

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## **FIRE FEAST / ATEŞ GECESİ** (1942) RESAT NURI GUNTEKIN (1889 – 1956)

### **Apropos**

Resat Nuri Guntekin's novel *Fire Feast* was first serialized in *Yedigün* journal in 1940 and published as a book form by Semih Lutfi Bookstore in 1942. Although the literary work, which is considered to be one of the novelist's masterpieces, seems primarily focus on the love theme. However, in the background of the narrative, social, historical and emotional themes are also explored. The novel consists of two main parts in total. The first part consists of twenty-three sub-chapters and the narrative is generally set in Milas. The second main part of the narrative consists of five sub-chapters in total, and the events take place in Istanbul. When looking at the plot of the narrative, it is evident that the pathological experience of the romantic relationship experienced by the protagonist, Kemal Murat, is the main focus. It is seen that the main character, who is fifty years old, narrates his past experiences through the narration technique. Therefore, the narrative progress from time to time with the heterodiegetic and sometimes with the intradiegetic narrator. The temporal deviations in the narrative are quite long. The real time of the narrative begins before Constitutional Monarchy and ends in 1918. When the narrator is fifty years old, he relates his experiences in Milas when he was eighteen and in Istanbul in 1918 when he was thirty. The main themes encountered in the literary work are: love, jealousy, passion, revenge, sadness, longing, despair, escape, loneliness, suicide, freedom, regret, etc.

### **Synopsis**

Kemal Murat, whose aunt Sabiha was one of the courtiers of Crown Prince Resit Effendi, was exiled to Milas district of Aydin. Although he is still very young, the local people thought he is a displaced. Kemal Murat, who also make himself look like an opponent of the Sultan and tries to appear older than he is, attracts the attention of the Qaimaqam and all the local people. Kemal Murat becomes close to the Sklavaki family, who are acquaintances of his father who fought in Crete. He falls in love with Afife, one of the married and childed daughters of the family. Despite having been with many Greek girls in Milas, he desires to be with Afife. Although the Sklavakis have a liberal worldview, they place importance on moral values. In addition, Kemal Murat, who has no interest in the country's problems and has never experienced any difficulties in his life, is treated like a child. Despite all his efforts, Kemal Murat cannot get Afife and eventually returns to Istanbul. Being from an influential family and having become wealthy quickly through trading during the war and working with politicians, Kemal Murat has experienced all the pleasures of life. Afife, who thought Kemal Murat was dead but came to Istanbul after learning that he is alive, says that she was in love with him in the past but could not be with him because she was a married woman with a child. Although the time the two spent together rekindles some buried feelings, Kemal Murat has given up on Afife. Afife returns to Milas alone and is never heard from again.

### **People**

<i>Kemal Murat</i>	Son of a wealthy family. An exile returns to Istanbul, he becomes rich.
<i>Afife</i>	One of the married girls of the Sklavaki family. She is in love with Kemal Murat.
<i>Mr. Selim</i>	A doctor. He is from the Sklavaki family. He is Afife's older brother.
<i>Major from Bursa</i>	Kemal Murat's father, who was a military officer.
<i>Qaimaqam</i>	District governor in Milas. He takes care of Kemal Murat.
<i>Mrs. Varvar</i>	Armenian owner of the house where Kemal Murat stays in Milas.
<i>Kegam</i>	Mrs. Varvar's deceased lover.
<i>Dr. Capt. Kemal</i>	A distant relative of the Sklavakis. A doctor.
<i>Mr. Akif</i>	Judge of the criminal court.
<i>Rina</i>	One of the girls in the Greek neighborhood. Kemal Murat shows interest in her.
<i>Stematula</i>	Girl who loves Kemal Murat and jealous of the other girls.
<i>Mr. Rifki</i>	Afife's husband who works as a businessman in Izmir.

<i>Chrysanthos</i>	Head priest of the neighborhood.
<i>Lefter Effendi</i>	Mukhtar of the neighborhood.
<i>Seniye</i>	Daughter of lawyer Ayyub and falls in love with Kemal Murat.
<i>Melek</i>	Neighbor girl that Kemal Murat had a crush on when he was a little child.

The names of other characters who take part in the narrative are as follows: Noncom Halil, Mariyanti, Elenica, Despina, Miyeris, Penelopica, (Picha), Angeliki, mother, grand sister, grand brother, little grand brother, Aristidi Effendi (retired pharmacist and soldier who works at the church), Simi, Mr. Suphi (a doctor who lives in Mrs. Varvar's boarding house), Irfan (Kemal Murat's classmate from engineering school), Perihan, Hayri, Sukru (Kemal Murat's older brothers), etc.

## Extended Storyline

**Kemal Murat arrives in Milas** The stagecoach traveling from Aydin to Milas carries six passengers. One of the passengers, Kemal Murat, is saved at the last moment from being swept away by the current of the stream at Cerci due to his mischievousness and curiosity. Eighteen-year-old Kemal Murat, who was studying at the engineering school, was taken to the Zaptiah Ministry one day and exiled. Qaimaqam is waiting for him in Milas. Qaimaqam, who has become anxious after receiving the news that an exile will be sent to Milas by the Ministry, is worried about restraining the exile. However, he is relieved when he sees that the exile is an eighteen-year-old boy. Kemal Murat tries to make himself look older than he really is to Qaimaqam and to his surroundings, but he fails. He allows himself to be thought that he is a political exile.

