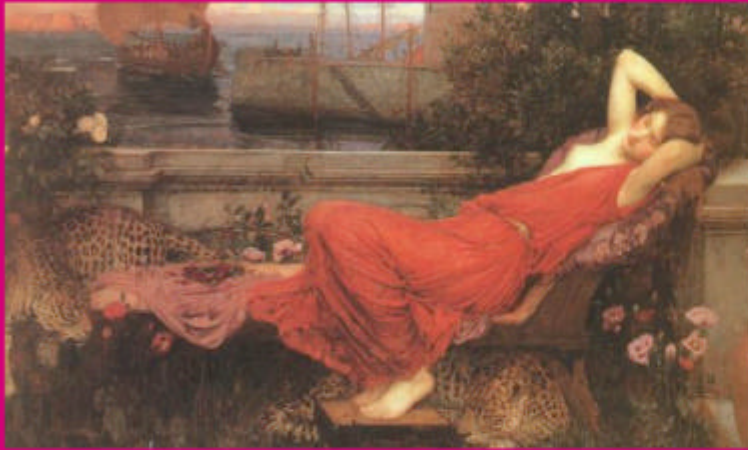


RÉVEIL (Fr., 'awakening')

The Electronic Newsletter with a Difference, for Women in Istanbul

Volume 1, No. 1

Spring 2004



Welcome to *RÉVEIL*

RÉVEIL was conceived primarily to provide a dynamic forum in which creative women (both expatriate and Turk) who are working in the arts and literature could share their vision and insights into the nature of everything. Since personal experience has shown how very isolated one can be here, we also wanted to develop a network that would enable us to be in touch with one another. Finally, we wanted to recollect something of the character of Istanbul when it was renowned throughout the world for being a vital, cosmopolitan center of culture, and perhaps, in so doing, help it to become such a place once again.

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WHY I MOVED HERE

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Eveline Zoutendijk

My dear Friend,

*Many of those of you receiving this first issue of **Réveil** know just how long this project has been in the realm of the purely potential. Some of you will know exactly why it has taken me so long. Ama, neyse, as we say in Turkish. I°te böyle. Details aren't important anyway; actions are important, and here it is, at long last.*

Please have a good think about who I might contact to try and get a few paid classified ads for our next issue. As I have said, my dream is to arrange things so that there is a bit of money coming in right before each issue and that would enable me to pay the authors something. That, by the way, is the only reason I am contemplating getting classified ads. I have no desire to make a profit from this newsletter. I make my money in other ways. It's just I that feel strongly that a writer should get paid for her work.

Please think too about what you might write for our next issue. At this point I want to put out an issue four times a year. This means you have until end of August/beginning of September to send something to me for publication.

Finally, let me say that while preparing everything I read all you had sent one more time. I feel that I am very, very lucky to know women like all of you. You are all—each one of you—a gift in my life. Thank you.

Karen-Claire

Expatriate

When you lay beneath
the foreign night sky;
when you hear the sound
of nakedness singing inside;
when you awake with eyes
different from those you took to bed
that sense fragrances only the soul can detect;
then
illusion no longer eludes you -
you realize
Home
is in your every breath
where you step
where you rest.
Home was and perpetually exists
wherever your heart
is no longer a guest.

Doering S. Meyer

Would this Rose Cry if Opened before Spring?

your hands are rivers
drawing close to the falls
the precipice's imminent edge -
my body the sky after lightning
in silent darkness
remembering
still
the snow falling
deep after midnight

Doering S. Meyer

Wild Horse Running

I am a wild horse running
across the Montana plains.
You are my tail and mane that rise and fall
with my hooves as they hit the ground.
We are one mind that defies capture.
We are one heart that beats
to the rhythm of an ancient drum.
Together we move against the wind
running from our fears -
avoiding the enemy lasso.

I am a wild horse running
across the eastern Anatolian plains.
You are my rider with legs tightly wrapped,
clinging to my bare back as I kick up the soil.
We are one body under the sun.
We are one spirit under the moon
that lights the path to escape.
Together we move toward the mountains
running closer to home
where safety and rest await our return.

