difference with people on the Asian side?" "What do you mean?" "Do they have slant eyes?" After such a start, these people accomplished a successful investment and production in Turkey.

On 20 November 2003 we had a classic Bosphorus trip on the schedule. Since the team was crowded, I consulted my brother Haluk and he organised his brother Faruk's boat. It was a big boat and we had a captain. We hadn't even reached the middle of the Bosphorus when we heard a terrible explosion. A cloud of flames and smoke rose from the European side, horrible. I couldn't understand what had happened. I was worried, but I didn't want to alarm the guests. Before we realised what had happened, the phone rang for one of our guests. It was his wife calling from America and asking, "There has been a terrorist attack in Istanbul, are you OK?." Two trucks filled with explosives blew up simultaneously at HSBC and the British Consulate. I tried to keep people calm by saying, "Terrorism is the scourge of every big city."

The negotiations with Cambro continued for a long time. We became friends with Gene Rubel, Cambro's consultant. On his second visit, he brought me an HP IPAQ Handheld Personal Assistant as a gift. I was very happy, I was carrying it in my shirt's pocket instead of a pen. We were getting deeper and deeper into the details of the partnership negotiations and we were making progress, but slowly. What sort of partnership, what sort of valuation, what sort of organisation.

My father and brothers were considering a partnership with at least 51% ownership. I tried to explain for a long time that such a thing would not be possible with a multi-national company 10 times bigger than us. They finally accepted that it was the most logical approach to



meet somewhere where our share would vary between 20 per cent and 49 per cent.

Gene was an Israeli-American. He understands both the European mentality and the American one. He both understands me and tells me about the American approach and the way of management. We made many memories together. While working, we travelled together on boats, Ataköy Marina yacht club days, fair visits, off-road trips, time spent in jeep repair shops, tasting all kinds of Turkish delicacies.

Neither of us can forget. Now I'm 65 and he's 75. We still keep in touch.

After 20 years, we came together again and renewed our memories in New York.

At some point in the negotiations it was time for them to make an offer. But they said: "Partnership is a good idea, but our intention is to invest and grow the company a lot. If we will ask for a capital increase in the future and you say no, this will not work. Either you sell the whole company or nothing. We don't want your building. We are not property investors. We'll rent it from you." I thought they were right. But tell that to our partners. We had a long meeting. I invited the whole family. Accepting that there is no other form of partnership, we took the decision, albeit difficult, to sell our business, hopefully at a good price. By the way, we had no financial difficulties, and we had no obligation to sell. But it would be the best solution for all of us to leave while the company is at the top before it starts to decline.

Anyway, they finally made us an offer. It was a variable amount with a formula depending on the revenues of the coming few years. It was acceptable when you put the most optimistic and pessimistic alternatives. But thinking we could get more, we made a counter-offer, aiming that we would settle in the middle.

The second offer after our counter offer came with a slightly different formula. Again the same excel table. We realised that the second offer gave results even below the first offer. I said: "I'm sorry. This goes beyond our rules. We cannot accept it. Let's stop these partnership talks. We are not in a desperate situation. Maybe we can meet again in the future on a new platform."

Gene was very upset and he was trying to see what he could do. He was planning a trip to Israel. He said, "Come on, you come too."

"OK, but I said I'd come with Nesrin." We had been to Israel

before but this was completely different. Gene took us to places that were not touristic and where only an Israeli could go. For example, we visited a Kibbutz where her friend lived. Kibbutz life impressed me a lot. A guide for those who have not heard of it, Holy Google.

There, I said, “Instead of a partnership or sale, let us produce contract trays for Cambro. Let’s make moulds with their special logo. Let’s make special patterns for them.” Gene liked this idea and said, “How will the prices be?” Special production, new technology, new moulds. He thought that the prices would be high. And we would charge for the moulds, like with IKEA. I didn’t do that. The plan was different. I calculated the costs and put 10% profit on it. I told him that we didn’t want to charge for the moulds. Gene’s eyes lit up and he said: “It’s a pleasure to work with you.”

Soon after, Gene and Cambro parted ways. I wished it hadn’t happened but it did. We started to produce for Cambro. We had 8-10 moulds made for them and some of our moulds had also Cambro inserts. Our products were included in Cambro’s catalogue under the name of Island Trays. But our search for a partner was continuing. I said to Gene: “Come and be our consultant.” He said, “OK.” He started to look for new partners and customers for us.

By the way, Cambro sales were going very well. Shipments were increasing. One day Argyle, the owner of the company, came to visit us. I said: “Argyle, our business is doing great, but this is a big risk for Cambro. If one day, due to financial difficulties, disagreement between partners, sale of the company to someone else, etc., we say that we are not producing for you anymore, you have no sanction. The moulds are not yours, you cannot take them and leave. If you say you will have them produced elsewhere, you will not find anyone. If you say let’s make new moulds and produce them ourselves, you cannot keep the cost at this level. There is no other solution, you will buy this company.” He thought for a while. “I think you are right,” he said.

With the atmosphere of trust between us, I said: “This time, let’s agree on a fix goodwill price that will be revealed by a multiplier of Özay’s net profit in the last year.” Goodwill included all of the fixtures; machines, presses, moulds, patents, rights, as well as naming the transfer of customers. Cash, cheques and notes, customer receivables, debts to vendors, raw materials, finished and semi-finished products

were excluded. Özay would receive its existing cash, collect its receivables from customers, pay its debts, and sell the raw materials, semi-finished products and finished goods in its stocks at cost price to Cambro's new company.

I said to Gene, "We have agreed on the principles, but since your relations have been severed, bringing you back into the picture will damage the business. You stay out of it. He said, "Okay." It was my turn to visit Cambro. I sat on the aeroplane, and on an A4 sheet paper, I listed the items we had agreed on, one after the other. When I got there, I read them and we signed them together. "Memorandum of Understanding." Now it was up to the lawyers.

I investigated when Cambro sent us the names of their attorneys. Company owner Ali was both a financial advisor and a lawyer. He graduated from German High School and Boğaziçi University. I called him and introduced myself. I told him that we graduated from the same schools and I would hope that we would have a good co-operation. He did not react at all. He hung up the phone with a frozen voice and face. "Jerk!" I said to myself.

They would do Due Diligence and prepare legal documents to be signed. They stretched and stretched the work that could be finished in 3-4 weeks. They gave us very hard times for about 4 months. They asked for impossible things. During Due Diligence, Mr Ali said:

"Can you give us the balance sheet for December 2003?"

"There in front of you, dated 31.12.2003."

"I want the one for December 2003."

"Mr Ali, the balance sheet is a daily picture of the company's accounts. It does not belong to a period. You are a financial advisor, you should know. The income statement is for a period."

He was not satisfied. His colleagues and assistants were leaning in his ear and saying silently: "He's right." He still insisted. Many times after, he infuriated me. He treated us as liars, tax evaders, a Turkish company trying to screw the American company. Several times I said to myself: "What am I doing here, do I have to be treated like this? Get the hell out of here!"

I learnt later that he said to Cambro: "OK, I've got Kemal in shape, now you can change the terms of the agreement in any way you like."

The idiot didn't realise that nobody wants to change the agreement. All he was asked to do is to put the terms of the agreement into legal documents and sign them.

All difficulties were overcome and it was time to sign a folder full of documents. Argyle, his deputy, all our family members and Mr Ali and his deputy gathered together. Our family members all signed on their own behalf, then signed as guarantors for the other partners and our company, signed that they would not compete. Blah, blah, blah. A folder of agreements. Özay's circular of signature was clearly stating that my father and I were authorised to represent the company individually, that was, alone and separately. While the assistant was passing the documents around, she asked Mr Ali, "Who will sign on behalf of Özay?" He looked at the signature circular and said: "Mr İlhan and Mr Kemal together, jointly." I had had enough. I jumped up: "You are either illiterate or you don't understand what you read. Enough is enough!" Chip came and calmed me down. "We know what happened. It's over. You'll never see this guy again."

According to what I heard afterwards, he invoiced Cambro about 3 times the estimated price. The purpose is to prolong the work by creating problems. One of the invoices sent to Cambro was sent to me by mistake. There were so many unnecessary items in it. A meeting with Kemal 2 hours, a meeting between them 1 hour, writing an e-mail 20 minutes, and so on.

By the way, our lawyer Mr. Ender was also advising us. But I had never brought two lawyers face to face. Mr Ender was warning me about the risks involved. I was talking to Ali about the issues that I found risky. If I didn't see it risky, I was convincing Mr Ender. Finally, the agreements were ready to sign. Özay's business sales agreement, fixture sales agreement, name, trademark and patent transfer agreement, sales agreement of stocks, non-compete agreement, rental agreement of buildings, etc. etc. Mr. Ender said, "Do not sign these agreements as they are." I said: "Is there a new subject we haven't discussed?" "No, but it is very risky in this form." "Thank you," I said, and we signed them in September 2004. Lawyers are not business people, they do not take risks, and their duty is to take precautions against all kinds of risks. Therefore, they cannot take decisions. Business people have to take risks. The important thing is to correctly estimate and evaluate the amount of risk and its possible consequences. No one felt the need to look at those agreements again.

Gene said that he didn't think it was right that he couldn't earn money from this work that he also had put his effort into. He hadn't actually worked for us, but he had contributed a lot to the deal. I told Chip and I talked to the our partners. We paid Gene both Cambro and Özay a sufficient amount.

Immediately after the agreements were signed, I gathered my father and my brothers and sisters. I gave each of them a piece of paper and a pen. "Now, please write down your feelings and thoughts about the sale of the company, in your own handwriting. We will remember these days in the future." Everyone wrote. They expressed what a right thing we had done, that our future was guaranteed, and how happy they were. Years later, I would realise what a right thing I had done.

One of the agreements was my employment contract. For 5 years, I had committed to work as the general manager of Cambro-Özay and the production company PK in Germany. I wanted to make this agreement separately. I did not include it among the other agreements. My goals were to move the high cost production in Germany to Turkey and to transfer high technology from Turkey to Germany and to manage both companies profitably.

In addition to being the sole dealer of Özay products in Turkey, Erhan's company also became the sole dealer of Cambro in Turkey. About two years later, Ömer, whom I hired as my assistant to replace me in the following years, asked me: "Mr Kemal, what is so special about Mr Erhan that you have given him such a great opportunity?"

I was now going to be second in command in a big organisation like Cambro, reporting to President Argyle. I liked being the leader and I did it well, and I wanted to be second man and I liked it just as much. If my ego had been pumped up too much, it probably would have prevented that. We did good job with the facilities of the big company and the full support of the first man. A different business world opened up for me after the vicious cycle and skidding process in the family company.

Ernst Gast was not happy about the change. And our friendship was damaged. He never liked the American mentality and Americans. Although the sales agreement with Özay until 2015 was transferred to Cambro, he left shortly afterwards receiving his compensation. He always blamed me but he also said: "We have brought exports to this level together. No one can take it away from us."

By the way, I bought a sieve and hung it in the most visible place in our living room. I was saying the famous phrase in Turkish: “I sifted my flour and hung my sieve. “ But I didn’t know who understood how much of it and who believed how much.

### **Meeting With Off-Road**

In January 2004, with the invitation of a friend of ours, we participated in a picnic trip of Istanbul Off-road Club. We spent a wonderful day around Şile with Haluk’s jeep. Our love of using four-wheel drive vehicles in the nature started that day. We got stuck in the water crossing and I think we got poisoned when the water in the car exceeded our foot level.

I started to figure out about how to get a jeep. I learnt that my sailor friend Mehmet had a Jeep CJ6 that had been lying in Ataköy Marina for a long time. 1975 made.

“Mehmet, will you sell it to me?”

“I don’t know if it’ll function. Take it for whatever you want.”

I found Cengiz the mechanic. He said: “If it has been lying for a few years, it should not be started without changing the oil. Tell me where it is and I’ll sort it out.” He went and changed the oil, started it up and brought it to his workshop. He serviced it and said, “It’s ready brother, you can come and pick it up.” I jumped in my car and went straight away. I got in with great pleasure and started doing a test drive, with Cengiz mechanic next to me. I had been driving for 30 years, so I knew. I said: “Cengiz, there seems to be a noise coming from the left rear.”

He said, “OK, brother, let me drive, let me have a look.”

He got behind the steering wheel. He drove towards a steep slope covered with grass inside the site. He hit the pavement hard and fast. He started to drive up the slope. I hit my head on the ceiling, trying to understand what was going on, he got back on the road and said: “Bro, this is how to drive this car. Never mind the noise. If you get stuck on the road, or in the forest, wherever you are, just let me know and I will come. Enjoy driving your jeep.”

Cengiz came many times. Once he miraculously found me at the bottom of the Belgrade Forest with the directions given on the phone. During the week, the Jeep would stay at his garage. On Saturday

morning, I would go with my daily car and pick up the Jeep, and on Sunday evening I would leave it with Cengiz again. There would always be something to be fixed. When I went to work on Monday morning, I would say to my father: "I couldn't get the Jeep roll-over this week either." He would look at me with a meaningless expression.

Since then, all my cars have been four-wheel drive off-road vehicles. We named them all like our boats. I am using them on a daily basis, even in the city, and I use them all the time. It is difficult to park and manoeuvre, I cannot enter indoor parking lots, but I love driving them.

With a little more experience, we understood better that our boat was too small for travelling the world. We wanted a centre cockpit boat. Ketch rigged. Two masts. The cockpit should be in the centre and elevated, not aft cockpit. We wanted generator, water maker, satellite phone. You name it. After visiting a few fairs we realised that we liked the Finnish boat Nauticat 44 and the owners Kaj Gustaffson and Tuula Gustaffson were very friendly. They produced the new PANK according to our requirements with the quality of the Northern European built boats. We went to Turku a few times to see the production stages. They adjusted the height of the seats according to our leg lengths and the dimensions of the navigation table according to us. They made suggestions and guided us and the new PANK, which suited our wishes, arrived in Istanbul. We sold our Moody 36 to Sarp, Selçuk's friend and partner.

Now we had a new excitement. A boat that not many people knew and was not accustomed in Ataköy Marina. It was different for us and our friends. We hadn't even boarded the boat properly yet, I was on a business trip. Haluk called me on his mobile phone and said: "My friends and I ordered kebabs from Ali Usta, we're all eating together in the cockpit of PANK." "Why bro, without us?" "We looked around and yours is the highest cockpit. Yours have also the best marina view among the other sailboats." "Oh bro be careful, the oil from the kebabs will stain that brand new beautiful teak deck." I sighed, but the boat was spotless when I returned.

We were making practice cruises in Marmara sea with PANK. One day we went to Hoşköy fishing harbour. Someone came up to us. "Brother," he said, "I like your boat very much. Look, we are building a boat in that shed. Come and have a look." I went a little later, they were producing a boat with plywood, for which I could not understand

what it will be used for. After a few conversations, the other builder came to the pier, next to PANK. He looked and looked and said: "It's a nice boat, but we need to give it a little bit more beam." The other one said: "Can we take some pictures? Maybe we can build a similar boat in the future." "Sure, come in." I said. Mr. Know-it-all said: "No need for pictures. I've seen what I would have seen, I can do the same. But we have to increase the beam a bit."

By the way, Pinar had a boyfriend, Ihsan. We liked him too. He was very fond of music and the whole family liked dancing. Pinar and Ihsan formed a music group with the participation of some of their friends, named Dekko. Pinar on flute and vocals. Ihsan on guitar, Sinan on drums, Deniz on keyboard and Arda on bass guitar. We loved them all and the things they do. They performed in different places. And we were loving to watch them. They even had a CD. Pinar came one day and said:

"We're playing at Allegria in Beyoglu. Will you come?"

"Of course we'll come. Where is Allegria? How did you organise it?"

"Allegria is a bar restaurant. Ihsan's mum and dad go there almost every weekend to make tango dancing as a group. They mentioned us talking with the owner. We said yes too."

We got up and went. We sat upstairs with a crowded family group. My parents, aunts, etc. Food and drink orders were placed, Dekko started their performance. When the waiter came, I asked, "Where did this band come from? What kind of music is this?" He said: "Sir, they are friends of the son of a couple which is one of our frequent and regular customers. They asked the owner whether they can perform here. The boss couldn't refuse. This is the first time. You came on the wrong day. It won't happen again." Silent laughter at the table. Dinner finished. The performance was over. Applause, applause. The team started packing up. I went downstairs and went on stage. After congratulating them all, I leaned into Pinar's ear and said: "You were great. I met the owner of Allegria. If you play from now on, he's offering 500 dollars per night." Pinar's eyes lit up. She immediately set out to inform her teammates with joy. "But," I said, "he wants you to pay in advance." I admit it. It was a disgusting joke.



## **New Zealand**

In late December 2004 we flew to New Zealand. Cüneyt and Seda arrived there with their boat Little Aries and we were going to stay with them. We were going to celebrate Christmas and New Year. They came to pick us up from the airport with an old Nissan 4WD they had just bought. We travelled together for two weeks in the North Island. They hosted us very well, we had a great time and we fell in love with the country. I, who was born and raised in the chaos in Istanbul, asked always Nesrin during our travels abroad the same question: “Would we live here?” My better Half who always said “No!” answered my question for the first time with “Yes.” I said to Cüneyt: “Let’s not miss this opportunity.” I knew that they also had plans to settle in New Zealand.

We decided to buy some land together. “Let’s buy a big piece of land in the countryside. We’ll play farming.” Away from everyone. How big should it be? That was the question! 125 acres? Can we afford it. How much is 125 acres, let’s visualise. Let’s go to a deserted road. Let’s measure 700 metres with the car’s odometer, then estimate 700 metres vertically to get a rough idea. It’s big!

If it’s big, it’s big. We will deal with it. Full authorisation to Cüneyt and Seda. “See you soon.”

We returned back to Turkey. We didn’t realise how this decision will change our lives. It was like buying a summer house, but it seemed a bit far. The longest distance you can fly from Istanbul. Southern Hemisphere, island country. Four and a half million people living on an area of one third the size of Turkey. 40 million sheep, ten times the human population. We liked the natural beauties of New Zealand. We liked its solitude. We liked being far from traffic lights. We liked its narrow roads without trucks or buses, its single-lane bridges. We liked its people. We liked the ethical values in place, the trust of the citizens in the state and the state in the citizens.

After the sale of our company, we wanted to move out of our apartment in Beşiktaş, where we had lived since we got married. We first thought of living on the Prince Islands. Although the idea sounded very attractive, we realised that the ferry ferry times would restrict our lives and we gave up the idea. After researching different neighbourhoods, we liked the idea of living in Etiler Alkent. We thought of buying an apartment, but then the alternative of renting a flat seemed more attractive.

We got a nice flat with all the appliances in it. We bought new furniture keeping our old house as it is. Nesrin showed a great performance. She set up and organised our house in a wonderful way. Now we were waking up with the sounds of birds, away from the city noise. We spent many beautiful days in that house. We still have our previous house in Beşiktaş. Maybe Pınar would live in that house in the future, who knows?

In spring 2005, Cüneyt and Seda came to Turkey. The next day we met at our place. They said: "We would like to watch a CD with you." "Of course, but what is it?" "It's a surprise. We won't tell you." We started watching it. Seda was walking among the grass. She was talking and talking. Five minutes passed before we realised. It turned out that they had found a land to buy, negotiated and shook hands. They applied for permission which was an obligation in New Zealand to buy more than 12 acres of land as foreigners. They filmed a promotional video of the property for us.

62 acres of land near Kerikeri on the North Island. One third of it is forest, a small swamp, pastures, a stream, a 15 metre high waterfall on the stream, a wonderful land with diversity. There was a large garage for farm tools and equipment. Adjacent to the garage was a small house with two rooms. If permission would be granted, Cüneyt and Seda would live there and we will be visiting them. We liked it very much. We were very grateful for what they have done. Are our dreams coming true or what?

In June 2005 we travelled to the Arctic with the diving group of brother Haluk. We will be travelling north from Longyearbyen with an old Russian research vessel. We will go round the island of Svalbard. There were 20 cabins on board. 40 passengers in total. 13-14 people are our Turkish team. The crew was probably 8-9 people. We would reach 80 degrees north latitude and visit Ny-Alesund, the northernmost settlement of the world at that time. Our ship would proceed by breaking the ice on the ocean, we would land in various places with 4 large rubber boats standing on the front deck.

We had a great trip. Before and after that, we travelled to many continents, countries, regions in many ways, but our Arctic trip still holds the first place. We saw 11 polar bears in 10 days, which was not easy. Walruses, seals, reindeers, polar foxes and thousands of different

birds. Not to mention what the team diving under the glaciers saw under the sea. It was the first time we witnessed the glaciers breaking and shrinking. It is impossible to forget the landscapes and our mood there. The weather that did not get dark, the sun that continued to circle well above the horizon line. When we looked at the clock and said it was 12 o'clock at night, let's go to bed, will remain in our memories.

Cüneyt and I rented bicycles in Ny-Alesund. We would cycle on the ice. They gave us a rifle, loaded. I said: "I won't take it." Cüneyt put the rifle on his back. It was for protection against polar bears. But we could only use it if they attacked us. It's illegal to shoot them at 50 metres distance or more. They were and are still in danger of extinction. So when we would see a polar bear, we wouldn't be scared shitless. We should take out the rifle and wait. If it would attack, we should wait until it comes 50 metres away, then shoot and hit it in the forehead. We really liked the script. The scenario is great. Anyway, we never met one.

I stopped somewhere on the road, because of the view. I was attacked by 4-5 seagull-sized birds. They were diving towards my head and hit my brain with their beaks. Cüneyt was watching me on his bicycle 10 metres in front of me. It turned out I was standing too close to their nest, they were protecting their chicks from me. Thank God the attacks stopped when I moved. Otherwise Cüneyt was about to shoulder the rifle.

We had disembarked. End of the trip. We would sleep overnight before we fly from Longyearbyen to Oslo. There was no night, but we were used to say. We woke up in the morning, Cüneyt was super happy. The news that our permission to buy the land in New Zealand had been granted came from the lawyer. We went out on the street and did a Turkish-style folk dancing, all together, full of joy. It had happened. Cüneyt and Seda's efforts had come to a happy end.

In November 2005, we travelled to Umrah, my mother, Refika our relative and us. It was a wonderful experience. We experienced a very different state of mind with a very different energy. We witnessed the life in Mecca and Medina. We visited historical and holy places.

We returned from Umrah, one day in the morning Pınar and I were going to Gebze. First Sabanci University and then Gebze Plastics Organisation. Pınar said: "Dad, we want to get engaged." My first reaction was a big laugh. Then I said: "Of course, we would be very

happy. But first they have to come and ask for our permission. You know the procedures and all that.” Pınar didn’t like these things. After all, in our house, families get together, “Allah’s command, Prophet’s help,” coffee with salt, etc. One or two puffs, but that was the way it is, there was no other way. After all, we had a proper asking for a girl to marry ceremony with the elders of the families.

### **Year 2006**

2006 was a very eventful year. IKEA was almost the only customer left in Nesrin and Leyla’s textile business. When they announced their decision to shift their textile business to China, there was no choice but to close the company. Machines and equipment were sold and given as gifts to the employees. The business was finished. Meanwhile, Nesrin wanted to build a school with the money she received from the sale of a property inherited from her family. At that time, our friend Tijen was working at Milliyet Newspaper. Milliyet and the Association for Supporting Contemporary Life were organising a campaign called “Dad, send me to school!” Nesrin talked to them and they came up with the idea of building a school in Çataltepe village in Derik district of Mardin. The land was given by the village community. Under the control of Ministry of Education and with the support of Milliyet, Nesrin built the “AYATA” Primary School in Çataltepe. No longer would the children of the village have to spend hours every day in the snow and winter to go to school in other neighbouring villages. A wonderful opening ceremony was held with the surprise participation of Minister Mehdi Eker and the Governor. Unfortunately, I could not be present at the opening ceremony due to an obligatory business trip. I could not witness the joy of the children.

Nesrin made a speech at the ceremony and told the story of that marvellous starfish:

“A man was walking on the shore, picking up the sea stars that had washed up on the shore with the receding sea and could not return to the water, one by one, and throwing them into the sea. His friend said: “There are thousands of them. You can’t throw them all. What difference does it make.” He pointed to the ones in the sea and replied: “Look, I made a difference for them.” It was a very emotional ceremony full of applause and enthusiasm.

A few months later, Pınar, Nesrin and I went to visit AYATA Primary School. On the way, we took gifts such as calculators etc. to the children in order to complete the school's deficiencies. When a little girl saw Nesrin, she hugged her and said, "We are your starfish, aren't we, Mrs Nesrin?" How can one describe experiencing such beauty?

We celebrated our 26th wedding anniversary on 2 July 2006 at the Imperial Hotel in Vienna. We stayed for a few days in a wonderful and luxurious hotel converted from a large old castle. High ceilings, large rooms, royal furniture etc. We enjoyed the sacher torte that Pınar had introduced to us before. It was a very romantic celebration with a champagne dinner.

Ernst and his wife Maria were in Vienna. Ernst's home country. They showed us around and one day they took us to a wine tasting event of a wine producer friend of theirs. There must have been 40-50 people in an open area on a hill overlooking Vienna from above. They introduced us to their friends, as their Turkish friends. An old Austrian did not shake our hand and as he turned round and said triumphantly: "They couldn't get up here. We stopped them down below." The maniac was talking about the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683.

The engagement of Pınar and İhsan took place on 9 July 2006 at Hayal Kahvesi on the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus. It was a wonderful organisation. Pınar's vocal teacher, jazz singer Sibel Köse was on stage. İhsan's mum and dad performed a small tango show with their dance friends. We made only one mistake. There was the Fifa World Cup final that day. Some of our guests left and watched the Italy-France game on the big screen inside. The game went on and on. When Italy won with penalties, we gathered again.

In the last week of July, we made a cruise ship trip in the Mediterranean with Costa Concordia. Mum, Dad, Pınar, Nesrin, me. It was the first and last big Cruise Ship trip I have ever done in my life. A 12-storey floating hotel with 4000 passengers and 1100 crew. The main purpose was tax-free, unrestricted gambling in international waters. For this reason, the ship was cruising between 7 pm and 8 am to the next port. The casinos were open during these hours. The aim was to get the passengers to the casino after dinner. Gambling until next morning. Apart from that, there were restaurants, movie theatres, shops, pools, whatever you want.