**Kemal Murat is hosted by Qaimaqam** When they go to the restaurant to eat and rest, Qaimaqam, who takes advantage of the absence of Mr. Akif, Judge of the criminal court, tries to find out whether Kemal Murat is a political exile. He tries to gauge Kemal Murat's reaction by reading poems by Namik Kemal. It turns out that Qaimaqam is actually a Unionist and admires Namik Kemal. The narrator mentions that Qaimaqam was poisoned one day because of his passion for fish and that he was accused of bribery together with the Jews during the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy because of his obsession for gold. Fish and gold are his two biggest weakness. Qaimaqam tries to find out why Kemal Murat was exiled, but fails in this endeavor. Aware of the situation, Kemal Murat hides the reason for his exile and tries to make himself look older by smoking cigarettes and saying big words. Upon the advice of Qaimaqam, Kemal Murat counts the gold coins in the pouch given to him by his father. Qaimaqam realized that Kemal Murat comes from a wealthy family.

**Settling in Mrs. Varvar's house and the reason for exile** Afterwards, they walk along road full ruts. The people of Milas are non-Muslims and people of different faiths live in every neighborhood. Kemal Murat will reside in a neighborhood predominantly inhabited by Greeks and Armenians and will be a guest in the house of Mrs. Varvar of Armenian origin. Mrs. Varvar's previous guest, Captain Suphi, has gone to Izmir. Dr. Selim, who accompanies the two, starts speaking Greek as soon as they enter the neighborhood. Because he is also from one of the wealthy families of Crete. Kemal Murat settles in a room in Mrs. Varvar's house and is reassured that he may be pardoned in 1-2 years and return to his homeland. While in the second year of engineering school, Kemal Murat is investigated after being caught cheating by providing answers to his classmate named Irfan. When Kemal Murat is taken to the detention center, it becomes clear that the investigation has another motive. During a visit of his father who served in Erzurum, Kemal Murat learns the reason for his arrest. Kemal Murat's aunt Sabiha is one of the courtiers of Crown Prince Rashid Effendi. One of Kemal Murat's older brothers, Hayri, was sent to Benghazi and Sukru to Baghdad. Kemal Murat was told that his family would arrive a few weeks after he arrived in Milas.

**Kemal Murat gains his freedom** Confined to the house and under strict supervision during his childhood, Kemal Murat was unable to enjoy his childhood to the fullest. When he goes to engineering school and is exiled, he feels that he has gained his freedom. Because he was freed from the pressure of his family and had the freedom to behave and do as he wished. Thanks to Qaimaqam, Kemal Murat finds a job as a public works conductor alongside an engineer and rumors spread about why he was exiled and he becomes a legend among the people. It is rumored that he incited his schoolmates to revolt and took part in the bomb attack on the Sultan. Mrs. Varvar, renowned for her beauty, fell in love with Kegam in her youth. After Kegam died of pleurisy, Varvar did not marry anyone. She likens things and people she sees to Kegam. Kemal Murat fell in love with Melek, a neighbor girl, when he was 12-13 years old. In the following years, Melek started to wear a black burqa and study at Women's

Teachers' Training College. Kemal Murat, who does not dare to approach Melek because of his short stature, is emboldened when he grows taller and puts on the uniform of the engineering school. Kemal Murat becomes close to the non-Muslim girls in the church neighborhood in Milas, first strings Maryanti along and then Rina.

**Feast Preparation and girls in the neighborhood** Kemal Murat, who is seeing many Greek girls living in the church neighborhood, is envied by Stematula. Stematula sees Rina as a rival and says bad things about her to Kemal Murat. She starts a rumor that Rina is seeing men in Turuncluk. Kemal Murat decides to organize a feast at Mrs. Varvar's house. Mrs. Varvar, who wants to curry favor with Qaimaqam and Archpriest, is very happy about the planned feast at her house. She wishes that the deceased Kegam had also seen the feast. Preparations for the invitation at the house begin and each girl is assigned a task. In order to prepare for the invitation, Kemal Murat takes advantage of the absence of the engineer, who has been elsewhere for some time, and skips work. Maryanti is the blind daughter of an old jeweler. Kemal Murat is impressed by her beauty, hard work and dignity. Rina, on the other hand, is a shrewd and vigilant coquette. She tries to impress Kemal Murat and make herself look more beautiful than she really is. Stematula, on the other hand, is jealous of Rina and Elecina, who are getting closer to Kemal Murat. Stematula spreads rumors that tarnish their reputations. An argument breaks out between Stematula, who slanders her, and Rina, who insults her, and Rina cries. Kemal Murat comforts Rina. Kemal Murat then calls the two to his side and gives them cologne and handkerchiefs to reconcile them.

