

SECTION 1: LIMNOS & ISTANBUL. Liz and Erdal.

If Liz peered obliquely out of Jules' long bedroom window she could just see him drinking his first Retsina at Lefteri's, lower down the quay. Behind her, on the ruffled bed, lay her suitcase full of summer dresses and white underclothes.

'Shoes,' she thought, and looked under the bed.

She chose a pair of sandals, two pairs of dark-blue elegants and a pair of ridiculously high-heels for evenings. If indeed there were going to be any evenings, which seemed increasingly doubtful as the complexities of 'Turkey Today (Provisional Title Only)' unfolded themselves.

'Above all try to make some sense out of their economy,' her producer had said. 'That's what people expect from you. Facts and figures and go easy on purple nights across the Bosphorus.'

A hoarse hoot announced the arrival of the steamer from Rhodes that was going to take her back on its return journey, so she muttered 'That'll have to do' to herself, packed her shoes and locked up. Jules, she knew, was sulking, as he always did when she had to go away, and that was why he had gone early to Lefteri's and left her to walk her suitcase down on her own.

"Do not forget passport, tickets, credit cards and condoms," he said, as she dumped the case at his feet. Liz thrust back her long straw-coloured hair and pretended to be more hot and bothered than she was, just as he was exaggerating his French accent and trying to

annoy her. It was their habit to find small ways of loosening the ties that bound them whenever Liz had to go away.

Jules raised his glass. "Istanbul," he said.

She saluted him.

"Will it really be three weeks?"

"It may be less." Liz frowned at her fingernails, recrossed her legs. "It's important to me."

Jules shrugged. "It is a job."

For another hour they fenced gently with each other, ate some houmos and pitta, drank some more.

Then Liz said, "I must go," and gathered herself up. This time Jules carried her case round the bay and stood on the quayside with one hand raised while the steamer cast off, and there they both stood, Liz on the top deck and Jules on the quay, until each was no more than a glint in the sun to the other. Then Jules walked slowly back to Lefteri's and Liz went below and collected a cup of tea from the cafeteria to help erase the memory of Jules' beautiful Greek island.

It was a long journey because the plane from Rhodes was late, which meant she missed her connection at Athens, but by eight o'clock that evening she was through customs at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport and sitting in a lumpy taxi on her way to the quiet hotel in Aksaray booked for her by the television company in tactful recognition of the fact that she was paying her own expenses.

The Receptionist was young and handsome and far too world-weary to shave. He smiled at her, regretted that there was no lift and told her that there was a roof-terrace if the Bayan would like a drink when she had unpacked.

It was there, holding a glass of Raqui and looking across the Sea of Marmara at Asia, that Liz realized what her producer had meant about the purple nights. With a sigh, she got out her diary to check her list of appointments, made by letter from Limnos, and unfolded her map of Turkey on which she had marked Spheres of Political Influence, Location of Heavy Industries and Population Densities. Gloom came and sat on her head like a small black cloud.

Tucked in the back of the diary, a column of newsprint fell onto the table-top. She smoothed it out and looked at it with affection - it was an enthusiastic review extolling the clarity and probity of her series on Post-Franco Spain the year before. Feeling a little less lonely and depressed, she went down to her room, showered and slept.

Next morning she woke early, put on a business-like dark-blue dress, tied her hair back into a dark-blue scarf and took a taxi to the Pera Palace Hotel, whose nineteenth century grandeur had been originally designed to impress the travellers on the Orient Express.

It was here, amongst the marble tables and elegant chandeliers of the American Bar, that Liz intended to set up her office, entertaining her victims with Turkish coffee and baklava. A word about her plans to the waitresses, accompanied by the discreet distribution of some 20,000 lire notes, and Liz began to feel more in control of her assignment and ready to do battle, extracting facts, figures and confessions from the most cautious general secretary.

During the next five days, she met fourteen of them, representing more shades of political opinion than she had thought possible. In the evenings, back on the roof-terrace, she rehearsed the many unpronounceable names she would have to talk about on film later and

added explanatory notes to her map of Turkey: 'Dogru Yol (True Path) strong here'... 'Sosyal Halkci (Social Democrat) gained ground 1982'... 'Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party) won over 50 % parliamentary seats November 1983...'