You brush the dust from my coat
with tender touch that excites
my wild horse dreams.
From someplace deep within
a sound of ecstasy escapes
and your smile captures a moment
you insist cannot be.

from Dawn of Destiny

Doering S. Meyer

Istanbul

I hear
The heartbeat of Istanbul
Rising above the cacophony of the city
Calling its devotees
To prayer
With sweet chants
Reminding them
And me
Only God is a refuge
These salty salutations of grief
Grace my face
As my wash before prayer
For what cannot be
You're gone
Were never here
All that's left
Are the chants
fading on the wind
As if they too
were never there.

Kayla Summers

Wishes

If wishes were horses
beggars would ride
causing economies
to crash in the tides
thus spurning the greedy
to warp overdrive
In killing the poor
For realized dreams
Of hopes and horses
and all in between
So national interest
Demand your request
To forfeit my heart
As payment of test
Heartless and horseless
A woman in jest
A pauper in rags
Who called herself Queen
A love she called hers
Was merely a scheme
No longer dreams
Of love or desire
But basks in the warmth
Of the funeral pyres

Kayla Summers

The Masterpiece

Necla Bal

It was just an ordinary day at my office. I had a guest who was the art manager of an advertising agency that I was going to deal with. At the end of our meeting her eyes caught my scribbles that were scattered around on my table as always. She asked "Who did these?" and when I told her that I had done them she said: "You need to get some professional help, starting now."

I began going to a private workshop on the weekends. On the first day my teacher asked me what my goal was. I answered that I wanted to paint my dream on a canvas and hang it on the wall in my living room. She replied "A dream! A dream has never yet been created on a canvas." I could not understand the meaning of these words. Until that time, I had believed that works were the dreams of artists. I asked "Why?" She said if you felt that you had actually managed to create a dream it would be your last work. I kept these thoughts in my mind, but I have nevertheless continued to dream.

I was getting more excited day by day while I was exploring my new interest. It was the start of sleepless nights and weary days for me. I was working for a pharmaceutical company and did not have enough spare time. I stopped my social life and isolated myself.

It was like a dream to awaken early in the morning and get ready to start a new life. I remember now how I was trying to capture this new passion of mine—it was as though I fell in love each day, over and over again. The alteration of colors in light and dark amazed me. I followed every moment of the variations of images all day long. I perceived the present as unreal. Instead, I experienced how objects must bear Time and how Time made them weary. I experienced myself as being aligned with them. I also observed the resistance of growing things, of flowers and trees and plants against Time. Time is stronger than all of us. Everything occurs as if all was in harmony. I became carried away with the phenomenon of Time. I experienced the fact that objects, just as human beings, are temporal. It is we who move, who flow. Time itself is inexorable.

After a few years of working I became discouraged, feeling that I would never reach my goal. Would the life remaining to me allow me to reveal my unique perception of things? Would there be something to compensate me for all the years I had passed? I was in my fifties.

I have been painting for seven years now. All the while I have been expecting to hear an apology from my lover who abandoned me one day long ago, suddenly and inexplicably—without any warning. I do not have the courage to begin trying to depict this experience of expectation on canvas. I am afraid that if I paint it I will lose my expectation, and therefore, irrevocably, lose him.

There is a canvas out there on which my dream will be painted. I realize now that dreams are never really painted; they will never be. I wish I could. Perhaps the blank canvas itself is telling the story of the dream. It stands alone; it keeps itself in silence. It seems as if it will stand as a symbol

of my dream forever. I named the blank canvas *The Masterpiece*. I hope to capture this new theme in my paintings so that they will call out to people: "Open your mind to your senses and let them free."

"What is the secret of happiness?" I asked my mother this question when I was ten. I remember that her answer was a smile. I would like to thank the young art manager whose name I can no longer remember. She led me into a life of pleasure. Each day I ask myself "Is there anything else?" I answer this question for myself, with a smile. Yes, Time has worn away my pain and turned it into a smile.

Cafe Afterthought

Doering S. Meyer

Glancing up I see an adamantine Arab and recall the day we took three sleeping bags, two large thermoses, and a half carton of milk, which Wendy prefers to cream, and set off on a road trip to the queen city sitting on her Lake Superior throne, rising above icy waters with hills reminiscent of a carnival ride going up, ready to spin, slip over, the seat belt catching across the abdomen before your head hits the top of the steel cage. As we reached city limits, you blurted out "Forget Duluth. Let's do the Rec." Back in St. Paul like a circus in three rings, we did the ceili with a group of drunken Irish strangers.

