



## SILENCE

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### ABSTRACT

How else can a path to exile be told; it talks through the flow of women's bodies.

### KEYWORDS

*Exile, birth, new lives, fear, hope*



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## SILENCE<sup>1</sup>

Pain. Too much. This pain scares me when everything has just begun; but I have to bear; I must hold out. I was not this bad as I took the road. Why is it now? Perhaps, it is because of the bumpy 'journey' on the bare truck bed. Or because of the fear, uneasiness and anxiety due to the uncertainty ahead. How will we be able to cross that river? My children... How will they continue on this road? Will my baby hold on to life?

The doctor, whom I saw before starting this uncertain road had told that I might give birth in a week. Despite that, I set off; we set off. But what if I give birth on the road; what if they send us back just because of my condition? In any case, we have heard about so many unfortunate people who were sent back; first beaten and then sent back, whether they had managed to cross the dreaded river. I have no idea what will happen, what we will go through. We just know that we do not want to go back to that land. That's why we left behind everything that holds one to a place, all our plans and our possessions. We take shelter in our hope. Our yet-to-be-born child. Perhaps he will help us in holding onto the shore across.

My husband, my two little ones, Mizgin and Azad, and my unborn child... We arrive at a border village after hours of so-called travel in the truck bed. The smuggler who took us in İstanbul hands us by the roadside to another smuggler. He then leaves. Midnight; mid-November. We walk across a field for some time. 'That is far enough; stop', says the smuggler, 'we must wait here'. This man is, again, not the one who will take us to the shore across.

We wait in silence. I have this deep pain; it is hard even to breathe. I cannot stand; I collapse on the ground, wet by dewdrops. Waiting in sorrow, in grief, in the dead of the night. What are we doing here?

We wait in silence. Twenty people in a field, twenty people packed into the same truck and transported here like sacrificial lambs. And damp, and cold and dark – everywhere.

We wait in silence. Different languages, different faces. Now there is no sound of the Kurmanci, Sorani, Arabic and Pashto, once blending in the truck bed.

We wait in silence. My husband does not let my hand go, not once. My head is on his chest; my head that I cannot keep straight. And my children; my eight-year old daughter; my seven-year old son. But no, they are mush older, more mature. How did they grew up so fast? Why did this need to happen? Night; dark, damp, and cold. And my children are here, in a foreign country, among those strange whispers and strange, tense faces, in a border village, on an empty field, in the mid of a November night, waiting silently for the time when we will take to the road, trying hard to stay awake. What taught them silence at this age?

I do not know how long we wait but at last the other smuggler comes. It seems there is another woman with him; I am not sure because of darkness. No I am not sure, because the pain doesn't let me to lift my eyelids. Then I hear her voice. She talks with the smuggler in Turkish; yes, a woman from Turkey.

Then the smugglers count us in that darkness. They count us, head by head, as if counting sheep. I know; we are just numbers for them – nothing to do with life itself. If one of us falls back, drowns in waters, that is one less head counted; no thought of the life and the hope that has disappeared with it. Numbers are important for the money they will get.

We start to walk; they say we have to walk along the Turkish border for an hour or so, and then cross the river by boat. And then we will have to walk just three or four more hours at most to get to the transport that will take us to Athens. The smuggler told us so; in such simple words. It was this so-called short path that encourages us with my unborn baby and two little kids. Just as the will to life that led me to set off. Everything is so simple, so humane!

It must be around 3.00 am. We walk by a water channel. And a pile of soil along the channel bank. I do not know why but we walk, well no, we try to walk, over this pile. Perhaps, it keeps us on the right path. But the rain left its pits on it, and in the hardened frost. How can one walk here? The smuggler walks up front, with woman from Turkey beside him, and the Afghanis keeping very close to them – followed by Iraqis and Syrians. My children are walking with two young Iraqi men, holding their hands. I call the men young, I am just 28, though. And we are, me and my husband are at the backmost. Thick socks on my feet, and my rubber slippers. I have so much pain that I can hardly lift my feet; I drag my slippers. We try to walk. Nobody knows that I am pregnant. Otherwise smugglers would not have accepted – I know.

*... embarrassed secretly  
scared, too, of the idea of death.  
we will add up one more life this winter.  
my baby, wherein should I hide you?*

*Notes from the Diyarbakir Castle and Baby Adiloş' Lullaby / Ahmed Arif*

My husband carries a bag of 26 kg; inside are things for us and for the baby (baby carrier, blanket, diapers and pacifier) – nobody knows. I carry a bag on my shoulder; some money in it. I am in my husband's arm; but no it is more like he carries me. He holds me over my waist, and tries to hold me up from underneath my arm. And another bag in his other hand – some food and beverages inside.

We wade on this mass of land and cold whether, getting colder by the hour. Can't raise my head anymore; looking down, but I still do not notice and step on the water, collected in the pits. That night, walking on the dirt road I notice for the first time: moonlight shines on some spots on the lands, leaving others in shades. First I assume that shiny spots are water, I should not step on them; then I get the trick; they are the dry ones. But my feet are wet; it is too late.

I hear the smuggler again; he is angry at the Iraqi men, for they talk out loud. Far ahead, lights of the guard tower. All of a sudden, far-reaching light spreads the land. The smuggler gives commands, we

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all follow his command - we bend in silence and fear. We are not sure: Did they notice us; or is this just one of the ordinary controls? We wait for a while; then we stand up. Now the smuggler wants the men to inflate the boats he carries with him folded. We must be getting closer to the river. Two big boats; four men carry each; we start walking again. But as we walk at the back we notice that the group slows down. As we approach them, we see that another water channel, with concrete on the sides blocks our way. It is as if its edges are slopy but still it is too steep. There is water in it, a bit of, but still... States – they are so keen on drawing their borders. Two smugglers discuss what to do now, as it is clear that we cannot go over the channel. Are they using this route for the first time; had not they know this block? We take the right and to walk by the channel. We search for a passage. They talk about a bridge; they say that there is tower nearby. They warn us to be silent; otherwise we could get caught. And they add: 'If we get caught you shall not turn us in. We will pretend to be one of you; otherwise we will ruin you!'