Several of the parties seemed to have programmes that would have qualified for summary examination under the UN Charter for Human Rights and others were so arcane that it was only with difficulty that she could unravel whether they had a programme at all.

One such was Yesil Yol, whose representative was to meet her the following afternoon. She referred to her dictionary. 'Yol', she knew, was 'Path', because Turkish political life was littered with them, but what was 'Yesil?'

She flipped the pages... 'Yesil'... 'Green'. 'The Green Path', and their courier, Erdal Cepli, was due at one-fifteen, and would doubtless be prepared to tell her all about it.

It being Saturday, it was also her first appointment. Luxury. She arrived at the Pera Palace at mid-day and ordered a non-Turkish coffee with cream and a copy of the London 'Times', turning at once to the Court Circular to see what the Queen had been up. She read with an emigre's nostalgia for home.

At one-thirty, a young man wearing grey flannels and a tweed jacket entered in a great hurry, had a word to one of the waitresses and was directed to her table.

"Miss Enwright? I am very sorry, I am late."

Liz smiled her business-like smile and asked him which sort of refreshment he would like. He took a lemon tea.

It appeared that he had driven all the way from Ankara where

the Party Headquarters were located, and had been delegated to see her because he spoke English and was coming to Istanbul anyway.

"You speak it very well," said Liz, reluctantly folding away the 'Times'. "Where did you learn?"

"Lisenlari, English as a second language, Ankara College."

"You were a talented pupil."

"Not at all, but I studied with them for three years."

She watched him as he sipped his tea - a very ordinary young man, not very tall, brown eyes, fair skin for a Turk, broad shoulders and delicate hands. Compact. He looked flustered and worried.

"Take your time," said Liz kindly, thinking that perhaps he was nervous.

"I'm alright, no problem," he said.

Liz waited a few more moments before asking her questions. She had noticed that his hands were shaking.

"Your political party," she said, at last. "Am I right in thinking that it's Islamic Fundamentalist?"

He nodded. "Very. Shi-ite Moslem."

"That's unusual. I thought Turkey was Sunni Moslem."

"Turkey is secular," he said, with distaste.

'Discuss,' thought Liz, remembering her school exam papers.

They discussed. He said that Ataturk had made a mistake when he westernized Turkey in 1925, thus taking her away from her natural allies. The Green Path intended to redress this. It would also create a new Kurdistan state in the East, restore the infallibility of the Imams, shift the capital of Turkey from Ankara to Van and rebuild a strictly Islamic society.

"We are an authoritarian sect," he said. "Not like the Sunni."

"Oh dear - then you really do want me to wear a yasmak?" said Liz.

"The veil is not for Christians." The barest flicker of a smile flitted across his face. "You can wear what you like."

"Thank you," said Liz gravely.

The young man regarded her uncertainly. "Do you like it here?" he asked.

"In Turkey?"

"No - here, in the Pera Palace."

"I think it's very beautiful. Do you not?"

He looked around as if for the first time. "I suppose so. But I had breakfast at five this morning in Ankara and I am very hungry."

Liz laughed. "You poor thing - then you must eat."

"But not here - it is too expensive and too western."

"Of course not, if you want to go somewhere else."

She collected her notebooks together, went over to the bar to pay the waitresses and returned.

"Where to?" she demanded.

He steered her into the street, across two roads and then took her into a large cave that hid an Underground Railway. "Like London," he said proudly, "But it only has one stop."

When they got out, Liz smelt the sea.

"It is The Golden Horn, it always smells like that," he said, and then he took her to a fish restaurant, one of many, floating on the water underneath the Galata Bridge.

To her surprise, the first thing he did was to order a bottle of white wine. "But surely that isn't allowed?" she said.

"Whosoever is constrained to drink without intending to be a transgressor incurs no guilt...The Koran."

"Are you sure you've got that right?" asked Liz. It sounded most unlikely.

He looked at her and frowned to himself. "Probably not," he said, "But it is not often that I take out a beautiful Christian."

He gave her the menu to cover his embarrassment at the sudden straight look she gave him, and advised her to have some Black Sea mackerel.