**Feast** At the feast attended by Qaimaqam, Archpriest and Mukhtar, it is obligatory for the girls living in the region to serve. However, it is not acceptable to have so many girls in a house where a man lives. However, Kemal Murat gains the love and respect of everyone with his gestures and behavior. Mrs. Varvar is touched to welcome statesmen to his home. She wishes that Kegam had also been invited and seen the feast at home. Missing the man she loves, Mrs. Varvar cannot control her tears. Father Chrysanthos and Qaimaqam try to comfort Mrs. Varvar by telling her that it is not religiously appropriate to cry on a happy day and that she may be punished for it in the afterlife. On the other hand, the fact that the girls were not served food despite having worked very hard is a subject of criticism. The important people in the house pity the girls' plight. Kemal Murat says they will eat, but Mrs. Varvar says that the girls can eat later. Because it is not right for the host to eat before the guests have finished their meal. Various music is played on Madame Angeliki's gramophone. Archpriest is especially fond of Turkish style music and sings it in the church style. At the end of the night, Simi, who had been allowed to stay in the courtyards in front of the houses but was later ostracized by everyone for stealing various things, is seen.

**Kemal Murat sees Afife** About a week later, the Fire Feast is held. Kemal Murat attends the church service and is deeply moved by the eyes of a woman dressed in a chador. He wants to ask Stematula about Rina, but is afraid that he will be recognized as having feelings for her, so he asks something else. Kemal Murat asks who the woman in the chador in the church is and says that she has beautiful eyes. Stematula initially gives false information about the woman, but later tells the truth to Kemal Murat, whom she believes to be sincere. The veiled woman with beautiful eyes in the church is actually Dr. Selim's sister. The young woman brought Kemal Murat, about whom she had heard so much, to the church to see him.

**Arrival of the protagonist's parents to Milas** The protagonist's parents come to Milas after visiting their son in Tripoli. However, the protagonist's mother gets sick and a doctor is called. Dr. Selim recognizes the protagonist's father and calls him "Major from Bursa". Dr. Selim's father Ibrahim Sklavaki was captured while fighting against the enemy on the borders and when he regained his freedom and went to Crete, he continued to fight against the enemy. When old struggles are mentioned, Kemal Murat is criticized for living comfortably in Milas and fooling around with girls. Although the protagonist tells his father that he rebelled against the Sultan in Crete, the father does not accept this and says that he is loyal to the Sultan. When they are invited to Dr. Selim's house, they talk about the old times of war and military service. Kemal Murat is very happy to have the opportunity to see Afife. None of the women in Dr. Selim's house are in chador and each of them greets the guests. This situation attracts Kemal Murat's attention a lot.

**Afife keeps Kemal Murat at a distance** When the conversation turns to the women in the house, Kemal Murat thinks about Maryanti, who is soon to marry a tobacco merchant from Mugla, and Picha, who is bedridden due to malaria. Kemal Murat also questions why Rina stays away from him.

Afife keeps Kemal Murat at a distance and Kemal Murat begins to think that Stematula is lying to him about Afife. Because Stematula had told him that it was Afife who wanted him to be taken to the church. Major from Bursa scolds his son in front of everyone for his childish behavior, irresponsibility and smoking. The father, who still treats his son like a little boy, asks those around him to keep an eye on him. After his family leaves Milas, Kemal Murat becomes depressed and starts going long nature walks. During these walks, he feels sad thinking about his past and worries about his future. During one of these walks, Kemal Murat encounters Afife and, to prove his courage to her, lets a dog named Flora bite him. However, Afife tells him that this situation is quite natural in rural life. At a well, Kemal Murat's hand is dressed.

**Afife's and her big sister's marriage** Afife's older sister married a nobleman but her husband was killed by Greek gangs in Crete. Although Afife's other name is Fofa, no one other than her family calls her by this name. Afife was married to a merchant from Izmir. Her husband Mr. Rifki is the son of a wealthy carpet merchant. Although the carpet trade business later failed, Mr. Rifki, an intelligent businessman who was educated in Europe, became wealthy again by trading. Afife makes a wry face and she changes the subject when she hears her husband's name, and it is immediately understood that she does not love Mr. Rifki. When it's wondered why she stayed married to a man she didn't love, it is revealed that they have a child. It is rumored that Mr. Rifki keeps the child with him all the time in as means of blackmailing Afife who wants a divorce.

**Kemal Murat becomes depressed after his parents leave** After staying in Milas for about forty days, Kemal Murat's parents set off for Tripoli to visit the younger big brother. From there they will return to Istanbul. Kemal Murat, who had enjoyed the time he spent with his parents, becomes depressed in their absence. He thinks about the time he spent with them and what they did together. He thinks by taking long walks in the wild. As time passes, he becomes more and more intimate with Mrs. Varvar. The landlady sees him as her son. He not only sees that his father has aged and turned into a worried character, but he also notices that his mother, who has not lived her youth, has become more active despite her old age. His mother's excitement also excites Kemal Murat. Kemal Murat is saddened by the despair and sadness of his father, whose son has been exiled. The absence of his parents deeply upsets him and causes him to be depressed for a while. He takes permission from the chief engineer to wander around Kulluk and Bodrum on his own, staying in workers' tents.

