

## Fighting Against Fate

*Melis Borovali, Izmir American Collegiate Institute*

'Oh no' I mumble to myself as I realize what time of the year is approaching. It is the time of year I detest the most. The four days of November 27 to November 30. It is the 'Kurban' Holiday, the Holiday of Sacrifice. With the religion Islam, during the Holiday of Sacrifice, sheep are sacrificed to give meat to people who are less fortunate than ourselves. In theory I think it is a noble thing to help people who are needy and less fortunate, and even though I give great importance to volunteer work and community service, this holiday has never appealed to me.

Sheep are sold unauthorized all around the country and many of the people who buy them are ignorant. During these three days the waters of the beautiful Bosphorus in Istanbul is dyed red from all the blood. Even though there are regulations concerning the manner of slaughtering, many people do not obey them. Picture it. A man holding a huge knife, a poor helpless sheep crying in utter fear as children are running around. The man then slits the sheep's neck and blood oozes all over. The sheep is lucky if it dies instantly. The children running around see this sight and they are traumatized for a life time. Some in a disturbing way, some just get used to the fact that animals are objects to be slaughtered. These sheep go through so much that you are forced to wonder if the people inflicting such pain upon them are actually human. Some break their legs, some hang them on trees, some saw through the bone in their neck while they are still alive...

The saddest part is that these people actually think they are doing something good. This slaughtering is not a part of our religion but an act of

## *Fighting Against Fate - Melis Borovali 2*

tradition. Hundreds of years ago one person misinterpreted the Quran and now millions of people do the same thing every year. Shockingly, I became aware of this unhumane slaughtering only two years ago and when I fully comprehended what was happening to these poor sheep I knew I had to do something. Since this is a religious holiday, therefore a sensitive issue, I was very limited on how to advocate my case, so I started by reading the Quran. I thought I should approach this incident in a religious aspect so that I could enlighten people, or so I thought I would. By reading the part of the Quran about the Sacrifice and after numerous talks with my school religion teacher I at last knew the truth. The main goal of the Holiday is not that as ignorant people say 'spilling the blood of the sheep' but indeed, helping the poor and giving them the chance to eat meat at least once a year. Sounds sensible right? Right, but now I would have to explain this to people and try to shatter a tradition that has been going on for hundreds of years. Firstly I started with the lady who works in our house. I started by explaining what my religion teacher had told me and that killing these sheep in such conditions is not right. She did not accept this and stubbornly kept saying that yes, the holiday is about helping the poor but is primarily about 'spilling the sheeps blood'. NO I thought, NO NO NO, what is this woman saying! But I knew deep down inside that the majority of the population of my beautiful country was inaccurately conditioned this way.

A dead end I thought, but I would not give up. November had approached and I could think of a last option. The law. I told any one who would ask me, yes I would report them if I saw any of them slaughtering sheep. I was called overly sentimental, and even a nonbeliever. Some people though the same as I but gave in to the fact that it was too common a thing to go against. I can not openly do something I thought, but I can save at least one life. So I got all of the money

*Fighting Against Fate - Melis Borovali 3*

which I had collected over the years and went to a place that sold authorized sheep. My sheep was young and I truly loved him. Our gardener and I made him a little hut in the garden where he would stay. I wished for him to live a happy life, to give him a chance that so many sheep do not get. My utopia did not last long. After two weeks I noticed my sheep was drastically losing weight. I immediately called the veterinarian and they said my sheep had the plague. The Black Plague. One of the most dangerous and deadly diseases a herd animal could get. I was shocked. I called the place where I had bought my sheep and asked them how a sheep they sold, which was legally supposed to be supervised by a veterinarian, could be diseased. They quickly said they would send their own veterinarians and see what the case was. They came and they said that my sheep had a cold. A cold. Right. They also quickly said that they would give my money back and take the sheep back very urgently. NO I said, don't you dare try to. I knew what they would do to my sheep if they took him back. They would either sell him to someone or kill him themselves. I called my own veterinarian whom I trusted and asked what I could do. He said that the plague was not a disease a herd animal could survive but still gave some medication I could try. I gave him medication for a while, but could tell they were not working. In the end we had to put my sheep to sleep. Even though I knew I was doing the right thing by putting my poor sheep out of his misery, I still felt like I had not reached my primary goal.

What the gardener later on said made me realize that the journey I was on was not a easy one. He said that because I had not sacrificed my sheep in the way ' Allah wanted ', Allah had taken his life in an other way. To stay calm in that state I had to muster up all my will power and through clenched teeth told him that no, he was wrong. Immediately after that, I thought that I needed someone much more influential and powerful than me, a seventeen year old teenage girl,

*Fighting Against Fate - Melis Borovali 4*

to be able to get the attention of all these people, represented by the gardener. I wrote an e-mail to the President of the Secretary of Religious Affairs explaining this problem and that if he were to give a speech about this, the problem would be solved. Sadly, I got no answer but a month later I saw in the newspaper that he gave an interview concerning this matter, which made me think that maybe my e-mail did actually have a part in this.

In conclusion, this slaughter has been going on for long enough and it is time that someone says no to a tradition that brings shame on such a beautiful country. It is a problem that can not be solved with flyers or protests, but with education and awareness. I do face major setbacks, but I will not give up and will keep fighting for this cause. Even if I am able to save one sheep a year, a life is a life and it is worth everything I do for it.

*Fighting Against Fate - Melis Borovali 5*

My dear sheep Mentos, in his hut in our garden.

