Cold Nights of Childhood

TEZER ÖZLÜ (1943–1986) claimed her place in Turkish letters by breaking every rule imposed on her. Though she was dismissed by many and misunderstood by most throughout her short life, her writings have gone on to inspire a new generation of feminist writers and readers. *Cold Nights of Childhood* is her first book to be translated into English.

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Cold Nights of Childhood

Tezer Özlü

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Translated from the Turkish by
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Introduction

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I FIRST READ THE WORKS of Tezer Özlü in my mid-twenties, in the years when I knew that I wanted to be a writer but didn't yet know what I should write, nor what sort of 'identity' I must take on. I wondered constantly what it meant for me to be a Turkish writer – whether it came with any responsibilities or particular subjects. It seemed, in those years when I read voraciously, that I was always reading the wrong things; that the books closest to my heart were somehow random rather than belonging to a literary lineage, and that I, their reader, wouldn't belong anywhere in my writing, either.

I was feeling particularly adrift, having just moved from California to Paris, and soon enrolled to audit a university class in Turkish literature in an effort to fit myself into some kind of tradition. I was familiar with most of the texts, though I didn't have any sort of feeling for them. And it was precisely for this reason that I thought I should take the class: to grow a bond – surely a more vigorous one from my vast and haphazard reading of books that I was drawn to without design.

One half of the class comprised second-generation Turkish students who seemed to be there for an easy grade; the other half studious, unsmiling linguists. The reading materials unravelled

steadily, each writer connected to the next, building an impenetrable wall of influence and fraternity, into which I had to try and wedge myself; from whose edifice scrape off my own influences.

All writers are part of a literary lineage, of course, though these lineages are rarely neatly marked, even if it appears that way in retrospect, from texts that constitute a national canon. If literature is also a map of human experience, then certain experiences are conspicuously absent from the canonical landscape.

The first work of Özlü's I read – in my 'free' time from class reading – was her second novel, *Journey to the Edge of Life*, a metaphysical travelogue in the footsteps of Özlü's favourite writers: Italo Svevo, Franz Kafka and Cesare Pavese. I found it refreshing that this Turkish author had chosen her own writers to follow, breaking away from the great wall of texts. When I read *Cold Nights of Childhood* next, it confirmed for me that her work didn't belong to any school or style, that her voice was uniquely her own: consciousness distilled into narrative form.

*

Cold Nights of Childhood is Özlü's first novel, and the second of three books she published in her short lifetime. She died of breast cancer at the age of forty-three in Zürich, a death even more tragic, perhaps, after years of battling with mental illness. Yet her small œuvre has always had a devout following, especially among young Turkish readers, for its madness, its honest sexuality, its lack of national fervour and its individuality. It is surprising to me that Özlü's work has not been translated into English until now but this translation arrives at a time when women's writing of the self is experiencing a golden age: finding its place among a wider readership not as the representative of a national ethos, but rather of particular lives, nonetheless universal in its attention to daily experience.

The book shares many similarities with its author's life. Born

in 1943, Özlü studied at St George's Austrian High School in Istanbul but dropped out in her final year to hitchhike around Europe. In Paris, she met the actor and playwright Güner Sümer at the Montparnasse café Le Select and was married to him for a short period. In her late twenties, she was treated in various psychiatric hospitals in Ankara and Istanbul for bipolar disorder. She was friends with prominent writers and artists of her generation, many of whom she met through the social circles of her brother, the writer Demir Özlü, who was arrested during the 1971 coup d'état, one of three that Özlü would witness in her lifetime. She got married again, this time to the film director Erden Kıral with whom she had a child. (Özlü would marry for a third and final time as well, shortly before her death.)

While these facts of Özlü's life story overlap with the events of *Cold Nights*, the interest of the book is not so much its autobiographical mirror but the way that life is endowed with an electric mutability. Madness, after all, disrupts the temporal narrative. Here, time is broken and reshuffled through the sharp edge of consciousness. The self is peeled away layer by layer to arrive at its core: 'Then slowly, very slowly, I begin to remember. Myself. This is me. I am twenty-five years old. I am a woman. I am living through the second part of the madness that begins with joy. I have suffered the anguish of lethargy.'