But we also wanted to see the places we visit. Early in the morning the ship docked at the next harbour. After breakfast, 40-50 buses arrived at the harbour. You would get on the buses in a queue. Towards the city centre. It would be 11:00 a.m. At 3:00 p.m. you had to be ready to get on the buses and go back. What you do in 3-4 hours around noon time with the summer heat in the city centre. Be ready at 3:00 pm so that everyone would be on board by 5:00 pm at the latest. Dinner at 6:00 pm. Let's get the ship moving. Let the casinos open. In the summer, the best time in a city is in the afternoon. The sun is down. Having a drink in a bar or cafe, experiencing the people and breathing in the essence of the city. We couldn't do any of that. We never liked this mass-tourism. The Costa Concordia sank six years later after hitting the rocks. 32 people died.

2006 was also the year Pınar graduated from Sabancı University. As she had done before and as she would do afterwards, Pınar again succeeded with her own initiative, to go to Rockefeller University in New York for her PhD in molecular biology. I still don't know how she managed to skip her master's degree and get into a PhD programme, but we were all delighted. She will be going to live in a small apartment for two people on the University campus in Manhattan. She and Ihsan will be going together. Preparations were made. Things were packed. The plane ticket was for 28 August. It coincided with Nesrin's birthday. I don't know why.

We put Pınar on the plane. Feelings of joy and sadness were rising and rising inside us. Nesrin and I went to Kaşibeyaz Meat Restaurant in Florya. We celebrated Nesrin's birthday by toasting to the aeroplanes taking off overhead: "Maybe it's them." We repeated our good wishes and prayers, and wiped our tears. We knew that Pınar had left her parents' home for good.

In October we went to Nepal and India with Cem's organisation. I loved India very much. I know many people who have been to India and didn't like it because of the crowds, traffic, dirt, poverty and said "I won't go again." I liked the country very much. I liked the colourful people. I liked their peaceful relations despite being crowded and noisy. I liked the street delicacies that hygiene lovers would not approve of. For example, one bite of raw pork wrapped in a banana tree leaf.

I liked the fact that the purpose of honking in traffic is not to swear,

but to give the message that I am here, I am approaching. I liked the “Please honk!” sign on the back of the trucks. I liked the fact that there is no wall or screen between the side by side toilets, the conversation while going to the toilet, the handwriting of the departure and arrival times on a white board at the airports, their history and culture.

Our first introduction to Buddhism, Hinduism. Our first sight of the Stupas. Sikkim region called mini Switzerland, Darjeeling region famous for its tea, Delhi, Kathmandu consisting of 4 cities, the splendour of the Himalayan Mountains were among our unforgettable places.

Like many of us, I had already seen dozens of photographs of the Taj Mahal. But it was only possible to feel that immense splendour by seeing it with your eyes and touching it. When Ercümend Banu, who took the name Mumtaz Mahal upon Shah Cihan’s ascension to the throne, died while giving birth to her fourteenth child. It was built in memory of the ruler’s love for his wife.

We stayed in huts inside Chitwan National Park. Hippos (Rhino), Bengal tigers, deers, crocodiles, elephants outside our door. It is hard to describe. We followed the footprints of Bengal tigers, wondering if we could see them. But they must have been in their shy days. They hid. We got on the elephants’ backs and went to the river together. We got off their backs before they entered the water. Then we all went into the river together. The caretakers put the elephants in the water. We started to wash them. Hoses are flying in the air, soaking us too. Pure joy.

We went on safari in an old jeep. “What’s that? Rhino?” “Yes, a rhino.” “It’s so big! Why doesn’t it run away? Or is it chasing us? Step on the throttle, driver. He’ll overturn the jeep if he catches us. OK, let’s see them close, but we don’t need to feel their breath.” We’ll go to India again, God willing. It wasn’t enough.

It was probably December. Pınar called us and she said: “İhsan and I have broken up.” However, the plan was that İhsan would be going to America next year after they will get married before. We were very surprised, we didn’t expect it, we couldn’t ask any questions, why, what happened. After hanging up the phone, I had a “great” idea. We were going to invite İhsan to dinner with us, find out what had happened and see how we could help them to come together.

In a few days İhsan came to us for dinner. He said: “I don’t understand what happened either. This is Pınar’s decision. I don’t know

what to say.” I had figured it out. “Pınar was depressed in her new life in America. But this was temporary. In a short time she would realise the situation and relations would return to their former state.” Again with a “great” idea, I called Pınar while we were with İhsan. As much as I could, I told her that this was normal, that they would overcome this, how much I knew about these issues, etc. You know how helpful is the advice of a mature, experienced father.

Pınar said “hmm hum” and we hung up the phone. The next day she called me and said: “Who are you to think you have the right to interfere in my private life?” She said something like that. I froze. I hung up the phone before I could say anything. Then I looked in the mirror and said the same words to myself. Once again Pınar was right. She had left İhsan because she found herself in her new life. She had made her own decision again. Her decision was right again. Being a parent does not give the right to interfere in the decisions of children.

Our children are not our children. They are individuals. We have caused them to come to life. We are not their owners. Of course, we will have suggestions in the direction of our own experiences, but within the rules, in every period, they make their own decisions according to their age and ability. They also bear the good and bad consequences. This is the journey of life. There are two things a parent can give to their children. The first is “Unconditional, love without any expectation in every situation” and the second is “The ability to stand up on their own feet.” Love is no need to talk about. The second begins at birth and continues until approximately 12-14 years of age. After that, we can only give something to the adolescent if they ask for help. The reason we have two ears is so that advice can go in one ear and out the other. If you push too hard, it backfires. That’s a bit harsh, but that’s my personal opinion.

I’ve heard a better description of the ability to stand on your own two feet. The ability to take the steering of your own car of the life journey. Another approach says that parents give their children two things. Roots and Wings. We give roots. And we give them wings to fly on their own.

According to what we learnt afterwards, the first days in America were challenging for Pınar. She did not make us feel it, but it was not easy to leave the city where she was born and grew up, to start living



in another metropolis, to leave her family and friends, to adapt to a different culture, to leave her parents' house for the first time, to live alone, but also to share with her flatmate, to have herself accepted by her new university and her professors and friends, to succeed in her PhD education and to do all this without any support.

Pınar took Badem with her next time she came to Turkey. Vaccinations, permissions from the American Consulate, approval from Turkish Airlines, etc. My daughter tried hard. She said, "You can keep her if you want." But we didn't want to because we were travelling a lot. After the first days in New York, Badem, who resented Pınar's frequent departures from home due to canoeing, skiing, climbing and hiking, showed her reaction by urinating on her bed. When Pınar was away she became more like her roommate's cat. After a while, her roommate left the house and took Badem with her, with Pınar's approval.

With her PhD journey, Pınar started working with lab mice. They deliberately modify the genetic structure of the mice, then take the brain of the animal, analyse it and try to prove their hypothesis. Pınar's first task as soon as she arrived was to kill the mice whose time had come. But she did it, sobbing her eyes out. Taking the life of a living creature knowingly and willingly. Even in the name of science, it's an unpleasant situation.

Pınar had other traumas too. Nesrin once bought a book called "Single Child Syndrome." I don't remember it. This book stayed by Nesrin's bedside for years, because Nesrin started reading it, didn't like it and didn't continue. The fact that book remained as a bedside book for years triggered and fuelled a serious questioning and prejudice in Pınar. It affected her soul negatively. It is a pity, but it is so. Years later, we cleared the misunderstandings.

### **Cambro-Özay**

Things were going well at Cambro-Özay. Omer, who I hired as my assistant, seemed to be able to take my place and continue the business, although his relations with his colleagues were troubled. In the last 2-3 years after the sale of the company, a great relationship of trust had been established between me and Argyle, the owner of the company. One day, I called him to sign some paperwork about the Board of Directors meeting. He said, "Send it to our dealer in Spain, I'll

be there for a few days.” The dealer in Spain was a family business where brothers and sisters like us work together. They had been working with Cambro for many years and they have very good relations.

DHL brought the envelope in the middle of the meeting. Argyle opened the envelope in the middle of the meeting, took out the documents, looked through them quickly, placed them on the table, and started signing where it was necessary. Everyone looked at him in astonishment. They said: “When did you learn Turkish?” He said: “I don’t speak Turkish. But I sign whatever Kemal sends me.” This was a source of indescribable pride for me for the rest of my life.

Our itches sailing the world seas with our boat PANK became stronger. It was time move. I sat down and wrote a long letter to Argyle. I titled it “Big Decision.” I explained a little philosophically, a little emotionally, a little logically the life Nesrin and I wanted to live together from then on and asked for his permission. He didn’t reply immediately. We was excited and anxious for a few days. Then I received a reassuring and kind reply. He understood me. He accepted me to go, under the following conditions:

1) I should come to Turkey at least once every two months, stay for at least two days, look at the general situation and report to him.

2) I should go to Germany six times a year to check the situation there and to make sure that the managing team is working in peace and co-ordination.

3) In case of an emergency, if I am called, I should come as soon as possible wherever we are in the world and intervene in the situation.

This answer blew Nesrin and me away. I said yes to all of his wishes and thanked him. Our friendship based on trust was further strengthened. The company continued to operate successfully in the coming years in line with the plans.

In the meantime, Ömer was dealing with Erhan and the only dealer of Cambro in Turkey, Erhan’s company Özay Servis. He magnified every problem and transferred it to the headquarters. Erhan was also very demanding. He had troublesome behaviours such as demanding special prices, priority in delivery, exaggerating customer complaints and delaying payments. Ömer wanted to apply the same conditions applied to foreign dealers. Erhan, on the other hand, wanted privileges.

In the meantime, Leyla, Erhan and I learnt in a meeting that Erhan

was not realising that his company was making losses as its turnover increases. The reason was that his fixed costs are disproportionately high compared to his turnover. Unnecessary expenditures, high discounts, special prices, high salaried, incompetent people he hired. The company philosophy was: "In any case, these expenses will be incurred, these concessions will be made to the customer, but in order to make a profit, concessions will be demanded from the producers and turnover should be increased." No budgeting, no planning. There is a loss, but it will be alright, if we continue to sell.

Ömer, on the other hand, wanted to utilise Erhan's insolvency to take him out of the business and bring the domestic sales into Cambro Özey. In fact, with a word from Argyle, sales to Erhan's company could be stopped, a sales department could be established in Cambro Özey and direct sales to domestic customers could be started. Because there was no written and signed agreement between the two companies. Relations were based on goodwill and trust.

Although this was known to everyone, the alternative of Erhan selling his company came to the agenda with my efforts to ensure fairness. I attended the meetings. One of them was in Frankfurt. I was an employee of Cambro Özey, but I also represented my brother's company. Conflict of interest. As a result of the negotiations, Özey Servis's discounts and dealer status were cancelled in return for the wiping out of Erhan's debt of approximately four hundred thousand dollars to Cambro Özey. Erhan was asked to visit Özey Servis's customers with Cambro Özey's newly hired sales staff and explain the situation and make introductions. Erhan refused. "I don't have a personal relationship with my customers, I have my managers," he said. Erhan really had nothing to sell.

### **We Cut the Ropes**

The first half of 2007 was filled with preparations for departure. The transfer of all my daily work at Cambro Özey to Ömer, the maintenance of PANK, the emptying of our house in Akatlar and putting the belongings in storage to be sent to New Zealand in the future, and most importantly the preparation of our souls. It is a very different feeling to embark on a journey where you do not know when or whether you will return. As a result of the decision we had made

with our free will, we were travelling towards uncertainty. From then on, our real home was PANK. Nothing would ever be the same again. Even if we came back, PANK would never return to Turkey again. That's why we didn't untie the ropes when we left; we cut them. Our brother Haluk cut them one by one with an axe.

A few weeks before the departure date, we organised a party by the pool at Ataköy Marina Yacht Club. We were close to 200 people. The invitation said that some of us might get wet. Just in case.

The food was an open buffet from the catering company and the music was by the Greek taverner couple Rula-Panço. When the atmosphere warmed up a bit and the bellies were full, I went on stage and made a speech, with Nesrin and Pınar by my side. It was an emotional journey, a little bit about ourselves, mixed with a little bit of joy. At the end, I left the stage with Zerrin Özer's song "We must leave!" and Rula and Panço sang the song "Goodbye to you, wish that your way will be clear."

A group of my friends, led by my brother Haluk, grabbed me and forced me to sit on a chair. I couldn't understand what was going on. Pınar was among them. There was also a nurse around. One of them tried to pull down my trousers; it was a mime of circumcision. Then it became clear. There would be an ear piercing ceremony on stage. Actually, I was going to get my left ear pierced after crossing the ocean, as was common among sailors. My friends, who knew this, thought, "You intended to do it. You' would be going to cross anyway." They surprised me. A fizz and then a "crack" sound. It happened and it's over, mashallah. Many people thought that it was a mise-en-scene I had planned and that I was not surprised. 15 years had passed and now I confess, I had no idea, but I liked it very much.

They took me off the stage and threw me into the pool. That's when some of us started our soaking ceremony.

Now people were being selected in turns and thrown into the pool. At one point, 5-6 people held hands and started to jump into the pool themselves. As soon as they got out, they started looking for new victims. The rules were simple. You had to leave your wallet and mobile phone. Some of our friends realised the situation and escaped for a while to avoid getting wet. When one of them was brought to the pool, he said: "My shoes are new and special. I don't want them to get wet."

We said: “OK, take them off.” Afterwards, first the shoes were thrown into the water and then the owner.

At one table we had friends from Kagider, of which Nesrin is a member. I didn’t know any of them. One of them came to Nesrin and said, “Mr. Hüseyin is very enthusiastic. He wants to be thrown into the water.” We realised that Mr Hüseyin was a senior bureaucrat in a suit and tie. We prepared a team of 3-4 people and picked him up, leaving his wallet and mobile phone behind. Arm in arm, we all went into the water together.

Nesrin had another fantasy for the departure day of 20 July 2007, in addition to the rope cutting ceremony. We invited a family-friend group of about 30 people for dinner at Ataköy Marina. The food was ordered. When everyone was halfway through their plates, we stood up and said, “We’re leaving!” Although we replied to those who said, “If only we could eat our dinner,” etc., “You go ahead,” all of our guests came to the dock before finishing their plates and waved us off with emotional goodbyes, watching the ropes being cut.

The reason we left in the evening was to cross the Marmara Sea at night and enter the Dardanelles the next day. As the lights of Istanbul slowly faded away in the darkness of the night, I felt black inside myself. I sat down and wrote what I felt under the title “Black as Black.” Thus, we started to perceive the colours of our days. We shared it with our friends via e-mail and there was a great interaction. There are quite a few details in our book “*When We Cut the Ropes.*”

## **Pank**

When we arrived in Greece, we started to create our web page. [www.pank.biz](http://www.pank.biz) or [www.dunyakazan.com](http://www.dunyakazan.com). I was writing the colours of the day, atlantic crossing days. Nesrin, wrote also pirate reports with a different style and point of view. Milliyet Newspaper and Naviga magazine conducted interviews and published our articles. We were very popular. We kept our website updated. Our other trips, besides our boat trip, also took their place on our website. But instead of describing our experiences in detail, we wrote about our feelings, people, surprising and unfamiliar aspects of the regions in a short and unique style.

The most important part of our journey with PANK was the 23-day Atlantic Ocean crossing. There are tens of thousands of people

crossing the same ocean every year with similar boats. But everyone's journey is different.

I think psychological preparation was the hardest part. The stress load. I must have lost a lot of weight during that period. It was a good thing, too. The reason was thinking about disaster scenarios. To name a few: One of us falling into the sea, appendicitis-emergency surgery, hitting a semi-submerged container that fell off the ship, fire, fracture-dislocation injury, mast breakage, capsizing, lightning strike, possibility of hurricane, etc. Going for 3 weeks without seeing anything. Going knowing that there is no possibility of returning. So, "Point of no Return!"

Even shopping for 3 weeks of food was an interesting experience. When you try to make a list, you would realise that it is not that easy. The watches were a different experience. In the darkness of the night, the boat is with full sails, your life companion is sleeping. You are on watch. Your eyes are on the radar screen. No need to change course. We're heading west. If the wind changes, you'll have to trim the sails. The companion will wake up then. No manoeuvring alone.

It is very important that the wave - swell direction and strength are compatible with the wind, our boat and our route. If the boat falls into a wobble, then cooking, eating, going to the toilet is a nightmare. That is, if we are still not seasick. We had three such days. We could only have a snack. It was not possible to eat and drink at the same time. Either we drank or we ate. It was painful to even think that we would need the loo. We had bought some things that could be prepared quickly so that Nesrin wouldn't have a hard time cooking before we left for the ocean crossing. Among these, half-cooked pizza was the majority. We were putting it in the oven and it was ready in 10 minutes. We were so fed up that we didn't eat pizza for 4-5 years afterwards.

Our mates were asking us: "What was it like fighting the waves?" How dare we fight with nature. We can only behave as nature wants, we can only go in the direction it shows us, at the speed it deems appropriate. We can only be one with the ocean, swaying with its harmony and sailing in harmony. We wanted to watch a film on a calm day. Nesrin chose an action film from the DVD collection Pinar had prepared for us. We watched for 5 minutes. I felt uneasy. I looked at

Nesrin, she was also uneasy. We couldn't make sense of it. We continued for another 5 minutes.

It was the same situation again. We stopped and realised that the Ocean was objecting: "You cannot bring here the strangeness, tensions, ambitions, fights in your virtual world that you have created. There are natural laws here. There is danger, of course, but not predominantly of your own kind. Leave yourself to the rhythm and harmony of Nature and experience the Ocean to the fullest. You will return to your virtual world anyway."

It was an internal challenge that Nesrin and I went through together, but it was an internal challenge that we both went through separately.

Weren't we scared? Very much. Weren't we happy? Oh, yeah:  
Getting used to it after three days of swinging like crazy,  
Watching the sun rises and sun sets in the sea,  
Being together with whales, ocean birds, dolphins, flying fish,  
Watching the rainbows after the squals,  
Realising of the slowing down of the body rhythm,  
Washing our souls with internal recognition and peace,  
Witnessing rapidly reducing remaining miles,  
Admiring the incredible nature over and over again, being grateful,  
After three weeks of sailing shouting "Land Ahoy,"  
And finally saying: "We did it!"

Argyle asked me, at the end of the ocean crossing, "Are you still married?" Actually, it was an inner journey for both of us. David Arkenstone accompanied us with his music. If we cross again, it will be another inner journey. It will never be the same, it can't be. The main thing is the solidarity of two people, full trust in each other, and forming a perfect team.

Who haven't we hosted in the Caribbean islands? Ayşe and Sermet, Aslı and Orhan, Murat and Ayda. We spent nice days with all of them on different islands. Erhan and Deniz came. When Erhan saw our life on the boat, he found it strange. Cooking, maintaining the boat, sailing, anchoring, cleaning, shopping, even taking out the rubbish yourself. He said, "I can't live like this, I have to have my slaves around me."

Haluk, Jülide and Ali came to Trinidad. We made the date of their arrival coinciding with the Trinidad Carnival, the second biggest carnival in the world after Rio. What a different experience we had all together.

Pınar joined us from time to time in the Caribbean. A few times she came with her friends. She came to St Lucia with Manuel and Chan. Then she came to the Bahamas with Charles and Sozanne, Mark and Connie. Later in the Bahamas we sailed with Pınar's friends Daniel and Matt and they taught us how to play Geocaching. When I learnt that Daniel and Matt were partners, I asked Pınar: "Do they stay together in the master cabin or does one of them sleep in the saloon?" The question was wrong. I realised right away. Intelligence is something else.

Yellow Man, the taxi driver/guide on the island of Grenada, and Jesse James, the taxi driver/guide in Trinidad, are still in our memories and phone books. In the Caribbean islands, we met sugar cane, rum and tropical fruits. We became acquainted with the colonisation efforts and processes of the Spanish, British, French, Portuguese and Americans in this area. As a result, almost every island became a separate state. It is necessary to fulfil the entrance formalities of each one individually. I think it was Grenada. I got the paperwork and was waiting for my turn. A cruiser and an officer were talking and arguing at the desk. There was obviously a problem. I was scared that it would affect also our entrance procedure. Anyway, when the cruiser left, I sat opposite the officer. His first question was: "Are you French?" When I said "No, I am Turkish," he started to complain about the French. "They are like this, like that, they are always a problem." I waited until he calmed down.

I don't have very good memories of the French either. Of course, it is not right to judge a nation or a tribe as a whole. But when we put PANK ashore in Trinidad, we built a tent made of plastic pipes and tarpaulin and left it for the hurricane season. The marina manager warned us and advised us to lock our valuable items that could be stolen, such as outboard motors, even when they are inside the tent. "It's not the locals, it's the French yachtsmen," he said. During my business life, I had 3 problems with our foreign customers, including a fake letter of credit message. All of them were French companies.

While I was at our client's stand at the Equip'Hotel fair in Paris, I went to the fair's cafe to buy coffee and soda for a group of six people. "Four coffee, two sparkling water please." The bartender replies in



French: “Quatre Café et ... ?” I understood four coffees, but not the rest. I repeated what I wanted in English, same answer. After the third time I got angry. Then he told me in perfect English that he was asking for the brand of sparkling water, that I should speak French because I was in France, that although he had lived in USA for 10 years and knew English very well, as a Frenchman he would never speak English in France. I said: “This is an international fair. There are exhibitors and visitors from many countries. You are also working here. You have to speak English.” Of course, I had good friends from France, but I never liked the arrogant ones.

After leaving PANK in Trinidad for the hurricane season, we flew to New Zealand and then to Fiji in June 2008. We spent a very nice week on Cüneyt’s boat Little Aries and Seda’s 8 month old baby Ege was with us. Pınar came also from USA and landed in the bay on a small aeroplane where we were staying. Cüneyt and Seda hosted us in a wonderful way. We met with the cannibalism and their special forks with four legs. We learnt that they ate human flesh not for nutrition but to destroy their soul too after killing the enemy. I wore a skirt and danced. We gave the tuna fish we caught to visit a tribe as a gift, and afterwards we drank kava with the chief and got drunk.

Before the end of June, we went to Iceland with the organisation of Cem. Iceland is a young island formed by volcanic eruptions between Greenland and Norway in the north of the Atlantic Ocean. Together with Pınar, 7 of us took a full tour around the island with a rental jeep. The island is covered with volcanoes and the cooled lava that erupted from them. There are glaciers on top of them. Pınar, Cem and Eren climbed the glaciers with the help of ropes. We took the easy way and trekked on the glaciers. Hot water gushes out from geysers in many places. The most important natural event that the islanders fear is that the glaciers will melt with the lava that will come to the surface with the volcano eruption and most of the island will be under flood waters. We have been warned for that.

We watched puffins, various birds, wild horses and whales. We took long sleigh rides on the ice with husky dogs. We watched very high waterfalls. We entered the warm, turquoise thermal pools. I must have seen more monster trucks here than I have ever seen in my life.

After returning to PANK, we sailed to Fort Lauderdale following

the Caribbean Islands, Puerto Rico and Bahamas. There we met Nilgün and Ali and we loved Florida. We had got used to the Everglades Wetland and crocodiles and then we had to leave again. We did a part of the Intracoastal Waterway, which stretches along the east coast of the USA and consists of rivers and canals. The bridges that we called the attendants on the radio that we wanted to cross, the fixed bridges that we could barely pass under and were afraid that our masts would break while crossing, once we could not pass due to the rising waters after heavy rainfall and waited for three days for the waters to recede, we got stranded while travelling at 6 knots and Nesrin flew onto the windlass on the bow and was slightly injured are among our memories. During this period, Tijen and her friend Yasemin, then Gene and Myrna, and then Nermin were our guests onboard Pank.

### **PankCar**

Our plan was to use Pank as a base in America for two years. We were going to stay on the boat and travel Canada and America by land. It turned out to be the wrong plan. This was a whole continent and base was meaningless. The distances made travelling back and forth and staying on the boat was unreasonable. When we realised that there was no way we could use the boat in these two years, we decided to sell PANK, buy another boat in Fort Lauderdale, the centre of yachting, at the end of our land tour of America, and cross Panama and continue on our way. When we bought PANK, we were saying “This boat will kill us.” But it didn’t, we sold it. An Australian citizen of British origin living in Thailand bought a Finnish boat from its Turkish owner in USA. Globalism.

We decided that the most suitable vehicle to fulfil our desire to explore North America by land would be a minibus camper van. It should not be too big so that we could travel and park it in the cities without any problems. When we started to look around, we were attracted by a short chassis of a Mercedes Sprinter minibus, a vehicle that had been converted into a campervan by Roadtrek company in Canada and had travelled around 50 thousand kilometres in its 3 years of age. Everything was for two people. Beds, food, bathroom, toilet, heating, cooling. The owner was an American in his 40s living alone. We went to his house to see the vehicle and negotiate. It

turned out that he was interested in golf. He bought this caravan to fulfil his goal of playing golf in the best 100 golf courses in America, and when he completed the list, he put it up for sale. We bought it after a short negotiation.

We called it PankCar. We parked it next to our boat moored in Fort Lauderdale. We transferred our personal belongings. Nermin was with us at this time. PankCar was our new home. But this time we had wheels. There was soil under us, not water. We were not dropping anchor, we were pulling the handbrake. We were not watching the wind, we were watching the temperature. It was not the same, but it was a form of travelling. Following the east coast of America, we first headed towards New York. In between we were staying in hotels so that we can fulfil our bathroom etc. needs. We were chasing hotel-motels just outside the cities. I was going in and asking for the price. I was saying: "I'll ask my wife." and going back to the car. I was going back and saying: "My wife didn't agree, she wants a discount." This method worked with a rate of 70-80 per cent.

Burak joined us first. Then we met with Selçuk, Selma and Can. We went to the Hair the musical in New York together. Burak was very surprised at the naked performers on the stage. At the end of the play, we went on stage with everyone and sang "Let the sunshine in!" together and the atmosphere was magical. Bartu arrived on the same flight as Burak and stayed with us for a while. We travelled to New York, Boston and then Toronto with Selçuk's family. After Bartu's return, we went to New Hampshire with Pınar as our chauffeur. For the first time in years, my daughter started to drive a car again, and in my presence. I swear that I did not open my mouth.

Then on to Maine and Canada. In Nova Scotia, the highest tide in the world was measured. 16.4 metres. The general tide average was 14 metres. We went and saw Halls Harbour during low tide. The boats were sitting on their keel at the bottom, leaning against the quay. The masts were also below the quay line. You could go down to the boats with a ladder. Boats had to wait for slack tide to enter the harbour. Due to the tide, water fills or empties into the harbour and a large current is formed inwards or outwards. Near the end of the tide, before the start of the tide, the current stops. If you entered during the slack tide, it's okay. Otherwise you had to wait 12 hours for the next one.