**Kemal Murat is injured and admitted to the Sklavakis' home** Kemal Murat, while jumping and walking on the rocks by the stream, falls and gets injured. One of the workers takes him back to the tent, dresses his wounds, and, anticipating that he might have a dislocation, he treats him in his own way. Kemal Murat is taken to a doctor in Milas, where he is examined and diagnosed with a fracture. He is told that he must lie in bed and rest until the fracture heals. The doctor thinks that Kemal Murat's bone is broken because of the primitive treatment method applied by the worker. After the treatment, Dr. Selim picks Kemal Murat up and takes him to his own house, saying that he promised Major from Bursa that he would take care of him. Kemal Murat is placed in a room on the second floor of the house. The older sister's room is also on the same floor and she takes care of Kemal Murat all the time. The young woman, whose whole life consists of helping her family and others, takes care of Kemal Murat. Qaimaqam and Mrs. Varvar visit Kemal Murat regularly. Kemal Murat reads the books recommended by Qaimaqam, such as *Iffet*, *Asker Oglu* (Ahmet Rasim), *Mavi ve Siyah* (Blue and Black) and *Cezmi*, but he is most impressed by *Raphael*.

**Getting close to Afife at the Sklavakis's house** At night, Afife is heard coming home. Although he does not understand the conversation in Greek, the fervor of the conversation makes Kemal Murat think that she had gone to Izmir for a lawsuit. The family tries to hide Afife's condition from Kemal Murat, but Mr. Selim gives a little information to Kemal Murat, whom he sees as his brother. Afife and Murat give each other books as gifts to read. They chat together. Qaimaqam visits him regularly and one day tells him that he should return to Mrs. Varvar's house, that his stay has lasted too long. He also complains about the constant presence of little girls in Mrs. Varvar's house. Afife knits for her child in Izmir. The developments related to the case are followed. Kemal Murat stayed at the Sklavakis' house for twenty-eight days.

**Kemal Murat desires Afife** Kemal Murat is taken to Mrs. Varvar's house. Impressed by Afife's intelligence and dignity, Kemal Murat realizes that he is in love with her. He remembers the feelings he used to have for Melek, the girl next door in Istanbul. Although Mrs. Varvar takes good care of him, Kemal Murat wants to go to the Sklavakis' house. He plans to go in there, using the excuse that his

injury has not healed. When he learns that Afife has come to Mrs. Varvar's house, he gets very excited and decides to go to Sklavakis' house. Kemal Murat, who wants to return to the Sklavakis' house, encounters Mr. Selim in a lawyer's office in the downtown. Mr. Selim takes care of the Greeks who are having issues with the land they own. Mr. Selim tells Kemal Murat, who pretends to be a cripple, that he should have recovered by now. He indirectly tells him that he is being childish and thinking only of himself. Later, returning to Mrs. Varvar's house, Kemal Murat takes Rina into the house and sits her on his lap and kisses her. Forced to choose between her sexual desires and societal norms, Rina distances herself from Kemal Murat. Invited to the Sklavakis' house by Afife and the elder sister, Kemal Murat takes Qaimaqam with him and goes there. When he goes to the Sklavakis's house, Qaimaqam sits there for hours chatting with Mr. Selim and Kemal Murat comfortably watches Afife. Kemal Murat learns that Afife's husband Rifki will be coming to Milas.

**Kemal Murat learns that Afife will be going to Izmir** According to first impressions, Rifki is not at all as he is described. He is quite affectionate and respectful. Rifki will cultivate licorice between Cine and Aydin and export it to Europe. Rifki plays backgammon with Qaimaqam and beats him. Having lost his money in the game, Qaimaqam continues to badmouth him to Kemal Murat. Kemal Murat runs into elder sister in the drapery and learns that Afife will soon be leaving for Izmir. Thinking that he will not see Afife for a long time, Kemal Murat becomes depressed. However, after a while, Afife sees Kemal Murat walking around with wet hair and warns him that he might be sick. Kemal Murat tries to find out from Afife whether she will go to Izmir and if so, how long she will stay. Afife says that she will go to Izmir in winter, even though she does not want to. Kemal Murat is happy because winter is still a long time away. Kemal Murat is very excited around Afife and has a hard time restraining his desire for her.

**Kemal Murat is jealous of Afife and wants to kill himself** Afife asks Kemal Murat, who does not look well, how he is doing. In order to hide the real cause of his sadness, Kemal Murat makes up a lie that he has received a letter saying that his mother is ill. Hearing this, Mr. Selim is curious about his mother's condition and says that he will send a letter to Istanbul. Kemal Murat tries to prevent Mr. Selim from sending a letter, but fails. Kemal Murat, trying to see Afife, takes a childhood photograph of her that he finds at home and keeps it. Dr. Capt. Kemal, one of the Sklavakis' relatives serving in Erzurum, is on leave for treatment because he got a disease in Crete. Arriving in Milas, Kemal attracts everyone's attention with his wit, jokes and good looks. Kemal Murat's depression deepens as he becomes jealous of the intimacy between Afife and Kemal.

