

Just One Record

Some men turn on the TV as soon as they get home. Hasan would go to the record player.

At seven o'clock in the evening, a corner of the living room carried its own little climate under the yellow light. Outside, the April evening of İlkadım had slowly started to get dark; the streetlights visible from the fourth floor of the Yuvam Apartment hadn't turned on yet, but they would soon. The headlights of the cars passing in front of the living room window threw short streaks of light onto the ceiling. Nagihan was sitting on the sofa, passing that strange hour of the evening, neither day nor night, with an open magazine on her lap. She had tea in her hand, but it had gone cold; a thin layer of condensation remained on the edge of the glass.



When Hasan came out of the kitchen, he had nothing in his hands. He stepped into the living room with the casualness of "I'm just going to look for a record." Nagihan, without lifting her head, turning the page of her magazine, said:

"Let's see." Her voice was slightly mocking but accustomed. "I hope it doesn't take until morning."

Hasan didn't answer. There was no need for him to answer anyway. There was a language between them, established for these kinds of things, cultivated over the years. Nagihan knew what would happen every time he stepped in front of the record shelf. And Hasan knew that his wife knew this. And neither of them felt the need to talk about it.

The record player corner was in the quietest part of the living room. Away from the window, away from the door, away from the TV. The record player, sitting on a small coffee table, waited there like a shrine that had been there for years. Next to it, leaning against the wall, the wooden record shelf held about a hundred records. Hasan's collection wasn't large, but each one was carefully selected. Some were left over from his student years, some were bought with his first paycheck, and some had entered the house after he met Nagihan. Each had a story. And every time Hasan touched one, he remembered that story.

Now he stood in front of the shelf, hands on his hips, scanning the records like a general inspecting his army. The light gave a slight sheen to the record covers. Some covers were worn out, some had bent corners, some had coffee stains. Hasan liked these. New, pristine record covers always felt a bit alien to him. These worn, touched, lived-in covers, on the other hand, were like old friends.

"What do you want to listen to?" asked Nagihan, still without lifting her head from her magazine.

"I don't know," said Hasan. "Something."

"You've been very helpful."

"It depends on my mood."

"What is your mood?"

Hasan thought. Actually, there was no such thing as a mood. Or there was, but he couldn't name it. He wasn't tired. He wasn't unhappy either. He just... wanted to listen to something. But he didn't know what it was.

"Indecisive," he said finally.

Nagihan laughed. "Then this will take until morning."

Hasan pulled out the first record. Cem Karaca, *Nem Kaldı*. He took the cover in his hand, looked at it. Cem's face, with that familiar, tired, wise look, looked back at him. How long had it been since he listened to this record? Maybe it had been a year. Maybe more. But did he want to listen to it now? He wasn't sure. Cem Karaca was always good. But being "always good" didn't mean being "right for right now."

He put the record back.

Then he pulled out Barış Manço. *2023*. This was good too. But maybe it was too cheerful. Or maybe it wasn't. He couldn't be sure. To listen to Barış Manço, one had to be a little prepared. Was he ready right now? He didn't know.

He put it back.

Nagihan called out from the sofa: "Don't put that one on, you listened to it last week."

He moved a bit further down the shelf. Frank Sinatra, *Come Fly with Me*. He pulled out the cover. Sinatra's elegant, confident face smiled at him. A classic. Timeless. But right now? Maybe it would be too sophisticated. Maybe that was exactly what he needed. He wasn't sure.

He put it back.

He saw Tony Bennett. *I Left My Heart in San Francisco*. He took the cover in his hand. Bennett's voice, it sounded to him like the warm, deep voice of an old friend. A beautiful record. But cheerful? Melancholic? Maybe neither. Maybe everything.

He put it back.

"Which one is that?"

"The one in your hand."

Hasan looked at the record in his hand. King Crimson, *Epitaph!* She was right. He had listened to it last week. But did listening to it last week mean he shouldn't listen to it this

week? Maybe, on the contrary, he should listen to it this week because he listened to it last week. Maybe he should start a ritual.

"What do you suggest?" he asked.

"Put something a bit more cheerful on."

"Cheerful?"

"Yes. Don't listen to heavy stuff this late in the evening."