Newfoundland was next. Captain James Cook, the conqueror of the South Pacific, came here in 1760 before setting foot in Tahiti, Australia and New Zealand. Newfoundland is a lonely, deserted, interesting and cold island. The people were famous for their friendliness and helpfulness. We had 5-6 experiences that confirmed this. While we were trying to find out the cause of the water dripping from the car, a man who came to help us lay under the car in his work clothes after our second sentence. He reacted to the key ring with the traditional Turkish evil eye, which we gave as a thank you, as if it was a sacred relic. When we told him that it is believed to protect him from the bad energy, he marvelled and said that he had cancer 3 times and he was glad that it would protect him from the next one.

We went to Prince Edward Island, Canada's manicured backyard. 250 kilometres from one end to the other. 137.000 people lived there. Lots of green, no mountains. The highest point was 152 metres. It was connected to the mainland by a bridge.

13 kilometres. The Confederation Bridge, built over ice-covered water. Lobster was cheaper than beef. \$12 a kilo. Probably no lobster died there naturally. And they were delicious.

We crossed Canada from east to west. 6.000 km. As you know, when you are on the sea, you can enjoy the sky to the fullest. We experienced similarly the splendour of the sky in that vast and treeless land. There were times when we did 1,000 kilometres a day. Thanks to the efforts of captain Nesrin, the heavy vehicle driver. After all, we were travelling across the second largest country in the world.

We admired Banff and Jasper National Parks in the western Rocky Mountains. Mountains, rivers, lakes, pine forests, waterfalls, glaciers, colours. Every time we turned our heads, we saw a different scene each like a calendar leaf. Postcards would see this place and be jealous. There were hiking, camping, canoeing, rafting, horse riding, cycling, quad biking, rock and ice climbing, skiing activities. But the inhabitants of this place had priority. That was deers, squirrels, moose, birds, foxes, goats, sheep, wolves and bears.

Traffic jams were there. The reason was not the tourist buses. It was the vehicles that see wild animals on the road, disregarding all traffic and courtesy rules, stopping in the middle of the road to take photos and videos!

We made an appointment and met Ali and Buket. We liked these two beautiful people even more. With his Turkish-made Landrover with Istanbul licence plates, Ali Eric was circumnavigating the Earth, going east all the time.

From Istanbul, to Georgia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Russia and Canada. Then South America, Africa, European countries and Turkey. He completed the journey with difficulty but successfully and returned to Turkey.

Now our route was Alaska. We came to Fairbanks by crossing the famous Alaska Highway which is 2.450 km long. This road was built in 8,5 months with ten thousand people for military reasons during World War II. On the way we came across bears, moose, buffaloes and forest fires. We were stopped by a woman with a STOP sign like in road construction zones. The one they call "Lollipop Man." We stopped and waited for the road to be open. 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes. Then I went to see what was going on. She said, "There's a wild fire up ahead." Our hearts sank, but we learnt that at that moment, forests were burning at 42 different places in Alaska. They were only intervening if residential areas were threatened. In fact, the fire was usually contributing to the regeneration of the forest. Usually not all the trees die. Forest fire was part of the natural cycle and life here. After two or three hours they cleared the road.

Then we witnessed small fires a few more times while passing through the forest. "Controlled fire" was written everywhere. "Please do not report it." The leaves of the trees falling in autumn and the branches broken by the wind was covering the ground and the seeds of the trees could not reach the soil. They would burn the ground cover under the control of the Rangers. Thus, more sunlight would reach the soil, and the carbon produced by the burning would increase the nutrient content of the soil. Since the burnt area was less likely to burn again, the newly growing trees were provided with a healthy and safe environment. In this way, the forest regenerates itself. However, forest fires in Turkey are a disaster in every environment and situation. I had never heard of a natural cycle until then.

Nature gets you high in Alaska. Lofty mountains covered with snow, glaciers that insist on melting, lush forests, turquoise rivers, sparkling lakes. The highest mountain in North America was here.

There are 12,000 rivers and 3 million lakes. Half of the active glaciers in the world were in Alaska. There are 75.000 kilometres of coastline with its islands. It is as much as the total of the other states of USA. Nearly twice the circumference of the Earth. Two months a year the sun never sets and two months the sun never rises. There are 90 active volcanoes and earthquakes occur constantly.

Then Vancouver and then Seattle. In Vancouver we met with Hıfı, Leyla and two of her friends. We introduced PankCar. In case they came alone and travelled. We did about 21.000 kilometres in Canada and Alaska. Pınar came to Seattle. We travelled for 3 days, ate good food. We met a couple aged 70-80 sitting at our next table in a gourmet restaurant. They were in Turkey recently. They loved our country very much. At the end of a sweet conversation in which they listened to our story, the waiter came and said: "If you don't mind, the couple at the next table would like to pay your bill." We didn't know what to do, we were embarrassed, we were proud. The three of us evaluated the situation among ourselves. Obviously, they were in a good mood. They wanted to make such a gesture as a thank you for the hospitality they received in Turkey. They would be happy if we accept. It would be rude to refuse. We said "OK" in an embarrassed way. We tried to thank them with a bottle of whisky we hadn't opened yet in our car, but we don't know if we succeeded.

### **Pururu Falls**

In early 2010 we left the PankCar in a car park in Seattle and flew to Turkey and then to New Zealand. We took my mum and dad with us. They were in good health. I'm glad we did it then. Then both of them gradually regressed. We bought Business Class tickets and they both flew comfortably. We asked for a wheelchair at the Singapore airport, so they didn't have to walk for long distances. On the plane, my mother came to Nesrin and me in the economy cabin and said: "It is very crowded here."

When we landed in Auckland, we rented two wheelchairs for 3 weeks. And a step ladder. Our Landcruiser was high, it was difficult for the elderly to get on and off. Nesrin was placing the step getting it from the back of the car every time say mum gets on and off. In places where there was a long walk, we put both of them in wheelchairs, Nesrin was

pushing my mother and I was pushing my father. In two of the three weeks we travelled most of the North Island: geysers, rivers, lakes, sand dunes, waterfalls, museums, Maori shows, cities, TV towers. In short, we went everywhere that can be reached with a wheelchair.

We stayed at our farm, which we named Pururu Falls, for a week. Pururu means densely leafy, shady in Te Reo Maori language. In other words, a shady waterfall. By the way, Cüneyt, Seda and Ege were living in a small two-room house next to the big workshop/garage. When we came with my parents, they moved to their boat for a week so that we could be comfortable. It was great. I let both mum and dad use the farm vehicles. Dad transported soil with the bucket of the tractor. Mum drove the quad bike. Then the lawnmower. Both of them used them all. We even had a convoy for a while. We ate and drank at the waterfall.

Once I took them to the local livestock market. We went on the day of the auction. We spent half a day watching the cattle being brought in mobs and changing hands through the auction. An event that only local people can witness. It seemed very different to them. On the way back, this time we took them on the plane on their own. Business Class, stewardesses, wheelchair and lounge at Singapore airport. They had a very comfortable journey back to Turkey. For years, my mother said about her New Zealand trip, "It was the best three weeks of my life."

Bahar and Şükrü came after my parents. We met them in the South Island. Glaciers, jet boat trips, fjords, Mount Cook flight with a small aeroplane, me getting scared on the aeroplane and starting to pray, the German woman who owned the motel getting angry at Şükrü for urinating in the garden even though he didn't. Everyone speeding on the 90 mile beach with Landcruisers, Şükrü being the only guest who swam in the ocean, etc. We made many good memories.

By the way, we have had our permanent residence permit for a while, we wanted to spend more time in New Zealand. But when Ege got a bit older and started sleeping in a separate room, it became difficult for us to stay in the small house with them for a long time. Actually, our first plan was for everyone to build their own house on the property. We identified two house locations and left the choice to Cüneyt and Seda. They were living there permanently and they had spent a lot of effort for the beautify of the farm. Unfortunately, the economic crisis

of 2008 had ruined our financial situation. We said, “You build your house, we decided not to build a house but to live in this house.” First they said: “OK,” a few weeks later: “We are not building a house either” and left us on our own.

First we thought that we should buy a container house, bring it and live in it temporarily. We looked at alternatives for a while. One day, when we were travelling in the car with Haydn, our friend from whom we bought the property, he showed us a house from a distance and said: “You can build that house for twice the cost of a container house. There are a few big companies. You can contact them if you want.” The house he showed us was a typical New Zealand house with a brick exterior. We liked the idea very much. Why not?

We immediately contacted several companies. We liked the approach and prices of GJ Gardner. By making some changes on an existing plan, we ordered our New Zealand style house with an area of 140 m<sup>2</sup>, two bedrooms, a man-cave for me, an open kitchen, a lounge, a fireplace, and a two-car garage.

They started immediately and finished it within 3-4 months. As soon as our house started, Seda and Cüneyt also decided to build their house.

They chose the location of their houses by considering the height, view, slope and excavation costs in such a way that there was a distance of 50 metres only between the two houses. 62 acres of land and two houses so close to each other. Cüneyt said afterwards: “I thought your house could be moved.” It didn’t bother us, but Cüneyt planted tall plants and trees in between not to see us. In the meantime, while we were travelling, they cut down about 15 huge endemic totara trees on the border of the forest behind our house while they were landscaping the road to their house. They called me just before they cut them down and couldn’t reach me. When I returned home, I saw the scene and was shocked. Cüneyt has his own reasons, that can be discussed, but the fact that he did this without our approval was a breaking point.

## **Mongolia**

In June 2010, we travelled to Mongolia, the country of our ancestors, nomads, sincerity, naturalness, primitiveness, vast emptiness. Cem, Emel, Nesrin and me. Our trip was Emel and Cem’s honeymoon trip. We flew from Ulaanbaatar to Mörön, the capital of



Khövsgöl province in the north. A Russian made minibus in front of us. There were 4 of us, an interpreter-guide and a driver. No comfort, no air conditioning. There was food, water, petrol. No road, no people, no telephone.

First we went north to Khovsgöl Nuur lake. 262 metres deep and constituting 2% of the world's fresh water reserves, it is a deliciously clear lake and forest. We travelled 135 km in only 4 hours. What was claimed to be a road on the map was actually a track on the ground formed by the passing of several cars in a row. If a few cars didn't like that track and drove right next to it, you got a second lane. So it was a motorway.

We travelled around 2,000 km in 8 days. All of them were dirt roads (i.e. trails) Jump, skid, bury, dive. We saw only one road sign. We didn't understand why there were bends on the road when we were travelling in a vast nothingness, steppe or desert. At one point, we came across a lorry with about ten people with children on its back. They were stuck in the mud, asking us for help. They had been there since last night. Our car was small, it couldn't pull them. They talked to our driver and we continued on our way.

I asked our driver: "Are we going to call someone to help them? Or maybe someone will come with us and bring help?" "No." he said. "They will wait until a vehicle that can tow them passes by chance. Because there is no vehicle that can pull them out in the settlements we are going to."

"But this is a vast steppe. In eight hours today, we saw only two or three vehicles, and none of them were up to the job?" Followed by blank stares.

Mongolia is a landlocked country in the middle of Asia, twice the size of Turkey, with an average height of 1850 metres above sea level, with barren steppes and the lowest population density in the world. It has two neighbours. Russia in the north and China in the south. Ulaanbaatar is the coldest capital of the world with its temperature dropping to minus 30C in winter. Nearly half of the 3 million population was living in the capital Ulaanbaatar. The rest were nomadic or semi-nomadic. They were making their living with animal husbandry and live in tents called Ger or Yurt. They were changing their places according to the condition of the pastures. There were 21 towns in total, but it was difficult to call them towns in our scale. Including the

ones in the cities, half of the people live in gers, the other half live in box apartments built by Russian communism.

Lunch was a picnic. And every evening we were staying in a Ger Camp. A tent camp. The tents of our nomadic ancestors, made of felt. Two beds, a coffee table and a stove were in the Ger. If you didn't light the stove, it was ice-cold at night, if you lighted it, it would be very hot. There were toilets and showers, but they were outside, in another building and for public use. Sound insulation was zero. There was no privacy. Knocking on the door was a no-no. At any moment, someone could come in and leave anything. As a matter of fact, at around 5 am in the morning, someone on duty was sneaking in and quietly lighting the stove and leaving.

We travelled south to the Gobi Desert. Once there was an ocean here and the desert was the bottom of the ocean. The first dinosaur eggs were found in this region and thus it was understood that dinosaurs were not mammals. After walking barefoot on the sand dunes, we were on the glaciers in Kartal Canyon on the same day. In Cem's words, in the middle of July and on the same day: From Dune to Glacier.

On our way, we were guests of a nomadic family engaged in animal husbandry. Parents, two children and an unspecified number of horses, yaks, cows and sheep. They had two gers, they were living in one. The other one was rented for guests for 4 USD per person per day. Their cleanliness did not match with ours. There was no harm in throwing rubbish such as paper etc. on the ground in the tent. The need for washing yourself was not common. A little wipe with hot water from the pot heated on the stove is OK. There was no need to run water over us, but we could rarely go to the stream to take a bath.

Ger's mother cooked dinner in the same pot after washing the dishes in it. There was no such thing as a toilet. Why would a nomadic person build a toilet and carry it. Animals do it everywhere. So we can do it anywhere in nature. Men can even urinate outside the tent or as soon as they get out of the car.

We rode camels with double and soft humps and Mongolian horses. Horse is an important culture and a very respected animal in Nomads. Every child is given a horse as a gift when he/she turns 3 years old. From the age of 5, children ride a horse perfectly. And bareback, no saddle. Mongolian horses are small in size, but they are

very durable and can run long distances. There are three million horses in the country. A small number of them are in the wild, unclaimed.

We herded horses. We milked cows. We travelled with the cart. We saw how many things can be made from milk. Bislik cheese, Iitzki from long-boiled milk, dried milk, Aarul from milk so dried that it can even break your teeth, clotted cream, butter, dry clotted cream, and Ayrigh with 3% alcohol from horse milk.

What we learnt:

Animals are not killed by cutting their throats and draining their blood, sheep are killed by slitting their bellies while they are still alive and tearing the aortic artery of the heart by hand, cows and horses are killed by hitting their heads with hammer-like objects, and pigs are killed by dipping boiled potatoes into cold water quickly and swallowing them as if they were cold, that it is common to drink blood drawn with a syringe from a live goat on cold winter days because it gives energy, that there may not be soya sauce existing in a luxury restaurant serving Chinese food, that there is a Mongolian version of GPS (Global Positioning System) (GER Positioning System).

We also learnt that we can live very well without toilets, bathrooms, refrigerators, electricity, telephones, newspapers, restaurants, televisions, computers and cars, and that everything we need is actually found in nature.

We were very impressed by Mongolia. It must be a unique country in the world. It is said that the best way of travelling to really understand and live in Mongolia is to come with a backpack, buy a horse for \$100 and look for the Ger Camps to stay. But only if you bring a proper saddle. We aimed to continue our way of travelling and hopefully one day come back with Kiwican our truck in NZ, reach the regions we have not yet discovered with our the van and spend more time with beautiful people. We haven't done it yet, but it is on our list.

## **PankCar Again**

At the end of 2010 we hit the road again with PankCar from Seattle. We were fascinated by the beautiful road we drove down from the west coast of America to the south, the mighty Pacific, the raging waves hitting the steep rocks, a thousand colours ranging from green to yellow, red and brown, endless sand dunes, foggy misty grey weather.

The ocean was added to the beauty of the Rocky Mountains.

Then California's famous wine valleys Napa and Sonoma. Vines dressed in autumn colours, castles, ceremonies, delicious wine tastings. Then San Francisco, built on 33 hills like Istanbul is built on 7 hills. Yosemite, Sequoia, National Parks, Mount Whitney, the highest mountain in the United States at 4,420 metres.

And then Death Valley. The driest, lowest and hottest place in the United States. 86 metres below sea level. Then Canyonland. Kings Canyon, Zion, Bryce and Grand Canyon. We were in a magical environment. 3000 metres above sea level, at the top of the plateau, we were watching the Colorado River from the north from a height of more than 1000 metres. We were in a snowstorm. The wind was blowing at 60-70 km/hour. The temperature was crawling at minus 3 degrees and the roads were about to be blocked by snow.

Then Sedona with another extraordinary panorama of nature, where the ground cover was red, even the rainwater was flowing red, and the fire-coloured rocks giving the feeling that they will explode at any moment. This region was the land of miracles.

Texas, the oil state, was next. Endless plateaus and pumps running quietly on their own.

You know, the ones that look like chickens pecking grain. In Dallas, we also went to Southwork Ranch, JR and Bobby's farm. Dallas series marked our youth. It was even in the Lonely Planet.

New Orleans, the largest city of Louisiana State and the hometown of famous musician Louis Armstrong, is also the city where jazz music was born. After watching jazz, folk and blues performances in three or four bars in and around the French Quarter, we followed the Mississippi River to the north. It is the 4th largest river in the world, 3700 km long, carrying the waters of 31 states of America to the sea. On our "Swamp Tour" with a river boat, we met Alligators, fresh water crocodiles. Crocodile is a sea water crocodile. We don't have them in Turkey, just lump them all together. When they see the boat, they come closer. The reason is the marshmallows thrown to them. They were fed on sugar. They were in their own environment, but their most valuable features, their naturalness and wildness, had been taken away from them.

The waters of the upper Mississippi were very high. At that time, it was higher than the record high water in 1927. So it was the highest

water in the history of the Mississippi. Despite the precautions taken in risky and important areas, we witnessed many damages and flooded houses and fields. We visited the Elvis Presley mansion and museum in Memphis, the largest city in the state of Tennessee, the birthplace of blues and rock and roll.

If we had not followed the (GRR) Great River Road route, maybe we would have never known St. Louis. While wandering randomly on the streets, we came across a drum session. A group of about 50-60 people were making music with various percussion instruments in a square. One person was starting a rhythm. Everyone accompanied him. People displaying their amateur dance skills also added joy and movement. For 2 hours we watched them mesmerised. There was no money collection. Anyone could bring their percussion instruments. We loved it. It is true that later on we made an effort to attend and organise drum sessions in New Zealand.

After finishing the Great River Road route, we headed east, down the west shore of Lake Michigan to Chicago. After days of brown river water, the blue lake water looked beautiful. It was time for the end of our PankCar project. Our little minibus, our tiny house, in which we travelled from east to west, from north to south, from USA, Canada and Alaska for two years, travelling a total of 46.000 km, met its new owner in a short time. Nothing living and non-living in life is eternal. We know this, but separation still makes us sad. But every finished project means a new beginning.

The message Pinar sent me to celebrate my birthday was worth a whole life for me. She said: "Happy birthday to my bald dad, my hero, my idol in life, who wears earrings after his 50th birthday, who has a ponytail hair. Happy birthday! You have become the person who wrote the greatest epic for the surname Ayata! Happy birthday, adventures, friends, places, cultures, tastes..."

It was the best birthday present I ever got.

## **Vietnam-Cambodia**

Our route this time with Cem's organisation was Vietnam, the country of wars, communism, rice, motorcyclists, poverty, natural beauties, tropical monsoons and handicrafts. Two big river deltas, Red River in the north, Mekong River in the south and the cornerstone of

the economy, rice. The world's 5th largest rice producer with 3 harvests a year. Nearly 100 million people living in an area smaller than half of Turkey. Women protect themselves from the sun. Because white women are acceptable. For men, being white signalled homosexuality.

It is said that 3 million people were killed, 2 million wounded and 300 thousand missing in the war that ended in 1975. The code name of the chemical weapon used by USA in the Vietnam War is Agent Orange. Because it was shipped in orange coloured barrels. They sprayed exactly 80 million litres of poison on the agricultural lands and forests of Vietnam. They made 6,542 helicopter flights over 100,000 square kilometres. Twenty per cent of Vietnam's forests were poisoned at least once. The aim was to exterminate the Vietcong who fought guerrilla warfare and sheltered in the jungle. Nearly 5 million people were affected by chemical weapons, 400 thousand people died and 500 thousand disabled children were born. The effects of Agent Orange on the soil still persist.

55 million scooters for a population of 100 million. Like buzzing flies, everywhere was full of them. But not a single one was riding without a helmet. Everyone over the age of 18 could buy a motorbike. We saw what could be carried on a motorbike, how other motorbikes or bicycles could be pushed. I wanted to drive a motorbike in this chaos. This time we had Pınar with us. Despite her, Nesrin and the whole group's efforts to prevent me, the only support came from our guide. He lent me his scooter, but he sat behind me. I would have preferred to be alone, but I still rode my scooter for a few hours in that traffic. Those who are curious about the traffic can consult the Holy Google.

We tried snake wine together. We didn't taste any snake. Cat, dog and rat meat was eaten. Especially rat meat was very tasty and served in restaurants. I searched for a restaurant serving rat meat on my scooter ride. They turned me down saying that it was on the menu of 2-3 restaurants but not available at the moment. They probably realised I was a tourist.

We were very impressed by the living centres built on the water, the heat and humidity, the Buddhist temples, the nature, the people, the lifestyle and the temple complex Angkor Wat in Cambodia. I really wanted to cycle along the coastline, maybe one day.

## **Dining in the Dark**

In early 2011, I learnt that there was such a thing as “Dining in the Dark” from a lady I had never met before who sat next to me at a friends’ meeting. It was possible to have a wonderful experience by eating in pitch darkness at a place called “Dark Matters” on the Serdar-ı Ekrem street leading to the Galata Tower. It could not be described, it could only be experienced. The food was provided by a famous catering company. It could only be visited on certain days of the week. I immediately researched and made a reservation.

Serdar-ı Ekrem is a narrow street. On the ground floor of a building, at the entrance we were waiting in the room, for others to come. Then mobile phones, lighters, matches, even lighted wristwatches, anything that can be a source of light were collected. There was a single line and everyone put their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. With the guidance of blind waiters, we entered the pitch black environment. You know how your eyes get used to the darkness after a while, but not there. Because there is not the slightest light source. The pupils open wide, but you need a little light. There is never a chance to see anything.

The waiter pulled out a chair and helped us to sit down. At that moment we started to imagine. “I wonder how big this place is? How many tables are there? I have my partner next to me, but who is on the other side of me? Who is in front of me? Can I hear familiar voices? Can I understand anything from the smells? We don’t know what we’re going to eat. It’s a surprise. I wonder what they’ll serve. Is there anything I don’t like? I can tell by the noises that we’re a large group and everyone is settling in.”

Once we were settled, there was an announcement. “Welcome. The experience you will have here is not for you to taste, understand and pity the living conditions of the visually impaired people. It is for you to feel how your other four senses are levelling up by the loss of your sight. Now please put your hand slowly on the table in front of you and feel everything one by one. In the centre is your plate, on the right is the knife and spoon, on the left is the napkin and fork. A little in front of you is your glass of water. There are cold appetisers on your plate. If possible, even if it is difficult, do not eat with your hands and savour what you eat. Our waiters will soon take your drink orders and serve you. Enjoy your meal.”

We understood the table top, but the uneasiness continued. “It’s OK with your partner, but there is no way to chat with other people at the same table. If you order raki or coke from the waiter, no problem, but what if you order white wine? Can you tell if the wine he brings is white or rose without seeing it? You smell it, there’s dolma with olive oil on the plate. Is it stuffed vine leaves or bell peppers? If it’s stuffed vine leaves, I’ll eat it all at once. But if it’s stuffed bell peppers, I have to split it. If I split it, how will I find the other half? No one can see it anyway. What if I eat it by hand?”

While we were just discovering the plate and struggling with the cutlery, live music started at a surprising moment. Kayahan’s song, which we all know, starting with “It’s dark everywhere!” and got into our cells. When he said “Enough, enough is enough!” something inside us broke. Then the appetiser plates were taken and the main courses were served. “Let’s take a bite. What could this be? It looks like chicken, not meat. But it could be fish too. Snapper, for example. I’ll have another bite. Nesrin, is that fish or chicken? I don’t agree. I think fish. The sauce makes it difficult to recognise. Should I ask the waiter?”

There was the waiter. He wanted us to go dancing. What would it be going like? He was taking us to the dance floor. “How can we dance without seeing the floor? We’ll probably sway where we are. What if we bump into other people, step on their feet? What can we do? They can’t see us either. Let’s enjoy ourselves. Being close to the musicians will make us more enthusiastic. Well, the music’s stopped. How will we get back to our seats? How will the visually impaired waiters recognise us and seat us in the same place? What if there’s a mix-up? I hold Nesrin’s hand and hug my wife, but how will we find our seats?”

The waiter came and sat us in the same place. Then desserts, more music. We got up, got in line, put our hand on the shoulder of the person in front of us. We went out with the guidance of the waiters. They didn’t switch on the lights on the way out either. We still don’t know what kind of hall we were in. They handed us the menu outside. Just don’t ask. It doesn’t matter. It was chicken.

Pınar was coming to Turkey in July with her friend Babitha. It would be a bit early, but we thought we should celebrate her birthday with “Dinner in the Dark.” I learnt that we could close the venue with around 40 guests. After making the organisation, it was time to invite



our guests. Pınar's plane was landing at noon. We could take her and her friend from the plane, have a little snack at Galata Tower, and then the surprise. Well, why not surprise everyone else? We said: "Reserve the evening of 28 July 2011 for us. The day before, we will tell you the address where you will come. Surprise!"

In addition to the food, Nesrin bought champagne and birthday cake. We were excited and nervous. In the last week, a 'wolf' has been in our stomachs. I wonder if some of our friends will be upset if they find out at the door that we will be dining in pitch darkness. They might be claustrophobic, they might turn away at the door and might feel bad. Wouldn't such a surprise be a big risk? We thought about it. We said, "We can't take this risk, we might upset our friends." Also, among those we invited were two of Pınar's teachers and their spouses, whom she still keeps in touch with. We only said hello to them few times. As a result, with less than a week to go, we announced the situation with a another e-mail and phone announcement. Indeed, 4-5 people gave up coming. Two people, although they came, could not enter and returned from the door.

We had a great evening with the guests. Since most of our guests knew each other, we all went out together onto the little street after dinner in the dark. Full of chatter, laughter, music, dancing and fun. We also had musicians. Kerim-Selim Altınok brothers and their vocal Buğra Kurtuluş. They are all visually impaired. Our blind waiters serving inside were offering coffee. A lady was dancing with fires in her hands. There was champagne and birthday cake. The glasses were raised in Pınar's honour. Narrow street. There were passers-by. No-one seemed strange. There were those we offer cake to. People collecting paper with big bags also passed by us. Dances and songs. Pınar's Spanish Tavern duet with soloist Buğra was reflected all the way to the Galata Tower, leaving its mark on the night. At the end of the night Buğra asked Nuri Kaya, the owner of the venue: "Was she beautiful?" Everyone had a great experience. Pınar was very happy. "This will be one of the ten nights I will remember in my life," she said. There will always be Pınar's Ispanyol Meyhanesi video on Youtube.

