



VINTAGE

**THE SEA-CROSSED
FISHERMAN**

YASHAR KEMAL

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About the Book

A tale of greed, hatred and decay from Turkey's legendary novelist Yashar Kemal

Yashar Kemal was an unsurpassed storyteller who brings to life a world of staggering violence and hallucinatory beauty. Kemal's books delve deeply into the entrenched social and historical conflicts that scar the Middle East. At the same time scents and sounds, vistas of mountain and stream and field, rise up from the pages of his books with primitive force.

In a sudden, chance encounter in a coffee-house in a fishing village near Istanbul, Zeynel Celik shoots a local gangster. Only one man intervenes - the village outcast Fisher Selim - and in doing so inadvertently transfers the blame for the murder onto himself. From this one simple act, Zeynel becomes a legendary outlaw in the minds of the people, whereas Fisher Selim, passionate about the sea and haunted by a lost love, is cast as an eccentric oddball. Each is pursued by his own paranoia, memories of the past and hopes for the future, until their paths cross once again on Selim's boat, and their obsessions come to a resolution. Reflective and lyrical, the novel offers insight into the Turkish mentality while drawing universally valid conclusions, and manages to be both brutally savage and deeply humane.

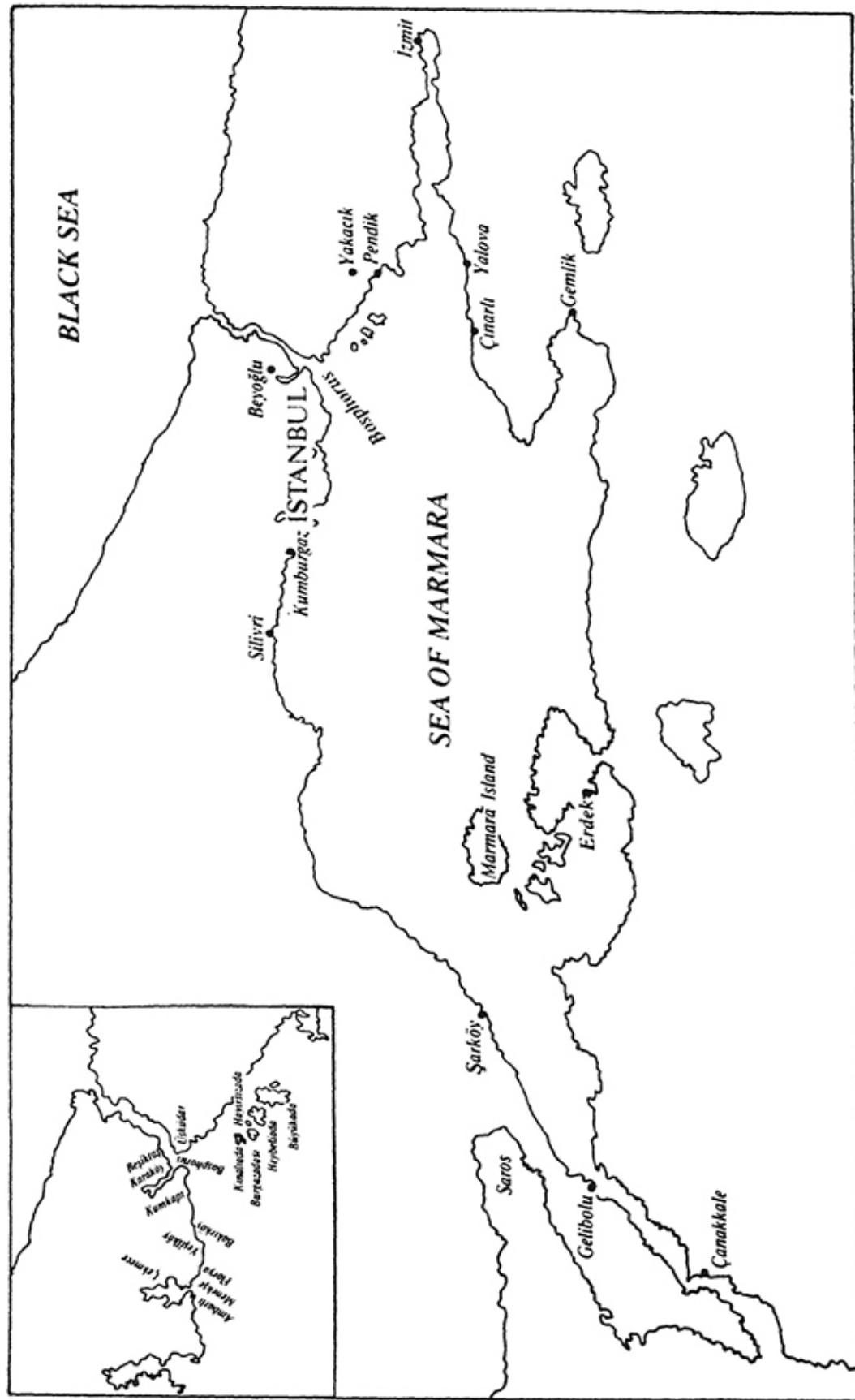
About the Author

Yashar Kemal was born in 1923 in the small village Hemite, which lies in the cotton-growing plains of Chukurova. Later, in Istanbul, he became a reporter on the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* and in 1952 he published a book of short stories, *Yellow Heat*. In 1955 came his first novel *Ince Memed*, published in English under the title *Memed, My Hawk*. This won the Varlik Prize for the best novel of the year. His novels include *Beyond the Mountain* (3 volumes), *The Legend of Ararat*, *The Drumming-Out*, *The Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, *Murder in the Ironsmiths Market* (3 volumes), *To Crush the Serpent*, *The Saga of the Seagull*, *The Birds Have Also Gone*, *Little Nobody* and *The Pomegranate Tree on the Knoll*. Other published works include a volume of *Collected Short Stories, Essays and Political Articles*, *God's Soldiers* (Reports on Delinquent Children), and a novel for the young, *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant*.

Yashar Kemal is married and has one son. His wife, Thilda Kemal, translates his books into English.

By the same author

Memed, My Hawk
The Wind from the Plain
Anatolian Tales
They Burn the Thistles
Iron Earth, Copper Sky
The Legend of Ararat
The Legend of the Thousand Bulls
The Undying Grass
The Lords of Akchasaz
The Saga of a Seagull
The Birds Have Also Gone



PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Letter Approximate pronunciation

- a as in French *avoir*, English *man*