Hasan thought. Cheerful. What did cheerful mean? Disco? Pop? Rock? Was there a category called cheerful in music? Or did being cheerful not reside in the music itself, but rather spark within the person listening to it?

He pulled out Erkin Koray. *Elektronik Türküler*. Was this cheerful? It wasn't. But it wasn't bad either. In fact, it was very good. But was it right for right now?

He put it back.

"Jazz goes well with this light," said Nagihan.

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. Nagihan was still looking at her magazine, but there was a faint smile on her lips. Jazz. Yes, maybe jazz would go well. But which jazz? Modern jazz? Cool jazz? Turkish jazz? World jazz?

"Which jazz?" he asked.

"I don't know. You would know."

"If I knew, I wouldn't have asked."

"Then it means you don't know."

Hasan smiled. These kinds of dialogues were frequent between them. Nagihan had been watching his record-selecting ritual for years, and now she had become a part of it. Sometimes she commented, sometimes she made suggestions, sometimes she just watched. But she was always there. On the sofa, with her magazine, her cold tea, her slightly mocking smile.

Hasan moved to the jazz shelf. There were a few records there. Tuna Ötenel, Okay Temiz, Emin Fındıkoğlu. All of them were good. But which one was right for right now? He pulled out Tuna Ötenel. He looked at the cover. A black and white photo, Tuna with his saxophone in hand. He loved this record very much. But did he want to listen to it now?

He wasn't sure.

He put it back.

Outside, the streetlights had come on. The living room had gotten a bit darker. The yellow light now looked more prominent, as if it were creating a separate world from the rest of the room. Hasan was lost among the records. His hands roamed over the covers, his eyes

read the names. Every record was a door. Every door opened to a memory. And now Hasan stood before these doors, trying to decide which one to enter.

He moved a bit further down the shelf. He saw Matt Monro. *Born Free*. He pulled out the cover. Matt Monro's soft, crystal-clear voice seemed to come from an angel on the cover. The English singer, an artist walking the line between classic jazz and pop. Monro's voice, that elegant, controlled voice carrying a grace in every note, had always moved Hasan. *Born Free* was the song of freedom. But did he want to listen to freedom right now? Or did freedom mean bringing an end to the evening?

He examined the cover. Monro's face, that calm, professional, slightly distant look. A representative of the Western jazz tradition. The successor to Sinatra. But Monro was softer, more introverted. He didn't have Sinatra's fire in his voice. Instead, he had a kind of melancholy. A beautiful melancholy. But did Hasan want melancholy right now?

He put it back.

"Put Barış on, don't take risks," said Nagihan.

"Which Barış?"

"Any of them. Barış is always good."

Hasan thought. She was right. Barış Manço was always good. But being "always good" wasn't enough. Because Hasan didn't just want to listen to a good record. He wanted to listen to the record that suited this exact moment, this mood, this light, this evening perfectly. And this was a much harder task.

It was half past seven. Hasan was still on his feet. The records changed hands. Some were pulled out and looked at, then put back. Some were set aside into the "maybe" category. Some weren't touched at all, because Hasan knew they weren't suitable for right now.

He pulled out Selda Bağcan. *İnce İnce Bir Kar Yağar*. He loved this record very much. Selda's voice, that powerful, rebellious, agonizing voice. But did he want to listen to Selda now? To listen to Selda, one had to be a little prepared. Because Selda would pull you in. She wouldn't let you go. And did Hasan want to be pulled in right now?

He didn't know.

He put it back.

"I trust a man who says 'I'm just going to look for a record' about as much as I trust a civil servant," said Nagihan.

Hasan laughed. "Why a civil servant?"

"Because neither of them do what they say."

"I will do it."

"When?"

"Soon."

"What does soon mean?"

"In a little while."

"What does in a little while mean?"

"When I pick the record."

"When will you pick the record?"

"When I find the right one."

Nagihan closed her magazine, put it on her lap, and looked at Hasan. In her eyes was that familiar, affectionate, slightly amused light. "You aren't picking music right now," she said. "You are weighing your destiny."

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. "Maybe so."

"Not maybe. Definitely so. Every time you look at a record, you see a life. A memory, an emotion, a time. And you can't decide which one to step into."