## **Uganda**

The same year we went to Uganda, the pearl of Africa, with our friend Cem, who was organising friend trips to exotic places with

pleasure. Seda and Cüneyt were also in the group. After flying for 6 hours, we started by pushing the minibus that came to pick us up at 1:00 am at night. 7 horsepower was enough to start it.

300,000 people died in the Idi Amin period of 1971-79. A few days later, after we started the trip, we asked Francis, our driver and guide: "What do you think is Uganda's number one problem?" He thought for more than 2 minutes and replied: "We don't have a major problem." "What do you mean? What about poverty?" "Everyone has a job and food. Nobody is hungry." "AIDS?" "It's largely solved." "Drugs?" "Not in significant quantities." "Ethnic or religious conflicts?" "None." "Problems with neighbouring countries?" "No." "Crime rate?" "Negligible, minimal." Ugandan people were happy. They were all smiling. They had enough of everything. There were no big differences between them.

We went rafting on the Victoria Nile. There were 4 plus and 5 degree rapids and the water flow was quite high. There were probably 8 of us on the boat. In the most risky rapid, I found myself in the water without realising what was happening. First I panicked, I couldn't breathe. Then I calmed down, surfaced with the help of my life vest and started to flow with the water. There were no boats or anyone around. I got stuck in a small nook of the river, waiting, anxious. It didn't take long, a rescue boat came and picked me up.

In that difficult rapid, our boat capsized and everyone, including our helmsman and skipper, fell into the river. But not Nesrin. When the boat recovered, she looked and couldn't see any of us. She was more worried and panicked than all of us. Anyway, when we all gathered together without any injuries, we realised that all 10-odd rafting boats that day capsized in the same place. Nesrin was the only one of nearly 100 rafters who did not fall off the boat.

The 10 National Parks in Uganda, home to the majority of animals, were well protected. We did not see a single rubbish. Our Landcruiser 70 series 4x4 car was the right vehicle for Game Drive on dirt roads. We visited the world of Silverback mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, various monkeys, hippopotamuses, crocodiles, countless butterflies, zebras, elephants, various antelopes, giraffes, warthogs, countless birds and lions. This time we were in an iron cage, that is, in a car.

It was fascinating to be at a distance to shake hands with Silverback mountain gorillas, of which there were only 650 left in the

world at that time, living an average of 55 years, giving birth every 4 years, caring for their young for 7 years. We won't forget, falling asleep with the sounds of lions in the tent at night, feeling the warthogs under the ground where we slept.

## **Ethiopia**

At the end of 2011, we went to Ethiopia for 3 weeks with the organisation of Cem and saw and experienced the "Ones."

\*Ethiopia is the ONLY country in Africa with its own alphabet (Amharic)

\*Ethiopia is the ONLY country with 13 months in its annual calendar

\*Ethiopia is the ONLY country that starts the clock of each new day at six the next morning instead of 12 midnight.

\*Ethiopia is one of the two countries in the world that has never been occupied and colonised. The other one is Russia.

\*Ethiopia is the homeland of coffee.

\*Ethiopia is the country where the first generation of humans emerged. 3 million two hundred thousand years ago, Lucy lived on this land.

\*Danakil Depression in Ethiopia has the highest average annual temperature in the world. 45C

It's hard to describe Ethiopia. You have to live it.

Dozens of churches built by carving the rock down from the ground,

The hottest desert in the world with an average of 45 degrees in the dry season and a bubbling red volcano lava lake,

Primitive tribes whose existence was discovered only 20-30 years ago,

Toilets without water,

Non existing Toilets

Resorts without shower

Lodges in the mud.

It was an arduous and exhausting journey towards the Middle Ages on dusty, stony, muddy, endless roads.

Ethiopia is an important country for all three major monotheistic religions. It has an Orthodox sect in its own name. 50 per cent of the population belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Ethiopia is the

second country to recognise Christianity as the state religion. But its roots are based on Judaism. In the Middle Ages, the Solomon Dynasty of Jewish origin was in power. In 615 AD, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Rukiye, her husband Prophet Osman and 15 Muslims migrated to Ethiopia and introduced Muslim religion to people. The Rastafari religious movement in Jamaica also has its roots in Ethiopia.

There were 9 of us. We were travelling with two Landcruisers, two drivers, one guide, two guards with Kalashnikovs where one of them was cross-eyed. We went up the Erta Ale volcano. 15 kilometres uphill on foot. To see the bubbling, red boiling lava lake. Since the weather was very hot, we started walking just before sunset. We walked at night and reached the summit in pitch darkness. Erta Ale, one of the few active lava lakes in the world, was overflowing from time to time. It was an exciting experience to walk on the cooled lava accumulated around the crater, to walk on a surface that breaks under your feet like pavlova cake. We got almost a metre close to the rim of the crater, which was about 150 metres in diameter, in order to see the entire lava lake below, which looks like a hellfire.

At night we slept in sleeping bags under the stars, with our guards with Kalashnikovs who walked with us and the camels which carried our loads. Nothing happened between us and the big rats passing by our heads. The next morning, after experiencing the sunrise on the rim of the crater lake and seeing the lava lake in daylight, we started our descent. It was very hot. We had a drinking water shortage. We understood better why the groups started to return before sunrise. A few weeks after we returned from our trip, German tourists camping in Erta Ale crater were attacked by Afar ethnic group. 5 dead, 7 wounded, 2 hostages. The area was closed to visit for a while. Nowadays, it is possible to visit under the protection of military troops.

We visited the Hamar tribe. We witnessed the rite of passage to manhood. We were the only guests. There was no place to watch. We were together with everyone else in the tribe. They did not find us strange and did not care about us. Men of marriageable age had to go through this ceremony in order to find a wife. The young man had to run, jump and somersault over fifteen cows lined up side by side four times. He was naked. It didn't matter if he fell, he could try again. Music, dancing, entertainment. After that he could start a family with the woman chosen for him by his family and have children, own

cows, etc. There were three or four men with whips at the ceremony. They were chosen and their job was to whip the women who wish to be whipped. The women were coming to them and begging to be whipped on the back. Isn't it a good job, men? The women who were whipped must not show their pain. They should be proud of the blood and whip marks on their backs. It was the only way to prove that they would be a good wife and mother, able to endure any kind of torture, to bear all the burdens of the family.

We visited the Mursi tribe. In their traditions, the way women express and declare their readiness for marriage and childbearing is through colourful patterned discs made of clay placed on their lower lips. After the removal of a few lower teeth of young girls at the age of 16-17, a hole is drilled in the lower lip and a temporary disc with a diameter of a few centimetres is inserted into it. When the wound healed, a slightly larger disc would be inserted, then an even larger one. Gradually the hole in the lower lip gets bigger. The bigger the disc, the more beautiful you are.

We stayed in an Afar village on the way to Danakil. The houses were built by attaching pieces of branches to each other. Plastic basins, straw hats, pieces of cloth, etc., which had completed their lifespan, were also placed between them, shelters that could be dismantled and transported. We had one shelter but there were only two beds in it. Our group gave it to us. Our other seven friends slept in the open on beds placed on the streets of the village. When Gaye woke up in the morning, she jumped up when she saw a couple of adolescent boys watching her by the bedside. There were no toilets. As you know, semi-nomadic life. The next valley was a public toilet. Before going to bed in the evening, I, our guide Yigo and Cem were guiding the girls of our group to go to the toilet in the valley. We turned round. There was a group of 8-10 men following us. Yigo asked, "What are you doing?" They replied, "We are going to the toilet." When he said, "Wait for the girls," they sat on the hillside and waited. It was a very unsettling situation. Later we learnt that we were safe. Our guide had given a large sum of money to the chief of the tribe in advance, so that they would not rape our women. We were in another "world." We experienced the difficulty of adaptation not there, but in Turkey when we returned.

## Retina

After the sale of PankCar, we started looking for a boat again. This time we want a different experience. Travelling the rivers and canals of Europe with a steel boat. After asking around and doing some research, the Dutch Linssen brand came to the fore. We travelled to the Netherlands to visit the factory. An old and well-established family company. A medium sized shipyard. Their new boats were made of thinner steel and cheaper materials. The reason was price competition, you know. That's why we decided to buy second hand boats. We got some ideas and came back.

Internet searches had begun. Among the second-hand candidates were boats that Linssen had taken back as barter, overhauled and offered for sale again. Another Linssen Holland trip. In the meantime we stayed in Amsterdam for a few days. Let's try these coffee shops. They had marijuana varieties on their menus, especially for tourists. But even though it had been 25 years since I quit smoking, I was still afraid that if I smoke these marijuana cigarettes, I would tend to put the cigarette pack into my pocket in a short time. I thought of eating a marijuana cake. That was also on the menu. It was saying: "It'll take a while to digest." We waited. In the meantime, we could walk around. We came to Dam Square. I felt bad. "Nesrin, let's sit somewhere, please." "OK." said Nesrin and we sat in the café in the square. The chairs were outside and there was probably only about 20 per cent occupancy. But I had the feeling, "It's too crowded and everyone is coming at me." I said before I even asked: "Let's go to the hotel, please." Nesrin was trying to understand what happened. It was still early afternoon. When I entered the room, my only desire was to sleep. Nesrin: "I'll make you some tea." The paper of the tea bag she tore at the other end of the room felt like it was tearing right in front of my eardrum. I fell asleep immediately. After about three hours I was fine. I was scared.

We liked a 2002 47-foot Linssen, 10 years old but relatively lightly used. She was at the marina in Muggia, Trieste. Owned by Angelo Vesnauer from Slovenia. We flew to Venice to see the boat. From there Trieste and Muggia. Angelo and his wife gave us a tour of the boat. It was not bad, but there was work to be done. We made an offer and they accepted. We said, "We'll have a survey done." They said, "OK." We found a survey company in Trieste. The boat was put on hard. Among other things, the survey team found damage on the starboard bowsprit.

I was also in contact with Linssen at that time. I gave them the hull number of the boat and asked them about the damage, in case they had any information. They immediately sent me pictures and told me that the boat had been pushed into the dock by waves in a storm. They did not want me to buy that boat. They wanted to sell us one of their second hand boats. They were also worried that the market value of their brand will decrease with the below market price we would pay for this boat. Angelo also cut the price drastically after the damage was revealed. I showed the pictures to my professional friends in Turkey and got their opinions. All of them agreed that the damage was only a slight dent in the steel hull and that it was repaired and that there would be no problems in the future. Thus, Retina became ours in July 2012. We did not change the name because it was said that “It is bad luck.”

We spent a couple of weeks with Retina in the Adriatic and then we came to Mandalina Marina in Sibenik, operated by the Doğuş group, for maintenance, minor changes, additions and then winterisation. Our plan was to enter the European river system and after sailing around for a few years, bring Retina to Turkey via the Danube and use her as a summer house in a different region in the south every year. Meanwhile, Nesrin’s nephew Burak had been suffering from Aplastic Anaemia for a long time. He needed a bone marrow transplant. A compatible marrow was being sought. For this reason, we decided to change the plan and come to Turkey first and then do the river trip.

The following summer we set off with Joanne and Haydn to bring Retina to Turkey. At that time, a full bone marrow match for Burak had still not been found and the decision had been made to transplant the half-matched bone marrow of his father Naci. When we learnt that the operation would take place before we had even crossed the Adriatic Sea, Nesrin flew to Istanbul from Tirana in Albania and I flew to Istanbul from Corfu in Greece. Haydn and Joanne crossed the Corinth Canal and the Aegean Sea alone and brought Retina to Bozburun. After spending the summer of 2013 in Orhaniye and the summer of 2014 in Göcek, Retina was moored at Ataköy Marina in Istanbul at the end of summer 2015.

## **Eat Drink Cycle**

We decided to do a Cappadocia tour with Yasemin and Murat, two beautiful people with whom I was sharing my desire to travel by

bicycle. We packed our bicycles, shipped them. We stayed in Ürgüp for three days and had a wonderful Cappadocia trip. We travelled very well on the main roads, back roads, Love Valley, fairy chimneys, churches carved into the rocks. Usually our bicycles carried us, but there were places where we had to carry our bicycles. We ate well and drank well. During the balloon flight, we saw the places we cycled and the places we were going to cycle from above.

After we returned, we started to think about where else we could make this kind of trip, which had left its taste in our mouths. Bahadır joined the group as a bicycle lover and said to us: “Come to Bodrum. Let’s go round the island of Kos.” We agreed that it was not very meaningful to carry our own bicycles. With Bahadır’s organisation, we had a perfect 3-day trip in Kos. We wanted to find a name and logo for ourselves. Yasemin said “Eat Drink Cycle.” Bahadır drew our logo. We also planned our web page. Pay attention to the order. First we eat, then we drink, the cycle is at the end.

In the spring, the “Eat, Drink, Spin” tour in Tuscany was Yasemin’s idea. Italy, Renaissance, vineyards, charcuterie, wine, cheese, history, nature! They were saying Tuscany is bumpy. They said, it rains in April. They said, the roads are risky. Nevertheless, we made our route. The company we rented our bikes from also organised the hotels we would stay in. They also carry our belongings to the next hotel every day. This time there were six of us. Murathan and Cüneyt joined us.

We met at the airport. We flew to Bologna. Then transfer to Siena. The first day our cycling was short and flat. After pedalling 15 km we stayed overnight in Monteroni D’Arbia. The next day the destination was Montepulciano. 65 km. It would rain in the afternoon. Let’s take precautions. Let’s go up and down in the green nature. Then let’s go down and up again. Let’s go up and down. Let’s descend singing and ascend puffing and puffing. We were passing through San Giovanni d’Asso while asking “Why are there no flat plains?.” We were hungry. Ristorante del Castello looked fine. Delicious food, delicious wine. Another bottle. “Welcome Abey!” greeted Faruk, the boss’s favourite assistant from Turkey. Friendly chat. A bottle of wine as gift, followed by another bottle. Conversation and laughter that got deeper and deeper. Then a slightly crazy man, who had been married only four times, wearing a frock coat with a rose collar, joined us with his bicycle and an inflatable bride sitting on the back, followed by a jumble of tin cans.



Murat's attempts to free wrestle with the inflatable woman, Bahadır's aphorism saying "I would stay here and publish a magazine." and all these things were going on. We started to think, "Should we take a taxi for the remaining 30 kilometres?" Our pride didn't let us do it. We jumped on our bikes and when we reached Pienza, the rain intensified and we were exhausted from too much wine, too much food and too much cycling. We had pedalled 53 km and there were still 12 km to go. After a fair voting, a minibus was hired with full agreement, to take us to Montepulciano.

The next day we did part of the most difficult 78 km leg from Montepulciano to Siena by train. The next day we would have a picnic on the road. Half a kg mortadella, 9-10 types of salami between 100-150 g each, 5 types of cheese, focaccia bread, two bottles of wine. From Siena to San Gimignano, it was 48 km and again up and down. But before we left Siena, Yasemin fell, hit her elbow and her arm was twisted. It was difficult for her to continue on the bike. Murathan's patronage. He accompanied Yasemin on the train. Unfortunate, but that's part of the life. No fractures, no dislocation, but a muscle contusion. Yasemin's arm was in a sling for two days.

The remaining four of us pedalled sadly. After 30 kilometres we started to look for a picnic place, we couldn't find one. It should be far from the main road, there should be tables, the view should be nice. The grass shouldn't be tall. It should be under a tree. We couldn't find the table but we found the rest. In addition, we found ants and small flies. They loved the mortadella and prosciutto. They ate it, we ate it, and we even ate some of them. Two bottles of wine were consumed by four people. We had deep conversations.

The next morning our destination was Florence, or Firenze. The centre of the Renaissance. 62 kilometres. Our hotel was the worst hotel on this tour. Rooms were on the second floor of an apartment block. A psychopathic old man at the reception desk. Bahadır wrote his thoughts about the receptionist clearly in the hotel's memoirs. No one seems to have translated it to the old man until today. The restaurants were packed. We could hardly find a place. It was our last night and we were all determined to have fun. When our waiter learnt that we were Turkish, he said that he wanted to come to Istanbul, but he was unsure because of him being gay. He looked at us with a question mark, Murat said, "No problem, come and call me" and gave his phone number. This

time the whole team looked at Murat with question marks.

As the meats and wines rolled around, the waiter brought a huge bottle of Limoncello to the table. And a bottle of Orancecello. But we hadn't asked for it! Then the music got louder and the dancing started. Colourful rooster wigs appeared. Bahadır warned me while I was drinking glasses of Limoncello, considering it as fruit juice, but my receptors were switched off. I was literally drunk, unable to walk, sleeping while leaning against poles, passing out in the toilets, trying to open the doors of cars on the road with two people on both my arms. I remember answering to those who asked "Why are you doing this?," "If I find it open, I'll get in and go to sleep." Afterwards, Murathan and Cüneyt threw me into the hotel room, the whole team walked to the square and had two separate Street Parties. With dancing and music until 3:30 am and without me.

On the way back we would go to Bologna airport by train. When we bought our tickets, Tren-Italia's ticket automat distributed the six of us two by two to three separate carriages. Bahadır and Kemal in one carriage, Kural siblings in another carriage, Murat and Cüneyt in the third carriage. 4 of us got off in Bologna. We listened the stories of Cüneyt and Murat about not getting off the train from them when we met in Istanbul.

Murat said:

"The adrenaline surged when Cüneyt and I, who loved to talk a lot, realised that the train had stopped in Bologna, peaked when we realised that the doors were locked, and our attempts to break the door down were not something to be forgotten for a lifetime. I thought of opening the window and jumping out of the train with my suitcases and Cüneyt thought of pulling the red emergency lever, whatever the punishment would be. Fortunately, the windows did not open and there was no red emergency lever.

Probably due to the feeling of exclusivity of being the first two people, who had been to Florence, Bologna, Milan and Rome on the same day, and the narcotic effect of the wine and champagne that we drunk in various places, the constant change of vehicles, and the labour of carrying suitcases on the run, we entered into a process of "spiritually down" that almost caused us to miss the Rome - Istanbul flight.

When we finished our wine and cheese enjoyment at the Rome

airport 45 minutes before the flight with the words “Let’s go, let’s go” and went to the G02 gate, realised that this was not an aircraft gate, but the gate to get on the train from the terminal we were, to the other terminal to board the aircraft. The sounds we made with the abundant use of the letter “f” must have surprised the other people waiting for the train. Again the train door, again it does not open, but this time we are not inside the train but outside. Seconds passed like minutes and fortunately, 25 minutes before the flight, we arrived at the boarding point sweating, tired. We were taken into the plane with the angry looks of the flight attendant and the people on the plane.”

“It was the best trip and the best five days of my life,” Bahadır said emphatically.

## **Bhutan**

Our friend Cem took us to Bhutan at the end of 2012. Then we realised that Bhutan is not an ordinary country. Rice there was red in colour. It was against the law to sell cigarettes there. The word ‘chilli’ there did not mean a hot flavour, but the food itself. People working in the public or private sector there were wearing tunics. Same sex partnerships were punishable by imprisonment. Many houses there had pictures or statues of giant penises tied with ribbons. Gross National Happiness was emphasised there instead of Gross National Product.

The 4th King of Bhutan, who opened his country to modernisation after taking the throne, pronounced the concept of Gross National Happiness for the first time. Based on the teachings of Buddhism, he said: “Not more production, not more consumption, but more happiness!.” He was also taken seriously. Researches then were being conducted in universities on this subject. Criteria had been determined and measurement strategies had been developed. After the European countries occupying the first 6 places, Bhutan ranked 7th in the Gross National Happiness ranking.

In Bhutan, happiness is described in two parts. Inner happiness and outer happiness. For inner happiness, the individual’s mental/physical health and strong social relations are decisive. For external happiness, the preservation of the beauty of nature is essential. The country is located at the top of the Himalayas at an average altitude of 2,500 metres. The environmental awareness in Bhutan, which

is landlocked with only Chinese and Indian borders, is surprising. Bhutanese people, who have a high national consciousness and are proud of their country, seem to have found the recipe for happiness.

Backpackers couldn't enter Bhutan as tourists within the framework of the King's and government's policy of limiting tourism, controlling development and rejecting immigrant requests. For a tourist to visit Bhutan, he had to apply to the Tourism Council and pay 250 USD for each day of the stay. This fee included all kinds of accommodation, food, guide, transport expenses. Hotels were Touristic Class A. 3 stars. 40% of the 250 USD daily fee goes to the state. 20% is allocated to social projects such as school, hospital construction, 20% covers guide, food, hotel, transport expenses. 20% is the profit margin of the tourism agency.

In cinemas you could only watch drama films in Bhutanese culture. You should watch Western films online or buy DVDs. Every Tuesday, except for fire trucks, taxis and ambulances, all vehicles with private and official licence plates were forbidden to drive. Even members of parliament were walking. Thimpu is the only capital city in the world without traffic lights. Transport was by new cars, jeeps or minibuses. It was not possible to see old vehicles.

There are no flat areas in the country. An airport was built on the only flat area. The landing manoeuvre of the plane descending in the valleys between the mountains made us all to be very scared. We climbed 10 km on foot from 2400 metres to 3500 metres altitude. We had the most delicious soup in the camp at our destination. We had one of our best meals. At night we did not all sleep well. It turned out that there was nothing wrong with us. If you were at an altitude of 3500 metres, it wouldn't be easy to sleep the first night. We descended 10 kilometres the next day without blinking an eye, also without feeling any tiredness.

Bhutan is importing all the meat from India. Because it is forbidden to slaughter cattle or sheep. Land or river hunting is forbidden too. In short, killing is against the law. So export live cows and sheep to India, then import them back as slaughtered meat.

There are rows and rows of marijuana growing on the side of the road. By itself. They used to feed it to cattle and sheep. It makes them hungry and makes them eat more and gain weight. But if you dry it and smoke it, you go nine years in prison.

## Kozi

Our friends Haydn and Joanne decided to rent out their farm in NZ and live in Australia for a while, working and travelling. Travelling in the Australian Outback was on our bucket list. The conversations that started as “Maybe we can join your trips” led them to buy a Land cruiser 105 series off-road vehicle and us to own an 8 year old Ultimate branded towable Camper Trailer in 2013. Kozi became the fourth leg of our life philosophy, which we call TransEarth / DunyaKazan. Its feature was that it can go and be used on all kinds of Off-road ground and conditions. It was one of the best among the similar ones produced for Australia’s harsh natural conditions, 100% dust and water proof. It was a camper-trailer that could swim if necessary when passing through deep waters, had a king size bed for 3 people with a refrigerator, stove, chemical toilet, couch, table, stereo. We were opening it in 10 minutes after parking and closing it in 10 minutes before departure.

Australia is an island, a continent and a country. 25 million inhabitants spread over an area slightly smaller than the European continent. If you take out the big cities, there will be no one around. It is absolutely necessary to investigate the water and fuel supply situation before going on a long journey in the Outback. We might not be able to refuel and get water for 1,000 km. We might also not come across a single person.

We got off the plane in Perth and met KOZI. We first found our Camper-trailer with the top, opening sideways strange, then we got used to it and loved it. Following the west coast we travelled to the south, experiencing holiday towns, beaches, ocean, sun, wine regions, tall karri trees, corrugated dirt roads, kangaroos. We started with a little touristic, a little local, acclimatisation trip with temperatures ranging from 43 degrees to 17 degrees. Then we handed it over to Haydn and Joanne. Next time we would experience the real Outback and more challenging conditions.

By the way, I wanted to put here an article I wrote about our Transearth / DunyaKazan life philosophy about 15 years ago:

### Why?

Only human beings seem to be the asking this question in the world.  
No creature on earth questions the reason for anything it does.

They know what to do, how to do, when to do, where to do.  
They do what they have to do in a Divine order and balance as Nature  
has programmed them.

They live.  
They do not ask 'Why' they live.  
They do not question the Purpose of Life...  
They are just living...  
The human being asks, questions, enquires, investigates, tries to  
dominate, tries to rule and  
tries to Own.

Why don't other creatures do it?  
Just because their brains work less than ours?  
Or do human beings have a different mission in this incredibly  
perfect world order?  
Human beings are at the top of the food chain.  
Every living creature is feeding the one up in the food chain and fed  
by the one down.  
Human being eats many links in this chain.  
But no one's eating us.

If we were eaten, the weak and underdeveloped ones of our species  
would be wiped off. Advanced specimens of our species  
would perpetuate our lineage.  
However, now the weak and underdeveloped ones are reproducing  
rapidly, while the strong and developed ones are diminishing in  
number.

Why are we at the top of the food chain?  
If we're at the top of the food chain,  
What is there to stop our inexorable proliferation?  
In the past, epidemics and wars have balanced the situation.  
So what do we do now?

Human rights and freedom endeavours,  
Sciences like medicine, biology,  
are succeeding to prolong our lives.

Mankind is trying to capture Immortality in order to defeat its  
greatest fear, Death.

Prolonging life is actually prolonging old age.  
As the population grows inexorably,  
the Earth's resources are diminishing and being polluted.  
By being at the top of the food chain, are we given the mission of  
resetting the Earth?

If so, when will it happen?  
Maybe there's not much time.  
Maybe our generation will see it.  
But we won't see what we saw.

Did I answer the question?  
What was the question?  
Why?

Why think that life is not just about work?  
Why say that's enough for me?  
Why build life on Cruising / Travelling?  
Why try to get away from the desire of Ownership?

The most diseased emotion of mankind,  
If we don't count perversions,  
Is probably the desire of "Possession."

Other creatures also have similar phenomenons.  
Like dominating a territory,  
Like mating with the opposite sex.  
These are means.  
Not the goals.  
The sole purpose is to sustain life and reproduce. Everything else is  
just a means.

In mankind, the goals and the means are mixed. Possession has  
ceased to be a means.  
It has become goal.

The disease starts here.  
Thus, the boundaries we draw for ourselves are shaped.  
The enthusiasm to live is identified with the obsession to possess.

The more we have, the happier we are.  
We are more peaceful.  
But that's not enough.  
We need more.  
More, more, more...

However, the world is so beautiful,  
The world is so different,  
The world is so natural...  
The answers to all questions are there.  
It's right here.  
Maybe right next to us.  
In the nature.

After passing the step of fighting for bread,  
The best way to eternity is  
Try to embrace different cultures,  
Try to live nature,  
Try to understand nature.  
Try to assimilate nature,.