- c j as in *jam*
- ç ch as in *church*
- e as in *bed* or the French *e*
- g as in *goat*
- ğ a soft g that lengthens the preceding vowel and never occurs at the beginning of a word
- h as in *house*
- o like French *eau*
- ö as in German *König*, French eu in *deux*
- s as in *sing*
- ş sh as in *shall*
- u as in *push*
- ü as in German *führer*, French u in *tu*
- y as in *yet*

A glossary of Turkish words that appear in the text may be found at the end of the book.

YASHAR KEMAL

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THE
SEA-CROSSED
FISHERMAN

A novel translated from the Turkish by
Thilda Kemal

VINTAGE

1



The rough-hewn door was kicked wide open, letting in a dusty blast from the mad south wind that was churning up the sea that day, and Zeynel appeared on the threshold, a gun in his hand. He hesitated, but only for a moment. Then, with slow deliberate aim, he pointed the gun at Ihsan and fired shot after shot. The men in the coffee-house froze in their seats.

Ihsan uttered a piercing scream. Blood gushed from his neck and he slipped from his chair to the floor.

Almost in the same instant, Fisher Selim sprang up and seized Zeynel's wrist. He wrenched the gun from his hand, then looked in amazement from the smoking muzzle to the young man who made no attempt to get away. Suddenly, a resounding slap startled us all. Selim's left hand was at Zeynel's collar, while his right pounded away like a sledge-hammer. The gun, no longer smoking now, had rolled under the coffee-range.

At last Selim let go, breathing hard, while Zeynel still cowered there, seemingly quite at a loss. The dead man lay on his side, hands clenched, legs drawn up to his belly, steeped in the blood that had trickled all the way to the door, his long yellow moustache stained with blood, his eyes bulging in a stare of horror and disbelief.

Selim looked at Zeynel wonderingly, as though he were seeing him for the first time, then bent down over the corpse, touched a finger to it and quickly snatched it away, as from a flame. He straightened up and came nose to nose with Zeynel. 'Take this,' he hissed, and spat in his face. Again and again the spittle struck Zeynel, whiplike. Then

Selim staggered drunkenly out of the coffee-house, past the Seagull Casino, and on towards the Florya beaches, oblivious of the waves that crashed like thunder over the asphalt road.

Only then did Zeynel lift his head, as though waking from a dream. He stepped over Ihsan's body, retrieved the gun from under the coffee-range and walked to the door. There he stopped, leaning on the jamb, and gazed at each one of us in turn until his eyes rested on Ihsan. A tinge of astonishment flitted across his face. 'Son-of-a-bitch,' he muttered, 'I'm done for now because of you.' He glared at us all. 'Tell me,' he said, 'you've witnessed everything. What harm did I ever do to that bastard Selim that he should treat me like that?'