I am scared on this road, which we have just begun, but which is getting ever longer. They said an hour, but now it is probably three hours and we are still walking. This time we are with the group, just behind them. My children cannot, must not, let go of the hands of those young men who walk with agility ahead of us, at least until we go beyond the channel, pass the wachtower over there. That is why I force myself and quicken my steps; I try to walk side by side with my children. Thankfully, we soon reach to the passage, which they call bridge and formed by the earth filled in the channel. How close we got to the tower! That is a scary moment, I try to calm down by holding fast to my husband. Silent and quick steps - we finally go over the channel, and beyond the tower; we fade into solitude.

After the tension, the pain returns. It is unbearable now, I cannot walk any further. We fall behind the group with every step. At first, especially when we were by the guard tower, everyone would stop and check each other frequently. But as they all rushed by the dawn they were looking back less and less. What shall we do now; how to catch up with them! My children are walking ahead of me. And I cannot go on; I collapse. My husband is by me; he holds my hand tightly. I am racked with pain. I think I am about to labor. But no, not now. We have to cross the river. We shall not be caught by the military; we shall not be stuck here; this shall not happen! No way, it is not the time, my dear baby, please!

*far ahead, full moon  
silver dagger on my back  
walking, but no way to die  
it is blood  
that the carnation drops*

*Poem of a broken pencil / Behçet Aysan*

Full daybreak is soon upon us and the distance between us and the main group gets even longer. I stand up with a last-ditch effort. We walk; we two walk in grand loneliness and silence – it is only the sound of my feet that I drag which disrupt the silence. But, where are my children, where are the others? After a while we notice some in front of us; two Syrian women and one man. They, too, were left behind like us. We are thus on the right path at least. We continue walking with a deep relief. But no, we do not see any others, no voices around. We just walk side by side. We are so unsure of what to do that all we have is our ever growing loneliness. But we catch a glimpse of the lush

reeds on that barren land. Water is life, isn't it? The reeds and shrubs tell us it is so. We are by the river, now. Which direction shall we take? Only if we can get closer to the shores then perhaps we might see the others; but this is impossible through the trees, the reeds. Perhaps we are lost. My children, where are they? It seems as if I cannot breathe. My husband tries to calm me down: 'perhaps they continued to search for a point to launch the boats', he says. Then, I do not know why, he turns right; the others follow without objection. Now, the river runs on our left. I try to gather myself together, all over again. For, we must walk more quickly; we have to catch up with them as soon as possible. As I am captured by the fear of losing my children I recoil by a terrible noise. It disrupts the silence! I am afraid. Did someone fall into the river; or did someone open fire from the guard towers, now standing far away? Noises repeat one after another...

As we see the river just where the trees get less we also see the owners of the noise: pelicans! Giant, snow-white birds. 'They are hunting for fish', says my husband: 'They move forward by clapping their wings on the water sharply, thus scaring and pushing the fish to the shore.' They remind us that life persists despite everything. My heart is filled with peace, just for a short time. And then the peace quickly fades away.

*no more leaves, no more birds  
my mountains are all in ruins  
ballads in my memory  
they, too, shed away  
no echoes of my life in my voice  
just the thunder of forests*

*My heart, forget this poem / Ahmet Telli*

For, others are still nowhere in sight. Perhaps, we took the wrong path. We return back; now the river is on our right. On our left, a plain field extends – the path that we had walked. I once more feel that my strength fades away. My husband tries to calm me; his hand on mine; 'we will find them', he says, 'do not be afraid'.

We walk and walk and walk... At one point, we realize that someone is running behind us. First we are scared, then all is clear. One of the smugglers looks for us. The smuggler walks ahead, grumbling; we rush after him. As we join the others by the riverside I find dear my children, collapsed side by side on the ground, all in their fragility, their silence turned into speechlessness, their fear running out of their eyes in tears in millions; they are smaller now. They hug me with a longing that tears me down; I kiss them on their eyes.

*spring sealed itself, lilacs  
blossomed, a cherry branch, just an arms-length ahead  
a doe runs through me  
poppy fields scream all over  
A cherry branch/ Behçet Aysan*

Morning... It is as if the baby is coming close to the earth. Actually we have some more time, not much, but at least some. But I think, walking so long and the anxiety caused much disruption. Writching in pain, I can no longer hide it! Just as we reach the riverside, just as we prepare to cross over the other side, I collapse by the edge of this strange water, so far from our home, for foreign to us. This is neither Tigris nor Euphrates. This is Evros river that bleeds through the lands with the

pains it carries all the way. My husband sits by me, takes my hands into his hands, our eyes meet. It is as if the sky has fallen into his eyes; they turned into the sky, they are clouded. He glances away and hugs me, he hugs more tightly to give strength – both to me and to himself, I know.

*say it my love! Say that: you will come on a hazel day,  
istanbul will fall apart, my hair is a mess. All is a mess!  
don't be sad my beloved! We will recover together,  
we will also stand up, and walk, too, my beloved  
to boot, digging into the steel land of life!*

*Say it my love/ Kûçük İskender*

The woman from Turkey who walk all the way side by side with the smuggler, always in the front; she is the one who notices me first and comes by. This is the first time that we see each other's face in daylight. She takes water out of her bag and washes my face. Then, an Iraqi man comes by me; he turns out to be a doctor, he checks my pulse and says that it is too low. I am happy to hear that he is a doctor and with the hope that he might help us I tell him that I am pregnant. And everything gets messy all of a sudden. The smuggler steps into the scene and pushes me on my shoulders to the wet land by the rivershore. And he says, 'No. I cannot take you in these conditions; just surrender to the military and go to a hospital.' The Iraqi doctor confirms him. 'You will never be able to get across, not in your condition', he says urgently. And I say, 'no, you can not do this; after we paid you and have come so far. You have to take us with you.' Now, there is no way back. We cannot go back. Besides what is left behind except for our ruined houses, and our streets, smelling death. The children shall live, these children shall live! My pain is horrible; it does not let me breathe. I clench my teeth, more and more and get up from the wet land on which they laid me down; I want to show them that I can continue. On the other hand I beg them, looking deep into their eyes – the fires inside me.

