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ADMISSION CARD

Exiled

At the very moment when I would take a second...no, no, actually just when it would occur to me that I am at a place where many but many many people would die to be...at the very moment when I would humbly appreciate my existence at a place, when I would gratefully realize how lucky I had been to be there, it wouldn't take long at all before I would be stricken down by a blow of misfortune, bad treatment, and a cruel rejection. And I would be forced to think, *"Is something trying to exile me? Exile me to a place where I tried so hard to escape from? To a place where I would die of embarrassment if returned? What's the conspiracy here? Why can't I take a moment to appreciate my own realization that I'm at a place where I'm content to be?"*

And no, goddamn it, I have no secret self-sabotaging wishes. I don't desire to be exiled at the very moment when I gratefully sigh and say thank you. I'm familiar with that shallow psychoanalytic explanation, which would assert, after having read the paragraph above, *"You have self-sabotaging tendencies. It is a disorder that stems from your troubled childhood. You are trying to punish you father -or whomever was the figure of authority at home for you- by avoiding success; by avoiding to be stable and constant; by sabotaging your own achievements. Just when you realize that you are about to be successful, you get panicked and try your best to ruin what you had accomplished hitherto."*

Oink, oink...wrong diagnosis. When I realize that I'm at a place where at one point I had wished to be and that wish came true, I just look up to the sky and heartily thank, feeling indebted. I say, *"Thank you,"* like a nice guy, like a decent human-being. *"I'm humbly*

obliged to you!" I say. Yes, I do. And at that very moment, I feel a tart slap crash at my neck, underneath my skull and the whole world fades to black with quickly extinguishing fireworks before my eyes.

One morning I wake up, for example, and decide to stay in the bad. Just to relish laziness for once. I feel the cold in the exterior of my blanket and wrap it even tighter around me. I put my bare arm out so that I could still feel the cold outside while I cozy up in the warmth inside; feeling joyfully safe and comfortable. I rub my feet to the clean sheets covering the mattress and my legs to the blanket. I see a bright sky, thin clouds and indifferently happy leaves on the branches that slightly sway in the morning breeze outside of my window. And I see the roofs of neighboring houses. They look adorable. They look familiar and friendly. I warmheartedly embrace everything that surrounds me. Everything seems just perfect. I gratefully realize: I live in a house that I had always envied to live. A modest, little house. Old but definitely habitable and with affordable rent. There are millions of people out there who desperately desire to be in a place like here. I am at a place where I can purely be proud of. I can go to other places, other countries, and tell my friends that I live in a house where the bedroom window overlooks a charming little street with tall trees on. I have a fairly big patch of sky in my window. The kitchen is large and inspiring. I can confidently tell other people to come and see my place, come and stay at my place. Well, it's actually my sister's and her husband's place but her husband is hardly there. Especially after they decided to appear as separated to the office of welfare in order to receive more aid in my sister's name. And the last three months he's been dwelling in Edinburgh in pursuit of a small business opportunity; venturing to open an ethnic fast food joint. My sister is thinking of joining him there soon. Good place to raise kids, they say. After they are gone, probably this place will be under my name. Great location, it's EC: East Central London. Anyway, my sister wouldn't mind if I had guests at this place whether under my name or not. I can tell other people, *"Please be guests at my place. Days, weeks, if you'd like!"*

But as soon as I'm done with my ever-grateful thoughts, which usually last only seconds, things instantaneously start to work contrary to what I would be grateful for. Things begin to crumble away. Things begin to either deteriorate or work against me. My sister becomes hostile towards me. She becomes intrusive, imposing, unnerving, you name it... Even my nieces, who usually adore me, begin throwing broken toys at me. The little one hatefully bit the skin of my wrist's inside the other day. It hurt like hell and I hurled her on the couch. My sister walked in just then and we began a bitter dispute that lasted three days with sour faces. I would fling myself out of that horrible house early in the mornings and dread to come back at nights during such days.

Cursed be the moments of gratitude!

