

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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MY SWEETHEART (VESİKALI YARİM)

1968

Lütfi Ö. Akad

Overview

Vesikalı Yarım is considered one of the cult films of Turkish cinema history. Although the film is based on melodrama patterns, which is a prevalent genre in Yeşilçam, it is an original work beyond these patterns in many aspects.

The narration's specifications have rare features compared to the other films of the period. In popular Yeşilçam films, the narration is often based on open and lengthy dialogues, and the finale is closed. In this film, the dialogues are extremely economical and straightforward. Contrary to Yeşilçam narratives, the depth of knowledge is limited; and the protagonists' background information is withheld. Moreover, the closing of the narrative is open-ended. Akad adopted a realistic style in mise-en-scene, cinematography, and fiction.

Vesikalı Yarım was referred to in different times and contexts in Turkish popular culture and art: From newspaper and magazine articles to popular culture reviews, cinema reviews to literature. Nobel literature prize-winning novelist Orhan Pamuk refers to this film in a chapter of *The Black Book* (1990). Thus, Vesikalı Yarım has an important place in cinema and the cultural memory of Turkish society. It is also known that the screenplay is adapted into cinemas of different countries.

The screenplay was written by Safa Önal, who wrote for numerous productions of the period, and the film was produced on behalf of Şeref Film company.

People

<i>Halil</i>	He is a humble man who runs a greengrocery store with his father in Istanbul.
<i>Sabiha</i>	A lonely woman who makes a living by entertaining clients in a tavern.
<i>Müjgan</i>	She is a close friend of Sabiha who works with her at the tavern.
<i>The Old Man</i>	Halil's father.

Synopsis

Halil is a man who works as a greengrocer with his father in one of Istanbul's old neighborhoods. One evening he goes to a tavern with his friends to have fun. There he meets beautiful hostess Sabiha. Sabiha and Halil soon fall in love. They start living together. Halil quits his job with his father. Sabiha walks away from her job at the bar. One day, Sabiha learns that Halil is married with children. Although her trust in Halil has been undermined, Sabiha does not want to believe it is accurate. She cannot ask Halil what the truth is because she is afraid her happiness will be disturbed. She tries to get away from him so she does not suffer. Halil cannot understand why Sabiha is moving away from him. Sabiha leaves Halil. Halil, who wants to find Sabiha and talk, accidentally stabs a man in a fight. Sabiha promises to wait for Halil, who is in jail. Only in time does she grasp the impossibility of this love. She tries to break away from Halil. Halil finds Sabiha working in the bar the day he gets out of prison. He stabs Sabiha, who humiliates him. Believing that this relationship is over, Halil returns to his family in shame. While in the hospital, Sabiha realizes that Halil loves her very much and decides to take him back no matter what. Sabiha comes to Halil's shop and sees him busy with his children and his work. She returns with sorrow, renouncing her decision.

Scenes

Opening Halil and his friends bring the vegetables they buy to the grocery stores in a horse-drawn carriage. They settle to go to a new tavern that night.

In the shop Halil works with pleasure, organizes his shop, takes care of the customers. His father goes to the mosque to pray.

At the tavern Halil and his friends enter a tavern. They do not want to buy a drink for the woman who comes up to them and works there. They talk about the lifestyles and relationships of the women

who work in the bar. His friends want to take Halil somewhere else. He does not want to go. Halil's friends leave the tavern. Halil continues to drink alone.

Encounter When Halil raises his head, he sees the beautiful woman standing in front of him and smiling. Sabiha, who works there, wants to sit next to him. Halil allows her. Sabiha then moves on to the other table. As the tavern closes, Sabiha comes back to Halil.

Party They go to another place together, and spend the night having fun at the club. In the early morning, Halil drives Sabiha home. Sabiha invites him to her house. Halil abstains and enters nervously. They chat. Halil says it was his first time at the tavern.

Greengrocery Halil goes to the store late at noon to work. His father calls him when he goes to the mosque. Halil does not go. He is absent-minded. His friend comes. They talk about the evening, but Halil does not mention Sabiha.

At night Sabiha tells her friend at the bar about Halil. Meanwhile, Halil arrives with a basket in his hand. Sabiha laughs as he brings a basket of fruits as a gift. Halil is upset. Then, Sabiha apologizes to him. Halil offers to be with her. Sabiha refuses him first; they go out together at night at the close.