On a stiff iron bench with cold reaching up like fingers of forbidden lust and an almost full moon looking down on us like a priest, you moved closer, tucked your face into my wool collar, complained about Minnesota, breathed hotly down my sweater—enlightened me—then told me your name "means morning star in Arabic". I held onto you like an exhausted mother holds a stillborn, confusion creeping in, wondering what the morning star was like in the East.

Wendy returned; threw a bouquet of dead leaves and dried grass; laughed as it covered us like a shroud; said if she didn't know better she'd mistake us for "a real couple". You rose, proclaiming, "There was this awesome U.F.O.—looked just like a falling star. Hey, let's do Dinkytown instead of sitting around like a group of stupid Buddhists." Wendy passed on the idea, claiming a previous commitment "to watch Channel 5 sign off".

At this same alchemy table, I sat nursing my espresso, while you separated my personality into different pouring vessels, effectively adding three drops of shy silliness and one vial of lust into my cup just before leaving—confident as geese returning North of my inability to hold your flight against you.

Travel Is the Greatest Teacher

Sydney Jean Unobskey

Being sensitive to cultural differences and adapting to your surroundings is one of the most important aspects of traveling abroad. Taking the time to educate yourself, asking questions in order not to offend anyone, is critically important. Sometimes, however, even the best-intentioned can make embarrassing mistakes.

I had the wonderful opportunity to travel throughout Israel and Jordan in the year 2000. Visiting magnificent historical sites that I had read about all my life, being in a region where all the great religions first started was a life-changing event for me. The highlight of my trip to the Middle East, however, was meeting the people of the region.

Jordan gave me my first exposure to meeting Palestinians. My Palestinian guide, Abed, was to travel with us for three days, showing us the famous King's Highway, Petra, Amman and Jerash. The first stop, after he picked us up at the border, was a pottery and handicraft artist co-op. The owners greeted us warmly and served everyone their famous coffee. Looking around the shop I saw many beautiful pieces of artwork. I was struck, however, by the fact that none of the pieces indicated the name of the artist or the history of this special style of pottery. I knew from speaking with our hosts that the artwork was made by local artisans. I thought since this was a tourist stop it would be interesting and helpful if information was offered; as a potential buyer and visitor to Jordan I knew if I was interested in the history others might be as well.

Our hosts wanted to sit down and chat about marketing ideas. After an hour of discussion we all had become good friends. Our guide, Abed, was especially impressed that Arab men would sit with an American woman to discuss business. He said that this was unusual. He also voiced that he was pleased I cared about their success and spent time with them. I knew from his enthusiasm that I had made a new friend in him.

Over the past few years I have gone back to Jordan not only to visit Abed, but also all the many friends he has introduced me to. I am welcomed in their homes and we talk about the politics of the area and the hardships that plague the Middle East. In America and Israel I know Israelis and often talk about the problems they face. Being in Jordan was my first opportunity to meet and speak openly with Palestinians.

My latest trip to Jordan was to visit Wadi Rum, the famous area where T.E. Lawrence crossed on his way to Aqaba. It is also the site of the famous movie "Lawrence of Arabia" filmed by David Lean. The inspiring desert of Jordan creates movie magic! One day Abed, Samir (Abed's friend) and I explored the vastness of Wadi Rum with a Bedouin guide in a battered road jeep. The Bedouin are part of the desert landscape, living in large tents throughout the area. Our guide had lived his entire life in Wadi Rum.

Coming around the bend of a huge monument of rock, we encountered a large tent where we could see many children and several adults. A man

came out of the tent to greet us and invite us in for coffee and conversation. I sat quietly observing eight children and two women while the men spoke in Arabic. The conversation lulled and Abed turned to me, telling me our Bedouin host had a question to ask.

Abed explained that our host had twenty-three children and three wives. In Islam, he said, the men are allowed to have four wives, as long as he can provide for them equally. Since I was American, the man was interested in making a proposal of marriage to me. He said he would like to have a Western wife; if I agreed he would be very generous. Abed pointed to a red Toyota jeep and said that the man was offering it to me. He also said the man owned quite a bit of land and would allot a share of it to me!

I looked into Abed's face and the faces of the men for a hint of playfulness. There was none. They were all very serious in their expressions. I had read nothing in my travel guides concerning how to handle a marriage proposal should one arise! Abed said our host was waiting for an answer. I asked if I could have a moment to digest such a generous offer. Ten minutes passed and everyone was ready to go. Abed said the man wanted an answer from me.

