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# R·I·T

## Dedeler En Iyisini Bilir (Grandpas Know Best)

by

Nehir Tuna

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Fine Arts  
School of Film and Animation  
College of Imaging Arts and Sciences

Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, NY  
December 16, 2013

Committee Approval:

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Committee Member

*Date*

**Abstract:**

This short fiction film is a modern love story set in Istanbul that explores cultural changes and family expectations regarding love and marriage. It explores the question of “Can you really make yourself and your family happy at the same time?”

The film was screened in December, 2013, at RIT, to members of the RIT community.



## **Thesis Report**

### **Synopsis:**

When Ali's father hires a new secretary, she awakens desires in Ali that the shy 22 year old never knew he had. But working for his father, his mother reminding him he's the right age to marry, and trying to be a good Muslim complicates things. Now he must choose between family duty and true love. Can you really make yourself and your family happy at the same time?

### **Writing Process**

Formation of this project went through a quite complex process for me. Previously, I was thinking of producing a comedy movie about a girl and a boy who come from different type of families of which one is from a solid conservative family and the other is from a modern family and meeting of these two families and quirkiness during this process. This idea was giving excitement to me because I had just married at that time and our families were not with us when we were married. I and my wife got married at City Hall with the testimony of one of our friends. Her family was a little bit modern when compared with my family and the idea was born from this fact.

I changed the places of families and took them at more ends in order to make the event and situation more dramatic. The idea of drawing two families together where one of them is a family whose members drink whiskey in the middle of day and wear low-cut clothing and another family whose members are veiled really attracted me. After working on this idea for weeks, I realized that there is still not a plot and the existing was only my writings full of descriptions and details.

I moved away from this idea in time but the idea of telling the story of a young man that grew up in a conservative Muslim family was prepossessing my mind all the time. The

script writing process of this short film lasted quite challenging and long time because this was also my screenwriting learning process.

Criticism of my thesis consultants was generally in a positive manner during my first meeting with them. I completed the script in line with these criticism and we met for the second time. I come in for criticism in line with pruning this time. I remember that Adrienne said me that the scene which the father says his son "Your Life is My Life" constitutes the core of the movie and the theme. This review led me in the subject that what unnecessary detail and what the main point are in this scenario. Previously, I could not decide what is good to write and what the focus point of the movie is. This review of Adrienne showed me the right way for the consolidation of the story and I started to ask myself the following question: "Can you make both yourself and your family happy at the same time?"

## **Pre Production**

I wanted everything to be perfect but I didn't have any money to do it. When I was able to sleep at night, I was having nightmares. I had to find the money which I needed for making the film, one way or another. My dad was giving crisis signals and wanting me to pray more in every phone call. He did not have money and could only meet my expenses like rent money and allowances. I was receiving 2000 dollars from *Marilyn* monthly back then. My father did not know it, so we were able to live on easily. There was no money which was sent with no questions asked, as in the previous years. We had to put an end to the breakfasts in La Pain's, brunches in Dos Cominos', the matchless dinners we ate in Vietnam restaurant in 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue some nights and musicals to which we were going once in every month. When you're not able to do all these things, living in New York is not different from living in Cincinnati. Rental contract of the house in which we were living in Manhattan would expire in June and I would be able to receive the money for 12.000 dollars that I paid as deposit for the house before going to Turkey for the summer. I would be able to use that money for the film. However, it was not even half of the money that I needed. I had to have a B plan in case of receiving negative answer from found application that I made to Turkish Culture Ministry excitedly.

For this reason we have decided to ask for help from *Selim* who is a cousin of *Beliz*, my wife. *Selim* was a rich man and have wanted to enter the film sector in one period of his

life. He liked to host famous Turkish performers in his townhouse in West Village and to invite to dinner at The Standard.

*Selim* had contributed to a small budgeted filmmaking, years ago and the film had gone down. Although he was a little bit nervous he had not lost his passion. I was thinking that to start with a short film would be a start of a good friendship for a person who had lost money and wanted to learn the industry.

At the night at which I went to the house of *Selim* in West Village with a white orchid with three branches and Merlot, I mentioned about the subject of my film. Before going back to Istanbul one of the things that I was able to do was to visualize some of the scenes together with a storyboard artist whom I found from craigslist. I showed the scenes that I drew to *Selim* and the next day I e-mailed the scenario to him and prayed to God.



*Part of the storyboards which I showed to Selim*

Before sending the script to *Selim*, we made some searches together with *Beliz* about the performers. We had determined some people in our minds. I wanted famous enough actors to perform because I could find the sponsor whom I need only in this way. I could steal ones heart who likes to spend time with celebrities only with famous people. After determining a number of actors I added these names to the script and e-mailed it to *Selim*.

After a couple of days when we went to five o'clock tea in The Greenwich Hotel, I was sure that *Selim* would support me. Now I could sleep well.

Meanwhile, I was meeting and getting opinions from Turkish producer, *Ahmet Guner* who lives in New York and with whom I met in Sundance. He introduced me to *Alex Dorris* who is a cinematographer he had worked with before. *Alex* had made a short film in Turkey last year. He had an Alexa brand camera and could rent it for a good price to me. Besides his showreel was very successful and telling everything. We phoned each other and met in Equinox. He was a sympathetic person. He was at his last year in New York University. He had read the scenario before meeting. He was asking questions to me and looking forward to work with me.

I remember the correspondences with *Alex* when I went back to Turkey. We were talking about tones, colors, shooting techniques and giving examples from movies.

*Alex* was an ideal cinematographer with whom you would want to work with in a perfect world, because he liked to use everything freely including the time. Either I could not explain my limits to him well or his working conditions were always like that and he could not adapt himself to any small scaled work. Yet I was happy to work with him.