No one answered him.

'Speak, damn you! You saw how he shamed me in front of you all. Shouldn't I now do something to him, too? Tell me ... Why don't you speak out? Are you all tombstones?'

He started pacing up and down the coffee-house, taking care not to step in the pools of blood.

'Speak, damn you! Cowards! Just because I'm holding a gun and this wretch is lying there in his blood, you're all tongue-tied, aren't you? Scared spitless! Why don't you answer me, you tombstones? You, Süleyman, look at you, you lumbering lout, you great clumsy bear! Where's all that swagger of yours gone to? You'll be grovelling under the table next and wetting your pants too ...' He gave a mad shout of laughter. 'Who knows, maybe you've done so already and that's why you won't budge.'

He aimed the gun at Süleyman. 'Get up, blunderbuss! Just look at that bulk! You could hack three men out of him.'

Süleyman put his hands on the table and tried to rise, only to fall back helplessly. His face was white as parchment.

'You, Laz Erkan, see if Süleyman's mucked up his pants.'

Laz Erkan seized Süleyman by the arm and hauled him up. He looked at the chair, then dutifully inspected the seat of his pants. 'Unh-unh,' he shook his head. 'He hasn't.'

Zeynel laughed. 'He was so frightened, the old gasbag, he couldn't even move his bowels.'

Süleyman muttered something under his breath and, at that, Zeynel stepped up to him. 'What did you say, what?' He thrust the gun at Süleyman's face. 'Say it again or I'll pump some lead into you too.'

'Don't, Zeynel, my child,' Süleyman breathed as if in a prayer. 'Don't ... There's a God above ...'

Zeynel ground his teeth. 'What? Why, you bastard whose mother I ... So it's a God above when it comes to me, eh? What about you?' And he swung the gun at Süleyman's head as hard as he could. The blood began to stream down Süleyman's face and shirt and gathered in a pool on the table.

'Laz Erkan, wipe that bastard's blood off. He won't croak, never fear. This'll just keep him from the sea for a month so he won't be after catching all the fish of the Marmara in one night.'

Erkan promptly grabbed the napkin from the coffee-house keeper's shoulder and mopped up the blood.

'Wretch!' Zeynel snarled at Süleyman. 'D'you remember how - was it five years ago - once when we were taking fish from the trawl, you stepped on my hand with your hobnailed boot? How the flesh peeled off and the white bone was laid bare? How you laughed, you godless scoundrel ...?'

He went to the door, looked out into the road and swerved back, tackling now another man, then another and another. It was as though he was bent on settling a lifetime's accounts. When he came to me, he smiled bitterly and his eyes filled with tears. 'You've heard it all, brother,' he said mournfully. 'Aren't I human too? Didn't a woman give birth to me like all of you?'

I was silent.

'At least say something, brother. You've been around. You know the ways of the world.'

'What can I say, Zeynel?' His revolver was trained right on my heart.

'Look,' he continued. 'This one's dead, that one's wounded. As for the others, I've got them where they're worse than dead. And now the police will come. But I won't give myself up. See!' He indicated his pockets. They were bulging with bullets. 'I came prepared. I'm not one to let my skin be punctured easily! D'you think Selim's gone to the police?'

'I don't think so,' I replied calmly.

'Now tell me, I haven't done such a bad job, have I?'

'I don't know, Zeynel.'

'He deserved it, the bastard. So did he,' he added, pointing to Süleyman. 'And the others too.' He glanced outside. 'The street lamps are on. Good ... In a little while I may be killed. Who knows how it feels to die ...? That bastard's dead all right, but look at his eyes ...'

Nobody uttered a word. Zeynel switched on the light. Under the naked glare of the huge hundred-and-fifty-watt bulb the men's long yellow faces seemed even longer. Only Laz Erkan was smiling.

'Tell me, brother - you know about such things - would they hang me if I gave myself up? Just because I've killed this son-of-a-bitch and wounded a miserable gasbag? They wouldn't, would they?'

'Who knows ...? Maybe ...'

'Who knows! Maybe!' he mocked me. 'Your kind can be such diplomats!'

At this moment Selim appeared on the threshold and at the sight of him Zeynel was thrown into a panic. He rushed to the door, pushed Selim aside and fled into the night.

'What happened?' Selim asked. 'Haven't the police come yet?'

'Did you call them?' I asked.

'No, I didn't,' he said gruffly.

'Then whatever have you been doing all this time?' old Father Hakki enquired.

Selim ran his hand through his hair. 'Why, Hakki, this gun ... I put out to sea in my boat and fired a hundred shots maybe ... Just to see ... What a gun! Like the Angel of Death ... And then I realized I'd run out of ammunition ... So ... Ah, if I'd had just one bullet left, he'd never have been able to get out of here ...'