**Realization of the futility of doubts** He thinks of various tricks to separate the two. He is almost certain that there is a love affair between the two. Influenced by Werther, he decides to commit suicide. He takes Qaimaqam with him and goes to the Sklavakis' house at every opportunity. Finally, out of jealousy, he decides to commit suicide for sure and goes to Afife's house to talk to her for the last time. Finding her elder sister doing Afife's hair, Kemal Murat wants to go back, but Afife takes him to the henhouse. Afife tells Kemal Murat that Kemal will marry Perihan, the daughter of her great uncle in Mersin. Happy that his suspicions were in vain, Kemal Murat is about to cry. Upon Afife's insistence, Kemal Murat confesses that he has been thinking that there was a relationship between the two for some time. Afife, angry at Kemal Murat for thinking this, tells him that she will never see him again.

**The relationship between the two is resolved** Kemal Murat harasses Maryanti when she comes home to return a bowl of rice she borrowed from Mrs. Varvar. Kemal Murat, fired by Afife and beaten by Maryanti, becomes spoiled and brazen. He thinks of going to the Sklavakis' house and giving the letter he wrote to Afife to ask for forgiveness. In front of her family, he asks her questions and tries to get answers. With his jokes and plays, Kemal Murat manages to calm Afife's anger over time. He mocks Afife and engages in behavior that makes her uncomfortable. He impersonates everyone in the Sklavaki family and eventually Afife.

**Qaimaqam learns that Kemal Murat is in love with Afife** Returning from the town, Qaimaqam tells Kemal Murat that he has good news and that he will give it to him in the evening while having dinner at Mrs. Varvar's house. Kemal Murat tries to find out from Qaimaqam what the good news is, but he can only find out during dinner. Qaimaqam met with the governor and tells him that Kemal Murat is very sick and must leave the town. The governor tells him that he will give Kemal Murat an engineering job in the city and his salary will be tripled. In addition, the governor, who had influence in the palace, said that he would meet with the chamberlain and have Kemal Murat pardoned. Qaimaqam tells Kemal Murat that he can spend as much time as he wants with the girls in Kordon in

Izmir and that he should be happy that he will soon return to Istanbul. Terrified, Kemal Murat tells him that he did not ask for help and that he cannot leave Milas. Qaimaqam lied to Kemal Murat and is now sure why he wants to stay in Milas. Qaimaqam warns Kemal Murat about meeting with the Sklavakis and a married woman with a child. Qaimaqam helps Kemal Murat to see Afife from time to time.

**Efforts are made for Seniye to marry Kemal Murat** Seniye, the daughter of Mr. Ayyub, a lawyer with an office in Milas, is in love with Murat. Her mother from Istanbul wants to marry her daughter off to a gentleman from her hometown. The two have met a few times in Milas and the elders talk about them all the time. Seniye refers to Kemal Murat as her fiancé. Her mother takes steps to arrange a marriage between the two by talking to the Sklavaki family.

**Rejection of Kemal Murat's declaration of love and his return to Istanbul** The whole neighborhood sets out in cars for the wedding to be held in a mountain village in Milas. Seniye tries to attract Kemal Murat's attention, but his mind is completely on Afife. After the guests are separated into men and women, Kemal Murat makes great efforts to see Afife. Unable to achieve his goal, Kemal Murat lies down on a heath and thinks about her. After a while, Kemal Murat gets up and starts walking and finds Afife in one of the cars. Seeing Kemal Murat unhappy for a while, Afife tries to find out what is wrong with him. She tries to find out if he is interested in Seniye or one of the girls in the neighborhood. Kemal Murat implicitly tells Afife that he loves her. When his words are insistently not understood, Kemal Murat confesses his love directly. He tries to make her feel sorry by saying that he will die of love, but he cannot succeed. Afife tells Kemal Murat that they will never meet again, that she sees him as her little brother and that he can love another woman. For months he hopes that he and Afife will meet, but this dream does not come true. Months pass and in July the Constitutional Monarchy is proclaimed. Kemal Murat, left on the mountain road by the Sklavakis, heads for Istanbul. When he shakes Afife's hand, he realizes that there is no trace of his old illness anymore.

**Kemal Murat's transformation into a wealthy snob** The second part of the narrative takes place in the summer of 1918. Ten years have passed since his return from exile. In the second month after his return from Milas, he was sent to Europe by Ministry of Public Works to study. He stayed in Germany for five years. When he returns to the country, it is decided that he will be assigned to Istanbul considering the years he spent in exile. He traveled to Europe with official delegations and became a wealthy businessman by engaging in trade during WWI. His younger big brother, who was Enver Pasha's classmate, was appointed to an important position in Ministry of War. The older big brother was a commander in Syria. His father lost his life in the Balkan War. Kemal Murat became a property owner and accustomed to debauchery, earning large sums of money from important positions. By the age of thirty he had experienced all the pleasures of life. He owns a bachelor pad and is seeing a coquette who, during the war years, was the wife of a poor civil servant, later the mistress of a wealthy man and then of a minister. On visits to towns in Anatolia, they listen to people's problems and act as if they understand their plight. The war has come to an end and Istanbul has fallen into the hands of the occupying forces.

