



Silent House (Vintage International)

By Orhan Pamuk

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In a crumbling mansion in a gentrified former fishing village on the Turkish coast, the widow Fatma awaits the annual visit of her grandchildren: Faruk, a dissipated historian; his sensitive leftist sister, Nilgün; and Metin, a high schooler drawn to the fast life of the nouveaux riche. Bedridden, Fatma is attended by her faithful servant Recep, a dwarf—and her late husband's illegitimate son. Mistress and servant share memories, and grievances, from the past. But the arrival of Recep's cousin, Hasan, a fervent right-wing nationalist, threatens to draw the family into the political cataclysm arising from Turkey's tumultuous century-long struggle for modernity. Written in the 1980s but never before published in English, this spellbinding novel is a stunning addition to the works of Nobel Prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk.

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Editorial Review

Review

“[A] superb novel, which grips the reader and refuses to let go.”

—*The New Yorker*

“Propulsive. . . . Reveals a family that is as complicated and volatile as [their] country. . . . The work of a great engineer.”

—*The Washington Post*

“Inspired and impassioned. . . . Threaded through with ideas about history, religion, memory, class and politics. . . . The reading experience is so very pleasurable.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Luminous and stylistically inventive. . . . Brilliantly captures the disorder, nostalgia and hope of a society struggling with violence and self-definition.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“An excellent introduction to a body of work that is worthy of its 2006 Nobel Prize. . . . Pamuk summons empathy.”

—*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“Impressive. . . . 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. . . . [A] subtle portrayal of the slow-burning fire of Turkey’s revolution.”

—*The New York Observer*

“A poised and hugely impressive grasp of human variety.”

—*The Sunday Times* (London)

“Artfully managed. . . . Illuminate[s] some of the sources of Islamist ideology, and sketch[es] the problems of Turkey. . . . Neither a polemic nor a history. It’s a satisfying work of fiction by one of the best novelists writing today.”

—*The Washington Times*

“An excellent introduction to [Pamuk’s] Nobel Prize-winning body of work.”

—*The Miami Herald*

“With its modernist multi-perspective narrative, the novel is full of arresting and unforgettable literary moments. . . . Psychologically gripping. . . . *Silent House* is both a highly readable fiction and an unsparing portrait of the Turkish intellectual class.”

—*The Independent* (London)

“A poignant portrayal of everyday life in a 1980s Turkish seaside resort. . . . Pamuk transports us to a pivotal moment in his homeland’s history—and maps the emotional geography of modern Turkey.”

—*National Geographic Traveler* (Book of the Month)

“Fanatical politics might empty our heads, but it is literature that returns humanity to the silent house.”
—*The Daily Beast*

“The beginnings of a great writer. . . . 30 years on, the novel feels doubly prescient.”
—*The Guardian* (London)

“A powerful, assured and engaging multiple-voiced narrative. It provides exciting insights into the subsequent career of a consistently original novelist. . . . English-language readers now have the opportunity to experience early Pamuk; it has been well worth the wait.”
—*The Irish Times* (Dublin)

“Pamuk builds a multifaceted panorama distinguished by his customary intellectual richness and breadth.”
—*Kirkus*

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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2

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:

Teresa Hunter:

As people who live in the modest era should be change about what going on or facts even knowledge to make them keep up with the era that is certainly always change and move forward. Some of you maybe will certainly update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for you personally but the

problems coming to a person is you don't know which you should start with. This Silent House (Vintage International) is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and need in this era.

John Olive:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider whenever those information which is inside former life are challenging to be find than now's taking seriously which one is suitable to believe or which one the actual resource are convinced. If you have the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen in you if you take Silent House (Vintage International) as the daily resource information.

Hye Elliott:

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