



Silent House

By Orhan Pamuk

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Silent House By Orhan Pamuk

Never before published in English, Orhan Pamuk's second novel is the story of a Turkish family gathering in the shadow of the impending military coup of 1980.

In an old mansion in Cennethisar, a former fishing village near Istanbul, a widow, Fatma, awaits the annual summer visit of her grandchildren. She has lived in the village for decades, ever since her husband, an idealistic young doctor, ran afoul of the sultan's grand vizier and arrived to serve the poor fishermen. Now mostly bedridden, she is attended by her constant servant Recep, a dwarf—and the doctor's illegitimate son. Despite mutual dependency, there is no love lost between mistress and servant, who have very different recollections—and grievances—from the early years, before Cennethisar grew into a high-class resort surrounding the family house, now in shambles.

Though eagerly anticipated, Fatma's grandchildren bring little consolation. The eldest, Faruk, a dissipated historian, wallows in alcohol as he laments his inability to tell the story of the past from the kaleidoscopic pieces he finds in the local archive; his sensitive leftist sister, Nilgün, has yet to discover the real-life consequences of highminded politics; and Metin, a high school nerd, tries to keep up with the lifestyle of his spoiled society schoolmates while he fantasizes about going to America—an unaffordable dream unless he can persuade his grandmother to tear down her house.

But it is Recep's nephew Hasan, a high school dropout, lately fallen in with right-wing nationalists, who will draw the visiting family into the growing political cataclysm issuing from Turkey's tumultuous century-long struggle for modernity.

By turns deeply moving, hilarious, and terrifying, *Silent House* pulses with the special energy of a great writer's early work even as it offers beguiling evidence of the mature genius for which Orhan Pamuk would later be celebrated the world over.

This eBook edition includes a Reading Group Guide.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Silent House:

"Inspired and impassioned...A microcosm of a country on the verge of a coup...Pamuk has a flattering faith in his reader's intelligence...The book [is] threaded through with ideas of history, religion, memory class and politics. But it never seems didactic because the reader comes to realize that these reflections are aspects of the inner life: plausible components of the characters' psyches. I was glad to be transported to a seaside town in Turkey, to meet this odd family and their neighbors, all of whom seem to be living in several places at once: in the present and the past, in history, in everyday reality and in the simultaneously limitless and constricted worlds of their own minds...The reading experience is so very pleasurable."

—Francine Prose, *New York Times Book Review*

"Luminous and stylistically inventive...energetic and exuberant...*Silent House* is a kind of literary time machine, allowing us to glimpse both the writer and his country at this crucial turning point...the novel brilliantly captures the disorder, nostalgia and hope of a society struggling with violence and self-definition."

—Michael David Lukas, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Propulsive...in this quiet unassuming way does a wrenching story unfold, until an unexpected and hair-raising turn...the author's most accessible novel to date...the work of a great engineer."

—Marie Arana, *Washington Post*

"Gripping family saga...arresting and unforgettable...[Pamuk] speaks with great prescience, subtlety and sophistication. *Silent House* is both a highly readable fiction and an unsparing portrait of the Turkish intellectual class."

—Alev Adil, *The Independent* (UK)

"Spellbinding...luminous...rich in brooding memories of a bygone era but the experience is elevating rather than oppressive. The events and characters in this novel may belong to a particular region and time, but their angst is universal...That is a measure of the greatness of his craft, something one finds in Anton Chekov."

—Shreekant Sambrani, *Business Standard* (India)

"The beginnings of a great writer... *Silent House* illuminates the recent historical pressures, and 30 years on, the novel feels doubly prescient... A novelist prescient enough to publish [this] in 1983 proved himself fully deserving of the call from the Swedish Academy in 2006."

—Mark Lawson, *The Guardian* (UK)

"Impressive...It proves once and for all that Pamuk is truly one of the world's most versatile fiction writers, no matter the language in which he is read...Despite the specificity of the novel's setting, the characters' respective struggles are universal; they could be any family, anywhere, at any time."

—Jason Diamond, *New York Observer*

"Pamuk builds a multi-faceted panorama distinguished by his customary intellectual richness and breadth."

About the Author

Orhan Pamuk won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006. His novel *My Name Is Red* won the 2003 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His work has been translated into more than sixty languages.

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Grandmother Waits in Bed

I listen to him going down the stairs one by one. What does he do in the streets until all hours? I wonder. Don't think about it, Fatma, you'll only get disgusted. But still, I wonder. Did he shut the doors tight, that sneaky dwarf? He couldn't care less! He'll get right into bed to prove he's a born servant, snore all night long. Sleep that untroubled, carefree sleep of a servant, and leave me to the night. I think that sleep will come for me, too, and I'll forget, but I wait all alone and I realize that I'm waiting in vain.

Selâhattin used to say that sleep is a chemical phenomenon, one day they'll discover its formula just as they discovered that H₂O is the formula for water. Oh, not our fools, of course, unfortunately it'll be the Europeans again who find it, and then no one will have to put on funny pajamas and sleep between these useless sheets and under ridiculous flowered quilts and lie there until morning just because he's tired. At that time, all we'll have to do is put three drops from a bottle into a glass of water every evening and then drink it, and it will make us as fit and fresh as if we had just woken up in the morning from a deep sleep. Think of all the things we could do with those extra hours, Fatma, think of it!