*Ahmet, my good old brother; why does a handkerchief bleed  
not a tooth, nor nail, why does a handkerchief bleed  
sounds of bleed on my handkerchief.*

*Sound of blood on my handkerchief / [Edip Cansever](#)*

And finally, the other smuggler says 'OK'; he concedes. Now, the woman from Turkey holds me, too; she takes the bag from my husband. But now she wants the bag, hanging on my neck. I know she wants to help; but no, I cannot trust her. As I am trying to understand who she is, her black nail polish and her shoes that look quite durable and comfortable catch my eye. As she approaches my bag, she says something, first in Turkish, then a couple of words in Kurmanci. I cannot talk but my eyes tell her that I do not want her to take my bag. She understands, and leaves it there. Now, my husband on one of my arm, woman from Turkey on the other, we walk for some more time with puzzling feelings in my mind, with fear, pain, and aches.

We see the opposite shore. New life. How close it is and how far away. So many boats turned over all afloat in the seas and rivers. So many people lost away. Taking this road, despite knowing these facts, moreover taking the road with two young children, and even with the one yet to-be-born. As we reach the best available point by the riverside two boats are tied together – perhaps, to speed up our

crossing or to withstand better the current in this giant river. I do not know. I cannot think. Now, I do not feel my pain and ache, either. As we try to get and sit into the boat one by one, all I feel is fear. All those facts about travellers lost in the water, all I had heard about, including some people I had seen before their departure, and some known through my closest acquaintances – those facts that burn me from the inside. I am scared, for my children, for my yet-to-be-born baby.

My children... The child's name was baby Alan; on this side of the river he was known as 'Aylan Kurdi'. How were these beautiful children different from each other? On 2 September 2015, the headlines read, 'A tiny dead body washed ashore'. And the date was today, just this moment, and also the future!

'One tiny body!' Simple words referring to a lost life. He was a tiny children, but a great life in front of him! What is the measure of life; years?

*humanity, like the streams  
unknowingly bleeding in their current;  
voiceless in its own song;  
sightless in its own dream,  
deaf to its own scream  
Kız Ali / Nihat Behram*

His was a life of three years; a great living through – just as the lives of his brother and mother, who were lost together with him. It was escape from death that pushed them to the roads; just as it was for us with our children in our arms. And we knew: 'Nobody puts a child on a boat unless the water is safer than the land!' (Homeland / Warsan Shire).

The smuggler who first accompanied us returns at this point. The second smuggler sits up on the front of one boat; the Iraqi doctor sits up front in the other boat. They will row. Alas, the Iraqi doctor cannot row, beyond that it seems as if he does not know how to do so. The river is wide, the stream is strong. The woman from Turkey tempts to row the boat. But the smuggler does not let her to pass to the other boat to keep the balance. He moves a bit with anger, and tries to sit somewhere in the middle. And how can this young, thin man row against the stream of this big river? What if the ropes, tying the boats break! We do not have life jackets. We only have big cases on our hands, on our backs. I am sure, if we fall into the river no way we can make it out. How often have we heard that here, on the Evros river, on the Aegean Sea boats, carrying people like us were overturned, sometimes dozens being drowned. It was the human smugglers carrying those people on the river, but on the sea it is all very different. There they briefly show the immigrants how to control the floating objects they call boats, which they themselves had built very cheaply and left the immigrants to travel alone on the rough seas – with these so-called boats, with their so-called lifejackets. Who knows how many individuals they sent to their deaths in this way. Baby Alan was only one of their victims!

As these thoughts and all such truths continued to scald my heart, the human smuggler who would not leave us alone in the boat, managed with great skill to land us successfully finally, on the opposite shore. Yes, quick as dreams, we are at the other side. We quickly abandon the boats; our feet and legs sink into and are immediately pulled up out of the sticky mud below the water. And immediately the boats pull off from the shore of river. We run toward the trees on the shore and change our socks and attempt to clean our shoes. Some have been so immersed in the mud that they try to change muddy pants and wear

cleaner ones. The woman from Turkey has a large package; she hands out wet wipes everyone. Looks as if new life has been put into the everyone. Everyone looks better and happier. It must have been the river that was our greatest fear. And we had made it. Seems like now we were not trying to get rid of the mud, but attempting to attend a wedding. Having reached the shore, everything is going to be more easy from now on- I hope! Then, on the shore, just beneath the trees, the boats are being deflated- and one of them is being put away- why I do not know, perhaps we do not need to have both at the same time. Or who knows, maybe the smuggler will use it on his way back. There are also a few other boats around besides the one we came in, this in addition to the dirty pants, socks and quite a number of empty food cans. So many people must have gone through these very same paths, so many. Just like all the others before us, we leave our dirty clothing, pants, whatever that has been through the mud bath, and we await to restart our journey, following the human smugglers. The smuggler however tells us that we cannot be walking in this light. He says it is time now to move to a more secure places and wait for the dark to set in. Just when we have passed through the greatest trial, crossed the river; when our fears calmed down; our hopes increased; just when we thought we were so close to our destination, why did we have to endure this 'long wait'? Why was it necessary? As we left the huge river behind us, as we tried to walk among those scrubs, I remember those people, previous immigrants freezing in their summer clothes. This is a road where 'death' is written on every step. On each moment of the way. My pain is gradually increasing, my hand on my tummy, I keep thinking of my baby. This pain, this terrible pain will bring me closer to my baby, as it had also happened before, I know. Thus, I try to relax myself a bit as I am walking my head down, behind the others, I see tens of carcasses. What are they? No, it is not right to call them carcasses, they are simply skeletal remains; but such that the whole the parts, the pieces are tied together. The head is connected to the neck, the ribs. Or the hips and legs as a unit. And also, many many horns and hooves. What happened here? What did these unscattered skeletons mean? Animals shot and left to decay? Who were the hunters? There could not be hunters in this region. Soldiers? I do not know...