The police finally turned up late in the night. I was woken up at home and detained for questioning, together with the whole of Menekşe village. Fisher Selim was there too and I heard him muttering to himself several times: 'Aaah, if only I'd had just one bullet left ...'

2



Ihsan's funeral took place on the following day and all of Menekşe flocked into the new mosque of Cennetmahalle. Ihsan's virtues, his courage, his good looks, his generosity were extolled, while his dubious activities as pimp and bodyguard to Meliha's notorious bawdy house were passed over in silence.

After the funeral we all went down to the coffee-house. Remzi, the only one not to have attended, was outside selling fish, which he had displayed on a large tin sheet. 'I wouldn't go to the funeral of that pimp, that cuckold!' he shouted to the world at large, exhaling a devastating stench of wine. 'Who would attend such a low-down creature's funeral? Only low-down creatures like him ...'

Şaban, the coffee-house keeper, had brewed the tea. It was ready for us, steaming in the slim-waisted gilt-rimmed glasses. Everyone was tired. We sipped our tea in silence. Then some men sat down to play gin rummy, while others paired off at the backgammon boards. Outside, a bright sun flooded the sea, which today was not like water at all, but a rippling expanse of blinding blue sparks that filled you with joy and made you long to sail away to its very limits.

Ibo Efendi leaned on his cane, his chubby face with its grizzled week-old beard rapt in thought. Laz Erkan was scrawling little drawings on a large sheet of paper. He had enormous hands and eyes that squinted slightly. Now and then, laying his ballpoint aside, he looked around expectantly, as if to say: Well, come on, what are you waiting for ...?

There was something heavy in the air, a frustrated, seething impatience. The men seemed to be bursting to talk. It wanted but a little prod to get them going. Remzi's voice could be heard outside against the rat-a-tat of a motorboat. A cock crowed from over Yeşilköy way. The tension was too much for me and I was about to make my escape when Fisher Selim stood up, his tall broad frame reaching almost to the ceiling. The tips of his greying ruddy moustache were twisted to a fine point. His wide brow was deeply furrowed like that of a man who has gone through much in life. A strong chin lent character to the full lips and sunken cheeks, and the large blue eyes shone all the more brightly for the web of wrinkles about them. They were usually narrowed, though, peering steadfastly as if at something which he could never have enough of looking at. He took some coins out of his pocket, put them on the table and buttoned up his brown serge parka. His brown trousers hugged his strong thighs and he was wearing yellow rubber boots. A red sash bound his waist. He strode out with long steps, then, for some reason, poked his head in again. His eyes swept over the men a little haughtily, then met mine, and the semblance of a smile flitted over his face. It seems to me it was at this moment our friendship and his trust really began, the upshot of many years' unspoken sympathy. He turned away and made for the little bridge that leads to one of the public beaches.

An aeroplane roared past, very low above us, followed by the helicopter which flew over the coffee-house every day at this hour, making for Thrace.

'Bastard! Murderer!' Süleyman snarled. 'He's the one who killed Ihsan. He could have snatched that revolver from Zeynel before it went off.'

'Of course he could!' Ibo Efendi concurred, lifting his bearded chin from the cane. 'It was all a put-up job.'

'It was indeed!' Şaban, the coffee-house keeper, agreed. 'I had a good view from here. Selim never moved until

Zeynel had fired. And three times too ...'

Süleyman turned to me. 'Tell me, wasn't it a put-up job? They must have plotted it together.'

'Plotted it together!' old Father Hakki mocked, ignoring Süleyman's black look. 'Why, you heathen, when did you ever see Fisher Selim so much as speak one word to Zeynel?'

'It's Selim who killed Ihsan, not Zeynel,' Süleyman insisted.

Remzi, who had been listening through the door, now strode in angrily, filling the whole room with his sour, wine-laden breath. 'Have you no fear of God, you bastards?' he shouted. 'How dare you slander a man so?'

Atom Salih darted forward. 'Dog!' he hissed. 'Fisher Selim's dog, that's what you are!'

'Dog yourself!' Remzi retorted. They fell on each other with fists and blows. No one attempted to stop them and after a while they left off by themselves and drifted out of the coffee-house.

Ibo Efendi struck his cane on the floor. 'If Fisher Selim had been a better man,' he said, 'Ihsan would have been with us now and not in his grave.'

Şaban brought us all fresh glasses of tea.

'That skinflint Selim killed Ihsan as sure as if he'd fired the shot,' Circassian Yusuf chimed in.