In a letter to the writer Ferit Edgü, from the period of her frequent depressions and psychiatric treatment, Özlü offers a glimpse of what will become her first novel: 'I'm alone here. I'm listening to Bach. Not that I'm really listening. Here there is only me. Or maybe someone who wants to appear like me. Everything is entangled in my mind. My childhood. The province. Men. Boredom. But my mind is completely empty. I have never been so lonely and so at ease. Completely empty.'*

* *'I'm at the End of Everything': Letters between Tezer Özlü and Ferit Edgü*, (Her Şeyin Sonundayım), Sel Publishing, 2014

The book's settings bleed into one another. At one moment we are in Berlin, the next, entering a hospital in Istanbul. The narrative jumps between interiors, all of them architecturally precise, cluttered with furniture. (Yet for a book that moves through so many interior spaces, *Cold Nights* is adamantly undomestic.) There is a sense of walls closing in, of being entrapped, so that it matters little what city of what country we are in. Once again, the experience is that of the essential 'I', wholly independent. There is no attachment to any place; Istanbul, Ankara, Berlin, Paris are all observed from the same remove, without nationalist feeling and without awe for Europe. The narrator subtly mocks her husband's fawning admiration for Paris: 'The man I've married begins to show his true face. His one and only world is Paris. Paris! Paris! Paris! [...] But now he's in Ankara. Deprived of Paris, he's still resentful and getting worse. But the idea remains as fixed as ever: Paris is the city of his deliverance.'

A similar coolness comes across Özlü's letters from Europe. To her friend, the great feminist writer Leylâ Erbil: 'I have time to think about many things. I've met lots of writers. Almost all Latin American writers. All the Germans. Others through the DAAD [German Academic Exchange Service]. Many of them are mere fluff ... Octavio Paz isn't a more intellectual person than you and me.'*

But too much independence is also detachment. The narrator is so staunchly an individual that she cannot seem to anchor herself in the world. She floats from the cold nights of her childhood to school, to Europe, to marriage and divorce, never quite able to shake off the seed of loneliness that sets her apart. Is this her condition, or that of society? Is it her inability to belong, or society's rejection of those who do not fit its mould? Her family and friends offer sympathy at a distance but ultimately hand her

* *Letters from Tezer Özlü to Leylâ Erbil*, compiled by Leylâ Erbil, 1995, Yapı Kredi Publications

over. Again and again, she finds that she has been brought back to a hospital, though she wishes those around her to understand that madness is contagious, and that she will only get worse among the sick.

*

The novel bears echoes of the political turmoil of the 1970s, leading up to the 1980 coup d'état (during which Özlü's brother was denaturalised). Still, the unrest never comes to the foreground, or rather, does not warp the young woman into its own flow: the narrator is located in her mind, in the back-and-forth swing of sanity. It is worth noting just how radically unpolitical *Cold Nights* would have appeared in the fraught years of its publication, amidst the mainstream of political engagement that defines the literature of Özlü's contemporaries. Still, the book isn't indifferent to the country's situation. (Özlü's own daughter, Deniz, was named after the revolutionary Marxist student Deniz Gezmiş, who was executed by hanging in 1972.) The lack of engagement is, rather, a frankness, the un-self-glorifying honesty particular to Özlü's prose, and increasingly alien to contemporary auto-fiction so concerned with one's own image, and the presentation of an exceedingly moral and moralising self: 'It's the spring of 1971 … In a year blighted by political unrest across the land. Unrest I shall never quite manage to understand. During the months of April and May, I am more cut off from the world than ever before.'

It is with the same frankness that Özlü writes about sexuality, neither sensational nor metaphorical. The book's catalogue of orgasms (from early childhood to the novel's final image) is once again daring, not just because of its writer's cultural milieu but alongside the socially engaged works of her contemporaries. But 'daring' is perhaps not entirely just. After all, there is nothing outwardly defying in Özlü's writing of sexuality. It is neither

confrontation nor bravado, but an examination of an essential state. Perhaps what is daring is that the book can strip us of our assumptions of what a woman, and an artist, can and cannot write, given her time period, her country, her political context.

I had enrolled in the Turkish literature classes hoping to find out what sort of topics I should inherit, not knowing yet that the greatest challenge for a writer was the ability to discern her own curiosities. In my first encounters with Özlü's work, I considered that it was an outlier, a one-off voice that had broken away from the great wall to follow its writer's obsessions. Yet, this is also the mark with which all literature must be distinguished: the unique investigation of what it is to be alive, riding the current with open eyes.