Hasan smiled. Nagihan was right. She was always right. But being right didn't solve the problem. Because Hasan still couldn't pick a record.

He pulled out Zülfü Livaneli. *Yo!* How long had it been since he listened to this record? Maybe it had been two years. He took the cover in his hand, looked at it. Zülfü's face, with that deep, thoughtful look, looked back at him. This record was always special. Because he had listened to this record for the first time together with Nagihan. Before they got married, while they were still engaged, in Nagihan's old apartment. It was raining that day. They were watching the gray sky of Samsun from the window. And Zülfü Livaneli was playing.

But did he want to relive that memory now?

He wasn't sure.

He put it back.

It was eight o'clock. Outside, the darkness had completely settled. The street in front of the Yuvam Apartmanı had grown quiet. The cars had dwindled. The sounds coming from the other apartments in the building had also lessened. The sounds of televisions, the sounds of children, the sounds of dining. Everyone had settled into their evening. Only Hasan, standing by the records, was still on his feet.

Nagihan got up, went to the kitchen, and made fresh tea. When she returned, she saw that Hasan was still standing in the same spot. He had a record in his hand, but he wasn't looking at it. He was just holding it. As if he were feeling the weight of the record.

"Don't look at that one," said Nagihan. "You love the A-side of that, but you get depressed on the B-side."

Hasan looked at the record. Ajda Pekkan, *Süperstar*. She was right. The A-side was wonderful. But the B-side was a bit of a downer. And Hasan wanted to listen to the entirety

of a record. Not just the A-side. Because listening to a record was like going on a journey. And a journey shouldn't be left unfinished.

He put it back.

"How many records have you looked at?" asked Nagihan.

"I don't know. Maybe twenty."

"And you didn't like any of them."

"I liked them. But they aren't the right ones."

"What does the right one mean?"

"The right one for right now."

"What does right now mean?"

Hasan thought. What did right now mean? Right now was eight in the evening, the month of April, Samsun, İlkadım, Yuvam Apartmanı, fourth floor, the living room, the yellow light, the record player corner. Right now was a mood that wasn't tired but wanted to rest. Right now was a moment that was neither happy nor unhappy, just wanting to listen to something. But what thing?

"I don't know," he said finally.

Nagihan laughed. "If you don't know, how should I know?"

Hasan smiled. She was right. But this still didn't solve the problem.

It was nine o'clock. Hasan was still on his feet. The records had now formed a pile. Some were on the coffee table, some were on the floor, some were leaning against the wall. The "maybe" category had expanded. But the "definitely" category was still empty.

He pulled out Fikret Kızılok. *Zaman Zaman*. He loved this record very much. Fikret's voice, that fragile, sincere, genuine voice. But did he want to listen to Fikret now? To listen to Fikret, one had to be a little lonely. A little introverted. And Hasan wasn't lonely right now. Nagihan was there. On the sofa, with her tea, with her presence.

He put it back.

"You love Fikret," said Nagihan.

"I do."

"But you're not going to put it on."

"No."

"Why?"

"Because Fikret is the music of loneliness. And I'm not lonely right now."

Nagihan smiled. "You are very romantic."

"I'm not. I'm just realistic."

"A realistic man doesn't look at records for two hours."

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. "Two hours?"

"Yes. It's nine o'clock."

Hasan was surprised. Had two hours passed? How did that happen? It felt like he had just started. But she was right. It was nine o'clock. Two hours had passed. And he still hadn't picked a record.

"Maybe you shouldn't pick one," said Nagihan.

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe you shouldn't listen to music tonight. Maybe you should just listen to the silence."

Hasan thought. Silence. Yes, maybe he should listen to silence. But did he need to come to the record shelf to listen to silence? No. That meant he didn't want to listen to silence. He wanted to listen to music. But what music?

"No," he said. "I want to listen to music."

"Then pick a record."

"I'm trying to pick."

"You've been trying to pick for two hours."

"I know."

"And you still haven't picked one."

"I know."

Nagihan stood up, came next to Hasan, and touched his shoulder. "You know," she said, "sometimes the best choice is the first one that comes to mind."

"But nothing comes to mind."

"Because you think too much."

"How am I supposed to pick if I don't think?"

"You'll feel it."