A while after, far away from the river we find a clearing in the midst of trees and bushes. No matter how wet and cool it is we all sit on the grass and start to wait. This is a restless wait! Regardless, all try to relax and start to eat whatever we have carried with us. Mizgin and Azad are very hungry; we first let them eat. As we all finish eating, we try to get some sleep. The Afghanis go a bit further and sleep in the big black trash bags. How clever! How well protected they are now, safe from the cold, wind and the wetness of the ground. And me, I am shaking. Shaking so badly that the Iraqi doctor notices me; he takes a raincoat out his bag and makes me wear it. He buttons me up. Then he lies down and tries to sleep; but he finds no rest, and turns and flinches continuously. The woman from Turkey does not sleep, either. She just waits, her back on the tree. The smuggler is beside her, lying down under a sheet. The Syrians are on the left, ahead of us, by another tree; they stand side by side. A woman among them, crouches and tries to keep the cold off with a shawl wrapped from head to toe; her knees against her chest.

Although the raincoat is not thick enough, it stops my shaking. But now, my pain starts again. And in a short while I feel the wetness between my legs. My water breaking? I instantly tell my husband; hold his hand and straighten myself. We go a bit more back into the woods with our children and without saying a word to anyone. The woman from Turkey is following us; it is clear that she does not understand

what is going on. My baby is about to come! Far away from everybody, I hardly lie down on wet grass. My husband holds my hand tight; Azad and Mizgin look at me, puzzled. For a moment I see two children in their eyes, Ruhat and Botan, and I remember their beautiful mother, Muntazam. They, too, watched their mother with such puzzled looks, when she was in labor at home alone. So told Muntazam. I could do the same; bear my labor and give birth here, cut my baby's cord on my own, as she had done on her own, with her own hands. I could do so, too. Besides I am not alone; my husband is with me. But no! That beautiful baby; Muntazam's sweetly passed away just when he was just two months old... There must be someone with me; there should be a woman! It starts; yes my baby's head is almost out. I tell Mizgin to run and bring the woman from Turkey Or the two Syrian women, they talk Kurmanji and Arabic and even though they don't know my language Sorani, it would be easier to communicate with them. But no; they never come; they must be hesitating before such a challenge; perhaps they are afraid. So, it must be the woman from Turkey who is to stand by me. Mizgin runs, calling, "Serê zarok" (head of the baby)'. And she instantly returns with the woman from Turkey. She briefly looks at me in shock. Then she quickly gathers herself, and sits down by my feet; she slowly pulls the baby inside out. My child is now in her hands; my husband is by my side; my children are watching the baby – my baby who is still tied to me. But where is my baby's voice? What is happening?

As the fire from my heart rises into my voice, the woman starts to flap my baby's butt – without a hint. Then that thin thread of a cry at last; a slight one, but life is there. And a wonderful peace sets in.

*a flower was standing somewhere over there,  
blossomed as if making amends;  
it is just by the edge of my mouth  
talks on.  
A flower / Cemal Süreya*

The woman asks us some questions; talks to us, again, she seems very puzzled. But no way; we do not understand each other. Luckily the smuggler comes by; she asks for his phone. She calls someone, tells something. Then she calls some other person; this time she turns on the speaker and puts the phone on my skirt, stretched across my legs. On the other side of the phone a woman talks in a strangely calm and reassuring tone, while on this side the woman sets to work, cutting the umbilical cord with a small knife she had in her bag. Now she has to close it; but no thread around! My husband lets my hand go for a very short time and searches the bag. We had everything in the bag for our baby. How could we forgot a piece of thread! The woman sends the smuggler with the hope that he might find something. Soon a Syrian woman comes with a bit of thin sewing yarn, thin piece, nothing more. She ties the thick, hard, eely umbilical cord with that thin sewing yarn. Then, after trying to wash him with a bit of water she hands the baby to the others to dress him. The phone goes off in the meantime. Our eyes meet – mine and this woman's. My eyes tell her of my happiness and gratitude; her face has a slight smile. But there is also worry in her eyes. She does not know what she would do now, but still she tries to comfort me; I can feel that. Although we do not speak the same language we try to support each other by the eyes. For, it is not only me who needs this; she also needs it. There is still much to be done and my laboring has not ended yet. We call it the 'baby's match'; it is still inside me... And the cord; I can feel it; the bond that connected me to my baby for months is now still lying my legs. Now all these

have to be taken out of my body. The woman, too, knows what has to be done, but she does not know how to do it. She asks me some questions. But I am in such a condition that I can neither respond nor guide her. Then she asks for the smuggler's phone once more; turns on the speaker, listens to the reassuring distant voice. This time she guides my husband; she shows him to press strongly on my belly. Now there is much more pain; as if knives are struck all over my body. As my husband pushes away all the parts left from my baby from my body the woman draws them out with her bare hands. Now, my pains are a bit less. I feel better, though I am tired out. Everything is over – I hope. I say, I hope, because I do not know how big the tear is; I do not know whether I lost blood or not; whether bleeding will continue or not.