**Kemal Murat and Afife's meeting and Afife's confession of love** Afife's husband drowned and lost his life as a result of a steamboat accident in Izmir Port seven or eight years ago. Mr. Selim died of typhoid fever while fighting in Crete during Balkan War. The elder sister fell ill and the Sklavaki family lost their fortune over time. Afife has been a guest at her relatives in Fatih for the last month. With the help of the older big brother, she enrolled her child in a school in Istanbul. The mother wants to host Afife in her house for a few days. Kemal Murat sees that the woman he had fallen in love with in the past is in an extremely pitiable state and is convinced that he had fallen in love not with her but with an illusion he had created in his own mind. When they sit in the garden of the mansion, they stay alone and talk about the past. Then Kemal Murat takes Afife out and shows her around. When they enter a ruined tomb, Afife confesses her love. Years ago, Afife had confessed her love to her elder sister, but she had told her that Kemal Murat was dead and did not want Afife to build castles in the sky. Two years ago, Afife saw Kemal Murat's photograph in a newspaper and learned that he was alive, but she could hardly come to Istanbul. Kemal Murat sees Afife experiencing the same feelings he had experienced in the past. Not knowing what to do in this situation, Kemal Murat has difficulty sleeping.

**The two spends time together** Afife and Kemal Murat's mother are on good terms. Kemal Murat cannot go to Istanbul as her visit is extended. He thinks that this disease can be cured with a sexual experience with Afife. However, he does not take any initiative in this regard for a while. Although he wants to arouse her maternal feelings, he sees that she does not care much about her

own child. Thus, he realizes how important he is for Afife. The child from an unwanted marriage is also an obstacle for Afife to be with the man she loves. While talking about the past, Afife tells Kemal Murat that she fell in love with him the moment she saw him, but she was ashamed of falling in love with a little boy. Because the moral principles of the Sklavakis reject such a situation.

**Kemal Murat breaks up with Afife without keeping his promise to her** Two days before the return journey, Afife begins to suffer from headaches due to sadness and nerves. During a car trip they come across a feast and stop to join in the fun. Seeing the children playing, Kemal Murat recalls his years in Milas and the love he felt for Afife. Remembering one of the novels she has read, Afife, saddened by the fact that she is leaving, quotes it and starts shouting "there is no tomorrow for us". The night before the trip, the two have a sexual intercourse and Kemal Murat promises Afife to take her on the ferry tomorrow morning. However, Kemal Murat breaks his promise and tells that he has never heard from her again since he turned fifty. He says that he has turned her into an obsession because he wanted to prove himself in his youth.

## Themes

**Love** In Resat Nuri Guntekin's *Fire Feast*, the protagonist Kemal Murat, who has come to Milas as an exile, falls in love with Afife, the daughter of the Sklavakis, one of the respected families of the region. Kemal Murat falls in love with Afife, who is married, childless and in her twenties. Afife also falls in love with Kemal Murat, but at the time she does not dare to confess her love. Kemal Murat constantly fantasizes about Afife, desires her sexually, is jealous of her and the thought of not being able to have her makes him want to commit suicide. However, when he leaves Milas, Kemal Murat experiences a change of fortune and tastes all the pleasures he could desire from life. Having reached a certain maturity and being satisfied, Kemal Murat no longer wants to be with Afife. Afife, whose family was destroyed in WWI, goes to the house of Kemal Murat, whom she learns later is still alive, and declares her love to him. The female character, who has experienced an unfavorable change of fortune, does not meet the love of her life at the end of the narrative. Kemal Murat, in his fifties, evaluates his feelings for Afife as a young man's attempt to prove his maturity.

**Transience** In the novel *Fire Feast*, Resat Nuri Guntekin tells the story of Kemal Murat, a man with a completely hedonistic worldview who is not interested in the problems of the state and society during the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Although the narrative progresses from Kemal Murat's point of view, Afife's story is actually being told. Kemal Murat, who had fallen in love with Afife with the exuberance and naivety of youth during his years of exile in Milas, completely forgets Afife and his love for her when he returns to Istanbul, receives an education in Europe, works in important positions in important institutions of the state and becomes a war profiteer. Having tasted all the pleasures of life, Kemal Murat forgets the feeling of love, which he calls an old disease. Kemal Murat, who had read *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Raphael* in his youth, was influenced by these books and even considered suicide for the woman he loved. However, he loses all his morale over time because he does not worry about the problems of the state or society like Mr. Selim and Major from Bursa and lives a hedonistic life. While he is in Milas, he is often accused of being irresponsible and spoiled by his elders.

**Conflict** The narrative in Resat Nuri Guntekin's *Fire Feast* begins before the Constitutional Monarchy and ends in a period after its declaration. The society is divided into two groups: nationalists and monarchists. The nationalists show interest in Kemal Murat, who is thought to be a political exile. Qaimaqam, who admires unionists such as Namik Kemal and Ziya Pasha, reads poems to him. It is believed that Kemal Murat tried to organize his classmates in Istanbul and played a role in the bomb attack against the Sultan. Especially unionist officers struggle to protect the integrity of the country in the frontiers all over the country. At the same time, there is a struggle in Istanbul to become a political actor and take over the government. Although the unionists eventually take over the government, many problems arise with the newly established government. Those who see politics as a means of enrichment use the power and influence they gain for their own personal interests.