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. In Nagihan's eyes was that familiar, affectionate light. And Hasan realized at that moment that Nagihan wasn't judging him. She was just watching. And maybe she was a little amused.

"You're laughing at me," said Hasan.

"I'm not laughing. I'm smiling."

"Same thing."

"It's not. Laughing is mocking. Smiling is loving."

Hasan smiled. "Do you love me?"

"I love you. But I find your way of picking records a little funny."

"Why funny?"

"Because you aren't picking a record. You're picking a life. And that's a very serious business. But at the same time, it's a very funny business."

Hasan laughed. She was right. She was always right.

Nagihan planted a kiss on Hasan's forehead, then returned to her sofa. But she wasn't reading her magazine anymore. She just sat there, watching Hasan. And Hasan knew this. And this both disturbed him and comforted him.

It was ten o'clock. The building had grown quite silent. The neighbors upstairs had gone to bed. The television downstairs was turned off. There were almost no sounds coming from the street. Only the occasional passing car, a dog barking, the sound of an ambulance in the distance.

Hasan pulled out Tunç Başaran. *Karanlıkta*. He loved this record very much. Tunç's guitar, that melancholic, soulful, deep guitar. But did he want to listen to Tunç now? To listen to Tunç, one had to be a little sorrowful. And Hasan wasn't sorrowful right now. He was just indecisive.

He put it back.

Then he pulled out Edip Akbayram. *Nedir Ne Değildir*. This was good too. But maybe it was too heavy. Or maybe it wasn't. He couldn't be sure. To listen to Edip Akbayram, one had to be a little prepared. Because Edip would pull you in. He would take you away. And did Hasan want to be taken away right now?

Then he saw Mike Oldfield. *Nuclear*. He pulled out the cover. Designed with black and silver colors, a cosmic image. Oldfield's instrumental music, those distant, experimental sounds that seemed to come from space. Hasan hadn't listened to this record much. But he knew this music would take you to other places. As it neared midnight, maybe this was exactly what he needed. Maybe tonight, at this hour, Hasan wanted to be experimental. Maybe he wanted to surrender himself to a cosmic journey.

He examined the cover. *Nuclear*. Yes, maybe this could be it. Maybe this could be exactly the right record for right now.

But then he stopped. No. Not yet. The night wasn't over yet. The night still had much to say. And Hasan wasn't ready to go to space just yet.

He put it back.

He didn't know.

He put it back.

"You know," said Nagihan, "you aren't actually picking a record. You are avoiding picking a record."

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, if you pick a record, you will listen to that record. And when that record is over, the evening will be over. And you don't want the evening to be over."

Hasan thought. Was she right? Maybe. Maybe he didn't want the evening to be over. Because the evening being over meant going to bed. And going to bed meant waking up the next day. And waking up the next day meant going to work. And maybe Hasan didn't want to go to work.

But no. That wasn't true. Because Hasan loved his work. He wasn't avoiding going to work. He just... wanted to pick the right record.

"No," he said. "I just want to pick the right record."

"There's no such thing as the right record."

"There is."

"There isn't. There are just records. And you will pick one of them."

"But which one?"

"That's your decision."

Hasan smiled. Yes, it was his decision. And he still couldn't decide.

It was eleven o'clock. Nagihan yawned, stretched, and stood up. "I'm going to bed," she said.

Hasan turned and looked at his wife. "Now?"

"Yes. I'm tired."

"But I haven't picked a record yet."

"I know. But I can't wait. Because you won't be able to pick one until morning."

Hasan laughed. "Until morning?"

"Yes. If you keep going at this pace, you'll still be here at the morning call to prayer."

"I won't be."

"You will be."

Nagihan approached and kissed Hasan on the cheek. "You pick," she said. "I'll find out the result in the morning."

"But I want to listen to it with you."

"Then pick quickly."

"I'm trying to pick."

"Try harder."

Nagihan smiled, then walked towards the bedroom. She stopped at the door, looked back. "I hope you decide before the kid grows up," she said. Then she closed the door.

Hasan was left alone.

For the first time, truly alone.

The living room was quieter now. It was darker. Only the yellow light in the record player corner was shining. And under that light, Hasan stood alone among the records.