The raincoat on which I lied down, now holds all that my baby left behind. I cannot prevent the shaking of my legs that stand on the remains. I am cold. My husband takes fresh clothes for me out of the bag, and the woman from Turkey tries to clean me with wet wipes. And then she sends the smuggler off on another errand. He comes back with a big black trash bag – clear that he took it from the Afghans. She cuts the lower parts of the raincoat, and she and my husband carry me onto the trash bag just by my side. Here she wipes all my body and puts my clothes on. But I do not have any other socks. I changed my socks when we crossed the river; where we stuck in the mud. The one that was on during the laboring was the only pair left; but I could not consider taking them off at that moment! She sends Mizgin to bring her own bag. Fortunately she has a pair of long socks; she puts them on me. Although I feel better for a moment, the cold does not end; my legs continue shaking. The woman now gets the smuggler talk to the Syrian woman; fortunately she has a short legging. She takes it and dresses me. Now, I feel good both because I am not cold any more and the legging will keep my underwears tighter. For, I bleed too much after laboring; I know this from Mizgin and Azad. And I do not want to bleed through my legs in the presence of so many people and on the wet and cold road. Bleeding means loss of energy, weakness; perhaps, inability to start walking again. But I shall not worry about these now. My baby is in my arms. I embrace him with great relief and peace.

Our baby rouse a weird excitement in the group. You could read both joy and unrest in people's eyes. Afghans, the quietist and the most distant people in the group. Everyone visited to see the new-born, but them. The smuggler went a step further and demanded that our baby has the same name with him. He insisted! That young man who wanted us to call him with his nickname, who kept his name as secret suddenly said his name, falling into his excitement. We concented; what else could we do. My husband whispered his name to the ear of our son, reading Koran. Then everybody went to their corners. The woman from Turkey is by me. My pain gets worse, again. I tell my problems using signs. I hope, perhaps, she has some painkillers. She makes another phone call. Why? Why is she so sensitive under these conditions? Perhaps, it is precisely because of these conditions. It is clear that she is afraid of doing something wrong, that something wrong might happen to us. As she turns off the phone, she takes pills out of her bag, and gives me one. She does not stop there. Together with the Syrian woman she makes me eat something as I feed my baby – I am worn out. A piece of chocolate, a couple of dates and a bit of bread. Then... As Azad and Mizgin continuously kiss their new brother I fall into a peaceful sleep with my baby on my bosom.

Time flows slowly. We are in this forest for hours; lying on wet grass, waiting for the safety that sunset brings. I am better, despite my pain. My baby – he is so beautiful. I hope you hold on, my dear little child;

and I hope you do not cry much. We must not be heard! I am aware this risk worries everybody. The sun sets slowly, and now is the time to start off. It must not have been a long way to go – they had said so. But as the time passed we saw that it was a big lie. My husband, again, holds my arm. His backpack is less heavy this time. Mizgin and Azad, again, hold the hands of Iraqi young men. And the woman from Turkey carries my baby – now she is my sister; his aunt. But she inevitably gets tired after a while. I see her talking to the smuggler; he carries the baby for some time; and then he talks to the Afghans. And five men without a word start to take turns to carry my baby.

The road does not end. We pass over mountains, hills, brooks, rivers. We climb up hills and we try to go down through the ridges and shoulders. It goes on and on. I am drained of pain, tiredness. But it does not end. The smuggler lets us have short rests occasionally. It is so hard, regardless! Especially, trying to pass through water is especially difficult and dangerous. Sometimes the water is too wide, but at the same time too shallow and filled with long leaves of grass and wedges – so, we cannot cross over by the boat. But they had told us that we would cross just one river, and that we would do by the boats. Luckily, young Iraqis on tightly the hands of my children and they carry them while passing through the waters.

Afghans who carry my baby pass him to the woman from Turkey whenever we reach at the edge of water. I know, they are scared! They are scared something will go wrong; perhaps, dropping him. I see that but I am helpless to do anything. I know, the woman feels the same. I had sensed her unease in the first brook that we had to cross on foot. Trying to wade in a brook with bags on our back, shoes in our hands, in the dark – as dark as pitch. I, with my pain; she, with my baby in her arms. It was difficult; but I had never lost faith in her; she would be able to do it. When the brooks were wide, my husband, after getting me to the other side, would turn and help her. He helps; never stops helping, but alas, the road does not come to an end. Sometimes, we see the lights of a village in the far distance. In those moments, every moment when I say 'it is over now, we are there' we turn to new roads. The road gets longer and longer; hours pass; it goes on. I have no idea how long we walked; how many times we had to run and how many times we had to hide – I do not know!

As we were all exhausted, the smuggler says 'let's take a rest for a while'. Children start to cry again; how long could a child bear this cold, darkness, tiredness, sleeplessness and now hunger. Seeing my children like this, having to watch their exhausting like this and being so helpless. There is no way to describe it.

*every child  
now is an endless poem in us  
her voice is a pint of joy  
her smile is a shellfire  
endlessly burns in us  
sometimes turns into light  
brightens us  
sometimes turns into fire  
burns us  
we don't tell our burns  
mistakes soak in blood all of a sudden  
songs keep quiet  
we do not know how a requiem starts...  
In the flow of a brook / Adnan Yücel*

Our tired and painful silence is broken by the voice of the smuggler. He calls the Afghans, those who are the most prepared for the road.

## SILENCE

He tells them to give us, to my children some of their food, just as when they are eating lavash, spreading ketchup and mayonese on it. A lavash with ketchup and mayonese on it. My husband takes in silence and we share; one bite for each of us.