"How many wives have you?," asked Liz. "I'm told that a strict Moslem is allowed only four."

He smiled, to show that he realized she was rebuking him.

"I have none, but I have a brother called Tuncay in Bodrum, and my parents live in Marmeris." He did not want to be seen to have no family.

Liz smiled. "And you are called - " She realized suddenly that she had forgotten his name. "Oh dear, I've forgotten. I really am sorry."

"I'm Erdal - Erdal Cepli - "

"Of course."

"And my party is called Yesil - "

"Yes, I know all that," she said, laughing at him.

"And my leader is called Yusuf Gul."

"That's right, and he is the Chairman of the party and you are all Shi-a Fundamentalist Moslems who want to move the capital to Eastern Turkey and found an independant Kurdistan."

"Very good," said Erdal.

"I shall need to know much more, of course." She gave him another of her quick, straight glances that Jules called her 'little knives' - he seemed a nice enough boy, direct and innocent.

"When we've eaten, perhaps we could carry on our interview at my hotel. There is a roof-terrace with a view," she added, sounding like an aunt promising sweets after the dentist.

Yes, he would like that.

When they'd finished the mackerel and had some almond biscuits and coffee, Liz got up to order a taxi, but Erdal said there was no need - his car, the one in which he'd travelled from Ankara, was parked outside the Covered Market on the far side of the bridge and they could easily walk to it. He also insisted on paying the bill, so Liz wrote the address of her hotel on the back of it so that he could refer to it on the way.

The walk to the Covered Market was longer than she'd thought, the streets narrow and crowded, and Liz noted with amusement that Erdal took her arm in a proprietorial way as he guided her there. His car was an old Renault 4 from which the back seats had been removed to make extra luggage space, and before they set off Erdal peered underneath the chassis as if he was checking that the exhaust was still there. He then drove with great panache through the Istanbul traffic, getting lost several times en route.

He found the hotel eventually however, and they presented themselves to the smiling Receptionist, who regretted that Liz was not allowed to entertain gentlemen in her room.

"Not even on the roof-terrace?" asked Liz.

The smile broadened. The roof-terrace was no problem, quite OK.

Erdal then engaged him in conversation and a tray appeared containing a half-bottle of raqui, some ice, two glasses and three small dishes of fish in three different highly coloured sauces.

They carried it up to the roof-terrace, which was quite deserted, put it on a table and then admired the view.

"That is the railway to Sirkeci Station," said Erdal, pointing to the railway lines just visible at the bottom of the long garden.

"I hadn't noticed them," said Liz.

"And across there you can see Haydarpasa Station where the trains for Ankara leave from." He pointed to the other side of the Sea of Marmara.

"You can see Asia as well," said Liz.

He agreed and then put his arms round her and kissed her firmly on the neck. She was so surprised that she gave an involuntary gasp which Erdal must have mistaken for passion, because he strengthened his hold, dropped his hands a little lower down her back and kissed her lips, which without thinking, she opened.

Suddenly everything became very highly-charged until, with a convulsive gesture, she shoved him away. "Enough," she said.

She grabbed the rail on the edge of the terrace and took some deep breaths. Her heart was pounding and she felt cross.

Erdal took her other hand and looked concerned. "Are you alright?" he asked.

She nodded and looked across at Asia.

"You probably shouldn't have done that," she said.

"Why? Are you married?" asked Erdal, still concerned.

"Don't ask such predictable questions," said Liz, irritably.

"Anyway it's none of your business."

"You are very cross," said Erdal, shaking his head. "But I don't understand why."

"I always get cross if people kiss me without an invitation."

"I thought it was man's business to do that sort of thing."

"You wouldn't have done it if I'd been Turkish," said Liz.

"Of course not. I would have waited until I'd met your parents."

"Then you know why I'm cross."

Erdal looked surprised. "But are your parents here? In Turkey?"

"No, they live in Basingstoke."

"There you are then - I couldn't have seen them."

"That's hardly the point. You've only just met me."

"But I knew as soon as I saw you that we would become lovers."

That took Liz's breath away. "What an impertinent, conceited, selfish, arrogant thing to say. I shall certainly never ever, ever be your lover - anyway, you're still a baby."

