

The Needle Man: Cindy Davies

As newlyweds, my husband Harvey and I lived in a small town in Turkey. Although it was the late 1960's there were still some 'quaint' old customs.

One was the 'needle man'. This was a person, always a man, who was employed at the local pharmacy to give injections to the sick.

We had lived in Zonguldak for six months and I taught English language privately. One of my students was a paediatrician called Şule. She was desperate to upskill her English and emigrate to the United States.

That first winter I got a really bad dose of flu and bronchitis. Our own doctor came to visit and gave Harvey a prescription. It turned out that the script was for an injection in my *bottom*. Harvey was told that the 'needle man' would be at our house at five that evening to do the deed.

I was 23 years old and was horrified at the thought of a strange Turkish man with no medical qualifications, viewing my rear end. 'Go and stop him,' I croaked. 'I'd rather die!'

Harvey rushed down the hill to the town centre and into the pharmacy. The pharmacist didn't want to cancel the appointment because I was so sick.

And then my student Şule waltzed into the shop. She heard what was going on and pulled rank on the pharmacist. She took the dreaded needle from 'the man' and appeared at my door with Harvey 10 minutes later and did the injection.

Thank you Şule—wherever you are now, I'll *never* forget you!

Cindy Davies (author of *The Afghan Wife* and *The Revolutionary's Cousin*)