### **I Lost My Self-Confidence Before Shooting**

One month to shooting, my self-confidence about the script dropped off. The people who read the script liked the story but told that there were some problems with the dialogues. I thought I could solve those problems and would turn it to my advantage at rehearsals. However a Turkish writer who read my script walked all over me. "Let's write it together" he said. You have sponsors and money. Postpone the shooting". (By the way, it should not be overlooked the cost of the "consultancy service" which he want to give to rewrite the script, I wonder how much money would he earn from me). I cried with anger. I was crying second time in the production process. When I pulled around, my self-confidence had gone completely. I made my decision, I would not shoot the film. This idea ruled over my whole body for quite an hour. Strictly speaking, I did not want to rewrite my story on which I worked for such a long time. This was my movie, better or worse it was mine. I didn't want to be controlled by others anymore. I didn't want to fear of anything. I remember those moments as if happened only yesterday. I was looking in

the eye of somebody to receive their approval and wanting to be appreciated and approved.

I would learn to not to ask for their valuable opinions from everybody in time.

### **First Meeting With The Team & First Look At The Budget**

In this process, I made a mistake by taking on a lot of jobs by myself. It was a big problem for me that I did not make any business with that professionalism before. I thought that if I worked harder I would be more ready but I was working hard but inefficiently. I was the one who was arranging the locations, finding the performers by myself, talking about myself and the story and trying to be seen nice to them. I was trying to find money in one hand and to create a team to work together with on the other hand. It was a big disadvantage that I was not doing these things in good order. For a moment I found myself asking the rent money for the golf course in a five star hotel. I remember that when I learnt that its price is 5000 dollar for a half day shooting, I went away. It was a total waste of time. I would carry that scene of the film to a restaurant.

The film company which would help me for production was Wella Film. *Andre*, a close friend of *Ahmet*, introduced me to the team; UPM, assistant director and production manager. The next day after meeting, when they showed the budget they prepared I was knocked out. It was about 88.000 TRL and on top of it, the wages of cinematographer, his assistant, costume designer and art director whom I arranged independently from them were excluded from this price. I objected. They said that I shouldn't be afraid, it was a standard budget and they could impose restrictions in certain areas. The second budget was around 77.000.

Selim would participate with 15000 Dollar (27 000 TRL). I had 12000 Dollar (21500 TRL) and my father would be able to give 20000 TRL. In total we had 68500 TRL. I would be able to pay the remainder 8500 TRL by myself. I think there is no need to say that I could not receive any budget from Culture Ministry at this point. I approved the budget and we started to work for the production.

### **How Did I Find The Performers**

The grandfather character was the first one I found. I had a chat with *Efsun Bahar* on the phone and met with him in a coffee shop in Taksim. After convincing him, to find the other actors was pretty easy, because if a well-known performer say yes to your project the others can accept it easier.

I knew *Aysel Kadri*, who has been casted as Mother, from her performance in one of *Fatih Akin* films and had admiration for her. She played a prostitute who found life again. Meeting with *Kadri*, who is an award winning and famous performer and the fact that I would work with her made me excited.

For the role of Ali, the name in my mind was a leading actor of a series which stormed through in Turkey. We sent the script and dreamed about what would happen if he accepted the role in the next two days. At the end of those two days, question marks had occurred in my mind. I wondered if that young boy was the right actor or if I only wanted him because of his fame. Later on, I started to search for another performer who would be more suitable in respect of his physical type. After all, the first candidate would give negative answer without justification after one week. Thus, I met with *Erkan Turcu* and liked his energy very much. The fact that he would be my actor was getting me excited.

I needed a tough-looking person for the role of Father. I also wanted him to be seen as an ordinary Turkish father type. Typically, one who had mustache and could be both angry and sympathetic at the same time. A friend of mine suggested *Ahmet Kazancı* to me. Since he is not a capricious but very sincere person I like the most him among the performers. Besides he is very respectful and patient person. He is one of that precious people who waits in silence for his turn to come in working hours that involuntarily lengthens out. To work with him was pretty easy and enjoyable for me.

### **Costume Design**

When we started to work together with *Meryem*, the most important thing to me was to enable the veiled girls to be seen very beautiful and stylish. The reason for this is that Ali was pretending as if he didn't like the girls whom his mother found not because he really didn't like them but because he wanted to make his own choice. So, I didn't want to see

the girls as ugly. Besides the mother was a fancy character and the girls whom she would find had to be fashionista just as her and to be a fashionista you should really try hard.

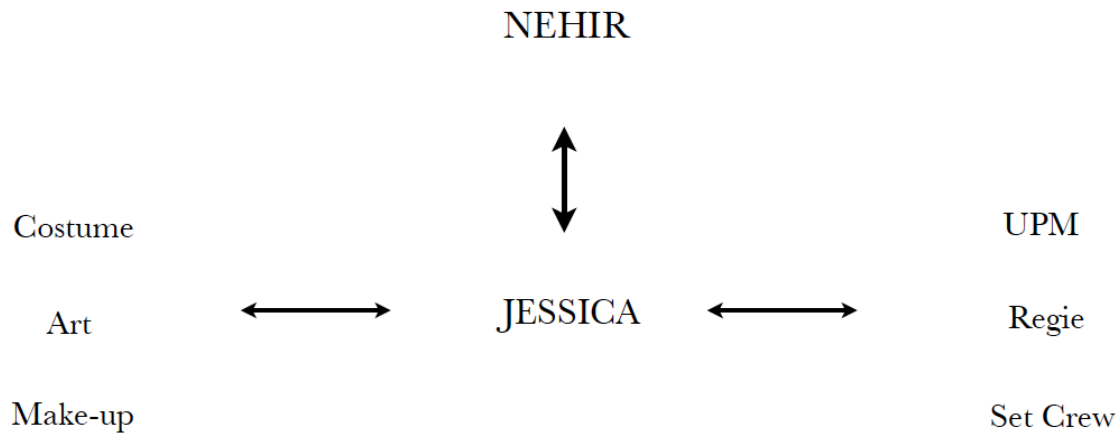
Two world brands Harvey Nichols and Bagozza had been our costume sponsors thanks to the fashion world background and great efforts of *Beliz*. This meant that giving an opportunity to *Meryem* to reach all combinations of fashion world. The done thing for her was to find stylish costumes on which we agreed upon among tens of thousand products. Supposing that we needed a costume for an invitation think about buying all the brands such as Hugo Boss, Yves Saint Laurent, Jean Paul Gaultier, Franco Morelli, Jil Sander, Marc Jacobs, Prada, Channel as much as you like and never paying for them. Isn't it wonderful? *Meryem* would be able to overcome this combination successfully.