> On Sundays … these days … if I am strolling down an alley … and catch sight of a father in pyjamas … or if, on a grey and raining winter day, I see smoke rising from a stovepipe … and windows fogged with steam … if I look in to see laundry hanging up to dry … if the clouds are almost low enough to touch the damp bricks … if it's spitting rain … if I hear live football matches blaring from every radio … all I want is to go, go, go, and keep going.

AYŞEGÜL SAVAŞ
August 2022

Cold Nights of Childhood

1

The House

—

MY FATHER HAS A WHISTLE, saved from his days as a gymnastics teacher. Every morning he marches through the house in his baggy striped pyjamas, blowing on that whistle.

—No pussyfooting in the army! Out of bed now! On your feet!

He sounds like a bugle.

I open my eyes to the early morning light and find myself in Süm's embrace. I ask myself why my father treats us like soldiers. He runs this house like his personal army. That's for sure. If he were rich, he'd be standing there with a real bugle. The men of my father's generation – how they cherish the army. Their days of military service most of all.

We're no longer in the provinces. We've abandoned those rambling orchards and large wooden houses to their silent towns. And we've abandoned those silent towns to the 1950s. All I have left are fleeting childhood dreams of Esentepe's tall pines, of yellow and purple crocuses gathered from fields of melting snow. Of my skinny legs, running down lanes on bright summer days into a cool breeze rolling off the waves . . .

The boulevard that starts at Saraçhanebaşı goes as far as Edirnekapı. In the middle is a wide footpath bisected by a row of oaks. Red and green trams run along either side. In the

buildings lining the boulevard, a few ground-floor shops, one or two banks. At the boulevard's midpoint – exactly there – a wide cobblestone lane leads into Çarşamba. Our house is down along the second left, on the dead end veering to the right. When my father was little, it was a clearing, left by a fire. Hard to understand the joy he feels, to be building on the field where he played as a boy.

At night I nestle in my mother's arms to escape the cold, but also loneliness. On winter mornings, we head out of town towards our school, bowing our heads to blizzards. My hands are cracked and bleeding from the cold. No sign of the dung left spread over the hill last summer to dry in the sun. The lane now a ribbon of pure white snow. Icicles hanging from every roof.

My father is building the house of his dreams on a burnt-out clearing. He's there to watch over the workers when they dig the foundations. There to take delivery of the sand and the lime and supervise the bricklaying. When the building is done, he plants three pine trees in the little garden at the back.

No electricity during daylight hours in that town in the provinces. It comes on towards evening. Cuts off again in the middle of the night. Summer comes late, bringing silent light to the lanes running alongside the gardens' wooden fences. The roosters crow in the afternoon here, too. Up on the mountain slopes the cows are lowing. Some days, a snub-nosed bus stops in front of the clocktower on its way from Istanbul to Ankara. I look with longing at these travellers on their way to the big city. And I think, 'One day I too shall come to know those faraway lands.'

Years later my father says:

—I've found it.

—The perfect name for our building. Çelebi Apartments.

Çelebi. A gentleman? Or a man of God?

He has the name engraved on a marble plaque which he places to the right of the door. This door opens out into the lane it shares with a honeycomb of sheds and shanties for which a large

family has claimed squatters' rights. The willow they planted on the lane has grown to a good height. In the summer months they gather underneath it. At night they sing and play the tambourine. Day and night, we are engulfed by their noise.

The wizened grandfather spends his days in bed, a blur of white on the ground floor of his wooden house. His milk teeth are coming in again. His mind is on a loop. On a horse cart bound for his village. The wife is making milky coffee on the coals from the stove. They won't let us have any because we're children. White curtains in the little window. Damson plums in the trees at the back. The wizened grandfather's thin legs poke out from beneath the white sheets. I look at his big feet and clawed toenails and I shudder.

There are six of us in the house. The bed I share with Süm is pretty much collapsed. Way back when, it was our parents' marriage bed. At night Süm rolls into the hollow and goes straight to sleep. Still awake on the slope beside her, I wonder about God. If he exists or not. For as long as I believe that God exists, I pray and pray. Pray for us all. Now, though, there's no need. I can think what I like.

Every night I lie down on her lap. Tomorrow we shall go our separate ways.

—I'm going to kiss you,
she says.

—I haven't even kissed a man yet.

—You kiss my top lip, and I'll kiss your bottom lip,
she says.

We do as she says.

