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The Dervish House

Written by Ian McDonald

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THE DERVISH HOUSE

Ian McDonald

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1

The white bird climbs above the city of Istanbul: a stork, riding the rising air in a spiral of black-tipped wings. A flare of the feathers; it wheels on the exhalations of twenty million people, one among ten thousand that have followed the invisible terrain of thermals from Africa to Europe, gliding one to the next, rising up from Lake Victoria and the Rift Valley, following the silver line of the Nile, across the Sinai and the Lebanon to the great quadrilateral of Asia Minor. There the migration splits. Some head north to the shores of the Black Sea, some east to Lake Van and the foothills of Ararat but the greatest part flies west, across Anatolia to the glitter of the Bosphorus and beyond, to the breeding grounds of the Balkans and Central Europe. In the autumn the stork will return to the wintering grounds in Africa, a round trip of twenty thousand kilometres. There has been a city on this strait for twenty-seven centuries but the storks have been crossing twice a year for time only held by the memory of God.

High above Üsküdar storks peel off from the top of the thermal, wing-tips spread wide, feeling the air. In twos and threes they glide down towards the quays and mosques of Sultanahmet and Beyoğlu. There is a mathematics to the wheeling flock, a complex beauty spun out of simple impulses and algorithms. As the stork spills out from the top of the gyre, its sense for heat tells it there is something different this migration, an added strength to the uplift of warm air. Beneath its wings the city stifles under an unseasonable heatwave.

It is after the hour of prayer but not yet the hour of money. Istanbul, Queen of Cities, wakes with a shout. There is a brassy top note to the early traffic, the shrill of gas engines. Midnotes from

taxis and dolmuşes, the trams on their lines and tunnels, the trains in their deeper diggings through the fault zones beneath the Bosphorus. From the strait comes the bass thrum of heavy shipping: bulk carriers piled high with containers edge past Russian liquid gas carriers like floating mosques, pressure domes fully charged from the terminals at Odessa and Supsa. The throb of marine engines is the heartbeat of Istanbul. Between them scurry the opportunistic ferries. Sirens and horns, call and response; motors reversing and burbling as they warp in to Eminönü's quays. Gulls' cries; always gulls. Dirty, conniving gulls. No one builds platforms on their chimneys for gulls to nest. Gulls are never blessings. The clatter of roller shutters, the bang of van doors. Morning radio, pop and talk. Much talk, of football. Champions' League quarter-final. Galatasaray/London Arsenal. The pundits are in full flow from a hundred thousand balconies and rooftop terraces. Pop, football and heat. This is the tenth day of the heatwave. Thirty-three degrees in April, at seven in the morning. Unthinkable. The climate pundits speculate on whether it could be another Big Heat of Twenty-Two when eight thousand people died in Istanbul alone. That was insane heat. Now some witty phone-in caller is fusing the two punditries together and speculating that if it flattens those pale English footballers, can that be such a bad thing?

Over all, through all, the chorus of air-conditioners. A box in a window, a vent on a wall, an array of fans on a rooftop, one by one they spin up, stirring the heat into ever-greater gyres of warm air. The city exhales a subtle breath of spirals within spirals, updrafts and microthermals.

The stork's pin-feathers feel out the rising airscape. The city's waste heat may save it those few wing beats it needs to carry it to the next thermal or away from the stooping eagle. Its life is an unconscious algebra, balancing equations between energy opportunity and energy expenditure. Black feather-tips flutter as it slides down across the rooftops.

The explosion goes almost unnoticed in the greater roar of the

waking city. A flat crack. Then silence. The first voices are the pigeons and gulls, bursting upwards in clattering wings and shrieks. Then come the voices of the machines: car alarms, security alarms, personal alarms, the hip-hop of call tones. Last come the human shrieks and cries.

The tram has come a halt in the centre of Necatibey Cadessi, a few metres away from the halt. The bomb detonated at the rear; the blue roof is bellied up, the windows and doors blown out. A little smoke leaks from the back end of the second car. The passengers have made their own escapes on to the street and now mill around uncertain what they are to do. Some sit on the ground, knees pulled up, deep in shock. Pedestrians have to come to help. Some offer coats or jackets; some are making cell calls, hands trying to describe the scene; more stand around feeling the need to offer help but uncertain what to do. Most stand back, watching and feeling guilty for watching. A few without guilt shoot video on their cepteps. The news channels pay money for citizen journalism.

The tram driver goes from group to group asking is everyone there, is anyone missing, are they all right? And they are all right. She doesn't know what to do either. No one knows. Now come the sirens. Here are people who will know what to do. Lights flash beyond the press of bodies, the crowd parts. It's hard to tell victims from helpers; the blood is smeared everywhere. Necatibey Cadessi is a street of global banks and insurance combines but the ripples from the blast have spread out along the lines of the light rail system. Station by station, street by street, tram by stalled tram, Beyoğlu seizes up. Everyone knows about the bombing now.

From the eye of a white stork riding in from the Bosphorus the paralysis can be seen spreading out from the heart of the outrage. Its eye has no comprehension of these things; the sirens are just another unremarkable note in the clamour of a waking city. City and stork occupy overlapping but discrete universes. Its descent carries it over the bombed-out tram surrounded by flashing blue lights and into the heel of the next thermal. Then the rising heat plumes of Istanbul

spiral the stork up in a wheel of white bodies and black wings, up above the eastern suburbs, up and onwards into Thrace.