That's the reason.  
That's why Trans Earth,  
That's why Dunya Kazan....  
Us ... Nesrin-Kemal Ayata

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## **China**

Cem Mergen's classic travel programme for 2013 included a trip to China. We travelled long distances, not by camel caravans, but by plane, bus or train, to smell the essence of the historical Silk Road. 12 of us this time. We started our visit to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with Kashgar at the western end. We were fascinated by the



majesty of the 7.546 m high Muztagh Ata mountain. We met Muslim Uyghur Turks, our compatriots in Central Asia who do not drink alcohol, cover their women's heads, speak Uyghur Turkish written in Arabic letters, address the men of the royal family as Hoja and their women as Pasha, resist assimilation by the Chinese and have managed to preserve their culture.

In Kashgar, the bicycle had almost disappeared and electric motorbikes were everywhere. The central government was using Beijing time, but the Uyghurs also had local time. People didn't wear white colour. Especially women liked bright colours very much. There were 25 million Uyghur Turks living in this region, which is as large as one sixth of China. 'The Valley of the Wolves' series from Turkey became so popular and famous there, that shops started selling main actor's clothes.

The most important feature of China is its history and culture dating back 5,000 years. For any event, when it happened, the answer was given in which dynasty it was. Terracota Warriors, perhaps the world's most important archaeological discovery, was only 2,200 years old. The start of the construction of the Great Wall of China, the largest structure ever built by mankind, was also 2,200 years ago.

The food culture is very different from ours. Sauteed chicken feet, donkey meat pie, sea horse and ox penis combinations are not unusual. There is no ground floor in the buildings. Buildings start from the first floor. Since it is very difficult to write with Chinese letters, the new generation uses a Latin alphabet keyboard. But they read what the computer translates into Chinese on the screen.

During the communist period between 1949 and 1980, people lived on an average of 3 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Now, prosperity had increased and areas had grown. Shanghai had become the largest and most luxurious metropolis in the east. Property prices were so expensive that it was difficult for men who did not own a house to get married. Chinese men would not approach girls who had European or American boyfriends with the scepticism of "I cannot satisfy her."

Contrary to ours, a matriarchal structure prevailed, the woman who was strong at home was the one who had her say. Starting from the 16th century conditions and extending to the present day, we made an interesting journey to China. China is very big, China is very different.

At the same time, the Gezi resistance started in Istanbul and we witnessed the most peaceful and democratic popular movement I have ever seen in my life. It was not enough to witness it, we needed to take part in it, we needed to support it, we needed to feel it. For nature, for the world, for our country. Nesrin and I took part in the resistance many times in Kabataş, Beşiktaş, Şişli, Taksim, Harbiye, Beyoğlu. It had become standard to encounter pepper spray. Only once the police didn't let us go up to Taksim from Dolmabahçe stadium. I almost fainted from the pepper spray we had there. We said enough for one day and returned home. Another time we couldn't enter our house in Yıldız. It was under a police blockade and there was a cloud of pepper spray everywhere. After a while when we entered the house, Nesrin brewed tea and prepared something like cookies. I went down and offered them to the bright young people who were resisting in front of our apartment.

2013 was also the year Pınar completed her PhD programme and graduated. 'Doctor' degree from the Rockefeller University Heintz Laboratory. How wonderful it was to experience the graduation ceremony together with our daughter who became a Dr. in Molecular Biology. Pride, joy, fun. Our daughter is climbing the steps all by herself with her own effort, strength and determination and she is happy. The greatest gift for parents.

## **Carving**

Ever since I can remember, I have had a great interest in wood. I admire chalets made of wood, IKEA's wooden furniture with natural matt surfaces. Dealing with wood, shaping it, engaging in the art of carving was always in the back of my mind. But not furniture making. I searched in Turkey. When it comes to wood carving, the address is usually carpenters producing classical furniture. I visited them and examined them closely, but I am not interested in the carpentry side of the business.

The main arts of the Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, are wood and jade carving. Cutting and piercing weapons, sculptures, symbols, unique motifs. They also have Kauri, Taraire, Kowhai etc. trees endemic to New Zealand. Some of them have remained intact in swamps for 40,000 years. Wood carving is an art/craftsmanship made by

hand with a variety of chisels and other auxiliary tools. Jade carving is another branch. It hasn't attracted me much so far. I started researching who and where I could learn this in New Zealand. There is a carving school in Rotorua. I went to them and said: "I want to be your student." The Pakeha (i.e. white race) manager said: "In order for us to accept you as a student, you must have Maori blood." "But you don't look very Maori?" "I have 5 per cent Maori blood. So one of my ancestors a few generations ago was Maori. We already have a capacity of 8 students. Our aim is to teach Maori our ancestral art and keep it alive."

I was very upset. But I had to agree. They had such nice workshops. What beautiful people, what beautiful artefacts they were creating. I did not give up and continued my research. I applied to a few universities in the North Island, but I didn't get any positive feedback from them either. One day we went to the newly opened Saturday market in Kerikeri. Vegetables, fruit, handicrafts, music, tea and coffee. An environment where people socialise at the same time. I met a guy there, chisel and mallet in hand, carving a tiki. "Hello, I'm Kemal, I'm Turkish." "And I'm Israe, I'm Maori." "I want to carve too. Can you teach me?" He asked: "Can you afford it?" "What do you mean?" As a result of our conversation, I became my master's student. Two, sometimes three days a week, I went to his workshop, using his tools and the way he showed me, I stepped into the world of Maori Carving. I paid by the hour. In the meantime, I gradually started to buy my own tools. The quality is excellent but very expensive in New Zealand. After the first few, I bought the big batch online from their dealer in Germany and had them sent to the Cambro Germany factory. I got them during one of my factory visits and brought them first to Istanbul and then to Kerikeri.

I embraced the carving endeavour with great enthusiasm. I wanted everything I did to be something different. I didn't and don't want to repeat myself too much. According to my master, he saw the potential in me from the very first moment. He fed and supported me a lot. He corrected my mistakes. He praised everything I did. He always honoured me when introducing me to other people. He even declared that he believed I was Maori in my previous life. I learnt everything from him. We had a master-apprentice relationship but not a friend relationship. We went through a different process and separation, which I will explain later, but with my efforts we got back on track after a while.

In 2014, it was the turn of Alsace region of France for “Eat Drink Cycle” travels. There would be six of us again. I had organised everything, the full amount had been paid. But my father’s COPD-pulmonary and heart ailments were giving him a hard time. He was often in and out of hospital. We were restless as a family. Yasemin, Murathan and I sat down and talked and decided not to go in this situation. The company did not refund the money of three people. Ayda was added to Bahadır, Murat and Cüneyt. Four of them made the tour.

### **Last Will and Testament**

I have already mentioned that my 47.5% share when Özay was first established, was equalised upon my suggestion after Erhan and Hıfı started to work in the company. When my father said, “You be different,” I argued that it was right to be equal. Naturally, my father’s logic that everyone should be involved in something and everyone should get enough of the meal in the middle did not work in the management of the company. We have never been able to implement a professional and hierarchical management style in the company. Within the organisation, my duties, responsibilities, skills, education and background were different from everyone else. The saying “Don’t be too modest, they will believe you!” is true. I was too humble. Since our being equal caused problems to become unsolvable in company management, at a shareholders’ meeting, I demanded that my share be equalised with my father’s, i.e. 30%, while Erhan and Leyla’s share should remain at 20%. Everyone found my demand justified and it was signed by everyone along with our other decisions. Year 2010.

In February 2011, my mother and father prepared a will under Erhan’s supervision. Erhan got a mental health report for both of them, and Erhan’s lawyer organised the drafting and notary work. Leyla knew about it, but it was hidden from me. I found out by chance in 2014, 3 years later. The purpose of the will was to equalise the company shares. For this reason, my mother excluded me from her will.

I felt deeply offended. The decision we signed in 2010 might have been wrong. Or ideas and conditions might have changed later. A meeting could have been held again and if there was a mistake, the situation could have been corrected. But it was very difficult for me to digest the fact that this was done in secret and by organising a will.

Other family members also should have found the 10 per cent share I received later unfair, so no one objected to my mother's will.

There is one thing I believe in. Every person can donate their assets to whomever they want, while they are still in good health. It should not be questioned, it is a personal preference, there must be reasons. For this reason, when my father passed away in 2015 and my mother passed away in 2020, I did not object to the wills. I did not file a lawsuit, I accepted them exactly. My parents had previously transferred our summer house in Silivri and then their house in Ulus to Erhan. Erhan had sold Silivri house for next to nothing. He emptied Ulus in the first week after my mum died. He scattered and destroyed their/our belongings and our memories in that house. Even the 40th day prayers could not be done in my mother's house. First he rented it out, then he sold it too.

I did not file a lawsuit again, because of the principles I believe in. After 2004, when we sold the company, nearly two million Euros of money that my parents had received was transferred to Erhan, little by little. My brother's need for money never ended, as he set up new businesses, failed them one after the other, and lived in luxury. But my parents ran out of money. They asked for the money back from the relatives they had helped before. While they could have been treated in the best private hospitals, Erhan took them to small hospitals in back neighbourhoods for tests and treatment. Finally, my mother asked for a loan for Erhan from her elderly and disabled neighbour living upstairs before she died.

My father accused me of embezzling money from the company the year before he died. A criminal offence. The company has three buildings. The rent we receive is known to everyone. After deducting insurance, dues, taxes, small expenses, the rest is distributed to the partners. It's a simple calculation. But I couldn't convince him. Erhan wanted to send his accountant to the company to analyse it. I didn't think it was appropriate for a person I didn't know to enter the books of the company. So I made an agreement with Deloitte to start a corruption investigation for the company. I also informed the partners about the situation. This would have worsened his attitude towards me. The corruption investigation was cancelled. So I asked all the partners to write and sign an acquittal letter for the past years. Everyone signed it, except my father. I want to attribute this to his health condition.

After a while, my mother's voice recordings arrived via WhatsApp. She recorded in her own voice how ungrateful we were, that we never took care of her, that she lived thanks to God and then her only son Erhan, that I divided the family into two because of my greed for money, and that she would never forgive Leyla and me. She is obviously reading the text written by Erhan. She gets confused at times, she starts the sentence from the beginning. There is also a prompter person with her.

I have never had a sense of revenge. To do another evil in response to someone who has done evil to me and to enjoy it, is a sick feeling for me. Even more, consciously planning to do evil to anyone goes beyond my criteria of humanity. What I do is, try to protect myself in order not to be harmed again. For this reason, I have brought my relations with Erhan to a new dimension. I cannot change the fact that he is my brother. I am not sulking. I talk to him if necessary or if he calls. But when we meet, I perceive Erhan as void and see the objects and scenery behind him.

I don't forgive Erhan for two reasons. Firstly: He made my father think I was a thief. The second is that my mum and dad died poor.

What does forgive mean?

"I paid for what I have done. OK, forgive me." I'm not the state, I'm not a judge. Does that mean it's done and should be forgotten? I won't forget. It's impossible to erase the consequences of a mistake as if it never happened. "Forgiveness is a big thing." No, I call it "Not caring." And that's the greatest punishment one can inflict on a human being. I heard a nice saying recently. "Forgiveness belongs to God. We can only swallow it."

## **Tropical Australia**

After a long break, in August 2014, it was a pleasure to be back on the road with Kozi. We flew to Darwin. The northernmost part of Australia. This time our journey would start in the tropics and continue to the Outback of Australia. July-August is the winter season in the Southern Hemisphere, but we were at 12-15 degrees South latitude, that is, in the tropics. The temperature fluctuated between 30-35 degrees Celsius. The seasons here are actually divided into two as wet and dry seasons. We came in the dry season. In the wet season, the famous monsoon rains limit the possibility of travelling.

First we visited Kakadu National Park, a World Heritage Site. We were in close contact with crocodiles jumping into the boats. They were just outside our car door at river crossings. Estuarines are salt water crocodiles. They would definitely attack and eat people. Freshwater crocodiles attack when they see humans as a threat. I still believe that no creature in nature attacks humans unless they feel threatened and starving to death. But I may have to sacrifice my life to prove it. Since I have no such intention, it seems that this theory will grow old with me.

Bison, crocodile, snake, spider, kangaroo, dingo, bat are the animals of the region. We did not meet snakes and big spiders, but we got close to others. Dingo is a wild animal of the dog type.

The bats are the size of a big cat. Flying foxes. They weigh up to 1.5 kg and have a wingspan of up to 1.5 metres. Sympathetic kangaroos are the biggest danger on the roads. They are a nightmare for drivers, especially when they jump on the roads at dusk. The reinforced front bumper, or bullbars, are called Ru-Bar here. Ru for kangaroo.

We met Boomerang. Nesrin shot herself on her first try. Voila! We tried playing the didgeridoo, Nesrin managed to make a sound the first time. She says she's from Bozüyük, but she seems to have Aboriginal roots.

Aborigines are a nomadic society that meets all their needs from nature. They used to hunt in the area they came from, and after consuming the fruits and plants they could eat, they set the area on fire. Isn't that horrible?

No it is not!

The same method is currently being used by National Park Rangers under the control of the Australian Government. We have also witnessed it in Alaska. Forest fires occur spontaneously and are a normal and necessary phenomenon in the cycle of nature. For example, the seeds of the eucalyptus class trees here can only crack and grow green when they are exposed to flames. Although the trunks of the trees are blackened, they continue to grow leaves and continue living. Today, in order to prevent large fires, Rangers burn forests in small areas in a controlled manner. Predator birds fly at the edge of the fire to hunt rats and other creatures that escape from the fire.

Our next route was Kimberley, the north of Western Australia. It is a tropical region with its lace-like coast and dramatic nature. It is a place far from everywhere, difficult to access, with living conditions not

being easy. It is possible to enter the areas belonging to the Aborigines with the permission of the relevant Ministry. In 1956, the famous Gibb River Road was built from east to west. The aim was to raise cattle in vast areas. The road was necessary to transport the animals.

665 kilometres of dirt road between Kununurra and Derby. Remote Outback. The corrugated sections were in a terrible condition, although a grader was constantly smoothing them out during the dry season. We couldn't believe the sounds coming from the car and Kozi! Halve the tyre pressure, reduce the speed to 15 km/h, relax!

On the 665 km road with deep water crossings, which can only be driven by 4x4 vehicles, if you are lucky, you can buy diesel fuel with 50% more price, or you can get your flat tyre patched for 70-80 dollars. Tyre punctures are very common due to sharp stones. It is essential to carry two spare tyres. You can only play games with your mobile phone.

The situation of the side roads you enter to go to 10-15 magnificent canyons are much worse. We completed our crossing by travelling a total of 1.000 km in a week to see canyons, waterfalls, amazing landscapes, incredible natural wonders.

On the road we saw a woman on a bicycle, a few motorcyclists and about 10-15 jeeps a day. Jeeps were not street jeeps like the ones produced now, they were machines produced and modified for off-road. We even saw 3-5 of them abandoned on the side of the road. Because the rescue would only cost 7.000 dollars.

The colour of the soil is red. More precisely, the colour of the dust that enters every corner of us and Kozi, including ears, nose and throat, is red. It is not dirt, red dust is an element of life here. So there is not much point in cleaning and cleansing. Just swallow it.

We didn't have anything to do with the clock anymore. We moved with the sun. Bird-songs with the sunrise and good morning. After the sunset, there was nothing to do but sleep. Animals and plants were in the same rhythm. Everything was indexed to the rising and setting of the sun.

To the west is the city of Derby and north of it the "Horizontal Falls." This is the second highest tide in the Southern Hemisphere. The sea level rises and falls by 11.8 metres every six hours. In the meantime, the water fills and empties into the bays with the tide. In two lagoons with narrow openings and very wide and deep inside, the filling and emptying



speeds of the water reach 20 knots (37km/h). In other words, the sea flows like a waterfall, but horizontally. It was a very different feeling to flow with the water and climb against the water with fast boats.

To get to Horizontal Falls, you need to take a 20 minute flight by helicopter. There were 5 people and a wooden crate in the helicopter. There was a goat in the crate. It was alive. "Gary the Goat." It belonged to a famous Australian comedian. They used to do a TV show together. Everyone recognised them. They flew out with us to shoot for the next show. That wasn't enough. Later, "Gary the Goat" sat side by side with us in the first row while travelling against the 20 knot current on a speedboat. That's how fame caught up with us. What could we do?

Another nightmare of endless roads is "Road Trains." Since it is not economical to build railways, "Road Trains" have taken over the transport business. Put up to 5 trailers on the back of a big truck to be towed, and you have a Road Train. However, it is a ceremony to start moving and to stop. Since Australia is mostly flat, there is not much of a problem. But you won't want to be in the way of Road Trains. There is no emergency stop. They don't care about crashing or throwing you off the road. If they had to stop climbing uphill, there's no way it can start moving again. The driver must first separate all the trailers, then take them one by one to the top of the slope, and only then put them all together again and continue on his way. Passing the Road Train is one problem, being passed is another.

We felt the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral eco-system in the north-east of Australia. It is difficult to say that we saw it, because it is 2,300 km long. A little snorkelling, a little helicopter ride. One of the three things you can see from space. The others are: The Great Wall of China and the magnificent turquoise ocean in the Bahamas.

We travelled nearly 11,000 kilometres with Kozi in Australia. We spent nearly 2 tonnes of diesel, we added some good memories from the Outback, we loved the crocodile meat. Shortly afterwards, when Joanne and Haydn sold their car, Kozi was sold together.

## **Aborigines**

Aborigines are the indigenous people of Australia. Their population is around 750,000. 3 percent. In the north, their proportion to the general population is 40 percent. Apparently, the British have

a lot of responsibility for them not to integrate into the society. They tried to exterminate this race with various methods. Now they are in the mood to apologise and make up for their mistakes. Aborigines are still determined to maintain their traditions and the teachings of their ancestors and pass them on to future generations.

Aborigines are unlike any other indigenous race on Earth. 40.000 -60.000 years ago, a group of Homo Erectus, the first bipedal human beings who emerged in Africa and South East Asia, arrived in Australia. Then they did not leave this continent. No other tribes or clans came and mixed with them. They preserved their culture almost unchanged for 50.000 years.

They maintained their hunter-gatherer lifestyle until the British arrived in the 18th century. They remained in the Paleolithic Age. Their brains are 15 percent smaller and their IQs are 20 percent lower. No saving, no accumulating, no agriculture, no animal husbandry, no production. Their only goal is to reach water and survive. They live a nomadic life. When the reptiles and other living creatures they are hunting and the plants and fruits they are gathering finish, they migrate to another place and set fire to the place they left, so that life can start again when they come back years later.

The men have a weapon. A spear or an axe. The women only have a water pot. Apart from that, they have nothing else. As the climate is also favourable, they do not need clothing and shelter. They light a fire in the evening, gather around it, pass on their traditions to the young people, sing songs, and when it is cold at night, they arrange the fire in rows and lie between them. Therefore, it is possible to see burns on their bodies.

They were created together with the earth and belong to the earth. They respect the laws of the land. The land is part of them and they are part of the land. They belong to the land, not the land to them. It is very important to die on the land they belong to. Aborigines have integrated their identity with the land.

They have no god or gods. They have spiritual ancestors. There are traces of them on earth. They have mysteries. There are sacred places and symbols. They have made their beliefs a way of life. Within the laws and traditions of the eternal creation period "Dreamtime," there is past, present and future.

I wanted to talk, listen, understand. It's hard to understand. It is also difficult to establish a bilateral relationship. They don't even tell women and children about their beliefs. Therefore, very little is known.

No sense of ownership. Sharing is essential. Individualism and selfishness are offences. No theft. No fighting. No murder. No prosecutors, judges, police, guards, prisons. Giving and doing something for others is a part of life. That's why there is no word of thanks. No invasion. No fighting. No hierarchy. No government. There's a tribe, but no chief. The elders get together and make decisions. There is no writing. No counting, because there's no stockpiling.

They have a variety of languages. They have smoke communications. They have art. People reflect their simple, clean, pure and unprejudiced souls. There are no exhibitions, no admiration, no praise, no awards. "Farewell" or "Good bye" is said only in death. Otherwise, we'll see you again.

I was deeply impressed by this culture that did not come to the agricultural revolution and capitalism. As can be expected, everything is now turned upside down after the British introduced flour, sugar and alcohol to these people and pushed them into capitalism.

## **Kerikeri**

We were spending more time in Kerikeri. On various occasions, at different times, we formed different friendships. People we met because of Carving, our friends from off-road clubs we travelled together, our boutique olive oil producer friends, our neighbours, Nesrin's pilates and pottery friends, our Kerikeri Cooking Club members.

After the professional kitchen established by Alexa, Nesrin, me and Alexa were chatting and the idea of Kerikeri Cooking Club came up. Anyone who would interested would be able to become a member of the club. Every month there would be an activity of cooking and eating together. In the professional kitchen, 9 teams could cook at the same time. The idea was if we think of teams of two, around 20 of us could meet in the afternoon. 2-3 different dishes could be cooked with the recipe and directions of one member. The costs would be shared, and then we would all eat, drink and comment together with joy. The Kerikeri Cooking Club activity lasted 3-4 years. Nesrin organised Turkish food days a few times. Nesrin became a legend with her recipes

and delicacies with lentil meatballs, spinach pie, grilled eggplant-meat, grilled meatballs, stuffed vine leaves with meat, dried apricot dessert, Turkish rice. People we just met: “We were thinking how we could meet you and come to you for dinner.”

I have a BBQ in Kerikeri that I call my piano. It is a LPG gas one. When I was little, grilling meatballs was my job. I used to light the charcoal barbecue in Silivri and having snacks while cooking. Since I am a lazy person, lighting the barbecue and preparing the fire was the most ceremonial and hard part of the job. The fact that it lights up just with a click, that it heats up and is ready in 10 minutes, that you can set it to the temperature you want, that you can use it like an oven by closing the lid, made me love the gas alternative. I hear people saying, “But the flavour of coal is different, dear.” I think it’s the fire that gives the flavour. Do not insist in vain. We won’t get anywhere by arguing.

I love meat, and we’re in close contact with the only butcher in town. The owner Reese is the brother of a friend of ours. We say hello, I try various meats they prepare, we chat, I ask them for something Turkish style. One day one of the employees called me Charles. I could correct it, but my name is not easily pronounced by foreigners. There are many different versions. The most popular and easy one is the one that sounds like “Camel.” I accept them all, but the shop was crowded. An inner being in me stopped me and I didn’t correct it as my name is Kemal. I let it pass. My name became Charles, in our butcher’s shop! “Well, welcome, Charles. We don’t have tail fat, Charles. You may have it in Turkey. Our sheep have foxtails, and we cut them right away so they don’t get flies. We’ll get you some rib fat for you, Charles.” It’s been going on for 8 years.

I brought special skewers, knives, etc. from Turkey to make Adana kebab. I also did different meals with new recipes, new cooking techniques. I try Thai, Indian dishes, different methods to flavour ocean fish, hot smoked fish, oxtail, ox cheek, pork belly, alternative meals that we don’t know much about. I take the ones I like to my recipe list. I dance in branches such as sous vide technique, cast iron skillet technique, flame cooking. Don’t ask me what these are. I could tell you, but it would take too long. Holy Google will help you.

I started cooking in New Zealand, but within certain rules.

Rule 1: No competition. No attempt at any dish made by Better Half, a marvellous cook Nesrin. or any dish that is in her field.

Rule 2: Listen carefully to Nesrin's experiences and suggestions, understand them and implement them if possible,

Rule 3: Washing the dishes I use when I cook.

So what do they say? Education and training is the beginning of everything.

We attend festivals, events etc. in Kerikeri. At the food and wine festival, a lottery was organised over the entrance tickets, and the draw would be held towards the end. So we extended our stay a bit and we were waiting. Just in case. The gift was a 3-day trip to the Pacific island of New Caledonia. For two people, including flight and accommodation. It was time for the draw. Surprisingly our number was called! Wow, I looked around and Nesrin wasn't there. She was gone to the loo. I went on stage alone. Applauses etc. I said, "I don't see my wife." A lady raised her hand and said, "I'll be your wife." Before I could answer, Nesrin jumped onto the stage. Afterwards we had a wonderful trip to the capital city of Noumea.

At the end of 2014 Pinar and John came to New Zealand. They shared their decision to get married with us. We were thrilled with joy and spent wonderful days together. When they saw the skydiving opportunity at Kerikeri airport, they wanted to try it. I said, "OK, but I won't jump with a parachute." Pinar had jumped before and wanted to do it again in the wonderful nature of the Bay of Islands, with her fiancé and her lover. We went early in the morning, they paid and started to get ready. Clothes, briefings, mental preparation and so on. They would take off in a 8-10 person jet plane, jump in tandem with an experienced instructor and land on the grass around the airport, near us. And we would be waiting.

The plane took off, we were waiting. No one came, no one jumped. Soon the plane landed. They were on the plane. What happened? It was partly cloudy. For the jump to take place, they needed a cloudless place where the ground could be seen from the plane. They couldn't find it and the plane landed back. "So what do we do?" "Let's wait a bit. The weather changes quickly. We will try again. You guys play table tennis, pinball in the mean time." "OK, let's wait." Two hours passed. Preparation, boarding. The plane took off again. We waited. The plane

landed back. Same situation again, no space found. “What do we do?” “We can try again in the afternoon.” “Our house is 10 minutes away. We’ll go home, if the weather is favourable, let us know and we’ll be here in 15 minutes.” “OK.”

We went home. Two or three hours later, a phone call; we got up and went. Dressing, getting ready, the plane taking off, waiting in excitement. Oh no, the same thing again! Everyone were having long faces. Pınar said: “Three times is enough. This is a message from the Universe. No more Skydiving.” They got their money back and we all returned home having done three “Bay of Islands sightseeing flights” for free.

The wedding ceremony will take place on 23 January 2015 at the New York City Hall. We decided to go first to Istanbul and then to New York. My father was frequently going to be hospitalised, out and back to the hospital again. Our intention was to see him. After seeing him a few times and staying as a companion in the hospital, my father passed away on 16 January 2015. We said goodbye to him with a crowded funeral ceremony. A week later, Pınar and John’s wedding ceremony would be taking place. Unfortunately we could not attend the 40th day prayers.

### **Pınar and John Are Getting Married**

We were staying at Pınar’s house in New York, which could be described as a shoebox. She gave us her bedroom. The bed was against the wall in front of the window. The bed was touching the walls on three sides. One person could stand in front of a small wardrobe and get dressed. There wasn’t any place to put luggage. Entrance, living room, corridor, dining room are all in one, the size of a small room. There was no dining table. There was only a coffee table, a two-seater armchair, 2 chairs. And a tiny toilet and shower. On the wedding day Pınar wore her modest wedding dress. “How will we get to the registry office? A limousine or something?” “No,” said Pınar. Soon John came with flowers. We all got on the subway and went. When I told people, they couldn’t believe it. “What do you mean, you went to the wedding by subway?” It was hard to explain the New York conditions to them. There is also our culture. Asking the family for permission, giving the daughter as a bride, promises, engagements, henna, picking up the

bride, convoys, car decorations, guns shooting, dance, jewellery. We wouldn't get out of it.

