

**Nativized short story**  
**'THE GIRLS IN THEIR SUMMER DRESSES'**  
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Kordonboyu was shining in the sun when they left Barışkent and started walking toward Republic Square. The sun was warm, even though it was November, and everything looked like Sunday morning--the buses, and the well-dressed people walking slowly in couples and the quiet buildings with the windows closed.

Coşkun held Özlem's arm tightly as they walked downtown in the sunlight. They walked lightly, almost smiling, because they had slept late and had a good breakfast and it was Sunday. Coşkun unbuttoned his coat and let it flap around him in the mild wind. They walked, without saying anything, among the young and pleasant-looking people who somehow seem to make up most of the population of that section of Çanakkale.

"Look out," Özlem said, as they walked past the Golf Tea Garden. "You'll break your neck."

Coşkun laughed and Özlem laughed with him.

"She's not so pretty, anyway," Özlem said. "Anyway, not pretty enough to take a chance breaking your neck looking at her."

Coşkun laughed again. He laughed louder this time, but not as solidly. "She wasn't a bad-looking girl. She had a nice complexion. Country-girl complexion. How did you know I was looking at her?" Özlem cocked her head to one side and smiled at her husband under the tip-tilted brim of her hat. "Coşkun, darling . . ." she said.

Coşkun laughed, just a little laugh this time. "Okay," he said. "The evidence is in. Excuse me. It was the complexion. It's not the sort of complexion you see much in Çanakkale. Excuse me."

Özlem patted his arm lightly and pulled him along a little faster toward Republic Square.

"This is a nice morning," she said. "This is a wonderful morning. When I have breakfast with you it makes me feel good all day."

"Tonic," Coşkun said. "Morning pickup. Simit and tea with Coşkun and you're on the alkali side, guaranteed."

"That's the story. Also, I slept all night, wound around you like a rope."

"Saturday night," he said. "I permit such liberties only when the week's work is done."

"You're getting fat," she said.

"Isn't it the truth? The lean man from Erzurum."

"I love it," she said, "an extra several kilos of husband."

"I love it, too," Coşkun said gravely.

"I have an idea," Özlem said.

"My wife has an idea. That pretty girl."

"Let's not see anybody all day," Özlem said. "Let's just hang around with each other. You and me. We're always up to our neck in people, drinking their rakı, or drinking our rakı, we only see each other in bed . . ."

"The Great Meeting Place," Coşkun said. "Stay in bed long enough and everybody you ever knew will show up there."

"Wise guy," Özlem said. "I'm talking serious."

"Okay, I'm listening serious."

"I want to go out with my husband all day long. I want him to talk only to me and listen only to me."

"What's to stop us?" Coşkun asked. "What party intends to prevent me from seeing my wife alone on Sunday? What party?"

"Nalan and Tarık. They want us to drop by around one o'clock and they'll drive us into Güzelyalı."

"Lousy Nalan and Tarık," Coşkun said. "Transparent. They can whistle. They can go driving in Güzelyalı by themselves. My wife and I have to stay in Çanakkale and bore each other t^te-...-t^te."

"Is it a date?"

"It's a date."

Özlem leaned over and kissed him on the tip of the ear.

"Darling," Coşkun said. "This is Kordonboyu."

"Let me arrange a program," Özlem said. "A planned Sunday in Çanakkale for a young couple with money to throw away."

"Go easy."

"First let's go see a basketball game – Turkey Championship of women. A professional basketball game," Özlem said, because she knew Coşkun loved to watch them. "Fenerbahçe are playing. And it'll be nice to be outside all day today and get hungry and later we'll go down to Albatros Fish Restaurant and get a fish as big as a man's arm, with a big bottle of rakı, and after that, there's a new Turkish picture - O Şimdi Asker - at the AFM that everybody says... Say, are you listening to me?"

"Sure," he said. He took his eyes off the hatless girl with the dark hair, cut dancer-style, like a helmet, who was walking past him with the self-conscious strength and grace dancers have. She was walking without a coat and she looked very solid and strong and her belly was flat, like a boy's, under her skirt, and her hips swung boldly because she was a dancer and also because she knew Coşkun was looking at her. She smiled a little to herself as she went past and Coşkun noticed all these things before he looked back at his wife. "Sure," he said, "we're going to watch Fenerbahçe and we're going to eat fish and we're going to see a Turkish picture. How do you like that?"

"That's it," Özlem said flatly. "That's the program for the day. Or maybe you'd just rather walk up and down Kordonboyu."

"No," Coşkun said carefully. "Not at all."

"You always look at other women," Özlem said. "At every damn woman in the city of Çanakkale."

"Oh, come now," Coşkun said, pretending to joke. "Only pretty ones. And, after all, how many pretty women are there in Çanakkale? Seventeen?"

"More. At least you seem to think so. Wherever you go."

"Not the truth. Occasionally, maybe, I look at a woman as she passes. In the street. I admit, perhaps in the street I look at a woman once in a while. . . ."