Lovers Halil falls in love with Sabiha. He leaves his work. Sabiha's boss sends his man to pick up Sabiha from her house. Sabiha makes up the lie that she is sick. Halil stays at Sabiha's. They eat together. Halil buys gifts for Sabiha. They go out together in the evenings.

Convince Sabiha's friend tries to convince her to go back to work. She advises that there is time to make money, and she should get rid of Halil. However, Sabiha is pleased.

Concern Halil does shopping for Sabiha's home. When he mentions his father, Sabiha asks Halil if his father knows the situation. Halil worries that the owners of the casino will not leave Sabiha alone.

Happiness Sabiha and Halil are happy together at home.

At the dinner Sabiha buys a cigarette case from the bazaar for Halil. Halil tells her he has come to all those places with Sabiha for the first time. Sabiha wonders about Halil's pensive and thoughtful state. She asks if he is happy with her. She worries.

Work Sabiha tells Halil not to worry about money because he does not work. Halil gets angry; he says he does not need her money.

A new job Halil sets up new work. He left his father's side and set up a stall in the market.

Threat The men from the tavern attack and threaten Halil. They believe he holds Sabiha by force. Halil fights. When the police arrive, he runs. The police visit Sabiha. The police officer threatens her not to cause trouble.

At the market Halil sees his father in the distance while talking to his friend. His father disappears without saying anything. Halil is embarrassed and saddened.

Doubt One night, Sabiha's friend Müjgan learns from Halil's friends that he is married. She tells Sabiha. Sabiha does not want to believe it. She says they made up lies to separate the two, but she is sad and worried.

At the table When Halil arrives in the evening, Sabiha asks about marriage at dinner. Nevertheless, she cannot ask if what she hears is true.

Quarrel Halil sees Sabiha at the market the next day and follows her. She talks to Halil in anger, but Halil does not understand what she means. He does not tell her anything. He says, "My home is your side." Sabiha leaves Halil. Halil is upset; he goes to a bar at night.

Fear Müjgan presses Sabiha to find out the truth. Sabiha is scared. She cannot dare to ask Halil the truth.

Face up The next day, Sabiha goes to Halil's father's shop to find out the truth. The old man understands the situation. He asks how Halil is doing.

The reason His friend advises the confused Halil to ask why Sabiha wants to leave. Halil comes home to find out what is going on; he does not find Sabiha at home. He goes to the tavern. Sabiha gets rid of him. However, Sabiha runs after Halil.

The letter Sabiha leaves a letter to Halil saying she wants to break up.

The search Halil searches for Sabiha at her old place, but cannot find her. Halil suspects that there is someone else in Sabiha's life. He wants Sabiha back. He asks if they know where she is.

The fight A fight breaks out between Halil, who finds Sabiha in another tavern, and the tavern's man who tries to stop Sabiha from leaving. Halil stabs the man. Sabiha and Halil run away together.

Talk Sabiha says this relationship will not work, but she cannot resist and promises to wait for Halil. Halil surrenders to the police. Although her former boss warns Sabiha, she refuses to work again.

In prison Halil is pensive and grieving in prison. He waits for Sabiha's visit.

Impossible love Sabiha starts drinking again. She tells her friend her unhappiness, the impossibility of this love, and the necessity of separation. She does not visit Halil. Halil writes letters to Sabiha.

Release The day Halil gets out of prison, Sabiha decides to start working. When Halil is released, he goes to the casino to see Sabiha. Sabiha rejects Halil. Halil stabs Sabiha. However, Sabiha tries to protect him. He tells the police it was an accident.

Grief and return Halil wanders around Istanbul all day thinking. In the evening, after a long break, he returns home to his family. His wife and children welcome him. His children are happy to see him again. He gazes pensively out the window.

Regret Sabiha believes that Halil loves her, but she caused him to be convicted. She regrets refusing him. When she recovers, she tells her friend she wants to continue to live with Halil. She believes that Halil will leave anything for their love.

Return Halil is in shame against his family. He strives to get back to his former life, to repair what happened. He starts to work again.

Sorrow Sabiha is sure that Halil will return to her. She arrives at his shop to pick him up. However, she sees that Halil is taking care of his children. She gives up her decision. She returns with bursting into tears.