Necdet sees the woman's head explode. He was only trying to avoid more direct, challenging eye contact with the young woman with the good cheekbones and the red-highlighted hair who had caught him looking in her direction three times. He's not staring at her. He's not a creep. Necdet lets his eyes unfocus and wander mildly across the passengers, wedged so politely together. This is a new tram at a new time: twenty minutes earlier but the connections get him into work less than an hour late, thus not upsetting Mustafa, who hates having to act the boss. So: his tram-mates. The boy and girl in their old-fashioned high-button blue school uniforms and white collars that Necdet thought they didn't make kids wear any more. They carried OhJeeWah Gumi backpacks and played insatiably with their ceptep phones. The gum-chewing man staring out the window, his mastication amplified by his superb moustache. Beside him the smart man of business and fashion scanning the sports news on his ceptep. That purple velvet suit must be that new nano-fabric that is cool in summer, warm in winter and changes from silk to velvet at a touch. The woman with the curl of silver hair straying over her brow from under her headscarf and the look of distant rue on her face. She frees her right hand from the crowd, lifts it to touch the jewel at her throat. And detonates her head.

The sound of an exploding skull is a deep bass boom that sucks every other sound into itself so that for a moment after the blast there is only a very pure silence. Then the silence shatters into screaming. The tram jerks to a halt; the momentum almost throws Necdet from his feet. To go down in this panic is to die. Necdet can't reach a handrail and steadies himself against the bodies of roaring passengers. The crowd surges against the still-locked doors. Their bodies hold the headless woman upright. The man in the fine velvet suit shrieks in an insane, high-pitched voice. One side of his purple jacket is dark glossy red. Necdet feels wet on his face but he can't

raise a hand to test it or wipe it away. The doors sigh open. The press is so tight Necdet fears his ribs will splinter. Then he spills out on to the street with no sense of direction or purpose, of anything except a need not to be on the tram.

The tram driver moves from group to group asking is anyone missing, is anyone hurt? There is nothing really she can do but she is a representative of IETT so she must do something and she hands out moist wipes from a pull-tube in her large green handbag. Necdet admires that her tram has been suicide-attacked but she's remembered to bring her bag with her.

The wet wipe smells of lemon. To Necdet the folded cone of white is the purest, most holy thing he has ever seen.

'Please move away from the tram,' the driver is saying as he marvels at the little square of cool citrus white. 'There may be another explosion.' She wears an expensive Hermes headscarf. It links Necdet to that other scarf he saw around the woman's head. In the final moment he had seen the wistful regret on her face resolve as if she had received a revelation into some long-rooted family woe. She smiled. Then she touched the jewel at her throat.

Passengers crouch around the schoolchildren, trying to ease their crying with word of comfort, offered hugs. *Can't you see the blood on your faces is scaring them all the more?* Necdet thinks. He remembers the warm, wet spray into his own face. He looks at the wet wipe balled up in his hand. It isn't red. It wasn't blood.

Everyone looks up at the beat of a helicopter. It slides in over the rooftops, defying talk and phone calls. Now sirens lift above the morning traffic noise. It will be the police before the ambulances. Necdet doesn't want to be near police. They will aks him questions he doesn't want to answer. He has ID; everyone has ID. The police would scan it. They would read the carbon debit Necdet used to buy his ticket that morning and a cash withdrawal the night before and another carbon debit that previous evening at eighteen thirty. They might ask about the cash. It's grey but not yet illegal.

And is this your current address?

No, I'm staying at the old Adem Dede dervish house in Eskiköy. With my brother.

Who is your brother? Here they might find they had more questions.

Ismet had replaced the padlock with the new one he had bought. Bright brass, a golden medal on a chain. The tekke's shuttered wooden balconies overhung the steps; this was a private, shadowed entrance, behind the industrial steel bins of the Fethi Bey teashop, miasmic and greasy with the ventings from the kitchen extractor fans. The door was of old Ottoman wood, grey and cracked from centuries of summer heat and winter damp, elaborately worked with tulip and rose motifs. A door into mysteries. It opened on to gloom and the acidic reek of pigeon. Necdet stepped gingerly into the enfolding dark. Light fell in slats through the closed and barred window shutters.

'We shouldn't be doing this,' Necdet whispered. It was an architecture that commanded whispers. 'People live here.'

'Some old Greek and a married couple at the front. And an office girl on her own. And that shop for blasphemies in the old semahane. We'll sort that eventually. This end's been left to rot for fifty years, just falling apart.' Ismet stood proudly in the centre of the floor. It was his already. 'That's the crime here. God wants this to be what it was before. This is where we'll bring the brothers. Look at this.'

Ismet flung open a matching door across the dusty room. Colour flooded in and more than colour: a growing verdure of clipped box; the perfume of sun-warmed wood; the burble of water and the sudden song of birds. Ismet might have opened a door on to Paradise.

The garden was six paces across but it contained a universe. A shady cloister walled with floral Iznik tiles ran around the courtyard affording shade or shelter in every season. The fountain was a single piece of sun-warmed marble, releasing water over a lily-lip into a basin. A jewel-bright lizard started from repose in the sun and dashed along the scalloped rim to vanish into the shade beneath. Herbaceous plants grew tall and cool in small box-bordered beds.