Erdal stiffened, adding another inch to his height, and walked to the door of the roof-terrace. "I am twenty-eight," he said, over his shoulder. "Goodbye", and she heard him running down the stairs.

'This is ridiculous,' thought Liz. She ran across to the side of the terrace that overlooked the street and waited until he appeared, still running, down the steps of the hotel.

"Erdal!" she called.

He looked up.

"I'm sorry," said Liz. "Do come back."

He shook his head crossly and walked towards his car.

"Please."

He stopped, looked up and then shrugged.

"If you behave, it will be alright," he said.

At that, she nearly said, 'Don't bother, then,' but managed to stop herself in time. After all, she did need lots more information from him.

She was foolish enough to tell him this when he reappeared on the terrace so that he nearly strode off again, but this time she gave him a Raqui and said, "Do stop being silly, please, and sit down."

She then made him talk in detail about The Green Path, about why he had joined it and whether he was a real believer. When he saw that she was taking him seriously, he opened up and told her how he was studying Law at Ankara University, paid for by the party, and how he had come to embrace Islam in spite of having secular parents, to which Liz replied by explaining why she found all forms of such bigotry not only distasteful but actually dangerous.

"It's like nationalism," she said. "If we're not careful it'll destroy us all, and you and your people are just as impetuous as they are - neither of you seem to mind how many people you kill as long as you shoot first."

At that, he was aghast. "That is not true. We are not like that - neither I nor my comrades."

"Comrades?"

He smiled. "I do not mean the Marxist sort."

"I wish you did - I know how to handle them. As it is, you're all a great mystery to me - sometimes you seem to be no better than Fascist thugs."

He stood up again. "Explain yourself, please, Miss Enwright."

That is not good enough."

Liz caught his arm. "I'm sorry, I know it's not, I shouldn't have said it. Please sit down."

"This is like we are playing a game - we should call it the 'Standing-up-and-Sitting-down Game.'" He sat down.

Liz laughed and poured herself another Raqui, filling the glass with ice.

"Thank goodness, you've got a sense of humour, after all." She swizzled the ice around with her forefinger and took a long swig.

"Thank you," said Erdal. "But please take back what you just said."

"Don't insist," said Liz. "It would mean we can't be rude to each other, and friends are allowed to be."

Erdal shook his head as if to himself. "You are very odd. Is it because you are English or because you are a liberated Western woman?"

"I wasn't liberated enough to let you kiss me, was I?" said Liz.

"No." He hesitated. "Are you a Miss or a Mrs Enwright?"

"Mrs, but divorced."

"Then you are free?"

"Not really, Erdal. I live with someone."

"But you are not married?"

"No."

"Then you are free."

"Oh dear," said Liz, "It's more complicated than that."

"I don't see how," he said.

Liz then tried to explain about Jules, but she soon realized that it is almost impossible to explain about someone who is close to you

to someone else who shows a similar sort of interest.

"But do you love him?" Erdal kept insisting.

"No," said Liz desperately. "Yes. We're not 'in love', if that's what you mean - at least, I don't think we are - but of course we love each other. Naturally we do, we wouldn't live together otherwise, but the way you say it, you make it sound so final, like some sort of sacrament - "

"That is what love is about, is it not?"

"Not always. There are all sorts, like liquorice. What about you and your four wives - "

"I do not have four wives."

"Erdal, you know what I mean, I'm just trying to show you that there are many sorts of love."

"Good. Then I would like to have one of them with you."

He's impossible, thought Liz. She got up. "Come on, young Erdal - you'd better go home. It's late." She was struck by a sudden thought. "Have you somewhere to go?"

"Yes. I have an hotel near the Ataturk Bridge. I must tell you I am very miserable, but I will go. Tomorrow I will call for you at ten and take you to see the Topkapi Saray."

Liz jumped up and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "No, you won't - I have to work. I've got to get all my notes in order."

"But it is Sunday tomorrow."

"That's why I shall have time to write."

"Then I will call in the afternoon when you have finished. Two o'clock."

"No promises," said Liz, and she walked him downstairs to his car.

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'Nice but pushy,' she thought next day as she sat in her room struggling to find a shape for her notes.