'Of course!' Süleyman said, puffing hard at his cigarette. 'It was all on purpose. Catching Zeynel by the wrist and all that ... Why didn't he tie him up and hand him over to the police?'

'Why did he spit on him?'

'Because it disgusted him even to touch him,' Laz Erkan laughed.

'He was afraid.' Mahmut, who had been sitting in a corner, spoke out for the first time. All eyes turned to him. 'You shouldn't be deceived by his high and mighty airs. He's something of a coward really. Not that he's a bad man,

but he's afraid of things, of the dark and the graveyard. Even of fish and cats and dogs ... Even of himself ...'

'Oh, come on, Mahmut!' I protested. 'That's a bit thick ...'

'But it's true, brother. I swear it. He's not one for talking and I know why. It's fear ties his tongue and makes him stutter. He'll kill himself one day because of that fear.'

'You're making it up!'

'Cross my heart, brother, that man might go crazy with fear.'

Atom Salih burst into the room. 'The mean wretch!' he cried. 'To think we were almost killing each other, Remzi and I, because of him!'

'Have you made it up, then?' Kurdish Hasan asked.

'Of course,' Atom Salih grinned. 'He kissed my hand, so why shouldn't we?'

Remzi's short rattleboned body leaned through the doorway. 'It was him kissed my hand,' he shouted.

'What!'

Salih was about to pounce on him again when Remzi retracted. 'All right, brother, all right, I kissed your hand first.'

'So you did,' Atom Salih said proudly. He took Remzi's arm and, with weaving steps, the two of them made for the tavern across the road.

Tongues were loosened after that. The men began picking Fisher Selim to pieces.

'Does anyone even know where he comes from?'

'Remember when he was sick and I nursed him? Three whole months I cooked soup for him and bought him medicines. And all the while I begged and pleaded with him ... "Look, Selim," I said, "you're in a bad way. Tell me where you've hidden your money ... Isn't it a shame to let all that money rot away uselessly? Look, Fisher Selim, I've been taking care of you all this time, washing you and all ... Even shaving you with my own hand! You're dying anyway ... I'm not asking you for anything. Only show me where the

money is. It's not right that this country's money should go to waste ..." He was at his last gasp, yet still he waved me away. So I picked him up and carried him out to his boat. "You can croak in your own boat," I said, "no need to soil my house!"'

'You're lying, Osman! I remember very well, you never took him out to his boat.'

'I certainly did! But he was back by my hearth the very next morning, moribund as he was. So I fed him for another month ...'

'Well, he paid you quite a tidy sum for it!'

'What? With all those soups I cooked?'

'If he'd died, his boat and everything would have been yours.'

'As though you looked after him for love! How much money did he give you?'

'A mere ten lira! The miser! There never was such a stingy fellow.'

'He'll soak week-old crusts in water and gulp down the mush!'

'He eats only bread and the small fry of his catch ...'

'Gobbling them down all raw, like a seagull!'

'Has anyone seen him eat anything else?'

'Someone gave him an orange once - was it ten years ago or fifteen? He kept it for a whole week, only smelling it. Then at last he peeled it and sliced it very thin and spent all day eating it!'

'A man who's got heaps of money!'

'He doesn't put it in a bank either.'

'Where can he be hiding it?'

'Who knows? Under the sea probably.'

'With seamarks only he knows about.'

'After he got over that illness, it was as if I never existed!'

'Yes, he never even said hello to Osman ...'

'And he took care not to be sick again!'

'Out of pure stinginess!'

‘He’d realized illness is a costly business.’

‘And death too ...’

‘So he’ll never die!’

‘That old handwoven parka of his, he had it on his back when he first came here years ago.’

‘One shirt has to last him seven years at least.’

‘He won’t even wash his underpants for fear they’ll wear out!’

‘Oh, he killed Ihsan all right!’

‘Did you notice how he snatched the revolver from Zeynel’s hand and threw it down? And then ran away?’

‘Just so we shouldn’t do anything ourselves.’

‘The double-crosser!’

‘As tight-lipped as he’s tight-fisted ...’

‘Measuring his words out of a dropper ...’

‘Who’s ever seen the inside of his house, eh?’

‘He won’t let a soul step over the threshold ...’

Süleyman rose, flinging his arms out wide. ‘You all witnessed it. Selim helped Zeynel escape. If the police ...’

‘He actually whisked him out of our hands.’

‘Any one of us could have caught him.’

‘Easily ...’

‘It’s because we all took it for granted that Selim ...’

‘It’s because we were all frozen with fright,’ Laz Erkan broke in. ‘That’s the truth of the matter. Wetting our pants, we were, with that revolver pointed at us!’