John's mum Barbara, his brother David and his wife Stacy and Pinar's 3 close friends were present during the wedding ceremony in Istanbul. A nice dinner in the evening. We decided that day that we will have one more ceremony and will add to a total number of five. The second one was a countryside wedding near NY, the third one in Iowa, where John was born and grew up, the fourth one in Istanbul, and the fifth one in New Zealand. We haven't managed that last one yet, but maybe one day.

The wedding in New York was held on 6 June 2015 in a big shed and adjacent meadow in the town of High Falls, about 2 hours north. Pinar-John, ourselves and a few close friends stayed at the house in the same place that night. It was a superbly organised event, with plenty of alternatives to entertain people of all ages and tastes, a live music ensemble, moving and joyful speeches and people.

My speech was as follows:

*I am the father.*

*The word father has a lot of different meanings.*

*It can be the biological father, the founder, an elderly man, a priest or even a Mafia leader.*

*But I; interpreted the word father as being the main creature to interfere in Pinar's important decisions throughout her life.*

*On her path, whenever she came to a junction, I thought that I should guide her to the right lane as being her father.*

*I did my best of course, but she never listened to me.*

*She went always her own way. I can tell many stories about this.*

*However she always questioned her decisions, after making them. I could see the question marks in her eyes.*

*The trouble for me was, that she was always making the right decisions for herself.*

*And then:*

*One day she chose you as her lifetime partner and husband.*

*For the first time we all agreed in her decision.*

*For the first time we don't see the question marks in her eyes.  
And for the first time we see the deep happiness in her soul.  
She is a lovely girl.  
Please take good care of her.*

The wedding in Iowa was 10 days later. To make use of this time, we rented a car and drove to Canyonland. We visited Yellowstone, Grand Teton and Bryce canyons. We also saw them from a high altitude in a small plane. Then we stayed in an AirBnb house that John rented in Iowa with all his siblings. It was very sweet. An extended family dinner in a restaurant, speeches, wishes, experiences, cake. Then the bar where David played guitar with his band. The songs sung together, John and Pınar's wonderful dances, John's brothers singing together on the stage, then John taking the stage with his guitar. It was marvellous.

The wedding party in Istanbul was on 10 October 2015. This time I was the organiser. Upon Pınar's desire for a countryside wedding, we made an agreement with Lifepark inside of a forest. Open air, food, live music. But we would do different things. Music is very important. People forget the food they eat, but entertainment sticks in their memories. I need to find a good band. I also want to organise a drum session. I met Şafak Özdoğan. He's a drummer. He has an orchestra of about 10 people. My desire for the orchestra is to be able to keep the pulse of the guests, to get them excited, to fill the dance floor, and not to just say "It's over." and leave. When I mentioned the drum session, he said, "I've done it before. We did it at the teamwork seminar. I have 100 darbukas (Turkish drum). We bring them and distribute them to the guests. I'll lead them for the drum session." Just what I was looking for. The guests will arrive late in the afternoon, there will be snack stands around before the meal. Çiğ köfte, lokma prepared on site, stuffed mussels, Maraş ice cream, Turkish coffee, etc.

There will be picture-taking stands. There will be professional photographers. The cake will be different. It will be a mosaic cake. Hidden inside is the rope Pınar and John used for rock climbing. It won't be soft, so it has to be cut with a sword.

What won't be there: No light and fireworks show, no jewellery ceremony, no wedding dress, no veil, no henna, no official wedding



ceremony, no chair decoration, no entrance of the bride and groom to the hall, no table walks, no bridal car, no hairdresser.

John phoned me a fortnight ago. He said: "I've always had a dream. I want to bring Pinar to the party on the back of my horse. I wonder if we can find a horse." I thought for five seconds and said: "What colour should the horse be?" "White!" he said.

We've invited over 300 of our friends. We'll be about 210 people. I went to the venue around 10 a.m. Checks, final adjustments, who will sit where and so on. There was a rain warning in the evening. Should we take rain precautions and set up tents? But this time the whole ambiance would change. Alpaslan and I analysed the weather forecast in detail. It seemed like we were on the edge of the rain clouds. Even if it would rain, it didn't seem to be very strong. The ground was already muddy in places. Our guests had been told to dress comfortably and the ladies might have difficulties with their high heels.

The news of a catastrophe fell to the centre. A suicide attack at the Ankara railway station. Two explosions 3 seconds apart. 109 dead and over 500 injured. There was an atmosphere of mourning and hatred for terrorism in the country. How could we organise a party in that evening? It had to be cancelled. A few phone calls, consultations. 18 people from US, John's family and close friends of the couple had come to Turkey. They had a trip to Cappadocia after the party. If we would postpone the organisation, everyone's schedules would be ruined. It was one of the most important dilemmas of my life.

How do I decide? I had thought about it. If we would postpone it, we would be doing what we had to do in clear conscience. But it wouldn't help anyone. It would harm everyone. To create this atmosphere was what terrorists also desire. Let's not fall into their game. I decided to go ahead.

Şafak came to the venue in the afternoon. The orchestra was settling in. He came in and said: "I apologise very much. I urgently need to go to Bodrum and play there tonight. The drummer of the second orchestra I organised has broken his wrist. I'll play there. The orchestra here already has a second drummer." For the second time, I was stunned. "How can you go? What about the drum session? It's the most important event of the party." "I know, but I have no choice. My plane ticket's booked. I have to go." He got in a taxi and left.

I wanted to disappear, I wanted to evaporate. While I was wondering what to do, he came back half an hour later. The plane was cancelled, he turned the taxi halfway and came back. We had a marvellous, one-of-a-kind night where we all had a lot of fun. John brought Pınar on the back of his white horse. Selçuk did not refuse my request. He made a wonderful, emotional speech. The music was marvellous. In was a very relaxed atmosphere where everyone was joking, the dance floor was never empty. Everyone who wanted to play joined the drum session with their darbukas. There was no room left on the dance floor for the professional drummers. At the end of the night, when the music ended, it started to rain.

### **Eat Drink Cycle Netherlands**

After a long break, we organised the 2015 tour of the Eat Drink Cycle team in the Netherlands, with its flat, lush, green nature decorated with old buildings and animals, with 13 million bicycles for a population of 16 million, where 31% of people use bicycles as the main means of transport, where there are special roads, special intersections, special traffic lights for cyclists. Two new 'flowers' joined our team. Ayda and Gülgün. We became three 'flowers' and five 'insects' , as we say in Turkish.

First we started with a visit to Amsterdam's coffee shops. The opening night was with great flavours and a wonderful meat feast at Yasemin and Robert Jan's Boat House. We ate, drank, had weed, passed out, snored. Me, Murathan, Bahadır were all useless. Cüneyt was half useless and Murat a quarter. The flowers were fine.

The next day, rain, wind, 81 kilometres to go. Murathan was our navigator. He had the GPS. Murat was our finance minister. He had the money. Bahadır was the master of smoking. He got the weed. Gülgün organised the dinner in Gouda. Our tradition is for the newcomers to treat the whole team to a nice dinner with drinks. The dinner in Dordrecht on the second day was also from Ayda.

In Utrecht we rented a canal boat with an aluminium hull and electric motor for eight people. Murat at the helm. Wines, herbs, meats, cheeses, songs. On the 5th day Cüneyt left early and set off. We were tired. Ayda, Murat, Gülgün they jumped on the train. The wind was coming from the head. 65 km but it was the toughest day. We left the

route for lunch break and had a beer. Cüneyt, who took a wrong turn, found us by chance. Turns out he was looking for us. We barely made it to Amsterdam. I was moaning, “My arse, my arse.” It was like concrete hard. Murathan said “PAS.” “Persistent arse syndrome.” Robert Jan finally said “What’s up, arsehole?” in Turkish to Bahadır. Ayda carried the champagne from Istanbul. We celebrated the wedding anniversary of Ayda and Murat.

2015 is the 35th anniversary of Nesrin’s and my marriage. For this special celebration, we decided to go to Andre Rieu’s concert in Maastricht, the city where he lives. We watched his concert on the 2nd of July in the VIP category. We arrived two days in advance. We stayed overnight in the church, part of which had been adapted for accommodation. We visited the places where Andre Rieu lived and where the orchestra worked and watched the concert that night from the front row. It was a great trip.

When Seda and Cüneyt learned about this programme, they wanted to join. And we said: “No, we don’t want to. This time we want a celebration alone, romantic and full of music.” Seda didn’t take it seriously. She searched online for a VIP reservation and couldn’t find one. But she didn’t give up. She made phone calls and a few days later she managed. We had our romantic celebration with 4 people.

The places we visited on our Tuscany tour with the EDC team a few years ago left a lasting nice taste in my mouth. In 2015, Nesrin and I made a perfect trip to experience those beauties again. But this time with a rental car.

The majority of our proverbs and idioms are meaningful and instructive. Besides these, there are also some strange and shameful ones. One day I wondered what “You leaked water up the donkey’s vagina” could be to express “You have overdone. It’s enough.” I called Cüneyt, thinking he would know, and asked him. When I got the answer “How should I know?” the only remedy was Holy Google. We heard that some of the Anatolian men living in rural areas share their early sex experiences with the female donkeys in their stables. When the donkey was not ready for this relationship, it would kick backwards. In order to prevent the donkey from kicking, it was taken to a river and put into the water. She couldn’t do kicking backwards when she was in the water. But the level of the water was important. It was important

not to overdo it, to catch a depth that would not get water in her pussy.

In January 2016, we participated in an off-road trip to the South Island of New Zealand. Bill, the organiser of the trip, researched before accepting us and saw Nesrin's Turkish cooking sessions at Kerikeri Cooking Club on social media. So he accepted us with the thought that "these people can cook well." I swear it is his own statement. After a marvellous trip, we made very good friends. Among them Val and Allan, became so close that we call each other as brother and sister. Bill named the trip as 99 Rivers. He didn't know the reason himself, but I guess it was because there were many river crossings. They wrote down every river we crossed and then counted them. The total was 100. But then they realised that we had crossed a river twice. So we really crossed 99 rivers.

We saw magnificent mountains, glaciers, valleys, lakes that we would not normally see. We slept in tents, barns, motels. We cooked excellent food and spent two weeks full of laughter.

## **Patagonia**

In March 2016 we flew from Auckland to Buenos Aires for a trip to Patagonia. We loved the city very much. We stayed for 4 days and walked about 50 km. We compared the people to us from Turkey and the neighbourhoods to those of Istanbul and found similarities. In the evening we went to a local Parilla, a meat restaurant. Hello to the famous steaks and delicious Malbec wine. Ice creams and Dulche de Leche. I thought we would put weight. In Argentina, red meat and tango are perhaps the most important parts of the culture.

La Recoleta Cemetery is one of the most beautiful cemeteries in the world. The deceased experience eternity in their tiny homes. Teatro Colón is the third best opera house in the world. We could not believe the acoustic performance. El Ateneo was built as a theatre in 1919 and turned into a book store in 2000. It was the second best in the world. One million people used to go in a year. In 2007, they sold 700.000 books.

We went to Montevideo for the day, the capital of Uruguay. Everything is flat. Everyone drinks mate. Like our tea. It's legal to grow and smoke marijuana. But not to sell it. One or two per cent of the population is indigenous. The rest are Spanish, Italian, Mediterranean, that's us. We felt at home.

One aeroplane and Iguazu. The waterfall(s) are very impressive. We have seen dozens of pictures, but watching in person was very different. Eleanor Roosevelt said “My poor Niagara” when she saw Iguazu. She was very right. The amount of water was mesmerising. Since it rained a lot before, dam gates were opened to prevent overflowing.

We met palm heart, similar to melon or cucumber. It is added to salads. If it is single-rooted, the palm tree whose heart is taken dies. In the hotel where we stayed for two nights, all the staff addressed me by my name Mr Ayata. It turned out that it was important to be bald with a pony tail, fat, wearing shorts, tattooed man.

Then we flew south to El Calafate. It was cold. We were going to rent a car. “Are there any scratches or damages?” I asked when taking delivery. The answer was: “Is a Patagonia car ever without scratches?” The second question was about mobile phone coverage. We learnt that the only way of communication in Patagonia was hitchhiking!

The Perito Moreno glacier was 30 kilometres long and 5 km wide. It was majestic and stable. It gave us permission to trek on it with spiked shoes. Lago Argentino where Perito Moreno meets water, melts and breaks, is the largest lake in Argentina. The Southern Patagonia Ice Field is the world’s third largest fresh water reserve.

Torres del Paine National Park in Chile. Queue at the border crossing. A young soldier was there, helping us and another cars, speeding things up. I wondered if he was demanding money. Should we give some? If yes, how much and how? All the answers were negative.

We were in the middle of the steppe on the roads of Patagonia, like Mongolia. Alone, deserted. All of the roads were partially stabilised with the gravel taken from the river. There were also huge stones. Overturned, abandoned and rotten cars on the left and right. Petrol was a problem. You have to buy petrol at every station. But 5 litres, 10 litres, whatever was missing in the tank.

Guanaco is an animal from the llama family and native to South America. It is about 1.5 metres long and weighs 90 kg. On the roadside, one of them had his neck tangled in the fence wires and was struggling. We stopped and tried to help him. He was sliding down the slope and the wire around his neck was taking his breath away. When Nesrin and I tried to push him up, he urinated on Nesrin. While we were saying “Oh shit!,” our guanaco closed his eyes. I did some CPR in case he’d

gone. But no kissing on the lips. In a few minutes, he opened his eyes again. When he stopped struggling, we managed to remove the fence wire from his neck. After a little rest, he jumped up and stood up. We returned to our car and started on our way. He ran beside us for kilometres cheerfully. We were all very happy.

El Chalten is a town that was hastily built when the border with Chile was demarcated. The mobile phone coverage arrived 1.5 years ago. Mobile internet was at GPRS level. Renault Taurus's were on the streets, dog gangs were everywhere. Travelling northwards on Ruta 40, this time we stayed overnight in El Bolson, between the mountains. The wind was never blowing. 1 degree at night, 27 degrees during the day. First we were in Santa Cruz province, then continue to Chubut. We wondered about the small monuments on the roadsides. They were built in the name of the legendary hero Gauchito Gil.

We travelled to Bariloche, visited the Lake District and admired it. We spent two nights as guests of Walter and Miriam in their rented room at their house. We had meals together, we talked about the sea voyage that they had dreamed of. We had friends in Argentina now.

When we handed over our car, we crossed 3 lakes by bus and ferries and entered Chile. We introduced ourselves to the guide on the bus and said that we had travelled 3,400 km in Patagonia, we received the reply "You have honoured us." Then she stood us up, introduced us to the other passengers and announced: "These people crossed Patagonia alone, in a simple rented car with no equipment." When she announced, a great applause broke out in the packed bus. Another applause came when we said, "We felt at home."

In the evening we were in Puerto Varas, Chile, on the other side of the lakes. We rented another car and drove north towards Santiago. We left the main road and stayed overnight at the foot of the Villarrica volcano. The peaks of the Andes are the border between Argentina and Chile. Chile is a country of earthquakes, volcano eruptions and tsunamis. Of the approximately 500 volcanoes, 123 are active. That is 25 per cent. The 8.4 magnitude earthquake in 2015 did not cause much damage. These natural disasters are part of life.

No more steak, but seafood instead. Congrio, king crab, pisco sour. Mapuche are the indigenous people of Chile. Their population is small but they have preserved their culture. Turkish TV series are

popular in Chile and all over Latin America. We met Caroline and Jose. Caroline was a Chilean citizen and in love with Onur, the husband of Scheherazade in the TV series “One Thousand and One Nights.” She studied at the German High School in Santiago. Jose is from Colombia. How happy, we have more friends from Latin America.

We travelled 5.000 km by car from south to north in Patagonia. Being 4 times in Argentina, 2 times in Chile, 1 time in Uruguay and 1 time in Brazil. We loved nature, people and culture.

Hıfsı has a special interest in poultry. He raises them in his house in Şile and supports their reproduction with an incubator. They benefit from their eggs and meat together as a family. In 2016, he was obsessed with Orpington breed chickens. Not much egg but delicious meat chickens. They are not common in Turkey. He brought fertilised eggs from England, but they never came out of the incubator. He asked me to bring fertilised Orpington eggs from New Zealand. I searched and searched, I found a farm. I spoke to the woman. They had purebred Orpington chicken. She said: “You can’t always get fertilised eggs. Tell me how many you want and when you want them to take with you. The eggs have to go into the incubator within 4 days after fertilisation. I hope we’ll be able to match it.” When the date of our travel to Turkey became clear, I informed her. She called two days before and said that she could provide 36 fertilised eggs. The farm is two hours away. We stopped by on our way to Auckland, paid and picked them up: “You should take the eggs into the cabin with you and you should not shake them. It should be neither colder nor warmer than room temperature. Until they enter the incubator, you have to turn each egg slowly and individually every 6 hours so that the embryo always stays in the centre and does not stick to one side.” I said: “We will fly twice for 11 hours each. There is an eight-hour stopover in Singapore. You should have told us all this before. What are we going to do now?”

We did exactly what the witch said. Our minds were on the eggs all the time. Let’s be gentle, don’t break them. Let’s turn them. Let’s turn them again. Don’t let anyone else put anything on them. I wonder if the x-ray machine will damage them. What will we say if the security guards ask, “What’s this?” I wonder if anything will come out of the incubator. Is it worth the trouble? I wish Hıfsı would come and meet us at the airport. Why did I say yes to this?

The eggs went into Hıfsı's incubator according to the instructions and procedures. 14 chicks hatched out of 36. Even our Witch was surprised. She said "marvellous result." For 5 years, Hıfsı fed and reproduced them. But when no new chickens came from elsewhere, their breed was spoilt due to inter-family breeding. They slaughtered them all and ended the Orpington adventure.

### **Eat Drink Cycle Ireland**

With EatDrinkCycle team, we made our 2016 tour to Ireland with Murat's suggestion. I found an agency with internet searches. The owner was an old man named Liam. We asked for a special tour for us. We would fly to Dublin. From there we would go to Galway on the west coast by bus. We would get our bikes from Liam and start the tour. We paid our deposit. We would pay the rest cash when we arrive. A week before our flight we received an e-mail saying that Liam had died of a sudden heart attack and the family had decided to close the business. "Take care of yourselves. You can't reach us anymore, if there is money left after the closure, you will get your deposit." They also gave us the name of Cycling Safaries. We followed the same programme with them, a little more expensive and with minor problems. We never got our deposit back.

Aslı has joined us now. In the meantime, we had all decided that we will not participate in our tours with our spouse. It is known that people's behaviour changes when they are with their partners, and this affects the group dynamism. Not in a positive or negative sense, just a different energy. Seda wanted to come for the next tour. I said: "Of course, but Cüneyt cannot come."

It's supposed to rain all week, but on the first day we were soaked. It was raining so hard that our arm skins hurt under the raincoat. Lunch break lasted three hours. We dried ourselves piece by piece with a hair dryer. We ate, drank, listened to music. Aslı paid for the dinner. A tradition for newcomers.

We liked the bikes, but the gears were not very good, the chains would occasionally slip. While descending one of the slopes, when my hat intended to fly, I lost control as a result of a sudden reflex and fell on the asphalt. Murat, who was following closely behind, also fell. A flat tyre, abrasions, swelling, bruising and some blood. No fractures. A



little ice, a little pharmacy, a little doctor, we lost our mood. Then we believed that it was close to ruin the whole trip and boosted morale. And there came the Cliffs of Moher. These are the wall-like rocks that are always featured in Irish paintings, rising 200 metres from the Atlantic Ocean on the wild west coast of the island. Right on the coast, there is a trail on maps and satellite images. Its name is Burren Way.

It was not written anywhere that you can go by bicycle, but we thought we should try it. We split into two. Those who didn't want to go were convinced by those who wanted to go. Together we did the risky hiking route above the cliffs with our bikes.

Riding, walking, cycling, sometimes carrying bicycles on our back. We travelled 6 km in 3 hours. The rain continued to drizzle.

The next day the destination was the Aran Islands by ferry. Bill O'Brien, the owner of the ferry company, saw my injured arm and asked, "What happened?." When he learnt the story, he sneakily stuck a quadruple-folded €20 in my palm and told me to treat myself to lunch. I was confused, the team was confused. How are we going to interpret this situation? We agreed that it was a humanist behaviour due to their culture. We thought it would be rude and offensive not to accept it. The sea was rough, the ferry was tiny, the bicycles were outside on top of each other. Suitcases inside. There were few places to sit. 3-5 people were standing. The boat started to swing, shake. A staff member was trying to get the bags in his hand to those with upset stomachs. Vomit on the floor. The smell was everywhere. When the ferry arrived, the smiling faces resumed.

On the last cycling day of the trip we had the most delicious food. The waitress asked: "Are you from Hungary?." We replied: "We are from very hungry." The second and next round of dishes were ordered. Seafood chowder, garlic bread, baked goat cheese. We counted that 8 of us ate 31 plates of food with Guinness beers. It turned out that they didn't have many customers as us.

After returning from Ireland, we lived through the night of the 15 July coup in our house in Istanbul. Pınar called us late night to ask what was going on. While Pınar and I were still on the phone, we suddenly saw a Skorsky military helicopter with no lights trying to land in the courtyard of Sabancı High School in front of us. Facing our balcony, with its propellers whipping the tops of the trees, it descended several

times. When I told Pinar about it, she shouted, “Get down on the ground!” We lay down on the ground in fear. The helicopter could not land and rose again and disappeared from sight. Later we realised that the target was to raid the Digitürk TV right behind our apartment and silence the broadcast of the TV channels. The next day we found two bullets on the balcony. We couldn’t understand where they came from.

## Galapagos

We had planned our Galapagos trip in 2016 with Pinar and John for 4 people, but we learnt in New York that there were 5 of us. Winter was with us too. Hooray! We had a long journey starting from New York. We flew 4 times, we were on our feet for almost 24 hours. We broke one of the wines we took with us in the suitcase. We covered John’s clothes with burgundy-pink patterns.

Tired, we reached our boat Mary Anne in the morning. 1997 built 3 masted barquentine. 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> sail, spacious cabins, various common areas, great crew, delicious food and a romantic sailing yacht. Everything on display in the marine antique shops were still in use there.

We were 14 passengers, there was a panga ride in the afternoon. Panga is the Galapagos version of dinghy or inflatable boat. We got on the panga and said hello to the mangrove trees growing in salt water. We met blue footed boobies. We made friends with red footed boobies. We exchanged glances with Nazca boobies.

We marvelled at the splendour of frigate birds. We watched the Herons. We didn’t give water to the Finches. We learnt that albatrosses can’t take off without wind. We watched the lizards. We swam with the sharks. We danced with stingrays. We did water ballet with sea turtles. We fought with owls. We waved to the cattle egret. We searched for mockingbirds. We watched the hawks soar. We had our picture taken with giant tortoises. We envied the elegance of the red-billed tropic bird. We made friends with sea lions. We dived with penguins. We greeted pelicans. We were attracted to crabs. We wanted to catch and eat lobster.

We smiled at Marin and Land iguanas. We snorkelled nose to nose with parrot fish and lots of different colourful fish. We tried canoe-kayaking. We couldn’t see flamingo and hammerhead shark.

Sea lion targeted Pinar and swam towards her. The penguin

pecked Nesrin while swimming. What is the magic of animals being so close to humans in their natural habitat?

How is it that man, who uses nature for himself and does not avoid harming living creatures, has behaved differently here?

Islands black, islands red. Desert-cactus on the coasts and lush rainforests at 800 metres altitude. On volcanic lands, it was as if we were on the surface of the moon. We walked on the lava layer formed by the volcanic eruption 120 years ago. We sailed on the romantic barquentine Mary Anne.

At one point, I took the helm, and two hours later, dropped the anchor. The Galapagos are 12 major islands, Mary Anne took us to seven of them.

We drank the best margarita and the best caipirinhas in Puerto Ayara. At Charles Darwin Station, we watched the tortoise being protected and produced. "Short steps!" and "Lets do it!" were the words of our guide Gabriel. The last stop was the capital of Ecuador, Quito, our romantic hotel Patio Andaluz, and our dinner "Guinea Pig Grill" at Los Geranios Restaurant on La Ronda street.

## **Year 2016**

In 2016, Yasemin, Can, Irem, Murathan got married with the people they were together with and established their future lives. We went to Amsterdam for Yasemin's wedding. Aunt Firuze was also there. One evening we were visiting the Red Light District. Auntie was devastated when she saw half-naked women in shop windows waiting for customers. "It's a twist of fate, what a pity." I said: "Aunt, fate didn't drop them here, these people are willingly doing the oldest profession in the world and earning money," But in vain we were continuing. "Ah, oops, pity, poor." I turned round and said: "Well, Auntie, you are over 70 years old. Aren't you ashamed to come to a foreign country and visit whorehouses as the first thing?" She was silent. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry. It is true that I am a bad person.

Our friends Val and Allan came to Turkey. The aim was to participate in the Transanatolia Off-road race and trip together. When it was cancelled due to the coup attempt, we changed the programmes. We spent a few nights in Istanbul, a little bit in Gallipoli, Cappadocia, Pamukkale and then a few days in Gökova with Haluk's boat. Our

friendship evolved into brotherhood.

We did two short domestic tours in autumn with EatDrinkCycle team. 4 days Bodrum tour with 4 people, 2 days Iznik tour with 3 people, 2 days Edirne tour with 3 people. We liked it very much and decided to continue domestic tours, but it didn't work out.

One day in November in Istanbul, I got a phone call in the morning. Vodafone dealer "Sir, you went to the car, but you didn't come back?" "What car, who went?" The phone was hung up. About an hour later, Alternatif Bank called. "Good afternoon. We are calling about your consumer loan application. Can we ask you a few questions?" I was surprised. I said: "No, it's not me. It must be a mistake." We hung up. Later, we went to visit my cousin in the hospital, another phone call. "Good day. This is police officer Fatih." I hung up the phone with the answer "Fuck off." Strange phone calls since morning. I was sure someone was trying to scare me and should be definitely a scam.

Ten minutes later I received a WhatsApp message. "Come to Sirkeci Police Station. Talk and behave properly. And they copied your ID." I checked his name on WhatsApp, Fatih. He also sent a picture of my fake identity card. All the information was the same as mine and all correct. The picture on the ID belonged to a 35-40 year old bastard.