The soil was dark and rich as chocolate. A green place. House martins dipped and bobbed along the eaves of the wooden gallery directly above the cloister. Their shrills filled the air. A copy of yesterday's *Cumhuriyet* lay sun-yellowing on a marble bench.

'It's all still here,' Ismet said. 'The redevelopers never got around to the back. The old cells are being used for storage – we'll clear them out.'

'Someone looks after this,' Necdet said. He could imagine himself here. He would come in the evening, when the light would fall over that roof on to that bench in a single pane of sun. He could sit and smoke blow. It would a good place for a smoke.

'We'll be all right here,' Ismet said, looking around at the overhanging balconies, the little rectangle of blue sky. 'I'll look after you.'

Necdet can't let the security police know he has moved into the dervish house which his brother intends to make the home of the secret Islamic order to which he belongs. The police think secret Islamic orders blow up trams. And if they look at his old address, they'll see what he did, back there in Başibüyük, and why Ismet Hasgüler took his brother of the flesh under his care. No, he just wants to go to work quietly and soberly. No, no police thank you.

The air above the still-smoking tram thickens in buzzing, insect motion. Swarmbots. The gnat-sized devices can lock together into different forms for different purposes; above Necatibey Cadessi they coalesce like raindrops into scene-of-crime drones. The sparrow-sized robots flit on humming fans among the milling pigeons, sampling the air for chemical tracers, reading movement logs from vehicles and personal cepteps, imaging the crime scene, seeking out survivors and photographing their blood-smeared, smoke-stained faces.

Necdet drifts to the periphery of the mill of survivors, haphazard enough to elude the darting drones. Two women in green paramed coveralls crouch with the tram driver. She's shaking and crying now. She says something about the head. She saw it wedged up under the roof behind the grab-bars, looking down at her. Necdet has heard

that about suicide bombers. The head just goes up into the air. They find them in trees, electric poles, wedged under eaves, caught up in shop signs.

Necdet subtly merges with the circle of onlookers, presses gently through them towards the open street. 'Excuse me, excuse me.' But there is this one guy, this big guy in an outsize white T-shirt right in front of him, with his hand up to the ceptep curled over his eye; a gesture that these days means: *I am videoing you*. Necdet tries to cover his face with his hand but the big man moves backwards, videoing and videoing and videoing. Maybe he is thinking, *this is a couple of hundred euro on the news;* maybe, *I can post this online*. Maybe he just thinks his friends will be impressed. But he is in Necdet's way and Necdet can hear the thrum of swarmbot engines behind him like soul-sucking mosquitoes.

'Out of my way!' He pushes at the big man with his two hands, knocks him backwards, and again. The big man's mouth is open but when Necdet hears the voice say his name, it is a woman's voice speaking directly behind him.

He turns. The head hovers at his eye level. It's her. The woman who left her head in the roof of the tram. The same scarf, the same wisp of grey hair coiling from beneath it, the same sad, apologetic smile. A cone of light beams from her severed neck, golden light. She opens her mouth to speak again.

Necdet's shoulder charge sends the big man reeling. 'Hey!' he shouts. The surveillance drones rise up, fizzing at the edges as they prepare to dissolve and reform into a new configuration. Then they firm back into their surveillance modes and swoop around the flashing blue lights which have only now made it through the city-wide traffic jam rippling out from the destruction of Tram 157.

In the hushed world of Can Durukan the explosion is a small, soft clap. His world is the five streets along which he is driven to the special school, the seven streets and one highway to the mall, the square in front of the Adem Dede tekke, the corridors and balconies,

the rooms and rooftops and hidden courtyards of the dervish house in which he lives. Within this world, lived at the level of a whisper, he knows all the noises intimately. This is new, other.

Can looks up from the flat screen in his lap. He turns his head from side to side. Can has developed an almost supernatural skill at judging the distance and location of the nano-sounds that are allowed to enter his world. He is as acute and weird as a bat. Two, three blocks to the south. Probably Necatibey Cadessi. The living room has a sliver of a view down on to Necatibey Cadessi, and if he squeezes right into the corner of the rooftop terrace that leans out over Vermilion-Maker Lane, a silver shard of the Bosphorus.

His mother is busy in the kitchen with the yoghurt and sunflower-seed breakfast she believes will help Can's heart.

No running! she signs. Şekure Durukan has many faces she can put on to augment the hands. This is furious-tired-of-telling-you-concerned face.

'It's a bomb!' Can shouts. Can refuses to sign. There is nothing wrong with his hearing. It's his heart. And there is nothing wrong with his mum's hearing either. Can often forgets that.

Can has found that his greatest power in the first-floor apartment is to turn his back. Half a world can be ignored. His mother will not dare shout. A single shout can kill.

Long QT Syndrome. A dry, form-filler's name. It should be called Cardio-shock; Sheer Heart Attack; like a title you would give to the kind of freak-show TV documentary featuring a nine-year-old boy with a bizarre and potentially fatal heart condition. Patterns of chaos flow across Can's heart. Potassium and sodium ions clash in wavefronts and graphs of fractal beauty like black tulips. A shock can disrupt those synchronized electrical pulses. A single loud sudden noise is enough to stop his heart. The shriek of a car alarm, the clang of a shutter dropping, the sudden blare of a muezzin or a popped party balloon could kill Can Durukan. So Şekure and Osman have devised a tight, muffling world for him.