And we head the road, once again. This time we are on a straight, dirt road, like a path crossing a field. After a while, a barbed wire fence comes up on our way. One side of the fence is cut and turned into a kind of gate; it is tied by a rope to the cut point. The smuggler unties the rope and opens the fence for us. After we quickly go by he ties and closes it. It is clear that this point is frequently used; that is why the road is so straight and well trodden. But then where is this place; who uses this place; what is left behind us by those barbed wires; what is ahead of us. Or perhaps we are coming close – are we? As I was thinking such and trying to gather some strength a close-by water sound takes away every thing. It is clear that we are approaching a brook, again. As the sound of the water comes closer we all start to grumble... Although the smuggler says 'this is the last one', but we do not believe him anymore. We just follow him with the last bit of energy we have; what choice is there? He says that we will use the boat here; but it needs to be pumped up first. As a couple of people try to use the pump, I sit with my baby somewhere by the brook. The woman from Turkey comes nearby. I watch my baby; she watches the stars. I am in worry; I do not know her thoughts. My baby is very quiet; maybe, everybody is now content that there is no point to worry in that respect. Nevertheless, as the road gets longer and as everyone grapples with tiredness and exhaustion, I am scared that the others in the group might see us as a burden, a brake on their speed and progress.

So many questions in my mind. They are eating me up. How many turns does it take for so many people to get to the opposite shore by just one boat? What if they do not return to take us; what if they leave us in this cold darkness, on this unknown, deserted land? What should we do? We have to get on that boat in the second turn - and not in the first turn, since I am also afraid of being left alone on the other side. And this time we should be the ones to hold our children's hands so that we stay with them whatever happens, whatever we will go through. As I think about these things, I hear the yelling of the smuggler, and my eyes catch the eyes of the woman from Turkey beside me. And as we try to understand what is going on we see that everybody is searching for something. I do not know what; but what I understand, they dropped a part of the pump, and are now not able to inflate the boat. But how can they find that small part of metal on this road in the dark? Who knows where it was dropped on this endless road, where we have been walking for hours. They will never find it. It should not be like this. It should not end here, like this! The woman from Turkey stands up from the point by the water, where she has been watching the sky, the stars. I feel the hopelessness in her, too. She nevertheless joins the search. Hard to believe, but the missing part is found a while after. The boat is quickly pumped up. We are all taken across the stream in several journeys, each journey for each person again ending with feet sunk into wet mud! But before I could find the chance to do what I planned. The smuggler gets us on the boat in order, and he is the one to select who should be next. I follow his orders without saying anything, thinking anything; perhaps because I am tired, perhaps, because I want to trust him now.

Then, I follow the smuggler with my completely wet feet, muddy all over; and we walk for some more time. Why do I say, 'some time'? Because I have no idea how much time is it; it could be for hours, or perhaps, it just minutes. It is as if the notion of time is totally lost. You simply keep moving.

*my hand cannot reach  
as its quince, its pomegranate are irresistible  
I just hang down my neck and walk.  
not a matter that the wolf, and the bird knows  
Do not ask at all  
Silenceeee...*

*Notes from Diyarbekir castle and the lullaby of Adiloş baby / Ahmed Arif*

Once again, we are at the edge of water. It is night and I cannot see exactly, but it is as if we are walking among dozens of small rivers or ponds. No, not really walking, but struggling to move forward. Especially all this mud. The stones and every other thing, stinging at our feet, cutting, making almost impossible to walk! How long it took this time! Finally, we stand on a small hill in the middle of the water, there is a secluded structure, we rest in it for a while. We got wet up to our knees, everybody is shaking! The smuggler says, 'we will have to stay'. 'Here tonight!' Everyone is looking at each other and the great despair can be read again, in all eyes, despite the darkness. No, this journey must end now! Nobody has the strength to walk furthermore, that is true, but no more waiting, we cannot wait, in this blind darkness, in the middle of the water, drenched and muddy! We have neither bread nor water anymore. We had no idea that the journey would take so long! That is why we object, let's get caught if necessary, but we have had enough, let it this dark night and this endless journey come to an end now! He does not say a word, and we just start walking again!

We come across a stream again. Nobody is making a voice anymore, so much so that we do not even hear a sigh. We are just looking for a way to cross. This time, the stream is deep but too narrow for us to cross by boat! In the middle, there is a structure that cuts the water vertically, extending all the way, an iron, flat-bottom, barred, door-like structure! First the smuggler goes forward, showing us how to get across. We have to step on this iron thing, stand sideways and hold on to its railings. But trying to find a place to step between the bars is extremely difficult, the gaps are too narrow. The opposite shore is also higher than this part, so the smuggler will have to pull up all those who cross after him up. Young Iraqi men, holding my children, cross trying to keep a grip on the bars, but with great difficulty. Those who reached the opposite shore before them took my children up. It is our turn. My baby has already been given to the woman from Turkey. My husband is the first to climb onto that door-like structure, he then stands a little to the side and pulls me towards him, it is hard for me to hold on with both hands, but I still find the strength to hold on tightly to the bars, my husband grasping me on one arm. We reach the opposite shore after a few steps. It is now the turn of the woman from Turkey, and our baby. Bag on her back, baby in her arms. She is searching in anxiety for a way to pass – just as I was! The handle of the baby carrier is too short, she can not attach it to her arm, but she also can not pass using just one hand. She puts it over her wrist, hands free. But what if the cloth handles break! Then, holding on with both hands, she manages to pass slowly and with great care, just like those Iraqi men did, and she immediately reaches out and hands my baby to my husband. My husband reaches out to take our baby and pulls her up. At last, one more stream is thus crossed. And we are walking, walking, and walking again. The thirst is mounting, only the smuggler has some water, I know that, but he will not share it! My husband is holding my hands even tighter in these moments. It is very painful to see that terrible helplessness in his eyes, very hard to feel that terrible despair. I try to smile nevertheless, looking deep into his eyes. In those

moments when I should be silent, I tell him with my gaze, that despite everything, I will endure, that we can do it, and that we will overcome everything.