"Everywhere," Özlem said. "Every damned place we go. Restaurants, ferries, theaters, lectures, concerts."

"Now, darling," Coşkun said. "I look at everything. God gave me eyes and I look at women and men and flying seagulls and moving pictures and the little flowers of the field. I casually inspect the universe."

"You ought to see the look in your eye," Özlem said, "as you casually inspect the universe on Kordonboyu."

"I'm a happily married man." Coşkun pressed her elbow tenderly, knowing what he was doing. "Example for the whole twentieth century, Mr. and Mrs. Coşkun Umutlu."

"You mean it?"

"Özlem, baby . . ."

"Are you really happily married?"

"Sure," Coşkun said, feeling the whole Sunday morning sinking like lead inside him.

"Now what the hell is the sense in talking like that?"

"I would like to know." Özlem walked faster now, looking straight ahead, her face showing nothing, which was the way she always managed it when she was arguing or feeling bad.

"I'm wonderfully happily married," Coşkun said patiently. "I am the envy of all men between the ages of fifteen and sixty in the city of Çanakkale."

"Stop kidding," Özlem said.

"I have a fine home," Coşkun said. "I got nice books and a computer and nice friends. I live in a city I like the way I like and I do the work I like and I live with the woman I like. Whenever something good happens, don't I run to you? When something bad happens, don't I cry on your shoulder?"

"Yes," Özlem said. "You look at every woman that passes."

"That's an exaggeration."

"Every woman." Özlem took her hand off Coşkun's arm. "If she's not pretty you turn away fairly quickly. If she's halfway pretty you watch her for about seven steps. . . ."

"My Lord, Özlem!"

"If she's pretty you practically break your neck . . ."

"Hey, let's have a drink," Coşkun said, stopping.

"We just had breakfast."

"Now, listen, darling," Mike said, choosing his words with care, "it's a nice day and we both feel good and there's no reason why we have to break it up. Let's have a nice Sunday."

"I could have a fine Sunday if you didn't look as though you were dying to run after every skirt on Kordonboyu."

"Let's have a drink," Coşkun said.

"I don't want a drink."

"What do you want, a fight?"

"No," Özlem said, so unhappily that Coşkun felt terribly sorry for her. "I don't want a fight. I don't know why I started this. All right, let's drop it. Let's have a good time."

They joined hands consciously and walked without talking among the baby carriages and the old ANZAC tourists jogging along Kordonboyu.

"I hope it's a good game today," Özlem said after a while, her tone a good imitation of the tone she had used at breakfast and at the beginning of their walk. "I like professional basketball games. They hit each other as though they're made out of concrete. When they defend each other," she said, trying to make Coşkun laugh, "they move so fast. It's very exciting."

"I want to tell you something," Coşkun said very seriously. "I have not touched another woman. Not once. In all the five years."

"All right," Özlem said.

"You believe that, don't you?"

"All right."

They walked between the crowded benches, under the scrubby citypark trees.

"I try not to notice it," Özlem said, as though she were talking to herself. "I try to make believe it doesn't mean anything. Some men're like that, I tell myself, they have to see what they're missing."

"Some women're like that, too," Coşkun said. "In my time I've seen a couple of ladies."

"I haven't even looked at another man," Özlem said, walking straight ahead, "since the second time I went out with you."

"There's no law," Coşkun said.

"I feel rotten inside, in my stomach, when we pass a woman and you look at her and I see that look in your eye and that's the way you looked at me the first time, in Tarık Uyanık's house. Standing there in the living room, next to the radio, with a green hat on and all those people."

"I remember the hat," Coşkun said.

"The same look," Özlem said. "And it makes me feel bad. It makes me feel terrible."

"Sssh, please, darling, sssh. . . ."

"I think I would like a drink now," Özlem said.

They walked over to a bar near Republic Square, not saying anything, Coşkun automatically guiding her past automobiles. He walked, buttoning his coat, looking thoughtfully at his neatly shined heavy brown shoes as they made the steps toward the bar. They sat near a window in the bar and the sun streamed in, and there was a small cheerful fire in the fireplace. A beautiful teenager waiter came over and put down some pistachio nuts and smiled happily at them.

"What do you order after breakfast?" Coşkun asked.

"Beer, I suppose," Özlem said.

"Beer," Coşkun told the waiter. "Two beers."

The waiter came with the glasses and they sat drinking the beer in the sunlight. Coşkun finished half his and had some pistachio nuts.

"I look at women," he said. "Correct. I don't say it's wrong or right, I look at them. If I pass them on the street and I don't look at them, I'm fooling you, I'm fooling myself."

"You look at them as though you want them," Özlem said, playing with her beer glass. "Every one of them."

"In a way," Coşkun said, speaking softly and not to his wife, "in a way that's true. I don't do anything about it, but it's true."

"I know it. That's why I feel bad."

"Another beer," Coşkun called. "Waiter, two more beers."