Odysseus, ancient sailor of these narrow seas, plugged the ears of

his crew with wax to resist the killing song of the Sirens. Jason, a subtler seafarer, drowned them out with the lyre-work of Orpheus. Can's earplugs are inspired by both those heroes. They are smart polymer woven with nanocircuitry. They exactly fit the contours of his ears. They don't drown out reality. They take it, invert it, phase shift it and feed it back so that it almost precisely cancels itself. Almost. Total precision would be deafness. A whisper of the world steals into Can's ears.

Once a month his mother removes the clever coiled little plugs to clean out the ear wax. It's a fraught half hour, carried out in a specially converted closet at the centre of the apartment into which Can and his mother fit like seeds into a pomegranate. It is padded to recording studio standards but Can's mother still starts and widens her eyes at every muted thud or rattle that transmits itself through the old timbers of the tekke. This is the time she speaks to him, in the softest whisper. For half an hour a month Can hears his mother's voice as she tends to his ear canal with medicated cotton buds.

The day the sounds went away is the earliest memory Can trusts. He was four years old. The white hospital was square and modern with much glass and seemed to flash in the sun. It was a very good hospital, his father said. Expensive, his mother said, and said still, when she reminded Can of the health insurance that kept them in this dilapidated old tekke in a faded part of town. Can had known it must be expensive because it stood by the water. Beyond the window of the ear clinic was a great ship loaded high with containers, closer and bigger than any moving thing he had seen before. He sat on the disposable sanitized sheet and swung his legs and watched more and more ship come into view until it filled the window. They were looking at his ears.

'How does that feel?' his father said. Can turned his head one way, then the other, sensing out the new presences in his ears.

'There will be some discomfort for a few days,' the ear doctor said. On came the great ship, huge as an island. 'You will need to clean them once a month. The electronics are very robust. You've no need

to worry about breaking them. Shall we try it? Can . . .' And his hearing had flown away, every sound in the world driven to the furthest edge of the universe. The doctor, his father, became like tiny birds. His own name turned into a whisper. The ship sailed past silently. Can thinks of it as the ship that took all the sound in the world away. When he goes up on to the terrace to peer down steep Vermilion-Maker Lane at that tiny vee of Bosphorus, he still hopes that he will see the ship that brings it back again, a different sound in each container.

His mother made aşure that night. A special pudding for a special time. Aşure was a big treat in her family; they were from the east. Can had heard the story of Noah's pudding, how it was made up from the seven things left uneaten when the ark came to rest on Ararat, many times from his mother and his grandmother when she was still alive, but that night Mum and Dad told it with their hands. High on sugar and twitching at the discomfort in his ears, Can had not been able to sleep. Airbursts flashed on to the Barney Bugs wallpaper. He had flung open the shutters. The sky was exploding. Fireworks blossomed above Istanbul, dropping silver rain. Arcs of yellow and blue stabbed up into the night. Bronze fire cascaded silver from starbursts of gold so high Can craned hard to see them. All in a hush of muffled thuds and whispered whooshes, detonations muted as a bread-crust breaking. The near silence made the lights in the sky brighter and stranger than anything Can had ever seen. The world might be ending up there, the seven heavens cracking apart and raining fire on to the earth. Mortars lobbed their payloads higher and higher. Can heard them as pops on the edge of his perceptions, like pea-pods releasing their seeds. Now luminous armies battled above the solar water heaters and satellite dishes of Istanbul: battalions of blazing janissaries armed with flash and artillery against swift, sparkling sipahis who galloped from one side of the sky to the other in a whisper. Above, a little lower than the stars themselves, the angels of the seven heavens warred with the angels of the seven hells and for one searing moment the sky blazed as if the light of

every star since the birth of the universe had arrived at once over Istanbul. Can felt its silver warmth on his upturned face.

As the light faded so the city returned the gift. From the Bosphorus first, the soft flute of a ship's siren, building in a chorus of tankers, ferries, hydrofoils and water taxis. The streets replied with tram hooters, delicate as prayers, then the brassier, flatter blare of car and truck horns. Can leaned forward, trying to hear. He thought he could make out dance music spilling from the Adem Dede teahouse. He could feel its beat, a pulse against his own. Beneath it all, human voices, cheering and whooping, laughing and singing, shouting nothing at all except for the joy of making pure noise; all bleeding into an aggregate of *crowd*. To Can it was a hiss of static. The people packed the streets, the little square with its two teahouses and one minimarket. Many carried little flags, more had bottles. Can could not believe so many people lived in tight, enclosed Adem Dede Square. Cars sounded their horns in exuberance and flew flags from their windows; the white-on-red crescent and star of Turkey, and a blue flag bearing a circle of golden stars. Those same flags were in the hands of the people in Adem Dede Square: crescents and stars. Can watched a young bare-chested man dance-swing along the balcony of the konak on the corner of Vermilion-Maker and Stolen Chicken Lanes. His country's crescent and star was painted white on his red face. The crescent made him look as if he were smiling. He turned to wave down to the crowd. They waved up. He pretended he was going to jump down. Can held his breath. It was the same height as his viewpoint. The crowd now seemed to be cheering the man on. Suddenly he let go. Can always remembers him falling through the streetlight, his skin shiny with sweat, his face eternally grinning in the face of gravity. He vanished into the crowd. Can never learned what happened to him.