### **Art Director**

Were it not for *Zuhal*, I thought that something would be left half finished. Although I didn't see any of *Zuhal's* work, the fact that she has worked as art director for full-length films had impressed me. Afterwards I would learn that I was more talented than her and would express deep regret about it.

### **Meeting With Jessica**

*Jessica* was a friend of my friend from NYU and was in Turkey about the time at which we would shoot the film. She had a BA on production. She wanted to work on films. We met and realized that we understood each other well. Also she knew *Alex* too. I included her into the project without losing time. This was one the most rational things that I did during my film project. Since *Jessica* is a practical person she lightened my burden. She was seeing everything through like a successful business woman and motivating me. She would ensure the communication between the team that I arranged with my personal efforts and consisted of an art director, costume designer and make-up-hair dresser group and regie and set crew that I did not find.



In our first meeting, she ensured that everybody heard about each other and coalesced. She took everybody's address, telephone and e-mails and copied and distributed them. The first thing she did was that. If I knew her before we could be doing this business with a smaller budget but it was too late to revise it. Still we did our best. One day before the shooting, only one thing was in my mind when I couldn't cash my cheques, had attack of nerves and cried: to cancel the shooting. At the other end of the phone was Jessica and she was the one who said me "Nehir, pull around, we loaded all equipment to the truck, you can't reverse your decision now". If her father was not a mafia and he didn't consider me as a threat for her daughter, Jessica was a person who would not get out of my life. At the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the set, she was bored since people considered her a foreigner because of her accent and she was sitting and crying on a rock beyond the shooting location. I went to her to console her. I held her hand and told her how good she was on her business and that she should not give heed to people.

### **Coming Of Alex**

*Alex* and his assistant *Alice* had come to Istanbul 4 days before the shooting. At first we ate together. The only thing that I could not forget about that night was that *Alex* selected the most expensive meal on the menu.

I placed them in my sibling's house in city center. Thus, me and my wife would not be able to stay there and go to the house of a friend of mine for two weeks.



In the days before the shootings, we worked on the shot list together with *Alex*. We felt comfortable about the shootings of the first two days. Since there was no money left for the next days, we were talking about the following day's plan, at the end of shooting for 15 minutes every day.

Meanwhile *Alice* had planned every day and participated in cooking classes and historical trips. There was no problem for her to do those things because she was a technical staff and we didn't need her in preliminary preparation. But I can't forgive her since she found a lot of things to enjoy while we were working our arse off.

### **What Is Happening To Selim?**

*Selim* would get married just then and was dealing with the wedding preparations. That evening we agreed to make our meeting which we cancelled for two consecutive weeks. Since you must lose a fly to catch a trout, the money that will come from *Selim* in my mind I bought a delicious cake and a bottle of wine from *Venus* for him.

6 weeks had passed after our last meeting with *Selim*. In our last meeting in *Four Seasons* he said to me that he would be able to arrange 20.000 dollars and also I would be able to shoot the party scene in his house. His living room was designed as soundproof, which has been furnished with white leather chairs entirely. It had a bar and a DJ cabinet.

That night I wanted to take the money and go as soon as possible. He had gotten straight to the point. He said a drift has occurred on the plans and he could not permit me to shoot the party scene there and he offered me 1500 dollars to compensate that. My gut told me that "no problem". I wondered if he would give me money in cash or as cheque?

As we continued to talk, I understood that *Selim* would give me only 1500 dollars from 20.000 dollars. *Selim* was busy arranging his marriage. He was very tired because of working hard for his wedding to take place after his own heart, for which he would spend half million dollars. He could not go to the Caribbean vacation that he wanted a lot and go to Bodrum in weekends. In my opinion he had lost his ability to think clearly.

I left his house even without taking that 1500 dollar. I remember that when I left the house I sat in my car peacefully at first but then started to scream in a minute. It was the

same with Carolyn Burnham who screamed in the car in *American Beauty*. Her husband saw her betrayal with his own eyes.

I sat in the car for some time more. I was thinking that “There is money out there”. But only they are not mine. I hated myself to trust Selim that much. Just to spite, I would shoot this film.

### **When I Couldn't Cash The Cheque**

There was one day to the shootings. My plan for that day to outwork easily on the shooting plans after meeting with *Alex* and taking our coffees. We had the time but before we start to work I should cash the cheque for 12000 dollars, which has just come from US. I had gotten the cheques in previous evening. I had to make payment to *Jessica* for some payments to be made and the production to progress. I went to the bank and I got the news that would turn my day to a nightmare. To cash those cheques would take one month. The cheques were coming from America and to understand if they would bounce or not, or at least require 1 month to clear. I tried all banks. Even HSBC, *local bank of the world*, asked for at least one month to do it. That's why I thought about canceling the project. However, as I mentioned above, *Jessica* had convinced me.