I was in a panic. What happened? I knew that I was in deep shit, but how deep was it? I swore at the police. Should I go to the police station? I took Murathan with me and went to the Sirkeci police station with great anxiety and regret. Fatih, the policeman, was a young and brilliant police officer. He would soon be transferred to the Southeast. I apologised and he received me with understanding and decency.

You know that they make copy and file our identity card, which we give without hesitation in hotels, here and there. Wherever the fraud network found mine, they printed a fake one and pasted the photo of someone from the network on it. This person first went to a Vodafone dealer and wanted to buy a phone line in my name. But when he realised that I was already a customer, he said, "I'm going to the car" and slipped away. Then he went to the Post Office and got a new password for my e-government account by showing his ID card. He logged into my account with the new password. He went to Alternatif Bank to apply for a consumer loan. They found my number, called me and politely rejected him.

Then he went to ING Bank Sirkeci branch to apply for a consumer loan again. The lady in charge at the bank was suspicious of the bastard's behaviour, and his age did not seem to be around 60. She kept him waiting, saying that she had to get approval from the headquarters, etc. Meanwhile, someone else informed the police. The policemen at Sirkeci Police Station came immediately, caught the bastard and the gang member who was guarding outside and brought him to the police station. Then Police Fatih called me to come and file a complaint. I said, "I'll file a complaint, but there will be a court case then, I don't want to come to the hearing and meet this shit." Fatih said: "This is a public case. In such cases, the judge does not call the complainant to the hearing," First thing I did was to get a new identity card with a new number. Nobody called me after that. I still don't know what happened.

## Winter

On 15 February 2017, Winter joined us. And our world changed. What a beautiful creature, what a beautiful feeling. It is always said; "Grandchildren are different. It is impossible to understand this without having a grandchild." They say that they are loved, but having no responsibility and giving them back to their parents is also good, etc. These are not wrong, but Winter and I have formed a different feeling and bond that I cannot describe. It is not desirable to live in distant parts of our planet. We wanted to meet every 3 months at most. It seems like we succeeded except for the pandemic years. She is now approaching the age of 6.

Winter calls me PopPop and Nesrin 'Anane' (Grandma in Turkish) The name PopPop is charismatic and according to the Urban Dictionary: "A loving term given to one's grandfather. Pop-Pop is the best grandparent you could ask for-loving, kind and doting. Pop-Pop will teach you about music, film, culture, and family values. If you are blessed enough to have a Pop-Pop you are very lucky!"

Pride in me. It was like, "Wow! What am I!" Pinar: "Don't exaggerate, Dad, it's nothing like that. It's just she doesn't mix up Daddy and Dede (Grandpa in Turkish)." "Okay. Okay then."

I loved and love to play and spend time with children. It can last for hours. If we can communicate mutually, not one-sidedly, I am happy. These are the most precious times for me. We also caught this frequency

with Winter. When grandparents talk about their grandchildren they usually start: “Look, I’m not saying it because he is my grandson, but ....” I tried not to do that and listed some selections from Winter.

At the age of 3, when she got tired and John picked her up: “Daddy you are a good boy.”

“I need to poop.” Mommy: “I am coming.” Winter: “No, I need privacy.”

Lake Placid, 3 years old: “I am a happy baby.”

When she shifted her position at the table and could see her mother: “Mommy I would like to see you.”

“I smell mint, I want mint, I got mint.”

At the age of 3, stuck in the musical Hamilton, “Does he say, Gums and Chips?” Mommy: “No, guns and Ships.” “But why he wants that? Why doesn’t he not want gums and chips?”

3.5 years old: “Mommy! I don’t need you to tell me what I need to do, okay?”

Her teacher Mrs. Shanora’s email when Winter changed the daycare: 9 September 2020: “I love Winter so much. She is such a good student. Silly, witty, smart and sooo brave. I have tears now, think about her time with us ending soon. I know she will persevere wherever she go. I will miss her so much. I know that day will be very emotional for me. In all, I am happy that she will get to experience new things at her new school. I know for sure she will be the top student, because she knows A LOT!”

New teacher’s comments: “She is different. All her friends want to play with her, she is the organiser. I would be very curious, to see what this girl will be doing when she turns 35. If I am still alive.”

Another teacher Tricia 28.1.2021. Winter is 4 years old: “It’s been especially nice to see the way Winter can be a very strong leader when she’s playing and has ideas, but she can also be an amiable follower, taking direction from her playmate. Your kid has the whole package, that’s for sure.”

The day she was going to sleep with us, I said, “I snore.” “What should I do, when you snore?”

I spread my arms wide: “I love you this much. How much do you love me?” “I love you as far as David’s house.” A few weeks ago they had travelled two days by car to his Uncle David’s house in Iowa. In the evening, when we were altogether: “How much do you love me you said

today?” and her answer after thinking for a while was: “I love everyone here, as far as David’s house.”

Mommy: “Do you really don’t want to come with us for climbing?”  
Winter: “No mommy, that is sadly true.”

9.9.2021. Pınar on her way to work in the morning: “Mommy, promise me, don’t make frowny face if nobody does anything rude or anything bad happens. You make smiley face always.”

Winter: “What’s he doing?” Pınar: “He is cutting the grass.”  
Winter: “But that’s rude. The little grass will die.” Pınar: “No, it makes the grass grow healthier. Just like when we cut your hair.” Winter: “No, but mom! I don’t grow when you cut my hair!”

Pınar and Winter are talking about feelings. Pınar: “Are you happy?” “Yes.” Why? “I had a good day.” “Are you sad.” “No.” “Are you scared?” “Yes.” “Why?” “Anane and PopPop won’t come to my birthday.” “Are you excited?” “Yes.” “Why?” “We will make a hole to their apartment.”

6.2.2022 While eating sushi, John asks. “Is it good?” Winter replies: “So-so!”

“What is that mommy?” “Shrimps.” “What are those?” “Feet of the shrimps.” “Is this an animal?” “Yes.” “Are we eating an animal now?” “Yes.” “Can you show me its picture after the dinner?”

“Daddy can you come to the bedroom to play?” Pınar quietly: “No.” John: “No. I am having still dinner.” Winter: “Don’t listen to Mommy, Daddy. You are the boss.”

Winter asked me the day after her fifth birthday. “My sixth birthday’s is far away, isn’t it?”

One day she asks her mum: “Mama, what is politics?”

Winter is on the phone with John, imitating Barbara. John: “Am I your best kid?” Winter, from Barbara’s mouth: “Almost.”

5 April 2022: “PopPop how old are your cows?” Me: “2.5 years old.” Winter: “I’m older than them.”

29 April 2022 at 9:00 pm: “When it’s wake up time I’m lazy; when it’s bed time, I’m crazy!” Pınar says: “I swear I can’t express it better.”

Walking down a street full of dog poo: “I wish, I was a fly on this street. Then I would be a happy fly.”

In August 2022, we would leave Ören Marina and sail with Haluk's boat for a few days. After me, Anane got COVID. For that reason, she arrived one day late from Istanbul. While walking on the pontoon, Winter raised his head and looked at the stars for a long time. "I wish Anane won't be sick anymore and come as soon as possible."

At the age of 5.5, she became my First Mate in her first boating experience. She followed the boat rules precisely. He always applied and enforced the rules such as the "Captain is always right, Shoes should be worn on the deck, Never throw paper in the toilets, One hand on the deck belongs to her and the other hand belongs to the boat. She steered the boat. She operated the windlass while dropping and picking up anchor. She steered a speed boat too. She had difficulty in using a sterndrive outboard motor.

With Winter, all our plans and programmes started to be centred around her family. Our concentration changed. Our days became more colourful with the desire to get a picture, video or news from them at every moment. Pınar also fed us a lot in this regard.

## **European Rivers and Canals With Retina**

We bought Retina in the summer of 2012 to explore the rivers and canals of Europe and to use it as a summer home in Turkey. In June 2017, Retina met the waters of the Danube in Passau, Germany, sitting on wheels in Istanbul and travelling overland by truck.

From Danube to the Main-Danube canal, then to the Main river and then to the Rhine, we passed 56 locks in 750 kilometres and steered for 100 hours. We realised that it is not easy to get fuel for boats in this region and the difficulties of finding a mooring place.

Our experiences:

Crossing the canals over the roads by boat, watching the cars below.

27 metres rise in the Lock,

Sailing in narrow waters with huge barges, passing, being passed, Staying overnight in Schleuses,

Being frightened and subsequently harassed by the captain of a barge, Switching to pass green to green when seeing the blue sign,



Counting 15 barges travelling on the river at the same time,  
To be amazed by families working and living in the barges, their homes, cars and playgrounds on the barges,

WeissWein, which was given to us as a gift by the ladies over 80 years old who were guests at our table in the only restaurant in Wipfel after our suggestion to share our pizza,

German specialities: Schweinhaxe, Kaesepaetzle, Flammkuchen, Apfelwein, Schaeufele, Sauerkraut, Bratkartoffeln, Würstchen

The places we remember:

Zum Riesen, the oldest German restaurant in Miltenberg.

Nuremberg, Würzburg, Miltenberg, Wiesbaden, Frankfurt, Koblenz, Cologne Cathedral (Dom).

Also Berlin, which we travelled by land, Mannheim and Heidelberg, which we visited with Saba and Şevket.

Then Pinar, John and Winter came to Retina. Winter was 6 months old. First long aeroplane journey. We cruised with them on the little river Lahn. Winter was very comfortable and wonderful. We travelled under low bridges. The height of the bridge had to be at least 3.15 metres for Retina to go under it. Somewhere I said: "We can't cross here." As we were getting ready to turn around in the narrow river, a man watching us on the bridge made a come-come sign with his hand. So we crossed under the bridge very slowly. If we had not crossed, we would not have been able to meet Pinar and John's friend Peter. Afterwards, Peter, his friend Klaus, Pinar, John and I had a full day cycling tour along the river between Weilburg and Limburg. Winter and Grandma had the whole day to themselves. We crossed the 12 locks on the river Lahn twice each. At the locks we stamped the LAHNPASS card and participated in the wine raffle.

We entered one of the big locks on the river Rhein. We were on the starboard side and tied with bow and stern ropes. The water started to descend and we were going down. Nesrin was slowly releasing the rope on the bow as the water descends. I was doing the same with the stern rope. My rope somehow got stuck while sliding around the cleat. While I was panicking and trying to free it, the boat started to rise from the water and hang on the rope. We weigh 22 tonnes. There are two things to do. The first is to call the lock manager via radio and

ask him to stop the water discharge. The second is to cut the rope with the knife we keep handy for emergencies. What do you think I did? In a panic, I shouted “Nesrin, come!” Fortunately, the rope came free by itself. The retina fell about 1 metre. We survived without any damage.

What we can't forget on the German rivers:

The heels that we hit many times while sailing in 10-20 cm of water,  
Endless canoeists,

Boats, kayaks, fishermen, which we disturbed with the wave we created,

Narrow canals that we could't decide whether we can cross and think of returning but continued on,

Spectacular views,

Tiny moorings,

The boats we squeezed in between,

220V electrical sockets powered by 50 cent,

Houseboats with outboard motors,

Rainy days,

Pils, Hefe Weizen, Kölsch,

Atilla Andıç from Adana the owner of the best restaurant in Bad Ems, Lahnterrasse,

Gülgün and Maya came to the Dutch rivers and canals. We had a very nice time. Yasemin and Robert Jan joined the team in 's-Hertogenbosh. We made unforgettable memories.

In Nijmegen, we visited the barge used as a hotel. In Den Bosch, we took a canal tour under the houses and attended the hot air balloon festival in Grave.

After Gulgun left, Val and Allan came to Retina. They did not double our invitation on the phone. They asked us where to come and where to return from. Then they travelled all the way from New Zealand to the Netherlands for two weeks only to us. We loved their behaviour and sincerity.

Things we cannot forget with Allan and Val

The electric boat trip in Utrecht,

Nesrin's birthday dinner at Karel 5 restaurant in Utrecht,

Witch museum in Oudewater,  
Windmills in Kinderdijk,  
The cheese festival in Gouda,  
The narrow Hollandse IJssel river,  
The cruises we made touching the leaves of the trees on people's  
properties,

Electric dinghy tour in Biesbosch National Park.

Retina finished her European river and canal voyage starting from Passau in the village of Drimmelen in the Netherlands. We left her to a yacht broker here to be sold. It took two years for her to find a new owner.

We travelled a total of 1529 km with 184 hours at the helm in 31 cruising days. We burned approximately 1700 litres of diesel. We climbed and descended nearly 100 locks and opened around 40 bridges.

In our nearly 30 years of sea life, we have had different experiences. We have raced sailing boats, travelled long passages, made coastal cruises, ocean crossings, river and canal cruises. We crossed locks and bridges. We had sailboats and river boats of various sizes. Our sailboats were made of polyester and our canal boat was made of steel. We travelled to many countries. We were in different moods. Sometimes we were happy, sometimes sad, sometimes scared.

### **This and That**

Towards the end of 2017, we planned a tour to Catalonia region of Spain with the EDC team. We planned for 7-8 people. In the last week, we were down to three people. Murat, Bahadır and I flew to Barcelona and stayed there for a few nights. Then we spent a great week eating, drinking and spinning. We stayed in small medieval villages, we visited Salvador Dali's house in Portlligat, we were fascinated by Gaudi's works in Barcelona.

I turned 60 on 24 December 2017. We celebrated with Winter, Pınar, John and our close friends at our home in Kerikeri and Nesrin honoured me with a very special gift. I had been looking for a Manaia necklace made of Pounamu (Jade) for a long time. It should be big, it should stand transversely and it should be tied in two places. I couldn't find it.

Nesrin contacted one of my favourite pounamu and wood carving artists through Ian. Paul Marshall was an important artist whom I met some time ago, visited him a few times and tried to learn from him. She sent him a picture of a Manaia that I had carved from wood and asked him to make a similar one from Pounamu. It turned out to be a marvellous work. He also made a special wooden gift box. I will wear it around my neck for the rest of my life, except for compulsory situations.

In the summer of 2018, we organised a trip to Czechia with our EDC team. Yasemin and Cüneyt were absent this time. Gülgün, Aslı, Murat, Bahadır, Murathan and me. Again we ate, drank and travelled in great places, again in great friendship.

In September, we travelled to Norway with 1,5 year old Winter, Pınar and John. We went as far as the North Cape in the limited number of cabins reserved for tourists on the Nordnorge ship of Hurtigruten, which carries passengers and cargo to small towns in the fjords. We liked the Fram and Kon-Tiki museums in Oslo very much. In Bergen, we celebrated Anane's 60th birthday as a family. Our flam train experience will probably never be erased from our memories. The song that echoed in the mountains and penetrated our souls, sung by a blonde long-haired woman representing the Norwegian folklore hero Huldra on a distant hillside when the train suddenly stopped in the wonderful nature between the fjords and the passengers landed in the middle of the green without realising what was happening.

We went on a king crab safari, fed reindeer, walked around with dozens of huskies at the Snow Hotel in Kirkenes. Four of us jumped hand in hand at the "Northern Lights" feast. We were surprised how many berry varieties there are in Norway. Lingonberry, crowberry, blueberry, bog whortleberry, cloudberry, rowanberry, bunchberry.

## **Totem**

My wood carving endeavour in New Zealand is continuing in full speed. Haydn has been cutting down totara trees in groups from time to time to make more grazing land for the cows on their farm. We are very sad to cut down healthy trees, but this is something that farmers here have been doing for years. Totara is endemic to New Zealand and one of the most ideal trees for carving. We talked once, he promised to give me a few of the long and thick tree trunks when he cut some down.

My aim is to carve totems. It's a desire that has stayed with me for years. I think it started after I saw the totems of the American Indians and was fuelled by the totems of the Maoris.

One day while we were travelling, Haydn loaded 5-6 logs on his trailer and brought them to me. Since I wasn't there, he asked Cüneyt where to unload them. Cüneyt was furious saying: "What are we going to do with them, they are a nuisance." He called me in a rage. I told him about our conversation with Haydn and my intentions: "We'll find a place on 62 acres of land." When I realised he wasn't calming down, I asked Haydn to get on the phone. I said, "Thank you very much for your efforts. Please don't listen to Cüneyt and take them to the far end paddock and unload along the fence."

Then I started thinking about how to make the totem. I got up and went to my teacher, my master Israe. He said: "The totem must first have a story. Fictionalise your story in your head. Do some sketches on drawing paper. Then we'll talk." I went out confused. "How do I do it, where do I start?"

I went back home. I picked up a drawing pencil and started staring blankly at the paper. Then it suddenly became clear. The totem was going to tell the life story of Nesrin and me. I started to shape what came to my mind.

A few days later, when I had few ideas on the drawing paper, I chose the log and went back to Israe to show him what I had done. I told him what I had in mind and that I wanted to erect it on our land, visible from the main road. He thought about it. Then he said: "This is a business. This is another relationship than we had before. I will send you my proposal about it." I was surprised. I said: "Why should it be different? This is also a carving and you are my master. What's different?" "It's a statement. You're saying there's a competent Maori carver here. People might knock on your door, question you and want to order some carvings. The Maori might not like it at all, they might want to cut the totem down and into pieces. I need to be involved in a different way."

When I came home, I thought: If I get an offer I can't accept and I refuse, the whole relationship with my master will be over. However, I learnt a lot from him and I want to learn more. I texted him and said: "I realise I've gone too far and I'm withdrawing." Then I decided that I

would continue the project on my own and place it opposite our house so that it would not be visible from the main road.

After 7-8 months of work, Tiara emerged and we dug a 1.5 metre deep hole in front of our house and erected it. We inaugurated the Tiara in November 2018 with a ceremony attended by Winter, Pınar, John and his family, many of our friends, live Maori music from Makareta and Nesrin's wonderful food. Our Maori friend Paitangi, who made our tattoos, blessed Tiara with karakia. We had emotional moments together. Here are some more details for you:

### TIARA

This craftwork tells the story of Nesrin and Kemal. The totem pole is made from a Totara Tree that is native to New Zealand and stands at 18 feet tall. It is made of three sections. The bottom section represents our first 25 years of life, while the middle represents ages 25 to 50, and the top symbolises the rest of our lives.

The bottom section is a Manaia, which is a mythological motif in the Maori carving art. With a head of a bird, body of a man, and tail of a fish, it represents life in the air, life on land, and life in the water, or simply life. The Raperape spiral patterns on the arms represent motion. For us, this section means the "start" from the spiritual world to the mortal world to becoming a human. The time of innocence and naiveté, the years of childhood, adolescence, and education with the protection of evil eye. The time before starting our family and being confronted by the chaos that is called adulthood.

The middle section is the period where we strove to earn our bread and endeavour for the better. The Maori weapon, Patu, in our hands and the coins in our eyes describe the difficulty and the stress of the working life in the city, the struggle to have more, and the broken hearts along the way. This second 25-year period is when we lived far from Nature and the natural state (naturalness) and when we experienced the pressure of the society and competition at its worst. The feet turned inward symbolises our lack of confidence, whereas the twisted legs symbolises the weight (burden) on our shoulders. The symbols on our upper arms represent our efforts to heal ourselves by joining the Freemasons and choosing a life on the sea. The heart-within-heart symbol on our arm tells of our growing family with love

and happiness. The Maori Koru spiral, which stands for birth to a new life, growth, trust, and peacefulness, represents Pinar. The Turkish Lira with Ataturk on the right eye and the New Zealand Dollar with Queen Elizabeth on the left eye accompanies our journey.

The third section is the years after 50, the retirement period. These are the years when we are more mature, more experienced, more talkative, more calm, and more enlightened. Our fight with Matter is winding down and our fight with Ourselves is on a peaceful stage. The years are spent in harmony with Nature, getting to understand the different parts of the World, living the life that we had dreamed. The crowns on the head illustrate that our ideas are becoming more universal. The long tongue means that our biggest possession now are those ideas, and our biggest merit is to pass them on. Fibonacci numbers: We encounter these awe inspiring series of numbers in the unique harmony of Nature again and again. We used them on the Maori patterns to represent perfection that continues to reach the Golden Ratio.

The Flax Weaving that separates the three sections from each other, means that the transition between the three stages of our lives was far from smooth and subtle but rather abrupt and radical, as if we were “Cutting the Ropes” in the sailors terminology, when you are leaving for a journey with no intention to come back any time soon.

The hawk at the top is another Maori symbol. The wings refer to whirling Dervishes in Sema ceremonies. A Messenger that extends to the Universe. Ascending into the skies. Returning to the spiritual world.

## Websites

I bought the domain names of [pank.biz](http://pank.biz), [transearth.biz](http://transearth.biz), [dunyakazan.com](http://dunyakazan.com), [dunyakazan.biz](http://dunyakazan.biz) before we started to go cruising with Pank making sure that they all opened the same page. We shared our pictures and impressions about our travels here. I admit that I have been a bit lazy lately. Then, when I started to cycle with the EDC team, I bought the domain names [eatdrinkcycle.com](http://eatdrinkcycle.com) and [yeiccevir.com](http://yeiccevir.com). I started designing the websites first, then Yasemin took over. She also has time constraints.

After we built our house on our property in New Zealand, I bought the the domain name [pururufalls.com](http://pururufalls.com). Then it occurred to me to buy,

[kiciminkenari.com](http://kiciminkenari.com) which refers in a way to the adjective “arsehole” in Turkish. I wondered if interesting stories would come out about arseholes. When I started with arse, the website [kiciminkeyfi.com](http://kiciminkeyfi.com) joined the queue, meaning “For the pleasure of my arse” in Turkish. Finally, there were 9 of them.

We celebrated our 39th wedding anniversary on the Amalfi coast of Italy. Dramatic landscapes, steep mountains stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the sky, romantic beaches, narrow roads with sharp bends where two cars can only pass each other by waiting for each other. Sorrento, the capital of Limoncello, the island of Capri with its villas of the rich and famous, the towns of Positano and Amalfi took our breath away.

In late July 2019, we travelled to Ukraine with the EDC team. This time Cüneyt and Gülgün were absent. 6 of us. Again we ate, drank, travelled, had fun again, saw and experienced different places. We didn't like the roads and the potholes. We had the idea to make our next trip somewhere outside Europe. Nepal in 2020. I did a lot of research, correspondence and finalised an EDC tour starting from Kathmandu, passing through Pokara and extending in the valley south of the Himalayas. But it could not be realised.

I intended to buy a diamond necklace for Nesrin's birthday. It would match the ring I bought for her before and she was loving it. That day I was going to Sirkeci to buy a side mirror for my car. On the way I would finish the job at a jeweller Selçuk knows in the Grand Bazaar. I jumped on my bike, first the Grand Bazaar. After looking to lots of them, I decided to buy one in the jewellery shop. After a heavy discount, they said: “If you pay by credit card, we have to charge commission. This is the cash price.” “OK, if there is a Garanti Bank nearby, I'll withdraw money and pay in Cash.” It was just a street away. They gave me an employee to accompany and we went to the bank together. There were a few people in front of me, waiting. The phone rang. It was Nesrin. “Don't you it!” she said. “What am I doing, and shouldn't do!” “I know what you're doing. I had question marks about going to Sirkeci story. I checked the Find My Friends app and saw you are in the Grand Bazaar. You're buying a necklace for me. Don't buy it, I can't wear it, it will stay in the safe the whole time. Please!”

I didn't know how we came to this point. I was scared too. What



am I going to tell the jewellers now? They're friends of Selçuk. We went back to the shop. I said something like, "My wife will come by herself, she will choose one and buy it." They were very understanding and didn't make any comment. I don't know what they said behind my back, of course. In fact I was going to buy car mirror in Sirkeci, but I didn't go and returned home with that disappointment.

Towards the end of August we travelled to Japan as a family, 5 of us. Winter was 2,5 years old. We were inspired by a travel itinerary Cem had done before. We landed in Tokyo. After staying in Tokyo for two or three nights, we rented a car and drove to Mount Koyasan, south of Osaka. We stayed in small, authentic towns. We saw, experienced and got to know the Japanese lifestyle, food, traditions and customs, old temples, World Heritage Sites. We avoided big cities except Tokyo. While passing through Osaka, we didn't even leave the motorway to see the city.

Pinar and John climbed Mount Fuji. We stayed overnight in a close by hotel in Lake Kawaguchi. Winter was with us. She woke up at 3 a.m. "My mummy, my mummy." She was crying. "Look, your mum and dad climbed Mount Fuji right there. They're asleep too. We'll see them in the morning." She sighed and looked at Mount Fuji and said, "Hi Mummy." Nesrin took Winter downstairs. They wandered around, not much sleeping for us all. The next morning their reunion was marvellous.

On the way back to Tokyo, I was driving the car. I heard an incoming text message sound. The road was not crowded, I looked at it sneakily. Then I started looking for a suitable place to stop. In response to the questions about what happened, I replied, "We need to stop." I stopped in a wide place. "Everyone out, please." I said. After we formed a circle like soccer or rugby players do and put our heads together, I gave the good news. "I just got the news that our application for New Zealand citizenship has been approved." We danced and celebrated next to the car amid the astonished looks of the passers-by.

On 20 September 2019, we celebrated Julide's 50th birthday at a cafe/restaurant in Karaköy. After the food was finished, the music got louder and Ayda took on the role of DJ. The dose of fun increased. Of course, we should not forget the contribution of alcohol. When the Zorba song started to play, Nesrin started her favourite Sirtaki dance. After putting the raki glass on the floor, she started to spin around with

elegant figures. Then she bent down and lifted the raki glass with her teeth without using her hands. She drank as much raki as she could without touching her hands again. The rest spilled on the floor. Then she threw the glass with his mouth, so that it would break, as a ritual. The glass that fell on the wooden floor did not break. Then Nesrin slipped on the wet floor and fell.

I was right there with her. A soft fall on her bum. Or so I thought. We realised that her left ankle was turned sideways. Ercan, our doctor friend was with us too. He immediately put the foot back in place. While we were thinking that there was a dislocation in the ankle and was put back in place, our doctor brother Ercan called an ambulance. Before we could understand what was going on, Nesrin and I reached Levent Hospital. Ercan had called our friend Dr Barış, an orthopaedic surgeon in the mean rime. Thanks to him, he came at an hour close to midnight. X-rays were taken. He said: "It is both dislocated and broken. We'll operate tomorrow morning." "But we were going to go to Bodrum and then to New Zealand." "No. She will have surgery. We have to put some metal pieces to support and heal faster. I won't allow travelling before six weeks." Nesrin couldn't break the raki glass on the wooden floor in the last moment, she broke her ankle instead. We postponed our travels, and the troublesome recovery process took a long time.

### **Ayata Lab**

Pinar won 4 awards during her career until 2019. We did not hear about these from our daughter. We learnt about the last one she received, the Robin Chemers Neustein Postdoctoral Fellowship Award, when our neurologist Professor brother Aksel Siva called us and congratulated us.