And looking for records in solitude was something else entirely.

Because now Nagihan's comments were gone. Her suggestions were gone. Her smile was gone. There was only Hasan. And the records. And the silence.

Hasan sat on the floor. He leaned his back against the wall. He laid the records out in front of him. And he started to look at them one by one.

But he wasn't just looking anymore. Now he was remembering.

Every record was a door. And every door opened to a memory.

He picked up Tolga Çandar. *Türküleri Egenin*. When had he bought this record? He was a freshman in college. In Ankara. At that old record store in Kızılay. He even remembered the name of the shop: Melodi Plak. The owner was an old man. He knew the story of every record. And when Hasan walked into the shop that day, the man had shown him Moğollar. "You'll regret it if you don't buy this record," he had said. And Hasan had bought it. And he hadn't regretted it.

But did he want to listen to it now?

No.

He picked up Cem Karaca. *Nem Kaldı*. When had he bought this record? The day he received his first paycheck. He had become a teacher. He was assigned to Samsun. He got his first paycheck and went straight to the record store. And he bought Cem Karaca. Because Cem Karaca was his youth. He was his rebellion. He was his hope.

But did he want to listen to it now?

No.

He picked up Barış Manço. *2023*. When had he bought this record? After he married Nagihan. They had returned from their honeymoon. And Barış Manço had released a new album. And Hasan had bought it. Because Barış Manço was his joy. He was his childhood. He was his innocence.

But did he want to listen to it now?

No.

Every record was a memory. But none of them were right for right now.

Because Hasan didn't want to listen to the past right now. He wanted to listen to the present. But which music was the present?

It was twelve o'clock. Midnight. The Yuvam Apartmanı had gone completely silent. The street was completely empty. Only the sound of a distant car, a dog barking. And Hasan was sitting on the floor, among the records, all alone.

He looked out the window. The streetlight created a reflection on the glass. And in that reflection, Hasan saw his own face. A tired face. An indecisive face. But not unhappy.

Just... a searching face.

Maybe Nagihan was right. Maybe he wasn't picking a record. Maybe he was avoiding picking a record. Because picking a record meant deciding on something. And deciding meant letting go of the other options. And maybe Hasan didn't want to let go of the other options.

But no. That wasn't true. Because Hasan made decisions every day. At work, at home, in life. He didn't shy away from making decisions. He just... wanted to make the right decision.

And what was the right record?

It was one o'clock. Hasan was still on the floor. The records were spread around him. Some were open, some were closed. Some had their inner sleeves sticking out. Some covers were leaning sideways. It was like a battlefield. And Hasan was sitting in the middle of that battlefield like a defeated general.

He picked up Erkin Koray. *Elektronik Türküler*. He loved this record very much. Erkin's guitar, that psychedelic, experimental, brave guitar. But did he want to listen to Erkin now? To listen to Erkin, one had to be a little adventurous. A little brave. And was Hasan brave right now?

He picked up Johnny Cash. *At Folsom Prison*. He pulled out the cover. Johnny's black eyes, that melancholic, deep, rock and roll voice. Hasan knew this record. Everyone knew it. But did he want to listen to Johnny now? To listen to Johnny Cash, one had to be a little broken. A little rebellious. A little familiar with death, too. And was Hasan broken right now?

Maybe.

But not enough.

Johnny's voice, the deep, cracked voice of an old man, was looking at Hasan. It was as if Johnny knew. As if Johnny knew all this indecision, all this searching, all this agony of choice that Hasan had been going through all night. And Johnny, with those black eyes, was saying this to Hasan: "Son, don't make a choice. Don't make a choice because no

choice is right. No choice is enough. No choice will save you. But choose anyway. Because not choosing is worse than choosing."

Hasan examined the cover. Johnny's face, those furrowed brows, that heavy gaze. Yes, Johnny knew this. Johnny had made many choices in his life. Most of them wrong. But Johnny had chosen. And Johnny had lived.

But Hasan wasn't ready to be Johnny yet.

He put it back.

He didn't know.

He put it back.

Then he picked up Selda Bağcan. *İnce İnce Bir Kar Yağar*. He loved this record very much. But did he want to listen to Selda now? To listen to Selda, one had to be a little rebellious. A little angry. And was Hasan angry right now?