If only they could leave us alone. If I could lie down on her lap. To explore our bodies, guided only by our instincts and the love that grows in nature, like a child in a womb.

Bunni's mattress is in our room, too. Our grandmother prays five times a day. Reciting her prayers in Arabic. If we bother her while she's praying, she prays even louder. She shouts in her

sleep: 'Oh Allah! Dear Allah!' The closer she comes to ninety, the more the world around her changes. The more she invokes his name.

I always had a hard time getting to sleep. Heard every noise. Saw every light. Even in silent hospitals, the children crying in the clinic next door would keep me awake.

Bunni always wakes up very early. She clears away the ashes in the stove. She puts in new logs, dribbles kerosene over the kindling and lights the fire. The kindling crackles. Brings light and warmth to the grey damp of dawn. Time to get up. To huddle next to the stove if the room's not yet warm. Rush into the icy bathroom to splash even icier water on our faces and run straight back to the stove. Our black school uniforms, ready and waiting, but stiff with the cold of night. We hang them near the stove to warm them up. Goosebumps all over as we put them on. Bunni brings in a big tray of tea, quince marmalade and toasted bread.

I move to the city a year after Süm does. Süm shows me all the new things she's learned. She throws powder into a dirty toilet.

—Look,

she says.

—It gets sparkling clean, just like that. She scrubs the bowl.

—Did you see that?

she asks.

At the grocery store, when we're standing in front of a refrigerated cabinet,

she says,

—We're going to drink pasteurised milk.

—What's that?

I ask.

—You can drink it without boiling it first. It's lovely.

She drinks it. I don't like it.

We go to see a film at Atlas Cinema. The auditorium is huge. The film never to be forgotten. *The Inspector General.* On our way out, Süm buys a bag of roasted chestnuts. She's accustomed herself to

city life. Adapted quickly to its ways. While I am still languishing beneath the plum trees of our garden in the provinces.

The hanger on the back of our door is always loaded down with clothes. In our small built-in wardrobe there are clothes belonging to everyone in the family (my big brother excepted). We have to push the hangers sideways to make them fit. (The wardrobe in my brother's room is deep enough to accommodate hangers with ease.) There's a carpet on the floor. But it's hard to move our curtains along the rods and they aren't wide enough to cover the whole window. There's a desk with two drawers that my father had made in the provinces, and that's where we work. The lamp's height can be adjusted. Hanging on the wall above the desk are our father's instructions:

> Children:
> 1. Light must come from the left. 2. Books should be kept at a distance of 30 to 45 centimetres. 3. The light must be turned off the moment studies finish, etc. I wish you success as children dedicated to the national cause. Your loving, long-suffering father. First name. Last name. Signature.

My parents' bedroom, which is next to ours, also serves as the sitting room. On the floor, our newest carpet. Four large armchairs fill the space not taken by the double bed. The venetian blinds are the same colour as the armchairs. The tulle curtains were made to order and so cover the full length of the windows. In the mornings my mother puts her folded sheets and quilts to our room and puts a coverlet over the bed. Which now becomes a divan.

(So many things packed into houses like this. So much piled into the corners.)

No sign of warmth or love between my mother and father. With her every movement, my mother makes it clear that she has never loved my father as a man. What binds them together

are their weighty petit bourgeois responsibilities. Loveless days. Loveless nights.

They have guests now and again. Most of them couples who share their devotion to duty and the nation. They entertain them in this room. They sprinkle cologne on their hands. Pass around the candies. Serve tea with sweet biscuits. On holidays, there are also chocolates and liqueurs. My father does most of the talking with these guests. The subjects never change. School. Duty. Success. Disputes with management. The children's successes. Then it's back to talking about school. And duty.

My elder brother has it easy. He has his own room. His own bookshelves. His own wardrobe. A gas heater he can use whenever he wants. He has me shine his shoes. First scrubbing off all the mud. Bookshelves line all his walls. He keeps them in good order. No one's allowed to remove books without his permission. But the moment he leaves the house I go into his room. And I don't know if it's because I see it first thing, or if it reflects the emptiness I feel inside me, or if everybody is talking about it, but it's *Foggy Boulevards* I end up reading, day after day. The ships sit waiting. Yearning for faraway ports. Dreaming of loves beyond reach.