Themes

Anxiety Vesikali Yarim is also a film of anxiety and restlessness. Halil is attracted to Sabiha. He is intriguingly anxious and restless, although at first, the reasons are not explicit. He is confused and nervous. The narrative provided by the film hides the causes of this anxiety and hesitation from the audience. We do not know any more than Sabiha knows about Halil.

Sabiha is also affected by this anxious state of Halil. Sabiha is uneasy about the problems this may cause in their relationship because she is a bargirl, while Halil's failure to explain his anxious state increases these concerns. Both of the film's protagonists are concerned that their happiness will be disturbed in any way, even though they love each other, and that their relationship will not work.

The rumors that Sabiha hears about Halil increase her concerns. Although she suspects that Halil is lying to her, she is afraid to know the truth. This situation manifests itself in various scenes. When her friend tells Sabiha that she hears Halil is a married man, Sabiha is afraid to face it. She resists her friend's insistence on the discovery of the truth. She says, "*I can't ask. What if he says yes?*"

Halil experiences the same situation at a later point in the plot. Halil, who is afraid that Sabiha will try to get away from him and that she no longer wants him, expresses this situation in the same way: "*I don't ask. What if she says yes?*" The anxiety and unease in the relationship of the two is spread throughout the whole atmosphere of the narrative, with similar situations repeated on several occasions.

Sadness Sadness is a distinct theme in the film. It dominates the overall mood of the film, such as anxiety and restlessness. The mood of both Halil and Sabiha is sad. Sabiha's sadness seems apparent at first. Sabiha depicts a fallen woman who does a job she does not want in a tavern to make a living. The causes for her occasional anger, sarcasm, and sadness seem understandable.

On the other hand, Halil's sadness was depicted more predominantly, although the cause is unknown. Halil often becomes quiet, plunges far away, trying to hide his sadness in Sabiha. While initially suggesting that this was about Sabiha's condition and his separation from his work and father, this sadness's natural causes are revealed later. Thus, Sabiha's sadness increases. The duo's sadness grows and influences the audience.

Hesitation Sabiha wants Halil on the one hand and tries to stay away from him and leave him. Sabiha experiences these tides several times. Because Halil is married, he falters between accepting

Sabiha's idea of separation and not accepting it. He loves Sabiha. At the end of the film, Sabiha wants to return to Halil one last time. However, she still reverses her decision in the film's finale. When she comes to Halil's neighborhood to pick him up, she sees him in the shop with his children and father; she cannot go any further. She does not want to struggle. She returns.

Impossible love Halil is married with children. He has abandoned his family and has not fulfilled his responsibility to them. He leaves his conservative social circle. He is also aware that Sabiha is a person that his conservative environment cannot accept because he is married and her beloved Sabiha is a bargirl. Also, people who have entered her life in the past disturb Sabiha.

While Sabiha is happy when she thinks she has a beautiful relationship, the unexpected information about Halil gives rise to the idea that such an affair with him is impossible to carry. He tells Halil: "Love is not enough. We should have met a long time ago." Sabiha tries to get away from Halil a few times to make the inevitable end quicker, but she also does not want to lose the man she loves. Although Halil initially appeared to have completely severed ties with his family, he understands that the way to make Sabiha no more unhappy is to end this affair. It also seems to improve his increasingly upside-down life because he stabbed a man and later harmed Sabiha.

Passion Sabiha believed she would be happy for a while. However, she is disappointed when she learns that Halil is married. She does not see a future for their relationship. On the one hand, she feels cheated. She thinks Halil will leave her after a while.

However, on the other hand, she believes that he loves her. She does not want to accept this difficult situation. Her heart wants Halil. Despite this, Sabiha makes the first move to end the relationship. Halil suffers from the passion barely. He does not want to leave her when he hears that Sabiha does not want him anymore. He follows Sabiha obsessively. He thinks about her during his time in prison. He goes to Sabiha on the day of his release. He cannot stand it when Sabiha turns him down. He stabs her with anger. Halil is happy with Sabiha but remains at the crossroad of returning to his family and Sabiha's love.

Character Analysis

Halil Halil works in his family's shop in Istanbul's old district and has a quiet life. His life changes when she meets Sabiha in a tavern where he goes with his friends. Halil is a sad and silent character.