Sick

I'm sick. I'm only 24 and I'm alarmingly sick. I have many health problems, the origins of which I can't seem to relate to anywhere identifiable. I had never guessed that I would be 24 this quickly and grown to be such a sick man. All my inner organs are troubled with one or the other problem. My skin has been tearsomely itchy for months due to a fungal disease. My teeth have begun to abandon their caves. My penis seems to be in ill-humor most of the times and won't stand up for itself. I have chronic diarrhea that has been storming my intestines since before my military service, during which it had gotten worse. It sounds like the connection between my nose, mouth and lungs have been blocked by a thick mist. At nights, I don't breathe, I hiss, huff, and puff. It pains me whenever I take a piss, something related to my kidneys, I suspect. My loins are constantly sore.

Most embarrassing of all, of course, is my inability to maintain an erection long enough to perform a thorough sexual activity. I love making love and I have sexually very active inner world. There were more then several times, however, my penis softened right in the middle of lovemaking. Even my partners felt sorry for me. They said, "*I'm sorry, love!*"

We'll do it later." And they asked, "*Do you have a psychological problem, dear?*", thinking that it would be more sensitive and polite to put it this way than saying that there is a physiological disfunctioning with me and perhaps even a sexually transmittable disease. It makes me incompetent and unconfident when talking with women. There is always a voice in my head warning me that it's all futile. What good will it be even if she is in the bed with me? This inconvenient thought comes up even when I'm talking to a woman whom I would never try to get into bed with. It's something so close to your ego and the image that you've been taught to give, I suppose.

And I have asthma. The air has become a heavy material that I have to work to shuffle into my lungs since the military service. Oh, yes, I had obligatorily done the military service in Turkey. I was the only Kurd serving in the section. A soldier in the commando unit, fighting against his own people right in the middle of the war zone. "*Life has some fucked up sense of humor, let me tell you*", used to say one of the lieutenants. He was right, goddamned asshole. Anywho, I can't freely breath now. Especially at night. I already have a slight case of insomnia and now with my severe asthma, many a nights I have the hardest time to fall asleep and when I do, I often wake up in the dark of night almost suffocated and in sweat. Probably even neighbors can hear my hissings and whistlings while my weak lungs distressedly labor to process whatever air they had received. And because I can't breathe a lung-full of air every time I inhale and exhale, I walk around tired and fuzzy most of the times. A blurry, thick cloud follows my head everywhere and I can't think clearly. And lately I realized that I get frustrated very easily. I get irritated and angry. I loose my patience quickly whenever anything seems to be in my way. Several times I angrily pushed old ladies out of my way in the bus fearing that I wouldn't reach the door before the driver closed them and drove off. Big deal! What a brute I was. I could probably have reached the door on time or I could have shouted, "*Still getting off!*" Or big deal if I got off at the next stop, which is only about 3 minutes away from the previous one and I'm usually not in a rush. I'm

currently unemployed. I almost destroyed my remote control the other day. It wouldn't work. I pressed the buttons but it wouldn't change the channels nor would it increase and decrease the volume. The battery was new, the TV was new, the remote control itself was new. I could not figure out what was wrong with the damn thing and I pressed it harder and harsher and I finally, in utter frustration, flung it against the wall as if the apparatus would get a grip on itself and remember what it was supposed to do, as if it would feel bad for what frustration it had caused me. As if it would rearrange its scrambled numbers and say, "I'm sorry, master, I guess I was being too much again tonight." I threw it to the hard wall and it split open to two pieces. Luckily it could be taped. Afterward it was still the same. All I had to do was to buy another remote control with only £5. I could buy it; I had the time and money for it. It was my own fault; the result of my own laziness and slackness that made me come home flabbily. And every night I arrived at the door, I would realize that I had forgotten to buy something or the other; the electric chip, the video tape, the telephone card, red pepper, cucumber, yogurt...something.

