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## The Businessman

**Yakup Almelek**
**Alvin Parmar, translator**
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Developed nations thrive on money, fame, and success. Fuel for the ego, these three attributes lead to material enrichment as well as happiness. That's what we're conditioned to value as we mature. Imagine obtaining the wealth and influence you dream of, and then learning you're dying of an incurable disease. With time running out and knowledge that everything earned on this earth cannot depart with the spirit, the real meaning of existence overrides the overachiever who had everything covered. Lofty aspiration has no useful purpose to a sick body.

The Businessman presents the story of a middle-aged rich man plunged headlong into this devastating predicament—terminal illness. In Yakup Almelek's fatalistic scenario, Aydin learns who he loves and who he hates, where he thrives and where he flounders. With a limit on his days, he seeks the genuine inspirations, opposed to the artificial motivations, that bring out the best of his personal qualities. While hoping for a miraculous cure, he makes decisions most would not make, for reasons they cannot comprehend. He only knows his body will not survive, so he travels to a quaint guesthouse in a tiny village in Sicily to reunite with his soul. There he meets a beautiful woman and discovers the concept of abiding love without money attached.

The Businessman was the first of Almelek's plays published in Turkey and the first translated into English. Staged by the Complete Theatre Company in New York in October 2009, this work is a reflection of the playwright's observations about business. He graduated from the School of Economics and Commerce in Istanbul and went on to found his own company in 1967. Born in Ankara, Turkey, in 1936, this dramatist has seen three of his plays staged, and one of his short stories, titled "Five Lira a Week," adapted to film.

The empty wealth theme has been presented in countless ways by writers worldwide, but Almelek's play does not succumb to irritating platitudes and inept moralizing. Though he begins with a familiar backdrop, he gives his protagonist a nonconforming way of dealing with serious illness. With a caustic, humorous demeanor, Aydin delivers an enlightening view of the global economy and its sophisticated coldness. Almelek's work will cause the most objective, level-headed entrepreneur to reconsider a stereotypical textbook agenda in life. It may be time to rewrite the way we do daily business.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (July 12, 2010)

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