Pensive Halil is pensive. When he goes to work late the day after he stays with Sabiha, he is distracted. He thinks about what he is going through. Besides, when he starts living with Sabiha, he sometimes wanders around the city and falls into thoughts. In the narration, the characters' pensive mood, their thoughts are not released to the audience. Halil's attitude first makes Sabiha curious and then provokes her anxiety.

Humble Halil is a humble man who lives a conservative life in one of Istanbul's old neighborhoods. The family works in the grocery store they own and meets with friends nearby. It is understood that Halil rarely goes outside his circle. While wandering with Sabiha in various parts of Istanbul, he says that this is the first he has been there. Halil has never had an affair before. Most of the time, he does not know how to behave. Sabiha warns him not to get too caught up in the alcohol and the fun.

Quiet Halil is a quiet character who hardly speaks to anyone. He rarely expresses his happiness or grief. In contrast to Sabiha's chirpy joy, he is often quiet. He does not tell Sabiha much about his life. He tries to keep the conversations short with people. Sabiha has a hard time getting a word out of him. Upon hearing that Halil is married, Sabiha tries to learn more one evening. She asks at the dinner: "*Marriage must be a good thing, right?*"

Halil: It must be. People should love, and get along.

Sabiha: *Do you want it?*

Halil (hesitates): *With you?*

Sabiha: *Noo, I didn't mean myself.*

Halil: *Don't I want to with you.*

Halil does not say anything else. This moment is where the conversation is ceased.

Halil's silence does not give the viewer much information about him. The knowledge that he is married comes out in the second half of the film, and he never explains anything about it. Furthermore, when he goes out to have fun with his friends, Halil does not say much when they talk all the time.

Moody Halil is a moody and withdrawn person. Although he is happy with Sabiha, he expresses sadness that he cannot take himself. This feature is evident from the night he first goes out with his friends. He wanders alone in the town. He also drinks alone when he is sad. He does not freely express his happiness when he is with Sabiha.

Sabiha Sabiha is a single woman working in a tavern in Beyoğlu, one of Istanbul's nightlife districts. Her job is to entertain clients who are usually men. She is an independence-loving, sarcastic, sometimes cheerful but sometimes a moody character like Halil.

Independent Sabiha is a self-indulgent character, although she has to work in a tavern and entertain men. She does not sit and chat with people she does not like. Even if her boss pushes her, she makes the final decision herself. She suddenly quits her job at the bar, even her boss insists on working. Sabiha, however, makes it clear that she will not work anymore. When she starts working again, she does it not because of anyone's wishes, but only she wishes.

She does not like Halil's questioning attitude when they meet. She gets angry and refuses when Halil, who came back to Sabiha's place the second night, asking whom he should pay to be with her.

Happy Sabiha is as happy as she can be in the early stages of her relationship with Halil. She tells Halil that she has always wanted to be like that. She has the relationship she has dreamed of for a long time. She quits her job at the tavern and spends her time with her boyfriend. She is cheerful. She does not consider going back to work. Sabiha feels like in a real family with Halil when he comes to the Sabiha's apartment, as he has done shopping. She says, "*I love this place now. Before, it was just a shelter.*"

Anxious Sabiha worries that her happiness with Halil will not be long-lasting. Halil's silence and pensiveness cause her anxiety. Shocked by the news that he is married, Sabiha's fears are worsen. Sabiha, whose social position is weak and does not know how to carry on this relationship, sometimes tries to leave Halil but sometimes wants to be with him despite any difficulty. The possibility of being right in her suspicions elevates her anxiety; she can never ask Halil if he is married. Indeed, throughout the film, Halil and Sabiha never speak directly about the hidden problem in their relationship.

Sarcastic Halil arrives at Sabiha's workplace again the next day. He brings a basket of fruit from his grocery for Sabiha. His attitude entertains Sabiha. She mocks about Halil's occupation. In another scene, Sabiha, bored with Halil's questions while at Sabiha's apartment, mocks, "*Do you wanna hear how I fell?*" Finally, when Halil comes out of prison, she tries to push him away by her sarcasm again.



Sabiha is at her apartment



Sabiha and Halil



Halil and Sabiha are in trouble



Halil finds Sabiha at work



Halil looks at the cigarette case (A gift from Sabiha)