During last few months I've been tearing my own skin like an ancient piece of cloth because of this itch that has been so indiscreetly molesting me. It has spread all over my body since the beginning and the ointments that I got from the pharmacy did not do any good, despite the generous amount I've been applying. I get the medication free. I'm an applicant for political asylum and on welfare. No jobs until your application is approved. They give you weekly vouchers. And health care is free. That's one of the up sides of being a political asylum applicant in England - they keep calling this country United Kingdom but I haven't still figured out why: Full coverage of health care. At this point it's almost as useless as junk mail, though. I can get a doctor's appointment as many times as I want but after a certain point it becomes pointless to go to those doctors at my district's clinic and in a way counter-productive too. In the beginning I claimed that they had tortured me while in Turkey and that it had many very negative after-effects on my psyche. I said I could not live

in that country anymore and I don't want to go back to there. They will persecute me if I return. I said I still have nightmares. So, they gave me pills. I don't know why exactly but I tried to be a good boy and regularly took those pills for a while. Maybe I felt the agents and CCTVs of Home Office were constantly and secretly monitoring me. Maybe I had begun to believe my own lies. I could sleep 13 hours straight and walk around like Garfield the cat while I used to take them.

Now, whenever I go to the doctor I have to be careful not to contradict anything that I had said in the beginning up to now. They are all recorded in the log that they keep on their computers. They know exactly when I had come to the clinic and complained about what. And in the bases of every diagnosis that they make there is my bleak history of detentions, tortures, threats of death, hiding from the political police and living my life on a general feeling of apprehension and uncertainty. It still haunts me. I wake up with nightmares. That's what I had said in my statement to the Secretary of Home Office when I had applied for political asylum 9 months ago and to the doctors when I was sent to. With my solicitor, we worked out a scheme that seemed consistent, a scheme that would form a substantial and factual base for my case. And now the psychological disturbances that I claimed to have been experiencing are haunting me and at this point I actually experience them. I'm sick and I wake up with nightmares.

Poor

I came poor to this world, lived poorly for the past 24 years and will, most probably, remain poor until it's too late. Until the end of everything. And I'm not necessarily talking about death when I say, "*Until it's too late.*" I'm talking about being poor until you're too old when even if you suddenly receive tons of money you probably won't know how to enjoy the wealth that you have just been laid upon, being too afraid to spend any of it, retaining your hand from going to your wallet anytime you want to buy something because

you just feel like it, considering them unworthy, unnecessary and over-priced. Really, how many generous old people have you known compared to the number of petty, stingy old ladies and old men? How many old people have you known who are relaxed and happy about spending money; either out of necessity or out of pleasure? Let me tell you, there is something unnatural, undialectic about old people. You tell a young man or woman that they've got only about 4 more years to live and you get stories of going to most adventuresome road trips, moving to French Riviera and everyday savoring sun, wine, and people, going to Greece and pressing olives and grapes beneath your bare feet, going to a monastery in Nepal and reaching nirvana... In either case, you hear a story that shrinks their bank and credit card accounts below zero and their account statements are left unanswered. Remind an old lady or old men the same thing; they grouchily complain about how high the price of coal is nowadays.

Ah, I strayed from the topic again. I was talking about myself. So I'm poor and I am to accept whatever I am. I am to accept and be at peace with a reality that all the dreams in the movies tell me not to. You see, all the stories that we hear tell us that it's all about heroes and it's all about being a hero, being the admired one, being the one whom everybody talks about, adopts as life-models and detaches from their ordinary lives. Yes, there is something out of joint about the whole thing. First of all there is nothing ordinary about the stories and that's inarguably accepted by everyone as if a law of nature. And I resent both the fact that there is nothing ordinary about the stories and the fact that people accept it as it is. If you use this point critiquing a movie, for instance, if you say, "*As usual, there is nothing ordinary about the story in this movie...*" they will abruptly and self-assuredly answer, as if I'm arguing about 1×1 not being equal to 1 and they are the ones who understandingly and patiently point the mathematical sign "x" for me, "*Yeah but then it wouldn't have been a story, would it?*" And I am to accept it, be at peace with it, "*Ah, of course, that's why it's a story.*"