He only knew his mother was beside him by the touch on his arm.

'What's happening?' Can asked. His own voice seemed small as a lizard's. His mother knelt beside him, pressed her lips close to his

ear. When she spoke he felt its tickle as much as heard the words.

'Can, love, we're Europeans now.'

Can runs through the hushed corridors of the dervish house. He knows all the best vantages on to the world beyond. Can runs up to the terrace. It smells of hot wooden patio furniture and desiccating geraniums. Can lifts himself up on his tiptoes to peer over the wobbly wooden shuttering. His parents will condemn him to a world of whispers but they never think that he might just fall off the terrace. He sees smoke rising up between the circling storks. There is not very much of it. Necatibey Cadessi, as he thought. Then his fingers grip white on the age-silvered balcony rail. The air above Adem Dede Square fills with grainy motion, as if from a dust dervish or a plague of locusts. The flock of insect-sized swarmbots barrels through the middle air, flowing around streetlights and electricity cables, channelled into a stream of furious motion by the close-pressing apartment blocks. Can beats his fists on the rail in excitement. Every nine-year-old-boy loves bots. Right in front of his eyes they turn in mid-air and pour down steep Vermilion-Maker Lane like water over rocks. In the open sky above the rooftops, the dancing-hall of storks, the wind would overwhelm their nano-fan engines and disperse them like dust. Can finds flocks within flocking, flows within flows, strange currents, fractal forms, self-organizing entities. Mr Ferentinou has taught him to see the blood beneath the world's skin: the simple rules of the very small that build into the seeming complexity of the great.

'Monkey Monkey Monkey!' Can Durukan shouts as the tail end of the swarm vanishes around the twists and staggers of Vermilion-Maker Lane. 'After them!'

A stir in the still-shadowed corners of the dining room, a scurrying in the intricate woodwork of the terrace screen. From nooks and crevices the machines come clambering, scampering, rolling. Tumbling balls fuse into scuttling crabs; many-limbed climbing things link and twist into arms. Piece by piece the disparate units self-assemble until the last section locks and a plastic monkey leaps up

on to the rail, clinging with hands and feet and prehensile tail, and turns its sensor-dotted head on its master.

Can pulls the smartsilk computer out of his pocket, unfolds it and opens the haptic field. He flexes a finger. The robot monkey twitches alert. Can points and it is off in a thrilling spring up on to the power line and a hand-and-foot gallop over the street to a coiled jump to the balcony opposite where the Georgian woman insists on hanging her underwear out to dry. Up up and up again. Can sees it perched on the parapet, a shadow against the sky.

Can's toy BitBots cannot compare to the police machines that flocked past him but Mr Ferentinou has pushed them far beyond the manufacturer's specifications. Can clicks the Monkey icon. Bird, Snake, Rat and Monkey are the four manifestations of his BitBots. Between their four elements, they create the city that is barred to Can. He sees through their eyes. Can giggles in excitement as he falls in behind Monkey's many sensors and careers across rooftops, weaves through mazes of aerial and cable, leaps the thrilling gaps between close-shouldering konaks. By map and the point-of-view camera link Can steers his eyes down through the roofs of crumbling old Eskiköy. Only a boy could do it. He is part superhero, part extreme-sports free-runner, part city-racer, part ninja. It is the greatest computer game. Parapet to parapet to pole to hands feet and tail scramble down the plastic sign of the Allianz Insurance. Can Durukan arrives at the scene of the blast, clinging upside down to the bottom of a giant letter I.

It disappoints. It is not a very big explosion. There are ambulances and fire trucks and police cars with flashing lights and news crews arriving by the minute but the tram hardly looks damaged at all. Can scans the crowd. Faces cameras faces cameras. A face he recognizes among the onlookers; that rat-faced guy who has moved into the empty quarter of the old house; the one with the brother who is some kind of street judge. At first Can resented their squatting. The deserted rooms filled with dust and pigeon shit were his undiscovered country. He had thought of sending Monkey – the only one of his

agents with hands – to move things around, pretend to be the ghosts of old unquiet dervishes– but Rat-Face might lay a trap for mischievous Monkey and capture him before he could split into his separate units and slip away. Observation was the game.

Rat-Face is trying to slip away. He almost starts a fight with a big man in a white shirt. What is he doing now? He looks as if he's seen a ghost. Now he's barging his way through the crowd. If the Scene-of-Crime bots see him they'll needle him with their stings. That would be exciting. Can still wishes ill on Rat-Face and his kadı brother, defilers of his sacred space. No, he's made it out.

Monkey uncurls his tail from the stanchion and prepares to swing back up into the rooftops. Nothing decent to post online. Then Can notices a glint of movement in the Commerzbank sign on the building to the left. There's something in there. Monkey swivels his sensor-studded head and zooms in. Click click click. Movement, a glitter of plastic. Then the disparate motions come together. Can holds his breath. He looks close up into the face of another many-eyed monkey bot. And as he stares the head turns, the smart-plastic camera eyes bulge and focus and stare back.