In *The Go-Between*, the child who is a guest in an aristocratic mansion races up the wooden stairs to his room. The moment he's alone, he peeks through the curtains. Looks up at the sky. At the moon peeking out from behind the clouds. So very distinct. What a puzzle the world is. What a puzzle the universe, and the moon this boy is watching. In the empty sky.

There's a geranium in our kitchen, a rubber plant in the sitting room. (I still don't like rubber plants. They take me back to the suffocating heaviness of middle-class sitting rooms, to the smoke-filled offices where nothing ever gets done, where idle civil servants look up from the day's newspapers only to stare at the walls.)

In the middle of the house is a hall. A very dark hall. The bedrooms and the kitchen open on to it. We eat here, too. My father

favours dim lightbulbs that save electricity. If any of us turn on a light in a room no one's using, he gets very angry.

At the front of the built-in buffet is my father's shrine to Atatürk. A gilded bust of the great man stands beside a miniature Turkish flag held up by a tiny metal rod, its star and crescent embroidered on to red silk. From time to time, and most especially on national holidays, my father tries to make us sing the 'March of Independence'. Even if no one else joins in to soften his bugle voice, he sings it right to the end. When they play the national anthem on the radio, he stands at attention. When he asks us to do the same, we object.

—No one stands at attention at home.

He loves the 'March of the Turkish Military Academy', too. And folksongs from the borderlands.

On clear mornings, sunlight pours in through the kitchen windows. From here we can see as far as Fatih Mosque. In later years, a maze of apartment buildings will block the entire view. Every balcony piled high with old things. Raised voices from every window. Radios blaring from every flat. Leaving not a moment for silence.

Thoughts of death chase after me. Day and night, I think about killing myself. My reasons unclear. To carry on with life, or to die – either will do. A vague disquiet, nothing more. Troubled thoughts, pushing me towards giving suicide a try.

Late one night, I rise from bed to walk into darkness. Everyone else deep in their usual slumber. The house is cold. I take care to make no noise. I gulp down all the pills I've been gathering for days now. Then I eat some bread and jam to keep from vomiting them up. I'm a young girl. For days now, I've been making the necessary preparations to ensure that my dead body looks beautiful. As if a beautiful dead body were a way of taking revenge. I'm objecting to these houses, these armchairs and carpets, these teachers. This music. These rules. I'm screaming! You can have your little world. I'm screaming! In silence

I go back to bed. Hardly any time left to think about death and nothingness. All I can see now are brightly coloured fields. Nothing to fear now. I'm running across fields. As if I can no longer bear life by the sea. Nothing but fields now, as far as the eye can see. Alone with the breeze in the fields of grass. Soon, very soon, death will take me.

I open my eyes to a dirty pillowcase. Embroidered on it are two letters. Initials that tell me I am in a psychiatric clinic.

—They saved me!
I think.

—If only they hadn't.

I begin to cry.

—What a tidy girl you are,
says another patient.

I look at my body. Bruises all over. The young girl lying in the bed next to mine starts speaking.

—Look, don't let this place frighten you. You'll only be here for a while. They won't abandon you. And this place isn't bad at all. I'm a university student. I'm comfortable here. It's easy to get used to this place. You come to like it . . . Wait and see for yourself, if you stay . . .

I'm no longer listening. What a frightening thought, though. To have to stay. They're calling me. Have they been waiting for me to wake up?

—I'm leaving,
I tell the other patients.

—You can't just get up and leave! No one can leave this place. You'd have to be crazy, to think you could!

—But I really am leaving!

They follow me down the corridor. A great group of women patients.

—She thinks she's leaving!
they cry.

And I really do leave.

I have no memory of the two and half days I was asleep.

We're back in the house, in the hall. My friend Günk is there, too. My father is holding up a fig.

—How could anyone think of dying when there are such beautiful things to eat?
he asks.

(Not even today am I sure I understand what he meant by these words.)

I've put all thoughts of suicide behind me. Now, like most people, I await a natural death.

My brother:

—Why did you do it? he asks.

—*March of the Soup Kettles. The Egotist,*
I say.

Unbearable commotion in the house on Sundays. As in most of the homes around us. Whole families sitting inside. My father never getting out of his pyjamas. My mother bent over her students' exam papers. My father is an inspector. Whenever he's at home, he's writing reports. When he's finished, he reads them out loud.