**Patriarchy** Although the main characters, Kemal Murat and Afife, who play a role in the novel titled *Fire Feast*, live in the same period, events they experience affect them in completely different ways due to their gender and social status. Afife, who was married off to a wealthy merchant at a young age, also had a child. It is rumored that Afife, who has an unwanted child from an unwanted marriage, will divorce her husband. Kemal Murat, on the other hand, gains his freedom at the age of

eighteen and can spend time with any girl he wants. The two cannot be together because of the obstacles in Afife's path. WWI is a period in which the two narrative persons experience a change of fortune in different directions. Kemal Murat, the child of a wealthy family and a former exile, becomes wealthy and important thanks to his education in Europe. Afife, on the other hand, loses her husband and brother, and her sister falls ill. The Sklavaki family falls apart completely and Afife struggles with poverty. As an oppressed figure in the society she lives in, Afife cannot achieve what she desires in her youth and adulthood.

## Character Analysis

### **Kemal Murat** (Open/Disagreeable/Unconscientious/Emotional)

Kemal Murat, the protagonist of the narrative, is the youngest son of one of Istanbul's wealthy families. While he was a student at the engineering school, he was exiled to Milas district of Aydin because his aunt Sabiha was one of the courtiers of Crown Prince Resit Effendi. Eighteen-year-old Kemal Murat is full of life and takes a close interest in the girls of the Greek neighborhood. However, his whole life changes when he falls in love with Afife, the younger daughter of the Sklavaki family. Apparently influenced by novels such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Raphael*, Kemal Murat begins to have morbidly intense feelings. Unable to get his feelings reciprocated, Kemal Murat returns to Istanbul, gets an education in Germany and takes important positions in important governmental institutions. Kemal Murat, who took advantage of the war and became wealthy, had tasted all the pleasures of life and forgot Afife by the time he was thirty. Eventually, he has a sexual relationship with Afife and leaves her. When he turns fifty, he says that he only had sex with Afife to reach his maturity.

*Pensive* "A person's sense of time is not determined by the number of days, but by the degree of richness of the events, thoughts and emotions that fill them. Especially during periods like the one I was going through at the time, when the soul and body undergo one of their rare transformations, there are nights and days that leave memories as if immeasurable time has passed between one hour and the next" (Guntekin 2018, 110).

*Excited* "(...) you wonder where this creature gets so much strength, what it wants and pursues with such insistence and rage. In the two days that passed until I saw Afife, I too became a little monster raging with such a constant need to flutter" (Guntekin 2018, 156).

*Oppressed* The protagonist, who was oppressed by his family when he was young, regains his freedom during his years as a student at the school and as an exile: "I'm under a lot of pressure. They don't tolerate me being a chatty and playful child. They would almost get upset and say, "Why didn't Kemal take after his brothers and sisters and become such a frivolous, overhead thing?" It was forbidden to go out on the street and play with neighbors' children" (Guntekin 2018, 34).

*Selfish* Not interested in the problems of the country, society and humanity, the protagonist leads a hedonistic lifestyle: "By the age of thirty, I had experienced almost all pleasures, leaving nothing significant to desire in life. However, because I had forgotten what bad luck was since the Milas adventure, I couldn't realize that I was at the peak and thought that it would continue like this with a series of unimaginable new happiness" (Guntekin 2018, 257).

*Bored* "The countryside began to attract me more than the cities. In Milas, an autumn mixed with rains followed by bouts of suffocating heat had begun (...) Another part of my illness would be to enjoy the countryside, to escape from people and get closer to animals. In this respect, the vagabond Mecnun, who built nests for birds on his head, should be considered our great master" (Guntekin 2018, 119).

*Free* "Now, exile was expanding this freedom completely, suddenly elevating me to the status of a great person with no interference, no interlocutors" (Guntekin 2018, 27).

*Obsessed* He falls in love with a married and a childless woman and becomes obsessed with being with her: "- Whether they get along or not, that's another story... Apparently, he saw her in his dream. He said, "Let's enjoy with her for a few more days. Doesn't he have the right? She is as delicate as an eggshell... If you look at one side of her face, you can see the other side... What harm would it do if he kisses and smells her in his bosom for a few days? Plus, he'll get to live off that fool Mr. Selim for free..." (Guntekin 2018, 166).



*Lover* "As with other diseases, love has certain symptoms that manifest themselves at specific stages, and suicide is probably one of them, one of those symptoms that always haunts every person who loves, even if only as a fleeting fantasy" (Guntekin 2018, 182).