## **Production**

### **1<sup>st</sup> And 2<sup>nd</sup> Day, Ali's Place.**

*Beliz's* aunt's house was located two street away from the house in which the shooting would take place and that night we stayed with her. When I took my bag and took my way on the shooting day, I said to my wife that “I am going to direct”. It was a sunny day, 8th September, 10:50 am.

The team arrived at 11.00 am. The landlord *Mrs. Hadise* greeted me warmly. I was unable to contain myself but still we were talking about the beauty of the house while drinking our Turkish coffees, together with *Mrs. Hadise*. As it would be expected from a landlord whose garden entrance gate is made of gold foil, her only benefit from this business was the show off that she would make to her neighbors. Every corner of the house was epideictic and magnificent and this was the one of the million things that

stressed me out. We should be very careful, we can't scratch anything and we have to enter the house with galoshes like people wear in hospitals.

When the cars started to come one by one, I was learning how big was the team. With one cinematographer, his assistant, assistant director, production manager and his assistant, focus puller, art director and assistants, make-up man and hair dresser, costume designer and her assistants, sound team, lightning team and the person who would cook for us, were 35 persons in total.

When the whole team came to the set and started to work, I had a free time for two hours. Within that period, I got the feeling that being a director was a very easy thing to do. This feeling would give way to stress in a little while. In this process I examined all scenes that we would shoot, one by one. I had my storyboards in front of me. We had agreed from which angle we would shoot, where we will put the camera and almost everything was ready. Since I didn't feel that ready for the shooting that we would do in the coming days, I began to realize that I hadn't planned the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> days much at all. I actually had to spend time with my performer within that period but my leading actor, Erkan was not around. According to the plan, he would come to the shootings from city with his own car. It was his own preference. My assistant had called him again and again and tried to reach him. We thought to send somebody and pick him up. In the end they called his manager and he said that *Erkan* is not feeling good. This could ruin everything. It was so scary to think that all those expenses and efforts would go for nothing. I was praying for all go well as we had planned.

I found as a director, when dealing with the lead actor, you have to acquiesce and give them encouragement even though you want to run and cry in the toilet. Directing a film and directing actors are quite different. You need to have some savvy in dealing with actors, treating them with kid gloves, but still getting what you wanted.

Fortunately after one hour his manager managed to bring *Erkan*. I was angry with *Erkan* but I must never reveal it to him. After all he was ashamed too. He wore the costumes and would come back as prepared and gotten a second wind shortly after.

That day the first thing we shot was close shots and when we shot the first plan I felt comforted. This would continue easily and go like clockwork. I had a childish feeling and the energy of the cinema students when they say "let's make movies".



*Me and my energy*

At the first shooting day, we could not shoot the car scenes in sunset since the sun went down wholly and we decided to shoot it the second day. That was the first shooting that we postponed. When the actor was late for one hour, this caused a scene to be deficient.

We left the house around 02.00 am at the first day. It was late hour and we worked for 14 hours at the first day. The second day would start before we rejoiced that the first day ended. We transferred all files to hard discs and I was carrying one of the two copies on my hand when I was turning back to the house. It was cold and I was walking alone. The first day had ended. I felt a glow of satisfaction. At least till I woke up in the morning.

I had pretty interesting experiences on the second day during the set. I was sitting under the shade on a sunny day and though I read the script again and again, I could not understand it. During the shooting, I always afraid of something being too short. The writings on the papers were only there to show me way and I would determine how I would walk on that way with my instincts which were occurred under the light of my previous preparatory works. I was living this enlightenment on that hot weather.

One of the things that made me excited and gave me energy was some unplanned nice things which occurred during the set. The best example for this is the moment at which the father was angry with Ali. I could not place that moment in my mind precisely but though I knew how to shoot it, still it seemed strange to me. Alex helped me with his suggestion on the subject. Thus I moved up what I wanted to do visually and also we would supported that violence and force moment with visualization.



*Alex suggested to shoot this scene as silhouette.*

The second day it was quite stressful and intensive later in the night. Since the scenes which we would shoot were too many and I couldn't celebrate my wife's birthday, I was under pressure. Birthdays are very important for *Beliz* but I was not able to show the required interest on the subject. Of course *Beliz* tolerated this, however it would cost me an expensive gift after months.



*We were shooting a car scene at the second day on sunset. Since my actor did not know to drive a car, we made the shooting in green screen.*

### 3. Office

You feel that people start to criticize you inside when the shootings drag on. They look for a person to blame without fail and that person is always the one who is taking care of the business. Everybody say something from “if I were him I would do this like that” to “he doesn’t know this business”. I was shooting backstage documentary for a feature film years ago and the director was someone who have made successful movies in the industry. I was bearing everybody from lighting crew to sound man, make-up man to art department, performers to regie as part of my job and having intimate relations with them. Thereby I was witnessing some gossips in the set. I was keeping this in a corner of my mind during shooting of my movie but I didn’t allow it to disturb me. I would complete the movie in a few days and everything would be forgotten.

### 4. The Mosque And Ali’s Office

The shooting in the mosque was cancelled because of a burial service. So we had to come here for the second time. This cost us a half day and God knows how much money?

In the afternoon we would shoot the office scenes of Ali. The shooting location was one of the most crowded places of Istanbul. So we chose Sunday to make the shooting. After shooting the scenes in which Ali comes to the office building by car and meets with Pelin, we carried the equipment to 7th floor to shoot the office scenes. Carrying and installing the dolly, panter, camera and lights took one hour. It was 05.30 pm. The sun was almost going down. Also *Erkan* had to be in studio at 8:00pm for making dubbing for his character on tv series. A very close friend of *Beliz* was getting married and we had promised to go to the wedding three months ago. In spite of the fact that I didn’t want to go we had to be there. It was impossible to create daylight if we shot those scenes at night. They had to be shot in the day. If we considered that we only had two hours of daylight left, it would be best to cancel the shooting for that day. Since the 7th floor was not used that much we could make shooting in the week days. This was the 3rd scene that we cancelled to shoot then.