Well, we are proud of our daughter.

In the meantime, Pinar had completed her postdoctoral period at Mount Sinai and had started applying for jobs for the next step in her career. She was in contact with various universities. They travelled as a family to Houston for an interview. But they did not like Houston's climate and life energy. Another offer came from CUNY (City University of New York). Pinar would have a laboratory at the Advanced Science Research Centre. She hesitated a bit, "Should I wait for the results of my other applications?" but then she decided to

proceed with CUNY and established the AYATA laboratory with the her new title of Assistant Professor.

What an honour for the parents. We want to shout it out to everyone. Pınar is modest. But we are also parents. I asked: "Pınar, what will be your main research topic at Ayata Lab? Can you tell me a little bit about it?" "Dad, please stop asking. You won't understand even if I tell you." my daughter replied. That was damn right, my daughter is always right. Anyway, we announced Ayata Lab to our friends by mumbling the words Brain, Cell, Microglia, Alzheimer's without going too much into the research subject. Many of them thought that we transferred money and bought or established a laboratory for our daughter. That's not how it works in New York.

Pınar's decision was just before COVID 19 - the pandemic. It turned out to be a great choice, including the timing. Everything stopped with the pandemic, you know.

Thank God, we set up our pandemic prison in New Zealand. It was not exactly a prison. We live on a farm, outdoors. It's like camping with all our luxuries. Days spent in our warm home in the middle of green grass, trees, birds, with hot water, electricity, internet. Wear a mask, go to the supermarket. You can even find toilet paper.

We could not meet our friends for a long time. We could not see Pınar, John and Winter for 18 months. This was the most difficult part for us.

In 2020, we had to cancel many of our previously planned programmes. Fjordland boat tour in South Island in May, Pınar's visit to New Zealand in May, the plan to celebrate our 40th wedding anniversary in Cinque Terre region of Italy on 2 July, a trip to Portugal with Şükrü, Bahar, Selçuk and Selma, a trip to New York in August, International Transanatolia off-road race and trip in Turkey, Nepal tour with EDC team in September, a cruise to Antarctica with Pınar, Winter John in December.

During this period I was able to deal with carving more intensively. I carved a tekoteko from the thickest of the wooden logs waiting for me. It is more than 2 metres tall. It had settled on the edge of the stream on our property. But this time it can be transported by tractor and trailer. I named it CORONA in honour of those days.

One day I was working and a farmer-looking man, who I later

found out was our neighbour, came in. He had 3-4 sheep in the back of his small pick-up truck. One of his recently born lambs had escaped through the fence to our property. He put his mother and a few more sheep into the tray of his pickup truck in the hope that he would recognise them by their smells and voices and come to them. He was asking for permission to search for his lost lamb in our property. Of course. While we were talking about where the lamb could have run away, he suddenly turned to his truck and pulled the balls of one of the sheep and threw them into the bush. I was shocked, I couldn't believe my eyes. No blood, no sound from the sheep. Everyone was calm. When he saw my widening eyes and gasping breath, he told me what was happening. To sterilise male sheep, they tie them tightly at the base of their balls. When they could not be fed without blood circulation, they would dry up and fall over time. These balls didn't fall off. But what about my trauma?

I decided to apply to Northtec University, which is about 1.5 hours driving away, to learn more in depth about the theory and practice of Maori carving. When I went to the mutual meeting, I took what I could take with me from the works I made so far. I had pictures of the rest. It was a great meeting that lasted about an hour. I visited the campus, told them about myself and our life. I explained that we travel a lot, that we live in Kerikeri and that I might have attendance problems. Michael, the teacher of the Whakairo (carving) department, was a very nice Maori carver. He liked my work very much. He said: "If the attendance issue is not exaggerated, we can handle it. As long as you fulfil your responsibilities. There are 7 classes in total to graduate. We will start you from the 5th grade. 5-6-7, you'll graduate in three years in total."

I was over the moon. I was going to university again at the age of 63. I would be getting a Bachelor's degree. Paperwork's done, I was enrolled. We were invited to the opening ceremony of Northtec University. When Nesrin and I went, we learnt that my teacher Michael's contract with the school had expired and he was leaving. He was replaced by a much younger teacher. When I complained, Michael said: "You will like him too, don't worry."

Apart from carving, there were also other art branches such as painting, sculpture and flex weaving. It had become a tradition that 10 times a year, all art students stay in the Marae at the campus for

the weekend, attend common classes together and share. Marae is a temple-like building that Maori use for meetings and ceremonies. My study would start with such a weekend. I got ready on Friday afternoon and went there. Beds were laid side by side inside the Marae. About 40-50 of them. The students chose a bed and put some of their belongings next to it. I went to my teacher and said: "I snore and I go to the toilet 3-4 times a night. I don't want to disturb my friends. I have a sleeping arrangement in my car. Can I stay in my car?" He said, "Of course." Meals were eaten together. Dining hall and shared meals.

We started classes on Saturday morning, getting acquainted with the lecturers and friends, warming up. About 70 per cent of the students were of Maori origin. I was the oldest among them. They called me Matua. A sign of respect for my age and my work. I spent two interesting days, meetings, warming up, exchanging information. I was with nice people. Meanwhile, the lecturers talked about the 80 percent attendance requirement. I was upset. I went to Kawiti, my carving instructor. "When I was talking to Michael, I told him that we were travelling a lot and he said that they would find a solution according to what I do and how I develop and fulfil my responsibilities. Now you say 80 per cent attendance is required. What am I going to do? As soon as the pandemic ends, we will have long journeys." He said: "I have just started working here, I don't really know how it will be." I also talked to other art teachers. They said: "Let's see, let's talk, we'll let you know." Unfortunately, when I didn't get any positive news, I decided to suspend my dream of studying at the university for a while. I don't know if I will act again in the future. I didn't warm up to my teacher either.

When the plan to celebrate our wedding anniversary in Cinque Terre in Italy didn't come true, we decided to celebrate with our friends in a beautiful restaurant in New Zealand with great food, good wine, live music and dancing. We spoke to the Marsden Estate winery restaurant in Kerikeri. They allocated the venue, which is normally closed for dinners, to us for the evening of 2 July 2020. Everyone would choose food from their wonderful menu and drink the wines of their choice. For the live music, we agreed with Ian's brother-in-law Craig's band of 3. I said: "Almost all the people who come are over 50. Most of them are over 60. I'd like you to play some well-known songs from the 80s and 90s. I'll make a short speech with a little old slide show in

between. During that time, please have your dinner. After that, I want to see everyone dancing on the floor.”

It’s not a common concept to celebrate wedding anniversary in such a way for people over middle age in New Zealand. We were over 40 people. We organised the table seating according to the criteria of our friends getting to know each other. People were a little confused at first. After they got used to the atmosphere, had their first drinks and the music started, we had a very friendly atmosphere. With the help of a small projector, I made a short speech accompanied by photos that gave an idea about our journey together which started with our marriage when we were 22 and 23 years old. At the end I said: “If I were to start my life again, I would choose Nesrin and do similar things. When I die, my last words will be: What a wonderful ride!”

Then the volume of the music increased. Gradually the dance-floor started to jam. Everyone started singing in unison. I counted at one stage, only 3 of our friends were sitting. We had a night that we had a lot of fun together and will never forget.

A few weeks later Gülgün left. The cancer she fought for a long time was victorious. She was 53 years old and full of energy of life. She fought relentlessly and suffered a lot. It tore me up inside, even though I followed her from afar. After her father, brother and husband left very early, she also left early.

## **Chatam Islands**

There are two things that symbolise our attraction to the Northland region of New Zealand. One is that there are no traffic lights and the second is that all the bridges outside the towns and main roads have single lane. It actually tells me a lot. That’s why I say to our friends: “If the bridges get a second lane and the towns get traffic lights, we’re out of here.” Of course the question: “Where to?”

The answer is the Chatham Islands. A group of islands 800 kilometres east of New Zealand. In the 1500s, the Moriori came and settled from the Pacific. Then the Maori occupied the island and it became part of New Zealand.

In March 2021, we jumped on the plane to go and take a look. A total of 750 people live on the island. Almost everyone knows each other and greet each other when they come across on the road. Fishing

and sheep animal farming are the main source of income. There is one bank branch. It is open until noon two days a week. There are two restaurants. They open one after the other. They are not open at the same time. There's a police station. It's closed. There's a police car with two policemen. There's a doctor and his surgery. No mobile phones. Internet is possible on landlines. There is a grocery store. Everything comes from mainland New Zealand. The climate is colder and very windy. The vegetation is very poor because of the salty winds. The variety and amount of trees is very small. So there's no wood for carving. It was both too much and too little for us. We will look for other options.

In April, with the organisation of our off-road friends, 5 Kiwi families went on a 5-day boat trip in the Fjordland region in the southwest of the South Island. We fished, hiked and canoed in the cold, deserted, lush green wild fjords with no road connection. We couldn't get enough of the blue cod fish with its wonderful flavour and the lobsters that our diving friends caught. We played games after the wonderful meals prepared by our Asian chef. We were in perfect harmony on the tiny, tiny boat. Then we left the boat by helicopter.

Over the years in New Zealand, I have recorded most of the kilometres we have travelled by car as GPS tracks. Later, when I put all the tracks on the same map, an impressive image emerged. When the subject of travelling come up, the common reaction of our Kiwi friends to whom we showed this was that we had done more kilometres in New Zealand than they had. There must be very few roads we haven't travelled.

At the end of June 2021, after 18 months, we went to New York after completing our Covid vaccinations. We missed our family very much. After the first longing moments, we decided to celebrate our 41st wedding anniversary together. Pınar said, "I know a very nice restaurant, but you can't go without making a reservation. I will make a reservation. You go alone." We got up and went. It was a great steak restaurant. We looked at the wines. We like Shiraz. We liked one, but it was too expensive. We looked at each other. "Will we come back to the world again?" and we ordered. Our meat was also quite expensive. After dessert, coffee and a great meal, we asked for the bill. They said: "Your bill has been paid, sir." We were in a state of shock. When we got home, I asked Pınar: "Did the bill start with a four?" "Let's not talk

about it," my daughter said. We hugged and told how happy we were.

In August, we rented a big house in Vermont for five days. We are five of us. We invited also Nesrin's two nephews and their families. We would spend time altogether for the first time. 7 children and 8 adults. It was quite risky to have the courage to invite people who have never travelled together, to live and share the same house for 5 days. At the end of this period, we could have left saying, "It was very nice, but let's not do it again." But at the end, I asked the key person, teenager Mete, "Do you want it to happen again next year?" He said, "Not next year, but let's do it the year after." Hooray, everyone agreed. We had a great time together without any problems.

The end of the pandemic was approaching, but New Zealand was still closed to tourists. Citizens were staying in a quarantine hotel for 14 days upon entering the country. We were caught on our way back. It was an experience like going to jail willingly. Our hotel was new, our room had a huge double bed, two chairs with armrests, another chair, smart TV, wifi, toilet, shower, kettle, tiny fridge, enough space to go around the bed. The food was standard, reminiscent of hospital food, usually cold. So there was nothing to complain about.

We were brought to our hotel under the control and management of a squad of 10 soldiers. Novotel Christchurch hotel is at the airport, 150 metres from the terminal. But there is a 10 metre walkway in between, which is not included in the quarantine zone. We couldn't cross it. After taking our luggage, we waited our turn for the distance we would go in 3 minutes, placed the suitcases on the bus, got on, went 5 minutes, waited for half an hour. We got off at the military control, took our luggage, first the health team questioning, then passport control, then hotel reception registration. Everyone around was fully protected, there were no other customers. No touching anywhere. Only pressing the button of the lift was allowed.

Once you were in the room, you were not allowed to leave the room until the first covid test came back negative. It was compulsory to wear a mask before opening the door of the room. The paramedics coming for the test were staying outside, the door was open, we were staying inside. They were stretching out their arms and with a stick in their hands, they were attacking deep into our noses and going away. Food was left at the door in a paper bag. Then there was a knock on the



door. You had to wait a few minutes. Before you step out, you should put on your mask and sneak it in before anyone sees you.

When the test came back negative, a band was put on our arm. We were allowed to pace with it twice a day for 45 minutes in an area surrounded by fence. After the negative test result, it was possible for garbage to come out of the room. Housekeeping did not visit the room for the 14 days of our stay, we did our own cleaning. The request for bed linen and towels could be made on Mondays and Thursdays only. You could order takeaway food, but drinks were restricted. High alcohol content liquors were prohibited, one bottle of wine a day was allowed. If you ordered too much, they kept it downstairs and were giving you a bottle every day. On day 3 and day 12 we had two more tests. If the tests were positive, we would be transferred from the isolation hotel to the quarantine hotel. We thought who knows what it would be like there. They called us every day and asked how we were doing. When the last tests were negative, we were released after 14 days. It was a strange experience. For a while I felt like a walking COVID-19 virus.

## **Diseases**

In September, I was fired from Cambro, where I have been a consultant for 14 years. Now I can only go to the company as a manager of the owner company. During my working life, I had many colleagues who touched my life. I have certainly touched them too, but I cannot repay them for what they have done for me. Yusuf Rıhtım, Abuzer Şenel, Fazlı Çendik, Ahmet Bodur, Ergün Yılmaz, Mustafa Küçük, Asiye Elsürer. Please forgive me for those I have forgotten. Thank you to all my colleagues. We had a nice journey together.

In the summer of 2022, we stayed in Turkey for a long time due to my health problems. It was decided to have a second biopsy for my long-standing prostate problem. During the biopsy, I caught Covid from the nurse and infected all of us in turn while Pinar and her family were in Turkey. As a result of the biopsy, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. PET CT was performed, no metastasis. I was advised to have my prostate completely removed. But it could be also followed up with a biopsy every two years. I decided on surgery, but after the EDC tour to Portugal.

Gülgün was then in our hearts. Unfortunately Murathan was also

absent this time due to family reasons. We had another great trip with the rest of the team. We flew to Porto and cycled along the Atlantic Ocean coast to Lisbon. Magnificent ocean views, small cosy towns, chatting, eating, drinking and cycling. We travelled around 250 km. Portugal is both a European country and not. It has its own culture and history, quite different from Europe. It is like an island country with Spain as its only neighbour.

When I returned from Portugal, we had routine heart check-ups before prostate surgery. Our cardiologist, our friend Mrs Saide, deemed it necessary and directed me to computerised angiography and then to normal angiography. As a result, 2 coronary artery by-pass decisions was made. I knew my inheritance from my mother and father, both of whom had by-pass and stents. I had been under control since 2005 and was using various medications. What I didn't know was when I would have my by-pass. It turned out to be today.

My prostate operation had suddenly become unimportant. "When could the surgery happen, I mean. we will be going to New Zealand, etc. etc." Answer: "Not tomorrow, the day after tomorrow." "When can I get on a plane?" "In 5-6 weeks, because you're lucky. Both your coronary arteries to be by-passed are on the left side. Therefore, we will not cut the sternum bone. Without opening the chest, we will enter between the ribs, and perform laparoscopic, robotic surgery. Recovery will be faster. You'll stay in intensive care overnight. You will be discharged in 4-5 days."

In the evening, we had dinner with our friends, and the next day I was hospitalised. My better half is with me. They came to pick me up in the morning and gave me a tranquilliser intravenously. I was already gone in the lift. I woke up in a room. The assistant surgeon was with me. He said: "Your operation went well. You are now in intensive care. During anaesthesia, your throat got oedema and swelled. For this reason, the intubation device in your throat will remain until the morning. I will come and take it out at 8 a.m. You won't remember this, but still I am letting you know."

I was well awake in the contrary, I was comfortable, but I couldn't speak because of the huge tube in my mouth and the tube going down into my lung. I was alone in the ICU room and there was a huge wall clock in front of me. It was showing 4:30 pm in the afternoon. There

were two huge screens on either side of my bed, but I couldn't see them. I looked at the clock to see if it shows seconds. No, but I could count the minutes. Every half minute it moved a tick. Nurses came in and out. Every now and then the alarms went on. They came in and were doing what they have to do and silence it.

At some point I got cold, I wanted a blanket over my shoulders. 'How do I call them, how do I tell them what's wrong?' I waited for them to come, I tried to explain. No luck. A bit of pushing and showing, I finally managed. The alarms were ringing frequently. They were coming and sorting it out, no fuss. But I was wondering what was going on. "What's wrong? I can't swallow my saliva." It was accumulating in my mouth and flowing out. It was very uncomfortable. Someone had to wipe it off. I couldn't explain. Then I got angry. Leyla called. The nurse from far away: "It's his sister. What should I say?" she asked. The nurse next to me, without looking at me said: "Tell her he's watching TV!" I got even more angry. There was a huge screen in front of me, but I had said with a hand signal that I did not want to watch TV at the very beginning.

I was having trouble breathing. I was feeling fluid accumulating in my lungs, I couldn't cough it out. I started hitting the edge of the bed to make my voice heard. Then they tied both my hands to the bed in case I pulled the hose and tube out of my throat. I panicked. "This is what it means to die by suffocation." I couldn't breathe. I couldn't get a word out of my mouth. I discovered that when I bite the tube in my mouth, the screen on my left side was alarming. I was biting the tube when I wanted my "Angels of Life" with me. They untied my hands and brought me a pen and paper. I was going to write a 7-letter word explaining my problem of the saliva accumulating in my lungs. The nurse didn't understand until I wrote the last letter. Then they brought a suction device, lowered the tube to my lung and sucked the fluid out. It was very painful and frustrating.

I was trying to sleep. I fell asleep a few times. When I was waking up, I was looking at the clock. One or two minutes at most. Around 5:00 am in the morning, the nurse came in. She did something on the screen on the left side and left. My breathing became more difficult. The alarm went on. I was choking. Before she left, the other nurse came in. "What are you doing?" she said. "The oxygen must be switched off before removing the hose and tube. That's why I cut off the oxygen." The other one: "He will still be here for three more hours. This should

be done 10 minutes before.” She pressed back the button and I started breathing again.

It was 7:30 am in the morning. I was counting every single minute that goes by. It had been 15 hours. Enough is enough. I told them to call the surgeon with a phone dialling sign. Anyway, they called him right away. Then the assistant surgeon came, thank God. Under his instructions, the nurses removed the intubation. Oh, my God. Back to earth. I told the assistant surgeon what kind of a 15 hours I had spent, how the nurses treated me like a flower pot and expressed my regrets. He told me: “There is nothing wrong with your health. You will tell these as stories in the future. You will get well soon.” Just as I was calming down, I lost my temper again.

After a while, the heart surgeon who performed the operation came. I said to him: “If I had known I was going to have a night like this, I would not have had this operation. We are all going to die one day anyway. I would prefer to have my heart attack one day and die.” I know it’s nonsense, don’t mention it to me. So he apologised and said: “We should have put you to sleep. It was wrong.” Now, I’m fine, thank God.

### **Let’s wrap it up**

Yes, that’s enough, let me wrap it up. I started this book when she was 4.5 years old. Winter turned 6 years old. Fortunately, the current photos of her that I upload to my phone screen every Friday continue to create a beautiful memory.

I have made dozens of mistakes in my life, many of which I have tried to mention in this book. The main ones are related to Pinar. Others are about doing business with family and friends, mistakes I have done in the company, etc. Hearts I have broken unknowingly, unintentionally, in anger or excitement. Who knows how many mistakes I have forgotten or have tried to forget. I love Orhan Gencebay’s song “There is no one without mistakes.”

My first principle is to apologise when I make a mistake. When I realise it, no matter who it is. I do not hesitate, I do not deceive myself and not defend myself, knowing that I am wrong. It does not matter whether it is a mother, father, son, wife, spouse, brother, sister, friend, boss, employee, elder, younger or a person on the street. I have apologised and will apologise to all of them. Apologising honours and

elevates a person. Also, accepting the mistake ends all discussions. Sometimes saying “It didn’t work out, I was defeated” also makes you feel relieved. In fact, it is what you do after making a mistake that makes you who you are.

After admitting the mistake and apologising for it, the next thing is to do your best to make it right. Just apologies can be fake. Action is absolutely necessary. The third important thing is not to repeat the same mistake. Someone said: “If you repeat the same mistake, it is no longer a mistake, it is a choice.”

I have been in front of the mirror many times, and then there have been moments when I slapped myself or vice versa, when I loved and appreciated myself. I always thought that “Man learns and develops through his own mistakes.” I am taking the rhetoric one step further: “Man is born to make mistakes.”

I have mistakes in life, but do I have regrets? No, I don’t. Sentences starting with “If only I had the same mind then as I have today...,” have no meaning. What is important is whether we made decisions and acted with our minds of that day, knowingly and willingly, with the intention of harming someone or something else. I have never made any of the important decisions and actions knowing that they were wrong or destructive. If I could go back to the circumstances of that day, I would do the same things under the same conditions, because I believed them to be right at the time. I love Frank Sinatra’s song “May Way.” Both the melody and the lyrics. Every time I hear it, I sing along. “YES, I did it my way.”

Of course, there were moments when I was very offended and upset. I have seen hurtful behaviour from some of my family members, colleagues and friends. What I do at such moments is to enlarge the distance between us. I believe that there is and should be a distance in the relationship of two people, regardless of the type of relationship, money, love, family, friendship, whatever. This distance, in my opinion, is determined by the sincerity of the relationship. If it goes down to zero, respect disappears, the relationship settles down to the level of frivolity and it does not last long, it ends. There should be a distance between two people, even if it is invisible. In relationships where I am offended, I enlarge this distance and put up barriers that can be overcome. For example, I don’t want to be buried in the family cemetery. Some of my

friends and I have lost touch. One day it can start again and continue from where it left off, if the conditions change.

Unfortunately, ego plays a very important role in all human relationships. We all have and should have ego. But the level of ego can take people to the extremes of psychopathy and narcissism. There are examples around me. The sentences coming out of the mouths that best express the Turkish type ego gushing: “Do you know who I am?” or “Who do you think you are?” My ego level has never been high. But this is not something I want to force myself to do. It is the point where my personal values reach. There is also a Turkish type ethical rule. “What would other people around say!” Whatever they say. We don’t care. However, the important thing is to make yourself and the other person happy with empathy, kindness, respect and love.

There’s a phrase in Turkish that we’ve made up in our mouths. ‘To be a friend on a dark day.’ I don’t know if it is similar in other languages. Black day friends are everywhere. When something bad happens to us, our neighbours are also our black day friends, also our colleagues and family members. I like Selçuk’s saying very much. “The important thing is to be a good day friend.” says my brother. In other words, sharing good things, jokes, favours, successes, meals, travelling, consulting about everything, saying “Look how bad it is. Did you see that?,” showing their weaknesses, opening their scars and hearts. And then not to think about how all this can be used against me. Thank God there are many around me. My dear friends. They know themselves.

Pınar started her own life at a very early age. This is an extraordinary value for us. We owe the colourful life we live to Pınar standing on her own feet, being at the wheel of her own car, being the author and hero of her own novel. She gets angry with me when I tell her this. Because Pınar doesn’t like to be praised or beaten. I used to be her hero, now Pınar is my hero. It is the biggest lottery of our lives that she united her life with John, a loving and beautiful person, and that they added Winter to our family and multiplied us five times.

Abdul says: “You’ve won the biggest lottery in this life. You shared your life with Nesrin.” Yes, one hundred percent true. As Yalçın says: “You became: husband and wife, partners, companions, friends, buddies, lovers, and a whole.” Nesrin is “My Better Half.” I mean it. We are whole and she is the better part.

We've made each other's lives easier for 46 years. I'm his, she's mine. What we did wouldn't have happened without her. What we've done wouldn't have happened without me.

Just like Pınar established a life in America, we established a life in New Zealand. We did not try to find Turks there, we made friends there. We brought our culture, we taught it, but we also tried to learn and adopt the culture there. Our life is different when we go to Istanbul and our life in New Zealand is different. Both our friends in Turkey and our friends in New Zealand ask us the same question. "Are you back?" We reply. "The question is wrong. We are not going back anywhere. We are always on the road and travelling. If we are talking about returning, yes, we are always turning." Another question from our friends in both places is: "How was your holiday?" And we answer. "We are always on holiday. We have lives in two different places. We go to both of them not on holiday, but to live."

I have never had a mentor in my life. We hear and read in families, there is always a wise person. Everyone consults him or her, or his or her ideas are respected and taken as a motto. We didn't have such a figure in our family, or at least not for me. I always searched for an answer to the question "Does my life represent who I am?"

Recently a friend of ours in New Zealand told us that an acquaintance of his was organising his own funeral. I asked him, "How does this happen?" The man was old, sick and his days were not countless. One afternoon he invited everyone who had touched his life to a place. Food, music, everything is OK. First he said a few words and expressed his feelings. Then people got up and told their memories and feelings about him. With a smiling face, he said goodbye to everyone before he started to suffer. I loved it. I'd like to do it one day. Raki, dancing, food, music, entertainment. But Frank Sinatra's "My Way" and Timur Selçuk's "Where are you?" will also be played.

For me, birth, marriage and death are the most meaningful moments of life. Birth is a miracle. At some point in the journey of a human being that begins in the womb of his mother, he decides that it is time to come out and comes to our world. I believe that this should be celebrated and blessed with great enthusiasm. Marriage, on the other hand, is signing an agreement that will last a lifetime. It is a great decision. It is celebrated and blessed in similar ways in all cultures.

Death is the end point of our life journey on Earth. It is the moment of diving into eternal sleep without dreams. The celebration and blessing of that person's journey on Earth after he has lived his destiny also fascinates me.

Let me quote Celal Kadri Kinoglu.

“When death comes, let it find nothing to take away from you; other than a castle whose walls were devastated by the winter, storm, and sun of the years. Yes. Live to the fullest. Let there be nothing left to live. Finish it. By believing, loving, choosing, creating, beautify it with all your soul, in accordance with your body, with your talents...

As the saying goes, live in such a way that you can respect your own story by putting your signature, without excuses, without buzzing that you couldn't do this or that because of others, that this is your work. Inspire those who know you. Having raised your life above coincidence, in the peace of fulfilling your duty, having done whatever you find meaningful, having tasted whatever you consider enjoyable, having satisfied your curiosity and enthusiasm, give your salute and walk into the silent darkness that wants to swallow you, that opens its arms to you.”

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## CUT

Of course, there will be those who say:

“What is this?”

It’s nothing.

It’s not a work of literature.

Not a memoir,

Not a novel.

Not an autobiography.

It’s not a summary, an interpretation of the meaning of life.

Not an inner settlement with myself.

It’s not a success story.

We played. Winter, it’s your turn now.

Cut!





CUT  
Kemal Ayata

Istanbul 2023