

## **At the Marketplace**

**Written by Sevim Ak**

It was a warm spring morning. I picked up my camera and walked down the street. It was Wednesday, market day in our neighbourhood.

5 I dashed into the marketplace hoping to take some interesting pictures. There was a young man wearing a dress over his trousers, making the women laugh. He was up on the table shouting:

“Ladies and gentlemen... Make your neighbours jealous...Wear a new dress everyday...”

As I was about to take his picture, he hid his made-up face with his hands.

10 “Don’t take my picture, bro” he said. ” I don’t want to be in the newspapers...My dad back in the village might see me dressed like this. I don’t want him to say “My son goes to the city...and now look at the state of him!!”

It was very crowded. A woman wanted to exchange the dress that she had bought last week. It was too big for her. She wanted me to help her as she couldn’t make herself heard.

15 The young man said,

“If you really want to photograph me, you can take my picture from behind. Just don’t show my face.”

At that point, someone poked me. I turned around; I caught the eye of a dark skinned, tall, skinny boy who was standing behind a table selling scrap.

20 “Are you a journalist?” he asked.” My brother has gone to eat something. I’m taking his place. If you have to ask any questions, ask me.”

Apparently, everyone in his family was working as a scrap dealer. They collected junk material from rubbish tips, workplaces and factories.

25 “My brother and I are responsible for collecting junk from three streets in this neighbourhood. No one else would dare touch our rubbish bins.

“How can you make money from things which people have thrown out?” I asked. “Some of these things are broken!” He looked astonished.

“You have no idea what people throw out! ... Hair driers, cassette players, radios, mobile phones, antique chandeliers, sofas ... Everything you can think of...My father got a 2,000 lira reward the other day. A woman had her bag snatched by thieves...They took the 200 lira from her bag then threw it in a rubbish bin.

My dad found the bag and got in touch with the woman. It turns out she had some really important documents in her bag“.

35 A boy with a dark blue hat was listening to us. His cheeks were sweaty, his eyes blue. He was selling onions, parsley, dill...When I turned to face him with my camera he suddenly became very shy.

“Please bro” he said. “I’ve been working under the sun and have freckles all over my face. Please, don’t take my picture.”

He hid his calloused hands in his pockets.

40 “Cutting onions has ruined my hands. We lost a lot of money over the last two years from onions but this year’s onion harvest is great. I’m not going to stay here doing this though. When school opens again, I’m going back to the city. Then I can forget all this.”

Someone handed me a cup of tea. It was the young man wearing a woman’s dress and makeup.

45 “No need to pay. The tea’s on me” he said.

He bent down to whisper in my ear speaking so softly that only the two of us could hear:

“Sorry for what I said just now... I’ve had a difficult life... I dropped out of school when I was in the fifth grade... My dad made me work as a shepherd during the summer holidays.

50 I had to look after a flock of sheep in the mountains alone and sleep outside at night...The worst part came later though...It turns out my dad had promised some guy. He came to the hill where I was staying one night and handed me a gun ... He wanted me to get mixed up in some blood feud...I ran away from home and came to this city...I found jobs at different marketplaces... This isn’t my stand I just work here... I put on this show to make some money...putting on these clothes...putting on makeup...dancing. All the time I’m  
55 scared stiff knowing that both my dad and the guy with the gun are following me... You understand why I’m scared, right bro?”

I nodded my head while listening... The tea was already cold.

60 The boy selling the onions poked the boy wearing a dress and made a sign with his hands.

The young man blushed and quietly moved away too embarrassed to look me in the face.

A huge man wearing a black jacket smiled at the boy wearing the dress. The man smoothed down the dress for the boy and helped him up on to the counter.

65 “That’s the onion seller’s father“, said the scrap dealer.” They walk around together every Sunday...Father and son...They do good business working like this...”

I smiled, I couldn’t drink my tea. I just left everything there and walked off towards the park to take photos of the goslings waddling around the pool side.