## **5. Wisteria Restaurant (Grandfather's Restaurant)**

At the 5th day we shot the restaurant scenes, the place in which Ali and Pelin ate together and the montage scenes in which they sat in a café and get to spend time together. The restaurant we shot in had 4 separate parts. It was keeping 4 separate locations (two different cafes and inner side and outer side) in one place. Rather going 4 different places we would be able to arrange all of them together and in one day. Also the owner was a friend and we could be free in a lot of matters.

The most difficult part of the shooting that day was that Grandfather's coming to the restaurant by car. The road in front of the restaurant was very narrow and if one car stopped, the whole road was blocked. So although we didn't have the permission for this, thanks to the big efforts of production manager we managed to block the road for one hour. A close friend of mine had allocated his Porsche with his driver to us. While the driver was keeping the car in a corner in a safely manner I was dealing with my actor. *Alex* and his team were searching for ways to get rid of the reflection on the glasses of the car. While I was having a Turkish coffee with my actor in the café, I started thinking "I wonder if could manage to complete the shooting in time today, what if the car was keyed, what if police came and said that we could not block the road"

Everything went with a swing and I shot the scenes of the grandfather quickly without any problem finished 2 hours early.

## **6. House With Pool**

When we went to see the house with pool, a surprise was waiting for us. This house which we found from internet belonged to *Mrs. Nevra* who is mother of a friend of mine from high school.

This coincidence would save us from paying a location price. In the beginning I was thinking that I would make the indoor shootings and shoot the scenes of Ali's room, that Ali and Makbule ate together and meeting with the girls, in that house. This place was a summer resort and not a kind of place to stay more than 3 months in a year. So we would had to shoot the indoors in another house.





*My actor started to feel ill after plunging into the pool with his clothes.*

When the sun was about to drop we were bust with shooting a scene that would not use in editing. After dinner we talked about the rest of the scenes with the assistant director. She was stressing me out as she did during the shootings and was telling me that I should get rid off some scenes. He was protecting the crew against me and mentioning that they were overworking and meal would not come for the night.

At that point, let's take a glance on the definition in the Wikipedia, all together: "The role of an Assistant director include tracking daily progress against the filming production schedule, arranging logistics, preparing daily call sheets, checking cast and crew, maintaining order on the set."

That day the set was not well organized. We were behind the program and there was no meal to come. The costume designer had not brought the costume that would be used in the scene which we would shoot, because that scene was not included in call sheet! The thing that should be made by her had not been made. I said that I did not want to work with her any longer. Though I was dreading when I was doing that, I was feeling good because of my attitude while I was shooting the remainder scenes that night. However, this feeling was replaced with panic when I was shooting the party scene next day.

## **7. Party Scene – The Party Scene That I Shot But Didn't Use**

We could make noise how much we want, tastefully kilometers away from the city. However, it was not like that at all. This scene was a disaster. We even had not a cd player.

I was searching for alternatives places to shoot the party from the date I was in New York. I wanted to shoot the party scene in a house very much. Despite it was within the boundaries of Istanbul that house in Catalca was 100 kilometer away from the city center.

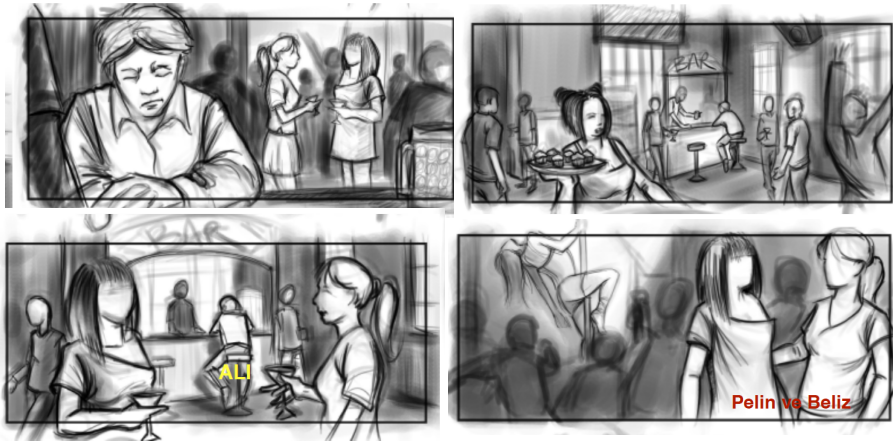


It impressed me too much and I thought that I had to shoot the party scene in that house. This place was the house of a friend of Pelin and they threw a wonderful party for Pelin. I suppose that there is no other thing as bad as thinking with prejudgments. What was thing that captivated me in that house? Even going to that house for two times cost 60 dollars of fuel for me for scouting. Why I wanted to make shooting in that house? I could make a shooting in a large and high ceiled house within the city center very well. How would for it to be an epideictic house, participate to my story? I was asking these questions of course to myself. However the answers that gave to those questions now and at the film pre-production process are very different from each other. Also another thing that attracted me in house was a horse farm near by it. If I could arrange that house I would be able to shoot the scenes of the grandfather there. This would show the production as overvalued. Besides there was a long summer before me and I wanted to spend it by preparing for the movie. So I found the real estate dealer who rents the house.



For the party scene we created ideas that we thought wonderful together with Art Director :

Expectation;



Reality;



I knew that some scenes were not as I wanted while shooting party scenes. However if there are 50 people who are there only for you in a chalet you probably may not be able to get enough nerve to cancel the shooting. Despite a lot of things went wrong and I could not shoot what I actually wanted I should do my best.