I am poor and not a hero. And I am to accept it. I may be told, *“That’s what many people are and you should accept it and that’s the basic step towards changing the course of your life, if you want to, of course.”* Then again, it’s not all that simple, is it? Common now, let’s be honest, as they say in my country: We are the forty sisters here and we all know each other. A saying that is used whenever someone tries to pull some bullshit, self-deceivingly thinking that he is so clever. The sentence above is full of shit and we all know it. I mean this is not an agreement between me and someone who makes people rich and affluent. It’s not a set up where he comes and asks me, as a step that is an initial part of the contract, *“Have you accepted your reality, dear poor sir?”* And if my answer is, *“Yes, Sir, I have heartily accepted my reality.”* Then he gives me the admission card, which gives me the full access to the rich club. No, it doesn’t happen quite that way. When I am poor and accept it, it means I am still in agreement with a still valid contract that I don’t remember signing or am I even sure whether I ever had or not. And this mystery contract -to the terms of which I still am to abide for reasons that are still unclear to me- requires me to stay outside of the periphery of a great many things besides money.

I, somewhat choiselessly, stay away from most of the beautiful, attractive, and sophisticated things in life, including, of course, beautiful women and men and horses and etc. As if a sophisticated, well-groomed, rich lady is “N” and I’m “N”, too, and we stubbornly refuse to get near each other. Except, however, I’m also pulled towards her magnetic field with a power outside the control of my will. My explanation is that I have both “N” and “S” nodes simultaneously present in me, whereas that lady is pure “N” with only a slight trace of “S”, unnoticeably slight trace but sufficient to remind her, a trick of collective unconscious I imagine, of potential misery of being a pure “S” node. Now, the contract that I had aforementioned recognizes and gives legitimate manifestation priority only to my “N” node, without ever eliminating my “S” node, so that at least I could be released of its torturous properties in the presence of that lady’s “N” node, and quite

controversially assigns it, my “S” node, as the symbol of my defining qualities: I am poor and I am not a hero... I strongly suspect that the people or the forces who wrought out our contract never really had such intentions as eliminating my “S” node or creating an environment where everybody’s “N” and “S” nodes would live together in harmony. No, for some malicious reason it seemed much easier for them to push forth the contract this way: I will be desperately attracted to that sophisticated lady by the natural drive of my “S” node but I will obey the magnetic field of my “N” node, which is pushed away by the pure “N” sophisticated lady. She will not, unless an act of a cosmic miracle gets involved, cultivate any interest in herself towards me even if I’m masterfully, gracefully juggling my balls in front of her, while she is sipping her superior quality hot chocolate out of that fancy porcelain cup at the patio of an upscale café. I’ll perhaps be an amusement to her only for couple minutes but she won’t, without that miracle, come up to me, as she would to a man who is in her circle already, by birth most likely, and say, *“Oh, how fascinating is that thing you are doing. You must teach me how to do it one day, my dear sir. And what handsome, talented hands, and marvelous balls you have. Let me, please, hold them in my palms. Ah, how honorable.”* Well, she can’t do that. I don’t blame her. It’s not in her contract to behave that way towards me. There are just too many and too obvious obstacles before her to stop her from even thinking of behaving so with me. With what face and justification she is going to introduce me to her other sophisticated gentlemen and lady friends at a lavish, delicate dinner table, where I won’t even know how to eat half of the food that will be brought out by elegantly dressed waiters. I still don’t know how to eat with forks and knives at the same time. My bites are always embarrassingly too big. When I put food in my mouth, they make my both cheeks big, round and swollen. Like the chin of that tropical frog you see in nature documentaries. I can’t change it. It’s a habit of a way long time. I wasn’t taught of such manners as eating with small bites when I was a child. And when I used to work in fashion

ateliers as the steam-presser, I just worsened the way I ate, rushing at every breakfast and lunch meals in order to get back to work.

I've always stayed away from those decent, respectable, well-paying jobs. Never bothered to apply for them. Partly because I had also stayed away from schools or was never really put near one after I dropped out of secondary school in my first year when my mother got severely ill and had to have that expansive operation, which had to be repeated twice. I was 12 and I got a job in a sweatshop and stayed away from those highly regarded jobs ever since. I think I stayed away from such jobs mostly because I never knew whether I was allowed to break or modify or exchange that contract of mine or not. And even if I was, I didn't know how to. I don't know how not to be poor. You know, sometimes it is not only about being in the circle as an attractive, sophisticated lady.