Sunday is bath day. We take it in turns. On cold days, a large copper basin is placed next to the stove. We bend over the basin to wash our hair. Then we sit in the basin and wash our bodies with what little water sits inside it. Bunni oversees all this. She pours the dirty water into a bucket, returning with a bucket full of clean water. Bunni never gets tired. Bunni devotes her life to overseeing baths, sweeping up ashes and cleaning away filth. For as long as I can remember, that's what she's been doing. She can even hold fire between her fingers.

When she isn't doing laundry, washing dishes, praying, fasting, she's at Çarşamba Market. No one offers her more than this. If they did, she wouldn't listen. When she pours the last drops of water over our heads, she blesses us with prayers in Arabic.

And we protest:

—God does not exist!

—God forbid! God forbid! You'll burn in hell!
she replies.

Fights break out towards evening most Sundays. Sometimes it's the relatives of the family on the middle floor that kick things off. They all pour out on to the stairs and lay into each other. Lots of shouting. Then someone throws a punch. The old people beg them all to stop. Bunni most of all.

Until the age of sixty-six, my father lives with Bunni. In her eyes, he remains her youngest son. If he comes home with a perspiring back, it's his mother who wipes it down. Drapes a dry towel over it. If he gets a cold, she draws little squares on his back with iodine. If it's a really bad cold, she cups it with glass jars. If he's been in some sort of accident, she has him lie down, covers him with a sheet, and pours molten lead into a pan of water held above his head, to rid him of bad energies.

Bunni loves old clothes. She won't wear anything new. There's a green silk costume that she's kept packed away for sixty years, bringing it out only for special occasions. Her eyes are blue-grey. It's been seventy years since she last slept with a man. She loves life. Nothing interests her more than her own funeral.

—Tell your father to put a notice in the paper. Who knows who might come,
she says.

And now she's in a coma. In the crowded wards of Taksim Hospital, there's no one else as old as she is. No one is having as hard a time dying. It's as if she has not entirely lost consciousness. She's trying to die, but still clinging to life. Her teeth are sitting in a glass on the bedside table. Her mouth a deep hole.

As if she's trying to say: '. . . Life just won't let go of me . . . I'm trying to die . . . but look, it's not so easy . . . as you can see, life just refuses to give in.' She groans and she moans. As if to say: 'But it will, soon it will . . . soon I'll die . . .' Waving her arms. Moaning.

It's boiling hot outside. As we climb up to Taksim Square, I see the asphalt sinking beneath the wheels of my small child's

pushchair. The sky a deep blue. The light almost blinding. My child and I are on our way to Bunni's funeral.

Her gold earrings go to Süm. Her copper brazier to me. I give the big towel she made for her shroud to Süm. I keep the little one.

We have a tradition in our family. After burying our dead, we do not tend their graves. None of us ever visit. Is this because there's no clear line between the living and the dead?

We three children leave home at the first opportunity. The noisy world outside, the lives of others – to us, they seem so much more beautiful. But Bunni never left. Even when she was very old, she made her slow way to Çarşamba Market. She made pickles. Cooked radish leaves. Collected food from the market's discards and managed on just a few hundred liras a month.

Süm and I drop by for a visit now and then. One warm day we find her sitting on her prayer rug, leaning against the wardrobe.

—Where's your father?

—He's on a trip.

—Why hasn't he returned?

—He will soon.

—He should come back now. I'm dead.

She tries to convince us that she's no longer in this world, that her life has come to an end, that she's speaking to us from the next world.

—You're fine, you're fine,

says Süm.

When at last we head for the dark and mildewy staircase, to leave this damp, cold, memory-laden house behind us, what a joy it is, to return to our own lives.

As they lower Bunni's casket into the hole they have prepared for her, I try to cry. But I can't. Her death is beyond the reach of all laments. It's a hot July day. In the valley beneath us, a shantytown reaching as far as the Golden Horn. I make to leave the cemetery, with my child in her pushchair. We roll across the cobblestones.

Workers' families in the shanties on either side. I head towards the wall of ugly apartment houses looming straight ahead.

On Sundays . . . these days . . . if I am strolling down an alley . . . and catch sight of a father in pyjamas . . . or if, on a grey and raining winter day, I see smoke rising from a stovepipe . . . and windows fogged with steam . . . if I look in to see laundry hanging up to dry . . . if the clouds are almost low enough to touch the damp bricks . . . if it's spitting rain . . . if I hear live football matches blaring from every radio . . . all I want is to go, go, go, and keep going.