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Page 190-193

hülya

On Your Deathbed

The phone call came one late evening. As for my lack of understanding, I have only myself to blame. My uncle's voice sounded out of the ordinary. I, however, did not pursue the situation with any query. "Your mother is back in the hospital; she had some fluid collecting in her abdomen; doctors have done a procedure to give her some relief. Don't worry. She is alright." I forced myself to take his last words literally. 'Could I possibly fly there soon', he then inquired.

My semester was about to end. I had several loose ends to amend. But there was no doubt: I had to go. Though sketchily, the hidden message in his voice told me so. One German professor, who knew about my excuse, threatened me with a failing grade – if I left my semester paper curtailed. He wouldn't give me an extension. I zoomed out of his office with a growing tension. I was ready to face any consequences. I wasn't going to stay there to listen to his ethnicist offenses.

As a student, my budget was rather limited. Airfares to Germany were no easy feat. I felt defeated. But then, my friends pitched in. Thanks to them, my ticket was now intact. The next obstacle, a visa for a Turkish citizen, constituted a nightmarish fact. We had already reached the weekend. No consulate was open on a Saturday or a Sunday. Besides, New York was hours away. I exhausted some connections in a panicked urgency. In Detroit, still long-distance, I located one authorized employee. He reassured me that he would wait; no matter when I make it there, no matter how late. That true human being greeted me with compassion, and took care of my paperwork fast and as if he was on a mission.

Seven and some lonely hours on the plane . . . all along writing scenarios in my head: Will you be in a stretcher, Mom? A wheelchair? You are tough. You will make sure to smooth out the distance between us. You will add hours to our remaining time. You will be fine!

There was no sight of you at the airport. Two family friends were waiting for me behind the security line with pretense-smiles on their otherwise expressionless faces. Before I could reach my ride, I had to put my pride aside: The check-point officer tossed my non-German passport to a hard hit on the ground – the split-second its cover revealed my ethnicity. As nasty as he might have been, his treatment of me distracted my anticipation of an unbearable sorrow. After all, I still was in the dark as far as your tomorrow.

For about an hour's drive on the highway, one of my companions steered the wheel, while the other avoided giving me even one single glance.

In the hospital, your only surviving brother greeted me first. He had once again served as your anesthesiologist. Your surgeon – a longtime acquaintance of yours, along with assisting doctors, welcomed me under predictable pleasantries. A large medical personnel entourage was also present. They all led me to a room in Intensive Care. Supposedly inaudible whispers surrounded me regarding me: “Has she ever been to a unit like this before?” – “No”, I heard my beloved uncle reply, “but my niece is utterly strong.” He could not have known back then that he was dead wrong. Dead wrong!

*Too long of a corridor . . . bare walls . . . then,
your eyes, when they saw mine . . .*

*I made it, Mom. I made it to your deathbed alright.
Hence, the end of this story. For, there is no
happy ending. The rest is gory.*

hülya

Of Turkish descent, hülya n. yılmaz [sic] is Professor Emerita (Penn State, U.S.A.), Director of Editing Services (Inner Child Press International, U.S.A.), and a trilingual literary translator. Before her poetry and prose publications, she authored an extensive research book in German on cross-cultural literary influences.

Her works of literature include a trilingual collection of poems, memoirs in verse, prose poetry, short stories, a bilingual poetry book, and two books of poetry (one, co-authored). Her poetic offerings appeared in numerous anthologies of global endeavors.

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