*don't believe when I say I'm tired, I'm not  
I'd live for more years  
my hands are just like this always, on my wound  
I take note of the history of suffering  
Being a poet harms life / Ahmet Erhan*

The day is dawning again. This time we are on the top of a mountain, we see a distant village, we are resting again. I breast-feed my baby for a while, then the woman from Turkey wants to hold my baby. She gets under the sheet brought by the smuggler and with my baby they lie under trees, on that steep slope! At least maybe he will be protected a little from the cold. We try to sleep a little bit, but soon we hear the sound of hunting dogs from the surroundings. We cannot stay here anymore, we immediately pack our things and start walking. It is difficult to walk fast on this hill, the smuggler takes the road nearby. But one of the dogs notices us and starts barking! We go back and start running. We must escape and hide before the hunters come and see us. We get off the road and dive into the trees, the smuggler says we need to move faster, but it is quite hard. I am at the end of my strength, but still forcing myself, I am running somehow. After a while, the smuggler says 'okay, they lost our track'.

Hours pass, walking, waiting and hiding, again and again. Finally, the expected news arrive, 'the car is on its way'. Passing from where we were hiding in the forest to the place where the vehicle will pick up us, we lie down on a slope under the highway, face down and wait for the smuggler's instructions. We have to get up immediately when he says so, run without hesitation and get into the car. And finally, finally the vehicle arrives. I do not know how I ran up that slope, how I sprinted that road! My children are on the laps of Iraqis, my baby is with an Afghani. We run, run and crowd into the back of a minibus with the seats removed. With great difficulty, I sit at the bottom of a window and have my back to a corner. Then I hold my baby in my arms. The Turkish woman runs from way behind but catches us. There is no space in the back, the smuggler tells her to sit in the front, and he quickly returns to where we came from. The woman looks at me and calls me to join her in the front, but the driver does not let me and he suddenly speeds up. But I give her my baby, at least so that my baby can go a little more comfortably.

*All is over, right? Everything comes to an end.  
Hope is the name of a story, it goes first at the beginning,  
Then comes a split, the wound unfolds yesterday  
Old story / Özdemir Asaf*

The road, which lasts for two days, on foot only, kilometers of road, by the mountain, stony hills, fields, streams. With neither water nor food in the last stages. Bags on the back, baby on the lap, children taken by the hand, dozens of people without the tiniest sound, people who do not complain, who have no power to say a word!

And after all this, what a great peace is this first 'arrival'!

While I was thinking these things, after I had just taken a deep breath, when we had just started the route, the vehicle comes to a sudden stop. The curtains of the rear windows are drawn. We do not

immediately understand what happened. Then the door opens. Greek cops! The first thing they say is, 'You are safe now, don't be afraid'. I do not know if we were really safe, I just remember our joy! We applauded, maybe because the road is over now, maybe because we really thought we got rid of it, perhaps we assumed that we would not be mistreated. I have no idea. This time the Greek police carry out a count –IDs, cities, countries may change, but the fact that we are seen and counted as mere 'heads' does not change– and talks about something with the woman from Turkey. The woman tells something after indicating my baby and me. The surprise of the policeman can be seen all over his face, he calls one of the other police officers and indicates us to him as well. Is she telling about the birth? The birth that took place on the riverbank, inside the forest, on the wet grass, on a November day, in the frosty morning, with a tiny pocketknife and a piece of sewing thread. That must be why the cops were astonished. How I could stand it, how my baby held on to life, how my children endured this journey!

*'I'm telling you the truth. Man cannot sprout wings unless he has first  
reached the brink of the abyss!'  
Nikos Kazantzakis*

We kept in the vehicle for a while, then we are taken to the police station. In the garden of the station, an ambulance immediately catches my eye, I understand that what the woman from Turkey said had worked. This is very important for me, I want the doctors to see my baby because I want to be sure that he is well, healthy. At the police station, they separate me and my baby from the group and register my personal data. Just then, they show me the woman from Turkey and ask 'is this the smuggler?' As soon as I hear this question, I am astonished and concerned for her. I just shake my head, indicating a firm 'No', although I have a million of things to tell them. I do not know if my answer was sufficient. I leave my children, my husband and everybody else behind me, leave my mind and heart behind as well and take the ambulance with my baby to go to the hospital.

At the hospital, a doctor examines me while other doctors take care of my baby. There is a great surprise in their eyes, but I can see from the expression on their faces that my baby is fine, I mean I feel it to be so, but they place him in the incubator anyway. How am I? It is as if the tiredness of the whole journey and what I have experienced is just written across my whole body. All what happened is like a dream, and now. The doctor asks something, I am just looking. I still have pain, my bleeding did not stop, but I do not say anything, I mean, I cannot say a word. It is as if I am not myself at this moment. The doctor puts a few stitches, then they attach the serum. I slept for a while, when I opened my eyes, it was night, the moon was up and I was all alone, my baby all alone. The first night away from my baby, my children, and my husband.

*a moon rises slowly  
into the chest of darkness,  
carrying itself in from yesterday to today  
shrank a little  
cross with its sky  
for not seeing the future  
yet it carries its rebirth  
in its sad ending  
Decrescent / Metin Altıok*

They did not let us meet the following day either, we are once again in the hospital, once again separated -mother and baby. We are now 'two lost longings, two pieces of souls' (Taciturn / Ahmed Arif). It is as if my body had collapsed, the pain in my feet is unbearable, and now this time my heart is also in pain. After two days long like an eternity, the doctors finally brought my baby and gave into my arms. I take him and put in my heart. After that, two policemen came and took us to the detention center.

And there, I finally meet my beloved ones again. I enter the women's section after passing two iron barred doors. Twelve people staying in the eight-person cell. My husband and my children are also here. Right next to it, there is the men's section, there is smoke everywhere. I take my first step into the cell with my four-day-old baby in my arms. We are together again. What a joy to see them again, what a great peace of mind to hug your children and your husband. How beautifully Azad and Mizgin love their brother, and how wonderfully we are embracing each other again. 'All we had was a dream. My grief is a dream, my dungeon is a dream. How did it last for years, an adventure that should last only one verse (Taciturn / Ahmed Arif).'