The confectioner Lefteres used to say that all the Greeks in Eskiköy could fit into one teashop. Now they fit around one table.

'Here he comes now.'

Georgios Ferentinou waddles across Adem Dede Square. *Square* is too grand for what is little more than a widening of the street that runs past the Mevlevi tekke. An old public fountain stands in a niche in a wall, dry longer than any Eskiköyu's memory. Room enough for two çayhanes, Aydin's kiosk on the corner of Stolen Chicken Lane with its spectacular display of Russian porn clothes-pegged to the bottom of the canopy, Arslan's NanoMart, the Improving Bookstore that specializes in colourful publications for elementary schoolchildren, and That Woman's Art Shop. Aydin the pornographer takes his morning tea in the Fethi Bey çayhane, on the insalubrious staircase on the derelict side of the dervish

house. Adem Dede Square is small enough for two teashops but big enough for rivalries.

'Hot,' Georgios Ferentinou wheezes. He fans himself with a laminated menu. The order is immutable as the stones of Aghia Sofia but Bülent the çayhane owner always lays out the menus. That cheap bastard Aykut across the square never takes that trouble. 'Again.' He sweats freely. Georgios Ferentinou is a fat bulb of a man, balanced on tiny, dancer's feet so that he seems permanently on the teeter-totter. None of his çayhane compatriots have ever seen him in anything lesser than the high-waisted trousers and the white linen jacket he wears today. A hat perhaps, in the highest of summers, like the terrible Twenty Two and when the sun gets low and shines through the slot of sky along Vermilion-Maker Lane, a pair of tiny, round dark glasses that turn his eyes into two black raisins. On those increasingly rare days when snow falls in Adem Dede Square and the tea-drinkers are driven inside behind breath-steamed windows, a red woollen scarf and a great black coat like some old Crimean trader from the last days of the empire.

'Hot as hell,' Constantin agrees. 'Already.'

'We've saved you a leg.' Lefteres pushes a plate across the small café table. Upon it a marzipan lamb lies slaughtered, its body broken. Delicate red frosting crosses adorn its grainy, yellow flanks. For over one hundred and fifty years since they arrived from Salonika into the capital of the empire, the family Lefteres made marzipan Paschal lambs for the Christians of Constantinople. Lambs for Easter, crystallized fruit made lustrous with edible gold and silver foils, the gifts of the Magi, for Christmas. Muslims were not ignored by the Lefteres: sesame candies and brittle sugary confection dishes for Sweet Bayram at the end of Ramazan. Boxes of special lokum and pistachio brittles for wedding calls and sweetening conversations. Family Lefteres sold the shop before the end of the century but the last of the line still makes his sweet lambs and jewelled fruit, his Bayram delights for Adem Dede Square. And he is still known as Lefteres the Confectioner.

Bülent sets down Georgios Ferentinou's invariable glass of apple tea.

'Here's the Father now,' he says. The last of the four old Greeks of Aden Dede Square sets himself down heavily in his ordained seat beside Georgios Ferentinou.

'God save all here.' Father Ioannis stretches his legs painfully out under the table. 'God damn my knees.' Without a word Bülent sets down his linden tea in its delicate tulip glass. Father Ioannis takes a sip. 'Ah. Great. Bastards have been at it again.'

'What are they doing this time?' Bülent asks.

'Someone slopped a bucket of piss into the porch. Half of it ran under the door into the sanctuary. I've been up since four trying to scrub it all off. Bastards. What I can't figure is, they must have been storing it up for days. All those teenagers standing around pissing in a bucket and giggling to themselves.'

'This is assuming,' says the most quiet of the Adem Dede çayhane divan, 'that it was actually human urine. It could have been some large animal.'

'In the middle of this city?' says Father Ioannis. 'Anyway, God and his Mother preserve me, I know what human piss smells like.'

Constantin the Alexandrian shrugs and examines the cigarette burning close to his yellow fingertips.

'It's going to take a lot of incense to get rid of the stink before Easter and who's going to pay for that?' Father Ioannis grumbles. 'I can't even get the Patriarchate to fix that tile on the roof.'

Georgios Ferentinou thinks this Easter he might visit the shrine of Aghia Panteleimon. He has no belief; faith is beneath his dignity but he enjoys the designed madness of religion. The minuscule church is tucked away down an alley off an alley off an alley. Older than any name in Eskiköy, Aghia Panteleimon let the district grow up around it like a fruit around a seed. It houses the sword that bent rather than behead its eponymous martyr (until he so decided) and a fine collection of icons of its patron saint, some in the alternate, Russian, style, with his hands nailed to his head. The woman who

owns the art gallery in the former dancing hall has made Father Ioannis a fine offer for his macabre icons. They are not his to sell. If he does go this Easter, Georgios Ferentinou knows he may well be the only attendee. Perhaps a couple of old widows, come from Christ knows where in their raven black. Even before the ethnic cleansing of 1955 the tide of faith had ebbed from Eskiköy. Yet lately he has sensed it stealing back in little seepings and runnels, feeling its way over the cobbles and around the lintel stones. It's a more strident faith than either that of Aghia Panteleimon or the Mevlevi Order. It has an easterly aspect. It's rawer, younger, more impatient, more confident.