We shot until the wee small hours. I would understand more clearly at the editing stage that the party scene was not good enough. I couldn't control the performers, the figurant team of 30 people had worn improperly for the general concept of the party and we were not able to redress them up. We realized the scenes by putting the best of the bad bunch. My assistant director's and his two assistant's not being there had dragged our wheels. *Jessica* and *Alice* were both managing the extras and working hard for us to stay on the schedule.

### **After Shooting**

After shooting the very last scene, I wanted to thank the whole team and to get away from there immediately. The son of the landlord of the house in which we made shooting, who is the same age as me and a friend of his stood over me all night and kept their eyes on me. Before leaving I said him that I would give him 1000 dollars and put the cheque for 3500 dollars to ransom. I was tired and with no money when going to the car. However I was feeling happy despite everything happened.

### **Alone With Debts**

The day at which the shooting had been completed I slept till the evening. When I woke up my mind was foggy. I called *Ahmet Guner* to ask for his opinion. He said that I should complete the missing scenes but when I said that I had no money he was answering by saying that I should wait for now and he was not able to give clear answers and was passing the buck to me.

We had planned the shooting for 7 days but could not have completed it in 7 days. Against the possibility of the shootings to get longer, I had bought the ticket of Alex by paying 300 Dollars extra and for the date of 17th September rather than 15th. That is, cinematographer would be in Istanbul for 2 days more. However, I couldn't anticipate

that both we would not be able to complete the shootings and I would run out of money, presence of *Alex* would not mean anything.

It would be unfair for everybody to continue to the shootings without being able to pay the fuel price for the vehicles that came to the shooting. Besides, agreement was made with a lot of people over one week. If we had money to extend the shooting for a few days would be a kid's stuff but it was almost impossible in my situation. Those two days were wasted.

## **Post Production**

Post production part was a painful process. There was a successful editor, *Batihani*. He had said me that he was ready to help me for the editing of the movie. He had a comfortable environment to work and robust equipment in his house. Previously he had not edited Alexa footage and this was increasing his excitement. The only thing left to start to work was to take the audio files from the sound man and he had not gotten any payment yet as the other numerous employees. After a delay for a few days in a moment in which I started to think that the files would not be given to me without making payment, I have been able to take the files and to start to the editing. For the first two days we synced the sounds on my computer. My friend would not take money for the editing and this was both good and bad news for me. Because if do not give money it is always more difficult to direct, demand something from people. It was the same with us. In the beginning he was allocating his two days to the editing, sometimes I was going to his house in the evening and we were working together. It went on in this way for a while. We reached to a certain point. Since the shootings were deficient we were not able to finish the rough cut of the movie. We did the editing of the shootings made and wrote explanatory texts which explain the missing scenes on the points at which the scenes were deficit. Meanwhile I wanted *Batihani* to make a trailer. I would use that trailer to make peace with my performer with whom I was at odds and to convince him to finish the shooting.

While I was dealing with editing the movie on one hand and I was sending e-mails to and asking for an appointment from production houses in Istanbul on the other hand. There were three production houses that I wanted to meet: PK Films, AT Productions and SMug. Those three were the leading companies in the sector, which have made successful

commercials and feature length movies in Turkey and I had never thought of doing with less. I had lived in New York for years and had education, besides I was experienced, at least my image was like that. The first company which interested in me was PK Films. I had met with its owner *Mrs. Ayse* in a screenwriting class in New York. I showed her the trailer of the movie and mentioned that if they accept me to their production house as a director, I would be thrilled. I was very excited. If in that process I could join such company I would have achieved a big part of what I wanted to do by making the movie, which was: *Get A Job*. Above all I would earn money. I was taking signals that even though we do not make an agreement we could work together. Thus my relationship with PK Films had started. At some days of the week, by wearing my nicest clothes and holding a Starbucks coffee on my hand, I was going their cool office in Sishane, sitting in a corner in a cold and distant way and not giving heed to the interns. By doing so I was giving an image like “I am not one of you, I am a director, I did not make a commercial here yet but will make in the shortest time”. These comings and goings and cool behaviors have ended with *Mrs. Ayse* being sponsor for the shooting for remainder two days of the movies and we happened to start to a long pre-production work with those interns. Office scenes were my biggest deficiency and without them, the film would be meaningless as if we hadn’t even started the project. Besides, there was a party scene that I wanted to shoot again. There was only one thing that I did during one month to gain sympathy of and take sponsorship of *Mrs. Ayse* and her husband *Mr. Mehmet*: to look over the deficient scenes, to rewrite some dialogues and to simplify my deficiencies to a level that a five year old would understand.

### **Being At Odds And Making Peace With My Leading Actor**

*Sude*, shared friend with my wife *Beliz*, had come to our house in a cold winter day, stayed for 6-7 hours and made plenty of gossips together with *Beliz*. When I left the room, *Sude* had spilled the beans and mentioned to *Beliz* that *Erkan*, my leading actor, has spoken ill of me. *Beliz* who acted with the instinct to protect me, had directly called *Erkan* and told him that he should not talk about me. He had responded that that was a slander and he did not talk bad about anybody. After that day *Erkan* didn’t answer my calls.



My wife had driven a wedge between me and my leading actor when shooting had not been completed while trying to protect me and had put everything at risk. Without *Erkan* it was impossible to complete the movie. After all those drama, to not complete the movie would be a real end for me.

After calling him tens of times and apologizes *Erkan* had agreed to meet with me. We had met in the *House Café* in Nisantasi.

He was very kind to me and behaving like we have not been at odds ever. When it came to the movie, his attitude had changed. He was saying that he wouldn't work with me again. I was tarrying to find ways to break the ice between us by directing the subject to other things. That moment I wanted to have a power to lead the thoughts of the person against me as I wanted.