The woman from Turkey and Syria are here too, along with everyone else, eagerly crowding around us in the cell. First, they caress the baby a little, then they give us a piece of food and leave us. After Azad and Mizgin caress the baby, they get on the top bunk with the woman from Turkey. They have invented a game where they taught her Sorani words, they laugh and have fun together. It warms my heart to see my children laugh like that after so many days. At the same time, I satisfy my longing for them while we eat something. We have missed each other, for we never separated from each other; for we never left each other's hands. Though I feel extremely happy at this moment, my soul is surrounded by sadness and anxiety as my husband talks about the situation of those who are here.

*now we just take refuge in sound  
into the night of light.  
to whom will we go,  
with which word will we describe the pain,  
in which language will we ask for forgiveness?  
we need a pure beginning  
a beginning in which where at dawn  
the words attach to the soul.  
we need the compassion of a home,  
a house with a smoking chimney as we sail by its shore,  
on the land of forgiveness  
deeming it a land to take shelter in  
let's hush  
let's hush.*

*Growing up in two dreams – Bejan Matur*

Because, in fact, nothing is over yet. The oldest of the cell is a 65-70 year-old Syrian couple who tried to escape from Istanbul three times, a city which they called 'haram to us'. Each time they were caught and sent back. Now, they are waiting in fear again in this cell where they have been held for weeks, what will happen this time, what will be done to them? Their only consolation is that they are side by side. Married ones and those with children were taken here because of the crowds of the men's cell. Both of them feel sick, maybe something brought about by old age. Even walking gives them a lot of pain, and at least they can support each other when they are side by side.

The youngest of the cell, Saher, is 17 years old yet. A chirpy girl. She does not seem to be able to stand still for even a moment. She either shouts to the police from behind the bars or bangs the wall of the next cell while shouting to the men, uttering 'why is nobody singing?'. She is a Syrian Kurd. They lived in Turkey for some time, her mother somehow reached Germany, but she is stuck here. Actually, before that she tried to escape twice, but after being detained for some time she was sent back like others. This time she is more hopeful, her captivity has lasted longer! Because that could be a sign of being sent to the camp, she is more likely to escape from there. It sounds so easy when said, but she is so young. What a courage to fall into these roads, at that age, all alone!

The woman from Turkey comes to my mind, she was the only one among us to take this journey alone, neither a friend nor anyone from Turkey accompanied her! We were twenty people and having someone speaking the same language around created greater trust, some of strength, maybe like a shield on this horrible road. All along the way, the only person she could talk to was the smuggler, who was supposed to be the person we should trust the most, but actually the one we trusted the least. This time I ask my husband about her, he says he does not know anything, but he adds; she was brought to the detention center hours after everyone in the group. While the personal details were being recorded at the police station, the police asked everyone else as they asked me, 'Is she the smuggler?'. This is why she was questioned for hours, even though everyone said that she was not. Why is that? My husband had no idea either! However, after the birth, everyone called her as 'doctor'. And because we were generally afraid of the smuggler, we were asking our questions about the road to her through that Iraqi doctor and the Syrian woman –most usually, 'how many streams do we still need to cross?'. At the police station, everyone kept calling her 'doctor' and asking questions, so maybe that is why they got suspicious. Maybe the problem was that she was caught sitting in front of the car, separate from the rest of us! Because on the one hand she was holding my baby and on the other hand holding the phone to the ear of the panicked Greek driver; so as not to miss the escort vehicle riding ahead! Although I am sad for this situation, I am relieved to see that she is once more with us.

While the whole family was closely sitting on a bunk bed, talking and thinking with mixed feelings, a police officer calls out from behind the bars in Turkish: 'İstanbulu?' (İstanbulite) (Apparently, the word 'İstanbulu' was one of the common words like the word 'kaçakçı' (smuggler), whatever language was being spoken, the word 'kaçakçı' could be heard. He says something in English to the woman from Turkey, pointing to us. This time, we do not have smugglers to translate, who will tell us what is going on? Curiously, looking at this woman, we see she says something in Turkish to Saher. Saher translates what is said to Kurmanji to a Syrian woman who was with us on the road, then the Syrian woman in turn translates into Arabic to an Iraqi woman. And finally, the Iraqi woman is giving us in Sorani the news that we have been waiting for with such anxiety.

'Pack up right now, you are going to camp!'

My husband jumps from the bunk with joy and hugs me, the whole cell becomes a part of this joy. What a wonderful news we have. They are not going to send us back. They will no longer allow my children to remain imprisoned in this small, windowless, smokey place. I get up from my place and start to tidy up with my husband.

I realize in the meantime that the woman from Turkey is also getting

communication network formed by women, why she is doing so. Happily, she is also being released.

After taking a few pieces of her belongings, she hugs everybody one by one and bids farewell to each of them. When it comes to us, she first asks for our baby, hugs him, and asks for the name then! His name, why so? Everything happened in her presence, she knows his name! But still she asks. Obviously, like us, she could not accept the name that was imposed by the smuggler when we were desperate! We never actually used that name. 'Rojhat' is our baby's name!

I say 'Rojhat', meaning 'sunrise'. This time, she hugs Rojhat with great joy, says goodbye to us. She embraces Mizgin and Azad again, Mizgin and Azad kiss her many times and she leaves.

'Who was this woman, what was she doing on those endless roads?' I do not have a clue. We almost never talked, as a matter of fact, we had no possibility to talk, yet it was as if we were 'one' with her on that horrible journey. I recall especially the moment we were running to the minibus before we were caught. What was it that made her drop behind us at this moment while making me rush to the front of everyone when I had just given birth? Maybe it was not death she was running away from; like ours. In the end what we went through all the way was about the human essence, and although we could not speak the same language, we were humans and we stood side by side. But

this last stop of the road, this last brief moment, was actually telling us another story.

After her exit, this time, the iron bars opened for us. While we rose from our bunk bed, we knew that a new struggle awaited us, after all those damned wars that took so many lives and stole our roots from us.

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