

INTERVIEW WITH NADIRE DIDA

Pristina | July 10 and October 8, 2014

Duration: 11:43 minutes

Present:

1. Nadire Dida (Speaker)
2. Donjeta Berisha (Interviewer/ Camera)
3. Jeta Rexha (Interviewer)
4. Kaltrina Krasniqi (Camera)
5. Ben Dida (Ms. Dida's grandson)

Transcription notation symbols of non-verbal communication:

() – emotional communication

{ } – the speaker explains something using gestures.

Other transcription conventions:

[] – addition to the text to facilitate comprehension

Footnotes are editorial additions to provide information on localities, names or expressions.

Death

We were playing in the garden, it was the month of *fror*.¹ Yes, the sun. There also was snow. My father asked for peaches, *şeftali*.² They sent me to my aunt to get them, I got them. He just slightly... {Moves her hands as if she was eating}. He died and put his head on my lap {touches her legs}. I wasn't scared, I didn't know what that was. But then, I don't know if it's a tradition of yours [addresses the people present], of our religion Islam, they washed my father in the garden. And now my aunt, my father's sisters said, "Come and kiss your father's hand." He was a corpse. Not my brother! They were sparing my brother. My aunts took me, I went. And his hand was like this {shows her hands} and this finger {touches her finger} it was something like this, the color was like this {points to the carpet}, a bit darker. A corpse. I was very scared there, I just took it, and I didn't kiss it. But for years, a year for sure, that place.... Because in order to go to the street we needed to pass there, I could see my father and feel the finger when I kissed the hand. My aunts, my father's sister, told me to kiss it.

Love

My husband was the editor-in- chief of the newspaper *Rilindja*. He was an intellectual, young. He invited me for lunch at Asllan Fazliu's. He was Sedat's friend, my husband Sedat. I went. Some girls went out with boys, walking in the korzo.³ And I never went out. We had lunch, then they asked my husband, "Sedat bre⁴! Come on Sedat, do you have a girlfriend?" "No, no, no. Go away! Go! Go!" said my husband. "Speak, come on, tell us. Do you have a crush on someone here?" He was embarrassed and at some point said, "Well, there's a girl. But you know what? I am staying away from her, she might be bourgeois because she dresses very neatly." I didn't have a father and I wasn't bourgeois, but I was very neat. "Uhh..." they said, "forget the bourgeois, you've chosen a very nice girl."

I was a school teacher. He wrote me a card, a photograph of the very first flowers that bloom in the spring, here said {she makes the card with the back of her hand}, "I finally decided to write you." Do you

¹ February in old Albanian.

² Dried peaches, a Turkish delicacy

³ The main pedestrian street, where people walk back and forth and socialize.

⁴ Colloquial: used to emphasize the sentence.

understand me? [Addresses the people present] “And to tell you that I sincerely love you” (laughs). [It came] in a beautiful envelope, a closed envelope. I took it, but how to read it in class? There were too many students, the class was too full to open [the card] and read it. I was very curious about what he wrote (laughs). Did you also do it in the middle...? Just like that, the first flowers of spring, white ones. On the other side, no “Dear,” shameful! (Laughs.)

He was a bit taller, a normal height. He was a bit blonde or so. I had a classmate, she said “Come on, let’s go out!” We didn’t use to go out in the korzo. My mother wouldn’t let me go out and wander in the korzo {moves her finger in negation}. We decided [to walk] from the school *Elena Gjika* to the korzo. Just the two of us. Sedat came behind us. He finally said, “May I accompany you?” Very embarrassing. But the girl who was with me walked away. While we were walking he said, “I have written you...” I have written you [using the formal address] (laughs) “...a card, I don’t know whether you have received it. Did you receive it?” I said “Yes, I received it.” And he kept walking with me. And the other girl, she walked away! It was just the two of us. I said, “I can’t decide.” He says, “No I want to ask for your hand.”

I rang the bell. “Where have you been till now?” I said, “I’m here.” She said, “No, you didn’t come from school now.” I had a sister, she wasn’t married, but she was older than I, she said, “Hey you, do you have a boyfriend?” (Laughs) “Yes,” I said, “to be honest.”

My sister, who was older, used to do a lot of... embroidery and this kind of things. I was disgusted. I said to her, “I don’t want any handkerchief,” they used to send them to the in-laws. Do you know who the in-laws are? [She addresses the people present] I had to send boshqa⁵ to my father in-law, to the mother in-law gold and rings and so on... I knew that Sedat’s family wasn’t rich, they were poor. His father was a tailor. I said, “I don’t want to.” Uhh this was welcoming to my mother. Ah no, don’t forget! You had to be a bride, wear makeup, and wear dimia⁶ and so on... [She addresses her nephew] Ben, when one gets married, one must be a bride. I said, “Sedat, I a bride, and welcome the women here? Never! If your mother asks me...” I said this too, “...If your mother asks me to be a bride...” And the brides used to stand at the end of the room {she points to the other side of the room}, at the receiving line. There’s the door, and they did this {places her hands on her stomach}, whoever came inside, she had to get up {she gets up} and do this {moves her hands in a welcoming sign}.

So we decided, we went to Skopje. We stayed in Skopje, in Hotel Bristol. I remember we stayed there four days. Now I wasn’t going to my house, I went to Sedat’s house (laughs). “Sedat, if your mother asks...” We stayed at the hotel four days. “If your mother asks me to be a bride, to kiss hands, I’ll run away during the night and return to my house.”

Birth

There was a room in the apartment provided by the state. One room and a bed. One room and a pantry, the pantry- kitchen. I didn’t know anything, I didn’t know how to cook. And Sedat was very happy that we got the apartment. When we went home, it was very windy and cold.

⁵ Embroidered sheets used to wrap up presents.

⁶ Billowing pants, Turkish style.

There's no menstruation! It used to be regular, now there's no menstruation. And since there was no menstruation, there was a baby (laughs). I went to the doctor. I was very embarrassed, I felt very ashamed at the gynecologist. She said, "Very well. You have regular menstruation, do you have it now?" I said "No, I don't." "You're pregnant, and it is the third month!" {She shows three fingers}. Uh... my mother in-law was happy. Do you know who the mother in-law is? [Addresses the people present] "Uh very well..." My neighbors came, "Uh, hopefully it's a boy" (laughs.) It was embarrassing, they wanted me to have a boy.

Donjetë Berisha: And how old were you then?

Nadire Dida: I was 18 when I got married, and then.... nine months (laughs).