‘And Zeynel heaping insults on us all the while ...’

‘The miserable wretch ...’

‘But it was Selim made him do it, that’s certain.’

Süleyman’s head was swathed in a white cloth, like a turban. ‘I was so shocked, it was like an invisible hand was pinning me down.’

‘Of course,’ Ibo Efendi said. ‘If not, you would have done something.’

Süleyman’s hand went to his head. ‘Yes, I would ...’ He thought better of it. ‘Anyway, Selim’s at the bottom of it all.

Are you game? When the police come back ...'

'Yes, yes ...'

'I'm not!' Laz Erkan said.

'Count me out too,' Mahmut said.

'Well, we don't need dogs like you,' Süleyman retorted.

'We've got plenty of witnesses.'

'A murderer!'

'And that business at the beaches?'

'Tell them, Yusuf!'

'What can I say? We used to go pimping together ...'

'Why, the bastard ...'

'The things we did to make money! I squandered mine in the bars of Beyoğlu, but he saved his.'

'Rubbish,' Father Hakki growled, shaking his mane of white hair. 'He never went pimping with you or anyone else. He may be a miser, a coward, a little mad, but he wouldn't sell women or steal or anything like that. I've known him for years. And he wouldn't lie either.'

'No, he wouldn't lie,' Ibo Efendi admitted.

'And don't forget he's been very useful to the village,' Şaban said. 'It was he who thought of hiring out rowing-boats to the young people who come over from Istanbul.'

'Hah, that was just so they should fuck in his boat!' Süleyman scoffed. 'As though he did it in a good cause, the pimp!'

'Be quiet, Süleyman,' Mahmut snapped. 'That's going too far.'

'Well, anyway,' Ibo Efendi said, 'we all saw how he let Zeynel escape. We can tell the police.'

Just then Fisher Selim's tall frame loomed in the doorway.

'Come in, come in, Fisher Selim,' some of the men called, rising in a flurry to greet him.

Selim sat down at an empty table near the door. 'Only think!' he said. 'If I'd had just one bullet left, I'd never have let him escape. Just one ...' He fell silent.

No one spoke. Şaban brought him some tea, steaming in its glass. Fisher Selim drank it down in three gulps, placed some money on the table and rose to go.

As soon as he was out of the coffee-house, the men were at him worse than ever.

‘Mark my words, that Zeynel won’t let him get away with it!’

‘He’ll kill him sooner or later, just as he killed Ihsan.’

‘Skin him alive, Zeynel will!’

‘You can’t treat a man like that.’

‘Snatch his revolver away from him and spit in his face!’

‘Would Zeynel ever swallow that?’

‘He’ll take his revenge.’

‘Selim’s taken fright already. All in a flutter he is, can’t keep still for a minute.’

‘Like a bitch with a burnt paw!’

‘Oh, yes, Zeynel will skin him alive ...’

‘After killing Ihsan ...’

‘And perhaps he was right to do it.’

‘Maybe there was something between him and Ihsan.’

‘It’s not good to meddle with a man who’s just killed.’

‘Our Prophet has prescribed that you touch not the snake that is drinking water ...’

‘Ah, he’ll get his deserts, that Selim, sure as fate!’

‘Sooner or later ...’

3



When such things are going on, I stay away from Menekşe for weeks, even months on end. Of course I long to go there. Of course I miss my friends, Skipper Nuri, old Kazim Agha, Ilya, Master Leon, Tartar Ali. Yet I cannot bring myself to sit in that coffee-house. I cannot look anyone in the face, just as though I were the guilty one. The world is like that, I know. People are like that. There is nothing I can do about it. That's what I try to tell myself, but it's no use. I cannot bear it. I feel as though something dirty, something evil, something hostile has rubbed itself against me. How could they do this to a man like Fisher Selim and still sit and drink tea with him, talk to him, play backgammon with him? I simply cannot understand it.

I wish I had a tiny island here, near Menekşe, and on that island a small house, just two rooms, and a garden where I would plant olive saplings which I would coax into growth by caressing them with my eyes every day ... The olive grows so quietly ... It is the most humble of trees. Who knows, perhaps it puts out only one or two leaves each year ...? So it would be the grandchildren of the people living on my island who would eat the first fruit of these olive trees, never knowing who had planted them ... How silvery their pointed leaves would be in the sunlight! I would also like to have a greyhound. And a foal too, a thoroughbred that I would raise myself. The other houses on my island would always be open to me, as familiar as my own, the people living in them closer than brothers. We would run to each other's aid, sharing everything, joys and sorrows alike.