I looked directly at our host as Abed interpreted for me. I explained that I had many obligations in my life at the moment and was unable to accept such a kind offer. I explained, however, that if I were to become a member of his family I am sure I would be very happy living among them. Everyone nodded in great approval and for a moment I felt like a Middle Eastern diplomat. My glorious moment, though, was going to come to an abrupt end.

As our jeep started to pull away from the tent the host came running after us. Minutes before leaving there had been conversation about providing a stipend for the man for his hospitality. Without taking a moment to think, I suggested that we had not provided enough money! There was silence in the jeep and then Arabic conversation among my friends. With a look of disapproval Abed explained that our host wanted to give us back the money; it was his pleasure to entertain us!

I was terribly embarrassed by my mistake. Abed said later that the men had discussed with each other that my ignorance came from the fact I was Western. I thought a lot about the comment. In a way they were right. I had just read a story about two men in New York who had dressed up as nuns, going around the city collecting for an orphanage! These were the types of stories you so often hear about deception in America. In the West we sometimes become cynical of people's true intentions due to our own experiences.

I learned a very important lesson about my misjudgment and traveling. One must never assume anything without proper reflection. Following the example of your traveling hosts is imperative. Every country has problems, but the people have always been the most exciting part about visiting new worlds for me. I realized the generosity and hospitality of the Jordanians and the Palestinians I had met made Jordan a place I will visit often.

On the Mosque Ceiling

Kayla Summers

Sitting in a mosque in Istanbul, my eyes gravitated towards the ceiling, so dense, with intricate designs, one leading into another, I wondered why men pray belly down, to be 'close to God'—all one has to do is lay on one's back and gaze at the ceiling. I smiled to myself. That may just be a woman's perspective. And that is how a modern day myth came to me, the story of how women lost their power.

"Ah, my love, come and see this beautiful ceiling I made for you to contemplate your God. Come now. Lay your beautiful head in my lap—just look as I comb your hair: so free, just for awhile. Gaze at the intricacies of my work. It is all for you and this God you love so. See how the designs twist and turn—no beginning, no end. Follow any colour you desire, my love, while I anoint your temples, so round, with rose-scented oil, like melons giving just so in my hands. Watch carefully, my heart, how the small lines become shapes which turn into patterns that in time transform into the sky itself."

As he glides his hands around her belly cupping her hips, "Ah, my love they are so strong. Having the power to make men groan just to watch them as you sway down the road. Feel the coolness of the marble floor on your back and meditate on this new universe I turned inside out... for you and our God."

As he pushes his chest on her knees, easing his breasts between her yielding thighs, making her groan and sigh: as he nuzzled the exquisite ripening peach, and nibbling at its stem pursing his lips as if to suck the birds milk, flowing so freely—"Ah, my sweetness. Concentrate on the patterns. Meditate on this cosmos until it, you, and God become one . . . And while you're in this blissful state, just rest. I'll lie beside you and, uh, just edit this Koran a bit. Oh, nothing much, a few commas . . . I've thought about your concerns of envy among your sisters—What about this shift? One size fits all. Then no one will know of your gorgeous shape and therefore there will be no envy among you. The power among you will be unified. We could embroider it together—you know you've always loved black. Ponder on the delicate flowers that seem to explode into a planet."

As he sucks her nipples, hardening them for the babies she will bring forth—"What s this? Oh, some charming anklets I had fashioned just for you with bells and keys . . . So I'll always know when you're coming and can prepare for you."

"What? Too heavy? Ah, perhaps, a little, but think of the quads you'll have," as he raises her legs and drives the final knife in.

And that is how women lost their power and why men don't dare look at the ceiling when praying.

Invitation to the Voyage

Karen-Claire Voss

It was a hot night in early summer. The woman and her friend were sitting at the edge of the sea, with their legs dangling over the water, eating sandwiches. As she looked up while chewing a mouthful of fried blue fish and sweet raw onion, the woman caught sight of a small boat, outlined in lights so that it looked to be an exquisite object fit for displaying along with other similar pieces on a travertine table in some luxurious apartment . . .

Gold ceilings would there be,
Mirrors deep as the sea,
The walls all in an Eastern splendor hung, . . *

But no objet d'art this; it was only a boat on the Bosphorus. "I bought and sold that boat," her friend told her. "For years it had never moved from its place in the harbor at Istinye."