She had thought about him with fond amusement when she went to bed the night before, but now he kept obtruding on her thoughts, which was annoying while she was trying to work.

She looked at her watch. Eleven o'clock. That meant he'd be on the doorstep in three hours. Decision time. If I work really hard for three hours, she thought, it might be possible.

In the event, she made him wait on the roof-terrace for a further half-an-hour while she finished, then changed into a white sleeveless and allowed herself to be whisked off.

He seemed in high good humour as he took her round the Topkapi Palace, touching her arm when he wanted to draw her attention to something. 'It's odd that he likes someone like me,' she thought. 'Why? Apart from anything else, I'm not young enough for him.'

Later, she made him take her to the Archeological Museum, which was next door to the Palace and which he did with some reluctance.

"You don't like it here, do you?" she said. "Would you rather not stay?"

He shrugged. "No, I will try. Otherwise you will go with someone else."

"Who?"

"I don't know. Someone."

She was beginning to realize that he was really quite serious, and she frowned as she tried to work out how that might affect her.

For supper, they went to the same restaurant under the Galata

Bridge and Erdal began asking her all about Jules and Limnos and about the flat he discovered that she had in Maida Vale.

"You must be very famous," he said. "People know who you are."

"Not many," said Liz. Then, because she didn't like being questioned, she said, "Now it's my turn," and asked him what being a courier really meant and whether it wasn't unusual for a courier to be chosen as party spokesman for an eventual television interview.

"It's because we are not a big party," said Erdal. "Only Yusuf and one secretary are paid properly. Otherwise we make do with members who are paid for certain services - like me when I come as courier to Istanbul. But the central organization itself is very small. In Eastern Turkey it is bigger - we have many more members and I think that is where Yusuf likes to spend most of our money." He paused, hesitated, and then spoke quickly and nervously. "Will you come back to my hotel this time? It is not as nice as yours and there is no roof-terrace, but you will be allowed to come to my room and I have a surprise for you there."

Liz thought it was probably foolish to say 'Yes', but she was getting extremely bored with saying 'No' all the time, and if he did have a surprise for her, it seemed discourteous to refuse.

"Of course," she said.

The hotel seemed more like a rooming house, with men asleep in every available space, on sofas and chairs, and with no-one at reception to tell Erdal he couldn't entertain ladies, but his room, when they got to it on the fifth floor, was quite large and friendly.

Standing on the table in the middle of it was an Arabic bracelet

of thin silver with a complicated design stamped into it, and next to it a large bunch of white flowers.

Erdal indicated proudly that they were both for her.

She smiled at him and examined the bracelet minutely to gain time while she thought what on earth she should say or do.

Eventually she went up to him and put her arms round his neck and said, "Thank you. It's very beautiful and so are the flowers."

In that moment she had made the decision that it was going to be futile and useless to resist him; he would just go on and on trying and in the end he would wear her down partly because she didn't much mind if he did.

So this time when he kissed her on the lips, she opened her mouth quite deliberately and when everything became highly-charged again she allowed it to be and moved in such a way that it became even more so.

In fact, it became obvious that Erdal was having the greatest difficulty in controlling himself, and this excited Liz greatly. "Take it off," she whispered in his ear, meaning her dress, and she felt his hands fumbling for the buttons that went down the back of it. Some of them he couldn't manage, but she was too busy with his tie and shirt to help, so in the end she had slither out of it with some movements of her body that made him put his hands all over her very quickly, but everywhere.

Liz knew that he wouldn't be able to last long while he was so excited and she wanted to see him, so she went down on her knees and loosened his trousers and then kissed him very gently. She thought he looked very beautiful there, his balls tight and his thighs slightly

parted, but she wanted him not to come until he was inside her so she stopped kissing him and got up, putting her hands on his shoulders and easing off his shirt. Then she put his hands on her small breasts. Her nipples were hard, she knew, and when he touched them and she felt his fingernails on them, she could hardly help shuddering.

He was pushing her backwards now until she felt the edge of the bed against the back of her legs, and she knew that for him it must be now. She lay herself back on the bed, bent her knees and opened her legs for him and then gave an involuntary gasp as he went inside. He felt very large although he was pushing only gently but then she knew she had been right - it was all too much for him to contain and almost at once he was seized with an orgasm and she felt it spilling all over her.