How often have I not dreamed of such an island! Dreamed that the people on it multiplied, that they never hurt each other, that the fishermen did not take little children out to sea in wintry weather, making them pick the fish out of the freezing nets, without even paying them their due afterwards ... Dreamed that children were not beaten or abused, that they did not line up like birds on the shore in the cruel northwester, eyes large with anxiety, waiting to unload the incoming fishing boats, so as to earn a little money, barely enough to buy a handful of dried sunflower seeds, a *simit*, a ticket to the movies Dreamed that Laz Mustafa never again has to go hoeing day after day in the parsley, radish, cabbage and lettuce plots out by the city walls, his hands hard as rubber wheels, so as to feed his nine children with a bare crust of bread. Yes, even Laz Mustafa is happy on my island. Every evening he dresses up his nine children in neat clothes and takes them for a stroll on the wharf. Young girls and lads in couples row out across the deep blue sea. They fish, they make love in the sun. Nobody disturbs them, nobody even looks at them ... Tartar Ali's son would never have set fire to his boat and perished in the flames. And Bekaroğlu, that best of men, would find happiness by marrying the widow Hatçe, who had been left with eleven children to raise. I can see those children running out joyfully when they spy his skin-and-bones figure trudging up the slope, and helping him carry the heavy fishing nets still wet from the sea ... All kinds of pleasant things happen on my island. People give free rein to their dreams. They are not ashamed, not afraid that these dreams may never come true, not laden with the curse of having to bury their hopes deep inside them ...

And my island in Menekşe will always be there as long as I live, and I and Mahmut and Ilya and Master Leon the mason will never grow tired of weaving dreams about it. One day we'll find a way of luring Ahmet from his wicked

life and make him settle there. Another day, we'll throw out drunken Haydar who bothers and abuses that poor old whore, Zeliha, banging on her door in the middle of the night ... We would have greyhounds on our island, with long slim legs, narrow arched bodies, lovely to behold, but we would not take them out rabbit-hunting. We would all be friends on my island, men and greyhounds and rabbits, too. Yes, we would dream dreams on my island and believe with all our hearts that they could come true.

Could there ever be any such place in Menekşe? Have we not let our dreams get the better of hard reality? Is not Istanbul city close by, noisy, dirty, swarming, laying new traps every day to set its inhabitants at loggerheads, sowing evil, enmity, exploitation, death? Or is this dream island, is our life there, more real than anything else? I defy anyone to answer that question. Who can say whether our true life is not in our dreamland, on that island of Menekşe?

What do you think, Fisher Selim? I wonder if he knows what went on in the coffee-house, if he is hurt, incurably wounded at this proof of men's viciousness ... How will he act when we meet again? Will he turn and give me so much as one look, even unfriendly, out of those sorrowful deep-set blue eyes of his? I listened to but a small part of what was said about him. Who knows what those Menekşe folk have been inventing since? And, as sure as I'm alive, one of them must be retailing all the gossip to Selim day by day, watching with relish how his face changes from anger to pain, from disgust to despair. Or why bother to talk so much if Selim is to hear never a word? Does he know, then, does every remark relayed to him pierce his heart like a greasy bullet? Or does he give a contemptuous laugh, secretly rather flattered at being the object of so much talk, even if it is only malicious gossip? You never know with him, he talks so little, and even then it is not like other

people. A sudden burst of words, and off he goes, head hanging as though ashamed of himself.

Well, anyway, I did not go down to Menekşe, but Mahmut came to see me several times. He seemed no different, cheerful as usual, but somehow subdued. We'd sit on the edge of the cliff and he'd talk about this and that. Then one day, without so much as a greeting, he said: 'Are you sore at me, brother?'

I did not reply. He sat down beside me. His arm touched mine. Involuntarily I drew away.

'So you *are* sore at me,' he said.

I only laughed.

'But Ilya also said things about him, and Tartar Ali and Father Hakki ...'

'They'd never do that, Mahmut,' I said.

Mahmut was confused. His hands opened and closed. 'But it's true he's a coward,' he shouted.

'So are we all,' I said, 'you too, me too ...'

He stared at me doubtfully. 'You too? Me too?' And then, bending his head, he murmured again: 'You too, me too ...'

'All of us ...' Silently, I cursed the whole world. If men were not such cowards, could they ever be so cruel, so hateful to each other, cheating, killing, enslaving, destroying? Humiliating others, browbeating them? Crazy, forgetting how to love and be loved ... Would the hand extended be so icy? Would they have lost all power of reasoning, only capable of aping others? Forever obsessed by death and never realizing the futility of the obsession? Would they be so insensible to the earth under their feet, to the sky, the stars, the streams, the flowers, the high mountain peaks, to light itself? How could they exist without love, affection, friendship, their hearts never stirred, never beating warmly like a bird's for a lover, for a faithful face?