Later I changed the subject to the new movie and said that I wanted to get him watch the trailer of the movie on Ipad. Like every actor he enjoyed to see himself. He was impressed. The ices were breaking. I had managed to bring to situation from "*I'll never work with you*" to "*as long as I don't come together with Beliz I will complete the shootings*". Almost all of the rest of the scenes were the ones with him and Beliz but for that night that much convincing was enough. Although I didn't know how to do that but I said ok.

After a while when my interviews had been published in a few newspapers and magazines, Sercan's approach to me had changed. After some time Beliz, I and Erkan would even give interviews together.

### **Shooting Of The New Party Scene**

To shoot a party scene in a club in Beyoglu the only thing you must have are some money and connections. I was a little bit lucky on this matter. A friend of *Mr.Ahmet* was running a night club in Beyoglu. I didn't know what I wanted. I was not used to the night life. I knew the night clubs from movies.

I went to the club and thought that I couldn't make a shooting there. I was going to the club at Saturday nights at which the club was most crowded, during two weeks and thinking that the only night at which I could find the number of people as I wanted, was the new year party. How would I find that number of people? If I could invite sufficient number of people and give them drinks, would I be able to fill that large space? More

importantly, did I have that number of friends? If I made the shooting in the weekend, may be I could reach the crowd that I wanted. However I had a problem; the club was open only on weekends and the shooting permission was given at the days which it was closed. That is, we should make the shooting in the week days.

I had no art director, a costume designer or a hair-dresser-make-up team any more as I had in the actual shootings in September. Instead I had my mom and grandmother. One would be the art director and the other would be the assistant of her. The ones who made the cloud heats that would be used in the party, were them. The performers would make their make-up by themselves using the make-up set of *Beliz*. There would be a light which was sectional and changing continuously. Make-up was not that much on the front burner in the party environment. *Beliz* arranged the costumes by herself. Including her own costume she borrowed the costumes from a designer friend of her.

Even though PT Films was a sponsor for the shooting, I had to make some payment for drinks and the other expenses (such as payments of doorman, dj and the food expense of the extras). I had a sum of money but like always it was not enough. If I had waited to have money I would not be able to complete this movie.

I would be able to make the payment thanks to a friend of mine, *Berk*, who had joined in the army during the first shootings and joined us later. *Berk's* help was incredible. I would decide for him to be my producer afterwards and utilize from his helps. He did a lot of things for me like, here when I had no money he gave me 100 liras, when I got bored he asked me in and watched a second class scary movie together with me and gave me a moral support.

That night the shooting had lasted till the morning. After a challenging and enjoyable shooting, a friend of mine said to another friend of mine that “I really admired *Nehir's* directing approach, it is a total neo-classic” and I didn't understand what he meant completely but I was delighted. Like I didn't understand what they meant when they said “a short representation of dogma cinema” for an old movie of mine years ago.

After one month, we had shot the scenes which were missing. During that time I had the time to make some changes on those scenes.

We had realized a very successful shooting for two nights with a new and dynamic assistant director and a smaller team. If you look at the office scenes you can notice Ali's



room and the strange camera angles in the room. The reason for this is that we couldn't enter an office which was busy in the day, so we could make the shooting at night and didn't have the capacity and equipment to create day light. Thus we planned our frame to not to see the windows.

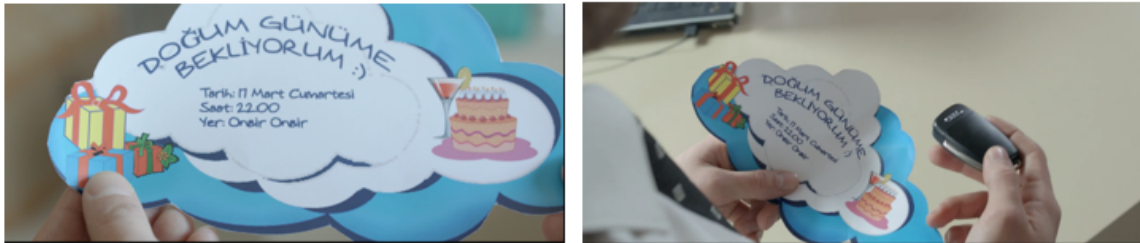
### Feedback On Editing

After the completion of editing, *Malcolm* and *Adrianne* made recommendation about the editing process. I cut out a few seconds from the movie in line with these recommendations. I reduced the soundtrack in some scenes. For example; *Malcolm* told me that the scene which the Grandfather appears for the first time with a car accompanied with music, do not contribute to the movie so I completely removed the soundtrack in that scene. I agreed with and applied approximately seven or eight of his recommendations out of ten.

Adrianne said: "The scenes of Pelin and Ali falling for each other could be tighter" and I increased the pacing of the scenes with dialogues and pruned the montage scene.

The father was giving a key of an Audi according to the script. This was a kind of bribe given by the father to his son. The dream car of Ali! Although this bribe, Ali was selecting Pelin because this was his own choice.

But I could not fully express this dream of Ali. Audi posters on his room's walls and small Audi cars on the table of his room were not enough to tell about his dream. So, I changed the scene which I was closing up at Audi key in one hand of Ali and Pelin's birthday invitation card in the other hand of Ali with the scene which I was only closing up at one hand of Ali which he has the invitation card in his hand.



*There was not a close up for the scene which the father gives the car keys to Ali that I removed the scene which Ali has the car keys in his hand. Thus, I've eliminated this problem completely.*

### **Festivals And Closing**

We finally completed the missing parts in March and festival applications are started after the completion of montage of the movie.

The movie was shown in Cannes Short Film Corner at first and then in festivals in Italy, England and Turkey. In addition, it was shown and competed in New York, Los Angeles, Richmond, Chicago and Maryland. At present, the movie has been competed and screened in 36 festivals and received 5 awards.