He gasped and began moving violently, not only up and down but from side to side as if he was bent on exploring every depth of her, and then he lay heavy and still on top of her so that she could feel his heart pounding like a great engine. He stayed there for so long that she wondered if he had fallen asleep, but then he came out of her and rolled over onto his side.

For some minutes they didn't speak. Then she moved over towards him and they kissed and murmured to each other and took off what was left of their clothing and looked properly at each other until he was big again, only this time he made sure that he moved only slightly so that she could enjoy feeling him in there and thus it took a long time, with Liz coming first, straining her body upwards and doing it with long rasping gasps.

After that, they were both quieter and they lay side by side

for a long while, not speaking, until Liz said, "This is only the beginning, you know," because she felt it was, and although not knowing how it would affect herself and Jules, she knew it was too much for her to do without, and probably for Erdal, too.

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For the next two weeks Liz found herself fighting desperately to maintain her equilibrium, on the one hand conducting her interviews and trying to fit each new one into the pattern that was gradually emerging, and on the other trying to contain her new-found passion for Erdal.

Often she felt lost, and Istanbul seemed like a strange and mysterious land existing only between Erdal's room and her own; sometimes tiredness overtook her so that she would beg Erdal for an evening off and he would be contrite at his selfishness; sometimes they would argue late after supper about Islam, about her uncertainties over her script and about what they would do when the time came for her to return to Limnos and Jules.

"You cannot go back to him," Erdal would say.

"Of course I can. He couldn't get on without me, nor I without him."

"But you could get on without me?"

"Only with the greatest difficulty, my darling."

"That means you could, but you couldn't without your Jules."

"I don't know," said Liz desperately. "I must go back to him, anyway, to tell him what happened."

"Then he is like your father?"

"Yes, maybe that's it. Not entirely, because he's also - "

"That's what I cannot think about."

"I know," said Liz miserably. "Nor will he be able to, so what am I to do?"

"Come back to Ankara with me. I have a room."

Liz knew that was impossible. The trouble was that the physical passion that they had both conceived for each other blotted out everything else. They never talked about love because love seemed irrelevant. They talked about what they were feeling while they were making love, but never about love itself.

'Perhaps with us it's the same thing,' she thought. What would happen to them if they were transposed from this unreal world, where neither of them lived, to Ankara or Maida Vale? Would they be able, in fact, actually to live together?

Questions came on top of questions, until she felt battered to death by them, and the awful thing was that she knew that she was the one who would eventually have to make the decisions about them because he was - what? Too young? Too thoughtless?

'Nothing can survive self-examination like this,' she thought as she undressed for bed back at her hotel. Then she thought, 'Can my work?' and a cold shiver went right through her.

The next evening, over supper, she said to Erdal, "I've decided what we must do."

He looked up warily, like a boxer ready to duck when the next blow came.

"You must go back to Ankara. I've only got another four days here and I must sit alone and write solidly. Then I shall go and tell Jules all about us. You and I must both think. Not about making love

but about what is between us when we're not."

"I cannot think about you without thinking about making love."

"No, I know. We'll just have to try."

"Then can we write to each other?"

"Yes, we can do that."

"I am very bad at it - maybe I should not, you will only laugh."

"We might be able to meet - somewhere between Limnos and Ankara."

"Would your Jules allow it?"

Liz laughed. It was a relief to do so - she felt she hadn't laughed for ages. "It isn't like that. We don't 'not allow' things."

Erdal looked puzzled. "I see. Then if you think we can meet I can write saying where it should be and what time. That will make the writing less difficult."

He didn't argue with her decision, she noticed sadly.

That night they made love with a sort of aching despair and the following morning he drove his car back to Ankara.

Liz had one more appointment at the Pera Palace and then she returned to her roof-terrace and spread all her papers out on three tables and began writing in earnest.

She felt very miserable. One night she ordered a half-bottle of Raqui and went to bed drunk.

She stayed an extra two days because she hadn't finished, and then another two days to gather herself together.

After that she went home to Limnos.

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