I don't have to think about it, Selâhattin, I know, I stare at the ceiling, I stare and stare and wait for some thought to carry me away, but it doesn't happen. If I could drink wine or *raký*, maybe I could sleep like you, but I don't want that kind of ugly sleep. You used to drink two bottles: I drink to clear my mind and relieve my exhaustion from working on the encyclopedia, Fatma, it's not for pleasure. Then you would doze off, snoring with your mouth open until the smell of *raký* would drive me away in disgust. Cold woman, poor thing, you're like ice, you have no spirit! If you had a glass now and again, you'd understand! Come on, have a drink, Fatma, I'm ordering you, don't you believe you have to do what your husband tells you. Of course, you believe it, that's what they taught you, well, then, I'm ordering you: Drink, let the sin be mine, come on, drink Fatma, set your mind free. It's your husband who wants it, come on, oh God! She's making me beg. I'm sick of this loneliness, please, Fatma, have one drink, or you'll be disobeying your husband.

No, I won't fall for a lie in the form of a serpent. I never drank, except once. I was overcome with curiosity. When nobody at all was around. A taste like salt, lemon, and poison on the tip of my tongue. At that moment I was terrified. I was sorry. I rinsed my mouth out right away, I emptied out the glass and rinsed it over and over and I began to feel I would be dizzy. I sat down so I wouldn't fall on the floor, my God, I was afraid I would become an alcoholic like him, too, but nothing happened. Then I understood and relaxed. The devil couldn't get near me.

I'm staring at the ceiling. I still can't get to sleep, might as well get up. I get up, open the shutter quietly, because the mosquitoes don't bother me. I peek out the shutters a little; the wind has died down, a still night. Even the fig tree isn't rustling. Recep's light is off. Just as I figured: right to sleep, since he has nothing to think about, the dwarf. Cook the food, do my little handful of laundry and the shopping, and even then he gets rotten peaches, and afterward, he prowls around the streets for hours.

I can't see the sea but I think of how far it extends and how much farther it could go. The big, wide world!

Noisy motorboats and those rowboats you get into with nothing on, but they smell nice, I like them. I hear the cricket. It's only moved a foot in a week. Then again, I haven't moved even that much. I used to think the world was a beautiful place; I was a child, a fool. I closed the shutters and fastened the bolt: let the world stay out there.

I sit down on the chair slowly, looking at the tabletop. Things in silence. A half-full pitcher, the water in it standing motionless. When I want to drink I remove the glass cover, fill it, listening to and watching the water flow; the glass tinkles; the water runs; cool air rises; it's unique; it fascinates me. I'm fascinated, but I don't drink. Not yet. You have to be careful using up the things that make the time pass. I look at my hairbrush and see my hairs caught in it. I pick it up and begin to clean it out. The weak thin hairs of my ninety years. They're falling out one by one. Time, I whispered, what they call our years; we shed them that way, too. I stop and set the brush down. It lies there like an insect on its back, revolting me. If I leave everything this way and nobody touches it for a thousand years, that's how it will stay for a thousand years. Things on top of a table, a key or a water pitcher. How strange; everything in its place, without moving! Then my thoughts would freeze too, colorless and odorless and just sitting there, like a piece of ice.

But tomorrow they'll come and I'll think again. Hello, hello, how are you, they'll kiss my hand, many happy returns, how are you, Grandmother, how are you, how are you, Grandmother? I'll take a look at them. Don't all talk at once, come here and let me have a look at you, come close, tell me, what have you been doing? I know I'll be asking to be fooled, and I'll listen blankly to a few lines of deception! Well, is that all, haven't you anything more to say to your Grandmother? They'll look at one another, talk among themselves, I'll hear and understand. Then they'll start to shout. Don't shout, don't shout, thank God my ears can still hear. Excuse me, Grandmother, it's just that our other grandmother doesn't hear well. I'm not your mother's mother, I'm your father's mother. Excuse me, Granny, excuse me! All right, all right, tell me something, that other grandmother of yours, what's she like? They'll suddenly get confused and become quiet. What is our other grandmother like? Then I'll realize that they haven't learned how to see or understand yet, that's all right, I'll ask them again but just as I'm about to ask them, I see that they've forgotten all about it. They're not interested in me or my room or what I'm asking, but in their own thoughts, as I am in mine even now.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lucia Morrone:

The book Silent House give you a sense of feeling enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make reading a book Silent House to become your habit, you can get more advantages, like add your capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You can know everything if you like wide open and read a guide Silent House. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science book or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this publication?

Jamie Lundquist:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As we know that book is very important for all of us. The book Silent House was making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The guide Silent House is

not only giving you far more new information but also to become your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your current spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship with the book Silent House. You never truly feel lose out for everything in the event you read some books.

Jon Gonzalez:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try and and must have the spare time or they will get lots of stress from both everyday life and work. So , when we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely without a doubt. People is human not a robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity have you got when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative inside spending your spare time, the actual book you have read is definitely Silent House.

Jocelyn Harper:

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