'You're right, brother,' Mahmut said as if I had spoken out loud. 'Forgive me, but ...' And he muttered something I did

not catch.

‘Speak out,’ I said. ‘I won’t kill you.’

‘Then, why ...?’ He hesitated. ‘Why didn’t you ...?’

‘Why didn’t I do something?’ I took the words from his mouth. ‘Why, indeed?’

‘I suppose a man gets carried away by the others, by what’s going on about him,’ Mahmut went on. ‘You get confused, you can’t think coolly ...’

‘That’s how it is.’

‘Still, I for one shouldn’t have done this to Fisher Selim. He’s always been kind to me ...’ He clenched his fists. ‘Just let me hear them say one more word against him! By God, I’ll scatter those people in the coffee-house to the winds.’

‘It’s no use,’ I said. ‘You’ll never stop them. They can’t do without their bout of gossip.’

‘You’re right,’ he assented, crestfallen. ‘They’ve always been like this about Fisher Selim.’ He rose to go.

After a while I got up too and walked down the slope to Menekşe, passing under the bridge of the lopsided little railway station to emerge beside the sea. And there, sitting in his boat a little way offshore, was Fisher Selim, mending a net. He lifted his head and our eyes met. He looked startled at first, then he smiled.

‘Hello, Fisher Selim,’ I said.

He waved his huge hand.

‘Have a cigarette,’ I said.

Seizing the oars he drew the boat alongside the wooden jetty. The boards creaked and shook as I stepped up to him and held out the packet of cigarettes.

We smoked in silence. His eyes were fixed somewhere in the distance. At last he spoke, just one word.

‘There,’ he said, pointing in the direction of Hayirsiz Island.

‘You don’t say!’

‘Certain.’

‘But I thought there weren’t any left.’

'Only a few. Here and there, like drunken creatures ...'

'What a pity,' I sighed.

'Yes, but if I don't catch it, someone else will.'

'They ought to forbid it.'

'If only they would ... But who listens to prohibitions!'

Dynamite fishing is forbidden too, but who listens?'

He was absorbed once more in his work and I sat on there, on the wooden jetty, legs dangling over the water. Several planes passed overhead to land at Yeşilköy Airport. The sea stretched out to the distant shores of Bursa, a glittering expanse. There was a smell heralding the *lodos* wind in the air.

'It won't rise,' Fisher Selim said without looking up from his net.

'What?'

'The *lodos*, of course.' He smiled and his strong white teeth gleamed. 'Sometimes it plays the coquette with you, like today.' He looked at me. 'So you like the sea? Why don't you come with me tomorrow? Who knows, you might be lucky and we'll see it.'

I was overjoyed. Certainly other people must have gone fishing with him before, but I felt somehow that I was the first to have been honoured with a genuine, heartfelt invitation. 'I'd love to,' I said with enthusiasm. 'I'm sure we'll find it.'

He seemed pleased at my eagerness. 'Tomorrow then, at three. Here.'

'All right,' I said.

He swung to the oars and rowed away, not stopping till he was in front of the presidential summer residence. I saw him bending over his net. The boat was swaying gently on the calm sea.



Excitement kept me awake that night. To think that Fisher Selim had actually invited me on to his boat!

The sea was only just paling when I left the house. In my garden the judas-tree, in full flower, shed a bright pink glow into the foredawn. A soft breeze, smelling warmly of the sea, wafted up to me as I walked to the shore. Fisher Selim was sitting in his boat by the wooden jetty. His huge shadow fell over the pale water and even from a distance the red sash he always wore gleamed in the blue starlight. He had drawn a green skullcap over his curly reddish-brown hair and when he saw me his face, his whole body, was suffused with pleasure. It was a profound gladness coming from the depths of his heart, such as I had not met with on these shores. The corners of his eyes crinkled as he smiled at me and I thought, now here is what we call friendship, love, fervour, if ever these things exist. But the next instant, as though he regretted having let himself go, he closed up again. The wrinkles on his brow deepened and his face grew grave. Still, his moustache quivered and he could not quite hide his pleasure as he grasped the oars.

‘Jump in,’ he cried.

He rowed out into the open. Then gently, with infinite care, he put up the oars, grasped the cord with his strong long-fingered hands and fired the engine.

We were heading for Hayirsiz Island, raising white waves on the smooth waters. The star-traceried sky shed a pale radiance over the sea and over the blue, smoke-veiled mountains on the opposite shore. We stopped off the island. The sea was calm. There was no swell, no sound from its