See, sheltered from the swells,
There in the still canals . . .

"And then, one day I met . . ."

The story was interesting as stories go, but it was the boat itself that the woman found compelling. A mere boat? No. This boat looked like nothing so much as a fairy tale ship. It possessed such a degree of perfection that it rendered the surroundings surreal, every detail appeared to be imbued with enhanced clarity, with hermeneutic import: the blue fish and sweet onion seemed to be archetypal nourishment, not merely food; her friend's resonant Turkish-accented English voiced sounds that could have been uttered a thousand years before.

Nothing but should address
The soul's loneliness,
Speaking her sweet and secret native tongue. . . .

The woman felt herself moving away -- from the taste of the food, from the story about the boat, toward the boat itself. Her imagination enveloped it so that the movement of her life melded with its movement. Of course the boat was filled with tourists who had paid significant amounts of hard currency in an attempt to catch the beauty of Istanbul's fabled garland of waters. The woman knew all that. Even so, it seemed as if the boat, now sailing in the direction of the Black Sea, would never again turn and head back towards the old city, but would continue, towards the open sea, towards freedom, towards Europe, towards Home. Her reverie continued, and the sensation of having been merged with the boat blended with other impressions: that of the painting she had seen and coveted -- a huge oil executed in deep colors. She had wished fervently to buy it, but the price was completely beyond her means. It was an unaccountably powerful painting, and the woman had resolved to find out more about the artist and the theme. It showed a cloudy night, intermittently illumined by a moon coquettishly appearing and reappearing behind diaphanous clouds. Rumeli Hisari loomed in the background.

Later, after having seen the painting only once, in her mind's eye she recalled that the foreground was dominated by a large, dark wooden boat with a fantastically carved bow, and that various people, mostly women, were in the process of boarding the boat which was harbored in a cove close by the shore in front of the fortress. She thought about the painting a lot, trying to recollect more details -- the number of figures, their positions, what they were wearing -- but found she could not. Finally, she went back to the shop where she had seen it. The woman had a shock. There was no boat in the painting, no sea. The foreground actually depicted a scene from what looked to be a rehearsal of a play. There were but two people on the stage: a clean shaven man dressed in a loose crimson shirt and dark trousers with a harp in front of him, and a pharaonic woman, with a headband ornamented by a serpent in the Egyptian style encircling her long, dark hair. The woman's neck and arms were bare and extremely pale; her dress was white and long, its gossamer fabric lay heaped upon the bench on which she sat. Offstage, to the left, stood a white-robed woman wearing a black head covering. She was not looking at the stage, but resolutely facing front. At the far left stood a man, perhaps a guard, dressed in a black robe with a white hood, holding a staff in his right hand. He too faced front. There were five other figures, all women. One, dressed in black and white with a black head covering, was sitting on the ground. Next to her, a woman with raised, clasped hands wearing a long white robe knelt as if in supplication. Seated on the ground facing the stage were three more women. The strange thing was that even after studying the painting again, and noting all these details, it seemed to the woman as if there had been a boat; she continued to feel that there should be a boat, that the boat was somehow missing from the painting.

Then there was the dream she'd had recently. Again, a cloudy night, with the same moon, that moon like some virgin hungrily yearning to become a woman, but whose fear of the abyss still kept her from acting out her desire. In the dream the woman was in a boat not unlike the one she was sure she had seen in the painting, not unlike the one that was in the sea before her now. She stood alone, near the bow. The night was cold, but she did not feel it, since she was wrapped in a long, thick, cream-colored woolen cloak. In the dream, she was having a dialogue with herself, as if she was two women, not just one. One asked, "What are you doing? You know nothing about sailing a boat. It's dark and cold. You're headed for the open sea. God help you, you've no food, no water, no compass, no map. Turn back." The other said: "Go. Go on. You can do it. God helps you. What you need will be provided. Have courage. Trust." The woman must have heeded the second voice, for in her dream she continued to sail away from port.

The fact that both seeing the painting and having the dream had occurred before the appearance of the boat this evening was significant. She knew this boat. It meant something. The boat was at once a symbol of the Home that was beckoning her, calling her to come, and the yearning of her heart that was moving towards it. Possessed of two movements, at the same time the boat was sailing determinedly, inexorably, forward, in the direction of the open sea, it seemed also compelled to move backward, as if in invitation to the woman who watched it:

Those drowsy ships that dream of sailing forth;
It is to satisfy your least desire, they ply

Hither through all the waters of the earth. . . .