No.

He put it back.

Then he picked up Zülfü Livaneli. *Yo!* He loved this record very much. But did he want to listen to Zülfü now? To listen to Zülfü, one had to be a little thoughtful. A little deep. And was Hasan deep right now?

Maybe.

But not enough.

He put it back.

It was two o'clock. Hasan stood up, went to the kitchen, drank some water. Then he returned. To the records. And he sat down again.

He was tired now. But he didn't want to give up. Because giving up meant being defeated. And Hasan didn't want to be defeated. He was going to pick a record. He would definitely pick one.

But which one?

He picked up Ajda Pekkan. *Süperstar*. He liked this record. But he liked the A-side. Not the B-side. And liking half of a record wasn't enough.

He picked up Agnus Dei. A classical spiritual piece. He pulled out the cover. Designed with black and gold colors, an image of a church window. Hasan hadn't listened to this record much. But he knew this music would take you to other places. Past midnight, at two o'clock, a man with exhaustion seeping into his bones—maybe this was exactly what he needed. Maybe tonight, at this hour, Hasan wanted to be spiritual. Maybe he wanted to surrender himself to meditation. Maybe music could be a prayer, not a choice.

He examined the cover. The light of the church window, that soft, holy light. Yes, maybe this could be it. Maybe this could be exactly the right record for right now.

But then he stopped. No. Not yet. The night wasn't over yet. The night still had much to say. And Hasan wasn't ready to pray yet. He still wanted to make a choice. He still wanted to decide. He still wanted to be human.

He put it back.

He put it back.

He picked up Fikret Kızılok. *Zaman Zaman*. He loved this record very much. But Fikret was the music of loneliness. And was Hasan lonely? Yes, he was lonely right now. But did he want to listen to his loneliness?

No.

He put it back.

He picked up Tunç Başaran. *Karanlıkta*. He loved this record very much. But Tunç was the music of sorrow. And was Hasan sorrowful? No. He was just indecisive.

He put it back.

He picked up Edip Akbayram. *Nedir Ne Değildir*. He loved this record very much. But Edip was heavy music. And did Hasan want to listen to heavy music? He didn't know.

He put it back.

It was three o'clock. The night had reached its deepest point. The Yuvam Apartmanı was sleeping. Samsun was sleeping. İlkadım was sleeping. Only Hasan was awake. By the records. Still unable to choose.

And at that moment, Hasan realized that the issue was no longer the record.

The issue was how time passed.

The issue was how an evening turned into night.

The issue was how a man got lost among records.

Because Hasan wasn't picking a record. He was stopping time. He was prolonging the moment. He was slowing down life.

And maybe he needed this.

Maybe everyone needed moments like this. Moments where they did nothing, just existed. Moments where they didn't decide, just thought. Moments where they didn't choose, just looked.

And Hasan was in such a moment now.

Among the records, in the middle of the night, all alone.

And this wasn't bad.

In fact, it was good.

It was four o'clock. Hasan was still on the floor. But he wasn't rummaging through the records anymore. He was just sitting, thinking.

What was he thinking about?

Nothing.

Everything.

He was thinking about life. He was thinking about the past. He was thinking about the future. But most of all, he was thinking about the present.

Now, this moment, this night, this living room, this light, this silence.

And these records.

These hundred records. Each one a life. Each one a story. Each one a moment.

And Hasan was now lost among these moments.

But this being lost wasn't a bad kind of being lost. It was a beautiful being lost. Because Hasan was finding himself now. Among the records, among the memories, among the music.

It was five o'clock. A slight brightness had begun outside. The sun hadn't risen yet, but the night wasn't entirely night anymore either. That strange, in-between time. Neither night nor day.

Just... a transition.

Then, in the corner of the shelf, he saw a colorful cover. *Christmas Hits*. He pulled out the cover. Red and green colors, snowflakes, the sound of bells, joy. The Christmases of his childhood. His mother, his father, the tree, the presents. Back then, music wasn't just music. Music was love. Music was safe. Music was home.

Hasan examined the cover. Yes, this record reminded him of his childhood. But did he want his childhood right now? Did he want joy right now? Did he want Christmas right now?