'It's the heat I say, the heat,' says Lefteres the Confectioner. 'Makes them fighting mad.'

'And the football,' Bülent adds. 'There'll be some English fan stabbed before the end of the week. Heat and football.'

The Greeks of the Adem Dede teahouse nod and murmur their agreement.

'So have you finished that lampoon then?' Father Ioannis asks.

Lefteres unfolds a sheet of A4 and slides it to the centre of the table. It is blank white.

'I have decided not to do this one.'

Lefteres, master of sugar and succulence, paschal lambs and gilded fruit, is the resident Lampoonist of Eskiköy. A pestering boyfriend, an unrecovered debt, unwelcome big beats or somebody fly-tipping in your dumpster: go to Lefteres at the Adem Dede çayhane. Pay him what he asks. It will not be cheap. Quality is never cheap. But the very next morning Eskiköy will wake to find a single sheet of A4, always handwritten, thumb-tacked to the offending door, gaffer-taped to a window, gunged to the windscreen of a parked car. In the best Turkish verse and scansion and the highest of style, every vice is listed and shamed, every personal attribute ridiculed. Every intimate detail is excoriated. Lefteres' research is immaculate. It works without fail. The crowd at the door is an ancient and powerful sanction. Word of a new lampoon travels fast. People come from far

beyond Eskiköy to read and marvel. There are international websites dedicated to the lampoons of Lefteres the Confectioner of Eskiköy.

'Have you told Sibel Hanım?' Georgios Ferentinou says.

'I have indeed,' Lefteres says. 'She wasn't happy. But I told her that part of my commission is that I must be absolutely satisfied myself that there is just cause as well as clear social need. That's always been the case. Always. The woman is not a prostitute. Simple as that. Georgian she may be but that doesn't make her a prostitute.'

Since the Caucasus and central Asia found that the front door to Europe now opened on to theirs, Georgians, Armenians, Azeris, Ukrainians, workers from as far as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Syrians, Lebanese, Iranians, Kurds in their tens of thousand have flooded across Anatolia, the buckle strapped across the girth of great Eurasia, Istanbul the pin. And that is how Georgios knows Lefteres' reasons for not accepting the lampoon. Istanbul was a city of peoples before and knows it shall be again, a true cosmopolis. The time of the Turk is ending. Georgians, Greeks: sojourners alike.

'Here, do you know who I saw yesterday on Güneşli Sok?' Constantin asks. 'Ariana Sinanidis.'

'How long is it since she went to Greece?' asks Lefteres.

'Forty-seven years,' says Georgios Ferentinou. 'What's she doing back here?'

'Either a will or a property dispute. What else does anyone come back for?' Constantin says.

'I haven't heard of any deaths,' Father Ioannis says. In as small and intimate a community as the Greeks of Istanbul, every death is a small holocaust. Then the bomb goes off. The sound of the explosion echoes flatly, flappingly from the house fronts. It is a little blast, barely distinguishable from the growl of morning traffic, but the four men at the table look up.

'How far was that?'

'Under a kilometre, I'd say.'

'Well under a kilo. It might well have been just the detonator.'

'Whereabouts would you say?'

'I would guess down towards Tophane Meydanı.'

'No guesses. This is an exact science.'

Constantin taps up news feeds on the smartpaper lying among the tea glasses and coffee cups.

'Necatibey Cadessi. Tram bomb,' Constantin says.

Behind the counter, Bülent clenches a fist.

'Yes!'

'Bastard!' says Lefteres. 'What's he made now?'

Georgios Ferentinou pulls out his ceptep. His thumb moves unswervingly over the icons.

'The Terror Market is up twenty points.'

'Lord Jesus Son of God have mercy on us,' says Father Ioannis. His fingers tie a knot on his prayer rope.

'Breakfast is on the house then,' says Bülent.

Georgios Ferentinou never saw economics as the Dismal Science. To him it is applied psychology, the most human of sciences. There are profound human truths in the romance between want and aversion; delicate beauties in the meshing intricacies of complex financial instruments as precise and jewelled as any Isfahan miniature.The blind wisdom of the mass still amazes him as it did when he first discovered it in a jar of plushy toys. The jar had sat on the desk of Göksel Hanım, his morning-school teacher. She had brought it back from a visit to her sister in Fort Lauderdale. Seduced by the Mouse, she had gone on a plushy spree across Disneyworld. Goofies and Mickies, Plutos and Stitches and little Simbas were packed together like pickles, eyes gazing out at eight-year-old Georgios Ferentinou. Çiftçi, Göksel Hanım had insisted on calling him. A Turkish transliteration of his name. Çiftçi had found the compressed figures strangely attractive. It would be quite good, he thought, to be squeezed into a jar full of other soft bodies.

'Guess how many there are,' Göksel Hanım said to her class, 'and you will win them.'

Çiftçi was lazy. He was told that every day by Göksel Hanım. Lazy and dull. He wanted the bodies in the jar so he did what any

lazy and dull boy would. He asked his classmates. Their answers ranged for fifteen to fifty. Dull, lazy and reluctant to commit to decisions, Çiftçi added the answers and divided them by the number of pupils in the class, rounding up for luck.