The other day I mistakenly took #19 instead of #55. When I realized that I had gotten on the wrong bus, I didn't care to get off and go back. There were these three Eastern European girls on the same bus. They kept smiling and giggling at me. Not mockingly and not loudly either. They were just being silly and friendly and I was smiling back at them. I can be very charming at times. As typical of me in such situations, I did not make any attempt to talk with them although I was burningly, accursedly desiring to hang out with them just for the sake of being within the same aura as they. That was sexy and sexual enough for me. I just charmingly smiled back at them and left it there. Soon the girls got off the bus, all in good humor and very playfully. I did not pursue after their irresistible appeal. Not only because I did not speak any English or whatever language they were speaking in and I didn't want to ridicule myself but also I was in absolute amazement at the neighborhoods that the line #19 was going through. I had never before taken this line and never knew that such neighborhoods, such impressive houses, hotels, shops and other splendid architectures existed in London, although I've been in this city about 9 months now. The only neighborhoods I had chance to get familiar with were Dalston, Hackney and

Islington. Especially Dalston and Hackney districts are almost entirely filled with people who seemed to have, at some point of their lives, agreed to that contract I was talking about. Filled with people whose “N” and “S” nodes were put together disharmoniously and were persistently tormented by this foul design. And they were all being good citizens and accepting it, being at peace with it... The areas of London that this bus was traveling through were the places where I instinctively knew I should keep away from, places that were occupied by the people who were in the same circle as that sophisticated lady, near which I had no business to be, unless I was a busboy or a similar service employee serving to her needs, impersonally. But that, I couldn't be either and not only because my English wasn't good enough, even for that job, but also I had no right to work until my asylum application was approved. So, if I wanted to be a busboy now I could have only worked in a cheap, greasy, Turkish fast food joint in Dalston or Hackney. Paid under the table and definitely under paid. And that, I did. For a while I worked as a dishwasher at night shifts at one of those joints that I had just described above. Upon the suffocating insistings of my sister and brother-in-law, I left the free English course that was offered for asylum seekers like me and sought to make a quid or two. They had an inarguable logic, *“You came here to make a living, brother, and you came with lots of debt behind. You ought to work now and when you have made enough you can learn English and lots of other things. So just accept whatever job you can find.”* I had no choice I had to accept whatever I was. I could not dare to stray from the contract. *“Life has some fucked up sense of humor.”* In deed it does. Your own siblings to keep guard of the boundaries you had been contracted to stay within.

Anywho, back to #19. Although I was amazed by the splendor of these grand boulevards and disgustingly rich streets, I did not get off the bus. I did not walk around this formidable, fairytale realm. I remained still on my seat until the last stop, from where I took another #19 to the opposite direction. I thought of taking a leisurely walk, of course. But I did not want to put myself in that awkwardness again. I mean from every move of mine it

would have been apparent that I did not belong to these neighborhoods. I wasn't going to walk around like a sample material that was put on display to show what wasn't authentic to this realm. Besides, it's not in my contract to be the non-resident of these parts until I received the acceptance card. I wasn't going to be stared at with accusatory rays in the eyes, *"You are currently breaking the terms of your contract, young man, and we are not sure if we want to have you around here that long. Just watch where you're stepping, touching, and watching at. You can roam around for a very short while but don't linger too long and don't forget we are watching you."* I wasn't going to walk around like a criminal who is about to or in the process of committing new crimes. I wasn't going to walk around apologetically, feeling terribly sorry for my every move that had over lapping aims with the moves of an already accepted one: Whenever, for example, my hand reaches for an object on a shelf in a store pull immediately back as if an electric current threateningly tickled my fingers when I realize that the hand of an already accepted one is reaching for the same object. I wasn't going to walk around to be an instant and constant reminder for their feelings of superiority. So, I did not walk around. I had accepted what I was: I was born poor, brought up poorly, and am poor and not a hero to fight the tyrannous monsters and demolish their horrendous castles.