**Afife** (Open/Agreeable/Conscientious/Emotional)

Afife, who lives in a Greek neighborhood in Milas district of Aydin, is the youngest daughter of the Sklavaki family from Crete. She is an object through which the protagonist reflects his love. In the narrative, her story is actually told through the perspective of Kemal Murat. She married a merchant from Izmir at a young age and had a child. It is clear that she does not love her husband and wants to leave him by the fact that she never talks about him and grimace when his name is mentioned. She attracts everyone's attention with her beauty, intelligence and dignity. Rumors that she is trying to divorce her husband are being talked about among the neighborhood. She gives a progressive and brave image compared to the women of the period. However, she also adopted the moral principles and traditions that her family had adopted. However, with the outbreak of WWI, the Sklavaki family falls apart and Afife has no obstacle to unite with Kemal Murat. Although she looks helpless and miserable, Afife declares her love for Kemal Murat and tells him that she has been waiting for him for years. Her love for a man younger than her ends tragically.

*Courageous* "The fact that I had been called to church on the fire feast at her urging had haunted me for a few days. But judging by tonight's irrelevance, it would have been just a curiosity to see an exiled boy who was much talked about in the city" (Guntekin 2018, 101).

*Oppressed* "“When her husband's name is mentioned,” he said, “she loses her cheerfulness. She immediately changes the subject. This is not a good sign. Either she doesn't love him, or he's a womanizer, a rascal...” (Guntekin 2018, 107).

*Unhappy* "The young woman was probably miserable. Half of her life, maybe even more, was spent at her big brother's house in Milas" (Guntekin 2018, 108).

*Pensive* "As for Afife, she had also recovered a lot in these few days. However, she had a slight confusion left over from the storm she had been through something similar to the staggering of those who come ashore after being rocked for a long time in a wavy sea, which for some reason would not go away" (Guntekin 2018, 133).

*Intelligent* "When she started talking, ideas and words came easily to her and she would talk for a long time, jumping from one topic to another" (Guntekin 2018, 134-135).

*Mysterious* "When I saw Afife in the veil, I thought she had grown up even more, that she had risen to distances inaccessible for my childhood. The latticework of the veil made her eyes, lips and teeth appear brighter than they were, while the other parts of her face were lost, sending me into a frenzy of despair" (Guntekin 2018, 162).

*Patient* "I was engaging in stealthy biting experience with movements that resembled coquetry, like a wolf pup that becomes more monstrous as it grows" (Guntekin 2018, 214).

*Lover* "Her eyes were tightly closed and teary. The wings of her nose were pinched, and her lips were just two thin lines in her mouth, which stretched and elongated towards her cheeks" (Guntekin 2018, 277).

**Qaimaqam** (Open/Agreeable/Conscientious/Rational)

Qaimaqam, one of the normative narrative persons, works in Milas. Although he is against the Sultan and the sultanate, he hesitates to express this view. Qaimaqam, who has adopted the unionist worldview, reads and analyzes the poems of poets such as Namik Kemal and Ziya Pasha. At the same time, he advises Kemal Murat to read literary works such as *Iffet*, *Asker Oglu* (Ahmet Rasim), *Mavi ve Siyah* (Halit Ziya Usakligil) and *Cezmi* in order to gain social consciousness. Qaimaqam constantly warns Kemal Murat, the protagonist, about his mistakes. He warns him that his childishness, selfishness and audacity will harm himself or others. He gets along extremely well with those in the Greek neighborhood. He is helpful and friendly to others. He is a close friend of the

Sklavaki family. "The presence of Qaimaqam not only ensures Kemal Murat's respectability in the neighborhood, but also helps him in the depressed moments of his feelings for Afife" (Kanter 2008, 385).

*Apprehensive* "They are sending an exile to Milas... Government orders him to be confined carefully... He is probably a troublemaker... I don't like this kind of matter at all. I feel as if a snake has crept into the house..." (Guntekin 2018, 8).

*Fatherly* "There was certainly a touch of sympathy and fatherly compassion in the word "urchin", which Qaimaqam pronounced in a scolding manner" (Guntekin 2018, 9).

*Wise* "-My dear child, as if having the name Kemal and Murat wasn't enough, you also talk big... It doesn't seem like you haven't entirely deserved your fate" (Guntekin 2018, 12).

*Progressive* "- Your namesake wrote poems that pierced the heart like an arrow. He too had been sent far from home at a young age, just like you" (Guntekin 2018, 15).

*Opponent* "Qaimaqam, who was a literature enthusiast, would often read poems by Namik Kemal, Ziya Pasha and other tanzimat reform era greats, and under the pretext of explaining their meaning, he would clearly show me how the country was heading towards an abyss" (Guntekin 2018, 85).

*Friendly* "- You deprived us of you for a week. We wanted to see you. And the guest is an annoying man. It's hard to endure if you're not there. When you're there, everything changes" (Guntekin 2018, 188).

*Shrewd* "His words were nothing but a trap. Qaimaqam wanted to catch me unawares, perhaps out of morbid curiosity, or with the good intention of finding out the truth of my problem and seeking a remedy" (Guntekin 2018, 193).

*Clever* "- Of course, it's not true that I told the governor about you. It's necessary to enter the man's presence with salutations... How dare we open our mouths in front of such tyrannical pharaohs? It is also a lie that the governor will ask for your pardon from Chamber of Deputies... (...) I had to do this just to be sure. So, you're head over heels in love that much, huh!" (Guntekin 2018, 221-222).

## **Bibliography**

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