News of the movie has taken place in written and visual media in Turkey. An author who had watched the movie at a festival proposed me to shoot his hit comedy sketches that had been popular in Turkey. A well-known actor/writer met with me to shoot his script. However, this is not concluded. I refused another feature-length project. *DCC* employed me as a director. I actively shoot commercials and doing what I like. I owe all these to “Dedeler En Iyisini Bilir”.

### **Response in The Screenings**

Overall I received very good feedback and valuable critiques from the students and the faculty members. I would like to include couple of them:

Some students had questions about the music I used and the musical choices I made. I simply answered that I made those choices because I use all kind of music when I'm editing. And I keep the ones I like the most. It's also about getting rights. I use the music that I can get the rights to. If I like a piece of music, like “Sea Blue Sea Green,” the one I used in the Ali and Pelin's getting together and having fun sequence, I look for a place to use it. When I feel like I've found the right spot, I use the music and try to get the rights.

One student wanted to see more cultural music since I was showing a confrontation with the modern world and the Islamic world. I replied that this is about a man making his own choices, in other words, his becoming modern in a way and I did not want to fill the film with traditional music. But really, it's not a film about the clash of foreign cultures. The culture Ali is from is full of rock music, pop music, jazz music, etc. The music I chose was representative of the music in Ali's culture.

Another comment was made about a particular shot where Ali prays and Pelin interrupts him. Coming from an Islamic world, the student says that not everybody can understand the effect of her interrupting him in that scene because they might not be aware of the importance of praying and bothering someone who prays in Islamic culture. My response was, it's a private moment with God as it happens in every religion and it's a private time in which one shouldn't be bothered. Simple as that. No further explanation needed. But I will say he gets very angry with Pelin after that scene which makes the interruption a big thing. Also seeing a nice attractive body kneeling and with her behind right in front of you while she tries to pick up the papers that were dropped unintentionally is pretty much universal in every man's fantasy. It arouses men and it's *bad* enough to ruin praying.

Someone commented that it was a very well made film in terms of the script, camera, direction, blocking and acting. He pointed out the part where Ali reacts his father in the office and they go to the office where they close the door to the camera and the camera goes around and finds them thru the window. He said that it was satisfying enough in terms of seeing the relation so the conversation between the father and son wasn't needed.

Another student commented that the performance were very good.

There was another comment made on editing where Ali jumps into the pool. I use that shot in the beginning where I introduced the character and I re-use it at the end where he is angry with his father. I was told that seeing that particular shot for the first time at the end might give the intended effect better. "It's good both ways" he added "but seeing it twice takes away the magic in that scene." I think he might be true on his end, it was a choice I made in the editing room and I'm pretty happy about it.

*Malcolm* said that the casting is great, the direction of the actors is very good, the writing, stage of the camera, blocking are beautifully done. Basically all the elements that make a film good are made in this film and they were put together beautifully.

### **A Modern Day Romeo and Juliet**

In a way, this film is a retelling of the age old Romeo and Juliet story. Two people from different worlds (families) fall in love despite the warnings of their families and friends. Only this time, we get a happy ending. The question is, is it really possible to be a real conservative in a world where it gets harder to protect yourself day by day? While on a bus, checking your emails or instagram or taking little trips on pinterest for example, your eyes might easily wander to a nice female body (or vice versa) and when you take your eyes off them and look out the window you might easily see a beautifully body in a bikini on a billboard. In a world where it is very easy to get “dirty”, where everything that is bad (and good) are click away from you, how “clean” can you stay? How much and for how long can you repress those impulses? Are they universal impulses? What happens when physiological urges win out over religious doctrine?

A conservative system is built on fear, obedience and submission. Human beings live their lives with the idea of the observation of the power that created them and knowing that every negative action that they take might be a threat for their life in the hereafter. When a person who is educated and brought up in a surrounding of conservative values, reaches a certain age, s/he will evolve and change like everybody else. Those people get trapped between the fear in their hearts and the world outside when they hit puberty and adolescence. Dilemmas possess that growing soul. The main thing in Islam is your intention. In religion, there is a belief that a person will not be cast out of the religion if he commits a sin to prevent a bigger sin even if he knows that he is committing the smaller sin. In Islam this is called "mubah." It's acceptable to do a bad thing if it will prevent an even worse thing from happening. It's a sort of ying/yang balance. In the case of the film, watching porn is a sin and Ali watches porn knowing that he is committing a sin. It's a slightly difficult concept to grasp, but essentially, if you know you commit a sin and you truly feel that it isn't a dangerous or harmful sin, then Allah will forgive you, because you know you are committing a sin but you consider it small and insignificant. This is the concept that God is merciful and understands us even when we're flawed and don't understand ourselves. In the film, Ali is aware of that and because of his age, he thinks he can get away with watching porn, without thinking he's being a

hypocrite.

But when it comes to a relationship with a real girl, things change. A girl who wears different clothes, who has silky hair, who doesn't dress like his mother, etc... he puts himself into protective mode and goes into his cocoon. Because "girls" is an area that he has been ignoring unintentionally. An area that he knows through the internet, almost a side effect of the modern world, but also an area that he doesn't know in real life. The ladies are simply on another level entirely, in his dreams basically. When he is confronted with a real live woman, for lack of a better word, he flips. And the whole film tells us the story of Ali adjusting to this process of entering the modern (real) world. When he realizes that his conservative world and Pelin's seemingly secular open world are essentially no different, he starts to like Pelin, embraces her, loves her and defies her family for her.

Ali falls for someone who is outside of the box that he has been brought up in. He commits a sin by defying his family to do good. According to him, he commits a sin, knowing that he will be forgiven one day.