'Thirty-seven,' he said confidently to Göksel Hanım. Thirty-seven there were, exactly. Göksel Hanım gave him the jar grudgingly. He stared at it for months, on his bedside table, enjoying their captivity. Then one day his mother had taken them away to clean them. She returned them all to their confinement but damp had got in and within two weeks they were green and bad-smelling and were thrown out. It was his first exposure to the power of aggregation. The mass decides.

There is a market for anything. Debts. Carbon pollution. The value of future orange harvests in Brazil and gas output in the Ukraine. Telecommunications bandwidth. Weather insurance. Buy low, sell high. Self-interest is the engine; aggregation, like the class of '71, the gear-train. Georgios Ferentinou has merely extended the free market principle to terrorism.

The market is played this way. A network of a thousand traders is strung across Istanbul. They range from economics students to schoolchildren and their mothers to real traders on the Stamboul Carbon Bourse. All night AI sift the news networks – those deep channels that Georgios Ferentinou took with him when he left academia, and less exalted sources like chatrooms, forums and social and political networking sites. By dawn they have drawn up a long list of potential future news. Georgios Ferentinou's first task of the day, even before he takes his breakfast tea at the Adem Dede tea-house, is to draw up that day's list of tradable contracts in his pyjamas and slippers. By the time he shuffles across the square to his table, the offers are out across the city like soft-gliding storks and the bids are coming in. I'll buy twenty contracts at a settlement price of one hundred on Galatasaray beating the Arsenal two one on Thursday. How much do you want to pay for them? That depends on how likely you think it is that Galatasaray will beat Arsenal two one.

This is the easiest future contract, a straight sporting bet. There is a clear termination point at which the contract is fulfilled – the sound of the referee's final whistle in the Galatasaray Stadium – and a simple pay-out. All you have to do is decide how much you will buy that pay-out for, and for others to decide how much they will pay to buy that contract off you. All trading is betting.

How much would you pay for a contract with a settlement of one hundred on a bet that the price of gas will rise by fifteen per cent by close of trade next Monday? Thirty? Fifty, for a hundred pay-out? What if you see the price rising on the Carbon Bourse? Seventy, eighty? Turn those prices into percentages and you have a probability; you have a prediction of future news.

Thirty, fifty, one hundred, what are these? Kudos: the artificial currency of Georgios Ferentinou's Terror Market. A light, odourless virtual money, but not without value. Kudos are not points in a game. They can be exchanged for other virtual-world or social networking or online-game currencies, some of which can be converted up into real world, pocketable cash. They can be traded. That is another one of Georgios Ferentinou's behavioural economics experiments. Kudos is worth something. Georgios Ferentinou understands there is no market without real gain, and the possibility of real loss. The money makes it work.

Here's another contract. Settlement price one hundred kudos. There will be a suicide strike on Istanbul public transport on a major arterial during the current heatwave. Do you buy it?

Georgios Ferentinou checks the closing price. Eighty-three kudos. High, given the plethora of speculative factors: the time since the bombing at the bus station; Ankara's announcement of a clamp-down on political organizations opposed to the national secular agenda; the possibility that the heatwave might break in glorious lightning among the minarets of Istanbul. Then he tracks the price since the contract was offered. It has risen as steadily as the thermometer. This is the miracle of the Terror Market. Buying and selling, petty greed, are more powerful prophets than the experts and artificial

intelligence models of the National MIT Security Service. Complex behaviour from simple processes.

The woman who runs the religious art shop in the bottom of the dervish house crosses the square. She squats down to unlock the security shutter. Her heels come a little off the ground as she balances on the balls of her feet. She wears good boots and patterned tights, a smart skirt not too short, a well-cut jacket. Hot for this weather but stylish. Georgios Ferentinou watches her run up the shutter with a rolling clatter. Such unconscious ease costs gym fees. Her ceptep rings, the calltone a spray of silvery sitar music. Georgios Ferentinou looks away with a small grimace of regret. He was admired once too. A disturbance in the air draws his eyes up, a shiver like heat haze, a plague of tiny mites, the visual equivalent of the glittering glissando of the art-shop woman's calltone.

The swarm of gnat-sized machines swirls in the choked air of Adem Dede. Even the boy bringing the sesame-dusted simits from Aydin's kiosk looks up. Then the cloud of nanorobots pours down Vermilion-Maker Lane like water over a weir, following the stepped terrain beneath them, flowing around the schoolchildren, the women, old Sibel Hanım labouring up and down the steps. Follow the flock. Avoid near neighbours but try to maintain an equal distance from them. Cohesion, alignment, separation. Three rudimentary rules; the well of complex liquid beauty.

In the corner of his vision Georgios Ferentinou glimpses the little monkey-bot go helter-skelter across the electricity line and jump to the offending Georgian woman's balcony. *A strange world that boy inhabits*, he thinks. A world of whispers, of distant tintinnabulations on the edge of hearing, like angel voices. But is it any stranger than four old Greeks, flotsam adrift for decades in the crash and suck of history, gathering over tea and doughnuts to divine the future?

And Ariana is back. Almost half a century and she is in Eskiköy. No deal, no play of trades and future outcomes could have predicted that. Ariana is back and nothing is safe now.

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