Maybe. But not yet. It wasn't winter yet. It wasn't Christmas yet. It wasn't childhood yet.

He put it back.

But before taking the cover out, he took one more look. That colorful, cheerful, warm cover. Yes, maybe when winter came. Maybe in December. Maybe then. But not right now. Not for this night, for this silence.

Hasan stood up, went to the window, and looked outside. The street was still empty. But the sky was changing. From black to gray, from gray to blue. Slowly. Silently.

And right at that moment, a sound came from afar.

The sound of the call to prayer.

The morning azan.

In the *Saba* makam.

That deep, sorrowful, beautiful makam.

Hasan stood and listened. The sound of the call to prayer passed over the apartment building, over the street, over the city. And as Hasan listened to that sound, he suddenly realized.

The night was over.

It was morning.

And he still hadn't picked a record.

He lifted his head, turned around, and looked at the pile of records. And suddenly he burst into laughter.

A loud, sincere, real laugh.

Because the situation was funny. It really was funny. A man who got up at seven in the evening saying "I'm just going to look for a record," had looked for a record until the morning call to prayer. And he still hadn't picked one.

This was funny.

This was very funny.

And Hasan was laughing now. He was laughing at himself. He was laughing at his situation. He was laughing at his life.

And as he laughed, he suddenly relaxed.

Because it wasn't important anymore. Which record he chose wasn't important. The right record wasn't important. The perfect choice wasn't important.

Because the night was already over. The ceremony had already been broken. Seriousness had already surrendered to comedy.

And Hasan was free now.

For the first time, truly free.

He bent down among the records. And picked up the first one that came to his hand.

He didn't even look.

He just took it.

Then he looked.

And he smiled.

Bariş Manço. *Disco Manço*.

Of course.

Of course *Disco Manço*.

After all those heavy, deep, serious records. After all those Cem Karaca, Selda Bağcan, Zülfü Livaneli records. After all that sorrow, rebellion, and thought.

Disco Manço.

The most cheerful, the most playful, the most fun record.

And Hasan understood now that this was the right choice. Maybe the most right choice.

Because towards morning, at the end of the night, in the middle of exhaustion, what did a person need?

Joy.

Light.

Life.

And *Disco Manço* was exactly that.

He took the record out of its sleeve. Held it carefully. Its black, glossy surface gave off a slight sheen in the first light of morning. He placed it on the record player. Lifted the needle. Spun the record. Lowered the needle.

A slight crackle.

Then silence.

Then music.

Drums.

Bass guitar.

Synthesizer.

And Barış Manço's voice:

"çıştıkiçıştıkiçıştıkiçıştıkiçışss... GAMZEEDEEEYİM DEVAAM BUULMAAM GARIİBİM BİİR YUVAAA BUULMAAM..."

Hasan smiled.

Right at that moment, the bedroom door cracked open. Nagihan poked her head out. Her hair was messy, her eyes sleepy. But there was a smile on her lips.

"Finally?" she said.

"Finally," said Hasan.

"Look at that. Disco at dawn."

"Yes."

"If you had said this in the first place, I would have picked it."

Hasan laughed. "I know."

Nagihan came out of the room, walked up to Hasan, and hooked her arm through his. They stood together. They listened to the music. The first light of morning was seeping in through the window. The street was slowly waking up. The birds had started to sing.

And on the fourth floor of the Yuvam Apartmanı, in the living room, by the record player, Hasan and Nagihan were listening to *Disco Manço*.

And this was a perfect choice.

Maybe the most perfect choice of the night.

Because sometimes, the rightest record is the most unexpected record.

Sometimes, the most beautiful music is the most surprising music.

And sometimes, what makes a night beautiful isn't which record you pick, but the time you spend picking that record.

Hasan understood this now.

And he was smiling.

Because he hadn't lost this night.

He had lived this night.

Every second of it.

Every minute of it.

Every hour of it.

Among the records, among the memories, among the music.

And now, in the first light of morning, accompanied by *Disco Manço*, arm in arm with his wife, he was still smiling.

Because this was life.

Small moments.

Small choices.

Small happinesses.

And a record.

Just a record.

But a night spent picking that record.

An unforgettable night.

A perfect night.

A *Disco Manço* dawn.