Oh, yes, she knew this boat. This boat symbolized her very soul. It was the vessel that would carry her Home. Its composition was not wood, but rather flesh and blood, muscle, sinew, and bone; all hers, it was her own body, her own heart, her own spirit, her own desire, her own will. It was this vessel, no other, which would finally convey her to her place, to Home.

There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,
Richness, quietness, and pleasure.

The woman had read many things. She knew that some said the idea of Home was real, but inherently elusive; thus, its very nature was such that it always remained just beyond reach. The woman could not, would not, accept this. She knew that things that were potentially real, things dreamed, for example, were also, necessarily, potentially actually real. For this reason, while she had days when she turned on a wheel of unutterable anguish, when she thought to herself, "Really, I shall die from this yearning. I shall die. I cannot possibly continue," there were other days when Hope stirred within her like an unborn child, nudging her to wonder, and finally, to act. And so, the woman continued to sit on chairs in Istanbul, and continued to force herself to get up from them and go out once more into the world.

* * *

* The title of this story and the quote lines are from Charles Baudelaire's *L'Invitation au Voyage*, translated by Roy Campbell in Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*. Poems selected and edited by Marthiel and Jackson Mathews. New Directions Publishing Co.: New York, 1955.

One Hundred Reasons

Eveline Zoutendijk

Had it not been for a rather rash decision of leaving my hotel management career behind to become a “painter” and a “writer” (two ambitions that never quite materialized, commercially speaking), I might never have made it to Istanbul to begin with. For it was at that moment that I gave myself a year to travel all over the world, visiting any friend that agreed to have me stay with them, in any even remotely interesting country.

I love to travel; one year quickly turned into twenty months. I visited myriad cities in myriad countries, most of them wonderfully interesting, but none having the impact that Istanbul had on me. This city simply captivated me from the very start. I'd barely returned to my “travel base” in the Netherlands when I decided to go back. And back. And back again, till my trips totaled a whopping eleven in those twenty months!

By this time I'd made a multitude of friends, I'd learnt Turkish from a book, I'd fallen in and out of love, and most of all I just couldn't forget that marvelous view of the Bosphorus and the endless warmth of the people. I was a tourist by day, a Turk by night. Sometimes my heart would start to pound as I overlooked the magical water reflecting stars and city lights, a glass of wine and some nuts in my hand, knots forming in my stomach as I listened to captivating Turkish love songs in the background. I decided I had to live here or die!

I knocked on many doors, pleading for a job, but fate seemed to be against me on this one. The multitude of connections I'd built up suddenly seemed useless. So I eventually moved back to New York eventually and after that, to Paris. And although these are two of my favorite cities, I still couldn't get Istanbul out of my head. What's worse, I couldn't stop talking about it!

Reactions from people ranged from clear hints of annoyance to stabbing exclamations like “WHY? Why Istanbul, of all places, why?!” I meekly replied I could think of a hundred reasons. Then, one evening I decided to challenge myself, so I sat down at home and started jotting down exactly one hundred reasons. I still have them somewhere. They didn't all make an awful lot of sense, but the more I wrote down, the more I realized how right I was about this city being so absolutely amazing and unique, that a person should have lived in it for at least part of their life.

Then, one day, an unexpected e-mail came from a friend, stating he was moving out of his apartment into another. This apartment happened to be my favorite in the whole of Istanbul! I rushed to the phone and a few days later everything was arranged. By this time Turkey was already knee-deep in the worst economic crisis ever. Then September 11 happened. My last spark of hope to build up something in the tourism sector was now ruined as well. However, I was determined at this point, and decided that if there wasn't any work out there, I would have to create some myself.

The dream of owning a small boutique hotel had been haunting me for a few years already. Several months later, with the help of a friend, I found the

Sarnýç Hotel in Sultanahmet. And now, since May 6, 2002, this charming place has been absorbing all my creativity and energy, and I'm loving it, especially when the house is full of guests. After all that's what I live for—to meet different people, from different countries! It feels just as if I'm traveling through the world again, whereas at the same time I don't have to miss the city that captured my heart!

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