"Why do you hurt me?" Özlem asked. "What're you doing?"

Coşkun sighed and closed his eyes and rubbed them gently with his fingertips. "I love the way women look. One of the things I like best about Çanakkale is the battalions of women. When I first came to Çanakkale from Erzurum that was the first thing I noticed, the thousands of wonderful women, all over the city. I walked around with my heart in my throat."

"A kid," Özlem said. "That's a kid's feeling."

"Guess again," Coşkun said. "Guess again. I'm older now, I'm a man getting near middle age, putting on a little fat and I still love to walk along Kordonboyu at five o'clock along sea side of the street between Barışkent and Kordonboyu, they're all out then, making believe they're shopping, in their leathers and their crazy hats, everything all concentrated from all over the world into eight blocks, the best leathers, the best clothes, the handsomest women, out to spend money and feeling good about it, looking coldly at you, making believe they're not looking at you as you go past."

The beautiful teenager waiter put the two drinks down, smiling with great happiness.

"Everything is all right?" he asked.

"Everything is wonderful," Coşkun said.

"If it's just a couple of leather coats," Özlem said, "and expensive boots . . ."

"It's not the leather coats. Or the boots. That's just the scenery for that particular kind of woman. Understand," he said, "you don't have to listen to this."

"I want to listen."

"I like the girls in the offices. Neat, with their eyeglasses, smart, chipper, knowing what everything is about, taking care of themselves all the time." He kept his eye on the people going slowly past outside the window. "I like the girls at Küçümen at lunchtime, the university students, all dressed up on nothing a week, talking to the good-looking boys, wearing themselves out being young and vivacious outside Lodos Disco, trying to forget all about lessons. I like the salesgirls at Gima, paying attention to you first because you're a man, leaving lady customers waiting, flirting with you over socks and dried fruits and cakes. I got all this stuff accumulated in me because I've been thinking about it for ten years and now you've asked for it and here it is."

"Go ahead," Özlem said.

"When I think of Çanakkale City, I think of all the girls, the Turkish girls from different cities, from İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Antalya, Manisa, all on parade in the city. I don't know whether it's something special with me or whether every man in the city walks around with the same feeling inside him, but I feel as though I'm at a picnic in this city. I like to sit near the women in the cinemas, the beauties who've taken hours to get ready and look it. And the young girls at the basketball games, with the red cheeks, and when the warm weather comes, the girls in their summer dresses . . ." He finished his drink. "That's the story. You asked for it, remember. I can't help but look at them. I can't help but want them."

"You want them," Özlem repeated without expression. "You said that."

"Right," Coşkun said, being cruel now and not caring, because she had made him expose himself. "You brought this subject up for discussion, we will discuss it fully."

Özlem finished her drink and swallowed two or three times extra. "You say you love me?"

"I love you, but I also want them. Okay."

"I'm pretty, too," Özlem said. "As pretty as any of them."

"You're beautiful," Coşkun said, meaning it.

"I'm good for you," Özlem said, pleading. "I've made a good wife, a good housekeeper, a good friend. I'd do any damn thing for you."

"I know," Coşkun said. He put his hand out and grasped hers.

"You'd like to be free to . . ." Özlem said.

"Sssh."

"Tell the truth." She took her hand away from under his.

Coşkun flicked the edge of his glass with his finger. "Okay," he said gently.

"Sometimes I feel I would like to be free."

"Well," Özlem said defiantly, drumming on the table, "anytime you say . . ."

"Don't be foolish." Coşkun swung his chair around to her side of the table and patted her thigh.

She began to cry, silently, into her handkerchief, bent over just enough so that nobody else in the bar would notice. "Someday," she said, crying, "you're going to make a move . . ."

Coşkun didn't say anything. He sat watching the bartender slowly peel a lemon.

"Aren't you?" Özlem asked harshly. "Come on, tell me. Talk. Aren't you?"

"Maybe," Coşkun said. He moved his chair back again. "How the hell do I know?"

"You know," Özlem persisted. "Don't you know?"

"Yes," Coşkun said after a while. "I know."

Özlem stopped crying then. Two or three snuffles into the handkerchief and she put it away and her face didn't tell anything to anybody. "At least do me one favor," she said.

"Sure."

"Stop talking about how pretty this woman is, or that one. Nice eyes, nice breasts, a pretty figure, good voice," she mimicked his voice. "Keep it to yourself. I'm not interested."

"Excuse me." Coşkun waved to the waiter. "I'll keep it to myself."

Özlem flicked the corner of her eyes. "Another beer," she told the waiter.

"Two," Coşkun said.

"Yes, ma'am, yes, sir," said the waiter, backing away.

Özlem regarded him coolly across the table. "Do you want me to call Nalan and Tarık?" she asked. "It'll be nice in Güzelyalı."

"Sure," Coşkun said. "Call them up."

She took her mobile phone, got up from the table and walked towards the door to make a call in a silent way. Coşkun watched her walk, thinking, what a pretty girl, what nice legs.